

YOGA – A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE HAPPINESS

Dr. Hiral Parikh

Assistant professor
K S School of Business Management & Information Technology, Gujarat University
parikhiral@gmail.com

Abstract

The main goal of human life is to be happy. All the actions of a human being are driven towards the pursuit of happiness. One is happy when a desire gets fulfilled. Once the desire is fulfilled, we are back to the same mindset having another desire and waiting for it to be fulfilled. If a desire is not fulfilled, then the state of mind is unhappy. When we are unhappy, various emotions come up like craving and aversion, anger, frustration, sadness, guilt, regret, ego, disgust, hatred, envy, fear, shame etc. Can we sustain any such emotion for a long period of time? The answer is NO. Happiness is also an emotion. Can we sustain happiness for a long period of time? The answer is YES. Yoga is a pathway for sustainable happiness. Yoga is the union of body, mind and breath. It is holistic in nature. Maharishi Patanjali; the father of science of Yoga, enunciated 8 limbs of yoga. They are Yama, Niyama, Asanas, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi. (<https://patanjaliyogasutra.in>, 2025) The present study focuses on the union (yoga) of body, breath and mind and how Asanas, Pranayama and meditation help in attaining sustainable happiness.

Keywords: Yoga, Body, Breath, Mind, Asana, Pranayama, Meditation, Happiness

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a gift given by Lord Shiva to Maa Parvati. Sadashiv explained yoga to saptarishis (seven sages) and saptarishis spread the knowledge to the whole world. Among the 4 oldest vedas, yoga is found in the Rig veda and its fossils are found in Indus Saraswati valley civilisation with motives and figures performing yoga. The breathing hymns are found in the oldest Upanishad - Brihadaranyaka. 20 upanishads were found along with yog vasistha which were before the period of Mahabharat and Bhagwad Gita. Maharishi Patanjali in Patanjali yoga sutras structured the practice of yoga and its meaning. (Dr. S.G. Praveen Kumar, 2023)

In *Pre-vedic Era* the knowledge was verbally passed and due to that most of the knowledge is lost. In *vedic era* Rishi badrayana compiled the 4 vedas and wrote Brahma Sutra and also wrote mahabharata; the highest knowledge for easier understanding. *The pre-classical period* witnessed Lord Krishna imparting Bhagwad gita to Arjuna and it also is a gift to humankind till date. Lord Krishna said in Bhagwad Gita; “Yogah karmashu kaushalam” (2.50) meaning Skill in Action is Yoga. “ (Bhagwad Gita , 2025) meaning Equanimity is Yoga. Lord Krishna, in Bhagwad Gita has described how a person can attain highest by following any of the methods prescribed by him. He gave us a beautiful gift of 4 Yogs Gyana yog meaning knowledge and wisdom, Bhakti yog meaning devotion to the supreme, Karma yog meaning action and inaction and Dhyana yog meaning meditation. In the *Classical Era* Maharishi Patanjali gave 8 limbs of yoga for liberation. In this era ved vyas also compiled Yogasutra called yog Bhashya which leads the seeker to attain mastery of the mind. The Post classical era witnessed hatha yog also with jnana yog and bhakti yoga flourished. Tulsidas and Mirabai attained lord through Bhakti yoga. Modern era witnessed by Swami Vivekanand, Acharya Raajneesh, BKS Iyengar and many great sages have imparted sacred knowledge to the entire mankind. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Maharaj found Sri Sri yoga School in 1984. He gave beautiful gift of Sudarshan Kriya to entire world. His profound sacred knowledge is a blessing in this era.

Thus yoga is a sacred knowledge since Shiva time and it is passed on to rishis and sages and through them mankind has been benefited in pre-vedic , vedic, pre-classical, classical , post classical and modern eras.

The term yog has come from Sanskrit work yuj means to join, to yoke to unite to attach. Yoga is not just a physical exercise as perceived by many; it is a way of living (Barara, July- Aug

2023). Yoga means union of body, mind and breath. There are many texts and Upanishads describing yoga, Maharishi Patanjali was the first person to compile the science of yoga in Patanjali Yog Sutras. Maharishi Patanjali enunciated 8 limbs of yoga. The 8 limbs of yoga are YAMA, NIYAMA, ASANAS, PRANAYAMA, PRATYAHARA, DHARNA, DHYANAAND

SAMADHI. The present study focuses on the union of body, breath and mind, and how to attain happiness through Asanas, Pranayama and Meditation.

METHODOLOGY

Definition of Yoga by Maharishi Patanjali

“*Yogah chitta Vritti Nirodha*” (PYS 1.2) (Shanker, 2025) meaning Yoga restrains the modulations of the mind. Further he said “*tada drashtuh swaroope avasthaanam*” (PYS 1.3) meaning yoga is abiding in the form of the seer. Furthermore, he said “*heyam dukham anagatam*” (PYS 2.16) meaning to stop the misery even before it arrives.

Definition of Happiness

Lord Krishna said in Bhagvad Gita ‘Samatwam Yog Uchhyate’, which means equanimity is yoga. It means to maintain a balanced state of mind in any circumstances; i.e. being centered.

Objectives

1. To create awareness about the union of body, breath and mind which is Yoga.
2. To know the benefits of yoga and its connection to sustainable happiness

Scope

The scope of the study is limited to third, fourth and seventh limb of yoga i.e. Asana, Pranayama and Meditation enunciated by Maharishi Patanjali in Patanjali Yog Sutras and inculcating practice of yoga in daily life and experience the union of body, breath and mind.

Research Design

The study is descriptive in nature.

Implications

Yoga has 8 limbs propounded by Maharishi Patanjali. Yoga is a union of body mind and breath. The body is a physical presence made up of five elements vis. Earth, water, air, fire and space. Mind is an invisible presence made up of space element. Mind is bigger than the body, as it can spread itself. Breathe is the life force in any living being. The co-ordination of their union is yoga. When they are united one experiences happiness and bliss.

Limitations of the study

1. It does not consider all the 8 limbs of yoga propounded by Maharishi Patanjali.
2. It does not teach how to perform an asana, pranayama and mediation, which should be learnt under the supervision of a master.

Asana and the Body

Maharishi Patanjali describes asana as ‘Sthira Sukham Asanam’ meaning that which is steady and comfortable is asana. Asana is also described as putting an effort to go into asana posture and then being effortless and relaxing in the posture for few seconds and coming out of it comfortably. It is said that movement is medicine. When the body moves, it works optimally. A person is happiest when the body has strength to carry on its daily tasks, when the body is flexible, it has good mobility, it is disease free, and it is pain-free. The Physical body is made up of nine systems, when all nine systems work in harmony then any living being is at its happiest state of mind.

When we do pranayama the air passage brings in oxygen to the lungs and from the arterilleries attached to heart, it is carried to all the tissues of the body. And when we breathe- out the waste of the tissues is filtered in heart and we expelled out as carbon- dioxide. Pranayama is the breathing exercise; they are the exercise for the organs of the body. The incoming breathe energies the body and outgoing breath relaxes the body. In normal breathing we take in 500 ml of oxygen; but in pranayama we take in extra oxygen; which is known as Inspiratory Reserve Volume. When we do forceful exhalation, it is known as Expiratory Reserve Volume. Therefore pranayama is the best exercise for all the organs.

All the nine systems of the body can be harmonized by third and fourth limbs of Yoga enunciated by Maharishi Patanjali i.e. Asanas and Pranayama. The following table shows the nine systems of the body; organs involved; their functions and relevant Asana and Pranayama to keep the system happy and healthy.

Table 1: Physiology and Asana

Systems in the body	Organs involved	Functions	Asanas and Pranayama
Musculo- skeleton system	• The skeleton and • tendons,	It joins muscles to the	• Vrikshasana, • Virbhadrasana,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • muscles and bones 	bones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaturanga Dandasana, • Utkatasana, • Bhujangasana, • Paschimotanasana, • Trikonasana, • Gomukhasana, • Tadasana, • Marjariasana, • Setu bandh asana, • Baddhakonasan, Balasana
Respiratory system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nasal cavity, • Oral cavity • Pharynx, • Larynx, • Trachea, • bronchus and • lungs. 	This system helps carry oxygen to the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhujangasana, • Ustrasana, matsyasana, • Dhanurasana, • tadasana, • Ardha Chakrasana, • Marjariasana, • Trikonasana, • Setu Bandhasana, • Balasana, Savasana, • Nadi Shodhan, • Bhastrika, • Kapalbhathi
Nervous system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain, • Spinal cord and • Peripheral nerves. 	It converts the messages through all five sense organs and its prompt understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balasana, • Shavasana, • Viprit karni, • paschimottanasana, • tadasana, • Vrikshasana, • Ustrasana,
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setu Bandhasana, • Sarvangasana, • Halasana, • Matsayasana, • Padmasana, • Bhujangasana, • Marjariasana, • Dhanurasana, • Trikonasana, • Nadi Shodhana, • Bhramari, • Kapalbhathi
Cardio-vascular system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood vessels and • heart, 	It is important for blood flow in the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SuryaNamaskar, • Tadasana, • Vrikshasana, • Trikonasana, • Bhujangasana, • Adho Mukh • Swanasana, • Setu Bandhasana,

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paschimottanasana, • Purvattoasana, • Shavasana,
Endocrine system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothalamus, • Pituitary gland, • Thyroid gland, • para thyroid, • Adrenal gland • Pancreas • Ovaries or • Testis. 	This system produces necessary hormones in the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarvangasana, • Halasana, • Matsyasana, • Dhanurasana, • Bhujangasana, • Ustrasana, • Mandukasana, • Paschimottanasana, • Purvattoasana,
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shasankasna, • Shavasana
Urinary system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kidney, • ureter, • bladder and • urethra. 	Kidney helps in purifying blood and other organs helps in the expulsion of liquid waste from the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhujangasana, • Dhanurasana, • Paschimottanasana, • Purvattoasana, • Ardha Matsyendrasana, • Setu bandhasana, • Baddha Konasana, • Malasana, • Ustrasana, • Marjari Asana, • Shavasana
Immune system /Lymphatic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lymph nodes and • Lymph vessels: they are present throughout the body. 	It helps fight any disease entered in the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tadasana, • Bhujangasana, • Dhanurasana, • Matsyasana, • Adho Mukh Swanasana, • Setu Bandhasanas, • Viprit Karni, • Ardha Matsyendrasana, • Baddha Konasana, • Shavasana, • Kapal Bhatti, • Nadi Shodhan • Pranayama, • Brastika
Digestive system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salivary glands, • Pharynx, • Mouth, • Oesophagus, 	It helps the food digest and helps in its expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vajrasana, • Pavanmuktasana, • Dhanurasana, • Paschimotanasana,
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liver, • Stomach, • Pancreas, • Large intestine, • Small intestine 	of solid waste from the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purvottanasana, Ardha • Matsyendrasana, • Bhujangasana, • Malasana, • Ustrasana,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rectum and • Anus. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kapal Bhatti, • Nadi Shodhan • Pranayama, • Bhramari
Reproductive system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In female there is Uterine Tube, • Ovaries, • Uterus, • Vagina. • In male there is penis and • Testis. 	It helps the creation of new life in the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baddha Konasana, Baddha • Supta Baddha • Konasana, • Malasana, • Dhanurasana, • Bhujangasana, • Setu Bandhasana, • Ustrasana, • Paschimottanasana, • Purvattoasanas • Viprit Karni • Shavasana • Nadi Shodhan • Pranayam • Bramari • Kapal Bhatti

The practice of these Asanas and pranayama help to create a healthy, stress-free body.

Pranayama and the Breath

As per Maharishi Patanjali breaking the natural flow of exhalation and inhalation is pranayama. Pranayama means rhythmic breathing. Breathing is the life force in us. It is breath only which can control the state of mind. It empowers you to feel the way you want to feel at any given point in time or circumstances. The mind can be brought into the present moment only through breath. The awareness, where the mind comes into the present moment is through breath. Any asana or postures to be performed should have awareness of movement and that awareness is created by breathing-in and breathing-out. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, "Every incoming breath energies the body and every outgoing breath brings relaxation". Pranayama, which is the 4th limb out of the 8 limbs of Yoga by Maharishi Patanjali, is a profound breathing technique which magically can make anyone attain a happier state of mind at any point in time. One can practice various types of Pranayama, the most common ones are:

Table 2: Pranayama

Nature of Pranayama	Types of Pranayama
Energizing pranayama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ujjai • Kapal Bhatti • Bhrestika • Agni Sar
Relaxing / cooling down Pranayama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nadi Shodhan • Bramari • Shitali • Sheetkari

Meditation and the Mind

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said; "A weak mind cannot carry a strong body, but a strong mind can carry a weak body." The mind is always busy judging, analyzing, seeking, thinking, dreaming, in illusion, in memories (past), in future (planning or fearing). Yoga happens when the mind comes into the present moment. While practicing the asana postures, the awareness of movement of the body is very important. An Asana is complete only when it is done with full awareness. A person in regular practice of Yoga can have control over their feelings and emotional well-being, one can anytime change the way one wants to feel.

The goal of Yoga is to attain meditation. Meditation is the art of doing nothing. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shanker defines meditation as (Shankar, 2025) - Mind without agitation is meditation, Mind; when becomes no mind is

meditation, Mind in the present moment is mediation. Meditation makes mind hollow and empty. Meditating for a few minutes every day can improve the gray area in the brain. (Mental calisthenics bulk up some layers, 2025)

Yoga and Happiness

Do you want to be happy without any reason? Do you want to smile more without any reason? Do you want contentment in real sense? If the answers to all this is yes, then yoga is the answer. Yoga is the essence of life. Yog is something to be experienced any time sooner than later in life. Ancient rishis has given some wonderful insights to us and also given us wisdom to understand and feel things on our own. Yoga improves health, fitness, mood and brightens the world around us. It also takes us to the next level of life. Any form of exercise can boost our health, but yoga is a holistic approach to life. It helps in reversing the lifestyle disorders, fat loss, lot of clarity in life, contentment, and joy. It helps in emotional upliftment and enthusiasm. Yoga is to be experienced rather described. There should be awareness of the movement which is performed by the way of asanas, each movement must be synchronised with the breath. One must keep awareness on the area of impact to get maximum benefits. There are numerous benefits of Yoga:

1. Yoga improves health as it works on different energy points of the body.
2. It improves digestion and gut health.
3. It improves awareness and increases intuitive abilities.
4. It helps in weight management.
5. It helps in reducing stress and anxiety and depression and hence increased happiness.
6. It reduces the negative emotions such as craving and aversion, anger, frustration, sadness, guilt, regret, ego, disgust, hatred, envy, fear, shame etc. by being more aware of such emotions.
7. Yoga brings out hidden skills and creativity.
8. Yoga helps in finding true joy and purpose of life.
9. It improves decision making ability and clarity in mind and thoughts.
10. Yoga helps oneself to easily slide into meditation and ultimately Samadhi.
11. By practicing yoga the nature of a person gets transformed into more calmer and peaceful existence.

CONCLUSION

A peaceful and happy person can create more peace and happiness around them and hence in the society and world at large. Yoga is the union of body, breath and mind. When performed regularly under the guidance of the Master, it can bring out hidden skills in a person. When a person performs yoga in a disciplinary way, uniting body, breath and mind then he attains the state of Ananda i.e. bliss. True joy or happiness is within. A person can be in constant state of bliss. And when such a person blesses others, such blessing turns into reality.

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