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## **Physical activity and yoga for holistic development of personality an initiative to foster positive outcomes: A review report**

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### **Abstract**

Physical activity and yoga are the most traditional and ancient Indian sciences that originally consisted of varied practices including physical postures known as asana, regulated breathing and meditation. It involves understanding the spiritual basis and ethical practices of life. It goes without saying that yoga is useful in enhancing physical, mental, emotional as well as social development. It leads to the enhancement of physical fitness, cognitive abilities and psychological development of children. It aids to calm the mind thereby providing serenity and composure through stimulation, relaxation and self-awareness. Yoga is the movement of the body through different condition, postures and poses. It is the way through which internal and external facilities of an individual meets in totality and through yoga children can achieve both physical and mental harmony. Numerous research studies suggest that providing yoga within the school curriculum is inevitably an effective way to help students to develop and maintain self-regulation, mind-body awareness and physical fitness among students. Yoga fosters positive student outcomes such as improved behaviour, mental health and better performance.

**Keywords:** yoga, physical exercise, emotional development, social development, better performance

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### **1. Introduction**

Eminent studies have depicted positive effects of yoga training to improve muscular fitness, and endurance. Abundance of previous and recent literature explain that yoga improves children's physical and mental wellbeing. Yoga plays a pivotal role in development and maintenance of positive health and it helps in recovering from various ailments including the life style related disorders. Yoga is important for good health and helps in the holistic development of personality. The word 'yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', which means 'to unite'. The yoga system is an absolute ladder for linking up individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness. Inevitably, the mind, ego, and intellect do not function for themselves; they exist to provide experiences to purusa. The true concept of 'liberation' and 'will' to 'liberate' is found in all human beings, in the quotes of sages, and in the scriptures, are for liberation of purusha. Evolution of prakruti will give purusha, the better chances of liberation. Human beings are made up of three components i.e. body, mind and soul corresponding these there are the three needs i.e. health, knowledge and inner peace. Health is related to the physical need, knowledge is related to the psychological needs and inner peace is related to the spiritual needs. It is important to have a proper balance of all these and when all three are present in such a manner, there is harmony. Yoga gives relief from countless ailments at the physical level. The practice of the postures strengthens the body and creates a feeling of wellbeing among children. Yoga enables them to sharpen their intellectual levels and increases concentration power. Yoga helps to hold and balance the emotions. The practice of breathing techniques - pranayama calms the mind. Yoga is a practical philosophy that involves every aspect of a person's life. It teaches the evolution

of the individual by the development of self-discipline and self-awareness. It develops focus and concentration. The act of practicing poses encourages children to clear their mind and focus on the effort. As a result of this single focus to achieve a particular postures or stay balanced, yoga helps children to focus and concentrate in school and perform better in educational and co-curricular activities. It boosts self-esteem and confidence. Yoga helps to imbibe confidence and it provides building blocks for the future. It strengthens the mind-body connection. It helps children to achieve a sound mind in a sound body by exercising the physical body and calming the mental spirit at every stage in life. The present educational system focuses mainly on the aspects related to literacy, theory and practical fields in the life of the child. The physical, psychological and spiritual aspects are not emphasized much which might not lead children with enough time to uplift their physical development, which in turn, might lead to various problems like obesity, depression, high anxiety. In addition, the inevitable changes in the eating habits, modern lifestyle and inconsistent living nature of individuals cater to different types of health issues. Over indulgence of children in watching television, viewing computer and playing different games on electronic gadgets lead to the creation of vacuum in terms of ethical, moral values and proper socialization. Thus children lack in attaining the integral personality. In this context, there ought to be a space for the child's holistic development. Yoga develops the physical stability, keeps a person youthful. There are various techniques of yoga. The first one includes the psycho-physical practices, i.e. the asanas, pranayama, bandhas and kriyas. The second includes meditational practices i.e. pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Various types of yoga

include Ashtanga Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Karma Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Swara Yoga and Raja Yoga. Yoga brings harmony of the mind, body and soul. Yoga is described as an exercise which merges regulated breathing with movements through a series of postures and mindfulness meditation. Feldman (2005) <sup>[6]</sup> studied principles of teaching yoga to school students. It was suggested that yoga enhances the students' abilities to comprehend, learn and focus. It was also found that the students benefitted from the relaxation of body and mind. It was witnessed that these students performed significantly higher after the yoga sessions. Similarly, Eliade (2009) <sup>[5]</sup> has discussed the methodology of yoga along with capricious aspects of yoga and has emphasized importance of connecting the yoga knowledge to improve the quality of life. According to the research conducted, yoga is comprehensive and holistic science about human being that deals with varied aspects of philosophy and psychology of the individuals. Moreover, Shelov *et al.* (2009) <sup>[17]</sup> carried a pilot study measuring the impact of yoga on the trait of mindfulness. Results indicated that a significant surge in mindfulness and the three subscales of mindfulness i.e. attention to the present moment, accepting and open attitudes toward experience, and the insightful understanding was observed through the yoga intervention. Findings suggested that yoga intervention is quite a viable method for enhancing levels of trait mindfulness and that yoga can be a preventive method for later development of negative emotional mood states including anxiety and depression. In corroboration Chaya *et al.* (2012) <sup>[3]</sup> studied the effect of yoga on cognitive abilities in school going children to suggest that yoga is effective in improving cognitive performance of school going children. Serwacki and Cook-Cottone (2012) <sup>[16]</sup> reviewed literature concerning yoga in the schools with an objective to examine the evidence for delivering yoga based interventions in schools. Results suggested the positive effects of participating in school based yoga programs. Telles *et al.* (2013) <sup>[19]</sup> conducted a research on the effect of yoga on physical, cognitive and emotional development in children. It was found that yoga improves the social self-esteem among children to a great extent. In addition, the rate of obesity decreased for children who practiced yoga. It was found that mindfulness based yoga assisted children in improved learning in the classroom as they became calmer and found it easier to pay attention and complete tasks. Children also learnt to improve their health. Ferreira-Vorkapic *et al.* (2015) <sup>[7]</sup> reviewed ample studies to evaluate the benefits of teaching yoga at schools. Apparently, yoga is a holistic system of various mind and body practices that can improve mental as well as physical health and it has been utilized in a variety of contexts and situations. Educators and schools have shown great interest to include yoga as a cost-effective, evidence-based component of urgently needed wellness programs for the overall development of their students in terms of their academic, cognitive and psychosocial benefits. Tiwari (2015) <sup>[20]</sup> studied and explained the benefits of yoga practices in high school student's memory and concentration in relation to examination stress and found that yoga resulted in higher concentration of attention and memory. Hence, it was suggested that yoga practices and exercises should be a regular part of the high school curriculum. In addition, Butzer and Khalsa (2016) <sup>[2]</sup> studied the importance of implementing yoga within the school curriculum. It was suggested that yoga exhibited a great positive role in the

improvement of academic performance among school going children. Khalsa and Butzer (2016) <sup>[10]</sup> through the review paper studied yoga in the school settings. As per the findings, yoga is potentially effective for improving child and adolescent health. Later, Wang and Hagins (2016) <sup>[22]</sup> conducted a study on the perceived benefits of yoga among urban school students. Results described that students perceived the benefits of yoga as increased self-regulation, mindfulness, self-esteem, physical conditioning, academic performance, and stress reduction. In their study Uthaman and Uthaman (2017) <sup>[21]</sup> explored the impact of yoga and meditation on cognitive functions of students. Findings suggested that there were significant differences present in the yoga practicing students than non-yoga practicing students. Nagendra and Betsur (2019) <sup>[12]</sup> studied the effect of yoga education on academic achievement and found that there was a significant increase and improvement in the academic achievement of students practicing yoga. Likewise, Paulson (2019) <sup>[14]</sup> studied the effects of yoga on attention of students from preparatory to kindergarten, it was found that when students practiced yoga during the school day, it increased students' attention and decreased the level of hyperactivity among them. The major increase was seen through participant observation, where attention time increased by more than 4 minutes at an average. Admittedly, yoga is most sufficient and cost effective exercise that surges cognitive abilities along with evident improvement in behavioral factors. This, in turn, helps in soaring the learning skills and enhances academic achievement among children. Rashedi *et al.* (2019) <sup>[15]</sup> carried a research study supporting positive behaviors through yoga. It was an exploratory study. It was witnessed that when yoga was implemented by teachers and with proper instructional supports consisting of audios videos in this study, it yielded effective results with improved children behavior. Taylor *et al.* (2019) <sup>[18]</sup> suggested that yoga is a potent tool to be included in a comprehensive school educational program. Wehner (2019) <sup>[23]</sup> demonstrated that the students in the experimental group practicing yoga had a greater sense of self efficacy post intervention and they also had higher self-regulation. Of course, a positive impact on the psyche and body of human beings is observed due to blending meditation and physical activity of yoga. Yoga is a way of better living. It ensures great competence and a better control over mind and emotions. Yoga is the movement of the body through different condition, postures and poses. It is the way through which internal and external facilities of an individual meets in totality and through yoga children can achieve both physical and mental harmony. Of course, a positive impact on the psyche and body of human beings is observed due to blending meditation and physical activity of yoga. Yoga is a way of better living. It ensures great competence and a better control over mind and emotions.

## 2. Discussion

Yoga is beneficial to people on every age and gender. It helps to keep oneself disciplined. There are five key aspects where students can benefit from the practice of yoga, and each of them improves the overall well-being of individuals. It promotes physical strength through different postures like standing, sitting and lying down. Each posture challenges various muscle groups while helping a children to become aware of their body and how efficiently each organ functions. It refines balance and coordination which is the key element of yoga. Balancing

postures were basically created to enhance mental and physical health, mental clarity and stability that emerges from the effort that children make to try the postures. Yoga gives an immense sense of accomplishment. Greenberg and Harris (2012) <sup>[8]</sup> also conducted a research study regarding nurturing mindfulness in children and youth. It was suggested that meditation and yoga are positively and proportionally associated with beneficial outcomes for children and youth. Further, Pandit and Satish (2014) <sup>[13]</sup> studied the long term and short term effects of yoga intervention among pre-adolescent children to reveal that the effect of yoga interventions emerge better at long term and the beneficial impacts are long lasting. Also, Eggleston (2015) <sup>[4]</sup> explained the benefits of yoga for children in schools. Study suggested that the academic grades improved over time for children. It was also observed that the adolescents improved their psychological well-being. Recently, Berry (2019) <sup>[1]</sup> revealed that yoga interventions reduced stress and anxiety of students. Supporting similar beliefs, Jarraya *et al.* (2019) <sup>[9]</sup> found that twelve weeks of yoga practice increased visual attention, visual-motor precision and attention among children specifically aging 5 years. Yoga also reduced hyperactivity among them. Lemay *et al.* (2019) <sup>[11]</sup> found the impact of a yoga and meditation on stress and anxiety levels of students. It was found that students perceived reduction in stress and anxiety levels after completing yoga and meditation program for six weeks preceding their final examinations. Results also suggested that if students practice yoga at least once per week, it reduces stress and anxiety among students. From the reviewed literature on the evolution of the concept of yoga, its historical significance and the research evidence, the best solution to this situation is probably the integration of yoga into the school curriculum. Yoga and physical activity portray the true way of life. Based on the views above, the prime investigator provides intensive yoga classes, available for beginners to professionals alike. Focusing on breath-work i.e. Pranayam to asana and postures, these classes focus on the overall wellbeing and a holistic lifestyle. Based on personal requirements, the yoga instructors personalize the yoga workout with a primary aim to achieve fitness and wellness goals set for each learner.

#### 4. Conclusion

As per the insights from these reviews, most of the studies reviewed were on the aspects involving attention span, memory, concentration, self-confidence, self-esteem, physical fitness and development of balanced personality in children. There are many studies related to the integration of yoga in school curriculum and in relation to academic, therapeutic and psychological aspects. These studies have shown the benefits and improvement like memory, attention span, focus, concentration, self-confidence, self-esteem, physical fitness and the personality development in children. It shows that yoga has immense benefits for children.

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