

Review Article

Yoga and Its Various Benefits in Dentistry

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Abstract

Yoga is a system of physical exercises and therapy, which originated in ancient India. Consistent practice of yoga cannot only help to decrease stress and anxiety, but also improves the cognition and immunity of the body. The objective of this review is to focus on the role of yoga in prevention of dental diseases and maintenance of oral hygiene. The etiology of dental diseases is ignorance towards the dental care, modern life style and stresses of busy life. The people who are stressed are less likely to give their teeth and gums the proper oral care. Yoga is one of the most effective treatment for stress. Yoga reduce the stress, improve the oxidatus status of body, improve the immune system and reduces chronic gingival inflammation. All these effects helps in better maintenance of oral hygiene and reduction in gingival inflammation and prevention of dental disease. In addition, there are case reports on the dentists being suffering from work related musculoskeletal pain. Yoga is versatile, enjoyable and highly beneficial and a great way for dentists and their patients to battle stress and anxiety and to decrease work related musculoskeletal pain. In dentistry and maintaining oral health.

Keywords: Yoga; Guidelines; Benefits; Oral Health; Dentistry

Introduction

Derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj', means 'to unite' yoga is the old age science of merging the individual consciousness or soul with the universal consciousness or spirit. Yoga is a hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline, a part of which, including breath control, simple medication and the adoption of specific bodily postures, is widely practiced for health and relaxation.

Yoga is understood to be an over 3000 year's old practice having its origin in India aiming to transform body and mind. In the past few years, yoga has steadily gained popularity among western and far eastern countries, as a holistic system of connecting mind and soul. Several studies have reported beneficial effects of yoga on anxiety, stress reduction and general wellbeing of individuals [1].

Yoga understands health and wellbeing as a dynamic continuum of human nature and not a mere 'state' to be attained and maintained. The lowest point on the continuum with the lowest speed of vibration is that of death whereas the highest point with the highest vibration is that of immortality. In between these two extremes lie the state of normal health and disease. For many, their state of health is defined as that 'state' in which they are able to function without hindrance whereas in reality, health is part of our evolutionary process towards Divinity. The lowest point on the dynamic health continuum with lowest speed of vibration may be equated with lowest forms of life and mineral matter while the highest point with highest speed of vibration may be equated with Divinity [2].

Yoga focuses on physical body, breathing and mind. Asanas (physical postures), pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation accomplish considering a part of yoga-pranayama techniques or rhythmic breathing exercises. Yoga prevents the impairment of cellular immunity seen in stress. Yoga involves body mind relaxation techniques and it cushions and relaxes the dental

pain stress. Practicing yoga has few side effects and a low risk of serious injury.

Since yoga involves body-mind relaxation techniques (pranayama and meditation) along with mild to moderate physical exercise, it was hypothesized that practice of yoga may optimize the production of the pro-inflammatory cytokines. Yoga has effects as if it improves the oxidative status of the body so helpful in relieving the stresses of life. Yoga (rhythmic breathing part) helps in improving the immune healing by reducing the mediators of inflammatory response. All these effects also helps in the maintenance of healthy gingiva. As described yoga has many effects in the body specially it is helpful in body-mind relaxation and reducing the stress level of body and the mechanical plaque control (tooth brushing) is time consuming and requires lot of motivation, so yoga may helpful in this part of mechanical plaque control [3].

History and Development of Yoga

The practice of Yoga is believed to have started with the very dawn of civilization. The science of yoga has its origin thousands of years ago, long before the first religions or belief systems were born. In the yogic lore, Shiva is seen as the first yogi or Adiyogi and the first Guru or Adi Guru [4].

Several Thousand years ago, on the banks of the lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, Adiyogi poured his profound knowledge into the legendary Saptarishis or "seven sages". The sages carried this powerful yogic science to different parts of the world, including Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and South America. Interestingly, modern scholars have noted and marvelled at the close parallels found between ancient cultures across the globe. However, it was in India that the yogic system found its fullest expression. Agastya, the Saptarishi who travelled across the Indian subcontinent, crafted this culture around a core yogic way of life.

Tentatively, the period between 500 BC-800 AD is considered as the Classical period which is also considered as the most fertile and prominent period in the history and development of Yoga. During this period, commentaries of Vyasa on Yoga Sutras and Bhagawadgita et al. came into existence. This period can be mainly dedicated to two great religious teachers of India Mahavir and Buddha. The concept of five great vows Pancha mahavrata by Mahavir and Ashta Magga or eightfold path by Buddha can be well considered as early nature of Yoga sadhana. We find its more explicit explanation in Bhagawadgita, which has elaborately presented the concept of Gyan yoga, Bhakti yoga and Karma Yoga. These three types of yoga are still the highest example of human wisdom and even today, people find peace by following the methods as shown in Gita. Patanjali's yoga sutra besides containing various aspects of yoga is mainly identified with eight-fold path of Yoga. The very important commentary on Yoga sutra by Vyasa was also written. During this very period the aspect of mind was given importance, it was clearly brought out through Yoga sadhana, Mind and body both can be brought under control to experience equanimity. The period between 800-1700 AD has been recognized as the Post Classical period wherein the teachings of great Acharyatrayas-Adi Shankracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhavacharya-were prominent during this period. The teachings of Suradasa, Tulasidasa, Purandardasa and Mirabai were the great contributors during this period. The Natha Yogis of Hathayoga Tradition like Matsyendaranatha, Gorkshanatha, Cauranginatha, Swatmaram Suri, Gheranda and Shrinivasa Bhatt are some of the great personalities who popularized the Hatha Yoga practices during this period.

The period between 1700-1900 AD is considered as Modern period in which the great Yogacharyas-Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Paramhansa Yogananda and Vivekananda et al., have contributed for the development of Raja Yoga. This was the period when Vedanta, Bhakti yoga, Nathayoga or Hatha-yoga flourished. The Shadanga-yoga of Gorakshashatakam, Chaturanga-yoga of Hathayogapradipika, Saptanga-yoga of Gheranda Samhita, were the main tenets of Hatha-yoga.

Now in the contemporary times, everybody has conviction about yoga practices towards the preservation, maintenance and promotion of health. Yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of great personalities like Swami Shivananda, Shri T.Krishnamacharya, Swami Kunalayananda, Shri Yogendara, Swami Rama, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Acharya Rajanish, Pattabhijoi, BKS Iyengar and Swami Satyananda Sarasvati [5].

Streams of Yoga

Jnana yoga (path of spirituality): 'Jnana' means knowledge. 'The path of knowledge or wisdom' that leads to the ultimate reality is Jnana Yoga.

Bhakti yoga (path of devotion): The term Bhakti comes from the root 'Bhaj', which means 'to be attached to God'. Bhakthi means 'surrenderance' (to the Almighty). Bhajan, worship, Bhakti, Anuraga, Prema, Priti are terms that are used interchangeably.

Karma yoga (path of work or action): The word 'Karma' means action. The interesting part is the attachment of the word yoga to the word karma. 'Karma Yoga' means actions that are performed without



Figure:

attachment.

Raja yoga (path of will power): Raja Yoga is the path of psychic control or the path of controlling the mind (or taming the mind) through will power. As the name suggests it is the king's path. It is a difficult path yet an effective path to reach the highest state of 'moksha' [6].

Stages (Limbs) of Yoga

Yamas: It means oneness with god; unwavering peace, ecstatic joy and ultimate fulfillment in life- of our external, physical desires as well as our internal spiritual desires only come if we abide by the natural laws of dharma. There are 5 yamas.

- Ahimsa: non violence
- Satyam : truthfulness
- Asteya : not stealing
- Brahmacharya
- Aparigarha : non cumulation

Niyamas: It means a rule, a law, or a standard practice. The 5 niyamas are internal laws, rules which we set for ourselves, to which we adhere in our quest for a disciplined, yogic life. They are,

- Suacha : cleanliness and purity
- Santosha : contentment
- Tapas : sadhna/austerities
- Swadhayay : sacred study
- Ishwara paridhana : devotion or surrender to god

Asana: It is typically translated as the physical posture. It keeps the body healthy and strong and brings in the harmony with nature.

Pranayama: Prana means the life force, the energy, which flows through all. It can be physical energy, mental energy, intellectual energy or even magnetic or heat energy. Ayama means to expansion. Therefore, pranayama is the extension, the stretching, the eprolonging of our life force and energy.

Pratyahara: It is the withdrawal of the senses. Pratyahara is taking all the millions of antennae all over our body and turning them from outward to inward. A total and complete withdrawal of all the senses, of all organs of perception.

Dharana: It is single-minded concentration, singlepointedness.

It teaches us to control the mind, teaches us that we are in charge, we are the boss and mind is only a tool.

Dhyana: Dhyana is meditation and meditation is the best medication for all agitations. It gets us back in touch with our true, divine nature and the deepest core of our being.

Samadhi: it is a state of super-consciousness by profound meditation. It is a supreme level of concentration where mind is kept in complete control of the senses and body is immobile. Full spiritual consciousness is achieved.

Yogic Concepts of Health

Yoga is first and foremost a *moksha Shastra* meant to facilitate the individual to attain the final freedom, liberation or emancipation. One of the important by-products of the Yogic way of living is attainment of health and wellbeing [2]. This is brought about by right-use-ness of the body, emotions and mind with awareness and consciousness.

Structural aspects of the human being: Yoga considers that we are not just the physical body but are of a multifold universal nature. Concepts of *pancha kosha* 3 (fivefold aspects of our existence) and *trisharira* (threefold aspect of our bodily nature) help us understand our multi-dimensional real nature where health result from a dynamic interaction at all levels of existence. At the level of the gross body, Yoga and Ayurveda consider that the human body is made up of seven substances.

These *sapta dhatus* are *rasa* (chyle), *rakta* (blood), *maamsa* (flesh), *medas* (adipose), *asthi* (bone), *majjaa* (marrow) and *sukra* (semen). Both these ancient health sciences understand importance of *tridosha* (three humors) whose balance is vital for good health. Health is further also understood as harmony of *prana vayus* (major energies of physiological function), *upa prana vayus* (minor energies of physiological function) and stability of *nadis* (subtle energy channels) with proper function of all *chakras* (major energy centres that may be correlated to the psycho-neuro-immunoendocrine axis).

Qualities of physical health according to Yoga: The Yogic view of health is exemplified in *Shvetaasvatara Upanishad* where it is said that the first signs of entering Yoga are lightness of body, health, thirstlessness of mind, clearness of complexion, a beautiful voice, an agreeable odour and scantiness of excretions *laghutvam arogyam alolupatvam varnaprasadam svara sausthavam ca ganghas subho mootra pureesam Yoga pravrittimm prathamam vadanti*.

Qualities of mental health according to Yoga: Yoga not only considers physical health but also more importantly mental health. Qualities of a mentally healthy person (*stitha prajna*) are enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita as follows:

- Beyond passion, fear and anger (*veeta raga bhaya krodh*)
- Devoid of possessiveness and egoism (*nirmamo nirahamkarakah*)
- Firm in understanding and unbewildered (*sthira buddhir asamudhah*)
- Engaged in doing good to all creatures (*sarva bhutahiteratah*)
- Friendly and compassionate to all (*maitrah karuna evaca*)

- Pure hearted and skillful without expectation (*anapekshah sucir daksah*)

Proper practice produces an inner balance of mind that remains stable and serene even in the midst of chaos. This ancient science shows its adherents a clear path to the “eye of the storm” and ensures a stability that endures within, even as the cyclone rages externally.

Qualities of spiritual health according to Yoga: The Bhagavad Gita also delineates qualities of a spiritually healthy person. These include: fearlessness (*abhayam*), purity of inner being (*sattva samshuddhih*), steadfastness in the path of knowledge (*jnanayoga vyavasthitih*), charity (*danam*), self-control (*dama*), spirit of sacrifice (*yajna*), self-analysis (*svadhyaya*), disciplined life (*tapa*), uprightness (*arjavam*), non-violence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satyam*), freedom from anger (*akrodhah*), spirit of renunciation (*tyagah*), tranquility (*shanti*), aversion to defamation (*apaishunam*), compassion to all living creatures (*daya bhutesv*), non covetedness (*aloluptvam*), gentleness (*maardavam*), modesty (*hrir acaapalam*), vigour (*tejah*), forgiveness (*kshama*), fortitude (*dhritih*), cleanliness of body and mind (*saucam*), freedom from malice (*adroho*) and absence of pride (*naa timaanita*).

Relationship between food and health: Yoga emphasizes the importance of not only eating the right type of food but also the right amount and with the right attitude. Importance of not eating alone, as well as preparation and serving of food with love are brought out in the Yogic scheme of right living. *Guna* (inherent nature) of food is taken into consideration to attain and maintain good health. Modern dietary science of diet can learn a lot from this ancient concept of classification of food according to inherent nature as it is a much-neglected aspect of modern diet. We are what we eat!

The great Tamil poet-saint Tiruvalluvar offers sane advice on right eating when he says, “He who eats after the previous meal has been digested, needs not any medicine”. He also says that life in the body becomes a pleasure if we eat food to digestive measure. He also invokes the Yogic concept of *Mitahara* by advising that “eating medium quantity of agreeable foods produces health and wellbeing”.

Yoga diet: What to eat and when

Just how you obsess over following the right posture for yoga asanas, remember that eating a healthy diet is also crucial. In fact, yogis believe that diet is an integral part of yoga. This not only helps in developing a mindful eating practice but also supports and nurtures your yoga regime.

Belief in Sattvic diet: According to Ayurveda, there are three broad dimensions, Tama (slow, lethargic and bland), Sattva (purity, harmony) and Raja (hot, spicy and fast). These three qualities are present in everything, but in different quantities and thus, making one quality dominant. When it comes to Rajasic foods, they are believed to be hot, bitter, dry, salty or spicy. They overstimulate the mind. Tamasic foods are bland. They include meat, alcohol, tobacco, garlic, onions, fermented foods and overripe substances. Sattvic food is considered as the purest form of diet. It is believed that Sattvic food is suitable for those who follow a yoga regime. It helps in nourishing the body and maintains a peaceful state.

Here are a few sattvic foods:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Pure fruit juices
- Wholemeal bread
- Seeds
- Sprouted seeds
- Milk
- Butter and cheese
- Legumes

Yogic Kriyas [3]

The kriyas are of six types:

- Dhauti Kriya
- Basti Kriya
- Neti Kriya
- Nauli Kriya
- Trataka Kriya
- Kapalabhati Kriya

Among all these kriyas recommended in yoga, Danta kriya of Dhauti kriya is recommended for oral hygiene.

Danta Dhauti: This is of four types, namely: *dantamula dhauti*, *jihwamula dhauti*, *karna dhauti* and *kapalantra dhauti*.

(a) **Dantamula Dhauti:** Scrub the teeth daily in the early morning with the juice of the *manjana* or *kakkali* plant or with clean mud. Then rinse and wash with clean filtered water.

Benefit: Removes bad breath and odour from the mouth and gives strength to the teeth.

(b) **Jihwa Dhauti:** Scrub the tongue vigorously using the three fingers of the right hand excluding the thumb and little finger. Spit out all the phlegm that comes out while rubbing the tongue. Afterwards, wash the tongue with water, gargle and rinse the mouth. Then rub cow's butter on the tongue. After this, with a small iron tong, hold the tip of the tongue lightly and little by little pull it out. This is only for *hatha yogis*.

Benefit: If this is done daily, without fail, in the morning and the evening, it will help prepare to do *khecari mudra*. It removes all the *doshas* of the tongue and speech will be clear.

(c) **Karna Dhauti:** Clean the ears as follows: Join the index and ring fingers together, insert them into the ears and then twist them around.

Benefit: This will remove deafness. It will prevent all diseases from entering the ear and give the power to hear the inner *nadam*.

(d) **Kapalantra Dhauti:** Using the thumb of the right hand, rub the underside of the tongue daily.

Benefit: If you continue to practise this *kriya* daily in the early morning as soon as you get up and after eating in the afternoon and evening, it will remove the *kapha dosha*, clean the *nadis* and give good

eyesight.

General Guidelines for Yoga Practice [7]

Before The Practice

- Yogic practice should be performed in a calm and quiet atmosphere with a relaxed body and mind
- Should be done on an empty stomach or light stomach.
- Bladder and bowels should be empty before starting Yogic practices.
- A mattress, Yoga mat, or folded blanket should be used for the practice.
- Yoga should not be performed in state of exhaustion, illness, in a hurry or in acute stress conditions.
- In case of chronic disease/pain/cardiac problems, a physician or a Yoga therapist should be consulted prior to performing Yogic practices.
- Yoga experts should be consulted before doing Yogic practices during pregnancy and menstruation.

During The Practice

- Practice sessions should start with a prayer or invocation as it creates a conducive environment to relax the mind.
- Do not hold the breath unless it is specially mentioned to do so during the practice.
- Breathing should be always through the nostrils unless instructed otherwise.
- Do not hold body tightly, or jerk the body at any point of time.
- Perform the practices according to your own capacity.
- There are contra-indications/limitations for each Yoga practice and such contra-indications should always be kept in mind.

After Practice

- Bath may be taken only after 20-30 minutes of practice.
- Food may be consumed only after 20-30 minutes of practice.

Yoga Benefits for Health

The physical building blocks of yoga are the posture (*asana*) and the breath. Yoga increased strength, endurance, flexibility and balance, which also translates into an increased ability to perform activities, have more energy and get a more restful sleep [8]. Most of the diseases take their origin in over-eating, sexual excess and outbursts of anger and hatred. If the mind is kept cool and calm at all times, you will have wonderful health, strength and vitality.

Some benefits of yoga include:

- Builds muscles strength
- Improves posture
- Prevents cartilage and joint breakdown

- Increases blood flow
- Drains lymph and boosts immunity
- Lowers blood sugar
- Maintains nervous system
- Gives a peace of mind
- Eases your pain

Yoga and Dentistry

Yoga is considered one of the most important, effective and valuable tools available for man to overcome various physical and psychological problems. Yoga helps the whole body to enable it to withstand greater stress. Yoga proposes healthy diet and encourages the natural process of elimination, whenever it is necessary [9].

Yoga and oral cavity

Children performing yogic practices like shitali and sheetkari prayanama that produce correct alignment of teeth avoiding their irregular development. Yoga also helps in prevention and cure of lichen planus, a premalignant oral.

Condition, which is prevalent in today's modern lifestyle due to increased incidence of psychosomatic disorders [10].

Yoga and professional burnout, stress in dentistry

Dentistry is one of the professions that demands prolonged static position with limited mobility. Repeated prolonged static postures resisting gravity during their work are thought to initiate a series of events that could account for pain and injuries in dentists. This makes dental surgeons in a high risk of occupational postural & musculoskeletal problems. In addition, the stress involved as they are working through a long list of patients and restrictions during the complicated treatment of procedures, has increased the need for introducing yoga as an aid to lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle. The various profession hazards, the dental surgeon faces are the complications of the spine such as cervical spondylosis, thoracic kyphosis, tendonitis, arthritis, et al., The others include pain in the leg due to unequal load owing to prolonged standing causing varicose veins in the lower limbs, eye problems due to continual, persistent concentration in the oral cavity even when the light is dim, skin diseases like contact dermatitis due to skin contact with hazardous dental materials. For dental professionals, it is necessary to improve the posture and condition of the body to prevent the injuries.

Bhujangasan is one of the asanas, which make the spine flexible, rejuvenates, and revitalizes the spinal cord. *Padmasana* also work wonders for the spinal cord by keeping it erect, healthy and flexible. *Sirshasana* can help both normal and diseased eyes by producing increased blood circulation in the organ. *Vajrasana* helps in majority cases of varicose veins. Due to this asana, the blood flow to the lower limbs is reduced [10].

Studies conducted by Vicente Pedro (1987) and Bhushan (1998) found significant reduction in the State Trait Anxiety of the subjects due to regular practice of yoga. Srivastava et al. (2004) also found significant reduction in MBBS students Anxiety level because of yoga practice. Delmonte (1987) suggests that meditation helps in

increase of psychological well-being. Malathi et al., (2000) observed a significant improvement in 9 of the 11 factors of subjective well-being in healthy volunteers at the end of 4 months of yoga practice [9].

Yoga and tooth extraction [11]

Jalandhara Bandha Yoga (tooth extraction without local anesthesia): *Jala* means network. It is a network of arteries, veins and nerves. *Bandha* means to Lock. Therefore, *Jalandhara* Bandha means locking or blocking of the nerve plexus, arteries and veins around the neck. This technique of blocking the nerve plexus is made use for the extraction of the tooth without anesthesia. This Yogic Tooth Extraction can be explained in three stages.

Poorva Karma (Pre-Operative Procedure): In this stage, first, the patient is examined thoroughly and the decision is taken whether the teeth should be treated conservatively or it needs extraction. If it needs extraction then the patient is educated priorly about the procedure of the yogic teeth extraction and he is prepared both mentally and physically. While extraction special care is taken, if the patient is *Krishna* (lean), *Durbala* (weak), *Vridhdha* (aged) or suffering from any neurological problems.

Pradhana Karma (Operative Procedure): Patient is made to sit in *Sukhasana* or *Padmasana* on wooden plank of 2-3" height. He should be calm, relaxed and should concentrate on *Vishuddha Chakra*. Then he is asked to hold both the knees firmly with his palm and fingers. After that the Ayurvedic Dental Surgeon stands behind the patient and puts cloth over his head and bends his head towards chest, so that the chin gets locked to the supra sternal notch or Jugular notch. *Danta Vaidya* (Dental Surgeon) then puts pressure over the *Sushumna Nadi* (Spinal Cord) with his left knee and puts pressure over trigeminal nerve with his left hand. Then the Patients head is slightly moved up and down for 2-3 times, then the head is lifted and tooth is extracted by using *Simha Mukha Yantra* (Lion Forceps) (who's description is mentioned in our classical text *Sushruta Samhita* which is four thousand years old) or with any other suitable *Sandhamsha Yantra's*.

It is said that *Vatadritaenastiruja*, i.e., there is no pain without vitiation of *Vata Dosh*. Here *Vata* is controlled by doing *Jalandharabandha*, which in turn blocks the pain path and thus helps in painless tooth extraction (Figure 1).

Paschath Karma (Post-Operative Procedure): In this step, utmost care of the patient is taken to reduce the chances of infection and to promote wound healing. Hence, patient is given with *Vranaropana* and *Raktastambhaka Gandoosha* and dressing is done with suitable Ayurvedic Antiseptic Drugs.

Then *Nasya* (nasal medication) is given with medicated oil prepared out of *Vidari*, *Yasti*, *Ksheera* et al., Patient is advised to take *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Swadu* (sweet), *Sheettha* (cold) and *Mrudu* (soft) foods. And also he is advised not to spit forcibly, not to use hot and spicy foods for 24 hours.

Benefits of Tooth Extraction by Jalandhara Bandha Yoga:

- It is good for patients who are allergic to local anesthesia, antibiotics and analgesics and other modern drugs.
- Hypertensive and patients with high blood sugar level can

undergo extraction without any complications. (Author has extracted tooth even with patients having blood sugar level up to 350 to 400mg/dl).

- Very Minimal Bleeding, Less injury to the healthy tissues and hence fast healing of the Gums.
- Procedure will be very brisk and effective.
- Post extraction complication like severe swelling, delayed wound healing and secondary hemorrhage is not found.
- Even the stumps, molar tooth and milk tooth can be extracted successfully by this method.

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