

# Preparing Yoga Teachers for Healthy India

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**Abstract:** Everyone who plans on becoming a yoga teacher looks forward to yoga teacher training from a recognized yoga school. This is only natural because professional yoga teacher training gives you the skill set and expertise to teach others in a secure environment. Yoga is a psychological, spiritual and physical practice that originated in India. Body-mind fitness programmes use a combination of physical activity and focus on attentiveness of the self, breath and energy to promote health. The ancient yoga included meditation, physical postures and breathing techniques. Today, International Day of Yoga or commonly known as Yoga Day is celebrated on 21st June since 2015. This paper will discuss about the positive aspects of Yoga in our lives as there are scientific evidence available about the physiological effects of yoga. Body-mind fitness programmes may have some beneficial effects which are not offered from those by traditional fitness camps. This paper will shed light on the role of yoga teachers in making India healthy.

**IndexTerms - Body-Mind Fitness, Effects, Teachers, Yoga.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Yoga is considered as one of the healthiest way of exercise and staying fit. Also, many people consider yoga as a healthy way to stay fit and young. The origin of yoga can be marked since pre-Vedic period in India. But yoga is actually a comprehensive life philosophy which has its existence in India for more than 5,000 years. The word yoga originated from the word "yuj" which means to attach/join. The word Yoga is similar to English word Yoke. The word yoga means to unite which refers to the union of mind, body as well as of spirit via meditation, breathing (Pranayama), body postures (Asanas). Many studies have been conducted on yoga to find its effectiveness in modern lifestyle and it has been proved that modern yoga is a complementary intervention for diseases like cancer, asthma, heart, schizophrenia etc. The result for these studies has been inconclusive and mixed. Hence, on 1st December, 2016, UNESCO listed yoga as an intangible cultural heritage.

Yoga has various forms and styles, Hatha, Vinyasa, Astanga, yoga therapy, Yin, Restorative yoga just to name a few. It is very important for one who wants to be a yoga teacher to learn and know everything about yoga. Yoga teacher or instructor work is to guide students for yoga. They have to help students to learn about the different poses and use them in correct form. Work of yoga teacher or instructor does not end with guiding for different poses but also have to help in guiding in yogic philosophy as well as adjacent areas of yoga like meditation, breathing, nutrition etc. There are different places in India where yoga instructors teach about yoga. They take classes, one-on-one classes, workshops on regular intervals at yoga studios, fitness centers etc. Thus, it is important to get ready mentally and physically before becoming a yoga instructor.

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF YOGA IN SCHOOL

Yoga means union; it is the practice of integrating and accessing all parts of mind, body and spirit gaining inner peace and harmony. Yoga is becoming popular with time again in schools through after school programs, curriculum activities, physical education programs, but this popularity has come with some controversies. Though many adults like yoga and some parents even feel that yoga has some religious association and like prayer it must not be practiced in public places. People argue that yoga is for Hindus as it disseminates religious preaching and meditation principles with its use of "om" and "namaste" chanting. To dispel this concept and avoid any cultural or religious messages, most yoga instructors focus on the benefits of the exercises, postures etc. of yoga. Yoga's increasing popularity can be credited to its widening advantages and improving body awareness, with the complementary mental well being.

Scientist articulates that children have many unexpressed and unexplained problems; due to communication gap they are unable to express themselves correctly. Another reason for their problem is that their knowledge of their psychology is not mature enough. It is the responsibility of guardians and teachers to take care of their behavior, as they are usually comfortable in expressing their feeling in front of them.

Kumar K (2012) Introducing the children to yoga at an early age can help them learn healthy lifestyle habits and set the foundation for a fit future. Here are kid-friendly yoga poses to get your family practice started. Kumar K (2011) Prāna (the inner energy) is the secret of fickleness of growing children. There should be an effort to channelize properly that energy. Their energy should be applied in a constructive way. The obstinate and destructive nature of the children can be changed by suggesting them to work according to their interest.

Rajora and Prajapati (2009) observed the positive effect of Selected Yogic Exercises on Emotional Intelligence and Intelligence Quotient of School going Children. SchonertReichl & Lawlor, (2010), also observed students who practiced yoga- asana three times a day in brief segments of attention training and mind-full breathing improved their wellbeing, and social and emotional competence. Another study conducted by Linda J. Harrison, et.al (2007) showed improvements in children's behavior, self-esteem and relationship quality.

We are taught in school that "Prevention is better than Cure". Yet, we fail to implement that in real life. And even those who do implement this in practice few have the will and ability to do so. Familiarizing children with Yoga helps in showing them the path of "Preventive medicine".

Kumar K & Tiwary S (2014) Yoga helps bring about subtle attitudinal changes in life. If taught earlier on in life, they are easier implemented and can bring about a healthy change in society. Children vary in nature due to which they have to be handled differently. As we are aware, that teaching cannot be imposed, else it will be destructive rather than constructive. Whatever children observe they absorb, so, yogic principles need to be absorbed through games, group activities etc. It is only then that the seed can be planted which will bear fruit over time.

"A child's yoga practice is a rare opportunity to experience play and focus without worrying about being wrong", Shana Meyerson, the founder of mini yogis (mini yogis.com) says. She believes that yoga is an option for children who shy away from physical activity or group activities for fear of failure or being picked last, and it helps athletic children excel in other physical activities and sports.

### 3. IMPORTANCE OF YOGA FOR CHILDREN

Self-confidence is the most important life skill for child's development and parents are the main source for this. A low self esteem and self-confidence can lead to many emotional issues in later life, including anxiety and depression. All this can be shunned with the proper guidance of role models care and with the positive interactions that these relationships impose on children. Role models range from teachers and parents to doctors and sports coaches. Another source that parents can coordinate with is a yoga teacher. Combine ancient effective poses with the counsel of a caring, neutral party and your child instantly has a mentor that he or she can relate to.

There are number of benefits by enrolling the child into a yoga class especially in Hatha yoga class. It specializes in four areas that are posture, relaxation, meditation and breathing. Yoga seems to contradict the nature of children, but when it is performed in a group it is a beneficial tool which helps children to excel. For example, we can talk about mathematics, many children find it very difficult but there are some who loves to talk about the subject all the time but this is not in the case of yoga, as children never feel it in that way. Immediately children understand the benefits of yoga and always remain eager to learn about yoga. There is no competition in yoga, so children are not competing with one another which can also subconsciously harm the ego.

In the initial lessons of yoga, children learn patience and self-acceptance in order to grow at yoga. They try hard to impress themselves. It is also discussed and understood that people and children are good at different skills. Certain children find it easy to relax their mind and body, meditate; while others are excellent in holding difficult postures. Yoga teachers understand that acceptance and balance is necessary for people of all ages, so they always praise their students equally. This unites the students and class.

Parents may notice how yoga benefits their kids, but the best judges are the kids themselves. Children who have practiced yoga tell their teachers and parents that they are able to concentrate better during the day, focus better on their activities, and pay better attention to their tasks -- all the finest endorsements. Yoga helps bring about subtle attitudinal changes in life. If taught earlier on in life, they are easier implemented and can bring about a healthy change in society.

### 4. BENEFITS OF YOGA

Today life has changed completely. Changing lifestyle has brought many changes in one's life, food habits have changed etc. There is always so much to do and also there are so many distractions at the same time, especially in today's crucial and hectic schedule. Facebook, video games and other social media platforms have taken up so much time of individual's life than anything else. Different types of yoga exercised used popularly are for:

#### Strength & poise: yoga poses (asanas)

Strengthen and tone muscles, while burning fat and reducing cholesterol. Yoga poses are also great to maintain flexibility and range of motion.



#### Energy: yogic breathing (pranayama)

Tune into your breath and with advanced breath-work. These practices rejuvenate the mind and body so that you feel more energized throughout the day.



## Deep rest: meditation and relaxation

Discover Yoga Nidra, an effective form of conscious relaxation that calms the body and mind for deep meditation.

## Insight: wisdom from yoga

Explore some of the fascinating insights yoga has to offer into the nature of the mind and body and how to live a relaxed, fulfilling life.



Here are some ways in which Yoga can help an individual-

### To calm the mind and improve focus-

People today are distracted with many things which hold more importance than career. The mind of an individual wanders while they sit for some important meeting or work, everything seems to be way more exciting than their work or studies in case of students. Yoga helps people and students to focus on more important things. Yoga also calms the mind and makes less wandering and ultimately helps everyone in concentrating on what is important.

### De-Stress-

Yoga is one of the best de-stress exercises, through meditation and breathing an individual can overcome any kind of stress. Mostly people today, especially students are stressed because of the hectic schedule due to which they lack proper eating, work pressure, peer pressure that mounts on different age groups. Yoga makes them stronger and helps in de-stressing. Also, it is very difficult for one to work under pressure and stress so an individual can notice change in them in the initial days only after practicing yoga.

### Body Image-

People today are very conscious about the physical appearance, how they look and how confident they are in moving around. Yoga not only tones the body muscles and one fit but also makes them confident about themselves. A person who practices yoga daily starts respecting and appreciating their body and feels connected to it. The confidence will be seen in their body language and this will also change the perspective of others and the way that others treat them. It is well said, "One who respects him/her with respect is treated with respect by others too."

### Makes the Brain Sharper-

One of the most important benefits of yoga is that an individual starts concentrating on important things and issues after doing yoga and due to improved concentration one's mind absorbs more. Avoiding unimportant issues and things is equally important. Yoga through its different exercises helps an individual in becoming sharper, stronger, confident and smarter.

### Personality Development-

Yoga helps an individual to realize that they are an important part of nature. They feel more connected to the world and the most important to themselves. They understand the meaning of respecting one's life and breathing as a whole. Other than this yoga imbues pure and great thoughts in an individual's mind, they start respecting fellow beings and become compassionate. They also develop a rational, balanced and calm mind. The overall personality, persona and behaviour of an individual changes because when one has a perfect body, they ultimately get to possess a calm mind and soul.

Hence, practicing yoga once in a while helps an individual in becoming a better human being. They start performing well in their work and otherwise. Yoga teaches and trains individuals and students the art which can be used to master any other activity like focus, tenacity, persistence, perseverance, respect for fellow beings and concentration. Yoga makes an individual an all-rounder in almost less time or in actually no time and the change in personality, behaviour and persona never goes unnoticed so an individual feels very confident. The overall opinion of the world toward that individual changes and becomes better. Thus, yoga is a boon which benefits in the overall development of an individual and always continues to do this for them in the same way for life long time.

### Importance of Yoga in Teaching-Learning process:

Like other common types of school campaigns like anti-bullying, character education, wellness and health efforts like yoga have joined hands to educate a child's mind and body. Teachers, guardians and administrators all are trying to slowly incorporate yoga practice in the teaching-learning process because of the scientifically proven benefits:

- It provides students healthy ways to balance their emotions and manage stress.
- It creates a calm classroom environment.
- It improves students' listening skills.
- Encourages children to respect themselves as well as others.
- Eases anxiety and stress (which helps with tests).
- Enhances focus, concentration and memory (which all children need to learn effectively).
- Enhances communication skills, as well as a child's organizational skills.
- Encourages community in the classroom.

- Helps students learn to be in the present moment.
- Enhances motor skills and balance.
- Expands creativity and imagination.
- Improves ability of mindful thoughts and actions.

A research has proved that the children who practice yoga daily tend to choose healthier food, are engaged in more exercises in order to keep body and mind healthy, have better social skills and are more happy than those who refrain.

#### **Importance of Yoga in classroom:**

Besides the amazing benefits that yoga has which are listed above, there are few more reasons that are necessary to consider yoga in classroom:

#### **Reinforces character education:**

Character here has its literal meaning i.e. the personality of an individual-yoga helps in building the personality or the character of a student. Practicing yoga daily helps to strengthen the character of a student, it enhances qualities of students like honesty, responsibility, kindness, integrity, respect etc. Also, other qualities like goal-setting, self-discipline, kindness, perseverance etc. are reinforced.

#### **Helps in developing self-confidence:**

Yoga is a non-competitive and collaborative activity where students/children and sometimes adults also cheer and praise one another. Hence, this unique combination of body and mind exercise is a great effort in order to boost students' self-esteem and ultimately developing self-confidence.

#### **Children with special need are benefited:**

Yoga has great benefits for the children born with special needs such as dyslexia, cerebral palsy, autism etc. Some poses help these children to strengthen the muscles while some other breathing exercise of yoga helps increasing lung functions. It also teaches these kids to relax their mind & body and focus, which is not only a physical and an emotional need but is also an essential thing for kids suffering from Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

#### **Helps children relieve stress and maintain focus:**

Yoga is very essential tool or an exercise that helps students to develop skills which are required to manage stress, helps in relaxation, maintains focus and improves concentration power.

The main aim of practicing yoga in classroom is give every child a healthy mind and body. With practicing yoga daily and incorporating it in daily life students of all grades will be benefited.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The experience of initiating yoga in school curriculum has a mixed experience due to the shortage of trained yoga teachers/instructors. Shortage of trained yoga teachers can be directly related to non-availability of proper and sufficient number of institution that has expertise and capacity for this purpose. The role of National Council for Teacher Education in this context is creditable as the modules prepared by NCTE for Yoga education are fulfilling the great expectations that society has placed on guardians and teachers for the composite development of students' personality. This is great and historic for India, as by incorporating yoga education in school and colleges it will ultimately lead to the development of healthy India.

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