



Impact of yoga on social congruence: An empirical study

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Abstract

Yoga is not only about physical or mental fitness, it very much emphasizes on the social aspects of human life as well. The present research study was undertaken to study how yoga leads to social congruence. The study was done by analysing the responses of 45 respondents who are yoga practitioners from Delhi. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire. For understanding the concept of social congruence in accordance with Yoga, the existing literature was reviewed from various online websites and books available on the internet. The analysis of responses of the respondents was done on a percentage statistical tool. The result shows that yoga helps people in connecting with others. Yoga practice leads to developing integrity within the self which is very much described by the first two limbs of the yoga practice. Social congruence can be achieved through yoga if the practitioner put themselves fully in the world of yoga.

Keywords: yoga, integrity, social congruence, limbs

Introduction

In the growing world of digitalization where everyone is busy on some digital platform, it is hard to find someone physically and have a face-to-face conversation and little talk. In this time of digital generation, where everyone is virtually available but not there in physical form which deprives the feelings of belongingness and intimacy^[1]. The digitalization and development of virtual technologies are important for the world's growth and Economy on the one hand but on the other hand, it contributed to the depletion in the emotions, feelings, and gratitude among living beings^[2].

Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand the concept of yoga in social surroundings. How the integrity within humans affects their social congruence and how yoga helps to keep up the relationships in society. The study will help in attaining an understanding of the social aspect of Yoga. It may help in understanding the impact of practicing yoga on the social surroundings of the people and also how social surroundings may impact the people.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the concept of Yoga in the social aspect.
- To analyse how Yoga leads to social congruence.

Concept of Yoga

The word Yoga is derived from the 'Yuj Dhatu' of Sanskrit whose meaning is to connect, unite and bind together. Yoga enables everyone to appraise and experience the world within and around us, to feel the beauty of all creation, and enjoy the divine or joy. Yoga is an ancient discipline of bringing balance, harmony, and truth between mind, body, and soul^[3].

According to Patanjali Yoga Sutra: yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ — Yoga Sutras 1.2

Yoga is essentially a set of meditative practices that culminate in attaining a state of consciousness free of all modes of active or discursive thought, and eventually, in attaining a state where consciousness is unaware of any object external to itself, that is, is only aware of its nature as consciousness unmixed with any other object^[4].

Yoga is defined through eight parameters that describe different aspects of the yoga practice and are collectively referred to as the "eight limbs of Yoga."

Eight Limbs of Yoga

“Yama niyama asana pranayama pratyahara dharana dhyana Samadhi ayoashtav angani”
(II, Sutra 29)

yama = restraint; niyama = observance; asana = postures; pranayama = regulation of breath; pratyahara = substitute food for the mind; dharana = ability to focus; dhyana = meditation; samadhi = higher states of consciousness; ashtau = eight; angani = limbs.

Restraint, observance, postures, regulation of breath, substitute food for the mind, the ability of the mind to focus, meditation, and higher states of consciousness are eight limbs of yoga (Patanjali Yogasutra).

As the study is about social congruence in the light of Yoga, it is evidenced from the literature review that the two first limbs of yoga direct the people towards that.

The first and foremost limb, Yama, is concerned with one's ethical standards and sense of integrity, with a focus on our behaviour and how we conduct ourselves in life. Yamas are universal practices that are most closely related to what is known as the Golden Rule, which states, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Yamas are further categorized into five parts which are, Ahimsa (Non-Violence) - not harming others, ourselves, or nature physically; refraining from having negative thoughts about others or ourselves, and ensuring that what we do and how we do it is done in harmony rather than harming anyone. Satya (Truthfulness) - This guides people in the direction of truthfulness and helps them overcome the desire to deceive others in their thoughts, words, and actions. It prevents people from lying or betraying others. Asteya (Non-Stealing) - Maintain the virtue of not stealing, thieving, coveting, or failing to repay debt. Keep your desires in check and live within your means. Brahmacharya (Celibacy) - meant to encourage conserving their sexual energy in favour of using that energy to advance along the Yogic path. Aparigraha (Non-Greed) - teaches us to take only what we need, to keep only what we need at the moment, and to let go when the time comes. The more material possessions we accumulate, the more we burden ourselves with not only physical but also energetic baggage.

The second limb 'Niyama' often translates as 'positive duties' or 'observances,' and is thought of as recommended habits for healthy living and 'spiritual existence.' They are traditionally thought of as practices concerned with us, though they can, of course, be thought of as having an impact on the outside world as well [5]. Niyama further explained in five categories such as Saucha (Cleanliness) - Maintain the pure ethics by avoiding impurity in mind, body, and speech. Keep your body clean and healthy. Maintain a clean, uncluttered home and workplace. Santosha (Contentment) - Pursue happiness and serenity in your life by cultivating contentment. Be cheerful, smile, and lift others. Live a life of constant gratitude for your health, friends, and possessions. Tapas (Burning Enthusiasm) - Austerity, serious discipline, penance, and sacrifice should all be practiced. Be zealous in your worship, meditation, and pilgrimage. To ignite the inner fires of self-transformation, perform severe austerities at specific times under the supervision of a satguru. Svadhyaya (Study of the Self) – includes 'lesson' or 'reading' and can refer to both the practice of studying scriptures and the practice of studying oneself. Isvara Pranidhana (Surrendering to Higher Power) – is about surrendering oneself to Supreme Being or higher self, which essentially means cultivating a deep and trusting relationship with the universe and making each action an offering to someone higher than ourselves.

The third limb, Asana is about to be able to sit in a comfortable position so that people are not 'pulled' by body aches and pains or restlessness caused by an uncomfortable position.

Pranayama could be interpreted as 'prana-ayama,' which translates to 'breathe freedom,' 'breathe expansion,' or 'breathe liberation.' Our state of being will change as a result of our breathing, but it is up to us whether we perceive this as 'controlling' our feelings or 'freeing' ourselves from the habitual way our mind may normally be. Pratyahara could conjure up images of being able to turn off our senses through concentration. It is the ability to be focused and live in the present moment that sensations and sounds do not easily distract the mind.

Dharana, the next limb is about to focus on something, the senses must withdraw so that all attention is focused on the point of concentration, and to draw our senses in; we must concentrate and focus intently.

The seventh limb is Dhyana 'meditative absorption,' which happens when we become completely lost in the focus of our meditation, which occurs when we are truly meditating. It describes a spontaneous action that occurs as a result of everything else.

Samadhi means 'bliss' or 'enlightenment', and is the final step in the journey of Yoga. Samadhi is a temporary state. It is the ability to 'see equally' and without interruption from the mind. It tells us that we will not be able to maintain the state of Samadhi for long unless we are completely ready, free of 'impressions' like attachment, aversion, desires, and habits, and with a completely pure mind.

As humans are the social species and have inhabitants in the surroundings of the society from their birth to the end of their life in the physical form. We all need social surroundings to live. Socialization begins at a young age in everyone's life and lasts a lifetime. Generally, no one can live alone and isolated for a long period. The need of other people or we can say, the presence of other living beings around us completes us and we enjoy our life in a more satisfied manner. Thus, Yama and Niyama, as well as their practices, aid in the strengthening of relationships with others because they contain elements that are important for one's social development [6].

Literature Review

Singh discussed Yoga and meditation in Lifestyle which involves development in physical, mental, social, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual health. The ability to be happy within oneself and to make others happy is referred to as social health. It entails cultivating genuine contact and communication with others, accepting responsibility in society, and working for the community. Social health is also the ability to unwind and enjoy life in all of its splendor [7]. On a physical level, yoga provides relief from a plethora of ailments. Yoga postures (asans) practice strengthens the body and creates a sense of well-being from a psychological standpoint. Yoga

sharpens the intellect and aids in concentration. The practice of breathing techniques (pranayam) helps to calm the mind. In the realm of spiritual yoga, inner peace is experienced by bringing awareness and the ability to be still through meditation. As a result, yoga is a practical philosophy that involves every aspect of a person's being. Yoga helps to discipline our sense of power with our own power^[8]. Yoga practice eliminates waste thought, resulting in harmony between mind, intellect, and desires. The experience of this peaceful state provides a natural ability to concentrate. Yoga is both an art and a science. It is concerned with the evolution of the human mind and body and thus incorporates a system of disciplines for advancing the integrated development of all aspects of a human individual. Productivity, creativity, and resources are increasing as a result of modern education, but on the other hand, man is on the verge of losing moral, religious, cultural, and social values, which are the most important integral parts of education system^[9]. Yoga is a path that leads from physical experience to the infinite Brahma. More systematic efforts, consistent practice, and the right attitude are required to achieve that state. Yoga should be a lifestyle choice. We cannot adopt the ancient way of life to reap the benefits of Yoga, but we can certainly adopt a lifestyle that is conducive to and practical for modern life circumstances^[10]. Yoga is becoming increasingly popular among people due to the numerous health benefits it provides, as well as its ability to reduce stress and boost performance. We can achieve physical, mental, and emotional well-being by practicing yoga in our daily lives because yoga is the nectar of life. Yoga is the only cure for all of our ills^[11]. The magnitude of the knowledge–practice gap, combined with the widespread acceptance of yoga, necessitates a shift in traditional healthcare provision through its integration with modern medicine. Positive public perceptions of yoga as a preventive health tool can not only catalyse consensus disease-specific yoga modules but also bridge the knowledge–practice gap caused by a lack of yoga centers and professionals^[12]. One proposed pathway for how yoga can help people relate to others is by inducing intrapersonal changes (e.g., facilitating self-awareness and a positive attitude toward oneself), which may lead to a more compassionate and/or nonreactive approach to interpersonal relationships, thereby increasing social connectedness. The positive within person influences that emerged from the current research suggest that yoga practice, even if only for a day, can help an individual better relate to oneself and others^[13]. Yoga practice is described as the link between the individual and the universe in the ancient Indian medicinal system. Yoga and meditation can be beneficial in our lives because they aid in the control of our mind's functions, such as ego, desire, and intellect. Yoga is a well-known physical, mental, and spiritual practice that has benefited people all over the world since ancient times. It aids in the transition from a limited egoistic personality to an all-encompassing, endless, and delightful state of reality^[14]. When the body is in good physical health, the mind is clear and focused, and stress is reduced. This allows you to spend time with loved ones and maintain socially healthy relationships. When you are in good health, you are in touch with your inner Self, others, and your surroundings on a much deeper level, which benefits your spiritual health^[15].

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory in nature and based on primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire adapted from different sources^[16, 17, 18, 19] and secondary data are taken from the Internet, Books, and Websites of concerned authorities. The sample size taken for the study is 45 respondents. The sampling method used is the convenience sampling method of non-probability sampling.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Analysing How Yoga Leads to Social Congruence

The data collected through a questionnaire is analysed for knowing how Yoga leads to social congruence by analysing the statements which were asked from respondents. The response for the statement1 shows all 45 respondents respond to 'Yes' which indicates that people feel calm after practicing yoga. No one responds to 'No' or 'Maybe' options. For statement2, 91.1% of respondents are responded in favour of the statement. The responses for statement3 show 95.5% of respondents think that yoga fulfills the need for a healthy body, mind, and soul. For statement4, 75.6% of respondents agree to the statement that yoga helps them in changing their attitude towards others while 24.4% of respondents are not sure if yoga helps them in changing attitude towards others or not. The responses for statement5 show 82.2% of respondents agree that they feel positivity in their behaviour after practicing yoga. For statement6, 68.9% of respondents agree that yoga connects them with other people while 22.2% of respondents are not sure whether they connect to other people. The responses for statement7 shows 82.2% of respondents agree with the statement that yoga helps them in maintaining and developing integrity within themselves while 15.6% of respondents are not sure. For statement8, 64.4% of respondents respond to 'Yes' as a response which means practicing yoga helps them to feel compassion for others while 33.3% of respondents are not confident about the responses whether yoga helps them or not. The response for statement9 is 100 percent in its favour. For statement10, 88.9% of respondents agree that yoga gives patience and strength. The response for statement11 35.6% of total respondents wants to do yoga individually while 35.6% respondents are not sure if they want to do yoga individually or in the group. 28.9% of respondents deny the statement which shows they don't prefer to do yoga individually. For statement12, 77.8% of respondents prefer to do yoga in the group while only 6.7% of respondents don't prefer to do yoga in a group.

Discussion

After analyzing the data, it is revealed that Yoga appears to hold promise for improving overall health. It is acceptable, accessible, and promotes self-sufficiency. Yoga is a holistic approach to achieving mental equilibrium, peace, and refreshment in today's modern age of stress and tensions. Yoga is about opening us up to new opportunities, new perspectives and identifying some of our innermost thoughts, feelings, and goals to ensure we are living authentically and in harmony with our values, maintaining and developing our integrity in our social space. According to Shri Aurbindo Ghose, "Yoga is methodized efforts towards self-perfection by the expression of potentialities latent in the human being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent existence, which are seen partially expressed in man and the cosmos."

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are as per the objective of the study which is fulfilled by analysing the data collected through the questionnaire in statements as the primary sources and from reviewing existing literature as the secondary sources.

- The statements which were asked to respondents reveal that people feel compassionate towards others as a result of practicing yoga, most people like to do yoga in groups and through Yoga, they feel connected to other people, feel positivity in their behaviour.
- Yoga helps most people to alter their attitude with others as they feel calm and have a happy body, mind, and soul after practicing yoga which is evidenced from data analysis. It helps them to keep calm and have peace of mind which follows them to live in harmony and show gratitude to the people which ultimately leads them to have better social skills and connections with integrity.
- Social congruence in yoga is defined in the first two limbs of yoga that are YAMAS and NIYAMAS, which directs people on how to behave and live in society. YAMAS consists of five main points which are Non-Violence, Truthfulness, Non-Stealing, Moderation of Sense, and Non-Greed. The NIYAMAS includes Cleanliness, Contentment, Discipline, Self-Study, and Surrendering to higher Power. It direct practitioners to develop integrity within them and taught them how to form, maintain and keep connections and bonds with others in society.
- From the literature review, it is evidenced that when yoga is performed in groups and social surroundings like the park, community halls, playgrounds, etc it helps the practitioner in curing boredom and loneliness. It is vital happiness need to have social networks and harmony ^[20, 21, 22].

Limitation of the Study

In this study, only the social congruence has been studied which is mainly based on the first two limbs of yoga. There are eight limbs of yoga that were broadly defined in yogic scriptures. The social concept of yoga is undertaken for study hence, it allows other researchers to study other aspects of yoga- like physical, mental, and spiritual. Only 45 respondents were taken for the study due to time and money constraints. In the future, researchers may take a large sample and cover a large area.

Recommendations of the Study

People suffering from anxiety, stress, and depression should practice yoga as it provides calmness and peace of mind and helps them to connect with people. Performing yoga would develop confidence and have better interacting skills which help them to feel more compassion and empathy towards others. Therefore, people should practice yoga to have better social interaction and live in harmony.

Conclusion of the Study

Yoga is a Self-realization practice that leads to 'the state of liberation' or 'freedom' by overcoming all types of pain. The primary purpose of Yoga practice is to achieve freedom in all aspects of life, as well as health and harmony. The researcher concluded that practicing yoga makes them have positive thoughts and outlook which gave them satisfaction. Yoga helps in anger management which is crucial while having people around you. You need to be calm and controlled. Through practicing yoga one can feel motivated, energetic, and have a positive attitude which helps anyone to spread happiness and joy around oneself.

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