

Insights from an Online Yoga Class

Sunita Wadhawan*

Department of Physical Activities, Georges college agra, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, Yoga has always been taught one to one, in fact the physical presence of the teacher has been an absolute necessity in Yoga and for all forms of physical, mental and spiritual development. Yoga classes have seen people lining up to learn from an experienced Yogi or yogini. Despite the challenges of distance and time, people have always been walking into a class to learn. The benefits of yoga have always pushed people towards it and people have taken great pains to attend Yoga Classes.

Lock down and social distancing have been the biggest challenges the pandemic has brought down unto us. In times like this, a yoga class would be essential since it helps reduce stress and brings about a positive attitude. With the whole world opting to work online, study online, the idea of an online yoga class took seed. Sunita Wadhawan explored this area by conducting a month-long, live, online yoga class. Different yogic exercises both physical and mental were carried out by students under the watchful guidance of the teacher through technology.

This paper discusses the challenges and advantages of an online yoga class specifically its need in testing times. "A yogi is not only flexible in his/her body but also finds creative ways to solve a problem" Says Sunita Wadhawan. It is this adaptability and openness that led to these online classes. The outcome of these classes was recorded through a questionnaire and on evaluation of the responses, it was found that all the traditional thought about importance of physical proximity of the teacher and student could be after all a myth. Yoga classes could very well be conducted online and its effectiveness not compromised at all. In fact the classes ensured a diverse and geographically spread out group could come together as a class. The teacher was also quite satisfied with the progress of the group. Online Yoga classes could well be the future of Yoga and its dissemination throughout the world.

Keywords: Yoga; Positive attitude; Adaptability; Physical proximity

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is the art of interconnection between mind and body. It is a practice that has a 5000-year-old history in ancient Indian philosophy. The connection between the body and mind in yoga practices is obtained using a combination of physical postures such as asanas, breathing techniques, and meditation. Initially starting as a practice in India, it has now spread throughout the world and has become popular as a form of exercise that promotes improved control over the mind and body. Improved control paves the way for mind strengthening and overall well-being.

Yoga is equally associated with physical exercise as it is with mind strengthening, but the start of traditional yogic practices was never focused on postures and poses. Physical fitness was not the goal. The practice dealt more with spiritual energy, breathing techniques and control over the mind. Today physical fitness, along with flexibility and strengthening of muscles has become an integral

part of yoga.

The famous sage, Patanjali has written treatise on yogic philosophy. This is known as the "Yoga Sutra" and it is a guide to master control over the mind and emotions. This treatise further states that control over the mind and emotions allows an individual to grow spiritually. The Yoga Sutra is also famous for the fact that this is the oldest written record on the practice of yoga, and as such has become a blueprint for all of modern yoga [1].

Yoga consists of Chakras which are the focal points of energy, thoughts, emotions, and the physical body. Yogis teach chakras as a way to determine the perception of reality by an individual. "When energy becomes blocked in a chakra, it is said to trigger physical, mental, or emotional imbalances that manifest in symptoms, such as anxiety, lethargy, or poor digestion."

Correspondence to: Sunita Wadhawan, Department of Physical Activities, Georges college agra, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, E-mail: wadhawansunita08@gmail.com

Received: February 03, 2021, **Accepted:** February 17, 2021, **Published:** February 24, 2021

Citation: Wadhawan S (2021) Insights from an Online Yoga Class. J Yoga Phys Ther. 11:327.

Copyright: © 2021 Wadhawan S. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Creativity of the mind can only have optimal functioning when the mind is strong and balanced. This can be achieved using Yoga. Practicing yoga allows an individual to align their chakras in a balanced state thus experiencing control over the mind and enhancing our creativity. Asanas are another integral part of yoga. They are the actual physical poses that yoga practitioners use to stimulate flow of energy and balance the chakras [1].

A yoga class can focus on various things; one of them is the cyclic meditation process. This process is an 8-step yoga practice that aims to create a cycle of stimulation and relaxation of the mind to achieve balance and mental strength. The key points of this practice involve single thought process for focused thinking, slowness, awareness of the surroundings, wakefulness, effortlessness to allow relaxation, and expansiveness of the mind. This process of cyclic meditation can relax the body in 35 minutes and gives nine hours of rest that one achieves in sleep. It decreases the heart rate and blood pressure to a state of relaxation.

The 8- step process involved in cyclic meditation is mentioned below:

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Instant relaxation technique

Step 3: Centering

Step 4: Standing asana

Step 5: Quick relaxation technique

Step 6: Sitting asana

Step 7: Deep relaxation technique

Step 8: Closing prayer

The aim of yoga is to have an all-round development of the mind and body. Mental strength to combat psychological illnesses and to increase creativity can be achieved through yoga. The development of a strong flexible body that is pain free and has a balanced functioning of all the organ systems is also achieved through yoga. The stretching routines that one practices in the art of yoga have shown through many experiments to reduce the effect of anxiety and depression on one's mind. The muscles and joints also attain a greater range of motion which releases lactic acid accumulated in the muscles and prevents cramps and problems in muscle contraction [2-5].

The vast range of benefits of yoga is evident. It is truly a holistic practice. Yoga is practiced with a yogi that knows the art of yoga and can teach it to you. This is usually done in the form of classes either with the yogi coming to your home or you going to a center to the yogi. Unfortunately, today in the crisis of the pandemic, where physical contact is completely restricted, the only option left for yogis is to move to online teaching modes. Creative means must be applied to carry out the practice of yoga and to try and achieve maximum productivity, and the yogis have done exactly that.

We have heard of many online classes being held for college and school students to take classes, and just as such yogis have started taking online classes. Their classes involve videos of a yogi practicing yoga, along with giving clear instructions in a soothing voice to ensure the correct posture for each pose and prevent any injuries.

YOGA ON ONLINE PLATFORMS

Yoga practitioners are known as yogis/yoginis. They have been known to be teaching and practicing yoga long before any written account of yoga was discovered. They are the ones who passed down the discipline of yoga to their students, who have spread it, further around the globe.

In today's world, stressful work environments and unpredictable crises have become recurring incidents that lead to disruption of normal lives. This deviation from routine can lead to various mental health problems that affect the daily work of a person. Yoga is known to help calm the mind and develop mental strength to focus and overcome any instability in the mind.

"With less access to gyms and fitness centers around the world, the yoga industry along with other exercise venues has quickly adapted by promoting and offering thousands of online classes" [6].

Yoga as online class is very beneficial during this pandemic time. It allows yogis to take classes from the safety of their home and still provide social help and support to their yoga students. Yoga classes were conducted with great enthusiasm and self-motivation. The benefits of online yoga classes are surely great, but there are also some challenges that one has to face. Good Internet connection is crucial for yoga students to be able to follow their yogi and to keep up with the class with clarity. Poor internet speeds can cause distortion in the video and the student cannot view the postures clearly. Another cause of concern is the amount of screen time gained while doing online classes. The classes conducted lasted for one hour to one and a half hours, and all this time is spent looking at the screen which causes tiredness of the eye and strain in vision. Having a good balance of the positives and negatives can give you huge benefits of doing online yoga class. Another issue is having the correct space to do yoga; if you live in a small cramped apartment it can become difficult to do the postures with limited range of motion.

Conducting online classes surely has its positives. Many people who don't have access to yogis or a yoga center near their homes can avail the benefits of yoga through online classes. There is also freedom and comfort in doing yoga from home. "When working from home people may not have the ideal work environment and for example may be sitting for prolonged periods of time and in awkward positions, which can lead to poor posture. Yoga allows a person to stretch and improve circulation and posture and combat the negative effects of sitting for up to 8 hours per day or more" [6].

You have the option of doing yoga even on rainy days when it isn't possible for you to commute to the yoga class and you also get to save time by reducing travel. Online yoga classes are also a great way to bring family members together to do a combined yoga session. The classes that were conducted had many families doing yoga together. This allowed them to spend quality time with family and experience yoga together.

BENEFITS OF YOGA IN A PANDEMIC

2020 has been a difficult time for all of humanity. The pandemic of Covid-19 started right at the beginning of the year and has spread to every nook and corner of this earth.

"Immunity of the host is an essential requisite to facilitate the eradication of infections. Disturbed immune systems seen as lymphopenia and elevated C-reactive protein levels are recognized to

be the characteristic features in severely affected cases of COVID-19 infection.” Extensive research has shown that asanas, meditation, pranayamas and mantras can help build broad spectrum immunity in an individual [7].

Six months into the pandemic has made people realize that there is a major increase in mental illnesses of the general population. “Rising numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths possibly raise stress and anxiety, while loneliness and depressive feelings are likely due to mandatory social distancing measures” [8]. Another issue is that because vast majority of the population is stuck at home unable to move about and do any activity, their muscles are not coming into use. This can cause loss of fitness and muscle flexibility. People may also end up risking their health by eating unhealthy food and putting on weight. All these issues can be tackled with the help of Yoga.

Poor mental health has known to be linked with decrease in normal functioning of the body and increasing the risk of acute respiratory infections [9]. With the unavailability of many facilities such as regular therapy sessions and certain hospital facilities, many people are suffering even more. There have been methods for online therapy, but they don't seem to be available at an affordable price for everyone. The best way to cope with these hard times is to develop mental strength by you. This can be done by taking online yoga classes. Many yogis have realized the importance of yoga even more so than before in this year, and they have adapted with creativity and flexibility of the mind to online classes. Availing online classes of yoga can help mediate many health risk factors such as anxiety and depression. Meditation has also been found to reduce inflammation markers and enhance stimulation of virus specific immune response [10].

CONCLUSION

Practicing yoga can ensure that flexibility of the body muscles is not lost and health of the individual is maintained. Strengthening the mind through yoga can also lead to creative use of time in quarantine and improvement of oneself.

Availing online yoga classes from the comfort of one's home is the perfect tool to battle boredom and loneliness. You can attain many benefits and this will ensure that you come out of this quarantine happy and healthy.

REFERENCES

1. Daniel Murrell. How does yoga work? Med News Today. 2018.
2. Iyengar BKS. Light on Yoga. London: Thorsons. 1966.
3. Hoyez AC. The 'world of yoga': the production and reproduction of therapeutic landscapes. Soc Sci Med. 2007;65(1):112-124.
4. Ghoncheh S, Smith JC. Progressive muscle relaxation, yoga stretching, and ABC relaxation theory. J Clin Psychol. 2004;60(1):131-136.
5. Amin DJ, Goodman M. The effects of selected asanas in Iyengar yoga on flexibility: Pilot study. J Bodyw Mov Ther. 2014;18(3):399-404.
6. Hart J. Core Wellness Practices to Recommend in Times of Crisis. Alternative and Complementary Therapies. 2020;26(4):155-157.
7. Nagendra H R. Yoga for COVID-19. Int J Yoga. 2020;13:87-88.
8. Tillu G, Chaturvedi S, Chopra A, Patwardhan B. Public Health Approach of Ayurveda and Yoga for COVID-19 Prophylaxis. J Altern Complement Med. 2020;26(5):360-364.

9. Maxwell L, Barrett B, Chase J, Brown R, Ewers T. Self-reported mental health predicts acute respiratory infection. WMJ: official publication of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin. 2015;114(3):100.
10. Morgan N, Irwin MR, Chung M, Wang C. The effects of mind-body therapies on the immune system: meta-analysis. PloS one. 2014;9(7):e100903.