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## **Importance of Yoga in Schools and in Teacher Education**

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### **Introduction**

Yoga has been an integral part of Health and physical Education that has been a compulsory subject up to the secondary school stage since 1988. The NCF 2005 adopted a holistic definition of health in which yoga is an integral part of it.

Both yoga and physical education contribute to not merely the physical development of the child but have a positive impact on psychosocial and mental development as well. Playing group games have a positive impact on individual self esteem, promotes better interaction among children, imparts values of co-operation, sharing and to deal with both victory and defeat. Similarly yoga contributes to the overall development of the child and various studies have shown that it contributes to flexibility and muscular fitness and also corrects postural defects among school children.

Within this overall framework both yoga and physical education are seen as routes for achieving overall development of children.

However, till now both yoga and physical education have not been given the due importance and neither have their contribution to the health and overall development of the child been adequately acknowledged. The constraints faced by yoga and physical education are related to a number of factors that affect the quality of school education in general and health and physical education in particular. This is the right time for making health the physical education to be considered as one of the important components of introduction of yoga in schools. In order to make this subject as par with other subjects of school education, the paper can help in advocating the area of health and physical education to be treated not merely instructive area but also having strong experiential learning component. The paper, therefore, focuses on preparing/training in yoga focusing on the comprehensiveness of the area of health and physical education.

The focus of preparation of teacher training programme need to be based on the stipulations made in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and the syllabus of Health and Physical Education prepared for various classes of school education. The paper focuses on achieving the objectives of Health and physical education in schools.

### **Stipulations made in the N C F 2005 Regarding Yoga Education**

1. The precondition for all development is healthy physical growth of all children. This requires that the basic needs in terms of adequate nutrition, physical exercise and other psycho-social needs are addressed. Participation of all children in formal and informal games, yoga and sports activities are essential for their physical and psycho-social development. The range of abilities as a result of games, sports and yoga will improve stamina, fine and gross

motor skills and expertise, self-awareness and control, and coordination in team games. Simple adaptation of playgrounds, equipment and rule can make activities and games accessible to all children in the school. Children can achieve high levels of excellence in sports, athletics, gymnastics, yoga and performing arts such as dance. When the emphasis shifts from enjoyment to achievement, such training can make demands of discipline and practice that can create stress at this stage. This curricular area adopts a holistic definition of health within which physical education and yoga contribute to the physical, social, emotional and mental development of a child.

2. The entire group (Health, Physical Education and Yoga) must be taken together as a comprehensive health and physical education curriculum, replacing the fragmentary approach current in schools today. As a core part of the curriculum, time allocated for games and for yoga must not be reduced, or taken away under any circumstances.
3. Recognizing this subject as a core subject, Health and Physical Education must continue to be a compulsory subject from the primary to the secondary stages and as an optional subject at higher secondary stage. However, it needs to be given equal status with other subjects, a status that is not being given at present.
4. In order to transact the curriculum effectively, it is essential to ensure that the minimum essential physical space and equipments are available in every school. Teacher preparation for this area needs well planned and concerted efforts. This subject area consisting of health education, physical education and yoga must be suitably integrated in the elementary and secondary pre-service teacher education courses. The potential of the existing physical education training institutes should be reviewed and utilized adequately. Similarly, their appropriate syllabi and teacher training for transaction of the yoga in schools need to be reviewed and reformulated.
5. Yoga could be introduced from the primary level onwards in informal way, but formal introduction of yogic exercises should begin only from class sixth onwards. All interventions including even health and hygiene education must rely on the practical and experiential dimensions of children's lives.

## Importance of Yoga in Education

- **Balancing both hemispheres of the brain**

Science tells us that there are two hemispheres in our brain, the right and the left. These two hemispheres perform different functions. The functions of the left hemisphere are linear, logical and intellectual. Those of the right hemisphere are artistic, creative and intuitive. If we consider these facts, the education system does not allow the child to develop the full potential of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. The trend of education has been through books. The child reads, memorizes, sits for an exam and receive a grade. Either he/she pass or fail. Again the child has to read, memorize, sit for an exam and get your grade.

The Subjects which are taught following a linear, logical system, whether it is maths, history, geography, physics, chemistry of medicine, whether it is advanced education or secondary education. In this process only one side of the brain is stimulated- the linear, logical side.

In order to balance other aspect, we teach children the arts. We encourage them to practice music, to paint, to perform plays. We encourage them to use their creativity. But if you compare the influence of the different lobes of the brain, you will find that the linear and logical are more profound than that of the artistic and creative.

- **Developing the whole mind**

The brain is the only medium through which we educate our mind. The mind is a composition of four different faculties, which in yogic terminology are defined as manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. The word manas means to rationalize, to think about something. Buddhi means intellect. Chitta is an area of consciousness where impressions are stored. Ahamkara is the concept of ego.

In the modern education system we are feeding only one aspect of the mind- buddhi. We are not dealing with the manas aspect, which deals with the faculty to know what is right and what is wrong. We are not dealing with chitta, where impressions of knowledge are stored in the form of memory and experience. Nor are we dealing with ahamkaara, the ego. Rather we are cramming buddhi with information without boosting up the other aspects of our mind. Therefore, despite all our education, we are not able to apply it constructively and creatively in our lives.

Despite all our understanding of right and wrong, become confused if we have to decide what we need to do. At the same time, as teachers and as parents, most of the time we ignore the psychological samskaras and the psychological nature of the child.

There is a Urdu couplet which says, "Let me tell you the grand things I have done in my life. I have studied and after receiving education, I did my service and after completing my service, I received my pension and after receiving my pension, I died. This is life. "But is this everything in life? No. It is important for each one of us to provide opportunities for our children to recognize themselves, to use their potential, to develop and awaken their personality, without parents imposing their own personal ideologies on them.

The problem is not only with education. The problem is also with the parents. Parents have not been educated. They might have studied at oxford or Harvard, they might have received the highest degree available, but they are not educated. A degree is not education. It is only a certificate which allows us to lead life with possibly, self-esteem, if that. A degree is only a passport to attain satisfaction, job status and recognition from other people. But a degree is not an indication of our education.

Proper education can only be received when we allow children to use their intuitive abilities along with their intellectual abilities, when we allow them to overcome their fears and inhibitions, to overcome the psychological pressures which are created without imposing our own conditions on them.

- **Developing awareness and rapport**

Yoga also helps to bring awareness. Teachers often teach subjects to the students without awareness. While the practice teaching is going on in the classroom, there is an absence of awareness. Students are taking down notes mechanically, whether they understand the subject or not. Most of the teachers are not worried about it. The students also know that the teacher is not concerned, so why should they bother? Hence, there is a gap in the relationship between student and teacher. That gap is a very crucial component

which can spoil the personality of the student. However, if we incorporate some methods of concentration, then rapport as well as awareness will be developed.

Yoga in the classroom is not confined to the physical practices and breathing techniques that are taught. Rather, the teacher has to be aware when to speak and when to keep silence. Speech is the medium of instruction, but at the same time silence is also the medium of instruction because silence allows assimilating what we have just heard.

Alertness and dynamic instructions have to be combined with passive visualization. Instruct and stimulate their intellect, but at the same time teacher has to give them a chance to visualize passively what they have just heard which helps them for stimulation and intelligence.

There is a well-known story about the sufi saint Mulla Nasruddin. One day he was sitting near a well trying to fill an earthen pot with water. But the earthen pot had a crack in it. So everything he poured into it would flow out through the crack. People scoffed at him and said, "You must be crazy. How can you expect to fill this pot with water when it is cracked and all the water is leaking out?" He replied, "Who care? I am only concerned with filling the pot. I do not care whether the pot is cracked or not."

As teachers we are repeating the same things. We are concerned with children gathering information. We are not concerned whether they retain it or not.

## Benefits of Yoga for Children

The following are just some of the recognized benefits of yoga for children:

### Body:

- Assists neuromuscular-development
- Promotes development of the vestibular system
- Encourages midline crossing motions; motor development on both sides of the body
- Develops a strong and flexible body
- Increases balance, body awareness and coordination
- Improves posture and alignment
- Develops core strength, essential for good posture and correct physical alignment
- Reduces injuries and improves performance
- Improves digestion, circulation and elimination
- Strengthens the immune system
- Relaxes the body, promoting better sleep

### Mind:

- Calms and clears the mind, bringing us into the present moment
- Relieves tension and stress
- Increases concentration, focus and attention span
- Promotes thinking and memory
- Stimulates auditory processing and responsiveness
- Expands imagination and creativity
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Improves ability to be less reactive and more mindful of thoughts, words and actions
- Balances energy (high or low)

## Spirit:

- Builds confidence and self-esteem
- Supports character development and emotional intelligence
- Enhances team skills and social interaction
- Develops discipline and self-control
- Supports individuality and self-expression
- Encourages social and environmental awareness and responsibility
- Supports a sense of universal connectedness
- Inspires respect for self and others

## Overall:

- Improves mind/ body connection
- Encourages a fit and healthy lifestyle
- Promotes an overall sense of well-being

## Benefits of yoga in the school setting

The following are some of the benefits of yoga to support the education of the whole child, thus maximizing the learning process

- Provides students healthy ways to express and balance their emotions
- Promotes a more relaxed, comfortable state of being-the perfect state for teaching and learning
- Brings students into the present moment – the most basic requirement for learning
- Encourages community and connectedness within the classroom
- Helps to create an atmosphere of confidence, enthusiasm and non-competitiveness where everyone can succeed
- Provides opportunities for beneficial motor breaks throughout the day
- Eases anxiety and tension (such as pre-test or performance jitters)
- Enhances focus, concentration, comprehension and memory
- Provides opportunities for reflection, patience and insight, reducing impulsivity and reactivity
- Supports social and emotional learning
- Improves listening skills
- Wakes up sluggish mind and creativity as needed
- Enhances organizational and communication skills
- Improves posture, assisting students to sit comfortably for long periods
- Enhances motor skills and balance
- Improves mind/body awareness and connection
- Encourages respect for oneself and other
- Creates a calm, harmonious classroom

## Conclusion

Yoga helps children to see their inner beauty, thereby boosting their self-confidence, allowing them to feel more comfortable with their bodies, and helping them get in touch with who

they are inside. A child who learns yoga, mindfulness and relaxation will develop essential skills for lifetime health and wellness in mind, body and spirit.

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