



Contentment in Life Before and After the Practice of Yoga: A Study

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Abstract

Contentment in life is the degree to which one perceives that wants are being met and accordingly, getting satisfied with what you have and who you are. This contributes to inner peace, happiness, gratitude and compassion to others and a feeling of purpose and meaning in life. The practice of yoga can help us to cultivate a sense of inner well-being, which allows us to feel contented without needing validation from the outside world. This study was carried out among 50 yoga practitioners of Patanjali Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala, India using a questionnaire containing the measure of contentment and the characteristics of the respondents such as age, sex, marital status, whether experienced any psychological problems during the past six months, and whether experienced any other problems in life during the past six months. The data was analysed as scores, percentages and through statistical test. The results show that when compared to before the practice of yoga, after starting yoga, higher proportion of people have experienced eleven positive contentment in life related items, while higher proportion experienced eight negative contentment related items less only. This indicates that yoga practice has helped the respondents to better experience the life contentment related items considered in this study. There exists statistically significant difference between the mean contentment score of the respondents before and after the practice of yoga, with a comparatively higher score obtained after yoga practice. Similarly, statistically significant difference was observed between the mean contentment score of most of the contentment related items under the study before and after the practice of yoga, with a comparatively higher score obtained for the items after yoga practice. These results establish the influence of yoga in improving contentment in life of the practitioners. How various contentment items under the study might have influenced the experience of other contentment items after yoga practice have also been interpreted in the paper, mainly from a psychological perspective.

Keywords: Yoga; Contentment; Life

Abbreviations: GABA: Gamma-Aminobutyric; BMI: Body Mass Index.

Introduction

It is often mentioned that contentment in life is the key to happiness. Contentment in life is the degree to which one perceives that wants are being met and accordingly, getting satisfied with what you have and who you are. Instead of comparing oneself to others or wishing for a different life, you feel like living a life you can stand behind, accepting yourself as you are today, and valuing all the opportunities and experiences. This contributes to inner peace, happiness, gratitude and compassion to others and a feeling of purpose and meaning in life. Peace of mind and positivity developed through contentment in life will help in personal growth and self-improvement. The practice of yoga can help us to cultivate a sense of inner well-being, which allows us to feel contented without needing validation from the outside world. Practices like yoga and meditation help us to become more familiar with the nature of the mind and more skilful in noticing when we are getting caught in the vagaries of the mind, helping us to disengage and move our attention in ways that support us rather than pull us down. A substantial body of research related to mindfulness theory demonstrate that people achieve better health through shifting their mind-set and reorienting their attitude towards themselves and their environment [1].

Methodology

The study was carried out among 50 yoga practitioners of Patanjali Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala, India using a questionnaire containing the measure of contentment [2] and the characteristics of the respondents such as age, sex, marital status, whether experienced any psychological problems during the past six months, and whether experienced any other problems in life during the past six months. The data was analysed as scores, percentages and through statistical test.

Results

Table 1 shows the contentment score of the respondents before and after the start of yoga practice. While 60% respondents get a contentment score in the range of 61 to 68 before the start of yoga, the scores have increased to 83 to 102 for 50% respondents after the start of yoga practice. Similarly, 40% respondents get a score in the range of 59 to 60 only before the start of yoga practice, which increased to 71 to 77 for 40% respondents after the start of yoga practice. Only 10% of yoga practitioners have a low score of 66 after the start of yoga practice.

Before the Start of Yoga Practice		After the Start of Yoga Practice	
Contentment Score Range	Respondents (%)	Contentment Score Range	Respondents (%)
59-60	40	66	10
61-68	60	71-77	40
		83-102	50
Total	100	Total	100

Table 1: Contentment score of the respondents before and after the start of yoga practice.

The responses of the yoga practitioners towards various items in the tool used to quantify contentment are given below:

- **I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am in life:** While 80% of the respondents do not agree that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga practice, all of them disagree to this after starting yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I feel that my life is very rewarding:** 70% of yoga practitioners have agreed to this after the start of yoga practice, whereas, only 20% agree that they were having this feeling before starting yoga. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).

- **I have warm feelings towards almost everyone:** After the start of yoga practice, 60% respondents have agreed to this contentment item, while only 20% agree that they were having this feeling before yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I rarely wake up feeling rested:** When compared to 10% respondents who do not agree that they were having this condition before the start of yoga practice, after starting yoga, 50% respondents disagree with this. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I don't feel particularly optimistic about the future:** While 70% of the respondents do not agree that they

were having this feeling before the start of yoga practice, 90% respondents disagree with this after they started yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).

- **I find most things amusing in life:** While none of the respondents agree that they were feeling in this manner before the start of yoga practice, 50% respondents are agreeing to this positive contentment item after starting yoga. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I am always committed and involved in life:** 90% of respondents have agreed to this after start of yoga practice, as compared to only 40% respondents agreeing before the start of yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **Life is good for me:** While only 10% respondents agree to this feeling before starting yoga practice, a very high proportion (70%) have expressed agreement with this after they started doing yoga. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I am well satisfied about everything in life:** 60% respondents agree to this after starting yoga practice, while none of them have agreed that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done:** Only 10% of respondents disagree that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga practice. However, after the start of yoga practice, 40% have disagreed with this.
- **I am very happy in my life:** While only 10% of the respondents agree that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga, 50% agreed to this after the start of yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I feel able to take anything on in life:** While only 10% of the respondents agree that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga, after doing yoga, 40% of the

respondents have agreed to this positive contentment item.

- **I feel fully mentally alert:** While none of the respondents have agreed that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga, 40% agree to have had this feeling after start of yoga practice.
- **I feel that I am not especially in control of my life:** The proportion of respondents disagreeing with this item changed from 30% before start of yoga practice to 70% after its practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I often experience joy and elation:** 10% of the respondents agreeing to this item before the start of yoga increased to 60% after starting yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in life:** Compared to 50% respondents disagreeing with this before the start of yoga, after doing yoga, 70% respondents have disagreed with this contentment item. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I don't have fun with other people:** 10% respondents disagreeing with this item before the start of yoga increased to 20% disagreeing after the start of yoga practice. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I don't feel particularly healthy:** 50% of the respondents disagreed with this feeling before the start of yoga practice, which increased to 70% disagreeing after doing yoga. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga (Table 2).
- **I feel I have a great deal of energy:** While 50% respondents have agreed to this after start of yoga practice, none of them have agreed that they were having this feeling before the start of yoga practice.
- **I don't have particular happy memories of the past:** The data shows that the same proportion of respondents are disagreeing with this contentment related item both before as well as after the start of yoga practice.

Item no.	Contentment Related Item	Mean Score for the Item		Statistical Significance of the Difference in Scores
		Before Yoga Practice	After Yoga Practice	
1	I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am	3.1	3.8	t stat = 2.27; p< 0.05
2	I feel that life is very rewarding	3.2	4.3	t stat = 3.35; p< 0.01
3	I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone	3.2	4	t stat = 2.44; p< 0.05
4	I rarely wake up feeling rested	2.6	3.7	t stat = 3.22; p< 0.01
5	I am not particularly optimistic about the future	2.9	4	t stat = 2.70; p< 0.01
6	I find most things in life amusing	2.8	3.9	t stat = 3.22; p< 0.01
7	I am always committed and involved in my life	3	4.1	t stat = 2.90; p< 0.01
8	Life is good	2.7	4.1	t stat = 4.00; p< 0.01
9	I am well satisfied about everything in my life	2.6	3.8	t stat = 4.00; p< 0.01
10	I am very happy	2.9	3.8	t stat = 2.63; p< 0.01
11	I feel that I am not especially in control of my life	2.2	4	t stat = 5.51; p< 0.01
12	I often experience joy and elation in my life	2.7	3.7	t stat = 2.22; p< 0.05
13	I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life	2.8	3.8	t stat = 3.12; p< 0.01
14	I don't have fun with other people	2.7	3.6	t stat = 2.63; p< 0.01
15	I don't feel particularly healthy	2.4	3.8	t stat = 3.83; p< 0.01

Table 2: Statistical difference in scores of items related to contentment in life before and after the practice of yoga.

The problems reported by the yoga practitioners (having different contentment scores) during the past six months are shown in Table 3.

Contentment Score	Problems Reported by the Yoga Practitioners during the Past Six Months
66	Had psychological as well as other problems in life
71	Had psychological problem
72	Had psychological as well as other problems in life
73	Had other problems in life
77	Had psychological as well as other problems in life
83	Had other problems in life
91	No problems
93	No problems
98	No problems
102	No problems

Table 3: Problems reported by the yoga practitioners having different contentment scores.

Statistical significance of the difference in contentment scores based on psychological problems experienced by the yoga practitioners during the past six months is shown in Table 4.

Experienced Psychological Problems during the Past Six Months	
Yes	No
Mean contentment score	Mean contentment score
71.8	93.4
t stat value = -5.85; significant p<0.01	

Table 4: Statistical significance of the difference in contentment scores based on psychological problems experienced by the yoga practitioners during the past six months.

Statistical significance of the difference in contentment scores based on other problems experienced by the yoga practitioners during the past six months is shown in Table 5.

Experienced other Problems during the Past Six Months	
Yes	No
Mean contentment score	Mean contentment score
74.5	88
t stat = -2.10; significant $p < 0.05$	

Table 5: Statistical significance of the difference in contentment scores based on other problems experienced by the yoga practitioners during the past six months.

Table 6 shows the statistical significance of the difference in contentment scores based on period of yoga practice.

Period of Yoga Practice (Months)	
5 to 9	18
Mean contentment score	Mean contentment score
79.4	95.5
t stat = -3.27; significant $p < 0.01$	

Table 6: Statistical significance of the difference in contentment scores based on period of yoga practice.

Discussion

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that the level of contentment in life experienced by the respondents has increased after yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. The influence of yoga practice in maintaining a positive mental state, regulation of emotions, promoting resilience ability, and improving the positive affect & reducing the negative affect of the yoga practitioners have been reported based on studies carried out [3-6]. Such psychological benefits of yoga practice can also be expected to contribute to improvement in contentment in life for the practitioners.

Discussion based on the responses of the yoga practitioners to various contentment items are given below:

I Don't Feel Particularly Pleased with the Way I am in Life

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed about having such a feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. The pleasure centres of the brain are sparked by a yoga, pranayama, and meditation. A study has reported that yoga practice increases quality of life [7]. This could contribute to pleasure in life also.

I Feel that My Life is Very Rewarding

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. The positive effects of yoga can become a motivation to live well and achieve rewards in life. Even if such rewards are not much, the improved mindset of the yoga practitioners could probably help to make them feel satisfied with whatever they have achieved in life.

I have Warm Feelings towards almost Everyone

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed to this after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. From this, it can be interpreted that yoga practice has helped the respondents to develop a positive social outlook. This assumes relevance in the present day context, of society being divided based on religion, caste, politics etc. to a great extent. Under such conditions, developing a positive social outlook through practices like yoga may be considered as a favorable outcome. At the foundation of our daily life are the principles of Yama and Niyama, the first two limbs of yoga according to sage Patanjali, which enable us to live harmoniously with others and our own selves. This paves the way for a peaceful state of mind.

I Rarely Wake up Feeling Rested

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they were having this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This is an indication of the capability of yoga to provide sufficient rest/relaxation to the body and mind.

I Don't Feel Particularly Optimistic about the Future

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they were having this feeling after starting yoga practice, as compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. After starting yoga practice, 70% of the respondents in this study had felt that life is rewarding in nature. This attitude might have also contributed to a better level of optimism for them. With yoga practice, people can stay active and optimistic. Under a study carried out by Patanjali Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala, it was

found that people have become more optimistic after the start of yoga practice [8].

I Find Most Things Amusing in Life

When compared to before yoga practice, higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This also shows the effect of yoga in creating a positive mindset. Positive emotions, which is one of the components of Mr. Seligman's PERMA model in psychology contains amusement as one of its components. According to him, Positive psychology takes you through the countryside of pleasure and gratification, up into the high country of strength and virtue, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfilment, meaning and purpose. This is what yoga also helps us to achieve in our lives to a great extent. The influence of yoga practice in maintaining a positive mental state has been reported based on one of the studies carried out by Patanjali Yoga Research Centre, Kozhikode [5]. A positive mental state developed by the yoga practitioners might have probably contributed to the feeling of amusement in life reported by 50% of the yoga practitioners after they started doing yoga in the present study.

I am Always Committed and Involved in Life

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This indicates that yoga practice has helped in inculcating a sense of responsibility in more number of people, which could probably be an outcome of better self-awareness achieved through improvement in their mental conditions.

Life is Good for Me

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. The physical and psychological benefits achieved through yoga practice, which contributes to positivity in their lives could be a reason for such an attitude developed by them. Results of a study showed that meditation, a component of yoga practice produced increases over time in daily experiences of positive emotions, which, in turn, increased a wide range of personal resources such as increased mindfulness, purpose in life, social support, and decreased illness symptoms. These

increments in personal resources predicted increased life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms [9].

I am Well Satisfied about Everything in Life

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This shows how much yoga has helped the practitioners in leading a productive and fruitful life, catering to most of the requirements in life. As already mentioned, 90% of the respondents have felt optimistic in life after starting yoga practice. Satisfaction in life may be considered as an important element in becoming optimistic in one's life. Results of a study have revealed that yoga practice is a powerful variable with enormous role in life satisfaction [10]. Another study also showed that yoga was significantly effective in Life Satisfaction of Middle age adults [11].

There is a Gap between What I Would Like to do and What I have Done

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. The health benefits achieved through the practice of yoga could have helped in doing the required tasks in life in a better manner. With respect to contentment item no. 7.8, it was observed that after starting meditation practice, 90% of respondents mentioned that they are committed and involved in life. This commitment could probably be the one of the reasons attributed for the yoga practitioners feeling that they do things which they like in life.

I am Very Happy in My Life

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. Agreement by higher proportion of respondents after the start of yoga practice, when compared to before starting it for the contentment items, namely, particularly pleased with life, life is very rewarding, waking up feeling rested after sleep, finding most things in life as amusing, optimistic, satisfied, and life is good can all be considered as contributing towards feeling very happy in life.

Yoga is the science of true and lasting bliss, Ananda. It starts with the second limb of Yoga known as Niyama. One of the Niyamas is Santosha, which roughly translates as "contentment." Patanjali Maharshi says that contentment

leads to extraordinary happiness. Contentment means to experience satisfaction in your present state, no matter what is going on. It is closely linked to evenness of mind and poise, undisturbed by either distress or happiness. The equanimity that enables us to accept all circumstances with serenity is so praiseworthy that Lord Krishna called it Yoga or union with the Supreme. Hence, instead of running after elusive happiness, in Yoga we focus on contentment, Santosha. Based on a study, it has been found that majority of the respondents achieved very strong improvement in happiness through the practice of yoga [12]. Gamma-aminobutyric (GABA) levels in brain spike after just a single hour of yoga. Higher GABA levels are associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety. Even a single yoga session can start changing your brain chemistry and improve your mood.

I Feel Able to Take Anything on in Life

Higher proportions of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Benefits reported by the respondents in this study after starting yoga practice such as very much of happiness, more commitment in life, satisfaction, optimism in life etc. achieved through yoga practice can all be considered to be contributing to the feeling that they can take anything on in their lives. The positive mind set achieved through such benefits could make people more confident to take on even difficult tasks/handle adverse conditions in their lives.

I Feel Fully Mentally Alert

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. It should be noted that the response is not just about mental alertness, but about full mental alertness achieved due to yoga practice. Higher level of mindfulness obtained through the practice of yoga could be the reason for such a response, which has been probably attained primarily through meditation (one of the components of yoga practice), the key to mental alertness and awareness. Research has shown that yoga can boost concentration and memory since you have to focus during its practice. In addition to turning inward, yoga helps to clear your thoughts, calm your senses, and improve your brain's ability to concentrate on one thing at a time. Improvement in one's concentration may be expected to contribute to mental alertness also.

I Feel that I am not Especially in Control of My Life

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This again is an indication of the effect of yoga in

helping people to carry forward their life in a better manner than what it was before they started doing it. Under the fast and strenuous nature of today's life, being able to have a control on life can be considered as a significant achievement, which will ultimately pay off to the yoga practitioners through a better standard of living.

I Often Experience Joy and Elation

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This is another indication of improvement in the mind-set of the yoga practitioners. When we are in a good mood attained through practices such as yoga, we feel more inspired in life, making us more joyful. The opposite of this happens when we are in a bad mood. Yoga helps us to shift our stagnant energy and become more present in the moment, creating space for more joy in life.

I don't have a Particular Sense of Meaning and Purpose in Life

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This shows their orientation towards achieving goals in life. It may be noted that 40% of the respondents had agreed that they feel as being able to take anything on in life after they started yoga practice (contentment item no. 7.12). In a way, this also shows their commitment / responsibility to undertake necessary activities in life to achieve their goals. It has been observed in this study that the practice of yoga has contributed to contentment related aspects such as happiness, commitment, alertness, optimism, feeling that life is rewarding, feeling joyful and elated, and feeling more energetic (this is shown as item no. 7.19 below) for a higher proportion of people. These achievements could have also contributed to instilling better sense of meaning and purpose in the lives of the yoga practitioners.

I don't have Fun with Other People

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. After starting practice, 60% respondents reported having warm feeling towards other people. Such a positive orientation might have helped them to interact well and

enjoy the company of / have fun with other people.

I don't Feel Particularly Healthy

Higher proportion of respondents have disagreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. Statistically significant difference observed between the mean score for this contentment related item before and after the practice of yoga confirms this result. This implies that the respondents have been able to achieve the physical and mental health benefits of yoga. This could motivate many of them to continue the practice of yoga. It would be worthwhile if these people transfer such an opinion to others so that some of them also may be interested to start doing yoga. Research has shown that yoga enhances muscular strength and body flexibility, promote and improve respiratory and cardiovascular function, promote recovery from and treatment of addiction, reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, improve sleep patterns, and enhance overall well-being. A study has reported that majority of the yoga practitioners have high to medium level of health. A very high proportion of respondents achieved slight and very much improvement in the psychological and physical health parameters considered under the study due to yoga practice with or without treatment / medicines, when compared to the pre-yoga base line condition of with or without treatment / medicines alone [13].

I Feel I have a Great Deal of Energy

Higher proportion of respondents have agreed that they had this feeling after starting yoga practice, when compared to before its practice. 70% of the meditators had reported feeling joyful and elated after the start of yoga practice. Feeling energetic after yoga practice can be considered to contribute to feeling elated in life also, which 60% of the yoga practitioners of yoga practitioners have shown as a benefit achieved. Feeling energetic could have probably helped the yoga practitioners to become optimistic, committed, satisfied, happy, mentally alert etc., which are reported to have been achieved by them after starting yoga practice. Moving your body in a sustained and focused way while doing yoga clears stagnation and boosts endorphin hormones, making you feel more energized. During the practice of yoga, we stimulate energy to flow, and then we remove any blockages or impediments to the flow of energy, termed as Granthis in Sanskrit. Yoga destroys Granthis. A study conducted in Canada found that meditation, a component of yoga practice can significantly improve brain function and energy levels.

I don't have Particular Happy Memories of the Past

The data shows that the same proportion of respondents are disagreeing with this contentment related item both

before as well as after the start of yoga practice. This may be probably because yoga practice might not have been started by the respondents under this study early to show its positive effects earlier.

It can be made out from Table 3 that respondents getting comparatively lower contentment scores in the range of 66 to 83 have reported psychological problems and or other problems in life during the past six months. However, those who get comparatively higher scores in the range of 91 to 102 do not report any problems in life during the past six months (Table 3). This could be because the type and level of psychological problems faced were more for the yoga practitioners who got lower scores for contentment, and hence, even with yoga practice, they were not able to feel much contented in life. Patanjali Maharshi has mentioned diseases, doubt, carelessness and mental lethargy as obstacles to yoga practice. The yoga practitioners in the present study getting a comparatively lower contentment score (who have reported psychological / other problem) might have had doubts on the effects of yoga, medical problems, carelessness and laziness in doing yoga properly due to their existing problems. This might have probably resulted in achieving less benefits through yoga practice including feeling contented in life.

The negative effect of psychological problems experienced by the yoga practitioners during the past six months on their contentment is evident from the data presented in Table 4. Respondents reporting psychological problems during the past 6 months are getting a comparatively lower total contentment score (71.8) than those who did not report the problem (score of 93.4), with statistically significant difference in the scores. Similarly, the effect of other problems faced by the yoga practitioners during the past six months on their contentment is evident from the data presented in Table 5. Respondents reporting other problems during the past 6 months are getting a comparatively lower total contentment score (74.5) than those who did not report other problems (score of 88.0), with statistically significant difference in the scores. The above mentioned results substantiate the negative effect of psychological and other problems experienced by the respondents during the past 6 months on the level of contentment achieved in life through yoga practice. It has been reported that meditators reporting psychological problems and other problems in life have obtained a lower contentment score than those who had no such problems, with statistically significant difference in the scores [14].

Yoga practitioners with 5 to 9 months of practice get a contentment score of 79.4 only, while those who have practiced yoga for 18 months period is getting a higher score of 95.5, with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 6). This indicates that more period of yoga

practice has contributed to more contentment in life for the practitioners. It has been reported that higher period of yoga practice contributes to better subjective wellbeing/psychological wellbeing [15]. The results of a study showed that when compared to people who do not practice yoga, higher proportion of yoga practitioners experience peace of mind all the time and most of the time. There exists statistically significant difference between the peace of mind score of people practicing yoga and those who do not do yoga [16].

Even though the mean total contentment score of males is comparatively higher (85.8) than that of females (77.8), statistically significant difference in the scores was not observed in the study. However, this implies that males have been able to achieve more contentment in life through the practice of yoga than females. Similarly, even though there was no statistically significant difference between the mean total contentment score of married and unmarried yoga practitioners, the former group had a score of 88.7 compared to the score of 79 for unmarried respondents, indicating that married yoga practitioners have achieved a comparatively higher level of contentment in life through the practice of yoga than those who are unmarried. Unmarried yoga practitioners reported significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression [17].

With respect to age of the yoga practitioners, even though there is no statistically significant difference between the mean total contentment score of respondents in the age group of 22 to 28 years and 32 to 39 years, the former category of yoga practitioners gets a mean total contentment score of 76.8 only, when compared to the latter category's score of 80.7. This implies that respondents in the comparatively younger age group of 22 to 28 years could not achieve as much of contentment in life through yoga practice as that of respondents in the 32 to 39 years age group. Similarly, even though there is no statistically significant difference between the mean total contentment score of respondents in the age group of 22 to 39 years and 42 to 59 years, the former category gets a mean total contentment score of 76.8 only, as compared to the latter group getting a higher score of 88.7. Similarly, even though the F value in ANOVA test was not found to be statistically significant, the mean contentment score of yoga practitioners in the lower age group of 22 to 28 years was the lowest, followed by the score of those in the 33 to 39 years age group, while the mean contentment score was maximum for yoga practitioners in the age group of 42 to 55 years.

The above results indicate that yoga practitioners in the higher age groups have achieved more contentment in life than those who are in the lower age groups. Longer-term meditation practice (a component of yoga) was associated

with structural changes of "white matter" in the brain, which is responsible for "relaying sensory information", which can explain why meditation helps people stay in the present moment and may help combat age-related cognitive decline. A study reported that the practice of hatha yoga is helpful in preventing and attenuating age-related deterioration of physical health, muscular strength and flexibility. After hatha yoga practice, Body Mass Index (BMI) of all the people in the younger age group 20-29 years remained in "normal range." But BMI of participants in the higher age groups of 30-39 years and 40-49 years changed to "normal range" with a reduction of 7.4% and 7.1% in BMI respectively, which could reduce the risk of ischemic heart disease [18]. Making yoga a part of our lives can help protect against the effects of aging on our memory and cognition. Many health concerns in senior citizens have been linked to the sedentary lifestyle and inactivity leads to muscular shortening, tightening and weakening. Lack of movement leads to joint deterioration and loss of flexibility. Yoga is concerned more with the mind than the body. Any sign of disease manifested in the body is a result of a mental imbalance or an unhealthy attitude. Yoga has proven to be immensely therapeutic in preventing the deterioration through ageing. As one grows older, the transformation back to the childhood begins. Feeling sad, lonely, worried or bored, facing retirement or coping with the death of someone may be more common for older people. Adapting to these changes leaves them feeling lonely. They carry a notion that they are of no use anymore to the family or society and hence, start feeling inferior and depressed. Physical mobility, range of movement, flexibility etc. decreases as one ages, and physical stiffness radiates to their mind too. Yoga has been proved to help alleviate or reduce many of the health challenges, making it an increasingly popular choice for the older adult population. Among the many benefits of yoga, it has been shown to slow down or even slowly reverse the ageing process. The comparatively older yoga practitioners under the study reported in this paper could have probably benefited more with respect to the above mentioned and related benefits, which might have contributed to more contentment in their lives.

Conclusion

When compared to before the practice of yoga, after starting yoga, higher proportion of people have experienced eleven positive contentment in life related items, while higher proportion of people experienced eight negative contentment related items less only after yoga practice, when compared to before starting yoga practice. This indicates that yoga practice has helped the respondents to better experience the contentment related items considered in this study. Statistically significant difference exists between the mean contentment score of the respondents before and after the practice of yoga, with a comparatively higher

score obtained after yoga practice. Similarly, statistically significant difference was observed between the mean contentment score of most of the contentment related items under the study before and after the practice of yoga, with a comparatively higher score for the items after yoga practice. These results help to establish the influence of yoga in improving contentment in life for the practitioners. How various contentment items under the study might have influenced the experience of other contentment items after yoga practice have also been interpreted in the paper, mainly from a psychological perspective.

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