# Yōga and Yōga Meditation

Posted on

Yōga is a famous word among people’s daily activities worldwide. It is some kind of exercise or meditation.



Though yoga originated in ancient India, it is now practiced worldwide. In ancient times, they said those who practiced yoga were yogic. At present, many youngsters and adults who practice yoga gain many benefits. Therefore, they have dedicated a day for yoga called International Yoga Day, which falls on June 21$^{st}$ every year.

As the NIH “National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health defines,” yoga is “an ancient complex practice rooted in Indian philosophy. It began as a spiritual practice but has become popular to promote physical and mental well-being.” It further states, “Yoga is practiced in the United States, typically through physical postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), and meditation

(dhyana). They emphasized that yoga and the Chinese tai chi and qi gong practices are meditative movements.” Some yogic say that the mind and body meet in yoga exercises, and the mind and body are exercised simultaneously.

Veda literature reviews more explanations of Yoga: “Yoga is an ancient practice that involves physical poses, concentration, and deep breathing.” According to that, the word “Yoga” first appears in the Rig Veda, and it comes from the Sanskrit word “Yui” which means “union” or “to join.” It has been traced back to northern India over 5,000 years ago. In Yoga, philosophy explains, “The main philosophy of Yoga is simple: mind, body, and spirit are all one and cannot be clearly separated… Like Buddhism, Yoga philosophy believes spiritual ignorance creates suffering and binds us to the wheel of sansāra (cycle of rebirth). Removing our ignorance can take many different paths and techniques in Yoga.” According to Yoga literature, there are also six branches of Yoga.

**1 Hatha Yoga:** a physical and mental branch that aims for the body and mind.

**2 Raja yoga:** this branch involves meditation and adherence to discipline.

**3 Karma yoga:** aims to free you from negativity and selfishness.

**4 Bhakti yoga:** aims to establish the path of devotion, create positive emotions, and cultivate tolerance.

**5 Jhana yoga:** aims to develop wisdom and intellect through study.

**6 Tantra yoga:** the pathway of ritual, ceremony, or consummation of the relationship.

Though these are the main branches of Yoga, many āsana must be fulfilled. But an individual can choose a suitable āsana according to his will. Usually, there are few āsana similarly practiced by a yogi or novice.

They are:

I. Padmāsana or Lotus Pose, and Siddhāsana.

II. Yoga mudrāsana or Colon-toning pose.

III. Ardha-matsyendrāsana or Spine-twisting pose.

IV. Paschimatānāsana or Posterior stretching pose.

V. Viparita Karani or Pelvic pose.

VI. Matsyāsana or Fish pose.

VII. Halāsana or Plough pose.

VIII. Dhanurāsana or Bow pose.

IX. Shalabhāsana or Locust pose.

X. Bhujangāsana or Cobra pose.

XI. Shirshāsana or Topsy-turvy pose.

XII. Shavāsana or Corpse pose. If one starts Yoga, he can use effortless poses and develop them gradually.

Besides that, they draw our attention to some benefits of Yoga practice. According to a survey in 2012, they introduced these benefits of Yoga as this: it builds muscle strength, enhances flexibility, promotes better breathing, supports heart health, helps with addiction treatment, reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, reduces high blood pressure, improves balance and coordination, eases chronic pain, improves sleep, and enhances overall well-being and quality of life.

Before one starts to practice yoga, one should know what the methods are. We can divide it into two parts: Yoga exercise and Yoga meditation. These two are also divided into different roles, and I intend to discuss only a few useful for your daily life. First, we should learn the āsanas (poses) to practice Yoga. Many decades ago, I was fortunate enough to read an ancient yoga book, “YOGIC ASANAS for Health and Vigor,” written by Lt-Col, S.L. BHATIA, I.M.S., M.A., B.Ch. (Cantab.), F.R.C.P. (Lond.), F.R.S.E., J.P., in the library, before I practiced Yoga. After I read this booklet, I was impressed and tempted to practice Yoga a few decades ago without any Guru or adviser. Accordingly, Yoga teachers intend to have a teacher, or a Guru advises a novice Yoga learner.

Yoga began as a spiritual practice but has become popular to promote

> physical and mental well-being. It is an ancient practice that involves physical poses, concentration, and deep breathing.

Usually, there are many Yoga methods, but one can use several of them to benefit day-to-day life. Similarly, Mr. Bhatia has described 14 āsanas and two Mudras in this book. Before we explain these āsanas, reviewing another explanation of practicing Yoga is better. “In Yogic āsanas, the concentration of the mind is almost automatic. Yogic āsanas are not gymnastic exercises in which the trunk and the limbs are made to move rhythmically, but they are special poses, and their chief benefit lies in retaining them for a certain fixed time without discomfort. The longer the retention time of a certain posture, the greater the benefit derived.” In addition, he explains the āsanas and reviews the benefits of Yoga step by step. “Without doubt, Yogic exercises assure a normal individual of his physical well-being, but they are also both curative and recuperative in action. They are excellent remedies against dyspepsia and chronic constipation and correct faulty liver action.”

Furthermore, he recommends certain āsanas for increasing metabolic activity and toning up the neuro-muscular tissues; when health has been shattered after an illness, these exercises will brace up the body, and a physically weak person may also start practicing āsanas to gain energy and stimulate the appetite. In his view, age, gender, and race are not bars against practicing Yoga.

In āsanas also have a spiritual significance, according to his explanations. It means a person who practices Yoga systematically can understand himself well and reach self-actualization. We can do meditation at any time, but practicing yoga is very different. Some recommend doing it in the early morning before the day starts or in the calm evening. On the other hand, you must choose a suitable, tranquil place to gain better results. And you should have to choose a convenient, lightweight, slack-off yoga kit and a yoga mat for laying and sitting Yoga poses.

To commence the yoga practice, it is advisable to start with the ‘Prānayāma and Sūrya Namaskar’ (sun salutation, but it is not a religious belief), which are very easy and essential. After that, an individual can choose any suitable, easy yoga poses until they get experienced. Also, you should have retained a few seconds to benefit each āsanas. But some āsanas should take more time to complete.

As there is a beginning to anything, there is also an end. Therefore, to end practice yoga, one should practice Shavāsana or corpse pose. But “It is easier said than

done," and the solution is in your hands, not luck or the stars. Just give it a try today, not tomorrow.

*Ven Diyapattugama Revatha Thero*

*(B.A., M.A., M.Phil.)*

*Expert Psychological Counselor and*

*Meditation Instructor*

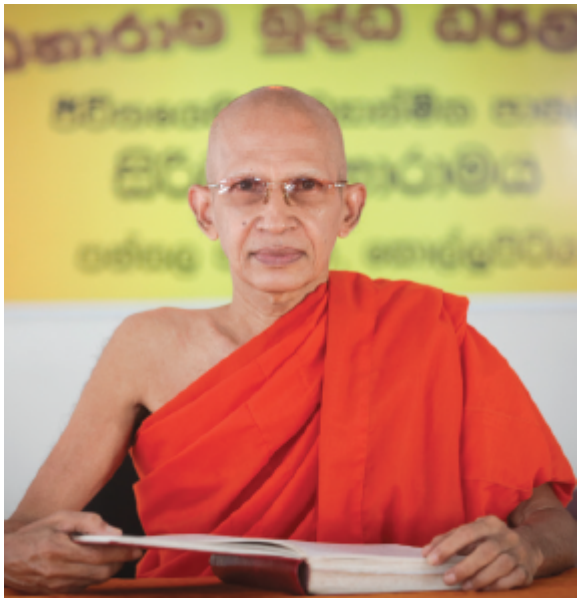
*Siriwardhanarama Buddha Dhamma College*

*Mano¯daya Meditation Center*

*Siriwardhanaramaya, Temple Lane, Kollupitiya*

*sirirevathad@gmail.com*

*dhammavedi.com*



Ven Diyapattugama Revatha Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Siriwardhanaramaya Temple, Kollupitiya