

Yogic Samskara for Children

Sannyasi Manas Shakti



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Swami Niranjan

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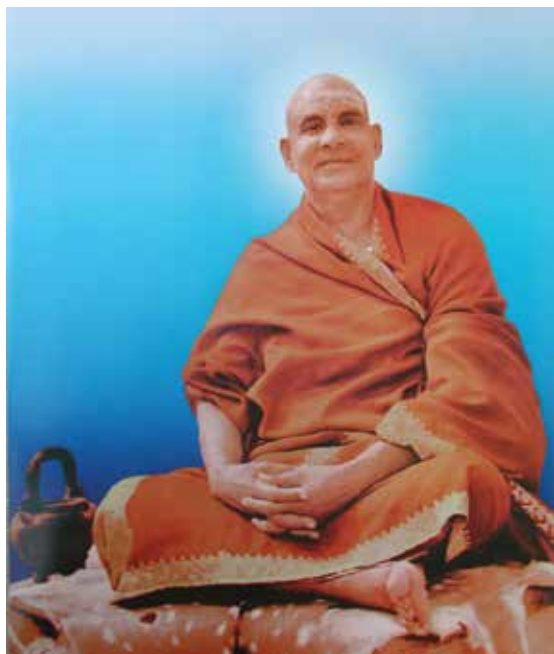
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, in order to fulfil the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. The mandate Swami Satyananda received was to propagate the science of yoga and take yoga from “shore to shore and door to door”. In the days of Swami Sivananda, yoga was far from the globally recognized and accepted word it is today. Yoga was considered a spiritual practice reserved for sannyasins and renunciates who had renounced society and were seeking enlightenment. It was not seen as something that could be incorporated into society and practised by the general public.



When the Bihar School of Yoga was established, the philosophy, practices, applications and lifestyle of yoga as practical and scientific systems were unknown, even in Indian society. From the beginning, yoga training and propagation by the Bihar School of Yoga took the form of intensive residential programs, in which yoga was taught as a way to qualitatively enhance physical health, mental peace, emotional harmony. A sequence of progression in yoga was defined fifty years ago by

Swami Satyananda, by giving systematic training first in hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga, as *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. Simultaneously, training in *antaranga*, internal, aspect of karma yoga, bhakti and jnana yoga was provided through the lifestyle and inspiration of the ashram environment. A holistic or integral yoga system developed in which the yoga aspirant could awaken and integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands. The different *angas*, limbs, of yoga become the means of attaining this personal harmony and integrated expression.

In the early 1940s, the subject of yoga was propagated across the world by teachers and masters of different traditions, introducing the idea that through the practice of yoga one could explore the body, mind, emotions, and have a glimpse into one's spiritual nature. The first-generation teachers focused on bringing the knowledge of yoga to human society according to the need of the society at that time. In the 1960s, yoga was seen as a physical culture. In the 1970s, it was seen as a way to overcome stress, anxiety, tension and to improve the physical and mental functions. In the 1980s, research into the various possibilities and potentials of yoga to assist and promote physical and mental health took the forefront. By the 1990s, a rapid increase in the popularity of the practice of asana was evident across the globe. The asana component of yoga had been accepted worldwide and other components of yoga were relegated to the background and largely ignored by the mainstream practitioners and majority of yoga teachers. Today, 28 million people are practising yoga in the United States alone and statistics estimate 300 million practitioners worldwide.

In 2013, the World Yoga Convention was conducted in Munger to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga. Over 50,000 yoga practitioners, teachers, students and aspirants participated in this historic event either in person or through the internet. The Convention was a milestone that marked the completion of fifty years of yoga propagation. The mandate of taking yoga from shore to shore and door to door was fulfilled. Over a fifty-year period,



with the help of yoga aspirants and well-wishers all over the world, a yogic renaissance had taken place. The chapter of yoga propagation was complete and when one chapter closed, the next chapter opened.

Thus the World Yoga Convention also heralded the beginning of the second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga. The hallmark of this second chapter is a new vision of yoga not as a practice but as a *vidya*, a wisdom to be understood, imbibed and expressed in life. This understanding of the fundamental need for integral development was the vision of Swami Satyananda, which he imparted and taught through the concept of the *yoga chakra*, or the wheel of yoga.

The second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga and the teachings which are being presented are not concerned with propagation of the practices of yoga. Isolated practices of yoga do not bring about the qualitative change and spiritual evolution intended and envisaged by the seers. The transcendence of the negative and restricting conditions and the real evolution and growth of the personality takes place only when the *vidya* of yoga is comprehended, absorbed and realized.

The profundity of yogic understanding must increase and the depths of yoga must be fathomed, if the *vidya* is to be realized and maintained for future generations. The experience and wisdom of accomplished yogis and spiritual scientists is recorded in the scriptural and classical texts detailing each *anga* of yoga. The second chapter teachings are a

progressive effort to discern and elucidate the experiences and realizations of the ancient seers, within the blueprint of the yoga chakra.

For individual aspirants, the challenge of the second chapter is to deepen the understanding and experience of yoga. Practice is merely an introduction to yoga, which is limited by personal motivation and constraints. The yoga vidya dimension is accessed only when one moves from practice to sadhana and makes a sincere effort to experience the aims defined by the different angas of yoga. Until that sincerity awakens, the commitment to adhere to the system and the vidya of yoga is lacking. With sincerity, seriousness and commitment, each aspirant has to accept responsibility for their own development and betterment in life.

Ultimately, yoga is a lifestyle. It is not a practice. For, once the yogic principles are imbibed and become part of life, the attitudes, perceptions, interactions, the mind, actions and behaviours will improve. To meet the challenge of the second chapter, the expressive and the behavioural components of yoga, the antaranga and the bahiranga aspects, have to come together. When head, heart and hands unite, an ordinary moment can become divine. An ordinary life can become a divine life.



Introduction

The Yoga Chakra forms the complete vision of yoga as seen by Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. The three yogas – karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga – are identified as internal, *antaranga*, since they help to manage the behaviour patterns and traits of your personality by managing the subtle influences that make up what you are. The outer yoga, *bahiranga*, hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, helps you to manage your senses and the interactive mind.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

It is through the inclusive nature of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga tradition that the aspirant is exposed to the experience of *yoga vidya*, the science of yoga. The level of understanding depends on the ability of each aspirant, yet the doors are open to one and all to learn, imbibe and live the yoga chakra in daily life. This includes children – they need not know.

Teaching the yoga chakra to small children age five to nine was a personal experience. In the section *To Keep the Yoga Chakra Turning*, suggestions are given for older children.

Real education has to be brought about from within, and one of the ways to accomplish this unfoldment is through yoga.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

More than a ‘normal’ practice session, each yoga class for children is meant to create a space where the tools of yoga are used to develop the ability to connect to the peace, luminosity and harmony within and in the environment.

In future, social education and spiritual education will have to come together again if there has to be peace in life. Right now with only one type of education in society, there is no peace or contentment in life, there is only competitiveness. Soon an integration of these two systems will again take place and the different stages of life can then be lived with an understanding of the relationship between human nature and divinity. That will make human life complete.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

There is no pressure to perform to certain expectations instead the freedom is given to each child to explore its potential within the boundaries of the class.

Children are independent beings who need their own space in which to develop, and they require your encouragement, support and guidance. They need positive understanding from you.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

The six branches of the yoga chakra address the whole person and personality of the child: a balance is created between introversion and extroversion, between time alone and time with others, a time of laughter and a time of silence and stillness. Each branch caters to a need and fulfils an aspiration, draws attention to a child’s strength and a weakness. The interactive nature of each class is an important aspect as the children are allowed to contribute their own ideas, stories of day-to-day occurrences and above all with their unbound creativity.

Education is not a filling-in of something from outside. It is a drawing-out from within of the highest and best qualities inherent in the individual.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

No doubt, the yoga chakra is a way to plant positive samskaras in young children and equip them with an experience that will be a source of inspiration and strength for their lives.

In every respect it is the samskaras which play a very vital role in your children's lives, and if you can help them awaken these samskaras, then you fulfil your obligations as parents.

—*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



1

Adapting the Yoga Chakra

One has to play with children, study them and compare them with flowers. One has to consider the purity of water, the purity of God and the purity of children.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Having taught yoga to a group of seven girls, age five to nine, I would like to share some experiences and observations. Every lesson was about 90 minutes. The structure was basically the same for each lesson. However, the duration of each part differed from lesson to lesson. My aim was to bring the girls closer to the feeling of what I have experienced as the yoga chakra and the yoga lifestyle.



The children can be exposed to the yoga chakra in an easy way. Without knowing they experience the completeness of yoga and understand that yoga is not only about postures, but about enhancing every aspect of their life and being.

With the structure of the class the whole yoga chakra can be integrated in a simple, natural manner and yet at the same time bring the child in touch with its various levels of experience and expression in life – the five koshas.

Real education starts when the inner mental potential is awakened and one starts to become aware of the spiritual being. This process of education is called yoga.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

There are six spokes to the wheel of yoga, or the *yoga chakra*. Three branches, hatha, raja and kriya yoga, make up the bahiranga yoga, the aspect of learning, mastery and control. With the three branches of karma, bhakti and jnana yoga, the anatranga yoga, the experience and attainment of bahiranga yoga is expressed in a harmonious way in day-to-day life.

I have added to these six branches one yama of yoga, *manahprasad* or happiness, and one niyama, *maitri*, friendliness. The intention was to connect the children with the goodness and joy inherent in them, their own happiness, and to share it with others through the attitude of friendliness.

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati explains the various aspects in this way:

Yamas and niyamas: They are the eternal principles that define the positive traits in life, representing a culmination of the human effort to experience beauty, peace, bliss, truth and expansiveness in life.

Children should be given the knowledge of how to maintain mental clarity. They should imbibe the knowledge of what is just and what is unjust.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Bahiranga yoga: Hatha yoga is for the body and prana; raja yoga for the mind; and kriya yoga to go through the awakenings in consciousness and ultimately experience the luminosity of the self from consciousness to spirit. Hatha yoga is for annamaya kosha and pranamaya kosha; raja yoga is for manomaya kosha; and kriya yoga is for vijñanamaya and anandamaya kosha.

Body, mind and spirit are covered in these three yogas. They allow you to explore yourself, they allow you to find equilibrium within yourself. They allow you to explore and awaken the dormant potential and prana shakti within yourself. They make you aware of the transformative process that you go through in life with sincere application of yoga. It is not just random performance, hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga represent the physical, mental and spiritual disciplines.

Antaranga yoga: The expression of these three yogas happens in the inner yoga, in jñana yoga, bhakti yoga and karma yoga. With karma yoga you learn to act in a way that every day what you do is done as if for the first and the last time in your life and you give your best. Every moment leads you to a new experience of participation and involvement in karma.

Bhakti yoga involves filling life with positivity. You express the beautiful aspect of your nature, the positive and the uplifting aspect of yourself. True jñana yoga is realizing how to apply the wisdom, how to use the understanding to create a better you and a better world in which there is harmony and union with the cosmic and the inner powers.

The purpose of inner yoga is to manage traits that are inherent and genetically embedded in your personality and nature.

Children do imbibe the spiritual qualities and it is not necessary that you give them lessons on yoga, lessons on spiritual life. Give them the yogic atmosphere.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Selecting the anga

For children the whole branch of yoga is not taught, it is not required and suitable. A selection from the various *angas* or limbs of each branch is necessary. One does not teach shatkarmas, the first limb of hatha yoga, to seven or eight year old children. There is no need for it. Asana and pranayama are the two parts of hatha yoga which can be given to children.

From the eight limbs of raja yoga the most important is *pratyahara*, developing the ability to withdraw the attention from the involvement with the external environment and connect with the inner self, peace and harmony.

The kriyas are not suitable for young children, however they can learn to cultivate a relationship with a world or a realm beyond the sensory experience.

Through karma yoga the sense of duty, detachment and joyful participation in daily activities can be instilled. From the nine limbs of bhakti yoga, I have selected three: *kirtan*,

singing in a group, *shravanam*, listening to inspiring stories, and *seva*, serving others without a self-centred motive.

The first exposure to jnana yoga is the understanding of yourself. I ask the children: What makes you tick? What makes you be the way you are? and Why do you behave the way you do?

In the last part, *To Keep the Yoga Chakra Turning*, suggestions and ideas are given on how to develop the yoga chakra for older children: how to expand each branch of yoga by incorporating another limb to suit the needs of the children. For instance, teenagers benefit from the practices of *trataka*, steady gazing, and *neti*, nasal cleansing, yet for small children these practices of raja yoga and hatha yoga are not appropriate. Therefore, the needs of the children and not the ambitions and whims of the teacher are the determining factor for each class.

We should not try to force, to build the children in our own patterns, or to modify their personalities. They must follow their own nature and not you.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



2

The Yoga Chakra Comes Alive

Children are pliable, innocent and devoted. They believe in higher realities, but they need proper training. It is better to give them an education in spiritual life, discipline and yoga from the very beginning.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Before describing an actual class, I give an outline of the twelve parts of the class structure and how I attribute each part to the yoga chakra. The whole class must remain a continuous flow adapted to the needs of the children and therefore the length and intensity of each part may vary from class to class.

1. Happy Hello

Attitudinal yoga: Yama – Happiness

The practice creates an atmosphere of lightness, laughter and joy.

2. Shanti mantra

Attitudinal yoga: Niyama – Maitri

After the chanting, all decide to be friendly to each other and cultivate the feeling of friendliness during the class.

3. TTK (tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana)

Hatha yoga: Asana



This is the first series of asanas to loosen and strengthen the spine.

4. Kirtan Go and Freeze

Bhakti yoga: Kirtan

Children like kirtan and they easily join in. Dance and music allow the children to express themselves freely.

5. Asana story with pranayama

Hatha yoga: Asana and pranayama

Asana and pranayama adapted to the age and ability of the children.

Kriya yoga: Developing the skill to visualize

Story and integrating asanas within a theme awakens the ability to visualize and thereby create a vivid mental reality.

6. Asana sequence

Hatha yoga: Asana

Introducing a sequence of asanas requires more coordination, strength and flexibility.

Raja yoga: Pratyahara

In order to retain the sequence of various postures the child has to pay attention, be aware and focused. With a distracted and dissipated mind it will not be able to remember the sequence.

7. Relaxation

Raja yoga: Pratyahara

Breath awareness is the first tool to withdraw the mind from the external environment. To practise rotation of awareness through the body parts the child needs to develop more attentiveness.

Kriya yoga: Developing the skill to visualize

Visualizing and feeling the various body parts are two tasks which enhance the ability to create an experience beyond sensory experiences.

8. Story telling

Bhakti yoga: Shravanam

A story which contains a teaching or an inspiring example is told in a relaxed manner. The children may also want to tell something good or positive that they have heard of, seen or done themselves. The awareness of positivity and goodness is thereby made alive and relevant to their lives.





9. Yantra colouring

Kriya yoga: Developing the skill to relate to the abstract

Yantra colouring stimulates dormant faculties in the child and the ability to create new experiences beyond sensory experiences.

Bhakti yoga: Kirtan

After immersing into the yantra and exploring something unknown, the

children externalize and join in a happy group activity. Balance between introversion and extroversion is created, preparing the children for the next part.

10. Reflexion

Jnana Yoga: Discovering yourself

The time for reflection can be used on various aspects of the class, such as the performance of asanas, likes and dislikes, ease and difficulties, the state of happiness and the feeling of friendliness. Simple awareness of its inner world will help the child to gain acceptance and a better understanding; and by sharing it connects with the other children and learns to understand and respect them as they are.

11. Shanti Path

Yoga: Sankalpa of yoga

A quiet time of connecting to yoga knowingly or unknowingly.





12. Wind up

Karma yoga: Developing a sense of duty and responsibility
Helping without expectation or rewards yet doing the task to the best of one's ability is karma yoga.

Bhakti yoga: Seva

Children love to serve, and seva is a way to develop a nature which is not self-centred. Awareness of what other children may need or what is required to improve the environment (in this case, the classroom) shared by all is the spirit of seva.



3

The Class – Experiencing the Yoga Chakra

As adults you have forgotten how to think and feel like a child. It is necessary to experience the world of the child once again before you start to teach yoga to children. This does not mean to try and behave as a child, but to think, feel and imagine as children do. You have to relearn from children innocence, simplicity, freedom from inhibition, the sweetest and purest smile, love and tenderness. Try to smile like them, to be tender like them, to speak like them and to be worry-free like them. If you can play like children, then this world will become a world of joy and happiness.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Part 1a. Happy Hello

Practice: The children form a circle and balance on little balls. After trying to balance on one foot, they stand with both feet on the floor and feel the different sensations of the right and left foot (warmth, shape, tingling sensation). The children can also try to balance with both feet on two balls at once.

Aim: This balancing exercise stimulates the joints, muscles and nerves in the feet and relaxes the hip joints and the



muscles of the back. It develops the child's attention. Eventually it can be followed by *Eka Pada Pranamasana*, tree pose.

1b. Happy Hello

Practice: The children softly slap all body parts: arms, shoulders, back, legs. The abdomen can be massaged in both directions, the head gently touched with movements of the finger tips as if by raindrops or sunrays.

Aim: This exercise is helpful to name and feel the body parts. The children often confuse right and left. A **red** string at their **right** wrist can help them to feel and see their **right**

body side. When the body parts are gently touched, the whole attention is naturally focused on that part and it ‘wakes up’.

Note: During the Happy Hello phase all sort of questions can be asked to help the children settle: Has your stomach eaten already? How does ‘he’ feel now? What would ‘he’ say? Have your legs walked all the way to class? Have they been jumping or running? Does your head like to feel the rain drops? With every rain drop a good wish enters your head: that you are happy, that you have many good friends, that you share your toys with your friends . . . anything else?

2. Shanti Mantra

Practice: The children sit in a circle in silence.

Aim: If the children come to class in a quiet mood, Shanti Mantra can be easily done at the beginning. However, often they are excited. The Happy Hello time helps them to calm down, focus their attention and be ready to sit quietly during Shanti Mantra.

3. Asana

Practice: Tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana (TTK).

Aim: The children learn to move in a guided and controlled manner. Various ways of moving the body can be named, practised and experienced: balancing, stretching, sideways bending and twisting. Direction can also be given: up, down, right, left.

4. Kirtan: Go & Freeze

Practice: While the teacher is playing an instrument and/or singing a kirtan the children may move in different ways to express themselves. The aim is for them to develop more body awareness in motion and stillness. When the music stops, the children need to freeze and remain still in the posture.



The game can be modified by putting yoga mats in numbers one less than the number of children. The child who has not managed to come on an island in time becomes a crocodile – *makarasana*, crocodile pose, for the next round or until all children are crocodiles.

A suitable kirtan to dance through the room or in a circle is *Bam Bam Bam Bam Bam Bole, Rama Charita Manasa Bole*. Kirtan and dance can be fast dancing, loud with jumping up and down, or sung with a soft voice and walking on tip toes.

Aim: The children develop more body awareness in motion and stillness. During the freeze period they have to quickly hold and steady their body posture which tones the body.

The children may move totally free which is interesting to watch: sometimes they dance for themselves ‘in their own space and world’, sometimes in pairs or all together in a circle. Sometimes they start doing asanas, alone or in pairs. Like this they explore their moving capacities in a positive, playful space and manner. The children love to do that. This is a good exercise for body and room orientation. They also make the effort to experience opposites, like slow and fast, strong and soft, heavy and light.

The children learn to lose at a game and deal with possible frustration. They also learn that the game continues and they are still a part of it.

Note: Sometimes the children want to know the meaning of the words of the kirtan. A good time for story telling!

If the free or structured dancing version goes on for a while the children often naturally lie down because of fatigue. That is the perfect, most natural moment for breath awareness and rotation of awareness through the body. At other times, children do not want to lie on the floor for no reason at all.

5. Asana story with pranayama

Practice: A few examples of story ideas are listed below:

- We start our journey with some magic to get to our destination: everybody to sit on a ‘flying carpet’ and one, two, three, let’s fly with *jhulana lurhakanasana*, rocking and rolling. Then come the dangerous right and left curves, *meru wakrasana*, spinal twist, and finally we are landing on safe ground, *shashankasana*, child pose.
- First we travel by boat, then by bicycle . . . and then we take a snowboard, *trikonasana*, triangle pose.
- At the zoo we visit the lion, *simhasana*, the snake, *sarpasana*, the cobra, *bhujangasana*, the tiger, *vyaghrasana*. Then we add everybody’s favourite animal: *ashwa sanchalanasana*, the equestrian pose, and the big elephant, *kati chakrasana*, waist rotating pose, or the eagle pose, *garudasana*.



Aim: Stories create a playful atmosphere to practise and learn asanas. Every time an asana is repeated, more details can be pointed and integrated. The awareness deepens for body movement and posture. The story captures the children’s interest and attention. It stimulates

their ability to visualize, and thereby their imagination is given a concrete and creative form and outlet. By sharing their creative ideas with the other children, self-esteem and self-confidence develop and grow.

Note: It is an opportunity to point out the main topic of the lesson during the asana story. Possible story topics are: zoo, tree, jungle, star, sunray, moon, candle flame . . . The children like these stories.

The asana mats are always arranged in a circle. The journey starts with practising magic to reach the destination. At the end our friend the little bee comes to let us know that we will soon go back, *bhramari pranayama*, humming bee pranayama.

The children's concentration span is usually quite short and after two or three asanas their tiredness is visible in their body postures and faces. Especially the smaller children would often search for body contact in these situations to simply relax near the teacher. Therefore, it is important to leave enough time and space for their fantasy to blossom within each topic. The children have great ideas yet are willing to move from playtime to learning and focus on the asanas again. It is also fun to integrate their ideas by showing them an asana which looks similar to what they might have in mind. It is important to make them feel that it is their class time and they are allowed to actively shape the class.

The children usually choose a moment of pause during the story time. So we can have our drink on a boat, in a beautiful garden, or on an ice rock floating in the ocean . . . anywhere is possible!

6. Any game or asana sequence

Practice: Surya namaskara or chandra namaskara

Aim: Depending on the energy level of the group, a game can be proposed to remove tiredness and increase

concentration. If the children are still full of energy, an asana sequence can be practised.

7. Relaxation

Practice: The group of children lie down on the floor, practise breath awareness, rotation of awareness through the body and eventually close the eyes.

A good way to introduce the rotation of awareness is to give little pouches filled with sand that the children can put on their body parts while the teacher names the various parts.

Aim: It is a good exercise to listen to the name of the body part, to put the pouch on the right place and then feel the weight of the pouch at the correct place.

Note: To begin with it is good to keep the children busy by having them put the pouch on their own body. After some time, they are used to the practice and become calmer. Then it is possible that they make pairs: one child can relax while the other one puts the pouch on her friend's body.

The pouch placed on the abdomen will also help to feel the movement of the inhalation and exhalation. Breaths can be counted. The same can be done with the chest.

In a more advanced version two pouches can be placed: one on the abdomen and one on the chest. Thereby the children learn to differentiate the movement of breath in these two areas.

Depending on the chosen topic the sunray, butterfly, star or flower can touch the body parts.

8. Story telling

Practice: An inspiring story of goodness and kindness for others can be told from the lives of saints, events and incidences of the present time, or from the lives of the children.



Aim: It is not an education in morals or moral behaviour, rather examples are given of people who act and live in an appropriate, uplifting way for the benefit and wellbeing of others.

9. Yantra colouring and making mandalas

Practice: The children are given the option to paint anything or to colour in a yantra.

Aim: Children usually choose to paint a yantra first and if there is time left, they draw an image, a scene, a feeling from either the asana story or the inspiring story. The children become calm, quiet and fully engrossed.

Practice: Using coloured building blocks or wooden shapes to make mandalas.

Aim: Mandalas can also be copied and laid out on the floor or new ones created with coloured wooden building blocks. It is a time of absorption in creativity and the abstract, non-figurative dimension of life.

10. Reflexion

Practice: The children and teacher sit together and reflect on the class, the likes and dislikes, the difficulties and learning.

Aim: Reflexion is a strong tool which helps the children to become aware of how they feel about an experience. It is a time of understanding and sharing. The kind and number of questions have to be adapted to the group, and the atmosphere must be free and friendly, without any tinge of judgment or expectation. A grading scale can be given along with questions:

- How much did I like to be a tree, *tadasana*? (1: not at all to 10: extremely)
- How difficult was it to stand like a tree? (1: not at all to 10: extremely)
- Which animal did I like best?
- How happy was I during the class? (1: not at all to 10: extremely)
- What lesson have I learnt from the story?
- What do I want to do better next class?





11. Shanti Path or Om chanting

Practice: After the reflection, the children remain quiet, close their eyes or keep them downcast. Then together they repeat the Shanti Path.

Aim: The children experience sound vibration. The chanting creates harmony and indicates the end of the class. The children feel safe and secure before leaving the class environment and returning to their daily life.

12. Wind up

Practice: The children prepare the classroom at the beginning and help tidy up at the end of the class.

Aim: Children love to help. They feel important and gain a sense of responsibility and belonging. It is a wonderful opportunity to teach them the importance of order, cleanliness and a safe environment by showing them how and where to put material in a proper way.

Children are definitely influenced by the structure of their environment and the personalities surrounding them. Therefore, the best thing to do is to live the way you would like your children to live and they will imbibe your lifestyle.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

4

To Keep the Yoga Chakra Turning

Children should be properly moulded by the teachers and parents. They are highly suggestible like malleable metal. They will do whatever we tell them to do. They are imitative and they will copy our behaviour. They are eager. They are brave. They fear nothing, even adverse criticism. If we set before them the path of good life, if we can inspire them with the principles of good physical and mental health and high ideals, they will turn out to be good citizens and ideal persons.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

For the next age group of children, the class needs to be adapted. Their attention span might be longer and more time can be spent on an individual part. Therefore, it is not possible or necessary to follow the same structure as for the small children. Important however is that each one of the six yoga branches be present in each session, otherwise the yoga chakra is not complete. The foundation of each class is to give positive samskaras, encouragement and inspiration to the growing child through yoga.

The following suggestions are based on the six spokes of the yoga chakra and how the many practices belong to these spokes. It is left to the teacher and his group of children to establish a structure, make the most appropriate

choices and remain true to the intent of each branch of yoga.

Attitudinal yoga

- *Yama*: happiness; or japa repetition of *Om* or *So Ham* with the breath;
- *Niyama*: friendliness; Namaskar, greeting and creating a positive encounter with others;
- Chanting of the three mantras

Hatha yoga

- *Shatkarma*: neti
- Shakti bandhas
- *Asana*: more advanced asanas
- *Asana story*: a few asanas can be given and the children have to weave their own story
- *Asana sequence*: surya namaskara, chandra namaskara with mantra. Various levels of pace: from slow to fast. Children may want to create a new sequence of asanas
- *Pranayama*: various levels of breath awareness; nadi shodhana 1:1, bhramari
- *Mudra*: hand mudras

Raja yoga

- *Asana*: holding each yogasana for a certain length of time
- *Pratyahara*: extended shavasana, yoga nidra including sankalpa and visualization, *Om* chanting
- *Dharana*: trataka

Kriya yoga

- *Visualization*: figurative and abstract objects; creating yantras and mandalas with coloured shapes
- Creating sensory experiences (taste, smell, touch, sound)

Karma yoga

- Awareness of maintaining a positive, joyful attitude while carrying out a task

- Awareness of expectations
- Do your best and leave the rest

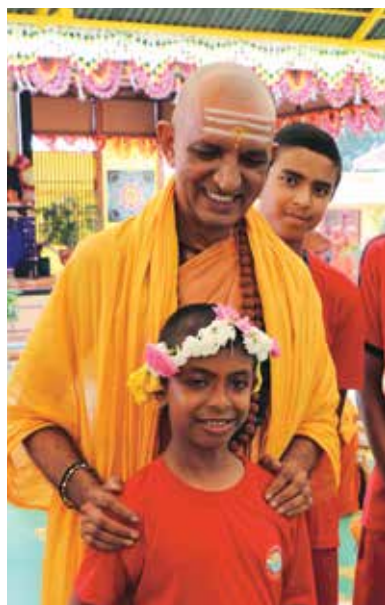
Bhakti yoga

- Kirtan
- Shravanam
- Developing positive qualities
- Seva

Jnana Yoga

- *Review*: of the class, of the day, of a particular day or event
- *SWAN*: beginning with strengths and weaknesses
- *Awareness*: of reactions and responses and willingness to improve, pratipaksha bhavana
- *Awareness*: of being part of an immediate environment.

These suggestions refer to each session only; however, the older children can be encouraged to carry the learning and understanding into their day-to-day life. It should



be shown how to integrate yoga into the daily routine of family, friends, school and extracurricular activities. Feedback of the children can be shared in the class.

The yoga chakra adapted to the needs of children can help the child find its place in this world. A child understands that the yoga chakra is not separate from its life, but that yoga enhances the quality of experience and expression, the quality of social interactions, academic achievements and the joy of being alive – right

here and now. This joy is the outcome of a genuine acceptance of itself as a person and of the people it shares its life with. This joy is the outcome of the inherent trust it has in the protection received from its visible and invisible environment.

The highest education is that which inculcates in you pure love, courage, a sense of duty, balance of mind, devotion, faith, discrimination, tolerance, dispassion and knowledge of the Self. Education should infuse in the child fearlessness, joy, peace, selflessness and godliness. Education is an introduction to life and should prepare us for an ideal life. Education is training in the art of living.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Note to Parents and Teachers

Yogic Samskara for Children is a practical example of how to introduce the yoga chakra, the six branches of yoga, to children.

It is based on personal experience of teaching and playing yoga with a group of children in Switzerland. The aim is to inspire and encourage parents and teachers to apply the wisdom of the yoga chakra in their family or at school. The scope of creativity is vast and depends on your personal experience, the social and cultural environment you and the children live in. Learn along with the children and together explore the treasure of your inner world and of yoga which will help you cultivate the discipline to live life with contentment and joy.

Give your children discipline but only little by little. If you press a pencil too hard, the lead will break. Give your children discipline in the light of a spiritual and yogic education.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Your openness, sincerity and pure intention is the foundation for this journey. As parent and teacher you need to believe in what you are passing on to the children and you need to live it yourself.

You must set an example, and the children will follow it.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Notes

Notes



Sannyasi Manas Shakti

International Yoga Teacher Certificate (Zürich, Switzerland); Bachelor of Child Psychomotor Therapy (Basel, Switzerland); one-year contemporary dance training at LABAN, (London, UK).

She has been living at Ganga Darshan since 2012. During this time, she completed the three-year Sannyasa Training (2012–2014) and the one-year Yoga Propagation Training (2018). She was initiated into karma sannyasa in 2012 by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

She has been teaching the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal (BYMM) dance and drama. Her joys in life are music, dance, havan and being in nature. Her inspiration is to connect to beauty and strength within and to share her understanding and experience of yoga and the yoga lifestyle with children.



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

Yogic Samskara for Children describes how the *yoga chakra*, the wheel of yoga, can be introduced to children in a creative, spontaneous and fun way. In the environment of a yoga class, they develop positive samskaras and a yogic understanding of themselves, their interactions with others and external situations. With guidance and encouragement, children are able to experience the six branches of yoga in their own way. They learn that with the right attitude, with openness and laughter they can bring yoga into their day-to-day activities and into their lives.

Always be positive, creative and constructive, no matter what you are experiencing. If you want to improve yourself and become creative, happy, satisfied and successful, take everything in life as a form of sadhana.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

