

Yoga as an effective complementary approach in managing unexplained female infertility

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Abstract

The infertility is rising at an alarming rate in both men and women worldwide. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), one in four couples in underdeveloped nations experience infertility.¹ The use of assisted reproductive technology (ART) by infertile couples is also increasing rapidly. Infertility may lead to exorbitant health costs as well as economic burden or deprivation secondary to social consequences. There is an urgent need to enhance access to high-quality, affordable fertility care for people in need. Infertility is usually considered unexplained when semen in the man is normal and ovulation and fallopian tubes are normal and ovulation is regular in the woman. Infertility among women has been associated with significant psychological distress, anxiety, and depression and Yoga therapy has been found to be useful in such conditions. Ayurved gives emphasis on Saumansya Garbhajanana (piece of mind) Good mental status can cause Garbhajanana. Many researches revealed that yoga therapy has a potential positive impact on mental health of women undergoing infertility treatment. In Infertility Yoga exercises can help with three main health benefits: reducing stress, improving circulation and increasing flexibility (especially in the pelvic and hip area). These exercises can ease tension and help reduce stress and anxiety, which are all commonly linked to infertility.

Keywords – Unexplained infertility, Ayurved, Yoga.

Introduction

According to WHO, positive reproductive health of a man and woman is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely absence of disease related to reproductive system and functions. Infertility is defined as a failure to conceive

within one or more years of regular unprotected coitus.¹ The infertility is rising at an alarming rate in both men and women worldwide. Unexplained infertility refers to couples that have received a comprehensive baseline infertility workup and have no

abnormalities yet are still infertile.² According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), one in four couples in underdeveloped nations experience infertility.³ The use of assisted reproductive technology (ART) by infertile couples is also increasing rapidly. Infertility being an incredibly common and devastating disease associated with depressing psychosocial consequences including marital insecurity, divorce, social isolation, and stigmatization.⁴ In infertile couples Women are considered more responsible and vulnerable for infertility in the society. Infertility may lead to exorbitant health costs as well as economic burden or deprivation secondary to social consequences. There is an urgent need to enhance access to high-quality, affordable fertility care for people in need.

A sizable collection of literature emphasizing the need of addressing emotional needs in infertility and incorporating psychological treatments into standard reproductive care has developed over the past 40 years.⁵

Acharya Sushrut lists four requirements for conception *GarbhaSamagri*: *Rithu* (fertile period), *Kshethram* (healthy reproductive system), *Ambu* (nutrition), and *Beejam* (healthy ovum and sperm)⁶ while Acharya Charak gives emphasis on *SaumansyaGarbhadharananam* (piece of mind)⁷ i.e. Good mental status can cause *Garbhdharanam* means reproductive health and mental health are inter-reliant. According to research, patients' social, emotional, and physical conditions can have a significant impact on the outcome of ART.⁸ Now a days due to the lifestyle changes the infertility rate is increasing day by day. People frequently exhibit overwhelming feelings as a result of the stress they experience in modern life. It should come as no surprise that yoga provides mental advantages including

lowered anxiety and depression given its emphasis on breathing techniques and meditation, both of which help calm and centre the mind. The aim of the current paper is to review the possible effects of yoga—including *Asanas* (yoga poses), *Pranayama* (proper breathing), *Shavasana*, and meditation—on female unexplained infertility.

Aim and Objectives–

1. To Study the concept of *Saumansya Garbhadharananam*
2. To evaluate the role of Yoga in unexplained infertility in female
3. To design the Yoga module for Unexplained Infertility in female

Materials and Method

*Saumansya Garbhadharananam*⁷

Acharya Charak has mentioned the foremost thing required for *Garbhadharana* is *Saumansya* which means rightness and soundness of mind.⁹ Women who suffer from chronic stress report greater difficulty conceiving, irregular periods/ovulation, or amenorrhea. Stress-induced high cortisol levels are known to be libido killers in women. Many researches had proven that Stress activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which inhibits the female reproductive system. Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) production from the hypothalamus is inhibited by corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), and pituitary luteinizing hormone, ovarian oestrogen, and progesterone secretion are inhibited by glucocorticoids. These effects are responsible for the “hypothalamic” amenorrhea of stress, which is observed in anxiety and depression, malnutrition, eating disorders and chronic excessive exercise, and the hypogonadism of the Cushing syndrome.¹⁰

Role of Yoga in Unexplained infertility-

Unexplained infertility refers to couples who are pathologically healthy, have no physiological defects, and are unable to

conceive. Nearly 20% of women experience this unexplained infertility. Modern medicine offers a variety of treatments, including pills, shots, hormone therapy, IUI, IVF, and other assisted reproductive technologies. Complementary approaches to reproductive wellness, such as the methods of traditional Chinese medicine, ayurveda, yoga, and mind-body techniques for stress reduction have recently been introduced in the ART(Assisted Reproductive Technology) field. Yoga is a form of alternative medicine that claims to improve a person's health by reducing stress and regulating hormonal secretions.¹¹Yoga asanas have several benefits for general overall health. For issues relating to fertility, yoga can help by stimulating the ovaries and uterus .Yoga can Strengthens and stretches the back muscles as well as purifies the energy channels, flushing out toxins from the body. Yoga has significant impact on the groin and hips making them flexible. Yoga poses Improves blood flow and supply to reproductive organs. *Pranayam* can relieve stress, anxiety, mood swings and depression.

Yoga Module for Unexplained Infertility

Yoga poses can help to alleviate stress related to reproductive issues and may support increasing the chances of conceiving.

Surya namaskar

It is known for its effect on Chakras which are known to affect our endocrine system .It balances the hormonal level as well as improves flexibility

Asanas^{12,13}

Paschimottanasana (Seated forward bend)

This asana is known as the seated forward bend yoga pose, which helps to stretch your lower back muscles and hips. It helps tone up the abdominal and pelvic organs, stretches shoulders, and relieves stomach pain. In addition, it reduces mental stress

and benefits reproductive organs such as the ovaries and stomach.

Hastapadasana (Standing forward bend)

This asana Stretches the back muscles. Improves blood supply to the nervous system and pelvic region.

BaddhaKonasana (Butterfly pose)

This asana helps to stretch the muscles of the inner thighs, hips, knees, and genitals. It helps to improve blood circulation and may also be beneficial for women in smooth conceiving.

ViparitaKarani (Legs up the wall pose)

Helps relieve backache and Improves flow of blood to the pelvic region.

Shavasana (Corpse pose)

This asana helps to regulate the blood pressure and reduce stress.

*Pranayama*¹³

These pranayamas or breathing techniques can induce a calm state of mind and body.

Nadi Shodhan Pranayama (Alternate nostril breathing technique)

This *Pranayam* calms the mind and body. It purifies blood by increasing flow of oxygen to it.

Bhramari Pranayama (Humming bee breath technique)

Bhramari Pranayama helps to relieve tension, anger, and anxiety and relaxes the mind and body *Bhramari* relieves stress and cerebral tension, and so helps in alleviating anger, anxiety and insomnia, increasing the healing capacity of the body. It strengthens and improves the voice.

The vibration of the humming sound creates a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system.

Meditation

20 minutes of meditation daily to uplift mind and spirit.

Discussion

Infertility interferes with one of the most essential and highly valued human activities, posing a significant life obstacle to people who wish to have children. The condition raises concerns about the health and well-being of individuals, couples, and families. Women's fertility is dependent on nature of *rasa dhatu*, and when the *Rasavaha strotas dushti* occur sterility, dryness, loneliness, and isolation are inevitable. To conceive a healthy child, one must be "*swastha*," or completely healthy. This optimal level of health creates a fertile environment for the embryo to implant and flourish. According to Sushruta, when *Dosha*, *Agni* (digestive fire), *dhatu*, *mala* and *Kriyas* are in equilibrium and *Atma*(soul) , *Indriya*(sense organ), and *Mana* (mind) are *Prasanna*(pleased), a person is considered to be *Swastha*. This is estimated that high levels of psychological distress are responsible to increase infertility. In unexplained infertility it was observed that mind plays an important role as all the investigations are within normal limits. Modernization has changed the lifestyles at the extreme where the mental issues are raised at alarming level. Couples may feel emotions like anger, guilt, sadness, depression, anxiety, and loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. Apart from this, the financial cost of infertility treatment also significantly contributes to the stress. As a result, *Saumansya* which is foremost for *Garbhadharana* is seems to be lacking day by day. Acharya Charak said, "True healing of any condition, '*Prakriti Sthapana*', means to restore the mind, body, and spirit to their

naturally balanced states." ¹⁵ Stress is one of the known causes of infertility in many couples. In addition, studies have shown that women with higher levels of cortisol have had a lower chance of getting pregnant. Yoga helps to reduce stress, improve the mind's clarity, and increase focus and calmness resulting in balanced cortisol level. Yoga has been shown in studies to offer potential benefits for stress management, mental/emotional health, supporting healthy eating/activity habits, sleep, and balance. The poses mentioned in *Hathayoga* which mainly act on pelvic region are beneficial in infertility as they restore the blood flow to the pelvic region. *Pranayam* along with meditation balances the mind and renders positive results in Infertility.

Conclusion

Yoga helps to reduce these stress levels and help you achieve the necessary strength needed to relax your mind as well as body to further help increase the chances of conception. Yoga poses can help alleviate stress related to reproductive issues and may support increasing the chances of conceiving. Yoga may increase physical adaptability, coordination, and quality while contemplation and breathing exercises may calm and centre the brain to increase. Yoga can be an effective complementary approach to managing unexplained female infertility. The benefits of yoga on stress reduction, hormonal balance, and other aspects of reproductive health make it a promising intervention for improving fertility outcomes.

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