CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 NEED OF THE RESEARCH

The present age is considered a vibrant age in which abundant professional skills are required for survival. Required skills include administration, management, planning, execution, oratory, technical abilities, rapport building, strong memory, flexibility, adjustability, swiftness, bubbling enthusiasm to work hard, vibrant optimism, working according to foresight, artistic skills, creativity, research oriented skills, reason, logic, common sense, arithmetic skills, effective communication, organizing capacity, team spirit and scientific approach.

These skills are more cognitive than physical. In fields of sciences, arts and business, whether working in the division of human resource development in a company, or in the field of information technology, growth in cognitive abilities is required to survive and thrive. Cognitive abilities are required in fields like industrial relations, public relations, human resource development, finance building, security-sector, manpower investment and scientific research.

Efficiency and work ability have also become very significant in the present age. Working ability includes constantly working hard without losing zeal and without getting tired and bored. Traditionally this ability is said to be developed by staying relaxed in the inner bliss of the silent conscious Self (Vivekananda). Yogic practices take one to inner bliss and help to remain fresh and relaxed. As the silent conscious Self is all potent and vibrant, one can manifest various cognitive abilities from pure consciousness for universal well-being (Chinmayananda).

Therefore, Yoga helps in two ways: a. Making one relaxed and fresh, by helping to stay in the fundamental Bliss of the inner Self. b. The fundamental substance is not
only Conscious Being, but also Conscious force; not only peace, bliss and harmony, but also omnipotent, creative power. Thus, Yoga, by enabling one to stay in that fundamental Self, makes one potent, creative and powerful, endowed with the cognitive abilities needed for universal well-being.

As the present age demands cognitive abilities as professional skills, education which is totally exam oriented is neither effective nor complete in today’s world. Education which is merely bookish and informative fails the needs of the present age. It is professional skills which are in demand, not just good marks in examinations.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF YOGA IN THE PRESENT AGE

Because of the need to develop students’ cognitive abilities, Yoga could be important to education. Yoga is hitting headlines and more and more people are thinking of incorporating Yoga into education. For several reasons Yoga may actually be essential. Yamas and Niyamas (individual and social values) of Yoga are more than mere ethics, because they carry one to the core of Dharma (natural law) and Ātman (cosmic order), thus, enabling one to understand the fundamental value of all ethics. Āsana (physical Postures) and Prāṇāyāma (gaining mastery over Prāṇa, the vital energy) of Yoga helps one to stay more in inner Bliss, if they are perfectly performed, than non-yogic physical and breathing exercises.

Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna (meditation), the 5th and the 6th limb of 8-limbed Yoga of Patañjali, can develop cognitive abilities more than other mental exercises such as puzzles and arithmetic problems, because Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna enable one to stay in the fundamental Conscious Being. And the last of the eighth limb, Samādhi (Absorption or super-consciousness) makes one completely relaxed, much more so
than drugs, liquor or sleep. Drugs may appear to offer immediate relief; but create
more stress and lead to addiction. Samādhi on the other hand is extremely health-
giving and harmonious.

1.3 GURUKULA EDUCATION SYSTEM
A detailed study of satisfaction patterns in students in MES schools, correlating 15
different questions and drawing a five-grade score, concluded that only 42% of all
students could be said to be satisfied with the quality of school education (out of
which 8% were “very satisfied”). Another 28% were average, 23% were dissatisfied
and 8% were very dissatisfied (Danino, 2008). In the modern world at large, it has
been taken for granted that education must be bookish, exam-oriented, merely
informative, and has to be strictly enforced. But slowly in the post-modern-era people
are beginning to realize that education should be something more than bookish
syntax; simply because growth in cognitive abilities is now recognized to be the need
of the hour in both education and the professions.
Investigating the Gurukula education system from a scientific perspective suggests
that its yogic practices can be adopted in MES schools to enhance the cognitive
variables. The ancient Gurukula education system (GES) includes many yogic
practices. These mainly enhance four abilities: a. to stay in inner silence, b. thereby to
be fresh and relaxed, harmonious and peaceful in all activities, c. to derive and
manifest the full potential of conscious being, d. to be Dhārmic to uphold values, and
be transparent as also ethical in all professional activities.
The present study examines one of the GES school which has contextualized the
oldest system of education in Indian heritage and culture. The GES is mentioned in
Vedic literature (Govindaśastry, Taittāriyopaniṣat, 1.1. 1987). Therefore, its
minimum date can be fixed to 3000BCE which is the minimum date fixed for the Vedas in recent years (Frawley).

In India, GES methods and practices are time-tested, updated to the changing context with eternal values kept intact in a changing society (Swami Ranganathananda) with newer ways of implementation and have been preserved for millennia unbroken traditions. In the Hindu tradition it is believed that the GES bestows great merits on society including improvement in student’s cognitive health (Dutta). The present study is to compare the GES curriculum with a conventional school of modern education system particularly about enhancement of cognitive abilities.

1.4 VEDIC YOGA AND COGNITION

The present study also explores the concepts of Yoga and cognition mentioned in the Vedas. All available information on the Gurukula Education System (GES) from the Vedas to the Epics alike are compiled in the thesis. A review of published scientific literature on the benefits of Yoga on cognitive variables like memory and attention were carried out to provide a backdrop for the experimental work. Similarly the review of the education systems and the evolution towards the modern educational system has been reviewed highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the system.