

Yoga as A Tool/Technique For Reducing Stress

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ABSTRACT:

We believe that human kind successfully evolved and adapted to every situation they encounter, especially by looking at our technological advancements in every sphere of life. It may be in the field of science, in medicine or in the field of information technology. As a result, today we are able to manage to cure incurable diseases, able greater access to education and health to under developed countries and more. But, there are still things that have not changed. Which are not inherent in mankind? That is jealousy, violence, poverty, war and feminine, which cause external and internal stress on the environment, society, family and individuals. These can be traced all the way back to the beginning of the dawn of man, As a society ,we have developed the physical tools to survive the external elements but not the internals; to live in peace, love and harmony with oneself and others.

In this scenario, there is no option except yoga, because yoga has become a powerful tool to reduce our everyday stress of life. In other words, we can say that yoga is a boon for mankind. Yoga is a unique contribution of India to the world. Yogic practices as such originated in India many thousands of years ago. Yogic practices were accepted and incorporated by various philosophies. Yogic techniques are also found in Sufism and they had some influence on Christian mysticism. Yoga is an ancient traditional psycho-physical culture that caters to the health and wellbeing of human beings. Yoga and yogic practices existed even when there were no known religions on this earth- but system/civilizations like Mohenjo-Daro-Harappa culture, Nile culture, Mayanculture, Babilonian culture and Greek and Spartan cultures existed at different times of human history.

Basically, human beings are made up of three components viz. Body, Mind and Soul. Correspondingly, there are three needs that must be satisfied for a contended life. The

physical need is the **Health**; the psychological need is **Knowledge**; and the spiritual need is the **Inner Peace**. One could maintain a perfect harmony of these through yogic practices. In view of this, yoga can integrate itself with any system or philosophy and become a part of it, as almost all the philosophies and ideologies preach and aim the achievement of the same.

Yoga is also becoming popular in the western society because it has become strong weapon to reduce the everyday stress of life through conscious effort of practicing asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing) and meditation. It balances mind, body and spirit and one can become closer with their divine or true self.

INTRODUCTION:

A lot of the problems we encounter both at work and in our personal lives are ones that we create ourselves. Typically, such problems occur because we failed to manage our time effectively with existing resources. Most of the time, we were unable to say 'no' and agreed to do something that we did not want to do or were unable to do in the time available; or totally mishandled a situation, upset others, loss of control and got angry. Frequently, the outcome of such situations causes stress and anxiety and leaves us feeling bad or inadequate. However, their cumulative effect is often stressful.

Today in modern culture, this condition is described by a single word stress. Indeed, stress has found as a firm place in our modern lexicon as fast food, junk bonds, and software packages. Even, we use the term in broader sense about casually to describe a wide range of 'aches and pains' resulting from the hectic pace of work and domestic life.

COST OF STRESS:

The cost of stress for an individual, for a nation and for a particular organization or industry is currently extremely high. At individual level, it may occur in the form of death due to coronary heart disease, high risk of suicide, divorce, alcohol abuse, accident and stress related disorder. At national level and organizational level, researches show that 180,000 people die each year from coronary heart disease. Almost 500 people, a day, and heart disease accounts each year for 70 million lost working days to industry and commerce. In addition, the mental health charity estimates that between 30% to 40% of all sickness absence from work is attributable to mental and emotional disturbances, with another 40 million working days lost to the nation's economy. The country has also suffered increased rates of suicide. Instability and life stress have also led to rising divorce rate. Finally, Alcohol concerns suggest that alcohol misuse costs society more than 2 billion per annum, with an annual cost to industry

from this cause alone of nearly 1 billion. As per estimate of United Kingdom 1 in 4 men drink more than the medically recommended units per week and that between 8 and 14 million days are lost each year from alcohol-related problems, with 25 % of accidents at work involving intoxicated workers.

There is another source of growing costs. More and more employees litigating against their employers through worker compensation regulations and laws concerning job related stress, or what is being lately termed cumulative stress disorder.

NATURE AND PREVELANCE OF STRESS:

Nowadays, stress has become a common catchword in our society to indicate a host of difficulties, both as cause and effect. Stress is the ‘wear and tear’ our bodies experiences as we adjust to our continually changing environment. It has physical and emotional effects on us and creates positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can compel us to action. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of disruption, rejection, anger and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems such as headache, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. The American Academy of Family Physicians has noted that stress- related symptoms prompt two-third of the office visits to family physicians.

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS:

Exercise and alternative therapies are now commonly prescribed for stress-related complaints and illness. A recent issue of consumer reports suggests yoga for stress relief. Many books and articles claim, as does Baba Ramdev from Patanjali Yogpith, Haridwar, that practicing yoga will “provide effective relief of anxiety and stress”.

Following techniques can be used to minimize the stress responses: ---

- Relaxation Training
- Practicing Yoga and Meditation
- Acquiring Problem Solving Skills
- Developing hobbies (Listening to music)
- Positive Thinking
- Cognitive Restructuring
- Social Support
- Physical Activity

Out of those techniques Yoga and Meditation plays an important role in reducing stress responses:--

CERTAIN YOGIC EXERCISES TO COMBAT STRESS:

1. Breathing technique helps, relax, and train the respiratory organs to cope-up with various types of Pranayama
 - a. Abdominal
 - b. Thoracic
 - c. Cavicular

It can be done in either lying down or in sitting posture, to ensure rhythmic breathing ins and outs for 3-5 rounds.

2. AUM Chanting-Mentally and loudly also by spitting the syllable AUM.
3. Practicing joint relaxing exercises – breathe slowly and do the all round joint movements from neck, shoulders, elbow, wrist, fingers, spinal stretching, knee movements, ankle movements/stretches.
4. Instant relaxation technique – lie down comfortably on a carpet brings legs together, hands by the side of thighs. Now tighten one by one consciously and quickly the ankle, calf muscles, knee joints, thighs, buttocks, low back, abdomen, chest, neck, back of neck, facial muscles, hold the breath, tighten the whole body at a stretch and relax, with deep breathing.

There are following some '*Asana*', which are also useful in stress reduction:-

- Shavasan
- Makrasan
- Bhujangasan
- Shalabhasan
- Suptavasan
- Vakrasan
- Pranayama: Naadishudhi (anulom- vilom), Ujjayee, Bhramharee
- Meditation

The others forms of yoga are also proved useful in reducing stress. They are as follows:-

1. **The Hath Yoga:** This involves a series of poses that designed to increase strength and flexibility. Poses range from lying on the floor while completely relaxed to difficult postures that may have you stretching your physical limits. It has been scientifically from by the researches that 'Hath Yoga' has potential as a useful intervention for improved physical wellbeing, reducing anxiety, and enhancing personality development when practiced regularly.

2. **The Mantra Technique:** This involves imagery, here the individual relaxes his mind completely and then meditates, he is here trained to invoke positive imagery and tries to shun away negative thoughts away from his brain. The secret movie also explains on how positive thinking and visualization results in happiness.
3. **The Surya Namaskara:** It is an intense body work out that leaves the mind refreshed after doing it. A great way to combat stress is indulging in intense physical activities as the body and mind are in tune while performing the act. Exercise may reduce the stress, as multiple studies have concluded but the self-observation necessary to recognize and stop the deleterious effects of the stress response before it spirals out of control is the key. The heart of yoga practice resides oneself-awareness, so it is appropriate that we turn to it for behaviour modification. In this way yoga, provide a framework to address the chronic stress response. It is not only a daily exercise sequence but is also a process of knowing ourselves with which we analyse our own thought processes and finally to lay bare our true human identities.

CONCLUSION:

Science has now proved that yoga can prevent and cure diseases and can help mankind lead to stress free life. The benefit of yoga in reducing stress and treating diseases mainly depends upon the way of practicing it and its duration. Because, today, the way we practicing yoga is very different from what it was practiced by the ancient people.

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