

A NARRATIVE REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF YOGA AND NATUROPATHY IN THE
PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LIFESTYLE DISEASESDr. Ravi Sharma*¹ and Dr. Prashanna Nepal²¹PG Scholar, Department of Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhant, Rajiv Gandhi Government Post Graduate Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Paprola, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh – 176115.²Lecturer, Patanjali Ayurveda Medical College and Research Centre, Dhulikhel-07, Kavrepalanchowk, Bagmati Pradesh, Nepal.

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ABSTRACT

Yoga and Naturopathy are complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies that are practiced worldwide. They are both drug-free medical approaches. The majority of diseases and illnesses that people suffer from are the result of bad eating habits, sedentary lifestyles, and improper living practices. Yoga is gaining popularity as a form of treatment through structured practices such as *Asana* (physical postures), *Pranayama* (breathing techniques), *Dhyana* (meditation), etc. Similarly, Naturopathy promotes natural living and healing therapies based on the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Many illnesses will vanish if natural living and eating habits are strictly maintained. Adopting the principles of Yoga and Naturopathy, as well as employing its therapeutic approaches, helps in the prevention of such lifestyle-related disorders. This narrative review highlights the importance of yoga and naturopathy in integrative health management. It aggregates information from multiple clinical studies to clarify their therapeutic and preventive potential in treating lifestyle-related diseases.

KEYWORDS: Yoga, Naturopathy, Therapeutic Approach, Lifestyle Disease Management, Complementary and alternative medicine.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga has its origins in Indian philosophy and has been used as a long-established spiritual and medicinal practice in India for almost 5000 years. Yoga was once regarded as hidden and mystical since it was introduced by solitary practitioners and *Yogis* who practiced it in privacy to achieve spiritual enlightenment. However, Yoga is becoming more popular as a form of therapy. Maharishi Patanjali is referred to as the father of Yoga since he compiled, edited, systematized, and developed the *Yoga Sutra* as a system of all-round improvement and development of human personality through *Ashtanga Yoga* (the eight limbs of Yoga).

Naturopathy has its own concept of health and disease and its own principles of treatment. Benedict Lust and Henry Lindlahr, the two pioneers of naturopathic medicine, developed the concept of natural treatment. According to Lindlahr, "Nature cure is a system of building the entire being in harmony with the constructive principles in nature on the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual planes of being".^[1] Naturopathy is a basic method of treating illness that involves five elements found in nature. Naturopathy has a major

position in the field of medicine, from advising on food and lifestyle modifications to enabling you to achieve mental well-being.

Though modern medicine has considerably reduced the worldwide incidence of communicable illnesses and accompanying deaths over the past two centuries, it has not been sufficient to avoid non-communicable diseases. A preventative healthcare strategy needs more than merely treatment-based results. Alternative systems of medicine, such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy, have much more to offer in the treatment of non-communicable illnesses, commonly known as lifestyle diseases. Most diseases and illnesses that individuals suffer from are the consequence of poor eating habits, a sedentary lifestyle, and abnormal living practices. Many diseases will disappear if the natural rules of living and eating habits are strictly followed.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to elucidate the role of Yoga and Naturopathy in the management of lifestyle diseases.

The objectives are as follows.

1. To explain the principles and treatment modalities of Yoga and Naturopathy in brief.
2. To enumerate the role of Yoga and Naturopathy in the management of lifestyle diseases with evidence from various clinical studies.

METHODOLOGY

A brief literature study on the concepts of Yoga and Naturopathy, as well as their therapeutic approaches, was conducted individually. In addition, the PubMed, Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar databases have been searched for evidence-based therapy methods of Yoga and Naturopathy for lifestyle-related disorders.

Yoga and Naturopathy

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. As a result, health consists of a broader spectrum of factors that mutually interact with one another. In other words, it can be said that Yoga and naturopathic treatments are collections of physical, mental, and spiritual practices that promote health and mind. Yoga and Naturopathy are popular complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies that are practiced all over the world. Yoga has been shown to be useful in the treatment of many non-communicable psychosomatic diseases. Similarly, Naturopathy includes therapies that use natural elements such as hydrotherapy (using water), heliotherapy (with the sunrays), mud therapy, fasting therapy, diet therapy (which includes plant-based natural supplements), chromotherapy (using colors), magnet therapy, acupuncture, acupressure, and so on. Yoshinori Ohsumi, a Japanese cell biologist, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2016 for his work on how cells recycle and regenerate their content, a process known as autophagy. Fasting increases autophagy, which slows down the ageing process and promotes cell regeneration. Yoga and Naturopathy are both drug-free systems of medicine.

Principles of Yoga

The eight principal practices of Yoga are known as *Ashtanga Yoga* propounded by Patanjali.

1. **Yama (Social Control):** It includes *Ahimsa* (not harming other living beings), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (chastity), and *Aparigraha* (non-possessiveness).
2. **Niyama (Personal discipline):** It includes *Shaucha* (purity, clearness of mind, speech, and body), *Santosha* (contentment, acceptance of others, acceptance of one's circumstances as they are, optimism for oneself), *Tapas* (persistence, self-discipline), *Svadhyaya* (study of Vedas, a study of self, introspection of self-thoughts, speech and actions), and *Ishvarapranidhana* (contemplation of the God/Supreme Being)

3. **Asana (Posture):** *Asana* is a pose that can be held for an extended amount of time while being calm, stable, comfortable, and immobile.
4. **Pranayama (Breath-control):** After achieving a desirable posture, *Pranayama* is the discipline of actively managing the breath (inhalation, full pause, and expiration).
5. **Pratyahara (Withdrawal of senses):** *Pratyahara* enables one to stop being controlled by the outside world, refocus one's attention on self-knowledge, and feel the freedom inherent in one's inner world.
6. **Dharana (Concentration):** *Dharana* is the act of focusing one's mind on a certain inner condition, issue, or topic.
7. **Dhyana (Meditation):** *Dhyana* is thinking, and reflecting on whatever *Dharana* has chosen to focus on. It is an uninterrupted flow of thought and awareness.
8. **Samadhi (Illumination):** When focusing on one thing in *Samadhi*, just the thing of awareness is present, and the awareness that the person is meditating disappears.

In *Ashtanga Yoga*, *Yama* and *Niyama* are recommended activities and habits for healthy living. *Yama* constitutes the principles of conduct that instruct us on ethical rules, which are the ways to behave toward people and our surroundings. *Niyama* includes regimens for self-discipline. Only after following *Yama* and *Niyama*, the remaining six steps, namely - *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, and *Samadhi* can be attained. Out of these Yogic practices, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, and *Dhyana* are especially effective in preventing lifestyle diseases. *Asana* is a comfortable and immobile posture that the practitioner can hold. Proper practice of *Asana* naturally strengthens the body. *Pranayama* stands for *Prana* and *Yama*, which means breath control. The physical act of practicing various breathing methods influences the mind in different ways. Each kind of breathing will influence one's state of being, whether it is calming or energizing. For example, practicing *Chandra Bhedana Pranayama* relaxes the body and is more rejuvenating, while *Surya Bhedana* stimulates organs and energizes the body. Although we focus on our movements in *Asana* and *Pranayama*, our mind wanders. We fix our attention on a single spot in *Dharana*, and this prolonged period of concentration ultimately leads to *Dhyana* (meditation). The first four phases of *Ashtanga Yoga* are concerned with refining our personalities, achieving physical mastery, and establishing an energy awareness of ourselves, all of which prepare us for the second half of this practice, which is concerned with the senses, the mind, and obtaining a higher state of consciousness. *Yogic* practices help to facilitate the development and integration of body, mind, and breath, which leads to structural, physiological, and psychological changes. These practices improve the function of different systems of the body, promote psychological well-being, improve the

oxygen supply to tissues, and remove metabolic waste products.

Concept of the Yogic Diet

Diet is an important factor contributing to a wide range of lifestyle diseases. Controlling your diet properly can lower your chances of illness. The three dietary divisions introduced by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita are the *Sattvic* diet, the *Rajasic* diet, and the *Tamasic* diet.^[2] The *Sattvic* diet is clean and balanced and is said to increase vitality, happiness, tranquillity, and mental clarity. It can prolong one's lifespan and increase one's health and spirituality. This diet contains fresh fruits and vegetables, sprouted grains, roots, tubers, nuts, cow milk, curd, and honey, as well as anything that is fresh, juicy, healthy, and tasty. *Sattvic* eating appears to be a modern-day version of smart eating practice. (Bhagavad Gita, 17/8) The *Rajasic* diet is overstimulating and is said to produce jealousy, wrath, unfaithfulness, delusions, and selfishness. It is recommended for leaders and warriors since it may boost enthusiasm, confidence, and intellect. This diet comprises bitter, sour, salty, spicy, hot, and dry meals, as well as white sugar, radishes, and fried foods. (Bhagavad Gita, 17/9) The *Tamasic* diet is that which causes negative thinking, weakness, lethargy, and doubts. This dietary pattern, according to Yoga practitioners, makes one dull, raises anger and criminal inclinations, and interferes with spiritual growth. This diet includes meat from domesticated animals, onions, mushrooms, stale, undercooked, and overly fried meals, high-fat fried foods, salt, sugar, spices, chilis, peppers, butter, and liquor, as well as medications and stimulants. (Bhagavad Gita, 17/10).^[3]

Concept of Shatkarma

In addition to *Asana*, *Pranayama*, and *Dhyana*, Yogic scriptures explain *Shatkarma* (six practices) for body cleanliness and good functioning. *Shatkarma* cleanses the body inside by eliminating toxins, impurities, and toxic substances that have been collected. It consists of *Neti* (cleansing and purifying the nasal passages), *Dhauti* (cleaning the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus), *Nauli* (massaging and strengthening the abdominal organs), *Vasti* (washing and toning the large intestine), *Kapalbhati* (a breathing technique for purifying the brain and strengthening abdominal muscles), and *Trataka* (eye cleansing and concentration development). These *Shatkarma* are necessary to remove toxins and impurities from the body and prevent diseases.^[4]

Principles of Naturopathy

There are six principles of naturopathic medicine for naturopathic doctors. These principles serve as a set of guidelines for making holistic treatment decisions.^[5]

1. **First Do No Harm (*Primum Non Nocere*):** Choose gentle and non-invasive therapies that have non-toxic remedies.
2. **The Healing Power of Nature (*Vis Medicatrix Naturae*):** Naturopathy detects and activates the

healing force that lies latent inside us. There will be no side effects but long-term advantages because the therapies are entirely based on nature and its systems.

3. **Identify and Treat the Causes (*Tolle Causam*):** The majority of people will benefit by removing the cause of their suffering. Though it may take time, the outcomes are always certain.
4. **Doctor as Teacher (*Docere*):** 'Docere' or Doctor derives from the Latin term that means 'to teach'. A naturopathic doctor's job is to teach his patients how to treat themselves and attain a healthy lifestyle through proper nutrition, exercise, spiritual well-being, the environment, relationships, posture, hygiene, and sleep.
5. **Treat the Whole Person (*Tolle Totum*):** Each person is unique, with a unique collection of contributing factors leading to the disease's emergence. Therefore, it believes in treating the whole person rather than a specific ailment.
6. **Prevention (*Preventare*):** The major goals of the naturopathic system of medicine are illness prevention and the realization of optimal health in individuals, which are met through education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles and hygiene.

Naturopathy Treatment Modalities

Nature is composed of five elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. These five elements can be found in our bodies as well. Naturopathy therapies make use of these five elements and their immense therapeutic power.

1. **Hydrotherapy:** Hydrotherapy regulates the water elements. Hydrotherapy involves using the therapeutic effects of water in various ways, such as baths, compression, fomentation, *Jala Neti*, and enemas. Such treatments open the pores of the skin, give the body a sense of lightness and alertness, engage all systems and muscles, and increase blood circulation.
2. **Mud therapy:** Mud baths/therapy regulate the earth elements. Mud contains organic and mineral components and has been utilized in treatments. It has been believed that the positive benefits of mud are connected to its chemical components as well as its local thermal effects.
3. **Sun exposure:** Sun baths/exposure regulate the fire elements. Sunlight controls melatonin synthesis in the body, which is required to maintain the body's circadian cycles. Sunbathing treatments help maintain hormonal balance and prevent diseases. A decrease in exposure to the sun has been associated with the development of physical and psychological diseases.
4. **Air exposure:** Air baths/exposure regulate the air elements. The treatments include walks in the open air and breathing exercises. Air baths have calming and tonic effects on the millions of nerve endings all over the body's surface, and they help with the elimination process.

5. **Massaging therapy:** Massaging also regulates the air elements. It is the systemic manipulation of the body's tissues and organs with the goal of enhancing blood circulation and strengthening muscles and organs.
6. **Fasting therapy:** Fasting regulates space elements. According to Naturopathy, there is only one cause of disease, which is the buildup of morbid matter, and only one remedy, which is the removal of toxic matter from the body. Fasting is a method that allows the digestive system to rest and is an excellent treatment for eradicating mental and physical illnesses.

Clinical Studies on Yoga and Naturopathy for the Management of Lifestyle Diseases

According to recent WHO statistics, four primary types of diseases are responsible for more than 80% of premature non-communicable disease deaths. The majority of deaths are caused by cardiovascular diseases (17.9 million per year), followed by cancer (9.3 million per year), chronic respiratory diseases (4.1 million per year), and diabetes (2.0 million per year).^[6] To name a few, cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack, hypertension, and stroke, cancers such as cervical cancer, breast cancer, and oral cancers, respiratory illnesses such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); obesity, and type 2 diabetes are all on the rise. Apart from these chronic kidney diseases (CKDs); mental disorders such as epilepsy; neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease; nutritional disorders such as Iodine deficiency disorder; Musculoskeletal (Bone and Joint) disorders such as osteoporosis and osteoarthritis; congenital diseases; and hereditary blood disorders such as sickle cell anaemia and thalassemia are also common.

Yoga and Naturopathic therapies have been proven to be effective in the treatment of quite a number of common lifestyle-related disorders. According to Dhananjay V Arankalle's review study, naturopathy and yoga protocols such as changing one's lifestyle, adopting therapeutic fasting followed by diet modifications, as well as using procedures such as hydrotherapy, mud therapy, massage, physiotherapy, yoga, and exercise can benefit the general population with musculoskeletal disorders.^[7] A prospective single-arm study on the impact of Naturopathy and Yoga based interventions on atherosclerotic CVD risk individuals suggested a significant risk reduction after the intervention.^[8]

Another study shows that lifestyle therapies based on naturopathy and yoga have benefits for lowering coronary risk indices in patients at high risk for coronary heart disease.^[9] Naturopathy and yoga therapy might be regarded as effective non-pharmacological alternatives to hypertension management. The study conducted by INYS medical research society in Jindal Nature Cure Institute, Bangalore, reported systolic blood pressure decreased from a mean of 139.6 to 129.6 after beginning the nonpharmacological therapy of naturopathy and

yoga, while diastolic blood pressure decreased from 91.2 to 86.1.^[10]

One case study reveals that a lifestyle adjustment in the form of Integrated Yoga and Naturopathy management can help with obesity control.^[11] Yoga was recommended as a safe intervention that is useful in lowering anthropometric and self-reported obesity features in a randomized clinical trial (RCT) on abdominal obese women.^[12] The results from a prospective cohort study of the effect of an integrated Naturopathy and Yoga program on long-term glycemic control in type 2 diabetes mellitus patients show a significant reduction in postprandial blood glucose (PPBG) levels and glycated haemoglobin levels, resulting in a reduced requirement for antidiabetic medications.^[13] A randomized trial to study the combined effect of yoga and naturopathy treatments on the lipid profile of people with type 2 diabetes mellitus suggested there was a significant reduction in total cholesterol, triglycerides, and LDL cholesterol.^[14]

In one of the scientific studies on the efficacy of Naturopathy and Yoga in bronchial asthma, the treatment included diet therapy, nature cure treatment, and yoga therapy. The results revealed significant improvements in PEFR, VC, FVC, FEV1, FEV/FEC %, MVV, ESR, and absolute eosinophil count.^[15] A study by YC Rao et al. pointed out the effectiveness of Yoga and Naturopathy therapies in improving lung function in individuals with bronchial asthma.^[16] A case report on the management of palmoplantar psoriasis and its comorbidities using yoga and naturopathic lifestyle interventions by Gulab Rai Tewani et. al. suggests that palmoplantar psoriasis and its associated comorbidities can be well-managed through a holistic Yoga and Naturopathy-based Lifestyle Interventions (YNBL) approach.^[17]

Yoga and naturopathy are highly effective in reducing and preventing cancer. The single strategy for lowering the incidence of cancer has been described as primary prevention, which includes behavioural, environmental, and lifestyle changes.^[18] It was determined that Yoga and Naturopathy treatment methods, in addition to chemotherapy, improve the whole functional life index and haemoglobin among patients with stage II and III colon adenocarcinomas.^[19]

Yoga and Naturopathy practices have also been shown in studies to have positive impacts on neurological and psychological factors. Naturopathic medicine used in combination with standard therapy for Multiple Sclerosis improved the general health subscale of the short-form health survey-36 (SF-36) on timed walk and neurologic impairment.^[20] An RCT by Cooley et al. on the Naturopathic treatment for anxiety discovered a substantial decrease in anxiety levels in the Naturopathic group over the psychotherapy group.^[21] A case report by Akila Anandhan et. al. suggests that integrated yoga and naturopathy interventions have a significant role in

managing the symptoms and stress levels of patients with palmar psoriasis.^[22] A pilot study by R. Jenefer Jerrin et. al. on Yoga and Naturopathy interventions for reducing anxiety and depression in COVID-19 patients reported significant reductions in anxiety and depression levels and the study suggested that the interventions can be added to conventional care to improve their mental and physical wellbeing.^[23]

CONCLUSION

Naturopathic medicine and Yoga appear to be medical systems with potentially good health benefits when it comes to various kinds of chronic illnesses, lifestyle-related disorders, and non-communicable diseases.

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