



ROLE OF YOGA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ANNAVAHA SROTAS VYADHI W.S.R. TO DIGESTIVE SYSTEM DISORDERS: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is a traditional and cultural science of India that aims at bringing balance between body and mind. It mainly includes physical poses or exercise, breathing and meditation. A healthy digestive system (*Annavaha Srotas*) is the key to good health. While most common digestive diseases are not life threatening, they can cause a lot of distress to the person, especially if they tend to occur frequently. Digestive system diseases contribute a big proportion of all pathologies. *Yoga* is being recognised worldwide as the solution to these problems. It is a key to a relaxed, efficient, harmonious to all body systems specifically digestive system (*Annavaha Srotas*). This article explores some yogic practices like Pavanmuktasana, Vajrasana, Mandukasana, Yognidra etc which have significant improvement in digestive system disorders.

KEYWORDS: Yoga, *Annavaha Srotas*, Vyadhi.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is one of the oldest sciences of Indian origin but now it has become a visible part of our diversifying culture that we all have encountered in one form or another. Yoga as a popular exercise trend, Yoga as an alternative medical therapy and Yoga as a profound spiritual path all color our vision of Yoga. Yoga is a psycho-somatic-spiritual discipline for achieving union and harmony between our mind, body, soul and the ultimate union of our individual consciousness with the universal consciousness.

Digestion is defined as the process by which food is broken down into simple chemical substances that can be absorbed and used as nutrients by the body. Most of the substances in the diet cannot be utilized as such. These substances must be broken into smaller particles, so that they can be absorbed into blood and distributed to various parts of the body for utilization. Digestive system is responsible for these functions. Digestive process is accomplished by mechanical and enzymatic breakdown of food into simpler chemical compounds.

Digestive system constitutes of alimentary tract that provides the body with a continual supply of water, electrolytes, and nutrients. To achieve this requires (1) movement of food through the alimentary tract; (2) secretion of digestive juices and digestion of the food; (3) absorption of water, various electrolytes, and

digestive products; (4) circulation of blood through the gastrointestinal organs to carry the absorbed substances (5) control of all these functions by local, nervous, and hormonal systems.

Ashtanga yoga

Patanjali's Ashtanga yoga consists of eight limbs or portions-Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

1. Yama- The Yamas are practices to eliminate wrong, harmful or disturbing behaviour. With these five Yama, Yoga provides a simple model of self discipline. These five Yamas are-Ahimsa, Satya, Brahmacharya, Asteya and Aparigraha.

2. Niyama- The Niyamas are principles of personal practice both for self healing and self development. Five Niyamas are-Shaucha, santosha, tapa, svadhyaya and Ishvara pranidhana.

3. Asana- Asana consists of physical postures and movements to release tension, toxins and prepare the mind for meditation.

4. Pranayama- They consist of specific types and ratios of breathing practices. Asanas puts the body in a state of balance so that we can work on our Prana through Pranayama. Pranayama extends to all means of developing and controlling Prana in the body and mind.

5. Pratyahara- Pratyahara refers to various methods of managing impressions and controlling the senses that are

our main source of contact with the external world. Most *Pratyahara* methods consist of withdrawing from external sensory overload and accessing peace and silence within ourselves. Deep relaxation is also a part of *Pratyahara*, which involves putting the motor organs to rest.

6. Dharana- *Dharana* consists of concentration practices that focus and stabilize our attention. Attention is the main power of the mind. Typical *Dharana* methods consist of concentration on various *Chakras* or holding our gaze on particular objects, until our mind becomes steady. Concentration is the foundation for meditation.

7. Dhyana- *Dhyana* refers to meditation, which is a sustained concentration or deep reflection on a particular object of thought. Through holding a 'one pointed' attention, we can arrive at a deep understanding of the reality. Meditation is the main method of classical *Yoga* that aims at controlling the mind.

8. Samadhi- *Samadhi* consists of merging the mind with the object of its attention, which occurs naturally through prolonged meditation. Once the mind becomes one with its object we experience profound peace and blissful happiness. *Yoga* shows us how to approach this internal state of bliss in a step-by-step manner working with body, *Prana*, senses, mind and heart.

Control of Anna vaha Srotas (Nerve supply to GI Tract)

GI tract has two types of nerve supply:

I. Intrinsic nerve supply II. Extrinsic nerve supply.

Intrinsic nerve supply – Enteric nervous system

Intrinsic nerves to GI tract form the enteric nervous system that controls all the secretions and movements of GI tract. Enteric nervous system is present within the wall of GI tract from esophagus to anus. Nerve fibers of this system are interconnected and form two major networks called

1. Auerbach plexus
2. Meissner plexus.

These nerve plexus contain nerve cell bodies, processes of nerve cells and the receptors. The receptors in the GI tract are stretch receptors and chemoreceptors. Enteric nervous system is controlled by extrinsic nerves.

Extrinsic nerve supply

Extrinsic nerves that control the enteric nervous system are from autonomic nervous system. Both sympathetic and parasympathetic divisions of autonomic nervous system innervate the GI tract

1. Sympathetic Nerve Fibers
2. Parasympathetic Nerve Fibers

Main cause of Annvahasrotas Vyadhis

Annava srotas (channels carrying food) get vitiated due to untimely intake of large quantity of wholesome food and the impairment of the digestion power. Eating too fast, eating high-fat foods, or eating during stressful situations, drinking too much alcohol, cigarette smoking, stress fatigue Anxiety and depression also play major

role in annava srotas vyadhis. Inadequate daily consumption of dietary fiber promotes digestive system related diseases.

Common digestive disorder

The characteristic manifestation of the vitiation of these channels are disinclination for food, anorexia, indigestion and vomiting. Other symptoms also includes abdominal pain, swelling, bloating or distention Belching, burning in the throat, diarrhoea, flatulence, indigestion, nausea gastroesophageal reflux disease, vomiting etc.

Yoga indicated in Annava Srotas Vyadhi

Pranayama

1. Kapalabhati
2. Nadisuddhi Pranayama
3. Sitali / sitkari pranayama
4. Bhramari pranayama

Meditation

1. Om meditation
2. Yognidra

Yogasanas

1. Ardhakaticakrasana
2. Padahastasna
3. Parivritta Trikonasana
4. Vakrasana / Ardh – Matsyendrasana
5. Bhujangasana
6. Salabhasana
7. Uddiyana Bandha / Agnisara

Role of yoga in Annava Srotas

Most of the diseases of *Annava Srotas* have a psychosomatic aetiology viz. indigestion, chronic constipation, diarrhoea, Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Gastric –Peptic diseases etc. Digestive system is almost wholly under the influence of autonomic nervous system, which in turn is thought to be governed by limbic area of brain. The emotions and mental processes act directly on the limbic area of brain and via autonomic nervous system they affect the stomach and digestive system. Autonomic stability depends a great deal on mental and emotional stability, the latter being contributed by the practice of *Yoga*.

The central nervous system has no direct control on the digestive function but the appetite and satiety centers lie in the hypothalamus. The emotional balance and behavior of the human beings are also controlled by the hypothalamic centers. It has been found that even the muscular tone of the smooth muscles of the visceral parts is affected due to an individual's emotional status, such as, rage, abhorrence and annoyance. Thus, it can be concluded that digestion is affected due to one's thinking style, tense and unsatisfied mind and the negative approach. This causes indigestion, acidity, and gastric troubles. If the digestive function is disturbed, health is also affected. In order to maintain mental peace and

balance, a positive approach, contentment and happiness are required, which can be achieved through yoga.

The smooth muscles of the digestive parts are involuntary muscles, which are not working under the individual's will. Major autonomic nerve of the gastrointestinal tract (GIT) is the vagus nerve, which sends branches to the stomach, small intestine and upper portion of large intestine. In fact, the activity of smooth muscles and exocrine (digestive) glands are controlled by the autonomic nervous system and the internal nerve plexus as well as the hormones secreted by GIT itself. Gastrointestinal receptors initiate reflexes and the information is conveyed to the central nervous system (CNS). Short reflexes bring about self-regulation in the tract. Sometimes an individual can experience sensations like pressure, pain, temperature, or burning in the abdominal region. This is mainly due to various visceroreceptors situated along the GIT. When they are stimulated because of stretching, pressure or the chemical action, the strong sensory impulses are sent to the CNS and one's attention is drawn. Hunger and appetite are such sensations coming from the stomach.

Yoga asanas increase blood flow to the digestive tract and stimulate the intestinal action known as peristalsis that results in digestion more efficiently. Yoga also calms the mind, which in turn relaxes the digestive system and leads to more effective elimination. Forward bend asanas increase the space in the abdomen and facilitate the release of entrapped gases. These poses heat the frontier part of the body and cool the back body as well.^{6,7,8}

CONCLUSION

Good digestion is key to radiant health. Yoga has a proven potential to maintain a healthy state of Digestive System. It should be implicated as an essential part of life to prevent the manifestation to alleviate the vitality to decrease the frequency of recurrence of various pathological conditions.

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