

The Societal and Economical Concept of Yoga: A Boon or a Bane

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Abstract—*The present paper aims to comprehend the societal notion of Yoga and evaluate its economic impact on our daily lives. This paper will be focusing on analyzing how the society responds to the adoption of yoga: as a trend or a need, the influence of yoga on consumer choices as a debate of Nature Vs. Natural, and the introduction of new economic opportunities due to the sudden popularization and commercialization of Yoga.*

Recently, a gradual cultural change has been observed in the Indian masses as their economic choices and social behaviors have altered. It is commonly known knowledge that yoga brings physical fitness, emotional/mental well-being, positive energy and peace, however, the changes that Yoga has brought into the social and economic areas of one's life in the ways of consumer choices, job opportunities or social behaviors still remains unexplored.

Thus a method of direct online interaction has been chosen to collect data regarding the changes of past, present and future due to the influence of Yoga. Two different surveys, which focused on the social and economic effects of yoga in routine lives, had been floated on popular social media platforms in order to get a variety of responses from different age groups to resolve pertinent questions like why are people adopting Yoga and how Yoga affects us financially. A distinction between natural products and nature has been drawn along with the study of effects of commercialization enlisting its advantages and disadvantages. Special emphasis has been given to the aspect of extensive marketing and publicity of Yoga and related products with its effect on consumer choices and behaviors. The inter relation between the social and economic benefits of Yoga has been analyzed which led to a better understanding of the subject and introduce an interdisciplinary approach to Yoga, Economics, Philosophy and Sociology.

Keywords: *Social, Economic, Lifestyle, Balance, Positive Changes, Commercialization, Nature, Natural, marketing, publicity.*

1. THE JOURNEY OF YOGA: FROM INDIA TO INTERNATIONAL

Yoga has been a practice for spiritual enlightenment, mental relaxation and physical exercise since the Ancient Vedic period in India. Gradually, with the course of time, Yoga was perfected as a discipline and has been passed on to the future generations as a part and parcel of the Indian culture and heritage. Yoga has not only been a form of exercise but it has had its fair share even in the mythological texts of India. Hence, Yoga has been a tradition for Indians since ages. However, it is only recently, with the recognition of 21st June in 2015 as the International Day of Yoga, that Yoga has been widely popularised and introduced to the world. The first International day of Yoga was celebrated in different countries all over the world. The Ministry of AYUSH convened the celebrations in India in the presence of 84 dignitaries of various nations and strength of 35,985 people at Rajpath. With such grand celebrations, Yoga, as a symbolic of Indian culture and heritage was officially introduced to the international platform. We, as Indians, have been adopting and practicing Yoga since years due to its established physical and mental benefits as well as the heritage and cultural value it holds. However, it remains unexplored as to how Yoga has impacted our lives in the social and economic spheres. Moreover, the reasons for this sudden popularisation and acceptance of Yoga on the international platform are yet to be analysed.

Therefore, this research paper will be focusing and elaborating on the following realms of study through the methods of pictorial statistical representations-

1. The Societal notion of Yoga: as a "Trend or a Need"
2. The Dilemma of Nature Vs. Natural
3. The Economical Side of Yoga

The discussion is organized as follows: At the outset, it is imperative to understand the societal notion of Yoga and the reason behind its sudden acceptance all over the world by people belonging to different cultures and ethnicities. Further, the dilemma between the two terms, Nature and Natural will be elaborated upon and distinguished from each other during the course of this paper. Finally, the paper will explore the economic opportunities and business models that have been introduced in the current world scenario due to the commercialization of Yoga and how the consumer choices are affected by all of the above stated factors.

2. THE SOCIETAL NOTION OF YOGA: AS A "TREND OR A NEED"

Since ages, Yoga has been an integral segment of Indian culture and heritage. The Indian masses are well aware that Yoga not only entails numerous physical benefits but also leads to spiritual and philosophical enlightenment. Thus, it is not surprising to see that Yoga receives a warm welcome into the daily lives of the people of India and they proudly associate it to their culture and ancient past. However, many societies other than the Indian society remained unaware for a very long period of time about the numerous benefits that Yoga brings along itself. Yoga, as a form of a life changing discipline has only been recently popularised in the whole world. It is surprising to see that despite remaining unaware of the various benefits of Yoga until recently, the new generation is increasingly accepting and including Yoga in their daily lives. Thus, it is imperative to explore the societal concept of Yoga and to understand why and how people from different societies are increasingly accepting Yoga.

It has been widely observed that in the present times, the youth follows practices in the forms of trends and overlook their needs in the process. Sometimes, people adopt or follow practices out of the pressure or influence that society creates by forming a positive or negative perception about certain practices and that gives birth to trends. 'Trends' can be simply defined as practices, which are popularly being followed by the people or a certain direction in which customs or habits

develop. On the other hand, 'Needs' are independent of the perception of the society and are solely based on individual requirements. 'Trends' are commonly followed by the masses: however, 'Needs' can differ from one person to the other. Therefore, there is a huge contrast that rests between a 'Trend' and a 'Need'. It is essential to recognise and relate the practice of Yoga as and to the question of whether it a Trend or a Need in order to completely understand the reasons because of which it is being increasingly adopted in the world today.

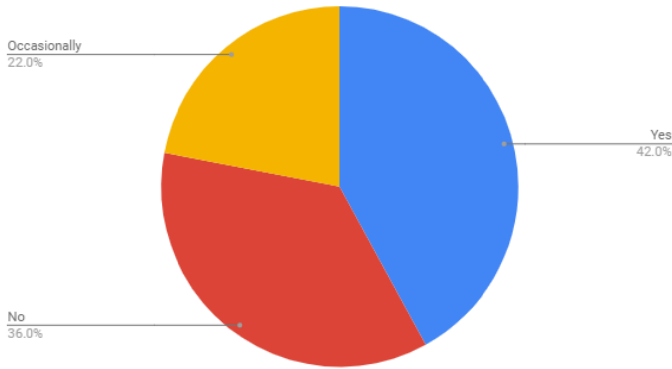
The same can be demonstrated through a simple example, it is common knowledge that a watch is an important gadget and is required in our daily lives. Hence, a watch as a gadget is our need. However, a limited edition diamond studded and gold plated watch that does nothing more than showing time (the same purpose can also be solved by an ordinary watch) but is in huge demands by the people for the sake of its glamorous value, will qualify as a 'Trend'. The possibility of Yoga to be a trend or a need remains equally shared by both the aspects as many people have adopted the practice to deal with their physical and mental problems through Yoga, however, at the same time, it has also been observed that the younger as well as parts of older generation are swiftly taking up Yoga as a practice because of peer pressure and societal influence of Yoga. Though Yoga brings only positive results and the results are independent of the reason because of which the practice is adopted but it is important for us to study the same to evaluate whether the presence of Yoga will remain in the routine lives of people for a long period of time or will be forgotten as trend of the past.

In order to find out the possible reasons due to which the youth has shown a sudden inclination towards the practice of Yoga, two surveys were conducted on popular social media platforms, which actively engages the young generations. In the survey, the participating members were asked to fill a simple form, which will demonstrate the influence that Yoga had in their lives and the reasons for the adoption of Yoga as well as the economic impact Yoga has had on their lives. The data collected in the two surveys has been used throughout for this study in order to draw substantial results and answers the questions, which have been raised at the beginning.

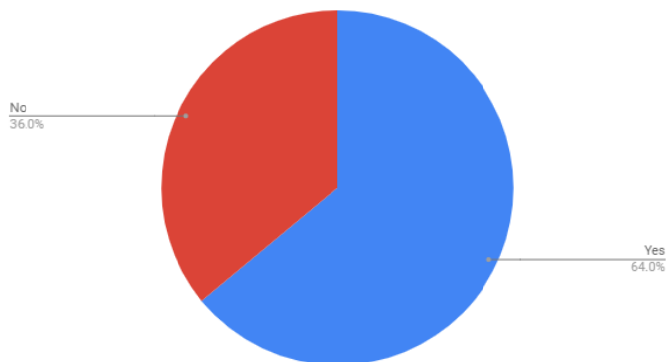
2.1 Data Analysis

The recorded statistical data can be demonstrated as follows-

Do you practice Yoga regularly?



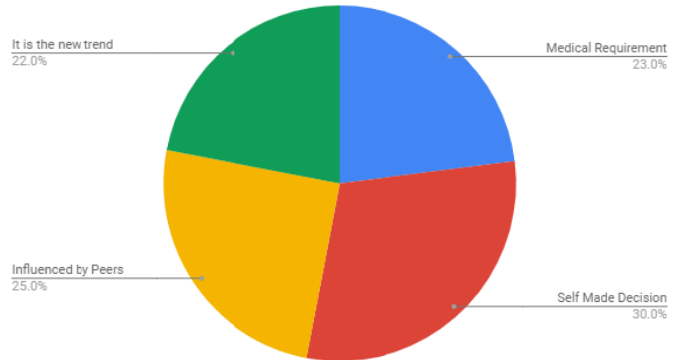
Have you started practicing Yoga recently?



Out of the 44 total responses received, it can be clearly observed that a significant share of 22% of the survey audience practice Yoga occasionally whereas a bigger share of 42% practice Yoga regularly and 36% do not practice at all. Hence, it can be seen that the sudden commercialization and popularisation of Yoga has had an important impact on changing choices of people where more and more people are now switching to Yoga and as many as 42% of the surveyed people prefer Yoga to be a part of their daily life routines. However, it is an important detail to notice through the survey that an important sector of the surveyed population, which is 22%, practice Yoga only occasionally which means that they have adopted Yoga out of societal pressure and influence because of which they are not able to continue Yoga as a daily practice and will end up quitting Yoga as a daily practice once it is outdated as a trend. A striking feature of this survey demonstrated that a huge section of the population, which was surveyed (64% to be exact)

clearly stated that they have started to practice Yoga only recently. This data reveals that the sudden market attention that Yoga has received and its recognition on the international platform as the International Day of Yoga was celebrated all over the world, has not only driven the international audience to this practice but has also attracted the local young population of India to Yoga and brought it back to its cultural roots.

Why did you start practicing Yoga in the first place?



This data helps us to finally completely answer our first question by revealing that the actual reasons for starting Yoga ranges from personal physical needs to just the influence of society and extensive marketing of Yoga. Thus the result of this survey can be broadly categorised into the following three subsections-

2.1.1 Self-conscious-decision

It needs to be observed that a considerable size of the population, which is 30%, has made a self-conscious decision of adopting Yoga into their routine lives due to the various benefits, which Yoga entails. This shows that the young population is now aware of the various advantages that Yoga has for dealing with the physical requirements of the body and the mental stresses of our daily lives. Thus, the extensive marketing and publicity of Yoga has also shown various positive aspects by attracting the young generation to this art and they are slowly changing their stressful modern lives to more balanced lives with the help of Yoga.

2.1.2 Societal Influence

However, almost an equally big number of 22% people have taken up yoga only because of the societal influence which means that they have adopted Yoga only because it is 'trending' currently and will eventually end up giving away this form of physical and mental exercise once it is out of popular practice. Hence, this

22% population stand a minimal chance of continuing Yoga as a daily life routine because they are not motivated by any important factors and it is only the current trend which is governing their choices.

2.1.3 Peer Pressure

Another important factor, which has gained substantial amount of votes 25%, is the Peer Pressure. At times, the general masses start following a practice, without realisation, out of peer pressure. As is depicted by the survey data, a sizeable population is temporarily taking up Yoga only as a fashion statement and majorly because it is a trend.

2.1.4 Medical Requirement As observed by the statistics, 23% of the surveyed audience adopted Yoga because they had been given professional medical advice to do so. As it has been established that Yoga helps in curing various ailments of different kinds, doctors are prescribing routine Yogic exercises in order to facilitate the process of medication and fulfil the medical requirements of their patients. Hence, this 23% of the population took up Yoga due to practical purposes and are out of the scope of societal influence or peer pressure.

Thus, a striking conclusion can be drawn out of these statistics that it is not solely for the purpose of physical or mental health requirements out of which people are adopting Yoga. Contrary to popular belief, they are doing so because of various other reason as well amongst which peer pressure, societal influence, self made conscious decisions and medical requirements are some of the major reasons.

3. THE DILEMMA OF NATURE VS. NATURAL

It is imperative to distinguish and understand the difference between products, which claim to be so called 'natural' and products, which are obtained directly out of 'nature'. In today's age of globalisation, the faster we are moving closer to technology, the more we are moving further away from our mother nature. The new generation has realised this problem and is moving a step forward towards sustainable development and conservation of nature. In the process to do the same, people are increasingly giving up on chemical based productions and prefer products, which have been

naturally produced or derived directly from nature. So, that the use of chemicals and eventually the harm to nature and individual health is minimised. However, due to extensive commercialization and marketing of so called nature based products, the fine line between what is originally natural and what is chemical based has been blurred and the general masses are blindly following and buying whatever is being sold to them in the name of nature and herbal products. There are various kinds of products available in the market. The major categories in which the production of products can be divided is as follows-

3.1 Classification of Products

3.1.1 Chemical Based Products

The items, which are produced completely through the use of chemicals and artificial substances, come under this category.

3.1.2 Chemical Products with Natural Additions

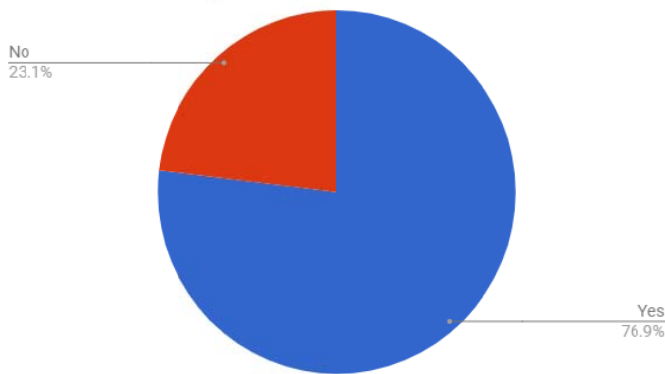
Certain daily life products are produced with chemical processes but because the audiences prefer to buy nature based products, they add certain highlights and characteristics in their product which are naturally derived and that leads to a mixed production using both chemical and natural substances.

3.1.3 Natural Products

The real natural products are produced completely through resources, which are obtained from nature and are harmless to individual health and nature.

For obvious reasons, the inclination of the general masses is towards natural products, however the corporate companies have studied such consumer behaviours and choices because of which they mould their advertising campaigns accordingly. Most of the times, the chemicals based products are sold to the audience as natural products and the consumers prefer using such products. Similarly, Ayurveda based products, which are closely related to nature are also heavily in demand in the current times and the markets profit from the same.

Do you use Ayurveda based products?



3.2 Data Analysis

The above data simply directs us to our second question, which concerns the debate of Nature versus Natural. Out of the surveyed audience, a huge percentage of 76.9% of the total 56 people, voted that they will prefer using Ayurveda based products rather than chemical based products because they believe that Ayurveda based products or products that have been manufactured naturally are the most effective and they bring people closer to nature. As it can be clearly seen that people prefer such products more than any other artificially manufactured products by companies, the markets are now trying to repackage their products as natural and chemical-free. People are ready to shell out big bucks on products that have been produced naturally even if their purpose gets solved by products of less price, which are produced chemically. Hence, this sudden inclination towards natural based products can be observed through the survey and general choices of the masses wherein a new debate of Nature Vs. Natural has cropped up.

4. THE ECONOMICAL SIDE OF YOGA

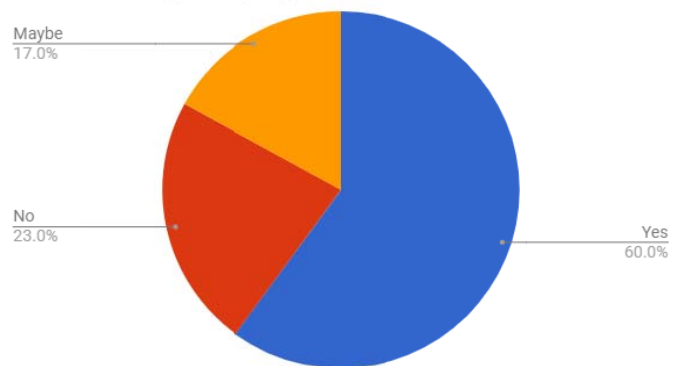
With the recognition of International Day of Yoga, many market opportunities and avenues have opened up for the youth of the nation and this study brings out a detailed analysis of the advantages and disadvantages that commercialization of Yoga has brought into perspective.

Modernization and Global Connectivity has led to the sharing and exchange of ideas on a huge scale and at a rapid rate. It is a result of this that the cultural idea of Yoga has rapidly spread throughout the world and everybody is aware of Yoga. The acceptance of Yoga on

a world scale has led to major developments in the social as well as economic spheres. The economic impact of Yoga has been stronger than expected and has translated into various major transformations in the everyday life of people with both negative and positive changes.

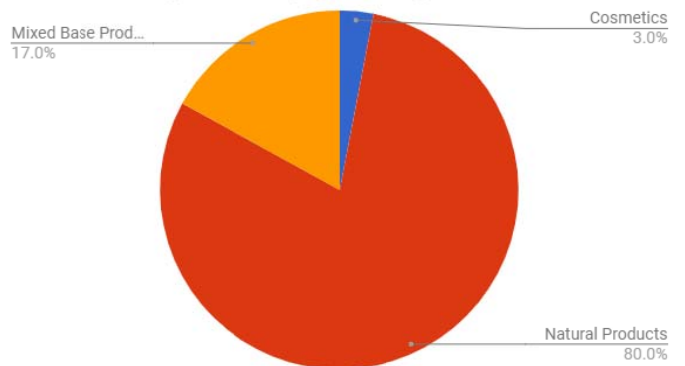
Yoga has made crucial alterations in the financial lives of people all around the world. The commercialization of Yoga has given both positive and negative results by creating job opportunities, expanding the market for Yoga and related products, and influencing the consumer choices in a negative fashion. The following survey data reveals interesting insights into the positive affects that commercialization of Yoga has led to-

Would you choose Yoga Training as a profession?



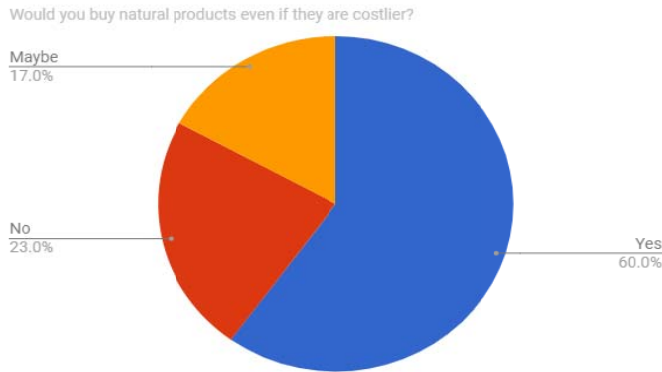
As can be observed by the survey results, out of 53 responses, 60% of the young population considers Yoga training and Meditation training as decent job openings wherein they would like to professionally take up teaching Yoga methodologies and Meditation practices.

Which of the following products would you prefer for daily use?



Similarly, it can be seen that a massive vote of 80% clearly indicates the preference in using natural products

over chemical cosmetics by the masses. Hence, these demands open up lucrative business opportunities for various corporates where they may create a new market space for such products.



The collected data brings us to the answer of our third and last question, which showcases how Yoga affects us financially and the changes in consumer choices patterns.

4.1 The Positive Aspects

4.1.1 Employment Opportunities.

The commercialization of Yoga has opened up different avenues in terms of employment opportunities for the youth as well as introducing and expanding the new market for natural products. There are various new sectors, which are providing jobs such a professional Yoga training, Meditation centres with trained professionals etc.

4.1.2 Expanding Market and Trade

Due to the wide acceptability and demand of natural or Ayurveda, based products, there is also an opportunity of setting up business and shops to manufacture and sell the same. The demand for Yoga training, meditation centres, professionals as well as Ayurveda/natural products is not limited to the local domains. International exposure has led to an exponential increase in the demand and market space for all such products.

The above mentioned positive aspects of the commercialization of Yoga are accompanied with certain negative aspects as well.

4.2 The Negative Aspect

4.2.1 People are drifting away from its core value.

Due to the marketing, branding and re-packaging of Yoga and Ayurveda based products, people are attracted only to its show value and are forgetting the roots where

Yoga grows from. They are drifting away from the cultural significance and simplicity that Yoga brings along it to the more modern version of Yoga, which has blurred the line between what is real and artificial.

4.2.2 Spending more than required.

As can be clearly seen from the survey, 60% of the audience will choose highly priced natural products over cheaper chemical products even if they solve the same purpose due to the brand value that is being attached to such items. Hence, the big corporates are en-cashing on this current trend and capitalizing on the inclination of people towards natural products and the masses are slowly falling in the such traps due to their negligence, ignorance and blindly following the trends.

4.2.3 Social Divisions and Economic Relations.

The interconnectivity of the economic impact and social divisions that are created in the society can be understood as hiring personal Yoga trainers and going for individual meditation classes is considered to be elite and only a small sector of the society can afford it. Hence, Yoga, from an affordable form of physical exercise and mental relaxation has been changed to an elite practice wherein it has emerged as a huge industry in itself with various brands popping up to the surface and fading away its root values.

5. CONCLUSION

It can be safely concluded that as a discipline, Yoga has not only made drastic changes in the physical and mental aspects of human lifestyle but in the recent scenario, it has also impacted the social and economic spheres of our lifestyles. This research paper has been an attempt to explore these indirect effects that the popularisation of Yoga has brought into the realms of human life and an effort to answer the questions, which demonstrates the connections between the various aspects of Yoga. Examining Yoga through the commercial lense, in this research paper, Yoga has been successfully interpreted in an interdisciplinary approach.

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