

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND.

As per sanatana dharma in the days of yore, man worshipped Godhead reciting Vedic chants considered as co-eval with God according to the time, the day and the season of the year.

Quite often man worshipped God in the form of nature simply in ecstasy or in awe. Iconic worship either individual or congregational, came later with the advent of Agamasastra and Tantric form of divine worship. In the preface to a book on congregational worship, Leadbeater describes the thought-form generated when a group of persons perform congregational worship with Gayatri mantra which includes nyasa procedure, led by a priest. Agama sastra lays down elaborate procedures for worship and stipulate strict adherence by the priests with the ultimate aim of welfare of the whole mankind. One of the procedures is Nyasa which is ordained as mandatory prior to every mantrajapa. Nyasa means to place parts of mantra on parts of the body of the worshipper in a designated sequence.

Both nigama and agama come from the root GAM (gachha) meaning to go and also to know. The more popular word for 'Nigama' is Veda which means 'to know'. Veda is considered as the fountainhead of all knowledge for all and for all time. It is held as anadi and apaurusheya (not composed by any person) and co-eval with God. Veda is also known as 'Sruti' - the one learnt by oral tradition and thereby maintaining the purity and correctness of chanting.

Agamasastras on the other hand are regarded as instructions from Gods/Goddesses through Rsis for the performance of worship to the divine in a structured and systematic manner for the welfare of the society, the flora, the fauna and the ecosystem.

Aims

- 1 To understand the concept of nyasapractice
- 2 To explore the possibility of adapting nyasa to yoga therapy

Objectives

- 1 To study any changes in the physiology due to nyasa
- 2 To measure changes in chosen parameters due to nyasa

Methods

DESIGN

Self as control with cross over from control to experimental and vice versa was used as the design.

SUBJECTS

The subjects are students of an institution for the study of sastras, in the age group 16-20, with regular daily practice of Gayatri for periods ranging from one to three years. They were all initiated into nyasa for Gayatri mantra by a faculty of the institution. The subjects practiced nyasa for two days before measurements were made. All subjects are of good health and not taking any drugs for any health problems. They are all from similar socio-economic background and form a homogenous group.

SAMPLE

This research is the first of its kind. No guidance for sample size is available. Therefore it was decided to take all available student population in the institution as sample. Thus the study was made on 30 subjects. The separation between control and experimental groups was randomized. Every alternate subject who came into the laboratory for measurement was assigned to control or experimental group. Though the measurements were taken for all thirty subjects, the data is available for less number of subjects due to noisy data, improper finger placement and drop out of data around some fingers and hence these could not be included in the study.

Data on Integral Entropy and Integral Area 29 subjects (15 control and 14 experimental)

Data on Fractality 22 subjects (10 control and 12 experimental)

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

A device known as Electro Photonic Imaging [EPI] – also known as Gas Discharge Visualization – is used for the investigations reported in this thesis. The instrument consists of a high voltage, high frequency generator whose field is applied to the fingertips of subjects. The field draws out electrons and photons from the body through the finger tips. Since the electric field is applied through a glass plate, the current through the finger is in the low microamperes range and no discomfort is felt by the subjects. Thus, the measurement is entirely non-invasive and safe. Since the fingertips of all fingers represent organs according to acupuncture theory, subtle energy flow of chi or prana in the body is monitored through this method. For current research on the subtle effect of nyasa, EPI is thought to meet the requirement very well.

INTERVENTION

Anganyasa and karanyasa are used together as intervention in this study.

DATA EXTRACTION

Data on three parameters, viz., Integral Entropy, Integral Area and Fractality were extracted from the EPI grams generated by the Electro Photonic Imaging device.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was primarily analysed qualitatively, being the first study of its kind. Quantitative analysis was limited to simple statistics and trend in changes in the parameters.

RESULTS

Decrease in Integral Entropy takes place when Gayatri mantrajapa is preceded by nyasa and relaxation as shown by 79% of subjects. Out of these, 45% of subjects show entropy decrease when Gayatri mantrajapa is preceded by nyasa as against 34% when preceded by relaxation. In the case of Integral Area the changes observed could be due to practice of nyasa. In the case of Fractality no significant change is seen in both groups. In summary, the data on entropy decrease, which is a sign of better health, encourage further extended study.

CONCLUSION

The benefits of doing nyasa prior to any mantrajapa cited in almost all agama sastras are experiential and holistic. They are subjective in nature as vouchsafed by agama practitioners and swamijis of monastic order. In this limited scientific study, nyasa shows small noticeable changes for the better as evidenced by entropy decrease. Extended study on heterogenous large sample will throw more light on the usefulness for therapeutic applications.