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Yoga for specially-abled children: A therapeutic means to increase body awareness

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Abstract

Yoga is becoming more popular every day by day, not just for adults, but also for children as well. Perhaps more important, for specially-abled children, it can be used as an alternative therapy. Yoga can help to increase concentration, flexibility, and strength. It can also develop coordination and reduce stress and anxiety. There are a lot of benefits of yoga for specially-abled children. Children with special needs do often have tension and rigid muscle tone and yoga can be used as a therapeutic means to address this. Children with special needs may have many issues such as developmental delays, medical conditions, psychiatric conditions or congenital conditions. These special needs require accommodations so that these children can reach their potential. An increase in body awareness brings all the benefits together. Children will not only have the opportunity to learn about different part of the body but also they may develop an understanding of how their own body works. The purpose of the study is to introduce yoga as a therapeutic means to increase body awareness and strength for specially-abled children. Yoga for the “Specially-Abled Child” will be a fantastic early intervention program that can assure the healthy formative development and coping mechanism for a child.

Keywords: specially-abled child, body awareness, therapeutic means, coping mechanism, psychiatric condition

Introduction

With the government flagging off the ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ (SSA) and ‘Inclusive Education’, which bars schools from rejecting children on the basis of physical or mental disability, a teacher’s role in a student’s life is challenging. Children born with disabilities are so “special” that a person working for them has to understand and comprehend situations as well as people. Every child with a special need is different and so we have to understand the level of need for each child and devise a specific method. Children with special needs may have developmental delays, medical conditions, psychiatric conditions, and/or congenital conditions. These special needs require accommodations so that children can reach their potential. In clinical diagnostic and functional development, special needs or additional needs refers to individuals who require assistance for disabilities that may be medical, mental, or psychological. Special needs can range from people with “Autism, Asperger syndrome, Cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Dyslexia, dyscalculia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, Blindness, Deafness, ADHD, Cystic fibrosis and Postural Deformities such as Kyphosis, Lordosis, Scoliosis, Bow Leg, Flat Foot, Knocking Knee etc.”

Things are more complicated with children who have specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia or dysgraphia (inability to write coherently). This is because their special need is not so obvious, the condition manifests only when academic pressure increases in school and the child fails to cope with it. Many children, who have special educational needs, have no visible disability. They do have specific difficulties in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics, and they find it difficult to cope with a textbook-based syllabus. Some have serious difficulties in adjusting with the norms and conventions of school, resulting in occasionally weird behavior. It needs to be underlined that these children are not ignored or they do not simply drop out of mainstream education. It has been noticed that by and large when students are referred for external help, they are already fragile. Many develop low self-esteem; some have examination phobia or psychosomatic conditions like nausea and migraine.

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Children diagnosed with what they call “Challenging Behavior” are perhaps worse off than those who have difficulties in learning. Once a child has been regarded as disruptive, even small acts of mischief assume larger proportions, they are usually teased by the peers who use their names as a cover for their own misdemeanors. This leads to a cynical flow of challenging behavior on their part and further challenges on our part.

Inclusive education schooling implies a system of education that is progressive and flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of all students including those with disabilities. Inclusion is an ongoing process of school reform that may be beneficial for all students irrespective of being bright or having special educational needs. However, it must be ensured that children with special needs gain equal access to the curriculum and that school authorities be dissuaded from making unjust and, sometimes, insensitive decisions. A school is established for all children. It is meant to be a safe haven where children, in general, feel that they are looked after and wanted, for the institution symbolizes tolerance, inclusion and acceptance. The school is expected to be equipped with facilities to deal with diversity and also to create confident individuals capable of making informed choices with the skill to evaluate the implications of these decisions. The so-called “Special needs education” is challenging but can be immensely satisfying. Only compassionate people with a sincere desire to give a new direction to the lives of children with special needs can afford to accept the challenge of constantly assessing a child, tweak his teaching accordingly and monitor progress.

Historical background of yoga

The ‘Garbopanishad’, of the post Vedic Period, 1000BC; is a treatise on ‘Embryology’, explains the systematic growth of the embryo in the 2nd chapter. Sushruta, a rehabilitative surgeon; explains the development of the foetus in detail in the 3rd chapter of ‘Sushruta Samhita’ 700 BC. The heart of the foetus starts developing in the fourth month. As heart is the seat of consciousness, it expresses its desire for things of taste, smell etc. (through the longings of its mother). The enceinte is called double-hearted (Dauhrida) now, those whose wishes and desires – not being honoured and gratified – lead to the birth of a paralysed, hump-backed, crooked-armed, lame, dwarfed, defected and a blind child. Hence the desires of the enceinte should be gratified, which would ensure the birth of a strong, vigorous and long-lived son. Suggestions about corrective surgery for certain disabilities have been explained. ‘Yoga Sutras’ of Maharshi Patanjali reveals that we have at our disposal an excellent yogic system which advocates a method of controlling the mind and the body. He depicts a crystallized picture of what constitutes the mind, its functions and impediments. Patanjali has also described the states of mind- Mudha, Kshipta, Vikshipta, Ekagrata and Niruddha: the dull, distracted, partially distracted, one pointed and controlled respectively. The mind of the disabled is classified under the Mudha, Kshipta or Vikshipta states.

Yoga is one of the six schools of ancient Indian philosophy that enables one to achieve higher levels of performance, helping manifest the potentials from within. Yoga is a great boon to civilized man having preventive, curative as well as rehabilitative potential. It is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic development of physical, mental and spiritual aspects of our being. Yoga is a conventional long-established and time-tested art and therapeutic science that

has positive contribution to make in maintenance of general wellbeing and happiness of all. “Yoga is a way of life”, says Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, which can make a person rediscover his best in life. The practice is calming and provides a rare opportunity in our chaotic lives enabling one to focus inwards. Children with special needs have various physical and mental disabilities which affect their mental attitude. They lack confidence and have a poor self-image. They develop feelings of inferiority from their awareness of their own abnormality and lack of success in all directions. They are frustrated due to the inability to do simple tasks, either unable to do it or do it with immense difficulty. Hence they are highly tense and tire easily from physical exertion. The spine is stiff, thus producing much pain, which further limits movement, imbalances co-ordination of limbs. They also have difficulty in concentration.

Review of Literature

According to ‘Hathapradipika’, a traditional Yoga text, Yoga is a safe and reliable practice that can be done at any age by anyone. “Yuva vrddho’thivrdho va vyadhito durbalo’pi va abhyasat siddimapnoti sarvayogeshvatandritah” – Hathapradipika I: 64, which mean whether young, old or very old, sick or debilitated, one who is vigilant attains success in all yoga, by means of practice, provided they abide to the rules and regulations properly. Yoga can also be performed by those with acute or chronic and painful disabilities, those who suffer from chronic illnesses and those with missing limbs too. Yoga has never recognized any barriers of age, sex, religion or creed.

Practice of ‘Hatha Yoga’ begins by working with the body on a structural level, helping to align the spinal column, increase flexibility, and strengthen muscles, while internal organs are toned and rejuvenated; the digestive, lymphatic, cardiovascular, and pulmonary systems are purified of toxins and waste matter; the nervous and endocrine systems are normalized and balanced and brain cells are nourished and refreshed. The end result is increased mental clarity, emotional stability and a greater sense of overall well-being. Yoga is a scientific system of physical and mental practices that originated in India more than three thousand years ago. Its purpose is to help each one of us achieve our highest potential and to experience enduring health and happiness. With Yoga, we can extend our healthy, productive years far beyond the accepted norm and, at the same time; improve the quality of our lives.

Chapter three of the book: “Yoga for the special child”

The branch of Yoga that forms the main focus of my teaching work with both adults and children is called Hatha Yoga. Hatha Yoga begins by working with the body on a structural level, helping to align the vertebrae, increase flexibility, and strengthen muscles and connective tissue. At the same time, internal organs are toned and rejuvenated; the epidermal, digestive, lymphatic, cardiovascular, and pulmonary systems are purified of toxins and waste matter; the nervous and endocrine systems are balanced and toned; and brain cells are nourished and stimulated. The end result is increased mental clarity, emotional stability, and a greater sense of overall well-being. Because Yoga works on so many different levels, it has great potential as an effective therapy for chronic diseases and conditions that do not respond well to conventional treatment methods. For this reason, children with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities that practice Yoga often surprise their parents and teachers

with their quick mastery of basic motor, communicative, and cognitive skills. The same Yoga routine can help children with learning disabilities develop greater concentration, balance, and composure in their daily lives. Everyone gains some level of benefit. The only requirements are proper instruction and regular practice.

Observation

Body awareness: Deepening connection with the body Body awareness is how conscious and connected you are to your own body. It's also known as kinesthesia, or the awareness of the position and movement of body parts in relation to muscles and joints. It involves the proprioceptive system, which tells you where your muscles are moving and how, as well as the vestibular system, which is made of organs in the inner ear that are in charge of spatial orientation. The vestibular system allows you to keep your balance, posture, and head stability. Body awareness has several benefits that range from physical to emotional health.

- Better balance and stability: One of the main benefits of body awareness is having a strong mind-body connection. When you know and feel where your body is in space, you're better able to direct it to do what you want it to do.
- Weight management: There's some evidence that body awareness can be a beneficial tool for weight management. One study showed that people with low body awareness were more likely to eat in the absence of hunger, which the study related to obesity risk.
- Pain management: Evidence suggests that body awareness can reduce pain when approached mindfully.
- Improved mental and emotional well-being: When our proprioceptive and vestibular systems aren't processing information from your environment correctly, it can be stressful. The body awareness that comes from balancing the vestibular and proprioceptive systems can give you a sense of security both in your body and in the world around you. It can even lead to reductions in anxiety, depression and vertigo.

Yoga for developing body awareness

Yoga is one of the most well-known and widely practiced forms of body awareness exercise. It involves linking breath and movement to become more present in body and mind. Practicing yoga helps provide a foundation and tools to building good habits, such as discipline, self-inquiry, and nonattachment. This exercise is also a pathway to empower you to make conscious choices to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Today, many agree that the word 'yuj' which yoga derives from refers to greater internal states, such as clarity, peace, and happiness. It's been shown to have multiple benefits, including:

- Easing stress
- Improving heart health
- Reducing inflammation

What's the relevance of interoceptive awareness to our health and well-being? It turns out that many illnesses; anxiety, depression, gut disorders, eating disorders, and more are diseases of disembodiment. In these illnesses, awareness becomes skewed.

Yoga for special children

The child's physical and mental development helps to nurture, restore and balance the emotional well-being of the child,

calm the mind, the nervous system, and strengthen the body. The children with disabilities who practice Yoga often surprise everyone with their quick mastery of various yoga techniques as well as tremendous improvement of basic motor, communicative and cognitive skills; they develop greater concentration, balance and control in their day to day activities. Yoga is beneficial to all but the only requirement is proper instruction and regular dedicated practice. It is highly recommended that the parents of the special children also enroll in with their children to experience the effects of Yoga for themselves. It also helps create better bonding and understanding between the parent and the child with special needs. We never really know what the outcome might be but we do know that yoga helps to recreate, refine and redefine the child, which lays foundation for positive improvement. The influences of yoga on special children with some common disorders are:

1. Yoga and children with cerebral palsy (CP)

Cerebral Palsy is a disorder caused by injury to the motor areas in the brain, affecting muscle tone and the ability to control movement and posture. In most cases, the onset occurs during pregnancy or at childbirth. In other cases, infections such as meningitis or traumatic brain injury may result in Cerebral Palsy. There are three types of movement disturbances associated with CP:

- a. **Spastic cerebral palsy:** Where muscles are tense, contracted, and resistant to movement. This is the most common form of cerebral palsy, especially in low birth weight or premature babies.
- b. **Athetoid cerebral palsy:** Where the affected parts of the body perform involuntary writhing movements, such as turning, twisting, facial grimacing, and drooling. This form of cerebral palsy generally involves damage only to the motor centers, not to other parts of the brain. In the past the "strange" and "unnatural" movements were diagnosed as signs of mental or emotional disturbance.
- c. **Ataxic cerebral palsy:** Where the main characteristic is lack of balance and coordination and altered depth perception, due to damage to the cerebellum. Ataxia involves difficulty maintaining balance and swaying when standing.

Sometimes several areas of the brain are involved, so the description of a particular child's condition may involve several of the above terms and symptoms. Also, the severity of the disability will vary from child to child, ranging from mild awkwardness to inability to walk. Other conditions associated with cerebral palsy may include: seizures, ADHD, learning disabilities, vision problems and speech impairment. The practice of Yoga poses (Asanas), followed by deep relaxation, can help to significantly reduce high muscle tone, which is characteristic of most children with CP. Holding an asana gives the muscles and tendons a relaxing stretch, releasing overall stress and tightness throughout the musculature and around the joints. At the same time that asanas are relaxing the body, they also provide just enough resistance to exercise low muscle tone areas of the body. In this way asanas actually improve both high and low muscle tone problems in children with CP. Perhaps the most important aspect of asana practice for children with CP is its ability to stretch and realign the spine. As a result, the child is able to develop a greater range of movement and coordination, as well as greater independence.

2. Yoga and children with Down's syndrome (DS)

Down's syndrome is a congenital disability with an overall incidence of one in every 700 births. The chromosomal abnormality involved in most cases is trisomy 21. As a result, the affected person has 47 chromosomes in all body cells, instead of the normal 46.

Persons with 'Down's Syndrome' are shorter than average, and often have with truncated limbs. Some other common characteristics include an epicanthic fold of skin extending from the eyelid over the inner canthus of the eye, strabismus (crossed eyes) and hypotonia (low muscle tone). Motor development is slow; and instead of walking by 12 to 14 months as most children do, children with Down's syndrome usually learn to walk between 15 to 36 months. Language and cognitive development are also significantly delayed. The majority of children with Down's syndrome function in the mild to moderate range of mental ability. In addition to these delays, children with Down's syndrome are also susceptible to certain medical problems, including: congenital heart defects; increased susceptibility to infection; respiratory problems; obstructed digestive tracts and childhood leukaemia.

Yoga poses (asanas) help to stretch tone and strengthen the entire body. Asanas also benefit the internal organs and help to balance and revitalize the endocrine glands. For this reason child with Down's syndrome who practice Yoga stay slim and flexible, while those who do not practice Yoga tend to put on weight as they age. In conjunction with yogic breathing exercises, which have a beneficial effect on the central nervous system, asanas facilitate the development of body awareness, concentration and memory - vital skills for any child with a developmental disability.

3. Yoga and children with autism

Autism is a developmental disorder that typically appears in the first three years of life. This disorder makes it difficult for children to communicate verbally and non-verbally, to socially interact with others and to relate to the outside world. Many children with autism, however, also exhibit remarkable abilities in the areas of art, music and math. Autism used to be a rare disorder, occurring in about one in 1,500 children. For decades, most psychiatrists considered autism to be a psychological disorder. It is now generally acknowledged that autism is caused by biological factors, but there is little agreement over which factors are most important, and exactly how they cause autism. Unlike other disorders, autism is defined not by its cause, but by its symptoms, which may include purposeless, repetitive behaviors such as hand-flapping, rocking or opening and closing doors. Language skills develop slowly or not at all, the meaning of words is often ignored and gestures are used instead of words. Some individuals with autism may exhibit aggressive or self-injurious behavior and resistance to change in routine. Others may seem to lack common sense, throw tantrums for no apparent reason or obsess over an idea, object or person. Children with autism may also experience sensitivities to sights, sounds, touch, odours and flavors, and have strong reactions to them.

The first step in teaching Yoga to a student with autism is to establish a strong bond with the child. To do this the practitioner will need to enter the world that the child lives in to meet the child on his or her own level, so to speak. Only then will the teacher be able to gain the child's complete confidence. Massage, music, dance, rhymes and stories are some of the different techniques that the teacher can use to connect with the child.

As student and teacher gradually develop a foundation of mutual trust and friendship, the practitioner can introduce some of the Yoga poses (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayama) that will help to bring the child with autism out of his or her shell and into the world of social interaction. After the student becomes familiar with these introductory poses, the practitioner may progressively add more asanas to the routine, as well as deep relaxation. The combination of asanas, pranayama and deep relaxation will strengthen the child's nervous system, increase overall health and facilitate the development of body awareness and concentration. By establishing optimal physiological and psychological integrity, Yoga therapy helps children with autism gain new motor, communication and social skills. The end result is an overall improvement in their quality of life.

4. Yoga and children with attention deficit disorder (ADD)

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a behavioural disorder formally defined as a significant deficiency in age-appropriate attention, impulse control and rule-governed behaviour, which manifests in early childhood. Associated behaviours include: difficulty with following instructions; speaking or acting before thinking; poor organizational skills; restlessness; impatience; forgetfulness; low self-esteem; and, in the case of children with ADHD, hyperactivity. Some experts believe that attention deficit disorder is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, but there is no documented proof that this is actually the case. The incidence of attention deficit disorder varies from 3-5% for school-age population, depending on the strictness of the diagnosis. Sometimes referred to as ADD or ADD/WO (attention deficit disorder without hyperactivity), children with this disorder generally do not perform well in school, though most of them test at average or above average intelligence.

Since breath is deeply connected to the emotions, teaching yogic breathing exercises (pranayama) is an ideal way to start working with children who have ADD. However, it is important for the practitioner to first find a way to create a strong bond with the child, in order to gain the child's trust and attention. Then the exercises will progress more rapidly. In addition to its positive effect on the emotions, pranayama stimulates vital areas of the brain and central nervous system. By combining pranayama with Yoga poses (asanas) and deep relaxation, the benefits are greatly enhanced. With regular Yoga practice, children with attention deficit disorder develop greater body awareness, emotional balance and concentration - increasing their capacity for schoolwork and creative play. As overall performance improves, so does their self-esteem.

5. Yoga and children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, is a behavioral disorder formally defined as a significant deficiency in age-appropriate attention, impulse control and rule-governed behavior, which, like ADD, manifests in early childhood. Associated behaviors include: hyperactivity; speaking or acting before one thinks; difficulty in following instructions; poor organizational skills; restlessness; impatience; forgetfulness; low self-esteem; and poor social skills. Children with ADHD find it difficult to slow down, even when they want to; often they are so hurried that they seem clumsy and uncoordinated. As with ADD, some experts believe that ADHD is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, but there is no documented proof that this is actually the case. The incidence of ADHD varies from 3-5% for

school-age population, depending on the strictness of the diagnosis. Sometimes referred to as ADD/WH or "minimal brain dysfunction," children with ADHD generally do not perform well in school, though most of them test at average or above average intelligence.

Children with ADHD often experience learning delays due to their hyperactivity and distractibility. Special Yoga practitioners will usually find it easiest to introduce pranayama and a few asanas to these children before attempting to teach them an entire Yoga routine. This will help them to calm down enough to follow instructions. Alternate nostril breathing will be of particular benefit to children with ADHD because of its ability to calm the mind and to balance the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Teaching these children proper respiration is an important aspect of their Yoga training. Once the child with ADHD is able to follow instructions, the Yoga practitioner can gradually introduce more asanas and the deep relaxation portion of the Yoga routine.

Yogic techniques for special children

Basic 'Jathis' and 'Kriyas' may be given as a part of the warm up practices with 'Surya Namaskar'. These help improve the flexibility, create awareness of the body and enhances the energy circulation throughout the body.

1. Asanas

'Asanas' or 'postures' are psycho-physiological practices since they form the basis of Yoga's mind-body integration activity. The greatest benefit from practicing asanas comes when we learn how to relax in a given pose resulting in a state of deep concentration in which mind is totally focused on a single object or on the incoming and outgoing breaths which helps harmonise mind and body.

Although the 'differently-abled' children might not be able to practice all of the poses, there are many postures that are especially beneficial to them. Even trying to attain a particular posture has the same benefit as attaining the final position. Depending upon the type of handicap, most of these postures can be modified for them. In fact, they can be taught to perform various postures without moving at all. There are instances of severely disabled persons who practice their yoga routine from their beds or wheelchairs. Asanas work on the muscles and the joints, creating space within the body's structure to help increase circulation and improve flexibility. The physical functioning becomes more integrated and less stressful.

- a. **Postures to improve blood flow to the head:** Postures like Viparitarani, (topsy-turvy posture) Sarvangasana (shoulder-stand), Matsyasana (fish posture), Halasana (plough posture), alternating with standing postures such as Padahasthasana (hand to foot posture), Trikonasana (triangle posture), Padangushtasana (clasping big toe like a hook) helps increasing blood flow to the head region and help activate the brain cells.
- b. **Postures to increase concentration:** Balancing postures such as Vrikshasana (tree posture), ArdhaChakrasana (half-wheel posture) and Natarajasana (posture of Lord Nataraja). Children have to be helped by the parent or the instructor to maintain these postures.
- c. **Postures to improve confidence and body stance:** Back bending postures such as Bhujangasana (serpent posture), Ushtrasana (camel posture), Chakrasana (wheel posture), Dhanurasana (bow posture) that opens the shoulders and the chest region are useful for enhancing their vital

capacity as well as improving their self-confidence and their body stance.

Those affected by the impairment of the lower limbs can be taught the practice of hand balancing postures and they excel in that. Simhasana (lion posture) improves stammering, stuttering and some ear, nose and throat defects of the children. Pavanamukta Asana (wind-releasing posture) is an enjoyable practice too. Thus starting from simple movements and dynamic postures, they can be slowly led on to the static postures, the concept of Sthira and Sukha, thereby satisfied gradually.

2. Pranayama

Pranayama controls and regulates breathing and is very beneficial for the disabled. This technique particularly improves the stamina, balance and strength, induces better sleep by the improved circulation of the vital energy. Pranayama helps in controlling epileptic-seizures which may be common among these children. Sounds of animals make it z 3=interesting for them to perform. Kukkuriya Pranayama, (dog panting breath) is an all-time favorite with children. Practice of Mathangi Pranayama, Vyagraha Pranayama with Cheeri and Sharabha Kriya are also enjoyed. Others like Kapalabhati are also very useful (for the slow dull people and not the hyperactive ones). The Shitali and Sitkari Pranayama are useful for the people affected by the 'Down's Syndrome' as they have thickened tongue with difficulty in speech. Nada Pranayama such as Pranava Pranayama helps alleviate stress as well as sublimate suppressed and regressed emotions. Mukha Bhastrika is also known as the 'cleansing breath' helps remove old, stagnant air from the lungs and cleanses the bloodstream of excess carbon dioxide. Its practice also decreases response time and enhances memory and comprehension. Research also suggests that it is useful in combating learning disorders, A.D.D., and mental retardation. It may also be of value to train mentally retarded children who have prolonged 'Reaction Time'.

Pranayama and Asanas work hand-in-hand to balance and integrate different physiological functions and to help dissolve emotional blockages and negative habitual patterns that can obstruct the flow of vital energy within the body.

3. Shatkarmas

Some of the Shatkarmas such as Trataka, Kapalabhati, may be very useful for the developing concentration and also act as tranquillizers. The regular practices of Kunjal Kriya and Dugda Neti up to at least 40 days have been found to improve mental retardation. These children suffer from numerous eye related problems and Trataka and the Neti are highly beneficial for such children along with a diet rich in 'Vitamin-A' and 'Vitamin-C'.

4. Mudras

Bhujangini Mudra and Brahma Mudra, working with breath and sound vibration induce a sense of relaxation and reinvigorate the head and neck region reducing stress. Hasta Mudras and Kaya Mudras (Yoga Mudra, Manduka Mudra) helps drive away depression, bringing out a sense of joy and happiness. Avoid 'Oli Mudras', due to their powerful influence on the gonadal and other endocrine glands.

5. Dhyana

The practice of meditation in any form reduces the feeling of loneliness and promotes peace of mind. It is very beneficial

for the physically disabled, but a difficult practice for the mentally challenged.

6. Yogic relaxation

Unrealistic expectations at home and outside add powerful peer pressures on them driving them mad. Shavasana (corpse posture) with 'Kaya Kriya' and 'Spanda-Nishpanda' relaxes all aspects of the musculoskeletal system thereby promoting complete relaxation and harmonization of mind, body and emotions.

Prayer and chanting of simple mantras makes them less aggressive, purifies the speech, calms the mind, and helps reduce distraction. Hence chanting the 'Pranava Mantra AUM' can benefit these children. Helps maintaining their concentration and improves their alertness with rest and relaxation and aids them to get emotional and mental strength. Repetition of certain sound patterns can produce a calming and healing effect on the nervous system and psyche.

Discussion

Yoga offers a rich array of resources for living a healthier and better life. The asana, pranayama, and meditation practices of yoga are well-honed tools for cultivating an abiding sense of wholeness in our lives and for opening to a more expansive appreciation of life itself as part of the sublime nature of human existence. They can also be applied in uniquely customized yoga practices to help us heal issues and several problems (Physiological, Psychological, Biological, etc.), common injuries and ailments, including those that can arise when practicing yoga.

From the earliest times of yogic exploration in India's Vedic period, 1500 BCE, seers, sadhus, and various seekers have sought to make life better by reducing or eliminating suffering. This is one of the leitmotifs of yoga. For some yogis, suffering is an inherent part of the human condition that is ultimately addressed on the path of ritualistic self-transcendent practices, while for others, yoga offers a path for living a healthier and more joyful life in the present moment regardless of one's conditions or circumstances. Here we take more of the latter path, exploring how best to heal and have greater joy in the here and now.

It has observed and found that there are very few Yoga schools or institutes in our country, which is very disappointing. India is a nation known all over as the founder of yoga. The total population of specially-abled person counts for 2.1% of the country's total population, i.e. 12.6 million males and 9.3 million females. India made its Summer Paralympic debut at the 1968 Games, competed again in 1972, and then was absent until the 1984 Games. The country has participated in every edition of the Summer Games since then. It has never participated in the Winter Paralympic Games. So far India has grabbed 4 Gold, 4 Silver and 4 Bronze Medals in Paralympic Games.

People who used mind-body interventions showed higher levels of awareness of and connection with their bodies. This resulted in greater self-acceptance, vitality, and lower sensory pain. When you're more aware of your body's cues, you can better understand what you need from moment to moment. This means you can tell the difference between hunger, thirst, tiredness, and emotional distress. Instead of reaching for a candy bar or another less than nutritious snack when you're tired, give yourself permission to take a nap. Instead of oversleeping when you're going through a difficult emotional time, you can reach out to loved ones, exercise self-care. Understanding what your body is communicating can help

you better meet your own needs, leading to greater health and emotional satisfaction. The western world is seemed to be more focused on this matter. The Inclusive Education System is a very good initiative as well as a challenging one. We need more experts to fulfill the growing demand and challenge. Yoga should be promoted and should be part of the curriculum at various levels of learning. The benefits of Yoga on Special Children cannot be ignored:

- a. Yoga helps coordinate the activities of mind, body and emotions
- b. Reduces distracted state of mind thereby building up focus and concentration
- c. Improves activities of day today living to the degree which could never otherwise be achieved
- d. Improves one's ability and helps one to rely on their own selves making them independent
- e. Helps develop social relationships, and reduces frequency of violent emotional upsets
- f. Reduces the negative traits and tendency to cause injuries to self and others
- g. Develops a positive outlook improving self-confidence, self-sufficiency and sociability
- h. Improves interpersonal relationships
- i. Improves their loco motor skills and psycho-motor coordination
- j. Reduces obesity
- k. Controls drooling
- l. Helps in disappearance of facial tics
- m. enhanced eye-hand coordination
- n. improved attention span
- o. Reduces hyperactivity
- p. Improves appetite and sleep
- q. Improves overall health
- r. Increases immunity
- s. Reduces aggression
- t. Reduces dependency of drugs
- u. Increases the efficiency of the nervous system and thus helps in their rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Every single child is unique and special. So, it is not correct to justify the ability of a child based on some parameters. Each child has the fullest right to live, learn, and play without any barriers. Although modern medical approaches are being used to cure the disabilities, they have achieved only a small amount of success. In comparison to the treatment given to such children; yogic therapy has been found to be more beneficial. Yoga is an experiential science: Anubuthi Shastra. The physiological, biochemical and psychological benefits have been measured and well established.

Quite frequently a lot of research is carried out, both in academic and non-academic institutions in the field of Yoga and Yoga Therapy. We felt encouraged by the urge to go for a descriptive and theoretical study on the benefits of Yoga as a Therapeutic means to increase body awareness for Specially-Abled Children. The study will further support and help to avail a deeper concept about the effectiveness of Therapeutic Yoga for Specially-Abled Children.

Research work is still in the toddler's level as far as the disabled and the disabilities are concerned. But it can be authentically said that these practices make them joyful and happy, making them jubilant, improving their quality of life, giving them a sense of well - being, apart from the other physical benefits. The sense of perception is tremendous in these children. We firmly believe that there is always scope

for improvement and accordingly looking forward for any valuable suggestion to enrich the quality of study in future days.

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