



Review Article

www.ijrap.net

(ISSN Online:2229-3566, ISSN Print:2277-4343)



IMPACT OF YOGA AND SPIRITUALITY ON LIFESTYLE DISORDERS: A REVIEW

Rashmi Gopal Untwal *, Swati Gajanan Vedpathak

Assistant Professor, Kriya Sharir Department, Dr. D. Y. Patil Ayurved College & Research Centre, Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Received on: 06/1/25 Accepted on: 14/2/25

*Corresponding author

E-mail: rashmiuntwal0@gmail.com

DOI: 10.7897/2277-4343.16124

ABSTRACT

In today's fast-paced world, lifestyle disorders have become a significant concern, requiring individuals to make conscious changes to their daily habits. Yoga and spirituality are essential components in managing these disorders. Yoga is a potent tool for balancing the body's three fundamental energies, known as doshas. Various yoga practices can address different imbalances, while meditation and pranayama (breathing exercises) complement yoga to promote overall well-being. Yoga offers numerous benefits, including lifestyle modifications, healthy diet, regular activity, relaxation, and a positive attitude. Its psychosomatic effects, achieved through pranayama's (breathing exercises) and yogic relaxation, also contribute to its benefits. Yoga emphasizes a healthy lifestyle, comprising four key components: Achar (healthy activities), Vichar (healthy thoughts), Ahar (healthy food), and Vihar (healthy recreation). Spirituality, a broader concept, encompasses beliefs beyond the self, seeking answers to life's mysteries and the universe. It emphasizes harmony with nature and cultivating inner peace. Spirituality can alleviate everyday stress, especially with intentional practice. By combining yoga and spirituality, individuals can create a personalized approach to lifestyle management, tailored to their specific needs and goals. This integrated approach can effectively manage lifestyle diseases and promote overall well-being.

Keywords: Yoga, Spirituality, Yogic Practices, Pranayama, Lifestyle Disorders.

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, health encompasses complete physical, mental, and social well-being, extending beyond the absence of disease or infirmity. The yogic way of life is a vital tool for achieving this holistic state of health. It is essential to cultivate both a sense of being healthy and feeling healthy. Yoga, as a holistic art and science, offers the most effective lifestyle approach for managing prevalent lifestyle disorders, such as diabetes and hypertension.¹ Yoga provides numerous benefits, including: Prevention and management of lifestyle disorders, Effective management of work-related stress, Promotion of psychosomatic and spiritual health

Yoga practices are based on the principles of proper relaxation, exercise, breathing, diet, positive thinking, and meditation. Spirituality, on the other hand, refers to the pursuit of ultimate reality, enabling individuals to discover their inner essence and deepest values. Spiritual practices, including meditation, prayer, and contemplation, aim to develop an individual's inner life, making spiritual health a vital aspect of overall well-being.

Role of Yoga

Lifestyle, once an indicator of overall well-being, has become a causative factor for diseases, necessitating medical attention. Urbanization and Western cultural influences in India have led to sedentary lifestyles, low activity levels, and increased risk of metabolic syndrome and lifestyle-related disorders.

Adopting yogic principles for diet and lifestyle modification can help prevent these disorders. Yogic practices promote physical and mental health, mitigate psychological stress, and enhance host resistance to infection. Yoga offers solutions for stress-related disorders, allergies, autoimmune diseases, cancer, and other lifestyle disorders.

Indian classics describe four major yogic streams:

1. Karma Yoga (selfless deeds),
2. Bhakti Yoga (devotion),
3. Gyana Yoga (rational thinking),
4. Raj Yoga (eightfold path synthesized by Patanjali)

Patanjali's eightfold yogic path consists of:

1. Yama (universal ethics), 2. Niyama (individual ethics), 3. Asana (physical postures), 4. Pranayama (breath control), 5. Pratyahara (sense control), 6. Dharana (concentration), 7. Dhyana (meditation), 8. Samadhi (bliss). Regular yoga practice can promote optimal health, spiritual growth, and intellectual development, encompassing physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being.

Yoga's Impact on Cardiovascular Health

Research has demonstrated that both fast and slow pranayama techniques benefit cardiovascular health, albeit with differing physiological responses. Slow pranayama's (breathing exercises) such as Nadi Shuddhi, Savitri, and Pranav, have been shown to:

- Decrease heart rate (HR)
- Lower systolic blood pressure (SBP) and diastolic blood pressure (DBP)
- Increase pulse pressure (PP)

In contrast, fast pranayama's like Kapalabhati and Bhastrika have yielded mixed results. Some studies indicate that solo practice of these techniques increases sympathetic activity, leading to: Increased HR, SBP, and DBP.

However, other studies suggest that these pranayama's (breathing exercises) decrease sympathetic activity, resulting in: Decreased HR, SBP, and DBP, Yoga's benefits extend to cardiac rehabilitation, as it: Enhances physical fitness, reduces stress,

promotes overall wellbeing, decreases physiological arousal, Improves sleep and appetite. Overall, yoga is a valuable tool for maintaining cardiovascular health and promoting overall wellness.²

Physiological Effects of Yoga on the Respiratory System

Yoga is a valuable exercise for maintaining overall health and has a profound impact on lung function. Yogic practices have been shown to prevent, control, and rehabilitate various respiratory diseases. By calming the mind, yoga reduces hyper-reactivity, alleviating conditions such as bronchial asthma and nasal allergies.

Yoga postures involve isometric contractions, strengthening skeletal muscles and improving inspiratory and expiratory muscle function.³

Specific techniques like: Kapalbharti: Utilizes the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, aiding in the removal of bronchial secretions and clearing respiratory passages.⁴ Nadi Shodhan pranayama (breathing exercises): Efficiently uses abdominal and diaphragmatic muscles, optimizing respiratory function and increasing lung capacity.⁵

During pranayama, slow and prolonged breathing stretches lung fibers, releasing lung surfactant and increasing lung compliance.⁶ This process also releases prostaglandins, reducing bronchial smooth muscle tone. Ultimately, yoga's calming effects mitigate emotional stress, reducing broncho-constrictor effects and promoting respiratory health.^{7,8}

Yoga's Impact on Type 2 Diabetes Management

Yoga plays a significant role in managing Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM). Recent scientific evidence supports the integration of yoga-based lifestyle modifications for effectively managing T2DM and its associated risk factors. The Mechanisms Behind Yoga's

Benefits - Yoga's holistic effects on diabetes control can be attributed to psychoneuro-endocrine and immune mechanisms. Parasympathetic activation and anti-stress mechanisms improve metabolic and psychological profiles, Increased insulin sensitivity and glucose tolerance, Enhanced lipid metabolism.

Yoga Practices for T2DM Management - Various yoga practices, Cleansing processes. Asanas (postures), Pranayama (breathing techniques), Mudras (hand gestures), Bandha (energy locks), Meditation, Mindfulness, Relaxation have been shown to Reduce blood glucose levels, manage comorbid disease conditions associated with T2DM, Yield significant positive clinical outcomes.

Additional Benefits of Yoga for T2DM - Increases insulin receptors in cells, improves insulin kinetics and reduces insulin resistance, Reduces stress-related hyperglycaemia, Enhances blood supply to muscles, increasing glucose intake, Stimulates the pancreas through specific yoga poses (e.g. Mayurasana, Vakrasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana, and Halasana).⁹

Yoga's Impact on Stress Management

Yoga and pranayama are effective tools for combating stress. pranayama (breathing exercises), which involves breath manipulation, serves as a dynamic bridge between the body and mind. This technique consists of three phases: 1. Puraka (inhalation), 2. Kumbhaka (retention), 3. Rechaka (exhalation). pranayama (breathing exercises) is a crucial aspect of Ashtanga Yoga, as emphasized by Maharishi Patanjali, and is considered

more important than Yogasanas for maintaining sound health. Stress Management Programs - Studies have shown that stress management programs incorporating meditation, yoga, hypnosis, imagery, and muscle relaxation can improve positive coping skills in students.

Yoga's Physiological Effects - Yoga regulates the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis and Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS), preventing the release of stress hormones like cortisol and catecholamines. Yoga elevates Gama-aminobutyric acid (GABA) levels, associated with improved mood and reduced anxiety. Yoga boosts the innate immune response and interrupts inflammation. Overall, yoga is a valuable tool for managing stress and promoting overall well-being.

The Role of Spirituality

Spirituality encompasses the human quest for purpose, meaning, and connection. It involves the experience of being linked to the present moment, One's inner self, Others, Nature, The sacred or significant. Spirituality provides a framework for individuals to discover their values, beliefs, and sense of belonging, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

The Influence of Spiritual Approaches on Chronic Diseases

In recent years, researchers have renewed their interest in exploring the impact of spiritual approaches on chronic disease outcomes. Studies have yielded promising results: A meta-analysis of cancer patients found that spiritual interventions improved quality of life, reduced depression and anxiety, and enhanced hope.¹⁰ A systematic review revealed that higher spirituality levels were associated with better quality of life in patients with cardiovascular diseases.¹¹ Research also suggests a positive link between spirituality and health outcomes in patients with end-stage renal disease.¹² A robust belief system was found to enhance coping skills in patients with schizophrenia and other mental illnesses.^{13,14} Additionally, spiritual coping among AIDS patients was linked to slower disease progression, improved health behaviours, and increased adherence to therapy.¹⁵ Collectively, these findings indicate that spiritual approaches have a profound impact on the management of chronic diseases, improving quality of life, mental health, and overall well-being.

Spirituality and Stress Management

Spirituality fosters a sense of fulfillment, optimism, and hope, enabling individuals to cope with stress more effectively. Various spiritual practices, such as chanting and prayer, focus on eliminating negativity and promoting psychological well-being. Numerous studies demonstrate the benefits of spirituality and spiritual practices for physical and mental health, as well as stress reduction.¹⁶

Techniques for Building Resilience Against Stress Practising gratitude, Prayer, Mindfulness, Breathing exercises, Meditation. Benefits of These Techniques are Helps to build resilience against stress, enable individuals to become aware of their thoughts and feelings, provide a sense of peace, purpose, and forgiveness, help individuals make sense of their experiences.

Spiritualism is an effective technique for managing stress and performing optimally. Spiritually intelligent individuals can handle paradoxes and conflicts more efficiently. Spirituality can improve mental health and provide a sense of calm. Physiological Effects of Spiritual Practices include Increase feel-good hormones (serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins) and Decrease stress chemicals (cortisol and noradrenaline).

DISCUSSION

Yoga

Yoga has a significant impact on managing and preventing various lifestyle disorders.

Heart Health: Yoga, particularly through physical postures (asanas), can improve circulation, lower blood pressure, and help regulate cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Weight Management: Yoga helps in maintaining a healthy weight by balancing the metabolism and reducing emotional eating, a common issue linked to lifestyle disorders like obesity.

Practices like pranayama improve lung function, enhance oxygen intake, and strengthen respiratory muscles, which can benefit those suffering from respiratory issues related to lifestyle factors, like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Yoga helps in regulating blood sugar levels by reducing stress and increasing insulin sensitivity, which is vital for managing Type 2 diabetes.

Certain yoga poses, especially those involving the core, stimulate the pancreas, aiding in better glucose regulation.

Impact on Mental Health: Yoga is known for its relaxation techniques such as pranayama (breathing exercises) and meditation, which help in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. It helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting calmness and balance.

Chronic Stress and Its Effects: Chronic stress is linked to conditions like hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes. Yoga can mitigate the harmful effects of stress by promoting relaxation and reducing the body's stress response.

Making yoga a regular part of daily life offers long-term benefits. Even short daily sessions can lead to significant improvements in physical and mental well-being, thus preventing the onset of lifestyle-related diseases.

Spirituality

Spirituality can have a profound impact on managing and preventing lifestyle disorders, as it often emphasizes holistic well-being, emotional balance, and a deeper connection to oneself and others. **Spiritual Practices and Stress Relief:** Spirituality encourages practices like meditation, prayer, and mindfulness that are known to reduce stress. These practices help in calming the mind, promoting relaxation, and decreasing the physiological impact of chronic stress, which is a common contributor to lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes.

Healing through Connection: Many spiritual practices emphasize the importance of love, compassion, and connection to others, which can combat feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Social support is a critical factor in mental health, and spiritual communities often offer a sense of belonging.

Emotional Healing: Spirituality can provide emotional healing, helping individuals address unresolved emotional issues or trauma that may contribute to disorders such as depression, anxiety, or even substance abuse. The emotional stability that spirituality fosters can have a direct impact on reducing the risk of mental health disorders.

Dealing with Life's Challenges: Spirituality provides individuals with tools to cope with challenges such as loss, illness, or financial difficulties. The sense of meaning, purpose, and connection to something greater than oneself can provide emotional and mental strength during difficult times, reducing the risk of anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders.

CONCLUSION

Yoga holds immense potential in preventing and managing lifestyle disorders and diseases. Adopting a yogic lifestyle can significantly contribute to improving public health. Yoga may prevent disease progression and potentially even facilitate a cure when initiated early. The overwhelming majority of studies on yoga and cardiovascular health demonstrate positive trends, underscoring yoga's promise in integrative healthcare. Yoga's benefits can be attributed to its lifestyle components (healthy diet, physical activity, relaxation, and positive attitude) and the psychosomatic harmonizing effects of pranayama and yogic relaxation.

According to tradition, yoga encompasses both the process and attainment of psychosomatic harmony and balance. This restoration of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance is likely the primary factor behind the positive changes observed in short- and long-term studies. Given its negligible side effects and numerous benefits, yoga is a safe, simple, and economical therapy. It is recommended as a beneficial adjunct for patients with lifestyle disorders. Ayurvedic literature highlights the significance of a physician's spirituality in contributing to patient healing and well-being. Spirituality and yoga can help prevent health problems, cope with illness, and improve overall health.

REFERENCES

1. Bhavanani, Ananda Balayogi. Role of yoga in prevention and management of lifestyle disorders. *Yoga Mimamsa*, Jul-Dec 2017;49(2):42-47.
2. Manchanda SC. Yoga--a promising technique to control cardiovascular disease. *Indian Heart Journal*, 2014;66(5): 487-489.
3. Agnihotri S, Kant S, Kumar S, Mishra RK, Mishra SK, Impact of Yoga on Biochemical Profile of Asthmatics: A Randomized Controlled Study. *International Journal of Yoga*. 2014; 7:16-22
4. Agnihotri S, Kant S, Kumar S, Mishra RK, Mishra SK Impact of yoga and Pranayama on Symptom Scores in, Asthmatics. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Studies*. 2013; 2(9):64-74
5. Agnihotri S, Gaur P, Bhattacharya S, Kant S, Pandey S. Benefits of Yoga in Respiratory Diseases, *Indian Journal of Pharmaceutical and Biological Research*, 31Dec 2018; 6(04):10-3.
6. Iyengar BKS. *Light on Yoga*, George Allan and Unwin Ltd. London. 1968; 243-45.
7. Hildebran JN, Groke, Clements JA. Surfactant release in exercised rat lung is stimulated by air inflation. *J.Appl. Physiol*. 1981;51:905-10.
8. Yadav RK, Das S. Effect of yogic practices on pulmonary functions in young females. *Indian J. Physiol Pharmacol*. 2001;45(4): 493-96.
9. Raveendran AV, Deshpande A and Joshi SR. Therapeutic Role of Yoga in Type 2 Diabetes. *Endocrinology and metabolism (Seoul, Korea)*, 2018; 33(3): 307-317.
10. Xing L, Guo X, Bai L, Qian J, Chen J. Are spiritual interventions beneficial to patients with cancer? - a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials following PRISMA. *Medicines*. 2018;97: 11948.

11. Abu HO, *et al.* Association of religiosity and spirituality with quality of life in patients with cardiovascular disease: A systematic review. *Qual. Life Res.* 2018; 27:2777-2797.
12. Al-Ghabeesh SH, *et al.* Spirituality in the lives of patients with end-stage renal disease: a systematic review. *J. Relig. Health.* 2018;57:2461-2477.
13. Das S, Punnoose VP, Doval N, Nair VY. Spirituality, religiousness and coping in patients with schizophrenia: A cross-sectional study in a tertiary care hospital. *Psychiatry Res.* 2018; 265:238-243.
14. RL, Peltzer JN, Burdette AM and Hill TD. Religiosity and health: a holistic biopsychosocial perspective. *J. Holist. Nurs.* 2018.
15. Kremer H, *et al.* Spiritual coping predicts CD4-cell preservation and undetectable viral load over four years. *AIDS Care.* 2015; 27:71- 7.
16. <https://www.sneucc.org/postdetail/our-faith-helps-relieve-stress-18348611>

Cite this article as:

Rashmi Gopal Untwal and Swati Gajanan Vedpathak. Impact of Yoga and Spirituality on Lifestyle Disorders: A Review. *Int. J. Res. Ayurveda Pharm.* 2025;16(1):131-134
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7897/2277-4343.16124>

Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared

Disclaimer: IJRAP is solely owned by Moksha Publishing House - A non-profit publishing house, dedicated to publishing quality research, while every effort has been taken to verify the accuracy of the content published in our Journal. IJRAP cannot accept any responsibility or liability for the site content and articles published. The views expressed in articles by our contributing authors are not necessarily those of the IJRAP editor or editorial board members.