



Yoga – A Solution for Stress Management

***Miss. Tangarani**Gajanana Prabhu.B**

Abstract

This paper focuses on relevance of Yoga and little on Physical Exercises in the management of stress. Yoga involves a series of both moving and stationary poses, combined with deep breathing. As well as reducing anxiety and stress, yoga can also improve flexibility, strength, balance, and stamina. Practiced regularly, it can also strengthen the relaxation response in our daily life. Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost feel-good and distract from daily worries. Exercise increases overall health and sense of well-being, which puts more pep in step every day. Virtually any form of exercise, from aerobics to yoga, can act as a stress reliever. The state of the mind and that of the body are intimately related. If the mind is relaxed, the muscles in the body will also be relaxed. Stress produces a state of physical and mental tension. Yoga, developed thousands of years ago, is recognized as a form of mind-body medicine. In yoga, physical postures and breathing exercises improve muscle strength, flexibility, blood circulation and oxygen uptakes as well as hormone function. The analysis made with the help of secondary data through books, internet, journals and articles. This paper also cover the concepts like asanas or different types of yoga, health benefits of yoga and effect of Yoga on the body etc,

Key Words: Anxiety, Asanas, Physical Exercises, Stress Management and Yogaetc.

**Miss. Tangarani: Guest Faculty, Department of Research in Physical Education, Jnansahyadri, Kuvempu University, Shankaraghatta. Ph: 9986368917, e mail: tangarani12@gmail.com*

***Gajanana Prabhu.B: Assistant Professor, Department of Research in Physical Education, Jnansahyadri, Kuvempu University,*



1. Introduction

Many people turn to yoga and physical exercises for simple reasons, perhaps they just enjoy it, perhaps they find it relieves stress, maybe yoga and physical exercise helps them to better cope with life's ups and downs, or perhaps it's because a physician has prescribed it. Regardless of the reason for participating in yoga and physical exercise, the result is almost always a more fulfilled life. If individuals may have tried yoga and physical exercise, they already know that both can help them to achieve their goals with a clearer head, a more in-tune body and a renewed spirit.

Working from the premise that "Life is breath, breath is life," yoga places great emphasis on making the breathing deep, rhythmic and effective. The principle here is that essential thoughts and messages are delivered more effectively when the body is relaxed and the brain is well-oxygenated, helping the body and mind to work more successfully while feeling less tired and less stressed. Furthermore, improved appearance through better posture, muscle and skin-tone, follows the dedicated practice of yoga. Bones are strengthened and joints become more flexible. And, it can be amazing to see how much more flexible the body is and how much more positive one's outlook becomes with just a few month's of yoga practice.

1.2 Concept of Yoga

Yoga is an ancient Indian philosophy that dates back thousands of years. It was designed as a path to spiritual enlightenment, but in modern times, the physical aspects of Hatha yoga have found huge popularity as a gentle form of exercise and stress management. There are many different varieties of yoga, but each one essentially relies on structured poses (asanas) practiced with breath awareness



Researchers have discovered that the regular practice of yoga may produce many health benefits, including increased fitness and normalization of blood pressure. Yoga is a renowned antidote to stress. Over time, yoga practitioners report lower levels of stress, and increased feelings of happiness and wellbeing. This is because concentrating on the postures and the breath act as a powerful form of meditation.

The classical techniques of yoga date back more than 5,000 years. The practice of yoga encourages effort, intelligence, accuracy, thoroughness, commitment and dedication. The word yoga means ‘to join or yoke together’. It brings your body and mind together and is built on three main elements- exercise, breathing and meditation.

The exercises of yoga are designed to put pressure on the glandular systems of your body, increasing your body’s efficiency and total health. Breathing techniques increase breath control to improve the health and function of body and mind. The two systems of exercise and breathing prepare the body and mind for meditation, with an approach to a quiet mind that allows silence and healing from everyday stress. When practiced regularly, yoga can become a powerful and sophisticated discipline for achieving physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

2. Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the techniques of Yoga to reduce the stress
2. To Analyze the role of different asanas of yoga in reduction of stress



3. Research Design:

The present study is descriptive in nature and covers all the asanas of yoga and its importance for stress management. In order to reach the above stated objectives the study covers only secondary sources of data, which is taken from the published sources like Journals, Books, and e sources.

4. Results and Discussions:

4.1 The asanas or yoga postures

Asanas are one of the most important systems of physical culture ever created. The purpose of asanas is to create a free flow of “Prana”, life energy in and out of the system, in order to perfect its functioning. Wrong posture, on the other hand, can create a lot of stress and cause contractions, inhibiting circulation of energy and nutrients in the body. This encourages toxins and waste materials to accumulate inside body. As the mind and body are connected, physical blocks combined with mental blockage can result in pain and disorder in both spheres.

The Corpse poses (Shavasana), the Crocodile pose (Makarasana), and Child pose (Balasana) are simple relaxation postures. These are particularly helpful in relieving anxiety and nervous irritability. Each yoga posture, or asana, is held for a period of time and linked with breathing. Generally, a yoga session begins with gentle asanas and works up to more vigorous or challenging postures. A full yoga session should exercise every part of your body and should include pranayama (breath control practices), relaxation and meditation.

The different postures or asanas include:

- Lying postures
- Sitting postures



- Standing postures
- Inverted or upside-down postures.

4.2 Yoga's Effects on the Body

The following is only a partial list of yoga's benefits:

- reduced stress
- sound sleep
- reduced cortisol levels
- improvement of many medical conditions
- allergy and asthma symptom relief
- lower blood pressure
- smoking cessation help
- lower heart rate
- spiritual growth
- sense of well-being
- reduced anxiety and muscle tension
- increased strength and flexibility
- slowed aging process

4.3 Role of Yoga in Stress Management

Life can be stressful. For starters, there's busy schedule — waking up super early for school, studying late at night for tests, juggling sports practice, homework, and meals. It's a lot to balance! Everyday issues can add emotional stress, too — counseling a friend through a breakup,



regretting a disagreement with a parent, weighing an important decision, or stressing over whether he will make final cuts for the varsity team. With lots on mind, it's easy to feel stressed.

There are many different ways to cope with stress. Talking with friends, exercising, and seeing school counselors are just a few. Yoga can help reduce stress because it promotes relaxation, which is the natural opposite of stress. Yoga can benefit three aspects of ourselves that are often affected by stress: our body, mind, and breathing. Practicing yoga builds individual's ability to calm, focus, balance, and relaxes him.

Lots of people think of yoga as stretching or twisting the body into various impossible-looking pretzel shapes. But yoga is easier than it looks. There are [simple poses](#) as well as complicated ones, so there's something for every ability. Yoga requires no special equipment, so anyone can do it almost anywhere.

Yoga poses are good exercise and can help loosen up the tense muscles in body. The areas of the body that tend to carry the most stress are the neck, shoulders, and back. But other parts of the body (like the face, jaw, fingers, or wrists) also can benefit from simple yoga stretches. Yoga is so much more than just physical exercise, though. The key to getting the best out of each pose is to focus not only on body, but also on mind and breathing.

4.4 Health benefits of yoga

The practice of yoga asanas develops strength and flexibility, while soothing nerves and calming mind. The asanas affect the muscles, joints and skin, and the whole body – glands, nerves, internal organs, bones, respiration and the brain. The physical building blocks of yoga are the postures and the breath.



Health benefits of yoga include:

- **Cardiovascular system (heart and arteries)** – asanas are isometric, which means they rely on holding muscle tension for a short period of time. This improves cardiovascular fitness and circulation. Studies show that regular yoga practice may help normalize blood pressure
- **Digestive system** – improved blood circulation and the massaging effect of surrounding muscles speeds up a sluggish digestion
- **Musculoskeletal** – joints are moved through their full range of motion, which encourages mobility and eases pressure. The gentle stretching releases muscle and joint tension, and stiffness, and also increases flexibility. Maintaining many of the asanas encourages strength and endurance. Weight-bearing asanas may help prevent osteoporosis, and may also help people already diagnosed with osteoporosis (if practiced with care under the supervision of a qualified yoga teacher). Long-term benefits include reduced back pain and improved posture
- **Nervous system** – improved blood circulation, easing of muscle tension and the act of focusing the mind on the breath all combine to soothe the nervous system. Long-term benefits include reduced stress, anxiety and fatigue, better concentration and energy levels, and increased feelings of calm and wellbeing.



4.5 Different types of yoga

There are many different varieties of yoga, each with a slightly different slant. The most popular are Ananda (Hatha), Bikram, Iyengar and Sivananda yoga. Yoga classes usually have 10 to 20 people, allowing for individual attention. Suggestions for getting the most out of from yoga class include:

- Wear comfortable clothes and take a blanket or mat, since many poses are performed sitting or lying down.
- Allow at least three or four hours since last meal.
- Always tell to yoga teacher if you have a specific complaint, so they can advise against any asanas that may aggravate your problem.
- Always tell your yoga teacher if you are pregnant, have had a recent injury, illness, surgery, high blood pressure, heart problems or osteoporosis.
- Don't talk during the class because it will disturb your own quiet focus and that of others in the class.

4.6 Role of Physical exercise in Stress Management

Stress is impossible to eliminate, but it is possible to manage with the help of physical exercises and most people usually do. The physical benefits of exercise—improving physical condition and fighting disease—have long been established, and physicians always encourage staying physically active. Exercise is also considered vital for maintaining mental fitness, and it can reduce stress. Studies show that it is very effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and at enhancing overall cognitive function. This can be especially helpful when stress has depleted your energy or ability to concentrate.



When stress affects the brain, with its many nerve connections, the rest of the body feels the impact as well. So it stands to reason that if your body feels better, so does your mind. Exercise and other physical activity produce endorphins—a chemical in the brain that act as natural painkillers—and also improves the ability to sleep, which in turn reduces stress. Meditation, acupuncture, massage therapy, even breathing deeply can cause your body to produce endorphins. And conventional wisdom holds that a workout of low to moderate intensity makes you feel energized and healthy. Scientists have found that regular participation in aerobic exercise has been shown to decrease overall levels of tension, elevate and stabilize mood, improve sleep, and improve self-esteem. Even five minutes of aerobic exercise can stimulate anti-anxiety effects.

5. Conclusion

The goal of yoga is to marry the breath to movement. The benefits of yoga include decreased stress and tension, increased strength and balance, increased flexibility and lowered blood pressure. Yoga's emphasis on breathing and the mind/body/spirit connection also yields strong emotional benefits. People who practice yoga frequently report that they sleep better and feel less stressed. The practice of yoga involves stretching the body and forming different poses, while keeping breathing slow and controlled. The body becomes relaxed and energized at the same time. There are various styles of yoga, some moving through the poses more quickly, almost like an aerobic workout, and other styles relaxing deeply into each pose. Some have a more spiritual angle, while others are used purely as a form of exercise. Virtually everyone can see physical benefits from yoga, and its practice can also give psychological benefits, such as stress reduction and a sense of well-being, and spiritual benefits, such as a feeling of connectedness with God or



Spirit, or a feeling of transcendence. Certain poses can be done just about anywhere and a yoga program can go for hours or minutes, depending on one's schedule.

Yoga does require some commitment of time and is more difficult for people with certain physical limitations. Some people feel self-conscious doing some of the poses. Also, yoga classes can be expensive, although it is possible, albeit perhaps more challenging, to learn from a book or video.

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