



LEGENDARY IN YOGA - A CASE HISTORY OF NANAMMAL

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the West, following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th and early 20th century. This paper is a voyage through a legendary in Yoga, a yoga Grandma . V. Nanammal , who turned 99 , on 24 February , 2018. She won the Padmasree this year for her mastery and contributions in the field of yoga. In March 2017, Nanammal was conferred the Nari Shakti Puraskar by former President Pranab Mukherjee on International Women's Day. Nanammal attempted to get on to the Guinness Book of World Records by teaching yoga to over 20,000 students and enthusiasts in Coimbatore .Her objective is to create awareness among women, mainly girl students, about yoga techniques by going to various educational institutions to solve several health-related problems, especially after marriage. In this world, where we find excuses to push away our responsibilities and dreams, Amma Nanammal stands out as a true inspiration.

KEYWORDS : Nanammal , Yoga

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. This tradition is 5000 years old. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help in well being."

— Narendra Modi, UN

General Assembly, September 2014.

Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Among the most well-known types of yoga are Hatha yoga and Raja yoga.

The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it is mentioned in the Rig-Veda, but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, in ancient India's ascetic and sramana movements. The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Hindu Upanishads. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date from the first half of the 1st millennium CE, but only gained prominence in the West in the 20th century. Hatha yoga texts emerged around the 11th century with origins in tantra.

The Essence of Yoga

The true essence of yoga revolves around elevating the life force or 'Kundalini' at the base of the spine. It aims to achieve this through a series of physical and mental exercises. At the physical level, the methods comprise various yoga postures or 'asanas' that aim to keep the body healthy. The mental techniques include breathing exercises or 'pranayama' and meditation or 'dhyana' to discipline the mind.

The ultimate goal of yoga is, however, to help the individual to transcend the self and attain enlightenment. As the Bhagavad-Gita says, "A person is said to have achieved yoga, the union with the Self, when the perfectly disciplined mind gets freedom from all desires, and becomes absorbed in the Self alone."

"The past master of Yoga – Nannamal"

In this world where we find excuses to push away our responsibilities and dreams, Amma Nanammal stands out as a true inspiration. She is 99 and still pursues her yoga practices without fail. She was born in a middle-class family in

Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu and learned yoga from her grandfather when she was ten years old. Since then she has never skipped the practice and is making a statement that age is just a number.

After that she started learning yoga from her grandfather at her home town Coimbatore after seeing some boys and girls learning the ancient Indian exercise and was hooked on ever since. The Coimbatore-based great-grandmother also credits yoga for her good health. She does not take medication nor had no health problems till now. She still live strong and healthy due to her love for the exercise and she neither visited a hospital nor used any medicine till date.

The woman, who has two sons and three daughters, teaches yoga every day for at least 100 students at her house. She claims her students "feel great" after the yoga sessions. Her students, usually a lot younger than her, also include two women in their 70s, some 60 year olds and the youngest is a girl of six. The yoga instructor has even developed a legion of admiring students that consistently attend her classes.

Being a regular practitioner and a firm believer of yoga and its potential, she never had to consult a doctor for any sort of physical or mental illnesses. Today she is a renowned teacher who teaches nearly 100 students daily. Her disciples include people from various parts of the world and age groups ranging from 6 – 70. All of them testify unanimously that she is an amazing teacher and all they want is to achieve her fitness level.

All of her family have accepted the yoga way of life and strictly follows it. Wearing a sari, the traditional Indian costume, she performs the astounding asanas with much ease. She is an expert in Silambattam, an Indian martial art using sticks as a weapon and has won several awards for the same. People like her who are true symbols of dedication and passion are the true assets of the yogic heritage.

At 99, V Nanammal, is thin and walks straight. She can bend and twist, but what is most striking about her is the shine in her eyes and the grace to her smile. There is also simplicity about her approach to yoga. Everything in the room is simple. She settles on a cloth carpet spread out on the floor. Tucks her sari, says a small prayer with folded hands and gets down to doing two of her favourite asanas. There was a time she did 50 asanas every day, now she does 10 -- every day, without fail. Yoga is the first thing she has done every morning for as long as she can remember. Her advice is simple -- just as you brush

your teeth and have a bath daily, do yoga, the same way

Nanamammal's day starts with –

- Wake up at 4.30am and drink half a litre of water.
- Brush teeth with neem sticks.
- Breakfast- she only has Ganji that is made of millets (raagi, kambu, thinai or kuthiravali)
- Teach yoga for the rest of the day.

She has over 600 yoga students across the world. Though she taught yoga in her house, Nanammal was recognized way back in 2003 when she first attended a yoga competition. She has later attended 100s of competitions.

Nanamammal is a yoga enthusiast who still goes about her morning exercises as if she was in her teens, and is inspiring an entire generation to take up the practice. Perhaps the country's oldest yoga instructor, the lady, who has rejected offers from several yoga federations across the world on account of not knowing English, recently even attempted a Guinness record! She talks to DC about her daily routine and how practicing yoga can bring magic to one's life.

Nanamammal, the yoga grandma – The Padma Shri winner

Nanamammal was among those chosen for the Padma Shri award by the central government. She has been teaching yoga to thousands of people and spreading the ancient traditional practice across Tamil Nadu. Born in an agricultural family at Zameen Kaliyapuram, she moved to Negamam after marriage and later to Ganapathy. Having learned yoga at the age of eight from her father, she mastered more than 50 asanas. Over the past five decades, Nanammal has trained more than 10 lakh students and continues to teach 100 students daily at the Ozone Yoga Centre run by her. Around 600 of her students, including 36 members of her family, have become 'Yoga instructors' around the world.

Nanamammal has won several awards for yoga and her legacy continues, with her students winning laurels in yoga competitions across the world. She has been particularly keen on teaching yoga to girls to help them lead a healthy life. "Yoga can keep you healthy and help mitigate stress, sugar, high and low blood pressure. I wish every house had a yoga exponent and everyone lived healthy,"- Nanammal

In March 2017, Nanammal was conferred the Nari Shakti Puraskar by former President Pranab Mukherjee on International Women's Day. Nanammal had also dined with Prime Minister Narendra Modi once. On February 24, the great grandma turn 99 (2018).

Her husband was a Siddha practitioner and was into agriculture and cultivation. This is how her liking for naturopathy had its inception, even after her marriage. She never stopped practicing yoga at any point in her life. That's the secret of her health. The food she consumes every day is highly rich in fiber and calcium. she has kanji with a different vegetarian dish every day. All the vegetables she use are from their own farm.

Nanamammal attempted to get on to the Guinness Book of World Records by teaching yoga to over 20,000 students and enthusiasts in Coimbatore. Right now, her objective is to create awareness among women, mainly girl students, about yoga techniques by going to various educational institutions to solve several health-related problems, especially after marriage. Around 600 students who learnt yoga from Nanammal are now into yoga instruction all around the world. Right now, 36 members from her family are serious practitioners. Nanammal strongly conveys that there's never any excuse or limit if there is the right intent.

V Nanammal, the 99-year-old yoga expert from the southern

state of Tamil Nadu, believes that, in its true form, yoga isn't about rigorous activity or getting all sweaty and breathless; it's about peace and relaxation, and this is what she's been practicing every day for nearly a century.

Despite her age, Nanammal can effortlessly curl into any yoga asana you name, an ability that's earned her accolades and awards. To this day, she's never stepped into a hospital and seems healthier than most millennial, for all their dieting and exercise. She's now become a celebrity in the yoga, and wellness world and videos of her performing complicated asanas have gone viral, attracting millions of views.

When it comes to yoga, Nanammal and her family, which includes her children, grandchildren, and even great-grand children, follow the traditions passed on from generation to generation. At the Ozone Yoga centre in Coimbatore, which they established in 1972, they teach their traditional style of yoga, which focuses on pranayama (breath control).

But you won't find any Lulu lemon yoga pants or specialized yoga mats in her home. Nanammal only wears traditional clothing and practices on a simple carpet. Her lifestyle is similarly minimalist: simple meals of porridge made with millets for breakfast, greens and rice for lunch, and milk and fruits for dinner. She also asks her students to avoid meat, cigarettes, and alcohol.

CONCLUSION

Nanamammal is focused on teaching what she has done for years, so the next generation can learn and hold on to our traditions," She is 99 today, but does extremely difficult yoga poses with ease. With her talent, she has proved that age is just a number. This Coimbatore-based super grandmother teaches yoga to over 100 kids and hasn't faced any health problems till date — all thanks to yoga. In this world, where we find excuses to push away our responsibilities and dreams, Amma Nanammal stands out as a true inspiration. Let us follow her life style and lead a healthy, happy and serene life.

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