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Yoga and Yogic Diet: Tool for Holistic Empowerment of Women

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Abstract

The present paper discuss about women empowerment through yoga and yogic diet. Women empowerment is essential to global development for many reasons. A better economy, improved workforce, and lower rates of domestic violence are just a few of the reasons why empowering women is beneficial for society as a whole. Since ancient times, yoga has been practiced as a form of holistic therapy. An increasing number of studies now demonstrate the physical, mental and emotional benefits of regular practice. If you want lower stress levels, better concentration, self- confidence and improved flexibility, yoga is wonderful way to get there. Yoga practicing and yogic diet allows us to recognize our inner capabilities, rather than constantly focusing on the outer world. Recognizing our unique gifts and talents is an empowering experience, which we can take off the mat and into the world. This is why embracing yoga as a tool for self-reflection is an effective way for women to feel empowered.

Keywords: holistic, domestic violence, capabilities, workforce, embracing

Introduction

Yoga is a great tool for self-empowerment. The word yoga actually means union with divine. The beauty and empowering part of yoga is that the practice teaches the student to take care of his or her health on all level.

In India men significantly outnumber women and Indian maternal mortality rates are highest in the world. “Approximately five women die in India every hour from problems developed during childbirth & due to heavy blood loss caused by hemorrhage is a major factor.”-The world health organization (who). Almost 45000 mothers expire due to causes related to childbirth every year in India which accounts for 17% of such deaths according to the international health body.

The world health organization (WHO) said, “The major reason of maternal deaths is post partum hemorrhage which is the loss of blood more then 500-1000 ml within the first 24 hours after childbirth.”However, juvenile and illiterate mothers especially those living in rural and hard to reach areas have a greater chance of dying in childbirth. Young girls residing exterior of the metropolises are particularly vulnerable. Since the teenage marriage and pregnancies are extremely high in country and remote rural areas of India.

Apart from this women in India face several health issues, due to the gender, class or ethnic inequalities that exist in healthcare. Some main health problems faced by women today are –

- **Breast and cervical cancer-** for the year 2012-144,937 women were newly detected with breast cancer and 70,218 women died of breast cancer.
- **Sexual and reproductive health problems-** 222 million women are not getting the contraception services leading to HIV infections, gonorrhea, and syphilis. Untreated syphilis is accountable for more than 100,000 stillbirth and early fetal death every year.
- **Violence against women** – one in three women under 50 has experienced physical and sexual violence by a partner or non partner. Sexual violence- violence which affects their physical and mental health in the short and long term.
- **Mental health-** taunts, mental and physical abuse and ultimate death by murder or ‘forced to commit- suicide‘ is an open fact of the women were killed every day. 4, 68000 married women have been killed in India due to related to dowry. These are only that reported numbers, the ones that came to notice. In reality the number of women killed due to this is much more.
- **Non- communicable diseases-** around 1.7 million women died from non-communicable diseases as a result of road traffic accidents, harmful use of tobacco, abuse of alcohol, drugs and substances and helping girls and women adopt healthy yogic lifestyles everyone is key to a long and healthy life.

Recently, International Women’s Day celebrations on 8 March, celebrated women and their empowerment and achievements around the globe. But it is also a great time to take stock of how women’s rights are full filled and empowering women world-wide through yoga seems to be befitting answer.

Role of yoga Empowerment for women today:-

Empowering women is crucial to sustainable development and global progress. When women recognize their self-worth, it gives them the opportunity to better their own lives and to improve society on a larger scale. Education is an essential step on the road to empowerment. However, yoga is another tool and one that’s increasingly being embraced. Yoga helps us to realize our inner talents and capabilities.

The practice of yoga since the ancient time proves that is a scientific way of living for holistic health. Yoga for women can be an enriching and empowering experience. We tend to overlook the internal gifts because we are so engrossed in the pursuits of the materialistic world. Yoga is a journey of self-discovery. For women empowerment yoga is not a new idea but thing is we need to revisit the self by using these techniques to get the essential details of holistic health and well-being.

Yoga is a way of life for better living and it is one of the simplest ways to build your self-confidence, ignite your passion and feel empowered. It instills awareness and growth of consciousness so that when you align yourself with the principles of nature that other things fall in place and harmony is restored. Yogic life teaches us the how to achieve the delicate mind, body and soul balance. Life can truly be very fulfilling if you know your limitations and potential growth areas.

Yoga for Women is The Holistic Solution for Empowerment:-

Yoga is not about getting a beautiful body- good health and shapely figure; these are just by – products. Yoga works on all levels. Yoga Kriyas- Healthy body, healthy mind is an old adage and quite true as well kriyas help in external and internal cleanse. They keep the body fit and prevent illness. Various yoga kriyas such as Kpalbharti, Sutraneti, Nauli etc keep the physical body clean and fit.

Pranayama- breath is the vital force that runs the body and its systems and energies. Control of the bio-energies is very important. Yoga pranayama is one of the most important methods and through it one can control the mind. Anulom - vilom, yogendra pranayamas, suryabhedana etc help to increase the vitality and longevity. They improve the lungs capacity and oxygenation of all the cells and body systems are improved.

Top five yoga poses for women empowerment: -

Researchers found that the yoga poses, particularly standing poses, resulted in greater feelings of power and control, as well as higher energy and self-esteem. Next time you need a confidence boost, roll out your yoga mat and flow through the following poses: -

1. **Parvatasna or the mountain pose:** - Holding a position demands certain steadiness of body and mind. They provide you with the opportunity to develop a sense of poise, clarity and steadying of the mind. This simple and challenging pose requires focus and sturdiness of mind and body. This pose embodies inner strength and complete empowerment. This pose improves posture, increases strength,, power, and mobility in the feet, legs and hips.



2. **Warrior pose:** - Teaches women to stand strong, be brave and ooze self confidence. It connects women to the absolute power that resides within, starting from the legs and reaching every muscle and joint to keep going strong just like a warrior. The benefits warrior poses are to improve focus, balance and stability. It encourages good circulation and respiration. It also helps to open her hips, chest and lungs and energizes the entire body.



3. **Chakrasana or the wheel pose:** - Finding your child like passion for life. Backbend of this pose helps to open the chest region and bring about a joyful vivacity. It helps to cure asthma, stand tall and healthy, embrace harmony, reduces osteoporosis, improves good hormone secretion.



4. **Halasana or the plough pose:** - Achievement and ability to push your body limitations. This posture presents a huge mental challenge and helps to overcome fear of the unfamiliar. Brings about a tranquil state of mind. The benefits of this asana are calms the brain, stretch the shoulders and spine, help relieve the symptoms of menopause, stimulates the abdominal organs and the thyroid gland, reduces stress and fatigue, therapeutic for backache, headache, infertility.



5. **Hastapadangustasana:** - This asana is very direct in its name, suggesting a body formation including the hands feet and toes. The hip joint is a major joint hence we require such a posture which along with keeping the waist flexible also strengthens those muscles. It deeply stretches the back thigh muscles, while gently opening the hips, shoulders and arms. This pose challenges and improves sense of balance, which in turn develops greater concentration and focus.



Yogic Diet:-

Yogic diet plays an important role in the success of yogic practices. For success in yogic practices at the time of beginning right food choices are indispensable. Yogic diet is also an essential prerequisite before practicing pranayama. Who begins the practice of yoga without controlling his diet does not make progress. There are three types of yogic diet viz. Rajasik, Tamasik and Sattavik as per yoga diet philosophy. It is considered that food is building block of the body, as we eat so we become in mind and body. The type of food we eat gradually manifests in our mental make up or state of mind. Eating of sattavik food leads to purity/ godliness, Rajasik food towards action and tamasik food leads to a dull, lethargic life with lot of inertia.

Rajasik Food: -

Rajasik food comprises of a variety of dishes on the pattern of food served to Indian kings. This type of food includes various type foods like fried, roasted, curried, and highly seasoned along with various types of desserts, wine and drinks. Food of this type are not recommended for yoga practitioners as these foods act as body stimulants and excite passions, making the mind restless and uncontrollable. These foods result in obesity and generate a typical feeling of heaviness in the stomach for a long time after eating a meal. Rajasik food should be avoided by those whose aim is peace of mind, but will benefit people with an active lifestyle.

Tamasik Food:-

It includes dishes prepared with too many spices, excessive use of salt, papper, chilies, artificial colors and additives. These types of foods have very less nutrition value for either mind or body. They make body dull, lazy and drowsy. These foods stimulate emotions of anger and greed. Tamasik foods include alcohol, tobacco, onion, garlic and fermented foods such as vinegar. This type food is undesirable and not recommended for yoga practitioners.

Sattavik Food:-

Sattvik food promotes clarity and calmness of mind and is favorable for spiritual growth. This type of food is cooked with least amount of spices and without much seasoning. The food is fresh, attractive and nutritive and is cooked in a simple way. It includes most fruits, nuts, seeds, honey, whole grains, milk, green leafy vegetable etc. This type of food is desirable and highly recommended for yoga practitioners.

Yogic Eating Guidelines for Women:-

Yogi often said that women should eat carefully and lightly in order to maintain their emotional, physical balance and well- being. In general, a woman should have two meals a day and two light drinks a day. The first drink begins at breakfast. The first meal can be about four hours later; it should be the largest meal of the day. "Eat to your delight" is the motto at this mid-day meal. But when you are full stop! Food eaten in a hurry or in foul mood will not be as nourishing compared to food eaten slowly with a peaceful mind. The traditional advice is to fill the stomach half with food, one quarter with water, leaving the last quarter empty.

Conclusion-

In the conclusion, as this research paper has shown that the yoga, yogic diet, yogic attitude and various yogic practices help women to strengthen her and develop positive health. Yoga is the best way for us to regain our birthright and attain the goal of our human existence. Yogic diet is specifically designed for yoga practices such that a yogic practitioner does not get ill and throughout her practice she remains healthy. Thus, yoga and yogic diet has tremendous potential for holistic empowerment of women but one has to walk through it. It is never too late to find the courage to follow your dreams and live the life you love. Just give yourself

permission to reach deep inside and go find that confident and empowered new you. Try out the top five yoga poses for women empowerment today;

‘Yoga and diet are two pillars of a successful yoga practice’

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