

Unit 1

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Yoga is a healthy way of life, originated in India. Now, it is believed to be a form of science accepted all over the world. The western culture is also accepting it as a healthy form of scientific exercise. Although the origin of yoga is obscure, it has a long tradition. Yoga for a common person contains the practices of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *kriya* and meditation, which are helpful to keep oneself physically fit, mentally alert and emotionally balanced. This ultimately prepares ground for the spiritual development of an individual.

The main emphasis of the present yoga curriculum for school-going children is to develop their physical fitness, mental development and emotional stability.

Posture or *asana* form an important basis of this curriculum. These have, therefore, been given more weightage. Though other yogic activities have also been included in the curriculum.

WHAT IS YOGA?

The word 'Yoga' is derived from Sanskrit root *yuj* which means 'join' or 'unite'. This may be taken as the union of body, mind and soul, and is used in the literature both as an end as well as means. As an end, yoga signifies 'integration of personality' at the highest level. As means, yoga includes various practices and techniques which are employed to achieve the development of such integration.

These practices and techniques are means in the yogic literature and are also referred collectively as 'Yoga'.

IMPORTANCE OF YOGA

Good health is the right of every human being. But this right depends on individual, social and environmental factors. Along with environmental or social factors to a large extent, we can develop a better immune system and a better perception of oneself so that other conditions do not affect us adversely and we can achieve good health.

Health is a positive concept. Positive health does not mean merely freedom from disease, but it also include a jubilant and energetic feeling of well-being with an amount of general resistance and capacity to easily cultivate immunity against specific offending agents.

Yoga is one of the most powerful drugless system of treatment. It is having its own concept of wellness which has been scientifically understood and presented by many. Yoga can be adopted as lifestyle for promoting our physical and mental health. Yoga, if introduced at the school level, would help to inculcate healthy habits and lifestyle to achieve good health.

The aim of yoga thus, at the school level, is to encourage a positive and healthy lifestyle for physical, mental and emotional health of children. Yoga helps in the development of strength, stamina, endurance and high energy at physical level. It also empowers oneself with increased concentration, calm, peace and contentment at mental level leading to inner and outer harmony.

YOGA – ITS HISTORY

Yoga has its origin thousands of years ago in India. It has originated from a universal desire to attaining happiness and getting rid of sufferings. According to yogic lore, Shiva

is considered the founder of yoga. A number of seals and fossil remains of Indus Valley Civilisation, dating back to 2700 BC indicates that yoga was prevalent in ancient India. However, systematic reference of yoga is found in Patanjali's *Yogadarshana*. Maharishi Patanjali systematised the yogic practices. After Patanjali, many sages/yogis contributed to its development and as a result yoga has now spread all over the world. In this sequence, on 11 December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with 193 members approved the proposal to celebrate 'June 21' as the 'International Yoga Day'.

OBJECTIVES OF YOGIC PRACTICES

- To develop a understanding of yogic practices and apply this understanding accordingly in one's life and living.
- To develop healthy habits and lifestyle in children.
- To develop humane values in children.
- To develop physical, emotional and mental health through yogic activities.

General Guidelines for Yogic Practices

Yoga may be introduced from the primary level onwards in informal ways, but formal introduction of yogic exercises should begin only from Class VI. The yoga curriculum must address itself to the children and there should be some hints to them to take up a study of this subject on their own in addition to what is being taught in the class. Yogic activities can be done by all children including children with special needs. However, children with special needs should perform these activities in consultation with yoga experts/yoga teacher as per their capacity.

- The yogic practices should start with a quiet mood which could be attained by reciting a short prayer.