

# Yoga and Altruism among Adults

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**Abstract:** *Yoga is a group of physical, mental and spiritual practice or disciplines which originated in India and the primary goal of yoga is to gain balance and control one's life. It sometimes plays an important role in developing altruism. Altruism is the principle and moral practice of concern for happiness of other human beings, resulting in quality of both mental and spiritual. The present study is an attempt to find out significant difference between yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behavior. Data were collected from Thrissur district, Kerala, using convenient sampling method. Sample size was 60 from which 30 belonged to yoga practitioners and remaining 30 to non-yoga practitioners. The age limit was 20-40. Only one scale was used. The self-report altruism scale; developed by Rushton J.P, Chris John & Fekken G.C. It was used to assess altruism via self report and it contains 20 items with 5 responses as never, once, more than once, often, and very often respectively. Independent t-test was used to generate results. The results show that there is a significant difference among yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behavior. The results also reveal that yoga practitioners have high level of altruism than non-yoga practitioners.*

**Keywords:** Altruism, Yoga

## 1. Introduction

Yoga therapy may be defined as the application of yogic principles to a particular person with the objective of achieving a particular spiritual, psychological or physiological goal (Richard Miller, PhD). Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word yuj, which means union. It is the union of individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. Yoga is a group of physical, mental and spiritual practice or disciplines which originated in India and the primary goal of yoga is to gain balance and control one's life. The person who experiences oneness of existence, said to be a yogi. Yogi, having attained to a state of freedom referred to as mukti, nirvana or moksha. Self realization is the aim of yoga and this leads to state of liberation of freedom. In yoga, it is seen that first Guru or Adiguru is considered as first yogi or adiyogi. Historical evidences of yoga were seen in the pre-Vedic period (2700BC). The information about yoga practices are available in Vedas, Upanishads, Jainism, Panini, Epics, Puranas.

Patanjali yoga(200BCE to 300BCE) mainly deals with the training of the mind to gain oneness with the universe. It helps to set man free from the bondage of matter. Patanjali yoga is also called astanga yoga or raja yoga. It consists of 8 limbs. These are ; Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Dharna, Pratyahara, Dhyana and Samadhi. Yama means that reigning in or control and it is in the form of commandments, moral imperatives & ethical rules within yoga and Hinduism. Niyama helps us to maintain positive duties in which to grow. There are 5 niyamas; self purification, contentment, self-discipline, self study & self-surrender. Asanas or physical posture uses the body to gain health and mastery over the mind. Pranayama is related to the speed of inhalation and exhalation( breathing). Pranayama act as voluntarily and involuntarily. Dharna refers to the collection or concentration of the mind. Pratyahara helps to use the senses to gain mastery over the mind. Dhyana or meditation requires deep mental concentration. Samadhi refers to a state of dhyana or complete state of meditative consciousness.

Yoga is not a religion. Yoga helps promote a balanced development of physical, mental and spiritual being. Yoga is a way of living that aims towards healthy mind in a healthy body. Yoga asanas is the way to build strength, flexibility and confidence. The practice of yoga helps in controlling the mind, body and soul and helps to manage stress and anxiety and keeps relaxing. Daily practice or regular practice of yoga leads to lose of weight, relieve stress, improve immunity and maintain a healthier life.

One of the methods by which yoga prepares the body and mind of the individual for the eventual liberation and enlightenment through karma yoga. It is the yoga of selfless action. Without any personal expectation an individual can achieve mind body awareness and enlightenment by practicing karma yoga. An individual needs to cultivate a loving attitude towards the selfless task. Yoga sometimes plays an important role in developing altruism.

Altruism is defined as in modern times, is a pro-social behavior in which a person will voluntarily help another at some cost to themselves (Cardwell, Clark& Meldrum,2002). Pro-social behavior are action intended to benefit another. It is just of antisocial behavior with positive, constructive, helpful behavior. Altruism is entirely different from pro-social behaviour. They are action intended solely to benefit another and thus not to gain external or internal reward. Swami Vivekananda, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela are few prominent examples of altruistic people, who sacrificed their life for the cause of others without any benefit. Altruism is the unselfish concern of an individual for the welfare of another ( Carlson, Martin& Buzkist,2004).

Altruism mainly of two types' biological altruism and reciprocal altruism. Biological altruism refers that people may help others regardless of who they are but are more likely to help relative as opposed to a stranger. Anderson & Ricci (1997) theorized that the reason for this is due to the fact that genetic relatives, in differing degrees, share a proportion of our genes, so their survival is way of ensuring that some of the individual's gene will be passed on altruistic behavior between an individual and a non-relation

will have no evolutionary advantage so it would be highly unlikely for a person to show altruistic behavior towards a non-relation. Reciprocal altruism refers that if you behave kindly to a person or help them in the past, they will be inclined to help you in future (Trivers, 1971). It never requires individuals to be related to each other because individuals should interact only once and never meet again. The aim or desire of altruism is to improve the welfare of another person without any expectation of getting rewards.

**Operational Defintions**

**ALTRUISM:**” Social behaviour carried out to achieve positive outcomes for another rather than for self.(Rhuston J.P, 16/03/1980)

**YOGA:** yoga therapy may be defined as the application of yogic principles to a particular person with the objective of achieving a particular spiritual, psychological or physiological goal.(Richard Miller, PhD).

**Objective**

To find significant difference between yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behaviour.

**2. Method**

The sample in the current study involves yoga practitioners and non yoga practitioners from age group of 20-40. The total sample size is 60 which include 30 to yoga practitioners and remaining 30 to non yoga practitioners. The data was collected from Thrissur district, Kerala using convenient sampling method. Each person was individually approached. The sample was collected based on some inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Inclusion Criteria:** The individuals who met the following criteria are included in the sample.

- Age group (20-40).
- Females and males of yoga and non yoga practitioners.
- Literate.
- Mentally healthy.
- Sample taken from Thissur district, Kerala.

**Exclusion Criteria:** The individuals who fell in the following criteria are excluded.

- Age group not belongs to the range of 20-40 excluded.
- Third gender.
- Illiterate.
- Mentally unhealthy.
- Samples other than from the Thrissur district are excluded.

**Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between yoga and non yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behaviour.

**Measures**

A) Altruistic personality scale ;It measures the self report altruism. It was developed by Rhuston J.P, Chris John R.D & Fekken G.C (1981). A 20 item scale designed to measure altruism. Participants answers on 5 point likert scale includes never, once, more than once, often, very often. The scale had significant inter-rater reliability of

$r(78)=+0.51(p<0.01)$ . The scale had internal consistency of the 20 item form is 0.51.

**Procedure**

The sample of yoga practitioners and non yoga practitioners individually from Thrissur district, Kerala and established a good rapport to make them feel comfortably. The subjects are assumed about the confidentiality of the response. A questionnaire was administrated, instruction to the subject was presented clearly at the beginning of the test. They were requested to be honest in their response. After the data collection, data were consolidated.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data collected was scored and the values obtained were subjected to statistical analysis. Independent t-test was used in the study.

**3. Result**

Variable	Groups	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size(n)	t-value
Altruism	Yoga practitioners	54.76	77.18	30	4.61
	Non yoga practitioners	43.96	99.88	30	

**4. Discussion**

The present study was conducted to find out the difference between yoga and non yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behaviour. The sample consists of 30 to yoga and remaining 30 to non yoga practitioners from Thrissur district, Kerala. The data were collected using convenient sampling and sample consists of both males and females. Self-report altruism scale is used for the study. Each person was individually approached. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical technique t-test.

The table shows the mean, standard deviation, number of samples and t-value of yoga and non yoga practitioners. There is significant difference between yoga and non yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behaviour, hence the calculated value is greater than the table value we reject the hypothesis.

Lynn E.O’ Connor (2015) investigated a study on “Empathy, Compassionate Altruism and Psychological Well Being in Contemplative Practitioners across Five Traditions.” Erik Wallmark (2012) conducted study on “Promoting Altruism through Meditation; An 8 Week, Randomized Controlled Pilot Study.” Above mentioned studies provides strong evidence for my result.

**5. Implications**

- The present study would provide policies for promoting yoga in educational settings.
- The present study helps in introducing programme, interpreting yoga in work settings.

## 6. Limitations

- Geographical area was restricted to Thrissur district, Kerala and here the sample may not be a true representation of the population.
- The size out of the sample was also limited.
- Lack of sufficient time and resources.
- Inadequate sample size may be responsible for the inability of the test statistics.

## 7. Suggestions

- a) The number of variables included in the study was limited. Hence further studies may be conducted incorporating additional variables. It may be recalled that present study was conducted upon a sample collected from Thrissur district only.
- b) The study may be replicated on other yoga practitioners in different districts of Kerala.
- c) More comparative groups can be included.
- d) More variables can be considered for correlation.

## 8. Conclusion

There is significant difference between yoga practitioners and non yoga practitioners with respect to altruistic behaviour. The study helps to understand that yoga plays an important role in altruism. The study reveals that yoga practitioners have a high level of altruism than non yoga practitioners. Harmonizing oneself with the universe is yoga. Yoga helps a person to attain altruism. If we practice yoga with involvement can gain its benefits. Now a day's millions of people have benefited by practice of yoga and its get vibrant every day.

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