

Hatha Yoga – Good for healthy breathing.

Hatha yoga is the way which has physical health and balance as a main goal, for its practitioners believe that greater mental and spiritual awareness can be brought about with a healthy and pure body.

Hatha yoga mainly concerns itself with asanas or postures. Asanas are contemplative in nature and were originally intuited by yogis during meditation; the Kundalini naturally brings forth these postures or movements, called Kriyas, during deep meditation. These movements help to remove blockages (disease) in the causal, subtle, and physical bodies.

As it has subsequently developed, hatha yoga has concentrated primarily on two of the eight paths, breathing and posture. We breathe roughly 23,000 times per day and use about 4,500 gallons of air, which increases during exercise. Thus, breathing is extremely important to health, and prana, or life-force, is found most abundantly in the air and in the breath. If we are breathing incorrectly, we are hampering our potential for optimal health. Pranayama, literally the "science of breathing" or "control of life force," is the yogic practice of breathing correctly and deeply.

The exercise of Pranayama in hatha yoga is essential to master ones' breathing patterns. If one can master breath, then the mastery of mind is within reach. Through breathing exercises the flow of prana or vital life force through the body is regulated. That energy is certainly needed on the further steps of Hatha Yoga that ultimately may lead to samadhi. Special breathing techniques, in which the flow of breath through both nostrils is alternated, brings balance to the two hemispheres of the brain, which is probably the central objective of Pranayama. Pranayama in hatha yoga also activates the Kundalini Energy.

The main elements of hatha yoga are

- 1) postures (asana),
- 2) cleansing practices (dhauti or shodhana),
- 3) breath control (pranayama),
- 4) locks (bandha, which temporarily restrict local flows of prana) and
- 5) hand gestures (mudra), all of which regulate the flow of prana and purify the inner and outer bodies.

The most wonderful part of Hatha Yoga is the ability to receive instant feedback. With an ever changing working surface, "The Body", one is able to watch the unfolding take place. This may show up as greater flexibility, or the release of energy or life-force "prana", as well as the intuition of what the body desires next in the form of movement to facilitate either healing or growth.

Practicing physical yoga is not difficult. By definition, asanas are bodily positions that are easy to hold comfortably. Regular practice will help you control your emotions and thus lead a more satisfying life. If you start yoga practice early in your life, it will dramatically reduce your risk of developing cancer, diabetes, heart disease and other serious illnesses. The body readily responds to yoga postures. They are simple and should take only a few minutes a day. The reward, however, much exceeds invested efforts.

About the Author

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