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Yoga for Social Integration in Modern Era

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Abstract:

*Social integration is a dynamic and structured process in which all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. Social integration is focused on expanding and strengthening conditions towards peaceful social relations of coexistence, collaboration and cohesion. By practicing Yoga, we open up our bodies and bring ourselves into alignment, stop many negative thoughts and distressing physical symptoms, Aparigraha (non-greediness), forming new relationship and **harmony. Yoga might more closely related with the natural environment and our communities. Yoga is mostly a physical or asana-based practice, with multi-national corporations increasingly fetishizing consumption and purporting an ideal body image that is white, slim and fit.***

Keywords: Yoga, Social Integration, Asana, Society, Identity.

Social integration is the process during which newcomers or minorities are incorporated into the social structure of the host society (Alba, Richard; Nee, Victor (1997)). Social integration, together with economic integration and identity integration, are three main dimensions of a newcomers' experiences in the society that is receiving them. A higher extent of social integration contributes to a closer social distance between groups and more consistent values and practices. Bringing together various ethnic groups irrespective of language, caste, creed, etc., without losing one's identity. It gives access to all areas of community life and eliminates segregation.

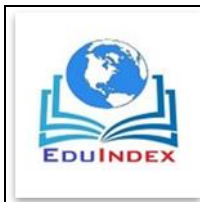
In a broader view, social integration is a dynamic and structured process in which all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. Social integration does not mean forced assimilation. Social integration is focused on the need to move toward a safe, stable and just society by mending conditions of social disintegration, social exclusion, social fragmentation, exclusion and polarization, and by expanding and strengthening conditions of social integration towards peaceful social relations of coexistence, collaboration and cohesion.

Yoga has great significance in present system of education. The modern education emphasizes on science and technology in which the material progress is being achieved, but the inculcation of ethical and spiritual values and promotion of healthy life-style are totally neglected. In this context, it is an urgent need to integrate Yoga in modern education system in order to make all-round development relating to body, mind and spirit harmoniously and thereby prevent the erosion of human values. The integration of Yoga education in the present system of education can promote human values reform attitude and behaviour, relieve from stress and strain, build up healthy life-style, shape high moral character and develop refined personality of the students so as to make them a complete well-being. Hence, we have to understand the importance of Yoga in education and introduce it as a discipline and thereby focus on the process of integration in the curriculum. However, Yoga practices can lead students to the attainment of the highest goal of life-the self- realization of the potentialities inherent in them.

The Cultural education cultivates intellectual development at a definite time or place. In modern times the cultural activity programmes are playing vital role for bringing far-laying countries nearer to each other and bridging the gaps between different kinds of people. This type of education also requires a particular set of value systems depending upon individual and his own culture. Depending upon the existing state of manners, societies are formed. The cultural education helps to keep the inter-personal relationships in sound condition. Human beings and some other animals want to live in groups, communities – in other words they are social animals. For living in friendly and affable manner some value systems are also required, which in large extent are in-born ones.

Concept of Integration:

Integration means combine into whole or complete by adding parts. Therefore, Integration is a process of work in which the different components are properly fitted (combined) so that the efficiency of that process or work will be the best. Thus, the integration brings proper harmony. In the present age of science and technology,



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integrations is playing central role in our life. The integration of computer programming, integration of automatic energy, integration of genetic engineering – integration of personality are some of the examples.

The concept of integration gives rise to another concept of a ‘whole man’ or a ‘Harmonised Man’. For getting a complete picture of a whole man, we should need a synthesis of all human sciences in a genuine way. The human sciences are biology, physiology, psychology and sociology. After discussing these necessary terminologies the efforts could be made to acquire further knowledge about the different approaches of the integration of yoga in modern education.

Modern man is at his best when he is dealing with analysis – his recent education has all tended in that direction. But he runs away from the realities when he comes to synthesis. He seems to have lost the secret of it because the modern education has left it out. Analysis is man’s strong point, synthesis his weak one. It is very easy to break a thing up into parts and to study each part in separation but it is rather difficult to put the parts together again. Thus the wholeness or the wholeness seems to be baffled. The division between material thing and the spiritual thing is the result of analysis. The yoga education helps to keep a balance between the analytical and synthetic faculties of a man. It also helps to emancipate a man from all restraints and gives the power of self-expression and self-realization.

Concept of Yoga:

Philosophy means “Love of Wisdom” and wisdom consists in knowing how to live. In other words it is a study of realities and general principles or a system of theories on nature, things or conduct. Vedanta, uttar mimamsa, purva mimamsa, samkhya, yoga, nyaya and vaiseshika are the six systems of Indian philosophy showing the ways or paths for getting an idea of how to live.

For, knowing the concept of yoga very clearly, we have to consider Patanjali’s philosophy which is the most authentic one, because it is based on a systematic methodology. According to him yoga is the inhibition of the modifications of the mind. Thus, the word yoga is to be used both an “end” as well as a “means”. This aspect is clearly elaborated in some of his sutras. The kriya yoga described by him (Tapa, Swadhyaya, Iswar-pranidhana) the eight parts (Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi) are the means to achieve Kaivalya (pure consciousness or Absolute spirit the ultimate goal of yoga) is the ‘end’, Kaivalya is that state of self – realization in which the purusa gets established finally when the purpose of his long evolutionary unfoldment has been attained.

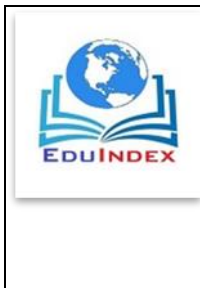
The whole subject of yoga deals with the realisation of one-self through the Niras or Nirodh of the Chitta i.e. complete cessation of various disturbances and turbulences (disorders) of the mind and consciousness. It is, therefore, a subjective type of an experimental and experiential science, art and philosophy. Therefore it conveys basically the same ideas of education; as it strives for the fullest development of the human potentialities.

The yoga, therefore, should be integrated in modern education to such an extent that the analytical and synthetic faculties of man should be balanced. In other words of yoga should be integrated in such a way that a harmony between external and inner-core of life should be maintained properly so that the wholeness is achieved.

EFFECT OF YOGA FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION

1) Improving Our Posture/ Personality : Personality affects academic and job performance, social and political attitudes, the quality and stability of social relationships, physical health and mortality, and risk for mental disorder. Many of us suffer from unnecessary aches and pains as a result of the poor postures we adopt. Hunching over a steering wheel or computer keyboard closes the back and chest, resulting in tension and shallow breathing. Our bodies evolved a long time before the invention of modern furniture; sitting on chairs instead of the floor weakens our back and reduces flexibility in our hips. Huge amounts of over-the-counter and prescription medication is taken to combat these aches and pains – but it only serves to suppress the symptoms while we carry on with our damaging habits.

By practicing Yoga, we open up our bodies and bring ourselves into alignment. The poses practiced strengthen and align key areas of the body, which means our posture will improve in our daily lives. A popular form of Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, was developed as a direct response to the poor postural habits of the West. Iyengar Yoga is designed to bring the body into alignment, using props such as bricks and straps to facilitate the poses. This form of Yoga retains the core spiritual principles of the ancient Hatha Yoga system, but also focuses on correcting our postures, undoing the damage done by our usual habits.



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2) Controlling Our Negative thoughts : There are many ways panic disorder can impact your life. Panic attacks, the main feature of panic disorder, are typically accompanied by many negative thoughts and distressing physical symptoms. These thoughts and feelings are often difficult to manage and can lower one's quality of life.

Despite the challenges of panic attacks and other anxiety symptoms, there are many self-help strategies that can assist you in coping with panic disorder. Numerous self-care activities and relaxation techniques are available to help you feel more calm, peaceful, and in control. Some of the most common relaxation strategies include breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and visualization. These techniques have been found to reduce anxiety and may even help you manage your panic symptoms.

Yoga is an activity that actually encompasses all three of these common relaxation techniques. Additionally, yoga has been known to help ease stress, reduce feelings of nervousness, and enhance mindfulness. For these reasons, yoga has been considered to be potentially beneficial for people with anxiety disorders, including panic disorder.

3) Bringing Awareness to Social Eating: Food has a connection to all the Yamas of Yoga, like we referred to Ahimsa, so too for the concepts of Asteya (non-stealing) and Aparigraha (non-greediness). By eating junk food, non-vegetarian food or hoarding food, it can be viewed as "stealing" one's own health from the body. Similarly when one is not greedy, i.e. eating the right quantity, type of food at a good pace, one can engage in the world with a lightness of mind and body, being better able to think, move and act with more clarity and awareness. So, it seems the Yoga of Eating spans beyond just eating when you are hungry for sustenance, but hinges upon the codes of ethics that govern a healthy, balanced mind, body and spirit.

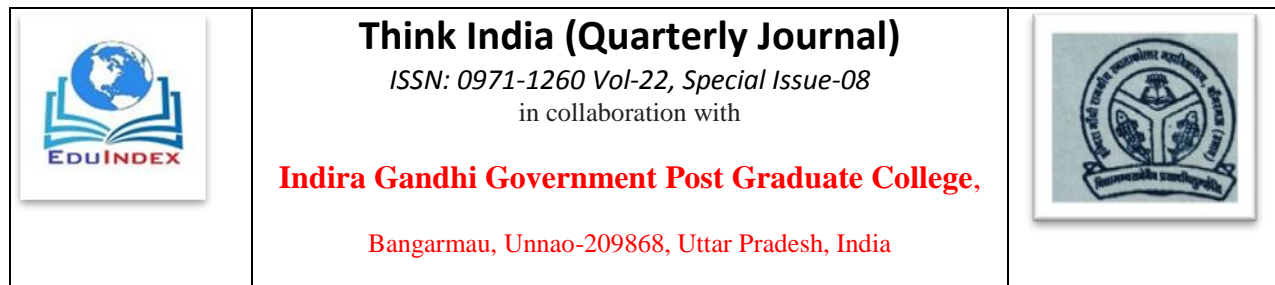
Food is an essential fuel for the body, and eating should make us feel satisfied and energised. Unfortunately this is often not the case: many of us feel tired and sluggish after eating as we struggle to digest the processed foods and meat-heavy Western diet. We have been conditioned to crave unhealthy foods that always leave us wanting more: good for business but terrible for our bodies. Obesity is a major problem, and digestive difficulties are extremely widespread. Huge amounts of time and money are spent on dieting and exercise classes as people attempt to compensate for the unhealthy diet and lifestyle we are living – but the problem seems to be getting worse.

The ancient Indian tradition of Ayurveda (which can be thought of as the medical branch of Yoga) has much to say about food. It advocates a mindful approach to eating, so we learn to eat when we are hungry rather than for emotional or social reasons. Rather than having to stick to the latest fad-diet, this approach simply allows us to listen to our bodies, and gradually recondition ourselves to eat what our body really needs.

4) Detoxifying Our Minds: Our modern society breeds dissatisfaction. Advertising has become increasingly sophisticated in breeding a sense of inadequacy that can only be relieved by purchasing products. People identify with the car they drive, the clothes they wear and the gadgets they own. However this weakens us as we become progressively dependent on external objects for our well-being. From an early age we are trained to compete with our peers – leading to widespread jealousy and self-doubt. We are educated to think in a very specific way: focusing on problem solving and preparing for the future. While this provides necessary skills for living in society, we forget that true happiness can only be found in the present moment, when we are free of desire and content with what we have.

As we have said, Yoga is about far more than the postures. In fact the postures are only 1 of the 8 limbs of Yoga given in the Yoga Sutra. The Yoga Sutra also includes foundational practices to prepare our minds for deep meditation, giving us guidance on how to relate to others and ourselves. Many of these seem particularly relevant in today's society. For example Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) advocates possessing only what is necessary and not being overcome with greed; this does not necessarily mean renouncing your possessions, just not being dependent on them for happiness. Samtosha (contentment) is the practice of being happy with what we have, rather than dreaming of what we want. Once the body and mind are prepared, deeper concentration and meditation can be developed, freeing us from distracting thoughts.

5) Living In Harmony: Practicing Yoga does not mean we need to reject our current society, but it will allow us to live in it in a way that does not harm our bodies and minds. It may seem challenging to adopt Yogic practices, but we should realise they are actually bringing us to a more natural state of being, and once our habits are formed, it will be easier to continue on this path return to the previous, less healthy ways of behaving.



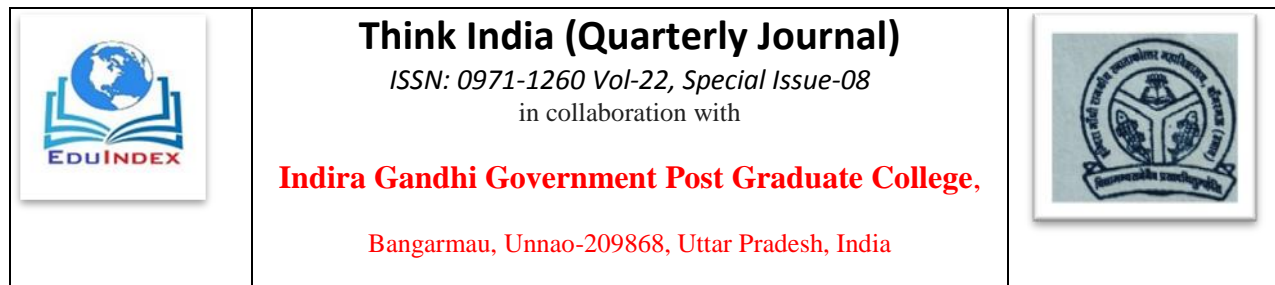
6) New Relationship: Another wonderful benefit of enjoying yoga is the social aspects that joining a yoga group or a yoga studio can have. One of the unexpected benefits of sobriety is that you have much more time to meet new people and **forge new friendships**. A recent study has revealed that regularly enjoying yoga classes can actually help to **alleviate social anxiety** and make your **perception of society more positive**. Socially anxiety is a problem often experienced by former addicts, particularly by former alcoholics who may well not feel comfortable making friends or introducing themselves to new people without the comforting crutch of a drink in their hand. Putting yourself out of your comfort zone and in a situation where you are learning a new skill is a wonderful way to meet new people. Yoga helps you to relax, and increases your endorphin level: something which has been shown to alter the perception so that you view the environment and the people around you in a less threatening and less negative way.

7) Yoga gives us tools to take action: Yoga provides everyone with a toolkit to operate in the world. Ultimately, these tools set the stage for self-improvement. This stage may also function as a launching pad that allows for an improved person to conduct themselves in ways that benefit others and the environment. We are living in a time when climate change caused by our behaviors is a threat to every being on the planet. The task to do something can feel daunting--but yoga can help you take steps toward making a difference. The size of the difference doesn't matter--it is the action, no matter how big or how small, that does.

8) Yoga to promote environmental awareness: The first path mentioned in the Yoga Sutras are the yamas (standards of how we should conduct ourselves with others and our environment). While each of the yamas can be personalized for specific situations, they are connected to how we interact with our natural environment. The environment, our communities and each of us as individuals are inextricably interconnected.

- a) **Ahimsa (non-harming):** Does your behavior harm the environment? Scientific consensus provides overwhelming evidence that our behavior has a detrimental impact on Earth (i.e. climate change). This, of course, has a negative impact on people, animals, and flora around the world. Most of the harm is rooted in our choices as consumers, including a dependence on fossil fuels and using products that are toxic for the environment. Focus on shopping locally, reducing your dependence on gas, and repurposing and re-using instead of buying new products.
- b) **Satya (truth):** Speaking the truth is vital when it comes to protecting our environment. A plethora of scientific knowledge exists about how we can help improve our environment, but some ignore it. Speak to others about these issues and do not be fearful of stating the truth.
- c) **Asteya (non-stealing):** Are you taking things from others? An example of this may be the consumption of energy. Reduce your energy consumption by washing clothes on cold water, air drying laundry and watching your electricity use in the house.
- d) **Brahmacharya (not wasting energy):** Being aware of our natural environment and plight of climate change can be a huge energy drain. Be mindful of what you can take on. Small steps, whether it be recycling more, planting a garden, or speaking to a friend about making more environmentally friendly consumer choices all require you to take care of yourself. And if you take care of yourself, you'll be able to do a better job caring for others and the environment.
- e) **Aparigraha (non-greedy):** Do you have everything you need? We are avid consumers, and often buy things we simply do not need. Try to curb the urge to buy things that aren't essential, and share with others. Volunteering with a local conservation effort is a great way to get involved and share your actions with your local community.

9) Yoga as a Tool for Social Justice: Today's modern conceptualization of yoga is said to be a product of "India's dialogical encounter with the worldwide physical culture movement" (Singleton 2010, 81). Many also argue that modern yoga is mostly a physical or *asana*-based practice, with multi-national corporations increasingly fetishizing consumption and purporting an ideal body image that is white, slim and fit (Webb et al. 2017, 94) detracting from what many believe to be the core goals of the practice (Blaine 2016 132). We have taken these critiques into account in the design of our programs and have witnessed how mainstream yoga can be a highly stratified activity most commonly practiced by upper and middle class participants, a largely white/global north demographic, according to reported global trends (Shift.com 2018). Yoga is reported to be the 4th fastest growing industry in the world, with



300 million people practicing, 83% of which are female (Garg 2016). Yet, despite yoga's rise in popularity globally, barriers to access persist in terms of class, race and ability.

Conclusion

Social integration is the process during which newcomers or minorities are incorporated into the social structure of the host society. The integration of Yoga education in the present system of education can promote human values reform attitude and behaviour, relieve from stress and strain, build up healthy life-style, shape high moral character and develop refined personality of the students so as to make them a complete well-being. Breathing, stretching, and meditating are universal tools that can be found in communities across the world, in many cases these tools are in practices that have been forgotten or that are known only to the elders. Because of this universality of the elements of yoga, we believe that it has the potential of becoming a powerful tool for healing the wounds of violence everywhere, taking into account the particulars of each community and their territory.

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