



ROLE OF YOGA IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

Review article

¹Ruksana Parvin ,

²Nazrul Islam Prodhani.

¹Consultant cum Assistant professor, Department of PTSR, IAMC USTM, Meghalaya.

²Assistant professor, Department of Rachana Sharir, IAMC, USTM, Meghalaya.

ABSTRACT

A woman's life cycle goes through a number of transitional phases namely menarche, pregnancy and menopause. From menarche to menopause a woman's body undergoes a lot of physiological and psychological transformations. This physical, mental, social and spiritual well being can be restored by the holistic means of yoga. Yoga which is a mind- body technique involves relaxation, meditation and a set of physical exercises performed in synchronization with breathing known as *pranayama*. Aims & objectives: The beneficial effects of *yogaasanas* at different phases of a woman is being studied. Materials & methods: It is a conceptual study; materials were collected from different Ayurvedic literatures and online articles related to the topic. Review Results: Regular practice of *yoga* and *pranayama* helps in proper functioning of the reproductive organs and thus helps in regulation of menstruation, conceiving a healthy progeny and attaining a pleasant menopause. Though the exact mechanism of how yoga helps in various disorders is not known but depending on its effects it is considered that there may be neurohormonal pathways with a selective effect in each pathological situation, thus managing overall health of women. Conclusion: *Yoga* helps to develop a healthy and regular menstrual cycle, and also helps to deal with various psychological disorders. *Yogasana* and *Pranayama* as part of her way of life will be even more meaningful and advantageous to her. *Yoga* supports a woman throughout all the phases of her life.

Key Words: Menarche, Menstruation, Pregnancy, Menopause, *Yoga*, *Pranayama*

INTRODUCTION: A blessing from ancient times-*Yoga* is a practice that has been around us for more than 2500 years. For a period of time, it was overlooked, however the scenario is changing and *yoga* is gaining popularity amongst modern society. The founder of *yoga* is Rishi Patanjali and the word *Yoga* comes from a Sanskrit root "*yuj*" meaning union, to join and to direct and concentrate one's attention⁴. *Yogah* has eight types, clusterly called as *Astangayoga*, however practically and commonly performed *yoga* practices are *Asana* (postures), *Pranayama* (controlled breathing) and *Dhyana* (meditation).⁵ The main goal of *Yoga* is to

calm the mind, to provide better coordination of mind and body. So that healthy life can be achieved with spiritual growth. The modern day women have an extended role in all aspects of life, be it social, economic or political. Thus it is important for her to keep a balance between health as well as meeting the expectations and norms of the society. *Yoga* stands as a solution to achieve a perfect health and harmony to withstand the stress and strains of life.

The exact mechanism of how *yoga* helps in various disorders is not known but depending on its effects it is considered that there may be neurohormonal pathways

with a selective effect in each pathological situation, thus managing overall health of women⁶.

AIM: To study the beneficial effect of *yoga* in women's health

OBJECTIVES:

- To study different phases of life a woman.

- To study the effect of different *yogaasanas* at different phases of a woman.

MENARCHE: Menarche begins with the start of the first menstrual cycle at around 12 years. It is a gradual physiological process consisting of a complex play through the hypothalamo-pituitary-ovarian axis.⁷

Table 1: YOGA THAT CAN BE PERFORMED DURING MENSTRUATION⁸

Yogasana		Benefits
● <i>Utthita Trikonasana</i> (Triangle pose)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to relieve low back pain. • Reduces cramping, excessive bleeding and bloating
● <i>Uttanasana</i> (Standing forward bend)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to reduce rigidity and stiffness in the joints. • Provide relief from low backache, headache, menstrual cramps and migraine
● <i>Janu Sirsasana</i> (Head to Knee Pose)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces heavy bleeding.
● <i>Supta virasana</i> (Reclining Hero Pose)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces pelvic pain and abdominal cramps. • Helps in relieving fatigue.

PRANAYAMA (Breath regulation): Deep breathing is very beneficial, especially when practiced in *Tadagasana* (Pond Pose) or *Shavasana* (Corpse Pose). Practice of:

Viloma Pranayama

- *Bhramari* (Humming Bee Breath),
- *Anulom viloma* (Alternate Nostril Breathing),
- *Ujjayi* (Victorious Breath),

- *Sheetali* (Cooling breath through the tongue),
- *Sitkari* (Cooling breath through the teeth).

DHYANA (Meditation): *Dhyana* is the most beneficial practice. Particularly, chanting 'OM'Kar and meditating on 'Om' can be used. *Antarmouna*, the practice of inner silence is a technique where one observes one's own thoughts.


Table 2: YOGA TO BE AVOIDED DURING MENSTRUATION⁹

YOGA ASANA		PRNAYAMA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sirsasana</i> • <i>Halasana</i> • <i>Urdhva prasarita padasana</i> • <i>Dhanurasana</i> • <i>Bipartta Dandasana</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bhastrika</i> (Bellow's Breath) • <i>Suryabedan</i> (Right Nostril Breathing) • <i>Kapalbhati</i> (Frontal Brain Cleansing)

These <i>yoganasas</i> may alter the <i>apana vayu</i> , the main driving force related to reproductive function and lead to menstrual abnormalities and reproductive issues.	Such <i>pranayama</i> demands extra physical strength and energy which is absent during this phase and all these may exert excessive pressure on the abdominal region.
---	--

YOGA AFTER THE MENSTRUATION: After the menstruation period one must begin with the following *Asanas* and *Pranayama* to


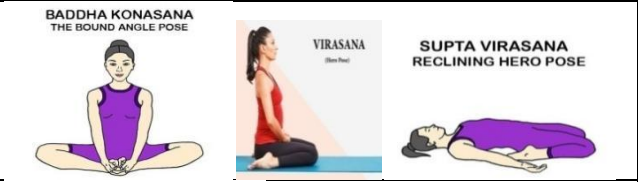
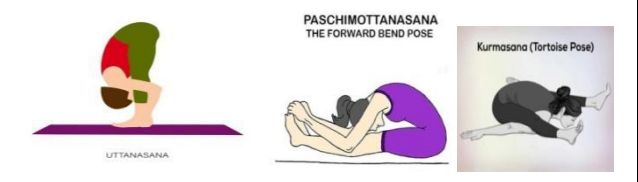


help the organs to recover from menstruation, hormone levels, re-establish a balanced mental state for the next cycle. **(Table 3)**

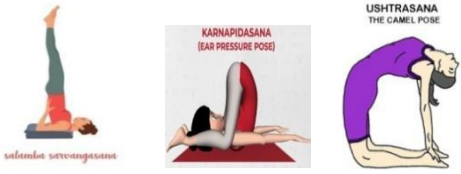


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adho Mukha Svanasana</i>(Downward Dog Pose) • <i>Supta Baddha Konasana</i>(Reclining butterfly pose) • <i>Sarvangasana Setu-bandha</i>(Bridge posture) • <i>Pascimottanasana</i> (Seated forward bend) 	
--	--

PRANAYAMA: *Ujjayi Pranayama I and II*(Ocean breath) , *Surya Bhedana Pranayama* (Right nostril breathing), *Anuloma Viloma Pranayama I and II*(Alternate nostril breathing) are beneficial in restoring the normal state.

MENSTRUAL DISORDERS: Several diseases related to menstruation respond well to the practice of Yoga. Regular practice of *yoganasas* along with *pranayama* are beneficial in menstrual disorders.

Table 4: YOGA IN MENSTRUAL DISORDERS¹⁰




AMENORRHEA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pindasana</i> in <i>Sirsasana</i> (Headstand pose) • <i>Halasana</i> (Plough pose), • <i>Bhujangasana</i>(Cobra pose). 	
DYSMENORRHEA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Baddha konasana</i> (Bound angle pose) • <i>Virasana</i> cycle (Hero Pose) • <i>Supta Virasana</i>(Reclining hero pose) 	
MENORRHAGIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Uttanasana</i>(Standing forward bend) • <i>Pascimottanasana</i>(Seated forward bend) • <i>Kurmasana</i>(Turtle pose) 	
METRORRHAGIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dandasana</i>(Staff pose) • <i>Malasana</i>(Squat pose) • <i>Salamba Sirsasana</i> (Headstand pose) 	
HYPOMENORRHEA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vriksasana</i> (Tree pose) • <i>Utthita Trikonasana</i>(Triangle pose) • <i>Ardha Candrasana</i> (Half-moon pose) 	

<p>OLIGOMENORRHEA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salamba Sarvangasana (Supported shoulder stand) • Karnapidasana(Ear pressure pose) • Ustrasana(Camel Pose) 	
<p>POLYMENORRHEA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janu Sirsasana(Head-to-knee pose), • Maricyasana I(Sage pose) • Siddhasana(Accomplished pose) 	
<p>PREMENSTRUAL TENSION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matsyasana (Fish pose) • Maha Mudra Viloma • Pranayama 	


PREGNANCY: The series of physical and hormonal events that take place in a woman's body due to the developing fetus-in-utero marks pregnancy. The physical and emotional changes of pregnancy and then in labour, birth and breastfeeding play vital roles in guiding women on the journey of becoming a mother.

Yogasana helps to maintain an active lifestyle throughout the pregnancy and is supposed to prevent complications during pregnancy such as miscarriages, pregnancy induced hypertension (pre-eclampsia, eclampsia), gestational diabetes etc.


YOGA FOR 1ST TRIMESTER¹¹: (Table 5)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parvatasana: Improves concentration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virasana: Stretches groin area, strengthens body and back muscles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trikonasana: Strengthens pelvic floor muscles, thighs, calf muscles.
		

YOGA FOR 2ND TRIMESTER:(Table 6)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vajrasana 2. Matsyakridasana 3. Marjarasana 4. Tadasana 5. Bhadrasana 6. Katichakrasana 	
<p>Benefits:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alters blood flow & nervous system impulses in the pelvic region. • Relaxes the nerves of legs. • Tones the female reproductive system & pelvic muscles. • Increases the flexibility of neck, spine & shoulder muscles. • Essential for bearing down effort during labour. • Relieves various stomach ailments.

YOGA FOR 3RD TRIMESTER:(Table 7)

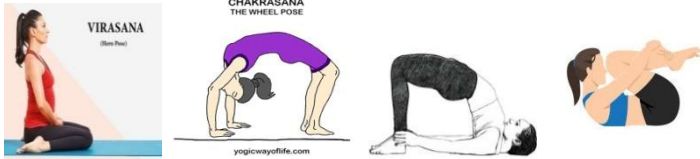
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baddhakonasana ● Ardhabaddhakonasana ● Utkatasana ● Chakkichalāsana ● Shavasana 	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loosening of hip joints, enables fast & easy delivery ● Increases stretching ability of perineum muscles ● Tones up joints, muscles & nerves of pelvis, uterus, thighs, legs. 	

PRANAYAMA: Slow breathing techniques should be practiced- *Anoloma Viloma, Ujjayi, Bhramari.* Stressful pranayamas should be avoided- *Bhastrika, Kumbhaka*

- Inversions
- Deep twists
- Deep forward bends
- Hot yoga and power yoga
- Extreme backbends
- Over-exertion

FOLLOWING TO BE AVOIDED DURING PREGNANCY¹²:

POSTNATAL YOGASANA¹³:(Table 8)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Veerasana ● Chakrasana ● Setubandhasana ● Pavanmuktasana 	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improves bladder control, ● Strengthens abdominal muscles, ● Prevents backaches, ● Manages postnatal depression , ● Corrects poor posture, ● Boosts energy levels, ● Improves digestion. 	

(Table 9)


<p>COMMON POSTNATAL PROBLEMS:</p>	<p>YOGASANA FOR POSTNATAL PROBLEMS:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uterine prolapse ● Rectocele ● Cystocele ● Urinary & fecal incontinence 	<p><i>Ashwini Mudra^{14,15}</i>: Beneficial in fecal & urinary Incontinence <i>Mulabandha^{16,17}</i>: Perineal muscles are toned up & circulation is improved, Genital organs are toned up <i>Setubandhasana</i>: Stimulates the lungs, thyroid gland & abdominal organs, Alleviates stress & mild depression <i>Baddhakonasana</i>: good for healthier ligaments , fascia & tendons</p>

MENOPAUSE: The permanent cessation of menstruation that occurs at a mean age of 50 years is known as menopause.¹⁸ A woman spends almost one-third of her life

in this phase.¹⁹ During perimenopause, there are fluctuating estrogen and progesterone levels that manifest in uncomfortable psychological, somatic and vasomotor symptoms. The most common menopausal symptoms include hot flashes, night sweats, fatigue, pain, tiredness,

insomnia, and weight gain, lack of concentration, urinary frequency, vaginal dryness, decreased libido and mood swings. *Yoga* is a non-hormonal, non pharmacological way of managing menopausal symptoms.

YOGA FOR MENOPAUSE²⁰: (Table 10)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prasarita Padottanasana (Wide Stance Forward Bend) ● Adho Mukha Svanasana(Downward Dog Pose) ● Pascimottanasana(Seated Forward Bend Pose) ● Salamba Sirsasana(Supported Headstand pose) 	
<p>Benefits of Yoga during menopause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helps to calm the nervous system. ● Enhances the functioning of the endocrine system thereby balancing hormonal fluctuations. ● Decreases risk factors for Cardiovascular diseases (both psychological and physiological risk factors for CVD). 	

PRANAYAMA: Strengthens mental concentration, induces relaxation, mitigating mild to moderate hot flushes.

Practice of:

- *Ujjayi Pranayama* .
- *Viloma Pranayama*.
- *Surya Bhedana Pranayama*

DHYANA: *Dhyana* aims at mental clarity. Increases plasma melatonin levels and melatonin effectively improves sleep quality. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of *Yoga* in improving sleeping patterns suggests its effective use in a clinical setting to combat symptoms of insomnia and other sleep disorders in postmenopausal women.

DISCUSSION: *Yoga* aims to develop symmetry, coordination, and endurance in the body. It stimulates the organs and makes them function amicably. The progress is slow but certain. There have been lot of advances in modern medical science ; though drugs and medicines are often of great help, *Yoga* can complement

them and speed up the method of recovery, where medication is getting used. Sometimes drugs and medicines have harmful side effects and *Yoga* helps to counteract them. *Yoga* strengthens the body's natural defenses to fight disease. From the onset of puberty to menopause, a woman's body goes through a lot of physical and mental strain. Thus the practice of *Yoga* on a daily basis promotes overall health to women. *Yoga* provides countless benefits to women like supporting the reproductive system, aiding in natural childbirth, giving complete workout to the body. Healthy menstruation indicates a healthy state of the body. During this period the body undergoes a lot of changes physiologically and psychologically. Due to lifestyle modifications, there is a breakdown of the immune system and alter in the hormonal system causing various conditions like fibroid tumors, endometriosis, ovarian cyst, menstrual disorders. Here *Yoga* plays

a vital role. *Yoga* reduces psychological conditions like stress, tension, depression, and anxiety. Menopause is the period of wisdom for the woman. This is a critical period of adjustment. Menstruation either stops suddenly or becomes irregular, or the quantity lessens. All these are natural signs that the reproductive functions are coming to an end. At the beginning of menstruation, physical, physiological, and psychological disturbances occur; and women again must face disturbances at the stage of menopause too. *Yoga* promotes positive psychophysiological changes in post-menopausal women and can be applied as a complementary therapy. At this point, the practice of *Yoga Asana*, *Pranayama* are extremely beneficial, as it calms the nervous system and brings equipoise.

CONCLUSION: *Yoga* has to be started from the onset of menarche itself which will not only help to develop a healthy and regular menstrual cycle but will also help to deal with various psychological changes. *Yoga* is highly effective and is strongly recommended to all women. It brings about an overall transformation in one's physical, mental, and moral well-being. *Yoga* practice however is very personal, so each *Asana* is individualized upon one's own body. *Yoga* as a supportive therapy is safe, free from untoward effects, and could be a best choice for women from menarche to menopause in promoting quality of life. *Yogasana* and *Pranayama* as part of her way of life will be even more meaningful and beneficial to her. Hence *Yoga* helps a woman in balancing a healthy lifestyle.

REFERENCES:

1. Kshama Kulkarni et al: An Overview on *Yoga* alongside Its Benefits in Menarche and Menopause

doi:10.46607/iamj4709092021/IAMJ-September2021,

http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/225_2231.pdf

2. Vd. Snehal Shivaji Jadhav, Vd. Sneha Shyamkant Bhokare: Review on Effect Of *Yoga* On Female Health. -JETIR October 2023, Volume 10, Issue 10 www.jetir.org(ISSN-2349-516)

3. Alyson Ross and Sue Thomas. (2010). The health benefits of *yoga* and exercise. A review of comparison

4. Lasater J. (1997). The heart of Patanjali. *Yoga J.*137:134–44. [Google Scholar]

5. Vaze N, Joshi S (2010). *Yoga* and the menopausal transition. *J Midlife Health* 1: 56-58.

6. Sahay BK. (1995). *Yoga is medicine*. API textbook of medicine. 5th ed. Pg.no. 1444-1445

7. D.C. Dutta, Textbook of Gynecology, fourth edition, Pg.no-.74

8. Bobby Clennel, 1 The women's *Yoga* Book, Pg no.47-49

9. *Yoga* for menstruation- <https://www.yogapoint.com/index.htm> 28/03/2024, 2pm

10. Geeta Iyengar. *Yoga –a gem for women- on menstrual disorders*; Pg.no-97-99

11. Exercise during pregnancy- <https://.marchofdimes.org> , 28/03/2024, 2.10pm

12. Do`s & don`ts in pregnancy- <https://www.womenshealthmag.com> 28/03/2024, 2.15pm

13. Postnatal *Yoga* benefits- <https://www.healthline.com> 28/03/2024, 2.33pm

14. Postpartum *yoga* benefits- <https://www.webmed.com> 28/03/2024, 2.11pm

15. Ashwini Mudra- Horse Gesture-
<https://www.yogapoint.com>28/03/2024,2.3
4pm
16. Vijay Patrikar. Sanpurna Swasthavruta
Vigyan, Shree Dhanvantari Books
Publications,2022
17. Mula Bandha: Pelvic floor exercises-
<https://www.healthline.com>
28/03/2024,2.25pm
18. Turnbull S. Yoga as a treatment for
menopausal symptoms. J Yoga Ontogenet
And the rap Investing 2010;2:14-5
19. Keefer L, Blanchard EB. (2005) Hot
flash, hot topic: Conceptualizing
menopausal symptoms from a cognitive-
behavioral perspective. Appl
Psychophysiol Bio-feedback 30: 75-82
20. Yoga for Menopause-
<https://www.morelandobgyn.com>
28/03/2024,2.33pm
21. Benefits of Yoga poses & postures-
www.Yogawiz.com28/04/2024,2pm
22. Ghadge Bharti Balu, Ayurlog,
Conceptual study of yoga from anatomical
view in female, :National Journal of
Research in Ayurved Science-2014;2(4):1-
5
23. <http://www.yogalifestyle.com>28/3/24

Corresponding Author: Dr Ruksana Parvin,
Consultant cum Assistant professor,
Department of PTSR, IAMC USTM,
Meghalaya.

Email: ruksanaparvin1991@gmail.com

Source of support: Nil Conflict of interest:
None Declared

Cite this Article as : [Ruksana Parvin et al :
Role of Yoga in Women's Health]
www.ijaar.in :IJAAR VOL VI ISSUE VII
MARCH - APRIL 2024 Page No: - 316-323