

# YOGA RESEARCH HAS A LONG WAY TO GO

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Yoga is an ancient and complex practice, rooted in Indian philosophy. It began as a spiritual practice but has become popular as a way of promoting physical and mental well-being.

When we think of what yoga can contribute to scientific research, and especially to research field, think of two entirely different types of research: psychological research about yoga and yoga research about psychology, or to say it even more succinctly, research *about* yoga and research *in* yoga. The first type of research, research *about* yoga, works within the limits of existing science, and distills from the Indian tradition only those theories and techniques that science can assess by its own well established research methods.

There is a great need of yoga and yogic practices to be taught and also to practice yoga, to overcome physical, mental and physiological problems. I urge upon the August body to see that yoga to be made simple rather than complex through research for the following reasons development of science and technology in the recent years has made man's life fast, busy and full of tensions. The pressure on the muscles has been largely taken away by the machines, but the pressure on the nerves has greatly increased. This has resulted in what are called stress disorders or the psychosomatic disorders.

Our mind and body is capable of bearing the load of tension to a certain limit. If tension continues beyond that limit, then the balance of the psycho-physiological processes is disturbed, and that results into various symptoms of mal-adjustment the mind expresses the tension in the form of impulses that flow from the brain to various muscles of the body. If these muscles continue to make an impact on the glands and organs, this will give rise to the malfunctioning of the organ or glands concerned. Unless and until the mind be relieved of the tension prevailing in it, the disorder of the organs concerned can't be rectified. The most important benefit of yoga is physical and mental therapy.

The aging process; which is largely an artificial condition, caused mainly by autointoxication or self-poisoning, can be slowed down by practicing yoga. Regular practice of asanas, pranayama

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and meditation can help such diverse ailments such as diabetes,- blood pressure, digestive disorders, arthritis, atherosclerosis, chronic fatigue, asthma, varicose veins and heart conditions.

Laboratory tests have proved that yogi's increased abilities of consciously controlling the autonomic or involuntary functions, such as temperature, heart beat and blood pressure. Research into the effects of yogic practices on HIV is currently underway with promising results. The Asana or the postures will help in keeping the muscles, nerves and joints to perform in a benefitting manner and tone up all the internal organs to function effectively without creating fatigue. The Pranayama which is systematic and rhythmic respiration helps to relax the physical and mental organs of the body and keeps every cell oxygenated which helps in metabolism.

A lot of research is conducted in Yoga for the prevention of the following:

Asthma, Respiratory Problem, High B.P., Back Pain, Arthritis, Weight Reduction, Cancer etc.

**Asthma:** Studies conducted at yoga institutions in India have reported impressive success in improving asthma. It has also been proved that asthma attacks can usually be prevented by yoga methods without resorting to drugs.

**Respiration Problems:** Patients who practice yoga have a better chance of gaining the ability to control their breathing problems. With the help of yogic breathing exercises, it is possible to control an attack of severe shortness of breath without having to seek medical help. Various studies have confirmed the beneficial effects of yoga for patients with respiratory problems.

**High Blood Pressure:** The relaxation and exercise components of yoga have a major role to play in the treatment and prevention of high blood pressure (hypertension).A combination of biofeedback and yogic breathing and relaxation techniques has been found to lower blood pressure and reduce the need for high blood pressure medication in people suffering from it.

**Pain Management:** Yoga is believed to reduce pain by helping the brain's pain center regulate the gate controlling mechanism located in the spinal cord and the secretion of natural painkillers in the body. Breathing exercises used in yoga can also reduce pain. Because muscles tend to relax when you exhale, lengthening the time of exhalation can help produce relaxation and reduce

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tension. Awareness of breathing helps to achieve calmer, slower respiration and aid in relaxation and pain management.

**Back Pain:** Back pain is the most common reason to seek medical attention. Yoga has consistently been used to cure and prevent back pain by enhancing strength and flexibility. Both acute and long-term stress can lead to muscle tension and exacerbate back problems.

**Arthritis:** Yoga's gentle exercises designed to provide relief to needed joints had been Yoga's slow-motion movements and gentle pressures reach deep into troubled joints. In addition, the easy stretches in conjunction with deep breathing exercises relieve the tension that binds up the muscles and further tightens the joints. Yoga is exercise and relaxation rolled into one - the perfect anti-arthritis formula.

**Weight Reduction:** Regular yoga practice can help in weight management. Firstly, some of the asanas stimulate sluggish glands to increase their hormonal secretions. The thyroid gland, especially, has a big effect on our weight because it affects body metabolism. There are several asanas, such as the shoulder stand and the fish posture, which are specific for the thyroid gland. Fat metabolism is also increased, so fat is converted to muscle and energy. This means that, as well as losing fat, you will have better muscle tone and a higher vitality level.

**Psychological Benefits:** Regular yoga practice creates mental clarity and calmness, increases body awareness, relieves chronic stress patterns, relaxes the mind, centers attention and sharpens concentration.

**Self-Awareness:** Yoga strives to increase self-awareness on both a physical and psychological level. Patients who study yoga learn to induce relaxation and then to use the technique whenever pain appears. Practicing yoga can provide chronic pain sufferers with useful tools to actively cope with their pain and help counter feelings of helplessness and depression.

**Mental Performance:** A common technique used in yoga is breathing through one nostril at a time. Electroencephalogram (EEG) studies of the electrical impulses of the brain have shown that breathing through one nostril results in increased activity on the opposite side of the brain. Some experts suggest that the regular practice of breathing through one nostril may help improve communication between the right and left side of the brain. Studies have also shown that this

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increased brain activity is associated with better performance and doctors even suggest that yoga can enhance cognitive performance.

**Mood Change and Vitality:** Mental health and physical energy are difficult to quantify, but virtually everyone who participates in yoga over a period of time reports a positive effect on outlook and energy level. Yogic stretching and breathing exercises have been seen to result in an invigorating effect on both mental and physical energy and improved mood.

**Emphasis of yoga intervention:** Asana was the most prominent component being used in 81% of interventions. The nature and form of asana was only described in 54% of studies and a mere 12% mentioned the amount of time that participants practiced asana or other forms of yoga.

A number of other yogic tools were also prominently featured in this research including pranayama (breathing exercises) 42%, meditation (dharana and dhyana) 23%, relaxation exercises (15%), and 37% with no additional emphasis reported.

**More research should be done in the following areas:**

The very essence of yoga lies in attaining mental peace, improved concentration powers, a relaxed state of living and harmony in relationships. All the above benefits will help the students in their academic achievements. Though Yoga is considered as one of the effective stress buster through pranayama and relaxation techniques it is not taken seriously by majority of the sportspersons as a training component. Reviews and literatures shows that Yoga helps in enhancing the vital capacity but again coaches and the trainers give little importance to it.

**Conclusion:-**

The most important thing that yoga teachers and therapists can do is to exercise caution, ask questions, stay informed, and exercise humility when it comes to discussing yoga research. While there are a number of promising studies and the field is continuing to grow, we still know very little about how yoga works and why. More and more researchers are beginning to ask these questions, so it is only a matter of time until we understand the scientific basis for the miracles that we witness each and every day.

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