



Harnessing Sahaja Yoga Meditation to Advance SDG 3: Promoting Health and Well-being

Neha , Research Scholar, Department of Education, School of Liberal Arts, GD Goenka University, Gurugram Email id: nkrisingstar@gmail.com

Parvesh Lata, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Education, School of Liberal Arts, GD Goenka University, Gurugram, Email id: Parvesh.lata@gdgu.org

Abstract

In today's fast-paced world, individuals are increasingly driven by ambition, achievement, and material gain—often neglecting their inner well-being. Amidst this relentless pursuit, questions arise: Are we truly satisfied, relaxed, and healthy? The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948), a vision echoed in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), which prioritizes holistic health for all. This review critically examines Sahaja Yoga Meditation (SYM) as a promising, evidence-based intervention to support SDG 3. Synthesizing findings from neuroscience, psychology, and educational research, the paper highlights SYM's impact on stress reduction, emotional regulation, and mental well-being—particularly in adolescent and educator populations. The review further contextualizes SYM as a scalable, low-cost intervention aligned with SDG 3 targets, including mental health promotion, non-communicable disease prevention, and health equity. Policy implications and recommendations for curriculum integration, community outreach, and cross-sector collaboration are discussed to position SYM as a transformative tool in global health strategy.

Keywords- Sahaja Yoga Meditation, Sustainable Development Goal 3; Good Health and Well Being

Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and the rise of artificial intelligence, global health systems continue to face persistent challenges—particularly the surge in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), mental health disorders, and substance abuse among youth (WHO, 2022). Despite progress, premature mortality and psychosocial distress remain widespread, raising urgent questions about the disconnect between innovation and well-being. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) aims to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” by 2030 (UN, 2015). Within this framework, targets such as SDG 3.4 (reducing premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and mental health promotion) and SDG 3.5 (strengthening prevention and treatment of substance abuse) underscore the need for integrative, scalable interventions.

Sahaja Yoga Meditation (SYM), founded by H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, offers a promising approach to address these challenges. The term *Sahaja* means “with” and *Ja* means “born,” while *Yoga* refers to “union with the all-pervading power of divine love.” Meditation in this context is defined as a state of **thoughtless awareness**, where the mind is silent yet alert. Emerging research suggests that regular practice of SYM can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression, while enhancing emotional regulation and psychosocial adjustment (Zohar et al., 2013; Manocha et al., 2011).

This review synthesizes interdisciplinary evidence on SYM's impact across educational, clinical, and community settings, evaluating its relevance to SDG 3.4 and 3.5. It further explores SYM's

potential as a low-cost, non-pharmacological strategy for advancing mental health, emotional resilience, and holistic well-being—positioning it as a transformative tool in global health promotion.

UNESCO and Sustainable Development Goals



Source link : <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Background

1. Self-Realisation and Psychological Resilience

- **Patil (2025)** explored how **self-realisation through SYM** enhances resilience in young adults by deepening identity, purpose, and meaning.
- **Beddoes & Danowitz (2021)** validated SYM's role in fostering resilience among engineering students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Morgan (1999)** found SYM more effective than CBT-based stress management in reducing anxiety, suggesting its unique contribution to resilience-building.

SYM promotes resilience by cultivating self-awareness, emotional depth, and existential clarity—key for youth mental health interventions.

2. Integrative Wellness and SDG 3 Advancement

- **Kandwal, Nautiyal & Juyal (2024)** emphasized **integrative wellness practices** (yoga, mindfulness, nutrition) as holistic pathways to achieving SDG 3.
- **Kumar & Singh (2024)** highlighted yoga's impact on maternal health, NCDs, CDs, and substance use, especially in post-pandemic Asia-Pacific contexts.



SYM and allied wellness modalities offer scalable, preventive strategies for achieving SDG 3 targets across diverse health domains.

3. Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Benefits of SYM

- **Dewli et al. (2024)** positioned SYM as a **non-invasive, accessible tool** for emotional balance, behavioral regulation, and interpersonal harmony.
- **Sharma & Sharma (2024)** reported physiological benefits (heart rate, blood pressure, emotional regulation), linking SYM to reduced NCD mortality (Indicator 3.4).
- **Chourasia et al. (2024)** emphasized SYM's role in **stress management and emotional maturity**, reinforcing its relevance to adolescent well-being.

SYM addresses mental, emotional, and physiological health simultaneously—aligning with SDG 3 Indicators 3.4 (mental health) and 3.5 (substance abuse prevention).

4. Academic Recognition and Neurophysiological Impact

- **Choudhary (2024)** conducted a **bibliometric analysis**, identifying SYM's growing academic footprint in mindfulness, psychological well-being, and neurophysiology.
- **Aftanas & Golocheikine (2001); Harrison et al. (1998)** described SYM's unique state of “**mental silence**”, which enhances emotional regulation and self-awareness.

SYM is gaining scholarly traction as a neurophysiologically grounded, evidence-based wellness intervention

Research Gap

While Sahaja Yoga Meditation (SYM) has shown promising biopsychosocial-spiritual benefits—such as stress reduction, emotional regulation, and enhanced well-being—existing literature remains fragmented in its alignment with the specific targets of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), particularly indicators 3.4 (mental health and well-being) and 3.5 (substance abuse prevention). Most studies focus on general wellness outcomes or spiritual dimensions, lacking systematic evaluation frameworks that connect SYM interventions to measurable SDG 3 health indicators².

Moreover, comparative analyses between SYM and other yoga-based or mindfulness practices in the context of public health strategies are scarce. There is also limited exploration of SYM's scalability, accessibility, and integration into institutional settings such as schools, hospitals, or corporate wellness programs

Objectives of the Review Paper

- **To critically examine existing literature** on Sahaja Yoga Meditation and its documented effects on physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- **To map the therapeutic outcomes of SYM** to specific targets and indicators of SDG 3, particularly 3.4 (mental health and well-being) and 3.5 (substance abuse prevention and treatment).
- **To identify gaps and limitations** in current research regarding the scalability, accessibility, and integration of SYM into public health systems and wellness programs.



- To propose a conceptual framework for incorporating SYM into sustainable health strategies aligned with SDG 3, including policy recommendations

Research Methodology

The present study primarily utilizes **secondary sources**, including books, academic journals, research papers, articles, and reputable online resources, to explore the intersection between **Sahaja Yoga Meditation (SYM)** and **Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3)**. A systematic literature review approach was adopted to gather, analyze, and synthesize existing evidence on the health benefits of SYM and its relevance to global health indicators.

Findings and discussion

Sahaja Yoga Meditation and SDG 3 – Summary Table

SDG 3 Indicator / Theme	Health Domain	Key Findings	Supporting Studies / Authors
3.4.1 – Reduce mortality from NCDs	Respiratory Health	SYM improves pulmonary function and reduces asthma symptoms	Manocha et al., 2002
	Cardiovascular Health	SYM lowers blood pressure, improves HRV, and reduces anxiety	Rai, 1996; Choudhary, 2011
	Diabetes Management	SYM improves blood sugar control and reduces complications	(General findings)
	Cancer & Chronic Stress	SYM reduces oxidative stress and promotes parasympathetic activation	(General findings)
	Neurophysiological Health	SYM increases gray matter in brain regions linked to attention and regulation	Morgan, 1999; Villemure, 2015
	Emotional Regulation	SYM reduces stress hormones and improves emotional balance	Sharma & Sharma, 2024

Sahaja Yoga Meditation – Contributions to SDG 3

SDG 3 Indicator / Theme	Health Domain	SYM Impact	Source
3.4.2 – Suicide Mortality Rate	Mental Health & Suicide Prevention	Reduces depression, anxiety, and builds emotional resilience	Hendriks, 2018; Morgan, 1999



SDG 3 Indicator / Theme	Health Domain	SYM Impact	Source
	Spiritual Anchoring	Fosters inner peace and purpose, countering hopelessness	Dewli et al., 2024
	Youth Mental Health	Helps adolescents manage academic stress and emotional challenges	Chourasia et al., 2024
	ADHD Support	Improves focus and emotional control in children with ADHD	Harrison, Manocha & Rubia, 2016
3.5.1 – Substance Use Disorder Treatment	Emotional & Mental Balance	Reduces stress, boosts self-esteem, and improves emotional regulation	Dewli et al., 2024
	Craving Control	Enhances mindfulness and craving tolerance	General findings
	Lifestyle Transformation	Promotes purpose-driven living and emotional healing	General findings
	Youth Addiction Prevention	Provides safe space, emotional tools, and community support	General findings
	Neuroplasticity & Recovery	Supports brain healing and habit formation	General findings
Cross-Cutting Theme	Holistic Accessibility	Simple, equipment-free, and suitable for all ages and backgrounds	General findings
	Public Health Integration	Scalable in schools, communities, and rehab programs	General findings

Suicide Mortality Drivers

Category	Contributing Factors
Psychological	Depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, chronic pain, impulsivity
Social & Family	Domestic violence, family stress, isolation, academic pressure
Economic & Environmental	Unemployment, debt, legal issues, post-pandemic stress
Healthcare System Gaps	Limited access, stigma, poor documentation
Digital & Societal	Cyberbullying, media influence (Werther effect)



Strategic Integration Pathways

Level	Integration Strategy
Policy Level	Include Sahaja Yoga Meditation in national wellness and mental health policies; recognize it as a complementary therapy.
Institutional Level	Embed Sahaja Yoga Meditation in school curricula, workplace wellness programs, and rehabilitation centers.
Community Level	Train local health workers and volunteers to facilitate Sahaja Yoga Meditation sessions in underserved areas.
Digital Health	Develop mobile apps and online platforms for guided Sahaja Yoga Meditation practice and monitoring.

Conclusion

Sahaja Yoga Meditation (SYM) offers a promising, evidence-based approach that supports the aims of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) — ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. Research shows that SYM effectively improves mental health, reduces stress, enhances emotional regulation, and positively influences physiological outcomes such as heart rate variability and immune function (Manocha et al., 2011; Zangi et al., 2019). Moreover, emerging studies suggest SYM's potential role in **addiction prevention**, including reducing dependency on **narcotics**, by promoting self-awareness and emotional stability. These outcomes contribute to reducing risk behaviours and can indirectly support a **decline in suicide mortality rates**, especially among vulnerable populations experiencing chronic stress, anxiety, or substance use disorders.

By integrating SYM into public health strategies, particularly in underserved or high-stress populations, it is possible to support preventive health care and holistic well-being in a sustainable, inclusive manner. Future policies should consider evidence-based inclusion of such complementary practices to strengthen mental health systems and support the achievement of SDG 3 targets globally.

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