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Yogic Intervention in Sexual Dysfunction - A Review

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is an ancient practice with Eastern roots that involves both physical postures (*Asanas*) and breathing techniques (*Pranayamas*). Yoga therapy for male sexual problems can effectively be treated through Yoga therapy, particularly with the help of Yoga poses and breathing exercises, Yoga has proven itself highly very effective in the treatment of a number of incurable and sometimes terminable diseases. Then again, Yoga's therapeutic effects are just a spin-off and supplementary. Yoga which has proved to be very effective in the treatment of many impossible and incurable diseases, the therapeutic effect of Yoga is only a by product and incidental. Problems related to sex can very well be handled with *Yoga* as most often these problems are more related to the mind than body. Either they are caused by lack of confidence or stress or fatigue or fear and very few times some physical cause is there. There is also a cognitive component focusing on meditation and concentration, which aids in achieving the goal of union between the self and the spiritual. Although numerous empirical studies have found a beneficial effect of *Yoga* on different aspects of physical and psychological functioning, claims of *Yoga*'s beneficial effects on sexuality derive from a rich but no empirical literature. The goal of this article is to review the philosophy and forms of *Yoga*, to review the no empirical and (limited) empirical literatures linking *Yoga* with enhanced sexuality, and to propose some future research avenues focusing on *Yoga* as a treatment for sexual disorder.

Key words: *Yoga, Asana, Pranayam, Sexual disorder.*

INTRODUCTION

Sexual dysfunction (or sexual malfunction or sexual disorder) is difficulty experienced by an individual or a couple during any stage of a normal sexual activity, including physical pleasure, desire, preference, arousal or orgasm. According to the DSM-5, sexual dysfunction requires a person to feel extreme distress and interpersonal strain for a minimum of 6 months

(excluding substance or medication-induced sexual dysfunction).^[1] Sexual dysfunctions can have a profound impact on an individual's perceived quality of sexual life. The term sexual disorder may not only refer to physical sexual dysfunction, but to paraphilias as well; this is sometimes termed disorder of sexual preference. Sexual dysfunctions can have a profound impact on an individual's perceived quality of sexual life.^[2] The term sexual disorder may not only refer to physical sexual dysfunction, but to paraphilias as well; this is sometimes termed disorder of sexual preference. A population based cross-sectional study of gynaecological and sexual diseases in rural women was done in two Indian villages. Of 650 women who were studied, 55% had gynaecological complaints and 45% were symptom-free. 92% of all women were found to have one or more gynaecological or sexual diseases, and the average number of these diseases per woman was 3-6. Infections of the genital tract contributed half of this morbidity. Only 8% of the women had undergone gynaecological examination

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and treatment in the past. There was an association between presence of gynaecological diseases and use of female methods of contraception, but this could explain only a small fraction of the morbidity. In the rural areas of developing countries, gynaecological and sexual care should be part of primary health care.^[3] A historical note on the origins and philosophies of Yoga is essential in order to place Yoga within a theoretical framework for being used for sexual enhancement. The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root *Yuj* meaning “to yoke, to bind, to attach, to join, to direct and concentrate one’s attention on, or to use and apply” Yoga is one of the six systems of Indian philosophy that was systemized by *Patanjali* with his text, *The Yoga Sutras*. Here, Yoga is described as a sacred science that involves evolution through eight components, known as the eight limbs of Yoga.^[4] The first step is *Yama* (attitudes towards the environment), and evolving through to *Samadhi* (complete integration with the object to be understood). The other limbs include: *Niyama* (attitudes towards the self), *Asana* (the practice of body exercises), *Pranayama* (the practice of breathing exercises), *Pratyahara* (restraint of the senses), *Dharana* (the ability to direct the mind), and *Dhyana* (the ability to develop interactions with what one seeks to understand (Desikachar, 2003). Through these limbs one is given the tools to connect with the higher being (which can be translated to whichever belief system one chooses) and therefore be liberated free of suffering mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.^[5]

Sexual dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction or sexual malfunction is the difficulty experienced by an individual or couple during any stages of normal sexual activity, which includes physical pleasure, desire, arousal and orgasm.^[6]

Causes

There are mainly two causes for sexual dysfunction.^[7]

- 1. Physical causes** - Includes hormonal imbalances, menopause, heart diseases, diabetes, alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking.

- 2. Psychological causes** - Includes work related stress, anxiety, concern about sexual performance, relationship problems, depression, feeling of guilt, past sexual trauma

Sexual dysfunction in Men

- Erectile Dysfunction** - It can be caused by medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure or anxiety in having sex, depression, fatigue and stress may also cause ED.
- Ejaculation Problems** - It includes premature ejaculation and inability to ejaculate at all. Causes include medications like some antidepressants, history of sexual trauma, strict religious beliefs.
- Low Libido** - Psychological issues like stress and depression, as well as anxiety about having sex can also lead to decreased sexual desire. Decreased hormone level especially testosterone, physical illness and medication side effect may also diminish libido in men.

Sexual dysfunction in Women

- Vaginal dryness** - This can lead to low libido as sex can be painful when vagina is not properly lubricated. This can be caused due to hormonal changes during menopause or while breastfeeding.
- Difficulty achieving orgasm** - This includes delayed orgasm or no orgasm at all. Again some antidepressant medication can cause this.
- Dysperunia** - Pain may be due to vaginal dryness normally, but it can be also due to vulvar vestibulitis which causes burning sensation accompany with lots of pain during sex.

Yogic Interventions

Yama

- Following the good conducts of *Yama* like
- Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Aparigraha, Daya, Arjava, Kshama* and *Druti*. One will be happy for ever without anger, stress, anxiety or depression which are psychological causes for sexual problems.

- *Brahmacharya* - by following this one can get more potent *Shukra* and also good vigour of having sex.

Niyama

- By following the rules of *Niyama* like *Shoucha*, *Santosh*, *Tapa*, *Swaadyaya*, *Eshwara Pranidana*, *Astikya*, *Dana*, *Siddanta Sravana*, *Japa*
- One can be hygienic in both ways of body and mind and will get more positive energy which helps to relive the psychological factors affecting sexual life.

Asanas

1. *Ardha Matsyendrasana*
2. *Paschimottanasana*
3. *Siddhasana*
4. *Baddakonasana*
5. *Garudasana*
6. *Setubhandasana*
7. *Halasana*
8. *Pavanamuktasana*
9. *Supta Vajrasana*
10. *Shavasana*

ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA^[8]

Method

1. Sit with legs stretched forward on the ground.
2. Bend the left leg at knee; place the sole and heel of left foot on the ground.
3. With the exhalation turn the spine up to 90° to the left so that right arm pit touches the outer side of right thigh.
4. Place the right shoulder beyond the left knee and stretch right arm forwards.
5. Exhale move the right arm around the left knee, bend the right elbow and place the right hand at the at the back of the waist.

6. With deep exhalation, twist the left arm from the shoulder behind the back and clasp the right hand behind the back with the left hand.

Mode of action

This *Asana* specially focus on hip and abdominal region and also chest, spine and arms. It increases the circulation to the pelvic region and therefore providing fresh blood, nutrients and oxygen, improving the health of the reproductive organs and urinary system.

Benefits

1. It tones liver, spleen and pancreas and enhances digestive power and helps to awaken *Kundalini* power.
2. It provides moon power to the man.

PASCIMOTTANASANA^[9]

Method

1. Sit straight with legs extended to the front.
2. Hold the great toes of the foot with the respective hands.
3. With exhalation bend forward and touch head to the knee joint.
4. Maintain this position for 30-60 seconds.
5. Release the hand with exhalation and come back to *Stiti*.

Mode of action

This *Asana* focus on hip, abdomen hamstrings and back. Useful in balancing the menstrual cycle and improves blood circulation to the pelvic region, it removes pelvic congestion and relives pain during period.

Benefits

1. It increases vitality and helps to cure impotence and gain control over sex.
2. Strengths the spine.
3. This pose massages Heart.

SHAVASANA^[10]**Methods**

1. Lying down on the ground in the supine position like a dead body is *Shavasana*.

Benefits

1. Provides smoothening effect to the body.
2. Relaxes the body completely.
3. Calms the mind and reduces the tension.

SIDDASANA^[11]**Method**

1. Sit on the ground with legs stretched to the front.
2. Flex the left leg at the knee, hold the left foot with the hands, keep the heel near perineum and keep the sole of the left foot against the right thigh.
3. Flex the right leg at the knee and place the right foot over the left ankle, keeping the right heel against the pubic bone.
4. Keep the sole of right foot between the thigh and calf of left leg.
5. Sit in this position as long as comfortable.

Mode of action

The *Mooladhara Chakra* is stimulated in the pelvic region as the heels of the lower foot tends to press the perineum, the *Swadistana Chakra* which is situated towards the north side of the *Mooladhara Chakra* is stimulated because of the force by the upper foot. When both these gets combined it tends to redirect the nerve impulses of sexuality and helps for the monitoring of reproductive hormones in the body.

Benefits

- This position keeps the pubic region healthy.
- One of the most relaxative positions.
- It promotes flexibility

BADDHA KONASANA^[12]**Method**

1. Sit with the back straight.
2. Bring your feet together.
3. Hold both the feet by hands.

4. Gently press both foot towards groin region.
5. Keep both the knee on the ground.

Mode of action

Taking both the legs near to the groin helps to stimulate the ovaries, prostate gland, bladder and keeps them healthy.

Benefits

- This position primarily opens the hip and inner thighs.
- Helps to increase endurance and flexibility in the groin region.

GARUDASANA^[13]**Method**

1. Stand straight on both legs.
2. Twine one leg around the other leg while one leg is rooted on the ground.
3. Squeezing legs gently together will cause rush of blood to the groin area when you release the pose.

Benefits

1. It increases blood circulation in the cervical area.
2. It makes the intercourse more pleasurable and sensitive.

SETU BHANDASANA^[14]**Method**

1. Lay down in a supine position.
2. Slowly bend your knee joint and hold both the ankle joints with hands.
3. Gently lift your butt until thighs are parallel to the floor.
4. Maintain this position for 30-60 secs.

Mode of action

Improves the blood circulation to the head and stimulates the thyroid gland thus regularising the thyroid hormones which play a major role in preventing sexual dysfunctions. As it enhances the blood supply to the brain it reduces stress, anxiety and fatigue.

Benefits

- It strengthens the muscles of the pelvic region.
- This *Asana* helps in stronger and more controlled orgasms.
- Relives menstrual discomfort.

HALASANA^[15]**Method**

1. Lie flat on the ground.
2. Keep the legs straight, exhale slowly and raise the legs perpendicular to the ground.
3. Exhale again, raise the hip and back supporting the waist with the palms, keep the chin on the breast bone.
4. Release the chin lock, further touch the ground with the toes.
5. Maintain this position as long as comfortable.

Mode of action

It mainly focuses on neck, thyroid gland, lower back and hamstrings. Due to compression in the pelvic region improves the blood circulation and tones up reproductive organs and increase their efficiency. It helps to strengthen the lower back and sacral area preventing lower back pain during menstruation.

Benefits

1. It is beneficial in several endocrine gland anomalies.
2. Beneficial in irritation, short temper and anxiety.
3. It is also useful in urinary disorders and uterine problems.

PAVANAMUKTASANA^[16]**Method**

1. Lie down in supine position.
2. Slowly bring the knees with inhalation, bring the thighs above abdomen and keep it on stomach.
3. Encircle the upper arm below the knee joint and slowly lift the head and upper part of the back with exhalation.
4. Maintain this position for some time.

Mode of action

It helps to massage the reproductive organs and pelvic muscles resulting good effect on menstrual problems. Improves blood circulation all over the body maintains energy level of the body for personal and professional life.

Benefits

1. Strengthens abdominal and pelvic muscles.
2. Helps in reducing excess fat from the belly.
3. Helps in controlling hypertension and diabetes.
4. Helps to remove gaseous distention from the abdomen.

SUPTAVAJRASANA^[17]**Method**

1. First sit in *Vajrasana* position.
2. Then inhale slowly and bend backwards towards the ground slowly.
3. Keep the head on the hands making it like a pillow.

Mode of action

It exerts pressure on the utero-abdominal and genital organs. This gives better muscle tone and brings fresh blood supply to the abdominal viscera, liver and pancreas. The muscles of spine, abdomen, pelvis, thigh and legs are fully stretched.

Benefits

Pelvic joints become more elastic and help in more easy and less pain during intercourse.

PRANAYAMA^[18]

- a. *Bhastrika*
- b. *Nadi shodana*
- c. *Ujjayi*

BHASTRIKA^[19]**Method**

1. Sit in *Padmasana*, *Vajrasana* or *Siddhasana*.

2. Take a fast vigorous breath and exhale fast and forcefully.
3. At a stretch 10-12 cycles should be completed.
4. Then inhale slowly and deeply. Retain the breath in *Moolabandha*, then exhale slowly.

Benefits

1. Very much effective in menstrual disorders.
2. It improves general health and activities of all the organs.
3. *Bhastrika* destroys all the defects of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* and balances these three in the body.

NADISHODANA^[20]

Method

1. Sit in *Padmasana*, *Vajrasana* or *Siddhasana* and perform *Jalandhara Bandha*.
2. Bend the right hand at the elbow, with *Nasagra Mudra* close left nostril and inhale deeply through right nostril and perform *Mula Bandha*.
3. Exhale completely through left nostril and again perform *Kumbhaka*. Repeat the cycles for 5-10 times.

Benefits

1. Nerves are calm and purified.
2. Improves oxygen supply to every organ of the body.
3. Helpful in menstrual disorders.

UJJAYI^[21]

Method

1. Sit in any comfortable posture and perform *Jalandhara Bandha*.
2. Inhale slowly through both nostrils. the passage of incoming air is felt on the roof of the palate making sound with the epiglottis.
3. Then perform *Kumbhaka* by *Mula Bandha*. Exhale slowly and deeply through the left nostril.
4. Repeat the cycle for 5-10 times.

Benefits

1. Enhances *Agni* and destroys all diseases.
2. It makes the man young.
3. Prevents old age and death.

BANDHAS AND MUDRAS

ASHWINI MUDRA

Method

Contraction and dilation of anal aperture again and again is called *Ashwini Mudra*. The *Kundalini Shakti* gets awoken by this *Mudra*.

Benefits

1. It is very helpful in preventing premature ejaculation.
2. The inflammation of prostate gland is also cured by this *Mudra*.

VAJROLI^[23]

Method

1. Place both palms on the ground, raise the leg and head upward in the air and draw urethra upward.
2. This is similar to that of holding back on urge to urinate. Hold the contraction as long as comfortable.

Benefits

1. This *Mudra* regulates and tones the entire urogenital system.
2. Balances testosterone level and improves sperm count and gives control over premature ejaculation.

MOOLA BANDHA^[24]

Method

Press the genitals with the heels then simultaneously contract the anal and perineal muscles, move the *Apana Vayu* in upward direction and try to mingle it with *Prana Vayu*.

Benefits

1. It tones the urogenital and excretory muscles as well as intestinal peristalsis.
2. If it is performed with *Vajroli* and *Ashwini Mudra* it helps in giving great result in erectile dysfunction.

DISCUSSION

The literature demonstrating beneficial effects of Yoga in numerous physical and psychological ailments is compelling and growing and Yoga interventions are increasingly incorporated into existing treatment programs because of their demonstrated benefit. In the domain of sexual response, Yoga has also been touted as a method for improving genital awareness, stimulating genital blood flow, enhancing relaxation of the pelvic floor, reducing vulvodynia, reducing symptoms of premature ejaculation, enhancing erectile capacity, extending the longevity of intercourse and fundamentally, of enhancing sexual pleasure. However, the empirical research is limited to one controlled study of Yoga for the treatment of premature ejaculation in men. Moreover, there is no empirical research on specific *Asana* for specific sexual problems, despite this practice and teaching for many hundreds of years. Clearly, this is an area of research. One specific practice in Yoga, the *Moola Bandha*, bears particular promise in the treatment of sexual problems, especially in women, where it has been used for centuries. Again, however, there are no empirical data demonstrating its tremendous anecdotal benefits. As a treatment for women with pelvic pain disorders, the *Moola Bandha* may complement pelvic floor physiotherapy by relaxing and enhancing awareness of pelvic floor tension for women with vestibulodynia and vaginismus. Future research may be aimed at comparing standard care with and without the practice of *Moola Bandha* instruction for the treatment of dyspareunia. With the advent of the age of "evidence-based treatment," professionals and the lay public want proof that our interventions are effective. Because Yoga has been practiced and taught for many centuries, and because of the power of the personal attestation that Yoga is effective, it has not been subjected to the scrutiny of empirical testing that many other interventions in medicine have. Those who practice Yoga experience the benefits. It is our hope that this experience will ignite an interest in testing and demonstrating the beneficial effects of Yoga for many different facets of human sexuality

CONCLUSION

Yoga is an ancient practice with Eastern roots that involves both physical postures (*Asanas*) and breathing techniques (*Pranayamas*). Yoga has a rich history with roots in India but branches in all cultures and parts of the world.^[25] It is reasonable that Yoga might also be associated with improvements in sexual health. For example, Yoga moderates attention and breathing decreases anxiety and stress and modulates cardiac parasympathetic nerves. All of these effects are associated with improvements in sexual response. By regular practice of *Yoga, Pranayama, Bandhas* and *Mudra* the person will awaken the *Kundalini Shakti* in him which eases the flow of *Prana Vayu* all over the body resulting in good physical and mental stability by which most of the sexual dysfunctions gets reduced.

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