Devena Manasā

Divinely Blessed-Differently Abled



Darśanam

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

(estd. in 1976)

KYM-*Darśanam* was a quarterly journal of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, devoted to *Yoga* and related aspects of Indian culture, as taught by *Śrī* T Krishnamacharya. Twenty one editions of the journal were published between February 1991 and February 1996. KYM-*Darśanam* was very well received by readers across the world and was valued for the authenticity of its contents and its adherence to the tradition of *Śrī* T Krishnamacharya.

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram is very happy to revive KYM-*Darśanam* and offer the fourth issue in a digitised and downloadable format, on the theme, *Devena Manasā* - Divinely Blessed-Differently Abled."

KYM-*Darśanam* offers serious students of *Yoga*, articles and content of value with regard to the philosophy, practice and application of *Yoga* in every edition. We also commit to upholding the authenticity of the legacy of our Founder, *Śrī* TKV Desikachar.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE I MR. S SRIDHARAN, TRUSTEE KYM, DR. LATHA SATISH, HEAD - KYM RESEARCH COUNCIL & MR. A.V BALASUBRAMANIAN, MEMBER, BOARD OF STUDIES, KYM

EXECUTIVE GUIDANCE I MR. T SWAMINATHAN, CEO, KYM

EDITOR IN CHIEF I NRITHYA JAGANNATHAN, DIRECTOR, KYM-MEDIA

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE AND DESIGN I SHRILEKHA, KYM-MEDIA

Our gratitude is due to Mr. Madhavan for coordinating and presenting the conversation between the teachers of KYM in this issue.

We offer our thanks to Praveena V and Varshaa Raman for their assistance with compilation and transcription.

Website I www.kym.org I www.kymyogavaisharadi.org

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law and with due credit to Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram. For permission requests, write to ceo@kym.org

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not in any manner reflect the opinion of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

***Namaskāram*.**

Over 40 years ago, a leading special educator, Dr. P Jeyachandran who runs Vijay Human Services approached *Śrī* Desikachar, wanting to know if *Yoga* could offer any kind of support to enhance the health and quality of life of children who are differently-abled. The response was a very honest, "I don't know, but we could try." That candid honesty and the openness to explore the scope of *Yoga* application led to the teachers of KYM slowly learning, understanding and working with children who are truly special, for these children have touched our lives deeply, giving all of us at the KYM so many lessons along the way.

Today, KYM's *MITRA* has over 120 wonderful collaborations with various centres who are doing outstanding work in bringing compassion, empathy, dignity and care into so many young lives.

The point of any intervention, *Yogic* or otherwise is surely not to normalise these children, but do what we can to support their caregivers in providing the child a chance for a better quality of life, given the multiple challenges they face.

We are delighted to feature in this edition, multiple perspectives on understanding child development, the causes for milestone delays and understanding and working towards the needs of the child through interventions that are supportive of the child's journey through life.

A chance conversation on a train ride with Mr. Iyappan, who very coincidentally runs one of the centres that KYM has collaborated with nearly 15 years ago, opened my eyes to the stark and horrifying reality of as many as 7 to 10 abandoned infants, just in the Chennai region alone, every month. The reason for abandonment - because the baby doesn't respond normally to stimuli and is branded "retarded" hours after birth. Thankfully, due to the tireless efforts of so many people who speak for the voiceless, some of these children do get a new lease of life. Very sadly, many don't.

Mr. Iyappan reiterated to me how important early intervention is, in shaping the lives of these children. Specifically, as we spoke to a large number of special educators, parents and centre heads in compiling this issue, what comes through is the role of *Yoga* based interventions in reducing anxiety, enhancing gross and fine motor skills, reducing restlessness, channelising distress, agitation and aggression, improving immunity and offering a sense of security and safety. Music, dance, painting, gardening, theatre, craft making, silent experiences in forests and so many other interventions also evidently go a long way and create a deep and very significant impact.

I thank all our expert contributors, who so unhesitatingly shared their insights and experiences with us through some thought provoking articles on "Holding with Empathy."

For several years now, KYM has been conducting one-on-one classes for children with differing needs, with the support of the child's primary care giver. The learnings from this programme are enormous and readily shared by the teachers of KYM. Supporting these insights are feedback received from parents and centre heads as well. Very interestingly, the role of chanting in these interventions comes obviously to the fore.

I also thank Mrs. Chandra Cuffaro, one of the very first students of Sir for her very moving reminiscences of a young *Śrī* Desikachar as a budding teacher, taking us through his evolution into a spiritual guide and healer over the decades.

For every parent who curses his or her fate for giving them a child with different needs, there are parents, care givers, special educators and rehabilitation therapists, who stand up with love and joy for their wards, and accept their lives' purpose in supporting these children who are blessed in so many ways.

While it is common to view children with different needs with pity and sympathy, in truth we need to feel grateful for their presence in our lives and the lessons they bring with them.

This edition of *Darśanam* is a celebration of these children and also a celebration of what they are here to teach us. Very precious lessons indeed, for within every one of these supposedly "lesser-abled" children, lies the wisdom of a soul that is here to leave its invaluable impact on the lives it comes into contact with.

With reverence and gratitude,

Nrithya Jagannathan

Director, KYM-Media

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

A NOTE ON THE TITLE '*DEVENA MANASA*'

The title of this issue is an adapted version of a *Mantra* segment from the very ancient *Ṛgvedasaṃhitā*.

The segment of the *Mantra* is as follows:

देवेन नो मनसा देव सोम रायो भगं सहसावन्नभि युध्य १.९१.२३

***devena no manasā deva soma rāyo bhagaṃ sahasāvannabhi yudhya* 1.91.23**

It is prayer to God *Soma* who is associated with the Moon, the Lord of the Mind. The Meaning of the segment of the *Mantra*:

Oh! God *Soma*! The Powerful ! With a Shining intellect drive away the forces that carry away our resources.

We dedicate the March 2019 edition to all the children who have come to this world with a divine purpose - to show us what true love and joy really mean, and to teach us invaluable lessons about ourselves and about living life in the moment with compassion and dignity.

Team Darśanam

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Remembering Sir

Śrī TKV Desikachar

Through the Eyes of His Students

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

REMINISCENCES

CHANDRA CUFFARO

In the early 1950's, Madras, as Chennai was called then, was a city with no high houses and no traffic at all. The roads were lively with wandering cows and buffaloes, paper nibbling goats, running chickens and of course plenty of stray dogs. There were hardly any trucks; heavy goods were transported on man-driven handcarts. Vegetable and fruit vendors balanced their full baskets on their heads and walked swiftly through the lanes, advertising their ware, full-throated.

In the whole city, in those days, there were less than ten cars. Small and big taxies were available. Cycle-rickshaws and hand pulled rickshaws served to transport people for short and long distances. There were buses too, with one side of the wooden seats reserved for ladies. In the morning, the buses were over crowded with uniform dressed students and dhoti-clad men.

During those days, not many women were working outside the house; the teaching profession slowly admitted ladies and some women were employed in the offices of banks. Those who rendered manual labor, walked barefoot from their thatched huts to the houses they helped to keep clean. Every residential district of the city had its own village of thatched huts from where the affluent citizens could hire maids, gardeners, drivers, cleaners, or ayah-s.

Except for the houses that clustered fort-like around the temples or around the railway station and the big market, most bungalows were surrounded by a garden. In the evenings, the sea breeze would reach the whole city, bringing respite from the heat. People would go for walks on the broad Marina beach or sit on the golden sand and chat and exchange news.

After Independence, a very special person arrived in Madras from Mysore. There, he was well-known as a special healer. He was a *Guru*, a *Yogi* and an *Āyurvedic* physician. He became famous because he could enable a healing in people who had been given upon by their doctors. His name was *Śrī* T. Krishnamacharya. In Madras, he lived with his family near one of the temples.

People called on him or were visited by him and he saw to it that they were cured. He taught them some breathing exercises, sometimes accompanied by gestures or simple body movements. He ordered for each patient a special diet to be maintained for as long as he said that it was needed. He gave life-style instructions as well as prayer instructions. Sometimes he asked people to undertake a pilgrimage to a specific temple. At other times, he gave some medicine that he himself had prepared from herbs that he procured himself from outside the city. It was clear to all, that if you wanted to be cured, you had to follow the needed discipline and practice *Yoga* on a regular basis. Those who resisted had no chance, but those who maintained the discipline, were cured.

He spoke many of the Indian languages like Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Bengali and Marathi. Of course, he was well versed in *Sanskrit*. He knew much of the *Veda-s* by heart and when there were disputes on the interpretation of a text, or as to the right way of a ritual, he was called upon as authority. His knowledge of the texts was as legendary as was his wisdom and experience in the field of *Āyurveda* and *Yoga*. He could demonstrate more than a thousand body postures. His precision work with the body exemplified the supremacy of the mind over the body. Yet, when he did his religious rituals, it was the spirit that mastered the mind. The mastery over body and mind, he obtained with the help of conscious, long and regulated breath. It was well known and documented by French medical doctors that he could stop his heartbeat. He never revealed the secret of this ability, maintaining that it was of no practical use.



Chandra Cuffaro came to India, soon after Independence and discovered the unbroken, continuing line in all artistic expressions: sculpture, painting, dance, music and poetry. The founder of Kalakshetra, Rukmini Devi, invited her to teach art and culture in her institution.

Apart from art and culture, she was also interested and attracted by the rich spiritual heritage of India. During her stay in India, she was drawn to the teaching of *Śrī* Ramana Maharishi, attended various talks by *Śrī* J Krishnamurti, expositions of different masters like Swami Chinmayananda's talks on the *Bhagavadgīta* and *Yoga* teachings, as taught by *Śrī* T. Krishnamacharya and made comprehensible by his son, *Śrī* TKV Desikachar.

She became and remained a student of *Yoga* with *Śrī* Desikachar as her teacher.

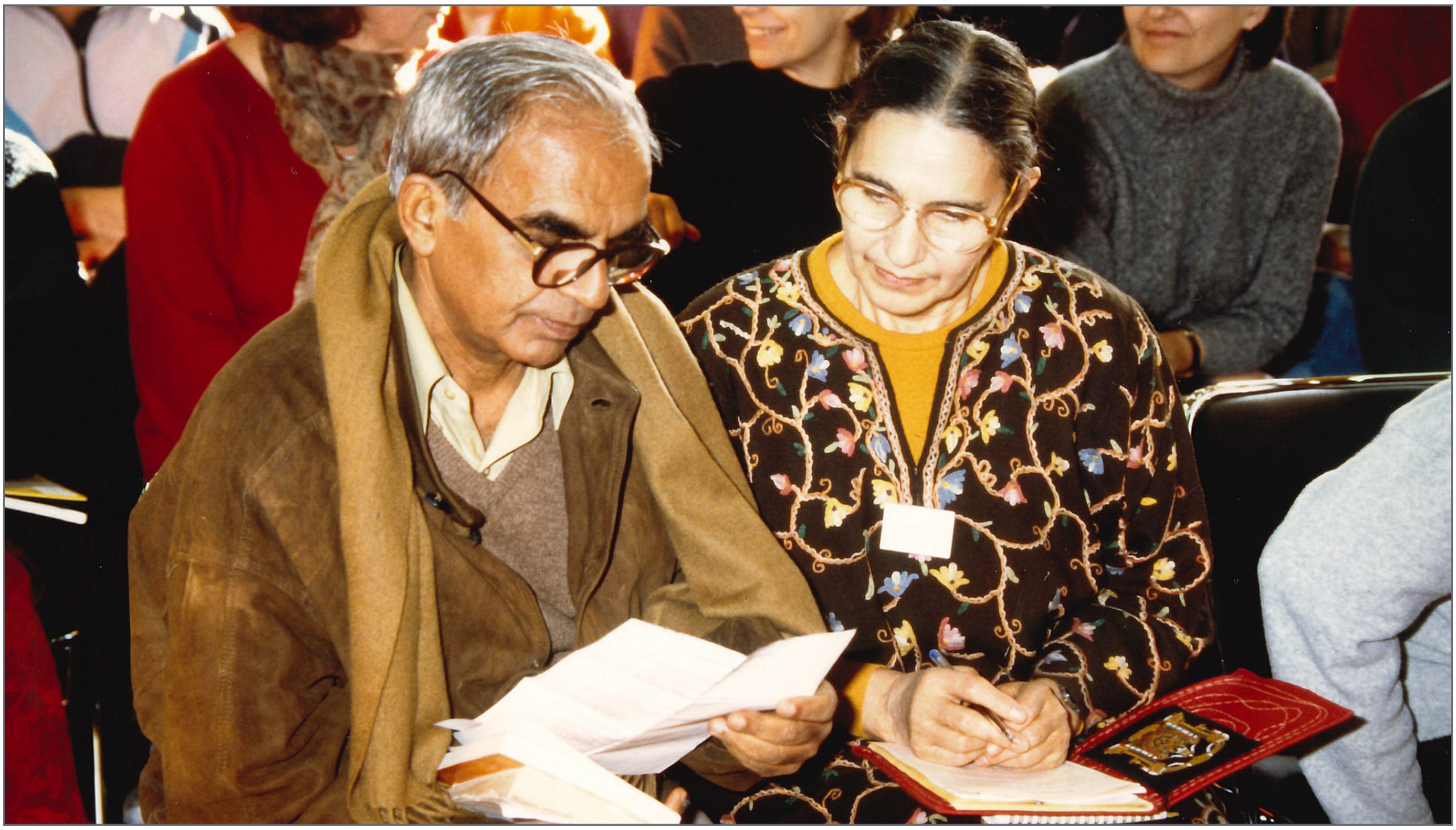
She lives in Rome where she continues to teach *Yoga* and *Vedic* Chanting.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



In the city, the slowly increasing modernity filled the roads with new, ever honking cars and noisy auto-rickshaws. The animals that clustered around were slowly driven away. Restaurants, coffee bars and tearooms sprang up like mushrooms in a city, where homemade food was as much a tradition as the love of music.

In spite of change, the city remained culturally and artistically very active. Spiritual, philosophic and religious discourses were held throughout the year. The Music festival brought the best of classical Carnatic music during the December - January season. World famous philosophers like J. Krishnamurti held their talks during the winter season and classical *Bharatanāṭyam* dance-dramas highlighted the themes of the ancient *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The people who attended these events were true connoisseurs. After a performance or after a talk, lively discussions on the merits or demerits of what was heard and seen filled the evening air.

The winter season brought respite from the heat, but it also bridged the growing gap between what was traditional and new. Young and old people were lively participants in the cultural and artistic programs. A new voice in any field was immediately noted and classified.

During the early 60's, it was therefore not unusual to overhear people talking of "the young Desikachar," the son of the legendary *Śrī* T. Krishnamacharya. Soon, the news circulated in the city that this young man had become a student of his father, that he had given up a well-paid job as engineer and that he gave talks in English on the *Yogasūtra* text. There was wonder and disbelief but also a lot of curiosity.

Many, myself included, went to the Saturday morning sessions and listened to him. We met a young, easy-going person who soon proved to be an excellent communicator. He was able to infuse life into the ancient *Yoga* teachings and make it understandable to the modern mind. He was respectful of authentic spiritual values but doubtful of orthodox habits that were maintained only in the name of tradition.

It was easy to get to know him and learn that it was the healing power of *Yoga* that first captured his interest. Observing his teacher's work, he understood that a process of healing starts from the core and then, when sustained, the healing slowly and gradually spreads through all the layers of the human system.

He worked under the guidance of his teacher and father, all the time learning. Learning the ancient texts, first by chanting, then through understanding the content. His enthusiasm was catching. I learned to read *Sanskrit* just for the joy of chanting. He gathered experience with *Yoga* and the various schools of *Yoga*. He was invited to Europe and introduced the *Yoga* teachers of the west to the philosophical basis of *Yoga*.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

In **1976**, in order to honour his father, Desikachar founded the **Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram**. This institution is dedicated to healing through *Yoga*, teaching *Yoga* and to train *Yoga* teachers.

The institution grew and was immediately much appreciated in the city by people from all walks of life as well as by the authorities. Desikachar kept on learning from his father as long as his teacher was alive. By now he was famous beyond Chennai and beyond India, but he kept his inquisitive curiosity and his modesty.

What he learnt from his teacher, he immediately shared. He was the most open-minded *Yoga* teacher with the ability to teach each individual in the realm of his need and capacity to understand. Physical exercises were seen only as a means to open the way to a deeper creative unfolding. He was able to tune in with the spiritual or religious inclination of people of all backgrounds. He was convinced that *Yoga* could help people to appreciate their own religious heritage. He believed that a regular practice of *Yoga* would transform each individual into a better person. His trust in *Yoga* and his teacher was unshakeable.

It was fascinating to watch his ability to apply the ancient teaching, making it a useful tool for healing. Thousands of people discovered a new well being thanks to the practice of an appropriate *Yoga* practice. Thousands of suffering people found relief and discovered a sustaining force within them that enabled them to renovate their lives in spite of an illness.

Listening to Desikachar was an experience that went beyond mere educational instruction. Here, we were in modern India, listening to a young man who was trained as an engineer, but who had the gift to narrate the ancient teachings with the rhythm of pulsating life.

What was transmitted was precious.

- Precious, because it was conveyed as a living teaching that could be applied in daily life.
- Precious, because it became clear that the application of the appropriate *Yoga* practice helps one to change and to transform one's life for the better.
- Precious, because the healing power was felt already in the chanting that preceded the explanation or instruction.

The *Yoga* that Desikachar believed in had to be applicable and useful, it had to create order in mind and body and the practice had to be precise. Students would be taught what was good for them and they were asked to practice at home every day, according to the designed instructions.

It was *Śrī* Desikachar's ability to listen to whomsoever was in front of him. His listening went well beyond the words and the sounds of language. He listened to the person, felt the often unspoken suffering, showed his empathy and then made the person participate in the trust that *Yoga* would help – if practiced.

This process was tested again and again in the KYM where Desikachar acted as consultant and then gave directions of what should be taught to a student. He always was careful to ensure that the teacher-student relationship remained respectful and that the teachers were attending to their students with concern and care.

Once the students practiced regularly, their mental and physical problems lessened, and often disappeared completely. Depending on the intensity of attention, a student managed to dedicate to his or her practice, the healing-process was either quick or slow. Often, simple conscious breathing seemed to work miracles.

Medical doctors and different medical practitioners, not only from Chennai, but from the whole of India sent their patients to *Śrī* Desikachar or to the KYM.





Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Śrī Desikachar didn't like the words "alternative medicine." He visualised a collaboration among the various therapies. In many cases, he saw that the application of *Yoga* could help a person in more than one way. If a cure was not possible, he found that the application of *Yoga* could sustain a person, both physically and psychologically. He found a thousand different ways of sustenance that could suit a person's individuality and help his physical condition.

In order to intensify the interchange with the medical world, *Śrī* Desikachar organised interviews, meetings, symposiums and workshops. He wrote newspaper articles and granted interviews. He invited allopathic medical professionals, surgeons, *Āyurvedic Vaidya*-s, *Siddha Vaidya-s* and healers of many different traditions. He invited them to come to the KYM and observe the work that was going on and then he wanted to understand the philosophy that guided their way of healing.

He found an ally and friend in Dr. B Ramamurthi, a world famous Neuro-surgeon at that time. Later, overwhelmed by positive medical reports, there were many allopathic doctors, surgeons and gynaecologists who understood the importance of *Śrī* Desikachar's efforts. It was thanks to *Śrī* Desikachar's reaching out, that *Yoga* gained respectability in the medical world.

He generously shared what he had witnessed and experimented in the field of healing and he always gave all the credit to his teacher.

As students and teachers of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM), we were exposed to the philosophical and practical teachings of *Āyurvedic Vaidya-s*, *Siddha* doctors and *Unani* medical professionals.

I think the crowning of this long interaction and in-depth sharing was the week long International Healing Conference at the KYM in February 1996 organised by the Aperture Foundation, USA.

The participants belonged to all the well-established healing traditions of the East and the West.

If today, modern medicine has come to accept that there is more than just the body to be healed, I think, this fact is also due to the untiring effort and the respectful openness of TKV Desikachar.

He was a master in establishing immediate cordial and respectful relationships with all people of all traditions.

To be invited to sit and observe his consultations, was each time, a special honour.

When a student arrived, he would introduce us observers with superlative words that would make us blush. Soon ,we understood that the eulogies had nothing to do with us, but served to make us acceptable to the student. To make a student feel at ease and gain his confidence was his only aim.

After asking very few normal questions, he would know the interests and aspirations of the person in front of him. Then, he would teach according to the capacity and ability of the student. It was during those sessions that I learnt to appreciate that teaching *Yoga* is a creative art.

I remember a student, a businessman, whose hobby was music. *Śrī* Desikachar drew up a course for him, integrating the movements of arms and legs with musical sounds. The person who was suffering from multiple sclerosis was fascinated with the music and thus, the effort to practice was possible for him.

To a well-known artist who was accustomed to practice headstand every day, he suggested that she might practice the headstand, seated, visualising it, rather than forcing her ailing body into that posture. She liked the idea. Then he gave her a simple breathing practice that would help her regain her health.

Whenever he would explain to us students the power of visualisation, he would describe a famous dancer whose body was being consumed by arthritis. In normal life she could hardly walk. Yet, on stage, when she impersonated the feelings the *Gopi-s* felt for *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, she was transformed. Her mime was superb, her gestures smooth, her body moved with grace and rhythm, all because she was able to visualise *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. She became the *Gopi* who sang the glory of her Lord, she was the *Gopi* who pined to catch His look or danced the *Rāsa* with Him.

It has been my fortune to be *Śrī* Desikachar's student for a long time. I consider myself particularly fortunate because I was able to witness his various transformations.

I met him when he was a teaching student. Then, his humility and his open willingness to share what he had learnt impressed me. The joy of sharing something precious was evident. He was happy when he found that we receivers realised that the Teaching was precious.

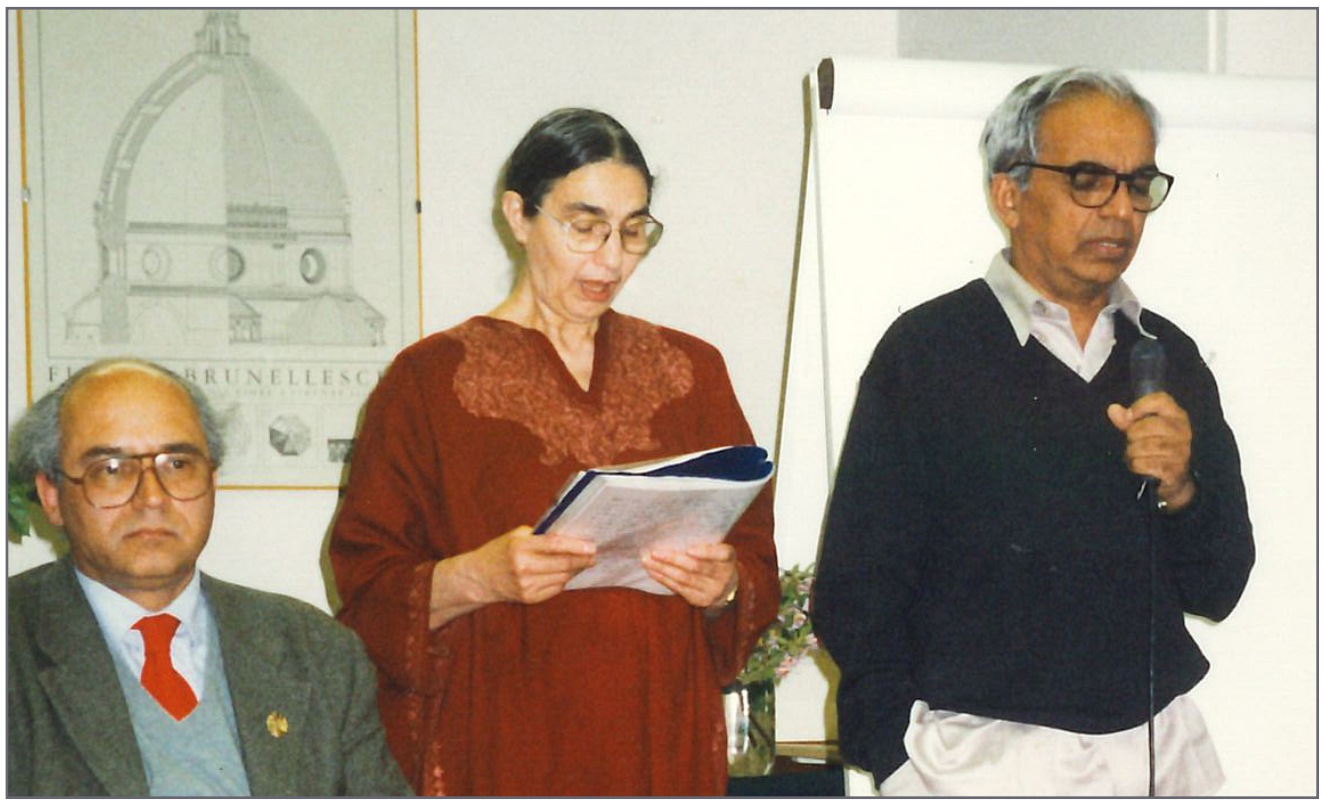
Later he became a Teacher. As Teacher, he expected that we practice and apply the Teaching in our daily life. However, if one of the students was ill or injured, he was quick to suggest a new way to practice. Usually he would say: "Try this – something good will happen!" And we practiced with intense attention so that "something good could, indeed, happen!"

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



He made it a habit to always find something good in a person, something to praise. We, of the Mandiram, knew a person who would never stop boasting about what he had done or was going to do. Frustrated of listening to the same music, someone exclaimed, "Not even Desikachar could find something good in this boaster!" Desikachar had overheard the exclamation, and coming out of his room, smiling, he asked "Has anyone ever heard him complain?"

With the suffering students who came for therapy, he developed utmost care and concern. From us students of *Yoga*, he expected that we practiced in such a way that changes would happen in the field of our behaviour; that the conditioning from the past grew less strong. He gave indications and pointers, and then, it was up to us to follow these, to reason, to reflect, to practice and to grow. He was the first to notice a positive change and to congratulate us, so that we continued with our efforts.

For *Śrī* Desikachar, the *Gurupāraṁpara* meant much more than just an unbroken lineage of teachers. For him, the link with his teacher was a daily necessity. It was his teacher's living presence that sustained him and inspired him. I think, it is probably because of this continuous and intense relationship that *Śrī* Desikachar was able to affirm: "My Teacher is my God."

Thanks to his vast experience with meditative practices and all the other *Yoga* tools, his detachment and his compassion assumed a heightened clarity.

During his last years, he taught not just with care, he taught with compassion. He would introduce the tools of healing and later he would see that the healing process was sustained according to the capacity of the practitioner. He was able to do this because he was teaching from the core of his being.

A serious *Yoga* teacher who practices and applies *Yoga* in his daily life is bound to manifest transformations that are visible also to his students. However, the Teaching that is transmitted remains the same.

As a former editor of a *Yoga* magazine in Italy, I had interviewed *Śrī* Desikachar on numerous occasions on different topics concerning *Yoga*. When I re-read these articles and interviews now, I am amazed to find the same clarity, the same simplicity and the same humility. I find also the same insistence of the importance of the relationship between the teacher of *Yoga* and the students. He affirmed then and later, that it is the responsibility of the teacher to find out what the student really needs and teach what is needed, in the way the student is not only able to do it, but likes to do it.

During the many years of teaching *Yoga*, *Śrī* Desikachar made many discoveries and gained enormous experience, but as before, he attributed all success to his Teacher.

Then, as later, *Śrī* Desikachar affirmed that people come to *Yoga* not to learn techniques, but for "something else." It is this "something else" that the *Yoga* teacher has to develop within him or her self.

Śrī Desikachar was a living example of transmitting *Yoga* as relationship. By relationship he meant that we should honour those with whom we come into contact. To honour someone means that you want to give something precious in such a way that what you give is also received as something unique and precious.

As a teaching student, he inspired all who listened to him. The admiration we felt was translated into an always-higher aspiration in our life, without any effort on our part, it happened naturally.

As Teacher, he inspired through his example of regular practice and regular application of all the *Yoga* tools. His example encouraged us to practice with attention and intensity.

As Healer, he inspired through his guiding and sustaining presence.

During the last years, I found that just to sit with him, was precious. To chant with him developed a joy that sustains in time; I would say it sustains even beyond time. To see and observe of how he lived the *Gurupāraṁpara* remains the most touching and inspiring experience.

As his teacher was a guiding reality for him, I feel that he continues to guide and inspire all those who had the opportunity to be his students.

With a thankful heart
Chandra

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Holding With Empathy

Multiple Perspectives

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

AN UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE SHIFTING CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE CHILD, ITS VARIATIONS AND HOW ONE CAN LOOK AT IT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *YOGA*

DR. KARTHIYAYINI AMAR MAHADEVAN

INTRODUCTION

Waldorf education has spiritual scientific roots and comes from Austrian scientist and thinker, Rudolf Steiner. Being a Theosophist, Rudolf Steiner was heading the Theosophical Society in Germany. Later in his life, he founded Anthroposophy. According to Steiner's philosophy, the human is a three-fold being of spirit, soul and body whose capacities unfold in three developmental stages on the path of life as early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence. His ideas, as seeds were sown through extensive lectures, writings and private consultations. The seeds are now coming into flowers as numerous projects infused with human values. Steiner, a truly "Renaissance man," developed a way of thinking that he applied to different aspects of what it means to be human.

In **child development**, if one sees not just physical growth and development but also the developing consciousness, it is a holistic way of understanding of the child.

In reality, what we receive at birth, is a model body that is with us for 7 years. Although in the very first year of life itself, it begins to die out and fall away, the process continues till the Change of Teeth.

A child's development can be seen in seven year cycles:

0 - 7 years | There is major growth and development of the physical body. With the Change of Teeth, the formative life forces engaged in growth and organ formation are partially freed. These released life forces are utilised for memory and recall. This is when the child is ready for formal learning.

What does the child learns in the first three years?

From birth to the first year is exponential growth in the physical**,** where the child's birth weight is doubled at 6 months and tripled at 1 year. The child which is born, has purposeless mass movement in response to a stimulus.These are stereotypical patterns of movement which are called the primitive reflexes. These reflexes have to be abolished serially at every milestone to establish purposeful movement. This is when the child crosses over every milestone such as head control, turning over, sitting, standing and finally walks without support by 1 year.

So, the process starts from head to foot. Gazing and grasping culminate in walking.

A. The First Three Years

The child attains walking. After having established a different relationship between the limbs and the trunk, the child speaks around the second year. Having spoken, the child listens to the response in the surrounding and starts feeling that it is an independent being different from the other, and starts to say, "I want this," around the third year.

So, in the first three years of the life of a child, being human is being established – Upright walking, talking and thinking. From then, it is a journey, revisiting these three years. Sometimes we get stuck and move in circles and there come some times when we move in spirals, each time revisiting with new learning.



Dr. Karthiyayini started her career as a general physician and worked in Naval family clinics focusing on women and child health for 15 years. She then served the Indian Navy for 5 years as Short Service Commission Officer and learned discipline as a way to address health. She also worked as a scholar in Diplomate in National Board Training in Paediatrics. She eventually went on to do her graduation in developmental neurology to work with children with special needs. The need for sensitisation to work for these children made her choose *Yoga* as a path for Inner Transformation. Dr. Karthiyayini has completed her teacher training with KYM and is also a faculty for Anatomy and Physiology at the Mandiram.

She is now in the process of studying Anthroposophic medicine which is a spiritual science - "study of human wisdom." She presently works as a consultant in child Development in SPARRC Institute, Alwarpet and heads the wellness team of Colombia Pacific senior living community.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

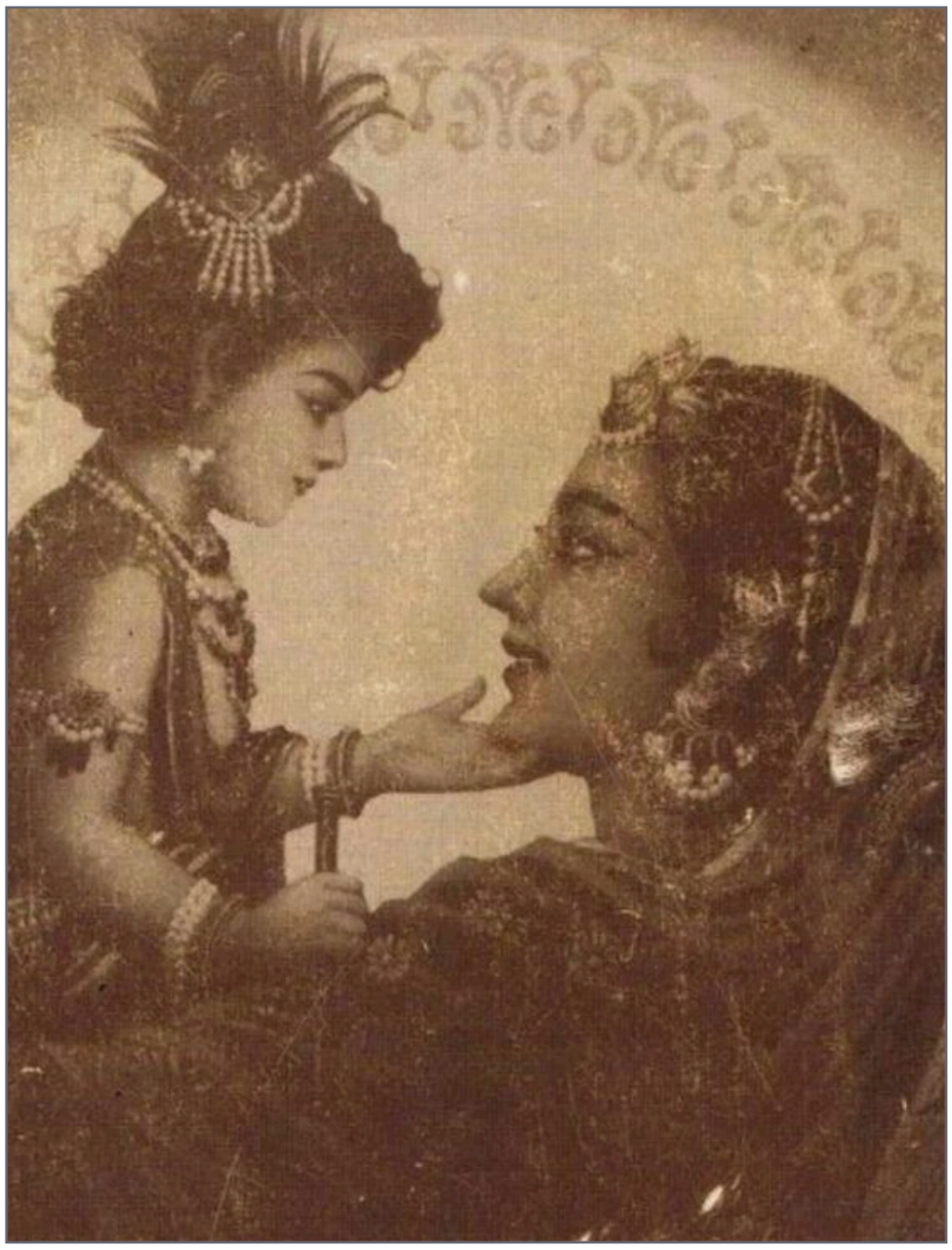


IMAGE DOWNLOADED FROM SRINIVASA DAS PINTEREST HANDLE



IMAGE DOWNLOADED FROM KRSNA ART (WWW.KRSNA-ART.COM) COPYRIGHT KRSNA ART

"Consciousness of a child till three years is Me and the world are the same." One can see this in *Kṛṣṇa's* childhood.

When *Yaśodha* asked him to open his mouth, he opened it to reveal his truth - me and the world are one, the world is within me.

From 3 - 7 years, the child learns through imitation.

VARIATIONS

Children who are born prematurely need to use their own life forces to overcome prematurity and catch up with growth. These children are delayed in their milestones. Also, there are some children who are born full term but still want to take a lot of time to catch up with these milestones.

How do we address these variations in the first 7 years of child development through *Yoga*?

Till 3 - 4 years | The child is an extension of the mother. So, when there is a difficulty expressed in child, the mother needs to be worked with. When there is a delay in the milestone, there is a need to hold the mother in a secure space by giving her assurance, listening to her fears and anxiety. Teaching mothers to do simple *Yoga* practices focussing on gentle arm movements and *Aṅganyāsam* with visualisation, reciting *Mantra*-s of their *Iṣṭa Devata* brings in more security. While the mother is held in a secured space, the child moves into the next milestone with the energy received from the mother. The diet and sleep of the mother need to be taken care of, for the child to come in to this secured space, where it takes the next step.

3 - 7 years | The child is getting to be independent of the mother to some extent in moving and reaching out by itself. This is the time they learn through imitation. Teaching *Yoga* to the child becomes easier if we create a conducive space for their imitation and we become worthy of imitation.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

So, teaching *Yoga* to the mothers and making that as part of their daily routine is a way the child picks it up. Around 7/8 years, consciousness of the child is, "I am different from the World. I am the centre and the world in periphery."

This is seen in *Kṛṣṇa's* childhood where *Kṛṣṇa* plays around with the *Gopika-s*, where he is in the centre and they are in the periphery.



IMAGE DOWNLOADED FROM
WWW.TALLENGESTORE.COM

B. FROM SEVEN TO FOURTEEN YEARS

The child is developing its emotional faculty through independent feeling. There is a shift in consciousness from wondering to questioning. There is a feeling of being neither here nor there. Shift in the hormonal axis wherein the Hypothalamo-Pituitary Gonadal Axis is triggered to meet the "Earth Maturity" in order to be here as a man or woman. Puberty, which is seen as a second fall from Paradise, needs to be handled with sensitivity. The growth forces are rekindled to meet the sexual maturity. This is a phase in which the child is confused about his/ her growing limbs and the trunk, with the face trying to catch up. Puberty is when the prefrontal cortex where the faculty of judgements, and decision making happens, is getting to be organised. It gets organised by 18-21 years.

The pineal gland is what helps the child to grow emotionally by taking in the 'Sun' rhythm called circadian rhythm. There is a rhythm which is maintained through good sleep and activity. When this rhythm is maintained, the neuroendocrine system works harmoniously to grow in a balanced way meeting life in each situation with the available environment. The pineal gland starts taking a back seat once the pituitary kickstarts, which happens around 11/12 years.

Around 10 years | Consciousness shifts from Centre to Periphery as a prelude to Earth Maturity. A conflict arises within as to, "Who am I and where do I belong?"

Kṛṣṇa* triumphs over this inner conflict and comes to be in the centre, holding the periphery as seen in *Kāliṅga Nartanam

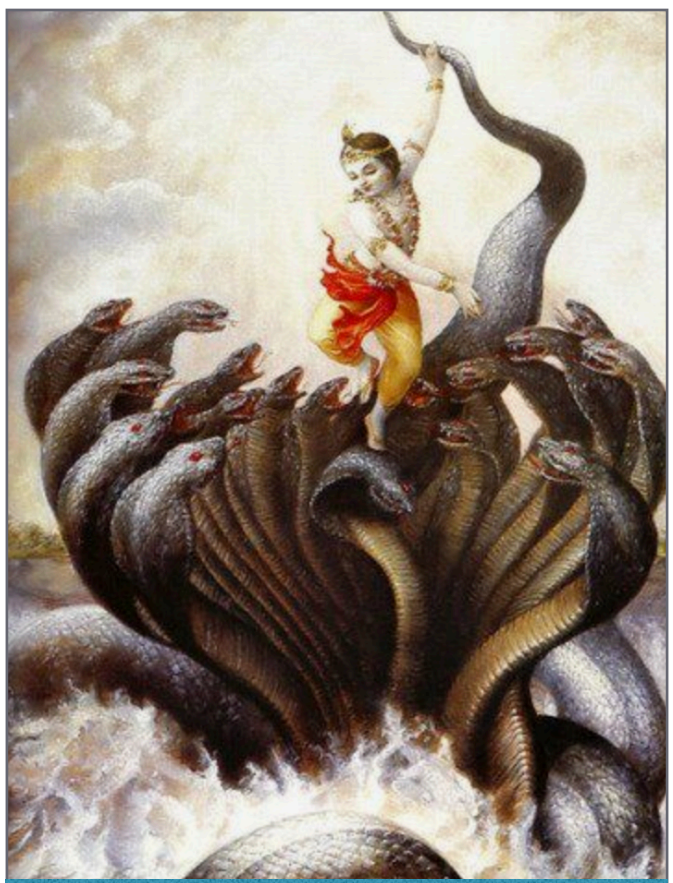


IMAGE DOWNLOADED FROM
WWW.KRSNABOOK.COM

VARIATIONS

These days, physical maturity happens too fast, and varied lifestyle puts the circadian rhythm out of place, which in turn, puts the pineal gland to sleep and the pituitary walks in much earlier than the emotional maturity. This brings in early sexual maturity, wherein the child finds it difficult to cope with the physical growth spurt and chances for him to lose his identity and keeps searching for, 'Who am I?'

HOW TO ADDRESS THIS THROUGH *YOGA?*

By bringing *Yoga* practices from early years, the pineal gland is kept active for the stipulated time, and this early pubertal spurt is kept under check.

In children with precocious puberty, there is a need to check, why this child has jumped too early into the Earth Maturity. This could be for their life's purpose to be achieved differently or they bring something of their inherited pattern!

Once puberty is set in early, the child needs to be given dynamic *Yoga* practices, avoiding static postures and weight bearing asymmetrical postures to avoid the damage to the early closing growing ends of bone. Diet and sleep are very important. There is a need to bring in more artistic activity through singing, painting etc.

In *Yoga*, more of dynamic postures, *Sūryanamaskar* with *Sūrya Mantra* and *Vedic* chanting can be very helpful.

In a child with special ability, a very important aspect is to treat the child "age appropriately" and not to give too much sympathy and curb their abilities.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

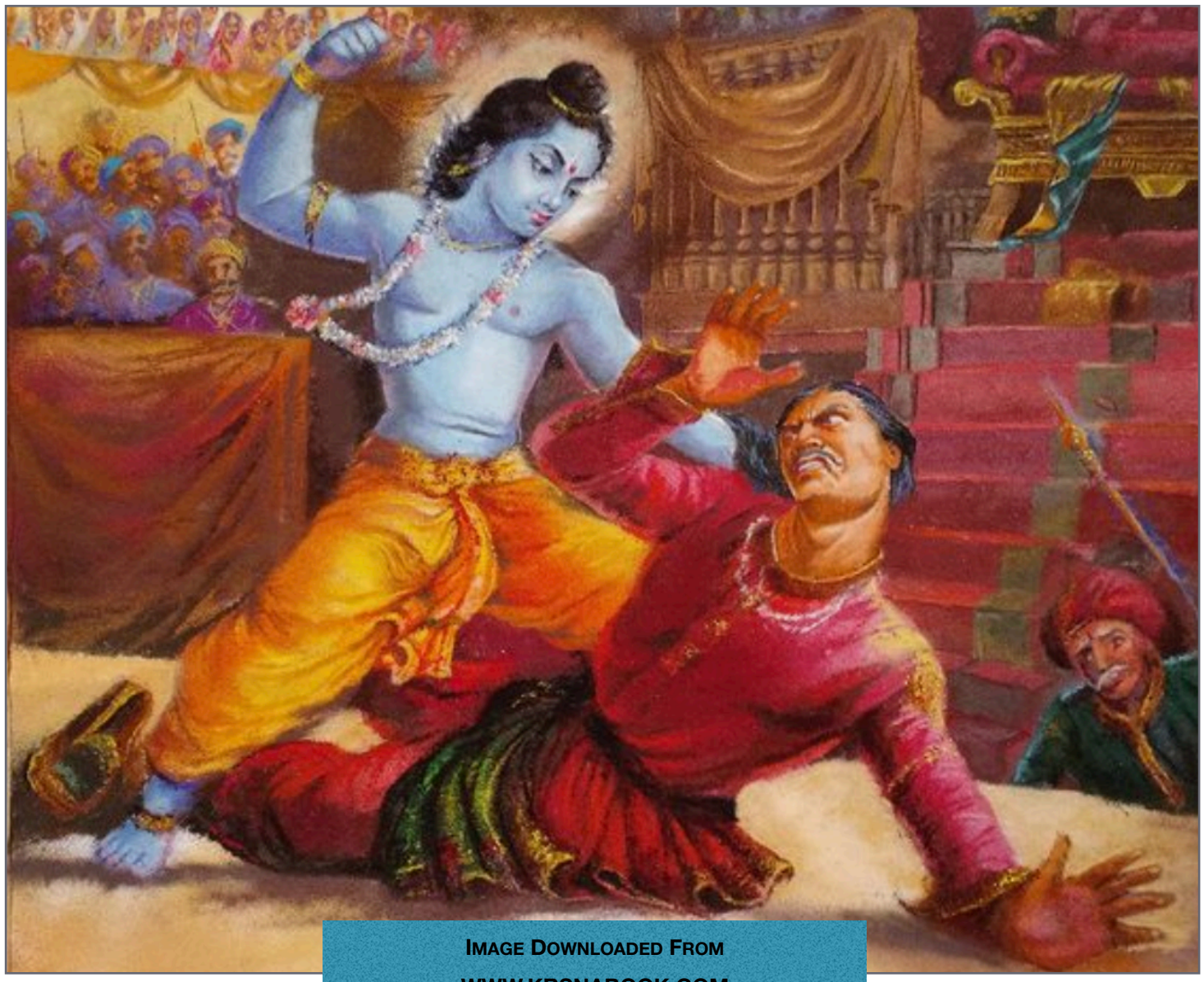


IMAGE DOWNLOADED FROM
WWW.KRSNABOOK.COM

C. FROM FOURTEEN YEARS TO TWENTY ONE YEARS

This is when child chooses its Loving Authority and prepares itself for meeting the world with its own independent thinking. Between 15-18 years, there is maturation of skeleton to adult level,. Hormone changes and maturation of the intermediary metabolism happens. What needs to be seen, is the uprightness. A glance at gait and movement will suffice to establish whether they have uplifting and stimulating thoughts or whether mental emptiness makes them feel unmotivated or disinterested.

Around 18 years | Consciousness of the child is, "I can change the world."

***Kṛṣṇa* wakes up to this consciousness and kills the fear within which is in the form of *Kaṁsa,* and changed his life.**

VARIATIONS

As an earlier setback in the 7-14 years phase, if the child is not given freedom and held with boundary, then the child loses itself and keeps wandering in looking out for their self in the 7 years. If he fails to see his **Loving Authority** by 12-14 years, then there is a high chance to be stuck in this adolescent period forever.

How can *Yoga* help?

Samasthiti as reference is called for quite often between postures. Practices involving postures which are challenging are assigned and the teacher should be able to do that with ease. The teacher does the posture and brings about an awe in the child, by which the child looks at the teacher as his **Loving Authority**. This will help the child move through this phase with ease and he/she will be able to be confident in taking individual decisions. "Walk the Talk" is a must to be a **Loving Authority.**

Vedic chanting with complex *Jata* and *Ghana* patterns will bring about self confidence and clarity to help the child take an independent decision. *Vedic* chanting also helps to modulate the voice which has been lost during the pubertal phase and this helps in regaining his expressive voice.

A child with a special ability holds the Identity of either father/mother/grandparent/caretaker taken at this phase. By understanding that, the child is given certain independent tasks and this will help to identify his ability. According to his ability, *Yoga* in the form of dynamic postures are used. For example, *Sūrya Namaskar* with *Sūrya Mantra* on the ascent and descent will help.

Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

How Should the Approach Be?
Rephrase Problem with Strength as a Solution

Problems	Abilities
Compulsive, driven, motor deficits	**Motor skills often highly developed – kinesthetic intelligence**
Distractability	**Wide ranging interest in the world**
Short attention span	**Panoramic vision, rapid perception and intense attention for this brief period of time**
Poor listening ability, inadequate auditory perceptual processing and connection to the space behind	**Visually dominated and forward oriented perceptual style**
Impulsivity	**Great flexibility, and receptivity to new things**
Claim to leadership is often pronounced in relationship with peers and adults	**Longing for authentic authority, personal leadership abilities not uncommon**

ADHD & *Yoga*

Dynamic *Āsana*-s with quick changes bring the focus through interest.

Dynamic postures and reciting a verse/ rhyme in forward and backward flow (eg *Sūrya Mantra* with *Sūrya Namaskar* sequence).

Stay focused in one posture with eyes fixed at a particular object.

Count gradually and increase the numbers counted

- Diet plays a very important role
- Sleep rhythm need to be maintained
- No media and gadgets

Autism-Brilliantly Disabled?

In Autism Spectrum Disorder, one can see the effect of polarised one-sidedness in the form of giftedness (or) a handicap.

Behaviour as their language of Communication - translate, not medicate

What goes in as input – food, sleep and sensory environment, comes as out output - speech, movement and behaviour

Two Ways To Approach This

1. 1.Name the behaviour and direct therapy to minimise them for measured behaviours. Processing happens in the child's inner life.
2. Work hard to meet the inner life, help them express their inner essence.
3. Children with Autism have Sensory Processing Disorder.

Yoga and Sensory Motor Integration

Understand their sensory issues, whether there are sense avoiders or sense seekers and design an optimum sensory diet and approach it through *Yoga*. For these children, every moment, the teacher has to be ready to change and be spontaneous and be in that moment.

- *Niyama*, *Āhāra Pathyam* as Caesin free gluten free diet
- *Āsana* - Dynamic and static with *Mantra-s*
- *Prāṇāyāma - Bhrāmari*
- *Pratyāhāra* - focus on a toy /tool
- Art and Craft - Many children use painting as a way to express.

Special abilities to address the society in:

- ADHD - Willing
- Down's syndrome - Feeling
- Autism - Thinking



Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Children with special capabilities are broadly classified into:

A. Global developmental delay with Intellectual disability

- Brain anomaly
- Brain Injury
- Chromosomal disorder

B. Intellectual Disability

- Learning Disability
- Slow learners due to attention deficit, Sensory deficits

They have sometimes co existing conditions like:

- Seizures
- Hypothyroidism
- Metabolic disturbances

Few Conditions to elaborate upon:

- Trisomy -21
- ADHD
- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy
- Learning Difficulties

What do we see in these children with special abilities? What do they have in common?

They are happy by themselves. Even if they have difficulties in physical/ mental, it does not affect them. It is for the people around to bring about a change.

I reflect upon this story always which my mentor shared with me:

God has created the human beings to see his expressions through them. The way science and technology progressed with the intellect, the human being went further away from being human. God as a creator was very concerned about this shift and wanted to bring back the human being. He tried to wake up the humanity through certain conditions in deviant health like Tuberculosis and Leprosy where there was initially no treatment. The only way these are addressed is through good nutrition, good environment and personal care of the wound. The human being did not stay there to understand the message but discovered the bacteria as Tubercle Bacilli and Lepra Bacilli and fixed them into a box to be kept in the sanatorium. God was very upset and wanted to give the message through children.There came these children with Trisomy 21, who are very compassionate and joyful. One can meet them not through the intellect, but through the heart. Humans did not stay with the message and went ahead to fix them up in the antenatal period itself. Then, God really was very upset and concerned that the message had to reach the human definitely. Here came a group of children, who reflected exactly what"s happening in the society - no eye contact, no communication and no social interaction. They are labelled "Autistic" as they demand so much from the society to change by their strong one sidedness and perfection.

I feel this is not a story, this is reality. Like how illnesses wake us up to our inner self, these children are reflecting the human's drift away from being human.

So I see these children as the trinity of *Kaliyuga*!

Trisomy - Extra Chromosome Called as Down's Syndrome
Bundle of Joy

- They express the affectionate message - Be happy and loving
- Short stature - Meet me not at my intellect, rather feel me in your heart
- Flexibility, decreased muscle tone - Be flexible in your thinking and sensitive to accommodate the other
- Short sight - Look closely into oneself rather than looking at the other
- Slanting eyes - look with a new perspective

They are angels in human form to uplift our souls with Joy and Love

ADHD

Kṛṣṇa was not labelled as ADHD by *Yaśodha*. ADHD mostly is overrated. Three main clinical features are:

- Inattentiveness
- Impulsiveness
- Hyperactivity

Three Categories as Subtypes:

- ADHD - Combined-Most common
- ADHD - Predominantly Inattentive type
- ADHD – Predominantly Hyperactive – Impulsive Type

ADHD – a sign of talent

- Curative educator, Henning Kohler contrasts the problems and abilities of children who can become socially ADHD as a sign of talent
- Henning Kohler also contrasts the problems and abilities of children who can become socially conspicuous today due to hyperactivity, impulsivity (or) attention deficits.

A true way to address the present problems in the society is to bring back the humane touch in all what we do. Our children with special needs are messengers to remind us on this path. Education as 'healing' should be the way our society should head. A holistic way of education is the need of the hour.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

MINDFULNESS IN DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO ARE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED

AN INTERVIEW WITH MS. SUJATHA SRIRAM

INTERVIEWED BY SHRILEKHA

What occurs to you when we say 'children with special or specific needs?' Can you share your experience working at the clinic.

When we speak of special children, they are really special with something. Firstly, we have to tap their potential and in order to help them express their potential, special educators are required. Secondly, we should not be concerned only about their academics but a lot of attention needs to be given for life and survival skills as well. Finally, who comes under the spectrum? I would say everyone. All of us have some kind of disability and we somehow find a way to deal with it. Example, some people are quite bad at navigation. They ask for directions at least 3-4 times before they reach their destination. So, can we just label them as 'navigation-disabled' individuals? That wouldn't be fair to them. We just allow them to explore and find their balance in order to overcome their limitation. This is what we do to children. We don't direct the child, we just let them be. At the clinic, we do have children with various kinds of needs.

Dyslexia is a condition where the child finds it difficult to comprehend words. They have difficulty in reading certain words and end up transposing them. They skip sentences or suddenly halt when they are communicating.

Dyscalculia is a situation where the child finds it difficult to do mathematics. They might understand the mathematical concepts, but when it come to doing it, there is a hindrance in the ability to process it. Even in writing, communicating through words becomes difficult. Especially when it comes to subtraction, they face a lot of trouble because the concept of 'borrowing' when we subtract is something that they have trouble understanding. Difficulty arises in taking decision as to which number to be used in order to borrow and deduct. Division of numbers is the second biggest problem faced by these children and this is where teaching mathematical tables become crucial.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is of different types. There are children who are highly verbal and some are not. There are also situations where the child starts off as verbal and in few years becomes non verbal. We do not know why this happens yet. Recently we observed a child having his food. He was not using his jaw, in the sense, he was not biting/chewing his food before he could swallow. When a child does not grind the teeth and give movement to his/ her jaws, how are they going to talk? On another occasion, with the guidance of a physiotherapist, we pressed the corners of the jaw, enabling the jaw movement of the child and he was able to utter some sounds and also repeated some words which we spoke. Perhaps, this is the reason why there is a shift between a child being verbal to being non verbal. This is indeed our speculation, which we have to research further. Children with ASD will not maintain eye contact when they interact with others.

Mental Retardation (MR) has several stages too and the only way we engage with these children is to repeat the same words again and again. When it comes to MR, what is important is to make the child independent in the long run. Some vocational training has to be inculcated so that they learn to be independent and learn how to handle money - life skills to be precise. Also, we emphasise on the concept of time. As we train individuals with MR, we insist that they give a lot of importance to time management. Example: Wake up by 6 am, bathing by 6.30 am, breakfast by 7 am, catch the bus by 7.30 am and study by 8 am.



Sujatha Sriram is a Senior special educator and therapist at the Nishta Centre of Excellence, Medical Research and Training (NICE). She has several decades of experience in educating children with special needs. Her approach to education is largely need based, where the intervention is predominantly one-on-one. She is part of the senior faculty at NISHTA in imparting hands-on training to other aspirants who are looking at becoming special educators.

Ms. Sriram has given several talks and lectures on 'handling children with special needs,' with specific attention given to mindfulness. She has volunteered in many NGO's, offering her services as an educator and therapist and has always had a dynamic approach when it comes to parenting.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Besides, we give a lot of activities for children who come to the clinic and most of these activities are aligned to life skills. In one activity, we would ask the children, "What will happen if you were to visit a clothing store and ask for 2 kgs of clothes?" This would make the children ponder. Can they even use the unit of measurement, 'Kilogram' in a clothing store? Because, of all, learning units of measurement is crucial. At the end, if they have to be independent, they should also be able to cook and that includes understanding weights and measures. So, when asked such questions, the children reflect. We even enact the situation. This gives them an idea as to what exactly to ask for instead. Therefore, we reinforce concepts in the form of activities without the child getting bored.

So, your approach is to engage them with activity and also insist on building their language?

Absolutely. When I walk into a class and suddenly ask them to share the recipe of 'Pal Payasam' (an Indian sweet made from milk and sugar) - they are certainly taken off-guard. In language, we have two kinds - receptive and expressive but the third one is demand language and we use it quite a bit here. So when I demand the recipe, the children certainly try their best and end up sharing their best. Of course, there is a lot of applause and laughter in the process.

Do you also give importance to swimming and self care as part of like skills?

This largely depends on how comfortable the parent is. We do have children who naturally have a great fascination for water. In such cases, we figure ways to convince parents. This is no easy feat by itself. Again we cannot allow the child to immediately explore the waters. Everything should happen in stages. They have to first observe the swimming pool, then touch the water and then observe their spatial awareness and slowly expose them to swimming as an activity - of course, all of these with the presence of a coach. But if you look at it, for the child, the experience of swimming has already started from the time he/ she began to observe the swimming pool. Spatial awareness as a life skill is important and swimming is a great way to inculcate this. The coach takes every movement slowly and over a period of time a coherence is achieved. All of this happens quickly if the child is interested in swimming which in most cases the answer is a yes. Self care is a long process and it happens as part of their activity. Like the '2 kg cloth' example, we subtly bring in several thought provoking questions instilling decision making thoughts.

How important is trust building?

Our relationship with the children works on trust. Anchoring happens when they feel secure. If we were to take the swimming example - we cannot just hand them over to the coach. According to the child, the coach is a stranger (which he/ she really is) and they cannot trust them. The child has to be accompanied by a family member. The member should be one whom the child trusts in the first place and they should never get impatient when handling the child. Statements like "How long will you take to learn this?" "When can we leave? It is getting late," are disastrous. What we need here are infinite levels of tolerance. The child picks your body language and reacts exactly how you don't want him/ her to.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

What are your approaches to therapy?

We use a lot of sound. A lot of phonetic awareness is created. Example, CAT is not taught as C.A.T but as K.A.T. We decipher the sounds and teach them to pronounce these properly. When the foundation is laid strongly, building words is largely easier. We use a lot of mnemonics to assist recall and enable further learning. When they get used to a particular sound, let's say <p> then we bring in the verbal fluency activity where they are asked to come up with words starting and ending with the sound <p>. We also focus on semantic fluency ie., categorisation. Tables, chairs and wardrobes belong to the category, 'furniture.' Categorisation, when it comes to children with special needs helps to be specific. Let's say we have an activity where we ask them to write whatever they think about ice cream. They don't start off with, "Ice cream is cool in temperature." This is because milk is cool as well. So, they write, "Ice cream is frozen," because anything that comes from the freezer of a refrigerator is frozen for them. When we develop semantic fluency, it helps them with definitions, and with definitions they start building sentences.

We also use a lot of traditional Indian games like Pallankuzhi, where they learn to use only two fingers to move the coins and also count in the process including the odd and even numbers. A lot of learning happens in this process. We also insist that the children copy on their notebook whatever is written on the board. This is because a lot of hand-eye coordination happens in the process.

Our approach to therapy is largely dependent on what the child needs. To share one beautiful incident - we had a child who found it very difficult to do additions. If his teacher asked the class what 4+8 was, everyone was able to give the answer but him. I noticed this a few times and I decided to give him personal attention. I took him to the garden and asked him to pick two of his favourite flowers which he did. I then asked him to pluck four petals from one and eight from the other. He did. I asked him to count them separately, which he managed to do perfectly well (verbally counting 1,2,3…) and then finally, when I asked him to give me the total petals in hand, he said, "12!" From then on, we used a lot of elements from nature to work on him. He has finished his higher education now and is contemplating studying engineering!

Can you explain something about memory when it comes to children with special needs?

There is something called active working memory. It works even if you are in deep sleep. We wake up in the middle of the night to use the washroom only because our mind functions all the time. However, in the case of children with special needs or when the child develops seizures - the active working memory does not work. They end up wetting their beds. As parents we do not understand these intricacies and we just take them to the doctor with bed wetting complaints, if it happens often. Eventually, more medicines are prescribed. It is wise to always remember that your child is witnessing and experiencing the pain every time. These experiences, which are forever stored in their memories will certainly change their character - in what way it changes - time will tell. What can parents do about it? Set an alarm to help the child use the bathroom. Solutions can really be as simple as that.

Memory is again further divided into procedural memory, sequential memory, photographic memory and episodic memory. All of these are components of memory. It is important to enable good memories for the child. If you were to have a Veena (musical instrument) in your house, it is only natural for the child to touch it and explore it. If you get impatient and warn the child not to touch the Veena, because he/she is not old enough yet - we are curtailing his/her curious minds. Whenever the child looks at the Veena, he will recall the experience of his/her parents warning them or yelling at him not to touch the instrument.

In order to create good memories, it is important that the parent has to follow these:

- **Attention** | Be completely present in the moment. When your child talks to you, do not sound distracted. Your body language should say, "I am here for you and I am listening." It also means not to be distracted by looking at your mobile phones or television in the middle of conversation.
- **Listening** | Listen to the child properly. Do not pass any judgments. Listening is nothing but understanding whatever the child says. Wait for the child to finish their sentences before you could speak up.
- **Language** | Your child copies your vocabulary. If it is nurturing, they will develop enriching vocabulary. If you are not mindful about what you speak and how you speak - they will mirror what you do. What you sow is what you reap. It is as simple as that.

These children must go through a lot of emotional instability which could cause stress…

Yes they do. Especially if bad memories pile up. Emotion is a good thing and we finally have Emotional Quotient. Measure of EQ used to be large families. Especially in the Indian household, if you were in the joint family system, your EQ was automatically taken care of. You met so many personalities within the family that you were 'sorted already' to face the world. You practically learnt how to deal with various personalities in different situations. But, we have nuclear families now. Tolerance levels have also come down. How do you think the child will cope with this?

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



It will show in their behaviour and then the parents start to worry. 'Worry' is such a negative word! Why cant we replace it with 'concern,' which really shows our innate intention for the child. As therapists, we are highly mindful of our presence - it should never be detrimental to the child. We also work on the short-term goals to a large extent because, once the first milestone is met, we get a fair understanding of the way forward.

The child has care providers. Leaving society aside, what do you think are the subtle aspects that parents, caregivers, doctors and teachers should watch out for? At the beginning of this interview, you have been quite categorical in stating that everyone of us is 'special' and we have to set aside the "I am here to save you" attitude. Besides that, do you suggest anything more?

Time and again, I insist on parents spending time with their children. Spending time with your children, especially those with additional needs, does not mean taking them to fancy places or an exotic holiday. How can dining out be acceptable as 'quality' time spent with the child?

You don't really have to take the child out every weekend. Just in the comfort of your home, if you can spend quality time reading, story telling, playing (physical activity), discussing topics that interest them etc., this will help in nurturing the child. This extends to the caregivers also. When it comes to the teacher, my only advise would be to be very creative. Dictation is a common activity given by teachers; but if you look at it from the child's perspective, it doesn't stop with one teacher giving dictations. The English teacher gives 10, the math teacher gives 10 to improve the math vocabulary, the Tamizh teacher gives hers and then we have pressure from every teacher with his/her respective subjects. Instead, it would be easy to have a teacher's meeting and come up with a theme and a set of words to be taught during that month, let's say.

Even while dictating, use phonetics as much as possible and allow the children to use hands in order to help their coordination. Ex - all vowels could be pronounced with a single clap and all consonants with double clap. Group the words and bring in themes and give the child time to learn. We give jumbled phrases to our children along with clues for them to decipher.

For example, we say, "The word is 'tal pi hos' and you go there when you're sick." They mostly end up answering with great spirits - "hospital."

Schools should also bring the system of meeting the parents as a panel. That is, involve all the teachers and let them discuss the child's report together. The parent should also be free to bring their own private tutors (if any) to the parent-teachers meet. This will facilitate a great insight on the child's psychology. It will be a great learning curve both for the educators and the parent.

To summarise, you suggest it best to avoid trigger points. Even better, to understand the psychology of the child, see the world from their eyes and be mindful of the present moment, thoughts and actions…

Absolutely. Connection to emotions is crucial. Years back, I used to frequently visit a Government school in Theni, Tamil Nadu. The teachers were always frustrated because of the 'rough' or the 'rowdy' attitude (a term casually used by the teachers) of the children. It did take me a while to understand that their behaviour was rude because they were hungry. How can we expect a child to concentrate in a class when they are starving? Of course, we have great schemes at the schools now, where the children are fed.

The bed wetting example we spoke of, is indeed a sensitive topic for a child to be speaking about to psychiatrists or psychologists. Give the child some time to overcome bed wetting. Give yourself time to figure out a balance with the child. Interventions are good, but do not come to conclusions and do not assume that your child is not listening to what you say.

When it comes to children with special needs, there is always negotiation. Even if you have to compromise in your negotiation deal, it is fine. Even it means the child will get physically hurt in the process - it is still fine. Remember - first attempt in learning is always best if it is experiential learning and even if mistakes are made, it is totally fine. At this juncture, I would like to quote one more instance.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



A four year old child came to us and she was already interested in *Yoga*. The therapist was working with the child for sometime, using *Yoga* as a tool. One day, the parents insisted that they wanted to observe their daughter in the class. The therapist knew that the parents may not entirely like what they would see because there would be a lot of negotiation happening, but more so, the child might hurt in the process. Somehow, the therapist managed to convince the parents to stay quiet and not change their body language no matter what.

The instructor asked the child to spread her *Yoga* mat and do a somersault. There was initial reluctance from the child and after much negotiation, the child placed the mat close to the table and did the somersault. She hit the table and got hurt on her head (at the clinic we have furniture with soft edges). The parents were worried but remembered what the therapist said. The next few times the therapist asked the girl to do the somersault again and every time the girl hurt her hand or leg but she understood that she had to adjust her mat somehow in order to avoid this. After a few tries, she placed her mat in such a way that she was able to do her somersault without getting hurt and that is a milestone!

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

SCIENCE EXAMINES *YOGA*

T.M. SRINIVASAN

Editor's Note: We reproduce here an article from KYM *Darśanam* archives as it is very relevant to the theme of this edition. The article is produced as is, without any changes.

Science, its body of knowledge and its methods, forms the basis for the modern understanding of life and the world. While it is not the only system or approach that exists, there is no doubt that it is, today, the most dominant amongst all systems. Anyone working with an alternate system cannot ignore or do without science. For, to do so, is to run the risk of extinction.

Further, rigorous and demanding as it is in its impersonal study of all matters, an alternate system can benefit from the new perspective got from the searching light of science. It is therefore worthwhile to use science to gain further insight into another system without compromising on the values or structure of that other system.

With this in mind we requested T.M.Srinivasan to begin a column where various aspects central to Yoga practice are studied by him, scientifically.

T.M.Srinivasan, Ph.D. is Director of Research at the Gladys Taylor McGarey Medical Foundation, USA. He had earlier been the Head of the Department of Bio Medical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. He has also been a teacher at the Mandiram.

It is important to know what *Yoga* is and what it aims at. *Yoga* is not mere calisthenics and the end point of *Yoga* is not just the manipulation of the body. *Yoga* aims at the integration of the body, mind and spirit in an individual. The eight limbs of *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* are designed to provide such an integration. Since the mind and body, but primarily the mind, are the means to this integration, *Yoga* works towards their discipline. Through the disciplined mind of *Yoga*, a person gets a correct perspective leading to the practices, qualities and attitudes outlined in the first two limbs, *Yama* and *Niyama*.

From the above, we can see that there are many subjective elements in the practice of *Yoga* where scientific evaluation might not be possible. For the purposes of this column, we will limit ourselves to those aspects of *Yoga* which lend themselves to a reasonable level of scientific study. For a simple understanding of how we would proceed let us consider the case of *Āsana-s*.

Where a person remains in a posture for a length of time; some muscles are used to support the weight of the person while other muscles are stretched across joints. There is both isometric muscle activity and muscle stretch. By definition (*Yogasūtra* II.46), an *Āsana* is both *Sthira* (stable) and *Sukha* (comfortable). The stability is established by the muscles in isometric contraction while the ability of the muscles to stretch sufficiently will result in comfort in the posture.

But why stretch at all? This is an old question in physiology. Till recently, the main objective of sports physiology was to build muscle strength in sportspersons and athletes. However, in sports as in other human affairs, strength without control could have disastrous results. It is this control over the muscle which is achieved through stretch.

Thus, we have in a posture, both isometrics – which build muscle strength, as well as stretch – which gives control over the muscle. By proper choice of *Āsana-s* and their intelligent sequencing (*Vinyāsa Krama*) it is possible to develop both strength and control over all the important muscles in the body.

My own interest in these studies began in the early seventies when I was volunteering my time at the **Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram**. One evening TKV Desikachar called me to meet a young boy and his parents. The boy was about 10 years old, had poor motor control and was obviously mentally challenged. He asked me to start teaching the boy *Yoga* with a view to improving his condition. I had read the literature on the subject of mental disorders and had formed or rather accepted the opinion therein: namely, that once the brain is damaged, nothing can be done to improve its functioning.

Not wanting to give false hopes and not wanting to waste the time of all concerned, I gave my reasons and turned down the assignment. He then assigned another teacher and requested me to follow the progress made. For the next two months, I observed the boy once a week. By the end of this period, he had greatly improved his motor control, his drooling had stopped, he could put on his own clothes and his head was well supported. He had even started writing his first letters in the special school that he attended!

This opened a series of questions for me. Most importantly, how can we measure and establish a scientific basis for the use of *Yoga* in rehabilitation?

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

CARING FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. P JEYACHANDRAN, VIJAY HUMAN SERVICES

Dr. Jeyachandran who pioneered the use of Yoga therapy for the differently abled spoke to KYM Darśanam on the basis of his experience in this field, moving from his early scepticism about Yoga to the point where he was working hard to get it officially accepted as a valid tool. He throws light on and clarifies many aspects of the use of Yoga for educating children with special needs. Excerpts from this interview are reproduced from KYM Darśanam archives with minimal changes made to comply with present day conventions used in addressing differently abled children. Statistics presented here are as per data available in 1993 and haven't been made current.

How did you begin recommending *Yoga* for the differently abled children? What gave you the confidence?

I had been sceptical about *Yoga* for many years. Then some of my fellow professionals working in Switzerland, Germany and U.S.A. were interested in *Yoga* as a tool in this area and approached me to find out more about it. I started looking around for a person or institute where I could learn more about its therapeutic effects. After hearing many 'tall' claims in many institutes, I met TKV Desikachar. He said that he would try working with these children and we could decide for ourselves whether it was effective or not. This, I felt, was a scientific approach.

I started sending a few children to him. I also sent the special educators, the teachers of these children. All these teachers, after some practice, said that they had got relief from or got rid of one problem or the other and especially the women experienced great benefits in relation to their menstrual problems. This was a revelation to me. A general course, practised for a limited time, had its effect on a wide range of problems. I was then convinced that *Yoga* has benefits for the normal person. I reasoned that if *Yoga* has benefits for a normal person, then it should also benefit those who are challenged in anyways. Differently abled persons have the same physiological and psychological problems as others; they are different in only one respect – they have a different intelligence.

Is there a standard approach in handling such children?

The overall approach can be a standard one but it will have to be modified for each individual.

Is it necessary to have a one teacher : one student equation or can they be taught in groups?

It is essential that they be taught in groups and have social interaction. Like all children, they too like to perform in front of others. Certain *Āsana-s* which would not be harmful to any condition are chosen. In the programme launched with TKV Desikachar we selected only 15 *Āsana-s*.

Are there distinct stages of MR?

Theoretically speaking, the retardation remains at the same level as the child grows. However as they grow older, their level of mental development will be seen against their actual age and it will appear as if they are losing ground.

With certain interventions, a 16 year old with a mental age of 4 can be brought to the level of an 8 year old. But society will expect him to perform as a 16 year old.



Prof. P. Jeyachandran is a clinical research psychologist, teacher, educator and academic consultant in special education for persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Prof. P. Jeyachandran's contribution to the field has been significant and pioneering to the development of an array of services for the welfare of persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

Prof. P. Jeyachandran's academic credentials include advanced degrees in psychology and special education from both India and abroad. He is a visiting professor to universities in Germany and is a host for student exchange programmes between India and Germany.

As the founder of Vijay Human Services, he has developed this field of educating and caring for persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). He has transformed it from a "custodial care practice" to a result oriented management system. He has trained over 3000 general educators by sensitising the needs of special education and differently abled. He has helped other organisations to start more than 100 similar centres in the country with at least 30 in Tamil Nadu.

Prof. P. Jeyachandran's has played a key role in helping to establish the National Institute of the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad & National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, Chennai.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

In the teaching of *Āsana-s* in a group, they not only learn to co-ordinate their own movements but also learn to co-ordinate themselves as part of a group. This is also learning for them. After all, to come together is *Yoga*.

Do you use *Yoga* therapy as total treatment or do you use it for treating specific problems?

It is used both ways. In almost all schools in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh and in many schools in North India there will be some teaching of *Yoga*. But the 500 special teachers who work directly under me have *Yoga* class just before lunch. This comprises the general use of *Yoga*.

The specific use arises according to the problem of the child. If the child has epilepsy, certain *Āsana-s* should be avoided. In the case of Down's Syndrome the muscles are very flexible. In a spastic child the muscles are very stiff. We have to relax the muscles. Some children need one-to-one teaching and others need company. So based on their needs the teaching is different.

Can you tell us about the use of breathing as part of the therapy for these children?

If at all a breakthrough was made, it was in this. The main problem was how to teach conscious breathing to a child or adult who cannot comprehend it. The contribution of TKV Desikachar in this area is significant. Sounds such as *Ā, Mā, Hā* were used in forward bends to start with. This was developed further in due course of time.

How does *Yoga* help with speech related issues?

This is where we introduce chanting. We originally introduced chanting to regulate their breathing but found it very useful in helping speech. Many of our children chant better than I do.

How do the children respond to *Yoga*?

Very favourably. I think it is because they feel they can do something on their own and can demonstrate it for others. It gives them confidence. Their self-esteem is enhanced by demonstrating that they are capable of achieving something.

What is the role of the parents in *Yoga* practice?

If the parents can act as carry-over agents and reinforce what is taught, the progress will be that much better. It helps to have the parents also practice *Yoga*. Once they see the effect it has on them, they will see to it that their children also practice regularly.

We believe that the practice of *Āsana-s* and *Prāṇāyāma* help increase the life span. Will this be applicable to these children also?

Definitely. When these children practice *Yoga,* their health improves. Because of improved health, they go to school more regularly. The more regularly they go to school, the more they learn. This learning becomes the foundation for other learning and there is an overall, all–round effect. We have documented this. So, while *Yoga* improves their health, leading to increased life span, it also results in all-round growth and development.

What sort of documentation do you maintain to monitor the progress of these children?

There are ethics involved. I don't want to deprive any child of the benefits of *Yoga* by forming a control group so as to prove my methods or present a paper at a seminar. But there is something called the One Case History Study Methodology. We have used that method of documentation where we record the progress of each individual as a separate study.

We have done comparative studies where the parents of one child are highly motivated and convinced about the benefits of *Yoga* as compared to another child whose follow up of the *Yoga* practice is not regular. The different rates of progress in the two cases are compared. But, we don't deliberately make a control group study.

Is *Yoga* recognised as a valid tool for teaching these children?

Yes. The Rehabilitation Council is the apex body in this country for all policies relating to differently abled persons. For a teaching method to be officially accepted and implemented in all the schools it must first be accepted by the Rehabilitation Council. The National Centre for the Mentally Handicapped, which is running teacher's training programmes in about 16 centres all over India has framed a curriculum for the special educators. *Yoga* has been included in that curriculum.

You have been a pioneer in the use of *Yoga* in this field in India. Did you face any problems in the beginning?

The tragedy in our country is that a system is accepted if it is from the West even though it may not have been properly researched or verified. But, if it is a natural or indigenous system there is a reluctance to adopt it. We have been trained to think like this over generations.

On the other hand *Yoga* is also projected wrongly by its practitioners. There are many persons who after a three month course become 'experts' and go abroad to teach *Yoga* and earn a lot of money. To correct this, *Yoga* should be taught very early in schools so that its basic

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



(Interview conducted by S. Sujaya and S. Ravi Shankar, members of the KYM Darśanam Editorial team, reproduced from Darśanam Archives - May 1993, Vol 2 No. 1)

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

ROLE OF *ĀYURVEDA* IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

DR MALAVIKA SESHADRI

Childhood is considered as the most important phase in life, which determines the quality of health, well being, learning and behaviour across one's lifespan. This may be the reason for giving the foremost position for *Bala Cikitsā* (*Āyurveda* paediatrics) among *Aṣṭāṅga-s* (8 branches) of *Āyurveda*. Children with special needs range from a wide spectrum of disorders such as:

- Learning disorders – Dyslexia, ADHD etc.
- Speech disorders
- Autism
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Down's Syndrome
- Those children who need extra attention and care to cope up with routine activities.

DOWN'S SYNDROME AND MANAGEMENT

According to *Āyurveda*, chromosomal anomalies such as Down's Syndrome is related to *Bīja Dośa* (abnormalities in sperm or ovum). Improving the child's quality of life, achievement of milestones, and cognitive abilities can be achieved with regular use of *Āyurvedic* herbs *Basti Cikitsā* (medicated enema therapy), *Abhyaṅga* (*Āyurvedic* massages), various types of *Swedana* (steam/sudation therapy).

DYSLEXIA

Learning is a result of successive and complex interaction of *Indriya-s* (cognitive and motor organs), *Indriyartha* (sense organs), *Manas* (psyche), *Ātma* and *Buddhi* (intellect). Above all, the functioning of these factors is governed by *Tridośa* (*Vāta*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*) and *Triguṇa* (*Sattva*, *Raja* and *Tamas*) in a specific coordination and balance. Any disturbance in these *Tridośas* and *Triguṇa* will cause disordered functioning of *Indriya*, *Manas* and *Buddhi* leading to learning disabilities known as dyslexia.

AUTISM

Autism has close similarity to the features of *Unmāda* (insanity) described in *Āyurveda*. The condition may be due to the result of *Khavaigunya* (derangements) of *Srotas* (channels) which nurture *Manas* (mind) as a consequence of many *Agantuja* (Prenatal and post natal environmental factors) and *Sahaja* (genetic) factors.

ĀYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF AUTISM AND DYSLEXIA

The preventive measures are more appreciated than the treatment protocols. *Āyurveda* indicates that the prevention of psychological disorders starts right from conception to the initial crucial years of a child's life. Practice of *Garbhini Paricarya* (Prenatal and post natal care of the mother) and *Garbhasamskāra* (prenatal and post natal child care) is of utmost importance.

Yuktivyapasraya Cikitsā (Rational therapy) which encompasses use of herbal supplementation, *Yoga*, *Pancakarma* and usage of specific and controlled diet can help in preventing and managing these conditions.

Specific *Āyurvedic* herbs such as *Brāhmi*, *Guduchi*, *Mandukaparni*, *Śaṅkhapuṣpi* and *Yaṣṭimadhu* (collectively known as "*Medhya Rasāyana*") are successfully used in the management of these disorders. Therapies such as *Śirodhāra*, types of *Basti* (enema), various types of *Snehana* (oleation) and *Svedana* (sudation) are employed to manage such conditions.

Considerable improvement has been noted in improvement of speech, restlessness, aggressive behaviour, attention and concentration. *Āyurveda* can be safely and effectively combined with therapies like – speech therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy and *Yoga*.

Thus, to conclude it becomes our moral responsibility as a society to nurture these young minds and give them the best chance in proving themselves to the world. *Āyurveda* can certainly benefit in improving the quality of life of such children so that they live a productive life, to the best of their potential.



Dr. Malavika Seshadri, has completed her post graduation in Swasthavritha (Preventive and Social medicine) from SDM *Āyurveda* College & Research Centre, Hassan, Karnataka and under graduation from Sri Sairam *Āyurveda* medical college and hospital, Chennai. Hailing from an illustrious family of *Āyurvedic* physicians, Dr. Malavika consults at 'Visesh *Āyurvedics*' in Chennai and is an Assistant Professor at Dharma *Āyurveda* college and hospital, Sriperumbadur.

She is a proud proponent of the rich legacy of *Āyurveda* and loves to help people subscribe to the discipline and enhance their lives. She is the faculty member handling *Āyurveda* for students of KYM's teacher training programme.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

THE USE OF *NĀṬYA* AS A HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL

DR AMBIKA KAMESHWAR

Each individual born on earth needs to acquire/ develop certain skills to function in an optimum manner. Development is a qualitative change which occurs in every individual as one grows up from a tiny toddler to the mature adult. It is also a continuous process that happens right from the moment we are born till the moment of the final breath.

The toddler first learns to move independently, learns to walk and talk, learns to smile to communicate joy, and learns to cry to express hurt. With the passage of time, the child's personality slowly develops - his cognitive skills increase - he is vulnerable at times and strong at times, well adjusted at times, confused at times. He learns to socialise, makes friends, goes to school, reads, writes, plays and relaxes. As he grows up, he becomes more and more independent in his thinking and actions. He needs guidance only for values and morals. He is exposed to the world full of good and bad, beautiful and ugly things, positive and negative feelings – he learns to take life as it comes – problem solving when required, coping when required, moving on in life – a complete well adjusted 'normal,' individual.

NĀṬYA IN LIFE

"A close imitation of the day to day activities of people including kings and householders is known as *Nāṭya* and that which is the nature of the world, interwoven as it were with happiness and sorrow, depicted by *Abhinaya* is known as *Nāṭya*."

Indeed, *Nāṭya* is the representation of various situations which people of the world go through and is a depiction of the various emotions and experiences they have.

Theatre is miniature real life and since theatre is an imitation of life '*Lokānukaranam*,' it is indeed possible to teach life skills through Theatre Arts. Indian Theatre is known as *Nāṭya* and the *Nāṭya Śastrā* is a encyclopaedic treatise on traditional Indian Theatre, complied by *Bharata* between 2nd century B.C. and 2nd century A.D.

Nāṭya or theatre enables an individual to explore one's inner most feeling and capacity in not only a non-threatening manner, but also in a manner which is greatly enjoyable as well. Emotions and experiences are explored and expressed with maximum comfort and delight. Personal discoveries are made – strengths identified, and weaknesses overcome, in the common forum of sharing - provided by the Art forms of *Nāṭya*. Every lesson that life needs to teach is provided by the *Nāṭya* experience.

Theatre, in all its aspects of Music, Dance, Drama, Arts and Crafts, provides all the inputs required to develop an individual's complete potential in all areas of development. Dance provides training in mobility, movement skills, muscle control and coordination, gestural communication and improved body language. Music and Drama provide the development of verbal skills, voice modulation, use of tone, pitch and volume appropriately. Training in stage arts and crafts develops an aesthetic sense of dress and ambience – what to wear and when to wear, what to make and how to use things in an optimal manner. Theatre, on the whole, provides scope for improved interaction and social skills – providing for the complete and holistic development of each and every individual it touches.

It is said in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*

natat śāstram, nathat śilpam, nā sā vidya,
nā sā kalā, nāsauyogo, natat karma
yat nāṭyam na dṛṣyate



Kalaimamani Dr.Ambika Kameshwar is a world renowned danseuse, vocalist, scholar and teacher of international acclaim. Her dance and music career spans 45 years and teaching career, 30 plus years. She has choreographed over 50 dance dramas, more than 10 complete *Bharatanāṭyam Margams* and has also composed music for over 50 dance dramas, several devotional albums and is a loved and respected teacher of classical dance and music.

Dr. Ambika is held by all in high regard as the Pioneer of Applying Theatre Arts as a tool of Holistic Development for people with multiple challenges. Her PhD was on *Nāṭyabhinaya* and she did her Post Doctoral Fellowship on the Application of *Nāṭya* as a holistic developmental tool, as a Senior Fellow of the Government of India.

She is the Founder Director of RASA - Ramana Sunritya Aalaya the organisation through which she fosters the holistic empowerment of one and all - with the inclusion of people with different abilities - by the structured application of Theatre Arts and its tools. She has been honoured with several Awards, including the highest award of the Rotary – namely the 'For The Sake Of Honour' Award, the Bharata Kala Ratna, Stree Ratna, Acharya Choodamani and the prestigious Kalaimamani Award for the year 2004 by the Tamil Nadu State Government, to mention a few.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

There is no *Śāstra*, no sculpture, no knowledge, no art, no *Yoga*, and no action that cannot be seen in *Nāṭya*.

yo ayaṁ svabhāva lokasya sukha dukha samanvitaḥ
sa aṅgādi abhinayo' peto nāṭyam iti abidhīyate

That which is the nature of the world (made up of men / women) with its opposites like happiness/ sorrow, expressing the same with the use of body etc is called *Nāṭya*.

Nāṭya is made evident through *Abhinaya*. *Abhinaya* is the tangible representation of emotions, ideas and feeling, which conveys the meaning of the idea or message to be communicated, through its component modes of physical (*Āṅgika*), verbal (*Vācika*), ornamental (*Āhārya*) and temperamental (*Sāttvika*) representation.

These four modes therefore form the media of "performance" namely – movement (pure or interpretive), word (recited or sung), make up (properties and decor) and the expression of internalised states. This is the framework of the wonder that is *Nāṭya*. This makes the exploration and study of *Nāṭya* equivalent to a study of life – of the nature of people - and is therefore a guideline for appropriate behaviour in various given life situations.

The value of *Nāṭya* is enhanced further by it being a great source of aesthetic delight as well.

Nāṭya As A Therapeutic Process For Children And People With Developmental Disabilities

A child with disabilities needs various stimulating inputs to help him reach his optimum level of functioning. The child may need a mutipronged approach to help him overcome the developmental delays. A developmental programme must be designed based on the individual requirement of the child after complete observation and assessment. The areas in which the child may need inputs might include – mobility training, improvement in language and communication skills, social skills training and he may even need help to express the emotion he is feeling at any particular moment.

Activities of *Nāṭya* – focused and structured for this purpose - provide an ideal answer to develop these skills - ideal in more ways than one because it is non-threatening and fun. Even as the child moves and sways to rhythm and melody, his movement skills are enhanced. Even as he learns and repeats the sounds and dialogues appropriate to any particular drama he is playing, his language and communication skills improve. As he makes and wears different coloured costumes, headgear and masks – his dress sense, fine motor control and self-help skills improve. As he play acts the roles of a father, brother, uncle, teacher and friend – his social skills and adaptive behaviour improve. Even as he dons various roles in life, when he dons various roles in the theatre class and on stage, he learns more and more new things about himself and his environment. He feels happy and secure, relaxed and confident during every moment of his *Nāṭya* experience yet he is learning-learning all along. Unbelievable? Yet True.

The aspects of Theatre – Dance, Drama, Music, Storytelling, Arts and Crafts – *Āṅgika*, *Vācika*, *Āhārya*, *Sāttvika* in the Indian *Nāṭya* perspective can therefore be successfully used to achieve developmental goals. It is to be noted that traditional Indian theatre included all these aspects namely Dance, Music, Arts and Crafts and Drama in its complete scope.



Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



How Theatre Arts Can Be Used To Achieve Developmental Goals

Drama: Facilitates an individual's progress by its basic potential to reflect life experiences and thereby, provides scope for transforming it as and when required. A connection, therefore, is created between the individual's inner world, the present moment /or situation in life, and the activity in the "Drama" session. New understanding and change in ways functioning result by this connection formed by participation in the drama session.

Dance and Movement: Provides one of the most personal / effective means of communication. As a developmental tool – dance provides the structure for understanding one's body and helps in the expression of inner feelings through one's body movements as well, cognitive skills are also sharpened as the mind and body work together executing dance movement and expressions.

Music: Facilitates mental/physical/ emotional well being. The music elements of rhythm and melody can be used both to provide emotional support and to provide an outlet for the expression of inner feelings. The contribution of music for well being is unique in the fact that every human being responds well to music.

Arts / Crafts: Just as the use of drama / music / dance as a developmental tool, is not structure oriented – the use of the arts is not product oriented. Neither are these purely recreational. They are process oriented and therefore, provide a high degree of fulfilment even as the progress takes place. When arts / crafts are used as a developmental tool, the individual is given scope to express feelings through a variety of art media including painting / sculpting / drawing and the like.

Story Telling: Story telling has been defined as, 'the art of using language, vocalisation, physical movement and gestures to reveal the elements and images of a story to an audience.' Story telling is one of the oldest forms of communication. It has been used since time immemorial as a means of entertainment, education and mass communication. It is an important tool for teaching and learning. It teaches us about universal concepts, important events, values, good morals and virtues. Stories are the building blocks of knowledge and form the very foundation of learning. Every child in every culture is brought up on a steady diet of stories suitable to his / her age and understanding.

Working With Special Needs

I have had the singular good fortune of working with children with different kinds of 'dis'abilities applying different aspects of *Nāṭya* for their holistic development for the past 37 years.The smiles of the special students and their success stories are wonderfully fulfilling.

Be it a child with cerebral palsy or Down's Syndrome, autism or learning disabilities, or any other kind of special needs, after a complete assessment of the needs of the individual, I would plan structured theatre activities to achieve individual specific goals.

These sessions would provide the children, young adults and adults with special needs, the opportunities to explore their potential and transcend their disabilities with their abilities. "Can Do" would be the *Mantra* and Theatre or *Nāṭya* would be the method to overcome. The sessions would energise and enable tangibly.

Today, myself and my team at **RASA - Ramana Sunritya Aalaya** have been blessed to be instrumental in transforming the lives of thousands of individuals over the past three decades, and we shall continue to do, as Theatre, or *Nāṭya*, is a methodology which transcends time and every other barrier, uniting and empowering as it were.

Thus does the theatre experience provide for an active, experiential, holistic and a wonderfully enjoyable learning process. When anybody comes within its orbit, it touches them and transforms them into more alert, more active, more capable, more fulfilled and more contributive individuals. That is the miracle called *Nāṭya*. When the so called 'differently abled' perform, they are transformed into artistes who are role models for everyone.

Their surrender to the roles they play is complete, and the *Rasānubhava* one experiences while seeing them perform is beyond the ordinary. The pristine purity of their souls comes across with crystal clarity ... indeed there is so much to learn from them.

Om Tat Sat

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Building Bridges With Yoga

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

The Heart & Soul Of A Sunday

FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW, KYM HAS BEEN RUNNING THE TKV DESIKACHAR CLINIC FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN (SUNDAY CLINIC) TO OFFER A SAFE AND PRIVATE SPACE FOR TEACHERS TO WORK ONE-ON-ONE WITH DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN. WE PRESENT HERE A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE MANDIRAM SUNDAY CLINIC *YOGA* THERAPISTS ANCHORED BY MR. MADHAVAN. IN THIS CANDID DISCUSSION, THE TEACHERS SHARE THEIR INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS FROM WORKING WITH DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



FROM LEFT | MADHAVAN, THARA NATARAJAN, SUDHA SUBRAMANIYAM & SRIVIDYA VARADARAJAN



FROM LEFT | MADHAVAN, RAMESH KANNA, VIDYA MOHAN & SUJATHA SARAVANAN



GEETHA SATEESH



FROM LEFT | MADHAVAN, PADMAVATHI KARTHIKEYAN & JEEVA SEKAR



SRIDHARAN GANAPATHY



Madhavan has been with the KYM for over seven years and has been involved in the activities of the KYM as a *Yoga* Teacher and Therapist. He handles group and one-on-one classes for adults and children, including those with special needs. He considers himself fortunate to be guided and encouraged by senior teachers at the Mandiram.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



I. About The Classes

Madhavan: To what age group do these children belong?

Geetha Sateesh: Generally, seven upwards, up to adolescents. In a rare case, there was a two-year old, who had once come to improve eye contact.

Jeeva Sekar: Predominantly age 5-15

Sujatha Saravanan: Age 4 upwards. Even up to adults.

Thara Natarajan: They should be able to follow instructions. This is more important than the actual age. Their condition or problem should have been identified.

Vidya Mohan: 5 to 25

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Madhavan: Do you do any assessments on your own, or go by what their parents and caretakers report?

Jeeva Sekar: We will do some basic assessment like enquiring about their language and math skills, and test these if required. With Fine motor and Gross motor skills..no specific testing, but basic ones like catching a ball for example. Eye contact and socialisation are also observed

Ramesh Kanna: Assessment here is done by demonstrating and requesting them to copy very simple movements, asking them to repeat sounds, etc. I go by the consultant's assessments.

Sudha Subramaniyam: Parents' and caretakers' reports are definitely taken into account – so is report of any psychological analysis that the child might have undergone. However, our consultant's analysis based on *Darśanam*, *Sparśanam* and *Praśnam* is what is most important when it comes to identifying goals for the practice as well as the practice itself. The therapist is also continuously assessing the child while drawing course plans or giving other suggestions to parents.

Thara Natarajan: I go by the consultant's observations. If I observe anything extra, I make a note. I am more concerned about the child's symptoms, behaviour and their understanding capacity – this is my yardstick to proceed. This tells me how I, as a teacher, have to adapt.

Vidya Mohan: I go by the consultant's observations. After a few classes, I may try and get further details about the children – because some parents do not reveal everything in the beginning.

Srividya Varadarajan: We keep their reports in mind. But I too assess them to see how we can help.

Madhavan: Do you teach 'regular' *Āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma* (typically taught in general group classes), but modified to suit children with specific needs? Or do you use Yoga as a therapeutic tool to address their specific needs?

Geetha Sateesh: *Āsana-s* are taught based on the condition, usually with modifications. Then, I slowly progress.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: I work on addressing their main condition and problems.

Ramesh Kanna: It is *Yoga* modified to suit children with specific needs.

Thara Natarajan: My first priority is to help the child. But I also don't want to somehow enforce *Yoga* lessons on them. In most of the cases, I address the main condition first.

Vidya Mohan: We address their symptoms by teaching them *Āsana-s* with modifications.

Srividya Varadarajan: Depends on their condition. It is not my intention to teach various *Āsana-s* just for the sake of teaching.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Madhavan: What are the typical expectations of the parents?

Geetha Sateesh: Some parents want their children to be calm, relaxed, and have good social behaviour. Some want their children to be able to do basic, day to day tasks on their own. It depends on the condition.

Jeeva Sekar: Typically their expectations are high. Some parents are aware that in most cases the condition is not curable and expect an achievable goals..like keeping the child calm and reducing melt downs.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: To focus better (in studies), to improve handwriting, improve understanding, better social behaviour.

Ramesh Kanna: Typically, better social behaviour.

Sudha Subramaniyam: This depends on parents' awareness as well as acceptance of the child's condition. When awareness and acceptance is complete – their expectations are realistic and they are happy and encouraged by small improvements. Sometimes the parents do not understand the condition of the child – then they just want the child to be normal like other children or like a sibling.

Sujatha Saravanan: Some parents want their children to accomplish daily activities like other children. This arises out of comparison. Eg, their children not being obedient, or not being able to focus when studying. Some parents accept their children's condition, and want to focus on their strengths (eg, their music skills).

Thara Natarajan: Parents are nowadays more aware of the problems. Around 90% of them expect some relief from the symptoms. For example, poor bladder control, or sitting intolerance due to restlessness. Around 5% of the parents have an open mind – no expectations. Around 5% have no expectations because they don't know enough about the condition.

Vidya Mohan: They generally want their children to manage their daily activities, want them to be more focused, relaxed.

Srividya Varadarajan: It depends on the acceptance levels of the parents. So, some want their children to be functionally independent, with some improvement in their school performance, less restlessness. While some others want their children to overcome their condition completely.

Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Madhavan: Do you address the main condition clinically reported (e.g. ADHD) or some of the other conditions these children may have (e.g. Asthma in a child with ADHD)?

Geetha Sateesh: Both. Sometimes, the secondary condition can aggravate the main issue. So, both have to be addressed.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: Combination of both. The choice of postures will take into consideration their secondary condition also (such as Asthma, Seizures).

Ramesh Kanna: Both, in consultation with the consultant.

Vidya Mohan: Both. If the secondary condition is bothering them a lot, it will take priority.

Srividya Varadarajan: We use a holistic approach. It depends on the students' capability. The intention is to make the student feel comfortable. Addressing the main condition itself may be a challenge. Within their capabilities and limitations, we address other complaints reported. For eg, a hyperactive boy with weak legs could not walk properly. We had to address both the conditions to make him physically and mentally steady.

Madhavan: Many children go to other therapy classes - e.g. Occupational or Speech therapy. How does *Yoga* combine with what they learn there?

Geetha Sateesh: *Yoga* makes them calmer. They are also able to sit for longer periods, including in their vocational classes. One or two teachers of other such classes have given feedback that the children are able to focus better, able to go through their classes better. This happened to one of my students with Autism and ADHD, who could neither sit through daytime classes nor sleep properly at night. After a few classes at KYM, there was an improvement in her participation in her daytime activities at her school.

Sujatha Saravanan: *Yoga* combines with other therapies. Some parents take their children to too many classes. In such cases, we ask them to not ignore *Yoga*. A structure in their lifestyles and activities is needed. We sometimes encourage them to do certain activities apart from *Yoga*, such as colouring. Their ability to do other activities is the yardstick of how effective *Yoga* is.

Thara Natarajan: Some overlap may be there. But *Yoga* therapy is independent. It does not disturb them. Sometimes, we ask the children to read or write in our class, and they immediately recall doing something similar in another class. I would say *Yoga* therapy is complementary.

Vidya Mohan: *Yoga* is complementary.

Srividya Varadarajan: They feel very free here. Many children seem to be forced to do things in their other classes.

Vidya Mohan: Yes, we don't force them.

Srividya Varadarajan: We teach them something they would like to do. At the same time, we don't ask them to stop any of their other classes.

Vidya Mohan: There was a child with Cerebral Palsy who was very familiar with some movements he had learnt in his physiotherapy classes. We incorporated them, with our way of doing, using chanting, and he could progress really fast.

Srividya Varadarajan: Our practices involve a lot of simple chanting, and we also tell them to not stop their speech therapy classes.

Madhavan: Over the last couple of decades, many doctors, clinical psychologists and other professionals in the field report an increase in the number of children diagnosed with certain conditions, e.g. Autism. Are parents now more open to *Yoga* classes at KYM?

Geetha Sateesh: There is some increase in awareness of the role of *Yoga*. Some parents have difficulty in accepting the condition of their children. Patience is needed.

Jeeva Sekar: Yes..but they are not sure what to expect from *Yoga*..we should be clear and educate them too.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: Yes. But, we cannot say quantitatively. Awareness of the role of *Yoga* has certainly increased.

Sudha Subramaniyam: Today there is increased awareness of the conditions suffered by the children. Similarly, popularity and awareness of *Yoga* and its benefits is also on the increase. Even doctors and psychologists suggest *Yoga* as therapy to children with special needs. All this has resulted in parents being more open to therapeutic *Yoga* offered by KYM.

Sujatha Saravanan: Yes. Many are aware of the long-term implications of medications. They are looking for non-medical interventions. There is a safe, holistic development that happens through *Yoga*.

Thara Natarajan: Definitely! Awareness of practicing *Yoga* and the relief it provides has increased.

Vidya Mohan: Definitely, yes! Many doctors and other professionals in their network recommend *Yoga* classes.

Srividya Varadarajan: That *Yoga* will help has a high awareness. But many doctors and other professionals are not aware of our one-on-one approach. The referrals to KYM are mainly through word of mouth, not from the network of professionals. The general public's perception is *Yoga* = postures. But modifications and chants give provision for closer interaction with the children.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



II. During The Class

Madhavan: How important is it to plan and structure a *Yoga* practice aimed at improvements in specific parameters?

Geetha Sateesh: The goals are set by the consultant. We then know what to bring about in the student. But the way each class goes depends on the student's state of mind.

Ramesh Kanna: For the first class, planning and structuring are based on the direction provided by the consultant. This triggers a continuous thought process in me. I then capture certain aspects and ideas, and try to incorporate them in subsequent classes.

Sridharan Ganapathy: In 9 out of 10 cases, I use the consultant's course as a guiding tool. I sit with the parents, and try to understand the child better. Some of the expectations are imposed by the parents - eg, a child not greeting people. The consultant encourages by not enforcing her initial guidelines. She acknowledges good ideas brought out by the teachers.

Sudha Subramaniyam: The needs in most cases, that I have seen are reducing hyperactivity, restlessness; increasing calmness and attention span. It is important to have a plan while working with a child. This is outlined by the consultant. It usually consists of the postures as well as chants that may be used. However, for any plan to work, the most important starting point is the connect between teacher and child. This opens up the child to new possibilities and helps the teacher to intuitively fine-tune the plan.

Sujatha Saravanan: Following the consultation, there is a direction provided. As a teacher, there is further observation of the child's capacity to understand and follow – both *Yoga* instructions, as well as other activities such as homework. I work on parameters that lead me to the goal, rather than working for the goal itself.

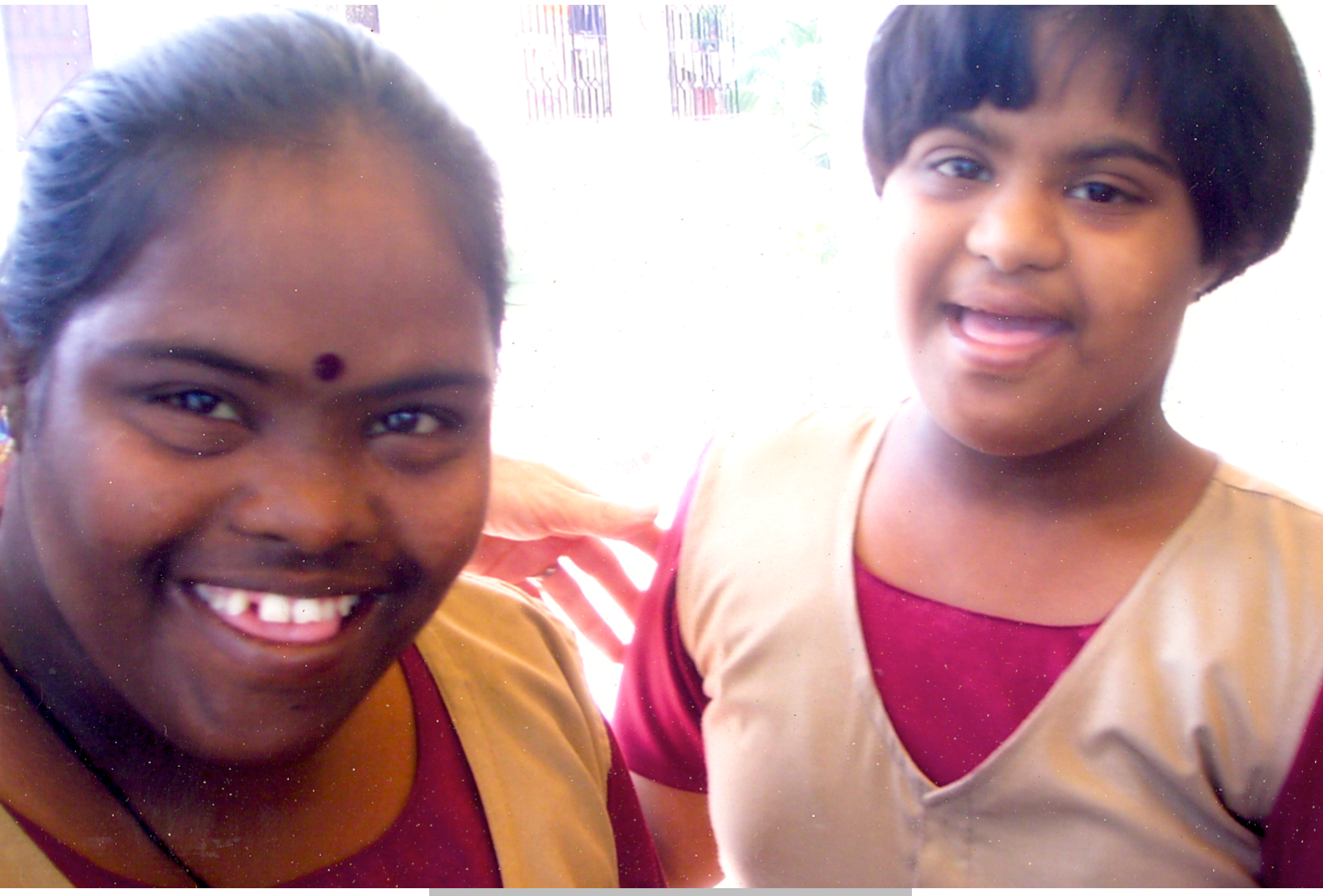
Srividya Varadarajan: The process of executing is subjective. We go by the major goals set. How we prioritise them in a particular class session depends on how the child is on that particular day. The student shows the way. Sometimes the student guides me through a very innovative and effective course. Children can also be upset easily. For eg, one child is comfortable coming to class with only one particular auto driver. If that doesn't happen, it would be hard for me to get across anything to the child.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Madhavan: Can you give some examples of short and long-term goals of the *Yoga* practices?

Geetha Sateesh: It depends. For example, a child with ADHD had short-term goals such as: to be able to listen to instructions, improve eye contact, improve sense of relaxation. Long term goals could be to make him sit for a few minutes, and focus without getting distracted. In some cases, the long-term goal would be to make the child stand with support, improve their strength, etc.

Ramesh Kanna: Short term goals could be the student's compatibility with me, how he follows my instructions and reproduces the learning in the next classes, improving eye contact, to reduce aggressive behaviour, etc. If things go based on our plans, we can fix long-term goals such as bringing down the irritation levels (say, from high to moderate). When such objectives are met, it amounts to better social behaviour, and such long-term goals can be achieved.

Sridharan Ganapathy: I first try to establish a good relationship with the parents and the child. It is the parents who will work a lot with the child. The role of the parents is more than the role of the child. Short-term goals are provided by the parents. Long-term goals vary from child to child. It could be for the child to listen, confirm his or her understanding of what I say, and showing proof of that understanding. Social interaction at this level is very important to me. This kind of interaction itself has several milestones. Sometimes, it involves asking them non-standard questions, making them think and respond.

Sudha Subramaniyam: Short Term goals: Reduce Restlessness, increase focus and concentration, improve muscle tone, regularise bowel movements. Long Term Goals: Improve speech, improve academic skills, improve social skills, basic life-skills.

Sujatha Saravanan: Short term goals take their condition into consideration. Long term goals would be to make the child be relatively independent, and manage their day-to-day activities.

Thara Natarajan: Short term goals could be to reduce restlessness, increase the sense of focus, improve sitting tolerance Long term goals could be to improve social behaviour, reduce impulsiveness, improve interactions and communication, interpersonal skills, the ability to study school lessons with a better sense of focus, etc.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Madhavan: What elements of *Yoga* do you typically use? How is it different from your other one-on-one classes?

Geetha Sateesh: *Āsana* and chanting. The tools are the same as with other one-on-one classes, but with greater modifications in *Āsana-s*. Sometimes, we use *Prāṇāyāma*.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: *Vinyāsa-s*, simple chants, counting, using rhymes, etc. The tools may be the same as with other 1 on 1 classes, but more patience is needed. It involves a slower pace of teaching and progress. Counselling for the parents is needed. It all takes a longer time.

Ramesh Kanna: At the gross level, we use *Āsana* practice, sometimes incorporating sounds or conscious breathing. The level of modification varies. At the subtler levels, the environment of the Mandiram, grace of the *Guru* and his blessings, guidance of the consultant, and interactive sessions with other teachers come into the picture.

Sudha Subramaniyam: Typically, we use *Āsana* and chanting. *Prāṇāyāma* and *Nyāsam* are also used. There are many differences from a regular one-on-one class.

- Breathing cannot always be specified as part of the movement.
- Innovative tools are employed – e.g., practice in front of mirror to be able to see and thereby increase body awareness, use a picture or some such prop on the wall or floor to maintain focus while going into or staying in a posture.

Madhavan: A teacher's keen observation of the child seems important.

Geetha Sateesh: Yes, very much! When you observe, you will understand the child's willingness, ability to cooperate, ability to understand and follow.

Ramesh Kanna: It should be in tune with the student – to understand several things. Depending on the level of observation of the teacher, he or she will be able to relate to the state and level of the mind of the student. This depth of observation can be as gross as *Dhāraṇā*, or as subtle as *Dhyāna*.

Sridharan Ganapathy: Observation decides the 'make or break' for the teacher. A slight flicker in the eye of the child, or a subtle attempt by the child to repeat my chant can be very significant. But it involves a lot of hard work and persistence. There can be subtle responses from the child. When listening to a new chant, or seeing new things in the garden, he starts making new sounds. I then understand his areas of interest. This helps me establish a relationship. This is of paramount importance.

Sudha Subramaniyam: This goes without saying. Empathy and observation are key. When it comes to special children – we are taught to think from the heart, and connect with the soul. Observation as well as continuously meditating on these observations helps the teacher to decide on the best course for the child.

Sujatha Saravanan: Sometimes, we know from their voice and tone how they are following. Sometimes we give instructions, but don't expect a response. How a child responds gives the teacher different insights.

Thara Natarajan: Sometimes children get anxious or excited in the classroom. Observing and looking for these signs will help. Otherwise, our efforts may become futile. If I feel the child is not following my instructions, I take steps to try and bring the child in sync with me.

Vidya Mohan: True, we may discover something new about the child.

Srividya Varadarajan: Sometimes, what we are trying to teach a child (eg staying in a posture) may cause them some kind of discomfort. Being observant will help modify the instructions.

Madhavan: Some children may not participate actively in the class sessions. How do you connect with them?

Geetha Sateesh: Go to their level first. See what they are interested in, and try to connect the class with that.

Jeeva Sekar: No specific technique..depends on the cues you get from the students.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: Various techniques. For example, asking them to teach the parents. Sometimes, changing the tone of my instructions.

Ramesh Kanna: Each day has its own colours and moods. If things are not working on a given day despite reasonable effort, I let it pass.

Sridharan Ganapathy: Connecting with the student is most important to me.

Sudha Subramaniyam: I have found chanting goes a long way in calming a child and creating a connect with him/her. Starting a class with a prayer and some chants creates an environment of trust where the child is willing to at least give the class a try.

Vidya Mohan: We first need to find out why they are not participating.

Srividya Varadarajan: We have to look for ideas. Sometimes, a group of teachers get involved, use colourful props or familiar objects.

Vidya Mohan: Like books.

Srividya Varadarajan: Eventually, we try to bring them gently into the class, and keep them involved in a simple practice.

Vidya Mohan: If they're still reluctant and non-cooperative, we tell them they could go back home, and ask them to do better in the next class. And they feel good not being forced.

Srividya Varadarajan: And they may not be treated the same way in some of their occupational therapy classes.

Madhavan: Some children (e.g. with certain types of Cerebral Palsy) may not be in a position to do much on their own. Can *Yoga* help them and their families?

Ramesh Kanna: If a student cannot move his or her limbs, but can make sounds, we can connect with their mind using sounds. It is about how we engage them. If they cannot make sounds, they can listen to sounds. We can also use visual stimulation.

When the family is involved, it is about how well the mind of the teacher, student and family can come together in an interactive session. This increases the family's sense of acceptance. If they create a wall that the classes are only for the benefit of the students, there are chances of them feeling dejected about our intervention.

Sridharan Ganapathy: Emphatically, yes. To give a specific example, a child with Cerebral Palsy and wheezing who could not move any of his limbs, talk or breathe properly started mimicking my chant with an open mouth. Small as it seems, it reduced his wheezing significantly.

Sujatha Saravanan: Of course, yes! With the support of their parents and caretakers at home, anything is possible. In the case of my own daughter, when she was a small child, doctors had ruled out movements on the left side of her body. A lot of perseverance was needed from my side. Today, she is 12 years old, and an athlete.

Madhavan: Have you come across children who are clear about their limitations or expectations?

Sridharan Ganapathy: All that the children are seeking, is acceptance. Not sympathy. They want signs of appreciation. The right amount, not too much.

Sudha Subramaniyam: I think mostly a child's capabilities in his own eyes is a reflection of the parents' opinion of them. I think many of these children understand that something is wrong with them but not what or how to make it right. Some of them try their best to understand and imitate what we ask them to do and at times get frustrated when they are unable.

Srividya Varadarajan: Yes, for eg, some children with mild hyperactivity know they're unable to sit in one place in their schools. They know they're different from other children.

Madhavan: Would group *Yoga* classes help in some cases - either here at KYM, or at other centers of special education?

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: Group classes provide an opportunity for social interactions. They can help improve social interactions and behaviour. We can give indirect instructions without being strict. So, a combination of one-on-one and group classes will really help.

Ramesh Kanna: They will definitely help. We try to connect their minds to their activities in the *Yoga* classes. That is being cultivated here. This has to be taken to other activities and tried socially. Group classes are a sort of graduation towards this. Some preparation in one-on-one classes is needed. Otherwise, the vision is blurred.

Sudha Subramaniyam: We have given group classes to special children as part of an early intervention program. In a school environment, being a part of a group and following certain discipline is important. *Yoga* does help in such a scenario. Similarly-abled children – along with a parent/care giver - can be given group classes. It may help to create a social environment and promote tolerance, interaction with peers and group activities and therapies.

Sujatha Saravanan: Mixed classes help, as long as there are no behavioural issues. Each child has his or her own strong need. Group classes provide an opportunity for the children to understand each other. We have to select children for group classes appropriately.

Thara Natarajan: It may help in some situations, eg - when some tend to watch others and learn. Sometimes, it may aggravate their symptoms. Either way, they may still need one-on-one classes.

Srividya Varadarajan: If some children are slow learners or have low confidence levels, it will help to first increase their confidence level, and prepare them towards a group class. In some cases, it can be detrimental – some may disturb each other.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



III. HOMEWORK AND PROGRESS

Madhavan: Is progress always subjective? Are there parameters that can be measured to see if there has been a change?

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: Some factors are objective, eg the duration for which they are able to listen, the ability to follow with fewer and fewer instructions, etc. At home or school, it could be things like fewer tantrums or improvement in studies.

Ramesh Kanna: It can only be measured using parental feedback – based on the original needs and expectations, and where they currently stand.

Sridharan Ganapathy: The problems defined are subjective. Therefore, the progress too is subjective.

Sujatha Saravanan: The general parameters are based on the original expectations. But, some of the progress can be measured. Eg, the duration of self-talking (in the classroom or outside).

Srividya Varadarajan: It is usually subjective – based on their feedback, what we observe, their performance in school, their behaviour in school.

Vidya Mohan: And also the quality of their *Yoga* practice.

Madhavan: How many classes does each child typically come for? Wouldn't it help them to maintain a long-term relationship with the Mandiram?

Geetha Sateesh: Typically, 8+ classes, sometimes extended beyond 12. A long-term relationship certainly helps. Often, we see good progress in 8 classes, but we don't know they are after that. Having classes twice a month would be good long-term. Or maybe shift them to group classes.

Jeeva Sekar: On an average 6-8 classes. Yes..a long-term relationship would help..that is what I believe.

Ramesh Kanna: Typically, one year of continuous classes. I also recommend other activities such as outdoor sports and other group classes. In the long run, it is good for them to touch base with the Mandiram, but not lean on to the Mandiram.

Sujatha Saravanan: Typically, 8+ classes. After that, we recommend them coming once in a couple of months. A long-term relationship and regularity of classes is helpful.

Thara Natarajan: Typically, around 6-8 classes. 8 is not enough. Yoga works at a higher plane, and more time is needed to bring about a change. It is not magic.

Srividya Varadarajan: We see progress in children who maintain a long-term relationship with us. But it depends on their parents' commitment to keep bringing them, the children's willingness to come, their comfort level with their teacher, and the environment as a whole. Some children develop a fixation. They manage their condition by following this routine of coming to a weekly class. Some are conditioned to practise at home.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Madhavan: How important is the regularity of the classes? Can you trust children to practice at home regularly?

Geetha Sateesh: It is 50-50. It depends on how much time and effort their parents put in.

Jeeva Sekar: Very important as they have to first familiarise with the place, teacher and the concept of coming to *Yoga* classes.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: The commitment needed is more from the parents than the children themselves. Sometimes, after several classes, the children realise without parental guidance that they should practise. Once that regularity sets in, the children practise religiously.

Ramesh Kanna: We cannot expect them to be regular. We should not enforce the discipline of regularity. That may increase their anxiety. Practising at home is important. That is where the parents' experience in the Mandiram or their awareness of the benefits of Yoga become important. Coming to the Mandiram is the first step. Trying to be regular is the next step.

Thara Natarajan: Regularity is a must. Without that, we cannot expect a change. Practice needs the support of parents or other caretakers at home. We cannot expect much out of the children themselves.

Vidya Mohan: We cannot say much about the quality of their practice at home. So, we have to trust them. It also depends on their parents' commitment.

Madhavan: Do some children stop coming after a handful of classes?

Geetha Sateesh: This has happened a lot. They come for 2-3 classes, and drop out. Sometimes, it is because parents cannot bring them; sometimes the students are not willing to come; sometimes the parents are impatient, and expect quick results.

Jeeva Sekar: Earlier there were many drop outs. Not so now..this is based on my individual experience

Sujatha Saravanan: Yes, some stop abruptly. Some, due to economic reasons. Sometimes, due to insufficient motivation of the parents – especially when they don't see satisfactory progress. Sometimes, they stop due to other commitments. Some give the least importance to their *Yoga* classes. In many Occupational Therapy (OT) classes, they force the child to comply. So, the progress is artificial, but some parents prefer that. Many parents prefer OT or swimming to *Yoga*.

Srividya Varadarajan: Yes. Major reasons could be their parents' inability to bring them, or taking them to multiple classes (and having to let go of some) or unwillingness of the children.

Vidya Mohan: Some children (eg - children with Cerebral Palsy) have caregivers coming to their home 3-4 times a week. When they don't see much progress through *Yoga*, they stop coming, and continue with their caregivers who come home. Some other therapy centers are quite aggressive (physically) in their methods, and some parents prefer to pursue that.

Madhavan: How important is the *Śraddhā* of their parents?

Geetha Sateesh: *Śraddhā* is very important. Very individualistic. Many have a strong *Śraddhā* when they first come here. They feel positive about *Yoga* intervention. After a few classes, even the slightest positive change in their children strengthens their belief. But some come out of curiosity – they are not that involved. The *Śraddhā* of the parents will set an example to the child. These children are sensitive to the attitudes of their parents.

Jeeva Sekar: Very, very important.. dropout is due to lack of parents' commitment towards the *Yoga* classes. Some bring the kids based on doctors' advice. If they have faith in what they are going to take up or if they are practitioners themselves..they know what to expect. Mostly parents are unclear of what to expect from *Yoga*.

Ramesh Kanna: There are different levels of *Śraddhā*. In most cases, strong faith is what brought them to Mandiram. If there are signs of progress, that faith becomes stronger. If not, it may weaken with time. It can fluctuate. To quote *Śrī* Desikachar, "Inevitably, the depth of faith varies with different individuals, and at different times with the same individual."

Sridharan Ganapathy: The parents' involvement decides the make or break of the progress. They can create a right, favourable environment for the child to flourish.

Sudha Subramaniyam: There cannot be another person who has the welfare of a child at heart more than the parents. If we are to identify one most important thing that can bring about improvements and positive changes in the child and take him closer to the goal of leading a near normal life, it has to be *Śraddhā* of the parents. It is this unshakeable faith that will push the parents to look of avenues to help the child, be open to different therapies, be persevering and religious when it comes to practicing these therapies. The connect to the soul will be the strongest for the parent with *Śraddhā*. We have seen maximum progress made by children whose parents strongly believe that *Yoga* will help and hence, ensure regularity as well as the quality of the practice.

Thara Natarajan: *Śraddhā* gives half the results, and we cannot expect it from the child. Most parents have a lot of *Śraddhā* in the beginning. Sometimes, depending on the condition of the child, over-expectant parents may lose their *Śraddhā*.

Vidya Mohan: Unshakeable faith is needed. The effort put in by the parents needs to have the quality of *Ḍṛḍha Bhūmi.*

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



IV. Long Term

Madhavan: Sometimes, it's more important for the parents (or caregivers) to have a good *Yoga* practice.

Geetha Sateesh: Parents certainly need *Yoga* classes. Many are physically and mentally exhausted. A *Yoga* practice will give them a bit of space for themselves – to look into their own well-being.

Jeeva Sekar: Generally parents' emotional status is low. Their fear about the child's future is predominant. Physically and mentally they are very naive. Some parents who are socially and economically placed well are more aware about their health and mind state.

Ramesh Kanna: The parents need to practise *Yoga*. They bring their child for *Yoga* intervention. They are emotionally connected to the well-being of their children. If they experience *Yoga* first hand, it will dispel any doubts of the effectiveness of *Yoga* practice. They will then be in a better, positive mindset.

Sridharan Ganapathy: It is definitely important for the parents to be in an acceptance zone. And a *Yoga* practice definitely helps them move towards that zone.

Sudha Subramaniyam: *Yoga* practice is not in general given to parents (or caregivers). In some cases, where we find the parent is overstressed or has some other problems, we give them a practice.

Sujatha Saravanan: Yes. Some parents need to be a part of group classes.

Thara Natarajan: It will certainly help the parents deal with the situation.

Vidya Mohan: Sometimes, we ask the parents to practise their children's *Yoga* lessons with them, and even that helps.

Srividya Varadarajan: It works both ways. Parents become more calm, and the children follow better.

Madhavan: Does knowing the child help design a suitable practice for the parents?

Sudha Subramaniyam: Whether knowing the child helps design a suitable practice for the parent is better answered

by the senior consultant who advises the parent. I think, knowing the child in such a case is certainly helpful, but other physical and emotional conditions of the individual are equally important.

Madhavan: Can you handle classes for special children on days when you have your other one-on-one or group classes?

Geetha Sateesh: I prefer not to. The kind of interactions are completely different. So, the mindsets of the teachers will be different. Many of these children are not very social. So, their anxiety and fear could build up when coming to class on days when the Mandiram is crowded with other people. Many children are sensitive to sounds too.

Thara Natarajan: Sure, it is not a problem to me. However, it may be a problem to the parents – to bring the child to a crowded institution.

Srividya Varadarajan: It's better to isolate the class sessions. Because we can focus better when there are fewer classes. On Sundays, we come to KYM mentally prepared.

Vidya Mohan: I would be in a better frame of mind if not combined with other classes. But I've also not had a string of classes on other days. I think it also depends on the student.

Madhavan: Have you seen transformations (in the children) in areas that you did not address directly?

Geetha Sateesh: Yes. I once worked with a 7 year old child, only helping him move his limbs. He had a form of Diplegia. After a few classes, his confidence had gone up, the clarity of speech and handwriting also improved. He later enjoyed even his swimming classes.

Jeeva Sekar: Yes.. example - socialisation.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: I focused on simple sounds and chants for a child with attention deficiency. Her mother noticed her liking towards it, and encouraged her. The child not only did well in using the simple sounds in her *Yoga* practise, she also went on to memorise long stanzas and *Śloka-s* (that she was being taught at home and at other classes).

Ramesh Kanna: Though we may be addressing their expectations such as bringing down irritability, reducing their anger or improving their focus, *Yoga* brings out a holistic development. It works on several areas.

Sridharan Ganapathy: A student is an overall system, a package. I try to hold onto to any available strands, and establish a relationship. Somewhere along the way, unexpected improvements happen.

Sudha Subramaniyam: I have not seen the same children for a sufficient period of time to see transformations in them. Though I have heard from other teachers about changes that they have seen that can be considered transformations. This is mostly seen in children with regular practice.

Sujatha Saravanan: Yes. For example, one girl had difficulty in walking. We had asked the mother to give her small responsibilities. Now, the girl is helping her mother with several chores. Another example is of a girl who, during her fits of anger, would disrobe, even amidst others. When working on her anger, her social behaviour got rectified out of her own realisation.

Srividya Varadarajan: Yes, with their posture, their flexibility, confidence levels, self-esteem – even though they were not the priority.

Vidya Mohan: With their posture, even though it was not addressed directly. With one student, Andal ma'am spotted that she had the potential to teach. So, we made her teach *Āsana-s* to other teachers who had come to observe her class. She later went on to teach something else (language related) at the school she goes to. It tapped her potential as a teacher.

Madhavan: Have you seen changes in yourself?

Geetha Sateesh: A lot. My acceptance and patience have become a lot better. The way I look at people has changed. I have become less judgmental. I am now more open to changes. For example, I am OK not being able to execute a planned *Yoga* lesson in the classroom. Earlier, I would find this very frustrating. My reactions have become less emotional.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: Definitely. I think I've become a lot more patient.

Ramesh Kanna: Whether I teach group fitness classes or one-on-one classes for children, I have to do my practice regularly. I have to prepare myself to provide *Yoga*-based intervention. That removes my doubts about the intervention. In my family and social circumstances, my sense of adaptation has become better - interacting with different people without any internal conflicts. I have learnt to accept defeats and loss gracefully. We are not the masters of our actions.

Sridharan Ganapathy: A lot. The general one-on-one classes give me satisfaction. But, working with special children gives me a huge amount of inner peace, regardless of the level of progress. It's almost like meditation.

Thara Natarajan: Yes. The children are in their own blissful world. Watching them, I sometimes forget their problems, and feel calm.

Srividya Varadarajan: Yes, in how I observe and perceive things.

Vidya Mohan: In the way I react to things. My sense of acceptance has increased.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Madhavan: Have the children taught you anything about *Yoga*?

Geetha Sateesh: Whatever may be happening to them, the children are calm. They are what they are. It is all about the acceptance by the others. With all these classes, somewhere a greater level of acceptance sets in to the parents. And somehow, the child recognises this, and parents see progress.

Padmavathi Karthikeyan: My overall acceptance level has increased.

Ramesh Kanna: I owe my learning to the students. When I try and overcome some of their resistances, I learn to identify and understand my own mind better, and use it better in day to day life. It is a form of skill-development. It is empowering myself through self-enquiry. It is a very individualistic approach, and I get to understand different dimensions of myself. It is an experiential learning, and not superficial, based on abstract assumptions. It is *Anuśāsanam*.

Sridharan Ganapathy: I have learnt to look for small progresses, celebrate with them, and use them as a stepping stone to progress. I have learnt to be more patient. Above all, I have learnt to accept. Not accepting and quitting, but accepting and seeing if something can be done about a situation.

Sudha Subramaniyam: Dealing with special children seems sometimes like a continuation of the learning and sometimes an application of what has been learnt. The first word of *Yogasūtra* is '*Atha*' being present here and now. This is the only way to deal with these children – observe them at present, their moods and capabilities at the moment and conduct the class accordingly. We have also learnt that *Yoga* is the path, it is the destination. Any progress that is made is *Yoga* and maintaining such progress is also *Yoga*. These lessons are emphasised in every class.

Besides this I have learnt postures and simplification, integrating chanting and planning a course for their specific needs. The children have challenged me to think out of the box when breaking down postures to simple steps that they can comprehend or coming up with other workable suggestions. On the whole I am very grateful for this wonderful and very special opportunity.

Sujatha Saravanan: Yes. They teach me what real *Yoga* is.

Thara Natarajan: Definitely. Acceptance. I have learnt to accept their abilities, their willingness. Only if I am open can I develop this acceptance.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

LEARNINGS FROM A GREAT TEACHER

REMADEVI

Initially I started mingling with special children, more as a person rather than a therapist, and this association was more from a subconscious level without attaching any intellectual or technical dimensions. I only had the feeling of sharing, caring, concern and love that came my way and somewhere, unknowingly, was trying to pass on the feeling of oneness among ourselves.

Working with special children raised a lot of questions that were difficult to be answered within me. Why at all these children should suffer? Have they done anything so bad in their previous birth to suffer now? Why doesn't God forgive them, when God speaks of forgiveness as the best attitude? Will I ever meet the creator, so that I could get answers for all these questions for all the above questions. My travel in *Yoga* as a *Yoga* therapist, and liking to lectures on philosophy has given me clarity about reality.

Also, working with these children changed my outlook of life. I realised that challenges I faced in life were nothing too serious, when compared to what these children faced. It was a lesson to be always positive and move on in life, and help others with a lot of willingness. Many a times, I was taken aback to see the enormous potentials these children had and the way they executed these potentials with enormous inner strength.

As a therapist, it opened up my cognitive and intellectual abilities by way of reflection to design, develop, teach, adapt or modify suitable appropriate practices to address different conditions faced by these children. Appropriate innovations that could be applied more practically evolved as I got closer to them. Experiences are many – also dealing with each and every special child/ adult was an experience by itself. Working with these children has added more meaning to life, allowing me to gradually evolve by way of respecting each and every creation in life, accept with a lot of contentment and (the realities of life) finally surrender to the highest as He knows what is the best.

Messages received from Sir (as result of my association with him):

- We are born only to help others in their needs.
- Life demands love, care, concern, trust and a good relationship, which people miss on account of so many situations and it is the responsibility of *Yoga* therapist / teacher to provide a good link to head the individuals who are affected emotionally.
- Give respect to all individuals and treat everyone with equal care and concern - I could sense an immense pleasure in Sir as he shared knowledge, care and concern, love, prayers and chanting with others. Even sharing eatables or small gifts made him happy.
- To develop attitudes of *Śraddhā* and *Īśvarapraṇidhānam* followed by *Abhyāsa* and *Vairagyam* as tools to achieve any goal in life.



Mrs. Remadevi is a senior *Yoga* Therapist and Faculty member at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram. After completing her Yoga Teacher Training Programme at the KYM in 1999, she had the great opportunity to work under the able guidance of *Śrī* TKV Desikachar for more than 10 years.

Ms. Remadevi has spear headed several Mitra projects and has also given seminars on *Yogic* intervention for children with special needs.

She is a teaching faculty at the Mandiram and participates in several national and international *Yoga* therapy and Mitra activities.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram





- Emotional health is more important to be stable.

- Time and space alone can heal - To accept change, as change is the only thing that is permanent – I have heard him say this.

- *Yoga* therapy or *Yoga* practice should help a person to heal, transform – it is not a mere transmission of theoretical expertise.

- Always lead a student to better clarity with less confusion. To observe others' potentials/ weakness and mould them, accordingly with care.

- Sir never taught, he made us reflect and analyse concepts in all different dimensions in such a way that we gradually moulded ourselves to the extent of applying ideas without any effort (transformation).

- According to Sir, knowledge has to be imparted in such a way that the student should reflect the concepts / ideas/ techniques not only intellectually but through their own experiences. This will ensure that the concepts sink deep into ones heart and help the person to transform himself/ herself.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

REACHING OUT TO REACH WITHIN

A CONVERSATION WITH ANDAL

INTERVIEWED BY SHRILEKHA

As a therapist who specialises in dealing with special children – what are the inputs given by *Śrī* TKV Desikachar and other senior teachers of the Mandiram?

I had just started my profession as a *Yoga* therapist at the Mandiram and my senior teacher was Mrs. Ramamani. It was around that time that I started working with children with special needs. Sir had asked Mrs. Ramamani to assign a care-seeker to me. He was about 20 years old and my responsibility was to religiously give him the practice and also report the same to my senior teacher. The classes went on for about 2 years. It was like *Tapas*. Everyday seemed like a new session with the care-seeker, without expecting any major change in him. I used a lot of verbal and visual prompts and in order to make him practice the postures six times, I would demonstrate nearly ten times. Although I didn't get into the intricacies of 'why this kind of approach?' – I knew that I had to follow my teacher's course sheet meticulously and have faith. I did insist that the parents of the care-seeker ensure efficient diet control in order to manage his weight. Sir didn't give me any 'theory sessions,' to deal with children with special needs. It was always - get on the field and learn it for yourself. Of course, the foundation as a Yoga therapist was well laid.

I remember an instance where Sir introduced me to a care-seeker. "She is Andal, a senior therapist of the Mandiram." I had recently completed my therapist training! But this was his approach. He would introduce us in such a way that the student felt reassured and along with it come a lot of responsibility. We would ensure that we were doubly careful when we deal with the care-seeker. In this process, the care-seeker also develops faith in us – *Śraddhā* – the foundation stone on which our relationship with the care-seeker is built.

I did reflect on the class that I took for the 20-year-old care-seeker. The instruction I gave, how I used to raise my voice in between to grab his attention, how I disturbed my colleagues in the next room who were giving therapy to other care-seekers and how he responded to my instructions. Any situation that I face right now, I reflect back and I have my answers from the boy I spent two years giving *Yoga* intervention. Somehow, Sir must have seen something in me, which is why he insisted that I get to the practicalities of giving therapy to children with special needs.

At the Mandiram, we ensure that the teachers observe enough classes before they are given their own set of care-seekers. They also have their own mentors with whom they interact on a regular basis. As a principle, we ensure that the do's and don'ts for dealing with children with special needs are followed impeccably. For example, we cannot give abdomen contraction to children who have seizures. At the same time, we also cannot expect the parents to open up in the first class itself. Hence, we avoid giving such postures until we learn about the child in detail. Such intricate details are shared with every therapist who handles children with special needs at the Mandiram.

Chanting plays an integral role in giving classes to the children. A soothing effect is brought when we ask the parent to touch softly on the child's head and we keep chanting. After few classes, the child would feel relaxed as he/ she enters the class. The child knows this out of his previous experience.



Andal, is the one of the senior faculty of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM). She is presently the Director of KYM Mitra, an exclusive wing of KYM working towards providing *Yoga* to the differently abled and financially underprivileged sections of the society. She had the blessings of learning under senior teachers of KYM and completed her Teacher Training about 13 years ago. For over 13 years she has led the KYM team in providing *Yoga* to the inmates of orphanages, old age homes, special children centres and prison inmates. She is a senior consultant at TKV Desikachar Clinic for Special Children which functions on Sundays at KYM.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



How has your experience working with children (with special needs) helped you both as a person and as a *Yoga* therapist?

I have worked with children from both ends of economic status. Children who live in urban areas in a comfortable family, initially oppose *Yoga*, since it is time consuming and also 'slow' from their point of view. Whereas, children from the rural areas are quite open to new experiences, they are eager to learn and also quickly grasp whatever is taught. Children living in rehabilitation homes do show some reluctance to perform tasks that need some kind of effort or if it is repetitive in nature. They feel insecure and seek attention, which largely stops them from learning new tasks.

As a person, I have developed empathy and accept limitations in life without making too much fuss. I have also learnt to maintain an amicable relationship with my family members, and started giving my son space to express emotions and thoughts. I learnt to view simple positive changes in life as a miracle. I am also better at decision making and feel a lot more confident to meet challenges in life.

As a therapist, I have developed my observation skills and have stayed consistent when it comes to giving attention. I am able to link with my care-seekers and show empathy. I have certainly developed immense faith and have learnt to accept that even if the results take time to manifest – it is important to keep trying.

In what way does *Yoga* help us to understand and work with the children - both from the perspective of care-giver and care-seeker.

Yoga helps to instil confidence. The learning process in *Yoga* is highly experiential and it helps in boosting the child's self esteem, confidence and mind-body connection. *Yoga* helps children achieve a sound mind in a sound body by exercising the physical body and calming the mental spirit. Even though we practice *Yoga* regularly, we understand the concept only when we start reflecting on it. Any situation we face, whether it is positive or negative, we have to reflect on it, to realise the truth.

As a care-giver, we learn to accept and adapt in accepting children in whatever level they are and stay open hearted. We also learn to interact with them without making any judgements.

What are your experiences or how do you deal (as a *Yoga* therapist) when it comes to situations like children indulging in self-harm or harming others?

There are two aspects to this. One is a behaviour issue, which needs to be addressed with a lot of patience. We should understand that the parents would have already put the child through a lot of other training and therapy. We cannot really blame them – they are trying their best. From the children's perspective, we should understand that they are already going through a lot of trauma. So, when they see a teacher sitting across the table, they somehow understand that it is an intervention, and that intervention would put them through yet another round of torture. As an immediate self defence, they retaliate by harming themselves. Some children also bite themselves/ others at times. For the child, we are yet another problem to be overcome. In this process, there is a tendency to bite others also.

The second aspect to this is the attention seeking nature. When you start giving a posture, the child thinks that the focus is shifted from them to the posture – a shift in their attention. This is something many cannot handle. When the child feels this way, they indulge in harmful behaviour. Over a period of time, this becomes a habit and being highly observant, the child notices every movement of yours – the eyes, hands, our general body language as such. So, when they bite themselves or others, they observe how we flinch. They are happy that they overcame the situation. So, how do we handle this? As *Yoga* teachers, we have to be mindful of what we do. We cannot raise our voice because it will sound authoritative and we cannot be too friendly because the teacher-student relationship will not get established. There has to be a healthy balance. We have to negotiate, and negotiation happens all the time when you give *Yoga* classes to children with special needs.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Negotiation can be done directly with the child if you are already comfortable dealing with them or it could happen through the parent where you give the instruction to the parent. Example, telling the child that he/ she will do one posture and I will answer two questions of theirs.

Can you share instances of such negotiation?

When I was working with a boy (Asperger's syndrome), he had difficulty in maintaining eye contact. During the sessions he would start asking me the same set of questions repeatedly (echolalic speech) expecting answers from me immediately. If I did not answer he would get agitated. It was so difficult to draw and sustain his attention towards my verbal instructions. Visual prompts along with verbalisation had some effects but not for too long. I had to raise my voice every time more than his voice to bring his attention, while also answering his questions in between. I then avoided looking at him and started speaking with the chair, table, fan, tube light and blackboard. I would look at the fan and ask the fan to raise its arms; "Hello fan, raise both your arms now." Somehow, he started to follow the instructions without any hesitation. To my surprise, we finished the session in 20 minutes.

Another child had the habit of spitting. You asked him any question, he would spit. I requested the parents to wait outside the class and I went on with my job – ensuring not to talk to him or look at him for a short while. He seemed comfortable and I slowly looked at him. He spat again. If you examined his habit carefully, he was building a fortress around him – a line of control where no one can come near him. That was his defence mechanism and also attention seeking behaviour. Our intervention came in the form of lying postures and that too in the supine position. This way, even if he spat, it would fall on him. We worked only on the lying postures and slowly moved to lying prone postures. After a long period, he completely forgot this habit of spitting. We replaced the spitting *Saṁskāra* with a new *Saṁskāra*. That's what *Yoga* does. It gives you *Saṁskāra* that will bring out the positive elements within you.

If you look at it, any kind of intervention that we have spoken so far, is not only meant for children with special needs but for everyone. We have somehow learnt the skill of hiding our emotions and managing everyday circumstances properly. However, in the case of children with special needs, they do not have the veil. They are blatant with their emotions and you essentially get what they have in mind. When they do *Yoga*, we look at their *Prāṇa Śakti* and *Annamaya* as well. We take into consideration how the child interacts with the family and vice versa. We carefully understand what the child has gone through in his/her life and what milestones have been reached. Our therapy observation pretty much starts from the time the care-seeker walks into the room.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

INTEGRATION OF SOUND IN TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



MRS. SHOBANA SRINIVASAN



MRS. PADMINI NARENDRAN



MRS. RAMAMANI KALYANARAMAN

Mrs. Shobana Srinivasan, Director-In Charge of the Dept. of Healing Chants

I vividly remember my first experience. It was right after my *Yoga* Teachers Training Programme. I was asked to take a *Yoga* session for children at the Down's Syndrome centre. I had absolutely no idea what to do and it was a new environment for me, although I was sent along with a senior teacher. The children were shy and were withdrawn. First class, we formed a group and started doing *Āsana-s* coupled with sounds, like *Mā* for long exhalation. The children were very happy to do the posture with the sound. I also observed that the children were quite flexible - they were able to do most of the postures. After the class, the parents and teachers approached us and said drooling seemed to be the biggest issue they face as care givers and they wanted us to look into it. Later when we took this to Sir's attention, he recommended using *Sūrya Namaskāra - Bījākṣara Mantra.* So in each and every *Āsana,* we started giving *Hṛām, Hṛim. Hṛum* etc., The children found it difficult at the beginning but they did their best. They enjoyed and eventually came out of their shell. They would approach and talk to us. Eventually, we made one child demonstrate for the entire class and they would go in turns. This way, every child wanted to do well. We did train the teachers to chant and give classes on a regular basis. Over a period of time, the drooling stopped.

In another instance, there was a child with Mucopolysaccharidoses. Unfortunately, the entire family had this problem. They were from an interior village and they couldn't afford any treatment. The KYM took up a Mitra project in the village and I was fortunate enough to be part of it. The lung capacity of the children were very good, which is why they were also susceptible to cough and cold. For those children, Sir asked us to give the mono syllable words like *Mā, Hā, Rā…* We used to give the syllables with light arm movements. This used to improve their exhalation capacity. Some parents told us that their breath capacity improved.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Mrs. Padmini Narendran, Senior Faculty Member & *Yoga* Therapist, KYM

Simple *Āsana-s* were taught in co-ordination with simple sounds. Some of them would say "*Mā.*" Others would do "*Āa,*" "*Hā,*" and "*Oṁ.*" The use of sounds (monosyllables) helped children improve their voices. Later on "*Oṁ Rām*" was introduced. Recitations of "*Rām*" in various combinations were introduced - to help children with drooling.

To regulate breathing, chanting was introduced. But that was also very useful in speech. Sir used sounds such as *Ā*, *Mā* and *Hā*, in forward bends to start with. This was developed further in course of time. The children would have a combination of chanting, breathing synchronised with posture, then again the use of sounds then finally games related to the postures.

Benefits of introducing sounds:

- **Chanting indirectly helped the child's breathing.**
- **Also improved both clarity and fluency of speech.**
- **Chanting also helped in relaxing and calming the mind.**

Mrs. Ramamani Kalyanasundaram, Senior Faculty Member & *Yoga* Therapist, KYM

I did a project in Gnana Deepam at Pammal, Chennai for about 18 months between 2001 - 03. The students were from age group 8 to 24 and some had Down's syndrome, some autism, MR and some were hyperactive. We introduced sounds in *Śītalī Prāṇāyāma* and also had to chant '*Om*' instead of exhalation. Initially, many children had difficulty understanding and following our instructions. Some with hearing difficulty mimicked the sound, by observing our lip movements, while no sound came from some children. Week by week there was some change in them, but not very tangible. At the end of 18 months, we made them do *Prāṇāyāma* individually and our observations were:

- **The '*Om*' sound was almost perfect with 30% of children.**
- ***Om* was somewhat audible in a few. These children couldn't even round their lips to chant initially.**
- **The drooling in many had almost stopped**
- **The group as a whole enjoyed chanting**
- **Some could chant slightly longer syllables also**

It was *Śrī* TKV Desikachar who guided me to handle children with special needs. He asked me to take classes for a 19 year old boy who was a slow learner and hyperactive as well. He didn't have patience to follow my instructions, and it was Sir, who asked me to integrate the movements with chant.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Samīkṣā

Insights From KYM's Yoga Based Interventions

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

THEORETICAL BASIS, ASSESSMENT, INTERVENTION, DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

NRITHYA JAGANNATHAN & ANDAL K

Poster presented at the third annual conference on Autism (AUTCON 2019) hosted by NISHTA Centre of Excellence, Medical Research and Training (NICE)

THEORETICAL BASIS

Techniques of Yoga incorporate simple repetitive movements integrated with breath coordination and/or the use of simple sounds. These techniques, when properly planned, sequenced and practiced regularly, offer multiple benefits such as:

- Improving metabolism and circulation
- Enhancing balance as well as fine motor and gross motor coordination
- Increasing concentration, attention span and retention
- Improving confidence
- Reduction of restlessness, anger and irritability
- Overall enhancement of sleep, energy and appetite, thereby enabling better quality of life
- Further, repeated practice of *Āsana-s* improves muscle strength and joint flexibility.

Applications of Tools of *Yoga*

Tools	Purpose	Goal
Āsana-s Dynamic	Physical Coordination	Reducing Restlessness and Improving Motor Skills
Āsana-s Static	Strength and Stamina	Immunity Building and Preventing Dystrophy
Vinyāsa-s	Attention	Improving Concentration and Sustaining Focus
	Circulation	Improving Circulation and Positively Supporting Spinal Motor Pathways
	Digestion	Improving Overall Metabolism and Assimilation
	Control Over Muscles	Reducing Involuntary Movements and Improving Strength
	Eye Contact	Enhancing Eye Contact
Chanting	Breathing Focus	Pronunciation Sequencing Concentration Cue Control (Teacher Chants Child to the Movement)

ASSESSMENT

The assessment made by the *Yoga* Therapist is based on direct personal observation and interaction with the child, supplemented by study of the doctor's report and advice and also inputs given by **parents, and/or caregivers/special educators/therapists** working with the child in question.

The initial assessment is reviewed at intervals based on the ***Yoga* Therapist's observations** of the child's progress as well as feedback from the primary caregiver.

INTERVENTION

Design of the practice for each child is highly individualised, keeping in mind that every child is unique and also responds uniquely to different kinds of stimuli.

At the core of all *Yoga* Therapy based interventions are the twin principles of:

AHIṀSĀ

To teach with love and empathy, without being judgemental of the child's behaviour and taking care not to harm or injure the child in any way.

YATHĀŚAKTI

The practice is designed in accordance with the child's current needs and capabilities, but there is always enough flexibility for the practice to adapt to suit the child's evolving needs and abilities. In our teaching methodology, one-on-one interactive sessions are the norm, proceeding from simple dynamic and static movements, with more layers of complexity gradually added.

Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

DELIVERY

Yoga practice sessions are always given individually to each child, with the parent/ care giver present. The number of *Yoga* sessions depends on the specific requirements of each child and frequency of classes may be increased or decreased subject to the therapist's observations and feedback from the primary caregiver. Usually, on the days when the child doesn't meet the *Yoga* Therapist, the parent or caregiver is required to help the child practice at home. A one-week interval between classes is the norm.

OUTCOMES

Yoga interventions for children in the Autism Spectrum focus primarily on improving the ability of the child to focus on specific tasks and also reduce restlessness and other associated symptoms. The repeated interaction with the *Yoga* Therapist in a safe and non judgemental space fosters a relationship based on trust and this helps improve the child's confidence and communication. Since interventions are highly child centric, *Yoga* Therapists often innovate and adapt to the needs of the child at that point. Hence, standardisation of outcomes is very difficult.

Some of the parent/caregiver reported outcomes include:

- Reduction of fidgeting or restlessness
- Improved eye contact and social behaviour
- Improvement in speech and general communicative behaviour
- Improved flexibility and stamina contributing to overall wellness
- Enhanced immunity
- Enhanced energy levels and improved sleep quality
- Increased concentration and attention span

S.No	Definition Of *Yoga*	*Yoga* For Special Children
1	To meet, to unite	To help coordinate the activities of mind and body
2	To streamline the movements of the mind	To help achieve sustained focus and attention to achieve simple tasks
3	To realise one's full potential, hitherto unachieved	Through training to move to higher levels of attention and performance, the potential for which exists

Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

CASE STUDIES FROM TKV DESIKACHAR CLINIC FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN (SUNDAY CLINIC)

CARE SEEKER - 1*

PRESENTED BY | MADHAVAN

Profile of the care-seeker	Male, 11 years old in 2015
Psycho-physiological status	Excellent energy levels, good appetite, easy onset of sleep, regular bowel movement, sometimes relaxed, mildly focused, poor motivation and enthusiasm for activity.
Main issue presented	ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
Other relevant background	On medication for the above. Inspiral, Sizadon Plus and Arkamin
Stated needs and expectations of the care-seeker	Relaxation, mental stability, increase in concentration, and to reduce impulsiveness.
Key observations made by the consultant	• Low attention, poor eye contact, low writing skills, low sitting tolerance, but with a good capacity to listen, good memory. • Needed appreciation and motivation. • Irritable.
Focus of the consultant's course plan	Staying and chanting in postures
Number of classes taken (after the consultation)	18 classes from Oct 2015 – Jan 2018

***Name Not Shared To Protect Privacy**

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

Feedback Across The Class	Evolution Of The Course
After the 4th class: More tolerant, more open to changes, focus had improved, responded better (in conversations)	• The initial classes had only 2 or 3 simple *Āsana-s*, plus *Śītkārī Prāṇāyāma*. The child was taught to stay and chant *Sūrya Namaskāra Mantra* (*Oṁ Hṛām*, etc) in these postures. • Reviews focused on his understanding of the instructions, how well he could achieve the form of an *Āsana*, and how stable he was when doing them. • Gradually, twists and small *Vinyāsa-s* were introduced. Activities combining colours and everyday objects were encouraged at home. • *Āsana-s* differing only slightly in form were introduced. Eg, *Pārśva* and *Parivṛtti* versions of *Trikonāsana*. *Āsana-s* in a *Vinyāsa* were associated with numbers and sequences. Breath-movement coordination was not enforced. • Longer chants and longer number sequences were incorporated to keep the child engaged. • In the 6th class, the *Sūrya Namaskāra* sequence of *Āsana-s* was introduced.
After the 6th class: Walked to his tuition classes on his own, could navigate across his neighbourhood to familiar places.	• In the 9th class, balancing asanas and inversions (*Viparīta Karaṇi*) were introduced. • In the 10th class, the child was taught to coordinate movements with breath (inhale, exhale/chant).
After the 15th class: Good improvement in his general sense of understanding, observations and eye-contact. Understood expectations, processes and results of tasks better.	• In the 16th class, finer techniques of Pranayama like breathing through ½ closed nostrils, pausing in breath, etc were introduced.
General Summary	The child had a good memory power. This was the base. Though he had poor attention and motivation, we overcame that by persistence and appreciation. The father played an important role in these classes - both by bringing him regularly, as well as by following up with assigned homework. With time, the child's confidence grew, and he took pride in narrating some of the new and complex activities he did at home. They stopped coming to class in January 2018 when they moved out of Chennai.

Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

CARE SEEKER - 2*

PRESENTED BY | THARA NATARAJAN

Profile of the care-seeker	Female, 24 years old, Under Graduate. Learns Carnatic music Scores above 90% in academics Quite sensitive to comments and good ability to handle money. Has difficulty in generalising previously learned information
Other relevant background	Sleep with dreams at times, has difficulty following multi-step instructions, makes very literal translations and has difficulty coping with changes, routines and transition.
Observation by Learning Disability Institute	Fidgets while talking, lack of consistent concentration, low confidence level and low self esteem
Observation by mother	Highly emotional, lacks focus, has more men friends and seeks attention, lacks self esteem, repeats the same mistake. Eg. leaves the lights and fan on, does not remember to shut down the computer
Focus of the consultant's course plan	Improve confidence and self esteem
Number of classes taken (after the consultation)	20 classes from February 2017 to February 2019

***Name Not Shared To Protect Privacy**

Feedback from the mother	Evolution Of The Course
• Able to manage accounts better • Started taking responsibilities at house • Started accepting the changes (slowly) • Obsession on phone has reduced • Fidgeting of fingers – still there • Emotional out-burst has reduced • Reading habit has improved • Now started working in a nearby school	Started with simple postures combined with chant to get her used to the practice first. Made her touch different parts of the body in order to control her fidgeting habit. Also introduced *Hṛām*, *Hṛīm* to work on her self esteem, to increase her courage. Eventually, she was made to visualise the various parts of her body instead of placing palms. The idea was to link and to gradually bring simple changes in each class. This also allowed her to accept changes in her own pace. *Vinyāsa-s* were introduced from the 6th class onwards where the postures with a combination of *Hṛām* and *Hṛīm* were taught. Interlocking fingers while doing the postures also helped in getting over the habit of fidgeting. Her eye contact improved and she focused on the teacher while also conversing for five minutes at a stretch which was not observed before. We have introduced *Krama* practice now with the integration of chant. She practices in front of a mirror and is comfortable doing so.
General Summary	• She has improved in following multi step instructions – which was difficult earlier. She would go to one posture and freeze, will think or look out for few seconds, and after we reminded her, she would continue – this had improved. • She looked more confident. • She is always regular in her practice and has started asking for more chanting

Vol. 2, No. 1 DARŚANAM March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

CARE SEEKER - 3*

PRESENTED BY | GEETHA SATEESH

Profile of the care-seeker	Female, 14 years old
Psycho-physiological status	Developmental Mile stones: Delayed Excellent energy levels with very good eating habits Sleep onset normal with good quality of sleep and irregular sleep duration Bowel movement – regular Puberty onset – 13 yrs. Menstrual cycle - Now irregular
Main issue presented	Autistic in nature
Other relevant background	Social interactions - difficult
Stated needs and expectations of the care-seeker	To calm down and to reduce irritable nature.
Key observations made by the consultant	Autistic in nature Verbalisation – possible to some extent, No meaningful communication Responds to commands, okay to some extent No eye contact, attention span less Socialisation difficult Gets irritated with sounds and strangers – fear Comfortable with schoolmates Self help possible, but not perfect Sleeplessness (sits for 3 days and 3 nights without sleep) Rocking of body Temper tantrums – Jumping, shouting, crying spells, self-hurting, restlessness
Focus of the consultant's course plan	Short term – relaxation Long term - to reduce behavioural issues and to bring in postural corrections
Number of classes taken (after the consultation)	8 classes from June 2013 to September 2013

***Name Not Shared To Protect Privacy**

Feedback from the mother	Evolution Of The Course
• Able to take instructions and do on her own - 80% • Able to sleep when chanting is done • Chanting helped to calm down • Rocking of the body reduced • Has become considerably calm. It is felt at home and also reported by her teacher at school.	Started with simple seated arm movement with chanting and used a roller to help the movement. *Somāya Namaḥ* and *Śāntiśāntiḥ* was used. The care seeker was initially reluctant to listen to instructions and was agitated in general. Especially while chanting *Om*, the aggression increases. Even in the 2nd class, seated arm movements were given along with mono syllable chanting like *Ma*. Was able to take instructions and was also less aggressive. From the 3rd class, standing postures were introduced with *Sūrya Mantra*. Gradually, stay was introduced in the practice and forward bends were given to reduce the rocking movement of the body. What started off as movement with wall support eventually shifted to movements without wall support like *Tādāsana* for example. Postures like *Pārśva Uttānāsana* was added to reduce lethargy and appropriate modifications to certain postures were done for relaxation and to stretch the body.

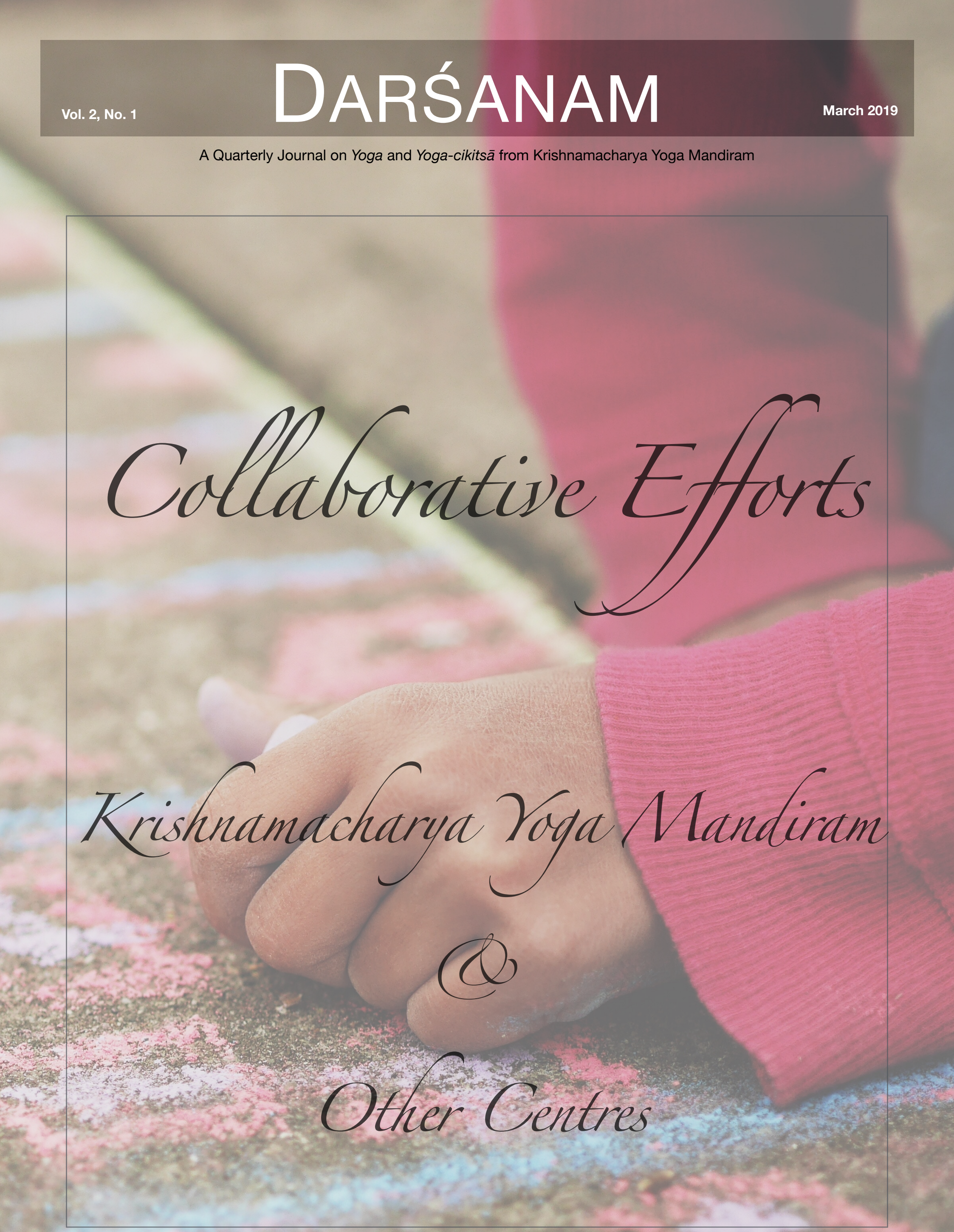
General Summary	• From the 3rd Class, care seeker was able to connect the teacher and take instructions. • Rocking of the body reduced. • Jumping, shouting, self-hurting was reduced. • Care seeker was able to be calm with chants. • Sleep improved. • At school, there were changes too as mentioned by teachers.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Collaborative Efforts

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

&

Other Centres

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram





KYM AND MADHURAM NARAYANAN CENTRE (MNC)

MRS. JAYA KRISHNASWAMY, DIRECTOR, MNC

The Seer who made a difference using 'breathing' at Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children, Chennai - TKV Desikachar

Madhuram Narayanan Centre (MNC) had just emerged in 1989 as a centre providing early Intervention services to children with Intellectual Disabilities, age group birth to 6 years.

Prof. P Jeyachandran (PJ), mentor and guide at MNC had been doing pioneering work, in the application of *Yogāsana-s* to persons with intellectual difficulties, under the aegis of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) with satisfying progress. Closely working under the very 'breath' of *Śrī* Krishnamacharya, Prof. P Jeychandaran, was well encouraged, by *Śrī* T K V Desikachar in the project and saw collaboration along the way.

Śrī TKV Desikachar was introduced to MNC by Prof. P Jeychandaran in 1989.

So full of enthusiasm to extend the services from KYM, so generous in his offering, *Śrī* TKV Desikachar took MNC under the fold of KYM.

'*Yoga* was introduced at MNC to the teachers and parents first. Practice mats, on the floor, parents becoming students along with the teachers, the small hall at G N Chetty Road became permeated with the sound of '*Mā*' – the scene of graceful movements by the 'de-stressed' group of relaxed parents. Children were around, some attempting to 'imitate,' some passively 'watching' as if in wonder and teachers from KYM were there every day and giving their precious time to the teachers and parents.

Behind these classes, was *Śrī* T K V Desikachar who stepped in to visit now and then from KYM to personally check on any requirements.

It is a 30 year journey of KYM and MNC together, a journey in which the 'child,' 'mother' and 'teacher' travelled together, along the path of tranquility and relaxation. The journey continues.

Śrī Suresh Rao, *Śrī* P Jeychandaran and *Śrī* TKV Desikachar have been the 'Trinity' in this passage of time.

Today, KYM inspired by the mission of *Śrī* TKV Desikachar and directed by *Śrī* Sridharan, with his dedicated teaching, has taken up *Yoga* at MNC with the object of more intensive and result oriented practice. *Śrī* TKV Desikachar's teachings live on and MNC cherishes the relationship with KYM.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



KYM AND AMAR SEVA SANGAM, AYIKUDI

Amar Seva Sangam (ASSA) is an organisation set up by Mr. S. Ramakrishnan focusing specifically on disability management. They act as a central resource centre to bring in changes in the development of children with special needs, with specific attention given to children from rural areas. The centre was established in the year 1981 and KYM has been associated with the institution for more than two decades.

The KYM visits ASSA once in three months and gives *Yogic* intervention to the students. The KYM teachers also ensure that the teachers and special educators of ASSA are trained and equipped to handle the class effectively.

Mr. Ramakrishnan, Founder & President of ASSA is largely instrumental in bringing *Yoga* as a regular practice for the students. “The students do their *Yoga* practice everyday for about 45 minutes. From my observation, I would say that there has been a change in their attitude - they are a lot more cheerful after their *Yoga* practice and are able to handle the stressful situations of their daily lives. Since these practices are done together - they feel a lot of bonding with other classmates and it gives them encouragement to push themselves. Besides, what we like about KYM is the fact that they insist on function more than form. We are so used to seeing postures done impeccably in its form and our children cannot do most of these postures. However, KYM’s approach helps the children to practice and do these postures easily. The postures are given keeping only the ‘function’ in mind. Form is not important.”

Mr. S Sankara Raman, Honorary Secretary of ASSA believes that *Yoga* as an intervention helps children with special needs to cope up with their limitations and also aids in the rehabilitation process.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram







Gomu, Special Educator of Amar Seva Sangam shared the following observation:

- Children look forward to their *Yoga* practice everyday.
- They are less hyperactive these days than before
- These children had the tendency to run around the class but after consistent practice, this habit has drastically reduced
- Their attention span has improved
- They are much more cheerful and feel energised at the right level.

At the beginning, the students were doing their *Yoga* practice just before their lunch hour and the Head of School - Mrs. Meenakshi felt that it would be better if the practice was shifted to the morning hours - from 10 am to 10.30 am. “This shift has brought about significant improvement in the minds of the children. Our centre houses children with cerebral palsy (CP), mental retardation (MR), combination of CP and MR, Down Syndrome and also Autism. However, our specialisation is giving care to children with cerebral palsy coupled with mental retardation. When it come to MR, children are most likely to have problems either with their ability to hear or see. KYM has taught us a system where both these issues are addressed. The use of *Prāṇāyāma* not only relaxes the children but brings in a lot of focus. The KYM teachers have given us chants to be used during our *Āsana* practice. For example, we have been taught to use ‘*Om’* during our *Āsana* practice. Over a period of time, our children know that at the beginning of the sound ‘Au/O,’ they should have begun their movement and by the end of the sound ‘M,” their movement should be completed. This coordination and awareness is indeed a remarkable milestone.

Integration of sound also works on the muscles in their mouth, which is otherwise weak. Some of these children have drooling issues and chanting helps them to manage it. The children ensure that they practice everyday for 30-45 minutes. Even if they run behind schedule, let's say due to a special class or a visit by a guest - they ask for their *Yoga* practice, bring their own mats and other props that we use for the practice. They are quite particular about their *Yoga* practice and they have stayed meticulously consistent at it. The biggest transformation that has happened due to the shifting of their daily practice from afternoon to the morning is an increase in attention span and energy levels. They also feel emotionally strong when practicing in the morning. This is because most of these children come from difficult backgrounds and more often than not, their parents do not give the kind of attention the children need. When they come to the school and start the day with a *Yoga* practice, they feel a lot of attention on them. This is because it is done as a group and the entire team of teachers are present to help them with their practice. In this process, not only is attention given but the children also feel emotionally secure. With this assurance, they continue their day with a lot of confidence.”

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



YOGA FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME

DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF TAMIL NADU

The Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram has been working closely with Down Syndrome Association of Tamil Nadu for nearly two decades. Periodic intervention in terms of relevant *Āsana* practices and integration of sound during such practice has brought in remarkable changes in children both at the emotional and physical level.

Physiotherapists Ms. Sri Lakshmi and Ms. Mithula, who work closely with individuals with Down Syndrome at Down Syndrome Association of Tamil Nadu shared the following observation:

"Consistent *Yoga* practice has helped them with their body alignment. They are able to stand and also sit straight for a long duration of time. This lays a strong foundation for physical balance. The muscle tone has also improved significantly and a lot of jumping activity has been observed after *Yoga* practice, which is otherwise a difficult body movement to comprehend for individuals with down syndrome. Besides, the group *Yoga* practice helps them to enjoy and connect with the rest of the group and there are many moments of laughter and fun."

Mrs. Banumathi, a senior therapist working with the Down Syndrome Association of Tamil Nadu from the time of its inception in the year 1984 is known to have helped many children to walk. She uses *Yoga* as a tool to introduce the concept of physical movement to young children with downs syndrome. She believes that *Yoga* as a tool has certainly helped the individual to maintain their thyroid levels which is susceptible to a lot of fluctuations because of this condition and it also facilitates better functioning of digestive organs. She added, "When it comes to older children, they feel a lot relaxed after their *Yoga* practice because emphasis is given to techniques of breathing while doing their *Āsana* practice.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram





Dr. Surekha Ramachandran, Director and Founder of Down Syndrome Association of Tamil Nadu is an ardent *Yoga* practitioner herself. She believes that any kind of intervention is more for the parents than the child, because the child is already evolved. “There is always this question running in parents’ minds - why me? But it is important for the parent to embrace the truth and evolve from this state. *Yoga* - especially the techniques of breathing, helps the parents to calm down and only when they are calm, they can handle the child.” Dr. Surekha believes that *Yoga* is not just a tool for wellbeing but helps us to realise the value of life and to introspect on the channels that we block whilst caring and loving others (both at the giving and the receiving end). *Yoga* is the source and not merely a tool. It is imperative to experience conscious breathing and enjoy its benefits.”

At the physical level Dr. Surekha has observed significant improvement in weight reduction and management for individuals with Down Syndrome. A lot of them were able to stay off the medicine which was given to regulate their thyroid levels. At the emotional level, she vouches that the depression levels have drastically come down and they are able to handle stress better than before.





Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

NURTURING LIVES AT SRI ARUNODAYAM

AN INTERVIEW WITH IYAPPAN SUBRAMANIYAN

Please explain in detail about your Centre

For 17 years, Sri Arunodayam has been providing a safe and caring environment for abandoned mentally challenged children in Chennai, India. These children have been abandoned in hospitals and in crowded public places such as railway and bus stations. At times, even in dustbins! At our home they are welcomed, nurtured, fed, clothed, rehabilitated and loved. We try to give these children what they have lost – a home and a family! There are 115 children at our home.

What is the social background of the members in your institution?

There are 115 children at present. 80 boys and 35 girls. All are children with intellectual disabilities and are abandoned by their parents due to poverty and their disability.

What are the challenges you face in handling children with special needs and how do you overcome them?

- Difficulty in controlling and managing the kids who are hyperactive.
- Getting a qualified and kind-hearted caregiver to look after our children is a huge challenge we face.
- Managing adolescent kids with their behavioural issues
- Unable to rehabilitate them into mainstream society due to their disability and stigma
- Unable to find a job for the grown-up boys

What kind of education and life skills are given to the children?

We impart special education training to all the children. We also provide early intervention services to the toddlers from new-born to 6 years of age.

Can you explain the various interventions that you give for the children?

- Care & Shelter
- Special Education Training
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Medical Treatment for general, psychiatric and neurological disorders.
- Vocational Training such candle making, paper bag making, incense stick making, tailoring and wire basket making etc to the grown-up boys and girls.

What do you think is the relevance of *Yoga* in dealing with children with special needs? How does it help them both at the physical and emotional level?

With the help of KYM, we had imparted *Yoga* to the children for 2 years in the year 2009 and 2010 and we will soon be resuming our classes again with the KYM.

- It helped them to a great extent to reduce their hyperactivity
- Kids performed well in special education classes such as obeying the instructions of teachers and responding to it.
- Concentration level improved
- Well- behaved in public places
- Socialisation skills such greeting, smiling at others and expressing their needs have improved
- Violent behaviour had been reduced to great extent.

The teachers also benefitted a lot in the process. At the end, it was a mutual learning experience.



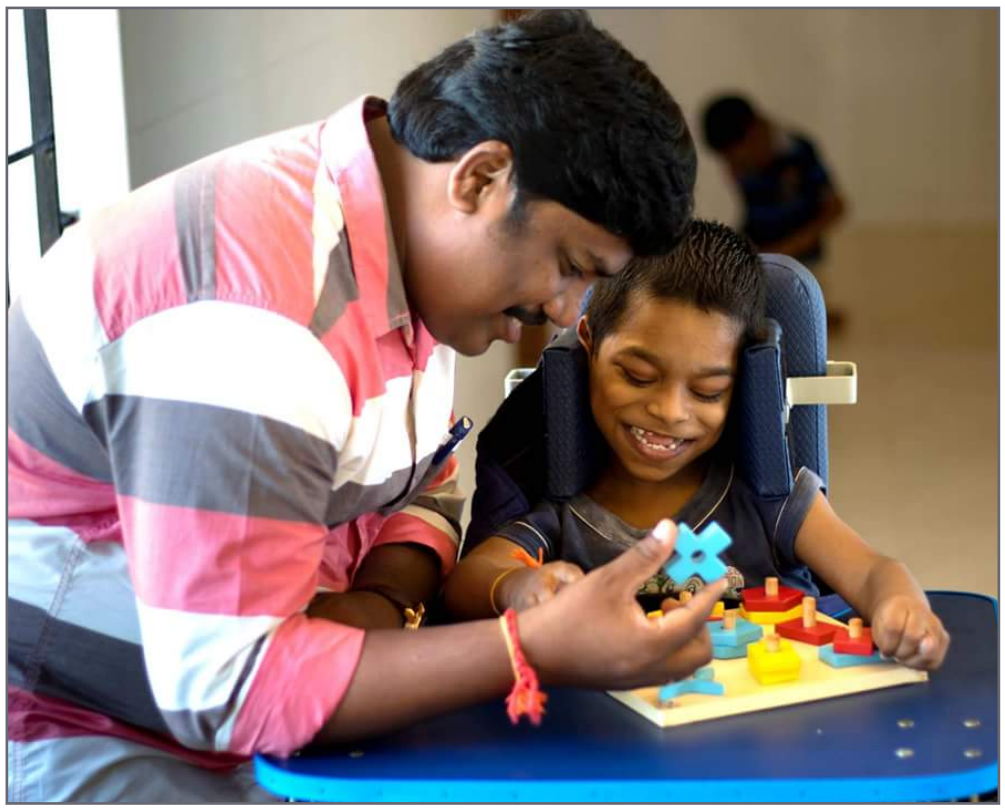
Iyyappan Subramaniyan is Sri Arunodayam's Founder & Managing Trustee. He is also the administrator, leading both board and staff teams. He is directly involved in the planning and execution of child welfare programme and is responsible for organisational planning, financial planning, budget preparation, action plan development, and policy making. Iyappan has Bachelor in Psychology and Bachelor in Law Degrees, and is Post Graduate in Law specialising in Constitutional Law and Human Rights.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



CHILDREN FROM SRI ARUNODAYAM





Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



"It Takes Two Hands To Clap"

Feedback From Parents

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



FEEDBACK FROM PARENT A*

To start with, I practice *Yoga* because I believe in it. That is why I brought my daughter to the Mandiram. I used to be a sulky parent at the beginning - crying all the time and wondering, “Why me?” Eventually as my daughter grew and perhaps, I also grew - I realised there is nothing wrong about the situation! She has a different brain network and things work a little different because of Asperger. When I came to terms with this, I started enjoying my time with her. I have learnt a lot from her and sometimes I wish I am like her. She is so immune to relationships and the conflict that comes out of it. She made me realise that she was not just born as a daughter to me but to educate me. *Yoga* helps to maintain anxiety levels and with my daughter. We do practice together at times but we mostly end up fighting because I cannot align with her and obviously cannot do things that she does and my course is also different. She is meticulous about her *Yoga* practice. She starts her practice by 7 am and it goes on till about 8 am. The only thing with her is that she has to agree with the practice. She should like it and she has thankfully accepted *Yoga*. She will also not say she is not agreeing with you. She will keep quiet if she doesn’t agree and she will only do what suits her.

Her relationship with her teacher is quite unique and I don’t interfere with that. She calls Vidya (*Yoga* Therapist, KYM) every week and shares her feedback, asks questions and also enquires about her next class; but every phone call usually starts with a detailed enquiry about her teacher’s wellbeing.

My daughter also remembers everyone’s birthday, wedding anniversary and makes it a point to call Vidya on hers. She forms a lovely bond with few people. When she establishes the bond, she is highly affectionate.

The evolution in my daughter as a *Yoga* practitioner - the first phase wasn’t successful. It was a group *Yoga* session. I could see that she was not interested and after about 3-4 months something else came up and we had to drop. In the year 2017, we came back to the KYM’s Sunday clinic and this was her second phase. Even Vidya increased the level of her practice. She also loves chanting while doing her *Āsana* practice. Whenever chants are given, she is very happy. In terms of her behaviour, her anxiety levels have come down. He ability to listen and self moderate has improved a lot. Social interactions have improved and she is teaching low functioning Autistic children now. Her connection with her students is quite good. *Yoga* as a tool has played a significant role in my daughters life.

*Name Not Shared To Protect Privacy

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



FEEDBACK FROM PARENT B*

We wish we had brought our son earlier. He is now 18 years old and for some reason we were quite sceptical to bring him. We thought, perhaps, it will be way too expensive or this is yet another 'intervention' given to children with special needs. We were totally wrong though. We brought our son in the 2017 and we have been observing a lot of changes in him.

- He takes his time to do his practice now. At the beginning, he would do it quickly. Arm movements with some chant for 4-5 times would take only 40-50 seconds for him. Today, he does it slowly. This is also reflecting in the other activities he does. Instead of doing it with haste, he is being mindful.
- His observation skills have also gotten better.
- His focus has improved.

He also loves doing *Yoga*. When we tell him that he has his *Yoga* classes the next day, he ensures to take the effort to wake up early and get ready for the class. He will also never do something that he doesn't like. *Yoga* and swimming are the two activities that are close to his heart and he takes the effort to do his best.

Indeed, when we came to KYM first, we were rather taken by surprise. Firstly, the course was not expensive at all and secondly, the consultant and the *Yoga* therapist were very kind to my son.

We love the one-on-one approach to *Yoga* therapy offered at the KYM and the pace at which the class go. There is no force at all. What should happen in the class is entirely dependant on the mood of the person and what they need at the moment.

We have 17 years of experience handling a child with special needs and we know by now, what will work and what will not work, which is clearly why we regret for not coming earlier.

However, we ensure to inform parents of similar needs about KYM's Sunday Clinic, hoping that they do not delay *Yogic* intervention.

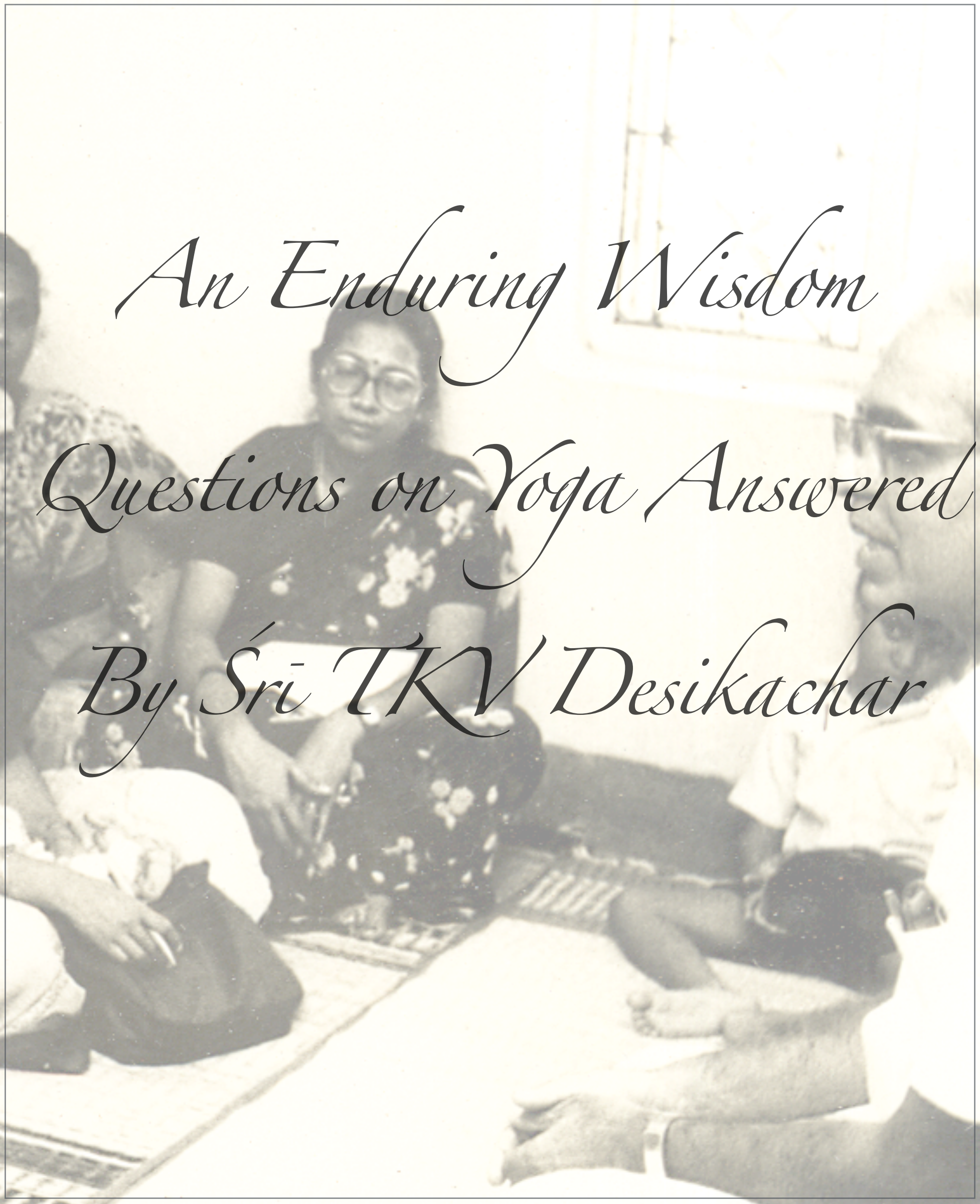
*Name Not Shared To Protect Privacy

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



An Enduring Wisdom

Questions on Yoga Answered

By Śrī TKV Desikachar

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

QUESTIONS ON *YOGA* ANSWERED BY *ŚRĪ* TKV DESIKACHAR

This segment features questions on *Yoga* raised by various readers of *Darśanam*, when it was being published in the early 90's. Over two decades have gone by since Darśanam was last published, but our questions haven't changed. *Śrī* TKV Desikachar's answers, given in his own inimitable style, are no less relevant either. Some of these questions and answers have been reproduced here. Names of people asking these questions have been intentionally withheld.



Very often we find our children doing the *Āsana-s* very fast. Is there no effect at all if *Āsana-s* are done fast? If so, how do we make them do the *Āsana-s* slowly?

We cannot say that children must always do the *Āsana-s* slowly; nor can we say that children must do *Āsana-s* fast. We are now dealing with children who have certain shortcomings. To be excessively alert is also a short coming. If an *Āsana* is difficult and if they can do it fast, it is an achievement - achievement in balance, achievement in strength and an achievement by itself. So, sometimes it is not a bad idea to encourage them to do it fast. If by habit, they do things fast, like hyperkinetic children we must use some means by which they can practice slowly.

We also use some long passages for chanting during movement in *Āsana* as a substitute for long exhalation. If on the other hand, they are able to repeat a passage that is difficult to chant fast, it means that their speech is improving. In conclusion, fast movement as well as slow movement is part of training.

Can you suggest any particular method to handle a group of ten children with different abilities especially when the time is limited? While teaching *Yoga* to a group, there are some children who have difficulty with some postures while others do not. So these children continue to stand in a particular posture till all the other children are helped. How do you suggest we handle this problem?

First we have to find out the similarities in the children and put them in a homogeneous group. Regarding children with vastly differing abilities, children who are doing well can help the children who are struggling to do it. Children like to look at each other. So you can put them in a circle rather than have them stand in rows, one behind another, so that they can look at each other. In the case of these special children, we must have a good ratio between students and teachers; it must be something reasonable and not a ratio of 100 and 1! In fact my father has said, the ideal ratio is approximately 20:1 which is already stretching the ancient teaching quite far. So we can always have some help. For example, there may be a child who is not able to do something fast and the teacher knows how to improvise. If one child does something fast, the assistant will have to guide the child.

Sometimes we can add the idea of competition. "Let us see who will do it correctly, who will chant very well"- it would help the children. In fact, group activity is very important for children with special needs because they are always kept aloof as they are considered socially unfit. That's how we met one student. When Joseph was excluded from the family, he became violent; when he was accepted as a part of the family, he became such a good gentleman! So group action is to be encouraged; it can be monitored and we can provide a programme where everybody can do something.

In the courses designed for children with MR, there seems to be a lot of emphasis on asymmetric postures. Can you tell us something about this? How do asymmetric postures help?

We find that children with MR need training in co-ordination – linking different functions that are so easy and automatic for normal persons. For example, yesterday I saw a girl who was about nineteen years old. Her parents said that she had a thyroid problem. I wanted to check if she had a deeper problem because she seemed to be slightly different. I asked her a few questions, "Can you raise your hands like me?" I raised both my hands and she also raised her hands. 'I raised my right hand and she also raised the hand that was on my right side – i.e. her left hand. So the first thing we need to make them understand is that my right hand is actually on their left hand side. It is something they don't understand. They only imitate us. So we need to develop many skills to help them to do things.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



In asymmetric postures, we have enormous scope for this. An asymmetric posture is where things are completely different. Children with special needs – they only imitate, they often do not understand what we say. So we demonstrate and they imitate – when my right leg is in the front, they will put their left leg forward because my right leg is on their left hand side. If you extend this further we can do many things with asymmetrical postures in terms of training and co – ordination. So naturally, we use asymmetric postures.

Also quite often, one side could be weaker than the other. So we use these postures to develop the weak portion. We never teach this on the first day. It is designed as a part of the development of the posture. Asymmetric postures require a different kind of balance in comparison with symmetrical postures. So when they can do asymmetrical postures, they also get confidence. One of the most important points of focus for mentally handicapped children is to reassure them that they can do many things that they were always told, they are not fit to do. Confidence building is also a point we focus upon with mentally retarded people. So asymmetric postures like *Pārśva uttānāsana, Ardha Śalabhāsana, Bhagiratāsana,* etc., are used.

We have problems teaching a hyperactive child to inhale. Could you please give some suggestions?

Hyperactive children have many problems. The easiest way to ask him to exhale is, say loudly “a a…”. Automatically he will exhale. Particularly, we will ask him to lie on his stomach and say aa… It is a problem; teaching inhalation is most difficult. They will understand exhale somehow, they will not understand inhale. That is why we teach chanting, they learn to keep their mouth open. It is not teaching them chanting, it is teaching them how to breathe. The moment they begin to exhale, inhale follows. The more they exhale, the more they inhale. Inhalation should be taught indirectly.

Some children with MR are also epileptic. Which are the *Āsana-s* should be avoided or given to them?

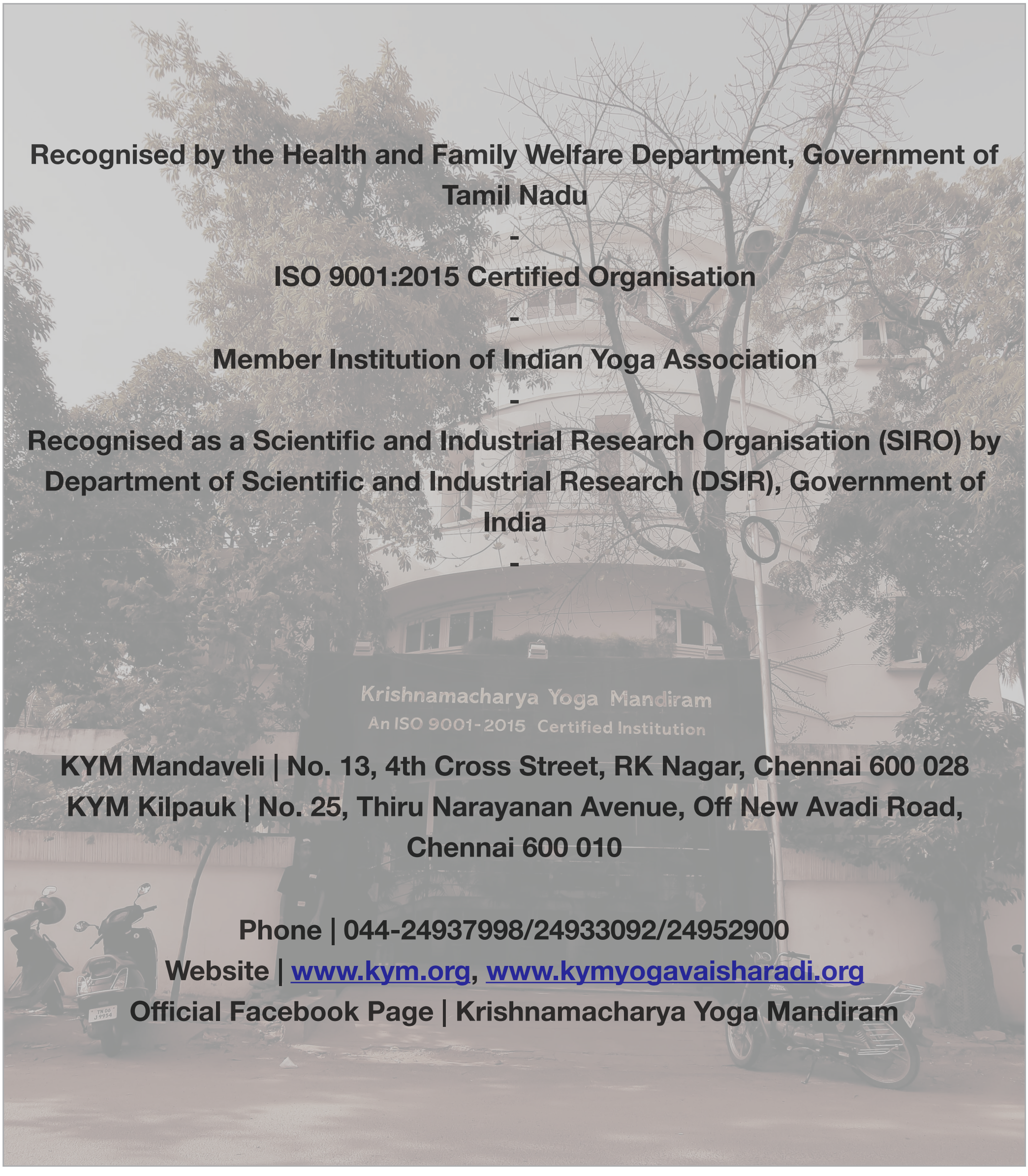
For those with epilepsy, we avoid postures which put a lot of pressure on the stomach like *Uṭkatāsana*, *Dhanūrāsana* and *Matsyāsana*.

Vol. 2, No. 1

DARŚANAM

March 2019

A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā* from Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Recognised by the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu

-

ISO 9001:2015 Certified Organisation

-

Member Institution of Indian Yoga Association

-

Recognised as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (SIRO) by Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Government of India

-

KYM Mandaveli | No. 13, 4th Cross Street, RK Nagar, Chennai 600 028

KYM Kilpauk | No. 25, Thiru Narayanan Avenue, Off New Avadi Road, Chennai 600 010

Phone | 044-24937998/24933092/24952900

Website | www.kym.org, www.kymyogavaisharadi.org

Official Facebook Page | Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram