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POSTURAL YOGA: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

“YOGA” is an ancient Sanskrit word which, in only two syllables, encompasses the entire body of spiritual experiences. Yoga is highly connected with Hindu Religion. Lord Shiva is considered as the ‘Adi Guru of Yoga’. There are so many Gods and Goddess in the yogic Scriptures. Yoga is one of the main pillars of Hinduism.

‘Yoga’ is the practice which encompasses both body and mind. Postural yoga differs from other kinds of physical exercise in the emphasis given to the variety of benefits of stretching and cultivating the body. Modern yoga is a wide range of yoga practices with differing purposes, encompassing in its various forms yoga philosophy derived from the Vedas, physical postures derived from Hatha yoga.¹ Modern Postural Yoga is now gaining popularity among the urban dwellers, among all age group of people. So the present topic is chosen.²

¹ James Mallison[13] in his book ‘Hathayoga’s Philosophy: A Fortuitous Union of Non-Dualities’(Oriental Institute University of Oxford)wrote that the root texts of hathayoga and their exegesis make little room for discussions of philosophy and so philologists of the usual bent have not been attracted to their study. Classical hathayoga as formulated in its locus classics, the fifteenth-century Hathapradipika, combines elements from a wide range of yogic teachings.

² Yog Darshan’ is a very important concept in ‘Hindu philosophy’. In ancient and medieval literature the word ‘Yog’ was used and very popular.’ ‘Yoga Darshan’ enriched the Indian Philosophy, physically, mentally and spiritually.

Key Words: Body-mind Technique, Postures and Yoga.

1. Introduction

Yoga' is the practice which encompasses both body and mind. Postural yoga differs from other kinds of physical exercise in the emphasis given to the variety of benefits of stretching and cultivating the body. Yoga is highly connected with Hindu Philosophy. Lord Shiva was considered as the Adi(first) Yoga Guru. Yoga encompasses the entire body of spiritual experiences and experiments of tens of thousands of Realized Masters. These Masters have discovered the Ultimate Reality, their infinite compassion; have carefully marked a path for others to follow.

Like medicines, many yoga asana can be very potent and can have strong side effects if performed incorrectly. So for both safety and effectiveness, the golden rule applies – when in doubt, find a good teacher and learn the basics.

Dr. Ananad Balyogi Bhabnani[5] wrote that Personality Development is not only an external mask and not only specific built of Dynamic organization within the person of those psychophysical systems. It was determined by his characteristic behavior and thought. It is a multi-dimensional process that consists of evolution of personality on several dimensions. Physical dimension, Intellectual/cognitive dimension, Emotional dimension, Social dimension& Spiritual dimension.

Dr. Anand Balyogi Bhabnani[5]in his article “The Concept and technique of Yoga To Children” (wwwicyer.com) wrote that Yoga has a lot to offer the children for their health and mental well being. The author wrote that yoga provides a healthy future to the children in terms of providing those tools and techniques of both physical and mental fitness. Yoga is now popular among the various age group of children Various poses of yoga appear as fun to them they enjoy the postures in the names of different animals, such as *Mayurasana* (Peacockpose), *Ustrasana* (Camael pose), *Simhasana* (Lion pose), *Bhujangasana* (Snake pose) and so on.

Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani[6] in her article‘The History of Yoga from Ancient to Modern Times’ wrote that Yoga is as old as the Universe.

Bhabnani[5] talked about the division of Yoga period. Such as i) Pre classical Yoga Period, ii) Classical yoga period and iii) Modern Period of Yoga. It is both the Path and the Goal.

i) Pre classical Yoga period: The History of Yoga traced back to the Indus –Valley and Harappan Civilization. In Mahenjodaro and Harappa the silmohars were discovered where there is the picture of Yogi sitting in a yogic posture surrounded by the beasts. The image was thought as the prototype of Lord Shiva. There were the images of other Gods and Goddess in the yogic postures.

ii) Classical Yoga Period: The classical Period of Yoga begins with the ‘Yoga Sutras of Patanjali’. Patanjali, the great Indian Sage contributed a lot to Indian Yoga. Bhabnani[6] wrote that The Yoga Sutras by Maharishi Patanjali have become the most authentic scripture detailing the principles of Astanga Yoga. In 196 Sutras, or short succinct verses, the great sage gives an all encompassing picture of the principles of Yoga. Ashtanga Yoga elaborated by Patanjali, begins with the code of conduct expected from a spiritual aspirant (Yama and Niyama) and then outlines the steps which lead to the final emancipation or Mukti.

iii) Modern Period of Yoga: Modern period of yoga begins with Swam Vivekananda’s religious speech in Chicago Parliament. Where, he emphasized on ‘Raja Yoga.’ Bhabnani wrote that Spiritual teachings gleaned from many sources, indiscriminately, often only through the written word and without the Guidance of Guru. In a very brief overview of the history of Yoga in modern times, one may divide the period into three cycles and name several prominent World teachers who actively taught in each period.

Now it should be analyzed what is ‘Postural Yoga’. “Asana” means steady and comfortable pose, which would, exclude movements or exercises. Some say asanas are any form of spontaneous body gesture including flowing exercises. The people should follow asanas with a brief relaxation to allow the body to stabilize from the session. Asanas are best followed by pranayama, then meditation.

The present topic is chosen because Yoga has now become popular among all age group of people. Yoga is now gaining popularity in present day urban society. Like medicines, many yoga asanas can be very potent and can have strong side effects if performed incorrectly. So for both safety and effectiveness, the golden rule applies – when in doubt, find a good teacher and learn the basics.

Postural Yoga: The Scholar’s view:

Bibhabari Bal[4], in her book ‘Integral Yoga And The Spirit Of Work In Auroville’ wrote that ‘yoga’ refers to ‘join in the Divine consciousness with one’s own consciousness to see ‘One in All ‘And ‘All in One’.

Bhabnani wrote that ‘Hatha Yoga Pradipika’ is claimed to be the source book of instruction by many Yoga teachers. Hathapradipika combines elements from a wide range of yogic teachings, but in essence comprises the gross physical techniques of an ancient extra-Vedic ascetic tradition overlaid with subtle visualisation-based Saiva yoga. According to the ‘Hathayoga Pradipika’ the main asanas are Siddhasana, Padmasana, Simhasana, and Bhadrasana and the classical asanas are Gomukasana, Veerasana, Kurmasana, Kukkutasana and so on. Asanas, Pranayamas,

Mallison[13] also discussed the place of ‘Saivism’ in ‘Hatha yoga’. He wrote that Although hathayoga provided a home for a variety of saiva practices and concepts, its philosophical basis came to be dominated by advaita Vedanta.

pranayams (Breathing exercise as defined by Patanjali Asana having been completed, cessation of inhalation and exhalation.³

Birch wrote that there is a link between the 'Hatha yoga'⁴ and 'Raja yoga'. Four texts of the early Haṭhayoga corpus used in this study preserve this system, which consisted of Mantra, Laya, Haṭha, and Rajayoga. Three of these established

A clear hierarchy among the four Yoga, in which Rajayoga is above the others.

Stephen Sharot in his book 'A Comparative Sociology of World Religions', Virtuosos, Priests, and Popular Religion (New York University Press, New York and London) talked about world religion. In the context of world religion the author mentioned Weber and Durkheim's view of religion. M. N. Srinivas also adopted the term Sanskrit Hinduism to denote an "all-India Hinduism" that transcends the many regional and local Hinduisms. Following Singleton's [17] view it is said that modern postural practices have no link with Traditional Hindu religion. Singleton [17] wrote that in traditional Hindu philosophy yoga forms an integral component of the 'Saiba Tantras, Bhagvad Gita and so on.

3. Theoretical Framework:

In order to explain Postural Yoga the theoretical orientation of Yoga should be analyzed which gives a clear picture of yoga in general and Postural Yoga in particular.

According to the Yogic teachers Yoga maintains the Chakras which are the centre points of energy, thoughts, feelings and physical body.

The main philosophy of Yoga is simple mind, body and spirit are one. Yoga philosophy explores the deeper dimension of body, mind and the spirit.

There is a more or less similarity between Yoga Philosophy and Buddhism. The central philosophical Teaching of Yoga resolves around the practice of spiritual knowledge and self awareness.

Yoga philosophy incorporates the concept of 'Prana and 'Kundalini', moving through the 'nadis' and 'chakras'.

³ Patanjali lays down on eight fold path consisting of aids to Yoga. Restraints (Yama) Observance (Niyama), posture (asana), Regulation of Breathing (pranayamas) Abstract of the sense (pratyahar) Concentration (dharana), Meditation (Dhyana) and Trance (samadhi). Yoga as a separate school of thought is mentioned in Indian texts from the end of the 1st millennium CE. The systematic collection of ideas of the Yoga school of Hinduism is found in Patanjali Yoga:

⁴ Williams' definition of Hathayoga appears to have been influenced by recent traditions of Sadhus and Sannyasins who have combined certain Hathayogic practices with extreme forms of tapas.

The law of 'Karma' is central to the 'Philosophy of yoga'. Karma attaches the people to 'samsara(family)'. The philosophy of yoga introduced another concept, that is the concept of 'maya'(illusion) or ignorance. Yogic Philosophy is necessary mean to deepen one's yoga practices and to reach enlightenment.

The main pillars of Yoga philosophy are:

The Bhagvad Gita:

'Song of Lord Krishna' or Bhagvad Gita is an ancient Sanskrit Text that contains the most powerful teachings in the practice of Yoga.

The Upanishad:

The Upanishad is a long complex potent written teaching of Yoga, a sacred spiritual text of yogic philosophy.

The Vedas:

The Vedas are considered as the most sacred and treasured text of yoga. Vedas are a collection of hymns, that were received by the ancient Rishis(Sage). The Rig Veda, however, does not describe Yoga philosophy with the same meaning or context as in medieval or modern times. Early references to practices that later became part of Yoga-philosophy.

Rigveda, Upanishad and Bhagavad Gita mentioned yoga practices in the term of mudras, meditation and wisdom and so on. Patanjali's "yoga sutras" had a great contribution in classical yoga period. Bhabnani wrote that The Yoga Sutras by Maharishi Patanjali have become the most authentic scripture detailing the principles of Astanga Yoga. In 196 Sutras, Ashtanga Yoga elaborated by Patanjali. begins with the code of conduct expected from a spiritual aspirant (Yama and Niyama) and then outlines the steps which lead to the final emancipation or Mukti.

Modern period of yoga was started with Swami Vivekananda's lectures at 1893 parliament of religion in Chicago. Where he emphasized on 'Raja Yoga.' Bhabnani wrote that Spiritual teachings gleaned from many sources, indiscriminately, often only through the written word and without the Guidance of Guru.

The Masters of the first period of Modern Yoga, Sri Ramakrishna, and his disciple Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharishi were very much in the Vedantic, Advaitic tradition of Adi Sankara .

According to Bibhabari Bal[4] 'Integral Yoga'⁵. According to Bal 'Yoga' refers to 'join in the Divine consciousness with one's own consciousness to see 'One in All' and 'All in One'. Integral yoga is an all-embracing philosophy (a synthesis of *jnana*, *bhakti*, *karma* etc.) that believes in integral transformation of the whole human nature to internalize all positive values of life.

Jason Birch in his book 'The Meaning of haṭha in Early Haṭhayoga(Oxford University, Journal of the American Oriental Society 131.4 (2011) wrote that 'Hatha Yoga literary means the 'Yoga of Force'.Hatha yoga is inherent in the understanding of the techniques, such as pranayam(Breathing Exercise). Many Indian and Western scholars have understood the 'force' of Hathayoga to refer to the effort required to practice it.

Bhabnani[5] wrote that 'Hatha Yoga Pradipika' is claimed to be the source book of instruction by many Yoga teachers. Yogi Swatmarama Suri describes only fifteen Asanas, He describes four of these Asanas, as the "best among postures". They are: Siddha Asana; Padma Asana; Simha Asana and Bhadra Asana.

Modern Postural Yoga mainly came from 'Hatha yoga.'James Mallision wrote that the 'Hatha Yoga' is the practice of non seating asana. Mallision[13] wrote that of the seven non-seated asanas taught in the Haṭhapradpika. The author wrote that 'poschimotthasana'(a name of a particular posture) was probably composed not long before the Hathapradpika.

James Mallision[13] in his book 'Haṭhayoga's Philosophy: A Fortuitous Union of Non-Dualities'(Oriental Institute University of Oxford)wrote that the root texts of haṭhayoga and their exegesis make little room for discussions of philosophy and so philologists of the usual bent have not been attracted to their study. Classical haṭhayoga as formulated in its locus classics, the fifteenth-century Haṭhapradipika, combines elements from a wide range of yogic teachings, but in essence comprises the gross physical techniques of an ancient extra-Vedic ascetic tradition overlaid with subtle visualisation-based Saiva yoga.

Hathayoga might have understood the use of force in their Yoga. In the texts consulted for this study, the earliest occurrence of haṭhayoga is in the eighteenth chapter of a Buddhist tantric

Mallision[13] wrote that "Whether a Brahmin, an ascetic, a Buddhist, a Jain, a Skull-Bearer or a materialist, the wise man who is endowed with faith and constantly devoted to the practice of [hatha] yoga will attain complete success.' Regarding the philosophical orientation of hathayoga text the author wrote that The Vivekamartanḍa, Gorakṣasataka and Dattatreya yogastra are three of the four texts which contribute twenty or more verses to the Hathapradipika.

⁵ The author Bibhabari Bal gave a nice description of 'Auroville' Place.Auroville, inaugurated on 28th February, 1968 with the goal of "collective human evolution to realize human unity". The author said that The aim of Integral yoga is not simply to be a great 'yogi' or superman or attain 'moksha' but to love Divine and aspire to be the perfect instrument of the Divine will. Here the author wrote that the concept of Integral yoga and the spirit of work in the context of Auroville. The author evaluated that the Aurovilian's inspiration, perception, and attitude to their life and work. She explored the problems faced by Aurovilians in integrating the concept of Integral yoga and the spirit of work.

Regarding the work of yoga Bullock said that Yoga improves the psychological well being and release the physical stress. The previous researcher suggests that one root might be improved self regulation, yoga is thought to facilitate through psychological and neurological dance. Yoga increases self realization which improves our ability to manage stress and live with balance.

Researchers suggest that practices such as yoga asana(Movement),Pranayams(breathing exercise)and meditation affects self realization through modulation of the automatic nervous system in general and the parasympathetic nervous system in particular.

Yoga Darshan'is a very important concept in 'Hindu philosophy'. In ancient and medieval literature the word 'Yoga' was used and very popular.' 'Yoga Darshan' enriched the Indian Philosophy, physically, mentally and spiritually. 'Yoga Sutra'of Patanjali is one of most important writings of this stream.

Like 'Sankhya Yoga Darshan' there are six proofs in 'Yoga Darshan'.Direct observation,prediction and wordsare the main proofs.in Yoga Darshan, the concept of dualism(opposition)into two.'prakiti'and 'purusha',where the inspired by 'prakiti and dependent on 'Karma' and 'feelings'.

Bhabnani⁶[5] wrote that Yoga is a holistic science of life, which deals with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Various Yoga practices help in the prevention and management of stress of all types including 'techno stresses'⁷. Various Yogic concepts have guided man towards shaping his life and the interpersonal relationships in his social life

Iyenger⁸[11] wrote that Most of the people begin to practice yogasana, the poses of yoga, for practical and often physical reasons. Perhaps it is for some medical Problem such as a bad back, a sports injury, high blood pressure, or arthritis. The aim of yoga is to discover our immortal Self. The practice of yoga teaches us to live fully. Physically and spiritually by cultivating each of the various sheaths.

Iyenger[11] further wrote that out of Eight Petals of Yoga described by MaharishiPatanjai ⁹the third petal of yoga is the practice of postures (yogasana). Asana maintains the strength and health of the body, without which little progress can be made. It also keeps the body in harmony with nature. Asana opens the whole spectrum of yoga's possibilities.

⁶ Dr Ananda BalayogiBhavananiin his article 'potential of Yoga as a Therapy' wrote that Yoga is practiced worldwide and the practice of Yoga helps to reduce various types of diseases and physical and mental disorder which is subject to therapy.

⁷ Bhabnani in his another article 'Combating Technostress Trough Yoga' wrote .that man in modern times faces stress everywhere . His life has become a 'rat-race' and full of competition of his body, emotions and mind are all jangled by his self physiological and psychological responses.

⁸ Padma Vibhusan Sri BKS Iyengar who left his body at the age of 96 went to Pune in 1937 upon the invitation of the Deccan Gymkhana Club.

⁹ Maharishi Patanjali have become the most authentic scripture detailing the principles of Astanga Yoga. In 196 Sutras, or short succinct verses, the great sage gives an all encompassing picture of the principles of Yoga. Ashtanga Yoga elaborated by Patanjali, begins with the code of conduct expected from a spiritual aspirant (Yama and Niyama) and then outlines the steps which lead to the final emancipation or Mukti.

The author wrote that the fourth petal of yoga concerns the breathing techniques or pranayama (prana = vital or cosmic energy, asana = extension, expansion). Breath is the vehicle of consciousness and so, by its slow, measured observation and distribution. Pranayam or breathing exercise is also an essential part of Postural Yoga.

James Mallison[13] in his book ‘Haṭhayoga’s Philosophy: A Fortuitous Union of Non-Dualities’(Oriental Institute University of Oxford)wrote that the root texts of haṭhayoga and their exegesis make little room for discussions of philosophy and so philologists of the usual bent have not been attracted to their study.Classical haṭhayoga as formulated in its locus classics, the fifteenth-century Haṭhapradipikā, combines elements from a wide range of yogic teachings, but in essence comprises the gross physical techniques of an ancient extra-Vedic ascetic tradition overlaid with subtle visualisation-based Saiva Yoga.

Asana The term asana means sitting in a particular posture, which is comfortable and which could be maintained steadily for long time. Asana may broadly be classified into three categories: (a) Cultural or Corrective asana (b) Meditative asana (c) Reparative asana.

4. Modern Postural yoga: A Field Survey

For the purpose of present research work a field survey is conducted in Kolkata, West Bengal. The survey is arranged personally by the present researcher. The Survey was conducted upon the yoga practitioners of different Yoga Centers of Kolkata. Both the Yoga Centres of North and South Kolkata are taken into consideration.



<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/india+map+states+capitalscited> (visited on 29.05.2021 at 22:00pm)

Objectives:

The objectives of this study are:

- 1. To see how modern postural yoga is being practised within various institute in Kolkata.
- 2. The language in which instructions of the practice is delivered.
- 3. Is there any relation between the practice of MPY (Modern Postural Yoga) and the practice of religion?
- 4. Throughout the study it should also be inquired that what is the relation between the age, sex and gender with the practice of MPY and religion.



Source: <https://magicpin.in/Kolkata/Ballygunge/Fitness/Yoga-Centre-Kolkata/store/23394a/photos/> (Visited on 29.05.2021 at 22:05 pm)

- **Population of the Study:** As the present researcher is living in Kolkata, the various yoga institutes of North Kolkata and South Kolkata are taken as the population.
- **Sample:**
 - Samples are taken from each of the yoga centres of Kolkata purposively.
- **Research Design:** Survey, face to face interview method was taken for the study. Structured questionnaires are prepared.
- **Data Analysis:**
 - The data will be analysed through various bi- variet tables/bar graphs, pie charts and through the method of correlation.

Variables: The relationship between variables is spurious.

- **The Survey: Total no of the Respondents Interviewed: 120**
 - Male: 50 Female: 50 Children: 20
 - Having idea of yoga and Religion: 40
 - Practicing Yoga only for health: 80

- Case Study: 4

Table 1

Distribution of respondents having idea about Yoga and Religion

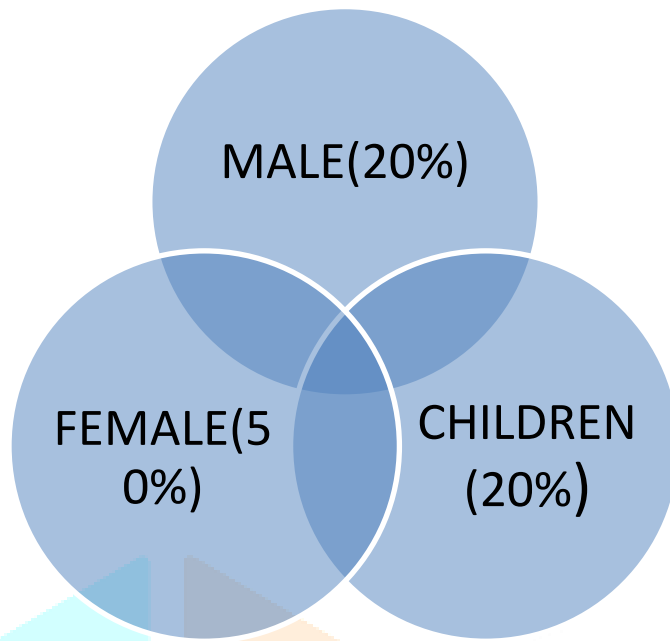
Gender	Yoga is highly connected with Religion{mainly Hinduism}	No relationship between Yoga and Religion	Total
Male	10(20%)	40(80%)	50(100%)
Female	25(50%)	25(50%)	50(100%)
Children	02(20%)	08(80%)	10(100%)

- Source: Primary Field Data

From the above table it is found that out of 50 male respondents 10(20%) said that yoga has a strong relationship with religion. 40(80%) said that there is no relationship between yoga and religion. They do yoga only for health purpose. Out of 50 female respondents 25 (50%) said that yoga is highly connected with Religion. 25(50%) said that there is no relationship between Yoga and religion. Out of 10 children 02 (20%) said that there is the relationship between yoga and religion. 08(80%) said that there is no relationship between Yoga and Religion.

So it is said a few of respondents have the idea of Yoga and Religion. Majority of them do it only for their health.

Respondents having idea of Yoga and Religion:



RESPONDENTS DO YOGA ONLY FOR HEATH

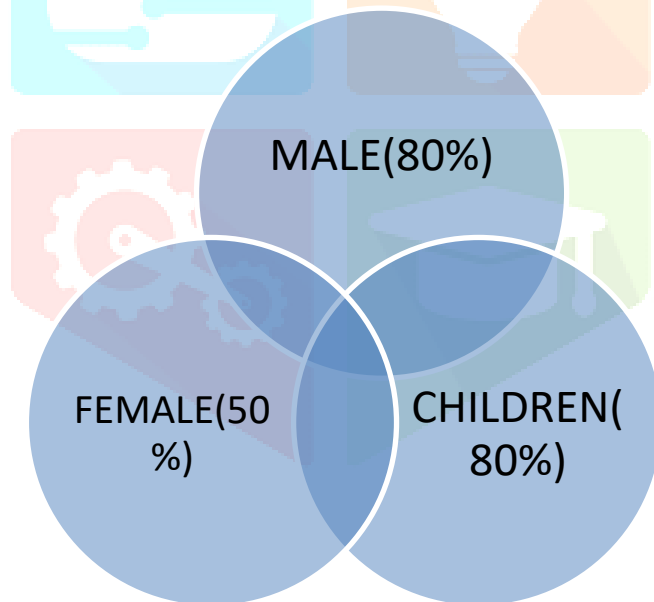


TABLE 2

Distribution of Respondents on the basis of their diseases:

Patients do yoga	Male	Female	Total
1. Artharities	06(50%)	06(50%)	12(100%)
2. High B.P.	06(46.153%)	07(53.84%)	13(100%)
3. Diabetes	06(33.33%)	12(66.66%)	18(100%)
4. Post Covid Patients	15(68.18%)	7(31.81%)	22(100%)
Normal practisioners	17(48.57%)	18(51.42%)	35(100%)

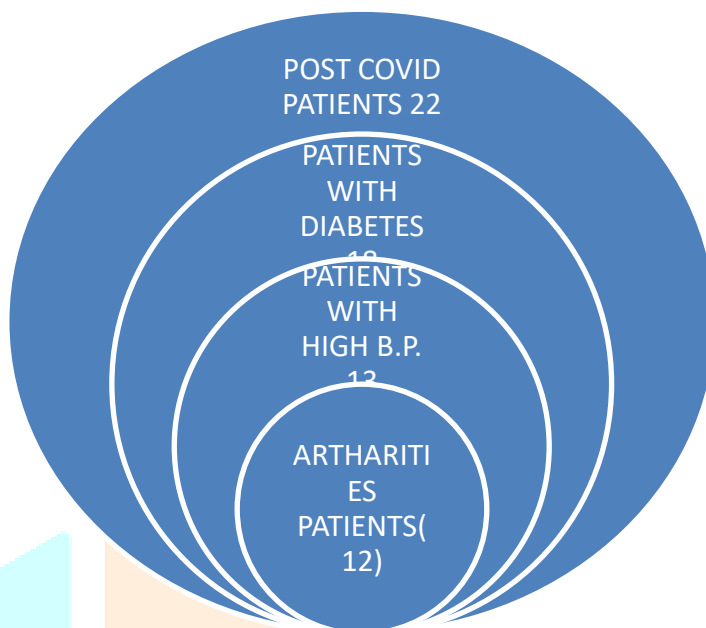
• Source: Primary Field Data

From the above table it is found that out of There care 12 Arthritis patients do yoga of which 06(50%) are male and 6(50%) are female. There are 13 practitioners with high B.P of which 06 (46.15%) are male and 07(53.84%) are female. Out of 18 diabetes patients 06(33.33%) are male and 12(66.66%) are female. It is also found there are 22 post Covid patients are doing yoga as prescribed by their doctors. Out of 22 post Covid patients 15(68.18%) are male. 07(31.81%) are female.

There are 17(48.57%) are male and 18(51.42%) are female normal yoga practitioners. They do yoga for physical, mental relaxation and beautification.



Patients do Yoga



Post Covid patient doing yoga:

TABLE: 3

Post COVID Patients do Yoga

Gender	Prescribed by the doctor	They do their own	Total
Male	04(66.66%)	02(33.33%)	06(100%)
Female	02(100%)	00(00)	02
Total	06(75%)	02(25%)	08

This table shows that post COVID patients do yoga. There are total 6 male post COVID patients do yoga. Of which 04(66.66%) do yoga as it is prescribed by their doctor. 02(33.33%) Yoga,do yoga as their own.

Of all female post COVID patients 02(100%)do yoga as it prescribed by the doctor and 00 that is none of them do yoga n their own way.

The table shows that there are 8 post COVID patients in total06 (75%) do yoga as it is prescribed by the doctor. 02(25%) do yoga in their own way.



Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/yoga+poses> (Visited on 29.05.2021 at 22:07 pm)

Conclusion

The term 'Yoga' comes from the Sanskrit term 'yuj' which means to join. Yoga is a mind-body technique. It keeps the people fit, both physically and mentally. Yoga is an age old practice. In the olden time yoga was considered as lower class culture and the culture of the 'thugs'. But now the 'thugs' culture becomes the elite culture and gaining popularity among the urban dwellers. Yoga provides a healthy future to the children in terms of providing those tools and techniques of both physical and mental fitness. Yoga enriches the children in study and sports and helps to develop flexibility and coordination. Yoga is now popular among the various age group of children. Various poses of yoga appear as fun to them they enjoy the postures in the names of different animals, such as *Mayurasana* (Peacock pose), *Ustrasana* (Camel pose), *Simhasana* (Lion pose), *Bhujangasana* (Snake pose) and so on. They practice these postures with a great interest and fun. The asanas help them to express their chest as well as whole body movement. The breathing exercise and pranayams are very much precious for the children those who are suffering from Asthma.

The message of Yoga (particularly postural yoga) is to stay healthy by keeping the body and mind fit.

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Compliance with ethical standards.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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