

## The integration of yoga in modern education: Why and how?

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### Abstract

The present system of education has mostly failed to achieve the objective of integrated development of the body, mind and spirit of learners. Mere science and technology based information- oriented education cannot make students to be a perfect well-being. That is why the present writer has come forward to focus on the matter and considered the need of integration of Yoga Education in the existing system of education for all round development of students by impacting upon its different dimensions—the individual and social, cognitive and emotional, psychomotor and behavioural and moral and spiritual. But it is a matter of consideration that how and to what extent Yoga Education is to be introduced in the curriculum. The present paper emphasizes on the role of Yoga in education and put forward some suggestions on the ways of integration of Yoga Education in the existing education.

**Keywords:** Yoga Education, Cognitive, Psychomotor, Integrated Development

### Introduction

Yoga has great significance in present system of education. The modern education emphasizes on science and technology in which the material progress is being achieved, but the inculcation of ethical and spiritual values and promotion of healthy life-style are totally neglected. In this context, it is an urgent need to integrate Yoga in modern education system in order to make all-round development relating to body, mind and spirit harmoniously and thereby prevent the erosion of human values. The integration of Yoga education in the present system of education can promote human values reform attitude and behaviour, relieve from stress and strain, build up healthy life-style, shape high moral character and develop refined personality of the students so as to make them a complete well-being. Hence, we have to understand the importance of Yoga in education and introduce it as a discipline and thereby focus on the process of integration in the curriculum. However, Yoga practices can lead students to the attainment of the highest goal of life-the self- realization of the potentialities inherent in them.

### Objectives

The objectives of the study of this paper are noted here precisely:

- To focus on the concept of Yoga and its different components.
- To find out the relation between Yoga and Education.
- To highlight on the importance of yoga in the present system of education.
- To put forward a strategy of integration Yoga in the existing system of education.

### Concept and components of yoga

According to Patanjali, one of the propounder of classical Yoga, Yoga is a conscious process of gaining mastery over the mind. Sri Aurobinda's opinion is that Yoga is a methodical effort towards self-perfection through the all-round

development of the potentialities inherent in man. As a subject, it deals with the realisation of Absolute Spirit ('Kaivalya') through Nirodh of Chitta i.e. complete cessation of turbulences of the mind for achieving self-realization. According to modern concept Yoga is the manifestation of Divinity within by controlling or refining nature either by action ('Karma Yoga') or worship ('Bhakti Yoga') or Psychic Control ('Raja Yoga') or Philosophy ('Jnana Yoga') – by one or more or all of these. Psychologically, Yoga deals with the mind and its modifications at intellectual and emotional levels. Hence in Yoga, the dispassionate outlook ('Vairagya'), personal discipline ('Yamas'), social discipline ('Niyamas'), friendly disposition ('Maïtri'), compassion ('karuna'), ignoring the wicked ('Upeksha') are cultivated for attaining cheerful disposition ('ChittaPrasadanam').

Yoga has two streams-the Astanga Yoga of Patanjali ('Raja Yoga') and Hatha Yoga.

The Astanga Yoga of Patanjali constitutes eight limbs. These are:

Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

1. The 'Yamas' are the social disciplines that direct us in social relationships. The Yamas are five—'Ahimsa' or Non-Violence, 'Satya' or Truthfulness, 'Aparigraha' or Non-Covetousness. 'Ahimsa' or Non-Violence, 'Brahmacharya' (Celibacy).
2. The 'Niyamas' guide us how we should interact with our internal world. These Niyamas are 'Saucā' or Purity, 'Santosa' or Contentment, 'Tapa' or Austerity, 'Svādhyay' or Self-education and 'Isvara-Pranidhana' or Meditation on the divine.
3. The 'Yogasanas' or Physical Postures is the use of body in a particular direction in order to gain health and mastery over the mind.
4. The 'Pranayama' is related to breathing technique for balancing the breath between the two nostrils.

5. The 'Pratyahara' indicates the process of controlling the senses from rushing towards the objects in order to gain mastery over the mind.
6. The 'Dharana' is to bind the mind on a single thought.
7. 'Dhyan' is meditation and also effortless de-focussing.
8. 'Samadhi' is deep adsorption or super-consciousness.

### **Relation between yoga and education**

There is a close relationship between Yoga and Education. Etymologically 'Yoga' means the process of joining of egoistic individual with the universal self. According to Sri Aurobondo, Yoga is systematic practice towards self-perfection by the unfoldment of the potentialities inherent in man. Education is also the manifestation of the perfection already in man. So the nature and aims of Yoga and Education are same—the self-perfection or self-realization.

Yoga is a process of gaining control over the mind through concentrating mind on any desired object and attaining a state of great 'steadiness' at mental level. It integrates the whole personality by co-ordinating body and mind in a well-balanced way. Education is also a process of all-round development through culturing body and mind in an integrated way. The elevation of individuality to a state of true knowledge, freedom, creativity and happiness are common objectives of Yoga and Education.

Yoga deals with mind and behaviour and its modifications through 'Vicara' (enquiry), 'Viveka' (discrimination between the pleasant and the God) and 'Vairagya' (dispassion). Education is also a process of modification or refinement of behaviour or action, intellect and attitude. The practice of Yoga can prevent psychological abnormalities, such as excessive irritations, anxiety and tension and lead the mind to equilibrium or undisturbed state which is required for performing academic activities.

Yoga is not either a dogma or magic or mysticism or self-torture rather it is a subject or discipline – a philosophical path that leads to happier life by developing spiritual awareness. Yoga is the synthesis of philosophy, art and experimental science which can enable the means for the fullest development of the human potentialities. Education is also the product of integration of different subjects which aims at unfoldment of inherent capacities of an individual.

### **Importance of yoga in education**

The importance of Yoga in Education is too immense to ignore. Today's education is mostly information-oriented and it needs to qualitative changes in physical, mental, spiritual development of the students in a balanced way. The education with Yoga would improve mental faculties, develop positive health, inculcate higher values, provide peace and tranquillity and build up moral character which can lead us to attain highest goal of life as well as education.

The manifold benefits of Yoga in Education are discussed here precisely:

#### **1. Develop physical fitness**

Yoga plays a vital role in physical development of the students. The practice of Yoga would increase physical strength, respiratory capacity, circulatory function, muscle tone and flexibility of the bodies. It can also help to heal inflamed muscles and tissues quickly. Yoga can prevent the

excessive flow of stress hormone for reducing the blood pressure and inflammatory responses.

#### **2. Balancing both hemispheres of the brain**

The traditional subjects in the existing curriculum would help to develop only one side of the brain – linear, logical and intellectual side of the brain i.e. left hemisphere. But the development of artistic, creative and intuitive side of the brain i.e. right hemisphere is being neglected for want of teaching suitable subjects. Hence the integration of Yoga Education in the curriculum would provide students to cultivate the full potential of the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

#### **3. Develop values and refine personality**

Yoga Education can prevent the erosion of values and restore our Indian traditional values of truth, co-operation, non-violence, peace, love and respect in order to promote healthy life-style, to build up high moral character and to develop refined personality of the present generation. The subtle human values can be achieved through Dhyan-Yoga and Karma –Yoga which lead to achieve wisdom and personality development.

#### **4. Provide healthy emotional development**

Yoga has a vital role to act as a body-mind medicine. The regular practice of yoga helps us to control negative emotions like anger, fear, greed and jealousy which cause hyperacidity, hyper-tension, insomnia, loss of appetite and also develop positive emotions like love, compassion and affection which enable us the strength to combat stress and illness. Yoga Education can bring about qualitative changes in terms of perception, attitudes, habits and life-style of the learners.

#### **5. Improve academic performance**

The practice of Yoga has a great role to reduce stress and strain of the students caused by excessive academic load and family pressure and ultimately help them to increase their academic performance. The study of International Journals of Yoga (2009) reveals that the practice of Asanas, breathing exercises and meditation would lead the students to diminish their stress levels and increase academic performance.

#### **6. Increase memory and attention**

The practice of Yoga has a lasting effect on improving memory and the span of attention. The Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology in a study in 2003 has shown that the spatial memory of the practicing Yoga group has been improved 43 % in comparison to other non-practicing Fine Art group and controlled group. Moreover, many Yoga practices, such as the repetition of mantras, asanas, pranayamas and mudras enable the practioners to improve the span of attention or concentration of mind and enhance the capacity in forming and retaining memories through mind-body co-ordination.

#### **7. Provide healthy living**

Yoga is a science of health (holistic), harmony (both inner and outer harmony) and bliss (self-realization). Yoga acts as a body-mind medicine which handles the problems from the root and cures the disease by changing the life style, dietary habits and proper Yogic practices. It is effective to handle the psychosomatic disease and psychiatric problems of man. Yoga can prescribe the principles of healthy living, identify potential

causes of ill-health, provide a comprehensive view of holistic health and suggest to use Yoga as a preventive health care.

### **8. Develop cognitive and affective domain**

Yogic practice can facilitate a proper cognitive and affective development of which include the development of intelligence and creativity, management of anger, culturing of emotions and maintaining inner silence. The practice of Yoga helps to improve concentration, channelize our energies judiciously, inculcate Sattva Gunas (goodness) for inner development and make our mind tension free which has a favourable effect on creativity.

### **9. Improve eye-sight and voice culture**

The practice of Yoga, such as Tratakas, Kapalbhathi, Asanas would strengthen the muscles of the eyes and rectify eye problems which lead to improve the function of body-mind co-ordination, perception and action. The breathing practices of Yoga would develop voice muscles perfectly, enhance control over breathing and finally promote the ability to communicate and express anything accurately. So it is necessary to provide suitable Yoga practices to the students for their eye-sight improvement and voice culture.

### **10. Integrated personality development**

Yoga can enable us an integrated personality development with spiritual upliftment. Yogic exercises develop physical fitness, improve intellect, enhance will-power, creativity and tranquillity of mind, develop emotional faculties to handle the emotional conflicts and turmoil, develop cognitive power and inally uplift the inner self by rectifying internal world in spiritual dimension.

### **11. Other benefits of Yoga in Education**

#### **• Benefits of Astanga Yoga**

The 'yamas' and 'Niyamas' help us to develop subtle values in life which lead to happier conscientious life. The practice of 'Yogasanas' or Physical Postures would provide deep relaxation, bring a balance in the nervous system, develop capacity to-come worries, anxieties and tensions and enable to gain health and mastery over the mind. The practice of 'Pranayama' would help to cleanse the respiratory system, stimulate the brain cells, improve memory and concentration power. 'Pratyahara' would strengthen the senses to withdraw from other objects. 'Dharana' consolidates the mind on a single thought and 'Dhyana' leads to meditation.

#### **• Benefits of four schools of Yoga**

The techniques of 'Karma Yoga' would help an individual to learn the art of working free from tension and stress. 'Bhakti Yoga' would soften the heart, remove all evil traits and infuse peace, bliss and divine ecstasy. 'Raja Yoga' recognizes the freedom of mind to change oneself so as to reach higher state of bliss, creativity and consciousness. The methods of 'Jnana Yoga', such as hearing ('Sravana'), recalling and analysing ('Manana') and dwelling and meditating (nididhyasana) would help to sharpen intellect and attain self-realization.

### **Strategy of integration of yoga in education**

The integration of Yoga in modern education needs much considerations.

### **1. Introduction of Yoga in all Stages of Education**

Yoga should be integrated in the curriculum at all stages of education in a graded way. Dr. B.P. Desai has suggested: "Yoga should be introduced as a physical training programme up to high school and pre-university level, as mind-culture in colleges and as a spiritual culture at University level". Initially Yoga should be introduced as a part of physical education, but in higher education, it should be studied as a separate discipline.

### **2. Designing effective curriculum**

The curriculum of Yoga should be need based, graded and effective. It will have two parts-theory and practicum. In order to make the Yoga practice accurate, students will have to be provided with the knowledge about the utility, peculiarity and proper techniques of yogic exercises through text books and class teaching. While framing curriculum of Yoga, we have to select Asanas, Pranayamas etc. as per age-needs and developmental factors of students.

### **3. Providing adequate academic facilities**

The integration of Yoga Education in the existing system of education needs adequate academic facilities, comprising qualified faculty members, spacious rooms for Yoga practice and proper supervision of teaching staff. Necessary initiatives have to be taken to motivate the students for practicing Yoga, to arouse consciousness about the importance of Yoga among students and guardians and to provide training on Yoga for all teachers.

### **4. Providing classroom practices**

Yoga should be integrated in education through classroom practices. In schools, the teachers should ask the students to practice one. Pranayama at the beginning of classes in order to enable the brain for retaining more information easily. Moreover, the occasional break of one or two minutes through the practice of Yoga would provide students to stimulate their intellect and strengthen the power of assimilation. The practice of asanas are to be made at the end of the working hours with proper supervision of the teachers. It should be remembered that over-doing and unintelligent or defective practice of Yoga may become harmful.

### **5. Integrating behavioural development**

The practice of Yoga is to be integrated between the external behaviours related to body and internal behaviours related to mind, and also intellect and spirit in such a way that a harmony between and external internal core of life could be maintained. It helps to develop a person to a harmonized man.

### **6. Organization of awareness programme**

As Yoga is not only a school subject rather way of developing healthful living; so the awareness programme on the importance of Yoga in the present life should be organized. Such programme may include lectures of experts, exhibitions film show and T.V. Programmes on Yoga. The government and educational institutions should organize seminars, workshops and symposia on the practice of Yoga and provide training programmes for all teachers. A special type of Yoga institute has to be set up for imparting teaching on Yoga exclusively.

### **Concluding remarks**

Lastly we may conclude that the aims and objectives of true education will not be attained unless Yoga is integrated in education. So proper initiatives are to be taken to construct well-designed syllabus and its implementation at all levels of education. First we have to develop our right attitude towards Yoga that it is not only a spiritual system rather it is a discipline of study which has great relevance to education. Next the practice of Yoga in schools needs adequate practice facilities along with active involvement of all teachers. Yoga should be integrated in the present system of education as a subject of study so that it can fill up the gap of inner development of personality.

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