

Place, Role and Significance of Yoga Practice in the Sport System in the Republic of Serbia

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Abstract: *The origins of yoga as a philosophy of life and practical spiritual discipline, whose goal is personal development, are in the ancient East. Widespread practice of Yoga in the West and numerous research studies conducted in this field in recent decades provided the scientific verification necessary for its application as a preventative, therapeutic, anti-stress method of exercise. Yoga practice is gaining an increasingly important role within the sports community due to its many practical benefits, such as its integrated approach to personal development in contrast to the dualistic view of human body and mind as separate. Yoga has found its place in the Sport System of the Republic of Serbia. The Non-governmental sport sector, within the Sports Association of Serbia, has a national branch association whose mission is to develop and apply yoga practice to all forms of sport by qualified professional sport organizations and professional sport experts as well as through clearly defined legislation. According to the national categorization of Serbian sport, yoga belongs to Group VI - so called "Multisports". Although Yoga practice is the most widely used recreational activity, it still needs to gain importance in the area of athletic training for competitive sport, to develop as an independent competitive Yoga sport, and to apply in public institutions such as schools, law enforcement, and the army. Greater involvement of highly educated professional experts, continuous professional development efforts, as well as faster development of scientific research in the field of yoga practice are necessary in order to succeed in this mission.*

Keywords: *Yoga classes, sports, sport law, yoga in sport, Yoga Federation of Serbia*

Introduction

The beauty and perfection of Nature are undeniable; therefore it is illogical to believe that life is meaningless. It is only the level of human conscious awareness that can be a limiting factor in the understanding of the meaningfulness of life. When a human being is acutely or chronically alienated from himself and his environment, and life is understood as meaningless, that leads to increased estrangement from life itself. The underlying cause of health problems on the mental and physical level is the alienation of human beings from their inner being, from other human beings, and from the environment. The way in which conflicts are resolved (by military interventions and wars) among different nations and religions is the indicator of the level of collective consciousness. Such forms of problem-solving exist even among members of the same family where violent behaviors and abuse can be highly represented. All this is an indicator of the level of tolerance, acceptance, and respect for diversity. Practice of yoga is a technique for the development of self-actualization and self-development. Through the practice of yoga self- alienation, conflicts and health problems disappear, and harmony is attained.

The knowledge and practice of yoga holds an important place in the Vedas which are the oldest source of complete knowledge of life known to mankind. Evidence of its existence is about 5000 years old. The highest authority in the field of yoga is Patañjali who wrote *Yoga Sūtra* 2500 years ago. The ideas expressed in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* are still as valid in the XXIst century, a century of great scientific discoveries and advancements in technology, as they were at the time of their creation. Patañjali's Yoga can be described as "cognitive, psychodynamic, behavioral and transpersonal psychology in one" (Salagame, 2010, pg. 23). Prominent individuals, such as Dr. Jung, helped spread the practice and knowledge of yoga from East to West (Pajin, 2013). Jung speaks about yoga as one of the greatest creations of the human mind (Jung, 1975). Even though he believed that yoga does not agree with the western man due to his divided state of mind, it was exactly this divided state of mind that helped find a way out of this state, when the West "discovered" the philosophy and practice of yoga. Yoga not only gained popularity at the end of the last century, but also gained its place in contemporary science (Raghuwanshi, 2011).

Most notably, yoga can play a significant role in the reintegration of man, especially by expanding the dualistic view of life, which holds that human mind and body are separated. In the Sanskrit language, the word yoga carries in its name the message of unity. It refers to the harmony of the spirit, the body and the environment, which is the main goal of yoga practices. Perfect health is achieved through individual self-development which brings about a harmonious integration of the body, the mind and the environment (Figure 1).

सम दोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः ।

प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनाः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते ॥

Sama dosha, Sam-agnis cha, Sama dhatu-mala-kriyah,
Prassan-atma-indriya-manah, Swastha iti abhidhiyate. (S.Samhita Su 15.38)
[sic]

He whose doshas are balanced, whose digestive fire (Agni) is balanced, whose tissues of the body (Dhatu) and eliminative processes (Malas) function normally, whose senses (Indriyas), spirit (Manah), and Self (Atma) are blissful, such a person can be called healthy.

Figure 1. Definition of a healthy individual. Vedic science defines biological intelligence through three basic components – three doshas (author's remark)

Western medicine has begun to emphasize the mind/body connection only in the last century. The World Health Organization introduced a holistic concept in the definition of health and a special branch of medicine called "Mind/Body Medicine" was established. Statistical data from 2002 show that 62% of population of the US used complementary and alternative methods of healing, including "mind-body" therapies, such as autogenic training, yoga, meditation, tai chi, chi gong, biofeedback, breathing techniques (Wahbeh, 2008). Dr Rankin has published a book "Mind over Medicine", in which she explains in simple terms the role that amygdala plays in the central nervous system, as well as the connection between mind and body that takes place through the hormonal activity in the process of relaxation (Rankin, 2014). International Interdisciplinary Scientific Yoga Conference of held in Serbia for the first time in 2010²¹. N teh 2011 the First International Symposium "Mind/body Medicine in Ayurveda" was also held in Serbia. At this meeting was emphasized the significance of yoga practice in the development and care of mind and body through the application of Ayurveda in sports, especially its specificity compared to other sports. It was pointed out that yoga is indicated in all ages, all seasons and all times of day (Sanader, 2013).

The benefits of yoga have been confirmed in many studies. In the last decade there has been a sudden increase in scientific interest in yoga. In the early XXIst century yoga gained an important place in medical research. The results of this research

¹ International Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference of Yoga was organized by the Yoga Federation of Serbia in 2010, 2011 and 2012 at the "Sava Centre" in the presence of the greatest scientific authority in the field of Yoga and representatives of the three largest universities of Yoga from India: Kajjavaljadama, Patanjali and Vivekananda. <http://yogasavezsrbiije.com/naucne-konferencije-o-jogi/page/2/>

were published in prestigious scientific journals with impact factor (scientific impact factor) greater than 30 (Nikolovski, 2010). Development and application of high technologies, quantum physics and medicine contributed to the establishment of yoga as a science in the modern meaning. Yoga is now commonly applied in modern medicine and is used in therapy, rehabilitation, and psychology, where a new concept of yoga intelligence has been developed (Nikić, 2011). Yoga is more and more used in work with children with special needs (Chittur, 2011) and people of the third age (Mishra, 2011; Manjunath, 2012). This paper also presents the place, role and importance of yoga in sports through the prism of the Serbian Sport System.

Yoga and Sport System in the Republic of Serbia

Developed countries pay great attention to sport because sport is an important way of presenting themselves to the world. Through sport individual countries affirm their cultural wealth and strengthen their national coherence (Sports Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, "Official Gazette" no. 110/08, hereinafter Strategy). Sport is recognized as an industry of special importance for the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter RS) (Sport Act, Article 2, "Official Gazette", no. 24/11, hereinafter Act) and has a clearly defined and regulated system that operates in two sectors: the public (government) sector and the non-governmental sector (hereinafter NGO). Public elements of the sport system are the Ministry of Youth and Sports; Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sports; units of local government with competent Secretary for Sports and Youth; Serbian Institute of Sports and Sport Medicine; Provincial Institute for Sport and Sports Medicine; Anti-Doping Agency of Serbia; Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science, Technological Development, and the Information Society; the National Council for the Fight Against Violence and Misbehavior by Spectators at Sporting Events; the Council for Sport and higher education institutions for sport and management accredited by the Act through the public sector. The NGO sector consists of the Sports Association of Serbia (hereinafter referred to as SAS), Serbian Olympic Committee, the Paralympics Committee of Serbia, national branch associations, territorial sport federations, sport and other organizations in the field of sport (Atanasov, 2013).

The Sport Act defines sport activity as "all forms of physical and mental activity which, through non-organized or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, thereby creating social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels" (Act, pg. 9). This definition clearly defines yoga as a sport activity. Yoga as a sport branch (Figure 2) belongs to a group of 12 multi sports, but unlike the others in this group it is not currently recognized as a branch of special importance for the RS and belongs, according to the national categorization, to the Group VI of sports, those that are not of special importance for the RS (Sport Act: Regulations according to Act, 2013).

<p><i>Serbian sport branches</i> (Regulation on Serbian sport branches)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olympic sports • Non-Olympic sports (sport Accord) • Non-Olympic Sports (other) • Multi sports (12 sport branches including Yoga) <p><i>Sport branches of special importance for the RS</i> (Regulations on sport fields of special importance for the RS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olympic sports • Non-Olympic Sports (sport Accord) • Non-Olympic Sports (other) • Multi Sports (11 sports branches, not including Yoga) <p><i>National classification of sport</i> (Regulation on national sports star)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group I • Group II • Group III • Group IV • Group V • Group VI (sports that are not of special importance for the RS, including Yoga)

Figure 2. Place of yoga in the sport branches system and sports category in the sports system RS (Sport Act: Regulations according Act, 2013)

The place of yoga in the Serbian Sport System is clearly defined by the acceptance of the Yoga Federation of Serbia (hereinafter YFS) into the branches of the National Sport Federation². At the request of the YFS and the Commission's proposal for elite sport and organizational development of the Sport Association of Serbia (SAS), the decision was made on June 26, 2011, to admit the YFS to SAS as an associate member (Figure 3) with all the rights and obligations, defined by the SAS Statute, regulations, and other acts³.

<p>SPORTS ASSOCIATION OF SERBIA (SSA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national branch sport associations (85 associations) • associated national branch sport associations (8 associations including YFS) • territorial sport associations (125 associations)

Figure 3. Place of the Yoga Federation of Serbia (YFS) in the NGO - Serbian sport sector (SAS)

² See more: www.sportskisavezsrbiye.rs/clanovi

³ See more: www.yogasavezsrbiye.com

Even though there are many sport organizations actively engaged in utilizing Yoga, this article presents the work of the YFS, a branch of the national sport federation, within the framework of all three Serbian sport segments that are described in the Strategy (Sports Development Strategy, 2008):

1. The First Sport Segment includes Olympic and Paralympic sports, non-Olympic sports and sports for people with disabilities who do not belong to Paralympic sports
2. The Second Sport Segment is sport within institutions (schools, universities, the military, police)
3. The Third Sport Segment consists of sport activities for individuals that are not strictly institutionally organized such as family sport, mass sport, sport for health, fitness, and others.

The Third Sport Segment

Yoga is represented in all Serbian Sport Segments. Yoga is the most common recreational sport in the Third Sport Segment within which it plays a significant role. It has been demonstrated that yoga practice has beneficial effects on the physiology and improves health conditions (Smith et al., 2007), and it is used for therapeutic purposes in accordance with the Law on Health Insurance, Art. 236 ("RS Official Gazette", No. 107/05). Yoga practice is recommended for balancing blood pressure, and other health disorders such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, hypothyreosis (Bhavanani et al., 2012), as well as in the treatment of patients with chronic back pain (Holger et al., 2012; Omkar, 2012; Romanov and Radak, 2013; Ni et al., 2014). Yoga practice has beneficial effects on physiological processes, blood pressure, heart rate and breathing (Raub, 2002). People who practiced yoga had a significant increase in the level of brain GABA (Gamma-aminobutyric acid is an important neurotransmitter) within one hour after the practice compared to the control group (Streeter et al., 2007). Improved effects on metabolic processes can be expected after only ten days of yoga practice (Bijlani, 2005). It was also found acting as a psychophysiological stimuli trigger for the secretion of melatonin which promotes the feeling of well-being (Harinath et al., 2004). Yoga practice was found to improve general mental health by reducing anxiety (Gupta et al., 2006; Javnbakht et al., 2009), and feelings of deprivation and destruction, as well as by developing greater emotional balance, self-satisfaction, a sense of meaning in life, an understanding of one's own ways of reacting, etc. (Janjušević, 2010). Yoga as a recreational activity has gained so much popularity that the UN General Assembly declared the International Day of Yoga. Hatha, Bhakti, Raja, Tantra, and other integrated yoga approaches (Nikić, 2010), as well as contemporary forms of yoga, yoga for women, etc. (Sanader, 2009), have been practiced in Serbia in an organized way for the last fifty years. Jasmina Puljo's pioneering work in the area of yoga practice was significant for

popularizing Yoga in Serbia⁴. Serbia, with 52 cities⁵, was one of 200 countries that participated in the first celebration of the International Day of Yoga, which took place on June 21, 2015.

The First Sport Segment

Yoga has its place, and plays an increasingly significant role in the First Segment of Serbian sport. In recent years yoga has become an independent sport branch and is also an integral part of sport training in different competitive sports. Yoga competitions take place at the highest international, continental and world championship levels. The first World Championship was held in 1989 in Montevideo, Uruguay. The International Yoga Sports Federation, a member of the International Yoga Federation, is aiming at becoming a member of the Olympic Movement⁶. Sport Yoga includes six disciplines: Athletic Yoga Sport, Artistic Yoga Sport, Yoga Asanas Sport, Rhythmic Yoga Sport, Acro Yoga Sport, and Yoga Dance Sport. The Yoga Federation of Serbia, a national branch association of yoga, is a member of the International Yoga Sport Federation and so far has held six national championships in 2015. Yoga as sport is still in its infancy in Serbia; growth is still expected and the Yoga Federation of Serbia (YFS) needs to adequately design and plan this segment in its strategy. More educated professional sport experts as well as more research and development activities regarding the importance and possibilities of yoga application in sport training and competition are needed. Elements of training for optimizing general and specific abilities, by which sport achievement is determined, have been the main focus of sport discussions so far; however, recently sport discussions are paying more attention to the elements of training which reduce the negative effects of training and competition (Sanader, 2005). Yoga may play an important role in both cases. (Sanader, 2008). Yoga practice can be used in sport training in the fitness, technical and tactical athletic preparation. Considering that modern sport is characterized by a high and early specialization, often at the expense of the general, harmonious and symmetrical exercise work and development, the techniques of yoga can compensate for this deficiency. Yoga can be implemented for the prevention of injuries and disease, factors due to which athletes are absent from sport fields for a long time, as well as in therapy and rehabilitation. Elite sport performance is linked to the achievement of the so-called "zone" experience, a condition that involves perfect coordination of body and mind, and yoga can be the most effective means of integrating body and mind during sport activities (Douillard, 1996).

⁴ Jasmina Puljo (1975) *Mini Yoga for Everyone*, published by Sportska knjiga, Belgrade, Serbia

⁵ Including 42 cities across Serbia who took part in this celebration organized by the Yoga Federation of Serbia

The Second Sport Segment

Methods of yoga can be successfully used in the Second Sport Segment, the general institutionalized state (government) sector. This Sport Segment, which is a complex and massive organizational structure, can be identified, due to the specific nature of activities involved, as a specific stress factor on individual and collective level. Studies have shown that people who have been practicing yoga for many years tend to have more tolerant behavior, have more stable emotions, lower scores on the impulsiveness scale, greater tolerance for frustration, and are more open and cooperative (Janjušević, 2011). These are exactly the qualities that are desirable for the proper functioning of these large collective systems, in particular the educational institutions. The education system is, in quantitative and qualitative terms, important for the life of every individual and every society. Its importance is reflected in the complexity and susceptibility of ages (processes of growth and development in childhood and adolescence). The long physical inactivity, that children are subjected in education, is not natural for them. Incorrect sitting posture blocks the circulation of body fluids, causes irregular breathing, and results in reduced concentration, attention deficit disorders, acute and chronic tiredness and irritability resulting in aggressive behavior. Young people are more and more turning to the use of inadequate means (tobacco, alcohol, drugs) when trying to cope with stress. American children are subjected to great stress and the number of suicides has increased fourfold compared to 1950. The use of pharmaceuticals to treat emotional disorders has also increased 68 percent for girls, and 30 percent for boys⁷. Studies confirm the positive effects of the application of yoga for children and young people in improving mental, emotional and physical aspects (Noggle et al., 2012; Hagen & Nayar, 2014; Butzer et al., 2015). Evident improvements in physical and mental status, attitudes and behavior in children have been recorded when children practiced yoga for a month (Singh, 2013)⁸. Yoga is becoming more common in schools, for example in France and Australia (Jensen, 2014), as well as in work with children with special needs (Chittoor, 2011). "Quiet Time" (including practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique) has been introduced in educational institutions around the world (300 educational institutions in 50 countries) in order to reduce stress among students, promote prevention of violence, suicide and drug abuse, and increase learning ability and sport success (Sanader et al., 2011)⁹. A recent survey confirmed that mind-brain development is the foundational factor in determining the level of excellence of athletes, managers, etc. (Harung & Travis, 2015).

⁷ Research study at Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body, Medicine Massachusetts General Hospital, USA, www.bensonhenryinstitute.org

⁸ This study was conducted in yoga camp for children

⁹ See more: www.davidlynchfoundation.org/schools.html

Even though yoga is used in work with Serbian children, it is only its systematic application within the framework of physical education that can produce significant outcomes in a short time. Physical education is one of the school subjects, however, this form of education represents a different, broader category; that is the reason why the practices of most European countries suggest that education and sport are complementary activities which should not be strictly separated, especially when taken into account the educational and pedagogical functions that sport and recreation represent in the education system of children and youth (Bićanin et al., 2009). Physical education teachers could be trained to apply yoga techniques in compliance with the tasks of program units, within the framework of their continued professional training. For example, based on the combination of volume and intensity of performance, a complex exercise called "Sun Salute" (*Sūrya Namaskāra*) can be adapted to different tasks of certain parts of the class. In order to reduce stress and overcome various challenging life situations (to avoid incidents and inappropriate use of prescription drugs) students can apply yoga techniques in everyday life also outside the classroom. The application of yoga in the institutions of the educational system requires the continued cooperation of the Serbian Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Yoga Federation of Serbia. As explained above, the Second Segment of Serbian sport is represented by sports within institutions such as schools, universities, the military, police, etc., therefore yoga should occupy a significant place in all of these elements of this Sport Segment, not only in educational institutions. A body of research on the application of meditation techniques in the army has been presented to the scientific community (Leffler, 1997; Stanley et al., 2012)¹⁰; these researches are based on the nature of the brain cortex function and its activity (Sanader, 2011). It can be said that yoga has its place in all Serbian sport segments; it is most highly represented in the Third Sport Segment, developing in the First Sport Segment and needs to be applied in the Second Sport Segment. In any case, whether it is already applied, or its implementation and develop professional work, and compliance with the legislation, is crucial for the realization of the place, role and significance of yoga in the Serbian Sport System.

Legislature Regarding Professional Work in Yoga Sport Organizations

Cases of abuse of athletes, who compromise their health and sometimes unfortunately result in death, are increasingly recorded not only in competition sports, but in all its aspects. Therefore, the legislature specifically regulated professional work through the legal act and ordained appropriate sanctions. Professional work in yoga sport organizations must be carried out by yoga sport organizations and sport experts. Members of the Yoga Federation of Serbia are supported in their work in both cases. However, the Alliance also has an obligation

¹⁰ See more: www.davidlynchfoundation.org/military.html

to control professional activities of its members and its compliance with legislation. The main goal is to ensure quality yoga practice conditions for the athletes: to have maximum benefits and to prevent abuse. This approach contributes to the regulation of sport activities in the field of yoga, and sport in general, and thus the national branch association, as well as other elements of the sport system, gains a better basis for the planning and organization of further work and development.

Activities of sport experts and yoga sport organizations must be in accordance with the following legislation regulating work in the Serbian Sport System:

- *Law* (Regulations of Acts and Sports Development Strategy)
- *Sport Regulations* (Yoga Federation of Serbia and its corresponding international organizations)
- *Conventions in the field of sport* (the European Convention on Violence and Misconduct in Sport Events, the European Anti-doping Convention, the European Convention on Manipulations in Sporting Events, the European Convention for the Prevention of Violence in Sports, the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse)
- *Principles set forth in the documents of international organizations in which the Republic of Serbia is a member* (European Sports Charter, the Code of Sports Ethics, the Charter of Sport for All at the Council of Europe, International Charter on Physical Education and Sport of UNESCO, General Assembly Resolution 58/5 of the United Nations - Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace, and the White Paper on Sport of the European Union).

The founder of a sport organization (association or commercial company) has to be familiar with legislation and needs to examine his options in this regard. Under the Act, penalty provisions, as well as ways to control labor through monitoring and inspection have been set forth. Work starts by registering sport organizations in the Register of associations, societies and associations in the field of sport (Business Registers Agency of the Republic of Serbia). The process of removal from the Register needs to be undertaken when a sport organization, for whatever reason, ceases to work; it is desirable that the founder becomes familiar with this procedure before starting to work. The word "club" in the title can only be used by the organization which takes part in competitions within the framework of the relevant national branch federation.

Yoga sport organizations need to meet the basic requirements of membership athletes, sport experts, and space for exercise, according to the national sports law (Sport Act, "RS Official Gazette", no. 24/11, hereinafter Act). If sports organizations participate in sport competitions, there are additional requirements to

be met, which are related to the internal organization and the financial resources. More detailed conditions are defined by the Regulations (Regulation on detailed conditions for performing sports activities and sports activities, "RS Official Gazette", no.17/2013, hereinafter Regulations). Athletes are defined as people who are engaged in sport activities, regardless of whether they compete or not. Data on athletes need to be kept in the records of the members. Engaged experts must be professionally educated or trained, and have a license issued by the relevant branch association. Experts are hired, according to the law, on the basis of the conclusion of a professional engagement or contract of employment. Yoga Federation of Serbia trains sport experts in association with the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Belgrade, through the program accredited by the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Sport professionals who work with children (persons under 14) must have appropriate education in the field of sport and physical education in accordance with the Act (see the exception in Art. 4 of the Act). If an organization has two yoga experts, it has to 1) engage one expert who has the appropriate education in the field of sport and physical education, and 2) appoint a person in charge of Internal Control of the professional work. A person who performs professional supervision must have a plan, reports, and records of internal professional supervision.

In addition to the requirements of athletes and professionals, the organization should provide adequate space and sport facilities and equipment. These requirements are met when a sport organization owns the sport facility or business premises, or if it uses the sport facility on the basis of the right to use, lease agreements, or on some other social legal basis. The requirements regarding sport equipment have been defined by Yoga Federation of Serbia in the sporting rules. If sport organizations take part in sport competitions, there are additional requirements to be met, which are related to the internal organization and financial resources. Finally, sport organization must be registered in the Register of Sport Organizations kept by the Serbian Institute of Sport and Sports Medicine, by the end of February for the previous year. Having registered and having received the Decision about its entry into the Register of Sport Organizations, a sport organization can register changes within the month of the change, but not later.

The main goal of yoga training is, as brought forth in this paper, to develop balanced psychological and physical health based on a professionally managed approach, and to avoid the implementation of non-professional practices. In order to provide high quality yoga education, a sport organization needs to implement proper plans: Plan of Internal Control (when more than one sport expert is engaged), Health Prevention Plan, Professional Education Plan, Professional Training Plan, and the Training of Sport Professionals Plan; as well as records: Records of Internal Professional Supervision, Records of Club Members, Records of the Implementation of the Work chosen by the jury, Records of Competency,

Records of the Contestants' Results. A sport expert, a person who has appropriate professional education, or is professionally trained (Art.23 of the Act), should adequately plan his work. The work plan should contain clearly defined macrocycles, mesocycles and microcycles, and selected procedures (methods, tools, procedures) need to be coordinated with the training experience and other individual characteristics and abilities of the athletes. Record of Health Status (prior medical examination), called the "initial athlete state" and defined periods of Time-Control Training Curriculum needs to be created for this purpose. In order to record professional work evidence, and most importantly, a good relationship with the athletes, a sport specialist should carry out activities according to the Plan of the Basic Unit, which is in accordance with the Annual Plan.

Conclusion

Yoga has gained popularity around the world in recent decades and the United Nations have declared the 21st of June as the International Day of Yoga. Yoga is being used as a preventative, therapeutic, anti-stress exercise method on the basis of the numerous research studies regarding the application of yoga techniques (including physical yoga exercises, breathing techniques, meditation and relaxation) which provided a scientific foundation. Due to its many practical benefits, including its integrated approach to personal development, in contrast to the dualistic view of human body and mind as separate, yoga practice is playing an increasingly important role within the sport community, and has found a place in the Sport System of the Republic of Serbia. Yoga has importance in all three Serbian Sport Segments. As a recreational activity, it is most represented in the Third Sport Segment. It is visibly developed in the First Sport Segment (i.e. competition sport: Olympic, Paralympic, and non-Olympic sports), present in training for different sports, and developed as an independent branch of sport. Yoga is least applied in the Second Sport Segment, i.e. large state institutions (schools, police, army). Scientific research and practice in the world show that development in this Second Segment may play a significant role in the future. In any case, whether the practice of yoga is already implemented, or is in the stage of planning, implementation, and development, the quality of professional work, and its compliance with the legislation as well, is very important. To succeed in this mission requires greater involvement of highly qualified sport personnel, continuous professional development efforts, as well as faster development of research activities in yoga. Yoga Federation of Serbia, as a national branch sport association of Serbian Sport System, plays an important and responsible role in this regard.

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