

A Research Study and Final Thesis Paper

EFFECTS OF YOGA THERAPY
ON
PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
WELLBEING

Submitted to:

Krishnamacharya Healing and Yoga Foundation, Chennai

Submitted by:

Rajinder Kaur Sandhu

Index

CHAPTER – I INTRODUCTION

S. No	Page No
1.0 Abstract	4
1.1 Introduction	4-5
1.2 Goal of Yoga Therapy	5-6
1.3 How Yoga Defines Illness	6-8
1.4 Classifications of Disease Based on Cause and Severity	8-9
1.5 Classification of Illness	10
1.6 Healing Approach in Yoga Therapy	10-19
1.7 Saririka-Cikitsa: Healing Using the Body	19-23
1.8 Prana-Cikitsa: Healing Using Prana	24-28
1.9 Indriya-Cikitsa: Healing through the Senses	28-35
1.10 Manasika-Cikitsa: Healing Using the Mind	35-41

CHAPTER – II OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

2.1 Statement of Problem	42
2.2 Hypothesis	42
2.3 Methodology	42
2.4 Students	43
2.5 Practices	43

CHAPTER – III RESULTS

3.1 Case 1	44-46
3.2 Case 2	47-48
3.3 Case 3	49-50
3.4 Case 4	51-52
3.5 Case 5	53-54
3.6 Case 6	55-57
3.7 Case 7	58-60
3.8 Case 8	61-63
3.9 Case 9	64-65
3.10 Case 10	66-67

CHAPTER IV - SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

4.1 General Conclusions	68
4.2 Final Thoughts	68
5.1 Bibliography	69

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

1.0 Abstract

The objective of this study is to find the therapeutic effects of yoga and to see how yoga therapy helps at various levels like body, breath, mind and beyond with daily yoga therapy practice. Due to sedentary life style and less of physical workout various diseases continue to increase. Thus, this research project is aimed at finding the various therapeutic effects of yoga applying various tools of Viniyoga in multitude of different ailments and conditions. Viniyoga is defined as the application of yogic tools for treatment of health conditions and to prevent, reduce or alleviate structural, physiological, emotional and spiritual pain, suffering or limitations. Results from this study show that yogic practices enhance muscular strength and body flexibility, promote and improve respiratory and cardiovascular function, reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, improve sleep patterns, and enhance overall well-being and quality of life.

1.1 Introduction

Yoga has many definitions. Shri TKV Desikachar defined **Yoga as a relationship.**

First Yoga helps us to have a relationship with ourselves – **with our body, with our breathing, with our mind, with our ego and with our potentials.** Now once we stabilize this relationship with ourselves then Yoga can help us have a good relationship with others.

Second domain where yoga helps us is in the inter-personal domain. The inter-personal domain-**relationship with other people, relationship with members of our family, in our working environment, in our employment, in our society.** Yoga helps us nourish all these relationships because Yoga is not just

about ourselves. So the second domain where yoga helps us is in the inter-personal domain.

Now we have a good relationship with ourselves and with others, Thirdly, yoga also helps us to transcend these into the trans-personal domain – **the domain of spirituality, the domain of the divine.** Thus yoga can also help us have a good relationship with the divine.

Yoga is a relationship

- **with ourselves,**
- **with others,**
- **with the divine.**

This is consistent with the message of the root meaning of Yoga - **Yuj: to link, to connect**, which is the basis of every relationship; so Yoga is a relationship.

1.2 Goal of Yoga Therapy

The goal of Viniyoga Therapy is to empower individuals facing health conditions to use the tools of yoga to manage their condition and improve their health and well-being.

Yoga must respect our individual differences like age, professional activities, culture, one's belief or beliefs, and above all health. We all have different capacities and stamina to do any activity.

Yoga therapy helps the care seeker to reinforce and re-establish the health.

Yoga therapy promotes centring, strength, endurance, flexibility and facilitates characteristics of friendliness, compassion, and greater self-control, while cultivating a sense of calmness and well-being. Sustained practice also brings changes in life perspective, self-awareness and an improved sense of energy to live life fully and with genuine enjoyment and full fill our life purpose. Yoga therapy helps to regain sense of balance at various levels of our being.

Four basic principles underlie the teachings and practices of yoga's healing system. The first principle is the human body is a holistic entity comprised of various interrelated dimensions inseparable from one another and the health or illness of any one dimension affects the other dimensions. The second principle is individuals and their needs are unique and therefore must be approached in a way that acknowledges this individuality and their practice must be tailored accordingly. The third principle is yoga is self-empowering; the student is his or her own healer. Yoga engages the student in the healing process; by playing an active role in their journey toward health, the healing comes from within, instead of from an outside source and a greater sense of autonomy is achieved. The fourth principle is that the quality and state of an individual's mind is crucial to healing. When the individual has a positive mind-state healing happens more quickly, whereas if the mind-state is negative, healing may be prolonged.

1.3 How Yoga Defines Illness

Shri Krishnamacharya gives the following definitions for disease: “Śāirika mānasika aindriyaka vyutthāna avasthā vyādhiḥ”, meaning that disease is a state of disturbance either at the body level, the mental level or the level of the senses. Also he defines disease as a state in which you are disconnected from the divine and bound by the material: “Paramātmāni viyukta prakṛteḥ baddha avasthā vyādhiḥ”.

In the Yogasūtra-s Patañjali refers to our journey of Yoga and Yoga therapy as a journey from vyutthāna saṃskāra to nirodha saṃskāra, from patterns or vibrations of agitation and imbalance to patterns or vibrations of balance (YS 3.9).

The ancient Yoga masters also defined disease or sickness in a specific way based on their holistic view of how our whole human system functions. In order to understand how Yoga heals and make effective use of the tools it offers us for

healing, we need to understand the ancient masters' conception. The Yoga masters identified three distinct types of illness, then further differentiated them by classifying them based on the causes(s) and severity of the illness. First, we will look at the three general types of illness as defined by the Yoga masters.

Duhkham

The Sanskrit word duhkham usually refers to emotional suffering, but duhkham is felt on other levels as well. Duhkham derives from the Sanskrit duh, which means "constriction" and kham, which refers to the space in our heart considered to be in the center of our chest. Duhkham is thus literally the constricting, tightening, or closing of the space of our heart. The opposite of duhkham is sukham, or openness in the space of our heart, an expansion of that space.

Roga

Roga refers to discomfort and/or unease that stems from being in a situation in which we do not wish to be.

Vyadhi

Vyadhi has many meanings, but in this context it refers to an imbalance occurring in the three aspects of our physical system: dhatu, rasa, and karana.

Dhatu

Dhatu refers to the aspects of our system that give form to and sustain the body, such as bones, muscles, and skin. Examples of dhatu imbalance include broken bones, one leg longer than the other, one arm stronger than the other, etc.

Rasa

Rasa refers to the liquids of the body, such as saliva, blood, tears, menstrual fluid, etc. Examples of rasa imbalance include dry eyes, dry throat, and anemia.

Karana

Karana refers to our senses, including the mind, eyesight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Examples of karana imbalance are blindness, deafness, and sinus problems.

The word vyadhi also can be derived from the Sanskrit vi, meaning “disconnected,” and adhi, meaning “inner consciousness.” When we are in a state of vyadhi, we are in a state of illness—we are imbalanced in the three aspects of our human system. This imbalance draws our attention outward: the mind becomes distracted, attaching itself to the pain, discomfort, or disease generated by the physical imbalance. In our distraction, in our imbalanced state, we lose the connection to our stable, balanced core, or inner consciousness.

1.4 Classifications of Disease Based on Cause and Severity

Yoga further classifies disease or illness based on the cause and also on the severity or manageability.

a. Cause

What is the cause of my illness? In other words, who is responsible for my illness?

Adhyatmika: Myself; I am the cause. For example, a person develops asthma because of his or her smoking habit.

Adhibhautika: Someone else or an outside cause is responsible. Examples include a woman who has contracted HIV or a sexually transmitted disease from her husband, or a person suffering from a dog bite (unless, of course, the person provoked the dog, and then this would be a case of (adhyatmika). In both cases, the individual in question is not responsible for her illness, but someone or something else is.

Adhidaivika: Divine force is responsible. In other words, something out of our control is the cause: for example, trauma caused by an earthquake or certain kinds of birth defects.

It is important to know the cause of a sickness, because it influences the course of treatment. The cause of an illness might be just one of the above-mentioned causes or a combination of any two or all three.

b. Severity and Manageability

Susadhya: Easily healed. Minor back pain is an example.

Dussadhya: Not so easily healed. Healing is possible, but with some difficulty. Considerable time and effort will be required, but the situation is not impossible.

Asadhya: Impossible. Some sicknesses (and here we are referring only to the sickness/disease itself, and not to the whole person) are impossible to heal. Presently AIDS and mental retardation are examples in this category.

Yapya: Manageable, even though it cannot be cured. Even though this sickness cannot be removed from the system, it can still be managed in a way that does not worsen it and that may even result in remission. Examples include asthma, AIDS, and mental retardation. I have listed the latter two again on purpose, to emphasize the importance of treating the human system as a whole and each person as a distinct, complex individual. AIDS may presently be an incurable disease, but the person with AIDS can still be healed and the incurable disease managed through readily available AIDS medication. Whether healing will occur after an individualized treatment has been prescribed depends, ultimately, on the person and his or her commitment to the healing process. Two people with the same “easy” sickness may not come through the healing process successfully. One may succeed quickly, while the other may heal much more slowly, or possibly not at all, depending on his or her level of commitment to the healing process.

1.5 Classification of Illness

Susadhyam - Can be cured with minimal effort

Dussadhyam - Can be cured with more effort and prolonged treatment

Yapam - Cannot be cured but can be managed

Asadhyam – Not possible to cure and manage no matter how much we may try

1.6 Healing Approach in Yoga Therapy

Step 1: Heyam: Recognizing the Need for Help

The very first step in the healing process actually belongs to the patient, who must recognize that he or she is in trouble and needs help, and then must seek help. The recognition that we need help is called heyam. Unless a person recognizes that he or she is in trouble, the healing process cannot begin. This recognition happens as a result of familiarity with the symptoms of suffering.

According to Patanjali's Yoga- Sutra (YS I-31), suffering expresses itself in four ways:

Emotional state: When we become sick, our emotional patterns change, which is another way of saying that our emotions mirror our situation. When we are sad or angry or unhappy, we need to recognize this, admit it, and ask why. Negative mental attitudes: We may become very pessimistic or negative, or begin to find fault in ourselves or others, or in a situation. The mind is not still, but rather is constantly fluctuating. Physiological changes in the body: There may be changes in bodily patterns. For example, the body temperature may change, hair may begin to fall out, the breath may smell bad, dark circles may form around the eyes, we may have digestion or elimination problems, etc. Breathing pattern: The normal breath is long and smooth, but if it becomes short or laboured or very heavy, then we know something is wrong. The human system is, of course, a single whole, and often times we will experience more than one symptom; that

is, the different dimensions of our human system will express suffering in different ways.

Step 2: Hetu: Identifying the Causes of Duhkham, or Suffering

What causes a person to suffer?

We know from experience that nothing happens without a cause. If we are suffering, our suffering must also have a cause. Whether healing will have a cause. In order to heal suffering, the teacher must know and understand the causes of suffering. Some of the causes of suffering are:

Parinama: Change. We suffer because there has been a change, either outside of us or within us.

Even a simple change in the weather can trigger allergies, physical discomfort, colds, etc. Another example would be a change in diet. If a person travels to another country and cannot eat the food which he /she is used to eating, he/she will suffer. In addition, as one grows older, one's body's nutritional needs change, and if one does not temper his/her eating habits appropriately, will suffer.

Tapa: Excessive thirst. Sometimes we have an excessive thirst for certain things like food, sex, alcohol, drugs, etc. Such "thirst" may elevate to an addiction and even to illness. Illness or a negative pattern of behaviour may also result when the thirst is not quenched.

Samskara: Our patterns, habits, and other automatic behaviours. A habit may be appropriate in one context, but not appropriate in another. When you visit England, if you continue to drive on the right side of the road, as is your habit, you will suffer. Habits may also result from experience.

For example, after a series of bad luck events, we may get into a habit of negative thinking and see all new situations in a negative light. The problem with automatic behaviours is that we do not think, we just act "automatically," and

how we act may or may not be appropriate to the situation. If it is not appropriate, we will certainly suffer.

Asatsanga: Inappropriate association or company. The company you keep and the relationships you maintain (social, familial, professional, etc.) are important because they influence you. There is an English adage that illustrates this point very well: if you lie down with dogs you are bound to get fleas.

Asatmya indriya samyoga: The linking of the senses to something inappropriate or abusive. In this situation, you can suffer from too much exposure or from underexposure. For example, excessive television viewing and video-game playing or long-term exposure to loud music will certainly cause problems for us over time, especially later in life. Anything, even Yoga, can be overdone.

Ayutka svatmika gauravam: Inappropriate self-esteem. This can mean either excessive ego or lack of self-esteem. There are many obvious examples of how people suffer because of lack of self-esteem or because of excessive ego.

Vata prakopa: Literally, “angry wind.” Anything we do that agitates the breath causes us to suffer. Breathing is central to life, and if we allow the breath to become agitated, the breath will retaliate and cause suffering. This suffering can take the form of bodily twitches or trembling, yawning, flatulence, indigestion, dry skin, bowel and urinary disorders, and even fertility problems. In some of the ancient texts, as well as Ayurvedic texts, there is considerable space devoted to the different kinds of illnesses triggered by vata prakopa.

Ayutka ahara: Inappropriate food or eating habits. This includes what a person eats, as well as how he or she eats—how much, in what way, at what time, where, and with whom.

Ayutka vihara: Inappropriate lifestyle. This refers to sleeping and exercise habits, where a person lives, who the person lives with, the workplace and work habits, extracurricular activities, etc.

Janmaja: Congenital disorders. These are problems present at birth. Sometimes we see children born with blindness or who are HIV-positive. They are born with their illness, and they cannot be blamed for it.

Isvara samkalpa: Divine will. An example would be a person hit by lightning. There is no explanation for why this should happen, except that it was a random act of nature or “Divine will.” Some may argue that this is a result of karma, but the point here is that the cause is unseen. It is important to note that these categories are not rigidly distinct. They will overlap on many occasions. It should also be noted that this list covers the most important causes, but there are others as well. As healers, we must develop the ability to observe, to be able to look at all the different dimensions of a person and to know what to look for. A healer must know not only what to observe (symptoms), but also how to observe.

In Yoga, there are three methods of observation.

The Three Methods of Observation

Darsanam: Observation through the medium of the senses. This refers to what we see, smell, and hear. Is the student’s voice weak or strong? Do I smell bad breath? Do I see drooping shoulders and a collapsed chest? We might also ask the patient to perform a physical posture or two as part of this observation process.

Sparsanam: Observation through touch. This includes such things as taking the temperature or pulse, or feeling the shoulder and neck as a way to check for muscle tightness. When using this method of observation, we should always ask patients if it is okay to touch them before doing so.

Prasnam: Interaction and dialogue. This refers to talking with the student and observing how he or she responds to questions. Do not always take a verbal response at face value. How the patient responds can often tell you much more than what was actually said? Sometimes the truth resides in what a person does not say. The teacher should be adept at utilizing all of the observation methods at

once and integrating them in a manner that fits the needs of the unique situation. In other words, the person you are healing is always more important than any checklist of techniques. The unique needs of the student should guide your choices. You are healing an individual, not fulfilling the requirements of any generic, institutional checklist or form. Continuing with the healing model from Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra, we now need to decide what we want to accomplish in the healing process. Healers create practices that are designed to address illness and its causes, so it is important to know where we are starting from in the healing process. By the same token, it is equally important to know what the desired result of the healing process is: if we do not know where we are going, how can we decide how to get there? A healer must carefully choose and prioritize reasonable goals for the healing process. Let us therefore discuss some ideas regarding health and determine what we are trying to achieve.

Step 3: Hanam: The Five Elements of Health and Prioritizing Health Goals for Healing

It is important to remember that when someone is sick, the symptoms do not manifest in the physical body only. Whatever the cause, the illness also will affect other areas of the student's life. We thus need to look at all the things that are happening in the student's life, decide what the priorities are in the healing process, and address the priorities first. The five elements of health, presented below, are all possible goals, or hanam, for the healing process.

Samatvam: Balance and harmony in the human system. Examples include eyes that are neither dry nor watery; an appropriate, balanced alignment of the body; clear sinuses; efficient, regular digestion and elimination; etc. We look for this quality especially in reference to dhatu, rasa, and karana.

Arogyam: No "roga," or no dis-ease. There is no anxiety or discomfort in one's situation.

Sthairyam: Stability. This refers to stability of mind, body, energy, emotions, etc. Ideally, an individual has the same amount of energy, the same stability and focus of mind, the same balanced emotional state, etc., every day.

Dvandva Sahanam: The ability to remain undisturbed by extremes (of weather, of circumstances, of emotion, etc.). If it is extremely cold, I am not affected, for example, by this extreme in temperature. I need to put on a jacket, but this does not agitate me. Responding in a balanced way to shocking news is also dvandva sahanam.

Indriya Nigraha: Literally, “holding the senses.” A healthy person is someone who has his or her senses under control, who can direct them or rein them in at will. In such a case, the senses obey the person rather than drawing the person here and there in pursuit of whatever catches the senses’ fancy. Sickness results when the senses dominate us, as in the case of any addiction to drugs, food, shopping, sex, videogame playing, etc. In the process of healing, it is not always possible to address the root cause of illness immediately, because the student is not ready. In such cases, we need to choose intermediate goals. Once we have accomplished these intermediate goals, perhaps then the student will be ready to focus on addressing the root cause of the illness. Our goals must be approached in steps, where one step prepares us for the next and healing takes place gradually. In selecting short-term goals, a decision needs to be made on how to prioritize them, which leads us to the next issue.

The Application of Sâmanam and Shodhanam

There are two approaches a healer may take when choosing and prioritizing goals:

Samanam: Pacification. When an individual is suffering a great deal, especially emotionally, the best approach to healing is an indirect one: to first pacify the person and stabilize him or her, rather than addressing the root of the problem immediately. This means that the roots of the problem will probably remain, but

the point here is to bring some stability to the patient before doing any deeper work, which, at this juncture, might threaten or even harm the patient. Samanam is the most common starting point for healing work.

Shodhanam: Refinement and cleansing. Shodhanam is the removal of the root of the problem. In some cases, a student's suffering may be due to a specific cause. For example, I may have stress because of my poor lifestyle choices. We may keep pacifying our stress using certain pacification methods. The stress will continue to exist, however, until the root of the problem, which in this case is the unhealthy life style, is addressed. To address the root cause of the problem is shodhanam.

A healer does not have to begin with samanam and end with shodhanam. Every decision, every choice, every step in the healing process is based on the healer's observations and interactions with and knowledge of the individual person. One student may be safely and successfully helped using a shodhanam approach from the outset. Shodhanam often provokes a strong reaction in people, however, so for many it is best if the healer initially adopts a samanam approach. Then, as the healing progresses, the focus can gradually be turned to the root problem. Samanam may thus be the short-term goal, while shodhanam would be the long-term one.

A woman in her mid-forties came to centre seeking relief from chronic depression. After working with her, we found that the cause of her chronic depression was the poor relationship between her and her husband. The strain in their relationship was caused by some choices the woman had made, but she was not able to look at her own issues right away. She needed to be pacified first, and so this is the method we used with her. Once we had worked with her for a while in this way, she became more calm and stable and was able to look at her own choices and resolve her relationship issues. If we had chosen to confront this patient immediately with her problems, she probably would not have been

receptive and might even have abandoned the healing process. This is why a healer needs to make this crucial choice between samanam and shodhanam. Healing takes time; we cannot expect to deal with everything at once. **We must first determine what it is we want to accomplish and then we prioritize our goals according to the student's unique needs.** We approach the healing process one step at a time in a logical, orderly manner that is always attuned to the needs of the student. **Who is going to be practicing is always more important than what technique is used.**

Step 4: Upayam: Finding and Implementing the Tools for Healing

Patanjali presented the concept of upayam, or tools, last because only after we know where we are going, and from where we are starting, can we determine how to proceed. If we decide to go to Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., how we travel would be very different if we set out from San Diego, California, U.S.A., rather than from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Likewise, the tools of healing only make sense in the context of their use; if we do not know what sickness the student is suffering from and how we intend to treat him or her, how can we choose the appropriate tools for healing?

We must choose the tools that will help us accomplish our healing goals. If we are going swimming, we would need a different set of tools than if we were setting out for a hike in the mountains. What good is a surfboard to us in the mountains? By the same logic, just because we have access to a tool does not mean it is an appropriate one for us to use. Once we determine the goals for the student, then we can choose the right tools. The goals determine which tools we use, as well as how we use them in the healing process. Before choosing any Yoga tool, there are several factors the Yoga therapist must consider for each patient in order to evaluate whether a tool will be useful in that patient's healing process, and how the tool may or should be applied. These factors include the following:

Kala: Time. The healer must take into consideration how much time a person can set aside to practice, that is, how much time he or she can comfortably commit to. We might offer a busy executive a fifteen- minute practice to be done twice each day, while a part-time student might be able to set aside 45 minutes every night for practice. We also should consider what time of day the person would be practicing. We tend, for example, to be more flexible at night than we are first thing in the morning. In addition, some practices are very energizing and thus should not be done in the evening. Time of the year is another aspect to consider. Each person reacts differently to seasonal patterns. Spring may bring on allergies, while winter may bring on sinus problems or depression, etc.

Desha: Place. Where will the student practice? Is the climate tropical, temperate, cold? Altitude makes a big difference as well. In high altitudes, even a seven-second inhalation can be difficult, whereas at sea level up to fourteen seconds may be easy.

Vayah: Age. The prescribed practice must respect the restrictions and distinct needs of the student's age. For example, while a thirty year- old woman could be expected to sit and meditatively gaze on the tip of a candle for fifteen minutes, a nine-year-old boy could not. This is why the ancient masters suggested that the main focus (not the only focus) for youth should be asana, for middle-aged students pranayama, and for older people meditation.

Vritti: Occupation or profession. If the student's job involves sitting at a desk all day, he or she will probably need a more dynamic practice. A farmer, on the other hand, would probably need a less strenuous practice. A psychologist might benefit most from a practice for the body or a practice that clears the mind between meetings with clients.

Shakti: Power or ability. How much physical, mental, and emotional strength does the person have at any given time? We have to respect the abilities of the person.

Ichha: Interest. What are the student's likes and dislikes? Consistent with the student's interests, we can add a few qualities to the tool so that it motivates the student to practice regularly. For example, if a student has a spiritual interest, perhaps a spiritual ingredient might help motivate practice and help generate a positive attitude about practice. As healers, considering these parameters helps us to evaluate the whole person and his or her needs and abilities, instead of fixating on the disease. We can now look at the tools Yoga offers us for healing the whole person.

1.7 Saririka-Cikitsa: Healing Using the Body

There are three methods of healing that engage the physical body.

a. Asana

Asana is the practice of physical postures. Our concern as healers when using the tool of asana is the pose's function, not its outward form. The Yoga masters classified asanas into five categories based on their functions. Asana is utilized primarily for affecting the health and well-being of our physical body, but we must remember that all five dimensions of the human system are interconnected: affect one dimension and all dimensions are affected. The physical dimension is the least subtle of the five. If we cannot connect with our physical body, our "grossest" dimension, how can we possibly connect with our subtler ones? Asana is thus a good starting point, a place to begin to open oneself to the possibility of connecting with the subtler dimensions of the human system. Beyond certain important, practical physical functions, each type of posture serves additional functions that are subtler. These are based on another model, consisting of the nadis, the cakras, and the kundalini.

The five main categories of asana

Samasthiti: These postures are reference postures. The spine in these postures is erect, or vertical. In other words, all of the important vital points of the spine are in a neutral, healthy alignment. When the spine is in correct position, there is no inter organ pressure: the body is not collapsing too far forward, compressing the organs and throwing the skeletal structure out of proper alignment, nor is the body leaning too far back or too far to one side, etc., which also puts unnatural stress on the organs of the body and on the various joints. It is in these neutral, erect samasthiti postures that the breath is able to flow most freely and easily, so these postures also serve the function of helping to prepare the student for pranayama and meditation. By extension, therefore, samasthiti postures also contribute to the process of cultivating a calm and focused mind.

Postures in this category include samasthiti and tadasana. Shavaasana also is classified as a samasthiti posture, although we are lying on the back in this position, and the spine is thus not technically vertical.

Pascimatana: Pascimatâna literally means “stretching the back of the body.” It is important to note that pascimatana postures should be done on an exhalation. The natural breath accompaniment to a forward bend is exhalation, because as we bend forward, the chest cavity naturally compresses and becomes smaller, expelling (exhaling) the air from the chest. All asana movements should begin from the point where the starting breath originates for that particular type of posture. In the case of pascimatana postures, movement must start from the abdomen, as these postures are done on an exhalation. In some cases, when a student’s back is overarched or when the stomach muscles are too tight, we practice pascimatana postures to correct this tendency. In pascimatana postures we are drawing the abdomen in and up as we exhale, wilfully engaging the abdominal muscles to help counteract any tendency, for example, to overarch in the area of the lower back or sink in the belly. Stretching the body in the opposite

direction of the misalignment, we help pull the spine back into a neutral, natural alignment. Examples of pascimatana postures are pascimatanasana, uttanasana, and vajrasana forward bend (commonly referred to as child's pose).

Purvataka: Purvatana may be translated as “stretching the front of the body.” The natural breath accompaniment of a backbend is an inhalation, because as we bend backward, the chest cavity naturally expands and gets larger, drawing (inhaling) air into the chest. As pointed out in the previous section, asana postures start from where the breath begins in that particular type of posture. In the case of purvatana postures, they begin with inhaling, so the movement should begin from the chest. Typically, the physical function of purvatana postures is to bring back to healthy samasthiti alignment a spine that exhibits a tendency to “slouch.” For example, people experiencing depression will often exhibit a distinctive posture: chest and shoulders hunched forward and rounded, collapsing the chest area. To counteract this tendency to slouch, which we also frequently encounter in people who work at a desk all day, we might ask the student to work with postures such as purvatanasana, dvipada pitham, or bhujangasana.

Parivritti: These postures involve twisting the body. They are done on exhalation (the same body/breath principle applies here as described above in pascimatana postures, and so we begin the movement in these postures from the abdomen). Sometimes the spine is straight on the vertical and lateral axis, but it is not aligned on the axial axis (the spine turns, instead, to one side or the other).

For example, we encounter this unnatural axial twist in people who tend to sit at work and talk to customers, while also typing on the computer keyboard, which is usually on the table to the right. The body, in such cases, is held in a partially “twisted” position for extended periods each day. Postures like trikonasana and jathara parivritti can be used to correct this kind of misalignment and bring the spine back to samasthiti.

Parshva. These postures involve lateral movement of the spine and can be used when working with an individual whose spine is tilted to one side. An example would be a student's shoulders or hips that are uneven due to a birth defect or certain lifestyle choices. Lateral postures like parshva konasana, parshva trikonasana, or godhapitham, are examples of parshva- type postures. This type of posture may be offered to correct misalignment, bringing back lateral symmetry to the body and promoting healthy, samasthiti alignment. There is also a sixth category of asana, viparita (inversions), that was created after the others. In most cases, the oldest texts mention inverted postures only very briefly, or not at all. Some masters classify inversions as vishesa (special), as if hinting that these are reserved for a special few who are healthy enough to do them. There are few benefits of inversions that cannot be obtained from an appropriate combination of postures drawn from the original five classifications. Inversions thus should be utilized carefully in the healing process, and only used when necessary and the student is ready for them. Remember, asana impacts not only the physical dimension of the body, but all the dimensions of our human system. As an example, when we use purvatana postures to correct a stooped posture (physical dimension) resulting from depression (mental and emotional dimensions), we are affecting not just the physical manifestation of the problem, but also the mental and emotional layers of the problem. Often, when performance of the posture improves, the person is able to breathe better. A smoother, longer, more comfortable breath helps to calm the mind and, by extension, the emotions. For this reason, the principle underlying function of any posture, regardless of which category it belongs to, is bringing the posture as close to samasthiti (the healthiest position) as possible. In this way, working only with the physical body, we are able to bring changes to the mind or even the emotions. Sometimes in applying asana in healing, we may need to utilize many of the functions of the various categories of asana. We are not limited to one function. We can create for the student a flowing sequence of postures combining the desired functions in a

smooth, safe way. In addition, some postures combine effects/functions from more than one category. For example, virabhadrasana combines both purvatana and parivritti effects, as we start from a position in which we have to twist the spine to face the front. If a student has physical limitations that prevent doing traditional postures, we need to identify the functions of those postures we want to offer and create adaptations that preserve them. If we ask the student to do a posture he or she is not physically able to do, there will be injury. If there is any doubt about what a student is capable of doing, it is always better to be safe. Finally, we must not forget to offer preparatory and counter-poses for any asana practice. Proper sequencing is essential, as it prevents injury and optimizes the healthy effects of the practice.

b. Dravya Upayoga

Dravya upayoga is the application of prepared mediums or certain other materials on the body, in particular, the physical application of oils or pastes. Just as with the practice of asana, the application of oils for specific physical problems may promote healing beyond the physical level. If a student has a stiff neck and we apply oil to help with the stiffness, we also may see results on other levels.

c. Abhyangam

Because Yoga focuses on supporting self-empowerment in the healing process, massage is not mentioned in the Yoga texts. Massage is, however, a part of Ayurvedic healing practices. Shri Krishnamacharya, who was also a master of Ayurvedic healing, said that a good asana practice is like a massage without a masseur. In some cases, when the student is unable to move on his or her own—when a stroke has been suffered for example—then it may be useful to use some massage techniques to alleviate some issues.

1.8 Prana-Cikitsa: Healing Using Prana

When prana is moving freely throughout the human system, we function in a normal, healthy manner, but when it is obstructed, there is sickness. We can work directly with prana to remove obstructions and promote healing, but before discussing the latter, we should first examine prana itself. Prana is a complex concept that easily could provide enough material for a separate article. For our purposes here, however, our explanation will be simple and brief. Prana refers to both the breath and to a kind of vital energy, or subtle life force, that is within the body and which animates us. As long as we have prana, we have life. If prana leaves, we die. The ancient yogis identified the close connection between breath and life (if we stop breathing, we die) and connected breathing directly with the vital energy that animates the living body. Every cell of our body, they determined, is imbued with prana, and all prana is the same in terms of origin and substance. The ancient yogis gave specific names to prana residing in different parts of the body, however, and attributed specific functions to each.

Description of the five pranas

The Yoga masters divided the body's prana into ten different types, called vayus (literally, "winds") and attributed different functions to each vayu. We will briefly present five of the most important vayus, which are called the maha vayu (great vayu).

Apana vayu: Located in the area below the navel, this vayu is responsible for the vital functions of elimination, reproduction, and fertility.

Samana vayu: Located in the area of the belly around the navel, this vayu is responsible for digestion.

Prana vayu: Located in the heart and chest area, this vayu is responsible for mental functions, thoughts, and emotions. In other words, the ancient Yoga masters believed that the seat of the mind is in the heart, not the head.

Udana vayu: Located in the throat region, this vayu influences communication and expression

Functions:

Vyana Vayu: This vayu is present throughout the human system, but it is specifically responsible for moving prana throughout the body. It also is responsible for functions in those areas not influenced by the other vayus. It is responsible for movement of the fingers and toes, for example If a student is experiencing a problem in a specific area of the body, one of the ways we can address that problem is by prescribing practices that work on the vayu responsible for that area.

The most powerful tool for working with prana is pranayama. Patanjali defines pranayama as “**conscious breathing**” (YS II-49). It is impossible to discuss the application of pranayama for specific ailments, because the needs and abilities of the whole person, not just ow to treat his or her ailment, must be considered before prescribing a practice. Generally speaking, however, we can use the exhalation and holding after exhalation to work with the apana vayu. Inhalation and holding after inhalation influence the prana vayu, and breathing ratios in which the inhalation and exhalation are of equal length influence the samana vayu.

Another important tool for working with prana is the set of practices known as bandhas. Bandhas are advanced techniques and should not be used casually or without the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher. If a knife is used correctly, it is a very useful tool, but if used incorrectly it can cause severe damage. Similarly, when utilizing pranayama and bandhas, if we force things or apply the wrong breathing ratios, we may agitate whatever problems already exist in the student’s system. Additionally, bandhas do not engage automatically (there are a few exceptions where it may happen automatically, such as jalandhara bandha in the posture dvipada pitham). The practitioner must engage bandhas wilfully, and this

is easier to do in certain postures than in others. The ancient texts that discuss bandhas advise that they be done only in samasthiti postures, i.e., when the spine is straight. Having offered these cautions, generally speaking, we can say that jalandhara bandha will bring attention to the throat region and thus affects the udana vayu. Uddiyana bandha brings additional attention to the apana vayu and to the samana vâyu, and mula bandha influences the apana vayu. The Yoga masters claimed that as the breath becomes longer and smoother, prana flows more freely throughout the human system. So anything that helps the practitioner to smoothly and comfortably extend breathing is a good tool. A long breath by itself is not enough, however—the breath must be not only long, but also comfortable. If the breath is long and ragged, or if we have to strain to make our breath long, we are working in the wrong direction and will likely aggravate any problem.

In addition to the bandhas, pranayama may be combined with other, complementary healing techniques, including asana, bhavana (visualization), mudras, oils, and chanting (adhyayanam).

For example, when chanting, we produce sound only while exhaling, so we can use the pronunciation of sounds as a way to help the student extend exhalation.

Chanting is a powerful tool for healing imbalances of the udana vayu. Beyond this most obvious application, chanting also has the potential to influence all of the vayus, as each Sanskrit sound resonates at a specific location in the body. Ha, for example, resonates in the throat, while ra resonates in the belly. The Sanskrit sound hra resonates in both. That is why it is absolutely crucial that when chanting in Sanskrit, we pronounce each sound correctly. The meaning of the sounds and words are secondary: it is most important to master the correct pronunciation.

It should also be pointed out that chanting is not a musical activity; we do not sing the sounds, we speak them. There is a difference between kirtan and

adhyayanam. Singing the sounds changes them, and since the sound has a specific function in adhyayanam, we do not want to alter it in any way. Other techniques that work on prana are mudra, or hand gestures, and bhavana, or visualization. Most mudras influence the vyana vayu, because mudras require consciously directed movement of the fingers and hands. In order to get our hand to hold the desired shape, we have to concentrate, and this conscious effort stimulates the prana in the area of the hands (vyana vayu). If we then move our hands to the chest region, we are directing the focus to the prana vayu. The point here is that bringing the mind's attention to a particular area of the body stimulates the prana in that area. Mudra accompanying pranayama would be one possible way to work with someone with Parkinson's disease, an imbalance in the vyana vayu. Bringing one's awareness to these physical actions (the mudras) with pranayama focuses and redirects the imbalanced vayu. For example, we can use the "cin" mudra (which is joining the index finger with the thumb) during pranayama. During every breath, the person can be asked to change the finger that links with the thumb. This brings the person's attention to the fingers and hence facilitates the flow of prana. As the ancient masters said, wherever our attention is, there flows prana. What this practice may do is strengthen the vyana vayu, whose weakness may be a cause of the trembling of our hands. Healing According to the tradition, the most important definition of mantras is "Mananāt trāyate iti mantraḥ" which translates to "On reflection it protects, hence it is a mantra". It means that mantras help us to get out of negative mind sets by us focusing on them. Mantras are never negative, in the Pūrva Mimāṃsa text of Jaimini, mantras are defined as "that which praises is known as a mantra" ("tat codakeṣu mantrākhyāḥ"). In Yogic understanding, our mind is colored by past experiences and belief systems, which create our perception and therefore reality. If we continuously hold negative thoughts in our minds or even have loops of reoccurring negative thoughts throughout our days, we will perceive and project our reality from those thought forms. Mantras introduce something positive and by holding these positive

vibrations in our mind, we change the direction and momentum of our experience and reality. In the Yogasūtras of Patañjali, he recommends that when negative thoughts disturb our mind, we should replace them with positive ones (Yogasūtra 2.33. “Vitarka bādhane pratipakśa bhāvanam”). Sometimes this can be a difficult task to do, because we might not be able to “think” of something positive in such a moment. But we can always repeat a mantra that helps us introduce a change or positive vibration to our minds. Mantras are therefore sounds with a positive vibration and a higher frequency that, when we focus our mind on them, can protect us and even elevate us into a higher form of consciousness. **Also mantra has to be consistent with the wish and belief of person who is going to do it.**

Visualization is another powerful technique for working with prana. When I visualize that I am a mountain or that I am sending the breath to my knee, for example, this is what “happens” during the visualization. And this experience, originating from my visualization, has an effect on me.

One of the ways we can use visualization is through intention. In Sanskrit this is known as sankalpa: the idea that I am now going to do something, an intention to do something. For example, I might say, “I am now going to work on inhalation to influence the prana dimension of my system, and I am going to do this by putting my hands on my chest and visualizing the inhalation getting longer and longer.” As we engage in this visualization process, the system changes and our breath does become longer. Finally, kriyas may also be used to work on prana, but we do not advise that they be used. It is too easy to misuse kriyas, and many Yoga masters have said that the same effects can be achieved in a safer manner through the use of pranayama alone.

1.9 Indriya-Cikitsa: Healing through the Senses

Having discussed the physical body as well as prana, let us move on to an even more subtle level of our human system that can be used for healing: indriyas, or

the senses. Before we can discuss the senses as tools for healing in Yoga, however, we need to understand how the ancient yogis understood the role of the senses in our lives. Beyond the pancamaya model of the human system, there exists an even deeper aspect, which is the foundation of our being. In Yoga, this center of our being is called purusha, cit, and drastir. These different Sanskrit names indicate the same thing, but emphasize slightly different aspects of it (just as brother, son, and husband all describe “me,” yet emphasize different aspects of me). Purusha means “one who dwells in the city,” cit means “that which is conscious” or “that which cognizes,” and drastir means “that which perceives.” In other words, there is something at the very core of our human system that is conscious, that perceives (or is the source of perception), and that is the master of the human system.

This core is fundamentally different from the five dimensions of our human system as presented in the pancamaya model: the core is “spirit,” while the five dimensions are “matter.” Although this core is both the source of perception and the source of cognition, it cannot function in the world on its own. It requires a medium through which it can act. That medium is the five dimensions of the human system: body, breath, personality, intellect, and emotions. Through these dimensions, which encompass the senses, purusha, or consciousness, functions in the material world.

The metaphor traditionally used to illustrate the relationship between the purusha and the rest of the human system is that of a lame man and a blind man cooperating in order to live successfully in the world. Purusha is the lame man: purusha can see, but cannot walk. The human system (pancamaya model), including the senses, is the blind man; he can walk, but he cannot see. The blind person carries the lame person on his shoulders; they work together (consciousness and material body) as one, because without each other, they cannot function. The point at the heart of this metaphor is that body, mind, and

senses are tools only. Mind is not the source of cognition: it is merely a tool, a kind of mirror, which reflects cognition. Cognition itself originates from a place other than mind. Of course, the quality of the tools (body, mind, and senses) matters. They must be healthy if we want to live a healthy, balanced, fulfilling life. If the tools are defective, the results of the actions that utilize these tools will be flawed. In other words, if the senses are unhealthy, out of balance, or undisciplined, then purusha “has no legs,” and its movements in the world will be equally unbalanced, undisciplined, and flawed. As the Yoga-Sutra says, suffering and sickness are bound to be the result.

What Are the Senses?

According to the Yoga masters, the senses, or indriyas, are a subtle kind of matter that helps purusha to function in the world. The ten senses help the purusha in two different ways, and thus the masters divided them into two categories: senses that gather information and senses that enable us to act.

Jnana indriya: Literally, “knowledge senses.” Hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling are the senses that support perception by gathering information about the surrounding world in the form of sound, feel, sight, taste, and smell.

Karma indriya: Literally, “action senses.” These senses support our actions and enable us to do things. These action senses underlie a kind of power or capability of the hands, legs, reproductive system, speech, elimination processes, etc.

Both types of senses can cause us problems, but in different ways. For example, blurry sight or a diabetic being overcome by temptation and indulging in sweets are examples of jnana indriya malfunctions. Acting violently or telling lies are examples of karma indriya malfunctions. Since the two sets of senses malfunction in different ways, different practices are suggested to address the problems associated with them.

Indriya-Cikitsa: Tools for Disciplining and Healing through the Senses

To maintain the health of the karma indriyas, Patanjali suggests (in sutras II-30 to II-45) that we cultivate certain attitudes and behaviours called the yamas and niyamas. These are essentially strategies or disciplines for keeping the senses of action pure and, as a result, healthy.

Yamas are rules governing our conduct and interactions with others. They are specific social practices we should follow. For example, if I speak to someone in a way that harms him or her, I am abusing the sense of communication (speech). If, however, I restrain myself and speak in a way that does not cause harm, I am healing myself, because I am actively taking steps to stop a certain cycle of behaviour that causes suffering to myself and others. If someone steals, then he or she also is creating a certain kind of cycle as well as actively participating in a negative pattern of behaviour that will probably cause trouble later on. If we change our conduct, our behaviours, however, we can change our life. In the Yoga-Sutra, Patanjali offers five yamas:

Ahimsa: Non-harming. Anything that hurts another being should be avoided. This means practicing nonviolence, not only at the physical level, but also the mental and communication levels. In every situation, before acting we should pause and consider the other's position.

Satya: Truthfulness. Satya encompasses more than simply speaking the truth. Satya means speaking the truth that is consistent with ahimsâ. This is not just "the truth," but how we speak the truth. Speaking the truth may hurt another, and in such a situation it may be better to say nothing. Satya should not conflict with our efforts to behave with ahimsa.

Asteya: Not stealing. This means not taking something that does not belong to you. Asteya encompasses many different levels: material (for example, money), intellectual (for example, plagiarism), etc. It is nonattachment in word, thought, and action to objects belonging to others.

To practice asteya is to refrain from serving only your own interest or harming somebody else's.

Brahmacarya: Appropriate sexuality. Brahmacarya is a complex concept, often translated simplistically as “sexual abstinence.” Brahmacarya literally means “a person moving toward ultimate truth,” and it refers to our responsibilities in different situations and throughout the course of our lifetime.

Aparigraha: Not to receive what you do not deserve. The idea is to not grasp things, not to hold onto or accumulate things, but to take only what is necessary. In other words, do not take advantage of the situation. A doctor receives money for seeing a patient: is it right that he or she also receives a commission for prescribing certain medicines? A teacher receives a fee for giving instruction, but just because the student, in gratitude, offers one million dollars, this does not mean the teacher should accept it.

Niyamas are personal disciplines, attitudes we should adopt regarding ourselves. There are five niyamas.

Shauca: Cleanliness, inside and out. Outer cleanliness refers to the normal routine of personal cleanliness: bathing, brushing our teeth, other grooming practices, etc. Inner cleanliness refers to the healthy functioning of our body, as well as to clarity of mind. Practicing asana and pranayama are both means of attending to shauca, as are approaching diet and lifestyle practices with care.

Santosha: Contentment with what we have. When we have santosha, we do not covet what is beyond our resources. Santosha encompasses our mental activities, physical efforts, and the way we earn a living. If I am content with what I have, I will be happy and calm. But if I am discontented and agitated, I will not respond appropriately in my relationships, and this is bound to cause problems sooner or later.

Tapas: Cleansing process. Tapas refers to the process of eliminating undesirable elements from all levels of our human system. We have defects, and if we do not correct these defects, we will suffer. Of course, removing unhealthy elements from our life is difficult. Tapas means, literally, “to heat.” Just as the impurities are eliminated from iron ore by heating the ore, so too impurities can be removed from our system through intense, concentrated effort. There are many different ways to eliminate rubbish from our system, including refining our eating habits, asana and pranayama practice, meditation, etc.

Svadyaya: Understanding the self through self-examination. All learning, all reflection, all contact that helps us to learn more about ourselves is svadyaya. Tapas has no meaning without svadyaya. How do we identify the defects that need to be removed from our system, or what efforts do we need to undertake to do this? The more I know about myself, the better I am able to identify and then begin to eliminate the unhealthy tendencies in my system.

Ishvara pranidhana: Acceptance of a higher force. Literally, Ishvara pranidhana means “to surrender to the Lord.” We are not the masters of everything we do: many aspects of life are beyond our control. All we can do is act, and the result of that action depends on many different factors, most of which are beyond our control. The point is to focus on the action, not the result of the action, to pay attention to the quality of our actions and accept whatever may happen. If we do what is right simply because it is right, then we will always have a clear conscience. But if we act in order to achieve a certain result, we may or may not achieve that result, and who knows how we will feel about ourselves afterward. To address problems related to the jnana indriyas, we offer practices that distract these senses from their habitual patterns and provide them with a healthier focus. Practices and techniques used to discipline the jnana indriyas are called pratyahara, literally, “opposite food. “We give the affected sense a food other than its habitual, unhealthy food, so that it no longer seeks the unhealthy option.

For example, a student who was suffering from various skin problems approached our center. Through consultation and primary examination, we determined that the woman's skin problems were due to a liver problem. This in turn, we found out, was caused by a very inappropriate eating pattern. The course of action suggested was to put the student on a strict diet and a moderate exercise regime. The discipline of replacing her normal food with a new, healthier diet proved to be a pratyahara that saved her from further agony.

Over time, through her strict adherence to our dietary suggestions, her problems vanished. Traditionally, problems associated with the jnana indriyas have been illustrated through the metaphorical image of a chariot pulled by five horses (which signify the five senses). As long as the charioteer maintains control of the horses, the chariot (the body) functions well. But as soon as the horses become undisciplined, the chariot is pulled hither and thither and eventually it is pulled to pieces. In other words, if the senses are allowed to choose their own (often unhealthy) directions, they will pull us along with them. If we can discipline the senses, however, control them and focus them, then the chariot of our body will function well. To discipline the senses is difficult. If we are going to shift the senses away from a habitual focus, we must offer a replacement object or objective. We are thus not actually "withdrawing" the senses from a particular focus: we are deliberately re-focusing the senses on an object or direction of our choice. We are replacing an unhealthy focus with a healthy one. For example, trataka (meditating on a candle flame, which trains the gaze and the mind/thoughts) forces the senses and the mind to go in a particular, chosen direction (the flame). The senses are not allowed to wander aimlessly, but are drawn in the specific direction. Other examples are nada (cutting off sight, smell, hearing, and taste and listening only to the heart sound in order to train the hearing to become sharper and more focused), eka rasa ahara (eating only one particular taste for ten days to stimulate one kind of taste bud, then changing to another

taste, thus refining over time the sense of taste), and mauna vrata (a vow of silence to train both the sense of hearing and speech). Each of the tools we have discussed here, yamas, niyamas, and pratyahara, has an important element in common: the use of the will. Conscious choice plays a critical role in each of these practices. One way to view it is the following: yama is the practice of conscious thought, niyama is the practice of conscious behaviour, and pratyahara is the practice of conscious perception. These practices thus will not work unless the student has a strong desire to succeed and is committed wholeheartedly to the practice. Some people react negatively to this kind of self-disciplined practice, and, as in all cases, the healer must observe carefully to see if the practice is causing the student more agitation. If it is, then the approach must be changed.

1.10 Manasika-Cikitsa: Healing Using the Mind

There are so many different ways to use the mind in healing. Mind clearly plays a central role in all of the tools that we have seen so far, not just manasika-cikitsa. If we are unable to pay attention, even for short periods of time, we will not be able to practice any of the given techniques. Practice requires attention. If during my morning asana practice I am constantly thinking of the tasks waiting for me at work, then I am, for all intents and purposes, already at work, because my mind is preoccupied with work. My body may be going through the motions of trikonasana, but I am not doing my asana practice, because my mind is engaged in something else. Presented another way: mind is fundamental to all of our activities. Consequently, it is fundamental to any healing process in which we are actively engaged. In fact, we can say that mind is the central tool of healing in Yoga. For our purposes, we need to focus on how mental activities heal the human system.

Bhavana: The term bhavana derives from the Sanskrit root bhu, meaning “to be.” Bhavana refers to

visualization—not just visualization of objects, like the sun or the moon or light, but also of certain attitudes we might desire to cultivate in ourselves, such as compassion or courage or stability. For example, I know I have to attend a meeting with a person with whom I do not get along. If before the meeting I visualize how I will deal clearly and effectively with that person, then when I do see him or her, there will be a subtle change in how I communicate. I change my attitude using visualization, and I thereby change the situation and myself. Visualization also can involve visualizing movements of the body, as in the case presented earlier of the student who had suffered a stroke. The doctors told this young man that he would never be able to move certain areas of his body again. As a practice, his Yoga teacher offered him pranayama in combination with some visualization, asking him to visualize himself raising the affected arm and leg. Gradually, over time, he regained mobility in the paralyzed areas.

Dhyanam: This term means “meditation.” Meditation serves two purposes in the healing process of Yoga. First, meditation helps us to refine our mind, so that we can act in a manner appropriate to the situation in which we find ourselves at any given moment. In this sense, one of the definitions of meditation according to Yoga is “refining the memory.” Our past experiences leave impressions on us, and these past impressions influence our current perception, sometimes appropriately, other times inappropriately. When I meet an old friend, I do not just see him, I simultaneously remember some past experiences we had together, remember his face, personality, the emotions he invoked in me, etc. How else would I be able to recognize him in a crowd of people and differentiate him from everyone else I have ever met? Memory is thus very useful to us. On the other hand, past impressions can become so powerful and influential in our behaviour that they control our actions. We no longer respond to the actual situation as it is, but instead respond according to our habitual way of thinking, which may not be

appropriate to the actual situation. Responding inappropriately can cause suffering for us and for others.

Meditation in this sense means recognizing our automatic behaviours, sorting through them, and creating new ones that are appropriate to the changing situations in our lives.

The second important purpose meditation serves in Yoga is related to what happens as a result of our meditation practice. We should think of meditation as a process comprised of three aspects:

there is a meditator (a perceiver), there is something that is perceived or meditated upon (an object), and there is the link between the two. Meditation is the process of gradually deepening the relationship between these three aspects.

Step 1: Dharana

The first step in the meditation process is for the meditator to choose an object to focus on. This “object” can be a thing or a concept or a word, but it must be something. Meditation here is not making the mind “blank,” or nothingness of mind. Meditation is focusing on a specific, chosen object, directing the mind toward that object, and maintaining focus on the object. This is not easy. Choosing an object and staying focused on that object alone requires a great effort of will.

Step 2: Dhyanam

If we succeed in focusing our mind in a chosen direction and in maintaining that focus, then gradually the link between the meditator and the object deepens. The link eventually deepens to such an extent that the meditator is aware of only two things: the object being focused on and the feeling that he or she is perceiving it. Nothing else is perceived—only the focus of the mind is perceived. At this point,

only the faculties of the mind necessary to perceive and understand the object is operating.

Step 3: Samadhi

If we are able to maintain this link and it continues to deepen, at some point the link between the meditator and the object becomes so strong that even the feeling “I am perceiving” drops away, and there is only the object. It is as though the meditator disappears and only the object exists.

The more intense the link becomes, the more we experience the object. Most importantly, as we continue to link with the object, deepening our connection and our experience of the object, we gradually assimilate the qualities of the object of meditation. In other words, we slowly become like the object, and this is how healing occurs as a result of meditation.

Consequently, choosing an appropriate and relevant object of focus is crucial. The object must not only be appropriate for the situation, but also for the individual. For example, a teacher might ask a student who lacks the quality of stability, whose mind or relationships or emotions are unstable and unbalanced, to use the image of a mountain as the object of focus. This does not mean, however, that every “unstable” person should meditate on a mountain. If the student has had a bad experience on a mountain, it will be very difficult for that person to focus on one. A mountain, therefore, would be an inappropriate, potentially harmful choice for that student.

The student’s behaviour is the indicator of whether or not a meditation practice is working appropriately.

Since the student should be assimilating the qualities of the object, the state of his or her mind should change, and as the state of mind changes, so should behaviours. When there is a positive change in the quality of the mind, the student’s life and relationships should improve. This is why we often say that we

know whether a person's Yoga is working by the quality of his or her relationships.

Adhyatmika-Cikitsa: Healing from the Core with adhyatmika cikitsa, as with indriya-cikitsa and manasika-cikitsa, we are using more subtle tools than the physical body or even the breath to heal an individual. Adhyatmika-cikitsa is healing using our “core,” i.e., the deepest, subtlest layer of who we are. According to the Yoga masters, this core is pure consciousness. There are several tools that may be used with adhyatmika-cikitsa, but we will present only the two most important ones here.

Ishvara Pranidhâna

This can be interpreted in two ways as it applies to the work of adhyatmika-cikitsa. Faith Here, we are not referring only to spiritual or religious faith, although ishvara pranidhana encompasses these aspects of faith as well. Faith, in this context, means faith in a higher force, be it God, Nature, or something else. The point is you do not have to believe in God or be engaged in a religious practice in order to have faith. When we have faith in something higher than ourselves, whatever this higher force may be, then in times of suffering, we are able to maintain a positive outlook and are less likely to suffer even more from fear, anxiety, and despair. In this way, faith contributes to our healing.

Every Action a Conscious Action Ishvara pranidhana also encompasses the idea that we may offer all our actions to a higher force. When we do this—when we perform every activity as a service to a higher force—then we immediately adopt a more attentive state of mind in everything that we do. Because we are more attentive to our actions, we are less likely to do things that cause us to suffer, and so we suffer less. Much of our sickness and suffering is self-imposed, stemming from our lack of attentiveness to our actions. For example, consider what you eat and how you live. Every day you make choices about both. Many people make

these choices without actually choosing, i.e., without attentiveness or conscious choice. They thus eat food that is bad for them and live life in a manner that causes them suffering by engaging in unhealthy relationships or over-scheduling their daily lives. This causes stress levels to rise, which negatively affects their physical, emotional, and mental health, etc. Suppose, however, that we ate each meal with the intention of offering up this simple action in service of a higher force, i.e., consciously, attentively, with care for the choices we are making nutrition-wise and attention to the act of eating itself. Acting consciously, we would suffer less.

Yajna

The second important tool in adhyatmika-cikitsa is yajna, or ritual. Simply stated, yajna is “a set of actions or techniques performed with mindfulness and a specific intention.” The ancient discipline of Yoga offers us a timeless and holistic model of health and healing. Yoga is not exercise, nor is it a method for curing physical disease. It is about healing the individual person holistically, which means healing not only the body, but every aspect of the human system, including the mind and the emotions. Healing through Yoga may or may not result in the elimination of physical diseases from the body. Yoga cannot cure cancer, but it can offer a path of healing for the whole person. The only conditions a person must meet when seeking Yoga therapy is being open and receptive to instruction and possessed of a mind capable of some attentiveness.

Because Yoga is a holistic healing system that addresses the needs of the whole person, its approach to healing is extremely personalized. You cannot heal the whole person unless you seek to understand the whole person. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that there can be no healing without the student’s active participation. Unlike most healing systems, Yoga is self-empowering. Ultimately, we could say, Yoga is a state of mind: not the teacher’s mind, but the student’s mind. It is not the teacher’s mind, knowledge, or ministrations that heal the

student. It is the student's own power of will and mind, with careful guidance and application of the proper tools by a fully trained, competent teacher, that heals him or her.

Yoga does not prescribe one-size fits- all doses of asana and pranayama for healing an illness. Every person, even every person with the same illness, is a unique individual. And Yoga's tools for healing the individual, as well as the combinations that may be created from these tools, are numerous and must be specifically tailored to meet the needs of each student.

CHAPTER – II OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

2.1 Statement of Problem

The purpose of study was to find out the effect of various yogic practices on physical and psychological among care seekers.

2.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that yoga therapy may decrease various illnesses like pain and anxiety. This hypothesis is presented based on the various tools used in Yoga therapy including asana, pranayama, mantra chanting and visualization. The practices were suggested in morning and in some cases two different practice were given for morning and evening to do every day for 8 weeks. There is no age nor gender limitation. It is hypothesized that everyday Yoga practice can be useful in decreasing the physical and psychologic illness by increasing flexibility, strength, endurance, centring and facilitates characteristics of friendliness, compassion, and greater self-control, while cultivating a sense of calmness and well-being.

2.3 Methodology

Research Setting and Design

All my research took place in 2020. All the care seekers were supposed to accompany for 8 weeks in which I would meet participant every two weeks to monitor and note down the process of change, healing and transformation as well as their own personal observations about the effects of the yoga therapy practices on different levels of their being. The type of feedback taken oral and unstructured and were always pointing and exploring the experience of the practice within the yoga therapy process.

2.4 Students

10 Male and female cases were taken for this research project. All of them had different levels of knowledge and experience of Yoga. There were some that had never practiced any Yoga before and

some of these people did practice yoga at certain times. All of them came for different reasons and

problems that they wanted to work on with the help of the yoga therapy practice, from physical discomfort, depression and general feelings of negativity over anxieties to seeking more peace and clarity. The majority of people came with problems that were actually physical but also more connected to the emotional, psychological or mental layers. The age of the students ranged between ages 25 and 71 years. The students came from different states of India and also abroad.

2.5 Practices

All practices that were given to the care seekers had asana, pranayama and mantras which were modified according the needs of each individual. Often times, I incorporated some pranayama in the beginning so that the participants would have a moment to arrive in the present moment and centre themselves. The practices were all about 25 to 30 minutes long but in some cases advised the care seekers to take rest between repetitions depending on their capacity to do the practice. Some of the practices can be seen as samples next to each case in this project.

CHAPTER – III RESULTS

3.1 Case 1

Mr. A

Age: 70 years /Male

Background: Retired from multinational in Hong Kong and travelling a lot between India and Canada.

This case is very close to my heart as it gave me all the required motivation to continue my yoga therapy journey when I was little wavering.

I met him in one wedding ceremony and he asked me for a class for general wellbeing, but as we all know that in Indian weddings there is hardly any free time after all the early morning and late night ceremonies so we both couldn't find time for class.

After wedding he travelled to Canada and then I received call that now he really needs help as he is unable to move his arms and is suffering from severe pain. It started with putting a heavy hand carry in upper cabin in flight.

Now the pain was so severe that he was unable to pull blanket to cover him.

So after taking all the details gave him a very short practice along with mantra from Sikh Gurubani as he was ardent follower of Sikhism and have much more faith and conviction in chanting something from the lineage. Moreover, the reason to give mantra was to help him in flow of breathing as he was doing yoga for the first time.


Practice was given for twice in a day at any time of the day preferably after waking up and before going to sleep.


Within in 4 days itself he felt better. After 4 days in review session he told me not to take out or change anything from the present practice as it is giving him so much relief.


After 3rd session, pain was totally gone and he was even able to hold his arms at him back and also tie his turban with ease. And he is able to go deep in his meditation and do other chanting with more focus and also feels fully grounded and healthy.


He practiced every day twice without fail and even continuing till today.


1.  - Observe breath - 12T


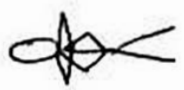
2.  - Inhale thru mouth like sipping water thru straw, raising neck up
ex - thru Left nostril [close right nostril]
Inhale thru mouth like sipping water thru straw, raising neck up
ex - thru Right nostril [close Left nostril] - 12T

3.  - Chant Waheguru raising arm up neck up
Inhale in position
Chant Waheguru bringing neck down, arm down
- 8T | alternate arm

4.  - 8T

5.  - Place both palms on right knee / thigh
chant - 6T
Place both palms on left knee / thigh
chant - 6T

6.  - Place hands on knees / thighs
chant - 12T - Loudly

7.  or  - Place hands on belly - chant softly - 12T
Place hands on heart - chant mentally - 12T

8.  - Rest

3.2 Case 2

Mr. B

Age 50 years/Male

Background: Corporate professional

Care seeker came for restless sleep and was only sleeping only for 4.5 hours since last two years and also had hernia also.

First practice was given with palming eyes and applying warm almond or sesame oil on soles at night.


Care seeker came back after 4 days for review and there was not much improvement but after changing the course sleep quality improved after second session and he started feeling sleepy during day also. After 3rd session there was overall improvement but was still little sleepy during day time. After 4th session there was overall improvement and he was having very good sleep and was also feeling more active during day. After that there was continuous improvement in overall behaviour and health and student continued coming for more classes even after finishing the 5 sessions.

Practice - Once in a day

Case- 2


Class- 1.

chant-(a) om śāntih
(b) om śāntih śāntih

1.  - 3T - chant (a)
3T - chant (b)

2.  - 2T - chant (a)
2T - chant (b)

3.  - 6T | alternate side

4.  - 3T - chant (a)
3T - chant (b)
(not too close to chest)

5.  - 3T | each side

6.  - Rest

3.2 Case 3

Mrs. C

Age 62/ Female


Background: Home maker and very busy doing household chores and taking care of family.


Care seeker came for pain relief specially in neck and shoulders. She had arthritis due to chicken guniya and also she was feeling light shivering in the body. She has insomnia also due to pain and she wanted relief from pain and also wanted to have good sleep. She also had mental tension due to some relatives.


Gave her practice with chant and squeezing balls and also told to do practice after applying warm oil on neck, shoulders and knees. After the first class pain slightly reduced but sleep still was not better and she had late onset of relief. Also she told about wrist pain.

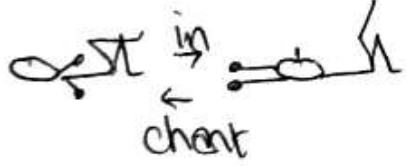
After the second class neck pain became much better and also wrist pain reduced a lot but sleep was still not on time. Also told the care seeker to reduce the weight in the hand bag and also advised her not to lift heavy weights as she was handling all the wet grinders and other heavy equipment herself in spite of having household help. Guided her to not to lift any weights.


After the third and 4th session pain was much better and also quality of sleep improved and mentally she was feeling much better and was able to let go some old hurts and made peace with relatives. In these sessions arm movements with nyasas were introduced and also guided her to continue oil application.

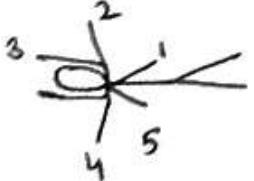
1.  - In - sitali raising head up + hold the balls - 12T
ex - chant bringing head down + squeezing balls

2.  - hold balls - in neck/up + arm up - 4T/arm
Ex - chant - head down + arm down + Squeeze balls

3.  - hold balls - in - head up + arms up - 8T
ex - chant - head down + arms down + squeeze balls

4.  - in - release and hold balls - 4T/side
ex - chant + squeeze balls

5.  - in - release balls - 8T
ex - chant + squeeze balls

6.  - in - free
ex - chant "Long om" - each position - 12T

Note - Apply warm oil on neck, shoulders and knees before practice.

3.4 Case 4

Mr. D

Age 60/ M

Background: Corporate Consultant

Care seeker came for relief from middle back spasm and pain. He also had pre-existing spondylosis and sciatica. During the consultation it was found out that care seeker got this because of over doing of exercises. Also he was doing all these exercises from YouTube and not under guidance of any teacher.


His neck was really stiff on both sides. So in start gave him a short practice with chant including Sitali pranayama, seated arm movements and Vajra asana to cakravaka asana keeping right leg in front. Also guided him to avoid other exercises and specially from YouTube.




Care seeker had great pain relief after first class itself. Care seeker was still doing some other exercises from YouTube and was told again not to do at all otherwise don't overdo and also don't club them with Viniyoga practice. After the second class pain was nearly gone. Second class introduced standing postures with wall support. After 3rd and 4th session pain was fully gone and spasm also healed and finally after seeing the result care seeker decided limit the exercises.




Practice - Once in a day

Case - 4




Class - 1
chant - "om"

1.  - In-sitali + neck up
ex - chant long "om" + neck down - 12T

2.    - In- neck up + arm up from side
ex - neck down + arm down from side
- 6T - alternate arm

3.    From sides
- 6T

4. Repeat No # 1

5.    - 6T/ alternate side
twist upto comfortable level

6.    - 6T
Right leg in front

7. Repeat No # 1

3.5 Case 5

Mr. E

Age 52/Male

Care seeker had high BP and neck pain. Was also suffering from late onset of sleep and giddiness and numbness in right index finger. His pulse was not strong and had high vata in right pulse. His emotional state was not good and was feeling very angry and frustrated. Gave him seated arm movements with niyayas and chant also extension of exhale.

After the first session care seeker was feeling better and neck pain was better and was much more relaxed. Was feeling more light and anger reduced and sleep became better.

After the second session neck pain was fully gone and BP also became better and was feeling more calm and anger also reduced a lot.

After the 3rd and 4th session care seeker has much better anger management and also neck pain fully gone and right finger numbness became better. Was feeling much more calm, peaceful and fully relaxed with better sleep.

3.6 Case 6

Mr. F

Age 65 / Male

Background: Businessman, owns consulting firm and highly educated from top institutes of India.

Care seeker had pain in centre of spine which was spreading to the sides and also had general depression and feeling low and also was unable to sleep at night. Care seeker used to be very active professionally and now because of age and back pain is not able to do as much.

Care seeker was given asana practice including sitali pranayama and also using balls to squeeze. Started with Inhale - Sitali Pranayama and squeeze the balls and exhale nostrils and release the balls. Tadasana using balls and parsva uttanasana using table support to bend half way only. After this gave Vajra asana forward bend to cakravaka asana. Next was lying twist (jathara privritti) and apanasana. And was instructed to repeat the pranayama with balls squeezing at the end again.

Care seeker had pain relief after the first practice and but still there was not much improvement in sleep. So next class gave two practices for morning and evening including mantra chanting. For morning practice gave Om on exhale breath and evening Om Somaya Namah on exhale breath. Care seeker started feeling much better after this and sleep was also better. Also counselled about the different stages of life and need to flow with life flow and take this new opportunity of so much free time to connect with family and spend more time on hobbies and with grandchildren.

In follow up classes more number of repetition was given and also introduced stay in twist and apanasana.

Care seeker lifted something heavy and had general back pain again and was not much comfortable with parsva uttanasana so was given standing asana with wall support. After doing the practices care seeker's back pain was better and also he felt more motivated to do other things and started going for walk and started having good sleep at night.

Practice - Twice a day

Case-6

Class - 1
Chant - "Om"

1.  - Inhale thru mouth like sipping water thru straw + Squeeze balls
Exhale - chant "om" + release balls - 8T
2.  - 6T in- squeeze balls
ex- release balls
3.  3T/ side
4.  - 6T
5.  - Rest
6.  - 6T/ alternate side
7.  - 6T
8.  - Rest
9. Repeat # 1

3.7 Case 7

Ms G

Age 25 years / F

Care seeker came to address the general anxiety disorder. But during the consultation she revealed about acidity, low BP and also indigestion. Also her middle back was very stiff and she had dust allergy.

She was ardent devotee of Sai Baba and loved to chant his mantra so given the first practice with SAI RAM chant. First was given free inhale and chant on exhale with neck movement and later was given tadasana withhold after inhale for 3 seconds, parsva uttanasana, uttanasana with support, Jathara Parivritti and apanasana and at the end repeat the first practice.

After the first class there was improvement anxiety but not much improvement in digestion. Keeping the first practice added ardha uttanasana after uttanasna and also gave palming the eyes and chanting and vajrasana forward bend to cakravakasana.

After the second class digestion improved and also started feeling better emotionally.

And also student told about frequent urination at night. Also student opened up about her dilemma to change profession. She wanted to do a different course and start her own YouTube channel but was reluctant to ask huge amount from parents as they already spent so much on her other professional qualification and she even got the job with that.

This time keeping the same chant gave hold for 5 secs after exhale and contract vaginal area in parsva uttanasana, uttanasana and jathara privrtti.


After this session care seeker digestion and urine problem became better and also felt emotionally stable and had more clarity to join her job. She had more clarity

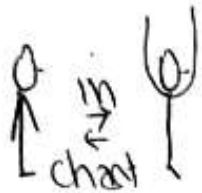
about career and she decided to have saving first and then pursue her passion of YouTube.

Prachce - Once in a day



Case-7

Class-1
Chant - "sai tām"


1.  - Inhale raising neck up
Exhale chant, bringing head down

2.  - Inhale and hold after inhale for 3secs
Exhale - chant

3.    - 3T/ each side

4.   - 6T

5.  - 6T/ alternate side

6.  - 6T

7.  - Rest-

8. Repeat No # 1

3.8 Case 8

Ms H

Age 50 /F

Care seeker came for pain relief. She had neck pain radiating to the arms and had numbness in ring finger in both sides. And also had lower back pain and had numbness in feet as well. Had constant headache and if stands for long time legs used to swell.

She was given practice with OM chant on exhale. First gave her Sitali with neck movement half way only. Then arm and neck movement – alternate and then both arms. First raising arms from sides and then from front. All the movements were given half way and within her present capacity. Then was given jathara privritti and vajrasana to cakravakasana.

The was instructed to sit on the corner of bed or chair and place both hands on right knee and neck half twisted. In this position inhale Sitali with neck up halfway and exhale and neck down for 6 times. Repeat same on other side. Then place hands on both knees and inhale Sitali neck up halfway only and exhale neck down.


Also was told to apply warm sesame oil with amrutaanjan balm on neck and shoulders before practice.

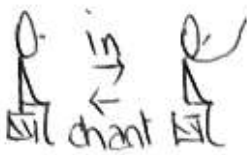
After the first class practice when care seeker came for second class her neck pain was nearly gone and her sleep became much better and headache became better.


Also she was not very much comfortable with cakravakasana so gave her apanasana with cushion under neck. After second class her neck pain was gone and back pain also improved.


For third class gave seated twist and stay in lying twist and apanasana.


Care seeker was regular with her practice except 4 days and she was feeling better physically and also started sleeping better.

1.  - In-śtali + neck up [half way] - 8 brs
ex- chant + head/neck down

2.  - In- arm up from side + neck up [half way]
ex- arm down from side + neck down
chant - 6T/alternate arm


3.  - 6T neck only half way

4.  - In- arm up from front + neck up [half way]
ex- chant- arm down from front + neck down
- 6T/alternate arm

5.  - 6T - neck only half way

6.  - 6T/alternate side

7.  - 6T

8.  → sit on corner of bed or chair, place both hands on knee & neck half way twisted.
In- śtali + neck up [half way] - 6T/each side
ex- neck down
- Place hands on both knees
In- śtali + neck up [half way] - 12 brs
ex- neck down

3.9 Case 9

Ms. I

Age 25 / F

Care seeker came for relief from anxiety disorder. Care seeker was working as Gynaecologist and was staying away from city and was feeling very home sick. Her palms and legs used to become chill at times and had neck and back stiffness.

First practice was given with OM SOMAYA NAMAH on exhale. First thing was sitali pranayama with raising neck up and on exhale chant the mantra while bringing the neck down. Next was given tadasana with support under heels, parsva uttanasana and uttanasana with table support. Then was instructed to stay in jathara parivritti parsva bheda and then do Vajrasana to vajrasana forward bend and repeat no 1 at the end again.

After the first course practice care seeker started feeling more relaxed, at ease and chillness reduced. In second class gave apanasana and also with alleviated legs place one hand on belly and other on heart and inhale free and extend exhale in each breath.


After the second session care seeker became normal and there was no more chillness in palms and legs and modified practice for maintenance of health and wellbeing.

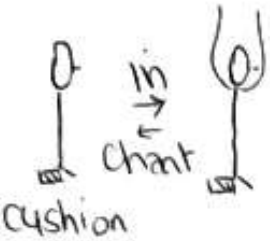
Prachce - Once in a day

Case - 9

Class - 1


chant - om somāya namah

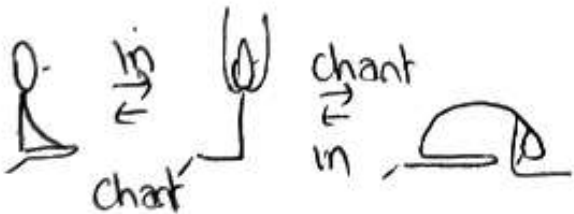
1.  - Inhale - sitali + neck up
Exhale - chant + neck down - 12 brs

2.  - In - free
ex - chant - 6T

3.  - 3T / each side

4.  - 6T

5.  → chant in position - 12T / each side

6.  - 4T

7. Repeat No # 1

3.10 Case 10

Mr. J


35/ Male

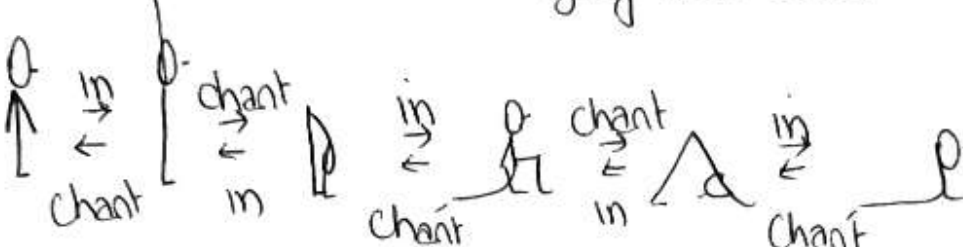
Care seeker was looking to join fitness group but upon consultation revealed about indigestion with acid reflux which sometimes is so much that he was not able to sleep. And also used to feel very agitated and angry.


Gave him practice with chant Santih. First one hand on heart and other on belly in seated position. Inhale neck up and on exhale chant and neck down. Was also given surya namaskara sequence. Next parsva uttanasana and utkatasana was given followed by rest and twist and apanasana. Was told to end practice by keeping hands on belly and chanting mantra for 12 times and then keeping hands on heart and chanting mantra for 12 times.

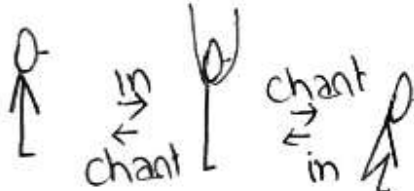
After the first session care seeker started feeling more relaxed and digestion was little better. For second class hold for 5 secs after exhale was given.

After practicing the second course care seeker reported much relief in reflux and also started feeling better mentally with reduced anger and agitation and increased sound sleep. After the third class there was tremendous improvement in digestion and care seeker was feeling fit and relaxed after many years. He continued the practice with more classes later.

1.  - Place one hand on chest and one hand on belly
 In-free - raising neck up
 ex-chant bringing neck down - 12T

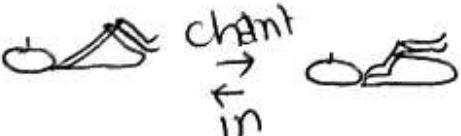
2.  - 4 Rounds


3.  - 3T/each side

4.  - 6T

5.  - Rest

6.  - 12T/alternate side

7.  - 6T

8.  - (i) Place hands on belly
 in-free
 ex-chant - 12T
 (ii) Place hands on heart
 in-free
 ex-chant - 12T

9.  - Rest

CHAPTER IV – SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

4.1 General Conclusions

Yoga therapy promotes flexibility, strength, endurance, centring and facilitates characteristics of friendliness, compassion, and greater self-control, while cultivating a sense of calmness and well-being. Sustained practice also brought changes in life perspective, self-awareness and an improved sense of energy to live life fully and with genuine enjoyment and full fill life purpose.

4.2 Final Thoughts

Yoga therapy helps to regain sense of balance at various levels of being and helps the care seeker to reinforce and re-establish the health and have greater quality of life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KHYF yoga therapy course material

Dr. Kausthub Desikachar - YouTube Channel

Heart of Yoga by Shri TKV Desikachar

Dr. Kausthub Desikachar's Article from <https://meridian.allenpress.com/ijyt>

Principles and Practices of Yoga Therapy by Dr. N Chandrasekaran

Liberating Isolation by Frans Moors