



Pranayama : The Secrete of Stress-Free Life

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ABSTRACT - We all know that our mental health is one of the strongest aspect of happy and stress-free life. But in modern times working conditions are strenuous which adversely affect our mental health and most of the physiological disorders arise because of psychological problems. Panayama is an irremovable part of traditional yogic text because it directly works on mental health and brings mental peace. Pranayama helps to get rid of unwanted thought, improves focus and reduces stress which in turn keeps an individual in healthy state of life. Prana is life force, Ayama is regulation of breath thus pranayama is the regulation of life force through breath regulation. Pranayama a breathing technique which includes inspiration, expiration and retention in different ways for relaxation, stress management and to control psychological conditions.

Keywords : - Yoga, Pranayama, Stress, Mental Health, Psychological.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is good if it motivates to perform task without affecting psychophysiological health but when it causes harm to physical or mental health then it is a disorder. In modern time because of working conditions and target oriented job every individual works under immense stress even when one realizes that he has been working under lot of stress, it caused an irreversible damage to the organ which are working directly under the control of autonomous nervous system like kidney, pancreas, heart etc.

Medicine can give a short term relive from symptoms but can't able to eliminate stress. Yoga is an ancient philosophy which passed by our ancestor to us for spiritual advancement and health is complimentary while we adopt yoga. Pranayama is a subset of yoga which has the capability to control mind, reduce stress and bring equilibrium in physical, mental and spiritual aspect of life.

PRANAYAMA

Pranayama is forth limb of Astanga yoga. Prana means life, vitality, breath, energy etc. and Ayama means extension, lengthen, expansion, restrain or control. pranayama means extension or regulation of life force or breath. In **shiva Samhita** it is called vayusadhana (vayu=breath; sadhana=practice). According to **patanjali yoga sutra** Pranayama is the regulation of

the incoming and outgoing flow of breath with retention. It is to be practiced only after perfection in asana is attained.

Tasmin Sati SvasaPrasvasayor Gati Viccheday Pranayamah||2.49||

Pranayama is art to move respiratory organ in a rhythmic way to get control over mind. It consists of long sustained subtle flow of inhalation(purak), exhalation(rechak) and retention(kumbhak) of breath. Puraka stimulate the system, rechaka remove toxins and kumbhaka channelize energy throughout the body. The disciplined breathing helps the mind to concentrates and get control over emotion thus reduce stress. As said in **Hatha Pradipika**

Chalevatechalam chittam nischalenischalam bhavet||2.2||

When the Breath wanders, the mind is unsteady, but when the Breath is still, so is the mind still. Pranayama positively affects our action and thoughts. Our thoughts influence pattern of our breath. Rhythmic and poise breathing is sign of happiness and contentment while irregular and interrupted breathing is sign of stress. By controlling breath, we can take a step forward toward self-healing process.

PRANAYAMA REDUCES STRESS

Stress adversely affects the functioning of organs that are directly under control of our autonomies nervous system(ANS) like digestion, blood pressure, heart beat and breath. ANS has two branches sympathetic nervous system(SNS), activate during strenuous conditions also known as ‘fight & flight’ reaction and parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), activate when we feel cool and calm also known as ‘rest & digest’ reaction which help us to cope up after strenuous conditions or situations. Pranayama regulates our breathing pattern, by controlling our breath we can easily get control over autonomic nervous system and reduce stress. By practicing pranayama an individual can balance Parasympathetic Nervous System&Sympathetic Nervous System and get control over mental and emotional health.

Three basic ways of practicing pranayama

1. **ENERGIZING PRANAYAMA** – This way of practicing pranayama helps to stimulate sympathetic nervous system thus increase heart rate a bit which intern keep us alert and active to deal with adverse situations, ‘fight & flight’ response. Suryabhedhi, Bhastrika, Kapalabhati etc. are energizing pranayama. These pranayama practices generate internal heat, improves metabolism and keep depression and dullness at a bay thus improves mental health and overall wellbeing.

2. **CALMING PRANAYAMA** – This way of practicing pranayama helps to stimulate parasympathetic nervous system thus decreases heart rate which intern keep us cool and calm. PNS allows us to rest recover and heal with ‘rest and digest’ response. Shitali, Sheetkari, are calming pranayama. These types of pranayama practice help us to cope up with stress and anxiety and bring peace of mind.
3. **STABILIZING PRANAYAMA** – This way of practicing pranayama bring harmony between body and mind keep us in balanced state of mind all the time by slightly stimulating or calming ourautonomous nervous system according to current situation. Anulom-Vilom, Bhramri etc. are stabilizing pranayama. These type of pranayamakeep us activeand calm during difficult situation.

RECENT RESEARCH - A study done by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has found that yoga- and meditation-based lifestyle intervention (YMLI) increases neuroplasticity and reduces severity of major depressive disorder.

The 12-week study, to determine the effects of YMLI on depression severity, showed that if an individual has genetic depression, then yoga can prove to be beneficial.

Speaking to IANS, Rima Dada, Professor at Department of Anatomy at AIIMS, said: “To combat stress anxiety and depression, yoga could play a key role. Yoga, especially pranayama, decreases expression of pro inflammatory genes and increases expression of anti-inflammatory genes and may also play an important immune-modulatory role in cytokine storm”.¹

CONCLUSION

Researches in yoga and its therapeutic aspect has been conducted in all over the world and it has been proven that yoga(pranayama) is best alternative therapy to reduce stress and improve mental health by regulating the functioning of autonomic nervous system. nowadays some of the psychologist even prescribed pranayama and meditation to patient dealing with stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. So, pranayama along with asana and meditation can not only be helpful to prevent stress but also to improve mental health.

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¹Yoga helps in combating stress, anxiety, depression: AIIMS
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