

REVIEW ARTICLE

Role of Ayurveda in Promoting the Athlete's Mental Health

Author: Preeti¹

Co Authors: Mani Sharma²

¹Department of Rog Nidan Avum Vikriti Vigyan, Desh Bhagat Ayurvedic College & Hospital, Mandi Gobindgarh, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

²Department of Sanskrit, Samhita & Sidhanta, Desh Bhagat Ayurvedic College & hospital, Mandi Gobindgarh, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

ABSTRACT

Our Athletes represents our nation on national and international level. The health of athletes is of paramount importance for their performance, as their bodies and minds are their primary tools for achieving success in their respective sports. Physical and mental balance of an athlete will always help an athlete to perform better and remain focussed during the competitions. Due to the intense pressure of performing well during trials of any sport, athlete especially the young ones often gets distracted which eventually affect their performance. so, we have to explore some options in Ayurveda to avoid such kind of situations to an athlete. Many times an athlete undergoes so much of pressure that he cannot perform up to the mark especially in the major trials or events. There are lot of factors responsible for that like, intense training, Peer pressure and higher expectations of the family and friends which affect their performance on and off the field. This article focuses on how an athlete overcomes such situations with the help of Ayurvedic formulations & improved lifestyle. Ayurveda is known for the herbal medications to the common people but it is not only limited to that but also a way of lifestyle to maintain and promote health in the healthy and the diseased ones. Ayurveda is an ancient science which focuses on certain lifestyle interventions and natural therapies to regain a balance between the body, mind, spirit and the environment. The purpose of this paper is to explore the scope of Ayurveda in maintaining the physical health as well as mental status especially during the competition of athlete.

Key Words *Ayurveda, Athletes, Mental health*

Received 28th April 23 Accepted 10th September 23 Published 10th September 2023

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda considers the mind and body as interconnected and interdependent, and it emphasizes the importance of balancing the body's energy systems to promote overall wellness. *Ayurveda* is known for the herbal medications to the common people but it is not

only limited to that but also a way of lifestyle to maintain and promote health in the healthy and the diseased ones. *Ayurveda* is an ancient science which focuses on lifestyle interventions and natural therapies to regain a balance between the body, mind, spirit, and the environment. *Ayurveda* is an ancient science which

REVIEW ARTICLE

encourages certain lifestyle and natural curatives to recapture a balance between the Body, mind & spirit. Ayurvedic drug is an example of a well-organized system of traditional health care, both preventative & restorative. Today it remains a favoured form of health care in large corridor of the Eastern world, especially in India, where a large chance of the population uses this system simply or combined with modern drugs.

Athletes are the backbone of our country. *Ayurveda* is a traditional Indian system of medicine, can play an essential role in improving the mental health of athletes. The health benefits of adequate exercise have been mentioned and well experienced by the society but intense exercise training and peer pressure increases physical as well as mental health risk to an athlete. An athlete can be injured especially while participating in organized sports, trials, Practice sessions or organized fitness activities. Many of the news articles often shows athlete injury and illness for which they take break from the game from many days to years. Injuries sustained during sports activities can be a significant source of physical and financial strain, affecting not only the individuals involved but also society as a whole. Athletes undergo various therapies and surgeries to overcome from these injuries. However the prevalence of sport injury is not well documented in India.

Physical and mental balance of an athlete will always help an athlete to perform better and remain focussed during the competitions. Due to the intense pressure of performing well during

trials of any sport, athlete especially the young ones often gets distracted which eventually affect their performance. so we have to explore some options in *Ayurveda* to avoid such kind of situation to an athlete.

Athletes face immense pressure during major trials and events, often leading to suboptimal performance on and off the field. Factors such as intense training, peer pressure, and high expectations from family and friends can significantly impact an athlete's mental and physical health. This article aims to explore the scope of *Ayurveda* in supporting athletes in overcoming such challenges and maintaining their well-being. *Ayurveda*, an ancient holistic healing system from India, offers a comprehensive approach to health that encompasses physical, mental, and emotional aspects. By incorporating Ayurvedic principles into an athlete's lifestyle, including personalized nutrition, stress management techniques, and herbal remedies, athletes can find balance, enhance their performance, and experience overall well-being during competitions.

HOW AYURVEDA CAN CONTRIBUTE?

Injuries sustained during sports activities can be a significant source of physical and financial strain, affecting not only the individuals involved but also society as a whole. Prevention is the most important part among this. *Ayurveda* offers several practices and therapies that can help an athlete to manage their mental health and perform at their best. By incorporating Ayurvedic practices into their training and recovery routines,

REVIEW ARTICLE

athletes can promote mental clarity, reduce stress, and perform at their best.

Sports medicine has been emerged as an important branch of medicine, which deals with physical fitness, preventions and treatments of sports injuries¹. Mental calmness and focus are integral components of optimal athletic performance. While physical strength, endurance, and skills are essential, the mental aspect plays a significant role in achieving success as an athlete. Ayurveda, when combined with Yoga practices such as Asanas, pranayama, and meditation, can have a positive impact on an athlete's physical and psychological well-being. This holistic approach helps athletes to improve their concentration and focus, while also reducing negative emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety. Overall, Ayurveda and Yoga can be highly effective tools for athletes seeking to achieve their best performance, both on and off the field.

Yoga and meditation: *Ayurveda* recommends regular practice of yoga and meditation to calm the mind and reduce stress. These practices can help athletes manage anxiety and depression, improve their focus and concentration, and promote mental clarity.

- Sukhasana (Easy Pose): This is a simple seated pose that is perfect for beginners. It helps to calm the mind and reduce stress.
- Balasana (Child's Pose): This gentle pose is perfect for reducing anxiety and promoting relaxation. It stretches the spine and hips, helping to release tension in the body.

- Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold): This pose helps to calm the mind and reduce stress by relieving tension in the neck and back. It also stretches the hamstrings and calves, improving circulation and promoting relaxation.
- Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog): This pose is great for reducing stress and anxiety by increasing blood flow to the brain. It also stretches the spine and hamstrings, helping to release tension in the body.
- Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose): This pose helps to relieve stress and anxiety by opening up the chest and shoulders, allowing for easier breathing. It also strengthens the back muscles and stretches the hips, promoting relaxation.
- Savasana (Corpse Pose): This is the ultimate relaxation pose that is great for reducing stress and anxiety. It involves lying on your back with your arms and legs extended and your eyes closed, allowing your body and mind to completely relax.

Ayurvedic diet: The Ayurvedic diet emphasizes whole, unprocessed foods that support overall health and well-being. Athletes can benefit from this diet by reducing inflammation, boosting their immune system, and providing energy for training & competition.

Ayurvedic herbs and supplements: Ayurvedic herbs and supplements can support an athlete's overall health and well-being. For example, *Ashwagandha*² is an adaptogenic herb that can help reduce stress and anxiety, while ghee and

REVIEW ARTICLE

turmeric can support joint health and reduce inflammation.

Ashwagandha - one of the most common uses of *Ashwagandha* products is for stress relief. It is now well accepted that stress can cause functional and structural changes within the brain and has been implicated in the development of most neuropsychiatric disorders, including anxiety, depression, and insomnia³⁻⁵.

Jatamansi- The plant *Nardostachys jatamansi* is a reputed Ayurvedic herb and helpful to manage the symptoms of anxiety. According to *Ayurveda*, *Vata* governs all the movement and actions of the body and nervous system respectively. Anxiety is mainly due to *Vata* imbalance. It is the major ingredient in Ayurvedic formulations for treatment of various disorders mainly central nervous disorders. It is mentioned as *Vednasthapan* (analgesics), *Sangyasthapan* (which restoring the consciousness or alertness of mind), *Medhya* (brain tonic), *Balya* (strengthen body), *Hrudya*(cardio-protective), *Jwaraghana*(anti-pyretic), *Kusthaghna* (prevent skin diseases), *Keshva* (promote hair growth)⁶.

MEDHYA RASAYANA⁷- Athletes can take *Medhya Rasayana* in routine to keep their mental power up. Acharya Charak has mentioned four *Medhya Rasayana* in Chikitsa sthan.

1. **Mandukaparni** – *Mandukaparni* (*Centella asiatica*), is a medicinal herb. Juice of *Mandukaparni* should be consumed. *Mandukaparni* helps to relief in anxiety due to its anxiolytic activity. It reduces the effect of certain

mediators that induce anxiety. According to *Ayurveda*, *Prakupita vata dosha* is responsible for anxiety. *Mandukaparni* helps reduce the symptoms of anxiety and gives a calming effect on the nervous system due to its *Medhya* (brain tonic) property.

2. **Yashtimadhu** - The powder of *Yashtimadhu* with milk should be taken.

3. **Guduchi**- The Juice of *Guduchi* (stem) alongwith its root and flowers can be taken.

4. **Shankhapushpi** - The paste of *Shankhapushpi* should be consumed.

These *Rasayana* drugs are life-promoting, disease-alleviating, promoters of strength, Agni, complexion, voice and are intellect-promoting. Of them, *Shankhapushpi* is specifically intellect-promoting.

SHIRODHARA - *Shirodhara* is an ayurvedic procedure of slowly and steadily dripping of medicated oil or other liquids on the forehead. *Shirodhara* is believed to have a positive impact on mental health and is often recommended as a complementary therapy for individuals dealing with various mental health conditions. The continuous stream of warm oil on the forehead is thought to have a calming effect on the nervous system and can help to reduce anxiety and stress. It is also believed to promote relaxation and improve sleep quality, which can be particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with insomnia or other sleep disorders. *Shirodhara* may also help to improve mental clarity and focus, which can be helpful for individuals dealing with brain fog or difficulty concentrating. It is also thought

REVIEW ARTICLE

to have a balancing effect on the mind and emotions, helping to promote a sense of calm & inner peace.

CONCLUSION

Athletes needs much focus and concentration to perform well in the competitions so these ways can be beneficial to enhance their performances and sports authorities should also incorporate these in the part of athlete's training.

REVIEW ARTICLE

REFERENCES

1. Dr. Radhakrishna Bishwal, Dr. Athulya Arun, Dr. Sanghamitra Samantaray, Dr. Shantunu Kumar Das, Dr. Dhanya T. And Dr. Bandana Dhal. Critical Review On The Ayurvedic Principles Of Exercise And Sports Medicine, *World Journal Of Pharmacy And Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 25 July 2018, Volume 4(8) Page no. 172-176.
2. P.V sharma, *Charak samhita-chikitsa sthan*. Fourth Edition, Varanasi, Chaukhambha orientalia, Page no.23.
3. Musazzi L., Tornese P., Sala N., Popoli M., What acute stress protocols can tell us about PTSD and stress-related neuropsychiatric disorders. *Front. Pharmacol.* 2018;9(JUN):758. doi: 10.3389/fphar.2018.00758.
4. Basta M., Chrousos G.P., Vela-Bueno A., Vgontzas A.N. Chronic insomnia and the stress system. *Sleep Med. Clin.* 2007;2(2):279–291. doi: 10.1016/j.jsmc.2007.04.002.
5. Yaribeygi H., Panahi Y., Sahraei H., Johnston T.P., Sahebkar A., The impact of stress on body function: A review. *EXCLI J.* 2017;16:1057–1072.
6. Talmale Sanjay, *Dravyagunavigyan*, 1st Edition. 2017, Nagpur, Dhanwantari Book Publishers, Page no. 574.
7. P.V sharma, *Charak samhita-chikitsa sthan*, 4th Edition, Varanasi, Chaukhambha orientalia, Page no.23.