

EFFECT OF PANCHABOOTHANA NAVAGRAHA MEDITATION IN VSP VILLAGES - A POWERFUL YOGIC SOLUTION FOR ALCOHOLIC DEADDICTION IN HUMAN

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ABSTRACT

It is observed that bringing alcohol addicted persons to yogic learning is an herculean task. Through, Village Service Project of World Community Service Centre, Aliyar, efforts are continuously made to rehabilitate them. Without targeting them directly, as a part of Village Service Project (VSP) activity, volunteers approached the villagers at their doorstep to create awareness and invite them to participate in Simplified Kundalini Yoga (SKY) classes and a lot of women and children came forward to learn the SKY yoga practices. However, only lean attendance was observed for men. Due to alcoholic addiction, men were hesitant to attend yoga class.

Research evidences show that the role of the family member is equally important for change in behaviour of the addict especially for the deaddiction treatment. (Nicholas D Hayes et al, 2018).

The present investigation has been focused to inculcate an interest in the minds of the alcohol addicted persons on the path of recovery. A sample of 300 family members who are affected by addicted persons were chosen at VSP villages, Nergunapattu and Eichur. Members are practiced to perform Panchabootha navagraha meditation for a period of one mandalam (48 days) with sankalpa thereby they are triggered to come forward in the spiritual path and adopt yoga to overcome addiction. This resulted in the positive effect and the family members are hopeful that their family will be happy in the days to come.

Keywords : SKY Yoga – Vethathiri Maharishi - Village Service Project (VSP) – WCSC- Addicted person – Panchabootha Navagraha Meditation - Deaddiction

1.0 Introduction

Yogiraj Thathuvagani **Shri Vethathiri Maharishi** (1911–2006) – He is a spiritual leader and founder-trustee of the World Community Service Center (WCSC) and formulated a complete science of living for the betterment of the society. He evolved the **Simplified Kundalini Yoga (SKY)** for Holistic Health (Physical, Mental, Spiritual and Social Health) and offered it to the humanity as a spiritual education. His teachings are lucid and a holistic blend of

science and philosophy, which would build brotherhood, harmony and understanding leading to world peace and happiness.

The **World Community Service Centre (WCSC)** is powered by the vision of guiding light, **Vethathiri Maharishi**, a sage who in his own lifetime rendered yeoman service to bring about positive change at the personal level through his teachings, WCSC carries on his inspiring legacy to bring about world peace. Today there are around 400 trusts and about 2023 sub centres registered and affiliated to WCSC. WCSC is a non religious, non-political and non profitable spiritual organisation spread across India and other foreign countries like Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and USA.

On behalf of WCSC, **Village Service Project (VSP)** was initiated in March 2012 at Vallipuram in Erode district of Tamilnadu. The project is the brain child of A/N Padmashri S K M Mayeilanandam, President and follower of Vethathiri Maharishi. The Pilot Project at Jarugu village set a benchmark in its own standard. By the end of five years since inception, more than 100 villages have benefitted from this scheme. By August 2019, 168 villages have come into the fold of Village Service Project.

According to Vethathiri Maharishi, there are sixteen reasons for the differences that are found in men. They are heredity, Food, Historical age, country, education, work, government policy, art, efforts, age, friendship, opportunity, research, sentimental feelings of the society, habits and moral behaviour. Addiction to alcohol becomes a habit and paves way for illicit moral behaviour. Both these are highly prevalent in the present society. Alcohol Addiction and Abuse is a social menace worldwide. From 1870 to 1900, addiction was considered as a habit. But now, research findings prove that addiction is a disease. (*Alagesan, 2013*)

Kurtz (1988) found that the higher the spiritual awareness of recovering alcoholics, the better their recovery from alcoholism. Spirituality has been reported as an important component of recovering efforts of an alcoholic and during treatment, the changes are maintained through spiritual practices only. (*Flynn et al, 1998*). Prayer, sat-sung, yoga, meditation or even chanting God's name are some of the fundamental practices of spirituality and any one of these if adopted will help the person to repair the damages occurred as a result of alcoholism.

The fatal disease like cancer in a person creates sympathy on him whereas, the illness due to alcoholism will not create any sympathy instead it creates anger and it brings misunderstanding. It also brings unhappiness and pushes the family to poor economic conditions. Initiating yoga practices to alcohol addicted persons facilitates rehabilitation of addicts voluntarily and self commitment to an alcohol free life.

2.0 Five fold moral principles formulated by Vethathiri Maharishi, a modern age saint

Vethathiri Maharishi, founder of World community service centre has given how the culture should be suitable for the modern age. In one of his poems he has written that drug usage should be abolished to imbibe a new culture.

Need of a new culture to the world

Abolishing drug, war, lie and smoke,

Let`s implement with sincerity

No extra burden

- 1) everyone decide to live based on their knowledge, energy and physical work
- 2) high order not to trouble other`s mind , body by erring knowledge
- 3) penance not to kill other lives for food
- 4) as a general rule respect and maintain others belongings and freedom to live and
- 5) Love to clear other`s suffering.

(Gnana Kalinjiyam Verse. 1843 written on 02.04.1999)

3.0 Meditation and Alcohol deaddiction

Ramana Maharishi referred as Sage of Thiruvannamalai once said `When camphor burns, no residue is left. The mind must be like camphor. It must melt away and be wholly consumed by the earnest resolve to find and be the real self. When the mind is thus consumed – when no trace of it as mind is left – it has become resolved into the Self.`. Success in meditation comes quickly to a few, and after long practice to others. The Sage further said : “Meditation is impeded by vasanas (proclivities or affinities of the mind); hence it becomes effective through the progressive weakening of the vasanas. Some minds are like gunpowder which takes fire and is consumed at once; others are like charcoal, and some others are like wet fuel.” (*Lakshmana Sarma, 2011*)

Meditation or Yoga is a powerful technique for deaddiction. It liberates a person from slavery to drugs, liquor or smoking. The energy which creates craving at higher mental levels gets blown away by the positive energy of yoga and meditation. It is a law of universe that stronger energy waves blows away the weaker energy waves. De addiction is the core area of concern as addiction leaves a very negative impact on an individual, family members and society at large.

3.1 Impact of meditation on human being

Varied research studies prove that meditation creates wonders by its effects on the critical brain and body chemicals such as serotonin, cortisol, DHEA, GABA, Endorphins, growth hormone and melatonin.

(1) Serotonin is also called as ‘happy neuro transmitter’. University of Montreal scientists have proved that meditation increases with increase in the serotonin level effectively melting the stress level. Thus meditation replenishes serotonin and makes the person calmer and happier.

(2) Cortisol otherwise known as `stress hormone`. Scientists of Rutgers University have studied and revealed that the meditation reduced 50% of production of cortisol.

(3) DHEA (De Hydro Epi Androsterone) also referred as the longevity molecule, the DHEA level in the body decrease with age and proved that meditation increases DHEA level dramatically. Dr Vincent Giampapa, the famous longevity researcher found that people who did meditation had their DHEA level increased by 43.77 % more.

(4) GABA (Gamma Amino Butyric Acid) is referred as 'calm chemical'. Lack of GABA is observed in almost all the addicts – be it alcohol, drugs, coffee, tea, food, nicotine, etc., A 60 minutes Meditation increases 27% of GABA level, this result was found reported by the scientists of Boston University School of Medicine in the year 2010.

(5) Endorphins also referred as 'the natural high chemical'. Harte et al (1995) conducted research on two groups namely runners and meditators and reported that the endorphin levels after the feel good effect of meditation scored very much higher than that of the runners.

(6) Growth hormone or fondly known as the Youth Hormone is responsible for growth during childhood and slowly diminishes with age. Reduced level of this hormone is the major reason for the weakness and the fragility that comes with aging. Growth hormone is produced in the pituitary gland and meditation enhances the production of growth hormone and that is why the meditators look young and fresh.

(7) Melatonin otherwise known as the Sleep Molecule is produced in the pineal gland and is maximum before bed time. Insomnia and cancer are some of the major diseases cured by the presence of Melatonin. Meditation boosts melatonin level in the blood by 98% as per the research reports of Rutgers University.

3.2 The impact of consumption of alcohol on human brain

Dependence to alcohol is linked to the interaction of alcohol with brain's stress system. The major component of the brain is CRF (Corticotrophin Release Factor) which works in the amygdala and the related areas of the brain. Chronic alcoholism increases the CRF level in the brain by inhibiting the GABA receptors and the glutamate receptor particularly the N methyl –d-aspartate NMDA. Consumption of even a small dose of alcohol releases other inhibitors such as dopamine (pleasure chemical) and serotonin (happy neuro transmitter) in the nucleus area of the brain which is also called as reward centre which makes alcohol drinking enjoyable.

3.3 The role of meditation on alcoholism

Goldstein et al (2002) have stated that the happiness centre which is in the prefrontal cortex of the brain is super stimulated during intoxication and very underactive during the times of withdrawal. Dr. Sara Lazar (2005), a Harvard neuro scientist found that meditation led to more neural density, cortical thickness and overall activity in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. Thus meditation can lead a man to be happy instead of resorting to alcohol drugs or other intoxication substance.

3.4 Tackling addiction through meditation - Science behind

Repeated performance of an action creates a mental blueprint. Every action is performed mentally as well as physically, and repetition of a particular action and its accompanying thought pattern causes the formation of subtle electrical pathways in the physiological brain, somewhat like the grooves in a phonographic record. After a time, whenever a needle of attention is put on those grooves of electrical pathways, it plays back the record of the original mental blueprint.

Each time an action is repeated, these grooves of electrical pathways become deeper, until the slightest attention automatically `plays` those same actions over and over again.

These patterns make the person a victim of the habits thus formed and depending on how set those patterns are, to that degree, the habituated person acts like a puppet. But one can neutralize the dictates of those bad habits by creating brain patterns of opposite good habits and can completely erase the grooves of bad habits by meditation. (Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, 2002)

4.0 Affirmation for removing bad habits

Affirmation done after meditation will have a positive strong effect on one`s thoughts. Paramahansa Yogananda concluded one of his public talks on overcoming habits by addressing his listeners as follows : `Close your eyes and think of one bad habit you want to get rid of.....Affirm with me. `I am free of that habit now: I am free:`. Hold on to that thought of freedom, forget the bad habit. Repeat after me, `I shall remould my consciousness. I m a new person. And I shall change my consciousness again and again until I have driven away all the darkness of ignorance and manifested the shining light of spirit in whose image I am made;. (Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, 2002)

5.0 Influence of planets on addiction

According to Vedic astrology, the planets Mars, Rahu and Saturn play a key role in initiation of addiction and obstruction in recovery. The unfavorable relationship of these planets with 1st, 2nd or 6th house of the natal chart and in addition, if the 2nd house is troubled, the probability of becoming an addict is very strong. Mostly, Rahu is considered as the planet that causes addiction. Some may be addicted in Mars or Saturn mahadasa periods. However Rahu will play a major role in addictions and obsessions. The 16 year Jupiter cycle makes a man learn about God and then the 19 year Saturn mahadasa period makes the man spiritual.

6.0 Review of Literature

Marlene Oscar-Berman *et al.* (1997) identified and used scientific facts and figures to examine the impairment of brain and behavior and the neurological effects as a result of alcohol consumption,. The facts revealed that alcoholism affects the entire nervous system. These effects bring dreadful changes in emotions, personality, perception, learning, and memory and witnessed the physical brain abnormalities such as atrophy of nerve cells and brain shrinkage. In patients with Korsakoff`s syndrome, alcoholism damages to limbic system and diencephalic structures. They also suffer diffuse cortical damage that affects the left and right brain hemispheres that result in abstracting and problem-solving abilities and, poor attention. The neurological consequences of alcoholism include nutritional deficiencies and liver disease. Damage to central neurotransmitter systems is considered as the contributing factor in alcohol-related abnormalities with harmful neurological consequences.

In a three months study done by **Bowen et al (2006)** from University Washington on 78 prison inmates who were substance addicted, it was found that the inmates who meditated drank 87% less alcohol and used marijuana 89% less than their usual consumption.

Surendra Kumar Mattoo *et al.* (2013) carried out a study to express out the family burden experienced by the family caregivers of 120 addicted men seeking treatment for substance dependence. In case of more than one family caregiver being available, the person selected for the study was the one staying with them longer and being involved more. They had also got the consensus among the patient, caregivers and the treating clinician. The selected family caregivers were assessed on family burden interview schedule. Considering the burden aspect, the results were reported as either moderate (52.5%) or severe (45.8%) and rarely as absent (1.7%). The study concluded that addiction to substances was associated with heavy burden for the family members. The study also revealed that the burden was more for rurally located families with low income.

Researchers from **University of Cincinnati** (UC) in United States of America have conducted a study for 10 years in a population with the age group of 18 to 24 year more than 125 at risk youths on the stressful life events and substance abuse. The study revealed that, positive coping behaviour of meditation either learned or self generated, have a positive effect on their life even though they endured stressful life events. Meditation could be a reason as otherwise they could have fallen prey to pro social activities and could have spoiled their future.

7.0 Objective of this study

- (1) A pilot study to be carried out with the family members of the alcoholic addicts.
- (2) To bring out alcohol addicted persons to yogic learning through Village Service Project
- (3) To do volunteers approach at the doorstep of villagers to create awareness and invite them to participate in SKY yoga.
- (4) This study is focused main with a consistent thought for the welfare of the family member through Panchabootha Navagraha Meditation and to bring out a positive effect to the addicted person.

8.0 . Deaddiction Camp in the VSP villages

The main objective of the Central Sector Scheme for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance Drug Abuse under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is to create awareness and educate people on the ill effects of alcohol and drug addiction. WCSC through its Village Service Project, along with their core SKY yoga classes conducts De addiction Camps to create awareness and educate the villagers about the ill effects of alcoholism and provide community based services like motivation, counselling and yogic techniques for rehabilitation for whole person recovery (WPR) of the alcohol addicts. So far, more than 168 villages in and around Tamilnadu have been covered under the WCSC_VSP Scheme.

9.0 Materials and Methods

A pilot study was conducted at Village Service projects, Nergunapattu village and Eichur villages, both sponsored by the corporate, Madras Atomic Power Plant, Kalpakkam . Conveniently selected samples of 300 (120 from Nergunapattu village and 180 from Eichur village) were included in the study after a brief discussion. The samples were notified about

the meditation time, venue and their continuous attendance was insisted. The meditation was conducted daily for 48 days.

There are different version for mandalam some say 41 but mostly it is said to contain 48 days. Doing something for a mandalam has an astrological significance. In the said 49 days, the moon would have completed two full rotations and the stars would have complete alignment with the sun in these 48 days. It is the total of 12 raasi, 9 planets and 27 stars. (12 + 9 + 27 = 48). Any work that is done with dedication consistently for a mandalam will give tremendous result.

9.1 Panchabootha Navagraha Meditation – Methodology

Vethathiri Maharishi designed Panchabootha navagraha meditation to invoke the blessings of the five elements or the pancha boothas namely Prithvi (earth), Apu (water), Theyu (fire), Vayu (air) and Akash (Space energy) as well as the nine planets namely, the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Rahu and Kethu. The meditation starts with the divine invocation (prayer), invocation of guru's blessing, purification of the surroundings, divine protection, salutation to mother, father and Guruji. Meditation is done on the five elements and then on the nine planets in the following order.

Meditation	Duratio n
Earth	2 min
Water	2 min
Fire	2 min
Air	2 min
Akash	2 min
Sun	2 min
Mercury	2 min
Venus	2 min
Moon	2 min
Mars	2 min
Jupiter	2 min
Saturn	2 min
Rahu & Kethu	2 min

The meditation is concluded with auto suggestion and blessings. (Master`s guide, 2008)

9.2 Panchabootha Navagraha Meditation in the VSP villages

Panchabootha Navagraha Meditation started on Mahalaya Amavasya 8th October 2018 and got concluded on 24th November 2018 at Nergunapattu village. At Eichur village, panchabootha navagraha meditation was started on 4th February 2019 and concluded on 23rd

March 2019. Those who could not do meditation for a few days in between due to unavoidable circumstances continued by extending the study. At the end of the study, the subjects were interviewed and the findings noted.

10.0 . Results and Discussion

Meditation roots out the true source of unhappiness in life which gets transformed on many levels by causing a favorable behaviour pattern, changes in life style with a conscious mindset and addiction free living becomes a natural way of living. The findings of the study conclude that panchabootha navagraha meditation is effective in the sense that it created a lot of positivity in the village and initiated the process of rehabilitation of the alcohol addicts to some extent.

It was found that 68% felt that they could find some notable changes in their family member who showed interest for recovery and the remaining meditators did not provide any comment on the effect. We are not sure whether they observed any effect nor was there any effect, we are not able to say. It was also found that almost 92% of the meditators prayed for their family welfare. It was also observed that a few also meditated for their self realization and for the welfare of their village.

11.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The present study was carried out using family members who are affected by the alcohol addicts. From the study, it is concluded that the meditation done by the family members for the welfare of the alcohol addicts yielded favorable result which resulted in considerable number of addicted men coming forward for rehabilitative treatment and attending SKY yoga classes. Thus the present study has revealed that if there is such an indirect effect on the alcohol addict due to meditation by their family member, undoubtedly, the benefits of yogic interventions if done by the affected persons themselves will be immense. As a corollary, it can be definitely stated that rehabilitation of the alcohol addicts will become a reality if the addicted persons lead a yogic life to remain sober and happy.

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(a) Meditators at Nergunapattu Village



(b) Meditators at Eichur Village