Stress Reactions: Its Management

by

Preksha Meditation & Yoga

Preface
Every human being wants joy, peace, happiness and love. For this they are blindly and desperately running after money and power. They probably obtain the money and power but on the way, unknowingly sacrifice the first four. This is the story of millions of successful peoples in the world. In spite of the amazing progress of science and technology, it is now being gradually realised by thinkers of the world in general, that man's problems have multiplied several folds and they face sorrow, disappointment, ill health & mental stress.

Stress is a common condition, a response to a physical threat or psychological distress that generates a host of chemical and hormonal reactions in the body. In essence, the body prepares to fight or flee, pumping more blood to the heart and muscles and shutting down all non-essential functions. As a temporary state, this reaction serves the body well to defend itself. However, when the stress reaction is attenuated, the normal physical functions that have been either exaggerated or shut down in response become dysfunctional in this extreme state. Many have noted the benefits of exercise in diminishing the stress response. A host of studies points to the benefits of such exercise. Yoga, too, has been recommended and studied in its relationship to stress, although the studies are less scientifically replicable. Nonetheless, several researchers claim highly beneficial results from Yoga practice in alleviating stress and its effects. The practices recommended range from intense to moderate to relaxed asana sequences, plus pranayama and meditation. In all these approaches to dealing with stress, one common element stands out: the process is as important as the activity undertaken. Because it fosters self-awareness, Yoga is a promising approach for dealing with the stress response.
The frequent stressful situations in the present age of advance technology affect the body not only psychologically but also undermine physical health by altering biochemistry & physiology of the body.

In technically advanced societies, stress is the biggest nemesis of human productivity, health and happiness. In the world, stress is responsible for almost 70% of all physical illness and high rates of anxiety and depression among the general population.

Stress is arises anytime there is unacceptable disparity between the expations and the experience.

Prolonged exposure to stress can have long–lasting consequences on physical and mental well being. Stress is any perturbation of either physiological or psychological homeostasis (Kim and yoon, 1998; McEwen, 2000; Shankaranarayana Rao et al., 2001; Sunanda et al., 2000; Vyas et al., 2002). In particular, stress is thought to precipitate or exacerbate several affective disorders including dispression and posttraumatic stress disorder. Stress leads to the activation of the hypothalmo-pitutary-adrenocortical (HPA) axis, which drives the secretion of steroid hormones from the adrenal cortex. The hippocampus is one of the critical sites for providing negative feed back regulation of the HPA axis preventing an uncontrolled stress response, which could be maladaptive.

Eminent philosophers, scientists and researchers since ages are very much concerned with the quality of human life. They have formulated and propagated various techniques and methodologies to help human beings in this regard. Yoga and Meditation are one of their creations, and is presently getting momentum from scientific interest in the process of innate human potential development.

Meditation has been there as integral component of Yoga practice for thousand of years. Irrefutable scientific proofs, now available, show that
meditation is a powerful device both for healing and promoting good health by maintaining state of homeostasis.

**Preksha Meditation** is the system of meditation engaging one’s mind fully in perception of subtle internal and innate phenomena of consciousness. It has derived from Jain Canon *Desavealiyam*. The basic purpose of the practice of Preksha Meditation is to purify the mental states. When the mind is cleaned, peace of mind automatically surfaces. Balance of mind, equaminity and state of well being are also experienced simultaneously.

The techniques of Preksha Meditation, developed more than three decades ago, claim to produce beneficial effects in terms of improvements in terms of psychological, physiological and biochemical balance in the human body. This preliminary background information about Preksha Meditation inspired the investigator to undertake the present scientific and systemic study, the results of which are very encouraging.

This study was undertaken with an objective to evaluate the therapeutic effect of Yoga and Preksha Meditation practice on physiological, psychological and biochemical parameters of human systems i.e. cardiovascular, respiratory & endocrine.

The first chapter provides details introductory information on Stress and its effects on systems of human body in relation to variable of study i.e. BP, PR, HR, RR, Stress Hormone (Cortisol), SCAT (psychological test for measuring anxiety level) and RFS (psychological test for measuring frustration level) along with revelant introductory principles of Yoga and Preksha Meditation.

Second chapter includes review of related and relevant scientific studies carried out in the past by various authors.

Chapter three provides details of methodology which include lacunae, objective, hypothesis, details of subjects included in the study, research
design and details of intervention module along with parameters of evaluation.

**Chapter four** is devoted to the description of results obtained, produced in the form of table, histogram and running statements.

**Chapter five** attempts to explain the effects of Yoga and Prekha meditaion intervention programme, in the light of results obtained and related earlier studies. Efforts to postulate the probable mechanisms of action have also been made.

Finally the whole study is summarized and presented in the **chapter number Six** i.e. “Summary and conclusion”. A list of all the references, cited in the text of this thesis has also been given in the last.