Benefits of Joint Exercise in the Practice of Classical Yoga

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Mini Review

Yoga, which refers to the union of the body and mind, is a science of right living. This meditative movement has become prominent as therapy in the science of complementary and alternative medicine. While maintaining its underlying principles, the number of variations and styles in yoga have mushroomed over the last two decades.

Unlike many other types of sports, yoga works on the physical, mental, emotional and psychic planes. This explains why the entire body must be mentally and physically prepared before one indulges in any type of asana (posture) be it a beginner or advanced posture. It is imperative for one to also understand that yoga is not a form of exercise but merely a system which involves subtle processes to help manipulate the energy within the biological system.

Therefore, in a classical yoga session, the preparation of the body and mind begins with the joint exercise or simply known as the Pawanmuktasana series in Sanskrit. This series consists of extremely non-challenging postures, but they should be done with awareness due to its innate characteristics. Each and every movement made by the body influences the energy flow throughout the entire anatomy. It is so crucial that the Pawanmuktasana series be done prior to any other challenging postures. Unknown to many modern day yoga practitioners, this series of asanas is so useful as it opens all the major joints and relaxes the muscles of the body [1]. Yoga practitioners should not forego this series as the subtle effect of this extremely easy practice brings about positive effects to the entire body and mind.

Last but not least, the pawanmuktasana series is also employed as a tool in yogic management of various disorders [2]. The naïve and the ignorant suffering from modern-day illnesses...
which are psychosomatic in nature, tend to be lured into drugs for treatment. While some drugs may provide immediate relief, it may be wise to note that drug treatment of many illnesses is symptomatic. This simply implies that the root of the disease is most of the time not addressed. That is the reason why many patients keep going back to the hospital for more and more medication. Swami Satyananda Saraswati has reported that the practice of the pawanmuktasana series has a positive impact on a range of disorders from arthritis to heart ailments to even hypertension [2]. This series, if performed mindfully, not only relaxes the muscles of the body, but also the impulses that travel back to the brain. By synchronizing the movement of the asanas with breath, the attentive faculty of the mind is made active and is not allowed to wander. The autonomic nerves will be normalized, and the hormonal functions and activities of internal organs will be regulated [2]. These findings concur with that of Motoyama [4], who advocated that the pawanmuktasana series be performed before any other asanas as they are preparatory work for the awakening the chakras, the energy points. He purported that the distribution of prana, which is the life force, and heat is enhanced as a result of the joint exercise.

In summary, it is strongly recommended that a yoga class or session begin with the pawanmuktasana series. It has been established that consistent practice of the three groups of asanas in this series over a duration of a couple of months will bring about not only profound relaxation, but also toning of the entire psycho-physiological structure [2]. While working through these joint movements, one should be mindful of each and every asana performed. Performing the asanas quickly without awareness may be futile or it may bring about more harm than good. The crucial aspect here is to move with the breath and to breathe with awareness.

References
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