



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-08
in collaboration with

Indira Gandhi Government Post Graduate College,

Bangarmau, Unnao-209868, Uttar Pradesh, India



Effect of Yogic Practices on Stress and Anxiety

Dr. Akhilesh Chandra Saxena,

Assistant Professor & HOD,

Department of Physical Education,

Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar University, Agra.

Abstract:

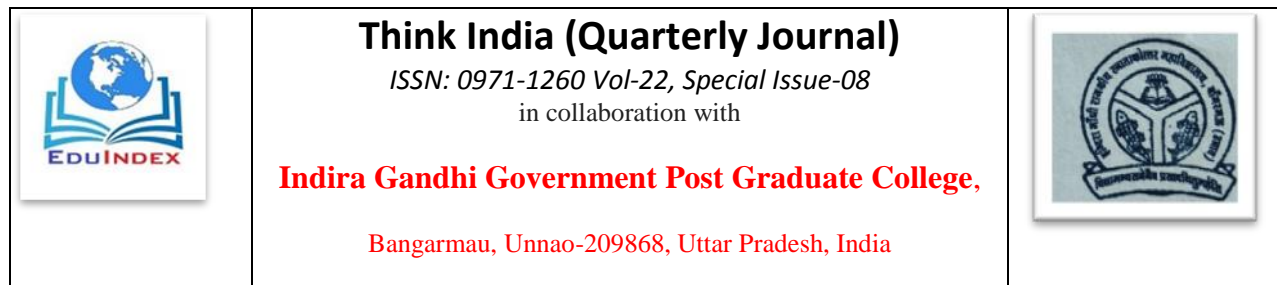
Regular yoga practice can help you stay calm and relaxed in daily life, and can also give you the strength to face events as they come without getting restless. Yoga practice ideally includes the complete package of asanas (body postures), pranayamas (breathing techniques), meditation, and the ancient yoga philosophy, all of which has helped several anxiety patients recover and face life with new positivity and strength. The effect of exercise on anxiety has, however, been reviewed. There is some evidence of an anxiolytic effect, with aerobic exercise possibly more beneficial than non-aerobic exercise. There is also some evidence that exercise may be particularly beneficial in people with more severe anxiety. Many people use yoga therapy to manage; mental and emotional problems, such as stress, anxiety, or depression, conditions and disorders, such as ongoing low back pain, chronic or long-term pain and overall health and well-being.

Key words: *Yoga, Asanas, Pranayamas, Meditation, Anxiolytic effect.*

Yoga is a combination of physical, mental and spiritual practices or disciplines. The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it is mentioned in the [Rigveda](#), but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, in ancient India's ascetic and śramaṇa movements.

Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the West, (*White, David Gordon -2011*) following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th and early 20th century with his adaptation of yoga tradition, excluding asanas. Outside India, it has developed into a posture-based physical fitness, stress-relief and relaxation technique (*Burley, Mikel-2000*). Yoga in Indian traditions, however, is more than physical exercise; it has a meditative and spiritual core (*Burley-2000, Marek Jantos -2012*). The impact of postural yoga on physical and mental health has been a topic of systematic studies, with evidence that regular yoga practice yields benefits for low back pain and stress (*Ross and Thomas -2010, Hayes 2010*).

There are many uncomfortable physical symptoms of panic and anxiety, such as feelings of tension, tightness, and pain sensitivity. Yoga postures, known as asanas, help ease the physical discomfort that is caused by anxiety. Asanas work to stretch, lengthen, and balance the muscles. These postures can assist in releasing built-up muscle tension and stiffness throughout the body. Yoga not only helps in easing the physical body, but it can also help with anxious thoughts. Negative thinking patterns and frequent worries are common for those diagnosed with panic disorder. Meditation, visualization, and focusing on breathing can help with letting go of worry



and fear. The overall practice of yoga can elicit the relaxation response, allowing both the body and mind to gain a sense of calm and ease (Katharina -2019).

Yogic practices can vary from gentle and accommodating to strenuous and challenging; the choice of style tends to be based on physical ability and personal preference. Hatha yoga, the most common type of yoga practiced in India, combines three elements: physical poses, called *asanas*; controlled breathing practiced in conjunction with asanas; and a short period of deep relaxation or meditation.

A wide range of yoga practices suggest they can reduce the impact of exaggerated stress responses and may be helpful for both anxiety and depression. In this respect, yoga functions like other self-soothing techniques, such as meditation, relaxation, exercise, or even socializing with friends. By reducing perceived stress and anxiety, yoga appears to modulate stress response systems. This, in turn, decreases physiological arousal, for example, reducing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and easing respiration. There is also evidence that yoga practices help increase heart rate variability, an indicator of the body's ability to respond to stress more flexibly.

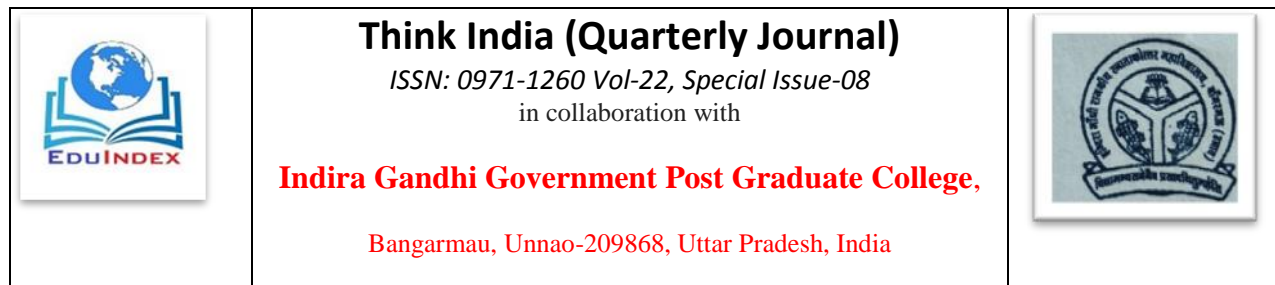
The following yoga techniques can help calm an unsettled mind and aid in anxiety treatment naturally.

1. Do Yoga asanas and relieve your stress of mind?: These yoga postures can help achieve a happy and healthy mind and body. Asanas help release tension and negativity from the system.

- Dhanurasana (Bow Pose)
- Matsyasana (Fish Pose)
- Janu Shirsasana (One-Legged Forward Bend)
- Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose)
- Marjariasana (Cat Stretch)
- Paschimottanasana (Two-Legged Forward Bend)
- Hastapadasana (Standing Forward Bend)
- Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog)
- Sirsasana (Headstand)
- Shavasana (Corpse Pose)

Note: At the end of the yoga posture session, lie down in Yoga Nidra to give your mind and body a few minutes of through relaxation. The technique is helpful in flushing out body toxins, a primary cause of stress, from the system.

2. Breathe right with pranayamas to relieve anxiety: Taking your attention to the breath can help free the mind of the unnecessary clutter of thoughts that breed anxiety. Try the following breathing practices:



- Kapal Bhati Pranayama (Skull-Shining Breathing technique)
- Bhastrika Pranayama
- Nadi Shodhan Pranayama (Alternate Nostril Breathing)
- Bhramari Pranayama (Bee Breath)

3. Meditate to enjoy the gift of a relaxed mind: Meditation can be an excellent technique to relax a distracted mind and give you a sense of calm and peace. Meditating daily can also make you aware of how your mind works to keep you involved in small, petty things around. It can also help you not worry too much or get anxious of the unknown future. You might have often heard the term ‘adrenaline rush.’ This happens when we get too anxious about a potential threat. For instance, while taking an adventure ride, the level of adrenaline hormone goes higher, leading our heart to beat faster, making the muscles tense and our body sweat profusely. Scientific research has shown that regular meditation practice can help significantly reduce the level of this stress hormone.

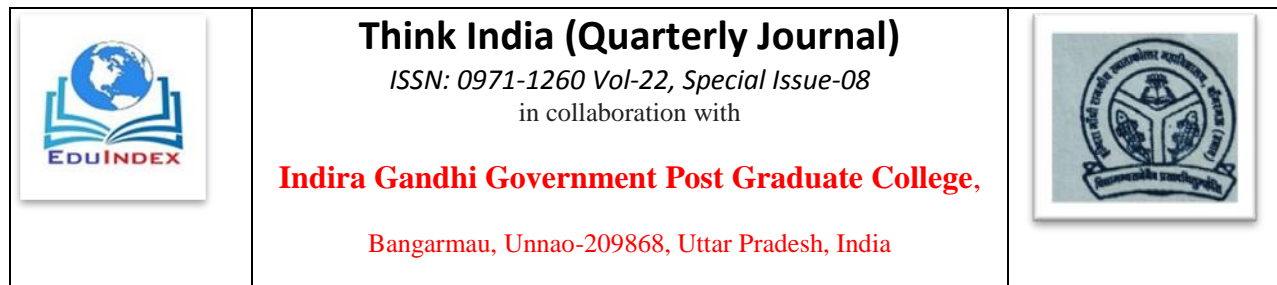
4. Apply yoga philosophy in your life; stay happy and enjoy every moment: Knowing and applying the ancient yoga knowledge in daily life, which talks about some simple yet profound principles (yamas and niyamas) of yoga, can be the secret to happy and healthy living. For instance, the Santosha principle (niyama) teaches the value of contentment. The Aprigraha principle can help us overcome greediness or the desire to keep possessing more, which can be a reason for stress and anxiety. Also, the Shaucha principle talks about the cleanliness of the mind and body. This rule can particularly help if you tend to get too anxious about catching infectious diseases.

5. Pray, keep faith and smile! : Prayer is the best form of reassurance and support to keep you anxiety-free. Developing habits of daily prayer, chanting or singing bhajans (devotional songs) fill you with positive energy and also help still the mind. They also instill a sense of deep faith that all happens for the best and that there is a higher divine power that takes care. Moreover, make a conscious effort to smile more and more. It will instill confidence, calmness and positivity instantaneously. Try it out right now!

6. Think about what you can do for others: When we constantly remain stuck in ‘me and mine’, it makes room for stress and anxiety. We keep worrying about what will happen to us. Rather, shift your attention to how you can be of some use to others around you. Energizing yourself with some service activity can give you deep satisfaction and immense joy.

7. Know the impermanence of the world: When this realization sets in that everything around us is temporary and would change, we become relaxed and settled from within. A feeling of ‘this too shall pass and not remain forever’ arises in us and frees us from anxiety. Meditation can help us see this founding principle of life.

8. Remember a similar past situation when you could overcome anxiety: This fills you with immense courage that you can pass even this situation. Keep reminding this to yourself often.



9. Keep positive company around you: When you spend more time with positive-minded people, you are influenced by similar thoughts which reflect in your overall attitude to life. Only a positive mind can breed joy, peace and relaxation.

References:

1. White, David Gordon (2011), *Yoga, Brief History of an Idea (Chapter 1 of "Yoga in practice")* (PDF), Princeton University Press
2. Burley, Mikel (2000). *Hatha Yoga: Its Context, Theory and Practice*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. p. 16. ISBN 978-8120817067.
3. Marek Jantos (2012), in *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare* (Editors: Mark Cobb et al.), Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-19-957139-0, pages 362–363.
4. Ross, Alyson; Thomas, Sue (2010). "The Health Benefits of Yoga and Exercise: A Review of Comparison Studies". *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. **16** (1): 3–12.
5. Ross, A.; Thomas, S. (January 2010). "The health benefits of yoga and exercise: a review of comparison studies". *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. **16** (1): 3–12.
6. Hayes, M.; Chase, S. (March 2010). "Prescribing Yoga". *Primary Care*. **37** (1): 31–47.
7. Katharina Star (2019) "How Yoga Can Help Ease Anxiety and Panic Disorder Symptoms"(<https://www.verywellmind.com/yoga-for-panic-disorder2584114>)