



## Yoga as a Stress Reducer

**Mrs. S. Kalaivani**

M.Sc.(N) Ph.D Scholar, Rani Meyyammai College  
of Nursing, Annamalai University,  
Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

**Dr. (Mrs) D. Karaline Karunagari**

Ph.D(N) Principal, Rani Meyyammai College of  
Nursing, Annamalai University,  
Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

### ABSTRACT

Yoga has an important role in modern medicine. It has a greater impact on reduction of stress and stress related disorders. Stress affects an individual's memory and concentration. Yoga developed thousands of years ago and it is a form of mind-body exercises which improves muscle strength, flexibility, and blood circulation and oxygen uptake as well as hormone functions. Meditation helps to stabilize the autonomic nervous system with a tendency towards parasympathetic dominance. The most prominent and recognizable form of yoga is hatha yoga. It is a branch of yoga that concentrates on physical health and mental well-being. It includes body postures (asana), breathing techniques (pranayama) and meditation. It helps in developing sound physical body as well as a calm and peaceful mind.

**Keywords:** *Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Stress*

### INTRODUCTION

*“Yoga heals, nourishes and challenges us.*

*The practice infiltrates every corner of our life”.*

*-Valerie Jeremijenko.*

Modern day plagues affecting the human race include stress and anxiety. Stress can destroy passion for life and enthusiasm for progress in academic or careers (Nagesh L, et al. 2014). Stress is the major health hazard which leads to psychosomatic disease, behavioral changes and it is the major contributor to disturbance in one's emotional, social and family life. Also many modern diseases have their origin in stress. Stress is a natural phenomenon that everyone

experience in his or her life time. Many people face stress as a daily hassles. Stress affects both mentally and physically (Subodh S, 2001). Constant stress brings about changes in the balance of hormones in the body which may lead to the situation or thought that makes us to feel frustrated, angry, nervous, or anxious (3).

A student may face many challenges and stressors. Mostly nursing students are likely to experience more stress than their friends and colleagues enrolled in other programme. Some stress is normal but it becomes problematic when it impairs the student's studies and personnel life (Stetson B, 1997). Some of the major stressors for the nursing students in academic and clinical areas includes academic workload, examination, long study hours, assignments and grades, lack of free time, and lack of timely feedback after their performance, taking care of critically ill patients, conflicts with peer group, insecurity about personal clinical competence, dealing with uncooperative patients, and prolonged standing in clinical, learning psychomotor skills eg. performing catheterization etc. Stress affects an individual's memory and concentration in studies and clinical areas and also makes them feel moodiness and sense of loneliness and isolation (5).

### *Yoga as a Holistic Approach*

Being holistic, yoga offers the best way out of this “Whirlpool of Stress”. Yogic lifestyle, yogic diet, yogic attitudes and various yogic practices helps a person to strengthen his body and mind to develop positive health enabling him to withstand stress by normalizing the perception of stress, optimizing the

reaction to it and by effectively releasing the pent-up stress through various yogic practices. Living happy and healthy life is possible through the unified practice of hatha yoga, asanas and pranayamas, and dhyana, especially when performed consciously and with awareness (6).

Yoga developed thousands of years ago. It is a mind-body exercise. The relaxation induced by meditation helps to stabilize the autonomic nervous system with a tendency towards parasympathetic dominance. Yoga has an important role in modern medicine. It has a greater impact on reduction of stress and stress related disorders (Vartha N, 2006).

Various studies indicate chronic emotional stress disturbs the blood pressure mechanism and cholesterol level. Many scientific studies have revealed that appropriate changes in the life style on the basis of yogic principles can even reverse the heart diseases and would help us in maintain our healthy state of body and mind and to prevent such stress disorders (Varta N,2006).

### **Hatha Yoga**

Hatha yoga is an ancient mind-body practice that stems from philosophical foundation of mindfulness. In practice, the individual unites intentional movements of the body with the mind via the breath. This self-regulatory process follows an implicit continuum of self-exploration, self-awareness, and ultimately, self-transcendence (8).

### **Core Components of Hatha Yoga**

There are **three main components** commonly practiced in Western culture. These are

- Physical postures (asana).
- Breathing exercise (pranayama) and
- Meditation (dhyana).

Each component is a vital aspect of the practice and they work in an integrated manner to produce healthful effects on the mind and body. Yoga is a way of life, and is characterized by balance, health, harmony, and bliss. Research studies reveals that a few weeks of disciplined yoga practice can lead to improvement in many physiological and psychological functions and also is a promising approach for dealing with the stress response (9).

Many studies have shown that among beginners, the fall in cortisol levels was significantly greater during

pranayama than when listening to classical music, suggesting that pranayama produces a better relaxation response (Nirmal, 1998). Researchers at the All India Institute of Medical Science in New Delhi have discovered a clear link between rhythmic breathing process and a state of relaxed alertness and recommended the practice of pranayama for beating stress.(Polit and Hungler, 1997). Also the study done by Gupta N et.al (2006).observed that a short educational program for life style modification and stress management based on yoga (pranayama) leads to remarkable reduction in the stress scores. Pranayama is now practiced around the world for its psychological, physical and spiritual benefits. According to results of 2008 survey conducted by the Harris Interactive Service Bureau on behalf of Yoga Journal, 15.8 million Americans, or 6.9% of U.S. adults, are believed to practice pranayama (Brown R.P, et. al, 2005).

Also in a study conducted on effect of yoga on academic performance in relation to stress among students. The study findings revealed that the students who practiced yoga performed better in academics and also concluded that low-stress students performed better than high-stress students (Kauts A and Sharma N, 2009).The study done by Leggett DK. (2010) showed that regular practice of suryanamaskar decreases pulse rate and blood pressure. It also improves cardio-respiratory efficiency for patients as well as healthy individual.

### **Benefits of Yoga**

- Reduces heart rate and easing breathing.
- Lowers Blood pressure.
- More use of oxygen.
- Reduces cortisol level..
- Improves immune functions.
- Reduces risk factors for various diseases.
- Improves muscle strength, flexibility and blood circulation.
- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Relaxes the mind.
- Positive mental attitude.
- Tolerance to pain.
- Feeling of confidence.
- Improved fitness and critical thinking.
- Greater self-awareness and happy life.

(Akther S, 2011)

## Conclusion

Thus the scope of yogic therapy may be extended to the preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative aspects also. So yoga can be considered as a holistic approach to stress management. Yoga gives us courage and strength to find new sources of meaning and hope.

***“Your calm mind is the ultimate weapon against your challenges  
So relax”***

## References:

- 1) Nagesh L, Goud RS, and Fernandes S. (2014). Pranayama: A viable stress relief option? A pilot study among pre-exam dental students. Journal of Dental Sciences and Oral Rehabilitation, July-Sep, Vol. 5(3): 115-119.
- 2) Subodh S. (2001). Organizational role stress among nursing students. The Nursing Journal of India, Vol. 92(12):269-270.
- 3) Hang Wong IK, 2011 [http://www.ifeet.org/stress\\_among\\_the\\_nursing\\_students.html](http://www.ifeet.org/stress_among_the_nursing_students.html)
- 4) Stetson B.(1997). Stress management for nursing students. The Nursing Journal of India, June, Vol. 52(2):143-157.
- 5) <http://www.childrenscolorado.org/pdf/Research-News-Spring-2010.pdf>
- 6) <http://www.pon.nic.in/citizen/science/dsteproject/madan1.pdf>
- 7) Varta N. (2006). The Monthly bilingual magazine for natural health. Vol.2: 14-15
- 8) [http://srividyantra.blogspot.com/2010/09/sutya-namaskar-king-of-yogasanas\\_24html](http://srividyantra.blogspot.com/2010/09/sutya-namaskar-king-of-yogasanas_24html)
- 9) <http://www.livestrong.com/article//360336-what-are-the-benefits-of-surya-namaskar-yoga/>
- 10) Nirmal .(1998).A comparative co-relational study to assess the psychosocial stress to assess and coping patterns with certain demographic variables and nursing students. Nursing Journal of India, Vol.50(8):170
- 11) Polit and Hungler. (1997). Essentials of Nursing Research Methods Appraisal and Utilization. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Philidelphia; Lippincott Publications, p-451.
- 12) Gupta N, Khera S, Vempati, Sharma R, and Bijlani RL.(2006). Effect of yoga based life style intervention on state and trait anxiety. Indian Journal Physiology Phormacol, Jan-Dec, Vol:50(1):41-7
- 13) Brown R.P., and Gerbarg, P.L. (2005). Sudarshan kriya yogic breathing in the treatment of stress, anxiety, and depression: Part I –neurophysiologic model. Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, Vol.1 (1):189-201.
- 14) Kauts A and Sharma N. (2009). Effectiveness of yoga on academic performance in relation to stress. International Journal of Yoga, Vol.2(1):39-43.
- 15) Leggett DK. (2010). Effectiveness of brief stress reduction intervention for nursing students in reducing physiological stress indicators and improving wellbeing and mental health. Utah.Qld; university of Utah
- 16) Akther S. (2011). Yoga: Saluting health with the Suryanamaskar <http://www.rediff.com/gethead/slide-show/slide-show-I-health-yoga-saluting-health-with-the-surya-namaskar/20110127.htm>