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KUMAR-KUMARI: IT IS MORE THAN GYMNASTICS FOR
CHILDREN OF YONGER AGE

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Abstract

Modern society has the following integral lines: promptly growing flows of information, stubborn problems and an unclear future. It creates expanding problems for its successors. A low level of physical development and functional condition of the organism of the child, hypodynamia, difficulties in socialization of the child causing behavioral disturbances, problems in the emotional-volitional sphere, problems of adaptation to kindergarten, school, difficulties in relationships with peers in a class, uneasiness and aggression are only a small list of the problems connected with preschool and school age. The original gymnastics arising in the Tibetan national tradition can overcome or, at least, facilitate many of them. The children's yantra-yoga is called "kumar-kumari". Exercises are based on synchronization of breathing and movement by means of pronouncing special sounds during inhalation and exhalation. The best age for practicing kumar-kumari is from 5-6 to 12-13 years old. But, it is possible to begin at the age of 4 years old, if the child shows corresponding abilities. It is known that increase in physical activity shows a positive influence on the health of a person, and children's, in particular. However, in the modern world, decrease in a physical activity of people, especially in big cities, is observed. Unfortunately, not all children love physical education classes. Unlike exercises at school, children always practice kumar-kumari with pleasure. Their self-assessment raises, and the relations with surrounding people improve, they become to be more pacified and study better at school. A joint occupation of children and parents strengthen their relationship.

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1. Introduction

1.1. What is kumar-kumari?

Kumar-kumari is the unique technique intended especially for the harmonization of the development of children since an early age till puberty. The principles of children's yoga "kumar-kumari" are based on the features of physiology of children's organism which have been experimentally discovered for centuries (Kumar Kumari, 2018; Lumsden, 2016; Boreham et al., 2001; Differences, 2009; Ployman & Smith, 2007;). Various movements (in Tibetan – yantras) are precisely coordinated with breathing. Sounds are used for the coordination of breath; each of the sounds corresponds to some type of an inhalation or exhalation. An exact coordination of breath (by means of sounds) and movements is a basis for the harmonization of various aspects of the processes flowing in children's organism. Unlike yoga for adults, kumar-kumari includes 15 exercises only. All of them are based on the principle of synchronization of breath and movement by means of pronouncing special sounds during inhalation and exhalation. These sounds harmonize and strengthen a growing organism. Breath is deeply connected with vital energy. Children receive a great advantage as a result of association of these sounds with the breath. Gradually, they begin to breathe more harmoniously and physiologically conformably not only during kumar-kumari exercises, but also in a usual life (Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga, 2018).

Training lessons in Tibetan yoga take place for children and their parents at the same time. On those days when the instructor does not give classes, parents do it at home. It takes half an hour a day. The regularity of classes increases their efficiency significantly (Soehin, 2017).

Yantra-yoga for adults (the Tibetan yoga of movement) is one of the most ancient yoga practices on earth. It is a way of achieving mind harmony through a harmonious breathing. But, unlike the adult, the child has a frequent and superficial breathing. Taking into account these features, in 1992 the

Tibetan master Chogyal Namkay Norbu develops a unique complex of yantra-yoga adapted for children aged 4 to 13 years old and call it kumar-kumari. Kumar-kumari means "boy and girl". A harmonious coordination of movements of the body, different types of breathing and sounds order emotions and create peace and clarity in minds of little practitioners. Breathing is connected with physical health and ability for concentration and self-control (Brains, 2017). Therefore, kumar-kumari improves physical health, emotional background and develops the habit to obey discipline. Kumar-kumari lays the foundation for a good health of the child. It is an important result of this type of gymnastics. Modern society has the following integral lines: promptly growing flows of information, stubborn problems and an unclear future. It creates the expanding problems for its successors. A low level of physical development and functional condition of the organism of the child, hypodynamia (Similarities, 2000; Hypodynamy, 2018, Malkov et al., 2007), difficulties of socialization of the child causing behavioural impairment, problems in the emotional-volitional sphere, problems of adaptation to kindergarten, school, difficulties in relationships with peers in a group or a class, uneasiness and aggression are only a small list of the problems connected with preschool and school age (Alekseeva, 2006; Boreham et al., 2001).

Numerous researches (Boreham et al., 2001; Brains of children, 2017) show that exercises and sports and increase in physical activity have a positive impact on health and mental capacity of people and children, in particular. But, unfortunately, most of children does not love physical culture classes (Miner, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

The usefulness of physical activity for a human body is well-known (How, 2015; Similarities, 2000). Nevertheless, physical education school classes are not pleasant to most of children. The attitude of children to kumar-kumari gymnastics has not been investigated yet. The scientific research of psychological and sociological aspects of the influence of kumar-kumari practicing on children and their parents has not been realized, as well.

3. Research Questions

- 3.1. What is the attitude of children practicing kumar-kumari to this type of gymnastics?
- 3.2. How do kumar-kumari gymnastics influence the children who are engaged in it?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research objective is the identification of the influence of kumar-kumari practicing on physical and mental health of children and their parents as well as the comparison of the emotional attitude of children to kumar-kumari with that of modern school physical culture.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Subjects (cases)

The subjects under test were 32 children from the community of pupils of Chogyal Namkay Norbu aged 4 to 13 years old living in Europe, the USA, Latin America and Australia as well as their parents. All the children had been regularly attending kumar-kumari classes (at the time of this poll) for more than a month and at least 2-3 times a week.

5.2. Procedure

- The children were asked to answer some closed questions and one open.
- The parents were also asked to answer both closed and open questions.

6. Findings

The most interesting results of poll are given in Table 01 and Table 02.

Table 01. Results of the poll among the children practicing kumar-kumari

| Questions\Age | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|--|--------|-------------|----------------|--------|--------------|---------------|----------|---------|----|----|
| 1. Do you like to practice Kumar-Kumari? | YY | YYY | YYY YYY | YY | YYY Y | YYY YY | YY YY | YYY | YY | Y |
| 2. Does Kumar-Kumari help you become better at school? | | | | - Y | - N Y | - N YYY | -N YY | - YY | YY | Y |
| 3. Does Kumar-Kumari help you | - - | - - Y | - - NYYY | YY | YY - - | - YYYY | -N YY | YYY | -Y | Y |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------|----------|---|
| become more hardy? | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Does Kumar-Kumari improve your relationships with parents? | - - | -N Y | YY | - - NY YY | - 0 YY | - - YYY | - 0 NY | - YY | - YYY | - |
| 5. Do you like sweets? | YY | YYY | YYY YYY | YY | YYYY | YYY YY | YYYY | YYY | YYYY | - |
| 6. If you were offered a choice: to eat sweet stuff or to practice Kumar-Kumari, would you choose Kumar-Kumari? | -N | -NY | - - NN YY | NY | - - NY | - - NYY | - - NY | -NY | NY | Y |

Designation: “Y” – yes; “N” – no; “-” – I find it difficult to answer.

Table 02. Results of the poll among the parents whose children practice kumar-kumari

| Questions\Age of children | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|---|----|---------|----------------|----|----------|---------------|----------|---------|----|----|
| 1. Has your child learned to understand his body better and be respectful to the body? | YY | YY Y | -N YY YY | NY | YY YY | -N YY Y | -Y YY | YY Y | YY | Y |
| 2. Has your child become more obedient? | YY | -Y Y | -N YY YY | -Y | -Y YY | YY YY Y | -N YY | -Y Y | -Y | Y |
| 3. Has the ability of your child for concentration improved? | YY | -Y Y | -Y YY YY | NY | -N YY | -Y YYY | -Y YY | -- Y | NY | Y |
| 4. Has your child become more responsible or responsive? | -Y | -N Y | -N YY YY | -- | -Y YY | -- YY Y | -N YY | -Y Y | -Y | - |
| 5. Has your child become better at school? | | | | -Y | -- YY | -N YY Y | -N YY | NN Y | YY | - |
| 6. Do you observe any improvement in the child moodiness after practicing Kumar-Kumari? | YY | YY Y | YY YY YY | -Y | -Y YY | -N YY Y | -Y YY | NY Y | -Y | Y |
| 7. Does your child enjoy practicing Kumar-Kumari? | YY | YY Y | YY YY YY | YY | YY YY | -Y YY Y | YY YY | YY Y | YY | Y |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---------|----------------|----|----------------|---------------|----------|---------|---------|---|
| 8. Does your child ask for any practice Kumar-Kumari with you? | -Y | YY Y | -Y YY YY | NY | -Y YY | -Y YY Y | | | | |
| 9. Does your child practice Kumar-Kumari by himself? | | | | | NN YY | -N YY Y | -Y YY | YY Y | YY | Y |
| 10. If you offered your child a choice between sweet stuff or Kumar-Kumari session, would he be most likely to choose Kumar-Kumari? | NN | -N N | -- NN NY | -- | -- NN YY | -- -N Y | -- NY | -Y Y | YY | N |
| 11. Do you think that regular half-an-hour Kumar-Kumari sessions can change your child's life for the better? | YY | YY Y | -Y YY YY | -Y | -Y YY | -N YY Y | YY YY | -Y Y | YY | Y |
| 12. Did you practice Kumar-Kumari exercises yourself? | YY | YY Y | YY YY YY | YY | YY YY | YY YY Y | YY YY | YY Y | -Y Y | N |
| 13. Do you like Kumar-Kumari practice? | -Y | -Y Y | NY YY YY | YY | YY YY | YY YY Y | YY YY | YY Y | YY Y | |

Designation: "Y" – yes; "N" – no; "--" – I find it difficult to answer.

As far as it is possible to see from table 1, the results of the polls have shown the following:

- All the children and almost all the parents like to practice Kumar-Kumari.
- The vast majority of the children older than 7 years old and more senior children and their parents consider that Kumar-Kumari helps study at school better. The parents also note that the children's ability to concentrate improves greatly.
- Most of the children state that Kumar-Kumari helps them be more hardy.
- Most of the children admit that Kumar-Kumari helps improve their relations with the parents. Also, most of the parents hold the same opinion. The parents consider that Kumar-Kumari makes children more obedient and responsible.
- The majority of the parents notice that children have become more flexible and learned to realize and respect their body.
- The majority of the parents observe improvement in their children's attitude after practicing Kumar-Kumari

- The children at younger age usually ask the parents to practice Kumar-Kumari together with them. The senior children practice Kumar-Kumari independently.
- All the interviewed children love candies, but many of them are ready to refuse the offered candy in favour of Kumar-Kumari practice. However, they add that it would be better to receive both candy and the practice. The both facts are confirmed by the parents, as well.
- The majority of the parents agree that the regular half-an-hour trainings of Kumar-Kumari enable to change the child's life for the better.

Besides, closed and some open questions are also offered to the parents. As a result, it has become clear that the parents are pleased by an opportunity to do something together with their children when it gives pleasure to all of them. One of the interviewed parents (the mother of the two girls) say: "Before practicing Kumar-Kumari my children did not realize the breath absolutely: they just breathed and tried neither to manage, nor to observe this process. Kumar-Kumari helps to realize one's own body, see how it reacts, how it becomes tired little by little, how it breathes, etc. No other practice gives such a fast and simple understanding to little children. It is useless to explain all of these with the help of words. Kumar-Kumari explains it through absolutely accurate and recognizable sensations (what it is possible to do during inhalation and exhalation, what is longer: the inhalation or exhalation, etc)". Besides that, the parents have noted that if they need to ask the child to do something, it is better to speak about it after practice: almost for certain the child would meet a request.

7. Conclusion

All the parents note essential positive shifts in physical and mental condition of the children. It is interesting that parents note positive changes in themselves, too. The mutual understanding between the parents and children improves. It promotes strengthening the institution of family. It is also assumed that Kumar-Kumari practices are pleasant to all (!) children unlike school lessons of physical culture. In this regard, it is possible to draw the conclusions that the Tibetan yoga of the movement Kumar-Kumari is of utmost use for children at 4 to 13 years old. One can recommend it for the inclusion in the program of primary and high school.

Further researches of the effects of Kumar-Kumari practices seem to be promising.

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