

Assessment of Yoga Awareness and Philosophical Literacy Among School Students: Insights from the National Yoga Olympiad 2024

Mukesh Kumar Verma

Associate Professor, Department of Education in Social Science, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.

Abstract

This paper was focused on the perception and knowledge of yoga among school-going kids who attended the National Yoga Olympiad 2024 which was held by the NCERT under the supervision of the MoE, GoI, and DOSEL. The survey on 477 students 237 boys and 240 girls in 31 units and 21 States/Union territories, Six National Bodies and Four Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) located all around the country formed the basis of this research. The participants were divided into Middle and Secondary Stages and the answers to the questions about the useful, philosophical and scriptural aspects of Yoga were evaluated. These data demonstrate that the advantages of Yoga are greatly understood on a practical level (the main benefits of Yoga are recognized by 99.2% of people, and the International Day of Yoga can be observed by 98.95% of people). There is not much awareness about its philosophical and scriptural aspects though as the rates of the concepts like Panchakosha (13.63%), yogas citta-vrtti-nirodhah (72.75%), and others, are less correct. This opposition is a learning point of difference between physical routines and the abundant international and historical aspects of yoga. Not only do the results reveal that there has been a sufficient grounding of the practical benefits of yoga but also indicate that other gaping holes still exist in philosophy and scriptures. This shows that education systems have now new attention on the physical and functional aspects of yoga and only have very little or no relation with the spiritual and historical significance of yoga. Some of the recommendations put forward were infrastructure in the teaching and learning of the scripture and philosophical teaching, as well as aspect of traditional and contemporary input in the education curriculum. They played a crucial role of a holistic knowing of yoga such that it can be a holistic practice itself and as a transformative instrument of personal and social welfare.

Keywords: Yoga Awareness, philosophical dimensions, scriptural knowledge, National Yoga Olympiad, holistic development.

Introduction

Yoga is the oldest science from the Vedic period to the modern period; all the sages, saints, scholars, litterateurs, psychologists, etc., believe in the glory of yoga. ¹ Yoga is a Sanskrit word with numerous connotations that comes from the root 'yuj,' which also means "to control, to yoke, or to combine." "joining," "uniting," "union," "conjunction," and "means" are among the translations. It's also probable that "yujir samadhau," which is Sanskrit for "contemplation" or "absorption," is where the name yoga comes from. Because differentiation between *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (pure consciousness) occurs

during contemplation, this translation is more compatible with the dualist *Raja Yoga*. A *yogi* or *yogini* is a person who practises yoga or adheres to the yoga philosophy to a high degree.ⁱⁱ

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, achieving excellence in action is *Yoga*.ⁱⁱⁱ In essence, when tasks are executed with a sense of devotion, devoid of any anticipation for outcomes (non-attachment), it embodies yoga. This approach serves as a means to accomplish success in life. In this context, the concept of non-attachment contributes to attaining a state of relaxation.

The *Bhagavad Gita* underscores the significance of ‘consciousness in action’, wherein composed action is the method, and proficiency and adeptness in action constitute the result.

Bibliography

There are no sources in the current document.

Yoga is not only a process for leading towards the astounding hidden personality of human beings by bringing mastery over the body, mind, intellect, and emotional faculties^{iv,v} but also a powerful tool to manifest those hidden potential powers in oneself.^{vi} Yoga is an art of living; it improves the quality of life, a healthy life with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being,^{vii} and leads to overall holistic development of body and mind.^{viii} Our Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji expressed, “It is our responsibility to ensure that the right spirit of yoga is conveyed to everyone.”^{ix, x} Therefore, there is a need of the hour to collaborate and work together so that concerns, views, ideas and experiences are exchanged.

The word ‘yoga’ is derived from Indian philosophy. India is where this skill was created, refined, and practised thousands of years ago.^{xi} The *Upanishads* and *Puranas*, written by the Indian Aryans in the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods, contain references of yoga.^{xii} Patanjali, who penned the “*Yoga Sutra*” over two thousand years ago, deserves most of the credit for systematising yoga.^{xiii} He explained the fundamentals of the entire eight-fold yoga discipline.^{xiv}

To enhance general well-being, this mind-body therapy uses physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation.^{xv} It is the most efficient approach for developing a person’s entire personality, including their physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects.

The aim of education, undoubtedly, is the attainment of human excellence and perfection, not just in any field of knowledge or activity, but life in totality. This means nurturing the qualities of head and heart in a way that is congenial to the growth and development of oneself and others around us. In real life, this must be converted into features of honesty, upright life, chastity on personal life, self-belief, unity of body, mind, and intellect, affection and sympathy to all living creatures. These qualities will be developed by fully practising Yoga in its real meaning. National Education Policy 2020 has given an emphasis to Yoga as a valuable add to our heritage. The use of yoga in NCERT textbooks of Physical Education including Health and Physical Education of Class IX and X is one of the major moves to mainstream yoga education. This reading makes yoga an element of an organized learning process centered on physical, mental, and emotional benefits of yoga. On the same note, *Yoga: A Healthy Way of Living (Primary Stage)* and *Yoga: A Healthy Way of Living (Secondary Stage)* provide foundational concepts in younger students, and build on them respectively, respectively by adding scriptural and philosophical contents. These resources set out to give a holistic picture of the role of yoga in promoting the overall well-being, as envisaged in the National Education Policy 2020, to enable the need of the National Yoga Olympiad to measure its development among school children. Similarly, NCERT has tried to determine the knowledge level of yoga, awareness, and its positive impacts on the students by taking their feedback with a survey organized

on the concluding day of National Yoga Olympiad-2024 in RIE Mysuru, Karnataka. The National Yoga Olympiad-2024 was held between 18th -20th June 2024.

Methodology

The researchers used survey as the means of gathering the data to collect it among the students who attended the National Yoga Olympiad 2024. The students were given a structured questionnaire and a sample size of 477 students was used including 237 boys and 240 girls representing 31 units comprising of 21 States/Union Territories, six National Bodies and four Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs). Middle and Secondary Stages were used to categorise the participants. The survey was designed to measure the knowledge and awareness of the students to yoga and in terms of basic, philosophical, and scriptural. The responses were classified into correct, erroneous and no response. The data gathered were analysed to find the patterns and gaps in knowledge to have a thorough evaluation of the knowledge students had on yoga concepts in the different stages and gender.

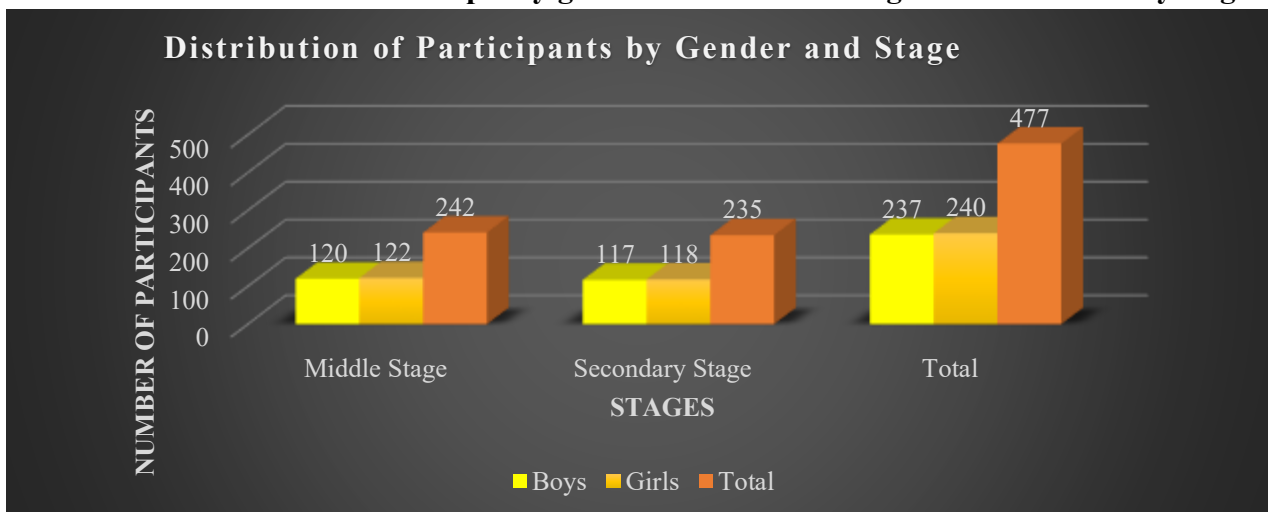
Table 1: Gender wise distribution of the sample at the Middle and Secondary Stage

Gender	Middle Stage	Secondary Stage	Total	Percent
Boys	120	117	237	49.69
Girls	122	118	240	50.31
Total	242	235	477	100.0

Table 1 delineates the gender wise distribution of participants across States/Union Territories/National Bodies/RIEs, distinguishing the Middle and Secondary Stages. It lists the number of boys and girls at each stage in a total of 477 participants.

Provides a detailed distribution of the sample taken for the survey by gender across the Middle and Secondary Stages in the National Yoga Olympiad-2024. The total number of participants is 477. Among them, boys constitute 49.69% of the sample (120 boys at the Middle Stage and 117 at the Secondary Stage), amounting to a total of 237 boys, whereas girls are 50.31% of the sample (122 girls at the Middle Stage and 118 at the Secondary Stage), bringing their total to 240. The above data shows girls’ participation in Yoga activities, such as the National Yoga Olympiad organised at RIE Mysuru by NCERT.

Chart 1: Distribution of the sample by gender in the middle stage and the secondary stage



The broader objective of the National Yoga Olympiad 2024 is to instil knowledge about yoga and its vivid benefits among school students.^{xvi} In a similar vein, this survey attempts to understand the students' awareness and knowledge of yoga.

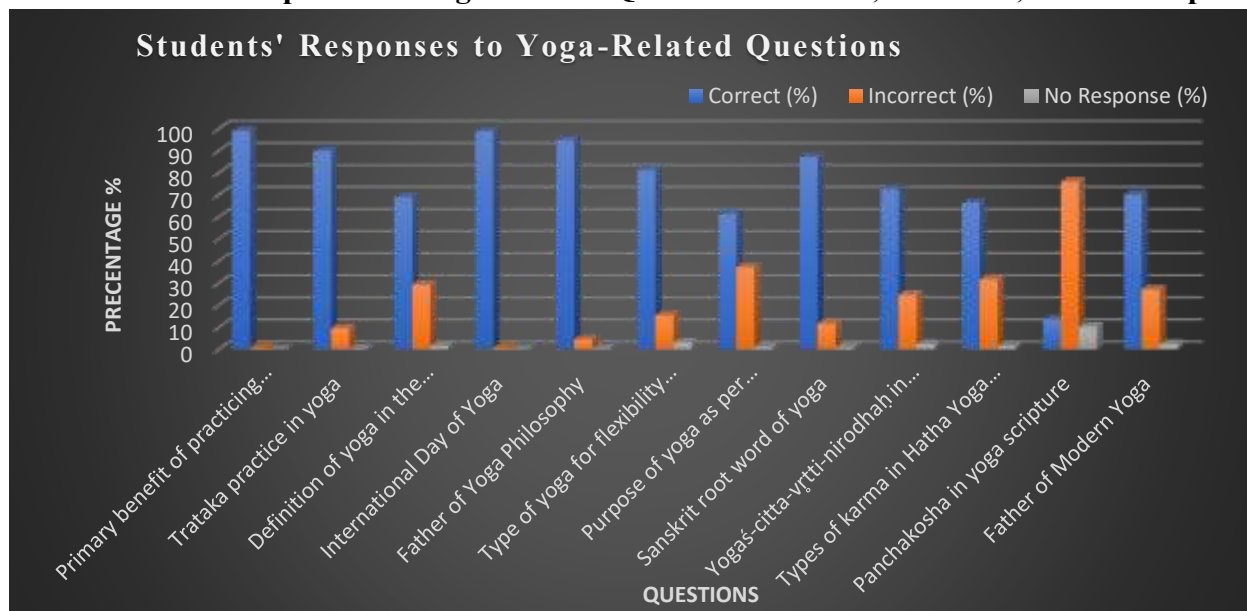
Results

This assessment was conducted with the students to discover their knowledge and awareness of yoga, especially regarding its basic, philosophical, and scriptural aspects. The analysis showed that students had varied levels of understanding, as depicted by the response data presented in Tables 2 and Chart 2.

Table 2: Students' Responses to Yoga-Related Questions Categorised by Stage.

Sr. No.	Questions	Correct (%)	Incorrect (%)	No Response (%)
1.	Primary benefit of practicing yoga	99.16	0.84	0.0
2.	Trataka practice in yoga	89.94	9.64	0.42
3.	Definition of yoga in the Bhagavad Gita	68.97	29.35	1.68
4.	International Day of Yoga	98.95	0.84	0.21
5.	Father of Yoga Philosophy	94.97	4.61	0.42
6.	Type of yoga for flexibility and strength	81.34	15.51	3.14
7.	Purpose of yoga as per ancient traditions	61.42	37.32	1.26
8.	Sanskrit root word of yoga	87.21	11.74	1.05
9.	Yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ in scriptures	72.75	24.74	2.51
10.	Types of karma in Hatha Yoga Pradipika	66.46	31.86	1.68
11.	Panchakosha in yoga scripture	13.63	76.10	10.27
12.	Father of Modern Yoga	70.23	27.25	2.52

Chart 2: Students' Responses to Yoga-Related Questions: Correct, Incorrect, and No Responses.



Fundamental Awareness of Yoga

Students showed a remarkable degree of accuracy in their answers to some fundamental questions no. 1 and 4. The question that came as to the major benefit for an individual when one practices yoga had a correct response rate of 99.16%, negligible, and no response was incorrect at 0.84% respectively. The same was seen for the question regarding the International Day of Yoga: the question saw a response rate for correct responses reach 98.95%, with only 0.84% incorrect responses and 0.21% non-responses. They were acquired to conclude that basic knowledge with respect to the benefits of yoga, as well as global observances related to yoga, is very much entrenched within the students.

Knowledge of Yoga Practices

It was a little above average concerning particular yoga practices, like *Trataka* and Asanas for flexibility or strength of practicing *Trataka* in questions no. 2 and 6; the response rate was 89.94%. The rate of correct responses for yoga for improving flexibility and strength was 81.34%. The incorrect response rates for these particular queries were 9.64% and 15.51%, respectively. It indicates that many students have some awareness regarding these practices, but there is a considerable number of students who do not know or have misconceptions about them.

Philosophical Aspects of Yoga

On measuring knowledge about the philosophical foundation of yoga, the results indicated a decrease in awareness among students in questions 3, 7, and 8. Only 68.97% of students correctly answered how the Bhagavad Gita defines yoga, while 29.35% gave answers that were incorrect, and 1.68% did not respond. In the same way, the question about the main aim of yoga's ancient traditions asked only 61.42% of students as correct, while 37.32% scored wrong, and 1.26% did not respond. A higher correct response percentage of 87.21% to the question concerning the Sanskrit root word of yoga counted as a requirement for further educational exertion to the etymological-philosophical roots of yoga, as its matching incorrect (11.74%) and no-response (1.05%) figures.

Scriptural Awareness

The students seemed to have little knowledge about the scriptures of Yoga in questions 9, 10 and 11. For instance, as many as 72.75% of the students could identify the scripture, *yogaś-citta-vṛtti*, but 24.74% answered wrong, and 2.51% left the question unanswered. Similarly, the awareness concerning *karma* types in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* was strikingly lower, achieving the right answer only 66.46% of the time. 31.86% of the kids answered incorrectly, while 1.68% gave no response."

The issues were raised with regard to Panchakosha in the yoga scripture. Only 13.63% of students provided the correct answer, while the majority, or 76.10%, gave incorrect responses. For the question, 10.27% were also not answered.

Historical Figures in Yoga

The student's knowledge of historical names concerning yoga was revealed to be variable in questions 5 and 12; for instance, 94.97% rightly identified the Father of Yoga Philosophy, 4.61% of the students answered incorrectly, while 0.42% gave no response. But only 70.23% could name the Father of Modern Yoga, 27.25% of the students answered incorrectly, while 2.52% gave no response. It indicates that students tend to know more traditional representatives than those in modern times.

Discussion

The results will be important in understanding the current level of awareness and knowledge that students have on yoga, particularly among the students who will be attending the National Yoga Olympiad 2024. It is possible to say that students could sense the traditional topics, such as the advantages of yoga and International Yoga Day taking place across the world. But their consciousness of philosophy, of scripture, and of history, seemed to be particularly cloudy.

Such very high accuracies for the most fundamental, broadest, and practical questions about the main benefit of practicing yoga (99.16%) or about the practice of *Trataka* (89.94%) indicate that the curriculum has taken care of the physical and functional benefits of yoga. Likewise, nearly universal awareness about International Yoga Day is indicative of the success of national efforts to promote yoga as an integral part of India's cultural and spiritual heritage.

But, ironically, correct responses in terms of questions dealing with their philosophical underpinnings, e.g., the definition of yoga in the Bhagavad Gita (68.97%) and the main purpose of yoga in ancient traditions (61.42%) show that there is a lacuna in understanding yoga's deeper spiritual-philosophical roots. Further enhancement was done by decreased accuracy rates due to questions on scriptural content. For example, only 13.63% students identified the scripture as Panchakosha, and only 66.46% were familiar with karma types in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. The significant scant difference relates to students' awareness of a historical person: 94.97% would identify him as the Father of Yoga Philosophy, while only 70.23% named as recognising him as the Father of Modern Yoga. This element, in the curriculum, stresses historical over modern contribution, hence underscoring the need to have this subject represented more towards balance over time.

Conclusion

Students are very well-versed in yoga. However, they lack an understanding of its philosophy and scriptures. This shows that the existing educational framework is skewed to the physical and functional benefits of yoga, neglecting the spiritual, philosophical, and historical aspects. Hence, the danger of power yoga alone being reduced to a physical activity as opposed to being utilized in an integrative manner for individual and societal transformation.

There is, hence, an urgent need to revise the curriculum to include a comprehensive approach in the deeper dimensions of yoga learning that students must undergo. Using resources of Yoga: A Healthy Way of Living, Primary and Secondary Stages, and Health and Physical Education for Classes IX and X can thus provide students with guided opportunities to learn about the philosophical, scriptural, and practical aspects of yoga. It is also possible to use these texts to provide the teacher's roadmap to include applicable traditional teachings into the minds of students, understanding holistic yoga.

Future Recommendations

To strengthen the study and promote a deeper understanding of yoga, the following recommendations are encouraged:

1. The impact of the current study protocol can be evaluated on several other and more variables. Similar studies can be conducted on a large number of subjects.
2. Expand studies to higher education students.

3. Incorporate the most important classical books into the yoga program, like the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, to cultivate a better understanding of the philosophical and spiritual bases of yoga among students.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses heartfelt gratitude to the Director, NCERT, for granting approval and extending overall guidance for the smooth conduct of the study. Sincere thanks are also extended to the NCERT Secretary, Staff, and all officials for their continuous support and encouragement throughout the research process. The author further acknowledges the valuable cooperation of the RIE Principals as well as State and UT authorities, whose timely coordination and facilitation played a crucial role in enabling access to the required administrative environments essential for the study.

Special appreciation is extended to all the participants, whose time, cooperation, and active involvement greatly enriched the research. The author also conveys genuine thanks to the escort teachers for their support and good faith during the data collection process. Their collective assistance ensured a smooth research journey and contributed significantly to the successful completion of the study.

Reference

1. Yogananda, P. (1946). *Autobiography of a yogi*. Self-Realization Fellowship. (Original work published 1935, pp. 188–192). Oxford University Press.
2. Shankaracharya, A. (2010). *Commentary on the Bhagavad Gita*. V. Sadanand, The Personal Bookshop.
3. Radhakrishnan, S. (1977). *The Bhagavad Gita: Commentary and translation*. HarperCollins. https://archive.org/details/NzFC_the-bhagavad-gita-by-s.-radha-krishna-harper-collins-publishers/page/12/mode/2up
4. Zimmer, H. (1951). *Philosophies of India*. Princeton University Press. (Also published by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.)
5. Iyengar, B. K. S. (2005). *Light on life: The yoga journey to wholeness, inner peace, and ultimate freedom*. Rodale.
6. Vivekananda, S. (1998). *Raja yoga*. Advaita Ashrama. <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=OyWaCwAAQBAJ>
7. Joshi, K. S. (1987). *Speaking of yoga and nature-cure therapy*. Sterling Publishers.
8. Desikachar, T. K. V. (1999). *The heart of yoga: Developing a personal practice*. Inner Traditions Bear & Company.
9. Modi, N. (2015). *Address on International Day of Yoga 2015*. Government of India Archives. <https://archive.pib.gov.in/yogaday2018/backge.htm>
10. World Health Organization. (2022). *Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: More active people for a healthier world*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-NMH-PND-18.5>
11. Mallinson, J., & Singleton, M. (2017). *Roots of yoga*. Penguin Classics. https://yso.soas.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Roots_of_Yoga.pdf
12. Zysk, K. G. (1991). *Asceticism and healing in ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist monastery*. Oxford University Press.

https://archive.org/details/ascetismandhealinginancientindiamedicineinthebuddhistmonasterykennethzyskg.oup_250_K/mode/2up

13. Feuerstein, G. (2008). *The yoga tradition: Its history, literature, philosophy, and practice*. Hohm Press.
14. Patanjali. (1990). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Integral Yoga Publications.
15. Bhavanani, A. B. (2013). *Understanding yoga: Theory and practice*. Dhivyananda Creations. <https://furhhd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Yoga-Chikitsa.pdf>
16. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
17. National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2016). *Health and physical education*. NCERT. <https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/publication/otherpublications/iehpel101.pdf>
18. National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2015). *Yoga: A healthy way of living (Primary stage)*. NCERT.
19. National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2015). *Yoga: A healthy way of living (Secondary stage)*. NCERT. <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3kv011a358a349e495ac2b52530f9158b/uploads/2024/02/2024022858.pdf>