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REVIEW ARTICLE

Literary Review on Apana Vayu W.S.R. to Micturition

Jyoti Kansal[1]*, Vishal Sharma[2], Pooja Sharma[3], Pragti Chauhan[1], Amit Guleria[1]

[1]P.G. Scholar, P.G. Department of Kriya Sharir, Shiva Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh, India.
[2]Professor and Head, P.G. Department of Kriya Sharir, Shiva Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh, India.
[3]Associate Professor, P.G. Department of Kriya Sharir, Shiva Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh, India.

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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of Ayurveda is to understand the fundamental principles of the Indian system of medicine and apply them for effective disease management. Ayurveda offers various concepts that explain and maintain individual health. Among these, the concepts of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Mala* are regarded as the foundational pillars of Ayurveda. The core theory underlying these principles is the *Tri-Dosha Siddhanta*, which states that *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* are responsible for maintaining the body's physiological functions. *Vata Dosha* governs all movement-related activities within the body and is further categorized into five subtypes, one of which is *Apana Vayu. Apana Vayu* is formed during the final stage of digestion, known as *Katu Paka*. Along with *Samana Vayu*, it aids in the breakdown of digested food and the formation of *Kitta* (excreted waste). *Apana Vayu* plays a crucial role in the excretory process by regulating the elimination of urine and feces. Notably, the action of voiding urine and feces is primarily governed by *Apana Vayu*, except in infants. This article aims to elaborate on the literature related to *Apana Vayu* in the context of the urinary mechanism. Micturition is a physiological process through which urine is expelled from the urinary bladder, controlled by a reflex mechanism that facilitates voluntary control over urination. To explore this correlation, studied classical Ayurvedic texts alongside modern physiological concepts to provide a detailed analysis of *Apana Vayu's* role in micturition. This article is a humble attempt to highlight the relationship between *Apana Vayu* and micturition, exploring whether a direct resemblance exists between the two concepts.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental concept of *Tridosha* forms the basis of Ayurveda in the study of life. The Sanskrit terms *Tri* and *Dosha* mean "three polluting or vitiating factors."[1] These factors are vital not only for maintaining health but also for preventing diseases and disorders. They influence the body at multiple levels, including the cellular, systemic, and organizational levels. Among the three *Doshas*, *Vata* is considered the most powerful, as it initiates and regulates all physiological functions. It governs all types of movement, and without *Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*, as well as all *Dhatus* and *Malas*, would remain inactive much like a disabled individual unable to move independently.[2]

Vata Dosha is characterized by its mobility. Just as the wind carries clouds across the sky, *Vata* displaces elements from their original locations. *Vata* also exerts significant influence over all sensory functions, guiding and regulating cerebral processes. It plays a key role in speech, sound production, and touch perception. Moreover, *Vata* unifies the body's tissues, providing compactness and structural integrity. The tactile and auditory senses are fundamentally governed by *Vata Dosha*.[3] In addition to these roles, Vata promotes courage and joy, ignites the digestive fire (Agni), and facilitates the assimilation of excretory secretions and *Doshas*. *Vata* is regarded as the indicator of life, circulating through all gross and subtle channels of the body. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in embryonic development, shaping the embryo and guiding its transformation into a structured human form.[4]

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Jyoti Kansal, P.G. Scholar,
P.G. Department of Kriya Sharir, Shiva Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital, P.O. Chandpur 174004, Distt. Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh, India.
Email: jkansal1017@gmail.com

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical Ayurvedic texts were used to evaluate the concepts of Apana Vayu and micturition. Primary references were drawn from the *Brihattrayee* texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga *Sangraha*, Ashtanga Hridaya, and *Sharangdhar Samhita*, along with their respective Sanskrit and Hindi commentaries. In addition, texts from the *Laghutrayee*, such as *Madhav Nidhan and Bhavprakasha*, were reviewed.

2.1. Selection Criteria

Relevant descriptions provided by various Acharyas regarding the physiology and function of *Apana Vayu* were considered. Furthermore, modern physiology references related to the micturition reflex, urinary bladder function, nervous system control, and excretion mechanisms were included for comparative analysis.

2.2. Data Collection

A comparative analysis was conducted between Ayurvedic and modern concepts. The physiological role of *Apana Vayu* in excretion, as described in different Samhitas, was examined. Modern literature on the micturition reflex, bladder physiology, and the nervous control of urination was also studied. Textual analysis of Ayurvedic descriptions was performed to determine how Apana Vayu governs micturition, while modern physiological texts were reviewed to understand the neurological control of micturition and its correlation with Apana Vayu.

3. CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF APANA VAYU

In Ayurveda, the Tridosha concept plays a fundamental role in maintaining physiological balance and bodily functions. Vata Dosha, being the primary controller of movement and neurological functions, is crucial for conducting two primary functions: Gati (motor functions) and Gandhan (sensory functions). Although the brain is considered the primary site of Vata, its influence extends throughout the body to regulate these functions. Vata Dosha is further divided into five subtypes, among which Apana Vayu holds significant importance. It is responsible for the elimination of bodily waste products and plays a key role in micturition, defecation, reproductive functions, and fetal expulsion. Apana Vayu also controls functions that correspond to the parasympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system.

Definition of Apana Vayu – The term Apana is derived from the Sanskrit root: "Apyatati Apna Yati" – meaning to take away, to breathe out, or to expire. Apana Vayu refers to that aspect of Vata Dosha that exhibits a downward movement tendency.

3.1. Location of Apana Vayu

Different classical Ayurvedic texts have described the anatomical location of Apana Vayu as follows:

According to Ayurvedic texts, Apana Vayu is one of the five divisions of Vata Dosha that governs the excretory and reproductive systems. It regulates the elimination of: Urine (*Mutranishkraman),* Feces *(Mala nishkraman*), Semen (*Shukra pravartan*), Menstrual blood *(Raja sravan),* and Fetal delivery (*Garbha nishkraman*).[9-11]

4. FUNCTIONS OF APANA VAYU

The major functions of Apana Vayu as described in Ayurvedic texts are as follows:

Apana Vayu's Location and Purpose as Explained by Various Acharyas – The process of *Nishkramanprakriya Mootra* (urination) refers to the act of expelling urine from the body. The characteristic dashed spikes represent repeated bladder contractions that occur as the bladder fills with urine. These contractions are triggered by a stretch reflex, which is activated by sensory stretch receptors located in the bladder wall, particularly in the posterior urethra.[12]

When the bladder pressure rises as it fills with urine, these stretch receptors send sensory signals through the pelvic nerves to the sacral region of the spinal cord. The parasympathetic nerve fibers then respond by transmitting motor signals back to the bladder, initiating micturition contractions. These contractions generally subside within a minute when the bladder is only partially filled. As the pressure returns to normal, the detrusor muscles relax, halting the contractions. However, as the bladder continues to fill, the micturition reflex becomes more frequent, resulting in stronger detrusor muscle contractions.[13]

4.1. *Apana Vayu* and Micturition[14] (Urination)

Micturition, or urination, is one of the primary functions governed by Apana Vayu. The process involves several coordinated steps:

- Filling of the Urinary Bladder: As the bladder gradually fills with urine, its walls expand. Stretch Receptors Activation: Stretch receptors located in the bladder wall are activated when the bladder reaches its capacity
- Pelvic Nerve Stimulation: Afferent (sensory) signals travel through the pelvic nerves to the sacral spinal cord, signaling the need for urination
- Detrusor Muscle Contraction: Efferent (motor) signals return through parasympathetic nerves, triggering the contraction of the detrusor muscle to expel urine
- Relaxation of Internal and External Sphincters: The inhibition of the pudendal nerve leads to the relaxation of the external urethral sphincter, allowing voluntary urination. Apana Vayu is crucial in initiating and regulating this entire micturition process, ensuring the smooth expulsion of urine from the bladder.

5. CORRELATION OF APANA VAYU WITH MODERN PHYSIOLOGY LOWER LUMBER AND SACRAL SAGMENTS OF THE SPINAL CORD

From an Ayurvedic perspective, Apana Vayu is responsible for expelling urine, feces, and reproductive fluids. In modern physiology, this function corresponds to: Urinary System: Controlled by the autonomic nervous system (parasympathetic and sympathetic control). Defecation: Regulated by enteric nervous control and voluntary muscle function. Reproductive Function: Governed by hormonal regulation and autonomic nervous control. Thus, Apana Vayu can be compared to the neurological and muscular mechanisms that control excretory and reproductive functions.[15]

6. MICTURITION REFLEX

Micturition is a process by which urine is voided from the urinary bladder also known as urination. The detrusor is the smooth, involuntary muscle of the bladder wall. The urethral muscles are composed of the internal and external sphincters. The autonomic nervous system regulates the detrusor muscle and the internal sphincter. In contrast, voluntary nerves regulate the external sphincter, a voluntary muscle.[16]

Adult's bladders typically have a capacity of 500–700 mL. The brain receives signals from the bladder when it becomes distended, and this results in the sense of a "full bladder," both the somatic and autonomic nerve systems send signals that control the urination. The sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system are parts of the autonomic nervous system. The stages of storage and emptying are the two states in which the bladder functions.[17]

6.1. Correlation of Apana Vayu with Modern Physiology: Lower Lumbar and Sacral Segments of the Spinal Cord

From an Ayurvedic view, Apana Vayu is responsible for the expulsion of urine, feces, and reproductive fluids. In modern physiology, these

functions align with specific systems and mechanisms: Urinary System: Controlled by the autonomic nervous system (involving both parasympathetic and sympathetic control). Defecation: Regulated by the enteric nervous system and voluntary muscle function. Reproductive Function: Governed by hormonal regulation and autonomic nervous control. Thus, Apana Vayu can be correlated with the neurological and muscular mechanisms that regulate excretory and reproductive processes.[16]

Micturition Reflex – Micturition, also known as urination, is the process by which urine is expelled from the urinary bladder. Key Structures Involved in Micturition Detrusor Muscle: A smooth, involuntary muscle forming the bladder wall, controlled by the autonomic nervous system.

6.1.1. Urethral muscles

Comprise two sphincters: Internal Sphincter – Controlled involuntarily by the autonomic nervous system. External Sphincter – Controlled voluntarily by the somatic nervous system.

6.1.2. Mechanism of micturition bladder filling

The adult bladder typically holds 500–700 mL of urine. As the bladder expands, stretch receptors are activated. Signal Transmission: Sensory signals are sent to the brain, creating the sensation of a "full bladder." Neural Control: Both the somatic nervous system and the autonomic nervous system participate in regulating urination. The sympathetic nervous system facilitates bladder filling and internal sphincter control. The parasympathetic nervous system promotes bladder contraction and relaxation of the internal sphincter to allow urine flow. Urine Expulsion: When voluntary control is exerted, the pudendal nerve relaxes the external sphincter, enabling the expulsion of urine. The bladder functions in two primary states – storage and emptying – controlled by a coordinated balance of sympathetic and parasympathetic signals.[17] Pathway is as followed –

7. PHYSIOLOGICAL MECHANISM BEHIND URINE HOLDING ABILITY IN TRAVELERS[18]

Bladder fills gradually with urine

↓

Stretch receptors in bladder wall get activated (mechanoreceptors)

↓

Afferent signals sent to spinal cord (S2-S4) through pelvic nerves

↓

Information relayed to brain centers (Pontine Micturition Center & Cerebral Cortex)

↓

Conscious awareness of bladder filling (urge to void)

↓

Higher centers (Prefrontal cortex) assess situation (e.g., during traveling)

↓

Voluntary control: External urethral sphincter remains contracted (pudendal nerve)

↓

Inhibition of Pontine Micturition Center to delay urination

↓

- Sympathetic nervous system activation (Hypogastric nerve)
- Relaxes detrusor muscle (through β3-adrenergic receptors)

Contracts internal urethral sphincter (through α1-adrenergic receptors)

↓

Bladder compliance increases to accommodate more urine

↓

Behavioral coping mechanisms (distraction, posture change, etc.)

↓

Urine is held until a socially appropriate time/place to void

8. BLADDER FILLING AND GUARDING REFLEX

The bladder filling phase is characterized by the voluntary contraction of the external urethral sphincter and the sympathetic contraction of the inner urethral sphincter. This is associated with the guarding reflex for the detrusor to distend without reflex, contractions; the sympathetic nervous system is responsible, in contrast to other voluntary muscles. Urine reflexes, sometimes referred to as the "guarding reflex," assist in preventing involuntary bladder emptying during this surgery. Every one of the afferents passes through the pelvic nerves to cause a spinal reaction.[19]

9. BLADDER EMPTYING AND THE MICTURITION REFLEX

During the micturition or emptying phase, the inner and outer urethral sphincters are modulated somatically and sympathetically and parasympathetic nervous system causes the detrusor muscle to contract forcefully.

9.1. The Following are the Characteristics of Micturition

- Relaxation of the striated sphincter (Somatic innervation)
- Opening of the bladder neck (sympathetic innervation) and relaxation of the smooth muscle sphincters
- Contraction of the detrusor (parasympathetic innervation).

A slight increase in wall tention is produced by the distension of the bladder wall. Reflex contractions from the detrusor, which are less powerful than those from voiding, occur when the bladder is almost full, at 500–700 mL. The micturition reflex is not overridden by cerebral control until deliberate voiding is ascertained, even though the frequency of afferent firing increases as the bladder fills. Further contractions of the detrusor muscle and relaxation of the external sphincter facilitate urine flow during micturition, hence reducing obstructions to this process. Complete emptying is facilitated by the muscular contractions of the pelvic floor and abdominal wall, which increase the force applied to the Bladder.[20]

9.2. The Micturition Reflex Pathway

The sacral regions of the spinal cord receive sensory. Afferent impulses from the receptors that pass through the pelvic (parasympathetic) nerve's sensory fibre to the pelvic nerve's motor fibers carry motor (efferent). Impulses from the spinal cord to the bladder and internal sphincter. Urine can flow from the bladder into the urethra because motor impulses cause the internal sphincter to reflex and the detrusor muscle to contract.

When urine enters the urethra, stretch receptors are activated. These receptors then send. Afferent signals to the spinal cord through pelvic nerve fibers. The impulses produced by the spinal centers now block the pudendal nerve. Consequently, the external sphincter become less

rigid, permitting micturition to occur.[21] A micturition reflex is self-regenerative once it gets going, which means that the initial contraction of the bladder activates receptors and increases the amount of sensory impulses coming from urethra and bladder.[22]

The reflex contractions of the bladder increase in response to these signals. Until the urine is completely discharged and the bladder's contraction force reaches its maximum, the cycle repeats itself. The flow of urine is aided during micturition by an increase in abdominal pressure caused by the voluntary contraction of abdominal muscles.[23]

9.3. Higher Centers for Micturition

Micturition centers can be located in the sacral and lumber regions of the spine. These spinal centers are under the authority of higher centers the inhibitory center and facilitatory centers are the two types of higher centers that affect micturition. Inhibitory centers for micturition regions in the cerebral cortex and midbrain that suppress the spinal micturition centers prevent micturition. Through spinal centers, micturition is aided by the pons. A portion of the cerebral cortex aids in micturition.[24]

10. DISCUSSION

Micturition is a complex physiological process that involves the coordinated functioning of the urinary bladder, nervous system, and muscular control. In Ayurveda, this process is primarily governed by Apana Vayu, a subtype of Vata Dosha, which is responsible for the downward movement and elimination of bodily waste products. Apana Vayu resides in the pelvic region, including the urinary bladder (Vasti), rectum (Pakvashaya), anus (Guda), perineal region (Apanadesh), and reproductive organs. It plays a crucial role in facilitating micturition (Mutra Nishkraman), defecation (Mala Nishkraman), ejaculation (Shukra Pravartan), menstrual flow (Raja Sravan), and fetal expulsion (Garbha Nishkraman). Any vitiation of Apana Vayu may lead to various urinary disorders such as retention (Mutraghata), painful urination (Mutrakricchra), incontinence (Mutranaha), and frequent urination (Prameha). From a modern physiological perspective, micturition is a reflex action regulated by the autonomic and somatic nervous systems. The process involves two main phases: the storage phase and the voiding phase. The bladder gradually fills with urine, and stretch receptors in the bladder wall send signals to the spinal cord (S2-S4 sacral micturition center).[25-27]

During the storage phase, the sympathetic nervous system keeps the detrusor muscle relaxed and the internal sphincter contracted, preventing premature urination. This retention function aligns with the balanced state of Apana Vayu, which ensures controlled storage of urine. When the bladder reaches its full capacity, the stretch receptors activate the micturition reflex, triggering detrusor muscle contraction. The parasympathetic nervous system facilitates detrusor contraction and internal sphincter relaxation, allowing urine to move into the urethra. Apana Vayu plays a critical role in initiating this downward movement, ensuring smooth and complete voiding. The external urethral sphincter, controlled by the pudendal nerve, allows voluntary control over urination.[28-36] Apana Vayu coordinates the voluntary and involuntary mechanisms of urination, ensuring that urine is expelled efficiently without dribbling or retention. An imbalance in Apana Vayu can lead to dysfunction in urinary elimination. Conditions such as Mutraghata (urinary retention) correlate with detrusor underactivity and sympathetic overactivity, leading to incomplete bladder emptying. Similarly, Mutrakricchra (dysuria) presents as painful urination, which can be associated with bladder irritation, infections, or nerve dysfunction. Mutranaha (urinary incontinence) is a result of weakened bladder control, similar to conditions like overactive bladder syndrome. Ayurvedic texts emphasize that maintaining a balance of Apana Vayu is crucial for the proper functioning of the urinary system, preventing disorders related to micturition. To regulate Apana Vayu and manage urinary disorders, Ayurveda recommends a combination of dietary modifications, lifestyle practices, herbal remedies, and Panchakarma therapies.[37,38] A Vata-balancing diet, including warm, easily digestible, and nourishing foods, is essential to prevent dryness and irregularities in bladder function. Lifestyle practices such as avoiding suppression of natural urges (Vega Dharana), engaging in regular physical activity, and maintaining hydration contribute to urinary health. Ayurvedic formulations such as Gokshura (Tribulus terrestris), Punarnava (Boerhavia diffusa), Chandraprabha Vati, and Shilajit are used to strengthen urinary function and balance Apana Vayu. Panchakarma therapies such as Basti (medicated enema) help regulate Vata Dosha, improving urinary control and preventing retention or incontinence. Apana Vayu and modern science both explain how the body controls urination. Apana Vayu helps push urine down and works with the nerves that control the bladder. In modern terms, this is like the sacral nerves (S2-S4) that help the bladder release urine. For normal urination, the bladder squeezes, and the sphincter opens, and Apana Vayu helps balance this. If Apana Vayu is not working well, it can cause bladder problems, just like nerve issues that affect urination.

11. CONCLUSION

Apana Vayu plays a significant role in regulating urinary physiology, ensuring proper control and smooth expulsion of urine. Understanding its function is essential for effectively managing urinary disorders through an integrative approach. Combining Ayurvedic principles to balance Apana Vayu with modern urological practices can improve the management of conditions such as urinary retention, incontinence, and dysuria. Ayurveda's holistic approach – encompassing dietary adjustments, herbal remedies, and therapeutic interventions – complements the contemporary understanding of bladder function and the neurological control of micturition. Integrating these approaches offers a more comprehensive strategy for maintaining urinary health. The higher brain centers exert continuous control over the micturition reflex, keeping it suppressed unless urination is desired. Even when the bladder triggers the micturition reflex, these centers maintain contraction of the external sphincter until conditions are suitable for voiding. When the appropriate time to urinate arrives, the cortical centers signal the sacral micturition center to activate the reflex while relaxing the external sphincter, allowing urine to be expelled efficiently.

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This study not required ethical approval as it is a review study

16. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

17. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

18. PUBLISHERS NOTE

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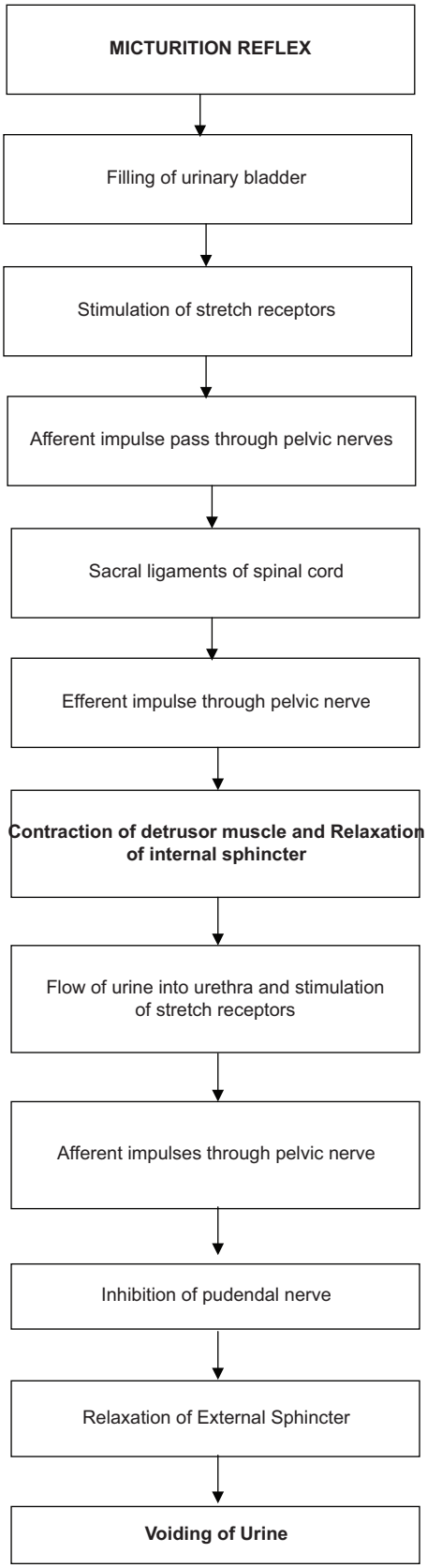
Text	Anatomical Location of Apana Vayu
Charaka Samhita[5]	Vrishana (Testicles), Vasti (Urinary Bladder), Medhra (Penis), Nabhi (Umbilicus), Uru (Thighs), Vakshyana (Inguinal Region), Guda (Anus), and Pakvadhana (colon and rectum)
Sushruta Samhita[6]	*Pakvadhana* (colon and rectum)
Ashtanga Hridaya[7]	*Apanadesh* (Perineal Region), moving along *Shroni* (Pelvis), *Vasti* (Urinary Bladder), *Medhra* (External Genital Organ), and *Uru* (Thighs)
Ashtanga Sangraha[8]	*Malashay* (Rectum), moves along *Basti* (Urinary Bladder), *Shroni* (Pelvis), *Mehan* (Penis), *Vankshan Pradesh* (Scrotum), and *Groin*

Function	Description
Mutra Nishkraman	Controls micturition (urine elimination)
Mala Nishkraman	Regulates defecation (expulsion of feces)
Shukra Pravartan	Facilitates ejaculation of semen
Raja Sravan	Governs menstrual blood flow
Garbha Nishkraman	Helps in fetal delivery (childbirth)
Ahar Pachana	Aids in the final stage of digestion, assisting in the formation of feces


MICTURITION REFLEX
Filling of urinary bladder
Stimulation of stretch receptors
Afferent impulse pass through pelvic nerves
Sacral ligaments of spinal cord
Efferent impulse through pelvic nerve
Contraction of detrusor muscle and Relaxation of internal sphincter
Flow of urine into urethra and stimulation of stretch receptors
Afferent impulses through pelvic nerve
Inhibition of pudendal nerve
Relaxation of External Sphincter
Voiding of Urine