



YOGA- PERFECT SOLUTION FOR THE STRESS IN ELDERLY

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ABSTRACT

Since the ancient times, man has always been in a search for age-erasing methods. Yoga puts a leash on ageing and helps the individual to stay happy and have a healthy ageing. A long life span has no importance in today's world as the average individual is conquered by diseases in the third-fourth decade of his life itself. Hence for such an individual, a diseased free old age is a far stretched dream. Yoga lends a helping hand to such people as it is a natural and correct way of life, simply organized into a systematic manner.

It is thought that mental health problems are a normal aspect of ageing. Besides dementia, anxiety, insomnia, an elderly mainly experiences emotional and psychological stress related to loneliness, isolation, or loss of loved one. But unfortunately, these are either ignored or not taken seriously. *Jara* or old age is a *swabhavbalapravritta vyaadhi* i.e it is an inescapable phase of one's life. It is an inescapable part of life. Although this phase comes naturally, with the help of yogic interventions, a healthy and happy old age can be experienced. Yogic interventions are absolutely cost free and can be a good alternative to fight against stress.

Keywords- *Jara*, yoga, stress, *swabhavbalapravrutta vyadhi*, dementia, anxiety, dementia

INTRODUCTION

A verse quoted by Buddha- says that "The mind is everything. What you think is what you become." A plethora of questions arise on how to rejuvenate the mind amidst the worldly chaos. Although mankind has entered an era of well advanced hi- tech medical facilities which makes life more comfortable, the expected quality of life still seems to be far from reality. The most vulnerable group in today's world i.e. the older age group faces the challenge of failing health, dwindling finances and most importantly loneliness - due to which they tend to get stressed.

The impacts of physical stress are clear and hence can be tackled but the emotional or mental stress is especially taxing for older people. Many a time it remains hidden and the eventual consequences can be harmful. Hence they get succumbed to different diseases.

Yoga plays a crucial role in maintaining the flexibility of joints, improving one's coordination skills and calming the mind. Hence it gives better results; also as it is an



all round wellness therapy. Yoga being the complete therapy for boosting one's positive energy towards physical, emotional and spiritual upbringing - becomes the right lifestyle that can be applied for the elderly. During ancient times Yoga was considered merely as a philosophy. But in today's modern era- yoga as a science and therapy can be used to treat many diseases and heal the mind. Yoga generates the feeling of contentment and gratitude, and boosts up the self-confidence of the older adults to live their life on their own terms. A healthy geriatric group plays a crucial role in building valuable and responsible citizens in the society and hence the medical fraternity needs to take their proper care.

Being part of the medical fraternity, it is our sincere effort to provide a strong solution for stress in the elderly by inculcating the practice of yoga. It is our belief that each and every individual irrespective of age deserves to achieve happiness. Hence this paper presents yoga as a concrete remedy for healthy ageing and their rehabilitation.

Causes of Stress in Elderly

- Loss of friends/ relatives- loneliness, isolation.
- Healthcare costs/ pressure to pay bills
- Loss of memory- causes stress and anxiety and this stress can speed up the memory decline.
- Chronic pain or physical discomfort i.e. deterioration of physical abilities.
- Retirement which brings boredom and free time which induces excessive thinking.
- Chronic systemic diseases.

- Neglect and verbal abuse from care givers or family members.
- Caring for a sick spouse.

Pathogenesis

During physical or emotional stress, the sympathetic dominates the parasympathetic. Activation of sympathetic division and release of hormones by the adrenal medulla sets in motion a series of physiological responses collectively called alarm reaction or fight-or-flight response, producing following effects:

- 1) Pupils dilate
- 2) B.P increases, heart rate increases, force of contraction increases.
- 3) Blood vessels of non-essential organs such as kidneys and gastrointestinal tract constrict.
- 4) Blood vessels of organs involved in exercise or fighting off danger- skeletal, cardiac, etc muscles- dilate to allow faster flow of blood.
- 5) Rate and depth of breathing increases- airways dilate- that allows faster movement of air in and out of the lungs.
- 6) Blood glucose level rises as liver glycogen is converted to glucose.
- 7) Medullae of adrenal glands are stimulated to release epinephrine and norepinephrine- these intensify and prolong sympathetic effects.
- 8) Processes not essential for meeting stress situation are inhibited. eg. muscular movements of GIT and digestive secretions slow down or even stop.

Ageing And Nervous System - From early adulthood onwards brain mass declines. By the time a person reaches 80, brain weighs about 7% less than it did in young adulthood. Although number of neurons



present does not decrease much, number of synaptic contacts declines. Decrease in brain mass causes decreased capacity for sending nerve impulses to and from the brain which diminishes the processing of information. Conduction velocity decreases, voluntary motor movements slow down and reflex time increases.

Ageing And Special Senses- There is gradual loss of olfactory receptors and gustatory receptor cells along with their slower rate of replacement from the age of 50. Amount of fat around orbits decreases causing eyeballs to sink into the orbit. Age related macular diseases, glaucoma, cataracts and presbyopia are common. By the age of 60, 25% elderly experience noticeable hearing loss for higher pitched sounds (presbycusis) which is usually caused due to degeneration of nerve pathway for hearing.

Symptoms Of Stress In Elderly

Common signs and symptoms:

Physiological: insomnia, nightmares, loss of appetite, palpitation, frequent urination, muscle pain, fatigue, increased rate of respiration, increased blood pressure, diarrhea or severe constipation etc.

Emotional and psychological: anxiety, fear, frustration, depression, restlessness, poor concentration, forgetfulness, mood swings, increased irritability, delirium, loss of cognition, rigidity, feeling of loneliness, inner withdrawal, weariness of life, suicidal tendency etc.

Sexual adjustment- Between 40 and 50, there is cessation of reproduction by women and diminution of sexual activity on part of men. During this phase, physical and emotional disturbances may occur. Irritability, jealousy and despondency are very frequent.

Cure: *Jara* being a *swabhavbalapravruttha vyadhi* is inescapable. Medicine plays a temporary role, but it is ineffective in

reversing the changes caused due to ageing. Also the heavy costs of medicine can be equally taxing. Here yoga plays a vital role as it ensures well being of the person in all aspects- physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It is also a cost free therapy with nil side effects. Yoga brings peace to the mind and hence alleviates psychological diseases. Yoga can work on all levels of prevention of disease.

- On the primordial level, it can eradicate the cause of mental diseases in the elderly. eg regular practice of *Suryanamaskara* by chanting the *beeja* mantra can promote health, as it is said "*Arogyam Bhaskarata Icchet*

Practice of *Yama & Niyama* can remove the possibility of different types of mental health problems, develop positive attitude, boosts confidence.

- On the primary level, it can prevent the occurrence of diseases. eg. the regular practice of *Shavasana*, *Dhyana*, *Omkar* chanting can help to prevent Hypertension.

- On the secondary level, it can offer a specific treatment for the disease. eg. the regular practice of *Bhramari* and *Shavasana* can help to cure insomnia, practice of *shatkriyas* can help to cure obesity, practice of *Trataka* can correct errors of refraction etc.

- On the tertiary level, it can help in rehabilitation, improve loco-motor function and prevent further damage e.g regular practice of *Gomukhasana*, *Vakrasana* can correct frozen shoulder in diabetic patients.

Benefits of Yoga in Elderly-

Benefits range from physical to mental changes:

- It improves balance (coordination) and further prevents falls.



- It boosts strength and flexibility and keeps the skeletal musculature healthy.
- Improves mobility and range of motion.
- It relieves pain
- It relieves stress and promotes joy and hope.
- *Pranayama* and meditation slows heart rate, reduces effect of adrenaline rush felt during a pressure situation.
- It promotes clarity of thought. Yoga increases the blood circulation to the brain and enhances brain function.
- Improves digestion.
- It slows down the breathing rate i.e. the time taken for 1 breath. This breathing rate is directly connected to longevity. Slower we breathe, the longer we live.
- It also lowers the rate of heart further controlling B.P
- It prevents and cures psychosomatic diseases as well.
- It increases lung capacity- during normal breathing 10-15% of lungs capacity is used but with *Pranayama – 8 Kumbhaka*, one can improve the capacity to 80%

CONCLUSION

Effect of time (*Kaala & Parinama*) is bound to happen and it is unavoidable. *Jara* is also a similar stage in life which occurs naturally and cannot be avoided. However if one adheres to certain modes of life, one can expect smooth sailing.

*Nagari Nagarasyeva Rathasyeva Rathi
Yatha, Swasharirasya Medhavi Krutyeshu
Avahito Bhavet/*

Each one of us should perform such actions which are good for the body and yoga gets included in it. Yoga has been defined as,

Chitta Vrutti Nirodha /

i.e yoga is the cessation of mental modifications which is caused due to mind, intellect and ego. It is also stated that,

*Tam Vidyat Dukha sanyoga Viyogam Yoga
Sandnitam/*

This means that yoga is remaining unbounded with the happiness and miseries of the world. This state of mind is essential during the old age. The sense of peace and contentment helps a person to tackle stress and further prevents the manifestation of disease.

Yoga has an effective role in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression that can be considered as complementary medicine and reduce the medical cost per treatment by reducing the use of drugs. Given that, the reason behind the effect of yoga on stress, anxiety, and depression is not clear for us and may be transient, and it is suggested that future studies are done to investigate the long-term effect of yoga on stress, anxiety, and depression.

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Cite article:

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Ayurlog: National Journal of Research in Ayurved Science- 2018; (6)(6) : 1-5

