

## An Insight on How Yoga, Spirituality and Meditation Can Help in Learning



*Numerous studies at many, many prestigious Universities all over the world have repeatedly shown the immense benefits of yoga and meditation. Some have shown that the brain actually changes its physical shape when one meditates over a prolonged period of time. This new shape makes it especially suited to learning new things. It sharpens the intellect and greatly boosts the power of the memory. In this article, the author explains as to how the ancient techniques of Yoga, Spirituality and meditation help a contemporary person struggling with their studies. Read on to know more...*

Ancient India has been the source of innumerable, almost magical for that time in history scientific advances. We knew how to make rust proof iron. We could peer into the vastness of space and make out that a faint blur was actually a twin star system. We performed plastic surgery. We gave the world zero. We calculated the value of Pi to 21 decimal places. The Ayurvedic system of medicine is still widely and effectively used. The knowledge of science and arts was surprisingly deep.

Throughout history, India has perhaps been the only country and civilisation where science and religion were never at loggerheads with each other. In fact, all our scientists were saints!

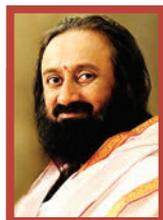
Through spiritual practices of pranayama, yoga and meditation, these great seers managed to look

into the furthest reaches of space and probe into the microscopic world of atoms as well. Sage Vasishtha in the Yoga Vasishtha, tells the young Prince Rama very matter of factly that the world appearance is an illusion, just like the blueness of the sky! The general population knew that the blueness of the sky was an illusion- 10,000 years ago.

Fortunately a lot of the yogic practices and related knowledge were passed on through the generations more or less intact. They survived the Islamic invasions as well as the onslaught of the British. This precious Knowledge is now easily available to anyone who will care to learn, practice and apply these principles in their lives.

How would these ancient techniques of Yoga, Spirituality and meditation help a contemporary person struggling with their studies?

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned in his address to the US Congress that there are more Americans who bend their bodies to do Yoga than play with a curved ball!! Yoga, meditation, pranayama and Indian Spirituality have become truly global. An intelligent student will



**Sri Sri Ravishankar**

(The author is spiritual leader and founder of Art of Living. Comments can be sent to [eboard@icai.in](mailto:eboard@icai.in).)

grab the opportunity to learn and practice these techniques to perform better than he could imagine in his studies.

A huge component of being able to study effectively is the ability to keep the mind focused for long periods of time on the task at hand. Regular practice of meditation grants you this ability.

Numerous studies at many, many prestigious Universities all over the world have repeatedly shown the immense benefits of yoga and meditation. Some have shown that the brain actually changes its physical shape when one meditates over a prolonged period of time. This new shape makes it especially suited to learning new things. It sharpens the intellect and greatly boosts the power of the memory.

Learning happens through the neurons in our brains. We have 100 billion neurons in our brains. Each neuron can grow up to 10,000 very thin filaments that are called dendrites. These dendrites can interact with each other in billions and billions of permutations and combinations through a process called synapses. So many, that they are more than the number of elementary particles in the universe.

As we read, there are electrical impulses that travel along our dendrites and make connections. When we write, re read or practice what we have learned, these connections become stronger. If we discuss or teach this material to others, then the connections acquire a sheath of a substance called myelin, which makes the connection super strong and effectively makes it a long term memory.

The catch here is that the neurons in the brain work best in a stress free environment.

When you are not feeling threatened and are feeling safe, the body is suffused with serotonin among other "good" hormones. The neurons in the brain love this environment and can function at peak efficiency.

On the other hand stress, both external and internal, causes the secretion of cortisol and other "danger" hormones - the ones that trigger the fight or flight systems of the body. When the body is on high alert like this, it becomes almost impossible to

**A huge component of being able to study effectively is the ability to keep the mind focused for long periods of time on the task at hand. Regular practice of meditation grants you this ability.**

**Meditation is known to cause the release of serotonin and stop the release of cortisol. This creates an environment in the body and the brain that is super conducive to learning and remembering.**

study anything new and the chances of forgetting material you have already covered becomes greatly increased. These danger hormones can destroy the delicate connections of the dendrites that you may have carefully cultivated.

Meditation is known to cause the release of serotonin and stop the release of cortisol. This creates an environment in the body and the brain that is super conducive to learning and remembering.

Yoga is a form of relaxed exercising. Dopamine is the hormone released by exercising and this prevents anxiety and depression from setting into the system. A bit of time spent doing Yoga everyday will shield you from mental fatigue and grant you immense stamina and flexibility in your body.

Pranayama and meditation will make you mentally alert and grant you the ability to remain focused until your work gets done.

Quite a few times while studying, you have to assimilate all the things you have learned and manage to come up with something new. Throughout history, the greatest of discoveries and inventions have been "accidents". They have happened when the person after wrestling with a problem for a long time, decided to relax. Then some event happened which triggered a powerful insight. Newton and Gravity, Kekule and the Benzene Ring structure, Archimedes and his Law of displacement come to mind.

After a gruelling session of mental activity, the brain needs to wind down. The mind needs to relax. Meditation does exactly this. After a lot of taxing work, in deeper states of relaxation, fortuitous connections among the dendrites may happen and valuable insights could be gained.

There are many who know their subjects, but simply don't know how to communicate effectively. The combined package of yoga, meditation, knowledge and spirituality will greatly enhance your ability to express yourself and become a team player.

Learn and practice yoga and meditation for achieving an unbeatable edge over others.

All the very Best! ■