



YOG FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Dear learners, everyone wants to live a happy and healthy life. Maintaining good health is crucial to accomplish the daily activities of life. A healthy living involves adopting the right and positive habits like careful selection of food and a healthy lifestyle. Nutritious food plays a crucial role in maintaining overall well-being; whereas unhealthy food has a negative impact on our body and mind. Apart from healthy food, incorporating Yog into our daily routine can also contribute significantly to healthy living.

In the previous lesson you have learned about Ashtang yog and its relevance in day-to-day life. In this lesson we will become familiar with the healthy diet described in Yogic texts. We will also learn about different yogic practices such as Shatkarma (cleansing techniques), Asanas (postures) and Pranayama (breathing techniques) along with their benefits which are useful in our daily life.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner-

- explains the meaning, importance and different types of yogic diet and lifestyle for healthy living.
- describes the concept, method and benefits of different yogasanas.
- identifies various parts of Shatkarma and their benefits for healthy living.
- applies the knowledge of Yog for a healthy lifestyle.
- explain the different types of pranayama.

15.1 YOGIC DIET

Yogic food (or yogic diet), is a way of eating food in keeping with the principles of yog philosophy to promote physical, mental and spiritual health. Diet has a strong bond with the mind. The Mind is made out of the subtle portion of food that we consume. According to Chhandogya Upanishad, the food we eat separates into three parts –





Note

- i. The majority becomes excreta and is expelled from our body.
- ii. A minor part becomes our body tissues like, flesh etc.
- iii. The remaining finest part affects our mind.

It's obvious that the nature of food impacts the mind. With the purity of food, one's inner nature becomes purified; through the purification of inner nature, one attains self-awareness; and with self-awareness, all external ties and attachments are withdrawn. We must understand that adopting Yogic Diet helps in the practice of Yog and spiritual growth. In this lesson, let's learn about various concepts related to food and the different types of diets in relation to our health.

Concept of Mitahara

The concept of Mitahara is explained in different yogic texts. Mitahara means restraint in diet. All Yog practitioners should follow Mitahara if they want to achieve success in yog. A famous yogic text book *Hathapradipika* states the importance of 'Mitihara', as-

ब्रह्मचारी मिताहारी त्यागी योगपरायणः ।
अब्दादुर्ध्वभवेत्सिद्धो नात्र कार्यविचारणा ॥

(Hathapradipika 1/57)

If a celibate and strict yogi starts practicing yog, he will attain success in yog within a year, there should be no doubt about it.

Dear Learners now the question arises: what is the meaning of Mitahara? The answer is given in the same textbook, *Hathapradipika*, as follows:

Food that is completely smooth and sweet in nature, like ghee, etc., consumed while leaving one-fourth of the stomach empty and taken after being offered to god (Shiva) for the happiness of the soul, is called *Mitahara*.

Different Types of Diet

All human beings are the same, but their likes and dislikes for food vary according to their nature. The *Bhagwad Geeta*, one of the finest yogic texts, provides an answer to why we choose different kinds of food in our daily lives. In this text, three different types of diet are described: Sattvic, Rajasic, and Tamasic. It also explains which type of person prefers which kind of food.

For a person of Sattvic nature person it is described that-

“Persons in the mode of goodness prefer foods that promote life span, increase virtue, strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and naturally tasty.” **Bhagwad Geeta (17/8)**



**Note****For a Rajasik nature person it is described that-**

“Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, very hot, pungent, dry, and full of chillies are liked by persons of Rajasik nature. Such foods produce pain, grief, and disease.”

Bhagwad Geeta (17/9)

For a Tamasic nature person it is described that-

“Foods that are overcooked, stale, putrid, polluted, and impure are liked by persons in the mode of ignorance. You can understand in a simple way which diet is good for healthy living.” **Bhagwad Geeta (17/10)**

Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic Food

Type of Food			
	Satvic Food	Rajasic Food	Tamasic Food
Effect on the body and mind	Sattvic foods are those which purify the body and calm the mind.	They stimulate the body and mind into action. In excess, these foods can cause hyperactivity, restlessness, anger, irritability, and sleeplessness.	Tamasic foods are those which dull the mind and bring about inertia, confusion and disorientation.
Identification of the food	Cooked food that is consumed within 3-4 hours can be considered assattvic food.	Overly tasty, spicy and oily foods prepared for taste only are Rajasic food.	Stale or reheated food, oily or heavy food and food containing artificial preservatives fall under this category.
Examples -	Fresh fruits, green leafy vegetables, nuts, grains, fresh milk, certain spices, freshly cooked food	Spicy food, onion, garlic, tea, coffee, fried food	Non-vegetarian diet, stale food, excessive intake of fats, oil, sugary food





Note

Pathya Ahara or Beneficial Diet

The concept of Pathya (Beneficial for health) is described in Hathapradipika as follows –

According to this textbook, *Pathya* food refers to food that is easily digested by the body without any difficulty. As per *Hathapradipika*, the following food items fall under the category of *Pathya Ahara*: wheat, aged rice, barley, Sathi rice (a variety of rice that matures in 60 days), milk (*ksheer*), ghee, *khand* (unrefined sugar), butter, *mishri* (rock sugar), honey, dry ginger, five types of vegetables, pulses such as green gram and lentils, and pure rainwater. These are considered diet foods, meaning they are easily digestible.

Additionally, it is stated that food should be nutritious (capable of strengthening the body), naturally sweet, aliphatic (prepared with ghee, etc.), and *gavyam* (made from cow's ghee and milk) for a yogic practitioner. Food that nourishes the *dhatus* (body tissues) and pleases the mind should be consumed. This type of diet is called *Pathya Ahara* and is considered highly beneficial. **Hathpradipika (1/62-63)**



Activity 15.1

Eat satvic ahara for 1 week regularly and observe its effects on your body and mind.



Intext Questions 15.1

Fill in the Blanks

- i) Food which we eat, divides itself into ____ parts.
- ii) The food which produces pain, grief, and disease is known as _____ food.
- iii) The food which is overcooked, stale, putrid, polluted, and impure is known as _____ food.
- iv) Pulses of moong, lentils and rain water etc. are called ____ food.

State whether the following statements are True or False.

- i) A brahmachari, devoted to yog achieves success in his enquiry and effort within two years. ()
- ii) Practicing *Mitahara* (moderation in diet) and *Tyaga* (renunciation and solitude) with devotion to yog leads to success. ()





Note

15.2 YOGASANAS

After understanding the significance of diet for healthy living and well-being, it is important to understand the meaning, purpose and methods of different Yogsanas. We will understand the benefits of some important Yogsanas which are very common and have healthy effect on our body.

15.2.1 Meaning and Definition of Asana

Traditionally, yogsana means a 'sitting condition' or 'position' of the body, which contributes to the steadiness of the body, mind and a sense of well-being. The term asana is also used to indicate a carpet of grass, a square piece of cloth or mat that is utilized as a comfortable 'seat' on the ground for sitting. The term yogasana or asana is used in different text books related to yog. Basically all the texts accept the term Asana as an important practice of Yog. In the Yog Sutra, Patanjali mentioned asana as a 'firm, comfortable posture' referring to seated posture that is basic of all asanas. Patanjali does not talk about any specific asana, he just mentioned that the only requirement of asana is that the posture should be controlled and contrable. He also equates asana to the balanced sitting position of dhyana.

i.e., स्थिरसुखमासानम् | *"Sthira Sukhamasanam"*. Patanjali Yog Sutra(2/46)

- Sthira means steady, firm or stable,
- Sukham means pleasant or happiness,
- Asana means Posture or Shape.
- Therefore, Asana (posture) is that which is steady and pleasant.

Maharishi Patanjali also describes the process of asana as -

Prayatna (all physical activities or all kinds of physical efforts), Shaithilya (to relax or stop) Ananta (which never ends i.e. in God or Paramatma) and Samapatibhyam (by concentrating fully on the asana one attains perfection).

15.2.2 Classification of Asana

The Authoritative scripture of yog Hatha Pradeepika covered only 15 asanas, and proceeds to breath holding and other practices. Gheranda Samhita is one of popular text of Hathayog, which has mentions 32 asanas. There are so many asanas described in different text books. But for easy understanding, we can understand the classification of asanas as follows –

- Meditative Asanas (Dhyana Asanas)** – Padmasana (Lotus Pose), Vajrasana, Sidhasana, Swastikasana etc.





Note

ii) **Cultural Asanas (Saririka Asanas)** – Matsyendrasna, Bhujangasna, Kurmasana etc.

iii) **Relaxative Asanas (Savasana Type)** – Savasana, Makrasna, etc.

Also we can understand the classification of asanas based on the physical posture of the body.

i) **Standing posture** – Tree pose, Tadasana, Triyak Tadasana, Trikonasana, Katichakrasana, etc.

ii) **Sitting posture** – Paschimottanasana, Mandukasana, Gaumukhasana, Vakrasana, Ustrasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, etc.

iii) **Prone position (lying on stomach)** – Bhujangasana, Makarasana, Salabhasana, dhanurasana, etc.

iv) **Supine position (lying on back)** – Pawanmuktasna, Uttanpadasana, Ardha halasana, Setubandhasana, Naukasana, Halasana etc.

15.2.3 General Benefits of Asana

To understand the benefits of asanas, Let's understand the benefits of some important asanas:

- They lubricate the muscles, joints, ligaments, and other parts of the body.
- They help increase circulation, enhance flexibility, and strengthen the body.
- Practicing asanas daily can boost energy levels.
- They aid in maintaining mind-body balance.
- They improve tolerance to cold and heat, hunger and thirst, profit and loss, etc.
- They promote steadiness, better health, and lightness of the limbs.

15.2.4 Few important asanas practiced in day-to-day life

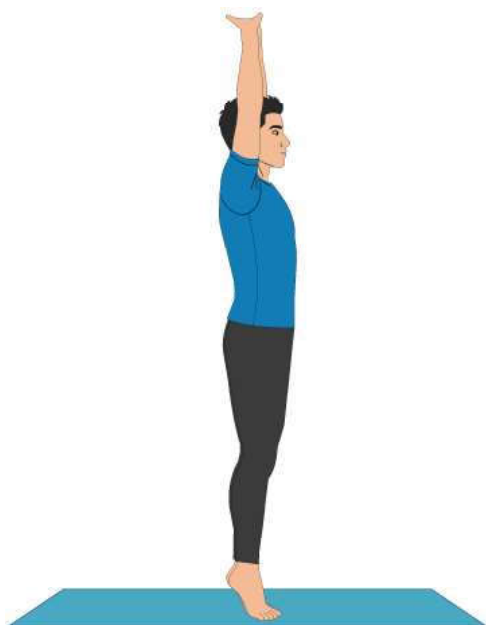
i. **Tadasana:** Tadasana is a foundational standing yog pose that serves as the base for many other standing poses. It is a simple yet powerful pose that focuses on alignment and grounding.

Method: Stand with the feet together. Steady the body and distribute the weight equally on both the feet. Interlock the fingers and turn the palm upwards and place it on the top of the head. Fix the eyes at a point during whole practice. Inhale and stretch the arms over the head and raise the heels coming up onto the toes simultaneously. Hold the breath and the position for few seconds. Slowly exhale and return to the starting position.





Note



Tadasana

Benefits: Increases body flexibility, relieves back stress, reduces pressure from the spinal nerves and contributes in increasing height.

- ii. **Tree Pose:** Tree Pose, or Vrikshasana, is a standing yog pose that involves balancing on one leg while bringing the other foot to rest on the inner thigh or calf of the standing leg. Beginners can place the foot on the calf if balancing is difficult

Method: Stand with feet 4" (inches) apart. Lift the right leg up and place the sole of the right leg on the inside of the left thigh close to the groin with the toes pointing down. Slowly inhale and raise your hands up, and at the same time give a good upward stretch to your body by lifting it up from the sides. Then join the palms on top. Hold as long as you can while breathing deeply and fix your eyes on a point. Then slowly, bring the hands down and then bring down the right leg on the floor next to your left leg. This is half. Repeat with the other leg.



Vrikshasana (Tree pose asana)





Note

Benefits: Stretches and strengthens the ligaments and tendons in your feet, improves balance. Tree pose requires proper weight distribution and posture, which can help provide stability to the groin, thighs, hips, and pelvis.

- iii. **Vajrasana:** Vajrasana, also known as Thunderbolt Pose or Diamond Pose, is a seated yog posture that is commonly used for meditation



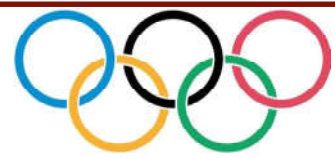
Vajrasana (Thunderbolt pose)

Method: Stand on your knees on your seat. Keep the knees and toes together with a distance of 4-6 inches between the two heels. Bring both toes together in such a way that the toe thumbs touch each other or the right thumb is above the left thumb. Then, sit down slowly, keeping your buttocks in the space between your heels. Place both palms on the knees, the inner part of the palm should be downwards. Keep the spine and neck straight. breathe normally in the final position of the asana.

Benefits: This helps in digestion, cures gastric trouble and constipation. Also, it keeps the stomach light and the back straight.

- iv. **Padmasana:** Padmasana is a classic seated yog posture used for meditation and breathing exercises. It is also known as the Lotus Pose,

Method: Sit on the floor or on a yog mat with your legs extended in front of you. Sit straight with your spine aligned. Bend the right knee and bring the right foot toward the left hip crease. Bend your left knee and bring the left foot toward the right hip crease. Ensure that both knees touch the ground. Rest your hands on your knees with palms facing up. Or you may place your hands in a mudra (hand gesture) with your index finger and thumb touching. Lift your chest and lengthen your spine. Engage your core muscles for support. Roll your shoulders back and down. Keep them relaxed, away from your ears. Focus on your breath. Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply.



**Note****Padmasana (Lotus pose)**

Contraindications: Avoid doing Padmasana during knee or ankle injuries. Pregnant women and individuals with hip or knee issues should be cautious with this pose.

Benefits It relieves constipation and improves digestion. The usual blood flow to the legs is diverted to the abdominal region, aiding digestion. Improved digestion may help to maintain body weight and fitness. Provides a stable foundation for meditation. It helps to achieve a calm and focussed state of mind.

- v. **Padahastasana:** Padahastasana is also known as Hand-to-Foot Pose or Standing Forward Bend. This pose requires bending forward from the hips to bring the hands to the feet.

**Padahastasana (Hand-to-Foot Pose)**



Note

Method: Stand with feet together, the spine erect and hands beside the body. Inhale slowly and raise both arms and stretch the body up from the waist. Exhale, bend forward from the waist and try to touch the forehead to your knee and place your palm on the ground beside the feet. Slowly return to the starting position. This is one round. Repeat this 5 times.

Benefits: This reduces gastric issues and strengthens the Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna Nadis and channelizes the pranic flow. It stretches the back of the legs which improves flexibility and reduces stiffness. This calms the mind and reduces stress and anxiety. The inversion in this posture increases blood flow to the brain, which brings about mental clarity and increases energy levels.

Activity – Create a chart listing standing and sitting asanas.

- vi. **Ushtrasan:** Ushtrasana, also known as the Camel Pose, is a yog asana that involves a deep backward bend.

Method: Begin by kneeling on your mat with your knees hip-width apart. Place your hands on your hips with your fingers pointing downward. Press your hips forward, engaging your core muscles. Inhale as you begin to arch your back, leaning backward. Take your hands back one at a time to grasp your heels. Drop your head back, open your chest, and extend your thighs. Hold the pose for 15-30 seconds, breathing deeply and maintaining awareness of your breath. To come out of Ushtrasana, slowly bring your hands (one by one) back on your hips. Inhale as you lift your torso back to an upright kneeling position.

Contraindications: Avoid Ushtrasana if you have neck or back injuries. Pregnant women and individuals with high blood pressure should avoid or modify this pose.



Ushtrasan (Camel pose)

Benefits: This strengthens the heart, enhances the lungs' efficiency and makes the spinal column flexible. This also provides exercise to Nadis.





Note

- vii. **Shashankasan:** Shashankasana, also known as **Rabbit Pose** or **Hare Pose**, is a **yog asana** that involves a forward bend and is often practiced for its calming and grounding effects.

Method: Adopt position of Vajrasana. Your heels should be slightly apart, and your big toes should be in contact to each other. Keep both the palms on the respective thighs with shoulder relaxed. Try to stay steady while keeping the spine, neck and head erect. Inhale slowly and deeply. Start bending forward from your lower back during exhalation. Bend forward with your arms stretched in front of you. With your forehead lying on the mat, stretch your arms forward and place your hands on the floor. Throughout the pose, your buttocks should continue to rest on your heels. Relax your neck in this position. In the final position, close your eyes and focus on your breath. Take slow, deep breaths, and allow your body to relax with each exhale.



Shashankasan (Rabbit pose)

Benefits: This increases flexibility of the backbone, cures stomach problems and helps to reduce headache, stress and hair fall.

- Viii. **Bhujangasana:** Bhujangasana or Cobra Pose, is a backbend yog pose that is often incorporated into yog sequences. It is named after the cobra snake, as the pose resembles a snake lifting its head.

Method: Bhujangasana involves lying on the stomach with hands under the shoulders then pressing the palms into the ground and lifting the chest and head off the mat. The pose resembles a cobra with its hood raised.



Bhujangasana (Cobra pose)





Note

Contraindications: People suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, hypertension, hyperthyroidism should perform under expert guidance.

Benefits: This provides a soothing exercise for the heart and the backbone. It also cures gastric troubles, firms up the abdominal muscles and improves kidney function. Additionally, it strengthens the muscles in the thighs and back. Regular practice helps reduce constipation.



Intext Questions 15.2

Fill in the Blanks

- Posture (asana) is that which is _____ and _____.
- As per patanjali when an asana is _____, it does not create trauma.
- As per Hathpradipika asanas improve _____.
- The Tree Pose _____ and _____ the ligaments and tendons in your feet and improves balance.
- Yogmudra posture _____, gives strength to the digestive system and increases appetite.
- Bhujangasana provides a _____ to the heart and the backbone.

15.3 SHATKARMA

After understanding the role of Yog sana for healthy living and well-being it is important to learn about Shatkarma in day-to-day life. We will try to understand the meaning, significance and purpose of Shatkarma and also try to understand its benefits. Shatkarma, also known as the six cleansing techniques, are practices in yog that aim to purify the body and mind.

15.3.1 Meaning, Purpose and Significance of Shatkarma

Shatkarma is a Sanskrit term and is also called as shatkriyas. These are six yogic purification techniques of the body.

Purpose and Significance of Shatkarmas

- To cleanse the body of impurities and maintain balance among **Vata, Pitta, and Kapha**, thereby promoting overall health.
- For yogis, it serves as a practice to purify the **nadis**, preparing the body for advanced yog practices.





Note

- If there is an excess of fat or phlegm in the body, these six **kriyas** (cleansing practices) should be performed first. However, those without such excess should not practice them.

15.3.2 Types of Shatkarma

धौतिर्बस्तिस्तथानेतिस्त्रटकर्मनौलिकम्तथा ।

कपालभतिश्चैतानिषट्कर्माणिप्रचक्षते ।। Hathyog Pradipika (2/23)

The six types of karmas are: 1) Dhauti, 2) Basti, 3) Neti, 4) Trataka, 5) Nauli and 6) Kapalabhati. Each of these six kinds of karmas/actions have a different purifying technique. Come let us learn about each karma in detail .

- Dhauti Karma:** ‘Dhauti’ is a Sanskrit word that means- ‘Washing or cleaning’. Dhauti cleans the upper part of the digestive system. Dhauti is one popular way, where one swallows a length of cloth in order to remove phlegm, bile and impurities from the digestive system. In Gheranda Samhita four types of Dhauti have been described, which are: Antar Dhauti, Danta Dhauti, Hrid Dhauti, and Moolashodhan.

Benefits: Provides benefits in cough, asthma, enlargement of the spleen, leprosy, and 20 kinds of kapha diseases.

Precautions: Individuals who are suffering from hypertension, stomach ulcers and cardiovascular diseases should avoid it.

- Basti Kriya:**

Basti Kriya means the ‘enema’ (cleansing of intestines the through anal route). In ancient times yogis stood in the river or the pond till the level of the navel and used to pull the water into the intestines through the anus and then expelled the water from the anus again.

Benefits: By practising Basti kriya with water, the Dhatus, the Indriyas and the mind become calm. It gives glow and tone to the body and increases the appetite. All the disorders disappear.

Precautions:

Persons suffering from stomach ulcers, piles, fistula & fissures should not practice it. This should only be done under the guidance of a yog teacher.

- Neti Kriya:** Neti means cleaning of the nasal passage (nose and its surrounding area). It is of two types:
 - a) Jal Neti— With lukewarm saline water
 - b) Sutra Neti— With wax coated cotton thread





Note

- a) **Jal Neti Method:** Sit in Kagasan. Take lukewarm saline water in the Neti pot. Put the cone of the Neti pot into the left nostril and keep the right nostril slightly downwards by tilting the head towards the right. During procedure take breath from the mouth by keeping the mouth open. The water starts coming out from the right nostril. Also, phlegm/mucus comes out along with the water. Do the same procedure with the other nostril. Immediately after Jal Neti, the Kapalbhati should be performed so that the water remaining inside the nostrils also comes out and the nostrils get fully opened. After this, relax in Shashankasana for some time.



Jal Neti

Time- Jal Neti is performed only in the morning on an empty stomach.

Benefits- Benefits in running nose, cough, sinusitis etc.

- b) **Sutra Neti:** In Sutra Neti, a waxed cotton thread is traditionally used to clean the nasal cavity. This waxed cotton thread is inserted into the nose and then pulled out from the mouth. Both ends are then held with the hands, and a to-and-fro motion is used to clean the nasal passage. Nowadays, a rubber catheter is commonly used instead of a cotton thread, as it is easily available in medical stores and easy to perform.



Sutra neti





Note

Benefits: Sutra Neti is the cleaner of the brain and gives divine sight. It soon destroys all the diseases of the cervical and scapular regions.

Precautions:

This kriya should be practised only under the guidance of a qualified yog teacher to ensure safety and effectiveness.

- iv. **Trataka Kriya:** Looking intently with a blinkless gaze at a small point until tears are shed is known as Trataka Kriya.

Method: Light a ghee lamp or candle and keep it in front of the eye level at about 4 feet distance. The lamp should be placed in a wind-free area. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana, keeping the back straight. Relax the whole body and be calm and quiet. Now open your eyes and gaze at the flame of the lamp without blinking. Gaze for as long as possible without strain. When the eyes begin to tire, burn or shed tears then gently close your eyes. Again open the eyes and start with the same procedure. Slowly increase the practice. With practice, one can go from a few seconds to a few minutes without blinking. Do not extend it beyond 20 minutes.

Time: This kriya should be done regularly to get benefits.

This can also be done by drawing a black dot on a paper or on the symbol of “Aum”, instead of ghee lamp, candle can be used.

Benefits: Trataka is practiced to activate unknown powers of the mind. Tratak is an extremely powerful sadhana for all spiritual seekers and is also good for the eyes and brain. It helps in developing concentration. It strengthens the eye muscles. Trâataka destroys eye diseases and removes sloth, etc. It should be carefully kept a secret, like a box of jewellery.

Precautions:

This kriya should be practiced only under the guidance of a qualified yog teacher.

Activity – Practice Tratak daily for 1 week and observe its effects on concentration and memory.

- v. **Nauli Kriya:** A cleansing practice for the abdomen that uses the abdominal muscles to massage and stimulate the digestive organs. The muscles of the abdomen are projected forward then contracted in a wave like movement that increases body fire.

There are four types of Nauli kriya: Madhyama Nauli, Vama Nauli, Dakshina Nauli, and Bhramar Nauli.

Method: Stand upright with a two-foot gap between legs. Place both hands on your knees and lean slightly forward. Look at the stomach and exhale completely to get in Uddiyan bandha. Abdominal muscles will align and emerge





Note

out at the center of the abdomen. It is shape like a naal (tube/stalk). Try to rotate emerged abdominal muscles from right to left and then left to right. Placing these emerged abdominal muscles at the centre of the abdomen is termed as “Madhya Nauli”, on the right side it is termed as “Dakshina Nauli” and on the left side it is termed as “Vama Nauli”.



Performing Nauli kriya

Benefit: It removes dyspepsia, increases appetite and digestion, and is like the goddess of creation, and causes happiness.

Time- Its practice should be done early morning, before meals and on an empty stomach.

Precautions:

This kriya should be practiced only under the guidance of a qualified yog teacher.

- vi. **Kapalbhati:** The meaning of ‘Kapal’ is ‘brain’ and ‘Bhati’ is to shine, i.e, kriya that cleans and shines the brain is called Kapalbhathi.

Method: Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana with a straight spine. Keep both hands on your knees. Take a regular deep breath by relaxing the abdominal muscles. Exhalation should be rapid and forceful while inhalation should be normaly. Holding of breath is not done in Kapalbhathi. Only exhalation and





Note

inhalation are practiced. Exhalation is the main part of Kapalbhata. Repeat the same procedure about 20-25 times and gradually increase the time of practice.

Time: Practice can be done on an empty stomach.

Benefits: It purifies the lungs and blood by increasing the amount of oxygen in the body. It calms down the mind. Regular practice helps in reducing the weight and detoxifies all the systems of the body.

Precautions:

- This is not suitable for heart and high blood pressure patients.
- In summer do not practice it for a long time.

15.4 PRANAYAMA

Dear learners, we have just explored **Shatkarma** in detail. Now, let us delve into **Pranayama**, its types, and its benefits. The primary reason for learning **Shatkarma** before **Pranayama** is to prepare the body and mind for more advanced practices. Practicing **Shatkarma** beforehand helps cleanse the body, enhances energy levels, and promotes mental clarity, making individuals better equipped for **Pranayama**.

15.4.1 Meaning, Purpose and Importance of Pranayama

Meaning of Pranayama: Pranayama is a fundamental concept in yogic literature and is emphasised in all schools of yog, including **Raja Yog** and **Hatha Yog**. The word **Pranayama**, derived from Sanskrit, combines two words: **Prana** and **Ayama**. **Prana** is the vital energy that connects the mind and body and is often associated with breath. **Ayama** means regulation, expansion or extension. In **Pranayama**, **Ayama** implies the control or expansion of breath which is crucial to harmonise the energy of the body and our well-being.

Voluntarily regulated yog breathing techniques are referred to as Pranayama practices. A few ways to modify our breath include changing the rate and depth, holding the breath, breathing through the mouth or breathing through one or both nostrils alternately.

Both Ashtangyog and Hathyog include Pranayama as an important practice. Pranayama practices and its importance are mentioned in almost all yogic texts.

Maharishi Patanjali defines **Pranayama** as:

“Pranayama is the regulation of the process of inhalation and exhalation, which follows after the attainment of a steady posture (asana).”

तस्मिन्सतिश्वासप्रश्वासयोः गतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः ॥ पा. यो. सू. 2/49



**Note****Purpose and Importance of Pranayama:**

Pranayama is the most significant element of the eight limbs of Ashtang Yog and is mentioned as the fourth limb of AstangYog.

- The objective of breathholding is to central and regulate vital force (prana) that pervades the body.
- Pranayama also help in regulating the breath that can calm mind and body.
- As long as this vital energy (prana) is present in the body it is called life. But as soon as it leaves the body, we attain the state of death. That's why we should practice Pranayama to save life.
- Pranayama brings lightness in the body.

As Parnayama is a very advanced yogic activity, therefore one should systematically practice it within their ability under the guidance of an expert.

15.4.2 Breathing Phases in Pranayama

The aim of Pranayama, is to regulate the unequal flow of breath through the nostrils.

Breathing phases in Pranayama:

1. Puraka or inhalation phase- It means complete inhaling (swas).
2. Rechaka or the exhalation phase- It means complete exhaling (praswas).
3. Kumbhaka- It means retention of breath. These three phases together form a breathing cycle.

Kumbhaka is further divided into two parts.

- i) Antar Kumbhak – retention of breath after Puraka
- ii) Bahir Kumbhak – retention of breath after Rechaka.

While practicing Pranayama, air should be exhaled and inhaled fully with proper skill. Pranayama's most important component is Kumbhaka or retaining breath. Kumbhaka should only be practiced under the supervision of an expert yogic practitioner.

Note: Kumbhak during Pranayam practice should be avoided by people with high blood pressure or heart problems. They should practice doing Pranayama with normal breathing.

15.4.3 Different Types of Pranayama

Different types of Pranayama are described in various yogic scriptures We will discuss a few very common Pranayama practices that are generally used to maintain good health are: Suryabhedhi, Ujjayi, Bhramari, Bhastrika, Sheetali and Sheetkari.





Note

Nadi shodhan/ anulom- vilom is performed before doing all these Pranayama practices. For easy understanding, we have categorised Pranayama based on its physiological effects on the body as follows:

- 1) Balancing or Purification Pranayam — Nadi Shodhan Pranayama
- 2) Tranquilizing Pranayam — Bhramari, Ujjayi
- 3) Cooling Pranayama — Sheetal, Sheetkari
- 4) Heating Pranayama – Bhastrika, Suryabhedhi

Come, let us learn different types of pranayama in detail.

- i. **Nadi Shodhan Pranayam:** Nadi shodhan means “channel clearing”. It is to be done before any Pranayama practice.

Method: Sit down in any comfortable asana with your spine erect. Then, use the thumb of your right hand to close the right side of your nose. Inhale slowly and deeply using the left nostril. Then, close the left nostril likewise and exhale using the right nostril. Similarly with the left nostril still closed, inhale with the right nostril and exhale with the left one. This is one cycle. Practice the same cycle around 10-15 times.



Nadi shodhan Pranayama

Benefits: Regular practice of this through Chandra (left nostril) and Surya nadi (right nostril), purifies the entire nadi in about three months or more. It improves the functioning of the respiratory system. It balances our nervous system and develops inner awareness and deeper understanding. Also, it balances both the hemispheres of the brain.

- ii. **Suryabhedhi Pranayama:** ‘Surya’ means the sun and ‘bheda’ means to pierce/awaken/enter. In the body, Pingala Nadi represents the energy of the sun or





Note

vital energy. Therefore, it means that we pierce or purify the Pingala Nadi. In this Pranayama, we inhale and exhale through the right nostril.

Benefits: Suryabhedhi Pranayama purifies our skull i.e. brain region, cures Vata & kapha related diseases and destroys worms produced in the stomach. It stimulates the sympathetic nervous system and the left part of the brain.

- iii. **Ujjayi :** Ujjayi pranayam is also called 'ocean breath' and this Pranayam is about mimicking the sound of the waves of ocean. In Ujjayi breathing, both inhalation and exhalation are through the nose. It is a diaphragmatic breath which fills the lower belly first, then the lower rib cage, the upper chest and the throat. The opening between the vocal cords is narrowed, creating a rushing or hissing sound. This audible breathing has been linked to ocean waves or the snoring of a baby.

Benefits This removes Sleshma (phlegm) in the throat and increases the appetite. It destroys the obstructions in the nadis. Ujjayi should be performed in all conditions of life, even while walking or sitting.

- iv. **Sheetkari:** In this Pranayama, we inhale air through our mouth. Sit in a comfortable position. Bring the teeth together lightly. Separate the lips so that the teeth are exposed and then fold the tongue behind the teeth to touch the soft palate. Inhale slowly through the teeth. It produces a hissing sound. Close the mouth and exhale slowly through the nose. Keep the breaths slow and relaxed.



Sheetkari Pranayama

Benefits: By practicing Sheetkari, one becomes next to the God of Love in beauty. This practice cools the body and mind. A practitioner of this Pranayama is not afflicted by hunger, thirst, sleep or lassitude. It helps to reduce blood pressure and acidity. It removes excessive heat, therefore, it is beneficial in summer.

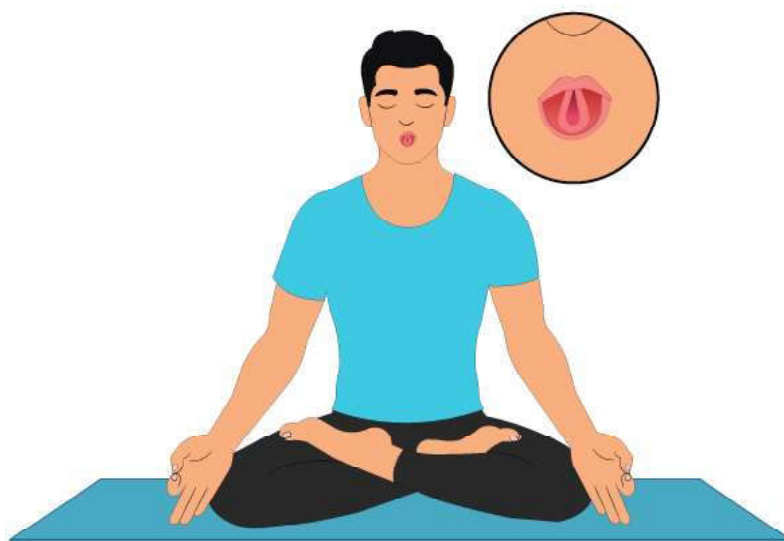




Note

Contraindications: People suffering from low blood pressure, respiratory disorder, excessive mucus, sensitive teeth, chronic constipation, hypothyroidism and hypoacidity should not practice this Pranayama. It should not be practiced by people having artificial teeth.

- v. **Sheetali Pranayama:** As the name ‘Sheetali’ suggests—cool, calm, and soothing—it helps us achieve these effects through practice. For this, open the mouth and extend the tongue outside of the mouth, rolling it from the sides to form a tube. Inhale through the tube and exhale through the nose slowly and deeply



Sheetali Pranayama

Contra-indications: -Same as Sheetkari Pranayam.

Benefits: Sheetali 2umbhika cures colic, enlarged spleen, fever, disorders of bile, hunger, thirst, and counteracts poisons.

- i. **Bhastrika Pranayama:** ‘Bhastrika’ is a Sanskrit word which means ‘bellows’. It resembles the blowing of bellows, hence it is called Bhastrika Pranayam. It is an excellent breathing exercise which can be practiced slowly or quickly as



Bhastrika Pranayama





Note

per our convenience. But basically it is fast breathing. Take a deep breath through both nostrils and fill the lungs with air and then exhale with a hissing sound. Inhale deeply and exhale completely.

Benefits: This destroys Vata, pitta (bile) and phlegm and increases the digestive power (the gastric fire). It quickly awakens the KuGalinî, purifies the impurities of body, gives pleasure, and is beneficial. It speeds up the blood circulation. Increases the flow of prana throughout the whole body.

- ii. **Bhramari Pranayama:** In this type of Pranayama we exhale air by making a humming sound, the sound of 'm', as in the third letter of 'aum'. It resembles the typical humming sound of bees. That's why, it is called Bhramari Pranayam. Exhale slowly and do not strain while practicing. The sound should be smooth, even and controlled.



Bhramari Pranayama

Benefits: It is best suited for insomnia (sleeplessness) disorder. It relieves tension, anger and anxiety. It increases concentration and memory. It controls high blood pressure. It strengthens the throat and voice and is beneficial for various throat problems. It is good for thyroid problems.



DO YOU KNOW?

The Indian Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, in his United Nations address suggested an annual Day of Yog on June 21, as it is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and shares a special significance in many parts of the world. The **International Day of Yog** has been celebrated across the world annually on June 21 since 2015. For more details visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Yog



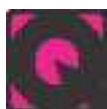
**Note**

15.5 APPLY THE KNOWLEDGE OF YOG FOR HEALTHYLIFESTYLE

Incorporating yog into your lifestyle, including a yogic diet, asanas (physical postures), shatkarma (cleansing techniques) and Pranayama (breath control), can contribute to a healthier and more balanced life.

Follow a balanced and nutritious yogic diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein etc. Remember it is essential to approach yog with consistency and patience. Listen to your body while practicing yog.

As you know that Asanas help in improve flexibility, strength and balance. Include a daily asana practice in your daily routine. Start practicing with a sequence that suits you like Tadasana, shavasana, etc; and also include shatkarma techniques like Neti, kapalbhati and Trataka into your daily routine. Consult a qualified yog instructor/teacher for guidance on proper technique and frequency. Practice Pranayama regularly. Start with simple techniques and gradually explore more advanced practices. Pay attention to your breath and practice mindfulness.



Intext Questions 15.3

State whether the following statements are True or False.

- i) The practice of Nadi Shodhan Pranayama affects the entire nadi system. ()
- ii) Nadi Shodhan Pranyama purifies our skull i.e. brain region, cures Vata related diseases (diseases caused by vitiation of air) and destroys krimi. ()
- iii) Practice of Bhastrika Pranyama destroys Vata, pitta (bile) and phlegm and increases the digestive power (the gastric fire). ()
- iv) The sattva of the practitioner's body becomes free from all disturbances with the practice of Sheetkari Pranayama. ()
- v) Enlargement of the spleen, leprosy, and twenty kinds of diseases caused by phlegm disappear with the practice of Dhauti Karma. ()
- vi) Basti kriya gives glow and tone to the body and increases the appetite. ()
- vii) The Neti is not the cleaner of the brain and giver of divine sight. ()
- viii) Kriya that cleans and shines the brain is called Kapalbhati. ()



MODULE-4

Yog



Note

Yog for Healthy Living



Terminal Questions

1. What is yogic Diet?
2. Which type of diet is good for health?
3. How many types of diets are there according to the Bhagwad Geeta?
4. Discuss the benefits of asana as per yogic texts
5. Write the classification of asanas.
6. Discuss two supine asanas with their benefits.
7. Explain the benefits of Pranayama as per yogic texts.
8. How many types of Shatkarmas are there? Name and explain them.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS-

15:1

- i) Three Parts,
- ii) Rajsic Food,
- iii) Tamsic Food,
- iv) Diet food means fast digestible food/Pathya Ahak

True and False-

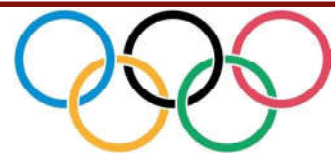
- i) F
- ii) T

15:2

- i) steady and pleasant,
- ii) perfected,
- iii) health and lightness of limb.
- iv) stretches and strengthens
- v) removes severe gastric trouble,
- vi) soothing exercise

15:3

- i) T
- ii) F
- iii) T
- iv) T
- v) T
- vi) T
- vii) F
- viii) T





Note

References/Bibliography

- i) Patanjali yog Sutra,
- ii) Hathayog Pradipika,
- iii) Gherand Samhita,
- iv) Bhagwad Geeta

Concept Map

