Effect of Yoga on Self-concept and Emotional Maturity of Visually Challenged Students: An Experimental study

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The study was designed to examine whether the practice of yoga has a positive effect on self-concept and emotional maturity of visually impaired students. The sample consisted of 15 visually impaired students drawn purposively from a School for the Blind. A Yoga training programme was designed and the subjects were exposed to it for a period of four weeks. The effects of yoga on self-concept of visually impaired students were measured by administering Saraswat’s Self-Concept Inventory whereas effects on emotional maturity were obtained by applying Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava’s Emotional Maturity Scale. The data was analyzed in terms of mean, SD, and ‘t’ test. The results indicate that on the whole, the level of self concept and emotional maturity of visually impaired students improves after the practice of yoga. Significance differences were found between mean gain scores on all the dimensions of Self-Concept Inventory and Emotional Maturity Scale. The study has its implications for school administrators, policy makers, parents, teachers, community leaders, and rehabilitation workers.

Keywords: Yoga, Self-concept, Emotional maturity, visually challenged students

It is a matter of great concern that abilities and potential of disabled persons have not yet been fully explored and tackled but practically, it is a great loss of human resources, which, if discovered, matured, appropriately channelized, and utilized, could add a new force to the progression of the society. In the present society, yoga is considered an important medical technique for developing the physical and mental functioning of an individual, especially of students with disabilities. It is one of the most important, effective, and valuable tools available for the students with disabilities to overcome their various physical and psychological problems such as anxiety, emotional instability, frustration, poor mental health, and so on. Yoga refers to the system of practices that help to control the mind, body, and soul. It is a holistic path that leads to a sense of peace and well-being. Through different poses (asanas), breathing technique (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana), yoga makes the practitioner aware of his inner self. It includes cultivation of correct attitudes and reconditioning of the neuromuscular systems. Yoga helps the whole body to enable it to withstand greater stress and strain. Yoga proposes healthy diet and encourages the natural process of elimination, whenever it is necessary. Yoga aims at an integrated and harmonious development of all the potentialities of human beings. Several studies have shown that the practice of yoga has a definite role in the promotion of positive health, including mental health. Setterlind (1983) found that regular practice of meditation and yoga brings a positive change in the well-being of the subjects. Swami (1994) and Rao (1995) established that the yogic practices are good and useful as they help not only to strengthen each organ and develop every muscle of the body but also to regulate the circulation of the blood, purify the lungs, inspire the mind to be more alert, and gives a feeling of well-being and harmonious development of human personality.

Saraswat and Gaur (1981) described self-concept as the individual’s way of looking at oneself. It also signifies his way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. According to Mosby’s Medical Dictionary (2009), self-concept is the composite of ideas, feelings, and attitudes that a person has about his or her own identity, worth,