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Yoga in the New Digital Century: Exploring its Utilization and Impact in the Era of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Yoga, an ancient practice originating from the Indian subcontinent, has gained immense popularity worldwide in recent decades. With the advent of social media platforms, the dissemination of yoga-related content has reached unprecedented levels, influencing how individuals perceive, practice, and engage with yoga in the new century. Also, with social media addiction, people are required to engage in yoga practices and how they can benefit positively from social media in terms of yoga. The research paper has described the evolution of social media and its fast pace development in the 21st century, so-called the digital era and how it has helped in taking the advantages of yoga to the hands of the people living in the remotest areas. This research paper examines the intersection of yoga and social media, exploring how digital platforms have influenced the practice, dissemination, and perception of yoga. This research paper investigates the utilization and impact of yoga in the context of social media, examining its effects on practitioners, communities, and the wider yoga industry. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, empirical studies, and qualitative analyses, this paper aims to provide insights into the evolving landscape of yoga in the digital age.

Keywords: *yoga, social media, trending, data analytics, facebook, instagram.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Yoga, originating from the Indian subcontinent, is a multifaceted discipline encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual practices. Its roots can be traced back thousands of years to ancient texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. The word "yoga" itself is derived from the Sanskrit word "yuj," meaning to yoke or unite, reflecting its aim to harmonize body, mind, and spirit. The philosophical underpinnings of yoga are deeply ingrained in Indian traditions, including cultures of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. One of the foundational texts of yoga, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, outlines the eight limbs of yoga², which include

¹ Author is UGC NET Qualified and Former Student of MA (Yoga), India.

² Anand Aman. Bharti Puja, Singh Gaurav Kumar. A Review on Ashtanga Yoga – Eight Limbs of Yoga. International Journal of Trend in Research and Development, Volume 8(3), ISSN: 2394-9333. <https://www.ijtrd.com/papers/IJTRD22647.pdf>. Accessed on 24/04/2024.

ethical guidelines, physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and meditation, among others. Over the centuries, yoga has evolved and diversified, with various schools, styles, and lineages emerging to cater to different needs and preferences of the society. In the current era, yoga has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, becoming a global phenomenon embraced by millions of people worldwide. Its practices, including physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation, are widely adopted for their numerous health benefits, stress-relieving qualities, and potential for personal transformation and relaxation techniques. Yoga studios, retreats, online platforms, and social media channels serve as hubs for practitioners to engage with this ancient discipline and explore its profound teachings in the contemporary context. One of the main prominent personality to start a new culture leveraging the use of his social media skills and the yoga practice worth mentioning here is the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. With his efforts, on June 21, 2023, the International Day of Yoga as celebrated at the UN headquarters in New York with PM in attendance.³

II. EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN SOCIETY

The emergence of social media has revolutionized modern society, profoundly impacting individuals of all ages and influencing various aspects of daily life. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become integral parts of communication, entertainment, and information dissemination. They offer unprecedented opportunities for connectivity, self-expression, and community-building on a global scale. However, alongside the benefits, social media also presents challenges such as privacy concerns, misinformation, and the proliferation of unrealistic standards. In this digital age, where the constant barrage of information and the pressure to curate an idealized online persona can lead to stress and anxiety, yoga emerges as a potent tool for navigating the complexities of social media in a mindful and balanced way. By incorporating yoga practices such as mindfulness, breath awareness, and self-reflection, individuals can cultivate greater awareness of their online behavior, discernment in consuming content, and resilience in managing digital stressors. Moreover, yoga offers techniques to ground oneself, foster authentic connections, and promote positive engagement with social media platforms, ultimately channeling the energy of these digital spaces toward personal growth, well-being, and meaningful social interaction. Through the integration of yoga philosophy and practices, individuals can harness the transformative potential of social media to cultivate a more conscious and harmonious relationship with themselves and the online

³ Sahasrabuddhe Vinay. Sharma Manjunath. (2023, June 21). World Yoga Day: Yoga's challenge on the global stage. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/international-day-of-yoga-2023-modi-un-speech-8675850/>. Accessed on 12/04/2024.

community.

III. THE INTERSECTION OF YOGA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In the current age of digitalization, the intersection of yoga and social media has become a significant phenomenon, shaping both the practice of yoga and the way it is perceived and consumed by millions worldwide. Here are some major points to be considered:

- **Accessibility and Reach:** Social media platforms have democratized access to yoga teachings and resources. According to the Data Reportal's Digital 2024: India report on internet users, India was home to 462.0 million social media users in January 2024, equating to 32.2 percent of the total population⁴. Anyone with an internet connection can access tutorials, classes, and discussions about yoga, regardless of their location or financial means. This has expanded the reach of yoga beyond traditional studio settings, making it accessible to a broader and more diverse audience. According to the Data Reportal's "Digital 2024: India" report on internet users, India was home to 462.0 million social media users in January 2024, equating to 32.2 percent of the total population. Social media has played a pivotal role in advancing the accessibility and reach of yoga to the common man through digitization. With just a few clicks, individuals from all walks of life can now access a vast array of yoga resources, including tutorials, classes, and inspirational content, right from the comfort of their own homes. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have democratized yoga education, breaking down barriers of geography, cost, and time constraints. Whether it's a beginner seeking guidance on basic poses or a seasoned practitioner exploring advanced techniques, social media offers a wealth of information at their fingertips. The interactive nature of social media fosters a sense of community and connection among practitioners, providing support, encouragement, and inspiration along their yoga journey. Overall, social media's role in digitizing yoga has revolutionized how the practice is accessed, shared, and experienced, making it more inclusive and empowering for the common man
- **Community Building:** Social media has facilitated the formation of global yoga communities where practitioners can connect, share experiences, and support each other. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube serve as virtual gathering

⁴ Kemp Simon. (2024, February 21). Digital 2024: India. DataReportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-india#:~:text=India%20was%20home%20to%20462.0,percent%20of%20the%20total%20population..> Accessed on 22/04/2024.

spaces for yogis to exchange ideas, seek advice, and foster a sense of belonging⁵. This sense of community can be particularly valuable for individuals who may not have access to local yoga communities. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and specialized yoga forums provide spaces where practitioners from diverse backgrounds can come together to share their experiences, insights, and challenges related to their yoga practice. These digital communities transcend geographical boundaries, allowing individuals from around the world to connect, support each other, and exchange knowledge in real-time. Whether it's through participating in online yoga challenges, joining virtual classes, or engaging in discussions on yoga philosophy and wellness, social media enables practitioners to forge meaningful connections and cultivate a sense of belonging within the global yoga community. Moreover, the accessibility and immediacy of social media platforms make it easier for individuals to discover the transformative effects of yoga on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being, inspiring others to embark on their own yoga journey. As a result, social media's role in community building has not only democratized access to yoga but has also contributed to its widespread adoption and recognition as a valuable tool for holistic health and self-discovery in the digital age.

- **Influencer Culture:** Social media has given rise to a new breed of yoga influencers who leverage their online presence to share their practice, teachings, and lifestyle with large audiences. These influencers often play a significant role in shaping trends, promoting specific styles or products, and influencing the perception of yoga in the digital space. However, it's essential to approach influencer content critically and discerningly, as it may not always align with the authentic principles of yoga. In the dynamic realm of social media, several influential figures are transforming the lives of millions through their innovative and inspiring approaches to yoga. Some among them are as follows:
 - a. Adriene Mishler stands out as a beacon of accessibility and authenticity, known for her YouTube channel "Yoga with Adriene"⁶. With her down-to-earth demeanor and inclusive teaching style, Adriene has amassed a dedicated following of millions worldwide, making yoga accessible to individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

⁵ Dhruv S, Ujjval Chandra D. (2023, August, 23). Role of New Media in Spreading Awareness of Yoga in India. *Journal of Yoga & Physiotherapy*. ISSN: 2476-1303. Volume 10, Issue 5. <https://juniperpublishers.com/jyp/pdf/JYP.MS.ID.555798.pdf>. Accessed on 24/04/2024.

⁶ Mishler Adriene. (n.d). Home [You Tube Channel]. You Tube. <https://www.youtube.com/@yogawithadriene/featured>. Accessed on 22/04/2024.

- b. Another prominent influencer is Kino MacGregor⁷, renowned for her mastery of Ashtanga yoga and her engaging presence across platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Through her captivating content and insightful guidance, Kino empowers practitioners to deepen their practice and explore the transformative potential of yoga.
- c. Rachel Brathen⁸, widely known as "Yoga Girl"⁹, has also made a significant impact on social media, using her platforms to promote self-love, mindfulness, and environmental activism alongside her yoga teachings.

These influential figures, among others, are leveraging social media to democratize yoga education, inspire positive change, and foster vibrant communities of wellness seekers worldwide.

- **Hashtag campaigns:** Hashtag campaigns have played a pivotal role in raising awareness and promoting engagement within the yoga community, reaching masses worldwide. We came across many notable examples related to this, some are as follows:
 - a. **#YogaEveryDamnDay** movement, which encourages individuals to commit to a daily yoga practice, fostering discipline and consistency, raising attention among people. This campaign has inspired countless practitioners to prioritize their physical and mental well-being through regular yoga sessions, contributing to a widespread culture of self-care and empowerment.
 - b. **#BodyPositivity:** Another impactful hashtag campaign is #BodyPositivity, which promotes acceptance and celebration of diverse body types within the yoga community, challenging conventional beauty standards and promoting inclusivity. By sharing images and stories of body-positive yoga practitioners, this campaign has sparked important conversations about self-love, body acceptance, and the democratization of yoga leading to a great effect on the general masses with the help of the social media platform.
 - c. **#YogaForAll** campaign advocates for accessibility and inclusivity in yoga by offering modified poses and adaptive practices for individuals of all abilities and

⁷ MacGregor Kino. (n.d). Home [You Tube]. You Tube. <https://www.youtube.com/user/kinoyoga>. Accessed on 24/04/2024.

⁸ Brathen Rachel [@yoga_girl]. (n.d.). Posts [Instagram Profile]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/yoga_girl/?hl=en. Accessed on 15/04/2024.

⁹ Brathen Rachel. (n.d.). *Yoga Guide*. Yoga Girl. <https://www.yogagirl.com/rachel-brathen>. Retrieved on 10/04/2024.

backgrounds, ensuring that yoga remains accessible and beneficial for everyone, regardless of age, size, or physical condition.

These hashtag campaigns, among others, have leveraged the power of social media to inspire positive change, foster community engagement, and promote the transformative potential of yoga on a global scale impacting the lives of many people, communities, etc and reaching the remotest areas of the countries just with the connection building social media platforms.

IV. CHALLENGES IN THE WAY OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOGA

- **Commercialization and Consumerism:** The commercialization of yoga on social media is a double-edged sword. While it has led to the proliferation of yoga-related products, services, and brands, it has also raised concerns about commodification and the dilution of yoga's spiritual essence. Some argue that the emphasis on physical appearance, flexibility, and product endorsements can perpetuate unrealistic standards and detract from the deeper philosophical aspects of yoga.
- **Misinformation and Misinterpretation:** The vast amount of yoga content on social media can also contribute to misinformation and misinterpretation. Without proper guidance and discernment, practitioners may encounter conflicting advice, unsafe practices, or cultural appropriation of yoga traditions. It's crucial for individuals to approach online yoga resources mindfully, seek guidance from qualified instructors, and cultivate a discerning eye for credible sources.
- **Absence of quality control mechanisms:** Despite the many benefits of propagating yoga through social media platforms in the new digital world, one significant challenge is the proliferation of misinformation and the dilution of yoga's authentic teachings amidst the vast sea of content available online. With the absence of quality control mechanisms, individuals may encounter conflicting advice, unsafe practices, or cultural misappropriation, undermining the integrity and efficacy of yoga challenging the whole sort of benefits that gets undermined in this malpractice.
- **Distraction and Disconnection:** Excessive engagement with social media can detract from the present moment and hinder individuals' ability to fully immerse themselves in their yoga practice. With the constant barrage of notifications, scrolling feeds, and endless streams of content, social media platforms have a remarkable ability to capture and monopolize users' attention, leading to fragmented concentration and diminished productivity. The addictive nature of social media, with its dopamine-driven feedback

loops and algorithmic optimization for engagement, exacerbates this distraction by fostering compulsive usage patterns and reducing individuals' capacity for sustained focus. Constant notifications, comparison browsing, and the pressure to perform for social validation can disrupt mindfulness and concentration, diminishing the depth and quality of the yoga experience. Whether it's checking for updates, responding to messages, or mindlessly browsing through posts, the allure of social media can easily pull individuals away from the tasks at hand, sabotaging their efforts to achieve their intended goals.

- **Comparison and Unrealistic Standards:** Social media often presents curated and idealized images of yoga practitioners, promoting unrealistic standards of perfection and beauty. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt among individuals who compare themselves to these images, detracting from the essence of yoga as a practice of self-acceptance and inner exploration.

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

- **Opportunities for Research and Collaboration in Studying Yoga and Social Media:** The intersection of yoga and social media presents exciting opportunities for research and collaboration, promising to deepen our understanding of human behavior, well-being, and community dynamics in the digital age. As social media platforms continue to evolve and shape modern communication channels, researchers have a unique opportunity to explore how these platforms influence the dissemination, adoption, and perception of yoga practices and teachings. By conducting interdisciplinary studies that integrate insights from psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and digital humanities, scholars can unravel the complex interplay between online interactions and personal well-being, shedding light on the potential benefits and challenges of integrating yoga into digital lifestyles of the new era.
- **Data Privacy and Ethical Considerations:** The government and the app providers of the social media should ensure strict adherence to data privacy regulations and ethical guidelines when tracking and utilizing data from social media platforms for predictive purposes. Also, our Indian constitution provides for the Right to Privacy under Article 21 and that must be adhered to so that the privacy of the individuals can be protected to all the aspects such as data privacy on the internet and social media platforms, etc¹⁰.

¹⁰ S Farsana. (2023, June 11). Right to Privacy: An Indian Context. Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/the-daily-roam/right-to-privacy-an-indian-context-55047/>.

Implementing robust security measures and transparency protocols to safeguard user information and maintain trust in the digital ecosystem can provide privacy and safety to all users.

- **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Launch targeted education and awareness campaigns on social media platforms to promote the benefits of yoga, mindfulness, and holistic wellness practices. Utilize influencers, experts, and user-generated content to amplify messages and reach diverse types of audiences, driving widespread adoption and acceptance of these practices into the minds of the younger generations can yield many benefits.
- **Community Building and Support Networks:** Leverage social media platforms to build communities centred around yoga, mindfulness, and holistic wellness. By fostering connections and providing support, these communities can encourage individuals to adopt and sustain healthy habits, creating a ripple effect that positively impacts society's overall well-being. This community building induces a sense of brotherhood and collective responsibility.
- **Data Analytics from Social Media for Yoga Trend:** Utilize advanced data analytics techniques used to track trends, sentiments, and emerging topics on social media platforms related to the yoga discipline. By analyzing vast amounts of data generated by users, patterns can be identified, helping to predict future trends in various domains such as technology, fashion, health, and entertainment. New digital era has provided us with many tools like machine learning and deep learning to detect fake news that can be used to provide authenticity to the users¹¹.
- **Health and Wellness Monitoring:** There are various wearable devices and health-tracking apps with social media platforms to monitor and promote overall health and well-being. By tracking metrics such as heart rate, sleep patterns, and physical activity levels, individuals can receive personalized recommendations and encouragement through social networks to maintain a healthy lifestyle and it can help further the benefits of yoga in the real time tracking system.
- **Content Curation and Personalization:** Develop algorithms and AI-driven systems

Accessed on 24/04/2024.

¹¹ All Tanvir Abdullah. Mia Mahir Ehasas. Akhter Saima. Rezwatul Huq Mohammad. (2019, June). Detecting Fake News using Machine Learning and Deep Learning Algorithms. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335936172_Detecting_Fake_News_using_Machine_Learning_and_Deep_Learning_Algorithms. Accessed on 22/04/2024.

that curate personalized content related to yoga, mindfulness, and wellness based on individual preferences and behaviors observed on social media. By delivering relevant and engaging content, these platforms can inspire and empower users to incorporate healthy practices into their daily routines.

- **Leveraging Technology for Positive Social Impact and Global Outreach in Yoga:** leveraging technology holds immense potential for fostering positive social impact and global outreach in the realm of yoga. By embracing innovative digital platforms and tools, the global yoga community can expand its reach and influence, democratizing access to ancient practices and wisdom. One recommendation for the future is to develop user-friendly mobile applications and online platforms that offer immersive virtual yoga experiences, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations to participate in classes, workshops, and retreats remotely. By harnessing the power of technology in this way, the yoga community can truly transcend existing boundaries and make a meaningful impact in promoting holistic well-being and spiritual growth worldwide. Furthermore, leveraging social media and digital marketing strategies can amplify the visibility of yoga initiatives, attracting a wider audience and fostering community engagement on a global scale.

VI. CONCLUSION

In 21st century, today's digital age, the convergence of social media and yoga has revolutionized accessibility to mindfulness practices with ease at home. With just a few clicks, individuals can embark on a journey of self-discovery and wellness, engaging with a global community of like-minded practitioners. While challenges such as information overload and the commodification of spirituality persist, opportunities abound for harnessing the power of social media to deepen one's yoga practice. Whether through virtual classes, inspirational content, or online communities, the benefits of this intersection are manifold. By leveraging technology responsibly, individuals can cultivate balance, resilience, and connection in ways previously unimaginable, enriching their lives both on and off the mat.
