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YOGA PRACTICES TO VYAYAM

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INTRODUCTION

Each and every kind of yoga becomes an independent system and discipline with its definite aims, objectives, rules, regulations, absolute and relative reference points, methods of upbringing and the goals to be reached and achieved through their teachings and practice.

Some of the disciplines appear to be contradictory to each other, such as martial art and dance. Yet, on detailed analysis and study, we realize that all practices were designed and developed to help the human beings to achieve following aims and objectives in life:

- To become strong and fit for the struggle for existence and survival.
- To procure and fulfill material needs in the form of food, water, shelter, etc.
- To satisfy biological needs and demands and desires.
- To develop a sense of fulfillment, contentment and satisfaction in life, and in the In the end,
- To develop a sense of freedom and emancipation.

Therefore, if properly used and employed, every yoga and its practices are good for health. Otherwise, the same practice can be harmful. Proper discrimination (*viveka*) on the part of the user becomes more important along with the practice itself.

Relationship of yoga practices to vyayama:

The word 'exercise' conveys the sense of 'going out' as in 'exit', 'exhalation', 'expulsion', etc. The words, 'Physical Education' and 'Physical Culture' emphasize the development of the physical aspect of the individual. These are different from emotional and intellectual aspects and all are still different from the human being and its personality.

In games, sports and different exercise systems (including 'vyayama'), the mind moves away from the 'self' (*swa-rupa*) to the motor and the sensory organs ('*karma*' and '*jnana indriyas*' in yoga). Arms and legs are used for actions and eyes and ears are used to get knowledge. Different exercises, body building programs, physical fitness schedules, games and sports have definite aims, objectives and goals for achievements. Specific tests and measurements procedures are developed to conduct laboratory and field studies and surveys with suitable instruments to obtain data for analysis, reference and future use.

In recent times, psychological tests are also conducted along with the physical parameters and counseling is done, if required. Theoretically, it is claimed that physical education will help in all-round development of the personality.

The whole body, mind and decision-making faculty is used in relation to objects outside the body. Arms, legs, audio-visual senses are used actively to a maximum extent along with the passive involvement of the vertebral column as the only support (pillar) for the whole body. Very few kinds of *vyayama* such as wrestlers' pole (*malla khamba*) give importance to the working with the vertebral column.

Many times, exercises are carried out by holding the breath for a long time such as in underwater diving, weight lifting, boxing, shooting, etc. Many times, there are emotional disturbances because of winning or losing the game and different thoughts being entertained by the practitioner. As a consequence, breathing can get disturbed and remain disturbed, if proper precautions are not taken. Being a vital activity, breathing gets connected with other vital activities. Therefore, disturbed breathing can disturb other vital activities.

In spiritual (adhyatmika) yoga, lot of importance is given to working with breathing in 4 to 5 different ways while remaining in a suitable posture (asana) which is expected to be stabilized and comfortable and can be maintained in a relaxed manner for a certain length of time, say for 20 to 30min. There are yoga practices involving indirect training of the working of the internal (visceral) organs such as movement of the gastrointestinal tract, movements involved in elimination, circulation with the help of breathing.

Practices related with vital functions (such as breathing, digestion, elimination), mind, thinking and consciousness are more congenial to health. Other types of practices will be useful for our profession, business, hobbies, social work and family life.

Comparison of Vyayama and Spiritual (adhyatmika) yoga practices:

Vyayama/games/sports	Spiritual practices
Aims and objectives are divergent and varied e.g. exercising arms, legs, eyes for different goals such as football, basketball, cricket, wrestling, trekking, swimming, weight-lifting, etc.	Aims and objectives are perception, realization, purification, development and emancipation of the 'self'; ultimately leading to the realization of the highest truth.
Most of the time, we work with legs and arms with the help of vision and audition and the vertebral column.	In stable body position, we work with breath and breathing movements in the area of the trunk, vertebral column and the head.
There is external object in games and sports. We do get joy of winning and sorrow after losing.	Initially, the 'self' remain the main object of work. Later, transcendence becomes the object of work.
There are definite thoughts and actions related with winning the game. No one wants to lose.	Thoughts and actions are related with the realization of undisturbed self (Samadhi).
It can give rise to various emotions such as hatred, jealousy, suspicion, revenge, intolerance, etc. even though the emphasis is on developing and cultivating 'sportsman spirit'.	The negative emotions are looked upon as 'enemies' and definite efforts are made to eradicate them.
Vertebral column is used for external goals such as bending forward, backward, sideward, etc.	Vertebral column is kept stabilized and 'flow of breath' or 'energy' is experienced along the spine.
Use of legs and arms becomes important. Senses and mind are 'externalized'.	Use of trunk and spine becomes important. Senses and mind are 'internalized'.
We work with the human brain (neo-cortex) in making decisions, executing decisions and getting knowledge from the outside world.	We learn and start working with sub-cortical areas to get educated in relation to our emotional life and existential life.
We have to remain externalized during games, sports and exercises. Loosing attention on outside objects can cause serious injuries and traumas.	We train our mind to get internalized. Make our breathing as the object of attention and learn to remain aware of 'self', which is helped to release tensions and overcome disturbances.
We work with movements of extremities which are in 'one direction' (locomotion) at any given time. They can be performed during breath holding. Therefore, they can be called as 'non-breathing' movements. Can it be working with Vyana Vayu in Yoga?	During maintenance of asanas, non-breathing movements are stabilized and we start working with breathing movements in the trunk area. These movements are 'multidirectional' like the 'opening and closing of a lotus flower' (Prana-Apana Vayus in yoga).
Sounds are made to externalize and express strong emotions and thoughts. Sometimes heated arguments.	Mantras are recited loudly or mentally to make the agitated mind calm, quiet and peaceful and to help it travel towards the self.
One works with breathing and breath-holding to improve performance and attention focusing outside the body.	In ' <i>pranayama</i> ', one works with breathing which is based on the concept of ' <i>puraka</i> ', ' <i>kumbhaka</i> ' and ' <i>rechaka</i> ' to reach the self

Conclusion:

It could be said that vyayama, games and sports helping the individual to prepare to lead practical life in the external world and the traditional spiritual yoga preparing the individual to work with the vital systems through breathing can be complementary and supplementary to each other. Games and sports having their importance in the earlier formative stages and phases of life while spiritual yoga having an important place in the later stages and phases of life.

In ancient India (and even today), in certain communities, boys were initiated in the practice of *pranayama*, *aum* and *gayatri mantra* as soon as they used to attain the age of seven years. They continued with these practices as their personal *sadhana* till the last breath. These children were learning and using different systems of physical culture/exercises/education (*vyayama*), games and sports and were also introduced to scholastic studies to lead professional life.

All the three practices (*pranayama*, *aum* and *gayatri mantra*) required training and education in working with the movement of breath and breathing movements in sitting position (*asana*) where arms, legs and spine did not move. The main movement was in the trunk region. Most of the vital organs and systems responsible for vital functions are located in trunk. Breathing is also a vital activity.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

The international body in Physical Education, Games and Sports can decide to strongly recommend to various authorities in the field of education to integrate systematic working with breath, breathing on the lines available in traditional yoga along with training in physical culture and physical education (*vyayama*) as an important adjunct and of complementary nature in the interest for an all-round development of personality.

The international body should also make a strong recommendation to educate children on working with the muscles of the vertebral column with the help of the wrestlers' pole (*malla khamba*) used in India.

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