

CHAPTER-15

PRANAYAMA TECHNIQUES INDICATED FOR ANXIETY: A REVIEW ARTICLE

Dr. VAISAKH R

Assistant Professor,

Department of Swasthavritta

Glocal College of Ayurvedic Medical Sciences and Research Centre

Glocal University, Saharanpur, U P, India

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ABSTRACT

In India, anxiety is prevalent among the general population, with women, young adults, and the elderly being the most susceptible. According to a study conducted by researchers in 2017 estimated that almost 200 million people had psychological illness in India. Depression was the most common disorder affecting people followed by Anxiety. The study also states that females are more prone to anxiety as compared to males. The prevalence of anxiety was the highest in states like Kerala followed by Manipur, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Studies shows that almost 38 million people in India are suffering from anxiety disorders. Holistic methods are becoming more and more common in the treatment of mental illness in recent years. Yoga is considered as a practice which includes 3 components: gentle stretching; breath control exercises; and meditation.¹ Yoga enhances hormone function, blood circulation, muscle strength, flexibility, and oxygen absorption through physical postures and breathing exercises. Furthermore, the relaxation causes the autonomic nervous system to become more parasympathetically dominant, thereby stabilizing the system.

Keywords: Yoga, Pranayama, Anxiety, Parasympathetic, Depression, Stress

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress can be of multiple forms, but among them some forms like physical strain, emotional distress, ongoing psychological pressure, existential crisis, and the aftereffects of past trauma. Studies have found that repeated stress will affect mentally and physically and require proper care. It's common to occasionally feel anxious in life. However, in contrast, strong, overwhelming, and persistent concern and fear about ordinary events are often experienced by people with anxiety disorders. The effects of stress in contemporary life can result in a number of issues, such as asthma, body aches, weight gain, headaches, easy fatigue and discomfort in the extremities. Although there are many different therapies available today to deal with "stress," most of them may not be the best fit. The main goals of pharmacological methods are to treat depression and anxiety disorders, including both acute and chronic symptoms.

According to several research and press reports, yoga can ease physical stress and aid to reduce anxiety. Frequent yoga practice, and incorporating the philosophy and principles of yoga into daily life, can help to lower the anxiety and improve the patients' general state of health. The yoga practices were designed to facilitate development and integration of the human body, mind, and breath to produce structural, physiological, and psychological effects.⁵ Beyond these particular results, the ultimate aim of yoga practices is to enhance general quality of life by facilitating self-transformation at all levels of functioning.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Gathering essential details in the Ayurvedic Samhitas and commentaries that are currently available. Index and non-index medical publications are also used as sources on pertinent subjects.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

i. Anxiety

By 2020, mental illness, including stress-related diseases, is expected to overtake other causes of disability as the world's largest cause of disability, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Burden of Disease Survey. In life, it's normal to experience anxiety periodically. On the other hand, individuals with anxiety disorders frequently experience intense, overpowering, and persistent worry and panic regarding commonplace occurrences. In today's world, stress can lead to a multitude of problems, including asthma, aches and pains in the body, headaches, weight gain, and discomfort in the extremities.

ii. Causes of Anxiety

Anxiety disorders can arise from a variety of sources. In certain situations, there may be involvement from the brain centres that regulate emotions and fear. The development of this issue may be influenced by environmental and genetic factors.

The following are a few typical outside variables that lead to anxiety disorders:

- a) Stress due to work
- b) In personal relationships such as marriage
- c) Financial issues
- d) Stress due to serious illnesses
- e) Side effects of medication etc.

iii. Types of Anxiety Disorders

- a. Agoraphobia It is the anxiety which happens when the person is in a public place or in a crowded place, from where escape is not possible, or help may not be readily available. This is categorized by the fear that a panic attack or panic-like symptoms may occur in such situations. People with agoraphobia, hence, strive to avoid such situations.²

- b. Intense anxiety or panic attacks that are directly brought on by a physical health issue are included in anxiety disorders that are medically produced.
- c. Generalized anxiety disorder occurs due to unrealistic, excessive and persistent worry about everything on daily basis. Such worry could be multifocal like family, finance, health, and the future. This disorder is excessive, hard to control, and is frequently accompanied by several non-specific psychological as well as physical symptoms. The key characteristic of generalized anxiety disorder is excessive worry.³
- d. Panic-disorder is frequently accompanied by panic attacks, which are sudden, intense episodes of terror or fear that peak in a couple of minutes only. Possible indicators of impending death include dyspnoea, chest pain, or palpitations, or a racing, pounding, or fluttering heart.
- e. High degrees of anxiety, fear, and social scenario avoidance are symptoms of social anxiety disorder (also known as social phobia), which is brought on by emotions of humiliation, self-consciousness, and worry about being judged or adversely perceived by others.
- f. Significant anxiety and a strong desire to avoid an object or circumstance are the hallmarks of specific phobias. Some people experience panic episodes due to phobias.
- g. Severe anxiety or panic attacks that are brought on by drug abuse, prescription side effects, exposure to toxins, or drug withdrawal are the hallmarks of substance-induced anxiety disorder.
- h. Anxiety or phobias that don't exactly fit the description of any other anxiety disorder but are severe enough to be upsetting and disruptive are called other specified anxiety disorder or unidentified anxiety disorder.

iv. Pranayama Technique's Useful in Anxiety

a. Anuloma-Viloma (Nadi-Shodhana Pranayama)

Anuloma viloma is alternate nostril breathing. It is done using a certain ratio with specific hand mudras.

Technique: Find a calm and quiet place, sit with straight spine. After taking a big breath through your left nostril, use your ring and index fingers to close it. Breathe out through your right nostril. Take a deep breathe through your left nostril, then close your left nostril with ring and index fingers. Hold the breath. Exhale through the right nostril.

Repeat this for the opposite side. Breathe in through your right nostril, shut it, hold it for a short while, and then release the breath through your left nostril.

b. Bhramari Pranayama

The term Bhramari pranayama comes from the name of the black Indian bee, Bhramari, and the word pranayama, which means breathing practice.

Technique: This Pranayama is performed by sitting in calm place with the eyes closed. Then gently obstruct the ear canal by placing his thumb in the ear canal or on the tragal cartilage. With remaining fingers close the eyelids, with the index finger cover the eyebrow. Ask the patient to take a deep breath and exhale slowly through nose by making a loud humming sound while focusing his attention on the area between the eyebrows. The process is repeated for 5-10 times per session. This technique reduces anxiety.

4. DISCUSSION

Several studies have revealed that yoga may be useful in lowering anxiety and tension. Your mood and general sense of wellbeing can be improved by yoga. Yoga is a mind-body activity that helps people become less stressed by helping them recognize the connection between their bodies and minds. Breath control is a crucial component of Pranayama, as the breath functions as a dynamic bridge between the body and the mind. Neurotransmitters like serotonin and norepinephrine are reduced during periods of depression and anxiety. In addition, elevated cortisol levels contribute to depression via controlling serotonin and norepinephrine levels. Pranayama has a counter-regulatory effect on cortisol levels, which lessens anxiety and symptoms of depression. Pranayama is beneficial in daily life for enhancing general health. Regular practice of yoga helps to achieve peacefulness of body and mind. Practice of Pranayama, Yoga and meditation controls the limbic hypothalamus axis. This reduces the anxiety and reduces level of stress hormones present in the blood. Pranayama and yoga are not just physical practices; they have a profound effect on our consciousness. Pranayama and yoga directly improve our way of thinking. Additionally, lower stress levels have been greatly aided by yoga and pranayama practices.

5. CONCLUSION

Mental illnesses are increasing day by day. This is due to modern stress full lifestyle and poor mental strength. Yoga and Pranayama helps to calm the mind when practiced regularly. Practicing Anuloma-viloma and bhramari pranayama shows significant impact in reducing stress and anxiety to a certain level. Hormones like

Serotonin and dopamine are increased during yoga and pranayama practice and also reduces cortisol level. So, the regular practice of pranayama and yoga along with better lifestyle and dietary modification helps in reducing illnesses of mind and also increases longevity.

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