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Yoga - A Royal Path for Stress Free Climate in Higher Education

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Overview

The phenomena of stress have become very common in the modern complex world. In the fast changing world of rapid technological advancement, more and more people are becoming victims of stress and this is true of people in all organization and at all levels. The victims of stress are more in the developed countries and in the urban area where in the world the pace of life is slow and stress is minimal. A study conducted by the W.H.O in 2001 revealed that every fourth person in the world was suffering from high level of stress and by 2020, depression would be the second largest cause for urban diseases after heart elements.

Etymologically, the word stress is derived from the Latin word stringer which means to stay tight. The word stress expresses the mental image of an individual with a situation of uneasiness and distress that is gradually tightening its hold, taking all in grips till it eventually strangulates an individual. In a very simple way, stress can be defined as the mental stress that an individual experience as a result of coping with some environmental factors creating stress. In the wisdom literature of ancient Indian the world stress is close to the word of Bishad. It has been explained in the 1st chapter of the Gita titled as Bishads-Yoga, when Arjun was under the extreme stress in the battle filed. In the Sankhya yoga two, concepts are highlighted namely Klesha and Dukha. Kalesha refers to stressor aspect and Dukha to the phenomena of stress itself. Hence, stress signifies an intense, adverse and painful emotional state that an individual experiences in the course of his/her interaction with the world. Stress involves an experience of painful motion and is characterized by powerlessness and helplessness in sprit, urging to escape from or avoid the situation causing up the stress. There is a very old saying that "healthy body lives in a healthy mind."

Whereas the reverse is rather more true in relation to the stress that “healthy mind live in a healthy body.” The role of stress in everyday life hardly needs to be over emphasizes. Stress and its prevention as well as its management, have now become an integral and essential part of modern life.

Objectives

The following are the main objectives of the present paper:

- I. To study the cause and implication of stress.
- II. To suggests remedial measures to manage the stress.

Research Methodology

In order to carry out the Present study a desk research and delphy method (expert Opinion) is applied. The interview and observation methods have also been applied to analyze and to reach the conclusion. Various books, journals, magazines newsletters and newspapers, etc. were consulted to collect and evaluate the various facts, including using electronic media like internet etc.

Causes of Stress

Stress is a situation that provides external and internal stimuli. These stimuli or stress causing factors are stressors. An individual may come across pleasant stress that may lead to the situation of distress and turnout under the experimental psychology. However stress is always considered to be negative but some positive elements are also perceived in stress that may be called as challenge. An individual has to draw a threshold line or Lakshman Rekha to differentiate the negative and positive stress. The threshold level varies not only from person to person but also varies for the same person under extremely varying situations. The followings factors have been noted the main causes of stress in the era of modern Information Communications and Technology (ICT) society or say, Knowledge Society:

External Factors

These causes are called Ipso-Facto that means causes are out of control of an individual at least in the short run. When nothing can be done, one has to live with the problems of stress. The followings are noted as the causes of external stress:

- ❖ Rapid obsolescence of skills
- ❖ Poor time management of others
- ❖ Unreasonable boss/superiors at workplace

- ❖ Uncongenial Work environment
- ❖ Target chasing & continuous target enhancement
- ❖ Sudden transfer from one work place to another
- ❖ Stock market crash
- ❖ Economic factors
- ❖ Socio-political factors.

Stress Generating Events and Situations

The empirical study has been carried out to identify the list of such stressors that produce the stress. The followings are the causes of stress generating events and situation.

- ❖ Death of a member in the family
- ❖ Sick member in the family
- ❖ Wedding
- ❖ Death of spouse
- ❖ Partition of property
- ❖ Physically handicapped child in the family
- ❖ Loss of job
- ❖ Change of job
- ❖ Shifting residence
- ❖ Noise pollution
- ❖ Major personnel failure
- ❖ Loss in business
- ❖ Financial problem
- ❖ Major theft in the house
- ❖ Significant increase in the income.
- ❖ Loneliness
- ❖ Leaving home for spiritual pursuits.

Internal Factors

The presence of internal factors also makes one stressful and these are by and large within one's control.

These factors are listed as follow:

- ❖ Strong negative emotions like anger, arrogance, ambitions etc.

- ❖ Materialistic world view like selfishness, greed, jealous, social rivalry etc.
- ❖ Leaving an impure it includes illegal and unethical life ruled by senses for example extra marital relations etc.
- ❖ Personality composition
- ❖ The Dwandik theory of stress which means interplay of quality

Implications of Stress

Stress has both negative as well as positive implications for an individual under the varying circumstances. Stressful person will either become functional or he cannot perform up to his full potential. Under the extreme stressful circumstances an individual may become lunatic, may commit suicide, may meet sudden demise and may become criminal. The followings implications of the consequences of stress have been revealed.

The implications of the stress may be physiological in nature which implies adverse effect on heart rate, respiratory system, blood pressure, indigestion, thrombosis, cancer, headache etc.

Emotional Implications

Emotional implications includes anxiety, anger, ambition, apprehension etc. The behavioral implication includes, over dependence, unpredictability, uncommunicativeness, unreasonableness, argumentativeness, haphazard daily routine, withdrawal from law and lack of interest or over interest in sex. The cognitive implication has adverse effects on mental functions such as reasoning, thinking, concentration and memory and in capability in decision making.

Managing Stress

The prevention and management of stress has now become an essential and integral part of modern life. The management of stress is to some extent related to the management of time, since the basic prerequisite for both is management of self. If one monitors stress, one can notice three stages such as alarm, resistance and exhaustion, while using the fight and flight strategy. The management of stress has two aspects. One, how an individual can prevent becoming stressful and remain in the challenge state and second, once a person migrates into stress state, how soon he can revert back to the challenge state. Hence, two dimensions of managing stress are prevention and coping ability.

Methods of Stress Prevention

In the first stage the efforts should be made to monitor and prevent the stress. These are various methods of managing the prevention of stress. These are discussed as follows.

- ❖ Effective management of anger, arrogance, anxiety, ambition and apprehension, i.e. management of 5A's. To manage 5 A's, there is modern and classical approach but there is almost complete unanimity among the psychologists that the classical approach is valid. The Raj Yoga also helps to prevent the stress.
- ❖ The theory of Nishkam Karma as given in the Gita also helps to prevent the stress. In the Gita, Shri Krishna explain the Arjun's that 'you surrender to me and I will bear the burden of your Yoga Karma'.
- ❖ Conscious efforts towards developing a healthy personality, based primarily upon the Guna Theory which consists of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The practical application of the Guna Theory may also be useful.
- ❖ The Gita offers two alternative method dealing with Dwandick, namely Nirdandwa and Samatw. These are the operationalizing methods of Gyan Yoga and Bhakti Yoga respectively.
- ❖ The ethic-moral law of cause and effect is the appropriate method of dealing with prevention of stress.

Method of Coping with Stress

Vedantic Model

The Vedantic model of higher self is also known as Astang yoga of Maharishi Patanjali. It helps to cope with the stress. The following is the model of Astang yoga.

Yama

Yama represents moral conduct. These are universal rules for social behavior. The adherence to these Yama is compulsory and obligatory under all circumstances. The five Yama or abstinence are non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing in continence and non-possessiveness.

Niyama

Niyama can be interpreted as "spiritual observances" and it represents individual's will power to adhere to these spiritual prescriptions. The regular practice of Niyama develops seeker's personality for the achievement of higher order. These five Niyama are purity of body and mind, contentment, self-discipline, self-study and surrender to the ultimate reality. These are ethical ideal conducts, which are conducive to one's welfare and well-being. The adherence to these Niyama provides a person with strength of positive spiritual discipline to defeat the battalions of evil misery that produce evils ways and effects.

These Yama and Niyama regulate the thoughts, behaviors, and actions of individuals, and are helpful in removal of emotional upheavals and mental distraction on one side, enabling the seeker to cultivate steady, tranquil and healthy mental attitude on the other side.

Asanas

Asanas bestows bodily control and mental and physical calmness enabling the person to meditate for hours without fatigue and restlessness. The right posture will produce the physical and mental pacification that is necessary to fight out body bound tendencies towards laziness, restlessness and flesh attachment. There are two kinds of Asanas. First type of Asanas i.e. Asanas for physical well-being, is practiced to make body perfect and free from diseases. These Asanas control specific muscles, nerves and have a great therapeutic value. The Second form of Asana is meditative posture: such as padmasana, siddhasana, sukhasana, suitable for Pranayama and Dhayana. Ensuring that the head, neck and trunk are erect and in a straight line. These postures help to make body still and motionless without strain and tension.

Pranayama

The word Pranayama consists of two words "Prana" and "Yama", former means energy or life force whereas later means "control and regulation of that energy". Since, there is a close connection between the flow of respiration and the dynamics of the mind, which help in maintaining some mental balance and enhancing its clarity and capacity for observations. This life force is the link between matter and spirit. Generally, there is no qualitative difference between man and universe, the common factor between both of them is prana. Prana is the vital energy which sustains the body and mind. The grossest manifestation of this vital energy is the breath, so the Pranayama is also called the science of breathing. The control of breathing leads to mental peace and happiness. Through Pranayama a person can gain control of motion of body and mind. As a result a person can regulate and control his thoughts, behavior, actions, shape the character and can even change course of his life. There are various types of Pranayama which are recommended such as. Anulom-vilom, bhastrika ujai, kapal bhati etc.

Pratyahara

Pratyahara means "withdrawal of consciousness" from the senses. It is purely first step in the system of yoga, which is aiming at preparing the mind for the mental evenness and inner vision, that is an essential prerequisite for the effective stress management. Mind is a

slave of senses, but with the regular practice of pratyahara, the slavery of senses can be managed effectively. These senses have strong hold over one's mind, which force the life energy to flow outside. Disciplining the senses is an essential perquisite for the stress management in every stratum of life as a strong and controlled mind can ignore external stimuli that are main causes of stress.

Dharna

Dharna means concentration and its aim is to bring one pointedness (ekagrata) of mind. The real potential of mind is hidden behind a veil of instincts, impulses, emotions, moods, sentiments, whims and fancies, which can in turn be unveiled with helpful dharna. Without concentration, the energy of mind is dissipated in vague thoughts, worries and fantasies. Dharna is therefore, the master key that opens the gates of mediation, as the prolonged concentration results in meditation. There are various types of concentration such as 'gross, subtle, outer, inner, objective, subjective and infinite', depending on the object of concentration. Mind is like a lake disturbed by the rising waves of thoughts or Verities. The practice of dharna helps to still the waves and when the thoughts are stilled, the aspirant can see his/her reflection in the lake and can experience his/her true self.

Dhayana

Dhayana means meditation. The science of meditation was systematically developed in ancient India during Upanishada period. Later on, it was elaborated in detailed by Sage Patanjali and the technique was spread far and wide. The concept of meditation is rightly defined by Sankhya School of philosophy as "Dhayanam Nirvishayam Manah", which means liberation of mind from all disturbing and distracting emotions, thoughts and desires. Meditation begins with concentration as through the concentration the mind become steady and pointed. Meditation helps in making mental and emotional environment pure and a yogi experiences a sense of inner refreshment and bliss. This state of inner calmness fosters the development of balanced, dynamic and stress free personality.

Smadhi

The state of ecstatic realization is also known as the fourth state of sleepless sleep (turiya) which transcends the three normal state of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. It is fully conscious and factual bringing unification to the seeker's mind or providing vision with universal Consciousness, which sets him free. Then he reaches the final state of liberation where he is ever free from the bondage of time, space and causation. He has

achieved the eternal bliss (spiritual joy) where he is undisturbed by external conditions or stimuli. In that state of mind a person enjoys the stress free state of mind. In this state, the yoga becomes with one and absorbed in higher self, similarly, as a ball of iron is placed in hot furnace becomes so red at the final stage that it is indistinguishable from the red hot appearance of the furnace i.e. the ball becomes one with the furnace.

The Pancha Kosha model of the Taittiriya also made an individual capable of coping with the stress. The five Kosha's are Annamaya Kosha, Pranamaya Kosha, Monomaya Kosha, Vijnanmaya Kosha, and Anandmaya Kosha. The two innermost Kosha i.e. Wisdom and Bliss are stress free. Stress can touch only the first three Koshas.

The Purusha Prakriti model in the Shankaya Philosophy. Similarly, the Prakrit state in our being –is Gundriven and is therefore stress-prone, Stress being the outcome of the interplay of the three Gunas. But the Purusha dimension being beyond Gunas (ie. "Gunatita") is Stress free. One can revert back from a stressful to a stress-free situation.

Conclusions and Suggestions

It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between stress and Yoga. Stress promotes the dominance of sympathetic nervous system which ultimately creates the waves of perturbation in psyche, whereas the regular practice of Yoga promotes peace and tranquility. The activation of parasympathetic nervous system helps in the development of mental evenness. Stress has adverse effect on one's performance, immune system, and decision making attitude. Teachers and students are on higher side of stress which not only affect one's health, performance and attitude but also adversely affect the present and future of the individual and society as a whole. Teachers should also empower themselves with the Yoga based stress management techniques for the cultivation of right attitude towards all stakeholders. This attitude will help them to overcome the negative situation and to restore the credibility in the society. Now time has come to adopt the philosophy of "healthy mind and healthy body". Our policy makers should understand the relevance of Yoga and spirituality in the development of disciplined and responsible human resources. Therefore, they should imbibe the philosophy the Yoga and spirituality at every level of policy making.

The following are the few suggestions to prevent stress

- ❖ Enhance the level of tolerance and patience.
- ❖ Control anger by all means

- ❖ Control jealousy by all means
- ❖ Have a daily time schedule for all activities
- ❖ Practice regularly some physical exercise Practice regularly some mental exercise
- ❖ Change your food habits
- ❖ Change your reading habits for proper nourishment of the mind
- ❖ Always keep your mind occupied in meaningful work
- ❖ Develop a spirit of contentment
- ❖ Share frankly one's limitations and inabilities with the boss and near and dear ones.
- ❖ One should aspire within the framework of one's capabilities.
- ❖ Avoid comparing oneself with others.
- ❖ Work efficiently but avoid competition with others.
- ❖ Strive for excellence through work is worship, follow the spirit of 'Nishkam Karma'- alongside kartavyam karma, i.e. the work is done as duty for the sake of duty only.
- ❖ Don't be a workaholic don't forget there are so many finer aspects of life
- ❖ Do not be rigid in your ways of functioning & dealing
- ❖ Do your best to get out of a provocative situation.
- ❖ Spend time with children in the 'age of innocence'
- ❖ Always thank the Almighty for whatever He has given us
- ❖ Look forward to opportunities to serve the needy and unfortunate people.

Finally, in order to operationalize the given set of practical guidelines for both prevention and coping with the stress, one needs to provide time on daily basis. It would be extremely useful to adopt the state of quality of mind through meditation with the view of preventing and coping with the stress.

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