Benefits of Yoga in Physical education and sports

Poonam

Department of Physical Education,
Rohtak, Haryana, India.

Abstract

Aim of the present article is the role of some yoga elements in physical education and sports. Yoga is one of the Indian philosophical systems that emphasize the importance of the work with the body to develop healthy behaviors and thoughts. Among all its techniques the physical postures, called asanas in Sanskrit, are the ones that got. It is necessary to remember that sports and gymnastics belong to the scope of Physical Education. Once there was a time when people said “it is not the winning itself but the competing nobly that really matters”, when the place where competitions took place was sacred and the respect between competitors was essential. In our modern society the term Physical Education has been understood in different ways. Some say it is the “education of the body”, which is educating the body to achieve some skills and abilities as it is done, for example, in sports. Others think it is the “education to the body”, which is working out only to improve one’s looks. Unfortunately, this is the main reason why people join gyms, especially before the summer.

In fact, the expression Physical Education originally means “education through the body”. It is using the work with the body as a strategy to reach the noblest goals of education: autonomy and ethics in our relationships with each other and the environment. It is necessary to remember that sports and gymnastics belong to the scope of Physical Education. Once there was a time when people said “it is not the winning itself but the competing nobly that really matters”, when the place where competitions took place was sacred and the respect between competitors was essential. Both Yoga and Physical Education in their origin use the body as a tool for developing attitudes and abilities that are important to achieve physical and mental health. Nowadays they can be considered complementary subjects. While the West developed
the aerobic conditioning and the sports training and focused on its relationship with good heath, the East pursued the same goals through concentration and relaxation.

**Keywords:** Yoga, exercise, science, physical education in schools, muscle

**Introduction**

The word 'yoga' means "to join or Yoke together". It brings the body and mind together to become a harmonious experience. Man is a physical, mental and spiritual being; yoga helps promote a balanced development of all the three. Yoga is a method of learning that aims at balancing "Mind, Body and Spirit". Yoga is a practice with historical origins in ancient Indian philosophy. Yoga is distinctly different from other kinds of exercise as it generates motion without causing strain and imbalances in the body. Other forms of physical exercises, like aerobics, assure only physical well-being. They have little to do with the development of the spiritual or astral body. Yogic exercises recharge the body with cosmic energy and facilitates. They have little to do with the development of the spiritual or astral body. Yogic exercises recharge the body with cosmic energy and facilitates

**Benefits for Physical Education**

Yoga is then commonly taken as a system of physical education with a spiritual component, although the truth is the reverse: Yoga is a spiritual system with a physical component. The practice of asanas is yet only a small part of the complete system of Physical Culture & Education known as Hatha Yoga.

Role of yoga in education from various angles, including the type of education that was being provided to children throughout the world as well as the different levels of stress that children face in the classroom environment. The difficulties, problems, conflicts, distractions and dissipation of their energies were also considered. We started using certain principles and practices of yoga, firstly, as an experiment to increase the children's learning ability and, secondly, to inspire teachers to teach their subjects in a slightly different way. Our belief was, and still is, that we are educating our children without considering or caring for the growth of their entire personality. We are cramming their brains and minds with information without creating any support group outside the classroom environment where they can continue to imbibe education. We have to look at what science says about the growth of a child, what psychoanalysis says about child psychology and how the hormones and glands alter and influence the rationality, emotional structure and creative output of the child.
Adjusting Both Hemispheres of the Brain

According to Science, 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. You read, memorize, sit for an exam and receive a grade. Either you pass or fail. Again you have to read, memorize, sit for an exam and get your grade.

The subjects which are taught follow a linear, logical system, whether it is math’s, history, geography, physics, chemistry or 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 the other aspects, 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 pronounced than the artistic and creative. This is one point.

Building up the Whole Mind

The second point is that the brain is only the 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 ahamkara, 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, we 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 an Urdu couplet which says, "Let me tell you the grand things I have done in
my life. I have studied and after receiving an 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. You might have studied at Oxford or Harvard; you might have received the highest degree available, but you are not educated. A degree is not education. It is only a certificate which allows you to lead a 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 your education.

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

This is what we found when we set up SALT in San Francisco. We interviewed many elementary, high school and college students. We found that each one had a psychological block in learning, remembering and memorizing. By nature children are different to their grown-up counterparts. In order to study, grown-ups may need to sit down at a desk with books, but children don't need to.

**Yoga in the Classroom:-**

The system of educating children has to be different. It has to be combined with certain practices which can remove their psychological blocks, which can make them aware of the psychological changes that happen in their body and brain, which can make them aware of their own distractions and which can give them the ability to focus on the theme of the subject they are studying.

So what did we do? We started with very simple yoga practices in the classroom environment, taking some hints from the work of RYE (Research on Yoga in Education) with children in Europe. In RYE schools the classes begin and end with the practice of two asanas and one pranayama. So if a child has to sit through six or eight classes during the day, he or she is practicing two asanas and one pranayama sixteen times each day at the beginning and at the end of each class.

In Europe, the schools have a psychologist who monitors the performance, behavior and aptitude of the child and who tries to create a support group for the child in the home environment. When the children who were practicing yoga in the classroom were monitored, a marked improvement in their responses, creativity, receptivity,
memory, willpower and behavior was found. The children were more relaxed, focused, one-pointed and tranquil than their counterparts in other classes who were not practicing yoga and who were more destructive, restless, violent and distracted.

In America we took pointers and hints from RYE, but we incorporated extra things along with yoga. We incorporated soft background music in the classroom so that children are not under constant psychological pressure to study. Having music around is a subconscious distraction and subconscious relaxation. For our experiment we chose the classical music of Bach.

The teachers started teaching pranayama to the students. The students were told to breathe in and out in unison with the help of a big grandfather clock. When the pendulum swung to one side, everybody was supposed to breathe in and when the pendulum swung to the other side, everybody was supposed to breathe out. After a few moments the breathing pattern had become regular and was coordinated with the swing of the pendulum. The teachers then gave instructions when the students were breathing out and became silent when the students were breathing in.

Now you may wonder what this has to do with education. But it is very important and relevant because psychologists have said that when we breathe in, we create psychological, emotional and rational blocks in our mind. The energy of the body, brain and mind is withdrawn. When we breathe out, relaxation takes place in the body, in the nervous system, in the mind and in the brain. If you provide information when the physical systems are relaxed, it is retained by the brain and not easily forgotten.

Developing awareness and rapport

This also helps to bring in the concept of awareness. When I visit schools I often find teachers teaching the subject to the students without awareness. While the training is going on in the class, there is an absence of awareness. Students are taking down notes mechanically, whether they understand the subject or not. That is not the worry of the teachers. The students also know that the teacher is not concerned, so why should they bother? So, there is a gap in the relationship between student and teacher. That gap is a very crucial component which can build up the personality of the student, which is non-existent. However, if you incorporate some methods of concentration, then rapport develops as well as awareness.

Please remember that 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 be silent. Speech is the medium of instruction, but at the same time silence is also the medium of instruction because silence allows you to assimilate what you have just heard. So don't only speak. After ten minutes give the children a
three minute break or after five minutes have a one minute break. Become silent and ask everybody to be silent.

In the period of silence get the children to play a game of observing their own breath. Ask them to count their breath backwards from fifteen to one. Inhalation and exhalation is taken as one count and as one breath. Fifteen breaths equal about one minute. Then again begin your instructions. This is another important point. Speech and silence have to be combined.

Alertness and dynamic instructions have to be combined with passive visualization. You instruct, you stimulate their intellect, but at the same time you have to give them a chance to visualize passively what they have just heard which has stimulated their intellect.

You have to develop a rapport with every student - not that of a teacher but that of a considerate friend to whom they can come and say, "Look, I am having such and such a difficulty with my studies, what can I do?" You should be able to guide them.

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 cares? 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 giving children information. We are not concerned whether they retain it or not. So what is the result? You study history and geography at night and in the morning you have already forgotten it.

**Benefit for Sports**

Sports can lead to injury because of its repetitive nature and the resulting musculoskeletal imbalances. On a physical level, yoga restores balance and symmetry to the body, making it the perfect complement to sports. Runners are often drawn to yoga to deal with specific issues, such as improving flexibility or helping with an injury. Yet many are shocked at the world it opens for them, specifically, the strengthening capacity and the use of muscles they never knew they had. Let’s take a closer look at the effects of yoga, both physical and mental, on runners.

**Physical Effects**

As seen in the preceding definitions, yoga encompasses more than the mere physical
Benefits of Yoga in Physical education and sports

postures. Nonetheless, the physicality of yoga is what draws most people to their first yoga class. The following summarizes the physical benefits that sports persons can expect from yoga.

**Flexibility:**

Many sports person cite greater flexibility as the number one reason for beginning a yoga practice. This is a good reason, because yoga stretches the muscles that are tight, which in turn increases the range of motion in related joints. Increased flexibility decreases stiffness, results in greater ease of movement, and reduces many nagging aches and pains.

**Strength:**

Like Runners are strong in ways that relate to running. However, a running stride involves only the lower body and movement in one plane—sagittal (i.e., forward and backward). Thus, certain muscles become strong while others are underused and remain weak. Runners have strong legs for running, but when faced with holding a standing yoga pose, they are quite surprised to find that their legs feel like jelly. This is simply because a properly aligned yoga pose involves using all the muscles in a variety of planes. The muscles that are weak fatigue quickly, and those that are tight scream for release—thus, the jelly-leg syndrome. Additionally, a by-product of becoming stronger is greater muscle tone. Yoga helps shape long, lean muscles that do not hinder free range of movement in joints.

**Biomechanical Balance:**

Overusing some muscles while under using others creates muscular imbalances, which affect the entire musculoskeletal balance and impairs biomechanical efficiency. For mostly sports persons, biomechanical imbalances eventually lead to pain and injury. Depending on the action, a muscle is either contracting (i.e., an agonist) or lengthening (i.e., an antagonist). For example, if you make a fist and lift your forearm, the biceps contracts while the triceps stretches. If you want showy biceps and do repeated biceps curls to pump up the muscle, the triceps will shorten and you could lose the ability to straighten your arm. A healthy balance is to work to both contract and stretch to maintain muscle equilibrium as well as functionality. For example, when stretching the hamstrings, the quadriceps need to contract. This coordinated action not only creates a deeper and safer hamstring stretch, but also provides an opportunity to strengthen the quadriceps, especially the inner quadriceps, which are weak in many runners. This is crucial for runners because the hamstrings most likely
need lengthening while the commonly weak inner quads need strengthening. Every yoga pose is a balance of stability (muscles contracting and strengthening) and mobility (muscles stretching and lengthening). At no time is only one muscle group used. Even the simplest yoga pose requires an awakening of every part of the body. Downward dog is an exemplary pose to demonstrate this. Following is a summary of the major muscle actions in this fundamental pose.

**Stability (Strength)**
- Arms: hands, wrists, lower arms, triceps, deltoids
- Back: lower trapezius, serratus anterior
- Legs: quadriceps, tibialis anterior (front of shins)

**Mobility (Flexibility)**
- Arms: fingers, biceps
- Back: latissimus dorsi, paraspinals (both superficial and deep layers of back muscles)
- Legs: hamstrings, calves, Achilles tendon

A balanced yoga practice requires most of the muscles in the body to perform some action. At the same time, joints are taken through their full ranges of motion as the corresponding muscles contract or stretch to support the movement. The result is improved muscle balance, which translates to better form, stronger running, and fewer injuries.

**An Energized Body:**
Many forms of exercise deplete the body of its energy stores. Yet a yoga practice oxygenates the blood and creates more energy, leaving the body and mind feeling restored and energized. Yoga provides a vehicle through which the body can actively recover from the physical demands of running.

**Improved Breathing:** Lung capacity is of prime importance for players, because it creates the ability to maintain an even breathing pattern through all phases of running. The better the lung capacity is, the more oxygen is circulated through the system, which is most helpful for running long and strong. However, the breathing pattern used in running and other forms of aerobic exercise involves quick and shallow inhalations and exhalations. This uses only the top portion of the lungs, leaving the
middle and lower portions untouched. Yogic breathing involves slow, deep inhalations and long exhalations, making use of the upper, middle, and lower portions of the lungs. Yogic breathing has been shown to increase lung capacity, and greater lung capacity increases endurance and improves overall athletic performance.

In Sanskrit, *prana* means “energy,” and yogic breathing is called *pranayama*. Through the breath, you bring in oxygen, feeding your cells and creating vital life force, and remove carbon dioxide, eliminating toxins. The use of the breath in yoga is vital. Whereas holding the breath creates internal tightness, tension, and anxiety, deep breathing releases tension, reduces stress and anxiety, and physically helps the body ease into poses, particularly those that are challenging. Through this conscious breathing, the body is energized as a result of increased oxygen circulation throughout all of its systems.

**Conclusion**

Yoga offers new learning possibilities to a wider group of students than traditional sports or fitness curriculum, making it a valuable addition to any educational program. Additionally, adding yoga to a school's curriculum will help provide a quality physical education program as modification of traditional physical education yoga in sports as important as other think it helps us in different ways and different levels in a sports men life. Yoga can play a key role in cultivating mind control and concentration which helps a sportsperson to perform at their game. It offers children and adults an opportunity to experience success in physical activity, which can help build a foundation of strong of life. However, curriculum specialists, teachers, trainers and students should know and analyze seriously the real challenges of yoga education in classroom settings and real life as well.

**References**
