



## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EFFECTS OF YOGA AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE ON PULMONARY FUNCTIONS AND RESPIRATORY PRESSURES

### Physiology

**Dr. Sonika Choudhary**

Assistant Professor, Department of Physiology, R.N.T. Medical College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

### ABSTRACT

**BACKGROUND:** The comparative study about effects of regular practice of yoga & physical exercise on respiratory functions is very important to better understand its effect on health.

**METHOD:** 200 healthy volunteers (146 M; 54 F) from age group (17-26) years were included in the study. They were divided into two groups. Gr A Yoga group (n=100) practiced some yoga exercises including Asanas, Pranayam & relaxation techniques daily one hour for 3 months. While Gr B Physical exercise group (n=100) practiced slow walk, calisthenic exercise & stretching exercises daily 1 hour for 3 months. Pulmonary function tests FVC, FEV1, FEV1/FVC, PEFR, FEF25%-75%, RR, TV, MV, MBC or MVV, BR, DI were recorded at start & end of the study. Apart from this MIP, MEP, BHT & 40mmHg endurance test were also recorded.

**RESULT:** Yoga training resulted in improved ventilatory functions in the form of increases in the FVC, FEV1, MVV, BR, DI, maximum expiratory pressure (MEP), maximum inspiratory pressure (MIP), 40 mm Hg test and prolongation of breath holding time (BHT) whereas PEFR, FEF 25-75% and BHT were found to be increased in exercise group after 3 months of training.

**CONCLUSION:** 3 months Yoga training produces a significant improvement in respiratory pressures (MIP, MEP), spirometric values.

### KEYWORDS

Yoga, Physical Exercise, PFT, Respiratory Pressures.

### INTRODUCTION:

Yoga is an ancient philosophic system that originated in India whose main objective is the development of the union of mind and body through exercise, respiration and meditation in order to achieve physical and mental well being.<sup>1-2</sup> The most popular branch of yoga is Hatha Yoga, which consists of a combination of postural exercises (Asanas), relaxation and voluntary breathing exercise (Pranayamas).

All over the world, Hatha Yoga has gained popularity as an alternative form of physical activity since it offers a different experience when compared to traditional physical exercise training and is less strenuous and more enjoyable.<sup>3</sup>

The comparative study of the effect of regular practice of yoga and physical exercise on respiratory functions and respiratory pressures, is important to better understand its effects on healthy individuals and to provide the basis for the possible use of yoga techniques as alternative therapy.

In this respect the present study evaluated the effect of regular practice of Hatha Yoga and physical exercise on pulmonary function tests and respiratory pressures.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD:

This study was conducted on 200 healthy students and volunteers between age of 17-26 years of either sex (M146: F54) from Dr. S.N. Medical College, other academic colleges and yoga centres.

Subjects included in the study were non alcoholic, non smokers, not taking any type of medication and were having similar dietary habits.

Subjects involved in heavy physical exercise and previous experience of yoga training, history of any major medical illness and major surgery were not included in the present study.

Subjects were divided in 2 groups: the yoga group (n=100) (M78:F22) allocated to practice yoga for 3 months and the exercise group (n=100) (M68:F32) allocated to practice physical exercise for 3 months.

The volunteers and students were briefed about the outcome of study and a written consent was obtained from them.

Yoga Group: - Yoga group was given yogic training for 1 hour under the guidance of qualified yoga instructor for 3 months regularly. The yogic schedule includes – asanas (postural exercise), relaxation techniques and pranayama (breathing exercise).

Asanas were performed for 40 min. duration. Each subject performed every asana 3 times. The asanas were followed by a meditation/ deep

relaxation technique in shavasana (corpse posture) for 5 min. & pranayama (breathing exercise) were performed in the last 15 minutes. The set of asanas & pranayama included in the course are listed in Table-1

**TABLE-1 DETAILS OF YOGIC PRACTICES**

<b>ASANAS</b>
<b>(A) Standing</b>
1. Ardhakatichakrasana (lateral arc pose)
2. Padahasthasana (forward bend pose)
<b>(B) Sitting</b>
Ardhamatsyendrasana (half-spinal twist pose)
Pschimmottanasana (back stretch pose)
<b>(C) Lying on stomach (prone)</b>
1. Makarasana (crocodile pose)
2. Bhujangasana (cobra pose)
3. Shalabhasanas (locust pose)
4. Dhanurasana (bow pose)
<b>(D) Lying on back (supine)</b>
1. Utthanpadasana (straight leg raising)
2. Ardhalhasana (plough pose)
3. Pavanmuktasana (wind relieving pose)
4. Setubandhasana (bridge pose)
<b>(E) Deep Relaxation in Shavasana (Corpse Pose)</b>
<b>(F) Pranayama (Breathing Practices)</b>
1. Kapalhati Pranayama
2. Anulom-VilomPranayama (alternate nostril breathing)
3. Bhramari (honeybee sound during expiration)

The physical exercise group: - This group was given physical exercise training for 1 hour under the guidance of physical exercise instructor. This 1 hour session was divided into 4 stages: warm up (10 min.) calisthenics (30 min.) cool down (5min.) & stretching (15 min.).

In warm up stage – subjects performed stretching & low energetic demand aerobic exercise such as slow walk & brisk walk followed by jogging & running (somewhat hard intensity). Warm up followed by calisthenics exercise – like jumping jacks, lunges, sit-ups, crunches, push-ups, squat, flutter kick, mule kick.

Cool down stage (5 min.) includes slow jogging & walking for 5 min. (to decrease body temp./ sweating).

Lastly stretching exercise was done for 15 minutes. These include-neck stretch, upper back stretch, triceps stretch, chest & biceps stretch, quadriceps stretch, calf stretch, butterfly stretch, hamstring stretch, lower back stretch, back extension stretch.

**Parameters:-** First anthropometric characteristics (body weight, height, and BMI) were evaluated using an anthropometric scale. (Table-2)

**Table-2 Anthropometric measurements in yoga and physical exercise group**

Parameter	Yoga Group		Physical Exercise Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>Height</b>	1.69±0.07	1.69±.07	1.69±0.09	1.69±.09
<b>Weight</b>	60.63±8.91	60.29±8.61	59.36±5.96	58.3±5.69
<b>BMI</b>	21.24±2.72	21.07±2.58	20.82±1.97	20.39±1.91

Then before starting the training & after end of 3 months following parameters were measured.

Pulmonary function tests Measured using a computerized spirometer (Helios 401, RMS Recorders & Medicare Systems, Chandigarh). For FVC test (FVC, FEV1, FEV1/FVC, PEFr, FEF25%-75%) subject was instructed to take maximum inspiration and blow into the mouthpiece as rapidly, forcefully and completely as possible. It was ensured that a tight seal would maintain between the lips and mouthpiece of the spirometer.

For SVC test (Tidal volume (TV), respiratory rate (RR), minute ventilation (MV)) subject was instructed to breathe normally with a resting tidal pattern, next, the subject inspired maximally, then exhales as completely as possible with a slow, continuous smooth exhalation and returned to tidal breathing.

For MVV subject was instructed to breathe in and out as rapidly and deeply as he can with his maximum muscular efforts for a period of 15 seconds in the mouthpiece of the spirometer with both his nostrils closed. Minute ventilation (MV=TVxRR) Breathing Reserve (BR=MVV-MV), and Dyspnoeic Index (DI=MVV-MVx100/MVV) were calculated for each recording.

Respiratory pressures: Maximum inspiratory pressure (MIP) and Maximum expiratory pressure (MEP) were recorded as follows. MIP was determined by asking the subject to perform maximum inspiratory effort against Aneroid manometer after breathing out fully. The maximum level at which the pressure could be maintained for about 3 seconds was noted. MEP was determined by asking the subject to blow against the Aneroid manometer after taking in a full breath. MEP that could be maintained for about 3 seconds was noted. It was ensured that the subjects did not use oral muscles to develop pressure or use their tongue to block the tubing.

For breath holding time (BHT) subjects were asked to take a deep inspiration after normal respiration and then to hold the breath as long as he could do it. The time of breath holding was calculated by stopwatch.

Respiratory endurance test (40mmHg test) was also determined. It includes maximum time for which subjects can maintain 40mmHg pressure in mercury manometer.

The above-mentioned parameters were measured before and after the 3-month study period in both the groups. For each parameter, three trials at 3-minute intervals were given and highest of the three values was used for statistical analysis.

#### Analysis of data

Data obtained for various parameters were subjected to statistical analysis using the Microsoft Excel and OpenEpi software (version 2.3.1). One-way ANOVA and appropriate post hoc test (Bonferroni multiple comparisons procedure) was used to study the changes within the group over the period of time and for inter group comparison. A p value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

#### OBSERVATION AND RESULT:

FVC and FEV1, were increased in both the groups but yoga group shows significant appreciation (p<0.05). FEV1/FVC% was not changed significantly in both the groups.

PEFR shows increasing trend in both the groups but it was significantly increased in physical exercise group. Similar trend was also observed for FEF 25-75%, which shows significant rise in physical exercise group.

Table 3 of present study shows decrease in RR and improvement in TV in both the groups but it was statistically insignificant.

Yoga group shows significant improvement in MVV, BR, DI, after yoga (p<0.01), while appreciable rise of these parameters were also observed after exercise training but statistically it was insignificant.

**Table-3 Pulmonary function in Yoga and Physical exercise groups.**

Parameter	Yoga Group		Physical Exercise Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
FVC (L)	3.46±0.64	3.73±0.67*	3.42±0.64	3.5±0.67
FEV1 (L)	3.14±0.59	3.39±0.59*	3.1±0.59	3.21±0.63
FEV1/FVC (%)	91.08±4.87	91.1±5.26	90.64±4.3	91.62±4.2
PEFR (lit/sec)	7.04±1.48	7.16±1.28	7.16±1.62	7.73±1.61£
FEF 25-75% (lit/sec)	3.85±0.94	3.93±0.77	3.93±0.87	4.37±0.82 ££
R R (breaths/min)	17.5±3.21	16.85±2.61	17.47±2.89	16.67±2.03
TV (L)	0.43±0.08	0.45±0.07	0.45±0.07	0.46±0.07
MV (L/min)	7.43±1.31	7.51±1.26	7.71±1.55	7.71±1.20
MVV (L/min)	115.33±24.1	126.9±19.3**	116.3±22.3	121.7±22.3
B R (L/min)	107.90±23.8	119.46±19.2**	108.61±22.3	114.08±22.2
DI (%)	93.30±1.78	93.95±1.39*	93.16±1.7	93.49±1.42

\*P<.05 on comparing pre and post yoga group.

\*\*P<.01 on comparing pre and post yoga group.

£ P<.05 on comparing pre and post exercise group ££ P<.01 on comparing pre and post exercise group.

**Table-4 Changes in respiratory pressures, BHT & Endurance test in Yoga and Physical exercise groups.**

Parameter	Yoga Group		Physical Exercise Group	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>MEP (mmHg)</b>	85.28±21.4	96.68±22.02**	84.6±24	91.82±23.9
<b>MIP (mmHg)</b>	117.42±22.8	129.32±18.6**	121.76±19.8	126.48±20.0
<b>BHT (sec.)</b>	51.66±12.62	60.41±9.78**	54.05±9.32	58.88±8.37££
<b>40 mm Hg Test (sec.)</b>	34.67±9.1	42.47±9.23**	40.66±11.4	44.45±11.2

P<.01 on comparing pre and post yoga group.

££ P<.01 on comparing pre and post exercise group.

There was a significant increase in MEP and MIP in post yoga group as compared to pre yoga group while increasing trend was observed in physical exercise group (p>0.05).

Yoga as well as physical exercise group showed statistically significant rise in BHT after training (P<0.01). Timing of respiratory Endurance test was also significantly (p<0.01) raised in post yoga group from base line data's, while in physical exercise group timing of respiratory Endurance was increased yet insignificantly (p>0.05).

#### DISCUSSION:

Yoga training resulted in appreciable and statistically significant improvement in most of the parameters measured in this study.

Our results are also consistent with the findings of other workers who have reported beneficial effects of Yoga training on pulmonary functions.

Significant improvement in FVC and FEV1 indicates strengthening of respiratory musculature incidental to regular practice of pranayamic breathing. Joshi et al<sup>4</sup> have reported that pranayam training improves ventilatory functions in the form of increase in FVC and FEV1. Makwana et al<sup>5</sup> and Yadav and Das<sup>6</sup> also found a significant increase in these parameters after yoga training.

However, in present study yoga showed significant increases in FVC and FEV1, the ratio of FEV1/FVC % (a dynamic lung volume that indicates any impairment of airway resistance) did not change after

yoga training due to similar increases in both variables.

In this study PEFR was increased but insignificantly in yoga groups. Joshi et al<sup>7</sup> have reported that pranayam training improves ventilatory function in form of increase in FEV, FEV1 & PEFR.

The present study revealed an insignificant change in respiratory rate (RR), and minute ventilation (MV). Yoga training induced increase in tidal volume (TV) was also not significant, suggesting that yoga training given for duration of 3 months does not influence these parameters. Our findings corroborate with the observation of Agarwal and Gupta<sup>7</sup> and Harinath et al<sup>8</sup> and Chanavirut et al<sup>2</sup>. However Raichur RN et al<sup>9</sup> observed statistically significant increase in the tidal volume and statistically significant reduction in the respiratory rate and minute volume after twelve weeks of meditation practice.

The increase in MVV following yoga training of 3 months duration is in line with the studies done by Nayer HS<sup>10</sup>, Bal BL<sup>11</sup> and Sayyed et al.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the practice of yoga can strengthen the respiratory muscles and increase the elastic properties of lungs and chest and thereby increase the MVV, breathing reserve and dyspnoeic index as last two parameters were calculated by using the values of MV and MVV.

Respiratory pressures are specific & sensitive indices of respiratory muscle strength & they are easy to measure and reproducible. Black & Hyatt<sup>13</sup> have demonstrated that their values are altered before there is alteration in other commonly used pulmonary function tests. Hence evaluation of respiratory muscle strength is important from physiological as well as clinical point of view.

In the present study yoga training significantly increases MIP and MEP ( $P < .01$ ). This suggests that yoga training improves the strength of both expiratory & inspiratory muscles. The different postures of asanas involve isometric contraction and chest wall expansion which may be improving strength of intercostals muscles.

Our results do not agree with those of Gopal et al<sup>14</sup> who have reported lower MEP in yoga training. However the present findings are consistent with earlier work of Chen & Kno<sup>15</sup> who have reported that inspiratory muscle endurance is greater in physically active men than sedentary men.

Table 4 shows a significant increase in BHT in yoga group. Karmur KA et al<sup>16</sup>, Ankad Roopa B et al<sup>17</sup> Lata M. Mullur et al<sup>18</sup> also found significant increase in BHT after short term Yoga practice. Improvement in BHT may be due to practice of Yoga which makes stretch receptors to withstand more stretching. Also the sensitivity of the respiratory center to carbon dioxide is reduced. Hence respiratory center can withstand higher carbon dioxide concentrations in the alveoli and the blood. With training subject can exercise voluntary control on the respiratory muscles overriding the excitatory stimuli to respiratory centres. In addition there is gradual acclimatization of receptors to the increased concentrations of carbon dioxide.<sup>19</sup>

In our study respiratory Endurance test shows significant increase in timing after yoga training. It is attributed due to increase in strength of respiratory muscles.

Present study have compared pulmonary functions of healthy volunteers before and after 3 month duration of physical training, result showed significantly higher PEFR, FEF 25-75% and prolongation of breath holding time whereas other PFT parameters did not increase significantly after their training period but a trend toward an increase in these functions was observed. The result discussed above confirms that regular exercise has a facilitatory effect on the lungs. The possible explanation for this could be that regular forceful inhalation and deflation of the lungs for prolonged periods leads to strengthening of respiratory muscles. The physical training must have helped in developing reduced resistance to respiration (Armour et al<sup>20</sup>, Birkel and Edgren<sup>21</sup> Cedric et al<sup>22</sup>) and greater endurance in respiratory muscles, accounting for increased PEFR, FEF 25-75% and prolongation of breath holding time.

## CONCLUSION:

The present study shows that 3 months yoga training produces a significant improvement in respiratory pressures and spirometric values, as compared to physical exercise group.

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