

## Evaluating the Therapeutic Role of Yoga in Stress Reduction and Obesity Management - A Review

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Submission:08.10.2025

Acceptance:07.11.2025



Publication:17.11.2025

[https://www.doi.org/10.63778/CIJISM-ARJCPL/2025\\_172508](https://www.doi.org/10.63778/CIJISM-ARJCPL/2025_172508)

## Abstract :

Today, two of the most pressing problems faced by society are Stress and obesity. Obesity has become an alarming issue, particularly in the developed world, and poses significant health risks. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1 billion people worldwide are obese, In many developed countries, over one-third of the adult population is obese, making it one of the leading causes of preventable death.

Obesity is a pathological condition characterized by the excessive accumulation of body fat, which is strongly associated with several co-morbidities such as hypertension, diabetes, Dyslipidemia, Stroke, Sleep Apnea, certain cancers, and psychological issues like mood disturbances and depression. Its primary causes include a combination of overconsumption of dietary calories, sedentary lifestyle, and genetic predisposition.

Stress, on the other hand, refers to the body's physical, mental, and emotional response to demands or challenges. The American Institute of Stress reports that about 77 percent of people regularly experience stress-related physical symptoms, and nearly 33 percent report extreme stress. Stress and obesity are deeply interconnected through cognitive, Behavioral, and physiological pathways. Stress hampers self-regulation and often drives individuals toward unhealthy coping Behavior , such as emotional eating of foods rich in calories, fat, and sugar. Over time, this significantly contributes to obesity.

In Ayurveda *sthaulya* has been described since very early days in various *samhitas*; *sangraha*; *Granthas*; etc. *Acharya charak* has described *sthaulya* among the eight most unwanted disease ( *Nindit purusha*) and *santarpan janita roga*.

*Acharya Charak* has described *Unmad*, *Apasmara*, *Atatvabhinivesha* ect in description of *Manas roga* for the sake of treatment, *Manasika Vyadhi* can be classified according to *Dosha* involvement and seat of Menifastation.

## Keyword :

## Introduction

*Manas Roga* or *sthaulya* is a major lifestyle disorder whose prevalence has increased drastically over a past few decades. This is due to the fact that man has forgotten many principles told in Ayurveda especially while describing *swasthavritta* such as *dincharya*, *ritucharya*, *achar-rasayana* and *Yoga Pranayam* and has become slave of modernization<sup>(1)</sup>. Obesity or overweight is a pathological condition in which excess body fat accumulated, leading adverse effects on health and life expectancy<sup>(2)</sup>. It is a chronic disorder with complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors<sup>(3)</sup>. According to Ayurveda, health is described as a balance between body (*Sharira*), mind (*Manas*), and soul (*Atma*)<sup>(4)</sup>. When this balance is disturbed, diseases arise. Mental disorders in Ayurveda are referred to as *Manas roga*<sup>(5)</sup>.

Stress is the body's physical, mental and emotional response to any demand or challenges. Stress and Obesity are interconnected to each other through different lines of cognition, behavior, and physiology. Stress can interfere with

cognitive processes like self- regulation. Stress can also influence behavior by indulging in over-eating of food that are high in calories, fat, and sugar, which leads obesity.

## Materials And Methods

Review of Literature

## Sthaulya (obesity)

In *Sthaulya Medovaha Strotas* are involved, because *Medovaha Strotas* are the channels which are responsible for digestion, assimilation & transportation of *Meda dhatu* in different forms<sup>(4)</sup>. *Acharya charak* has mentioned *vrikka & vapavaha* as the moola of *Medovaha strotas*. *Medovaha strotodushti* is linked with *Sthaulya (Obesity)*, which is mentioned in *Asthanindita purusha*. *Sthaulya* is considered a *Medo* and *mansa* disorder, and a primarily *Santarpanjanya vikar*<sup>(6-7)</sup>.

Obesity is one of the most common nutritional disorder in which there is excessive accumulation of adipose tissue in the body beyond physiological limits which results from excessive calorie intake over calorie expenditure.

BMI	WHO Classification	Description
<18.5kg/m <sup>(2)</sup>	Underweight	Thin
18.5-24.9kg/m <sup>(2)</sup>	.....	Healthy, Normal
25.0-29.9kg/m <sup>(2)</sup>	Grade 1 overweight	Overweight
30.0-39.9kg/m <sup>(2)</sup>	Grade 2 overweight	Obesity
>40 kg/m <sup>(2)</sup>	Grade 3 overweight	Morbid Obesity

### Symptoms of Obesity<sup>(6)</sup>

Gurugatrata (Heaviness in body)  
 Javoparodha (Inability to do work)  
 Daurgandhya (Foul body odour)  
 Atikshudha (Excessive hunger)  
 Nidradhikya (Excessive sleep)  
 Atipipasa (Excessive thirst)  
 Vyavayakasta (Difficulty in performing sexual act).

### Manas Roga –

In Ayurveda, the mind (*Manas*) is influenced by three *Gunas*: *Sattva* (purity), *Rajas* (activity), and *Tamas* (inertia). *Sattva* represents a balanced and healthy mind, while imbalances in *Rajas* and *Tamas* cause mental disorders—hence, they are called Manas Doshas. Based on the dominant *Guna*, mental personalities are classified as *Sattvik*, *Rajasik*, or *Tamasik Prakriti*<sup>(8)</sup>.

Mental disorders comprise a broad range of problems, with different symptoms. However, they are generally characterized by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.

### Relation Of Manas Roga And Obesity-

In Ayurveda, *sthaulya* (Obesity) is not only a physical disorder but also linked to *manas roga* (mental disorder) through the imbalance of *rajas* and *tamas dosha*<sup>(5)</sup>. Stress, anxiety, and emotional disturbance can impair manas function, leading to irregular eating habits, excessive intake, & reduced motivation for physical activity. This aggravates kapha and *meda dhatu*, causing or worsening Obesity. Conversely Obesity can further disturb the mind, creating a cycle between *manas roga* and .

### Role Of Yoga –

Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word *yuj*, which means to unite the body, mind, and emotions. It is a holistic mind-body practice that improves many of the causes of weight gain. Yoga can decrease stress and cortisol levels, enhance mood, decrease anxiety and depression, improve sleep, and improve chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes also. Yoga's benefits is that it improves mindfulness of the body and awareness of body sensations. It is integration and

harmony among head, heart and limbs. Yoga play important role in management of obesity and for effective complication. Yoga is the art and science of healthy living. Various yoga asanas can be practiced effectively to reduce the weight and achieve normal healthy condition of body and mind<sup>(9)</sup>.

### Yogasana-

**Surya namaskar-** Surya namaskar is a dynamic sequence of twelve yogic posture performed in continuous flow, synchronizing breath with movement. It enhances flexibility, muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and promotes mental well being. Regular practice helps balance between doshas, improves digestion, stimulates metabolism, and aids in weight management, making it beneficial in sthaulya (obesity) and stress management<sup>(9)</sup>.

### Steps -

- 1) Pranamasana (Prayer Pose)
- 2) Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose)
- 3) Padahasthasana (Hand to Foot Pose)
- 4) Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose)
- 5) Dandasana (stick pose)
- 6) Ashtanga Namaskara (Eight Limbed Pose)
- 7) Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)
- 8) Parvatasana (Mountain pose)
- 9) Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose)
- 10) Padahasthasana (Hand to Foot Pose)
- 11) Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose)
- 12) Pranamasana (Prayer Pose)

**Shavasana -** Deep relaxation and stress relief, Lowers heart rate and blood pressure, Helps integrate the benefits of your yoga practice, Calms the nervous system, Enhances mental clarity and focus<sup>(9)</sup>.

### Pranayam –

#### Bhramari (Bee Breath)

Bhramari Pranayama is a very effective yogic breathing technique named after the humming sound of a bee that is produced while exhaling. It is practiced by sitting in a comfortable position, inhaling deeply through the nose, and then exhaling slowly with a gentle humming sound. It is

benefits for both the mind and body. It helps in reducing stress, anxiety, anger, and restlessness by calming the nervous system and balancing the mind. It also improves concentration, memory, and voice quality. Regular practice of Bhramari Pranayama promotes sound sleep, supports emotional stability. By quietening mental chatter, it also prepares the mind for deeper meditation and overall mental well-being<sup>(10)</sup>.

#### **Anulom Vilom (Simple Alternate Nostril Breathing)**

*Anulom Vilom Pranayama*, also known as alternate nostril breathing, is a very popular yogic breathing technique that balances the body and mind. It is practiced by closing one nostril with the finger, inhaling slowly through the other nostril, then closing that nostril and exhaling through the opposite one, repeating the process in a rhythmic manner. Regular practice of *Anulom Vilom* helps in improving lung capacity, purifying the *nadis* (energy channels), and increasing oxygen supply in the body. It reduces stress, anxiety, and high blood pressure, improves concentration and mental clarity, and promotes emotional stability<sup>(10)</sup>.

#### **Kapalbhati Pranayam**

*Kapalbhati Pranayama* is a yogic breathing technique in which forceful, quick exhalations are performed through the nose while inhalation happens naturally. The word "*Kapalbhati*" means "shining forehead," as it is believed to purify the mind and body. This practice improves lung capacity, strengthens abdominal muscles, and enhances digestion by stimulating abdominal organs. It also helps in removing toxins, reducing belly fat, improving blood circulation, and boosting energy levels. Regular practice of *Kapalbhati* is beneficial for stress relief, mental clarity, and overall health<sup>(10)</sup>.

**Dhyan** – calms *rajas* and *tamas*, enhancing *satva* guna, balance *manovaha strotas*, stabilizing *vata* dosha, and support overall *tridosha* harmony. Regular practice of Dhyana helps reduce stress, anxiety, and negative emotions, improves concentration and memory, and promotes self-awareness and spiritual growth. It balances the body, mind, and soul, leading to inner calmness, emotional stability, and overall well-being<sup>(11)</sup>.

#### **Discussion –**

The study demonstrates that yoga is an effective holistic practice for reducing stress and managing obesity. Regular yoga practice, including asanas, pranayama, and meditation, helps calm the nervous system, lower cortisol levels, and promote mental relaxation. This reduces psychological stress, which is often linked to emotional eating and weight gain. Physically, yoga improves metabolism, supports fat loss, and enhances body awareness, which encourages

healthier lifestyle choices<sup>(12)</sup>. By addressing both mental and physical health together, yoga offers a natural, low-cost, and sustainable approach to improving overall well-being. The present study highlights that regular yoga practice, including asanas, pranayama, and dhyana, is an effective, holistic approach for managing stress and obesity<sup>(13)</sup>. Yoga is enhancing *manas Shuddhi* and also improves metabolic function, promotes weight reduction and restores dosha balance as per ayurvedic principle. Its integrated mind- body benefits make it a safe, sustainable, and cost- effective therapeutic modality for long-term health and well-being<sup>(14)</sup>. However, more extensive research is needed to confirm these benefits on a larger scale<sup>(15)</sup>.

#### **Conclusion-**

Stress is caused by an imbalance in Vata dosha, and obesity is due to excess Kapha dosha. Yoga helps balance these doshas—calming Vata through breath and meditation, and reducing Kapha through movement and improved metabolism. Thus, yoga acts as a natural Ayurvedic therapy for managing both stress and obesity.

**Source of Support:** Nil

**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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