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## PATANJALI'S YOGA ASANAS: A REMEDIAL MEASURE TO COPE WITH STRESS

**Virender Kaushal**

Research Scholar, Himachal Pradesh University Business School, H.P. University, Shimla

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### **Abstract**

Now days, stress becomes the inevitable part of the human beings life because of the fast changing life. Today's world is a competitive world and called as world of achievements. So to achieve the objectives human beings can do anything by making their life drastic and rough. They left everything behind and focused only on their achievements. It creates tension, stress and anxiety in the life of human beings and they become ill, frustrated, physically unfit and socially alone. To cope with these types of problems human being took the help of Yoga. Yoga provides various techniques to cope with stress, tension and anxiety. In this paper, we present the theoretical perspective of Patanjali's Yoga Asanas. How they help an individual to fight with stress, tension and anxiety. The present study is descriptive in nature and secondary data has been used to draw the results.

Key Words: Stress, Stress Management, Yoga Asanas, Patanjali

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### **Stress: A Brief Introduction**

Stress has become a common thing of human's life in modern world. The present world is known as the world of achievements also called as a world of stress. It prevails everywhere, whether it is a corporate entity, enterprise, institution, any social or economic activity and even it is a family. Right from the birth till death, a human being passes through various stressful situations.

Stress is a pattern of physiological, behavioural, emotional, physical and cognitive responses to real or imagined stimuli that are perceived as blocking a goal or otherwise threatening individual's well-being. It is a common condition, a response to a physical threat or psychological distress, which produces a host of chemical and hormonal reactions in the body. In essence, the body prepares to fight or flee, pumping more blood to the heart, muscles and shutting down all non-essential functions.

As a temporary state, this reaction serves the body well to defend itself. When the stress reaction is prolonged, however, the normal physical functions that have in response either been exaggerated or shut down become dysfunctional.

The following are the some of the symptoms of stress, which affect the normal functioning of human beings: -

**Table 1: Shows the Symptoms/Impact/Consequences of Stress**

Physical	Psychological	Behavioural/Emotional	Cognitive
Hair loss	Irritability	Increased smoking	Memory problems
Headache	Moodiness	Grinding teeth	Disorientation
Tightness in neck	Anxiety	Nail biting	Confusion
Backache	Anger	Hair pulling	Slowness of thinking
Facial or jaw pain	Withdrawal from other people	Wrinkling forehead	Slowness of comprehension
Stomach disorder	Feeling of insecurity	Increased alcoholism	Difficulty in calculating
Swollen joints	Loneliness	Increased drug consumption	Difficulty in decision-making
High blood pressure	Helplessness	Sudden changes in social habits	Poor concentration
Skin disorder	Restlessness	Proneness to accidents	Loss of objectivity
Muscle twitching	Sadness	Sleeping disorder	Limited attention span
Lower back pain	Depression	Changes in job performance	Blaming others
Fatigue	Feeling hopeless	Short tempered	Tension
Changes in sexual desires	Isolation		
Decreased resistance to infections	Frustration		
Constant working	Mood swings		

The above table represents the different symptoms of stress which are experienced by an individual during the certain critical situations which are unfavourable for him/her. These symptoms are the results of survival stress, internal stress, environmental stress, relationship stress, cognitive dissonance, emotional stress, physical stress, financial stress and job stress.

### **Yoga: A Brief Introduction**

In Sanskrit the term 'Yoga' is derived from the two roots 'Yujir' and 'Yuj Samadhu'. The word 'Yujir' means to join, to combine. So, Yoga is meant for the union where the body, senses, organs of action unites with

the mind and mind unites with the intelligence, intelligence with the consciousness, consciousness with the soul.

The 'Yuj Samadhu' means 'Yoga is Samadhi'. The Samadhi is a higher level of consciousness; the consciousness transcends its own boundaries, almost reaching to the regime of the soul. These remain partly between the consciousness and the soul. When the disparity vanishes, 'Samadhi' happens.

Yoga is an ancient art that is defined as the union of the soul with God. It is a path of personal spiritual development that utilises meditation to bring enlightenment, self-realisation, and ultimately, the attainment of God and bliss.

Yoga evolves from Hindu, Jaina, and Buddhist religious traditions in India. Yoga is a school of thought that constitutes the perennial wisdom of India. The Yogic culture is evident in all aspects of life in our country, be it food, dress styles, postures, activities, habits and attitudes. It is expressed in all art forms such as music, dance and sculpture. All through the years, it has remained as one of the most important facets of Indian culture, remaining vibrant and responsive to the changing times all through this period. As it developed in India, it came to be associated with the development of Hinduism and its philosophy.

The Yoga has always remained away from any religious doctrines or dogmas and never demanded acceptance of any specific belief system. It paves the pathway realisation of truth, open for all the people professing different faiths belonging to different religions and different races. It is a path of spiritual enquiry, awakened by the earnest desire for having a deeper understanding of life and the entire phenomenon associated with it.

Patanjali is known as the father of yoga and appeared around the sixth century B.C. in the epic The Mahabharata written by Great Sage Vyasa also containing The Bhagavad Gita. The Lord Krishna explains about the essence of Yoga as practiced in the daily life such as song of the Lord to Arjuna, uses the term 'Yoga' extensively in different ways.

In addition to an entire chapter dedicated to traditional yoga practice, including Meditation, it introduces three important types of Yoga:

- Karma Yoga: The Yoga of Action.
- Bhakti Yoga: The Yoga of Devotion. The Lord Krishna had also specified importance of devotion in Bhagavad Gita.
- Janana Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge.

The Patanjali introduced, 'Ashtanga or Power Yoga' the more important workout where individual moves from one posture to another posture.

### **Dimensions of Patanjali's Yoga**

The following are the eight basic dimensions of Patanjali's Yoga which helps individuals to be stress free, relaxed and calm: -

- Pranayama (Breathing Exercise)
- Asanas ( Body Postures)
- Yamas (Behaviour Control or Restraints)
- Niyamas (Rules and regulations/Healthy Observances)
- Pratyahara (Sensory Withdrawal/Control of Senses)
- Dhaaraana (Concentration)
- Dhayan (Meditation)
- Samadhi (Mergence/Higher Consciousness)

### **Review of Literature**

Tripathi (2011) in the study, "Role of Stress in lifestyle Disorder and Its Management", suggested that rapid changes in globalizing world associated with urbanization in the new millennium have resulted in a new type of stressors. The negative lifestyle factors that are becoming part of modern life styles such as abusing drugs and alcohol, overwork, poor diet including excess caffeine etc. Physical illness resulting from unhealthy lifestyles is such as heart disease, hypertension and so on. The effect of stress over these diseases can be taken care by variety of relaxation and stress reduction activities. They include meditation, yoga, asana, pranayama, prayer, listening to music, art, body scan exercises etc. These exercises need to be practiced regularly to be effective and yoga nidra is a very useful procedure for taking care of the variety of stressors.

Jaya Kumar (2014) in the survey, "An Empirical Study on Stress Management for Higher Secondary Students in Salem District-Tamilnadu" elaborated that stress management includes techniques to prepare an individual or human being with efficient coping mechanism for treating with stress. It involves techniques such as self-management,

conflict resolution, positive attitude, self-talk, breathing exercise, meditation, Asanas, proper diet and rest.

Singh et al (2015) in their research, “Stress Management through Yoga”, revealed that stress is a major killer and it is adversely affecting the efficiency, productivity, and overall effectiveness of individual’s at work and at home. Yoga as a comprehensive health system offers the most suitable solution to stress and tension.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the present study: -

- To study the concept of stress and yoga in general.
- To study the reasons behind stress among individuals.
- To study about how yoga asanas helps in coping with stress and improving the individual performance.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data only. For the collection of secondary data various books, journals, articles, research papers, and e-journals have been cited and analysed.

### **Patanjali’s Yoga Asanas for Coping with Stress**

The Yoga Asanas work at Chitta (Subtle aspect of Consciousness) Level that eliminates the physical and mental tensions. They are trained in supine and prone position of the body respectively. There are different types of Yoga Asanas which helps individual to get out of stress, tension and anxiety which ultimately makes the body exceptionally strong and relaxed.

These are Shavasana, Makarsana, Vajrasana, Bhujangasana, Trikonasana, Virabdrasana, Pranayama, Siddhasana with Kumbhaka, Padmasana and Yogamudras respectively. They are explained in brief as follows: -

1. Vajrasana: - It is the best asana for removing stress, tension and anxiety. It makes the body exceptionally strong and healthy. In Sanskrit language, Vajra means diamond. During this asana, the individual feels sensation in the body as they move them. Do these movements slowly and in a relaxed manner. Inhale and exhale slowly. While drawing the abdominal region inwards and expanding the chest, focus the attention on these body parts. The way the

- muscles move must be felt. Relax before, during and after the Yoga posture.
2. **Trikonasana:** - The Trikonasana also known as the triangles pose. In this asana legs are spread apart and the body stretches to the left, moving from the Pelvis and extending over the left leg. Both arms should be perpendicular to the floor, the left hand on the floor or resting on the calf or the outer ankle of the left foot, and the right hand reaching up straight. The spine is straight, chest open, the body facing to the front.
  3. **Bhujangasana:** - The pose of this asana starts from a downward facing position with hands flat on the floor below the shoulders. The spine is lengthened and buttocks firmed as the head and chest is slowly lifted. The elbows stay close to the body and the eyes look up. The neck is kept neutral. Such asana also termed as Cobra pose.
  4. **Virabhadrasana:** - In such asana the individual must be in standing position, feet are jumped apart approximately at a distance of four feet from each other. Arms are raised parallel to the floor, gaze is forward. The left foot is turned 90 degrees to the left and the knee is bend by keeping the knee above the ankle.
  5. **Padmasana:** - In this asana individual has to sit on the ground by spreading the legs forward. Place the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. Place the hands on the knee joints and keep the body, back and head erect. The eyes should be closed and the individual can do Pranayam in this asana.
  6. **Siddhasana:** - In siddhasana the individual place his left heel at the anus. The terminal opening of the alimentary canal or digestive tube. Keep the right heel on the root of generation organ and it should in such a way that the knees and the heels, both lie upon the other. The hands must be placed on either sole of the feet. The eyes should be half closed.
  7. **Pranayama:** - It is a breathing exercise which rejuvenate individual to carry on his work with extra enthusiasm and energy. In this exercise individual to put his right thumb on his right nostril and deeply inhale air using left nostril. Then close left nostril with right index finger and hold breath for few seconds. Now exhale through left nostril. Do it similarly with left nostril closing right nostril. Now, inhale through left

nostril, hold breath and exhale through right nostril and do it the other way.

8. **Neck-Roll:** - The neck-roll exercise can ease tension in the neck region and normalize the situation. In this exercise the individual has to turn the head to the right and back to normal. Then turn to the left and back to normal. Then bend the head to the left and pull the left ears to the left shoulder. Then bend to the right as if pulling the right ears to the right shoulder. Rotate the neck slowly to the left and then to the right which is also known as **Brahma Mudra** depending upon the ailments.

These are the various Yoga Asanas from Patanjali which can be practiced by an individual to cope with stress, anxiety, tension and other health related problems. The above mentioned Yoga Asanas must be practiced under the supervision of expert Yoga Gurus.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it has been concluded that yoga asanas are the most popular and recognised techniques and practices used by an individual to cope with stress, tension, anxiety. The following conclusion drawn from the above the discussion: -

- It combines various techniques to remove stress.
- It helps in improving concentration and mental calmness.
- It helps in reduction of stress.
- It helps in increased awareness of individual's own body.
- It helps to improve posture and greater self-confidence.
- It represents a process through which one can learn how to live in the most integrated way.
- It makes body and mind relaxed.
- It integrates the mind and body focusing on balance posture, deep breathing, stretching and relaxation.
- It alters and changes stress responses and person's attitudes towards stress along with improving self-confidence, increasing one's sense of well-being and creating a feeling of relaxation and calmness.

- It helps in reducing pain, relieve tension, reduces risk of injury, improve posture and communication, increase energy and communication, enhance feeling of overall wellness and well-being of an individual.

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Pratibha  
Spandan