

HAṬHA YOGA BY SRI SWAMI SATCHIDĀNANDA

Bodily postures (Āsanas), Yoga Nidrā (Deep Relaxation), breath control (Prāṇāyāma), cleansing processes (Kriyās), and mental concentration create a supple and relaxed body, increased vitality, radiant health and help in curing physical illness. Through proper diet, the physical body undergoes a cleansing through which impurities and toxins are eliminated and at the same time vitamins and minerals are easily assimilated and utilized by the system. As the body and mind become purified and the practitioner gains mastery over his mind, he finally attains the goal of Yoga, Self-Realization.

Yoga Āsanas are not exercise. The word exercise tends to give the idea of a practice done with quick movement and with a measure of strain involved. "Asana" simply means posture. According to Mahārṣi Patañjali Bhagavān, the definition of a posture, or pose, means one that gives steadiness and comfort.

Symptoms of old age such as wrinkles and poor complexion can be caused by poor circulation of the blood. Poor circulation leaves a lot of toxins and other waste matter in various parts of the body. Once the blood circulation is enriched, however, this foreign matter is washed out and eliminated, giving the body a young look and feel.

As the Yoga Āsanas and Yogic breathing are practiced, increasing the vitality of the body, there will follow a considerable decrease in harmful acts such as smoking and drinking. Many Yoga practitioners have told me that, surprisingly enough to them, they have unconsciously lost the desire to smoke and drink. For that reason, I have never asked any of my students to give up habits such as the above-mentioned, nor have I used a "don't do this, don't do that" method of training. As one takes to it, the ailments disappear.

There is no better health tonic than Yoga Āsanas, and, as everyone will agree, nothing is possible in this world without good health. Health is your birthright but not disease. Strength is your heritage but not weakness. Courage, but not fear. Bliss, but not sorrow. Peace, but not restlessness. Knowledge, but not ignorance.

May you attain this birthright, this divine heritage, to shine as fully developed Yogis, radiating joy, peace, and knowledge everywhere.

Om Śānti, Śānti, Śānti.