



# CONSCIOUSNESS OF YOGA IN REDUCING STRESS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Samson R Victor\* and Greta D'Souza\*\*

## Abstract

*In spite of extensive research all over the globe, decreasing quality of life, increasing health hazards, social unrest, student unrest, etc. are all different expressions of stress. Selye and Levi (1975) defined "stress as a nonspecific, conventional and phylogenetic basic response pattern, the primary function of which is to prepare the body for physical activity such as resistance or flight". Stanley Hall describes the period of adolescence as "a period of great stress and strain, storm and strife." Developmentally, adolescents are not initially too capable of handling much stress in their lives and it affects their academic and personal life. But, more & more researches reveal that yoga is an important tool for reduction of stress. With special concern it is helping teenagers in dealing with stress and thus is one of the foremost objectives of Yoga. In this aspect there is a need to create consciousness of Yoga to reduce*

\* Dept. of Education, Christ University, Bangalore. E-mail: [samson.victor@christuniversity.in](mailto:samson.victor@christuniversity.in)

\*\* Dept. of Education, Christ University, Bangalore. [greta.dsouza@christuniversity.in](mailto:greta.dsouza@christuniversity.in)

*stress during adolescence in academic and personal life among adolescents. Secondary physical education teachers have to take initiatives in imparting and practicing yoga in school, in addition a separate Yoga subject can be incorporated at secondary level; supportively suitable curriculum should be structured by the concerned organization in the view of adolescent-student to help them in reducing anxiety and stress.*

**Key Words:** *yoga, stress & adolescents.*

## Introduction

Scientific and technological progress all over the globe has made man highly sensitive, critical & creative. His intellect has gained tremendous power of analysis. He has unraveled subtle mysteries of nature and understood the general laws of nature. But in spite of extensive research all over the globe, decreasing quality of life, increasing health hazards, social unrest, student unrest, etc. are all different expressions of stress, have shown no trend of decrease. Over the last two decades, it has also been a special concern with adolescents.

## Stress

Selye and Levi (1975) defined "stress as a nonspecific, conventional and phylogenetic basic response pattern, the primary function of which is to prepare the body for physical activity such as resistance or flight".

In fact, stress is a many faceted process that occurs in reaction to events or situations in the environment called Stressors. Taylor (1995) has concluded that there are three major antecedent sources of stressful behavior, stressful life events, stress in work place, and stress in families. But in the modern times, adolescents are facing a huge amount of stress in school life, personal life & family life.

## Stress in Adolescents

Stanley Hall describes the period of adolescence as "a period of great stress and strain, storm and strife." Adolescents experience good stress and bad stress on a daily basis. Good stress is best described as the adrenaline rush they feel when they rise to challenges. Bad stress feeds on worry, fear and anxiety, and creates a vicious cycle of harmful stress that can lead to health problems. Bad stress can also get

embedded into their life when it's consistent; like the stress that comes from ongoing work-related issues, peer group & family struggles, or relentless financial problems.

Developmentally adolescents are not initially too capable of handling much stress in their lives and it affects their academic and personal life.

## Yoga

Yoga is the way of integrating body with the spirit. It is a high state of consciousness. Yoga leads the aspirant to the awakening of the 'Divine' within. The history and tradition of ancient India gives us sufficient information about the fruitfulness of practice of yoga. The etymology suggests that the term yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj', means 'to yoke', unite and join together as one. It is the bringing together of two things-body and spirit into a relationship. In general yoga refers to a certain range of methods and techniques of contemplation. Specifically speaking, yoga refers to a school of Hindu philosophy with a particular emphasis on contemplative techniques.

## Yoga Sutra of Patanjali

It was Patanjali who systematically presented the yoga sutras. He presents yoga as a means of meditation and concentration. According to him, yoga means, "*chitha vrithi nirodham yoga*," means, it is the complete cessation of all the mental activities. Patanjali's basic thought was not God realisation, but the removal of pain and ailments. Later it became more God centred and many religious groups incorporated yoga into their daily practices as a means for realisation of God.

## Stages of yoga

Patanjali has suggested eight stages of yoga. There for it is also known as '*ashtanga yoga*'.

- Yama: (abstentions) non-violence, non-lying, non-covetousness, non-sensuality and non-possessiveness
- Niyama: (observances) purity, contentment, austerity, study and surrender to God
- Asana: (posture) the seated position used for meditation
- Pranayama: (breath control) it is the control of the life force

- Pratyahara: (abstraction) withdrawal of sense organs from external objects
- Dharana: (concentration) fixing the attention on a single object
- Dhyana: (meditation) intense contemplation
- Samadhi: (self-realisation or liberation of the self) merging consciousness with the object of meditation. This is the point of God realisation.

From time immemorial, yoga has been flourishing. In this modern era yoga has become inevitable to every individual. In this modern world, which is more than a jungle, it still becomes imperative for everyone who is mentally and physically haunted, to practice yoga to lead a stress free life.

The old saying in Sanskrit “**Avidya asmita raga dvesa abhinivesha Klesah**” which means, in our original state we are totally stress-free. We are blissful. That state devoid of any tensions and pressures, even thinking or feeling is the source of a bliss, knowledge, creativity and freedom. We may call it perfection; patanjali calls it swarupa (self). When this stage gets disturbed, there will an imbalance even at the subtlest level, thinking starts. Avidya – Ignorance has set in, says patanjali. This ‘Avidya’ leads to further thinking and we start limiting ourselves: constriction, pressurization or stress is built up. This saying seems to be very appropriate in modern day context all over the world.

Supportively, Christian Perring (2004) has developed a DVD consisting of two main Yoga practices, one for stress prevention, and the other for stress relief, both 35 minutes long. For those whose lives are full of anxiety and emotional difficulty, and who are looking for non-medical ways to feel better, this stress management DVD could be helpful.

Peterhutch (2008) Yoga for Stress Management, Yoga for Stress Relief, Conducted a Research on a group of people in which Hatha Yoga - the type of yoga which has a significant impact on ones muscular strength, flexibility, balance and endurance. The studies revealed that , the group of people who practiced yoga, regularly revealed that after eight weeks - on average - the flexibility of this group improved by 14% to 35%.

More & more researches reveal that yoga is an important tool for reduction of stress. Corresponding to this an objective of Yoga is to attain absolute peace and calm of mind and body. With special concern it is helping teenagers in deal with stress is thus one of the foremost objectives of Yoga. Yoga music has been found to be effective in helping people and especially Dept.teenager’s dealing with stress and mental exertions. It gives them strength, health and flexibility. Hence, Yoga is considered an excellent choice in stress-management.

In this aspect there is a need to create consciousness of Yoga to reduce stress during adolescence in academic and personal life among adolescents.

## Suggestions to enhance Consciousness of yoga among adolescents

As multiple studies have concluded, a daily Yoga practice provides the time and space to experience the sensations of the body, and to interpret them. In this aspect the secondary physical education teachers have to take initiatives in imparting and practicing yoga in school. In addition a separate Yoga subject can be incorporated at secondary level; supportively suitable curriculum should be structured by the concerned organization in the view of adolescent students to help them in reducing anxiety and stress, resulting in better health, better mood, and better concentration throughout the day.

## Conclusion

The effect of the latest academic scenario spelt in terms of stress and problems that are encountered among adolescents is a major cause of concern among academicians, as it can have a major impact on the health. In this regard teachers, parents and academicians should consider yoga as an important tool in reducing stress among adolescents and promote yoga in the school curriculum.

## References

1. Carlson, G. A. and Cantwell, D.P, (1978), Unmasking Masked Depression in Children and Adolescents, *American Journal of Psychiatry*.137, 445-44
2. Christian Perring, (2006), *Anxiety Disorders*, from [http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view\\_doc.php](http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php).
3. Nagendra H R Dr. & Et.all, (1988), *New Perspectives in Stress Management*, VK Yoga, Kanyakumari, India.
4. Peterhutch, (2008), *Yoga for Stress Management, Yoga for Stress Relief* , from <http://www.articlesbase.com/wellness-articles/yoga-for-stress-management-yoga-for-stress-relief-617514.html>
5. Selye H, (1975), *Stress without Distress, USA* , New American Library.
6. Taylor D, (1995), *Effects of a behavioural stress-management program on anxiety, mood, self-esteem, and T-cell count in HIV positive men. Psychological Reports* 76(2): 451-457.