

**SRI VISHNUSAHASRANAMA COMBINED YAGYA, A HOLISTIC PRACTICE FOR PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL WELLBEING: A CASE STUDY****Pombala Sujitha\*, PhD**

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**ABSTRACT**

During the global pandemic -with fear, stress, anxiety and depression, the research on Ayurveda Classics is especially significant and have important applications with its distinctive mental and physical health implications. In quest for traditional approaches or no drug therapies, the present study support the practice of Mantra and Yagya chikitsa of Daivavyapashraya chikitsa (Ayurveda classics) as an alternative therapy of preventive and protective approach to combat infectious diseases, and to enhance immunity and psychological wellbeing. With the growing research on influence of mantra on the efficacy of yagya, and with the little available research on Sri vishnusahasranama mantra,

the current study presents interesting results on the psychological interventions of performing Yagya and Sri vishnusahasranam mantra. The present study infered that, Yagya with Sri Vishnusahasranama chanting combined with pranayama and dhyana significantly reduced anxiety level of the participants measured using Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test. There is a significant difference on anxiety of participants before and after the divine practice with reduction in the level of anxiety ( $p=0.0842$ ; 95% confidence interval -3.62 to 32.62;  $t = 2.5467$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $n=4$ ). The mean difference of pre readings (Mean + SD;  $27.75+17.35$ ) and post readings ( $13.25+9.22$ ) was  $14.50+5.694$  indicating significant reduction in the anxiety level. This could be a holistic alternative approach to improve psychophysiological immunity, mental wellness, mindfulness, mental power and strength; decrease psychological stress, anxiety, fear, increase positive mood, decrease negative mood, and improve social and family connection.

**KEYWORDS:** Yagya therapy, Sri Vishnu Sahasranama, Mantra therapy, wellness, anxiety, stress.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda developed more than 3000 years ago is one of the world's largest holistic healing systems and still there is quest for traditional health knowledge. Traditional medicine is defined as "the sum total of the knowledge, skill and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness". The main principal of ayurveda is to promote good health, not fight diseases is dependent on balance between mind, body and spirit. Health is described as a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing but not merely as the absence of disease <sup>[1]</sup>. From ancient times, Traditional Medicine (TM) is associated with physical health, mental health and spiritual health benefits and understanding and rationalization of ancient TM is an important aspect of scientists throughout the world in past few years.

Recently, WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023 stressed the need to fully harness traditional medicine and its contributions to maintaining health, wellness and people - centered and universal health care. At least 25% of all modern medicines are having direct or indirect roots from traditional medicine. The complementary and alternative medicine has two categories, natural products and mind - body practices. Currently, more than three of the population around the world use traditional medicines for their health care. Ayurveda, as an alternative traditional complementary medicine describe Daivavyapashraya chikitsa as one of the three modalities for Shariraka Dosha (bodily elements) and Manasika Dosha (psychological attributes). Among Daivavyapashraya chikitsa, Mantra chikitsa and Yagya therapy are considered as prominent tools of Ayurveda classics.<sup>[2]</sup>

Recent scientific research has contributed to understanding of the mechanisms, effects, and applications of Mantra and Yagya therapy. Mantra has been shown to be associated with alterations in brain structure, better mental health, improved attention, greater emotional self-regulation, slower cellular aging, better academic performance and other outcomes <sup>[3]</sup>. Mantras are "primordial rhythms of creation" and constant repetition awakens the consciousness – chit or Chaitanya. Yagya is an ancient holistic spiritual sacrifice and sublimating *hawan samagri* (herbs) in the *Yagyagni* with chanting of vedic mantras. As per Ayurveda classics Yagya and Mantra chikitsa are considered as the most important

approaches of Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa for physical and mental wellness [5]. Despite, growing research on Mantra and Yagya therapy, research on its psychophysiology correlates is in nascent stage and little scientific studies are available on the effect of Sri Vishnusahasranama and Yagya on psychological attributes. In this scenario, the present study provides a report on the effect of Yagya practiced in a holistic approach as a divine spiritual therapy for psychophysiological immunity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Participants*

Four participants were selected for the study to understand the impact of divine therapy of Mantra and Yagya on psychological wellbeing. A sample of 4 volunteers of age group 25-35 were selected randomly with their prior consent to participate in the study. Two male and two female participants who had faith on Mantra and Yagya were selected.

### *Pranayama and Mantra Meditation*

Before performing Yagya, 20-minute Mantra meditation was conducted by chanting Om Mantra and Gayatri Mantra. During meditation participants were instructed to sit in a quiet and comfortable position to enter meditative state, close eyes and first practice pranayama, a breathing exercise involving fast breathing followed by a slow inspiration through the right nostril and a slow expiration through the left nostril according to individual comfort. Then followed by meditation to feel the positive energy of mantra chanting.

### *Procedure of Yagya*

Yagya was performed as described in the book “Sankshipt Gayatri Hawan Vidhi”<sup>[6]</sup> by four vedpandits. Yagya was performed in a traditional small yagya shala with the Yagya Kunda (fire pit) and the fire pit used was made of clay and bricks, coated with cow dung. The four participants were made to sit on the four sides of the Kunda. Yagya was performed early in the morning during the time of sunrise with herbs (common havan samagri) available from Herbal Medicine store, Telangana. Dried Cow dung patties of indigenous breed and mango sticks were used as samidha (firewood). The mantras used were Sri Vishnu Sahasranama and Gayatri mantra.

Briefly the procedure included *Shatkarma* (*Pavitrikaranam, achaman, shikhavandanam, nasya, prithvi pujanam*), *chandandharanam, Guru Aavahan, 24 Gayatri Mantrahuti, Sri Vishnusahasranam Mantrahuti using havan samagri, and pranayama*. Hawan mixture

included several medicinal herbs such as Tulasi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*), Saptaparni (*Alstonia Scholaris*), Aswagandha (*Withania somnifera*), Harada (*Terminalia chebula*), Mulaithi (*Glycyrrhiza Glabra Bois*), Punarnava (*Boerhavia diffusa*), etc.

### ***Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test (SCAT)***

Comprehensive Anxiety Test, Constructed and Standardized by Sinha, A. K. P. and Sinha L. N. K. (1971)<sup>[7]</sup> was used to measure the anxiety among the participants. During the testing session participants were instructed in brief about the purpose. Firstly, a questionnaire of Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test (SCAT) was filled with proper instructions as per the manual and data was recorded. Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test (SCAT) by A. K. P. Sinha and L. N. K. Sinha is a test available both in Hindi and as well as in English. This test is published by Agra National Psychological Corporation. It covers five levels of anxiety. The test contains 90 items of manifest anxiety. It is 15 to 20 minutes' test. Participants were asked to read the items carefully and to put a tick mark in one of the provided spaces according to their opinion "YES" or "NO". After collecting the responses, checked for any gaps or discrepancies in the response sheets and then used scoring key to calculate MEAN, SD and "t" - Value of respondents. Test consists of 4 items, significant at 0.01 levels. Scoring, Sum, total scores show the anxiety level. Higher the scores show higher the anxiety.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Divine therapy is a very effective ancient therapy and holistic approach for physical and mental health. The present study indicated a significant reduction in stress and anxiety level that could be attributed to divine practice of pranayama, gayatri Mantra dhyana and Yagya with Sri Vishnusahasranama mantra. To date, there is little understanding of the unique properties of Mantra and Yagya therapy, and the research is still in its infancy stage. It is believed that their health benefits arise from a convergence of multiple processes. It provides therapeutic advantage to many kinds of disease whether somatic or psychic or somatopsychic or psychosomatic.<sup>[8]</sup>

Pranayama, the initial step practiced in this divine therapy, is a yogic breathing technique that help improve the pulmonary and cardiovascular functions by increasing lung capacity and improving circulation of blood resulting in better expulsion of toxins and free radicals from the system. When pranayama is performed slowly and rhythmically may help reduce stress levels along with lowering of blood pressure and heart rate simultaneously increasing metabolism and cognitive function; and reduced fatigue, anxiety, and other emotional

responses.<sup>[9]</sup> Dhyana (Meditation) is yogic practice to lead the mind into a calm and meditative state and help to resetting the psycho-neuro-immuno-endocrine pathways and various hormonal secretions, thereby connecting the body mind and breath. The growing evidence suggest that regular practice of dhyana acts as antioxidant component to strengthen body immunity by lowering inflammatory and oxidative stress markers and upregulating various defense markers of the immune system.<sup>[10]</sup>

In the study, participants performed pranayama (breathing exercise), 20 minutes om mantra dhyana and Gayatri mantra dhyana followed by Yagya by offering medicinal herbs and Sri Vishnu sahasranama chanting. The anxiety level of the participants was measured using Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test before and after this practise. There is a significant difference on Anxiety of participants before and after the Yagya. The study indicated that during the divine practice, there was a trend of reduction in the level of anxiety ( $p=0.0842$ ; 95% confidence interval -3.62 to 32.62;  $t = 2.5467$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $n=4$ ). The mean difference of pre readings (Mean + SD; 27.75+17.35) and post readings (13.25+9.22) was 14.50+5.694 indicating reduction in the anxiety level (Table 1).

**Table 1: Change in the anxiety level before and after Yagya measured using Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Test questionnaire.**

Participants	Before Divine Therapy	After Divine Therapy
1	15	10
2	18	2
3	25	18
4	53	23

Recent findings indicate proper Mantra chanting help improve the quality of functions and enhance overall performance of psychological and physiological factors. Ayurveda classics mentions the importance and usage of various mantras for treating ailments and for good health. The chanting of Sri Vishnusahasranama (the sacred text Acharya Charak, Ch.Chi-3/197) in treatment of ailments like Jwara (fever) is described in Mantra chikitsa of Ayurveda classics. Recently, scientific evidence revealed that Gayatri Mantra chanting during Yagya improve antimicrobial activity significantly.<sup>[9]</sup> From the Vedic age in India, Yagya - inhalation of medicinal herbal smoke was general mode of treatment of several physical and mental disorders. Some of the herbs used in the present study Brahmi, shankhpushpi, jatamansi, vach, etc are traditionally known for mental and stress reduction when taken in vapor or gaseous form through the nostrils, have much greater efficacy.<sup>[10]</sup>

Stress is considered as the hallmark of several diseases. Kumar et al.,<sup>[10]</sup> reported that the chanting of Vishnusahasranama can significantly reduce depression, anxiety and stress levels and increase the spatial memory. As evidenced by SCAT in the current study, a significant difference on anxiety of participants before and after Yagya was observed. The trend of reduction in anxiety level can be correlated with the previous observation that electromagnetic waves combined with the sonic signals of mantras help in intensifying and transmitting impact of Yagya in psychological disorders and surroundings atmosphere and in enhancing the hidden potentialities. The herbal fumes released during the process of Yagya possess a wide range of physiological health benefits by exhibiting biological activities including antimicrobial, antiviral, immune modulatory, anti-inflammatory, antifungal and antioxidant activity. The current study involving a combination of Pranayam, Om/Gayatri Mantra Meditation and Yagya with Sri Vishnusahasranama recitation named as Chaitanya kriya – A divine practice to attain a state of awareness/ consciousness “Chit” provide possible information for psychophysiological wellness and use as mindfulness - based stress reduction practice. This divine practice can be integrated and adopted as a holistic wellness approach/ selfcare and for physical and psychological care.

## CONCLUSION

The divine practice of Mantra Chikitsa and Yagya is a holistic approach to develop one's mental wellness, mental power and strength; and helps to remove fear, anger and depression. It helps to attain higher level of consciousness to connect oneself to one's inner consciousness that results in calm, peace and balance to benefit both emotional well - being and overall health. Health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but is a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing. It can be integrated into psychotherapy for mental health, school-based programs to facilitate attention and socio-emotional development, prisons, the military, drug and alcohol treatment programs, corporate settings, and in hospitals for disease management and self- health care practice.

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