



STRUCTURAL CURRICULUM DESIGN OF YOGA FOR SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN: A REVIEW PAPER

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ABSTRACT

Yogic principles have been recommended to be adapted slightly so as to suit the children's nature. Such a semi-yogic syllabus, as propounded by the author, consists of yoga-like rhythmic exercises and hygienic cleansing processes. The study has been divided the children into three categories as their ages and academic levels whereby yogic concepts and practices have been recommended in graded fashion.

Keywords: -Yoga, Rhythmic Exercises, Hygienic, Cleansing Process.

INTRODUCTION:

Child is a budding human being. Usually, children grow physically and mentally with speed up to the age of thirteen. Till that age, their muscles are tender, bones are elastic and spongy, joints are very flexible and all systems in general, brain and the nervous system in particular are in a developing stage. Natural urges are more predominant in this age. Both mentally and physically children are not so matured. They may not understand so vividly the difference between good and bad, desirable and undesirable, social and anti-social, moral and immoral acts etc. Yoga presupposes presence of discriminating intellect (Viveka Buddhi), developed personality which is capable of understanding subtle Yogic principles and concepts, physical and mental maturity, conscious attitude, absence of competitive spirit etc. The traditional Yoga, therefore, may not prove suitable to the fickle and wavering nature of children. However, the childhood is the most impressionable and receptive stage of life. It is in this stage that the seeds of good behaviour, discipline and healthy attitude towards life can be sown. Yoga, if indirectly introduced at this stage can definitely help children in developing their personality fully.

Physical exercises usually involve vigorous and strenuous movements which may be good for developing muscles, strength, speed, endurance, dexterity, agility, etc., whereas Yogic practices are to be practised without any exertion so that they can cool down body and pacify the mind. Children by their very nature enjoy speedy movements and continuous activities which are lacking in Yogic practices. Hence, Yogic principles need to be adapted slightly so as to suit the children's nature. Such a semi-yogic syllabus can consist of Yoga-like rhythmic exercises and hygienic cleansing processes, etc,

similar to Yogasanas and Shatkriyas. Such Yoga-like rhythmic exercises are required to be so designed as to fall in between the two i.e. physical exercises and Yogic practices so that the children are attracted towards Yoga well intine and get fore-taste of Yoga properly which in turn help them in easily adopting Yoga as a way of life when they mature. This will not only help the children to achieve neuro-muscular co-ordination but also help them in excelling in their studies, sports and all other activities by ensuring their positive health and marked improvement in their abilities and attitudes.

The children can be divided into three categories as per their ages and standards in which they are studying i.e., 1. Primary School Stage (5 to 8 years of age - I to IV Std.), II. Middle School Stage (9 to 12 years of age-V to VIII Std.) and III. Secondary School Stage (13 and 14: years of age-IX & X Std.).

1. PRIMARY SCHOOL STAGE- Age: 5 to 8 years
Std.: I to IV

Children of primary school stage are too small to practice Yoga in real sense or perceive Yoga as a formal education or as a strict discipline. Therefore, it is better not to have any formal syllabus of Yoga in this stage. However, the foundation of Yoga can be laid down in this stage itself by informally and indirectly introducing Yoga-like activities some of which are indicated below;

- (i) Cleansing habits i.e. cleaning teeth, mouth, ears, eyes, nose, skin etc.
- (ii) Proper and correct postures while sitting, standing, bending etc.
- (iii) Rhythmic, graceful, dance-like movements and imitating movements of animals, birds etc.
- (iv) Proper, deep and complete breathing.
- (v) Morning assembly, recitation of prayer, inspiring verses, shlokas and poems.
- (vi) Observance of silence for some time individually and in a group.
- (vii) Telling stories of moral and cultural values e.g. stories of Dhruva, Bhakta Prahlad, Arjuna, Shivaji.
- (viii) Producing melodious, soothing and vibrating sounds in different pitches and volume; participating in chorus and group songs with action.

II. MIDDLE SCHOOL STAGE- Age: 9 to 12 years
Std.: V to VIII

This is the stage in which Yoga-like rhythmic exercises and few other things indicated below can be introduced as an experience-based, planned and systematic programme for achieving all-round personality development of children:

- (i) Imparting knowledge about various body parts, sense organs, emotions and the nature of mind.
- (ii) Simple definition of health and importance of maintaining good health.
- (iii) Narrating stories of great personalities, Yogis, patriots, scientists; so as to help children imbibe the virtues of those great persons. Also tell anecdotes and personal experiences etc. emphasizing points like-work is worship, honour labour, help each other in times of need, be self-reliant, know your strong and weak points.
- (iv) About what to eat, what not to eat and how to eat.
- (v) Learning and practising simple Yogic cleansing processes like Danta Moola Dhouti, Jivha Moola Dhouti, Netra Dhouti and Shavasana Marga Shuddhi

(vi) Learning the technique of conscious, controlled and complete breathing without performing 'kumbhaka'. This will prepare children for Pranayama proper to be introduced in the next stage.

(vii) Introduction of basic tenets of Yama-Niyamas through experience-based programme. 'Yamas' are the restraints to be observed while living in the society and 'Niyamas' are the observances which prove helpful in personal development.

(viii) Performing Yoga-like rhythmic exercises involving movements of spine to various directions and stretches/twist/compression of spine, apart from some balancing postures.

Bending forward	:	Hastapadasana, Dronasana, Sulabha Halasana
Bending backward	:	Naukasana, Dhanurasana
Twist	:	Uttana Vakrasana, Trikonasana with slow swing
Stretch	:	Tadasana, Parvatasana
Compression	:	Bhushirasana :
Lateral Bend	:	Sulabha Chakrasana
Head down pose	:	Viparitamukha Mudra
Balancing postures	:	Ek Pada Vrikshasana, Utkatasana, Garudasana

.Suryanamaskara and certain bandhas like Jalandhar bandha, Uddiyana bandha as also Mudras like Tadasana Mudra, Brahma Mudra and Simha Mudra can also be taught in this stage.

The above list is only indicative. The actual selection of asanas, bandhas and mudras should be made taking into account specific physical needs and other requirements of the concerned children. As the natural inclination of children of this age group is in favour of movements, they may be allowed to perform these asanas, bandhas and mudras in a dynamic way i.e. involving rhythmic, physical exercise type movements and maintaining the final stage of every practice for a very short time unlike the proper yogic way in which all movements involved in performing asanas, bandhas and mudra are to be slow, steady, continuous, controlled and the final stage of the posture/practice is maintained static for comparatively longer duration.

III. SECONDARY SCHOOL STAGE-

Age: 13 and 14 years

Std.: IX & X

This is an adolescence period of children's life. So many physical, mental, emotional and social changes take place during this developing period. It is usually in this period that children develop independent attitude of mind and tend to ask questions of fundamental nature. Also, they start thinking about their future. Tendencies like hero-worshipping, spirit of optimism and idealism prevail in children of this age group. They may have to face certain psychological and physical problems mainly due to changes in hormones taking place in their body causing restlessness and confusion. This may give rise to many problems including indiscipline in school which is manifested by delinquency, destructiveness and apathy. Introduction of Yoga abhyas proper in this stage proves very helpful in making children physically fit and mentally balanced to meet all such challenges. This in turn ensures harmonious relationship between students and teachers, children and parents as also with other members of society.

Yoga education at this stage should be comprehensive and should cover all aspects of children's personality i.e. physical, mental, social and spiritual. While teaching Yogabhyas one should stress more on holistic aspects of yoga. The syllabus for the children of this age group should be formulated keeping in mind following objectives:

- i) Achieving proper balance of all body systems.
- ii) Ensuring balance in emotional life.

iii) Correcting faulty life style.

iv) Making optimum use of their physical and mental powers and capacities bestowed by the nature.

v) Steadying mind and achieving better concentration and memory.

vi) Making spine supple and healthy.

vii) Imbibing importance of values in life.

viii) Ensuring proper use of breathing mechanism.

ix) Achieving excellence in performance as claimed in the verse

x) Significance of observing certain restraints while living in society and observance for self-development also usefulness of cleansing processes in maintaining positive health.

xi) Developing integrated personality.

ACCORDINGLY, THE SYLLABUS FOR CHILDREN IN THIS AGE GROUP MAY BROADLY CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWINGS:

(a) Experience-oriented discussion on the usefulness of Yamas and Niyamas in improving relationship between individuals and society and their role in expediting the process of personality development.

b) Pranayama for fostering complete and disciplined breathing which in turn can help children in soothing their nerves, steadying their mind and maintaining proper emotional balance.

c) Learning the techniques of fixation of mind, meditation and absorption of mind.

d) Useful information about

- History of Yoga Shastra
- Basic objectives of Yoga
- About great Yogis, Saints and their work
- Importance of proper life style and values in life

e) Practice of asanas involving balance, vertical stretch, flexion, extension, compression lateral bend and twist to the spinal column.

Now all practices should be performed with ease and without strain following the basic principles of Yoga i.e., all movements involved in asanas should be sluggish, steady, continuous, controlled, rhythmic and graceful. With these objectives in view, the children may be told to follow four cardinal principles viz.

- (i) slackening of efforts,
- (ii) differential relaxation,
- (iii) normal/natural breathing and
- (iv) fixation of mind on the breath.

Further, they should avoid any kind of competition in practising Yogasanas as it is not conducive to the study of Yoga. Individual should attain the posture according to their capacity i.e., the stage which Individual's body structure and tone of muscles permit.

In a steady posture, the flightiness of the mind is reduced. This being the main objective of any asana, children should now be encouraged to maintain the final stage of Asana for a longer stretch. With the increasing practice, they should be told to slowly reduce the number of rounds and maintain the final stage of asana for a long time at a stretch.

CONCLUSION:

The detailed syllabus consisting of specific asanas, bandhas, mudras, pranayama, theory of Yoga and information about subjects related to health and Yoga can be drawn on the basis of the above broad guidelines. However, while doing so, one should not forget the Yoga basically is individual in nature. Hence, any Yogic syllabus must take into account the capacities and needs of the concerned individual.

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