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### Effect of Yoga and Meditation on Academic Anxiety of School Children

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**Abstract :** *The number of suicides due to academic anxiety is increasing day by day. The extreme step of suicide and other disasters happening due to academic anxiety is in a great need of prevention by settling the anxiety of students through a natural way of living. Anxiety is a mental feeling of uneasiness or distress in reaction to a situation that is perceived negatively. Academic anxiety afflicts students during school related situation. Academic anxiety is a common issue that students cannot ignore as they want to succeed in school. It often leads to problems of concentration while studying and remembering information while*

*completing tests, which makes the student, feel helpless and like a failure. If academic anxiety isn't properly addressed, it can have many serious and lasting consequences, such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly in school work, fail classes and withdraw from socializing with the peers or pursuing activities that interest him.*

*These days yoga and meditation are being practiced throughout the world to decrease the stress in day to day life by the adults. If yoga and meditation can help in settling stress of adults, it may also help the school children who are facing tremendous pressure of performance in their academics and hence suffering from academic anxiety.*

*To study this problem a sample of 100 students was selected by incidental sampling technique. These students were selected from different C.B.S.E. schools of Patna; the students belonged to Baldwin Academy, Delhi Public School, International School, Notre Dame Academy, and St. Michael's High School.*

**Key words:** *Academic Anxiety, Yoga and Meditation.*

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## **Introduction :**

Academic achievement is an attained ability or degree of competence in school task, usually measured by standardized tests and expressed in grades or units based on norms derived from a wide sampling of pupils' performance. Studies reveal that even low or moderate levels of stress can interfere with task performance. Cognitive reactions of stress result in the inability to concentrate.

No doubt, school is tough. For some it is the worry of being able to get enough credits to graduate high school, while for others it is being able to get a 4.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) and get into Stanford. No matter what the goals are, but all the students struggle with a tremendous amount of stress and pressure.

At school there is a range of academic pressure. Students feel a need for perfection, worry over grades, parental pressure, competition, sports, or a tough class load.

Academic pressure begins in school. The nervous breakdowns, panic attacks, burnouts, and depression are also apparent in many students due to academic pressure. The same situation is not always stressful for all people, and all people do not undergo the same feelings or thoughts when stressed.

Having a strong support network to fall back on when times get tough at school is critical to staying upbeat and maintaining a big picture perspective. The academic pressure and anxiety does not allow the child to excel in their academics and may lead them into a state of depression or committing suicide (Nagendra and Nagarathna, 1977).

Yoga, which is a way of life, is characterized by balance, health, harmony and bliss, it was realized that the anxiety and stress due to academic pressure of school children can also be settled and reduced by practicing yoga and meditation (Tamini, 1961).

Academic pressure and academic anxiety is so high among the school children that it not only affects their studies but also their mental and physical health (Das, 1975).

Anxiety is not a bad thing. It is true that a high level of anxiety interferes with concentration and memory, which are critical for academic success. Without any anxiety, however, most of us would lack the motivation to study for exams, write papers, or do daily homework (Daubenmier, 2005). A moderate amount of anxiety actually helps in academic performance by creating motivation but excess of anything is disastrous and should be reduced to minimum level (Krejci, 1994).

It can be interpreted thus, that to achieve academic success with peaceful mind, yoga and meditation should be encouraged and practiced. It intends to make progress and remove words such as suicide, stress and academic anxiety from the dictionary of school children. To reach high standards of development, we should first keep our children, physically and mentally healthy and yoga and meditation serves this purpose (Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, 1972). With so much emphasis on yoga and meditation practice in newspapers, magazines, television, internet and other mass media, different researchers from the field of psychology, philosophy and physiology are conducting studies on different aspects of it. Since the whole emphasis of yoga and meditation is the management and reduction of stress and anxiety of school children, it becomes imperative to find out the effect of yoga and meditation on academic anxiety in school children. It was in this context that the present study was undertaken.

## **Objectives of the Study :**

The following objectives were proposed for achievement in this study :

1. To find out the reasons for academic anxiety among school children.

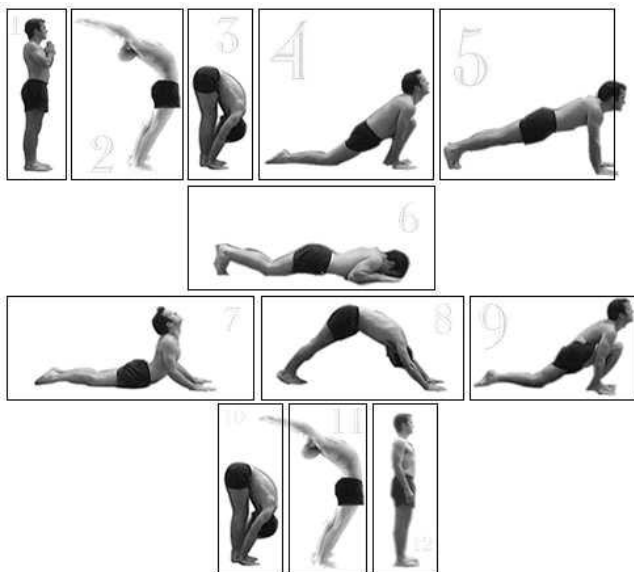
2. To study the impact of yoga and meditation on academic anxiety among school children.
3. To study the effectiveness of different Asanas practiced in reducing the academic anxiety.
4. To outline the benefits of yoga and meditation for school children.

### Asanas of Yoga and Meditation practiced by the Students

#### ASANAS OF YOGA:

**1. Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar) :** The Sun Salutations form a nice link between warm-ups and Asanas. A few rounds of Sun Salutation done at a fast pace, warm ups the body and gives a good cardiovascular workout, whereas when done at a slower pace they can be very grounding, energizing, meditative and relaxing. The students practiced Sun Salutations at a slower pace.

There are twelve positions of Sun Salutation (Verma, 2010).



**2. Corpse Pose- Final Relaxation (Shavasana) :** Final relaxation is one of the most important and rewarding poses. It is in this pose that one reaps the benefits of the asana practiced; one experiences very deep peace and calmness, while absorbing all the positive energy that one has created around him (Verma, 2010).



**3. Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhan) :** Nadi means 'channel' (allowing the passage of vital energy of prana). Shodhana means 'cleansing'. Nadi Shodhana cleanses all the Nadis or the channels in the system (Bhole, 1977).

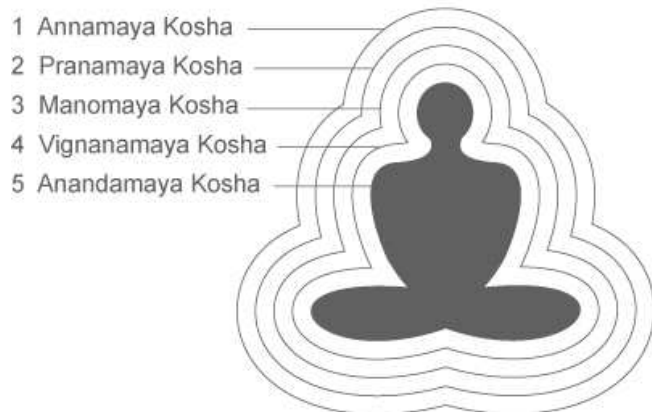


every level of a human being.

Pancha Kosha comprises:

1. Food sheath (Annamaya Kosha)
2. Breath sheath (Pranamaya Kosha)
3. Mind Sheath (Manomaya Kosha)
4. Intellect sheath (Vignanamaya Kosha)
5. Bliss Sheath (Anandamaya Kosha)

The path of meditation is an inward journey towards realization of one's true nature. The Pancha Kosha meditation takes us on this journey by gently taking our attention to the five sheaths (Verma, 2010).



## METHODOLOGY :

**Design of the study :** Pre test – Post test experimental design was used to study the Effect of Yoga and Meditation on Academic Anxiety of school children.

**Population of the study :** The secondary school students studying in VIII, IX and X Standard of C.B.S.E. schools of Patna during the session 2011-2012 constituted the population of the study.

**Sample of the study :** A sample of 100 secondary school students studying in VIII, IX and X Standard was selected by an incidental sampling technique. These students were selected from five C.B.S.E. schools Baldwin Academy, Delhi Public School, International School, Notre Dame Academy, and St. Michael's High School.

**Table 1: Break-up of the sample**

S. No.	Name of the schools	Sample size (students)	VIII standard	IX standard	X standard
1.	Baldwin Academy	20	6	6	8
2.	Delhi Public School	20	6	6	8
3.	International School	20	6	6	8
4.	Notre Dame Academy	20	6	6	8
5.	St. Michael's High School	20	6	6	8
TOTAL		100	30	30	40

## Tool of the study :

An **Academic Anxiety Scale for Children** by **Dr. A. K. Singh (Patna) and Dr. (Miss) A. Sen Gupta** was used. The Academic Anxiety Scale for

Children consisted of 20 items which included positive as well as negative statements on a 2-point scale- yes, no. The reliability of the AASC test was computed through the two methods, that is test-retest method and the split-half method. The reliability of the test by test- retest method and split half method was 0.60 and 0.65 respectively.

## Analysis :

**Analysis related to first objective :** The first objective of the study was **to outline the reasons for academic anxiety among school children.** All those reasons were classified under the following categories :

- **Social Reasons :**  
Teachers  
Friends  
Bullies
- **Scheduling Reasons :**  
Over scheduling  
Lack of Family Attention  
Not Enough Sleep
- **Academic Reasons :**  
Work That's Too Hard  
Work That's Too Easy  
Learning Ability  
Homework Pressure  
Test Anxiety
- **Environmental Reasons :**  
Poor Diet  
Noise Pollution  
Lack of Preparation

**Analysis related to second objective :** The second objective of the study was **to study the impact of yoga and meditation on the academic anxiety among school children.** Again after practicing yoga a post test was conducted. After sorting out the responses given by the students in pre-test as well as in post-test of the questionnaire some positive effects came to light. Asanas were

very beneficial for the students suffering from academic anxiety. The effects of yoga postures (asana) include increased body awareness, release of muscular tension and increased coordination between mind-and body.

**Analysis related to third objective :** The third objective of the study was **to study the effectiveness of different Asanas practiced in reducing the academic anxiety of school children**. After sorting out from the responses given in the questionnaire relationship between yoga, meditation and academic anxiety came to light. A constant stress in students leads to academic anxiety which induces risky mind body disorders like dizzy spells, anxiety, tension, sleeplessness, nervousness, muscle cramps that result in chronic health problems. Besides prescribed drugs, there are extremely effective holistic methods like yoga and meditation to tackle the impairing influence of stress.

Stressed out individuals carry a great deal of physical tension in their body. In these cases the natural unblocking effected by yoga postures are helpful. In our research work we have used **Sun Salutations, Corpse Pose, Alternate Breathing and Pancha kosha**. When one rests between postures, abdominal tension is released from the body promoting deep breathing. The benefits of yoga postures (asana) include increased body awareness, release of muscular tension and increased coordination between mind-and body.

**Analysis related to fourth objective :** The fourth objective of the study was **to outline the benefits of yoga and meditation for school children**.

**Benefits at the physical level:**

- Improved flexibility of muscles.
- Improved range of motions of the joints.
- Improved strength and condition of muscles and bones.

- Improved pose and body alignment.
- Improved digestion, circulation and immunity.
- Improved function of neurological and endocrine organs.
- Prevention and relief from many physical illness and chronic pain.

**Benefits at the mental level :**

- Increased peace of mind.
- Improved alertness and clarity.
- Increased ability to deal effectively with short and long term stresses.
- Increased concentration of mind
- Improved self-esteem.
- Decreased reliance on drugs.
- Greater energy and enthusiasm for life.

**Conclusions :**

The investigation was conducted to find out the effect of yoga and meditation on academic anxiety of school children. The variables were attitude towards teaching profession, streams of study and courses of study. The conclusions are as follows :

1. On the basis of this study it can be concluded that **the holistic methods like yoga and meditation share a close relationship with academic anxiety**. Yoga and meditation have decreased the anxiety level of school children. Yogic asanas, Pranayama and Meditation has helped the students to perform better in their academics. It has also helped the students to build their self confidence and overcome hesitance.
2. The study also leads to the conclusion **that yoga and meditation effectively tackle impairing influence of academic anxiety**. Yoga and meditation balances the mind and body coordination.
3. On the basis of this study it can be concluded that **there are a number of reasons which**

**lead to the development of academic anxiety among school children.** Some of the important reasons are strict teachers, conflict with friends, bullying in schools, heavy work load, lack of family time, not enough sleep, learning styles mismatch, homework problems, competition among students, test anxiety.

4. From the study it can also be concluded that **there was significant reduction in the level of academic anxiety among school children after practicing yoga and meditation.** Before practicing Yoga and Meditation 24% students were very anxious which reduced to 0%, 44% were anxious which afterwards reduced to 0 %, 28% were average later it decreased to 4%, 4% were less anxious which increased to 53% and 0% was very less anxious which also increased to 43%.
5. The study also leads to the conclusion that **Yoga and Meditation has multifold benefits for school children at physical and mental level.** Yoga not only improves the flexibility of the muscles but also strengthens them and improves the body postures.

#### **Limitations :**

After retrospective view of the whole study, investigators find that there were a few limitations in this study. These limitations have constricted the area of generalization of this study. The limitations are as given below :

1. Due to paucity of time and resources a sample of only 100 secondary school students was taken which restricted the scope of valid generalization.
2. Since the observation was done on the basis of fixed responses the students might have given socially accepted responses instead of giving correct responses.

3. Only a very few secondary schools affiliated to C.B.S.E. were selected in this study.
4. The biggest limitation was that some students consulted each other while making the choice. So the result might have been affected due to this.

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