



Sahaja Yoga Thailand, news/feature series.

Sahaja Yoga and Stress management

or how to enhance your overall well-being through the practice of meditation

By Wanphen Sreshthaputra



Caring, calming, cocooning, soothing, relaxing, rejuvenating, realigning, unwinding... The range of heavenly services on offer in burgeoning spas and wellness centers around town is inversely proportional to the heavy toll taken by our high-speed and demanding lifestyles. Stress, strain, pressure, anxiety, hypertension, depression... The list of work- and stress-related conditions affecting one's behaviour, emotional and overall well-being is long and expanding (see side-bar).

What then could be more legitimate than breaking open one's piggy bank and indulging in exclusive and pampering treatments to help us cope and avoid breaking down?

But what if those desperately needed moments of respite were found in the comfort of one's home, on a daily basis, without having to incur any expenses or waste time and energy in transportation? What if this ability to reset one's brain and find internal exhaust valves were somehow in-built and could be triggered by the mere action of one's desire?

This self-healing, in-built mechanism seems actually to be the submission of Sahaja Yoga meditation which relies on the balancing power of the *Kundalini*; an inner subtle energy described in ancient Indian texts such as the *Gyaneshwari* as most soothing and elevating. Through a simple meditation technique, this residual and unifying energy can be awakened, practitioners say, bringing about a wide range of benefits, enhanced self-esteem and well-being.

According to Dr. R. Mobasseri, physician: "Sahaja Yoga is a simple and accessible meditation technique which has been found to have long lasting, positive, physiological and psychological effects upon people of all age groups". In a research paper published in the AyurvedaNews online newsletter, the German physician explains: "Through the practice of Sahaja Yoga, an inner energy called *Kundalini* [...] spontaneously becomes awakened and commences a physiological process of re-balancing the complex interrelationships between the autonomous, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and the plexuses of the body".

As explained by Dr. Mobasseri, the overall well-being of an individual is intimately related to the condition of his subtle body, composed essentially of seven energy centres (or *chakras* in Sanskrit) and three energy channels (or *nadis*). "According to ancient Eastern philosophies, the complex autonomous nervous system is dependant upon the functioning of the energy centres and energy channels [...] Age- Hence, the development of physiological and psychological illnesses are seen to be directly related to





the existence of subtle imbalances and disharmonies within this subtle system”, he says old traditions, like the ancestral Indian *Rig Vediya Purush Sookta*, refer to three main channels of energy existing within human beings and controlling complex interconnected sets of smaller channels. These subtle channels (identified by acupuncturists who operate on this simple basis) are placed within the spine and find their expression in the autonomous nervous system. It is comprised of the left and right sympathetic nervous systems and the central parasympathetic nervous system.



According to Sahaja Yoga, founded by H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in the early 1970s, the left channel, or moon channel [also the *Yin* of the Tao philosophy] correlates anatomically with the left part of the sympathetic nervous system. It nourishes our desires and emotions, and is related to the past. If healthy, this channel instills emotional security and allows an individual to enjoy life. But if overactive and obstructed, one becomes very emotional and tends to suffer from emotional distress or depressive moods.

Typically, the person's attention would be dwelling on the past fuelling reasons for unhappiness: the unfair treatment that can not be forgiven, the lost love that one cannot let go...

The right channel, or sun channel [the *Yang* of the Tao philosophy] correlates with the right part of the sympathetic nervous systems. It is related to our mental and physical actions, planning and to the future. If healthy, this channel allows us to bring our desires to fruition. But if overactive, one becomes aggressive, dominant, emotionally dry and subject to mental distress. The person cannot stop thinking about the future, worrying about and planning things that remain to be done.



Insomnia would be one of the common consequences of an hyperactive right-side channel, which occur when the mind keeps thinking instead of calmly enjoying the present, relaxing and falling asleep.

By contrast, the central channel, correlated with the parasympathetic nervous system aim at conserving, restoring and balancing the energy. It looks after our evolutionary capacity. If active, the central channel provides the means to truly experience the joy of the present moment. Only if the left and right-side channels are in balance can the central channel develop its qualities. Practically someone on the central channel can work hard while maintaining joyful and loving emotions and being able to let go of office problems as soon as one steps out of the office.

Psychic energy tends to go back and forth between these two poles, rarely managing to settle on the equilibrium point – the balance (central channel) between the activity (right side channel) and passivity (left side channel) However, if this complex network of energy centres and channels remains in a state of equilibrium, the subject can lead a life of harmony and balance. His attention would be in the present and he would retain full control over his emotions and mental activity.

The above-mentioned awakening of the *Kundalini* energy, which takes place in Sahaja Yoga thanks to a simple process of meditation called Self-Realization, greatly contributes to making this state of balance accessible and sustainable.





In *Medical Science Enlightened – New Insight into Vibratory Awareness for Holistic Health Care* (Life Eternal Trust), the late Prof. Umesh C. Rai, an eminent Indian physician, specialist in Medical Physiology and Fellow of the World Health Organization, dedicates a whole chapter to the **“Role of Sahaja Yoga in Stress Management”**.

“Through the practice of Sahaja Yoga the sympathetic nervous system gets down-regulated while the parasympathetic nervous system gets activated. This helps the practitioner to truly relax and restore the ‘inner balance’ of his subtle system”.



Prof. Umesh C. Rai,

Based on numerous graphs and charts, and citing various researches, Dr. Rai explains: “The research work [...] has conclusively proved its [Sahaja Yoga’s] usefulness in modulating the activity of the Autonomic Nervous System [Sympathetic and Para sympathetic]... On the basis of experiments, it has been observed that if one practices Sahaja Yoga for 20 minutes daily for 16 weeks, changes could be seen in the blood chemistry, urine examination, ECG, EEG (Electro-encephalography), respiratory rate and Galvanic Skin Resistance...”

He continues: “In the experiments done on human beings exposed to normal stress and strain of modern life, it has been found that after 12 weeks of practice, there is statistically significant decreased production of adrenaline, as is evident from decrease in urinary V.M.A. [Vanyl Mandelic Acid], decrease in heart rate, decrease in blood pressure, decrease in blood lactic acid and increase of galvanic skin resistance”.

“All this conclusively proves that with Sahaja Yoga practice in 12 weeks one is able to attain a stage of profound physical and mental relaxation”.

four years, showing further decrease in sensitivity to stress and increased positive attitudes.

“As the control value of urinary VMA decreases significantly, blood lactic acid decreases, blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate remains at the optimum level of functioning, Alpha index increases in the EEG recordings.... One could deduce that most probably the perception of stress also dramatically changes after Sahaja Yoga because of Self-Realization. In other words, the way of looking at things changes, one becomes a witness, detached and that is the reason why psychological stress or day-to-day stress of life did not produce any effect on these subjects”, Dr. Rai states.

A higher level of tolerance to stress thus appears to be one the many benefits of this meditation technique, as it allows the practitioner to be better equipped to respond to the many demands placed upon him, enhancing self-control and helping him to remain in a state of balance and harmony.





In addition, the meditation process, aimed at quieting the mind and accessing a state of “mental silence” (known ancestrally as Void) further contributes to stress alleviation. Without reducing self-control or alertness, meditation helps practitioner to become free from unnecessary mental activity. The meditator thus gains control over his thought process rather than being subjected to it.

Clear-headedness, enhanced consciousness, improvement of ones’ cognitive faculties and concentration power, leading to less energy wastage, are other benefits commonly cited.

To refer to yet another research finding involving Sahaja Yoga meditation, conducted by Dr. R. Manosha and other researchers in Australia and France: “Meditation [in a traditional sense] is a qualitatively unique phenomenon which involves a state of awareness best described as ‘mental silence’ with outstandingly beneficial effects on health and psyche”. “The highly developed meditator is not only less stressed and more relaxed but has also activated potential for positive psychology and optimized well-being”.

Knowing that the few medicines prescribed to combat the dreadful effects of stress (tranquilizers, hypnotics and other anxiolytics) are rather toxic and habit forming, meditation might be an appealing alternative for those increasing numerous health-conscious, spa-addicts and high-flyer citizens.

Good stress, bad stress While a certain quantity of stress can be stimulating, making us work and think faster and forcing us to cope effectively with situations perceived as hostile, some negative effects can be felt when stress accumulates beyond a certain limit. Stress then becomes distress, bringing about negative results on the body and mind. Acute external stress can cause anxiety and lead to several types of disorders. Symptoms can manifest on the physical, emotional or relational levels and range from irritability to sleep disturbances, through to back, neck or shoulder pains, inability to concentrate, biting of nails, ankle bending or taping, etc.

Typically, a stressed person cannot enjoy the present anymore: his or her attention remains involved in the future (for instance on the unfinished work or project) or in the past (on any painful event or relation that cannot be forgotten...).

Note: Sahaja Yoga Thailand will present a second themed conference on the topic of music and spirituality on Sunday 26 February, from 14.00 to

Sahaja Yoga and stress management:

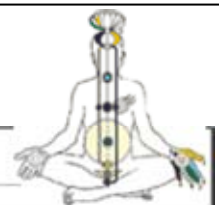
Date and time: Sunday 19 February, 14.00 to 17.00

Venue: Novotel Lotus, Sukhumvit Road soi 33

Topics to be addressed:

- What is stress?
- What causes stress?
- How to prevent and cope with stress?
- How can self-realization help? (through *Kundalini* awakening)

“In those modern times, especially in megacities such as Bangkok, everyone is subject to a great amount of pressure and to various stress-inducing situations. Stress may be work-related or caused by a number of factors including issues at home, financial worries, life in general or the urban environment... What is beautiful is that there are simple, clearing techniques that people can learn and practice at home to empower themselves, correct emotional imbalances and alleviate stress”, explains Pascal Sreshthaputra, a senior executive in the automotive industry and coordinator of Sahaia Yoga group. Thailand.





With guided meditation and self-realization process. Conference is both Thai and the English language

Entrance is free. All are welcome. For more information,
please call 02 253 33 98, 04 159 44 03 (Thai) or 01 824 38 25 (English).



“As the Kundalini rises through the seven *chakras* [energy centers], it nourishes and revitalizes them, so that the person feels relaxed, calm and rejuvenated”.

