

Role of Yoga in National Education Policy 2020

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Abstract - The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a major and revolutionary shift in India's educational system, which emphasises comprehensive education and the integration of traditional Indian knowledge systems, such as yoga. This research article examines the expanding role of yoga in the Indian school system. With a growing emphasis on holistic development and well-being, the incorporation of yoga practices into educational institutions has gained importance in recent years. Incorporating yoga into the Indian educational system has numerous benefits for students, teachers, and the overall learning environment. This seminar paper examines the role of yoga in the Indian education system under the New Education Policy 2020, highlighting its benefits, including academic and cognitive benefits, emotional and psychological well-being, sociological and ethical development, physical health development, and support for inclusive education. Despite of these benefits, integrating yoga into the Indian education system faces many challenges, for example: Lack of trained yoga teachers, Resource and infrastructure limitations, Limited time in academic schedules, Lack of policy mandates and administrative support and Cultural resistance or misconceptions about yoga, etc. This seminar paper analyses these challenges and discusses strategies, including Teacher Training and Professional Development, Policy Advocacy and Institutional Support, Community engagement, Ongoing Research and Evaluation, Curriculum Integration with Flexibility, Use of technology and digital platforms, etc. This paper's findings will help educators, policymakers, and stakeholders promote holistic education by providing insights into the expanding role of yoga in the Indian educational system.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Yoga, Comprehensive education, Indian Education system, Holistic development.

I. INTRODUCTION

“The purpose of education is to develop a complete human being, and yoga plays a crucial role in achieving this goal.” - Swami Vivekananda.

Education in the twenty-first century is no longer limited to academic performance; it seeks to promote holistic development, including intellectual, emotional and physical development of the learner. New Education Policy (NEP), introduced in 2020 by the Government of India, envisions an education system that goes beyond academic achievement to nurture the holistic development of the learners. The policy represents a fundamental shift in the country's approach to comprehensive education. Among all the salient features of NEP 2020, one of the most prominent is the integration of yoga into the educational curriculum. The key component of the policy is integrating Indian knowledge systems, such as yoga and mindfulness, into the curriculum (Government of India, 2020). This policy shift aims to enhance students' mental and physical health while fostering values such as self-awareness, mindfulness, resilience, psychological well-being, social responsibility, discipline, and emotional balance.

In today's changing education system, learning is not only about textbooks and classroom lectures. Modern education now focuses on the overall development of the students, including their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. In this context, yoga has become an important and effective practice in schools and universities across the world. Its techniques, which include meditation, physical postures, and controlled breathing, help students focus better, reduce stress, and maintain their emotional balance. These advantages are very beneficial for young students who are being overburdened by their academic workloads.

II. MEANING OF YOGA

Yoga is a holistic practice originating from ancient India that incorporates physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), meditation (dhyana), and ethical principles to achieve physical, mental, and spiritual welfare. Yoga, which is based on the Indian Knowledge System, is more than just exercise; it is a way of life that seeks balance between the body, mind, and spirit. The word "yoga" has been derived from the Sanskrit root "YUJ", which means "to unite", "to join" or "to yoke", signifying the union of individual consciousness with universal consciousness.

Some definitions of yoga are given below:

1. In the “Srimad Bhagawad Gita”, two definitions of yoga can be found. One is: a) ‘Maintenance of equanimity or balance is yoga’ (Samattwam Yoga Uccyate). The other is b) ‘Yoga is skill in action’ (Yoga Karmasu Kausalam).
2. Sage Patanjali in the ‘Yoga Sutra’ defines yoga as the inhibition or restraint of modifications of the mind (Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodhah).
3. The ‘Maha-Nirvan Tantra’ defines yoga as “Union of the individual with the universal soul” (Yoga Jivatma Paramatmano Eikyam).

Some of the major schools of yoga are discussed below:

1. Srimad Bhagawad Gita prescribes three major paths of yoga:
 - i. Jnana yoga (Path of knowledge),
 - ii. Bhakti yoga (Path of devotion),
 - iii. Karma yoga (Path of action).
2. Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra: In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra, the eightfold path is called ashtanga, which means ‘eight limbs’ as follows: 1) Yama, 2) Niyama, 3) Asanas, 4) Pranayama, 5) Pratyahara, 6) Dharana, 7) Dhyana, 8) Samadhi. These eight steps basically act as guidelines on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life.
3. Hatha yoga (Yoga of physical discipline): It focuses on the balance of the body and the mind through physical postures (Asanas), breathing control (Pranayama), and cleansing techniques (Shat Kriyas).

III. OBJECTIVES

These objectives collectively aim to study the role of yoga in the Indian education system, highlighting its benefits and challenges while providing actionable strategies for effective implementation.

1. To explore the role of yoga in fostering holistic education, as proposed in NEP 2020.
2. To explore the perceived benefits of yoga on students' physical health, mental well-being, and academic performance.
3. To identify the challenges to implementing yoga programs effectively in educational institutions.
4. To analyse the strategies that can support the effective implementation of yoga in the Indian education system.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach, analysing secondary data from academic books, different research journals, government reports, and case studies related to yoga in the Indian education system. The research uses thematic

analysis to explore the role of yoga in Indian education under NEP 2020. By reviewing existing literature, this study identifies the perceived benefits of yoga on students' physical health, mental well-being, and academic performance, as well as the most significant challenges and strategies for effectively integrating yoga in the Indian education system.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INTEGRATION OF YOGA ACROSS EDUCATIONAL STAGES IN NEP 2020

One of the key recommendations of the New Education Policy 2020 is the 5+3+3+4 structure in school education. NEP 2020 has restructured school education into four stages: Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary stages. In the foundation stage (3-8 years), yoga is introduced through yoga-based movements, mindful breathing and playful asanas, which help children's motor development and sensory integration. In the preparatory and middle stages, children are encouraged to do structured yoga practices, such as basic-level asanas, breathing exercises, and storytelling infused with moral values from ancient yogic texts. These practices help to improve physical fitness and foster discipline in children. Similarly, in the secondary stage, students have the option of studying yoga as a compulsory and elective subject. This involves both theoretical knowledge and advanced asana, pranayama and meditation techniques. NEP also advocates the idea of yoga as a vocational skill at the secondary level. Students can pursue yoga certification and training for professions such as yoga instructor, wellness coach and health educator. Collaboration with the Skill India Mission and the Ministry of Ayush improves this career path. Yoga is integrated into co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Additionally, the National Education Policy 2020 also highlights the need for integration of yoga into teacher education programs so that teachers can effectively implement yoga instruction in schools. (Aneraye, & Priya, 2025)

BENEFITS OF YOGA IN EDUCATION

A Position Paper on Health and Physical Education by NCERT (2019) recommends incorporating yoga into the school curriculum as it benefits the body, mind, and soul. According to the report, frequent practice of yoga in classrooms can improve children's concentration, memory, and emotional stability. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes integrating yoga into the educational system, which has numerous benefits for students, teachers, and the overall learning environment. Yoga promotes physical health, emotional balance, mental clarity, and ethical values, leading to the overall development of learners.

1. Academic and cognitive benefits

- **Improved Focus and Concentration:** Regular yoga practices help learners with concentration in studies. It also increases the span of attention. Yoga enhances learners' classroom engagement by reducing distractions (Telles et al., 2013). Yoga boosts attention span and lowers hyperactivity in school-aged children. It suggests age-appropriate asanas and breathing practices for school programs (Desai, P., & Gharote, M., 2017). Yoga enhances students' focus and concentration, resulting in improved academic achievement and cognitive abilities (Kumar, T., 2021).
- **Enhanced Retention of Memory:** Yoga enhances memory retention by increasing blood flow and oxygen to the brain, lowering stress, and strengthening brain regions important for learning. It also increases memory storage and promotes the understanding and recall ability of the learner (Rangan et al., 2009).
- **Enhanced problem-solving abilities:** Yoga practice enhances executive functions like decision-making, goal-setting, and problem-solving. Yoga promotes creativity, cognitive flexibility, and logical reasoning. It helps in improving students' capacity to solve complicated problems efficiently (Sharma, R., 2025).

2. Emotional and Psychological Well-being

- **Increased Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence:** Yoga practices increase resilience, emotional intelligence, and self-regulation. It helps pupils create a strong sense of self-worth by fostering self-awareness (Sharma, R., 2025).
- **Reduces stress and anxiety:** Mindfulness-based yoga practices reduce stress and exam anxiety via regulating cortisol levels (Kirkwood et al., 2005). Through meditation and mindfulness practices, yoga can help reduce stress, anxiety, and exam pressure. It helps students cope with peer pressure, fear of failure, and behavioural issues (Aneraye & Priya., 2025).
- **Better emotional regulation:** Yoga breathing (Pranayama) and meditation promote emotional stability, enabling pupils to respond calmly to challenges (Sharma, R., 2025). Yoga practices promote inner peace, patience, and a better mood.

3. Social and Ethical Development

- **Promoting Ethical Values:** The practice of yoga promotes moral values such as non-violence (Ahimsa), truthfulness (Satya), and self-restraint. These ethical principles guide students to make better decisions in life. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 states that holistic development and value-based education are

crucial, and yoga plays an important role in accomplishing these objectives.

- **Developing Self-Control and Discipline:** Yoga plays an important role in the development of students. Through regular practice of yoga, students develop qualities such as patience, self-control, self-discipline and emotional balance. Yoga helps in shaping a positive attitude and strengthens inner values, which are essential for personal growth and responsible behaviour.
- **Development of Empathy and Teamwork:** Yoga encourages cooperation, teamwork, and empathy among students. Group yoga activities create opportunities for social interaction, mutual understanding, and respect for others. This helps in building a harmonious and inclusive learning environment.

4. Development of physical health:

- **Improved Posture and Flexibility:** Asanas (yoga poses) improve spinal alignment, flexibility, and avoid musculoskeletal disorders associated with extended sitting (Field, 2011).
- **Improved disease resistance and physical strength:** Yoga increases the body's ability to fight diseases. Regular practice strengthens the immune system and reduces the chances of falling sick. As a result, students remain more active, energetic, and attentive in school (Sharma, R., 2025).
- **Prevention of lifestyle-related problems:** Yoga helps in controlling body weight and preventing obesity. It also reduces the risk of high blood pressure and improves heart health. Through breathing exercises and physical postures, yoga keeps the body balanced and fit (Sharma, R., 2025).

5. Support for inclusive Education:

Children with disabilities can benefit from modifications and adaptations of yoga techniques. It increases motor coordination, sensory integration, and emotional regulation in children with special needs (such as visual impairment, autism, and ADHD). It also promotes inclusive engagement and confidence building for all students (Aneraye & Priya., 2025).

CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING YOGA IN INDIAN EDUCATION

1. **Lack of trained yoga teachers:** Although teacher training is encouraged by the New Education Policy of 2020, teachers' current readiness and desire to adopt and teach yoga and mindfulness vary. Many schools do not have properly trained yoga instructors. As a result, yoga is sometimes taught incorrectly or irregularly. In many

situations, normal teachers do not obtain adequate training to properly incorporate yoga practices into their daily teaching, reducing the benefits of yoga for students.

2. **Resource and Infrastructure Limitations:** Many schools, particularly in remote regions, lack adequate space, yoga mats, and basic facilities to run yoga courses correctly. In addition, many schools lack a defined or structured yoga syllabus; therefore, yoga is taught in an unplanned and irregular manner.
3. **Limited time in academic schedules:** Schools already have very busy timetables, so it becomes hard to give time to yoga without affecting other subjects. Due to exam pressure and focus on marks, schools often give more importance to academic performance than to practices like yoga that support overall well-being.
4. **Lack of Policy Mandates and Administrative Support:** In the absence of strong policy support, schools may not prioritise the inclusion of yoga in their educational programs. Furthermore, the lack of a standardised assessment framework makes it challenging to systematically evaluate the impact of yoga on students' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
5. **Cultural resistance or misconceptions about yoga:** In some regions, parents and educational institutions oppose yoga because it is thought to be connected to a specific religion. Additionally, misconceptions regarding the objectives and benefits of yoga hinder its acceptance within secular education systems (Sharma, R., 2025; Aneraye & Priya., 2025).

implement yoga in a proper and organised way (Sharma & Ram, 2025; Sharma, R., 2025).

3. **Community Engagement:** Raising awareness and gaining support from parents and the community is important. Workshops, demonstrations, and seminars can clarify misconceptions about yoga and emphasise its benefits. With community understanding and support, implementing yoga programs becomes easier and more effective (Sharma & Ram, 2025).
4. **Ongoing Research and Evaluation:** It is important to conduct long-term studies to evaluate yoga's effects on students' academic performance and overall well-being. Ongoing monitoring helps educators improve practices, support further integration, and ensure lasting benefits (Sharma & Ram, 2025).
5. **Curriculum Integration with Flexibility:** Instead of being taught separately, yoga can be included in physical education, mindfulness sessions, or as a warm-up before classes. Short yoga breaks between classes can help students relax, refocus, and reduce stress (Sharma, R., 2025).
6. **Use of technology and digital platforms:** Even in places with limited resources, students can practise yoga through mobile apps, recorded videos, and online sessions. Personalised yoga recommendations powered by AI can increase efficacy and engagement even more (Sharma, R., 2025).

VI. CONCLUSION

Yoga plays an important role in the overall development of the learner. Integrating yoga into the Indian education system, as recommended by the New Education Policy 2020, is a big step towards developing an educational system that is more balanced and driven by values. Yoga is much more than just a physical activity; it provides a holistic approach to social harmony and personal growth. Implementing yoga from the foundational stage to the secondary stage helps students to achieve a balanced lifestyle free from stress and unhealthy habits. Although it has many benefits, including academic and cognitive, emotional and psychological well-being, sociological and ethical development, physical health development, and support for inclusive education, the actual challenge is the successful execution of yoga in the Indian education system. Systematic efforts are required to overcome the issue, such as lack of trained yoga teachers, resource and infrastructure limitations, limited time in academic schedules, lack of Policy Mandates and Administrative Support, Cultural resistance or misconceptions about yoga, etc. Yoga education can help to mould future citizens who are not only intellectually capable but also physically fit, emotionally stable and ethically responsible, if it is executed with sincerity, structure and sensitivity. Its successful implementation needs

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Teachers will be prepared to teach yoga if it is incorporated into teacher education programs. Comprehensive training programs must be developed to certify teachers in order to successfully introduce yoga. For in-service educators, online courses, workshops, and certification programs may be offered. Such programs should teach yoga postures as well as how yoga helps improve mindfulness and reduce stress, so that these practices clearly support better learning outcomes (Sharma & Ram, 2025; Sharma, R., 2025).
2. **Policy Advocacy and Institutional Support:** To promote yoga widely, strong policies are needed. Governments and schools should work together to create guidelines and provide resources, making yoga a regular part of physical and mental health education. The government can make yoga a compulsory part of holistic education, just like physical education. By working with educational boards, clear and age-appropriate yoga curricula can be developed, which will help schools

collaborative efforts among policymakers, Educators and healthcare professionals.

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