

YOG - YOGA

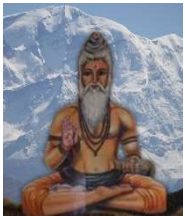
A BEACON FOR MODERN LIFESTYLES & THE NEED FOR CUSTOMIZATION

Article by Acharya V Venkat

YOG is the practice of the inner journey and YOGA provides the direction – The Bridge Within

Many traditions consider the human experience to be dual - composed of an outer, material world and an inner, spiritual one. While much of modern life is focused on the outer world, with its focus on material achievements and sensory experiences, yoga encourages us to explore the inner realm.

Through yoga, we learn to slow down, to breathe, to pay attention to our bodies, our thoughts, and our feelings. We begin to observe ourselves from a place of detached mindfulness, which helps us understand our patterns, our reactions, our fears, and our desires.

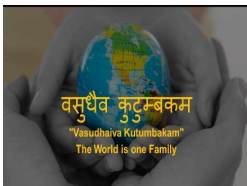


“Patanjali” - a great sage, compiled knowledge about yoga from various sources into a concise text called the Yoga Sutras.

The International Day of Yoga, celebrated globally on 21st June each year, is a testament to the growing recognition of yoga as a holistic pathway to health and wellbeing. Its resonance lies in the ease with which it transcends cultural boundaries and integrates with modern lifestyles. The observance of Yoga Day is a profound reminder of the significance of yoga, not just as a form of exercise, but as a lifestyle promoting unity of mind, body, and spirit.

The theme “वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्” “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” for International Yoga Day 2023, holds great significance. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, an ancient Sanskrit phrase, translates to "the world is one family". This concept aligns with the essence of yoga, which promotes unity, harmony, and peace.

The Essence of the Theme: Yoga is more than a physical practice. It is a philosophy, a way of life that encourages a sense of connection – with oneself, with others, and with the environment. This year's theme beautifully encapsulates these connections, reflecting the world's shared aspiration for unity and peace.



**“One Earth, One Family,
One Future.”**

This universal appeal underscores the belief that despite our diverse cultures, languages, and geographies, we all belong to one large family - our Earth. It calls for us to care for each other and our planet as we would for our immediate family.



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Yoga: A Pathway to Unity: In today's Modern world, characterized by increasing polarization, conflicts, and environmental issues, yoga offers a pathway to unity and balance. Yoga helps us cultivate a sense of inner peace and mindfulness, which extends into our interactions with others and the world around us. It encourages empathy, compassion, and mutual respect, all integral components of a united global family.

Yoga also promotes the principle of Ahimsa, or non-violence, which includes environmental stewardship and respect for all forms of life. This principle encourages us to live sustainably, aligning our lifestyles with the needs of our planet.

Yoga and Modern Lifestyles: Modern life can be fast-paced, stress-inducing, and disconnected from nature. Work pressure, unhealthy diets, lack of physical exercise, and the general hustle and bustle of everyday life can lead to an array of health issues – both physical and mental. This is where the role of yoga becomes indispensable. Yoga, with its comprehensive approach to wellness, serves as a counterbalance to these pressures. It involves physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), meditation, and ethical principles that can infuse our lives with tranquility, mindfulness, and healthy habits. The benefits range from improved flexibility and strength to stress reduction, better focus, and overall increased vitality. The mindful awareness developed through yoga practice helps us manage our lifestyles more effectively and respond to stressors with greater equanimity.

Challenges and Misconceptions:

However, there exists a misconception that yoga is not for everyone - that it's only for those who are flexible, young, and physically fit. This belief creates a barrier, discouraging many from exploring yoga's diverse benefits. Yet, yoga's essence lies in its universal accessibility, as it offers different paths suitable for varied individual needs and capacities. Another hurdle is the complex lifestyle and time constraints of modern individuals. While traditional yoga practice may involve a substantial time commitment, it can be challenging for many to incorporate it into their busy schedules.

Adapting and Customizing Yoga:

Recognizing these challenges, the need arises for customization in yoga practices, adapting them to align with individual needs, capabilities, and time limitations.

There are various styles of yoga, each with different intensity levels and health benefits. For example, Hatha yoga focuses on basic postures at a comfortable pace, ideal for beginners or those seeking a more relaxed approach. Vinyasa yoga, on the other hand, is more dynamic and can be suitable for those looking for an intense workout.

Moreover, Chair Yoga or Bed Yoga can be great options for the elderly, people with mobility issues, or those recovering from injuries. In this format, traditional yoga poses are modified to be performed while seated on a chair or lying on a bed. This adaptation makes yoga practice more inclusive and accessible.

Also, yoga doesn't necessarily require an hour or two every day. Short, regular practice – even just 15 to 20 minutes – can be extremely beneficial. Micro-practices interspersed throughout the day, like a few minutes of mindful breathing or some desk stretches, can also be valuable ways to integrate yoga into a busy day.

The celebration of Yoga Day serves as a reminder of the importance of yoga in the face of the challenges posed by modern lifestyles. While the perceived barriers to yoga can be daunting, the key lies in adapting and customizing yoga practices to suit individual circumstances. Through this approach, yoga's benefits can be made universally accessible, guiding us towards healthier, more balanced lives in today's hectic world.

Role in the Future: As we collectively envisage “One Earth, One Family, and One Future,” yoga stands as a crucial tool to foster global unity, peace, and sustainable development. It encourages us to adopt lifestyles that are in harmony with our environment, promoting health and wellbeing for all members of our global family.

This year's theme is a call to action, inviting us all to embrace the principles of yoga in our lives, to foster unity, peace, and sustainability. As we commemorate International Yoga Day 2023, let's remember that we are all part of one interconnected family. Through yoga, we can nurture this connection, moving towards a future where we live in harmony with ourselves, each other, and our beautiful planet.

Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is not just a theme; it's a vision for a world united in its diversity, a world where we understand that our individual wellbeing is intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of our global family. It's an invitation to each one of us to be a catalyst for unity and peace, one yoga posture, one breath, one moment of mindfulness at a time.

Youth, Yoga, and the Journey from Mobile Phones to Mobility of Body and Mind: In the digital age, where smartphones and other technologies have become a prevalent part of daily life, it's crucial to explore how the ancient practice of yoga can play a transformative role, especially among the youth. This integration of yoga could initiate a significant shift - from a fixation on mobile phones to the cultivation of mobility and mindfulness in both body and mind.

The Digital Quandary and Youth: Today's youth live in a world that is more connected than ever before, thanks to the advent of smartphones and the internet. The digital age brings a wealth of information and opportunities at our fingertips, enabling a level of global connectedness that previous generations could only dream of. However, it also comes with unique challenges. Young people are increasingly getting entangled in a web of constant digital connectivity. The overuse of mobile phones can lead to physical health issues like poor posture and digital eye strain, and mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and disrupted sleep patterns. It also encourages a sedentary lifestyle, reducing overall physical mobility.

Yoga:A Journey to Mobility and Mindfulness:

This is where yoga can make a remarkable difference. Yoga is a comprehensive discipline that harmonizes the body, mind, and spirit. It has the power to counteract many of the adverse effects of excessive digital device usage and offers a path towards increased physical mobility and mental mindfulness.

Yoga poses (asanas) encourage physical activity and flexibility, counteracting the effects of a sedentary lifestyle. Regular yoga practice can correct postural issues caused by excessive device use, improve overall strength and stamina, and increase physical mobility.

From a mental perspective, yoga practices such as meditation and pranayama (breathing exercises) foster mindfulness and focus. By helping to calm the chatter of the mind, yoga provides young people with tools to manage stress and anxiety effectively, promoting mental wellbeing in an increasingly complex digital world.

Transforming the Youth Perspective

Inculcating yoga in the lives of young people provides them with a healthier alternative to constant digital engagement. By establishing a balance between online connectivity and personal wellbeing, they can harness the benefits of technology without sacrificing their physical and mental health.

Yoga also enhances self-awareness, helping young people understand their bodies and minds better. This heightened sense of self can guide them to use technology mindfully, aware of its effects on their health and wellbeing.

As we strive to guide the youth of today in navigating the digital landscape, integrating yoga can provide a significant boost. Yoga can pave the way for a more balanced, holistic approach to life in the digital age. Encouraging a shift from constant mobile phone usage to enhancing the mobility of body and mind, yoga provides an anchor in the ever-evolving digital world. This International Yoga Day, let's encourage our youth to adopt this timeless practice, fostering a more balanced, healthier future.

Yoga Practice in Parents: Being Role Models Instead of Preaching:

It's often said, "Actions speak louder than words," and there's no context where this saying holds more truth than in parenting. Parents are the first teachers for their children, and the behavioural standards they set greatly impact their child's development and worldview. This dynamic extends to health and wellness habits as well. When it comes to encouraging practices like yoga, parents can play an influential role by embodying its principles and becoming role models, rather than merely advocating for its benefits.

Leading by Example: Children learn more from what they observe than from what they are told. They imitate the actions of those around them, especially their parents. Therefore, if parents are seen practicing yoga regularly, children are more likely to perceive it as a normal, desirable part of daily life. They will naturally gravitate towards adopting this healthy habit, mirroring their parents' actions.

The Ripple Effect of Wellness:

When parents incorporate yoga into their lives, they don't just improve their health. They also foster an environment of wellness within the family. Children growing up in such an environment are likely to have a more favorable attitude towards physical fitness, mental wellbeing, and a balanced lifestyle.

Practicing yoga regularly helps parents manage stress more effectively, promotes better physical health, and improves emotional well-being. This positive impact on parental health and mood can create a more nurturing and harmonious home environment, which is beneficial for children's development and wellbeing.

Beyond Physical Fitness: Embodying Yoga's Values:

Yoga is more than a set of physical exercises ,it is a philosophy that promotes values such as mindfulness, patience, compassion, and self-discipline. Parents who embody these principles provide their children with a living example of how to apply yoga's teachings in their daily lives.

For instance, a parent who practices mindfulness and patience during challenging situations sets a powerful example for their child. They demonstrate how to manage stress healthily, cope with difficulties, and maintain equanimity. Such experiences can be profoundly educational for children, teaching them essential life skills that no amount of verbal instruction can impart as effectively.

The benefits of yoga are manifold, and encouraging children to adopt this practice can set the foundation for a lifetime of health and wellness. However, as parents, it's crucial to remember that our actions carry more weight than our words. By incorporating yoga into our own lives and embodying its principles, we provide our children with a living model of what yoga truly represents.

This International Yoga Day, let's embrace the practice of yoga not just for our children but for ourselves as well. After all, the journey towards a healthier, balanced lifestyle starts with us, and our children are likely to follow in our footsteps.

Yoga has grown in popularity over the years, attracting millions worldwide with its promise of physical fitness, mental wellbeing, and spiritual growth. However, despite the known benefits of yoga, there exist certain challenges in its application in reality. This piece examines those challenges and provides

Challenges in Yoga Practice: Mindset, Modern Food, and Yoga:
The Imperative for Habitual Practice: The cultivation of a holistic lifestyle involves more than just regular exercise or a balanced diet; it includes cultivating the right mindset and integrating healthy practices such as yoga into our daily routines. In today's fast-paced world, the rising popularity of convenient, processed foods and a sedentary lifestyle poses numerous health challenges. These challenges underscore the need for integrating yoga into our everyday lives as a mandatory practice, fostering beneficial habits for physical and mental wellbeing.

The Role of Mind-set: A fundamental aspect of integrating yoga into one's life is adopting the right mindset. Yoga is not a quick fix or a trend to be followed temporarily; it's a lifestyle choice that requires dedication, discipline, and patience. Embracing yoga involves adopting a mindset that values long-term health and wellbeing over immediate gratification, which is key to sustain this practice in the long run.

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The Impact of Modern Food Habits:

In the modern era, our food habits have undergone a significant shift. The rise of processed and fast foods has led to dietary patterns that are high in unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium. These dietary habits, coupled with a sedentary lifestyle, have contributed to increasing rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other health issues.

Yoga, with its holistic approach, can serve as a powerful tool to counter these modern food challenges. Yoga enhances physical health, boosting metabolism, promoting digestion, and aiding weight management. It also cultivates mindfulness, which can extend to our eating habits. A regular yoga practitioner is likely to be more mindful of their dietary choices, favouring nutritious, balanced meals over unhealthy, processed foods.

Mandatory Yoga Practice: Inculcating a Healthy Habit:

To reap the full benefits of yoga, it is crucial to make it a regular practice. In this regard, mandatory yoga practice could play an instrumental role, especially in educational institutions or workplaces. Encouraging students or employees to practice yoga regularly can foster a habit that potentially continues for life.

A regular yoga practice can offer numerous benefits, including improved physical fitness, enhanced focus and productivity, better stress management, and overall improved health. More importantly, the practice of yoga teaches individuals to take active control of their health and wellbeing, promoting a sense of self-care and personal responsibility.

Conclusion:

In a world where our health is increasingly challenged by our modern lifestyle and food habits, yoga offers a comprehensive solution that addresses physical health and cultivates a positive mind-set. By integrating yoga as a mandatory practice in our institutions, we can nurture a habit that is likely to extend beyond the classroom or office, inculcating a lifestyle choice that enhances personal health and societal wellbeing. On this International Yoga Day, let's commit to making yoga an integral part of our lives, not just as an occasional activity, but as a mandatory practice that fosters a healthier, more balanced lifestyle.



“वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्”
“VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM –
The world is one family.”

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