

**ASHTANG YOGA—A PANACEA FOR ADOLESCENCE
WELLBEING**

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Paper Received On: 5 FEBRUARY 2023

Peer Reviewed On: 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Published On: 01 MARCH 2023

Abstract

Adolescence is the most crucial stage in a person's life. It is a period of maximum growth and development in all the dimensions of one's personality and is marked by a number of intra and interpersonal changes. It is a period which lays foundation for the rest of the life. In this stage, individuals are influenced by peers, friends, society media etc. Due to modernisation, and its various attractions, a number of changes have resulted in life style and behavioural patterns of adolescents. In order to channelize their full potentials and develop competence among them, their health and wellbeing needs have to be addressed. Ashtang yoga, a very dynamic form of hath yoga given by sage Patanjali is a multifaceted tool that can help in developing a sound physical and mental health, and in turn their wellbeing. Research has reiterated that Ashtang yoga ensures harmony of individual in promoting wellbeing in all dimensions in one's personality. The current study attempts to make an extensive literature review to explore the benefits of Ashtang yoga in ensuring wellbeing at adolescence.

Keywords: Adolescence, Yoga, Ashtang Yoga, wellbeing



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INTRODUCTION:

According to WHO, adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. This period ranges from the 10 to 19 years of age. It is a unique stage of human development that forms basis for one's future and entire life. According to Stanley Hall (1904), Adolescence is a "period of stress and strain, storm and strife." Individuals at this stage are perplexed and worried about the sudden changes in their somatic as well as other areas of development. It is also a phase of experimentation and exploration and getting indulged in

various negative behaviours like drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual activity, addiction to social media etc. The remarkable hormonal changes in their bodies also contribute to their emotional instability and pessimistic moods. Individuals at this stage feel scared, ashamed, or shy to discuss their problems with parents, family members, and teachers since they believe. Educating adolescents, about wellbeing is the need of the hour.

Well-being is a concept related to positive aspect of human behaviour. It refers to attaining satisfaction and happiness in life. Wellbeing is associated with decreased risk of illness and improved state of immunity and longevity. Individuals with high levels of well-being are emotionally stable and easily cope up with various situations and also have sound mental and psychological health. At adolescence, particularly, wellbeing is an important goal to be achieved as promoting wellbeing of this target group develops their emotional, mental, physical and spiritual dimensions and in turn the wellbeing of the future generation. One of the important tools for developing wellbeing at adolescence is Yoga.

Yoga is the ancient science of health and wellness gifted that has originated in India. Yoga, with its particular diet patterns, yogic practices, and meditation techniques to helps one to attain divine consciousness. Among all the yogic techniques, Ashtang yoga of sage Patanjali is a practical hath yogic technique that involves in improving one's physical and mental health and in turn improving one's wellbeing.

ASHTANG YOGA AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Ashtang yoga is the eight limbed yoga developed by sage Patanjali in his book Patanjali yoga sutras. Ashtang yoga can be classified as Bahiranga and Antaranga Yoga. Bahiranga yoga is the yoga that enables one to deal effectively with the social world around us while antaranga yoga deals with the interactions with one's internal world. Bahiranga yoga comprises of five limbs namely Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Prathyahara while the limbs of Antaranga yoga include Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Yamas prescribes the required code of conduct in society. These include self-restraints that one should follow in life. It is composed of five components namely Ahimsa, Sathya, Astheya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. Yamas help in developing a strong value base among the individuals by inculcating the values such as truthfulness, honesty, tolerance, sensitivity to others, self –satisfaction etc.

Niyamas include five components namely Saucha, Santosha, Tapas, Swadhyaya and Iswarapranidhana. Upon following the principles of niyamas, emotional stability, knowledge of the self, intellectual abilities can be developed.

Asanas or physical postures help one to develop physical stability, endurance and stamina. Asanas also regulate the pranic flow in the body and regulate the bodily functions by regulating the nervous system.

Pranayama, breath control techniques improves lungs functioning, activates parasympathetic system of nervous system making a person relaxed and energetic.

Prathyahara, which involves withdrawing the senses from objects and experiences helps in developing sense control, emotional management etc.

Dharana involves fixing the mind on a particular object. It is a powerful tool to improve one's concentration, attention and develops focus on goal.

Dhyana or meditation develops all faculties of human being. It leads to one's emotional as well as spiritual development.

Samadhi is a state of complete merging with the divine consciousness. This is a state of increased concentration, a state of attaining inner peace or tranquillity and joy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives are framed to carry out the current study.

- To review the role of Ashtang yoga in promoting wellbeing of adolescents
- To highlight the need of practicing Ashtang for holistic development of adolescents

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ashtang yoga and physical wellbeing

Physical well-being is a state of absence of disease, presence of good health and living in a balanced state of body, mind, and spirit. A number of studies were done to study the effect of ashtang yoga on physical well being of adolescence. Ashtanga yoga is a proven weight loss method among adolescence, according to research. (Sandra Benavides and Joshua Caballero 2009)It has a favourable impact on bone development (So Jung Kim et al 2015) A study involving yogic intervention on adolescent girls and boys found to decrease their eating disorders problems. (Carei TR, et al, 2010). Yoga improved bodily functions, including muscular strength and flexibility, respiratory and cardiovascular health, addiction recovery, and sleep quality. A wide range of yogic interventions were successful in improving self-regulation in children and adolescents in terms of their academic, health, and behavioural outcomes.(Pandey A, et al, 2018)

Ashtang yoga and mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is a state of health that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their

community. Research demonstrated that yoga enhanced mental health (Sat Bir S. Khalsa and others (2011)). Children who struggled with stress and anxiety responded well to a yoga intervention that included asanas, pranayama, prathyhara, dharana, and dhyana (Chandra Nanthakumar) (2018). Among adolescents, yoga is found to reduce depression and anxiety. (James-Palmer A, 2020). Also, studies suggest that practising yoga and meditating can help with executive functions like reasoning, decision-making, memory, learning, reaction time, and accuracy on mental acuity tests (Usha S. Nayar and Ingunn Hagen's (2014) analysis revealed. It also has been shown to lower stress, anxiety, sadness, and chronic pain. (Catherine Woodyard (2011)

Ashtang yoga and emotional wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing involves the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Hath yoga was found to improve attention and hyperactivity in high school students. (Saxena K, et al 2020) Students who practise yoga have been proven to have improved resilience, mood, and stress- and emotion-management abilities. Bazzano AN, Sun Y, et al, (2022) study showed that yoga and mindfulness meditation decreased the levels of anxiety and depression symptoms among the adolescents. Yoga demonstrated preliminary, positive implications as a complementary treatment for individuals with an inter-personal violence history. (Andrea Kappas Mazzio et al 2021)

Ashtang yoga and Spiritual wellbeing

Spiritual wellbeing is a state of developing a purpose in life. It also involves upholding one's beliefs and values. Using its meditational techniques and other methods, Ashtang yoga helps practitioners reach the greatest state of consciousness. Ashtang yoga was found to boost the sattva guna and decrease the rajas and tamas gunas, according to a study by Aruna Mewada et al. (2022). Yoga practise may be positively related to a number of spiritual qualities (Barbara Csala et.al 2021).

The literature review has clearly elucidated the role of Ashtang yoga in promoting health in all dimensions which in turn promote wellbeing of adolescents. Realising the potential benefits of yoga, NCERT has made yoga education, a mandatory subject at all levels of schooling.

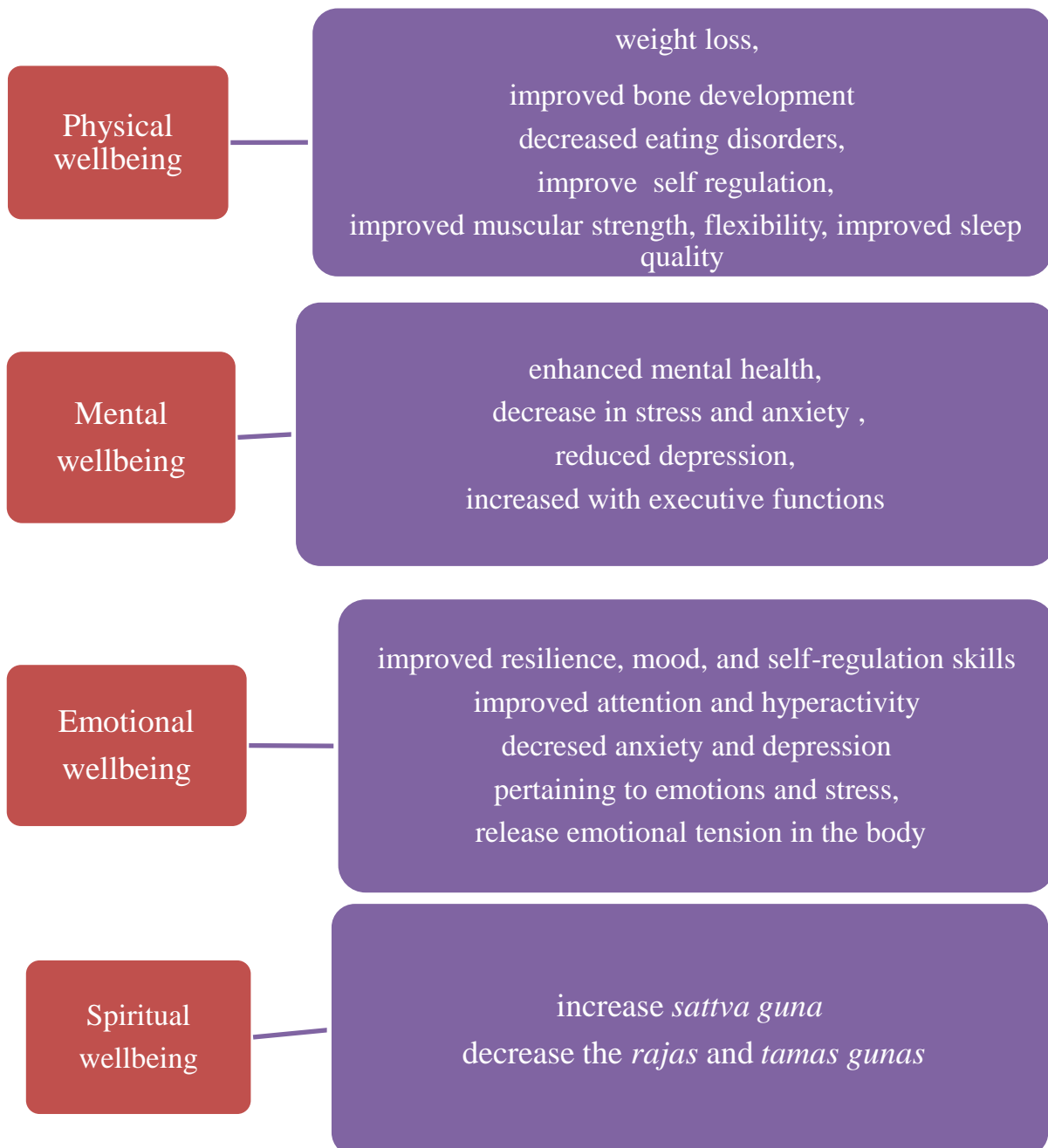
METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The present study was undertaken by reviewing and analysing the research articles related to yoga, Ashtanga yoga, its practices and benefits to adolescents. For the study, various databases like Google scholar, PubMed, Elsevier, PsycInfowere explored. Studies related to

Ashtang yoga and benefits of yoga at adolescence were considered for the study. Other studies were excluded.

ANALYSIS

After intensive literature review, the following insights regarding Ashtang yoga in different dimensions related to various personality dimensions of adolescent are drawn.



SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTEGRATE ASHTANG YOGA

School is the most viable place to identify, manage, and sustain progress of adolescents with mental health problems. Major problems of adolescents related to well being can be addressed by various school curricular and co-curricular activities keeping in mind the numerous benefits derived from Ashtang yoga, to make maximum and fullest utilisation of this wonderful gift to mankind, following recommendations are made that can be adopted by schools to promote wellbeing among adolescents.

- Regular performing of Yogasanas: Adolescents need to be made aware of the importance of Yoga and yogic practices and every day or every alternate day, a period should be allotted for learning yogasanas and other yogic techniques as they develop physical fitness, stamina and endurance in individuals
- Meditation or mindfulness sessions: Meditating at least 10-15 minutes in a day should be encouraged as it develops good concentration power, increases memory etc
- Spiritual talks and discussions: Talks and discussions on spiritual matters by spiritual leaders can be enlightening and encouraging and give clarity, show direction in the spiritual path. Class discussions on spiritual matters can be encouraged.
- Emphasis on Co-curricular activities: Co- curricular activities such as arts, sports, games should be given importance as they bring out the latent talents and also release stress, pressure and tension of students.
- Engaging in extension activities: The energy of adolescents can be channelized by actively engaging them in various service and community activities. They need to be encouraged to actively participate in social service activities, awareness campaigns which will sensitise time and develop in them values like gratitude, tolerance etc.
- Visiting Yoga centres: Visiting Yoga centres can widen one's knowledge and improve understanding of yoga. They also help one to practice various yogic techniques to derive their maximum benefits.
- Moral classes: In curriculum, moral classes can be allotted in timetable to make students get exposed to values, its practice and implications. It develops in moulding and shaping the behaviour of youth.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, it is evident that Ashtang yoga acts as a powerful tool in moulding the young generation and shaping their personality in all dimensions. It also helps the present day

adolescents in facing the demands and challenges of the current times smoothly and succeed in every sphere. It helps in combating with the unnecessary attractions of the world and chooses the royal road of self fulfilment. It acts as a panacea to overcome the problems related to physical, mental and emotional dimensions. Therefore, it is recommended that all schools need to realise the importance of Ashtang yoga and promote its practice in order to develop wellbeing of adolescents.

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