

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of 2-week yoga and meditation on emotional quotient

Shashikala L, Lakshmi T

Department of Physiology, Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences, Mandya, Karnataka, India

Correspondence to: Lakshmi T Venkatesh, E-mail: jenydraks@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: With the current demand for enhanced performance in all walks of life, stress is present universally. **Aims and Objectives:** The present study is to study the effect of yoga and meditation on emotional quotient (EQ). **Materials and Methods:** A total of 60 subjects both male and female were asked to fill the questionnaire before and after the yoga training for 2 weeks. **Results:** The results showed that all the EQ dimensions were increased after training of 2 weeks. **Conclusion:** Practicing the yoga way of life may bring about a complete transformation of one's personality, on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

KEY WORDS: Yoga; Meditation; Emotional Quotient

INTRODUCTION

Yoga has the potential to provide physical, mental, and emotional health benefits. Multitasking and competition have increased in all walks of life, which may manifest as psychological and physiological stress. This leads to mental and emotional drain. Dissatisfaction and frustration are leading to depression and more incidence of suicide in the society. Emotional quotient (EQ), also called emotional intelligence (EI), assesses the emotional stability of the person and also tells us the ability of the person to handle different stressful situations. EI is "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate between them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action."^[1] Goleman identifies five components of EI self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.^[2] An alternative framework as defined by the Consortium for Research on EI.^[3]

Objective of the Study

This study is undertaken to know the effects of yoga and meditation on emotional quotient.


MATERIALS AND METHODS

Source of Data

In this study, we included 60 adults (males and females) in the age group of 20–45 years. Written informed consent was obtained before recruitment into the study. Subjects were asked to fill the questionnaire before and after yoga training of 2 weeks in Mandya Yoga Centre. EQ is assessed by EQ questionnaire "The Quick EI Self-Assessment" developed by Dr. Singh and Dr. Chadha. This test has 22 real-life situations based on 4-point scale rating. This test is useful to measure emotional dimensions such as emotional competency, emotional maturity, and emotional sensitivity. The subjects will be asked to fill the questionnaire before and after the yoga training.

Inclusion Criteria

- Age between 20 and 45 years (males and females), physically and mentally fit, normal health as declared

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Table 1: Comparison pre- and post-test score

Parameters	Before yoga training	After yoga training	P value
Emotional sensitivity	91.24±13.87	95.80±10.97	0.0481
Emotional maturity	113.24±17.21	119.32±15.92	0.0468
Emotional competency	159.18±28.23	170.11±23.01	0.0218
Total emotional quotient	352.28±39.98	370.17±40.12	0.0159

by the physician. All of them taking high-fiber low-fat vegetarian diet and no caffeinated drinks, alcohol, or tobacco in any form.

Exclusion Criteria

- Taking medication, using any other wellness strategy.

RESULTS

Statistical analysis of the data was done using paired *t*-test before and after yoga training. The score of the subject in emotional competency, emotional maturity, emotional sensitivity, and total emotional quotient was increased significantly after 2 weeks of training [Table 1].

DISCUSSION

Our study showed significant increase in emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity, emotional competency, and total emotional quotient after undergoing yoga and meditation training for 2 weeks. This indicates the necessity of yoga and meditation in our daily life.

A study conducted by Adhia *et al.*, who studied EI of managers, found that there was significant enhancement of EI score in the yoga-practicing group compared to the control group which practiced physical exercise.^[4] Ganpat and Nagendra did a study which assessed emotional intelligent quotient in managers undergoing yoga-based self-management of excessive tension (SMET) program. The study showed 72.02% significant increase in EQ and may have implications in “executive efficiency.”^[5] Singh *et al.* studied the effect of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga on physical health, psychological health, and EI and found that there was an enhancement in the parameters they studied.^[6] EI was significantly improved in managers who practiced SMET program in the study conducted by Kumari *et al.*^[7]

Yoga and meditation bring out balanced between sympathetic and parasympathetic system, meditative experience causes a sensation of normal and even increase in alertness along with a state of complete mental silence. This can be the cause for increase EQ score where there is tolerance to self and also others.^[8]

The molecular basis and what exactly happens at the cellular level cannot be explained in this study. Further studies can be done by correlating with biochemical reactions.

CONCLUSION

Based on a review of the literature, we hypothesize that practicing the yoga way of life may bring about a complete transformation of one’s personality, on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

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Research Article

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER AMONG POST GRADUATES

Anjum Ahmed*

Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002

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ABSTRACT

Temperament is defined as that part of the personality which is genetically based. Along with character, and those aspects acquired through learning, the two together are said to constitute personality. The paper aims to study the relationship between temperament and character. The sample comprised of 300 post graduate students selected randomly from Aligarh Muslim University. For collecting relevant information for the present study, the investigator used The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) by Cloninger *et. al* [1994]. The analysis was done by computing the product moment correlation between the two variables. The result showed that the temperament of the post graduate students was found to be negatively but significantly related to their character. The negative correlation between the temperament and character is mainly due to novelty seeking and harm avoidance dimensions of temperament. However, Reward dependence (a dimension of temperament) was found to be positively related to Cooperativeness and Self transcendence (dimensions of Character). Persistence (a dimension of temperament) was found to be positively related to Self directedness and Cooperativeness (dimensions of character). The educational relevance of the findings of the study is discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

In psychology, temperament is the innate aspect of an individual's personality, such as introversion or extroversion. Temperament is defined as that part of the personality which is genetically based. Along with character, and those aspects acquired through learning, the two together are said to constitute personality. Historically the concept was part of the theory of the humours, which had corresponding temperaments. It played an important part in premodern psychology, and was important to philosophers like Immanuel Kant and Hermann Lotze. More recently, with the emphasis on the biological basis of personality, the relationship between temperament and character has been examined with renewed interest that temperament is biologically based.

Temperament can be conceived of as those predispositions for behaviour that form the substrate on which experience and life events work to form the traits that later build a personality. Temperament is discernible in individual differences that emerge in very young human infants and is presumed to be partly heritable. Temperament, traits and personality are concepts that are hard to distinguish from each other in the literature, with different authors using different approaches. (Matthew, 1980)

Character - the inherent complex of attributes that determines a persons moral and ethical actions and reactions; "education has for its object the formation of character"- Herbert Spencer - a distinguishing feature of your personal nature personality - the complex of all the attributes--behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental--that characterize a unique individual; "their different reactions reflected their very different personalities". Being a good person, however, is more than a matter of understanding what is morally right. In philosophy a distinction is made between deontic judgments of what is morally right and aretaic judgments of responsibility which involve a commitment to act on one's deontic judgment. In everyday language we use the term "character" to refer to the tendency to act in ways that are consistent with what one understands to be morally right. Traditional character education, which has been under focus since the early part of this century, had as its central aim fostering formation of elements of the individual's personality and value structure which would constitute socially desirable qualities or virtues. In the late 1920s a major research effort was undertaken by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May to identify the factors that contributed to the formation of character. To the surprise and disappointment of the researchers they discovered that few students were virtuous, and that instead, most children cheated, behaved selfishly, and lacked "self control" a large amount of

*Corresponding author: **Anjum Ahmed**

Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002

the time. Virtue, according to their data, seemed to be context dependent as students cheated, or lied in some situations and not in others. As Clark Power (1989, p. 127) noted: Hartshorne and May concluded that there were no character traits per se but "specific habits learned in relationship to specific situations which have made one or another response successful."

A man of character has not even the awareness that he is a man of character. It shines in everything that he does. Therefore such people attract, like they say, the moth to the candle. You cannot possibly accuse or praise the candle for attracting the insect; it is what it is, and being responsive to what it is, the rest of the insect life flocks to it. We flock to the light when we are in darkness. The truth behind the spiritual statement is: "Be yourself, and you will achieve much more than flaunting a false personality." Principles of Sahaj Marg (1978)

After collecting the related literature for all the two variables from different journals, books, encyclopedia and websites, the investigator has now come to a valid conclusion temperament and character has been used together in almost all the researches of clinical type and only a few have been observed in the educational field with other variables. The several studies show the relationship between temperament and motivation system (Beauvare and Tokarz, 1996). Similarly Barbara Keogh's research and thinking on temperament in childhood is paving way to the importance of temperament in education. Temperament related classroom strategies may prove to be helpful in learning. Puttonen *et al.* (2005) study provided support for the validity of Cloninger's temperament dimensions as predictors of emotions responses during different challenges. Especially, Novelty Seeking and Harm Avoidance appear to have a significant influence on emotional experiences.

Character has been a topic of discussion from time immemorial (Sabini and Silver, 1998) found an aesthetic and moral basis of character. Calabrese and Roberts (2002) described character at the core of leadership. Leaders with virtuous character provide benefit to their schools and communities. Mayer and Casey (2000) examined the scientific evidence for whether emotional intelligence underpins social and emotional learning and how emotional intelligence is related to success and whether it is central to character.

For Herbert Spencer "education has for its object the formation of character". The complex of all the attributes--behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental--that characterize a unique individual. Cloninger deals with the psychobiological aspect of character. The question for the educators is how to understand character and what aspects of educative process can contribute to character formation.

Just like motives are central to any theory of personality and therefore has a strong education implication so are our emotions. Motives are emotions in actions. Temperament and character are both biological and psychological. We cannot disregard temperament and character from any understanding of human behaviour and therefore these implications to the field of education cannot be overlooked.

Temperament and character are both biological and psychological. We cannot disregard temperament and character from any understanding of human behaviour and therefore these implications to the field of education cannot be

overlooked. It was felt that these variables as a major part of personality should be dealt in educational field. Therefore an attempt has been made to study the temperament and character among the sample under study.

The operation definition of the two variables taken into consideration for the research is:

Temperament

'The temperament is generally described as biologically based components of personality which are set to be independent heritable, manifest early in life and involve pre conceptual biases in perception, memory and habit formation.'
(Cloninger *et al.*, 1993)

On the basis of various definitions many sub dimensions have evolved of Temperament. Therefore Temperament can be defined in terms of sub dimensions like: Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Persistence.

Character

'Character dimensions are consciously learned components of personality which mature in adulthood and influence personal and social effectiveness by insight learning about self concepts.'
(Cloninger *et al.*, 1993)

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are given below:

1. To find out the relationship between temperament and character of the post graduate students.
2. To find out the relationship between the temperament and character of the male students.
3. To find out the relationship between the sub dimensions of the temperament and the sub dimensions of character of the male students.
4. To find out the relationship between the temperament and character of the female students.
5. To find out the relationship between the sub dimensions of the temperament and the sub dimensions of character of the female students.

Hypotheses

In order to study the objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a positive and significant relationship between the temperament and character among the post graduate students.
2. There is a positive and significant relationship between the temperament and character among the male students.
3. There is a positive and significant relationship between the sub dimensions of temperament and character among the male students.
4. There is a positive and significant relationship between the temperament and character among the female students.
5. There is a positive and significant relationship between the sub dimensions of temperament and character among the female students.

Design and Methodology

Sample

The data was collected from four faculties of Aligarh Muslim University, namely- Faculty of Social Sciences, Life sciences, Commerce and Arts. The sample of 300 post graduate students was selected randomly which consisted of 151 males and 149 females. The sample was found to be a true representative of the population.

Research Instrument/Tools Used

For collecting relevant information for the present study, this investigator used The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) by Cloninger *et. al.* [1994].

The TCI has been developed to account for individual differences in both normal and abnormal (deviant) behaviour patterns. The seven factor structure of personality has been replicated in both the general population and psychiatric patient populations. The TCI has proven useful in practical clinical work, notably in the diagnosis, differential diagnosis and treatment planning of psychiatric disorders.

The test measuring the temperament dimensions only was originally called the Tridimensional Personality Questionnaire (TPQ). In the TPQ, Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Persistence were measured, but Persistence was originally scored as a component of Reward Dependence. The name of the Test was changed when the character scales were added and Persistence was recognized as a fourth separately inherited Temperament dimensions.

The test retest reliability of the quantitative scores over six months is moderately high i.e, **0.85** for TCI. Cloninger *et. al.* has developed different versions of the TCI. There are Tri dimensional Personality Questionnaire (TPQ), Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI), Temperament and Character Structured Interview (TCSI) and Junior Temperament and Character Inventory (JTCI). The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) consists of 240 items out of which 14 items are not scored as a part of TCI therefore it leaves with **226 items** in total.

Cloninger envisages temperament as being connected to the procedural learning systems of the brain, whereas character is connected to propositional learning. Thus character is more open to cognitive influence, whereas temperament reflects habit system. The sum total of temperament and character make up the personality of human, with the two being causally independent and functionally interactive.

The Temperament Variables is divided into four (4) sub dimensions. There are:

1. T1- Novelty Seeking (NS)
2. T2- Harm Avoidance (HA)
3. T3- Reward Dependence (RD)
4. T4- Persistence (P)

T1- Novelty Seeking (NS) – Behavioral activation involved the activation of behaviour in response to novelty and signals of reward or relief of punishment; accordingly, individual differences in such activatability were called ‘Novelty Seeking’. In other words it refers to engaging in new and unfamiliar, which leads to exploration of potential rewards.

This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Choleric’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘anger’ emotion. Subjects Scoring high on NS are easily bored, impulsive, quick tempered, extravagant and disorderly. Subjects scoring low on NS like rules, are highly structured and are content without need for excitement.

T2- Harm Avoidance (HA)- Behavioral inhibition occurred in response to signals of punishment or non-reward, so individual differences in inhabitability were called ‘Harm Avoidance’. It is a temperament associated with inhibition or succession of behaviour and fear of uncertainty. People scoring high on HA are pessimistic, fearful, shy, anxious and easily fatigued. People scoring low on HA remain calm, even under circumstances where others might feel upset. This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Melancholic’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘fear’ emotion.

T3- Reward Dependence (RD)- Behaviour that was previously rewarded was later maintained for a while without continued reinforcement, and individual differences in such maintenance was called ‘Reward Dependence’. It is also defined as a heritable base in maintenance and continuation of an ongoing behaviour and manifest as social attachment and dependence on approval of others. Subjects scoring high on RD are sociable, dependent on emotional support from others, yield quickly to social pressure, are warm and sympathetic, sensitive to rejection or criticism and responsive to sentimental appeals. Subjects scoring low on RD are aloof, cold, insensitive to criticism and resistant to social pressure. This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Sanguine’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘love’ emotion.

T4- Persistence (P) - means perseverance in behaviour as being industrious, hardworking and stable despite frustration and fatigue. People scoring high on persist despite frustrations, sometimes to the extent that they are unable to change strategy when necessary. Thus, a high score on persistence points also to rigidity. People scoring low on persistence easily give up in case of frustration. This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Phlegmatic’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘tenacity’ emotion.

The Character Variable has three (3) sub dimensions. There are:

1. C1- Self Directedness (SD)
2. C2- Cooperativeness (C)
3. C3- Self Transcendence (ST)

C1- Self Directedness (SD)- Individual who are able to adapt their behaviour in accord with individually chosen, voluntary goals. It measures individual self-acceptance. Subjects scoring high on SD are autonomous, responsible, have high self-esteem, good impulse control and set clear goals for themselves. Subjects scoring low on SD are irresponsible, purposeless, helpless, have poor self- acceptance and poor impulse control. From this self concept are derived feelings of personal integrity, honor, self-esteem, effectiveness, leadership and hope.

C2- Cooperativeness (C)- is understanding and respecting the preferences and needs of others as well as their own. Cooperativeness is related to which a person identifies himself or herself as an integral part of the society as a whole. People

scoring high on cooperativeness are tolerant, empathic, agreeable, helpful and compassionate. People scoring low on cooperativeness are intolerant, narcissistic, disagreeable, hostile, revengeful and opportunistic. From this self concept are derived feelings of community, compassion, conscience and charity.

C3- Self Transcendence (SD)- reflects the tendency of identification with unity of all things and is associated with deficits in transpersonal identification or conscience. It captures the degree to which an individual feels a part of nature and the universe at large. Subjects scoring high on ST have aesthetic sensitivity, pursue spiritual values, are self neglecting and have a strong imagination. Subjects scoring low on ST accept only their own perspective, are materialistic and are not interested in spiritual issues. In addition, they are unstable in affect and self image. From this self concept are derived feelings of mystical participation, religious faith and unconditional equanimity and patience.

Scoring of the Test

Cloninger *et al.* (1993) constructed the Temperament and Character Inventory (**TCI**) with total of 226 items. The self report questionnaire are paper and pencil tests in which the subject answers true or false to a series of questions about their

0 and for negative statements (110 statements) score for True is 0 and False 1.

Analysis of Data

All the calculations were done on the computer with the help of a software package named as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 12.0). The analysis was done by computing the product moment correlation between the two variables.

RESULT

Product Moment correlation was worked out between the temperament and character among the post graduate student. The value of correlation between the temperament and character was $-.217^{**}$, which was significant at 0.01 level. This leads to the partial confirmation of hypothesis I. Hence, the temperament of the post graduate students is significantly but negatively related to their character. According to table II, the value of correlation between the temperament and character of male students was $-.305^{**}$, which was significant at 0.01 level. Thus the hypothesis II was partially accepted. Hence, the temperament of male students is significantly but negatively related to their character. In male sample novelty seeking was found to be negatively and significantly related to Cooperativeness ($-.235^{**}$).

Table I The Intercorrelation Between The Variables And Their Sub Dimensions of The Total Sample

VARIABLES	Total Temperam. (T)	Total Character (C)	Novelty Seeking (T1)	Harm Avoidance (T2)	Reward Depend (T3)	Persistence (T4)	Self Direct (C1)	Cooperative(C 2)	Self Transd (C3)
Total Temperament –T	1	-.217**	.410**	.650**	.475**	-.073	-.330**	-.054	-.041
Total Character- C		1	-.281**	-.247**	.265**	.275**	.717**	.815**	.521**
Novelty Seeking- T1			1	-.250**	.000	-.046	-.286**	-.237**	-.044
Harm Avoidance-T2				1	.064	-.326**	-.286**	-.086	-.126*
Reward Dependence- T3					1	.017	.075	.309**	.173**
Persistence- T4						1	.279**	.184**	.095
Self Directedness- C1							1	.467**	-.060
Cooperativeness- C2								1	.208**
Self Transcendence- C3									1

[Where **. Significant at the 0.01 level,

*. Significant at the 0.05 level]

Table II The intercorrelation between the variables and their sub dimensions of The male sample

VARIABLES	Total Temperam. (T)	Total Character (C)	Novelty Seeking (T1)	Harm Avoidance (T2)	Reward Depend (T3)	Persistence (T4)	Self Direct (C1)	Cooperative (C2)	Self Transd (C3)
Total Temperament –T	1	-.305**	.441**	.669**	.295**	.065	-.253**	-.140	-.209**
Total Character- C		1	-.223**	-.382**	.236**	.310**	.671**	.725**	.580**
Novelty Seeking- T1			1	-.158	.013	-.002	-.107	-.235**	-.099
Harm Avoidance-T2				1	-.189*	-.286**	-.318**	-.085	-.355**
Reward Dependence- T3					1	.212**	.028	.110	.332**
Persistence- T4						1	.355**	.116	.143
Self Directedness- C1							1	.303**	.023
Cooperativeness- C2								1	.129
Self Transcendence- C3									1

[Where **. Significant at the 0.01 level,

*. Significant at the 0.05 level]

and values. No time limit is given. As this test is lengthy it takes up to 25-30 minutes to complete it. For positive statements (116 statements) the Score for True is 1 and False is

Harm Avoidance was found to be negatively and significantly related to reward dependence ($-.189^*$), persistence ($-.286^{**}$), self directedness ($-.318^{**}$) and self transcendence ($-.355^{**}$). Reward Dependence was found to be positively and

significantly related to persistence (-.212**) and self transcendence (.332**). Persistence was found to be positively and significantly related to self directedness (.355**). Self directedness is positively and significantly related to cooperativeness (.303**). Thus the hypothesis III is partially accepted as there was found to be negative as well as positive significant relationship among the sub dimensions of temperament and character in male sample.

novelty seeking and harm avoidance dimensions of temperament.

On the maturity continuum we move from dependence (paradigm of you) to independence (paradigm of I) to interdependence (paradigm of we). With reward dependence and especially persistence, the independent character moves to interdependence. Interdependence is a far more mature, and more advanced concept.

Table III The intercorrelation between the variables and their sub dimensions of the female sample

VARIABLES	Total Temperam. (T)	Total Character (C)	Novelty Seeking (T1)	Harm Avoidance (T2)	Reward Depend (T3)	Persistence (T4)	Self Direct (C1)	Cooperative (C2)	Self Transd (C3)
Total Temperament -T	1	-.195*	.375**	.652**	.575**	-.203*	-.420**	-.021	.084
Total Character- C		1	-.346**	-.0157*	.271**	.233**	.738**	.874**	.491**
Novelty Seeking- T1			1	-.308**	-.026	-.105	-.417**	-.269**	-.077
Harm Avoidance- T2				1	.230**	-.357**	-.268**	-.085	.055
Reward Dependence- T3					1	-.128	.086	.428**	.067
Persistence- T4						1	.209*	.210*	.063
Self Directedness- C1							1	.562**	-.113
Cooperativeness- C2								1	.276**
Self Transcendence- C3									1

[Where **- Significant at the 0.01 level,
*- Significant at the 0.05 level]

According to table III, the value of correlation between the temperament and character of female students was -.195** which was negative and significant, which leads to partial confirmation of hypothesis IV. Thus the temperament of the female students is significantly but negatively related to their character.

In female sample it was found that Novelty seeking was negatively but significantly related to harm avoidance (-.308*), self directedness (-.417**) and cooperativeness (-.269**). Harm Avoidance was found to be positively and significantly related to reward dependence (.230**) and negatively related to persistence (-.357**) and self directedness (-.268**). Reward Dependence was found to be positively and significantly related to cooperativeness (.428**). Persistence was positively and significantly related to self directedness (.209*) and cooperativeness (.210*). Self Directedness was positively and significantly related to cooperativeness (.562**) and Cooperativeness was positively and significantly related to Self Transcendence (.276**). Thus the hypothesis V is partially accepted as it was found to have negative as well as positive significant relationship among the sub dimensions of temperament and character in female sample.

DISCUSSION

One can understand as to why a temperament is negatively correlated to character. Temperament is biologically inherited whereas character is a learned component of personality. However, reward dependence and persistence dimensions of temperament do not seem to be completely biological, rather a matter of habit formation and learning. This is the reason why these dimensions are positively correlated to cooperativeness and self transcendence dimensions of character in case of reward dependence; and to self directedness and cooperativeness in case of persistence. The negative correlation between the temperament and character is mainly due to

As an interdependent person we have the opportunity to share ourselves deeply, meaningfully with others and we have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings. This was observed in the sample under study where the dimensions of temperament (reward dependence and persistence) were contribution in the character domain. The essence of character growth can only be achieved by first mastering the inner accomplishments (self awareness, imagination, conscience and independent will).

Relevance of the Findings

The development of character dimensions i.e, self directedness, cooperativeness and self transcendence are prime importance from educational point of view. The inculcation of the dimensions of character will help us in achieving the aims of education. Besides, the novelty seeking (making one angry and impulsive) and harm avoidance (leading to fear and anxiety) aspect of temperament should be discouraged and treated properly for a sound development of personality.

The 'inside-out' approach should be adopted as it supports the idea that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping to others. According to this approach it is futile to put personality ahead of character. (Covey, 2008)

CONCLUSION

The temperament of the post graduate students was found to be negatively but significantly related to their character. The temperament of the male and female students was also found to be negatively and significantly related to their character. Moreover a common feature found in total, male and female sample was that Reward dependence (a dimension of temperament) was found to be positively related to Cooperativeness and Self transcendence (dimensions of Character). Persistence (a dimension of temperament) was

found to be positively related to Self directedness and Cooperativeness (dimensions of character). The negative correlation between the temperament and character is mainly due to novelty seeking and harm avoidance dimensions of temperament. To conclude a well said quote by Henry David Thoreau 'I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.'

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Research Article

Effects of Meditation on Temporal Processing and Speech Perceptual Skills in Younger and Older Adults

Uppunda Ajith Kumar,¹ A. V. Sangamanatha,² and Jai Vikas³

¹ Department of Audiology, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Manasagangotri, Mysore, India

² National Center for Audiology, Elborn College, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada N6G 1H1

³ National Hearing Care, Suite 2, Northbourne Avenue, Canberra, ACT, Australia

Correspondence should be addressed to A. V. Sangamanatha; sangamanatha@gmail.com

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The purpose of this study was to assess the temporal processing and speech perception abilities in older adults who were practicing meditation for more than five years. Participants were comprised of three groups, 30 young adults (“YA”) in the age range of 20–30 years, 30 older adults in the age range of 50–65 years who practiced meditation for a period of five years or more (effective meditators “EM”), and 51 age matched older adults who did not have any experience of meditation (non-meditators “NM”). Temporal processing was evaluated using gap detection in noise, duration discrimination, modulation detection, and backward masking and duration pattern tests. Speech perception was measured in presence of a four-talker babble at –5 dB signal to noise ratio and with the vocoded stimuli. Results revealed that EM group performed significantly better than NM group in all psychophysical and speech perception tasks except in gap detection task. In the gap detection task, two groups did not differ significantly. Furthermore, EM group showed significantly better modulation detection thresholds compared to YA. Results of the study demonstrate that the practice of meditation not only offsets the decline in temporal and speech processing abilities due to aging process but also improves the ability to perceive the modulations compared to young adults.

1. Introduction

Auditory temporal processing is the perception of sound or of the alteration of sound within a restricted or defined time domain [1]. Speech stimuli and other background sounds are dynamic in terms of both amplitude and frequency. Perception of this variation in amplitude and frequency is crucial to understand speech in quiet and more so in background noise [2]. Psychophysical evidence indicates deterioration in a broad spectrum of auditory abilities as a result of chronological aging [3]. Thus, the deterioration in temporal processing may also be expected with the aging. Evidence for deterioration of temporal processing with age predominantly comes from studies on gap detection. Investigators have shown increased gap detection thresholds in elderly population [4–7]. Some investigators have used simple tonal or noise signals and reported age-related difficulties in detection of

gap [6, 8], whereas others have used more complex stimuli or increased task demands and shown more pronounced differences between younger and older listeners [9]. Additionally, older individuals are also shown to have difficulties with auditory sequencing tasks that require discrimination or recognition of temporal order of the stimulus within a serial pattern [10–13].

Supporting evidence for the decline in temporal processing with the age also comes from speech perception studies using complex and acoustically degraded speech stimulus. It has been reported that older listeners experience increased difficulty in understanding speech in noise (e.g., [14, 15]). Presence of noise reduces the temporal variation of the waveform by filling the valleys of the amplitude spectrum. These amplitude variations in the temporal envelope of the speech signal and periodicity have been shown to convey important information about syllable and phrase boundaries,

voicing, and consonant identification [16, 17]. Degradation of temporal envelope may distort the speech signal and consequently reduce the speech understanding. Peripheral hearing loss and cognitive decline which accompany aging will induce additional difficulties in understanding speech. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that older listeners are more susceptible to the irrelevant or distractive stimuli because of age-related changes in cognitive functioning, especially the working memory capacity. Working memory is important for auditory perceptions of both speech and nonspeech stimuli [18]. Speech recognition decline associated with peripheral hearing loss can be rehabilitated with amplification devices that provide audibility of signals. Speech recognition declines associated with poor temporal processing or poor cognitive mechanism may not necessarily be helped by amplification.

Meditation practices have various health benefits including possibility of preserving cognition and preventing brain aging. It has been shown that both the short-term and long-term meditation improves the attentional resources [19, 20]. Slagter et al. [19] reported that three months of intensive meditation training resulted in improvement in executive attentional network, as measured by attentional blink test. Tang et al. [20] reported that even short-term meditation training for 5 days significantly improved the attention and reduced the stress. Furthermore, meditation is also reported to improve the other cognitive faculties such as working memory capacities and some executive functions. Physiologically it has been shown that meditation affects the lipid profiles and lowers the oxidative stress. This can reduce the age-related neurodegeneration [21]. Neurophysiological lines evidence suggest that meditation may potentially strengthen neuronal circuits and enhance cognitive and/or sensory reserve capacity. Evidence to this claim comes from electroencephalogram (EEG)/evoked potential (for review see [22]), structural [23], and functional neuroimaging studies [24]. EEG studies have demonstrated increase in alpha and theta power and decrease in over all frequency distribution in some individuals when meditating compared with the baseline EEG (for review see [25]). Lazar et al. [23] reported increased thickness in cortical areas associated with attention, introspection, and sensory processing in meditation participants compared to those in the matched controls. Increased thicknesses in the prefrontal cortical areas were most pronounced in older participants practicing meditation, suggesting that meditation might offset the age-related cortical thinning. Baron-Short et al. [26] reported increased activation in brain regions associated with attention such as dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex during meditation. Srinivasan and Baijal [27] reported larger amplitudes of auditory evoked mismatch negativity in individuals who practiced meditation compared to those in the control group.

We hypothesized that, as suggested by behavioral and physiological studies, if meditation results in reorganization of neuronal circuitry and improves cognitive abilities such as selective and executive attention and working memory then this beneficial effect should be reflected in the auditory domain too. In this study, we evaluated the speech recognition and temporal processing abilities of older adult individuals who were practicing meditation for more than

TABLE 1: Mean and standard deviations of MMSE scores.

Group	Mean	Standard deviation
Young adults	29.4	0.81
Effective meditators	29.5	0.76
Nonmeditators	29.3	0.86

five years. Results were compared with matched older adults group and with young adults.

2. Method

2.1. Participants. A total of 111 participants participated in this research. The participants were comprised of three groups, 30 young adults (hereafter called “YA”) in the age range of 20–30 years (mean age: 20.2 years, 15 males), 30 older adults in the age range of 50–65 years (mean age: 56.88 years, 20 males) who practiced meditation for a period of five years or more (hereafter called “EM” (effective meditators)), and 51 age matched older adults (mean age: 57.9 years, 40 males) who did not have any experience of meditation (hereafter called “NM” (nonmeditators)). All the members of EM group had learnt the meditation from a qualified teacher and were practicing “Sahaj Marg Meditation” (a raja yoga system of spiritual training based on heart centered system of meditation). All of them were practicing meditation for at least two hours a day for a period of five years. Participants in all the three groups had hearing thresholds within 15 dB HL in the octave frequencies between 250 Hz and 8 kHz. None of the participants reported any otologic or neurological problems. All the participants were native speakers of Kannada, a Dravidian language. Mini-Mental Status Examination (MMSE) was administered on all the participants to rule out any gross cognitive deficits. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of MMSE scores. MMSE scores were within normal limits for all three groups. ANOVA did not show any significant effect on MMSE scores ($F(2, 108) = 0.12, P > 0.05$). Table 2 shows the details of the meditation practice by the EM group.

2.2. Stimulus and Procedure

2.2.1. Psychophysical Tests. All temporal processing tests except for the duration pattern test were carried out using “maximum likelihood procedure” tool box which implements a maximum likelihood procedure in Matlab [28]. The maximum likelihood procedure employs a large number of candidate psychometric functions and after each trial calculates the probability (or likelihood) of obtaining the listener’s response to all of the stimuli that have been presented given each psychometric function. The psychometric function yielding the highest probability is used to determine the stimulus to be presented on the next trial. Within about 12 trials, the maximum likelihood procedure usually converges on a reasonably stable estimate of the most likely psychometric function, which then can be used to estimate threshold [29, 30]. Stimuli were reproduced at 44, 100 Hz sampling rate. A two-interval alternate forced choice method using a “maximum

TABLE 2: Details of the meditation practice by EM group.

Participants	Number of years of meditation practice	Age at which meditation practice was started
1	30	35
2	10	51
3	30	35
4	7	33
5	5	35
6	10	37
7	6	37
8	8	42
9	8	44
10	8	45
11	9	41
12	10	60
13	10	50
14	5	54
15	6	54
16	10	55
17	10	40
18	10	40
19	5	50
20	6	50
21	7	46
22	8	52
23	5	45
24	7	45
25	8	42
26	10	40
27	8	47
28	9	47
29	8	45
30	10	50

likelihood procedure” was employed to track an 80% correct response criterion. During each trial, stimuli were presented in each of two intervals: one interval contained a reference stimulus, the other interval contained the variable stimulus. The participant indicated after each trial which interval contained the variable stimulus. This procedure was used in all temporal processing tests except for the duration pattern test. Stimuli for the latter test were generated using Audacity software 1.3.5 (beta version 2008). In all of the psychophysical tests, stimuli were presented binaurally at an intensity of 80 dB SPL. Stimuli were presented via a laptop computer (Compaq Presario C700) connected to EAR-3A earphones. Output of the earphones was calibrated at the beginning of the experiment and regularly thereafter to produce 80 dB SPL for a 1 kHz pure tone in a 2cc coupler. For this purpose, a 1 kHz pure tone was generated at the same rms level as the test signal. Output of the earphone was routed to a 2cc coupler which was connected to a sound level meter (Quest 1800)

and a microphone (Quest 4180). The volume control of the computer was adjusted to produce 80 SPL on the sound level meter. Participants were given 3-4 practice trials before the commencement of each test. All psychophysical tests were carried out in a quiet room in 2-3 sessions with 5–10 minutes of rest period between each session.

Gap Detection in White Noise. This was measured by asking the participants to detect a temporal gap in the center of 750 ms band pass noise (400–1600 Hz). Duration of gap was varied according to the listener performance using maximum likelihood procedure. The noise had 0.5 ms cosine ramps at the beginning and end of the gap. In two interval alternate force choice tasks, the standard stimulus was always a 750 ms broadband noise with no gap whereas the variable stimulus contained the gap.

Duration Discrimination. In this, the minimum difference in duration that was necessary to perceive the two otherwise identical 1000 Hz pure tone was measured. Duration of the standard stimuli was 250 ms. Duration of the variable stimuli was changed according to subject’s response. In two intervals of alternate forced choice procedure, subject’s task was to tell which interval contained the longer duration signal.

Modulation Detection Thresholds. Temporal modulation refers to a reoccurring change (e.g., frequency or amplitude) in the signal over time. A 500 msec Gaussian noise was sinusoidally amplitude modulated at 8 Hz, 20 Hz, 60 Hz, and at 200 Hz modulation frequencies. The subject had to detect the modulation and determine which interval had the modulated noise. Modulated and unmodulated stimuli were equated for total RMS power. Depth of the modulated signal was varied according to participants response to track 80% criterion level. Noises had two 10 msec raised cosine ramps at onset and offset. The modulation detection thresholds were expressed in dB using the following equation:

$$\text{modulation detection thresholds in dB} = 20 \log_{10} m, \quad (1)$$

where m = modulation detection threshold in percentage.

Backward Masking. In this procedure, the masker followed the signal with no time interval between two. A 20 ms, 1 kHz pure tone (the signal) was presented immediately before (i.e., no silent gap) band pass noise of 300 ms (400–1600 Hz). Both noise and tone had rise and fall time of 10 ms. The participants’ task was to tell which interval had the tone. Intensity of the pure tone was changed depending on subject’s response to track the backward masked thresholds.

Duration Pattern Test. Duration pattern test was administered in the manner described by Musiek et al. [31]. A 1000 Hz pure tone was generated with two different durations (i.e., short 250 ms and long 500 ms). By combining these two durations in a three-tone pattern, six different patterns were generated (Short Short Long, Short Long Short, Long Long Short, Long Short Short, Short Long Long, Long Short Long). Participants were asked to repeat the order of tones verbally. Following practice trails, the 30 test items were administered.

Participants were asked to verbally repeat the responses. The order of psychophysical tests was counterbalanced between participants to avoid the order effect if any.

2.2.2. Speech Perception Tests

Speech Recognition with Multitalker Babble. Speech recognition was tested using custom made sentence material. Material consisted of 10 sentences, each containing 4-5 key words. There were a total of 44 key words. A four-talker babble was added to the sentences at -5 dB SNR using a custom written Matlab code. The program first calculated the root mean square amplitude of speech stimuli and then adjusted the root mean square amplitude of babble to achieve desired signal to noise ratio. These sentences were randomly presented binaurally using a personal computer at an intensity of 70 dB SPL. Output of the computer was calibrated in the beginning of the experiment and then regularly in between as described in the previous section. Participants were asked to repeat the sentences. Subject's responses were voice recorded for further analysis. Each of the correctly repeated key words was given a score of "1", and the total number of correct responses was calculated for individual participants. These scores were arcsine-transferred for further analysis.

Speech Recognition with Vcoded Stimuli. Same sentences that were used for speech recognition in multitalker babble were used for measuring speech recognition with vocoded stimuli. This kind of the degradation removes all the spectral content from the speech, leaving only the temporal (envelope) cues, and gives an estimate of individuals capability to understand speech only with temporal cues. This represents the approximation of auditory stimulus received by cochlea implant users. Envelopes of the sentences were extracted with the help of frequency amplitude modulation encoding [32] algorithm. Briefly, stimulus was first filtered into 16 logarithmically spaced filters spanning a frequency range of 80–8000 Hz [33]. The band-limited signal was then decomposed by the Hilbert transform into a slowly varying temporal envelope and a relatively fast-varying fine structure. The number of band-limited filters was chosen to avoid cochlear filtering with a low number of filters and filter ringing with a high number of filters [34]. The new stimuli with primarily temporal envelope cue were created by modulating each filters' center frequency by slowly varying temporal envelope and then summing the modulated subband signals. The procedure used for presentation of the stimuli and collection of responses was the same as that used for speech recognition with multitalker babble. The order of testing was counterbalanced between participants to avoid order effects. Scoring and analysis procedure was similar to speech recognition with multitalker babble.

3. Results

3.1. Psychophysical Tests. Figure 1 represents the means and one-standard-deviation error bars of three participant groups for gap detection thresholds, duration discrimination thresholds, backward masking thresholds, and duration pattern scores. Figure 2 shows the temporal modulation transfer

TABLE 3: *F* values and degrees of freedom obtained on univariate ANOVA.

Psychophysical test	Degrees of freedom	<i>F</i> value
Gap detection in noise	2, 110	38.1**
Duration discrimination thresholds	2, 110	34.7**
Modulation detection thresholds at 8 Hz	2, 110	20.03**
Modulation detection thresholds at 20 Hz	2, 110	14.6**
Modulation detection thresholds at 60 Hz	2, 110	50.4**
Modulation detection thresholds at 200 Hz	2, 110	17.8**
Backward masked thresholds	2, 110	15.8**
Duration pattern scores	2, 110	20.9**

** $P < 0.01$.

function for three groups along with one-standard-deviation error bars. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to find significance of differences between the means of psychophysical test scores among the three groups. MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of subject groups ($F(16, 202) = 18.721, P < 0.01$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated that subject groups had a significant effect on all the five psychophysical measures. Table 3 shows the *F* values and degrees of freedom of univariate ANOVAs. Bonferroni's post hoc comparisons were done to evaluate the effect of meditation and age on each psychophysical measure separately. The results of post hoc comparisons were as follows.

- YA group performed significantly better than NM group on all the temporal processing tests.
- EM group performed significantly better than NM group on duration discrimination, duration pattern, and backward masking measures.
- There was no significant difference between EM and NM group in gap detection thresholds.
- EM group showed significantly better modulation detection thresholds compared to both YA and NM group.

These results in combination suggest that performance of individuals who practice meditation was on par with that of young adults.

3.2. Speech Perception Tests. The mean percent correct identification scores (and one standard deviation) in multitalker babble and vocoded condition for three subject groups are shown in Figure 3. Prior to conducting statistical analysis, the percent correct scores were transformed using rationalized arcsine transformation [35]. MANOVA showed significant main effect of subject group on speech recognition scores ($F(2, 108) = 140.317, P < 0.00$). Bonferroni's post hoc comparisons showed that NM group had significantly poorer speech recognition scores compared to EM and YA groups

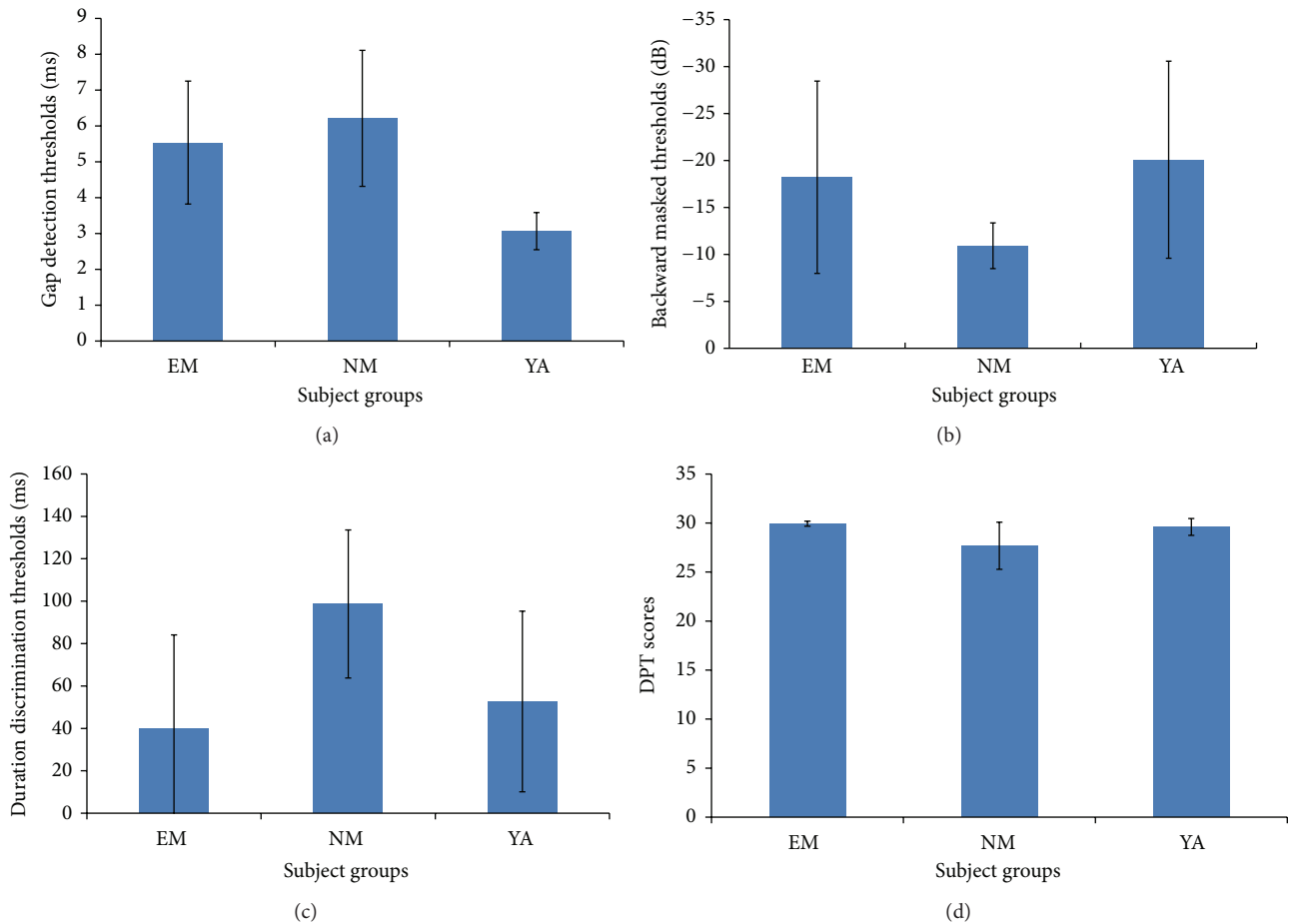


FIGURE 1: Mean and one-standard-deviation error bars of three participant groups for (a) gap detection thresholds, (b) backward masking thresholds, (c) duration discrimination thresholds (d) duration pattern scores. EM: effective meditators; NM: nonmeditators; YA: young adults.

for both speech in noise and vocoded sentences. YA and EM groups did not differ in both conditions.

3.3. Relationship between Meditation and Auditory Measures. To evaluate the relationship between meditation and auditory measures, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated with different auditory measures as dependent variables and years of meditation practice and age at which meditation practice was started as independent variables. Results failed to reveal any significant relationship among auditory measures and meditation.

4. Discussion

The word “meditation” refers to practices that self-regulate the body and mind, thereby affecting the mental events by engaging a specific attentional set [25]. Sahaj Marg, meaning “natural path” or “simple way,” is a system of practical training in spirituality and meditation. It is in essence the traditional practice of raja yoga (yoga of the mind), remodelled and simplified to help people achieve inner perfection or God realisation. Previous research has shown that meditation has several

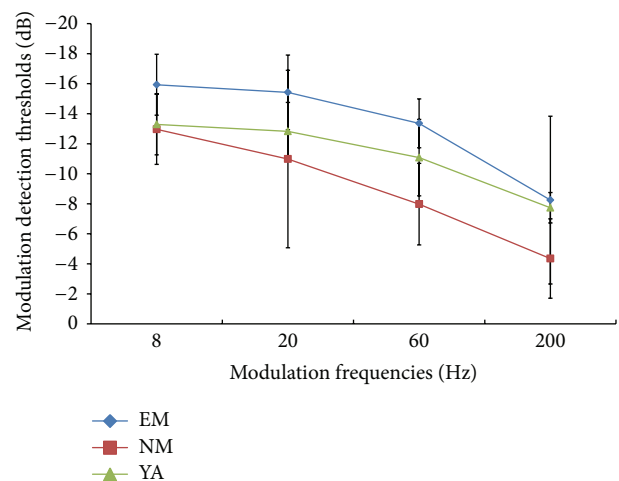


FIGURE 2: Temporal modulation transfer function in different participant groups. Error bars depict one standard deviation of error. EM: effective meditators; NM: non meditators; YA = young adults.

health benefits including possibility of preserving cognition and preventing brain aging [21]. Much of the evidence for

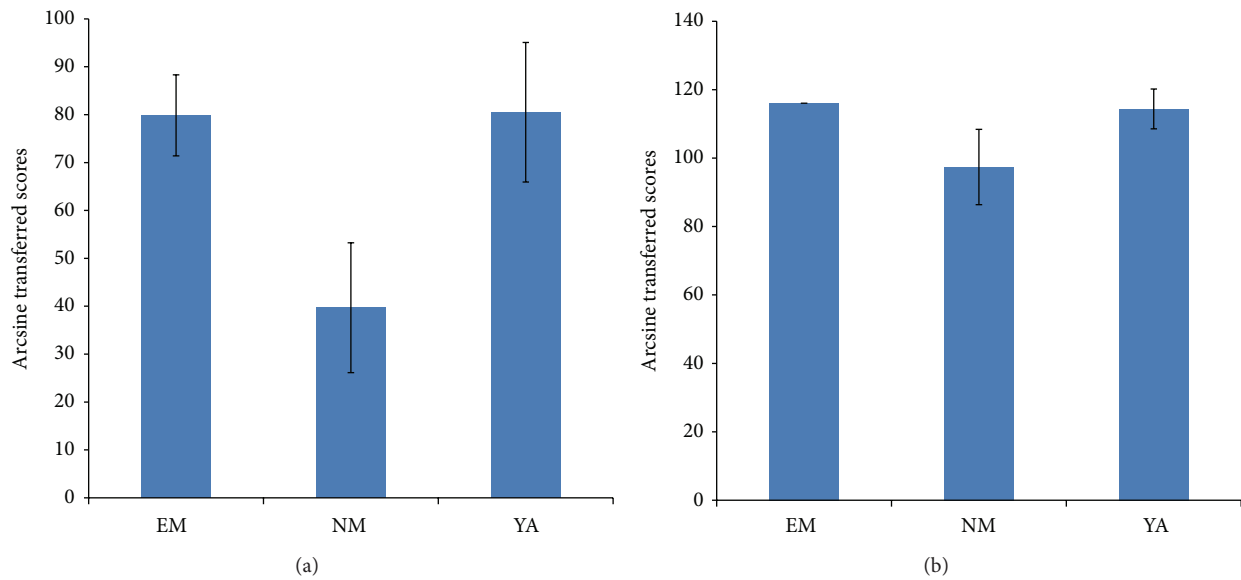


FIGURE 3: Speech perception scores (a) in presence of -5 dB SNR (b) with vocoded sentences three participant groups. Error bars depict one standard deviation of error. EM: effective meditators; NM: non meditators; YA: young adults.

positive effects of meditation comes from electrophysiological and imaging studies of the nervous system. To our knowledge, perhaps this is the first study to use auditory behavioral paradigm, specifically temporal and speech processing skills, to investigate the changes owing to the practice of meditation. Results of the present study indicate that temporal and speech perception abilities of individuals who practice “Sahaj Marg meditation” were superior compared to these of age matched controls. It is also worth noting that elderly control group (NM) performed significantly poorer temporal processing and speech perception skills compared to young adults. These results are consistent with the previous studies which have shown decline in temporal processing and speech perception abilities with the advancing age [7, 14]. We did not observe any relationship between auditory measures and meditation history. This is probably because other than 2 participants, all had meditation experience between 5 and 10 years and commenced meditation practices after the 3rd decade of life. Lack of relationship between these two variables does not rule out the cause and effect relationship between them. However, it should be kept in mind that we did not control for the musical skills or the music listening habits of the participants. It has been shown that musicians have better auditory skills when compared to nonmusicians [36] and this could have influenced the results of the current study if a particular group had more or less musicians than the other group.

Extracting acoustic cues involves separating (grouping) and organizing the psychoacoustic cues over a period of time [36]. This process is essential for understanding speech in adverse listening condition. Extracting these cues from the background noise draws attentional resources resulting in shorter auditory memory span available for understanding the speech [37]. Individuals with better attention and working memory may spend less time in extracting the acoustic cues in noisy conditions and may spend more time in rehearsal

and recall of the target word. Studies have reported reduced working memory span in adverse listening condition [38]. It is well documented that meditation improves the cognitive functioning including working memory capacities and selective and executive attention [19, 20]. The same cognitive functions play a crucial role even in auditory perception also [39].

Lazar et al. [23] showed that cortical regions associated with somatosensory, visual, and auditory processing were thicker in individuals who practice meditation than those of the age matched controls. The differences in the cortical thickness were most pronounced in older participants, specifically in prefrontal regions, suggesting that meditation might offset age-related cortical thinning. Hölzel et al. [40] noted that meditation practices activated the rostral anterior cingulate gyrus and dorsal medial prefrontal cortex, suggesting better attention regulation in individuals who practice meditation. In accordance with these results, there are some lines of evidence to show that meditators have superior attentional performance especially to unexpected stimuli compared to nonmeditators [41, 42]. Slagter et al. [19] reported that three months of intensive meditation training resulted in improvement in executive attentional network, as measured by attentional blink test. Tang et al [20] reported that even short-term meditation training for 5 days significantly improved the attention and reduced the stress. Furthermore, certain biochemical differences have been reported in individuals who practice meditation compared to nonmeditators [22].

Wong et al. [43] investigated the cortical mechanisms of hearing in noise in elderly participants using fMRI technique. They reported that elderly participants had poor speech recognition abilities in noise (at -5 dB SNR) compared to young adults. Elderly individuals showed less activation in auditory areas (bilateral superior temporal gyrus) and more activation in prefrontal and regions precuneus (working

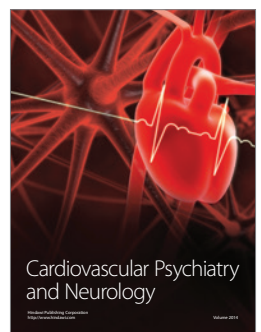
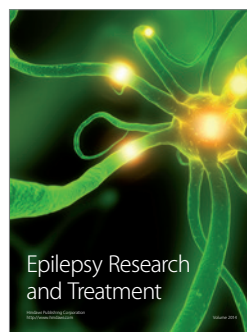
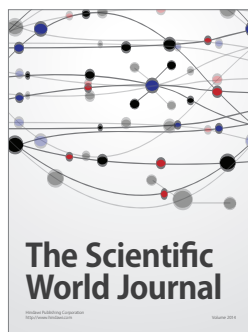
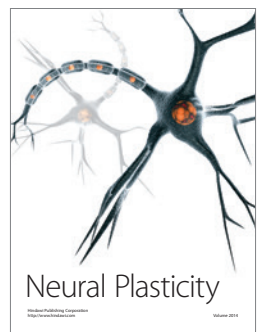
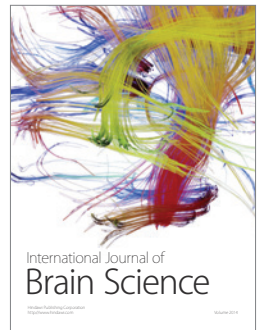
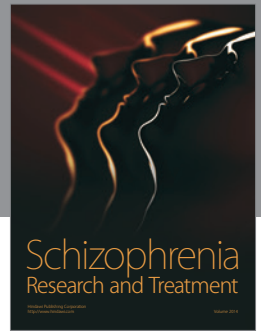
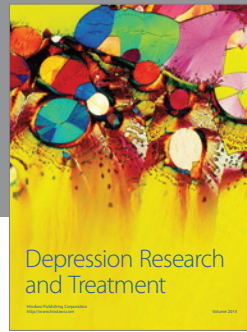
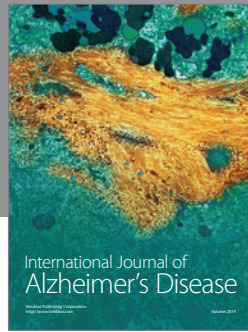
memory and attentional networks). Furthermore, the activation in the prefrontal and precuneus regions was positively correlated with behavioral performance in noise. These results in combination suggest that elderly individuals require more attention and working memory while listening to speech in noise, and meditation prevents the age-related thinning of cortical areas associated with these functions. Prefrontal regions have also been indicated as a part of dynamic network of cortical-subcortical regions associated with the different components of temporal information processing [44]. This slowing down of age related cortical thinning may be one of the reasons for better performance of meditators on speech and temporal processing tests. On modulation detection tasks, individuals who practice meditation performed even better than young adults. These results show that practice of meditation not only offsets the decline in modulation detection abilities due to aging process but also improves the ability to perceive the modulations compared to young adults.

Recently, in a series of studies, Kraus and her colleagues have demonstrated a number of beneficial effects of music on auditory perception and cognition (e.g., [36, 45]). They showed that musicians with experience of more than 10 years of music practice had better speech in noise, auditory temporal processing, and auditory working memory skills. Results of the present study indicate that meditation can also have beneficial effects on auditory temporal processing and speech perception in noise. These preliminary results suggest that meditation can be one of the rehabilitative options to offset the age-related decline in auditory and speech processing. It may be one the adjunctive therapeutic techniques to augment the benefits from amplification devices in elderly individuals with hearing impairment. However, more systematic and controlled investigation is required before clinically using meditation as one of the rehabilitative techniques in elderly hearing-impaired individuals.

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Sahāj Mārga Yoga (Union through the Natural Path)

Sahaj Marg translates to "The Natural Path." It is a natural, simple system of Raja Yoga meditation and spiritual practice that helps one realize the ultimate potential within oneself. Regular spiritual practice under capable guidance enables aspirants to progressively experience the sublime presence of the divine in their daily lives. The Sahaj Marg system is freely offered to seekers worldwide through the [Shri Ram Chandra Mission \(SRCM\)](#) under the guidance of current living Master, Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (also known as "Chariji"), and is effectively practiced by individuals from all walks of life - diverse nationalities, religious backgrounds, and various social conditions.

From: <http://www.srcm.org/>

A system of practical training in spirituality, Sahaj Marg emerged in the late 1800s. Through meticulous research, Shri Ram Chandra, also known as [Lalaji](#) by his family and peers ([masters of Sahaj Marg](#)), rediscovered the long-lost art of transmission of spiritual energy. From the early years of his life, [Lalaji](#) followed the promptings of his own inner need for spirituality . He recognized the natural birthright of every individual to develop to the ultimate level of human perfection, and he saw the need for a simple and effective system of spiritual development that could be universally practiced by any person.

From: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/sm/what-is-sahajmarg/tracing-roots> (Sahāj Mārg Rājā Yoga Foundation)

Surrender in totality to the WILL OF THE SUPREME LIFE FORCE is the ORDER to which the Masters belong. They have no personal will whatsoever and their consciousness is controlled and maintained by the Pranic force. Such is the Order to which Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad, Sri Ramchandra of Fatehgarh, and Sri Ramchandra of Shahjahanpur belong. It may be observed that there is a common thread running through all their spiritual life and teachings. Though we may mention these personalities and many more and show them as roots, the Spiritual Order is the most ancient and in fact Timeless. Thus we may say that Sri Ramchandrajī Maharaj of Shahjahanpur is the Sanatana Purusha. His message and teaching is LIVING....

We say sit in any comfortable posture and maintain the same posture. Comfortable posture we take surely, but then we go on changing it incessantly. There is no control over the body. There is no discipline. We change our posture. Try to remain in the same posture. It is very difficult, but when you are asking for mergence, when you are asking for a goal where you will be totally balanced, to maintain balance is not a joke, you have to strive for it. Balance is a tough concept. Static balance of course we can have. We can sit somewhere. Even there we are prepared to, but our body is such it refuses to be balanced even at the static level. We are not doing any gymnastics here. We are not doing any hatha yoga. We don't do such things. To sit like this itself consistently for one hour becomes a big tedious problem for us. That

is the amount of indiscipline that has got into us. There must be discipline. This is foremost. Then if we meditate, it makes some sense. Meditation is always for seeking our oneness with Nature. We are trying to feel one with Nature. That is laya is it not? Oneness with God. This is what we are asking for. Our morning meditation should be for one hour for this reason, otherwise we will be disturbed. We will not be in a position to have our thought firm. In the beginning it is only at the 55th minute that we will be in a position to have some idea of what we have got to meditate up on. As we gradually progress it starts even at the first second. Progress enables us to meditate for one hour, though in the beginning people are asked to sit for one hour, we should know that our meditation is less than few minutes. Meditation usually will begin thinking about what we can do during the day? What are the other plans that we have got to do? What are our responsibilities? All these things come to us. The meditation is a must for one hour, if we want to control our thoughts. Later on once we learn to sit for one hour and meditate, it becomes easy for us to meditate for longer hours. Once we get absorbed in His thought, time passes off. I don't ask you to do that, but then that's what happens. Meditation is one aspect of it and the evening cleaning is another aspect. We have formed so many impressions in our heart. We have got various values in our mind. We have given certain people some positive marks and certain other people some negative marks. Several notions are carried by us and they are our own. It has nothing to do with others and the circumstances. The general question is, how is the day? It is beautiful. The day is always beautiful. It is warm. Either it is warm or hot or cold it will be according to its nature. We are not the persons to decide. It is as it is. We have to adjust to it. It dictates

circumstances. Nature doesn't accept our ways of doing things. It has got its own ways. Because it is the mother. The mother knows how to dictate and how to love. Both the things she knows better. We have unfortunately formed various impressions. All these thoughts keep haunting us. We have to clean ourselves. This cleaning is a must otherwise our mind will never be clean.

From: <http://www.sriramchandra.org/pam/pam.htm>

In the late nineteenth century, [Lalaji](#) met a Sufi master. Together, they founded a syncretic teaching between Hinduism and Sufism, in northern India. In 1945, *(13 years after Lalaji's death...allegedly)* on posthumous orders by Lalaji *(and others, in dreams)*, [\(see Autobiography of Ram Chandra\)](#) Babuji founded the Shri Ram Chandra Mission and the Sahaj Marga method which spread gradually to the south of India, once it rid itself of its Sufi *(Islam)* references. After raising Rajagopalachari *(The current president of SRCM(California-1997))* on a pedestal, in 1982, Babuji, ill and aging, finally appoints his own son (Umesh Saxena) to succeed him. Immediately after his *(Babuji's)* death *(1983)*, Rajagopalachari attempts to place himself at the control of the Society *(SRCM Shahjahanpur-1945)* with the support of followers from the West, while supporters of the son of Babuji continue to develop the Sahaj Marg from its historical stronghold in northern India, at Shahjahanpur. In 1999, (after having been refused the Presidency of SRCM (Shahjahanpur-1945), *by its Board of Directors, and having re-registered the Shri Ram Chandra Mission) in San Luis Obispo, California, in 1997, and its research arm, the SMRTI in Austin, Texas)*

Rajagopalachari returns to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Babuji, inaugurating the lavish Manapakkam ashram, near Chennai. Strengthened by his troops of Western followers and the financial power they give him, he (*Chari*) returns in triumph to his country. But to succeed in this feat, he has generously adapted the Spiritual product of Babuji and exploited without limit the weaknesses of his troops. He has become an autocratic guru, but resistance is increasing

In the late nineteenth century, precisely in 1891, a young Brahmin named Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh , aka Lalaji, meets the master of a Sufi lineage ([Naqshbandiya Sufi Order](#)) in India. This encounter between a Hindu and a Muslim is not unique in this northern region of India, Uttar Pradesh, densely populated and heavily Muslim. Their friendship is much more surprising in this politically sensitive time when the inter-communal tensions are exacerbated.

From: <http://historyofsrcm.blogspot.com/>

There is only one God and, naturally, there is only one way to reach Him. The people have given many names to that stage. A particular institution named “Shri Ram Chandra Mission” has given birth to a new denomination to reach Him, “Sahaj Marg”. “Sahaj” and “Marg” (path) are two separate words. According to my limited knowledge, the word “Sahaj” is synonymous of “Aatma” (soul or sensitivity), i.e. connected some thing to the “Spirituality “. It means some particular school of spirituality, other than ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, Headquarter at Fatehgarh (U.P.), India. However, very recently, it has been registered as a trademark of ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’

Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj of Fatehgarh (UP) was the first non-Muslim Saint of "*Naqushbandia, Mujaddadadiya, and Mazahariya* system of Sufism. He having well connected "*nisbat*" (the subtlest Divine thread) with its ancestry through his Spiritual Master Hazrat Maulana Fazl Ahemad Khan Saahib Raipuri, Kaimganji which has a certain well defined handling. He was, of course, against the rituals (meaningless social customs), but not the theological-ceremonies like ;(1) the disciple- making ceremony called *Bay't*- placing the palm of once hand on *the* (that) hand of his Spiritual- Master, merely to have been the sign of sealing an agreement of allegiance. When a man or woman repented of his sins and had made up his mind to lead a life of righteous- ness and piety he/she had to perform *Bay't*. The spirit seems to be for men/women to have direct communion with God, through the whole chain of the Spiritual Masters, so much so that all the intermediaries whose existence having been acknowledged are lost sight of, in the communion of men/women with God. (2) *Ijazat/Khilafat*, are determined on the question of *Fana* and *Baqa*, etc.

The 'Sahaj Marg' is schism of the 'Ramchandra School of Spirituality', renamed as NaqshMuMRa, occurred because of its manner, style and the vocabulary of Sufism. The split in socio-spiritual sects is not a strange phenomenon. Many religions, after the demise of their founders, dwindled either into insignificance or into use to split into innumerable branches. Here also the divine will cause the spread of the whole 'Society' after Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj, everywhere, through its numerous branches and under different leadership. In fact, the philosophy and tenets have not undergone any major changes at the hands of different leaders, except the 'Shri Ram Chandra Mission'.

There is an emphasis upon the *living Guru*. The founders held that *Guru* of the time alone could reveal the inner secrets, remove doubts and thus lead to salvation. In course of time, the essential truth about

the “True Guru” was lost sight of and the faith degenerated into the cult of personality- worship.

From:

<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaaajinilayam/epitomeofsahajmarg>
**(Naqshbandiya Mujaddadia Mazahariya Ramchandriya,
abbreviated as NaqshMuMRa)**

The reality of ‘Muraakibah’ is that we wait to be connected with that Supreme Power or “zaat Paak”; our total concentration in Meditation is based on this much only.

The plain meaning of ‘Muraakibah’ is – ‘Awdhaan’ or keep a watch (as per Hindi Dictionary). Keep your inner self out of any doubt; physically- eye and cardiac eye should be in perfect harmony and in the same form. When this happens there is no need to close the eyes. But till we clearly understand the ‘omni presence’ state of God, we have to close our eyes and wait vehemently.

To understand the mystery of ‘Muraakibah’ clearly, two things must be understood very well; first, what is the mystery of duality, non duality (Dwet and Adwet) and second is what the omnipresent form of God is.

According to Sufi saints, internal purity and stability is a must. You can not achieve your aim till your heart is not pure. Instability of heart is one difficulty, which does not allow us to achieve our aim. If the mirror of your heart is not clean then how can you see clearly? The biggest hurdle is confusion. It means when there are two opposite thoughts in your mind, you remain confused and perturbed.

From: <http://sites.google.com/site/samaadhidhaam/themeditation>
(The NaqshMuMRa School of Sprituality)

In 1930, Guru Maharaj, Paramsant Dr. Chaturbhuj Sahay Ji, established Ramashram Satsang Mathura (RSM) (naming it after his Guru, [Lala Ji Maharaj, Paramsant Sri Ram Chandra Ji](#)) out of the northern Indian town of Mathura. As per the directive of his Guru, he propagated a [System of Meditation](#) adaptable by people of any religion, community or race. This system is especially suited for our busy and demanding lives in today's world. If we shape our lifestyles and mold our thought processes according to it, spiritual success can be achieved effortlessly. We can learn to live a peaceful life amidst the stress.

Our system of *Sadhana/Satsang* is a unique unification of *Karma* (duty), *Upasana* (devotion), and *Gyan* (knowledge). The core of this unification is achieved through *Dhyan* (meditation) every morning and evening for 15-20 minutes.

From: <http://www.ramashram.com/> (Ramashram Satsang Mathura)

Sahaj Marg, or the "natural path," is an ancient spiritual teaching. This technique focuses on heart-centered meditation and is a simple practice which you can easily adapt. It requires no rituals or ceremonies. You need nothing more than the power of thought.

Instructions:

1. Practice Sahaj Marg meditation in the early morning for at least one hour and complete the meditation before sunrise. As

the sun sets, perform an evening cleansing meditation for at least 30 minutes, completing it as the sun goes down.

- 2. Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes shut, and concentrate on your heart being filled with "Divine Light." Assume a position which is comfortable for you and where you can remain still for about an hour. Do not lie down to meditate, or you may fall asleep.**
- 3. Concentrate on filling your heart and mind with loving energy and healing light. As thoughts enter your mind, allow them to drift away and come back to your heart-centered meditation. In Sahaj Marg meditation, all thoughts come from within, and they linger only if you give them attention. If you allow your thoughts to fall away, they will become weak as your meditation becomes strong.**
- 4. Continue your meditation for about an hour, until the sun rises, and then prepare for your day with new-found energy.**
- 5. Finish each day with an evening Sahaj Marg meditation, sitting for about 30 minutes, as you allow the thoughts and stresses of the day to fall away while the sun sets.**

From: http://www.ehow.com/how_4454652_do-sahaj-marg-meditation.html (*How to Do Sahaj Marg Meditation*, by an eHow Contributor)

Samarth Guru Mahatma Sri Ramchandra Ji Maharaj (Puja Dada Guru) came to the planet earth in 1873. His ancestors used to live in

Bhogaon, Mainpuri, UP, India. His forefathers were very rich but by his time he left with little property.

His father was Toll Suprintendent in Farukhabad. Puja Dada Guru studied in Farukhabad. He had to leave the study and take the responsibility of the family after the death of his father. He started working in Farukhabad's collector's office.

Since birth he had interest in spirituality. His mother used to recite 'Ramayan' in the morning which he used to listen with great interest.

At the same period, there was a great Muslim saint in Farukhabad. He was secular in nature and had respect for all other religions. He used to say that God is in 'love' not in 'religion'. When Puja Dada Guru was around 19 years old he got a chance of the company of the Great Muslim saint. The saint said "Come to me. I shall teach you spirituality. It belonged to Hindus but they no more has it. You learn it first and then spread it among others.". From that day he started going to the saint.

Long time passed and Puja Dada Guru kept on visiting his Guru. One day both of them were taking an evening walk. His Guru asked him to turn back. He tried to turn and suddenly all his veils got pierced. He saw the God. He saw the actual form of the whole universe. He felt the working of super natural forces.

His Guru said 'Son be cautious this is the God'. That was the day when Guru blessed him with divine knowledge.

He used to remain calm in either sorrow or happiness. He never used to laugh loudly. During satsang he never used to sit on special mattress, couch or rug. He used to say that same arrangements to be made for everybody. He never used to take gifts from his followers or disciples and never considered others lower to himself. He was very

kind and pure hearted with no difference between his words and actions. He was an ideal man.

A person loves only his children but he loved every creature. Everybody used to feel relieved and relaxed while meeting him. He did not do more talking and preferred keeping quiet. He had a glowing face and had sweet voice. He had knowledge of music too but seldom sing using musical instruments. Mostly he used to sing prayers during satsang. He had a very good knowledge of principles of every religion and sects.

His teaching was "Serve everybody without thinking of return and refrain from taking services from others.". He kept his own words. Five to ten seekers were always staying at his house and he used to provide food etc and not letting people to eat somewhere else. If somebody insisted for eating outside, he used to say "removal of duality is meeting God; if you have such feelings for me, then how will you proceed further. Remove such feelings. Whatever is mine is yours too and whatever is yours is mine too."

He kept on distributing spiritual knowledge to everybody without any reservation. He departed from this world in 14 August 1931 at the age of 59 years.

From: <http://www.ramashramsatsang.org/> (Yogäbhyäs)

Pujya Dr. K.C.Vardachari was born at Munulapudi Agraharam, a small village near [Tiruchanoor](#) a temple town of Sri. Padmavathi Ammavaru on 14th August 1902, in the asterism of Moola and Vrschika Lagna. He had his early education at [Tirupati](#) and he moved to Madras for his collegiate education. He did his F.A. at [Christian College Madras](#). He participated in the Freedom movement for a span of few years and

later joined the B.A.(Hons) course at Christian College, Madras. He graduated with a B.A. (Hons) Degree, in 1926 securing Gold medal from the [University of Madras](#). In 1927 he worked as Research Scholar in the [Andhra University](#). During this period he wrote his first book [Metaphysics of Sri Ramanujas' Sri Bhashya](#). He took his Ph.D. from the University of Madras in the year 1932. His Ph.D was the first in Visistadvaita awarded by the University of Madras. After occupying several important positions he ended his active professional life with the Vivekananda Professorship on comparative religion, ethics and philosophy at the University of Madras in 1966.

He has written profusely on the Visistadvaita system of philosophy of Vedanta, Sri [Aurobindo](#) and later on the System of [Natural Path](#), the new system of Raja Yoga propounded by [SriRamchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, U.P., India](#). [Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh](#) corresponded with him starting with the words "Salutations to the Atman" and thus recognizing his spiritual status.

In the man who leaves a deep impression on the history of his race we invariably find rare qualities besides those of the mere intellect. All those who knew Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari, had seen in him the perfection of Intellect and Intuition coupled with impeccable Character. Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari's compassion to other human beings in particular and all existence in general was something that every one wanted to acquire for himself. Pujya Dr. K.C. Vardachari was infectious and was carrying with him the seeds of Infinity wherever he went and many did acquire the symptoms of Divine Sickness due to separation from the Lord.

It is not all the certain that prizes of this world were got by him, perhaps he never bothered about it: but surely he got the gifts of the Beyond as was attested by Mahatma Sri Ramchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. U.P. The curvatures he feared that were developing in the method that is propagated by the Great Master Sri Ramchandrajai

Maharaj, slowly turned out into a reality where the stress on the spiritual path was over taken by the philosophies of love and unmindfulness in meditation. He has condescended to the prayers of the earnest seekers and has made himself available as a guide in the path leading to the Master. [A new order in spirituality](#) has commenced in 1991 and is guiding the spiritual destinies of earnest seekers.

He was an ardent seeker of reality and had a pretty long journey in spiritual life. While more would be found in the section “Spirituality”, it may be said that he has moved from the traditional forms of worship to the most illumined path of Realisation in the system of Raja Yoga of Sri Ramchandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. He answered the question of his development in the following manner.

“A question has been asked as to how it came about that I had taken to Sri Ramchandraji’s” method, preferring it to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramanuja. It is a question in autobiography.

I first awakened to spirituality through the reading of the life of [Swami Vivekananda](#). Earlier I had soaked myself in the lives of all warriors of the world as well as the great travelers of my school days. I admired the great works of Burke and soldiers. Though this was so, I did a good lot of reading in the lives of the great discoverers in science. Proctor books and the book of knowledge I had read avidly. But the reading of the life of Vivekananda, which synchronized with the First Non- Cooperation movement, which had deep spiritual coloring, was the beginning of my interest in Yoga. Though Karma yoga was what was put forward by the Gandhian way, yet the jnana attracted me or rather the Raja yoga attracted me. Then after study of all the books concerned including quite a lot of books by [Tolstoy](#) and [A.E \(Whitehead\)](#) and others I found that the books of [Swami Ramatirtha](#) (Words of God Realisation) and the Arya volumes of Sri

Aurobindo came to me. Though the first author did stir deep spirituality, it was Sri Aurobindo's works that made me get the feeling that here indeed is the authentic voice of spirituality. I drank literally the works of Sri Aurobindo. I do not know how it was so easy for me to feel into. After the Arya, I subscribed for the Standard Bearer (Chandranagore). I felt that weekly food was invigorating and necessary. I had discontinued the studies after F.A (Intermediate) now I once again entered into the college-to study Philosophy. European Philosophy I studied and took interest in the problems. [Bergson](#) I had to study fortunately, and under Dr. A.G. Hogg. I was all along saturating myself with the Arya and the essays on the Gita.

I discovered that Sri Ramanuja's thought was similar to Sri Aurobindo's at least on the side of Bhakti. I began to work for my research on Sri Ramanuja's major work and completed it. I then did another research project on Yoga Psychology in the Minor Upanishads and came to the conclusion about the major needs of spirituality and they agreed with that of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo remained my pramana. However I did not make any effort to meet and get the personal guidance in my sadhana. In the meanwhile I studied Theosophical literature and [Krishnamurthy](#) and the skeptical modes and approaches. However though I had saturated myself with Visistadvaita the inner feeling that Sri Aurobindo was giving the right direction never left me.

It was in 1936, however that my two reviews of Sri Aurobindo's writings and life put me into touch with Sri Aurobindo. I had the first darshan of him on 24th Nov. 1936; I requested that I may be accepted as a sadhaka non resident. I was asked come in 1937 June, Aurobindo and the Mother saw me. I was asked to sit bare chested and on examination it was decided that I could not be accepted as a sadhaka. That was my first shock. However I continued devoting myself to a serious study of Sri Aurobindo.

In 1939, there was a call from the [Devasthanams at Tirupati](#) which is avowedly a Visistadvaita shrine to join the [Oriental institute](#) as Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy to do work (Service) for the Visistadvaita Philosophy. The offer was not good salary wise. Yet owing to the insistent demands of my father, Sri Rao Bahadur K.V. Rangaswami Iyengar and his uncle Rao Bahadur N.S. Narasimhachariar, I accepted the offer. Since I was not accepted by Sri Aurobindo I did not consult him but joined. (I belong to the sect of Visistadvaita by birth and thought that I had perhaps to do and achieve my salvation through it alone) I had to face lot of persecution and within two years the fact became clear to me that [Visistadvaita](#) had no hope and place at this famous shrine and might get discarded slowly. This was my second shock-profoundly more than the first.

“It began to dawn on me whether after all the God worshipped on the Hills was partial to Sri Ramanuja , or whether it was after all a common enough God for all sects and personsThe diversion of funds towards secular.... meanwhile gained momentum..... the Srinivasa Mission, expansion of the secular activities, the expanded provision of amenities for pilgrims, the gold-gilding and so on. These undoubtedly popularized God: more income and more expenditure and more pilgrim traffic. T.T. Devasthanams began growing. I cannot say that there was a great wave of religiosity and interest. The summer school of Religion was a regular feature. But all was for making Sri Venkateswara more well known and popular.

We have been expanding and Tirupati became a really all- India centre of pilgrimage.... But in my inner thoughts one thing alone has been growing-a deep distrust and agony of an indescribable kind. There was perfect loss of hope about a renaissance in spirituality and growth of true philosophic evolution. More and more it became clear that institutions of religions can only lead to subtle corruption, and all sorts of persons take the shelter of religion for the furtherance of

their own vanity and livelihood. God becomes the vehicle for individual adventure...Philosophy suffered an eclipse in this place when the University came and a professor who had hardly any belief in philosophy was appointed to it.

Thus Visistadvaita became non-grata and every attempt to improve it had failed. Thus I was forced to the conclusion that it is futile to resurrect it or attempt to waste one's life over it. Its votaries were working against it: a suicidal affair. The philosophy is not obviously wrong-intellectually to me it has been fairly satisfactory. The Aurobindonian element of supra mental evolution was possible in terms of Visistadvaita according to me, but it was not so admitted by Sri Aurobindo. I had failed in both of my efforts. So I had to think again: perhaps a rejection of both was demanded of me by the Supreme Power that is beyond Venkateswara and Sri Aurobindo..... It was enough for me at this juncture to somehow get the grace of God and leave everything to it -to reveal or reject or illumine the great Vast of Being.

God indeed was kind to me also. I had experiences of the most vivid kind and almost certain times direct awareness..... It was at this juncture that two persons came into my life. One is Sri Swami Sivananda whose ability to catch men is as skillful as a master fisherman, who wrote to me a letter saying that my life was very important and offered to look after my body. This meant quite a copious supply of his literature and one tin of Chyavanaprasha and one of bottle of Brahmi Hair Oil every month. He made me a fellow of his Forest Academy also. But his teachings had not at all stimulated in me any serious spiritual vibrations. However Swami Sivananda considered him to be realised soul and has written as follows while conferring the Fellowship of the [Forest Academy, Rishikesh](#) "With disarming simplicity and effortless dignity that characterizes his written works Dr. K.C. Vardachari has consistently and persistently

yoked the services of his philosophical acumen towards the errors of a purely intellectual approach of life and has sought to defend and advance with adequate persuasion and power the claims of higher and spiritual values both for the attainment of deeper philosophical insights into the nature of the individual, the Word and the Ultimate Reality as also for the perfection and integration of the individual personality in a scheme of living that results in the fullest enjoyment of the prizes of this world and the gifts of the world beyond”.

The other was also seeking to introduce his book to the Public. I received a book and a letter from one of his abhyasis for opinion. I read the book and asked for further particulars. I Reviewed the book for The Hindu, Madras and I found that some three gentlemen responded to it by getting into contact with its author Sri Ramchandraji. He then wrote to me offering to help me in spirituality. I thus entered into this sadhana because here was an offer to lead me, to accept me as a disciple and sadhaka- and not on my request but by himself. I felt that I was not accepted by Sri Venkateswara or Sri Aurobindo and to me only SriRamchandraji himself came in 1956, 57, 59, 60 and has led me to spiritual experiences. So, I was led to test these carefully and was made a Preceptor in 1957 so that I could myself see how the spiritual training is done.”

From 1966 till his last days he was fully engaged in the spread of the system of Rajayoga of SriRamchandra. He delivered many talks and many books on the system during this period. After a brief period of illness he attained Maha Samadhi on the auspicious day of Basanth Panchami on 30th Jan. 1971

From: <http://www.drkcv.org/About/About.htm> (Pujya Dr. K.C. Varadachari)



The Golden Sufi Center is the vehicle for the work of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya Order of Sufism. The purpose of The Golden Sufi Center is to make available the teachings of this lineage of Sufism.

Naqshbandi Sufis (named after Bahâ ad-dîn Naqshband, d. 1389) are known as the "silent Sufis" because their practices are done in silence. They practice a silent *dhikr* and the silent meditation of the heart—God is the silent emptiness and is therefore most easily reached in silence. They also attach great importance to dreams, which they consider to be a form of guidance along the Path. The central focus of The Golden Sufi Center is the meditation groups. At meetings, silent meditation is followed by dreamwork.

Sufi dreamwork combines spiritual and psychological approaches, helping participants to realize the guidance that comes from within and to understand the inner processes of the path as they are imaged in dreams. Dreamwork is regarded as the modern equivalent to the ancient Sufi teaching stories. Participants are encouraged to share their own dreams, particularly those which have a spiritual dimension.

From: <http://www.goldensufi.org/about.html> (The Golden Sufi Center)

The essence of any Sufi order, or *tariqa*, is the energy of succession, the spiritual energy or substance that is transmitted from teacher to teacher, back in an unbroken lineage to the Prophet Mohammad. Without this transmission the *tariqa* is form without substance, lacking the spiritual energy that is necessary for the real transformation of the heart. The true history of any Sufi order is the

history of this transmission, which is the central core of the path, around which its practices and etiquette develop over time. The outer form of the path can change according to the time and the place and the people, but the inner essence must remain the same living substance of divine love.

In 1961 a Western woman, Irina Tweedie, arrived in the northern Indian town of Kanpur, where she met a Sufi master, Bhai Sahib. He was a member of a family of Sufis. His uncle, father, and elder brother had all been Sufi *sheikhs* in the lineage of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya, an Indian branch of the Naqshbandi order, named after the fourteenth-century master, Baha ad-din Naqshband. The Naqshbandis, known as the Silent Sufis, practice a silent rather than vocal *dhikr*, and they do not engage in *sama*, sacred music, or dance; nor do they dress in any special way to distinguish themselves from ordinary people. A central aspect of the Naqshbandi path is the *suhbat*, the close relationship of master and disciple. The order was very successful in Central Asia, and spread throughout India through the work of Ahmad Sirhindî (d. 1624), who was known as the Mujaddid (Renewer).

What was unusual about this Sufi family is that they were Hindu, not Muslim. Traditionally the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya are the most orthodox of all the Sufi orders, stressing the importance of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law); but at the end of the nineteenth century a transition took place. Fazl Ahmad Khan, the *sheikh* of Bhai Sahib's uncle, was Muslim, as were all of the predecessors on this path. But when the uncle, Lalaji, said to his *sheikh*, "I am yours. If you permit me, I may adopt Islam," Fazl Ahmad Khan rejected the idea: "You should not think of such an idea. Spirituality does not need following of any particular religion. Spirituality is seeking the Truth and self-realization, which are matters of the soul.... It is the duty of everyone to follow

the customs and rituals of the country and religion in which one is born.”...

I attended her small meditation group in a tiny room beside the train tracks in North London. The heart meditation that we practiced was developed in India, where it is also known as *dhyana* meditation:

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart *chakra*. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it is peace, tranquility or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us, we immerse ourselves in this feeling; we place all of ourselves in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked the feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories will float by, images appear before the mind’s eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the

utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty.

The state of *dhyana* is a complete abstraction of the senses in which the mind is stilled by the energy of love within the heart, and the individual mind is absorbed into the universal mind. The actual experience of *dhyana* rarely happens during the first practice of meditation. It may take months, even a few years, to reach this stage. And once we do begin to experience *dhyana* we may not realize it. The initial experiences of *dhyana* usually last for just a split second—for an instant the mind dips into the infinite and just for a moment we are not present. There may be little or no consciousness that this has happened; the mind may not even be aware that it was absent. But gradually, the mind disappears for longer and longer periods; we become aware that our mind has shut down. The experience can for some time seem like sleep, since sleep is the nearest equivalent we have ever known to this mindless state.

The experience of *dhyana* deepens as the lover is immersed deeper and deeper into a reality beyond the mind. More and more one tastes the peace, stillness, and profound sense of wellbeing of a far vaster reality where the problems that surround us so much of the time do not exist—a reality beyond the difficulties of duality and the limitations of the world of the mind and senses, into which, for a little while each day, meditation allows us to merge.

Dhyana is the first stage in the meditation of the heart. It is, as Irina Tweedie described it, “the first stage after transcending the thinking faculty of the mind, and from the point of view of the intellect it must be considered as an unconscious state. It is the first step beyond consciousness as we know it.” In *dhyana*, the heart is activated and the energy of love slows down the mind. The mind loses its power of control and individual consciousness is lost, at first for an instant and

then gradually for longer periods of time. The lover becomes absorbed, drowned in the ocean of love.

Then in this state of unconsciousness a higher level of consciousness, or *samadhi*, begins to awaken. The evolution of *dhyana* into *samadhi* happens “by easy degrees,” as “the highest stages of *dhyana* are gradually transformed into the lower stage of *samadhi*, which is still not completely conscious,” and this less-conscious state leads in turn to the higher state of *samadhi*, which “represents a full awakening of one’s own divinity.”

The experiences of *samadhi* cannot easily be described. They belong to a level of reality beyond the mind, to a dimension of unity in which everything is merged, where the mind, operating as it does by making distinctions, cannot get a foothold. In *samadhi* we begin to experience our true nature which is a state of oneness: we are what we experience. Gradually we glimpse, are infused with, the all-encompassing unity and energy of love that belong to the Self and underlie all life. And this oneness is not a static state, but a highly dynamic state of being that is constantly changing. Also our experience of it changes: no two meditations are the same and our experience becomes deeper and richer, more and more complete. On this plane of unity everything has its own place and fulfills its real purpose. Here the true nature of everything that is created is present as an expression of divine oneness and divine glory. In the outer world we experience only a fragmented sense of our self and our life. Here everything is complete and we come to know that everything is just as it should be....

The *dhikr* is the repetition of a sacred word or phrase. It can be the shahâda, “*Lâ ilâha illâ llah*” (There is no God but God), but it is often one of the names or attributes of God. The *dhikr* we were given is Allâh. It is said in Islam that God has ninety-nine names, but foremost

among these is Allâh, for Allâh is His greatest name and contains all His divine attributes.

But for the Sufi, the name Allâh also points beyond all His attributes. According to an esoteric Sufi tradition, the word Allâh is composed of the article *al*, and *lâh*, one of the interpretations of which is “nothing.” Thus the word Allâh can be understood to mean “the Nothing.” The fact that His greatest name contains the meaning “the Nothing” has great significance, because for the mystic the experience of Truth, or God, beyond all forms and attributes, is an experience of Nothingness. Shortly before his death, the Naqshbandi Sufi Master Bhai Sahib told Irina Tweedie, “There is nothing but Nothingness.” He repeated it twice. The words point to the very essence of the Sufi path, as Irina Tweedie explains:

There is nothing but Nothingness. . . Nothingness because the little self (the ego) has to go. One has to become nothing. Nothingness, because the higher states of consciousness represent nothingness to the mind, for it cannot reach there. It is completely beyond the range of perception. Complete comprehension on the level of the mind is not possible, so one is faced with nothingness. And in the last, most sublime, sense, it is to merge into the Luminous Ocean of the Infinite.

Thus, the name Allâh contains the essence of all Sufi teaching: to become nothing, to become annihilated in Him, so that all that remains is His Infinite Emptiness. One of the mysteries of the path is that this Emptiness, this Nothingness, loves you. It loves you with an intimacy and tenderness and infinite understanding beyond imagining; it loves you from the very inside of your heart, from the core of your own being. It is not separate from you. Sufis are lovers and the Nothingness is the Greatest Beloved in whose embrace the lover completely disappears. This is the path of love; it is the annihilating cup of wine which His lovers gladly drink, as in the words of Rumi:

I drained this cup:
there is nothing, now,
but ecstatic annihilation.

In saying the *dhikr*, repeating His name silently on the breath—"Al" on the out-breath, "lâh" on the in-breath—we remember Him. With each cycle of the breath we return to the inner essence within the heart and live the remembrance of our love form Him. Practicing the *dhikr* as constantly as we can, we bring this mystery into our daily lives. Repeating His name as we engage in the simple activities of our day—walking, driving, cooking, cleaning—we infuse His name into all we do: cooking with the *dhikr* we put His remembrance into the food, for example; cleaning with the *dhikr* we clean with His name. Lying awake at night we can silently repeat His name. It is more difficult to do when we are talking or engaged in mental activities, but when our mind is free enough to remember Him again, we rejoice once more in repeating the name of the One we love.

We may find it difficult at first to remember as much as we would like to. But with practice the *dhikr* becomes a natural, almost automatic part of our breath, and then no moment is wasted; every breath aligns our attention with Him. And over time our whole being comes to participate in this attention. Through repeating His name, we remember Him not just in the mind but in the heart; finally there comes the time when every cell of the body repeats His name.

It is said, "First you do the *dhikr* and then the *dhikr* does you." The name of God becomes a part of our unconscious and sings in our bloodstream. This is beautifully illustrated in an old Sufi story:

Sahl said to one of his disciples: "Try to say continuously for one day: 'Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!' and do the same the next day and the day after, until it becomes a habit." Then he told him to repeat it at night also, until it became so familiar that the disciple repeated it even during his

sleep. Then Sahl said, “Do not consciously repeat the Name any more, but let your whole faculties be engrossed in remembering Him!” The disciple did this until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day, a piece of wood fell on his head and broke it. The drops of blood that dripped to the ground bore the legend, “*Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!*”⁽¹²⁾

The way the name of God permeates the wayfarer is not metaphoric but a literal happening. The *dhikr* is magnetized by the teacher so that it inwardly aligns the wayfarer with the path and the goal. (It is for this reason that the *dhikr* needs to be given by a teacher, though in some instances it can also be given by the Higher Self or, traditionally, by Khidr. Working in the unconscious, the *dhikr* alters our mental, psychological, and physical bodies. On the mental level this is easily seen. Normally, in our everyday life, the mind follows its automatic thinking process, over which we often have very little control. The mind thinks us, rather than the other way around. Just catch your mind for a moment and observe its thoughts—every thought creates a new thought, every answer a new question. And because energy follows thought, our mental and psychological energy is scattered in many directions. To engage seriously in spiritual life means learning to become one-pointed, to focus all our energy in one direction, towards Him. Through repeating His name, we alter the deeply worn grooves of our mental conditioning that play the same tune over and over again, repeat the same patterns which bind us in our mental habits. The *dhikr* gradually replaces these old imprints with the single imprint of His name. The automatic thinking process is redirected towards Him. You could say that the practice of the *dhikr* reprograms us for God.

The lover experiences a deep joy in repeating the name of her invisible Beloved who is so near and yet so far away. When He is near, saying His name becomes the expression of our gratitude to Him for the bliss of His presence, for the sweetness of His companionship.

When He is absent, it becomes our cry to Him and helps us to bear the longing and the pain. In times of trouble His name brings reassurance and help. It gives us strength, and it can help to dissolve the blocks that separate us from Him. When we say His name, He is with us, even when we feel all alone with our burdens.

Through repeating His name, we begin to lose our identification with our isolated, burdened self and become identified with our Beloved who has been hidden within our own heart. Gradually the veils that have kept Him hidden fall away and the lover comes to know His presence in her heart. And as He removes the inner veils, so also does he lift the outer veils. Then the lover finds Him not only within the inner dimensions of her heart, but also in the outer world; she comes to experience that “whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God.”

Then He whom we love and whose name we repeat becomes our constant companion. And the lover also becomes the companion of God, for the “eyes which regard God are also the eyes through which He regards the world.” This relationship of companionship belongs to the beyond and yet it is lived in this world. The Beloved is our true friend, and this is the deepest friendship; it demands our total participation. Practicing the *dhikr*, repeating His name, we are with Him in every breath.

(A Brief Excerpt from “Neither of the East nor of the West: The Journey of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya from India to America” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/article_eastwest.html (The Golden Sufi Center)



Rather than attempting to still one's thoughts by focusing on the mind, through focusing on the heart and the feeling of love within the heart one leaves the mind behind. Thought-forms slowly die and our emotions are also stilled. The "meditation of the heart" is a practice that drowns the mind and the emotions in love's ocean.

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart chakra. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it has a feeling of peace, tranquillity or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us we immerse ourself in this feeling; we place all of ourself in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked this feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories float by, images appear before the mind's eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty....

Individually this meditation should initially be practiced for at least half an hour a day. Early morning is usually the best time as there are fewer thought-forms in the air and we are not saturated by the activities of the day. Meditating before falling asleep is also a good practice. But this meditation is not a rigidly prescribed discipline—it should not be forced. As in all Sufi practices if there is too much effort it is not spiritual. And sometimes one is unexpectedly drawn into meditation. The heart, awakened from within, calls one. Then if possible one turns away from outer activities and sits in silence for a few minutes or even hours, called by love into the innermost chamber of the heart.

(A Brief excerpt from “The Sufi Meditation of the Heart” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/a_meditation_of_heart.html (The Golden Sufi Center)

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Shri Ram Chandra Mission

The **Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Shahjahanpur)** (also named **SRCM**) is a non-profit organization, a new religious movement. It was registered in 1945 in Lucknow, India, by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (aka Babuji) (1899–1983) in memory of his spiritual teacher, Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (aka Lalaji) (1873–1931), whom he met a few times before Lalaji's death in 1931, and to promote the method of Sahaj Marg which Babuji invented and registered in 1945.^[1] The Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Chennai) was registered in San Luis Obispo, California, USA, in 1997.^[2]

Beliefs and practices

The stated purpose of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission is to "awaken the divine consciousness and support on the path of evolution", and according to the movement, its modified form of Raja Yoga starting at step #7 of Patanjali's Raja Yoga^[3] is not based on "mechanical methods involving austerity and penance unsuited to current living conditions" but on "simple and natural means". The proposed practice claims to be seeking to be "universal", "easily practiceable" and one can quickly "get to find yourself in what is sought unsuccessfully on the outside".^[4] The Sahaj Marg system uses the cleansing of the past impressions (samskara), meditation on the heart and the support of a living (self-titled and self-appointed) spiritual master.^[5] The role of the spiritual teacher is said to be essential, according to the books published by the SRCM, as "he is well aware of all issues and all matters of spirituality and is claimed to have walked the path to realization or enlightenment of the soul, thus ending the cycles of life". He allegedly knows what to do for the traveler.^[4] "He is regarded by the practitioners as "a living example, a teacher by his writings and by his words. "It is God who is the true Guru, Master, and from him (God?) alone that we receive the light", wrote Ram Chandra in his book *Reality at Dawn*.^[6]

Organization

The current President and spiritual Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California, USA in 1997 (SRCM California-1997), is Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (aka Chariji) (b. 1927). The current President and spiritual master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in Lucknow, India in 1945, (SRCM-Shahjahanpur-1945) is Navneet Kumar Saxena, the founder's grandson. Chariji was the disciple of the founder, Sri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, (aka "Babuji") who himself was taught for a short while by Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, aka "Lalaji" having met him a few times.^[7] The SRCM claim that Lalaji rediscovered a very old method of spiritual training, the so-called inherited knowledge of the sages of ancient India, and which is based on the transmission of divine energy or "pranahuti".

Lalaji and his lineage claim that Lalaji was the first "non-Muslim" Master of the Naqshbandiya Sufi Order and that his Master was Hazrat Maulana Shah Fazl Ahemad Khan Naqshbandi Mujaddadi Mazahari r.a. (Huzur Maharaj) of Raipur (Kaimganj), Uttar Pradesh, India. Lalaji was initiated on January 23, 1896 at 05 P.M. and was conferred full Master-ship on October 11, 1896, which he remained to his death on Aug. 14, 1931. The teachings of Lalaji are the teachings of his Master, Huzur Maharaj, of whom he was declared "a perfect copy" by an independent panel of other religious disciplines.

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission is now present on all continents, and books by Sahaj Marg are now translated into twenty languages and used in many ashrams.^[8]

Reception

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California in 1997 (SRCM California, 1997) and headquartered in Chennai, India, is an NGO recognized by the UNDP (Department of Public Information) as a "non-profit organization" in Denmark, the United States and India.^[9]

In France, the SRCM is organized as a non-profit organization established in 1986, but has been classified as an orientalist cult with over 2,000 members in the 1995 report established by the Parliamentary Commission on Cults in France.^[10] Around 1995, it counted about 60 tutors for 600 abhyasis.^[11] The anti-cults association GEMPPI denounced the "indigence doctrinal and philosophical talks among followers, unrelated to the Eastern religious systems". Its President stated that one sole life of total and absolute obedience to the Master of SRCM is supposed to interrupt the cycle of reincarnation. "Critical reflection and autonomy of thought are stifled in this ideological movement which claims to be revolutionary in its ideas".^[12]

In Belgium, the 1997 parliamentary report established a list of 189 movements which contained the Shri Ram Chandra Mission.

The inclusion in the parliamentary report on cults has been criticized by lawyer Lawrence Hincker, who said that "this system of meditation, called Sahaj Marg, does not lead to a life away from the world. It integrates all aspects of man, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without charge or austerity or penance or self-negation".^[13] According to the sociologist Bruno Étienne, an expert on religious issues, the SRCM publishes books as any other group but does not proselytize, and has never been convicted: "To us, it is fully a NMR (new religious movement), modern religious group, although based on an ancient tradition, and subject to serious arguments advanced by others more knowledgeable, we do not understand why it is criticized on the list of the damned".^[14] Raphaël Liogier, Director of the Observatory of religious and university professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Aix-en-Provence, said he did not understand the inclusion on the cult list of an association that is fully recognized in India.^[15] The Centre d'Information et de Conseil des Nouvelles Spiritualités (CICNS), a French association for the defense of religious freedom and conscience, said the movement is victim of slander on the Internet.^[16]

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- Critical views on Shri Ram Chandra Mission France (<http://www.prevensectes.com/sriram.htm>)
- Lalaji's NaqshMuMRa Nexus (<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/home>)
- Sufi Saints and Sufism (Dr. RK Gupta) (see section on Lalaji in Sufism (<http://sufism.weebly.com/>))

Sahaj Marg

Sahaj Marg (Hindi translation, the *easy* or *natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1] [2] [3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 - 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

Sahaj Marg is offered free of charge to peoples all around the world. Sahaj Marg system of meditation is practiced by over 400,000 practitioners (*abhyasis*) in over 92 countries.

The daily practice includes:

- Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
- Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);^[5]
- A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes) ;^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

- Group meditation sessions known as 'Satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (Sat = Truth and Sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;^[5]
- Cleaning sessions or individual sittings with a preceptor (trained prefect) are also available free of charge and they can be scheduled on a one-to-one basis.

Generally individual sittings are taken every other week but if necessary they can be had every week based on preceptor's availability.^[6]

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, it's founder and president, called "Babuji."^[6] Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and died in April 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique called *pranahuti*.^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.^[6]

Controversies and schisms

There are some break away groups and some controversies have spun out on who controls the domain and trademark names of the group after the death of its founder in 1983 (Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur). The court verdict was given in favor of his nominated representative.^[9]

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[10]

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Sahaj Marg

Sahaj marg (*The Natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1][2][3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 – 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

The daily practice includes:

1. Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
2. Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);
3. A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes);^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

1. Group meditation sessions known as 'satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (sat = Truth and sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;
2. Cleaning sessions.
3. Universal prayer: The fundamental elements of sahaj marg practice—morning meditation, evening cleaning and night-time prayer meditation—are primarily meant for personal spiritual growth and development. The universal prayer is a feature of the practice that is dedicated to the welfare of all. The instructions for the prayer are as follows:
 "At 9:00 P.M. sharp every abhyasi, wherever he or she might happen to be at the time, should stop his or her work and meditate for fifteen minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are being filled up with love and devotion and that real faith is growing stronger in them. It shall be of immense value to them, which their practical experience only shall reveal."
4. Constant remembrance: Meditation, cleaning and prayer make up the basic elements of the sahaj marg practice. Practice becomes dynamic and infused with life and feeling when it leads to the remembrance and experience of our connection with the divine within. One cultivates this ongoing connection through a specific training of mind and heart referred to as constant remembrance.

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, its founder and president, called "Babuji." Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and left his mortal coil on April 19th, 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique taught by his master Lalaji called *pranahuti*^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicants' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.

Whispers From The Brighter World

Four Whispers (books) have been published, the last released in May, 2012. Fifth whispers(book) released in may 2013

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[9]

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Sri Ram Chandra Mission - Sahaj Marg

Ten Rules of Sahaj Path (Principles)

1. Every brother should wake up before the sun rises in the morning and meditate at the fixed time before the sun rises. Set a different place and asana for worship. Make a habit of sitting in the same posture as far as possible. Take special care of body and mental purity.
2. Worship should be started with prayer. Prayer should be for spiritual upliftment and such that the heart is filled with love.
3. Every brother should have his purpose and that he should reach God and make a permanent position by attaining rhythm in it and not rest until it is achieved.
4. Make your life simple so that it meets nature.
5. Always speak the truth and understand every trouble from the Lord for your good and thank him.
6. Consider the whole world as your brother and treat everyone like this.
7. If someone gets hurt, don't think of taking revenge from him, rather understand it from the owner and thank him.
8. Whatever you get while eating, eat happily and eat in the remembrance of God. Take care of pure and sacred earnings.

9. Make your living and behaviour such a good way that people feel good by seeing it and people start loving it.

10. If a crime is committed by mistake, take God in front of you while sleeping and ask for forgiveness from him in the state of religion, repent and pray and try so that there is no crime in the future.

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सहज in English

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ औ औ क ख ग घ ङ च छ ज झ ट ठ ड ढ न त थ द ध प फ ब भ म य र ल व श ष स ह
ख ष ङ ष

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Hindi English

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सहज Meaning in English

- Inherent, Simple, Ingrown, Inborn, Native, Unacquired, Spontaneous, Natural, Easy, Glib, Unlaboured

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सहज - अनाद्य अनेकी में

Get definition, translation and meaning of सहज in English. Above is English meaning of सहज. Yahan सहज ka matlab English mai (सहज अनाद्य अनेकी में) diya gaya hai.

What is Sahaj meaning in English ? (सहज ka English arth, matlab kya hai?).

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Marg meaning in English

मार्ग मतलब

- Way, Road, Boulevard, Itinerary, Route

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Marg - Matlab in English

Here is meaning of Marg in English. Above get definition and English meaning of Marg. What is मार्ग meaning in English ? (English matlab - arth kya hai?).

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Impact of Five Days Spiritual Practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on Well-Being Related Parameters and Selected Physiological Indicators

Narendra Kumar Arya^{1*}, Kamlesh Singh¹, Anushree Malik¹

ABSTRACT

Impact of five days spiritual practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters and selected physiological indicators has been studied on 55 participants (25 male, 30 female; age range 18-65 years; mean age = 49 years & SD = 12.5 years). It was found that mental health and its dimensions like emotional well-being and social well-being; positive experience and negative experience; Sat-Chit-Ananda; depression anxiety and stress had significant change towards improved well-being. However, psychological well-being, flourishing Scale and mindfulness did not show significant improvement after the sessions. Observations during the Semi-structured interview corroborated with the above results.

Keywords: *Heartfulness, Sahaj Marg, Spiritual Practice, Well-being, Meditation.*

All communities have been making efforts to enhance the well-being and happiness of their people. These efforts are mainly of two types: deliberately delivered modules and socio-cultural practices of societies (Singh, Jain & Singh, 2014). Various studies have been carried out on deliberately induced modules and their efficacy has been well documented (Singh & Choubisa, 2009; Crawford & Caltabiano, 2011; Diener & Diener, 1995; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). However socio-cultural practices are also very important as they are practiced widely in all societies with spirituality being central to many cultures.

Spirituality is an integral part of one's identity and the personal experience of the transcendent which may be called God or a higher power, or unity with greater world or mystery, (Gall, Malette & Guirguis, 2011). Various activities come under the category of spiritual practices with meditation being the core component in most of the eastern spiritual practices. Meditation

¹ National Resource Centre for Value Education in Engineering (NRCVEE), Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi, India

[*Responding Author](#)

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practices can be divided into two categories: focused attention meditation, which requires sustained attention voluntarily on a chosen object, and open monitoring meditation, in which moment to moment content of experience is monitored without reaction (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008). Automatic self-transcending meditation practice is a third category of meditation practice which includes techniques designed to transcend their own activity. The category of automatic self-transcending is found to be different from focused attention and open monitoring (Travis & Shear, 2010).

Individuals with higher level of spiritual well-being have been reported to experience lesser levels of emotional and mental illness (Brown, Carney, Parrish & Klem, 2013). A new spiritual understanding called three principles, considers mindfulness, flow and mental health as the most natural state of people. This state can be realized and sustained via three spiritual principles which are Universal Mind, Thought and Consciousness. By understanding the three spiritual principles, one can gain insight into “thought recognition” and “innate health via clear mind”. This insight has shown significant positive relationship with mindful acceptance, mindful attention, flow experience, and mental health (Kelly, Pransky, & Lambert, 2016). Universal Mind has been considered as the purest life force; the formless energy and creative intelligence within and behind all of life; the essence of everything in the universe, including human beings, (Banks, 1998).

There are many activities in rural India which have spiritual effects, for example *Satsang*, which comprises of different prayers and chanting in a group. *Satsang* has been found to be promoting well-being among women in rural India. *Satsang* has a spiritual essence that helps a person in connecting with inner self and higher self, also referred to as God (Singh, et al., 2014).

For higher level of spiritual experiences a concept of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (*Sat* meaning being truthful, *Chit* referring to being aware, and *Ananda* being the bliss) has been described in Indian spiritual texts. The Indian concept is about achieving bliss or infinite happiness by having the experience of connecting with inner source (Srivastava & Misra, 2011). A study proposed a scale to measure *Sat-Chit-Ananda* with adequate psychometric properties in which a multidimensional construct with four dimensions namely *Chit*-consciousness, *Antah Shakti*- Inner strength, *Sat*-truthfulness and *Ananda*- blissfulness was proposed (Singh, Khari, Amonkar, Arya, & Kesav, 2013).

Meditation is a core component of most of the eastern spiritual practices. Mental and physical health has been found to improve as a result of meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Empirical studies have confirmed that meditation can indeed foster beneficial psychological and physiological state (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, et al., 2003). Effect of a Buddhist practice Soka Gokai (Soka Gokai International) on well-being and some factors of positive

Impact of Five Days Spiritual Practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on Well-Being Related Parameters and Selected Physiological Indicators

psychology have been studied in a transnational comparison. The practice has been found to be very effective across the nations (Sachar, 2013). In a review of many studies on effect of meditation, it has been found that meditation improves state of mental and physical well-being, (Arya, Singh & Malik, 2013).

Many Indian organizations with large international following such as Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, Vipassana and Sahaj Marg are having very effective and popular meditation based programs. These organizations have similar aim of giving spiritual progress, mental peace and happiness through meditation based spiritual practices; however their practices are different in terms of type of meditation, other side-activities and delivery of the programs.

Art of Living runs “Happiness Program” and other programs involving meditation, *pranayama* (breathing exercises) and *sudarshan kriya* (a process for cleansing of mind). In a one month study on *Sudarshan Kriya Yog* (SKY), significant reductions occurred in the pre and post intervention mean Hamilton Anxiety Scale’s (HAM-A) total score and psychic subscale (Katzman, Vermani, Gerbarg, Brown, Iorio, et al., 2012). In a review paper on *Sudarshan Kriya Yog* (SKY), several papers on SKY were studied in which mounting evidence was found to suggest that SKY can be beneficial, low-risk, low-cost adjunct to the treatment of stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, stress-related medical illnesses, substance abuse and rehabilitation of criminal offenders (Zope & Zope, 2013).

Brahma Kumaris practice a technique of Rajyoga (Yoga of mind). Their main focus is on spiritual practices, meditation and self-transformation. It was observed in a study that use of some autonomic and respiratory variables (e.g., heart rate) may reveal group effects of meditation, whereas other variables can alter in an individualistic way (Telles & Desiraju, 1993). Another ancient Indian technique of meditation is called Vipassana, which means to see things as they really are. In a study on impact of intensive Vipassana meditation, it was found that there was a significant improvement on selected measures of psychological health and well-being, including positive affect, satisfaction with life, and mindfulness whereas there was significant decrease in depression, stress and negative affect measures related to ill-being. However, anxiety subscale of the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) did not change (Krygier et al., 2013). In another research which reflects author’s embodied experience of meditation; Vipassana Meditation is a medium for embodied self-reflexivity. It adds value to the body of knowledge of meditation. Engaging in embodied self-reflexivity has the potential to reduce stress for nurses and other women (Riet, 2011).

Sahaj Marg or Sri Ram Chandra Mission offers a platform for spiritual and practical living in more than 100 countries. Their practice is based on inner experience through meditation. It is a refined and simplified form of *Rajyoga*, suitable for modern everyday life. *Rajyoga* refers to

Impact of Five Days Spiritual Practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on Well-Being Related Parameters and Selected Physiological Indicators

meditation and other practices affecting the mind and heart. The Sahaj Marg practice includes a morning meditation, evening cleaning (cleaning of mind) and prayer meditation at bed time. These three basic elements combine to create a complete and effective system for inner transformation. *Pranahuti*, an ancient yogic technique, also called yogic transmission is the backbone of Sahaj Marg practice. *Abhyasi* (practitioner) training program at CREST, stay in retreat centers, annual *bhandaras* (spiritual gatherings), and stay in Himalayan ashram are some of the supporting elements (a full description of courses available at www.sahajmarg.org). There is a lack of empirical studies on Sahaj Marg practices in the published literature. To fill up this gap, the present study has been carried out in which the impact of five days Spiritual Practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters and selected physiological indicators have been assessed. At the end of the program, semi-structured interview was conducted to collect responses based on personal experience to correlate the results from quantitative data.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

There were fifty five participants (25 males, 30 females; age range 18-65 years; mean age = 49 years & SD = 12.5 years) who participated in the study. The participants were practitioners of Sahaj Marg and were staying full time in the *ashram* during the five days program. All participants gave informed consent for the purpose of participating in the study.

Study Location

The study was carried out at the Himalayan Ashram located at Satkhol, District Nainital, Uttarakhand, India. The *ashram* is located in the foothills of the majestic Himalayas at an elevation of approximately 1900m (5700 ft). Satkhol is nestled in a golden valley among orange groves and whispering willows. There is a clear view of majestic Himalayan range in its entire splendor. Organic vegetables and fruits are grown in the *ashram* for preparing meals for participants.

Daily Routine

Participants started their day by getting up at 4 a.m. and doing morning meditation and ended their day with prayer meditation. During the day, participants had morning group meditation, evening group meditation, evening thought process cleaning, going to library twice, voluntary work, golden silence, universal prayer and breakfast, lunch and dinner which consisted of simple vegetarian food (*Satvic* food) prepared using vegetables grown in Ashram compound.

Procedure followed

Data for the study was collected at the beginning and end of the five day program. The participants arrived on first day of the program and departed in the morning of sixth day. They

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stayed for the full duration in the Ashram going out only once. Daily schedule comprised of various activities like morning meditation (1 hour), evening meditation (1hour), evening cleaning (15-30 minutes duration mental process using will power, which is part of the spiritual practice), universal prayer (15minutes), prayer meditation before going to bed (10minutes), library time (2-3 hours), golden silence (30 min), voluntary work (1hour) etc.

Psychological tests

A booklet for data collection was prepared containing demographic information and selected psychological tests. The booklet also contained a consent form which was to be signed by the participants. The booklet was bilingual having each question in English and Hindi both. Bilingual experts translated the original English version to Hindi language for use in the study. The tests were later back-translated into English by bilingual experts to verify the content similarity to the original scales and to ensure that translated tests were true copy of the original tests. The discrepancies were resolved and the data collection booklet was verified once again by the authors and bilingual experts. The psychological tests used are given below:

1. **Mental Health Continuum- Short Form (MHC – SF; Keyes, 2005):** This test consists of 14 items. Three items represent emotional well-being, six items represent psychological well-being, and five items represent social well-being with 6 point Likert scale (0-never to 5-every day). The internal reliability reported for total MHC score was $\alpha=0.89$, for emotional well-being $\alpha=0.83$, for psychological well-being $\alpha=0.83$ and for social well-being $\alpha=0.74$ (Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, Klooster & Keys, 2011). In a study on Indian population, accepted alpha reliability for Emotional Well-Being ($\alpha=0.82$), Social Well-Being ($\alpha=0.79$) and Psychological Well-Being ($\alpha=0.83$) have been reported, (Singh, 2014).
2. **Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE, Diener et al., 2010):** This is a 12 item scale which is rated on 5 point Likert scale. The measure of feelings like good, pleasant, happy, joyful, contented, bad, unpleasant, sad, afraid and angry are rated on a scale of 1-5 (from Very Rarely or Never (1) to Very Often or Always (5)). The scale reveals positive feelings score (SPANE-P, ($\alpha=0.87$), negative feelings score (SPANE-N, $\alpha=0.81$) and SPANE-B (The two scores can be combined by subtracting the negative score from the positive score, and the resulting SPANE-B scores can range from -24 to 24). Cronbach's coefficient for SPANE-P ($\alpha = 0.81$ and for SPANE-N ($\alpha = 0.77$) were also acceptable in Indian study (Singh, 2014).
3. **Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010):** This is a 7 point Likert scale with 8 statements to assess flourishing. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths. Diener et al., (2010) reported very good Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=0.87$). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results were acceptable and Cronbach coefficient was found to be excellent ($\alpha = 0.93$) on Indian population (Singh, 2014).

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4. **Sat-Chit-Ananda scale (Sat-Chit-Ananda; Singh et.al, 2013):** The scale has seventeen items, having four factors with acceptable psychometric properties, namely, *Chit-Consciousness* ($\alpha = 0.76$), *Antah Shakti*– Inner Strength ($\alpha = 0.76$), *Sat- Truthfulness* ($\alpha = 0.69$) & *Ananda*– Blissfulness ($\alpha = 0.64$) and overall *Sat-Chit-Ananda* scale ($\alpha = 0.82$).
5. **Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown and Ryan, 2003):** This is a 15-items scale designed to assess a core characteristic of mindfulness. Internal consistency is good with alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 (Brown & Ryan, 2003).
6. **Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS 21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995):** The DASS 21 is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Each of the three DASS 21 scales contains 7 items. Scores for Depression, Anxiety and Stress are calculated by summing up the scores for the relevant items. Internal consistency is good with $\alpha = 0.96, 0.89$ and 0.93 for Depression, Anxiety and Stress, respectively (Brown et al., 1997).

Physiological and physical health parameters for study

Blood pressure and heart rate were measured at beginning and end of the program as physiological parameters. Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate was carried out using commercially available automatic blood pressure monitor of brand–Omron model SEM-1 (HEM-7051-C12). Each participant was asked to take rest for 5 minutes and then the measurement was taken.

Semi structured interview

Semi-structured interview was conducted with help of questionnaire comprising of seven questions. Participants were asked many questions e.g. why have you come for this program, how long have you been doing Sahaj Marg practice, how regular you are in your practice, how much improvement you feel in your spiritual condition during this program, which activities you liked most in this program, which activities you did not like in this program and anything you want to say on your own.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 16. Paired t-test was used to study the effect of spiritual practice based program as it was a pre-post study.

RESULTS

Well-being related parameters

There was a significant difference in the scores for the MHC-SF (Total) in pre ($M = 52.42$, $SD = 10.57$) and post sessions ($M = 57.12$, $SD = 9.39$); $t(49) = 3.06$, $p < 0.01$. At component level also, there was a significant difference for emotional well-being scores {(Pre $M = 11.72$, $SD = 2.86$ and post sessions $M = 13.04$, $SD = 2.38$), $t(49) = 2.69$, $p < 0.01$ } and for social well-being

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scores{(pre M = 16.68, SD = 5.70 and post sessions M = 18.88, SD = 4.57), $t(49) = 3.24$, $p < 0.01$ }. Values of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* scale also improved significantly {(pre M = 73.43, SD = 9.48) and post-sessions M = 76.02, SD = 6.89); $t(50) = 2.22$, $p < 0.05$ }.

Table 1: Paired t- test of Pre and Post sessions data for well-being related parameters

Factor	Pre - Testing		Post -Testing		N	t - values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
MHC-SF (Emotional)	11.72	2.86	13.04	2.38	50	-2.69**
MHC-SF (Social)	16.68	5.70	18.88	4.57	50	-3.24**
MHC-SF (Psychological)	24.02	4.86	25.20	4.34	50	-1.61
MHC-SF (Total)	52.42	10.57	57.12	9.39	50	-3.06**
SPANE-Positive	23.57	3.88	26.22	3.57	49	-5.03**
SPANE-Negative	13.33	3.33	10.92	3.51	49	5.16**
SPANE-Balance	10.24	5.84	15.31	6.57	49	-6.40**
Flourishing Scale	47.18	8.18	49.69	8.23	55	-1.94
Sat-Chit-Ananda	73.43	9.48	76.02	6.89	51	-2.22*
MAAS	66.74	15.72	71.20	15.54	50	-1.52
DASS(Depression)	4.57	4.81	3.27	4.26	49	2.75**
DASS(Anxiety)	4.76	4.47	3.61	4.08	49	2.24*
DASS (Stress)	5.82	4.40	4.00	4.38	49	3.01**
DASS (Total)	15.14	12.51	10.88	11.73	49	3.14**

*Note: MHC-SF = Mental Health Continuum Short Form, SPANE= Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences, MAAS= Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, DASS= Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale. * Significant $p < 0.05$ ** significant $p < 0.01$*

In SPANE, Scores on positive feelings {(pre M = 23.57, SD = 3.88 and post sessions M = 26.22, SD = 3.57); $t(48) = 5.03$, $p < 0.01$ } and Balance scores {(pre (M = 10.24, SD = 5.84 and post sessions (M = 15.31, SD = 6.57); $t(48) = 6.40$, $p < 0.01$ } were increased significantly whereas negative feelings {(pre M = 13.33, SD = 3.33 and post sessions M = 10.92, SD = 3.51); $t(48) = 5.16$, $p < 0.01$ }, Depression {(pre M = 4.57, SD = 4.81 and post sessions (M = 3.27, SD = 4.26); $t(48) = 2.75$, $p < 0.01$ }, Anxiety {(pre (M = 4.76, SD = 4.47 and post sessions (M = 3.61, SD = 4.08); $t(48) = 2.24$, $p < 0.05$)} and Stress {(pre (M = 5.82, SD = 4.40) and post sessions (M = 4.00, SD = 4.38); $t(48) = 3.01$, $p < 0.01$)} were decreased significantly. However, there was no significant changes in flourishing, psychological well-being and mindfulness in this study (see Table 1).

Physiological parameters

Physiological measures (Blood Pressure and Heart Rate) were taken as dependent variables in the study to observe any change in them. Blood Pressure (diastolic) {(pre (M= 85.31, SD =

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11.79) and post sessions ($M = 77.21$, $SD = 10.42$); $t(41) = 5.50$, $p < 0.01$) and heart Rate changed significantly} (pre ($M=77.52$, $SD = 10.41$) and post sessions ($M = 86.12$, $SD = 9.58$); $t(41) = 7.92$, $p < 0.01$)). However, there was no significant change in blood pressure (systolic) values (see Table no. 2).

Table 2: Analysis of Pre and Post data for physical health related parameters

Factor	PRE- Testing		POST-Testing		N	t- values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Blood Pressure (systolic)	133.55	29.95	128.90	16.53	42	1.25
Blood Pressure (diastolic)	85.31	11.79	77.21	10.42	42	5.50**
Heart Rate	77.52	10.41	86.12	9.58	42	-7.92**

** Significant $p < 0.01$

However, when we critically analyze the blood pressure data as per the American Heart Association Standards, the number of participants in normal range (BP Systolic < 120 and BP Diastolic < 80) increased from 7 to 12 (Fig 1). Participants in Pre-hypertension stage (BP Systolic 120-139 or BP diastolic 80 – 89) increased from 15 to 19. Participants in High blood Pressure Stage 1 (BP Systolic 140-159 or BP diastolic 90 – 99) decreased from 11 to 9. Participants in High Blood Pressure Stage 2 (BP Systolic > 160 or BP diastolic > 100) decreased from 4 to 2. Very important thing to note is that participants in hypertensive crisis condition reduced from 5 to 0 (Fig. 1).

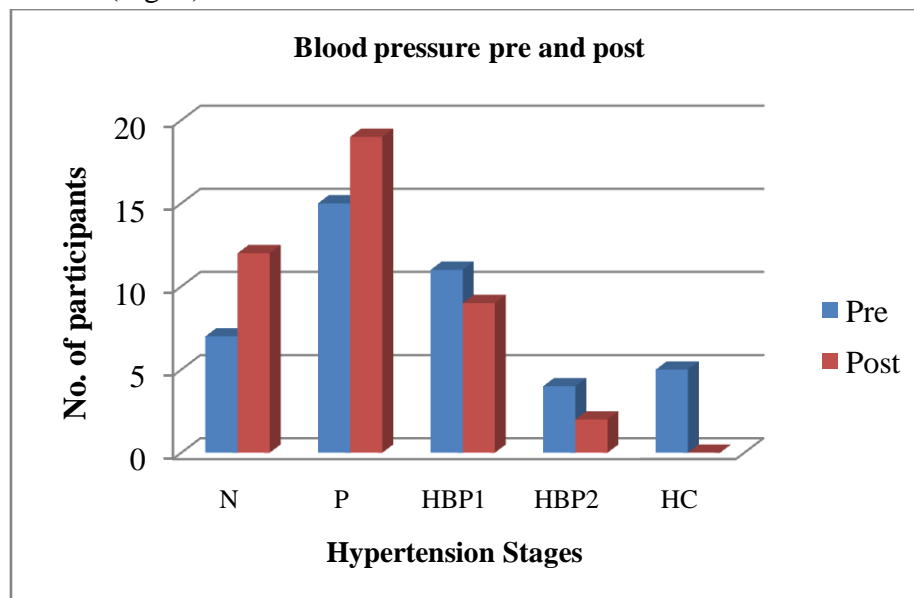


Figure 1: Number of participants in various stages of hypertension

N-Normal; P-Pre-hypertension; HBP1-High Blood Pressure Stage 1; HBP2-High Blood Pressure Stage 2; HC-Hypertensive Crisis

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Semi Structured Interview

To assess the impact of the program in qualitative terms, semi structured interview was conducted. Replies to the questions are given below.

Q1 Why have you come for this program?

Majority of participants replied that they have come for spiritual progress. Many replied that they have come for mental peace, uniqueness of Himalayan Ashram at *Satkhol*, to participate in the program at Himalayan Ashram, to experience the atmosphere. Some people replied that they wanted to be one with nature and also because the spiritual master likes the place very much. Some wanted to experience the silence of Himalayas.

Q2 How long have you been practicing Sahaj Marg?

Experiences of participants spanned over a very wide range with eight participants having experience up to five years and another five having experience of more than 20 years (Fig. 2). Twenty five participants were in the range of five to ten years whereas sixteen were in the range of ten to twenty years. One participant did not report the experience. When asked to elaborate, some reported that they discontinued for some time, some said that with the grace of master they were active till now. Some reported that they are continuing because of interest in meditation and spirituality and also their faith in the absolute.

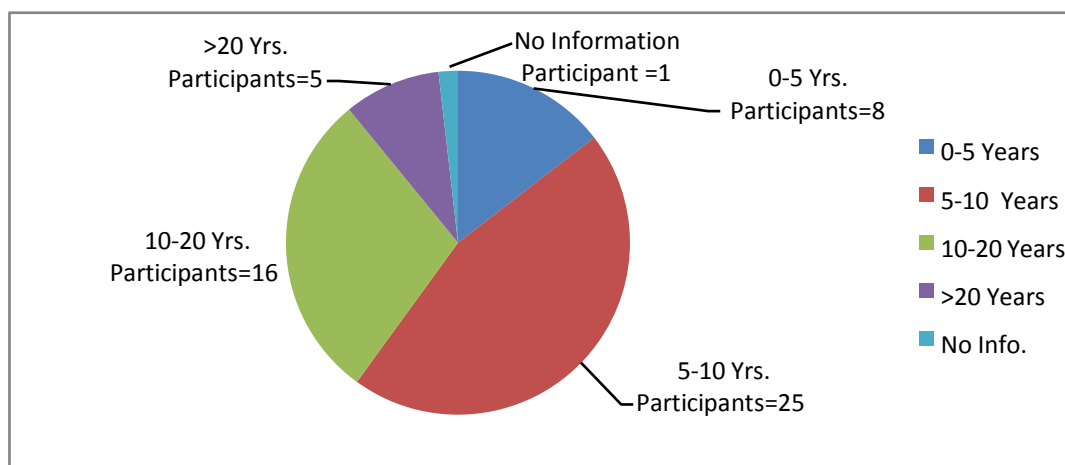


Figure 2. Duration of meditation practice

Q3 How regular you are in your practice? (Rate between 1- seldom to 5- Regular)

When asked about the regularity of meditation practice on a scale of 1-5 (1- seldom to 5- regular), thirty two of them reported the highest number 5 (Fig. 3). Twelve of them reported 4 while nine of them reported 3. One participant reported two and nobody reported 1 whereas for one participant data was not available. When asked to elaborate, some reported that they were regular in all aspects of practice whereas some reported that they were regular in the morning meditation but irregular in cleaning. Some reported their irregularity due to laziness whereas

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some others had lack of reason for irregularity. One person reported that he was missing diary writing where as one reported that his practice has improved in *Satkhol*.

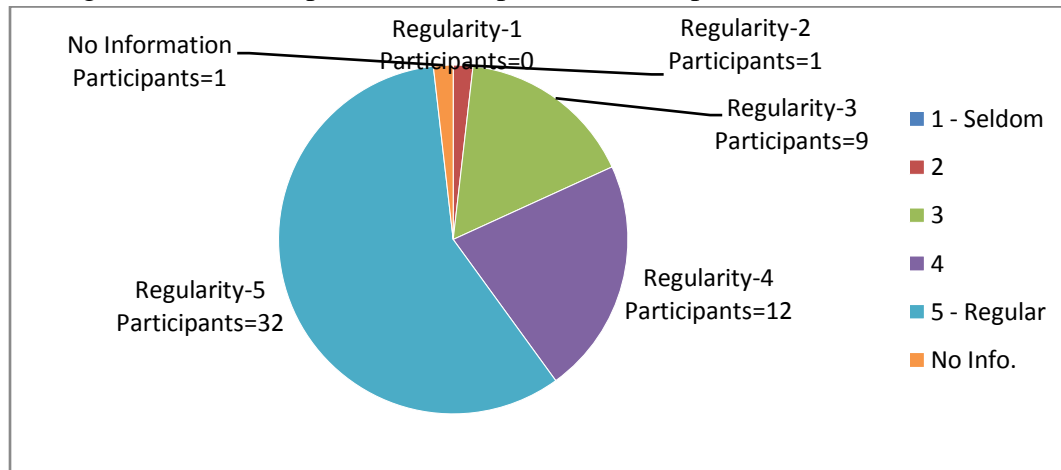


Figure 3: Regularity of meditation practice

Q4 How much improvement you feel in your spiritual condition during this program?

When asked about the improvement in spiritual condition during the program on a scale of 1-5 (1- Negligible, 5- Tremendous), thirty five of them reported the highest number 5 (Fig. 4). Sixteen of them reported 4 while three of them reported 3. None of them reported 1 or 2 whereas for one participant, data was not available. When asked to elaborate, some reported that their mind was totally at peace and they developed art of listening to nature silently, some felt totally absorbed in meditation, for some the regularity of practice and sensitivity has increased. One participant reported that he was fully focused on the program without deviation due to group effect while one reported that exploring self was much easier here.

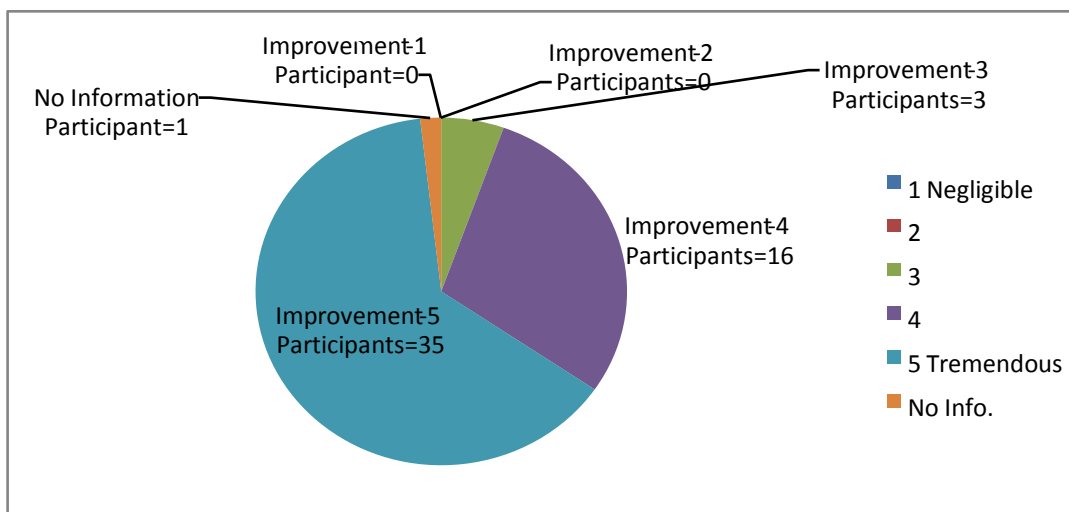


Figure 4. Improvement in spiritual condition during the program

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Q5. Which activities you liked most in the program?

Six participants reported that they liked all the activities whereas many reported that they liked meeting the Master. Many participants replied that they liked volunteer work, meditation, cleaning process, peaceful atmosphere, introspection, group meditation etc. Some people liked heart fulness program whereas some liked the nature walks.

Q6. Which activities you did not like in the program?

Eight participants reported that there was no activity which they did not like. One participant did not like filling this format; one did not like being left totally free whereas one did not like not having time for introspection. One person felt that unnecessary fear was created about rules and regulations in the *Ashram*. All other participants did not answer the question.

Q7. Anything you want to say on your own?

Many participants felt very good, with two saying that it is like heaven. Some participants wanted to thank the Master for the opportunity. Some felt free inside whereas some felt the real experience of meditation. Some wanted to come again whereas some said that participants are wonderful. One participant wanted to stay there only after retirement whereas one appreciated the program. Another participant felt differently during meditation which was never felt earlier. Twenty seven participants did not mention anything.

DISCUSSION

Main aim of this work was to study the effect of spiritual practices at Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters. There were significant improvements in measures of well-being like positive experiences, Emotional well-being, Social well-being and *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. In a similar study, brief mindfulness meditation training was effective at increasing mindfulness skill, reducing negative mood and fatigue (Zeidan, et. al, 2010). In another study on *Satsang* carried out in rural India, it was observed that all the rural women participating in *Satsang* felt more empowered and free from stressors (Singh, et al., 2014). *Satsang* also has spiritual essence similar to Sahaj Marg Spiritual Practice. In another study it was found that the mindfulness meditation significantly reduces stress levels and it was effective in reducing repetitive and persistent thinking (Kang, Choi & Ryu, 2009). Considering various studies cited about meditation effects earlier, it can be interpreted that the well-being related parameters have moved on expected lines showing significant improvement. The insignificant result on mindfulness may also be attributed to this kind of practice which is heart centered instead of mind. In this practice, practitioners are encouraged to be heart centered, however, they observe through introspection what is going on in the mind as a secondary thing.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress have reduced significantly in this study. Consistent to these results, Rocha et al, (2012) have found that regular yoga practice reduced stress, depression and

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anxiety and it also improved performance in a recognition memory task. In the same study, Salivary Cortisol analysis indicated that yoga practice reduces physiological parameter indicative of stress levels. In a similar study based on *Pranayama*, it was found that regular practice of *pranayama* had a positive effect in lowering the test anxiety (Nemati, 2013). A study on effect of negative air ions concentration found that there was a decline in computer oriented stress and psychological stress (Malik, Singh, & Singh, 2010). The pristine environments similar to Himalayan Ashram are known to harbor high density of beneficial negative air ions (Suni, et. al, 2007). This may also be relevant as the decrease in stress may be partly due to higher levels of negative air ions in natural surroundings, where sessions of the study were conducted.

In selected physical health indicators, there was significant improvement in Blood Pressure Diastolic values in spite of the fact that normally blood pressure increases at higher altitudes (Lang, et al., 2016; Stöwhas, et al, 2013). However, mean Heart Rate values have gone slightly up instead of improvement. It is difficult to explain this negative effect, however, one of the possible reasons may be the higher altitude (Stöwhas, et al, 2013). In a related study, a meditation group performed mindfulness meditation 30 minutes daily for seven consecutive days. They were found to have reduction in Systolic blood pressure and anxiety scale scores (Yu, Xueling, Liyuan & Xiaoyuan, 2013). Another study observed that higher blood pressure (BP) participants in the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) group had lower BP at week 8 relative to control group (Tavis, et. al, 2012). In a study on 50 healthy subjects (24 males and 26 females), it was found that heart rate, systolic BP and diastolic BP after *pranayama* and meditation for 15 days, went down (Roopa, et. al, 2011). In another study on borderline hypertensive subjects, it was found that relaxation and meditation technique is an effective method of lowering borderline hypertensive blood pressures (Benson, Rosner, Marzetta, & Klemchuk, 1974).

In the present study, semi-structured interview was also conducted to study attitude towards the program. It has been found that results obtained for well-being related indicators correlate well with responses of semi-structured interview. Remarkable improvement was reported by most of the participants in their spiritual level. This reflects a support to self-report measures results. The fact that they liked most of the activities in the program also points towards participants feeling contented.

Some participants had higher blood pressure, however it could not be ascertained whether they had similar problem before starting the practice of Sahaj Marg. Moreover what other difficulties they are facing in life has not been asked for. Hence it cannot be explained how the practice worked for them before the program, which is a limitation of this study. Also, to more clearly pin point the main factor (the practice, the location, the Master, or all of them) responsible for benefits, control group is desirable. It would have been better to have a control group such as a

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group of people who practiced but did not attend the ashram, however it was not feasible due to physical limitations of the research team as the ashram is too far away and participants come from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds. Getting people of similar backgrounds at a place other than *ashram* and not doing any spiritual practice was very difficult and hence this can be considered a limitation. Follow up measurement could also not be done which adds to limitations in terms of finding whether the effect is lasting or not. Future research can explore impact of spiritual practices, locations (*ashrams*, nature trip etc.), the Master (spiritual/ religious guru) and other factors on well-being.

CONCLUSION

The results of the self-report measures suggest that due to the program, mental health and its emotional and social well-being components, positive experience, *Sat-Chit-Ananda* showed improvement whereas Depression, Anxiety, Stress and their total score had significant reduction. However, Psychological well-being, Flourishing and mindfulness did not have significant change. Results of well-being and ill-being related parameters, physiological parameters and semi-structured interview indicate perceived change towards general improvement.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Sahaj Marg spiritual practice is finding more and more acceptance throughout the world; however it has not been researched much. It is also being spread by the name Heart fulness as an experience even for those who may not like to follow the regular practice of Sahaj Marg for long duration. It is suggested that effect of heart fulness programs of Sahaj Marg aimed at non-practitioners could also be studied in different settings. Moreover, the inclusion of control group as well as wider physiological parameters can be considered to strengthen the results in future studies.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declared no conflict of interests.

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Sahāj Mārga Yoga (Union through the Natural Path)

Sahaj Marg translates to "The Natural Path." It is a natural, simple system of Raja Yoga meditation and spiritual practice that helps one realize the ultimate potential within oneself. Regular spiritual practice under capable guidance enables aspirants to progressively experience the sublime presence of the divine in their daily lives. The Sahaj Marg system is freely offered to seekers worldwide through the [Shri Ram Chandra Mission \(SRCM\)](#) under the guidance of current living Master, Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (also known as "Chariji"), and is effectively practiced by individuals from all walks of life - diverse nationalities, religious backgrounds, and various social conditions.

From: <http://www.srcm.org/>

A system of practical training in spirituality, Sahaj Marg emerged in the late 1800s. Through meticulous research, Shri Ram Chandra, also known as [Lalaji](#) by his family and peers ([masters of Sahaj Marg](#)), rediscovered the long-lost art of transmission of spiritual energy. From the early years of his life, [Lalaji](#) followed the promptings of his own inner need for spirituality . He recognized the natural birthright of every individual to develop to the ultimate level of human perfection, and he saw the need for a simple and effective system of spiritual development that could be universally practiced by any person.

From: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/sm/what-is-sahajmarg/tracing-roots> (Sahāj Mārg Rājā Yoga Foundation)

Surrender in totality to the WILL OF THE SUPREME LIFE FORCE is the ORDER to which the Masters belong. They have no personal will whatsoever and their consciousness is controlled and maintained by the Pranic force. Such is the Order to which Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad, Sri Ramchandra of Fatehgarh, and Sri Ramchandra of Shahjahanpur belong. It may be observed that there is a common thread running through all their spiritual life and teachings. Though we may mention these personalities and many more and show them as roots, the Spiritual Order is the most ancient and in fact Timeless. Thus we may say that Sri Ramchandrajī Maharaj of Shahjahanpur is the Sanatana Purusha. His message and teaching is LIVING....

We say sit in any comfortable posture and maintain the same posture. Comfortable posture we take surely, but then we go on changing it incessantly. There is no control over the body. There is no discipline. We change our posture. Try to remain in the same posture. It is very difficult, but when you are asking for mergence, when you are asking for a goal where you will be totally balanced, to maintain balance is not a joke, you have to strive for it. Balance is a tough concept. Static balance of course we can have. We can sit somewhere. Even there we are prepared to, but our body is such it refuses to be balanced even at the static level. We are not doing any gymnastics here. We are not doing any hatha yoga. We don't do such things. To sit like this itself consistently for one hour becomes a big tedious problem for us. That

is the amount of indiscipline that has got into us. There must be discipline. This is foremost. Then if we meditate, it makes some sense. Meditation is always for seeking our oneness with Nature. We are trying to feel one with Nature. That is laya is it not? Oneness with God. This is what we are asking for. Our morning meditation should be for one hour for this reason, otherwise we will be disturbed. We will not be in a position to have our thought firm. In the beginning it is only at the 55th minute that we will be in a position to have some idea of what we have got to meditate up on. As we gradually progress it starts even at the first second. Progress enables us to meditate for one hour, though in the beginning people are asked to sit for one hour, we should know that our meditation is less than few minutes. Meditation usually will begin thinking about what we can do during the day? What are the other plans that we have got to do? What are our responsibilities? All these things come to us. The meditation is a must for one hour, if we want to control our thoughts. Later on once we learn to sit for one hour and meditate, it becomes easy for us to meditate for longer hours. Once we get absorbed in His thought, time passes off. I don't ask you to do that, but then that's what happens. Meditation is one aspect of it and the evening cleaning is another aspect. We have formed so many impressions in our heart. We have got various values in our mind. We have given certain people some positive marks and certain other people some negative marks. Several notions are carried by us and they are our own. It has nothing to do with others and the circumstances. The general question is, how is the day? It is beautiful. The day is always beautiful. It is warm. Either it is warm or hot or cold it will be according to its nature. We are not the persons to decide. It is as it is. We have to adjust to it. It dictates

circumstances. Nature doesn't accept our ways of doing things. It has got its own ways. Because it is the mother. The mother knows how to dictate and how to love. Both the things she knows better. We have unfortunately formed various impressions. All these thoughts keep haunting us. We have to clean ourselves. This cleaning is a must otherwise our mind will never be clean.

From: <http://www.sriramchandra.org/pam/pam.htm>

In the late nineteenth century, [Lalaji](#) met a Sufi master. Together, they founded a syncretic teaching between Hinduism and Sufism, in northern India. In 1945, *(13 years after Lalaji's death...allegedly)* on posthumous orders by Lalaji *(and others, in dreams)*, [\(see Autobiography of Ram Chandra\)](#) Babuji founded the Shri Ram Chandra Mission and the Sahaj Marga method which spread gradually to the south of India, once it rid itself of its Sufi *(Islam)* references. After raising Rajagopalachari *(The current president of SRCM(California-1997))* on a pedestal, in 1982, Babuji, ill and aging, finally appoints his own son (Umesh Saxena) to succeed him. Immediately after his *(Babuji's)* death *(1983)*, Rajagopalachari attempts to place himself at the control of the Society *(SRCM Shahjahanpur-1945)* with the support of followers from the West, while supporters of the son of Babuji continue to develop the Sahaj Marg from its historical stronghold in northern India, at Shahjahanpur. In 1999, (after having been refused the Presidency of SRCM (Shahjahanpur-1945), *by its Board of Directors, and having re-registered the Shri Ram Chandra Mission) in San Luis Obispo, California, in 1997, and its research arm, the SMRTI in Austin, Texas)*

Rajagopalachari returns to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Babuji, inaugurating the lavish Manapakkam ashram, near Chennai. Strengthened by his troops of Western followers and the financial power they give him, he (*Chari*) returns in triumph to his country. But to succeed in this feat, he has generously adapted the Spiritual product of Babuji and exploited without limit the weaknesses of his troops. He has become an autocratic guru, but resistance is increasing

In the late nineteenth century, precisely in 1891, a young Brahmin named Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh , aka Lalaji, meets the master of a Sufi lineage ([Naqshbandiya Sufi Order](#)) in India. This encounter between a Hindu and a Muslim is not unique in this northern region of India, Uttar Pradesh, densely populated and heavily Muslim. Their friendship is much more surprising in this politically sensitive time when the inter-communal tensions are exacerbated.

From: <http://historyofsrcm.blogspot.com/>

There is only one God and, naturally, there is only one way to reach Him. The people have given many names to that stage. A particular institution named “Shri Ram Chandra Mission” has given birth to a new denomination to reach Him, “Sahaj Marg”. “Sahaj” and “Marg” (path) are two separate words. According to my limited knowledge, the word “Sahaj” is synonymous of “Aatma” (soul or sensitivity), i.e. connected some thing to the “Spirituality “. It means some particular school of spirituality, other than ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, Headquarter at Fatehgarh (U.P.), India. However, very recently, it has been registered as a trademark of ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’

Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj of Fatehgarh (UP) was the first non-Muslim Saint of “*Naqushbandia, Mujaddadadiya, and Mazahariya* system of Sufism. He having well connected “*nisbat*” (the subtlest Divine thread) with its ancestry through his Spiritual Master Hazrat Maulana Fazl Ahemad Khan Saahib Raipuri, Kaimganji which has a certain well defined handling. He was, of course, against the rituals (meaningless social customs), but not the theological-ceremonies like ;(1) the disciple- making ceremony called *Bay’t*- placing the palm of once hand on *the* (that) hand of his Spiritual- Master, merely to have been the sign of sealing an agreement of allegiance. When a man or woman repented of his sins and had made up his mind to lead a life of righteous- ness and piety he/she had to perform *Bay’t*. The spirit seems to be for men/women to have direct communion with God, through the whole chain of the Spiritual Masters, so much so that all the intermediaries whose existence having been acknowledged are lost sight of, in the communion of men/women with God. (2) *Ijazat/Khilafat*, are determined on the question of *Fana* and *Baqa*, etc.

The ‘Sahaj Marg’ is schism of the ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, renamed as NaqshMuMRa, occurred because of its manner, style and the vocabulary of Sufism. The split in socio-spiritual sects is not a strange phenomenon. Many religions, after the demise of their founders, dwindled either into insignificance or into use to split into innumerable branches. Here also the divine will cause the spread of the whole ‘Society’ after Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj, everywhere, through its numerous branches and under different leadership. In fact, the philosophy and tenets have not undergone any major changes at the hands of different leaders, except the ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’.

There is an emphasis upon the *living Guru*. The founders held that *Guru* of the time alone could reveal the inner secrets, remove doubts and thus lead to salvation. In course of time, the essential truth about

the “True Guru” was lost sight of and the faith degenerated into the cult of personality- worship.

From:

<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaaajinilayam/epitomeofsahajmarg>
**(Naqshbandiya Mujaddadia Mazahariya Ramchandriya,
abbreviated as NaqshMuMRa)**

The reality of ‘Muraakibah’ is that we wait to be connected with that Supreme Power or “zaat Paak”; our total concentration in Meditation is based on this much only.

The plain meaning of ‘Muraakibah’ is – ‘Awdhaan’ or keep a watch (as per Hindi Dictionary). Keep your inner self out of any doubt; physically- eye and cardiac eye should be in perfect harmony and in the same form. When this happens there is no need to close the eyes. But till we clearly understand the ‘omni presence’ state of God, we have to close our eyes and wait vehemently.

To understand the mystery of ‘Muraakibah’ clearly, two things must be understood very well; first, what is the mystery of duality, non duality (Dwet and Adwet) and second is what the omnipresent form of God is.

According to Sufi saints, internal purity and stability is a must. You can not achieve your aim till your heart is not pure. Instability of heart is one difficulty, which does not allow us to achieve our aim. If the mirror of your heart is not clean then how can you see clearly? The biggest hurdle is confusion. It means when there are two opposite thoughts in your mind, you remain confused and perturbed.

From: <http://sites.google.com/site/samaadhidhaam/themeditation>
(The NaqshMuMRa School of Sprituality)

In 1930, Guru Maharaj, Paramsant Dr. Chaturbhuj Sahay Ji, established Ramashram Satsang Mathura (RSM) (naming it after his Guru, [Lala Ji Maharaj, Paramsant Sri Ram Chandra Ji](#)) out of the northern Indian town of Mathura. As per the directive of his Guru, he propagated a [System of Meditation](#) adaptable by people of any religion, community or race. This system is especially suited for our busy and demanding lives in today's world. If we shape our lifestyles and mold our thought processes according to it, spiritual success can be achieved effortlessly. We can learn to live a peaceful life amidst the stress.

Our system of *Sadhana/Satsang* is a unique unification of *Karma* (duty), *Upasana* (devotion), and *Gyan* (knowledge). The core of this unification is achieved through *Dhyan* (meditation) every morning and evening for 15-20 minutes.

From: <http://www.ramashram.com/> (Ramashram Satsang Mathura)

Sahaj Marg, or the "natural path," is an ancient spiritual teaching. This technique focuses on heart-centered meditation and is a simple practice which you can easily adapt. It requires no rituals or ceremonies. You need nothing more than the power of thought.

Instructions:

1. Practice Sahaj Marg meditation in the early morning for at least one hour and complete the meditation before sunrise. As

the sun sets, perform an evening cleansing meditation for at least 30 minutes, completing it as the sun goes down.

- 2. Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes shut, and concentrate on your heart being filled with "Divine Light." Assume a position which is comfortable for you and where you can remain still for about an hour. Do not lie down to meditate, or you may fall asleep.**
- 3. Concentrate on filling your heart and mind with loving energy and healing light. As thoughts enter your mind, allow them to drift away and come back to your heart-centered meditation. In Sahaj Marg meditation, all thoughts come from within, and they linger only if you give them attention. If you allow your thoughts to fall away, they will become weak as your meditation becomes strong.**
- 4. Continue your meditation for about an hour, until the sun rises, and then prepare for your day with new-found energy.**
- 5. Finish each day with an evening Sahaj Marg meditation, sitting for about 30 minutes, as you allow the thoughts and stresses of the day to fall away while the sun sets.**

From: http://www.ehow.com/how_4454652_do-sahaj-marg-meditation.html (*How to Do Sahaj Marg Meditation*, by an eHow Contributor)

Samarth Guru Mahatma Sri Ramchandra Ji Maharaj (Puja Dada Guru) came to the planet earth in 1873. His ancestors used to live in

Bhogaon, Mainpuri, UP, India. His forefathers were very rich but by his time he left with little property.

His father was Toll Suprintendent in Farukhabad. Puja Dada Guru studied in Farukhabad. He had to leave the study and take the responsibility of the family after the death of his father. He started working in Farukhabad's collector's office.

Since birth he had interest in spirituality. His mother used to recite 'Ramayan' in the morning which he used to listen with great interest.

At the same period, there was a great Muslim saint in Farukhabad. He was secular in nature and had respect for all other religions. He used to say that God is in 'love' not in 'religion'. When Puja Dada Guru was around 19 years old he got a chance of the company of the Great Muslim saint. The saint said "Come to me. I shall teach you spirituality. It belonged to Hindus but they no more has it. You learn it first and then spread it among others.". From that day he started going to the saint.

Long time passed and Puja Dada Guru kept on visiting his Guru. One day both of them were taking an evening walk. His Guru asked him to turn back. He tried to turn and suddenly all his veils got pierced. He saw the God. He saw the actual form of the whole universe. He felt the working of super natural forces.

His Guru said 'Son be cautious this is the God'. That was the day when Guru blessed him with divine knowledge.

He used to remain calm in either sorrow or happiness. He never used to laugh loudly. During satsang he never used to sit on special mattress, couch or rug. He used to say that same arrangements to be made for everybody. He never used to take gifts from his followers or disciples and never considered others lower to himself. He was very

kind and pure hearted with no difference between his words and actions. He was an ideal man.

A person loves only his children but he loved every creature. Everybody used to feel relieved and relaxed while meeting him. He did not do more talking and preferred keeping quiet. He had a glowing face and had sweet voice. He had knowledge of music too but seldom sing using musical instruments. Mostly he used to sing prayers during satsang. He had a very good knowledge of principles of every religion and sects.

His teaching was "Serve everybody without thinking of return and refrain from taking services from others.". He kept his own words. Five to ten seekers were always staying at his house and he used to provide food etc and not letting people to eat somewhere else. If somebody insisted for eating outside, he used to say "removal of duality is meeting God; if you have such feelings for me, then how will you proceed further. Remove such feelings. Whatever is mine is yours too and whatever is yours is mine too."

He kept on distributing spiritual knowledge to everybody without any reservation. He departed from this world in 14 August 1931 at the age of 59 years.

From: <http://www.ramashramsatsang.org/> (Yogäbhyäs)

Pujya Dr. K.C.Vardachari was born at Munulapudi Agraharam, a small village near [Tiruchanoor](#) a temple town of Sri. Padmavathi Ammavaru on 14th August 1902, in the asterism of Moola and Vrschika Lagna. He had his early education at [Tirupati](#) and he moved to Madras for his collegiate education. He did his F.A. at [Christian College Madras](#). He participated in the Freedom movement for a span of few years and

later joined the B.A.(Hons) course at Christian College, Madras. He graduated with a B.A. (Hons) Degree, in 1926 securing Gold medal from the [University of Madras](#). In 1927 he worked as Research Scholar in the [Andhra University](#). During this period he wrote his first book [Metaphysics of Sri Ramanujas' Sri Bhashya](#). He took his Ph.D. from the University of Madras in the year 1932. His Ph.D was the first in Visistadvaita awarded by the University of Madras. After occupying several important positions he ended his active professional life with the Vivekananda Professorship on comparative religion, ethics and philosophy at the University of Madras in 1966.

He has written profusely on the Visistadvaita system of philosophy of Vedanta, Sri [Aurobindo](#) and later on the System of [Natural Path](#), the new system of Raja Yoga propounded by [SriRamchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, U.P., India](#). [Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh](#) corresponded with him starting with the words "Salutations to the Atman" and thus recognizing his spiritual status.

In the man who leaves a deep impression on the history of his race we invariably find rare qualities besides those of the mere intellect. All those who knew Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari, had seen in him the perfection of Intellect and Intuition coupled with impeccable Character. Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari's compassion to other human beings in particular and all existence in general was something that every one wanted to acquire for himself. Pujya Dr. K.C. Vardachari was infectious and was carrying with him the seeds of Infinity wherever he went and many did acquire the symptoms of Divine Sickness due to separation from the Lord.

It is not all the certain that prizes of this world were got by him, perhaps he never bothered about it: but surely he got the gifts of the Beyond as was attested by Mahatma Sri Ramchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. U.P. The curvatures he feared that were developing in the method that is propagated by the Great Master Sri Ramchandrajai

Maharaj, slowly turned out into a reality where the stress on the spiritual path was over taken by the philosophies of love and unmindfulness in meditation. He has condescended to the prayers of the earnest seekers and has made himself available as a guide in the path leading to the Master. [A new order in spirituality](#) has commenced in 1991 and is guiding the spiritual destinies of earnest seekers.

He was an ardent seeker of reality and had a pretty long journey in spiritual life. While more would be found in the section “Spirituality”, it may be said that he has moved from the traditional forms of worship to the most illumined path of Realisation in the system of Raja Yoga of Sri Ramchandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. He answered the question of his development in the following manner.

“A question has been asked as to how it came about that I had taken to Sri Ramchandraji’s” method, preferring it to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramanuja. It is a question in autobiography.

I first awakened to spirituality through the reading of the life of [Swami Vivekananda](#). Earlier I had soaked myself in the lives of all warriors of the world as well as the great travelers of my school days. I admired the great works of Burke and soldiers. Though this was so, I did a good lot of reading in the lives of the great discoverers in science. Proctor books and the book of knowledge I had read avidly. But the reading of the life of Vivekananda, which synchronized with the First Non- Cooperation movement, which had deep spiritual coloring, was the beginning of my interest in Yoga. Though Karma yoga was what was put forward by the Gandhian way, yet the jnana attracted me or rather the Raja yoga attracted me. Then after study of all the books concerned including quite a lot of books by [Tolstoy](#) and [A.E \(Whitehead\)](#) and others I found that the books of [Swami Ramatirtha](#) (Words of God Realisation) and the Arya volumes of Sri

Aurobindo came to me. Though the first author did stir deep spirituality, it was Sri Aurobindo's works that made me get the feeling that here indeed is the authentic voice of spirituality. I drank literally the works of Sri Aurobindo. I do not know how it was so easy for me to feel into. After the Arya, I subscribed for the Standard Bearer (Chandranagore). I felt that weekly food was invigorating and necessary. I had discontinued the studies after F.A (Intermediate) now I once again entered into the college-to study Philosophy. European Philosophy I studied and took interest in the problems. [Bergson](#) I had to study fortunately, and under Dr. A.G. Hogg. I was all along saturating myself with the Arya and the essays on the Gita.

I discovered that Sri Ramanuja's thought was similar to Sri Aurobindo's at least on the side of Bhakti. I began to work for my research on Sri Ramanuja's major work and completed it. I then did another research project on Yoga Psychology in the Minor Upanishads and came to the conclusion about the major needs of spirituality and they agreed with that of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo remained my pramana. However I did not make any effort to meet and get the personal guidance in my sadhana. In the meanwhile I studied Theosophical literature and [Krishnamurthy](#) and the skeptical modes and approaches. However though I had saturated myself with Visistadvaita the inner feeling that Sri Aurobindo was giving the right direction never left me.

It was in 1936, however that my two reviews of Sri Aurobindo's writings and life put me into touch with Sri Aurobindo. I had the first darshan of him on 24th Nov. 1936; I requested that I may be accepted as a sadhaka non resident. I was asked come in 1937 June, Aurobindo and the Mother saw me. I was asked to sit bare chested and on examination it was decided that I could not be accepted as a sadhaka. That was my first shock. However I continued devoting myself to a serious study of Sri Aurobindo.

In 1939, there was a call from the [Devasthanams at Tirupati](#) which is avowedly a Visistadvaita shrine to join the [Oriental institute](#) as Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy to do work (Service) for the Visistadvaita Philosophy. The offer was not good salary wise. Yet owing to the insistent demands of my father, Sri Rao Bahadur K.V. Rangaswami Iyengar and his uncle Rao Bahadur N.S. Narasimhachariar, I accepted the offer. Since I was not accepted by Sri Aurobindo I did not consult him but joined. (I belong to the sect of Visistadvaita by birth and thought that I had perhaps to do and achieve my salvation through it alone) I had to face lot of persecution and within two years the fact became clear to me that [Visistadvaita](#) had no hope and place at this famous shrine and might get discarded slowly. This was my second shock-profoundly more than the first.

“It began to dawn on me whether after all the God worshipped on the Hills was partial to Sri Ramanuja , or whether it was after all a common enough God for all sects and personsThe diversion of funds towards secular.... meanwhile gained momentum..... the Srinivasa Mission, expansion of the secular activities, the expanded provision of amenities for pilgrims, the gold-gilding and so on. These undoubtedly popularized God: more income and more expenditure and more pilgrim traffic. T.T. Devasthanams began growing. I cannot say that there was a great wave of religiosity and interest. The summer school of Religion was a regular feature. But all was for making Sri Venkateswara more well known and popular.

We have been expanding and Tirupati became a really all- India centre of pilgrimage.... But in my inner thoughts one thing alone has been growing-a deep distrust and agony of an indescribable kind. There was perfect loss of hope about a renaissance in spirituality and growth of true philosophic evolution. More and more it became clear that institutions of religions can only lead to subtle corruption, and all sorts of persons take the shelter of religion for the furtherance of

their own vanity and livelihood. God becomes the vehicle for individual adventure...Philosophy suffered an eclipse in this place when the University came and a professor who had hardly any belief in philosophy was appointed to it.

Thus Visistadvaita became non-grata and every attempt to improve it had failed. Thus I was forced to the conclusion that it is futile to resurrect it or attempt to waste one's life over it. Its votaries were working against it: a suicidal affair. The philosophy is not obviously wrong-intellectually to me it has been fairly satisfactory. The Aurobindonian element of supra mental evolution was possible in terms of Visistadvaita according to me, but it was not so admitted by Sri Aurobindo. I had failed in both of my efforts. So I had to think again: perhaps a rejection of both was demanded of me by the Supreme Power that is beyond Venkateswara and Sri Aurobindo..... It was enough for me at this juncture to somehow get the grace of God and leave everything to it -to reveal or reject or illumine the great Vast of Being.

God indeed was kind to me also. I had experiences of the most vivid kind and almost certain times direct awareness..... It was at this juncture that two persons came into my life. One is Sri Swami Sivananda whose ability to catch men is as skillful as a master fisherman, who wrote to me a letter saying that my life was very important and offered to look after my body. This meant quite a copious supply of his literature and one tin of Chyavanaprasha and one of bottle of Brahmi Hair Oil every month. He made me a fellow of his Forest Academy also. But his teachings had not at all stimulated in me any serious spiritual vibrations. However Swami Sivananda considered him to be realised soul and has written as follows while conferring the Fellowship of the [Forest Academy, Rishikesh](#) "With disarming simplicity and effortless dignity that characterizes his written works Dr. K.C. Vardachari has consistently and persistently

yoked the services of his philosophical acumen towards the errors of a purely intellectual approach of life and has sought to defend and advance with adequate persuasion and power the claims of higher and spiritual values both for the attainment of deeper philosophical insights into the nature of the individual, the Word and the Ultimate Reality as also for the perfection and integration of the individual personality in a scheme of living that results in the fullest enjoyment of the prizes of this world and the gifts of the world beyond”.

The other was also seeking to introduce his book to the Public. I received a book and a letter from one of his abhyasis for opinion. I read the book and asked for further particulars. I Reviewed the book for The Hindu, Madras and I found that some three gentlemen responded to it by getting into contact with its author Sri Ramchandraji. He then wrote to me offering to help me in spirituality. I thus entered into this sadhana because here was an offer to lead me, to accept me as a disciple and sadhaka- and not on my request but by himself. I felt that I was not accepted by Sri Venkateswara or Sri Aurobindo and to me only SriRamchandraji himself came in 1956, 57, 59, 60 and has led me to spiritual experiences. So, I was led to test these carefully and was made a Preceptor in 1957 so that I could myself see how the spiritual training is done.”

From 1966 till his last days he was fully engaged in the spread of the system of Rajayoga of SriRamchandra. He delivered many talks and many books on the system during this period. After a brief period of illness he attained Maha Samadhi on the auspicious day of Basanth Panchami on 30th Jan. 1971

From: <http://www.drkcv.org/About/About.htm> (Pujya Dr. K.C. Varadachari)



The Golden Sufi Center is the vehicle for the work of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya Order of Sufism. The purpose of The Golden Sufi Center is to make available the teachings of this lineage of Sufism.

Naqshbandi Sufis (named after Bahâ ad-dîn Naqshband, d. 1389) are known as the "silent Sufis" because their practices are done in silence. They practice a silent *dhikr* and the silent meditation of the heart—God is the silent emptiness and is therefore most easily reached in silence. They also attach great importance to dreams, which they consider to be a form of guidance along the Path. The central focus of The Golden Sufi Center is the meditation groups. At meetings, silent meditation is followed by dreamwork.

Sufi dreamwork combines spiritual and psychological approaches, helping participants to realize the guidance that comes from within and to understand the inner processes of the path as they are imaged in dreams. Dreamwork is regarded as the modern equivalent to the ancient Sufi teaching stories. Participants are encouraged to share their own dreams, particularly those which have a spiritual dimension.

From: <http://www.goldensufi.org/about.html> (The Golden Sufi Center)

The essence of any Sufi order, or *tariqa*, is the energy of succession, the spiritual energy or substance that is transmitted from teacher to teacher, back in an unbroken lineage to the Prophet Mohammad. Without this transmission the *tariqa* is form without substance, lacking the spiritual energy that is necessary for the real transformation of the heart. The true history of any Sufi order is the

history of this transmission, which is the central core of the path, around which its practices and etiquette develop over time. The outer form of the path can change according to the time and the place and the people, but the inner essence must remain the same living substance of divine love.

In 1961 a Western woman, Irina Tweedie, arrived in the northern Indian town of Kanpur, where she met a Sufi master, Bhai Sahib. He was a member of a family of Sufis. His uncle, father, and elder brother had all been Sufi *sheikhs* in the lineage of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya, an Indian branch of the Naqshbandi order, named after the fourteenth-century master, Baha ad-din Naqshband. The Naqshbandis, known as the Silent Sufis, practice a silent rather than vocal *dhikr*, and they do not engage in *sama*, sacred music, or dance; nor do they dress in any special way to distinguish themselves from ordinary people. A central aspect of the Naqshbandi path is the *suhbat*, the close relationship of master and disciple. The order was very successful in Central Asia, and spread throughout India through the work of Ahmad Sirhindî (d. 1624), who was known as the Mujaddid (Renewer).

What was unusual about this Sufi family is that they were Hindu, not Muslim. Traditionally the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya are the most orthodox of all the Sufi orders, stressing the importance of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law); but at the end of the nineteenth century a transition took place. Fazl Ahmad Khan, the *sheikh* of Bhai Sahib's uncle, was Muslim, as were all of the predecessors on this path. But when the uncle, Lalaji, said to his *sheikh*, "I am yours. If you permit me, I may adopt Islam," Fazl Ahmad Khan rejected the idea: "You should not think of such an idea. Spirituality does not need following of any particular religion. Spirituality is seeking the Truth and self-realization, which are matters of the soul.... It is the duty of everyone to follow

the customs and rituals of the country and religion in which one is born.”...

I attended her small meditation group in a tiny room beside the train tracks in North London. The heart meditation that we practiced was developed in India, where it is also known as *dhyana* meditation:

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart *chakra*. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it is peace, tranquility or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us, we immerse ourselves in this feeling; we place all of ourselves in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked the feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories will float by, images appear before the mind’s eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the

utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty.

The state of *dhyana* is a complete abstraction of the senses in which the mind is stilled by the energy of love within the heart, and the individual mind is absorbed into the universal mind. The actual experience of *dhyana* rarely happens during the first practice of meditation. It may take months, even a few years, to reach this stage. And once we do begin to experience *dhyana* we may not realize it. The initial experiences of *dhyana* usually last for just a split second—for an instant the mind dips into the infinite and just for a moment we are not present. There may be little or no consciousness that this has happened; the mind may not even be aware that it was absent. But gradually, the mind disappears for longer and longer periods; we become aware that our mind has shut down. The experience can for some time seem like sleep, since sleep is the nearest equivalent we have ever known to this mindless state.

The experience of *dhyana* deepens as the lover is immersed deeper and deeper into a reality beyond the mind. More and more one tastes the peace, stillness, and profound sense of wellbeing of a far vaster reality where the problems that surround us so much of the time do not exist—a reality beyond the difficulties of duality and the limitations of the world of the mind and senses, into which, for a little while each day, meditation allows us to merge.

Dhyana is the first stage in the meditation of the heart. It is, as Irina Tweedie described it, “the first stage after transcending the thinking faculty of the mind, and from the point of view of the intellect it must be considered as an unconscious state. It is the first step beyond consciousness as we know it.” In *dhyana*, the heart is activated and the energy of love slows down the mind. The mind loses its power of control and individual consciousness is lost, at first for an instant and

then gradually for longer periods of time. The lover becomes absorbed, drowned in the ocean of love.

Then in this state of unconsciousness a higher level of consciousness, or *samadhi*, begins to awaken. The evolution of *dhyana* into *samadhi* happens “by easy degrees,” as “the highest stages of *dhyana* are gradually transformed into the lower stage of *samadhi*, which is still not completely conscious,” and this less-conscious state leads in turn to the higher state of *samadhi*, which “represents a full awakening of one’s own divinity.”

The experiences of *samadhi* cannot easily be described. They belong to a level of reality beyond the mind, to a dimension of unity in which everything is merged, where the mind, operating as it does by making distinctions, cannot get a foothold. In *samadhi* we begin to experience our true nature which is a state of oneness: we are what we experience. Gradually we glimpse, are infused with, the all-encompassing unity and energy of love that belong to the Self and underlie all life. And this oneness is not a static state, but a highly dynamic state of being that is constantly changing. Also our experience of it changes: no two meditations are the same and our experience becomes deeper and richer, more and more complete. On this plane of unity everything has its own place and fulfills its real purpose. Here the true nature of everything that is created is present as an expression of divine oneness and divine glory. In the outer world we experience only a fragmented sense of our self and our life. Here everything is complete and we come to know that everything is just as it should be....

The *dhikr* is the repetition of a sacred word or phrase. It can be the shahâda, “*Lâ ilâha illâ llah*” (There is no God but God), but it is often one of the names or attributes of God. The *dhikr* we were given is Allâh. It is said in Islam that God has ninety-nine names, but foremost

among these is Allâh, for Allâh is His greatest name and contains all His divine attributes.

But for the Sufi, the name Allâh also points beyond all His attributes. According to an esoteric Sufi tradition, the word Allâh is composed of the article *al*, and *lâh*, one of the interpretations of which is “nothing.” Thus the word Allâh can be understood to mean “the Nothing.” The fact that His greatest name contains the meaning “the Nothing” has great significance, because for the mystic the experience of Truth, or God, beyond all forms and attributes, is an experience of Nothingness. Shortly before his death, the Naqshbandi Sufi Master Bhai Sahib told Irina Tweedie, “There is nothing but Nothingness.” He repeated it twice. The words point to the very essence of the Sufi path, as Irina Tweedie explains:

There is nothing but Nothingness. . . Nothingness because the little self (the ego) has to go. One has to become nothing. Nothingness, because the higher states of consciousness represent nothingness to the mind, for it cannot reach there. It is completely beyond the range of perception. Complete comprehension on the level of the mind is not possible, so one is faced with nothingness. And in the last, most sublime, sense, it is to merge into the Luminous Ocean of the Infinite.

Thus, the name Allâh contains the essence of all Sufi teaching: to become nothing, to become annihilated in Him, so that all that remains is His Infinite Emptiness. One of the mysteries of the path is that this Emptiness, this Nothingness, loves you. It loves you with an intimacy and tenderness and infinite understanding beyond imagining; it loves you from the very inside of your heart, from the core of your own being. It is not separate from you. Sufis are lovers and the Nothingness is the Greatest Beloved in whose embrace the lover completely disappears. This is the path of love; it is the annihilating cup of wine which His lovers gladly drink, as in the words of Rumi:

I drained this cup:
there is nothing, now,
but ecstatic annihilation.

In saying the *dhikr*, repeating His name silently on the breath—“Al” on the out-breath, “lâh” on the in-breath—we remember Him. With each cycle of the breath we return to the inner essence within the heart and live the remembrance of our love form Him. Practicing the *dhikr* as constantly as we can, we bring this mystery into our daily lives. Repeating His name as we engage in the simple activities of our day—walking, driving, cooking, cleaning—we infuse His name into all we do: cooking with the *dhikr* we put His remembrance into the food, for example; cleaning with the *dhikr* we clean with His name. Lying awake at night we can silently repeat His name. It is more difficult to do when we are talking or engaged in mental activities, but when our mind is free enough to remember Him again, we rejoice once more in repeating the name of the One we love.

We may find it difficult at first to remember as much as we would like to. But with practice the *dhikr* becomes a natural, almost automatic part of our breath, and then no moment is wasted; every breath aligns our attention with Him. And over time our whole being comes to participate in this attention. Through repeating His name, we remember Him not just in the mind but in the heart; finally there comes the time when every cell of the body repeats His name.

It is said, “First you do the *dhikr* and then the *dhikr* does you.” The name of God becomes a part of our unconscious and sings in our bloodstream. This is beautifully illustrated in an old Sufi story:

Sahl said to one of his disciples: “Try to say continuously for one day: ‘Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!’ and do the same the next day and the day after, until it becomes a habit.” Then he told him to repeat it at night also, until it became so familiar that the disciple repeated it even during his

sleep. Then Sahl said, “Do not consciously repeat the Name any more, but let your whole faculties be engrossed in remembering Him!” The disciple did this until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day, a piece of wood fell on his head and broke it. The drops of blood that dripped to the ground bore the legend, “*Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!*”⁽¹²⁾

The way the name of God permeates the wayfarer is not metaphoric but a literal happening. The *dhikr* is magnetized by the teacher so that it inwardly aligns the wayfarer with the path and the goal. (It is for this reason that the *dhikr* needs to be given by a teacher, though in some instances it can also be given by the Higher Self or, traditionally, by Khidr. Working in the unconscious, the *dhikr* alters our mental, psychological, and physical bodies. On the mental level this is easily seen. Normally, in our everyday life, the mind follows its automatic thinking process, over which we often have very little control. The mind thinks us, rather than the other way around. Just catch your mind for a moment and observe its thoughts—every thought creates a new thought, every answer a new question. And because energy follows thought, our mental and psychological energy is scattered in many directions. To engage seriously in spiritual life means learning to become one-pointed, to focus all our energy in one direction, towards Him. Through repeating His name, we alter the deeply worn grooves of our mental conditioning that play the same tune over and over again, repeat the same patterns which bind us in our mental habits. The *dhikr* gradually replaces these old imprints with the single imprint of His name. The automatic thinking process is redirected towards Him. You could say that the practice of the *dhikr* reprograms us for God.

The lover experiences a deep joy in repeating the name of her invisible Beloved who is so near and yet so far away. When He is near, saying His name becomes the expression of our gratitude to Him for the bliss of His presence, for the sweetness of His companionship.

When He is absent, it becomes our cry to Him and helps us to bear the longing and the pain. In times of trouble His name brings reassurance and help. It gives us strength, and it can help to dissolve the blocks that separate us from Him. When we say His name, He is with us, even when we feel all alone with our burdens.

Through repeating His name, we begin to lose our identification with our isolated, burdened self and become identified with our Beloved who has been hidden within our own heart. Gradually the veils that have kept Him hidden fall away and the lover comes to know His presence in her heart. And as He removes the inner veils, so also does he lift the outer veils. Then the lover finds Him not only within the inner dimensions of her heart, but also in the outer world; she comes to experience that “whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God.”

Then He whom we love and whose name we repeat becomes our constant companion. And the lover also becomes the companion of God, for the “eyes which regard God are also the eyes through which He regards the world.” This relationship of companionship belongs to the beyond and yet it is lived in this world. The Beloved is our true friend, and this is the deepest friendship; it demands our total participation. Practicing the *dhikr*, repeating His name, we are with Him in every breath.

(A Brief Excerpt from “Neither of the East nor of the West: The Journey of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya from India to America” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/article_eastwest.html (The Golden Sufi Center)



Rather than attempting to still one's thoughts by focusing on the mind, through focusing on the heart and the feeling of love within the heart one leaves the mind behind. Thought-forms slowly die and our emotions are also stilled. The "meditation of the heart" is a practice that drowns the mind and the emotions in love's ocean.

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart chakra. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it has a feeling of peace, tranquillity or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us we immerse ourself in this feeling; we place all of ourself in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked this feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories float by, images appear before the mind's eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty....

Individually this meditation should initially be practiced for at least half an hour a day. Early morning is usually the best time as there are fewer thought-forms in the air and we are not saturated by the activities of the day. Meditating before falling asleep is also a good practice. But this meditation is not a rigidly prescribed discipline—it should not be forced. As in all Sufi practices if there is too much effort it is not spiritual. And sometimes one is unexpectedly drawn into meditation. The heart, awakened from within, calls one. Then if possible one turns away from outer activities and sits in silence for a few minutes or even hours, called by love into the innermost chamber of the heart.

(A Brief excerpt from “The Sufi Meditation of the Heart” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/a_meditation_of_heart.html (The Golden Sufi Center)

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Shri Ram Chandra Mission

The **Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Shahjahanpur)** (also named **SRCM**) is a non-profit organization, a new religious movement. It was registered in 1945 in Lucknow, India, by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (aka Babuji) (1899–1983) in memory of his spiritual teacher, Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (aka Lalaji) (1873–1931), whom he met a few times before Lalaji's death in 1931, and to promote the method of Sahaj Marg which Babuji invented and registered in 1945.^[1] The Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Chennai) was registered in San Luis Obispo, California, USA, in 1997.^[2]

Beliefs and practices

The stated purpose of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission is to "awaken the divine consciousness and support on the path of evolution", and according to the movement, its modified form of Raja Yoga starting at step #7 of Patanjali's Raja Yoga^[3] is not based on "mechanical methods involving austerity and penance unsuited to current living conditions" but on "simple and natural means". The proposed practice claims to be seeking to be "universal", "easily practiceable" and one can quickly "get to find yourself in what is sought unsuccessfully on the outside".^[4] The Sahaj Marg system uses the cleansing of the past impressions (samskara), meditation on the heart and the support of a living (self-titled and self-appointed) spiritual master.^[5] The role of the spiritual teacher is said to be essential, according to the books published by the SRCM, as "he is well aware of all issues and all matters of spirituality and is claimed to have walked the path to realization or enlightenment of the soul, thus ending the cycles of life". He allegedly knows what to do for the traveler.^[4] "He is regarded by the practitioners as "a living example, a teacher by his writings and by his words. "It is God who is the true Guru, Master, and from him (God?) alone that we receive the light", wrote Ram Chandra in his book *Reality at Dawn*.^[6]

Organization

The current President and spiritual Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California, USA in 1997 (SRCM California-1997), is Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (aka Chariji) (b. 1927). The current President and spiritual master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in Lucknow, India in 1945, (SRCM-Shahjahanpur-1945) is Navneet Kumar Saxena, the founder's grandson. Chariji was the disciple of the founder, Sri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, (aka "Babuji") who himself was taught for a short while by Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, aka "Lalaji" having met him a few times.^[7] The SRCM claim that Lalaji rediscovered a very old method of spiritual training, the so-called inherited knowledge of the sages of ancient India, and which is based on the transmission of divine energy or "pranahuti".

Lalaji and his lineage claim that Lalaji was the first "non-Muslim" Master of the Naqshbandiya Sufi Order and that his Master was Hazrat Maulana Shah Fazl Ahemad Khan Naqshbandi Mujaddadi Mazahari r.a. (Huzur Maharaj) of Raipur (Kaimganj), Uttar Pradesh, India. Lalaji was initiated on January 23, 1896 at 05 P.M. and was conferred full Master-ship on October 11, 1896, which he remained to his death on Aug. 14, 1931. The teachings of Lalaji are the teachings of his Master, Huzur Maharaj, of whom he was declared "a perfect copy" by an independent panel of other religious disciplines.

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission is now present on all continents, and books by Sahaj Marg are now translated into twenty languages and used in many ashrams.^[8]

Reception

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California in 1997 (SRCM California, 1997) and headquartered in Chennai, India, is an NGO recognized by the UNDP (Department of Public Information) as a "non-profit organization" in Denmark, the United States and India.^[9]

In France, the SRCM is organized as a non-profit organization established in 1986, but has been classified as an orientalist cult with over 2,000 members in the 1995 report established by the Parliamentary Commission on Cults in France.^[10] Around 1995, it counted about 60 tutors for 600 abhyasis.^[11] The anti-cults association GEMPPI denounced the "indigence doctrinal and philosophical talks among followers, unrelated to the Eastern religious systems". Its President stated that one sole life of total and absolute obedience to the Master of SRCM is supposed to interrupt the cycle of reincarnation. "Critical reflection and autonomy of thought are stifled in this ideological movement which claims to be revolutionary in its ideas".^[12]

In Belgium, the 1997 parliamentary report established a list of 189 movements which contained the Shri Ram Chandra Mission.

The inclusion in the parliamentary report on cults has been criticized by lawyer Lawrence Hincker, who said that "this system of meditation, called Sahaj Marg, does not lead to a life away from the world. It integrates all aspects of man, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without charge or austerity or penance or self-negation".^[13] According to the sociologist Bruno Étienne, an expert on religious issues, the SRCM publishes books as any other group but does not proselytize, and has never been convicted: "To us, it is fully a NMR (new religious movement), modern religious group, although based on an ancient tradition, and subject to serious arguments advanced by others more knowledgeable, we do not understand why it is criticized on the list of the damned".^[14] Raphaël Liogier, Director of the Observatory of religious and university professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Aix-en-Provence, said he did not understand the inclusion on the cult list of an association that is fully recognized in India.^[15] The Centre d'Information et de Conseil des Nouvelles Spiritualités (CICNS), a French association for the defense of religious freedom and conscience, said the movement is victim of slander on the Internet.^[16]

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External links

- SRCM (California-1997) Official site (<http://www.srcm.org>)
- Critical views on Shri Ram Chandra Mission France (<http://www.prevensectes.com/sriram.htm>)
- Lalaji's NaqshMuMRa Nexus (<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/home>)
- Sufi Saints and Sufism (Dr. RK Gupta) (see section on Lalaji in Sufism (<http://sufism.weebly.com/>))

Sahaj Marg

Sahaj Marg (Hindi translation, the *easy* or *natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1] [2] [3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 - 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

Sahaj Marg is offered free of charge to peoples all around the world. Sahaj Marg system of meditation is practiced by over 400,000 practitioners (*abhyasis*) in over 92 countries.

The daily practice includes:

- Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
- Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);^[5]
- A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes) ;^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

- Group meditation sessions known as 'Satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (Sat = Truth and Sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;^[5]
- Cleaning sessions or individual sittings with a preceptor (trained prefect) are also available free of charge and they can be scheduled on a one-to-one basis.

Generally individual sittings are taken every other week but if necessary they can be had every week based on preceptor's availability.^[6]

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, it's founder and president, called "Babuji."^[6] Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and died in April 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique called *pranahuti*.^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.^[6]

Controversies and schisms

There are some break away groups and some controversies have spun out on who controls the domain and trademark names of the group after the death of its founder in 1983 (Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur). The court verdict was given in favor of his nominated representative.^[9]

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[10]

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Sahaj Marg

Sahaj marg (*The Natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1][2][3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 – 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

The daily practice includes:

1. Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
2. Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);
3. A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes);^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

1. Group meditation sessions known as 'satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (sat = Truth and sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;
2. Cleaning sessions.
3. Universal prayer: The fundamental elements of sahaj marg practice—morning meditation, evening cleaning and night-time prayer meditation—are primarily meant for personal spiritual growth and development. The universal prayer is a feature of the practice that is dedicated to the welfare of all. The instructions for the prayer are as follows:
 "At 9:00 P.M. sharp every abhyasi, wherever he or she might happen to be at the time, should stop his or her work and meditate for fifteen minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are being filled up with love and devotion and that real faith is growing stronger in them. It shall be of immense value to them, which their practical experience only shall reveal."
4. Constant remembrance: Meditation, cleaning and prayer make up the basic elements of the sahaj marg practice. Practice becomes dynamic and infused with life and feeling when it leads to the remembrance and experience of our connection with the divine within. One cultivates this ongoing connection through a specific training of mind and heart referred to as constant remembrance.

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, its founder and president, called "Babuji." Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and left his mortal coil on April 19th, 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique taught by his master Lalaji called *pranahuti*^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.

Whispers From The Brighter World

Four Whispers (books) have been published, the last released in May, 2012. Fifth whispers(book) released in may 2013

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[9]

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of 2-week yoga and meditation on emotional quotient

Shashikala L, Lakshmi T

Department of Physiology, Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences, Mandya, Karnataka, India

Correspondence to: Lakshmi T Venkatesh, E-mail: jenydraks@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: With the current demand for enhanced performance in all walks of life, stress is present universally. **Aims and Objectives:** The present study is to study the effect of yoga and meditation on emotional quotient (EQ). **Materials and Methods:** A total of 60 subjects both male and female were asked to fill the questionnaire before and after the yoga training for 2 weeks. **Results:** The results showed that all the EQ dimensions were increased after training of 2 weeks. **Conclusion:** Practicing the yoga way of life may bring about a complete transformation of one's personality, on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

KEY WORDS: Yoga; Meditation; Emotional Quotient

INTRODUCTION

Yoga has the potential to provide physical, mental, and emotional health benefits. Multitasking and competition have increased in all walks of life, which may manifest as psychological and physiological stress. This leads to mental and emotional drain. Dissatisfaction and frustration are leading to depression and more incidence of suicide in the society. Emotional quotient (EQ), also called emotional intelligence (EI), assesses the emotional stability of the person and also tells us the ability of the person to handle different stressful situations. EI is “a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate between them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action.”^[1] Goleman identifies five components of EI self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.^[2] An alternative framework as defined by the Consortium for Research on EI.^[3]

Objective of the Study

This study is undertaken to know the effects of yoga and meditation on emotional quotient.


MATERIALS AND METHODS

Source of Data

In this study, we included 60 adults (males and females) in the age group of 20–45 years. Written informed consent was obtained before recruitment into the study. Subjects were asked to fill the questionnaire before and after yoga training of 2 weeks in Mandya Yoga Centre. EQ is assessed by EQ questionnaire “The Quick EI Self-Assessment” developed by Dr. Singh and Dr. Chadha. This test has 22 real-life situations based on 4-point scale rating. This test is useful to measure emotional dimensions such as emotional competency, emotional maturity, and emotional sensitivity. The subjects will be asked to fill the questionnaire before and after the yoga training.

Inclusion Criteria

- Age between 20 and 45 years (males and females), physically and mentally fit, normal health as declared

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Table 1: Comparison pre- and post-test score

Parameters	Before yoga training	After yoga training	P value
Emotional sensitivity	91.24±13.87	95.80±10.97	0.0481
Emotional maturity	113.24±17.21	119.32±15.92	0.0468
Emotional competency	159.18±28.23	170.11±23.01	0.0218
Total emotional quotient	352.28±39.98	370.17±40.12	0.0159

by the physician. All of them taking high-fiber low-fat vegetarian diet and no caffeinated drinks, alcohol, or tobacco in any form.

Exclusion Criteria

- Taking medication, using any other wellness strategy.

RESULTS

Statistical analysis of the data was done using paired *t*-test before and after yoga training. The score of the subject in emotional competency, emotional maturity, emotional sensitivity, and total emotional quotient was increased significantly after 2 weeks of training [Table 1].

DISCUSSION

Our study showed significant increase in emotional sensitivity, emotional maturity, emotional competency, and total emotional quotient after undergoing yoga and meditation training for 2 weeks. This indicates the necessity of yoga and meditation in our daily life.

A study conducted by Adhia *et al.*, who studied EI of managers, found that there was significant enhancement of EI score in the yoga-practicing group compared to the control group which practiced physical exercise.^[4] Ganpat and Nagendra did a study which assessed emotional intelligent quotient in managers undergoing yoga-based self-management of excessive tension (SMET) program. The study showed 72.02% significant increase in EQ and may have implications in “executive efficiency.”^[5] Singh *et al.* studied the effect of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga on physical health, psychological health, and EI and found that there was an enhancement in the parameters they studied.^[6] EI was significantly improved in managers who practiced SMET program in the study conducted by Kumari *et al.*^[7]

Yoga and meditation bring out balanced between sympathetic and parasympathetic system, meditative experience causes a sensation of normal and even increase in alertness along with a state of complete mental silence. This can be the cause for increase EQ score where there is tolerance to self and also others.^[8]

The molecular basis and what exactly happens at the cellular level cannot be explained in this study. Further studies can be done by correlating with biochemical reactions.

CONCLUSION

Based on a review of the literature, we hypothesize that practicing the yoga way of life may bring about a complete transformation of one’s personality, on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

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Research Article

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER AMONG POST GRADUATES

Anjum Ahmed*

Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002

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ABSTRACT

Temperament is defined as that part of the personality which is genetically based. Along with character, and those aspects acquired through learning, the two together are said to constitute personality. The paper aims to study the relationship between temperament and character. The sample comprised of 300 post graduate students selected randomly from Aligarh Muslim University. For collecting relevant information for the present study, the investigator used The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) by Cloninger *et. al* [1994]. The analysis was done by computing the product moment correlation between the two variables. The result showed that the temperament of the post graduate students was found to be negatively but significantly related to their character. The negative correlation between the temperament and character is mainly due to novelty seeking and harm avoidance dimensions of temperament. However, Reward dependence (a dimension of temperament) was found to be positively related to Cooperativeness and Self transcendence (dimensions of Character). Persistence (a dimension of temperament) was found to be positively related to Self directedness and Cooperativeness (dimensions of character). The educational relevance of the findings of the study is discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

In psychology, temperament is the innate aspect of an individual's personality, such as introversion or extroversion. Temperament is defined as that part of the personality which is genetically based. Along with character, and those aspects acquired through learning, the two together are said to constitute personality. Historically the concept was part of the theory of the humours, which had corresponding temperaments. It played an important part in premodern psychology, and was important to philosophers like Immanuel Kant and Hermann Lotze. More recently, with the emphasis on the biological basis of personality, the relationship between temperament and character has been examined with renewed interest that temperament is biologically based.

Temperament can be conceived of as those predispositions for behaviour that form the substrate on which experience and life events work to form the traits that later build a personality. Temperament is discernible in individual differences that emerge in very young human infants and is presumed to be partly heritable. Temperament, traits and personality are concepts that are hard to distinguish from each other in the literature, with different authors using different approaches. (Matthew, 1980)

Character - the inherent complex of attributes that determines a persons moral and ethical actions and reactions; "education has for its object the formation of character"- Herbert Spencer - a distinguishing feature of your personal nature personality - the complex of all the attributes--behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental--that characterize a unique individual; "their different reactions reflected their very different personalities". Being a good person, however, is more than a matter of understanding what is morally right. In philosophy a distinction is made between deontic judgments of what is morally right and aretaic judgments of responsibility which involve a commitment to act on one's deontic judgment. In everyday language we use the term "character" to refer to the tendency to act in ways that are consistent with what one understands to be morally right. Traditional character education, which has been under focus since the early part of this century, had as its central aim fostering formation of elements of the individual's personality and value structure which would constitute socially desirable qualities or virtues. In the late 1920s a major research effort was undertaken by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May to identify the factors that contributed to the formation of character. To the surprise and disappointment of the researchers they discovered that few students were virtuous, and that instead, most children cheated, behaved selfishly, and lacked "self control" a large amount of

*Corresponding author: **Anjum Ahmed**

Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002

the time. Virtue, according to their data, seemed to be context dependent as students cheated, or lied in some situations and not in others. As Clark Power (1989, p. 127) noted: Hartshorne and May concluded that there were no character traits per se but "specific habits learned in relationship to specific situations which have made one or another response successful."

A man of character has not even the awareness that he is a man of character. It shines in everything that he does. Therefore such people attract, like they say, the moth to the candle. You cannot possibly accuse or praise the candle for attracting the insect; it is what it is, and being responsive to what it is, the rest of the insect life flocks to it. We flock to the light when we are in darkness. The truth behind the spiritual statement is: "Be yourself, and you will achieve much more than flaunting a false personality." Principles of Sahaj Marg (1978)

After collecting the related literature for all the two variables from different journals, books, encyclopedia and websites, the investigator has now come to a valid conclusion temperament and character has been used together in almost all the researches of clinical type and only a few have been observed in the educational field with other variables. The several studies show the relationship between temperament and motivation system (Beauvare and Tokarz, 1996). Similarly Barbara Keogh's research and thinking on temperament in childhood is paving way to the importance of temperament in education. Temperament related classroom strategies may prove to be helpful in learning. Puttonen *et al.* (2005) study provided support for the validity of Cloninger's temperament dimensions as predictors of emotions responses during different challenges. Especially, Novelty Seeking and Harm Avoidance appear to have a significant influence on emotional experiences.

Character has been a topic of discussion from time immemorial (Sabini and Silver, 1998) found an aesthetic and moral basis of character. Calabrese and Roberts (2002) described character at the core of leadership. Leaders with virtuous character provide benefit to their schools and communities. Mayer and Casey (2000) examined the scientific evidence for whether emotional intelligence underpins social and emotional learning and how emotional intelligence is related to success and whether it is central to character.

For Herbert Spencer "education has for its object the formation of character". The complex of all the attributes--behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental--that characterize a unique individual. Cloninger deals with the psychobiological aspect of character. The question for the educators is how to understand character and what aspects of educative process can contribute to character formation.

Just like motives are central to any theory of personality and therefore has a strong education implication so are our emotions. Motives are emotions in actions. Temperament and character are both biological and psychological. We cannot disregard temperament and character from any understanding of human behaviour and therefore these implications to the field of education cannot be overlooked.

Temperament and character are both biological and psychological. We cannot disregard temperament and character from any understanding of human behaviour and therefore these implications to the field of education cannot be

overlooked. It was felt that these variables as a major part of personality should be dealt in educational field. Therefore an attempt has been made to study the temperament and character among the sample under study.

The operation definition of the two variables taken into consideration for the research is:

Temperament

'The temperament is generally described as biologically based components of personality which are set to be independent heritable, manifest early in life and involve pre conceptual biases in perception, memory and habit formation.'
(Cloninger *et al.*, 1993)

On the basis of various definitions many sub dimensions have evolved of Temperament. Therefore Temperament can be defined in terms of sub dimensions like: Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Persistence.

Character

'Character dimensions are consciously learned components of personality which mature in adulthood and influence personal and social effectiveness by insight learning about self concepts.'
(Cloninger *et al.*, 1993)

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are given below:

1. To find out the relationship between temperament and character of the post graduate students.
2. To find out the relationship between the temperament and character of the male students.
3. To find out the relationship between the sub dimensions of the temperament and the sub dimensions of character of the male students.
4. To find out the relationship between the temperament and character of the female students.
5. To find out the relationship between the sub dimensions of the temperament and the sub dimensions of character of the female students.

Hypotheses

In order to study the objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a positive and significant relationship between the temperament and character among the post graduate students.
2. There is a positive and significant relationship between the temperament and character among the male students.
3. There is a positive and significant relationship between the sub dimensions of temperament and character among the male students.
4. There is a positive and significant relationship between the temperament and character among the female students.
5. There is a positive and significant relationship between the sub dimensions of temperament and character among the female students.

Design and Methodology

Sample

The data was collected from four faculties of Aligarh Muslim University, namely- Faculty of Social Sciences, Life sciences, Commerce and Arts. The sample of 300 post graduate students was selected randomly which consisted of 151 males and 149 females. The sample was found to be a true representative of the population.

Research Instrument/Tools Used

For collecting relevant information for the present study, this investigator used The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) by Cloninger *et. al.* [1994].

The TCI has been developed to account for individual differences in both normal and abnormal (deviant) behaviour patterns. The seven factor structure of personality has been replicated in both the general population and psychiatric patient populations. The TCI has proven useful in practical clinical work, notably in the diagnosis, differential diagnosis and treatment planning of psychiatric disorders.

The test measuring the temperament dimensions only was originally called the Tridimensional Personality Questionnaire (TPQ). In the TPQ, Novelty Seeking, Harm Avoidance, Reward Dependence and Persistence were measured, but Persistence was originally scored as a component of Reward Dependence. The name of the Test was changed when the character scales were added and Persistence was recognized as a fourth separately inherited Temperament dimensions.

The test retest reliability of the quantitative scores over six months is moderately high i.e, **0.85** for TCI. Cloninger *et. al.* has developed different versions of the TCI. There are Tri dimensional Personality Questionnaire (TPQ), Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI), Temperament and Character Structured Interview (TCSI) and Junior Temperament and Character Inventory (JTCI). The Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) consists of 240 items out of which 14 items are not scored as a part of TCI therefore it leaves with **226 items** in total.

Cloninger envisages temperament as being connected to the procedural learning systems of the brain, whereas character is connected to propositional learning. Thus character is more open to cognitive influence, whereas temperament reflects habit system. The sum total of temperament and character make up the personality of human, with the two being causally independent and functionally interactive.

The Temperament Variables is divided into four (4) sub dimensions. There are:

1. T1- Novelty Seeking (NS)
2. T2- Harm Avoidance (HA)
3. T3- Reward Dependence (RD)
4. T4- Persistence (P)

T1- Novelty Seeking (NS) – Behavioral activation involved the activation of behaviour in response to novelty and signals of reward or relief of punishment; accordingly, individual differences in such activatability were called ‘Novelty Seeking’. In other words it refers to engaging in new and unfamiliar, which leads to exploration of potential rewards.

This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Choleric’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘anger’ emotion. Subjects Scoring high on NS are easily bored, impulsive, quick tempered, extravagant and disorderly. Subjects scoring low on NS like rules, are highly structured and are content without need for excitement.

T2- Harm Avoidance (HA)- Behavioral inhibition occurred in response to signals of punishment or non-reward, so individual differences in inhabitability were called ‘Harm Avoidance’. It is a temperament associated with inhibition or succession of behaviour and fear of uncertainty. People scoring high on HA are pessimistic, fearful, shy, anxious and easily fatigued. People scoring low on HA remain calm, even under circumstances where others might feel upset. This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Melancholic’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘fear’ emotion.

T3- Reward Dependence (RD)- Behaviour that was previously rewarded was later maintained for a while without continued reinforcement, and individual differences in such maintenance was called ‘Reward Dependence’. It is also defined as a heritable base in maintenance and continuation of an ongoing behaviour and manifest as social attachment and dependence on approval of others. Subjects scoring high on RD are sociable, dependent on emotional support from others, yield quickly to social pressure, are warm and sympathetic, sensitive to rejection or criticism and responsive to sentimental appeals. Subjects scoring low on RD are aloof, cold, insensitive to criticism and resistant to social pressure. This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Sanguine’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘love’ emotion.

T4- Persistence (P) - means perseverance in behaviour as being industrious, hardworking and stable despite frustration and fatigue. People scoring high on persist despite frustrations, sometimes to the extent that they are unable to change strategy when necessary. Thus, a high score on persistence points also to rigidity. People scoring low on persistence easily give up in case of frustration. This sub dimension can also be interpreted as ‘Phlegmatic’ type of temperament corresponding to ‘tenacity’ emotion.

The Character Variable has three (3) sub dimensions. There are:

1. C1- Self Directedness (SD)
2. C2- Cooperativeness (C)
3. C3- Self Transcendence (ST)

C1- Self Directedness (SD)- Individual who are able to adapt their behaviour in accord with individually chosen, voluntary goals. It measures individual self-acceptance. Subjects scoring high on SD are autonomous, responsible, have high self-esteem, good impulse control and set clear goals for themselves. Subjects scoring low on SD are irresponsible, purposeless, helpless, have poor self- acceptance and poor impulse control. From this self concept are derived feelings of personal integrity, honor, self-esteem, effectiveness, leadership and hope.

C2- Cooperativeness (C)- is understanding and respecting the preferences and needs of others as well as their own. Cooperativeness is related to which a person identifies himself or herself as an integral part of the society as a whole. People

scoring high on cooperativeness are tolerant, empathic, agreeable, helpful and compassionate. People scoring low on cooperativeness are intolerant, narcissistic, disagreeable, hostile, revengeful and opportunistic. From this self concept are derived feelings of community, compassion, conscience and charity.

C3- Self Transcendence (SD)- reflects the tendency of identification with unity of all things and is associated with deficits in transpersonal identification or conscience. It captures the degree to which an individual feels a part of nature and the universe at large. Subjects scoring high on ST have aesthetic sensitivity, pursue spiritual values, are self neglecting and have a strong imagination. Subjects scoring low on ST accept only their own perspective, are materialistic and are not interested in spiritual issues. In addition, they are unstable in affect and self image. From this self concept are derived feelings of mystical participation, religious faith and unconditional equanimity and patience.

Scoring of the Test

Cloninger *et al.* (1993) constructed the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) with total of 226 items. The self report questionnaire are paper and pencil tests in which the subject answers true or false to a series of questions about their

0 and for negative statements (110 statements) score for True is 0 and False 1.

Analysis of Data

All the calculations were done on the computer with the help of a software package named as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 12.0). The analysis was done by computing the product moment correlation between the two variables.

RESULT

Product Moment correlation was worked out between the temperament and character among the post graduate student. The value of correlation between the temperament and character was $-.217^{**}$, which was significant at 0.01 level. This leads to the partial confirmation of hypothesis I. Hence, the temperament of the post graduate students is significantly but negatively related to their character. According to table II, the value of correlation between the temperament and character of male students was $-.305^{**}$, which was significant at 0.01 level. Thus the hypothesis II was partially accepted. Hence, the temperament of male students is significantly but negatively related to their character. In male sample novelty seeking was found to be negatively and significantly related to Cooperativeness ($-.235^{**}$).

Table I The Intercorrelation Between The Variables And Their Sub Dimensions of The Total Sample

VARIABLES	Total Temperam. (T)	Total Character (C)	Novelty Seeking (T1)	Harm Avoidance (T2)	Reward Depend (T3)	Persistence (T4)	Self Direct (C1)	Cooperative(C 2)	Self Transd (C3)
Total Temperament –T	1	-.217**	.410**	.650**	.475**	-.073	-.330**	-.054	-.041
Total Character- C		1	-.281**	-.247**	.265**	.275**	.717**	.815**	.521**
Novelty Seeking- T1			1	-.250**	.000	-.046	-.286**	-.237**	-.044
Harm Avoidance-T2				1	.064	-.326**	-.286**	-.086	-.126*
Reward Dependence- T3					1	.017	.075	.309**	.173**
Persistence- T4						1	.279**	.184**	.095
Self Directedness- C1							1	.467**	-.060
Cooperativeness- C2								1	.208**
Self Transcendence- C3									1

[Where **. Significant at the 0.01 level,

*. Significant at the 0.05 level]

Table II The intercorrelation between the variables and their sub dimensions of The male sample

VARIABLES	Total Temperam. (T)	Total Character (C)	Novelty Seeking (T1)	Harm Avoidance (T2)	Reward Depend (T3)	Persistence (T4)	Self Direct (C1)	Cooperative (C2)	Self Transd (C3)
Total Temperament –T	1	-.305**	.441**	.669**	.295**	.065	-.253**	-.140	-.209**
Total Character- C		1	-.223**	-.382**	.236**	.310**	.671**	.725**	.580**
Novelty Seeking- T1			1	-.158	.013	-.002	-.107	-.235**	-.099
Harm Avoidance-T2				1	-.189*	-.286**	-.318**	-.085	-.355**
Reward Dependence- T3					1	.212**	.028	.110	.332**
Persistence- T4						1	.355**	.116	.143
Self Directedness- C1							1	.303**	.023
Cooperativeness- C2								1	.129
Self Transcendence- C3									1

[Where **. Significant at the 0.01 level,

*. Significant at the 0.05 level]

and values. No time limit is given. As this test is lengthy it takes up to 25-30 minutes to complete it. For positive statements (116 statements) the Score for True is 1 and False is

Harm Avoidance was found to be negatively and significantly related to reward dependence ($-.189^*$), persistence ($-.286^{**}$), self directedness ($-.318^{**}$) and self transcendence ($-.355^{**}$). Reward Dependence was found to be positively and

significantly related to persistence (-.212**) and self transcendence (.332**). Persistence was found to be positively and significantly related to self directedness (.355**). Self directedness is positively and significantly related to cooperativeness (.303**). Thus the hypothesis III is partially accepted as there was found to be negative as well as positive significant relationship among the sub dimensions of temperament and character in male sample.

novelty seeking and harm avoidance dimensions of temperament.

On the maturity continuum we move from dependence (paradigm of you) to independence (paradigm of I) to interdependence (paradigm of we). With reward dependence and especially persistence, the independent character moves to interdependence. Interdependence is a far more mature, and more advanced concept.

Table III The intercorrelation between the variables and their sub dimensions of the female sample

VARIABLES	Total Temperam. (T)	Total Character (C)	Novelty Seeking (T1)	Harm Avoidance (T2)	Reward Depend (T3)	Persistence (T4)	Self Direct (C1)	Cooperativeness (C2)	Self Transd (C3)
Total Temperament -T	1	-.195*	.375**	.652**	.575**	-.203*	-.420**	-.021	.084
Total Character- C		1	-.346**	-.0157*	.271**	.233**	.738**	.874**	.491**
Novelty Seeking- T1			1	-.308**	-.026	-.105	-.417**	-.269**	-.077
Harm Avoidance- T2				1	.230**	-.357**	-.268**	-.085	.055
Reward Dependence- T3					1	-.128	.086	.428**	.067
Persistence- T4						1	.209*	.210*	.063
Self Directedness- C1							1	.562**	-.113
Cooperativeness- C2								1	.276**
Self Transcendence- C3									1

[Where **- Significant at the 0.01 level,
*- Significant at the 0.05 level]

According to table III, the value of correlation between the temperament and character of female students was -.195** which was negative and significant, which leads to partial confirmation of hypothesis IV. Thus the temperament of the female students is significantly but negatively related to their character.

In female sample it was found that Novelty seeking was negatively but significantly related to harm avoidance (-.308*), self directedness (-.417**) and cooperativeness (-.269**). Harm Avoidance was found to be positively and significantly related to reward dependence (.230**) and negatively related to persistence (-.357**) and self directedness (-.268**). Reward Dependence was found to be positively and significantly related to cooperativeness (.428**). Persistence was positively and significantly related to self directedness (.209*) and cooperativeness (.210*). Self Directedness was positively and significantly related to cooperativeness (.562**) and Cooperativeness was positively and significantly related to Self Transcendence (.276**). Thus the hypothesis V is partially accepted as it was found to have negative as well as positive significant relationship among the sub dimensions of temperament and character in female sample.

DISCUSSION

One can understand as to why a temperament is negatively correlated to character. Temperament is biologically inherited whereas character is a learned component of personality. However, reward dependence and persistence dimensions of temperament do not seem to be completely biological, rather a matter of habit formation and learning. This is the reason why these dimensions are positively correlated to cooperativeness and self transcendence dimensions of character in case of reward dependence; and to self directedness and cooperativeness in case of persistence. The negative correlation between the temperament and character is mainly due to

As an interdependent person we have the opportunity to share ourselves deeply, meaningfully with others and we have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings. This was observed in the sample under study where the dimensions of temperament (reward dependence and persistence) were contribution in the character domain. The essence of character growth can only be achieved by first mastering the inner accomplishments (self awareness, imagination, conscience and independent will).

Relevance of the Findings

The development of character dimensions i.e, self directedness, cooperativeness and self transcendence are prime importance from educational point of view. The inculcation of the dimensions of character will help us in achieving the aims of education. Besides, the novelty seeking (making one angry and impulsive) and harm avoidance (leading to fear and anxiety) aspect of temperament should be discouraged and treated properly for a sound development of personality.

The 'inside-out' approach should be adopted as it supports the idea that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping to others. According to this approach it is futile to put personality ahead of character. (Covey, 2008)

CONCLUSION

The temperament of the post graduate students was found to be negatively but significantly related to their character. The temperament of the male and female students was also found to be negatively and significantly related to their character. Moreover a common feature found in total, male and female sample was that Reward dependence (a dimension of temperament) was found to be positively related to Cooperativeness and Self transcendence (dimensions of Character). Persistence (a dimension of temperament) was

found to be positively related to Self directedness and Cooperativeness (dimensions of character). The negative correlation between the temperament and character is mainly due to novelty seeking and harm avoidance dimensions of temperament. To conclude a well said quote by Henry David Thoreau 'I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.'

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Research Article

Effects of Meditation on Temporal Processing and Speech Perceptual Skills in Younger and Older Adults

Uppunda Ajith Kumar,¹ A. V. Sangamanatha,² and Jai Vikas³

¹ Department of Audiology, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Manasagangotri, Mysore, India

² National Center for Audiology, Elborn College, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada N6G 1H1

³ National Hearing Care, Suite 2, Northbourne Avenue, Canberra, ACT, Australia

Correspondence should be addressed to A. V. Sangamanatha; sangamanatha@gmail.com

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The purpose of this study was to assess the temporal processing and speech perception abilities in older adults who were practicing meditation for more than five years. Participants were comprised of three groups, 30 young adults (“YA”) in the age range of 20–30 years, 30 older adults in the age range of 50–65 years who practiced meditation for a period of five years or more (effective meditators “EM”), and 51 age matched older adults who did not have any experience of meditation (non-meditators “NM”). Temporal processing was evaluated using gap detection in noise, duration discrimination, modulation detection, and backward masking and duration pattern tests. Speech perception was measured in presence of a four-talker babble at –5 dB signal to noise ratio and with the vocoded stimuli. Results revealed that EM group performed significantly better than NM group in all psychophysical and speech perception tasks except in gap detection task. In the gap detection task, two groups did not differ significantly. Furthermore, EM group showed significantly better modulation detection thresholds compared to YA. Results of the study demonstrate that the practice of meditation not only offsets the decline in temporal and speech processing abilities due to aging process but also improves the ability to perceive the modulations compared to young adults.

1. Introduction

Auditory temporal processing is the perception of sound or of the alteration of sound within a restricted or defined time domain [1]. Speech stimuli and other background sounds are dynamic in terms of both amplitude and frequency. Perception of this variation in amplitude and frequency is crucial to understand speech in quiet and more so in background noise [2]. Psychophysical evidence indicates deterioration in a broad spectrum of auditory abilities as a result of chronological aging [3]. Thus, the deterioration in temporal processing may also be expected with the aging. Evidence for deterioration of temporal processing with age predominantly comes from studies on gap detection. Investigators have shown increased gap detection thresholds in elderly population [4–7]. Some investigators have used simple tonal or noise signals and reported age-related difficulties in detection of

gap [6, 8], whereas others have used more complex stimuli or increased task demands and shown more pronounced differences between younger and older listeners [9]. Additionally, older individuals are also shown to have difficulties with auditory sequencing tasks that require discrimination or recognition of temporal order of the stimulus within a serial pattern [10–13].

Supporting evidence for the decline in temporal processing with the age also comes from speech perception studies using complex and acoustically degraded speech stimulus. It has been reported that older listeners experience increased difficulty in understanding speech in noise (e.g., [14, 15]). Presence of noise reduces the temporal variation of the waveform by filling the valleys of the amplitude spectrum. These amplitude variations in the temporal envelope of the speech signal and periodicity have been shown to convey important information about syllable and phrase boundaries,

voicing, and consonant identification [16, 17]. Degradation of temporal envelope may distort the speech signal and consequently reduce the speech understanding. Peripheral hearing loss and cognitive decline which accompany aging will induce additional difficulties in understanding speech. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that older listeners are more susceptible to the irrelevant or distractive stimuli because of age-related changes in cognitive functioning, especially the working memory capacity. Working memory is important for auditory perceptions of both speech and nonspeech stimuli [18]. Speech recognition decline associated with peripheral hearing loss can be rehabilitated with amplification devices that provide audibility of signals. Speech recognition declines associated with poor temporal processing or poor cognitive mechanism may not necessarily be helped by amplification.

Meditation practices have various health benefits including possibility of preserving cognition and preventing brain aging. It has been shown that both the short-term and long-term meditation improves the attentional resources [19, 20]. Slagter et al. [19] reported that three months of intensive meditation training resulted in improvement in executive attentional network, as measured by attentional blink test. Tang et al. [20] reported that even short-term meditation training for 5 days significantly improved the attention and reduced the stress. Furthermore, meditation is also reported to improve the other cognitive faculties such as working memory capacities and some executive functions. Physiologically it has been shown that meditation affects the lipid profiles and lowers the oxidative stress. This can reduce the age-related neurodegeneration [21]. Neurophysiological lines evidence suggest that meditation may potentially strengthen neuronal circuits and enhance cognitive and/or sensory reserve capacity. Evidence to this claim comes from electroencephalogram (EEG)/evoked potential (for review see [22]), structural [23], and functional neuroimaging studies [24]. EEG studies have demonstrated increase in alpha and theta power and decrease in over all frequency distribution in some individuals when meditating compared with the baseline EEG (for review see [25]). Lazar et al. [23] reported increased thickness in cortical areas associated with attention, introspection, and sensory processing in meditation participants compared to those in the matched controls. Increased thicknesses in the prefrontal cortical areas were most pronounced in older participants practicing meditation, suggesting that meditation might offset the age-related cortical thinning. Baron-Short et al. [26] reported increased activation in brain regions associated with attention such as dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex during meditation. Srinivasan and Baijal [27] reported larger amplitudes of auditory evoked mismatch negativity in individuals who practiced meditation compared to those in the control group.

We hypothesized that, as suggested by behavioral and physiological studies, if meditation results in reorganization of neuronal circuitry and improves cognitive abilities such as selective and executive attention and working memory then this beneficial effect should be reflected in the auditory domain too. In this study, we evaluated the speech recognition and temporal processing abilities of older adult individuals who were practicing meditation for more than

TABLE 1: Mean and standard deviations of MMSE scores.

Group	Mean	Standard deviation
Young adults	29.4	0.81
Effective meditators	29.5	0.76
Nonmeditators	29.3	0.86

five years. Results were compared with matched older adults group and with young adults.

2. Method

2.1. Participants. A total of 111 participants participated in this research. The participants were comprised of three groups, 30 young adults (hereafter called “YA”) in the age range of 20–30 years (mean age: 20.2 years, 15 males), 30 older adults in the age range of 50–65 years (mean age: 56.88 years, 20 males) who practiced meditation for a period of five years or more (hereafter called “EM” (effective meditators)), and 51 age matched older adults (mean age: 57.9 years, 40 males) who did not have any experience of meditation (hereafter called “NM” (nonmeditators)). All the members of EM group had learnt the meditation from a qualified teacher and were practicing “Sahaj Marg Meditation” (a raja yoga system of spiritual training based on heart centered system of meditation). All of them were practicing meditation for at least two hours a day for a period of five years. Participants in all the three groups had hearing thresholds within 15 dB HL in the octave frequencies between 250 Hz and 8 kHz. None of the participants reported any otologic or neurological problems. All the participants were native speakers of Kannada, a Dravidian language. Mini-Mental Status Examination (MMSE) was administered on all the participants to rule out any gross cognitive deficits. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of MMSE scores. MMSE scores were within normal limits for all three groups. ANOVA did not show any significant effect on MMSE scores ($F(2, 108) = 0.12, P > 0.05$). Table 2 shows the details of the meditation practice by the EM group.

2.2. Stimulus and Procedure

2.2.1. Psychophysical Tests. All temporal processing tests except for the duration pattern test were carried out using “maximum likelihood procedure” tool box which implements a maximum likelihood procedure in Matlab [28]. The maximum likelihood procedure employs a large number of candidate psychometric functions and after each trial calculates the probability (or likelihood) of obtaining the listener’s response to all of the stimuli that have been presented given each psychometric function. The psychometric function yielding the highest probability is used to determine the stimulus to be presented on the next trial. Within about 12 trials, the maximum likelihood procedure usually converges on a reasonably stable estimate of the most likely psychometric function, which then can be used to estimate threshold [29, 30]. Stimuli were reproduced at 44, 100 Hz sampling rate. A two-interval alternate forced choice method using a “maximum

TABLE 2: Details of the meditation practice by EM group.

Participants	Number of years of meditation practice	Age at which meditation practice was started
1	30	35
2	10	51
3	30	35
4	7	33
5	5	35
6	10	37
7	6	37
8	8	42
9	8	44
10	8	45
11	9	41
12	10	60
13	10	50
14	5	54
15	6	54
16	10	55
17	10	40
18	10	40
19	5	50
20	6	50
21	7	46
22	8	52
23	5	45
24	7	45
25	8	42
26	10	40
27	8	47
28	9	47
29	8	45
30	10	50

likelihood procedure” was employed to track an 80% correct response criterion. During each trial, stimuli were presented in each of two intervals: one interval contained a reference stimulus, the other interval contained the variable stimulus. The participant indicated after each trial which interval contained the variable stimulus. This procedure was used in all temporal processing tests except for the duration pattern test. Stimuli for the latter test were generated using Audacity software 1.3.5 (beta version 2008). In all of the psychophysical tests, stimuli were presented binaurally at an intensity of 80 dB SPL. Stimuli were presented via a laptop computer (Compaq Presario C700) connected to EAR-3A earphones. Output of the earphones was calibrated at the beginning of the experiment and regularly thereafter to produce 80 dB SPL for a 1 kHz pure tone in a 2cc coupler. For this purpose, a 1 kHz pure tone was generated at the same rms level as the test signal. Output of the earphone was routed to a 2cc coupler which was connected to a sound level meter (Quest 1800)

and a microphone (Quest 4180). The volume control of the computer was adjusted to produce 80 SPL on the sound level meter. Participants were given 3-4 practice trials before the commencement of each test. All psychophysical tests were carried out in a quiet room in 2-3 sessions with 5–10 minutes of rest period between each session.

Gap Detection in White Noise. This was measured by asking the participants to detect a temporal gap in the center of 750 ms band pass noise (400–1600 Hz). Duration of gap was varied according to the listener performance using maximum likelihood procedure. The noise had 0.5 ms cosine ramps at the beginning and end of the gap. In two interval alternate force choice tasks, the standard stimulus was always a 750 ms broadband noise with no gap whereas the variable stimulus contained the gap.

Duration Discrimination. In this, the minimum difference in duration that was necessary to perceive the two otherwise identical 1000 Hz pure tone was measured. Duration of the standard stimuli was 250 ms. Duration of the variable stimuli was changed according to subject’s response. In two intervals of alternate forced choice procedure, subject’s task was to tell which interval contained the longer duration signal.

Modulation Detection Thresholds. Temporal modulation refers to a reoccurring change (e.g., frequency or amplitude) in the signal over time. A 500 msec Gaussian noise was sinusoidally amplitude modulated at 8 Hz, 20 Hz, 60 Hz, and at 200 Hz modulation frequencies. The subject had to detect the modulation and determine which interval had the modulated noise. Modulated and unmodulated stimuli were equated for total RMS power. Depth of the modulated signal was varied according to participants response to track 80% criterion level. Noises had two 10 msec raised cosine ramps at onset and offset. The modulation detection thresholds were expressed in dB using the following equation:

$$\text{modulation detection thresholds in dB} = 20 \log_{10} m, \quad (1)$$

where m = modulation detection threshold in percentage.

Backward Masking. In this procedure, the masker followed the signal with no time interval between two. A 20 ms, 1 kHz pure tone (the signal) was presented immediately before (i.e., no silent gap) band pass noise of 300 ms (400–1600 Hz). Both noise and tone had rise and fall time of 10 ms. The participants’ task was to tell which interval had the tone. Intensity of the pure tone was changed depending on subject’s response to track the backward masked thresholds.

Duration Pattern Test. Duration pattern test was administered in the manner described by Musiek et al. [31]. A 1000 Hz pure tone was generated with two different durations (i.e., short 250 ms and long 500 ms). By combining these two durations in a three-tone pattern, six different patterns were generated (Short Short Long, Short Long Short, Long Long Short, Long Short Short, Short Long Long, Long Short Long). Participants were asked to repeat the order of tones verbally. Following practice trails, the 30 test items were administered.

Participants were asked to verbally repeat the responses. The order of psychophysical tests was counterbalanced between participants to avoid the order effect if any.

2.2.2. Speech Perception Tests

Speech Recognition with Multitalker Babble. Speech recognition was tested using custom made sentence material. Material consisted of 10 sentences, each containing 4-5 key words. There were a total of 44 key words. A four-talker babble was added to the sentences at -5 dB SNR using a custom written Matlab code. The program first calculated the root mean square amplitude of speech stimuli and then adjusted the root mean square amplitude of babble to achieve desired signal to noise ratio. These sentences were randomly presented binaurally using a personal computer at an intensity of 70 dB SPL. Output of the computer was calibrated in the beginning of the experiment and then regularly in between as described in the previous section. Participants were asked to repeat the sentences. Subject's responses were voice recorded for further analysis. Each of the correctly repeated key words was given a score of "1", and the total number of correct responses was calculated for individual participants. These scores were arcsine-transferred for further analysis.

Speech Recognition with Vcoded Stimuli. Same sentences that were used for speech recognition in multitalker babble were used for measuring speech recognition with vocoded stimuli. This kind of the degradation removes all the spectral content from the speech, leaving only the temporal (envelope) cues, and gives an estimate of individuals capability to understand speech only with temporal cues. This represents the approximation of auditory stimulus received by cochlea implant users. Envelopes of the sentences were extracted with the help of frequency amplitude modulation encoding [32] algorithm. Briefly, stimulus was first filtered into 16 logarithmically spaced filters spanning a frequency range of 80-8000 Hz [33]. The band-limited signal was then decomposed by the Hilbert transform into a slowly varying temporal envelope and a relatively fast-varying fine structure. The number of band-limited filters was chosen to avoid cochlear filtering with a low number of filters and filter ringing with a high number of filters [34]. The new stimuli with primarily temporal envelope cue were created by modulating each filters' center frequency by slowly varying temporal envelope and then summing the modulated subband signals. The procedure used for presentation of the stimuli and collection of responses was the same as that used for speech recognition with multitalker babble. The order of testing was counterbalanced between participants to avoid order effects. Scoring and analysis procedure was similar to speech recognition with multitalker babble.

3. Results

3.1. Psychophysical Tests. Figure 1 represents the means and one-standard-deviation error bars of three participant groups for gap detection thresholds, duration discrimination thresholds, backward masking thresholds, and duration pattern scores. Figure 2 shows the temporal modulation transfer

TABLE 3: *F* values and degrees of freedom obtained on univariate ANOVA.

Psychophysical test	Degrees of freedom	<i>F</i> value
Gap detection in noise	2, 110	38.1**
Duration discrimination thresholds	2, 110	34.7**
Modulation detection thresholds at 8 Hz	2, 110	20.03**
Modulation detection thresholds at 20 Hz	2, 110	14.6**
Modulation detection thresholds at 60 Hz	2, 110	50.4**
Modulation detection thresholds at 200 Hz	2, 110	17.8**
Backward masked thresholds	2, 110	15.8**
Duration pattern scores	2, 110	20.9**

** $P < 0.01$.

function for three groups along with one-standard-deviation error bars. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to find significance of differences between the means of psychophysical test scores among the three groups. MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of subject groups ($F(16, 202) = 18.721, P < 0.01$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated that subject groups had a significant effect on all the five psychophysical measures. Table 3 shows the *F* values and degrees of freedom of univariate ANOVAs. Bonferroni's post hoc comparisons were done to evaluate the effect of meditation and age on each psychophysical measure separately. The results of post hoc comparisons were as follows.

- YA group performed significantly better than NM group on all the temporal processing tests.
- EM group performed significantly better than NM group on duration discrimination, duration pattern, and backward masking measures.
- There was no significant difference between EM and NM group in gap detection thresholds.
- EM group showed significantly better modulation detection thresholds compared to both YA and NM group.

These results in combination suggest that performance of individuals who practice meditation was on par with that of young adults.

3.2. Speech Perception Tests. The mean percent correct identification scores (and one standard deviation) in multitalker babble and vocoded condition for three subject groups are shown in Figure 3. Prior to conducting statistical analysis, the percent correct scores were transformed using rationalized arcsine transformation [35]. MANOVA showed significant main effect of subject group on speech recognition scores ($F(2, 108) = 140.317, P < 0.00$). Bonferroni's post hoc comparisons showed that NM group had significantly poorer speech recognition scores compared to EM and YA groups

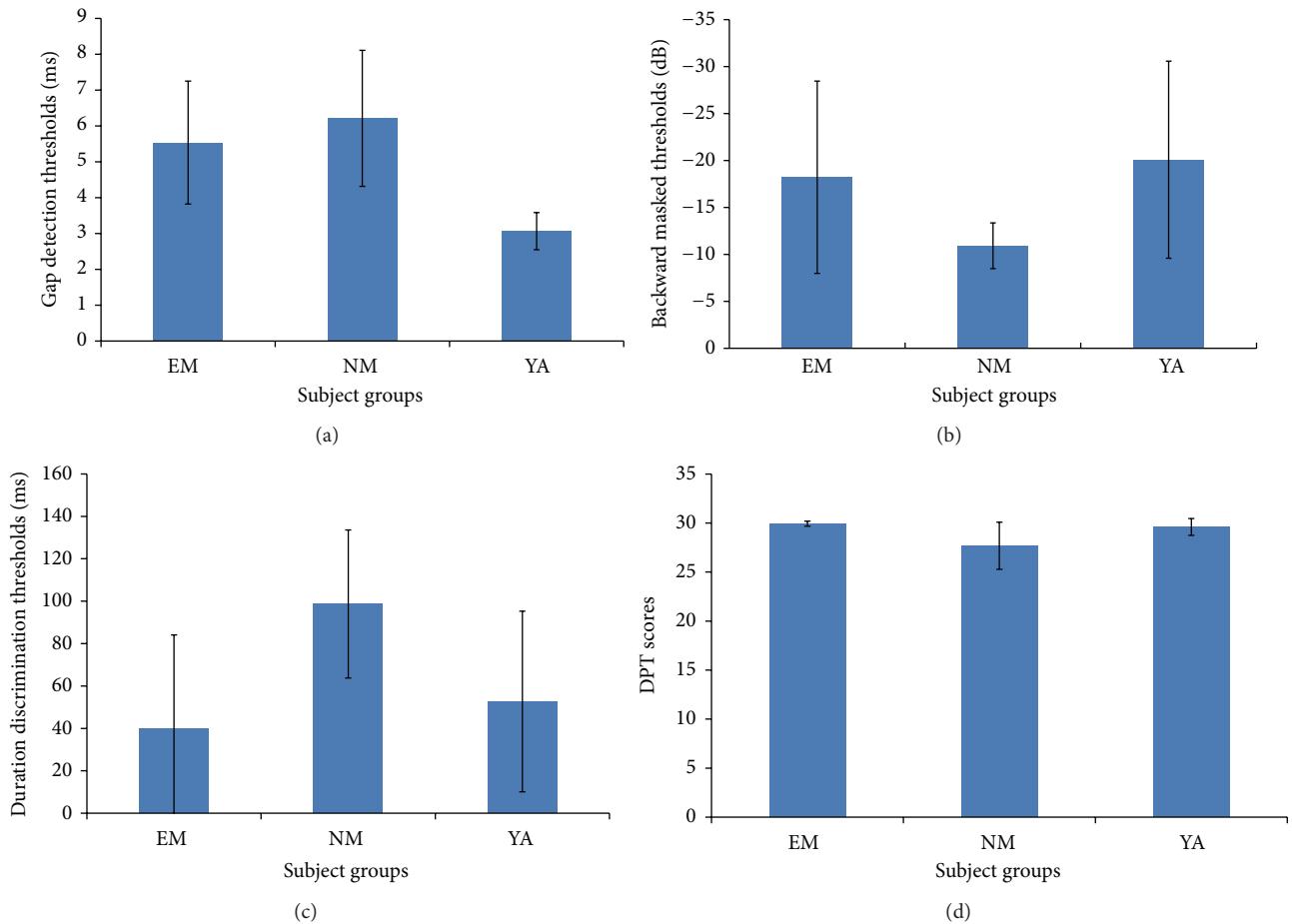


FIGURE 1: Mean and one-standard-deviation error bars of three participant groups for (a) gap detection thresholds, (b) backward masking thresholds, (c) duration discrimination thresholds (d) duration pattern scores. EM: effective meditators; NM: nonmeditators; YA: young adults.

for both speech in noise and vocoded sentences. YA and EM groups did not differ in both conditions.

3.3. Relationship between Meditation and Auditory Measures. To evaluate the relationship between meditation and auditory measures, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated with different auditory measures as dependent variables and years of meditation practice and age at which meditation practice was started as independent variables. Results failed to reveal any significant relationship among auditory measures and meditation.

4. Discussion

The word "meditation" refers to practices that self-regulate the body and mind, thereby affecting the mental events by engaging a specific attentional set [25]. Sahaj Marg, meaning "natural path" or "simple way," is a system of practical training in spirituality and meditation. It is in essence the traditional practice of raja yoga (yoga of the mind), remodelled and simplified to help people achieve inner perfection or God realisation. Previous research has shown that meditation has several

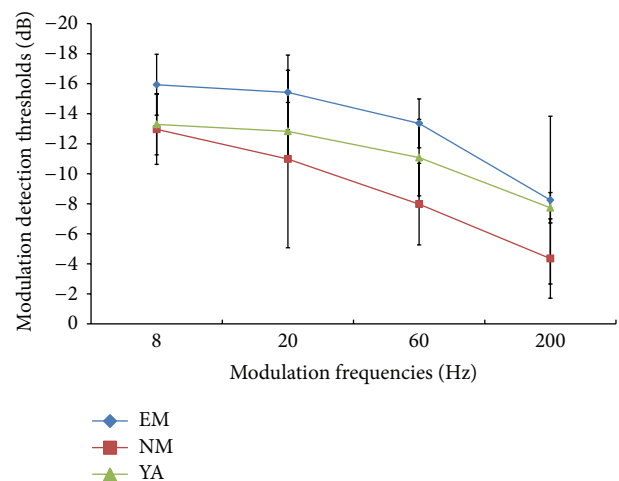


FIGURE 2: Temporal modulation transfer function in different participant groups. Error bars depict one standard deviation of error. EM: effective meditators; NM: non meditators; YA = young adults.

health benefits including possibility of preserving cognition and preventing brain aging [21]. Much of the evidence for

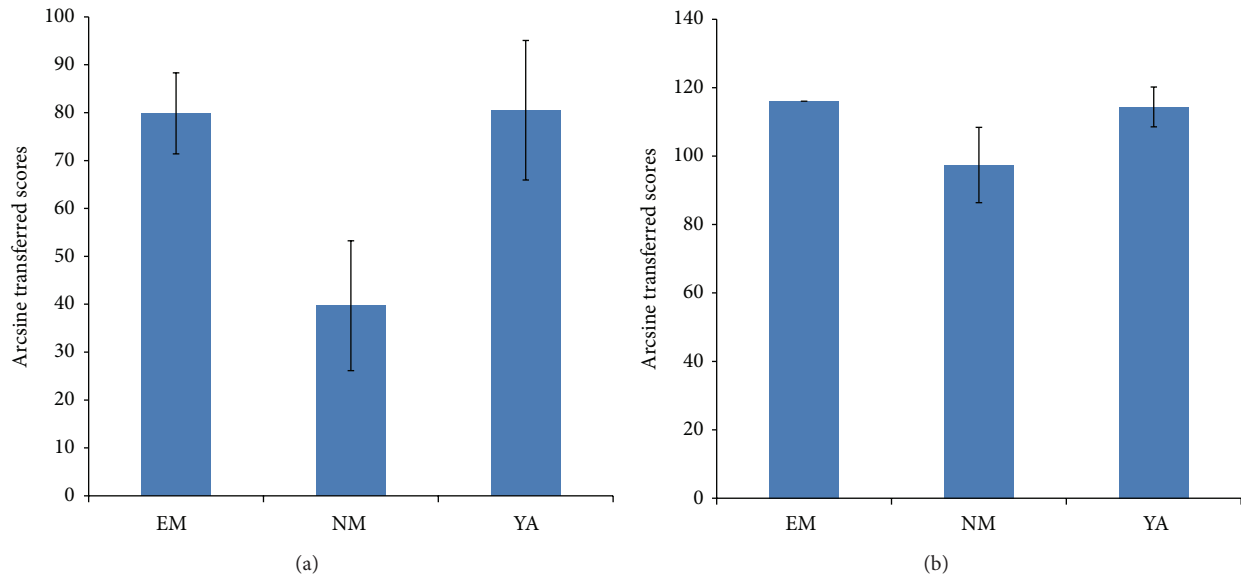


FIGURE 3: Speech perception scores (a) in presence of -5 dB SNR (b) with vocoded sentences three participant groups. Error bars depict one standard deviation of error. EM: effective meditators; NM: non meditators; YA: young adults.

positive effects of meditation comes from electrophysiological and imaging studies of the nervous system. To our knowledge, perhaps this is the first study to use auditory behavioral paradigm, specifically temporal and speech processing skills, to investigate the changes owing to the practice of meditation. Results of the present study indicate that temporal and speech perception abilities of individuals who practice “Sahaj Marg meditation” were superior compared to these of age matched controls. It is also worth noting that elderly control group (NM) performed significantly poorer temporal processing and speech perception skills compared to young adults. These results are consistent with the previous studies which have shown decline in temporal processing and speech perception abilities with the advancing age [7, 14]. We did not observe any relationship between auditory measures and meditation history. This is probably because other than 2 participants, all had meditation experience between 5 and 10 years and commenced meditation practices after the 3rd decade of life. Lack of relationship between these two variables does not rule out the cause and effect relationship between them. However, it should be kept in mind that we did not control for the musical skills or the music listening habits of the participants. It has been shown that musicians have better auditory skills when compared to nonmusicians [36] and this could have influenced the results of the current study if a particular group had more or less musicians than the other group.

Extracting acoustic cues involves separating (grouping) and organizing the psychoacoustic cues over a period of time [36]. This process is essential for understanding speech in adverse listening condition. Extracting these cues from the background noise draws attentional resources resulting in shorter auditory memory span available for understanding the speech [37]. Individuals with better attention and working memory may spend less time in extracting the acoustic cues in noisy conditions and may spend more time in rehearsal

and recall of the target word. Studies have reported reduced working memory span in adverse listening condition [38]. It is well documented that meditation improves the cognitive functioning including working memory capacities and selective and executive attention [19, 20]. The same cognitive functions play a crucial role even in auditory perception also [39].

Lazar et al. [23] showed that cortical regions associated with somatosensory, visual, and auditory processing were thicker in individuals who practice meditation than those of the age matched controls. The differences in the cortical thickness were most pronounced in older participants, specifically in prefrontal regions, suggesting that meditation might offset age-related cortical thinning. Hölzel et al. [40] noted that meditation practices activated the rostral anterior cingulate gyrus and dorsal medial prefrontal cortex, suggesting better attention regulation in individuals who practice meditation. In accordance with these results, there are some lines of evidence to show that meditators have superior attentional performance especially to unexpected stimuli compared to nonmeditators [41, 42]. Slagter et al. [19] reported that three months of intensive meditation training resulted in improvement in executive attentional network, as measured by attentional blink test. Tang et al [20] reported that even short-term meditation training for 5 days significantly improved the attention and reduced the stress. Furthermore, certain biochemical differences have been reported in individuals who practice meditation compared to nonmeditators [22].

Wong et al. [43] investigated the cortical mechanisms of hearing in noise in elderly participants using fMRI technique. They reported that elderly participants had poor speech recognition abilities in noise (at -5 dB SNR) compared to young adults. Elderly individuals showed less activation in auditory areas (bilateral superior temporal gyrus) and more activation in prefrontal and regions precuneus (working

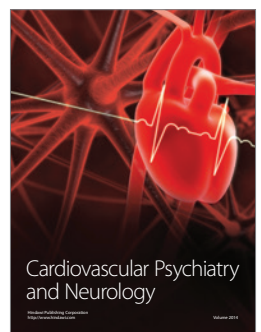
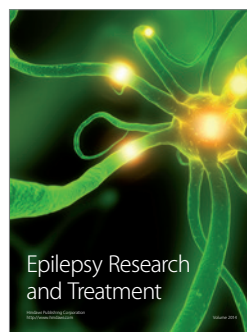
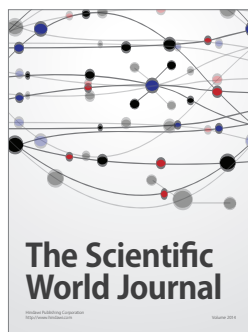
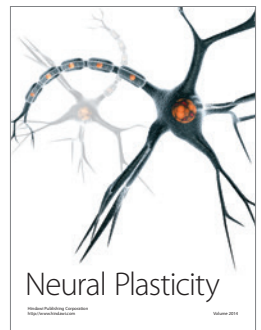
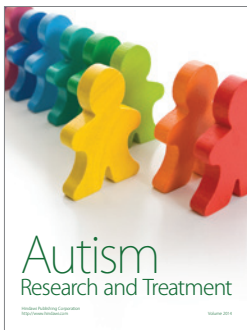
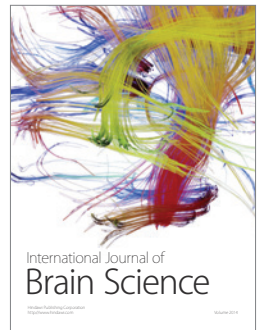
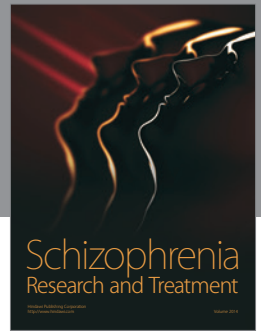
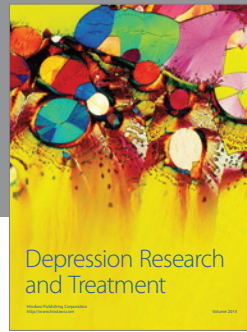
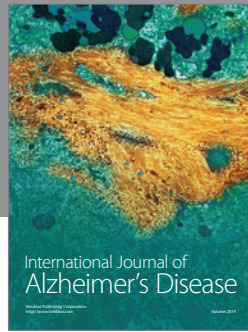
memory and attentional networks). Furthermore, the activation in the prefrontal and precuneus regions was positively correlated with behavioral performance in noise. These results in combination suggest that elderly individuals require more attention and working memory while listening to speech in noise, and meditation prevents the age-related thinning of cortical areas associated with these functions. Prefrontal regions have also been indicated as a part of dynamic network of cortical-subcortical regions associated with the different components of temporal information processing [44]. This slowing down of age related cortical thinning may be one of the reasons for better performance of meditators on speech and temporal processing tests. On modulation detection tasks, individuals who practice meditation performed even better than young adults. These results show that practice of meditation not only offsets the decline in modulation detection abilities due to aging process but also improves the ability to perceive the modulations compared to young adults.

Recently, in a series of studies, Kraus and her colleagues have demonstrated a number of beneficial effects of music on auditory perception and cognition (e.g., [36, 45]). They showed that musicians with experience of more than 10 years of music practice had better speech in noise, auditory temporal processing, and auditory working memory skills. Results of the present study indicate that meditation can also have beneficial effects on auditory temporal processing and speech perception in noise. These preliminary results suggest that meditation can be one of the rehabilitative options to offset the age-related decline in auditory and speech processing. It may be one the adjunctive therapeutic techniques to augment the benefits from amplification devices in elderly individuals with hearing impairment. However, more systematic and controlled investigation is required before clinically using meditation as one of the rehabilitative techniques in elderly hearing-impaired individuals.

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Sahāj Mārga Yoga (Union through the Natural Path)

Sahaj Marg translates to "The Natural Path." It is a natural, simple system of Raja Yoga meditation and spiritual practice that helps one realize the ultimate potential within oneself. Regular spiritual practice under capable guidance enables aspirants to progressively experience the sublime presence of the divine in their daily lives. The Sahaj Marg system is freely offered to seekers worldwide through the [Shri Ram Chandra Mission \(SRCM\)](#) under the guidance of current living Master, Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (also known as "Chariji"), and is effectively practiced by individuals from all walks of life - diverse nationalities, religious backgrounds, and various social conditions.

From: <http://www.srcm.org/>

A system of practical training in spirituality, Sahaj Marg emerged in the late 1800s. Through meticulous research, Shri Ram Chandra, also known as [Lalaji](#) by his family and peers ([masters of Sahaj Marg](#)), rediscovered the long-lost art of transmission of spiritual energy. From the early years of his life, [Lalaji](#) followed the promptings of his own inner need for spirituality . He recognized the natural birthright of every individual to develop to the ultimate level of human perfection, and he saw the need for a simple and effective system of spiritual development that could be universally practiced by any person.

From: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/sm/what-is-sahajmarg/tracing-roots> (Sahāj Mārg Rājā Yoga Foundation)

Surrender in totality to the WILL OF THE SUPREME LIFE FORCE is the ORDER to which the Masters belong. They have no personal will whatsoever and their consciousness is controlled and maintained by the Pranic force. Such is the Order to which Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad, Sri Ramchandra of Fatehgarh, and Sri Ramchandra of Shahjahanpur belong. It may be observed that there is a common thread running through all their spiritual life and teachings. Though we may mention these personalities and many more and show them as roots, the Spiritual Order is the most ancient and in fact Timeless. Thus we may say that Sri Ramchandrajī Maharaj of Shahjahanpur is the Sanatana Purusha. His message and teaching is LIVING....

We say sit in any comfortable posture and maintain the same posture. Comfortable posture we take surely, but then we go on changing it incessantly. There is no control over the body. There is no discipline. We change our posture. Try to remain in the same posture. It is very difficult, but when you are asking for mergence, when you are asking for a goal where you will be totally balanced, to maintain balance is not a joke, you have to strive for it. Balance is a tough concept. Static balance of course we can have. We can sit somewhere. Even there we are prepared to, but our body is such it refuses to be balanced even at the static level. We are not doing any gymnastics here. We are not doing any hatha yoga. We don't do such things. To sit like this itself consistently for one hour becomes a big tedious problem for us. That

is the amount of indiscipline that has got into us. There must be discipline. This is foremost. Then if we meditate, it makes some sense. Meditation is always for seeking our oneness with Nature. We are trying to feel one with Nature. That is laya is it not? Oneness with God. This is what we are asking for. Our morning meditation should be for one hour for this reason, otherwise we will be disturbed. We will not be in a position to have our thought firm. In the beginning it is only at the 55th minute that we will be in a position to have some idea of what we have got to meditate up on. As we gradually progress it starts even at the first second. Progress enables us to meditate for one hour, though in the beginning people are asked to sit for one hour, we should know that our meditation is less than few minutes. Meditation usually will begin thinking about what we can do during the day? What are the other plans that we have got to do? What are our responsibilities? All these things come to us. The meditation is a must for one hour, if we want to control our thoughts. Later on once we learn to sit for one hour and meditate, it becomes easy for us to meditate for longer hours. Once we get absorbed in His thought, time passes off. I don't ask you to do that, but then that's what happens. Meditation is one aspect of it and the evening cleaning is another aspect. We have formed so many impressions in our heart. We have got various values in our mind. We have given certain people some positive marks and certain other people some negative marks. Several notions are carried by us and they are our own. It has nothing to do with others and the circumstances. The general question is, how is the day? It is beautiful. The day is always beautiful. It is warm. Either it is warm or hot or cold it will be according to its nature. We are not the persons to decide. It is as it is. We have to adjust to it. It dictates

circumstances. Nature doesn't accept our ways of doing things. It has got its own ways. Because it is the mother. The mother knows how to dictate and how to love. Both the things she knows better. We have unfortunately formed various impressions. All these thoughts keep haunting us. We have to clean ourselves. This cleaning is a must otherwise our mind will never be clean.

From: <http://www.sriramchandra.org/pam/pam.htm>

In the late nineteenth century, [Lalaji](#) met a Sufi master. Together, they founded a syncretic teaching between Hinduism and Sufism, in northern India. In 1945, *(13 years after Lalaji's death...allegedly)* on posthumous orders by Lalaji *(and others, in dreams)*, [\(see Autobiography of Ram Chandra\)](#) Babuji founded the Shri Ram Chandra Mission and the Sahaj Marga method which spread gradually to the south of India, once it rid itself of its Sufi *(Islam)* references. After raising Rajagopalachari *(The current president of SRCM(California-1997))* on a pedestal, in 1982, Babuji, ill and aging, finally appoints his own son (Umesh Saxena) to succeed him. Immediately after his *(Babuji's)* death *(1983)*, Rajagopalachari attempts to place himself at the control of the Society *(SRCM Shahjahanpur-1945)* with the support of followers from the West, while supporters of the son of Babuji continue to develop the Sahaj Marg from its historical stronghold in northern India, at Shahjahanpur. In 1999, (after having been refused the Presidency of SRCM (Shahjahanpur-1945), *by its Board of Directors, and having re-registered the Shri Ram Chandra Mission) in San Luis Obispo, California, in 1997, and its research arm, the SMRTI in Austin, Texas)*

Rajagopalachari returns to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Babuji, inaugurating the lavish Manapakkam ashram, near Chennai. Strengthened by his troops of Western followers and the financial power they give him, he (*Chari*) returns in triumph to his country. But to succeed in this feat, he has generously adapted the Spiritual product of Babuji and exploited without limit the weaknesses of his troops. He has become an autocratic guru, but resistance is increasing

In the late nineteenth century, precisely in 1891, a young Brahmin named Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh , aka Lalaji, meets the master of a Sufi lineage ([Naqshbandiya Sufi Order](#)) in India. This encounter between a Hindu and a Muslim is not unique in this northern region of India, Uttar Pradesh, densely populated and heavily Muslim. Their friendship is much more surprising in this politically sensitive time when the inter-communal tensions are exacerbated.

From: <http://historyofsrcm.blogspot.com/>

There is only one God and, naturally, there is only one way to reach Him. The people have given many names to that stage. A particular institution named “Shri Ram Chandra Mission” has given birth to a new denomination to reach Him, “Sahaj Marg”. “Sahaj” and “Marg” (path) are two separate words. According to my limited knowledge, the word “Sahaj” is synonymous of “Aatma” (soul or sensitivity), i.e. connected some thing to the “Spirituality “. It means some particular school of spirituality, other than ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, Headquarter at Fatehgarh (U.P.), India. However, very recently, it has been registered as a trademark of ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’

Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj of Fatehgarh (UP) was the first non-Muslim Saint of “*Naqushbandia, Mujaddadadiya, and Mazahariya* system of Sufism. He having well connected “*nisbat*” (the subtlest Divine thread) with its ancestry through his Spiritual Master Hazrat Maulana Fazl Ahemad Khan Saahib Raipuri, Kaimganji which has a certain well defined handling. He was, of course, against the rituals (meaningless social customs), but not the theological-ceremonies like ;(1) the disciple- making ceremony called *Bay’t*- placing the palm of once hand on *the* (that) hand of his Spiritual- Master, merely to have been the sign of sealing an agreement of allegiance. When a man or woman repented of his sins and had made up his mind to lead a life of righteous- ness and piety he/she had to perform *Bay’t*. The spirit seems to be for men/women to have direct communion with God, through the whole chain of the Spiritual Masters, so much so that all the intermediaries whose existence having been acknowledged are lost sight of, in the communion of men/women with God. (2) *Ijazat/Khilafat*, are determined on the question of *Fana* and *Baqa*, etc.

The ‘Sahaj Marg’ is schism of the ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, renamed as NaqshMuMRa, occurred because of its manner, style and the vocabulary of Sufism. The split in socio-spiritual sects is not a strange phenomenon. Many religions, after the demise of their founders, dwindled either into insignificance or into use to split into innumerable branches. Here also the divine will cause the spread of the whole ‘Society’ after Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj, everywhere, through its numerous branches and under different leadership. In fact, the philosophy and tenets have not undergone any major changes at the hands of different leaders, except the ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’.

There is an emphasis upon the *living Guru*. The founders held that *Guru* of the time alone could reveal the inner secrets, remove doubts and thus lead to salvation. In course of time, the essential truth about

the “True Guru” was lost sight of and the faith degenerated into the cult of personality- worship.

From:

<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaaajinilayam/epitomeofsahajmarg>
**(Naqshbandiya Mujaddadia Mazahariya Ramchandriya,
abbreviated as NaqshMuMRa)**

The reality of ‘Muraakibah’ is that we wait to be connected with that Supreme Power or “zaat Paak”; our total concentration in Meditation is based on this much only.

The plain meaning of ‘Muraakibah’ is – ‘Awdhaan’ or keep a watch (as per Hindi Dictionary). Keep your inner self out of any doubt; physically- eye and cardiac eye should be in perfect harmony and in the same form. When this happens there is no need to close the eyes. But till we clearly understand the ‘omni presence’ state of God, we have to close our eyes and wait vehemently.

To understand the mystery of ‘Muraakibah’ clearly, two things must be understood very well; first, what is the mystery of duality, non duality (Dwet and Adwet) and second is what the omnipresent form of God is.

According to Sufi saints, internal purity and stability is a must. You can not achieve your aim till your heart is not pure. Instability of heart is one difficulty, which does not allow us to achieve our aim. If the mirror of your heart is not clean then how can you see clearly? The biggest hurdle is confusion. It means when there are two opposite thoughts in your mind, you remain confused and perturbed.

From: <http://sites.google.com/site/samaadhidhaam/themeditation>
(The NaqshMuMRa School of Sprituality)

In 1930, Guru Maharaj, Paramsant Dr. Chaturbhuj Sahay Ji, established Ramashram Satsang Mathura (RSM) (naming it after his Guru, [Lala Ji Maharaj, Paramsant Sri Ram Chandra Ji](#)) out of the northern Indian town of Mathura. As per the directive of his Guru, he propagated a [System of Meditation](#) adaptable by people of any religion, community or race. This system is especially suited for our busy and demanding lives in today's world. If we shape our lifestyles and mold our thought processes according to it, spiritual success can be achieved effortlessly. We can learn to live a peaceful life amidst the stress.

Our system of *Sadhana/Satsang* is a unique unification of *Karma* (duty), *Upasana* (devotion), and *Gyan* (knowledge). The core of this unification is achieved through *Dhyan* (meditation) every morning and evening for 15-20 minutes.

From: <http://www.ramashram.com/> (Ramashram Satsang Mathura)

Sahaj Marg, or the "natural path," is an ancient spiritual teaching. This technique focuses on heart-centered meditation and is a simple practice which you can easily adapt. It requires no rituals or ceremonies. You need nothing more than the power of thought.

Instructions:

1. Practice Sahaj Marg meditation in the early morning for at least one hour and complete the meditation before sunrise. As

the sun sets, perform an evening cleansing meditation for at least 30 minutes, completing it as the sun goes down.

- 2. Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes shut, and concentrate on your heart being filled with "Divine Light." Assume a position which is comfortable for you and where you can remain still for about an hour. Do not lie down to meditate, or you may fall asleep.**
- 3. Concentrate on filling your heart and mind with loving energy and healing light. As thoughts enter your mind, allow them to drift away and come back to your heart-centered meditation. In Sahaj Marg meditation, all thoughts come from within, and they linger only if you give them attention. If you allow your thoughts to fall away, they will become weak as your meditation becomes strong.**
- 4. Continue your meditation for about an hour, until the sun rises, and then prepare for your day with new-found energy.**
- 5. Finish each day with an evening Sahaj Marg meditation, sitting for about 30 minutes, as you allow the thoughts and stresses of the day to fall away while the sun sets.**

From: http://www.ehow.com/how_4454652_do-sahaj-marg-meditation.html (*How to Do Sahaj Marg Meditation*, by an eHow Contributor)

Samarth Guru Mahatma Sri Ramchandra Ji Maharaj (Puja Dada Guru) came to the planet earth in 1873. His ancestors used to live in

Bhogaon, Mainpuri, UP, India. His forefathers were very rich but by his time he left with little property.

His father was Toll Suprintendent in Farukhabad. Puja Dada Guru studied in Farukhabad. He had to leave the study and take the responsibility of the family after the death of his father. He started working in Farukhabad's collector's office.

Since birth he had interest in spirituality. His mother used to recite 'Ramayan' in the morning which he used to listen with great interest.

At the same period, there was a great Muslim saint in Farukhabad. He was secular in nature and had respect for all other religions. He used to say that God is in 'love' not in 'religion'. When Puja Dada Guru was around 19 years old he got a chance of the company of the Great Muslim saint. The saint said "Come to me. I shall teach you spirituality. It belonged to Hindus but they no more has it. You learn it first and then spread it among others.". From that day he started going to the saint.

Long time passed and Puja Dada Guru kept on visiting his Guru. One day both of them were taking an evening walk. His Guru asked him to turn back. He tried to turn and suddenly all his veils got pierced. He saw the God. He saw the actual form of the whole universe. He felt the working of super natural forces.

His Guru said 'Son be cautious this is the God'. That was the day when Guru blessed him with divine knowledge.

He used to remain calm in either sorrow or happiness. He never used to laugh loudly. During satsang he never used to sit on special mattress, couch or rug. He used to say that same arrangements to be made for everybody. He never used to take gifts from his followers or disciples and never considered others lower to himself. He was very

kind and pure hearted with no difference between his words and actions. He was an ideal man.

A person loves only his children but he loved every creature. Everybody used to feel relieved and relaxed while meeting him. He did not do more talking and preferred keeping quiet. He had a glowing face and had sweet voice. He had knowledge of music too but seldom sing using musical instruments. Mostly he used to sing prayers during satsang. He had a very good knowledge of principles of every religion and sects.

His teaching was "Serve everybody without thinking of return and refrain from taking services from others.". He kept his own words. Five to ten seekers were always staying at his house and he used to provide food etc and not letting people to eat somewhere else. If somebody insisted for eating outside, he used to say "removal of duality is meeting God; if you have such feelings for me, then how will you proceed further. Remove such feelings. Whatever is mine is yours too and whatever is yours is mine too."

He kept on distributing spiritual knowledge to everybody without any reservation. He departed from this world in 14 August 1931 at the age of 59 years.

From: <http://www.ramashramsatsang.org/> (Yogäbhyäs)

Pujya Dr. K.C.Vardachari was born at Munulapudi Agraharam, a small village near [Tiruchanoor](#) a temple town of Sri. Padmavathi Ammavaru on 14th August 1902, in the asterism of Moola and Vrschika Lagna. He had his early education at [Tirupati](#) and he moved to Madras for his collegiate education. He did his F.A. at [Christian College Madras](#). He participated in the Freedom movement for a span of few years and

later joined the B.A.(Hons) course at Christian College, Madras. He graduated with a B.A. (Hons) Degree, in 1926 securing Gold medal from the [University of Madras](#). In 1927 he worked as Research Scholar in the [Andhra University](#). During this period he wrote his first book [Metaphysics of Sri Ramanujas' Sri Bhashya](#). He took his Ph.D. from the University of Madras in the year 1932. His Ph.D was the first in Visistadvaita awarded by the University of Madras. After occupying several important positions he ended his active professional life with the Vivekananda Professorship on comparative religion, ethics and philosophy at the University of Madras in 1966.

He has written profusely on the Visistadvaita system of philosophy of Vedanta, Sri [Aurobindo](#) and later on the System of [Natural Path](#), the new system of Raja Yoga propounded by [SriRamchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, U.P., India](#). [Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh](#) corresponded with him starting with the words "Salutations to the Atman" and thus recognizing his spiritual status.

In the man who leaves a deep impression on the history of his race we invariably find rare qualities besides those of the mere intellect. All those who knew Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari, had seen in him the perfection of Intellect and Intuition coupled with impeccable Character. Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari's compassion to other human beings in particular and all existence in general was something that every one wanted to acquire for himself. Pujya Dr. K.C. Vardachari was infectious and was carrying with him the seeds of Infinity wherever he went and many did acquire the symptoms of Divine Sickness due to separation from the Lord.

It is not all the certain that prizes of this world were got by him, perhaps he never bothered about it: but surely he got the gifts of the Beyond as was attested by Mahatma Sri Ramchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. U.P. The curvatures he feared that were developing in the method that is propagated by the Great Master Sri Ramchandrajai

Maharaj, slowly turned out into a reality where the stress on the spiritual path was over taken by the philosophies of love and unmindfulness in meditation. He has condescended to the prayers of the earnest seekers and has made himself available as a guide in the path leading to the Master. [A new order in spirituality](#) has commenced in 1991 and is guiding the spiritual destinies of earnest seekers.

He was an ardent seeker of reality and had a pretty long journey in spiritual life. While more would be found in the section “Spirituality”, it may be said that he has moved from the traditional forms of worship to the most illumined path of Realisation in the system of Raja Yoga of Sri Ramchandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. He answered the question of his development in the following manner.

“A question has been asked as to how it came about that I had taken to Sri Ramchandraji’s” method, preferring it to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramanuja. It is a question in autobiography.

I first awakened to spirituality through the reading of the life of [Swami Vivekananda](#). Earlier I had soaked myself in the lives of all warriors of the world as well as the great travelers of my school days. I admired the great works of Burke and soldiers. Though this was so, I did a good lot of reading in the lives of the great discoverers in science. Proctor books and the book of knowledge I had read avidly. But the reading of the life of Vivekananda, which synchronized with the First Non- Cooperation movement, which had deep spiritual coloring, was the beginning of my interest in Yoga. Though Karma yoga was what was put forward by the Gandhian way, yet the jnana attracted me or rather the Raja yoga attracted me. Then after study of all the books concerned including quite a lot of books by [Tolstoy](#) and [A.E \(Whitehead\)](#) and others I found that the books of [Swami Ramatirtha](#) (Words of God Realisation) and the Arya volumes of Sri

Aurobindo came to me. Though the first author did stir deep spirituality, it was Sri Aurobindo's works that made me get the feeling that here indeed is the authentic voice of spirituality. I drank literally the works of Sri Aurobindo. I do not know how it was so easy for me to feel into. After the Arya, I subscribed for the Standard Bearer (Chandranagore). I felt that weekly food was invigorating and necessary. I had discontinued the studies after F.A (Intermediate) now I once again entered into the college-to study Philosophy. European Philosophy I studied and took interest in the problems. [Bergson](#) I had to study fortunately, and under Dr. A.G. Hogg. I was all along saturating myself with the Arya and the essays on the Gita.

I discovered that Sri Ramanuja's thought was similar to Sri Aurobindo's at least on the side of Bhakti. I began to work for my research on Sri Ramanuja's major work and completed it. I then did another research project on Yoga Psychology in the Minor Upanishads and came to the conclusion about the major needs of spirituality and they agreed with that of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo remained my pramana. However I did not make any effort to meet and get the personal guidance in my sadhana. In the meanwhile I studied Theosophical literature and [Krishnamurthy](#) and the skeptical modes and approaches. However though I had saturated myself with Visistadvaita the inner feeling that Sri Aurobindo was giving the right direction never left me.

It was in 1936, however that my two reviews of Sri Aurobindo's writings and life put me into touch with Sri Aurobindo. I had the first darshan of him on 24th Nov. 1936; I requested that I may be accepted as a sadhaka non resident. I was asked come in 1937 June, Aurobindo and the Mother saw me. I was asked to sit bare chested and on examination it was decided that I could not be accepted as a sadhaka. That was my first shock. However I continued devoting myself to a serious study of Sri Aurobindo.

In 1939, there was a call from the [Devasthanams at Tirupati](#) which is avowedly a Visistadvaita shrine to join the [Oriental institute](#) as Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy to do work (Service) for the Visistadvaita Philosophy. The offer was not good salary wise. Yet owing to the insistent demands of my father, Sri Rao Bahadur K.V. Rangaswami Iyengar and his uncle Rao Bahadur N.S. Narasimhachariar, I accepted the offer. Since I was not accepted by Sri Aurobindo I did not consult him but joined. (I belong to the sect of Visistadvaita by birth and thought that I had perhaps to do and achieve my salvation through it alone) I had to face lot of persecution and within two years the fact became clear to me that [Visistadvaita](#) had no hope and place at this famous shrine and might get discarded slowly. This was my second shock-profoundly more than the first.

“It began to dawn on me whether after all the God worshipped on the Hills was partial to Sri Ramanuja , or whether it was after all a common enough God for all sects and personsThe diversion of funds towards secular.... meanwhile gained momentum..... the Srinivasa Mission, expansion of the secular activities, the expanded provision of amenities for pilgrims, the gold-gilding and so on. These undoubtedly popularized God: more income and more expenditure and more pilgrim traffic. T.T. Devasthanams began growing. I cannot say that there was a great wave of religiosity and interest. The summer school of Religion was a regular feature. But all was for making Sri Venkateswara more well known and popular.

We have been expanding and Tirupati became a really all- India centre of pilgrimage.... But in my inner thoughts one thing alone has been growing-a deep distrust and agony of an indescribable kind. There was perfect loss of hope about a renaissance in spirituality and growth of true philosophic evolution. More and more it became clear that institutions of religions can only lead to subtle corruption, and all sorts of persons take the shelter of religion for the furtherance of

their own vanity and livelihood. God becomes the vehicle for individual adventure...Philosophy suffered an eclipse in this place when the University came and a professor who had hardly any belief in philosophy was appointed to it.

Thus Visistadvaita became non-grata and every attempt to improve it had failed. Thus I was forced to the conclusion that it is futile to resurrect it or attempt to waste one's life over it. Its votaries were working against it: a suicidal affair. The philosophy is not obviously wrong-intellectually to me it has been fairly satisfactory. The Aurobindonian element of supra mental evolution was possible in terms of Visistadvaita according to me, but it was not so admitted by Sri Aurobindo. I had failed in both of my efforts. So I had to think again: perhaps a rejection of both was demanded of me by the Supreme Power that is beyond Venkateswara and Sri Aurobindo..... It was enough for me at this juncture to somehow get the grace of God and leave everything to it -to reveal or reject or illumine the great Vast of Being.

God indeed was kind to me also. I had experiences of the most vivid kind and almost certain times direct awareness..... It was at this juncture that two persons came into my life. One is Sri Swami Sivananda whose ability to catch men is as skillful as a master fisherman, who wrote to me a letter saying that my life was very important and offered to look after my body. This meant quite a copious supply of his literature and one tin of Chyavanaprasha and one of bottle of Brahmi Hair Oil every month. He made me a fellow of his Forest Academy also. But his teachings had not at all stimulated in me any serious spiritual vibrations. However Swami Sivananda considered him to be realised soul and has written as follows while conferring the Fellowship of the [Forest Academy, Rishikesh](#) "With disarming simplicity and effortless dignity that characterizes his written works Dr. K.C. Vardachari has consistently and persistently

yoked the services of his philosophical acumen towards the errors of a purely intellectual approach of life and has sought to defend and advance with adequate persuasion and power the claims of higher and spiritual values both for the attainment of deeper philosophical insights into the nature of the individual, the Word and the Ultimate Reality as also for the perfection and integration of the individual personality in a scheme of living that results in the fullest enjoyment of the prizes of this world and the gifts of the world beyond”.

The other was also seeking to introduce his book to the Public. I received a book and a letter from one of his abhyasis for opinion. I read the book and asked for further particulars. I Reviewed the book for The Hindu, Madras and I found that some three gentlemen responded to it by getting into contact with its author Sri Ramchandraji. He then wrote to me offering to help me in spirituality. I thus entered into this sadhana because here was an offer to lead me, to accept me as a disciple and sadhaka- and not on my request but by himself. I felt that I was not accepted by Sri Venkateswara or Sri Aurobindo and to me only SriRamchandraji himself came in 1956, 57, 59, 60 and has led me to spiritual experiences. So, I was led to test these carefully and was made a Preceptor in 1957 so that I could myself see how the spiritual training is done.”

From 1966 till his last days he was fully engaged in the spread of the system of Rajayoga of SriRamchandra. He delivered many talks and many books on the system during this period. After a brief period of illness he attained Maha Samadhi on the auspicious day of Basanth Panchami on 30th Jan. 1971

From: <http://www.drkcv.org/About/About.htm> (Pujya Dr. K.C. Varadachari)



The Golden Sufi Center is the vehicle for the work of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya Order of Sufism. The purpose of The Golden Sufi Center is to make available the teachings of this lineage of Sufism.

Naqshbandi Sufis (named after Bahâ ad-dîn Naqshband, d. 1389) are known as the "silent Sufis" because their practices are done in silence. They practice a silent *dhikr* and the silent meditation of the heart—God is the silent emptiness and is therefore most easily reached in silence. They also attach great importance to dreams, which they consider to be a form of guidance along the Path. The central focus of The Golden Sufi Center is the meditation groups. At meetings, silent meditation is followed by dreamwork.

Sufi dreamwork combines spiritual and psychological approaches, helping participants to realize the guidance that comes from within and to understand the inner processes of the path as they are imaged in dreams. Dreamwork is regarded as the modern equivalent to the ancient Sufi teaching stories. Participants are encouraged to share their own dreams, particularly those which have a spiritual dimension.

From: <http://www.goldensufi.org/about.html> (The Golden Sufi Center)

The essence of any Sufi order, or *tariqa*, is the energy of succession, the spiritual energy or substance that is transmitted from teacher to teacher, back in an unbroken lineage to the Prophet Mohammad. Without this transmission the *tariqa* is form without substance, lacking the spiritual energy that is necessary for the real transformation of the heart. The true history of any Sufi order is the

history of this transmission, which is the central core of the path, around which its practices and etiquette develop over time. The outer form of the path can change according to the time and the place and the people, but the inner essence must remain the same living substance of divine love.

In 1961 a Western woman, Irina Tweedie, arrived in the northern Indian town of Kanpur, where she met a Sufi master, Bhai Sahib. He was a member of a family of Sufis. His uncle, father, and elder brother had all been Sufi *sheikhs* in the lineage of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya, an Indian branch of the Naqshbandi order, named after the fourteenth-century master, Baha ad-din Naqshband. The Naqshbandis, known as the Silent Sufis, practice a silent rather than vocal *dhikr*, and they do not engage in *sama*, sacred music, or dance; nor do they dress in any special way to distinguish themselves from ordinary people. A central aspect of the Naqshbandi path is the *suhbat*, the close relationship of master and disciple. The order was very successful in Central Asia, and spread throughout India through the work of Ahmad Sirhindî (d. 1624), who was known as the Mujaddid (Renewer).

What was unusual about this Sufi family is that they were Hindu, not Muslim. Traditionally the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya are the most orthodox of all the Sufi orders, stressing the importance of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law); but at the end of the nineteenth century a transition took place. Fazl Ahmad Khan, the *sheikh* of Bhai Sahib's uncle, was Muslim, as were all of the predecessors on this path. But when the uncle, Lalaji, said to his *sheikh*, "I am yours. If you permit me, I may adopt Islam," Fazl Ahmad Khan rejected the idea: "You should not think of such an idea. Spirituality does not need following of any particular religion. Spirituality is seeking the Truth and self-realization, which are matters of the soul.... It is the duty of everyone to follow

the customs and rituals of the country and religion in which one is born.”...

I attended her small meditation group in a tiny room beside the train tracks in North London. The heart meditation that we practiced was developed in India, where it is also known as *dhyana* meditation:

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart *chakra*. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it is peace, tranquility or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us, we immerse ourselves in this feeling; we place all of ourselves in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked the feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories will float by, images appear before the mind’s eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the

utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty.

The state of *dhyana* is a complete abstraction of the senses in which the mind is stilled by the energy of love within the heart, and the individual mind is absorbed into the universal mind. The actual experience of *dhyana* rarely happens during the first practice of meditation. It may take months, even a few years, to reach this stage. And once we do begin to experience *dhyana* we may not realize it. The initial experiences of *dhyana* usually last for just a split second—for an instant the mind dips into the infinite and just for a moment we are not present. There may be little or no consciousness that this has happened; the mind may not even be aware that it was absent. But gradually, the mind disappears for longer and longer periods; we become aware that our mind has shut down. The experience can for some time seem like sleep, since sleep is the nearest equivalent we have ever known to this mindless state.

The experience of *dhyana* deepens as the lover is immersed deeper and deeper into a reality beyond the mind. More and more one tastes the peace, stillness, and profound sense of wellbeing of a far vaster reality where the problems that surround us so much of the time do not exist—a reality beyond the difficulties of duality and the limitations of the world of the mind and senses, into which, for a little while each day, meditation allows us to merge.

Dhyana is the first stage in the meditation of the heart. It is, as Irina Tweedie described it, “the first stage after transcending the thinking faculty of the mind, and from the point of view of the intellect it must be considered as an unconscious state. It is the first step beyond consciousness as we know it.” In *dhyana*, the heart is activated and the energy of love slows down the mind. The mind loses its power of control and individual consciousness is lost, at first for an instant and

then gradually for longer periods of time. The lover becomes absorbed, drowned in the ocean of love.

Then in this state of unconsciousness a higher level of consciousness, or *samadhi*, begins to awaken. The evolution of *dhyana* into *samadhi* happens “by easy degrees,” as “the highest stages of *dhyana* are gradually transformed into the lower stage of *samadhi*, which is still not completely conscious,” and this less-conscious state leads in turn to the higher state of *samadhi*, which “represents a full awakening of one’s own divinity.”

The experiences of *samadhi* cannot easily be described. They belong to a level of reality beyond the mind, to a dimension of unity in which everything is merged, where the mind, operating as it does by making distinctions, cannot get a foothold. In *samadhi* we begin to experience our true nature which is a state of oneness: we are what we experience. Gradually we glimpse, are infused with, the all-encompassing unity and energy of love that belong to the Self and underlie all life. And this oneness is not a static state, but a highly dynamic state of being that is constantly changing. Also our experience of it changes: no two meditations are the same and our experience becomes deeper and richer, more and more complete. On this plane of unity everything has its own place and fulfills its real purpose. Here the true nature of everything that is created is present as an expression of divine oneness and divine glory. In the outer world we experience only a fragmented sense of our self and our life. Here everything is complete and we come to know that everything is just as it should be....

The *dhikr* is the repetition of a sacred word or phrase. It can be the shahâda, “*Lâ ilâha illâ llah*” (There is no God but God), but it is often one of the names or attributes of God. The *dhikr* we were given is Allâh. It is said in Islam that God has ninety-nine names, but foremost

among these is Allâh, for Allâh is His greatest name and contains all His divine attributes.

But for the Sufi, the name Allâh also points beyond all His attributes. According to an esoteric Sufi tradition, the word Allâh is composed of the article *al*, and *lâh*, one of the interpretations of which is “nothing.” Thus the word Allâh can be understood to mean “the Nothing.” The fact that His greatest name contains the meaning “the Nothing” has great significance, because for the mystic the experience of Truth, or God, beyond all forms and attributes, is an experience of Nothingness. Shortly before his death, the Naqshbandi Sufi Master Bhai Sahib told Irina Tweedie, “There is nothing but Nothingness.” He repeated it twice. The words point to the very essence of the Sufi path, as Irina Tweedie explains:

There is nothing but Nothingness. . . Nothingness because the little self (the ego) has to go. One has to become nothing. Nothingness, because the higher states of consciousness represent nothingness to the mind, for it cannot reach there. It is completely beyond the range of perception. Complete comprehension on the level of the mind is not possible, so one is faced with nothingness. And in the last, most sublime, sense, it is to merge into the Luminous Ocean of the Infinite.

Thus, the name Allâh contains the essence of all Sufi teaching: to become nothing, to become annihilated in Him, so that all that remains is His Infinite Emptiness. One of the mysteries of the path is that this Emptiness, this Nothingness, loves you. It loves you with an intimacy and tenderness and infinite understanding beyond imagining; it loves you from the very inside of your heart, from the core of your own being. It is not separate from you. Sufis are lovers and the Nothingness is the Greatest Beloved in whose embrace the lover completely disappears. This is the path of love; it is the annihilating cup of wine which His lovers gladly drink, as in the words of Rumi:

I drained this cup:
there is nothing, now,
but ecstatic annihilation.

In saying the *dhikr*, repeating His name silently on the breath—“Al” on the out-breath, “lâh” on the in-breath—we remember Him. With each cycle of the breath we return to the inner essence within the heart and live the remembrance of our love form Him. Practicing the *dhikr* as constantly as we can, we bring this mystery into our daily lives. Repeating His name as we engage in the simple activities of our day—walking, driving, cooking, cleaning—we infuse His name into all we do: cooking with the *dhikr* we put His remembrance into the food, for example; cleaning with the *dhikr* we clean with His name. Lying awake at night we can silently repeat His name. It is more difficult to do when we are talking or engaged in mental activities, but when our mind is free enough to remember Him again, we rejoice once more in repeating the name of the One we love.

We may find it difficult at first to remember as much as we would like to. But with practice the *dhikr* becomes a natural, almost automatic part of our breath, and then no moment is wasted; every breath aligns our attention with Him. And over time our whole being comes to participate in this attention. Through repeating His name, we remember Him not just in the mind but in the heart; finally there comes the time when every cell of the body repeats His name.

It is said, “First you do the *dhikr* and then the *dhikr* does you.” The name of God becomes a part of our unconscious and sings in our bloodstream. This is beautifully illustrated in an old Sufi story:

Sahl said to one of his disciples: “Try to say continuously for one day: ‘Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!’ and do the same the next day and the day after, until it becomes a habit.” Then he told him to repeat it at night also, until it became so familiar that the disciple repeated it even during his

sleep. Then Sahl said, “Do not consciously repeat the Name any more, but let your whole faculties be engrossed in remembering Him!” The disciple did this until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day, a piece of wood fell on his head and broke it. The drops of blood that dripped to the ground bore the legend, “*Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!*”⁽¹²⁾

The way the name of God permeates the wayfarer is not metaphoric but a literal happening. The *dhikr* is magnetized by the teacher so that it inwardly aligns the wayfarer with the path and the goal. (It is for this reason that the *dhikr* needs to be given by a teacher, though in some instances it can also be given by the Higher Self or, traditionally, by Khidr. Working in the unconscious, the *dhikr* alters our mental, psychological, and physical bodies. On the mental level this is easily seen. Normally, in our everyday life, the mind follows its automatic thinking process, over which we often have very little control. The mind thinks us, rather than the other way around. Just catch your mind for a moment and observe its thoughts—every thought creates a new thought, every answer a new question. And because energy follows thought, our mental and psychological energy is scattered in many directions. To engage seriously in spiritual life means learning to become one-pointed, to focus all our energy in one direction, towards Him. Through repeating His name, we alter the deeply worn grooves of our mental conditioning that play the same tune over and over again, repeat the same patterns which bind us in our mental habits. The *dhikr* gradually replaces these old imprints with the single imprint of His name. The automatic thinking process is redirected towards Him. You could say that the practice of the *dhikr* reprograms us for God.

The lover experiences a deep joy in repeating the name of her invisible Beloved who is so near and yet so far away. When He is near, saying His name becomes the expression of our gratitude to Him for the bliss of His presence, for the sweetness of His companionship.

When He is absent, it becomes our cry to Him and helps us to bear the longing and the pain. In times of trouble His name brings reassurance and help. It gives us strength, and it can help to dissolve the blocks that separate us from Him. When we say His name, He is with us, even when we feel all alone with our burdens.

Through repeating His name, we begin to lose our identification with our isolated, burdened self and become identified with our Beloved who has been hidden within our own heart. Gradually the veils that have kept Him hidden fall away and the lover comes to know His presence in her heart. And as He removes the inner veils, so also does he lift the outer veils. Then the lover finds Him not only within the inner dimensions of her heart, but also in the outer world; she comes to experience that “whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God.”

Then He whom we love and whose name we repeat becomes our constant companion. And the lover also becomes the companion of God, for the “eyes which regard God are also the eyes through which He regards the world.” This relationship of companionship belongs to the beyond and yet it is lived in this world. The Beloved is our true friend, and this is the deepest friendship; it demands our total participation. Practicing the *dhikr*, repeating His name, we are with Him in every breath.

(A Brief Excerpt from “Neither of the East nor of the West: The Journey of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya from India to America” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/article_eastwest.html (The Golden Sufi Center)



Rather than attempting to still one's thoughts by focusing on the mind, through focusing on the heart and the feeling of love within the heart one leaves the mind behind. Thought-forms slowly die and our emotions are also stilled. The "meditation of the heart" is a practice that drowns the mind and the emotions in love's ocean.

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart chakra. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it has a feeling of peace, tranquillity or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us we immerse ourself in this feeling; we place all of ourself in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked this feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories float by, images appear before the mind's eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty....

Individually this meditation should initially be practiced for at least half an hour a day. Early morning is usually the best time as there are fewer thought-forms in the air and we are not saturated by the activities of the day. Meditating before falling asleep is also a good practice. But this meditation is not a rigidly prescribed discipline—it should not be forced. As in all Sufi practices if there is too much effort it is not spiritual. And sometimes one is unexpectedly drawn into meditation. The heart, awakened from within, calls one. Then if possible one turns away from outer activities and sits in silence for a few minutes or even hours, called by love into the innermost chamber of the heart.

(A Brief excerpt from “The Sufi Meditation of the Heart” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/a_meditation_of_heart.html (The Golden Sufi Center)

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Shri Ram Chandra Mission

The **Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Shahjahanpur)** (also named **SRCM**) is a non-profit organization, a new religious movement. It was registered in 1945 in Lucknow, India, by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (aka Babuji) (1899–1983) in memory of his spiritual teacher, Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (aka Lalaji) (1873–1931), whom he met a few times before Lalaji's death in 1931, and to promote the method of Sahaj Marg which Babuji invented and registered in 1945.^[1] The Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Chennai) was registered in San Luis Obispo, California, USA, in 1997.^[2]

Beliefs and practices

The stated purpose of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission is to "awaken the divine consciousness and support on the path of evolution", and according to the movement, its modified form of Raja Yoga starting at step #7 of Patanjali's Raja Yoga^[3] is not based on "mechanical methods involving austerity and penance unsuited to current living conditions" but on "simple and natural means". The proposed practice claims to be seeking to be "universal", "easily practiceable" and one can quickly "get to find yourself in what is sought unsuccessfully on the outside".^[4] The Sahaj Marg system uses the cleansing of the past impressions (samskara), meditation on the heart and the support of a living (self-titled and self-appointed) spiritual master.^[5] The role of the spiritual teacher is said to be essential, according to the books published by the SRCM, as "he is well aware of all issues and all matters of spirituality and is claimed to have walked the path to realization or enlightenment of the soul, thus ending the cycles of life". He allegedly knows what to do for the traveler.^[4] "He is regarded by the practitioners as "a living example, a teacher by his writings and by his words. "It is God who is the true Guru, Master, and from him (God?) alone that we receive the light", wrote Ram Chandra in his book *Reality at Dawn*.^[6]

Organization

The current President and spiritual Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California, USA in 1997 (SRCM California-1997), is Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (aka Chariji) (b. 1927). The current President and spiritual master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in Lucknow, India in 1945, (SRCM-Shahjahanpur-1945) is Navneet Kumar Saxena, the founder's grandson. Chariji was the disciple of the founder, Sri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, (aka "Babuji") who himself was taught for a short while by Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, aka "Lalaji" having met him a few times.^[7] The SRCM claim that Lalaji rediscovered a very old method of spiritual training, the so-called inherited knowledge of the sages of ancient India, and which is based on the transmission of divine energy or "pranahuti".

Lalaji and his lineage claim that Lalaji was the first "non-Muslim" Master of the Naqshbandiya Sufi Order and that his Master was Hazrat Maulana Shah Fazl Ahemad Khan Naqshbandi Mujaddadi Mazahari r.a. (Huzur Maharaj) of Raipur (Kaimganj), Uttar Pradesh, India. Lalaji was initiated on January 23, 1896 at 05 P.M. and was conferred full Master-ship on October 11, 1896, which he remained to his death on Aug. 14, 1931. The teachings of Lalaji are the teachings of his Master, Huzur Maharaj, of whom he was declared "a perfect copy" by an independent panel of other religious disciplines.

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission is now present on all continents, and books by Sahaj Marg are now translated into twenty languages and used in many ashrams.^[8]

Reception

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California in 1997 (SRCM California, 1997) and headquartered in Chennai, India, is an NGO recognized by the UNDP (Department of Public Information) as a "non-profit organization" in Denmark, the United States and India.^[9]

In France, the SRCM is organized as a non-profit organization established in 1986, but has been classified as an orientalist cult with over 2,000 members in the 1995 report established by the Parliamentary Commission on Cults in France.^[10] Around 1995, it counted about 60 tutors for 600 abhyasis.^[11] The anti-cults association GEMPPI denounced the "indigence doctrinal and philosophical talks among followers, unrelated to the Eastern religious systems". Its President stated that one sole life of total and absolute obedience to the Master of SRCM is supposed to interrupt the cycle of reincarnation. "Critical reflection and autonomy of thought are stifled in this ideological movement which claims to be revolutionary in its ideas".^[12]

In Belgium, the 1997 parliamentary report established a list of 189 movements which contained the Shri Ram Chandra Mission.

The inclusion in the parliamentary report on cults has been criticized by lawyer Lawrence Hincker, who said that "this system of meditation, called Sahaj Marg, does not lead to a life away from the world. It integrates all aspects of man, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without charge or austerity or penance or self-negation".^[13] According to the sociologist Bruno Étienne, an expert on religious issues, the SRCM publishes books as any other group but does not proselytize, and has never been convicted: "To us, it is fully a NMR (new religious movement), modern religious group, although based on an ancient tradition, and subject to serious arguments advanced by others more knowledgeable, we do not understand why it is criticized on the list of the damned".^[14] Raphaël Liogier, Director of the Observatory of religious and university professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Aix-en-Provence, said he did not understand the inclusion on the cult list of an association that is fully recognized in India.^[15] The Centre d'Information et de Conseil des Nouvelles Spiritualités (CICNS), a French association for the defense of religious freedom and conscience, said the movement is victim of slander on the Internet.^[16]

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External links

- SRCM (California-1997) Official site (<http://www.srcm.org>)
- Critical views on Shri Ram Chandra Mission France (<http://www.prevensectes.com/sriram.htm>)
- Lalaji's NaqshMuMRa Nexus (<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/home>)
- Sufi Saints and Sufism (Dr. RK Gupta) (see section on Lalaji in Sufism (<http://sufism.weebly.com/>))

Sahaj Marg

Sahaj Marg (Hindi translation, the *easy* or *natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1] [2] [3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 - 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

Sahaj Marg is offered free of charge to peoples all around the world. Sahaj Marg system of meditation is practiced by over 400,000 practitioners (*abhyasis*) in over 92 countries.

The daily practice includes:

- Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
- Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);^[5]
- A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes) ;^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

- Group meditation sessions known as 'Satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (Sat = Truth and Sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;^[5]
- Cleaning sessions or individual sittings with a preceptor (trained prefect) are also available free of charge and they can be scheduled on a one-to-one basis.

Generally individual sittings are taken every other week but if necessary they can be had every week based on preceptor's availability.^[6]

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, it's founder and president, called "Babuji."^[6] Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and died in April 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique called *pranahuti*;^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.^[6]

Controversies and schisms

There are some break away groups and some controversies have spun out on who controls the domain and trademark names of the group after the death of its founder in 1983 (Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur). The court verdict was given in favor of his nominated representative.^[9]

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[10]

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Sahaj Marg

Sahaj marg (*The Natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1][2][3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 – 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

The daily practice includes:

1. Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
2. Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);
3. A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes);^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

1. Group meditation sessions known as 'satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (sat = Truth and sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;
2. Cleaning sessions.
3. Universal prayer: The fundamental elements of sahaj marg practice—morning meditation, evening cleaning and night-time prayer meditation—are primarily meant for personal spiritual growth and development. The universal prayer is a feature of the practice that is dedicated to the welfare of all. The instructions for the prayer are as follows:
 "At 9:00 P.M. sharp every abhyasi, wherever he or she might happen to be at the time, should stop his or her work and meditate for fifteen minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are being filled up with love and devotion and that real faith is growing stronger in them. It shall be of immense value to them, which their practical experience only shall reveal."
4. Constant remembrance: Meditation, cleaning and prayer make up the basic elements of the sahaj marg practice. Practice becomes dynamic and infused with life and feeling when it leads to the remembrance and experience of our connection with the divine within. One cultivates this ongoing connection through a specific training of mind and heart referred to as constant remembrance.

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, its founder and president, called "Babuji." Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and left his mortal coil on April 19th, 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique taught by his master Lalaji called *pranahuti*^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.

Whispers From The Brighter World

Four Whispers (books) have been published, the last released in May, 2012. Fifth whispers(book) released in may 2013

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[9]

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Sri Ram Chandra Mission - Sahaj Marg

Ten Rules of Sahaj Path (Principles)

1. Every brother should wake up before the sun rises in the morning and meditate at the fixed time before the sun rises. Set a different place and asana for worship. Make a habit of sitting in the same posture as far as possible. Take special care of body and mental purity.
2. Worship should be started with prayer. Prayer should be for spiritual upliftment and such that the heart is filled with love.
3. Every brother should have his purpose and that he should reach God and make a permanent position by attaining rhythm in it and not rest until it is achieved.
4. Make your life simple so that it meets nature.
5. Always speak the truth and understand every trouble from the Lord for your good and thank him.
6. Consider the whole world as your brother and treat everyone like this.
7. If someone gets hurt, don't think of taking revenge from him, rather understand it from the owner and thank him.
8. Whatever you get while eating, eat happily and eat in the remembrance of God. Take care of pure and sacred earnings.

9. Make your living and behaviour such a good way that people feel good by seeing it and people start loving it.

10. If a crime is committed by mistake, take God in front of you while sleeping and ask for forgiveness from him in the state of religion, repent and pray and try so that there is no crime in the future.

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सहज in English

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ औ औ क ख ग घ ङ च छ ज झ ट ठ ड ढ न त थ द ध प फ ब भ म य र ल व श ष स ह
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आजके कुछ खरी रोचक चीजे भी :

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सहज Meaning in English

- Inherent, Simple, Ingrown, Inborn, Native, Unacquired, Spontaneous, Natural, Easy, Glib, Unlaboured

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सहज - अनाद्य अनेकी में

Get definition, translation and meaning of सहज in English. Above is English meaning of सहज. Yahan सहज ka matlab English mai (सहज अनाद्य अनेकी में) diya gaya hai.

What is Sahaj meaning in English ? (सहज ka English arth, matlab kya hai?).

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Marg meaning in English

मार्ग मतलब

- Way, Road, Boulevard, Itinerary, Route

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Impact of Five Days Spiritual Practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on Well-Being Related Parameters and Selected Physiological Indicators

Narendra Kumar Arya^{1*}, Kamlesh Singh¹, Anushree Malik¹

ABSTRACT

Impact of five days spiritual practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters and selected physiological indicators has been studied on 55 participants (25 male, 30 female; age range 18-65 years; mean age = 49 years & SD = 12.5 years). It was found that mental health and its dimensions like emotional well-being and social well-being; positive experience and negative experience; Sat-Chit-Ananda; depression anxiety and stress had significant change towards improved well-being. However, psychological well-being, flourishing Scale and mindfulness did not show significant improvement after the sessions. Observations during the Semi-structured interview corroborated with the above results.

Keywords: *Heartfulness, Sahaj Marg, Spiritual Practice, Well-being, Meditation.*

All communities have been making efforts to enhance the well-being and happiness of their people. These efforts are mainly of two types: deliberately delivered modules and socio-cultural practices of societies (Singh, Jain & Singh, 2014). Various studies have been carried out on deliberately induced modules and their efficacy has been well documented (Singh & Choubisa, 2009; Crawford & Caltabiano, 2011; Diener & Diener, 1995; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). However socio-cultural practices are also very important as they are practiced widely in all societies with spirituality being central to many cultures.

Spirituality is an integral part of one's identity and the personal experience of the transcendent which may be called God or a higher power, or unity with greater world or mystery, (Gall, Malette & Guirguis, 2011). Various activities come under the category of spiritual practices with meditation being the core component in most of the eastern spiritual practices. Meditation

¹ National Resource Centre for Value Education in Engineering (NRCVEE), Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi, India

[*Responding Author](#)

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practices can be divided into two categories: focused attention meditation, which requires sustained attention voluntarily on a chosen object, and open monitoring meditation, in which moment to moment content of experience is monitored without reaction (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008). Automatic self-transcending meditation practice is a third category of meditation practice which includes techniques designed to transcend their own activity. The category of automatic self-transcending is found to be different from focused attention and open monitoring (Travis & Shear, 2010).

Individuals with higher level of spiritual well-being have been reported to experience lesser levels of emotional and mental illness (Brown, Carney, Parrish & Klem, 2013). A new spiritual understanding called three principles, considers mindfulness, flow and mental health as the most natural state of people. This state can be realized and sustained via three spiritual principles which are Universal Mind, Thought and Consciousness. By understanding the three spiritual principles, one can gain insight into “thought recognition” and “innate health via clear mind”. This insight has shown significant positive relationship with mindful acceptance, mindful attention, flow experience, and mental health (Kelly, Pransky, & Lambert, 2016). Universal Mind has been considered as the purest life force; the formless energy and creative intelligence within and behind all of life; the essence of everything in the universe, including human beings, (Banks, 1998).

There are many activities in rural India which have spiritual effects, for example *Satsang*, which comprises of different prayers and chanting in a group. *Satsang* has been found to be promoting well-being among women in rural India. *Satsang* has a spiritual essence that helps a person in connecting with inner self and higher self, also referred to as God (Singh, et al., 2014).

For higher level of spiritual experiences a concept of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (*Sat* meaning being truthful, *Chit* referring to being aware, and *Ananda* being the bliss) has been described in Indian spiritual texts. The Indian concept is about achieving bliss or infinite happiness by having the experience of connecting with inner source (Srivastava & Misra, 2011). A study proposed a scale to measure *Sat-Chit-Ananda* with adequate psychometric properties in which a multidimensional construct with four dimensions namely *Chit*-consciousness, *Antah Shakti*- Inner strength, *Sat*-truthfulness and *Ananda*- blissfulness was proposed (Singh, Khari, Amonkar, Arya, & Kesav, 2013).

Meditation is a core component of most of the eastern spiritual practices. Mental and physical health has been found to improve as a result of meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Empirical studies have confirmed that meditation can indeed foster beneficial psychological and physiological state (Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, et al., 2003). Effect of a Buddhist practice Soka Gokai (Soka Gokai International) on well-being and some factors of positive

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psychology have been studied in a transnational comparison. The practice has been found to be very effective across the nations (Sachar, 2013). In a review of many studies on effect of meditation, it has been found that meditation improves state of mental and physical well-being, (Arya, Singh & Malik, 2013).

Many Indian organizations with large international following such as Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, Vipassana and Sahaj Marg are having very effective and popular meditation based programs. These organizations have similar aim of giving spiritual progress, mental peace and happiness through meditation based spiritual practices; however their practices are different in terms of type of meditation, other side-activities and delivery of the programs.

Art of Living runs “Happiness Program” and other programs involving meditation, *pranayama* (breathing exercises) and *sudarshan kriya* (a process for cleansing of mind). In a one month study on *Sudarshan Kriya Yog* (SKY), significant reductions occurred in the pre and post intervention mean Hamilton Anxiety Scale’s (HAM-A) total score and psychic subscale (Katzman, Vermani, Gerbarg, Brown, Iorio, et al., 2012). In a review paper on *Sudarshan Kriya Yog* (SKY), several papers on SKY were studied in which mounting evidence was found to suggest that SKY can be beneficial, low-risk, low-cost adjunct to the treatment of stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, stress-related medical illnesses, substance abuse and rehabilitation of criminal offenders (Zope & Zope, 2013).

Brahma Kumaris practice a technique of Rajyoga (Yoga of mind). Their main focus is on spiritual practices, meditation and self-transformation. It was observed in a study that use of some autonomic and respiratory variables (e.g., heart rate) may reveal group effects of meditation, whereas other variables can alter in an individualistic way (Telles & Desiraju, 1993). Another ancient Indian technique of meditation is called Vipassana, which means to see things as they really are. In a study on impact of intensive Vipassana meditation, it was found that there was a significant improvement on selected measures of psychological health and well-being, including positive effect, satisfaction with life, and mindfulness whereas there was significant decrease in depression, stress and negative affect measures related to ill-being. However, anxiety subscale of the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) did not change (Krygier et al., 2013). In another research which reflects author’s embodied experience of meditation; Vipassana Meditation is a medium for embodied self-reflexivity. It adds value to the body of knowledge of meditation. Engaging in embodied self-reflexivity has the potential to reduce stress for nurses and other women (Riet, 2011).

Sahaj Marg or Sri Ram Chandra Mission offers a platform for spiritual and practical living in more than 100 countries. Their practice is based on inner experience through meditation. It is a refined and simplified form of *Rajyoga*, suitable for modern everyday life. *Rajyoga* refers to

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meditation and other practices affecting the mind and heart. The Sahaj Marg practice includes a morning meditation, evening cleaning (cleaning of mind) and prayer meditation at bed time. These three basic elements combine to create a complete and effective system for inner transformation. *Pranahuti*, an ancient yogic technique, also called yogic transmission is the backbone of Sahaj Marg practice. *Abhyasi* (practitioner) training program at CREST, stay in retreat centers, annual *bhandaras* (spiritual gatherings), and stay in Himalayan ashram are some of the supporting elements (a full description of courses available at www.sahajmarg.org). There is a lack of empirical studies on Sahaj Marg practices in the published literature. To fill up this gap, the present study has been carried out in which the impact of five days Spiritual Practice in Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters and selected physiological indicators have been assessed. At the end of the program, semi-structured interview was conducted to collect responses based on personal experience to correlate the results from quantitative data.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

There were fifty five participants (25 males, 30 females; age range 18-65 years; mean age = 49 years & SD = 12.5 years) who participated in the study. The participants were practitioners of Sahaj Marg and were staying full time in the *ashram* during the five days program. All participants gave informed consent for the purpose of participating in the study.

Study Location

The study was carried out at the Himalayan Ashram located at Satkhol, District Nainital, Uttarakhand, India. The *ashram* is located in the foothills of the majestic Himalayas at an elevation of approximately 1900m (5700 ft). Satkhol is nestled in a golden valley among orange groves and whispering willows. There is a clear view of majestic Himalayan range in its entire splendor. Organic vegetables and fruits are grown in the *ashram* for preparing meals for participants.

Daily Routine

Participants started their day by getting up at 4 a.m. and doing morning meditation and ended their day with prayer meditation. During the day, participants had morning group meditation, evening group meditation, evening thought process cleaning, going to library twice, voluntary work, golden silence, universal prayer and breakfast, lunch and dinner which consisted of simple vegetarian food (*Satvic* food) prepared using vegetables grown in Ashram compound.

Procedure followed

Data for the study was collected at the beginning and end of the five day program. The participants arrived on first day of the program and departed in the morning of sixth day. They

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stayed for the full duration in the Ashram going out only once. Daily schedule comprised of various activities like morning meditation (1 hour), evening meditation (1hour), evening cleaning (15-30 minutes duration mental process using will power, which is part of the spiritual practice), universal prayer (15minutes), prayer meditation before going to bed (10minutes), library time (2-3 hours), golden silence (30 min), voluntary work (1hour) etc.

Psychological tests

A booklet for data collection was prepared containing demographic information and selected psychological tests. The booklet also contained a consent form which was to be signed by the participants. The booklet was bilingual having each question in English and Hindi both. Bilingual experts translated the original English version to Hindi language for use in the study. The tests were later back-translated into English by bilingual experts to verify the content similarity to the original scales and to ensure that translated tests were true copy of the original tests. The discrepancies were resolved and the data collection booklet was verified once again by the authors and bilingual experts. The psychological tests used are given below:

1. **Mental Health Continuum- Short Form (MHC – SF; Keyes, 2005):** This test consists of 14 items. Three items represent emotional well-being, six items represent psychological well-being, and five items represent social well-being with 6 point Likert scale (0-never to 5-every day). The internal reliability reported for total MHC score was $\alpha=0.89$, for emotional well-being $\alpha=0.83$, for psychological well-being $\alpha=0.83$ and for social well-being $\alpha=0.74$ (Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, Klooster & Keys, 2011). In a study on Indian population, accepted alpha reliability for Emotional Well-Being ($\alpha=0.82$), Social Well-Being ($\alpha=0.79$) and Psychological Well-Being ($\alpha=0.83$) have been reported, (Singh, 2014).
2. **Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE, Diener et al., 2010):** This is a 12 item scale which is rated on 5 point Likert scale. The measure of feelings like good, pleasant, happy, joyful, contented, bad, unpleasant, sad, afraid and angry are rated on a scale of 1-5 (from Very Rarely or Never (1) to Very Often or Always (5)). The scale reveals positive feelings score (SPANE-P, ($\alpha=0.87$), negative feelings score (SPANE-N, $\alpha=0.81$) and SPANE-B (The two scores can be combined by subtracting the negative score from the positive score, and the resulting SPANE-B scores can range from -24 to 24). Cronbach's coefficient for SPANE-P ($\alpha = 0.81$ and for SPANE-N ($\alpha = 0.77$) were also acceptable in Indian study (Singh, 2014).
3. **Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010):** This is a 7 point Likert scale with 8 statements to assess flourishing. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths. Diener et al., (2010) reported very good Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha=0.87$). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results were acceptable and Cronbach coefficient was found to be excellent ($\alpha = 0.93$) on Indian population (Singh, 2014).

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4. **Sat-Chit-Ananda scale (Sat-Chit-Ananda; Singh et.al, 2013):** The scale has seventeen items, having four factors with acceptable psychometric properties, namely, *Chit-Consciousness* ($\alpha = 0.76$), *Antah Shakti*– Inner Strength ($\alpha=0.76$), *Sat- Truthfulness* ($\alpha=0.69$) & *Ananda*– Blissfulness ($\alpha=0.64$) and overall *Sat-Chit-Ananda* scale ($\alpha=0.82$).
5. **Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown and Ryan, 2003):** This is a 15-items scale designed to assess a core characteristic of mindfulness. Internal consistency is good with alpha ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 (Brown & Ryan, 2003).
6. **Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS 21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995):** The DASS 21 is a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Each of the three DASS 21 scales contains 7 items. Scores for Depression, Anxiety and Stress are calculated by summing up the scores for the relevant items. Internal consistency is good with $\alpha = 0.96, 0.89$ and 0.93 for Depression, Anxiety and Stress, respectively (Brown et al., 1997).

Physiological and physical health parameters for study

Blood pressure and heart rate were measured at beginning and end of the program as physiological parameters. Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate was carried out using commercially available automatic blood pressure monitor of brand–Omron model SEM-1 (HEM-7051-C12). Each participant was asked to take rest for 5 minutes and then the measurement was taken.

Semi structured interview

Semi-structured interview was conducted with help of questionnaire comprising of seven questions. Participants were asked many questions e.g. why have you come for this program, how long have you been doing Sahaj Marg practice, how regular you are in your practice, how much improvement you feel in your spiritual condition during this program, which activities you liked most in this program, which activities you did not like in this program and anything you want to say on your own.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 16. Paired t-test was used to study the effect of spiritual practice based program as it was a pre-post study.

RESULTS

Well-being related parameters

There was a significant difference in the scores for the MHC-SF (Total) in pre ($M = 52.42$, $SD = 10.57$) and post sessions ($M = 57.12$, $SD = 9.39$); $t(49) = 3.06$, $p < 0.01$. At component level also, there was a significant difference for emotional well-being scores {(Pre $M = 11.72$, $SD = 2.86$ and post sessions $M = 13.04$, $SD = 2.38$), $t(49) = 2.69$, $p < 0.01$ } and for social well-being

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scores{(pre M = 16.68, SD = 5.70 and post sessions M = 18.88, SD = 4.57), $t(49) = 3.24$, $p < 0.01$ }. Values of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* scale also improved significantly {(pre M = 73.43, SD = 9.48) and post-sessions M = 76.02, SD = 6.89); $t(50) = 2.22$, $p < 0.05$ }.

Table 1: Paired t- test of Pre and Post sessions data for well-being related parameters

Factor	Pre - Testing		Post -Testing		N	t - values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
MHC-SF (Emotional)	11.72	2.86	13.04	2.38	50	-2.69**
MHC-SF (Social)	16.68	5.70	18.88	4.57	50	-3.24**
MHC-SF (Psychological)	24.02	4.86	25.20	4.34	50	-1.61
MHC-SF (Total)	52.42	10.57	57.12	9.39	50	-3.06**
SPANE-Positive	23.57	3.88	26.22	3.57	49	-5.03**
SPANE-Negative	13.33	3.33	10.92	3.51	49	5.16**
SPANE-Balance	10.24	5.84	15.31	6.57	49	-6.40**
Flourishing Scale	47.18	8.18	49.69	8.23	55	-1.94
Sat-Chit-Ananda	73.43	9.48	76.02	6.89	51	-2.22*
MAAS	66.74	15.72	71.20	15.54	50	-1.52
DASS(Depression)	4.57	4.81	3.27	4.26	49	2.75**
DASS(Anxiety)	4.76	4.47	3.61	4.08	49	2.24*
DASS (Stress)	5.82	4.40	4.00	4.38	49	3.01**
DASS (Total)	15.14	12.51	10.88	11.73	49	3.14**

*Note: MHC-SF = Mental Health Continuum Short Form, SPANE= Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences, MAAS= Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, DASS= Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale. * Significant $p < 0.05$ ** significant $p < 0.01$*

In SPANE, Scores on positive feelings {(pre M = 23.57, SD = 3.88 and post sessions M = 26.22, SD = 3.57); $t(48) = 5.03$, $p < 0.01$ } and Balance scores {(pre (M = 10.24, SD = 5.84 and post sessions (M = 15.31, SD = 6.57); $t(48) = 6.40$, $p < 0.01$ } were increased significantly whereas negative feelings {(pre M = 13.33, SD = 3.33 and post sessions M = 10.92, SD = 3.51); $t(48) = 5.16$, $p < 0.01$ }, Depression {(pre M = 4.57, SD = 4.81 and post sessions (M = 3.27, SD = 4.26); $t(48) = 2.75$, $p < 0.01$ }, Anxiety {(pre (M = 4.76, SD = 4.47 and post sessions (M = 3.61, SD = 4.08); $t(48) = 2.24$, $p < 0.05$ } and Stress {(pre (M = 5.82, SD = 4.40) and post sessions (M = 4.00, SD = 4.38); $t(48) = 3.01$, $p < 0.01$ }} were decreased significantly. However, there was no significant changes in flourishing, psychological well-being and mindfulness in this study (see Table 1).

Physiological parameters

Physiological measures (Blood Pressure and Heart Rate) were taken as dependent variables in the study to observe any change in them. Blood Pressure (diastolic) {(pre (M= 85.31, SD =

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11.79) and post sessions ($M = 77.21$, $SD = 10.42$); $t(41) = 5.50$, $p < 0.01$) and heart Rate changed significantly} (pre ($M=77.52$, $SD = 10.41$) and post sessions ($M = 86.12$, $SD = 9.58$); $t(41) = 7.92$, $p < 0.01$)). However, there was no significant change in blood pressure (systolic) values (see Table no. 2).

Table 2: Analysis of Pre and Post data for physical health related parameters

Factor	PRE- Testing		POST-Testing		N	t- values
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Blood Pressure (systolic)	133.55	29.95	128.90	16.53	42	1.25
Blood Pressure (diastolic)	85.31	11.79	77.21	10.42	42	5.50**
Heart Rate	77.52	10.41	86.12	9.58	42	-7.92**

** Significant $p < 0.01$

However, when we critically analyze the blood pressure data as per the American Heart Association Standards, the number of participants in normal range (BP Systolic < 120 and BP Diastolic < 80) increased from 7 to 12 (Fig 1). Participants in Pre-hypertension stage (BP Systolic 120-139 or BP diastolic 80 – 89) increased from 15 to 19. Participants in High blood Pressure Stage 1 (BP Systolic 140-159 or BP diastolic 90 – 99) decreased from 11 to 9. Participants in High Blood Pressure Stage 2 (BP Systolic > 160 or BP diastolic > 100) decreased from 4 to 2. Very important thing to note is that participants in hypertensive crisis condition reduced from 5 to 0 (Fig. 1).

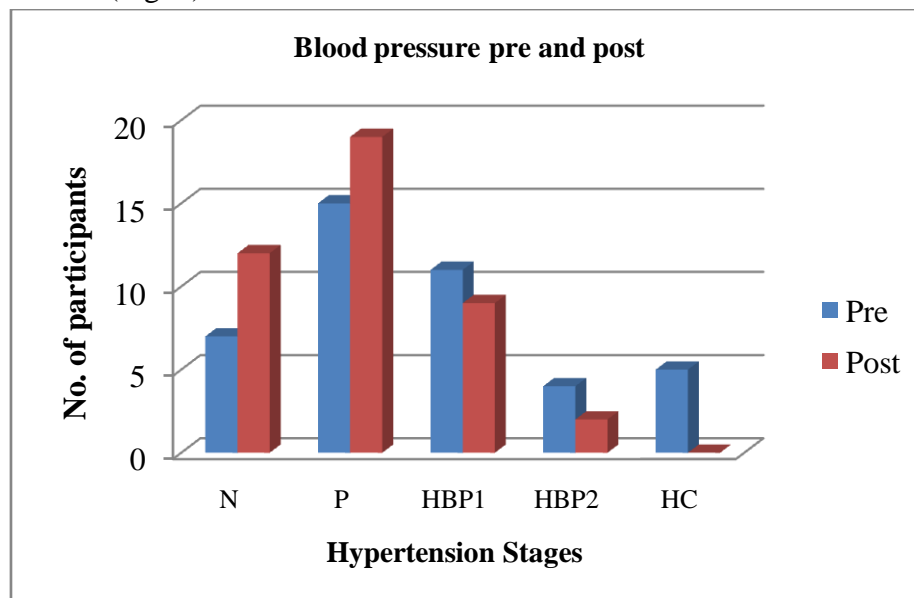


Figure 1: Number of participants in various stages of hypertension

N-Normal; P-Pre-hypertension; HBP1-High Blood Pressure Stage 1; HBP2-High Blood Pressure Stage 2; HC-Hypertensive Crisis

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Semi Structured Interview

To assess the impact of the program in qualitative terms, semi structured interview was conducted. Replies to the questions are given below.

Q1 Why have you come for this program?

Majority of participants replied that they have come for spiritual progress. Many replied that they have come for mental peace, uniqueness of Himalayan Ashram at *Satkhol*, to participate in the program at Himalayan Ashram, to experience the atmosphere. Some people replied that they wanted to be one with nature and also because the spiritual master likes the place very much. Some wanted to experience the silence of Himalayas.

Q2 How long have you been practicing Sahaj Marg?

Experiences of participants spanned over a very wide range with eight participants having experience up to five years and another five having experience of more than 20 years (Fig. 2). Twenty five participants were in the range of five to ten years whereas sixteen were in the range of ten to twenty years. One participant did not report the experience. When asked to elaborate, some reported that they discontinued for some time, some said that with the grace of master they were active till now. Some reported that they are continuing because of interest in meditation and spirituality and also their faith in the absolute.

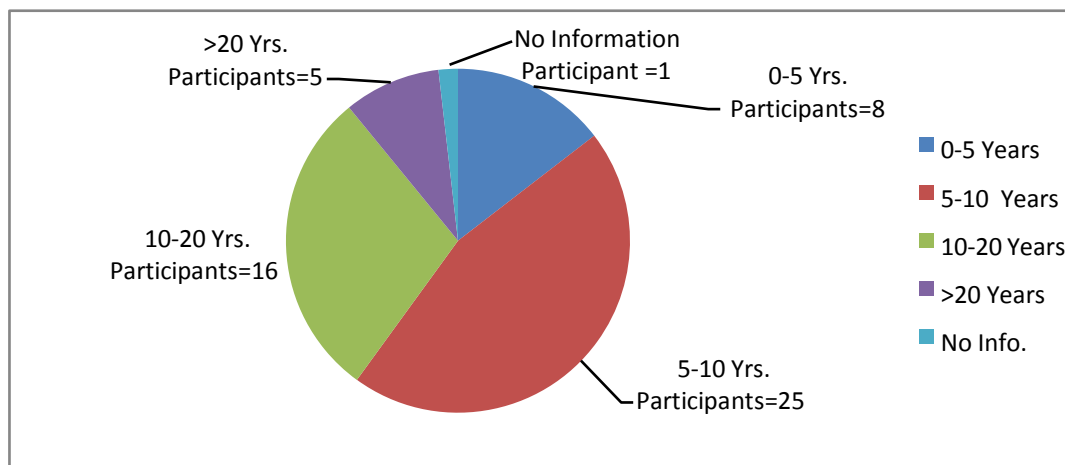


Figure 2. Duration of meditation practice

Q3 How regular you are in your practice? (Rate between 1- seldom to 5- Regular)

When asked about the regularity of meditation practice on a scale of 1-5 (1- seldom to 5- regular), thirty two of them reported the highest number 5 (Fig. 3). Twelve of them reported 4 while nine of them reported 3. One participant reported two and nobody reported 1 whereas for one participant data was not available. When asked to elaborate, some reported that they were regular in all aspects of practice whereas some reported that they were regular in the morning meditation but irregular in cleaning. Some reported their irregularity due to laziness whereas

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some others had lack of reason for irregularity. One person reported that he was missing diary writing where as one reported that his practice has improved in *Satkhol*.

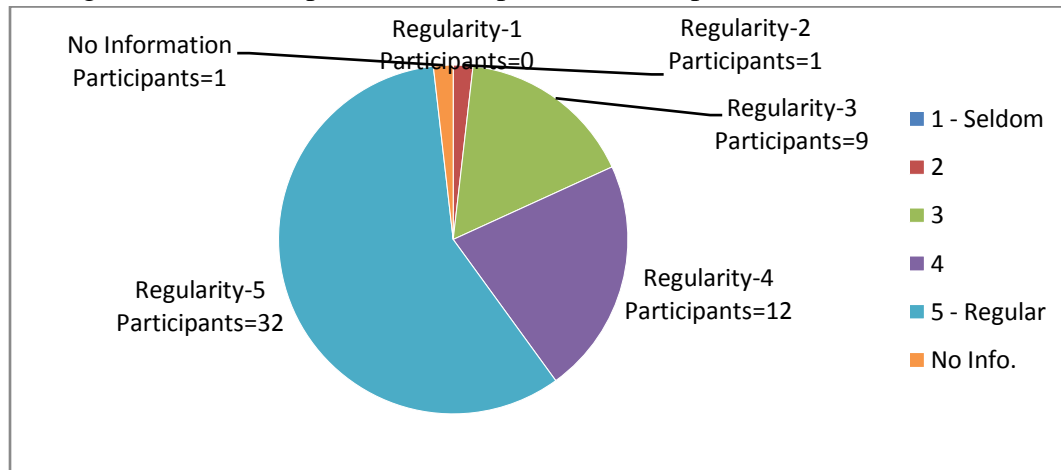


Figure 3: Regularity of meditation practice

Q4 How much improvement you feel in your spiritual condition during this program?

When asked about the improvement in spiritual condition during the program on a scale of 1-5 (1- Negligible, 5- Tremendous), thirty five of them reported the highest number 5 (Fig. 4). Sixteen of them reported 4 while three of them reported 3. None of them reported 1 or 2 whereas for one participant, data was not available. When asked to elaborate, some reported that their mind was totally at peace and they developed art of listening to nature silently, some felt totally absorbed in meditation, for some the regularity of practice and sensitivity has increased. One participant reported that he was fully focused on the program without deviation due to group effect while one reported that exploring self was much easier here.

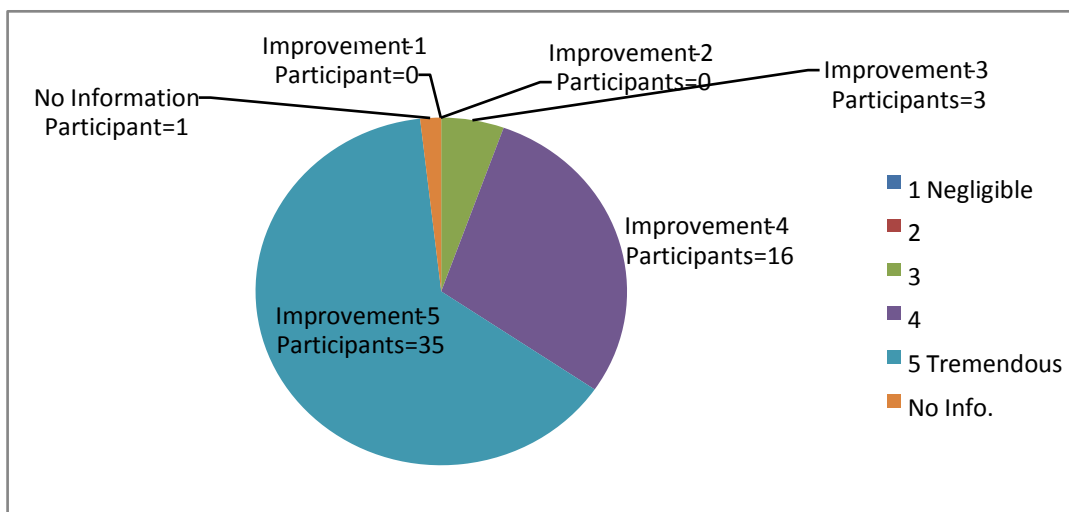


Figure 4. Improvement in spiritual condition during the program

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Q5. Which activities you liked most in the program?

Six participants reported that they liked all the activities whereas many reported that they liked meeting the Master. Many participants replied that they liked volunteer work, meditation, cleaning process, peaceful atmosphere, introspection, group meditation etc. Some people liked heartfulness program whereas some liked the nature walks.

Q6. Which activities you did not like in the program?

Eight participants reported that there was no activity which they did not like. One participant did not like filling this format; one did not like being left totally free whereas one did not like not having time for introspection. One person felt that unnecessary fear was created about rules and regulations in the *Ashram*. All other participants did not answer the question.

Q7. Anything you want to say on your own?

Many participants felt very good, with two saying that it is like heaven. Some participants wanted to thank the Master for the opportunity. Some felt free inside whereas some felt the real experience of meditation. Some wanted to come again whereas some said that participants are wonderful. One participant wanted to stay there only after retirement whereas one appreciated the program. Another participant felt differently during meditation which was never felt earlier. Twenty seven participants did not mention anything.

DISCUSSION

Main aim of this work was to study the effect of spiritual practices at Himalayan Ashram of Sahaj Marg on well-being related parameters. There were significant improvements in measures of well-being like positive experiences, Emotional well-being, Social well-being and *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. In a similar study, brief mindfulness meditation training was effective at increasing mindfulness skill, reducing negative mood and fatigue (Zeidan, et. al, 2010). In another study on *Satsang* carried out in rural India, it was observed that all the rural women participating in *Satsang* felt more empowered and free from stressors (Singh, et al., 2014). *Satsang* also has spiritual essence similar to Sahaj Marg Spiritual Practice. In another study it was found that the mindfulness meditation significantly reduces stress levels and it was effective in reducing repetitive and persistent thinking (Kang, Choi & Ryu, 2009). Considering various studies cited about meditation effects earlier, it can be interpreted that the well-being related parameters have moved on expected lines showing significant improvement. The insignificant result on mindfulness may also be attributed to this kind of practice which is heart centered instead of mind. In this practice, practitioners are encouraged to be heart centered, however, they observe through introspection what is going on in the mind as a secondary thing.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress have reduced significantly in this study. Consistent to these results, Rocha et al, (2012) have found that regular yoga practice reduced stress, depression and

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anxiety and it also improved performance in a recognition memory task. In the same study, Salivary Cortisol analysis indicated that yoga practice reduces physiological parameter indicative of stress levels. In a similar study based on *Pranayama*, it was found that regular practice of *pranayama* had a positive effect in lowering the test anxiety (Nemati, 2013). A study on effect of negative air ions concentration found that there was a decline in computer oriented stress and psychological stress (Malik, Singh, & Singh, 2010). The pristine environments similar to Himalayan Ashram are known to harbor high density of beneficial negative air ions (Suni, et. al, 2007). This may also be relevant as the decrease in stress may be partly due to higher levels of negative air ions in natural surroundings, where sessions of the study were conducted.

In selected physical health indicators, there was significant improvement in Blood Pressure Diastolic values in spite of the fact that normally blood pressure increases at higher altitudes (Lang, et al., 2016; Stöwahas, et al, 2013). However, mean Heart Rate values have gone slightly up instead of improvement. It is difficult to explain this negative effect, however, one of the possible reasons may be the higher altitude (Stöwahas, et al, 2013). In a related study, a meditation group performed mindfulness meditation 30 minutes daily for seven consecutive days. They were found to have reduction in Systolic blood pressure and anxiety scale scores (Yu, Xueling, Liyuan & Xiaoyuan, 2013). Another study observed that higher blood pressure (BP) participants in the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) group had lower BP at week 8 relative to control group (Tavis, et. al, 2012). In a study on 50 healthy subjects (24 males and 26 females), it was found that heart rate, systolic BP and diastolic BP after *pranayama* and meditation for 15 days, went down (Roopa, et. al, 2011). In another study on borderline hypertensive subjects, it was found that relaxation and meditation technique is an effective method of lowering borderline hypertensive blood pressures (Benson, Rosner, Marzetta, & Klemchuk, 1974).

In the present study, semi-structured interview was also conducted to study attitude towards the program. It has been found that results obtained for well-being related indicators correlate well with responses of semi-structured interview. Remarkable improvement was reported by most of the participants in their spiritual level. This reflects a support to self-report measures results. The fact that they liked most of the activities in the program also points towards participants feeling contented.

Some participants had higher blood pressure, however it could not be ascertained whether they had similar problem before starting the practice of Sahaj Marg. Moreover what other difficulties they are facing in life has not been asked for. Hence it cannot be explained how the practice worked for them before the program, which is a limitation of this study. Also, to more clearly pin point the main factor (the practice, the location, the Master, or all of them) responsible for benefits, control group is desirable. It would have been better to have a control group such as a

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group of people who practiced but did not attend the ashram, however it was not feasible due to physical limitations of the research team as the ashram is too far away and participants come from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds. Getting people of similar backgrounds at a place other than *ashram* and not doing any spiritual practice was very difficult and hence this can be considered a limitation. Follow up measurement could also not be done which adds to limitations in terms of finding whether the effect is lasting or not. Future research can explore impact of spiritual practices, locations (*ashrams*, nature trip etc.), the Master (spiritual/ religious guru) and other factors on well-being.

CONCLUSION

The results of the self-report measures suggest that due to the program, mental health and its emotional and social well-being components, positive experience, *Sat-Chit-Ananda* showed improvement whereas Depression, Anxiety, Stress and their total score had significant reduction. However, Psychological well-being, Flourishing and mindfulness did not have significant change. Results of well-being and ill-being related parameters, physiological parameters and semi-structured interview indicate perceived change towards general improvement.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Sahaj Marg spiritual practice is finding more and more acceptance throughout the world; however it has not been researched much. It is also being spread by the name Heart fulness as an experience even for those who may not like to follow the regular practice of Sahaj Marg for long duration. It is suggested that effect of heart fulness programs of Sahaj Marg aimed at non-practitioners could also be studied in different settings. Moreover, the inclusion of control group as well as wider physiological parameters can be considered to strengthen the results in future studies.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declared no conflict of interests.

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Sahāj Mārga Yoga (Union through the Natural Path)

Sahaj Marg translates to "The Natural Path." It is a natural, simple system of Raja Yoga meditation and spiritual practice that helps one realize the ultimate potential within oneself. Regular spiritual practice under capable guidance enables aspirants to progressively experience the sublime presence of the divine in their daily lives. The Sahaj Marg system is freely offered to seekers worldwide through the [Shri Ram Chandra Mission \(SRCM\)](#) under the guidance of current living Master, Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (also known as "Chariji"), and is effectively practiced by individuals from all walks of life - diverse nationalities, religious backgrounds, and various social conditions.

From: <http://www.srcm.org/>

A system of practical training in spirituality, Sahaj Marg emerged in the late 1800s. Through meticulous research, Shri Ram Chandra, also known as [Lalaji](#) by his family and peers ([masters of Sahaj Marg](#)), rediscovered the long-lost art of transmission of spiritual energy. From the early years of his life, [Lalaji](#) followed the promptings of his own inner need for spirituality . He recognized the natural birthright of every individual to develop to the ultimate level of human perfection, and he saw the need for a simple and effective system of spiritual development that could be universally practiced by any person.

From: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/sm/what-is-sahajmarg/tracing-roots> (Sahāj Mārg Rājā Yoga Foundation)

Surrender in totality to the WILL OF THE SUPREME LIFE FORCE is the ORDER to which the Masters belong. They have no personal will whatsoever and their consciousness is controlled and maintained by the Pranic force. Such is the Order to which Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad, Sri Ramchandra of Fatehgarh, and Sri Ramchandra of Shahjahanpur belong. It may be observed that there is a common thread running through all their spiritual life and teachings. Though we may mention these personalities and many more and show them as roots, the Spiritual Order is the most ancient and in fact Timeless. Thus we may say that Sri Ramchandrajī Maharaj of Shahjahanpur is the Sanatana Purusha. His message and teaching is LIVING....

We say sit in any comfortable posture and maintain the same posture. Comfortable posture we take surely, but then we go on changing it incessantly. There is no control over the body. There is no discipline. We change our posture. Try to remain in the same posture. It is very difficult, but when you are asking for mergence, when you are asking for a goal where you will be totally balanced, to maintain balance is not a joke, you have to strive for it. Balance is a tough concept. Static balance of course we can have. We can sit somewhere. Even there we are prepared to, but our body is such it refuses to be balanced even at the static level. We are not doing any gymnastics here. We are not doing any hatha yoga. We don't do such things. To sit like this itself consistently for one hour becomes a big tedious problem for us. That

is the amount of indiscipline that has got into us. There must be discipline. This is foremost. Then if we meditate, it makes some sense. Meditation is always for seeking our oneness with Nature. We are trying to feel one with Nature. That is laya is it not? Oneness with God. This is what we are asking for. Our morning meditation should be for one hour for this reason, otherwise we will be disturbed. We will not be in a position to have our thought firm. In the beginning it is only at the 55th minute that we will be in a position to have some idea of what we have got to meditate up on. As we gradually progress it starts even at the first second. Progress enables us to meditate for one hour, though in the beginning people are asked to sit for one hour, we should know that our meditation is less than few minutes. Meditation usually will begin thinking about what we can do during the day? What are the other plans that we have got to do? What are our responsibilities? All these things come to us. The meditation is a must for one hour, if we want to control our thoughts. Later on once we learn to sit for one hour and meditate, it becomes easy for us to meditate for longer hours. Once we get absorbed in His thought, time passes off. I don't ask you to do that, but then that's what happens. Meditation is one aspect of it and the evening cleaning is another aspect. We have formed so many impressions in our heart. We have got various values in our mind. We have given certain people some positive marks and certain other people some negative marks. Several notions are carried by us and they are our own. It has nothing to do with others and the circumstances. The general question is, how is the day? It is beautiful. The day is always beautiful. It is warm. Either it is warm or hot or cold it will be according to its nature. We are not the persons to decide. It is as it is. We have to adjust to it. It dictates

circumstances. Nature doesn't accept our ways of doing things. It has got its own ways. Because it is the mother. The mother knows how to dictate and how to love. Both the things she knows better. We have unfortunately formed various impressions. All these thoughts keep haunting us. We have to clean ourselves. This cleaning is a must otherwise our mind will never be clean.

From: <http://www.sriramchandra.org/pam/pam.htm>

In the late nineteenth century, [Lalaji](#) met a Sufi master. Together, they founded a syncretic teaching between Hinduism and Sufism, in northern India. In 1945, *(13 years after Lalaji's death...allegedly)* on posthumous orders by Lalaji *(and others, in dreams)*, [\(see Autobiography of Ram Chandra\)](#) Babuji founded the Shri Ram Chandra Mission and the Sahaj Marga method which spread gradually to the south of India, once it rid itself of its Sufi *(Islam)* references. After raising Rajagopalachari *(The current president of SRCM(California-1997))* on a pedestal, in 1982, Babuji, ill and aging, finally appoints his own son (Umesh Saxena) to succeed him. Immediately after his *(Babuji's)* death *(1983)*, Rajagopalachari attempts to place himself at the control of the Society *(SRCM Shahjahanpur-1945)* with the support of followers from the West, while supporters of the son of Babuji continue to develop the Sahaj Marg from its historical stronghold in northern India, at Shahjahanpur. In 1999, (after having been refused the Presidency of SRCM (Shahjahanpur-1945), *by its Board of Directors, and having re-registered the Shri Ram Chandra Mission) in San Luis Obispo, California, in 1997, and its research arm, the SMRTI in Austin, Texas)*

Rajagopalachari returns to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Babuji, inaugurating the lavish Manapakkam ashram, near Chennai. Strengthened by his troops of Western followers and the financial power they give him, he (*Chari*) returns in triumph to his country. But to succeed in this feat, he has generously adapted the Spiritual product of Babuji and exploited without limit the weaknesses of his troops. He has become an autocratic guru, but resistance is increasing

In the late nineteenth century, precisely in 1891, a young Brahmin named Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh , aka Lalaji, meets the master of a Sufi lineage ([Naqshbandiya Sufi Order](#)) in India. This encounter between a Hindu and a Muslim is not unique in this northern region of India, Uttar Pradesh, densely populated and heavily Muslim. Their friendship is much more surprising in this politically sensitive time when the inter-communal tensions are exacerbated.

From: <http://historyofsrcm.blogspot.com/>

There is only one God and, naturally, there is only one way to reach Him. The people have given many names to that stage. A particular institution named “Shri Ram Chandra Mission” has given birth to a new denomination to reach Him, “Sahaj Marg”. “Sahaj” and “Marg” (path) are two separate words. According to my limited knowledge, the word “Sahaj” is synonymous of “Aatma” (soul or sensitivity), i.e. connected some thing to the “Spirituality “. It means some particular school of spirituality, other than ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, Headquarter at Fatehgarh (U.P.), India. However, very recently, it has been registered as a trademark of ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’

Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj of Fatehgarh (UP) was the first non-Muslim Saint of “*Naqushbandia, Mujaddadadiya, and Mazahariya* system of Sufism. He having well connected “*nisbat*” (the subtlest Divine thread) with its ancestry through his Spiritual Master Hazrat Maulana Fazl Ahemad Khan Saahib Raipuri, Kaimganji which has a certain well defined handling. He was, of course, against the rituals (meaningless social customs), but not the theological-ceremonies like ;(1) the disciple- making ceremony called *Bay’t*- placing the palm of once hand on *the* (that) hand of his Spiritual- Master, merely to have been the sign of sealing an agreement of allegiance. When a man or woman repented of his sins and had made up his mind to lead a life of righteous- ness and piety he/she had to perform *Bay’t*. The spirit seems to be for men/women to have direct communion with God, through the whole chain of the Spiritual Masters, so much so that all the intermediaries whose existence having been acknowledged are lost sight of, in the communion of men/women with God. (2) *Ijazat/Khilafat*, are determined on the question of *Fana* and *Baqa*, etc.

The ‘Sahaj Marg’ is schism of the ‘Ramchandra School of Spirituality’, renamed as NaqshMuMRa, occurred because of its manner, style and the vocabulary of Sufism. The split in socio-spiritual sects is not a strange phenomenon. Many religions, after the demise of their founders, dwindled either into insignificance or into use to split into innumerable branches. Here also the divine will cause the spread of the whole ‘Society’ after Rev. Laalaaji Maharaaj, everywhere, through its numerous branches and under different leadership. In fact, the philosophy and tenets have not undergone any major changes at the hands of different leaders, except the ‘Shri Ram Chandra Mission’.

There is an emphasis upon the *living Guru*. The founders held that *Guru* of the time alone could reveal the inner secrets, remove doubts and thus lead to salvation. In course of time, the essential truth about

the “True Guru” was lost sight of and the faith degenerated into the cult of personality- worship.

From:

<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/epitomeofsahajmarg>
**(Naqshbandiya Mujaddadia Mazahariya Ramchandriya,
abbreviated as NaqshMuMRa)**

The reality of ‘Muraakibah’ is that we wait to be connected with that Supreme Power or “zaat Paak”; our total concentration in Meditation is based on this much only.

The plain meaning of ‘Muraakibah’ is – ‘Awdhaan’ or keep a watch (as per Hindi Dictionary). Keep your inner self out of any doubt; physically- eye and cardiac eye should be in perfect harmony and in the same form. When this happens there is no need to close the eyes. But till we clearly understand the ‘omni presence’ state of God, we have to close our eyes and wait vehemently.

To understand the mystery of ‘Muraakibah’ clearly, two things must be understood very well; first, what is the mystery of duality, non duality (Dwet and Adwet) and second is what the omnipresent form of God is.

According to Sufi saints, internal purity and stability is a must. You can not achieve your aim till your heart is not pure. Instability of heart is one difficulty, which does not allow us to achieve our aim. If the mirror of your heart is not clean then how can you see clearly? The biggest hurdle is confusion. It means when there are two opposite thoughts in your mind, you remain confused and perturbed.

From: <http://sites.google.com/site/samaadhidhaam/themeditation>
(The NaqshMuMRa School of Sprituality)

In 1930, Guru Maharaj, Paramsant Dr. Chaturbhuj Sahay Ji, established Ramashram Satsang Mathura (RSM) (naming it after his Guru, [Lala Ji Maharaj, Paramsant Sri Ram Chandra Ji](#)) out of the northern Indian town of Mathura. As per the directive of his Guru, he propagated a [System of Meditation](#) adaptable by people of any religion, community or race. This system is especially suited for our busy and demanding lives in today's world. If we shape our lifestyles and mold our thought processes according to it, spiritual success can be achieved effortlessly. We can learn to live a peaceful life amidst the stress.

Our system of *Sadhana/Satsang* is a unique unification of *Karma* (duty), *Upasana* (devotion), and *Gyan* (knowledge). The core of this unification is achieved through *Dhyan* (meditation) every morning and evening for 15-20 minutes.

From: <http://www.ramashram.com/> (Ramashram Satsang Mathura)

Sahaj Marg, or the "natural path," is an ancient spiritual teaching. This technique focuses on heart-centered meditation and is a simple practice which you can easily adapt. It requires no rituals or ceremonies. You need nothing more than the power of thought.

Instructions:

1. Practice Sahaj Marg meditation in the early morning for at least one hour and complete the meditation before sunrise. As

the sun sets, perform an evening cleansing meditation for at least 30 minutes, completing it as the sun goes down.

- 2. Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes shut, and concentrate on your heart being filled with "Divine Light." Assume a position which is comfortable for you and where you can remain still for about an hour. Do not lie down to meditate, or you may fall asleep.**
- 3. Concentrate on filling your heart and mind with loving energy and healing light. As thoughts enter your mind, allow them to drift away and come back to your heart-centered meditation. In Sahaj Marg meditation, all thoughts come from within, and they linger only if you give them attention. If you allow your thoughts to fall away, they will become weak as your meditation becomes strong.**
- 4. Continue your meditation for about an hour, until the sun rises, and then prepare for your day with new-found energy.**
- 5. Finish each day with an evening Sahaj Marg meditation, sitting for about 30 minutes, as you allow the thoughts and stresses of the day to fall away while the sun sets.**

From: http://www.ehow.com/how_4454652_do-sahaj-marg-meditation.html (*How to Do Sahaj Marg Meditation*, by an eHow Contributor)

Samarth Guru Mahatma Sri Ramchandra Ji Maharaj (Puja Dada Guru) came to the planet earth in 1873. His ancestors used to live in

Bhogaon, Mainpuri, UP, India. His forefathers were very rich but by his time he left with little property.

His father was Toll Suprintendent in Farukhabad. Puja Dada Guru studied in Farukhabad. He had to leave the study and take the responsibility of the family after the death of his father. He started working in Farukhabad's collector's office.

Since birth he had interest in spirituality. His mother used to recite 'Ramayan' in the morning which he used to listen with great interest.

At the same period, there was a great Muslim saint in Farukhabad. He was secular in nature and had respect for all other religions. He used to say that God is in 'love' not in 'religion'. When Puja Dada Guru was around 19 years old he got a chance of the company of the Great Muslim saint. The saint said "Come to me. I shall teach you spirituality. It belonged to Hindus but they no more has it. You learn it first and then spread it among others.". From that day he started going to the saint.

Long time passed and Puja Dada Guru kept on visiting his Guru. One day both of them were taking an evening walk. His Guru asked him to turn back. He tried to turn and suddenly all his veils got pierced. He saw the God. He saw the actual form of the whole universe. He felt the working of super natural forces.

His Guru said 'Son be cautious this is the God'. That was the day when Guru blessed him with divine knowledge.

He used to remain calm in either sorrow or happiness. He never used to laugh loudly. During satsang he never used to sit on special mattress, couch or rug. He used to say that same arrangements to be made for everybody. He never used to take gifts from his followers or disciples and never considered others lower to himself. He was very

kind and pure hearted with no difference between his words and actions. He was an ideal man.

A person loves only his children but he loved every creature. Everybody used to feel relieved and relaxed while meeting him. He did not do more talking and preferred keeping quiet. He had a glowing face and had sweet voice. He had knowledge of music too but seldom sing using musical instruments. Mostly he used to sing prayers during satsang. He had a very good knowledge of principles of every religion and sects.

His teaching was "Serve everybody without thinking of return and refrain from taking services from others.". He kept his own words. Five to ten seekers were always staying at his house and he used to provide food etc and not letting people to eat somewhere else. If somebody insisted for eating outside, he used to say "removal of duality is meeting God; if you have such feelings for me, then how will you proceed further. Remove such feelings. Whatever is mine is yours too and whatever is yours is mine too."

He kept on distributing spiritual knowledge to everybody without any reservation. He departed from this world in 14 August 1931 at the age of 59 years.

From: <http://www.ramashramsatsang.org/> (Yogäbhyäs)

Pujya Dr. K.C.Vardachari was born at Munulapudi Agraharam, a small village near [Tiruchanoor](#) a temple town of Sri. Padmavathi Ammavaru on 14th August 1902, in the asterism of Moola and Vrschika Lagna. He had his early education at [Tirupati](#) and he moved to Madras for his collegiate education. He did his F.A. at [Christian College Madras](#). He participated in the Freedom movement for a span of few years and

later joined the B.A.(Hons) course at Christian College, Madras. He graduated with a B.A. (Hons) Degree, in 1926 securing Gold medal from the [University of Madras](#). In 1927 he worked as Research Scholar in the [Andhra University](#). During this period he wrote his first book [Metaphysics of Sri Ramanujas' Sri Bhashya](#). He took his Ph.D. from the University of Madras in the year 1932. His Ph.D was the first in Visistadvaita awarded by the University of Madras. After occupying several important positions he ended his active professional life with the Vivekananda Professorship on comparative religion, ethics and philosophy at the University of Madras in 1966.

He has written profusely on the Visistadvaita system of philosophy of Vedanta, Sri [Aurobindo](#) and later on the System of [Natural Path](#), the new system of Raja Yoga propounded by [SriRamchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, U.P., India](#). [Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh](#) corresponded with him starting with the words "Salutations to the Atman" and thus recognizing his spiritual status.

In the man who leaves a deep impression on the history of his race we invariably find rare qualities besides those of the mere intellect. All those who knew Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari, had seen in him the perfection of Intellect and Intuition coupled with impeccable Character. Pujya Dr. K.C.Varadachari's compassion to other human beings in particular and all existence in general was something that every one wanted to acquire for himself. Pujya Dr. K.C. Vardachari was infectious and was carrying with him the seeds of Infinity wherever he went and many did acquire the symptoms of Divine Sickness due to separation from the Lord.

It is not all the certain that prizes of this world were got by him, perhaps he never bothered about it: but surely he got the gifts of the Beyond as was attested by Mahatma Sri Ramchandrajai Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. U.P. The curvatures he feared that were developing in the method that is propagated by the Great Master Sri Ramchandrajai

Maharaj, slowly turned out into a reality where the stress on the spiritual path was over taken by the philosophies of love and unmindfulness in meditation. He has condescended to the prayers of the earnest seekers and has made himself available as a guide in the path leading to the Master. [A new order in spirituality](#) has commenced in 1991 and is guiding the spiritual destinies of earnest seekers.

He was an ardent seeker of reality and had a pretty long journey in spiritual life. While more would be found in the section “Spirituality”, it may be said that he has moved from the traditional forms of worship to the most illumined path of Realisation in the system of Raja Yoga of Sri Ramchandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. He answered the question of his development in the following manner.

“A question has been asked as to how it came about that I had taken to Sri Ramchandraji’s” method, preferring it to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramanuja. It is a question in autobiography.

I first awakened to spirituality through the reading of the life of [Swami Vivekananda](#). Earlier I had soaked myself in the lives of all warriors of the world as well as the great travelers of my school days. I admired the great works of Burke and soldiers. Though this was so, I did a good lot of reading in the lives of the great discoverers in science. Proctor books and the book of knowledge I had read avidly. But the reading of the life of Vivekananda, which synchronized with the First Non- Cooperation movement, which had deep spiritual coloring, was the beginning of my interest in Yoga. Though Karma yoga was what was put forward by the Gandhian way, yet the jnana attracted me or rather the Raja yoga attracted me. Then after study of all the books concerned including quite a lot of books by [Tolstoy](#) and [A.E \(Whitehead\)](#) and others I found that the books of [Swami Ramatirtha](#) (Words of God Realisation) and the Arya volumes of Sri

Aurobindo came to me. Though the first author did stir deep spirituality, it was Sri Aurobindo's works that made me get the feeling that here indeed is the authentic voice of spirituality. I drank literally the works of Sri Aurobindo. I do not know how it was so easy for me to feel into. After the Arya, I subscribed for the Standard Bearer (Chandranagore). I felt that weekly food was invigorating and necessary. I had discontinued the studies after F.A (Intermediate) now I once again entered into the college-to study Philosophy. European Philosophy I studied and took interest in the problems. [Bergson](#) I had to study fortunately, and under Dr. A.G. Hogg. I was all along saturating myself with the Arya and the essays on the Gita.

I discovered that Sri Ramanuja's thought was similar to Sri Aurobindo's at least on the side of Bhakti. I began to work for my research on Sri Ramanuja's major work and completed it. I then did another research project on Yoga Psychology in the Minor Upanishads and came to the conclusion about the major needs of spirituality and they agreed with that of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo remained my pramana. However I did not make any effort to meet and get the personal guidance in my sadhana. In the meanwhile I studied Theosophical literature and [Krishnamurthy](#) and the skeptical modes and approaches. However though I had saturated myself with Visistadvaita the inner feeling that Sri Aurobindo was giving the right direction never left me.

It was in 1936, however that my two reviews of Sri Aurobindo's writings and life put me into touch with Sri Aurobindo. I had the first darshan of him on 24th Nov. 1936; I requested that I may be accepted as a sadhaka non resident. I was asked come in 1937 June, Aurobindo and the Mother saw me. I was asked to sit bare chested and on examination it was decided that I could not be accepted as a sadhaka. That was my first shock. However I continued devoting myself to a serious study of Sri Aurobindo.

In 1939, there was a call from the [Devasthanams at Tirupati](#) which is avowedly a Visistadvaita shrine to join the [Oriental institute](#) as Professor of Comparative Religion and Philosophy to do work (Service) for the Visistadvaita Philosophy. The offer was not good salary wise. Yet owing to the insistent demands of my father, Sri Rao Bahadur K.V. Rangaswami Iyengar and his uncle Rao Bahadur N.S. Narasimhachariar, I accepted the offer. Since I was not accepted by Sri Aurobindo I did not consult him but joined. (I belong to the sect of Visistadvaita by birth and thought that I had perhaps to do and achieve my salvation through it alone) I had to face lot of persecution and within two years the fact became clear to me that [Visistadvaita](#) had no hope and place at this famous shrine and might get discarded slowly. This was my second shock-profoundly more than the first.

“It began to dawn on me whether after all the God worshipped on the Hills was partial to Sri Ramanuja , or whether it was after all a common enough God for all sects and personsThe diversion of funds towards secular.... meanwhile gained momentum..... the Srinivasa Mission, expansion of the secular activities, the expanded provision of amenities for pilgrims, the gold-gilding and so on. These undoubtedly popularized God: more income and more expenditure and more pilgrim traffic. T.T. Devasthanams began growing. I cannot say that there was a great wave of religiosity and interest. The summer school of Religion was a regular feature. But all was for making Sri Venkateswara more well known and popular.

We have been expanding and Tirupati became a really all- India centre of pilgrimage.... But in my inner thoughts one thing alone has been growing-a deep distrust and agony of an indescribable kind. There was perfect loss of hope about a renaissance in spirituality and growth of true philosophic evolution. More and more it became clear that institutions of religions can only lead to subtle corruption, and all sorts of persons take the shelter of religion for the furtherance of

their own vanity and livelihood. God becomes the vehicle for individual adventure...Philosophy suffered an eclipse in this place when the University came and a professor who had hardly any belief in philosophy was appointed to it.

Thus Visistadvaita became non-grata and every attempt to improve it had failed. Thus I was forced to the conclusion that it is futile to resurrect it or attempt to waste one's life over it. Its votaries were working against it: a suicidal affair. The philosophy is not obviously wrong-intellectually to me it has been fairly satisfactory. The Aurobindonian element of supra mental evolution was possible in terms of Visistadvaita according to me, but it was not so admitted by Sri Aurobindo. I had failed in both of my efforts. So I had to think again: perhaps a rejection of both was demanded of me by the Supreme Power that is beyond Venkateswara and Sri Aurobindo..... It was enough for me at this juncture to somehow get the grace of God and leave everything to it -to reveal or reject or illumine the great Vast of Being.

God indeed was kind to me also. I had experiences of the most vivid kind and almost certain times direct awareness..... It was at this juncture that two persons came into my life. One is Sri Swami Sivananda whose ability to catch men is as skillful as a master fisherman, who wrote to me a letter saying that my life was very important and offered to look after my body. This meant quite a copious supply of his literature and one tin of Chyavanaprasha and one of bottle of Brahmi Hair Oil every month. He made me a fellow of his Forest Academy also. But his teachings had not at all stimulated in me any serious spiritual vibrations. However Swami Sivananda considered him to be realised soul and has written as follows while conferring the Fellowship of the [Forest Academy, Rishikesh](#) "With disarming simplicity and effortless dignity that characterizes his written works Dr. K.C. Vardachari has consistently and persistently

yoked the services of his philosophical acumen towards the errors of a purely intellectual approach of life and has sought to defend and advance with adequate persuasion and power the claims of higher and spiritual values both for the attainment of deeper philosophical insights into the nature of the individual, the Word and the Ultimate Reality as also for the perfection and integration of the individual personality in a scheme of living that results in the fullest enjoyment of the prizes of this world and the gifts of the world beyond”.

The other was also seeking to introduce his book to the Public. I received a book and a letter from one of his abhyasis for opinion. I read the book and asked for further particulars. I Reviewed the book for The Hindu, Madras and I found that some three gentlemen responded to it by getting into contact with its author Sri Ramchandraji. He then wrote to me offering to help me in spirituality. I thus entered into this sadhana because here was an offer to lead me, to accept me as a disciple and sadhaka- and not on my request but by himself. I felt that I was not accepted by Sri Venkateswara or Sri Aurobindo and to me only SriRamchandraji himself came in 1956, 57, 59, 60 and has led me to spiritual experiences. So, I was led to test these carefully and was made a Preceptor in 1957 so that I could myself see how the spiritual training is done.”

From 1966 till his last days he was fully engaged in the spread of the system of Rajayoga of SriRamchandra. He delivered many talks and many books on the system during this period. After a brief period of illness he attained Maha Samadhi on the auspicious day of Basanth Panchami on 30th Jan. 1971

From: <http://www.drkcv.org/About/About.htm> (Pujya Dr. K.C. Varadachari)



The Golden Sufi Center is the vehicle for the work of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya Order of Sufism. The purpose of The Golden Sufi Center is to make available the teachings of this lineage of Sufism.

Naqshbandi Sufis (named after Bahâ ad-dîn Naqshband, d. 1389) are known as the "silent Sufis" because their practices are done in silence. They practice a silent *dhikr* and the silent meditation of the heart—God is the silent emptiness and is therefore most easily reached in silence. They also attach great importance to dreams, which they consider to be a form of guidance along the Path. The central focus of The Golden Sufi Center is the meditation groups. At meetings, silent meditation is followed by dreamwork.

Sufi dreamwork combines spiritual and psychological approaches, helping participants to realize the guidance that comes from within and to understand the inner processes of the path as they are imaged in dreams. Dreamwork is regarded as the modern equivalent to the ancient Sufi teaching stories. Participants are encouraged to share their own dreams, particularly those which have a spiritual dimension.

From: <http://www.goldensufi.org/about.html> (The Golden Sufi Center)

The essence of any Sufi order, or *tariqa*, is the energy of succession, the spiritual energy or substance that is transmitted from teacher to teacher, back in an unbroken lineage to the Prophet Mohammad. Without this transmission the *tariqa* is form without substance, lacking the spiritual energy that is necessary for the real transformation of the heart. The true history of any Sufi order is the

history of this transmission, which is the central core of the path, around which its practices and etiquette develop over time. The outer form of the path can change according to the time and the place and the people, but the inner essence must remain the same living substance of divine love.

In 1961 a Western woman, Irina Tweedie, arrived in the northern Indian town of Kanpur, where she met a Sufi master, Bhai Sahib. He was a member of a family of Sufis. His uncle, father, and elder brother had all been Sufi *sheikhs* in the lineage of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya, an Indian branch of the Naqshbandi order, named after the fourteenth-century master, Baha ad-din Naqshband. The Naqshbandis, known as the Silent Sufis, practice a silent rather than vocal *dhikr*, and they do not engage in *sama*, sacred music, or dance; nor do they dress in any special way to distinguish themselves from ordinary people. A central aspect of the Naqshbandi path is the *suhbat*, the close relationship of master and disciple. The order was very successful in Central Asia, and spread throughout India through the work of Ahmad Sirhindî (d. 1624), who was known as the Mujaddid (Renewer).

What was unusual about this Sufi family is that they were Hindu, not Muslim. Traditionally the Naqshbandiyya-Mujadidiyya are the most orthodox of all the Sufi orders, stressing the importance of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law); but at the end of the nineteenth century a transition took place. Fazl Ahmad Khan, the *sheikh* of Bhai Sahib's uncle, was Muslim, as were all of the predecessors on this path. But when the uncle, Lalaji, said to his *sheikh*, "I am yours. If you permit me, I may adopt Islam," Fazl Ahmad Khan rejected the idea: "You should not think of such an idea. Spirituality does not need following of any particular religion. Spirituality is seeking the Truth and self-realization, which are matters of the soul.... It is the duty of everyone to follow

the customs and rituals of the country and religion in which one is born.”...

I attended her small meditation group in a tiny room beside the train tracks in North London. The heart meditation that we practiced was developed in India, where it is also known as *dhyana* meditation:

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart *chakra*. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it is peace, tranquility or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us, we immerse ourselves in this feeling; we place all of ourselves in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked the feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories will float by, images appear before the mind’s eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the

utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty.

The state of *dhyana* is a complete abstraction of the senses in which the mind is stilled by the energy of love within the heart, and the individual mind is absorbed into the universal mind. The actual experience of *dhyana* rarely happens during the first practice of meditation. It may take months, even a few years, to reach this stage. And once we do begin to experience *dhyana* we may not realize it. The initial experiences of *dhyana* usually last for just a split second—for an instant the mind dips into the infinite and just for a moment we are not present. There may be little or no consciousness that this has happened; the mind may not even be aware that it was absent. But gradually, the mind disappears for longer and longer periods; we become aware that our mind has shut down. The experience can for some time seem like sleep, since sleep is the nearest equivalent we have ever known to this mindless state.

The experience of *dhyana* deepens as the lover is immersed deeper and deeper into a reality beyond the mind. More and more one tastes the peace, stillness, and profound sense of wellbeing of a far vaster reality where the problems that surround us so much of the time do not exist—a reality beyond the difficulties of duality and the limitations of the world of the mind and senses, into which, for a little while each day, meditation allows us to merge.

Dhyana is the first stage in the meditation of the heart. It is, as Irina Tweedie described it, “the first stage after transcending the thinking faculty of the mind, and from the point of view of the intellect it must be considered as an unconscious state. It is the first step beyond consciousness as we know it.” In *dhyana*, the heart is activated and the energy of love slows down the mind. The mind loses its power of control and individual consciousness is lost, at first for an instant and

then gradually for longer periods of time. The lover becomes absorbed, drowned in the ocean of love.

Then in this state of unconsciousness a higher level of consciousness, or *samadhi*, begins to awaken. The evolution of *dhyana* into *samadhi* happens “by easy degrees,” as “the highest stages of *dhyana* are gradually transformed into the lower stage of *samadhi*, which is still not completely conscious,” and this less-conscious state leads in turn to the higher state of *samadhi*, which “represents a full awakening of one’s own divinity.”

The experiences of *samadhi* cannot easily be described. They belong to a level of reality beyond the mind, to a dimension of unity in which everything is merged, where the mind, operating as it does by making distinctions, cannot get a foothold. In *samadhi* we begin to experience our true nature which is a state of oneness: we are what we experience. Gradually we glimpse, are infused with, the all-encompassing unity and energy of love that belong to the Self and underlie all life. And this oneness is not a static state, but a highly dynamic state of being that is constantly changing. Also our experience of it changes: no two meditations are the same and our experience becomes deeper and richer, more and more complete. On this plane of unity everything has its own place and fulfills its real purpose. Here the true nature of everything that is created is present as an expression of divine oneness and divine glory. In the outer world we experience only a fragmented sense of our self and our life. Here everything is complete and we come to know that everything is just as it should be....

The *dhikr* is the repetition of a sacred word or phrase. It can be the shahâda, “*Lâ ilâha illâ llah*” (There is no God but God), but it is often one of the names or attributes of God. The *dhikr* we were given is Allâh. It is said in Islam that God has ninety-nine names, but foremost

among these is Allâh, for Allâh is His greatest name and contains all His divine attributes.

But for the Sufi, the name Allâh also points beyond all His attributes. According to an esoteric Sufi tradition, the word Allâh is composed of the article *al*, and *lâh*, one of the interpretations of which is “nothing.” Thus the word Allâh can be understood to mean “the Nothing.” The fact that His greatest name contains the meaning “the Nothing” has great significance, because for the mystic the experience of Truth, or God, beyond all forms and attributes, is an experience of Nothingness. Shortly before his death, the Naqshbandi Sufi Master Bhai Sahib told Irina Tweedie, “There is nothing but Nothingness.” He repeated it twice. The words point to the very essence of the Sufi path, as Irina Tweedie explains:

There is nothing but Nothingness. . . Nothingness because the little self (the ego) has to go. One has to become nothing. Nothingness, because the higher states of consciousness represent nothingness to the mind, for it cannot reach there. It is completely beyond the range of perception. Complete comprehension on the level of the mind is not possible, so one is faced with nothingness. And in the last, most sublime, sense, it is to merge into the Luminous Ocean of the Infinite.

Thus, the name Allâh contains the essence of all Sufi teaching: to become nothing, to become annihilated in Him, so that all that remains is His Infinite Emptiness. One of the mysteries of the path is that this Emptiness, this Nothingness, loves you. It loves you with an intimacy and tenderness and infinite understanding beyond imagining; it loves you from the very inside of your heart, from the core of your own being. It is not separate from you. Sufis are lovers and the Nothingness is the Greatest Beloved in whose embrace the lover completely disappears. This is the path of love; it is the annihilating cup of wine which His lovers gladly drink, as in the words of Rumi:

I drained this cup:
there is nothing, now,
but ecstatic annihilation.

In saying the *dhikr*, repeating His name silently on the breath—“Al” on the out-breath, “lâh” on the in-breath—we remember Him. With each cycle of the breath we return to the inner essence within the heart and live the remembrance of our love form Him. Practicing the *dhikr* as constantly as we can, we bring this mystery into our daily lives. Repeating His name as we engage in the simple activities of our day—walking, driving, cooking, cleaning—we infuse His name into all we do: cooking with the *dhikr* we put His remembrance into the food, for example; cleaning with the *dhikr* we clean with His name. Lying awake at night we can silently repeat His name. It is more difficult to do when we are talking or engaged in mental activities, but when our mind is free enough to remember Him again, we rejoice once more in repeating the name of the One we love.

We may find it difficult at first to remember as much as we would like to. But with practice the *dhikr* becomes a natural, almost automatic part of our breath, and then no moment is wasted; every breath aligns our attention with Him. And over time our whole being comes to participate in this attention. Through repeating His name, we remember Him not just in the mind but in the heart; finally there comes the time when every cell of the body repeats His name.

It is said, “First you do the *dhikr* and then the *dhikr* does you.” The name of God becomes a part of our unconscious and sings in our bloodstream. This is beautifully illustrated in an old Sufi story:

Sahl said to one of his disciples: “Try to say continuously for one day: ‘Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!’ and do the same the next day and the day after, until it becomes a habit.” Then he told him to repeat it at night also, until it became so familiar that the disciple repeated it even during his

sleep. Then Sahl said, “Do not consciously repeat the Name any more, but let your whole faculties be engrossed in remembering Him!” The disciple did this until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day, a piece of wood fell on his head and broke it. The drops of blood that dripped to the ground bore the legend, “*Allâh! Allâh! Allâh!*”⁽¹²⁾

The way the name of God permeates the wayfarer is not metaphoric but a literal happening. The *dhikr* is magnetized by the teacher so that it inwardly aligns the wayfarer with the path and the goal. (It is for this reason that the *dhikr* needs to be given by a teacher, though in some instances it can also be given by the Higher Self or, traditionally, by Khidr. Working in the unconscious, the *dhikr* alters our mental, psychological, and physical bodies. On the mental level this is easily seen. Normally, in our everyday life, the mind follows its automatic thinking process, over which we often have very little control. The mind thinks us, rather than the other way around. Just catch your mind for a moment and observe its thoughts—every thought creates a new thought, every answer a new question. And because energy follows thought, our mental and psychological energy is scattered in many directions. To engage seriously in spiritual life means learning to become one-pointed, to focus all our energy in one direction, towards Him. Through repeating His name, we alter the deeply worn grooves of our mental conditioning that play the same tune over and over again, repeat the same patterns which bind us in our mental habits. The *dhikr* gradually replaces these old imprints with the single imprint of His name. The automatic thinking process is redirected towards Him. You could say that the practice of the *dhikr* reprograms us for God.

The lover experiences a deep joy in repeating the name of her invisible Beloved who is so near and yet so far away. When He is near, saying His name becomes the expression of our gratitude to Him for the bliss of His presence, for the sweetness of His companionship.

When He is absent, it becomes our cry to Him and helps us to bear the longing and the pain. In times of trouble His name brings reassurance and help. It gives us strength, and it can help to dissolve the blocks that separate us from Him. When we say His name, He is with us, even when we feel all alone with our burdens.

Through repeating His name, we begin to lose our identification with our isolated, burdened self and become identified with our Beloved who has been hidden within our own heart. Gradually the veils that have kept Him hidden fall away and the lover comes to know His presence in her heart. And as He removes the inner veils, so also does he lift the outer veils. Then the lover finds Him not only within the inner dimensions of her heart, but also in the outer world; she comes to experience that “whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God.”

Then He whom we love and whose name we repeat becomes our constant companion. And the lover also becomes the companion of God, for the “eyes which regard God are also the eyes through which He regards the world.” This relationship of companionship belongs to the beyond and yet it is lived in this world. The Beloved is our true friend, and this is the deepest friendship; it demands our total participation. Practicing the *dhikr*, repeating His name, we are with Him in every breath.

(A Brief Excerpt from “Neither of the East nor of the West: The Journey of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya from India to America” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/article_eastwest.html (The Golden Sufi Center)



Rather than attempting to still one's thoughts by focusing on the mind, through focusing on the heart and the feeling of love within the heart one leaves the mind behind. Thought-forms slowly die and our emotions are also stilled. The "meditation of the heart" is a practice that drowns the mind and the emotions in love's ocean.

For the heart meditation, as long as the body is relaxed the physical position does not matter: one can sit or even lie down.

The first stage in this meditation is to evoke the feeling of love, which activates the heart chakra. This can be done in a number of ways, the simplest of which is to think of someone whom we love. This can be God, the great Beloved. But often at the beginning God is an idea rather than a living reality within the heart, and it is easier to think of a person whom we love, a lover, a friend.

Love has many different qualities. For some the feeling of love is a warmth, or a sweetness, a softness or tenderness, while for others it has a feeling of peace, tranquillity or silence. Love can also come as a pain, a heartache, a sense of loss. However love comes to us we immerse ourself in this feeling; we place all of ourself in the love within the heart.

When we have evoked this feeling of love, thoughts will come, intrude into our mind—what we did the day before, what we have to do tomorrow. Memories float by, images appear before the mind's eye. We have to imagine that we are getting hold of every thought, every image and feeling, and drowning it, merging it into the feeling of love.

Every feeling, especially the feeling of love, is much more dynamic than the thinking process, so if one does this practice well, with the utmost concentration, all thoughts will disappear. Nothing will remain. The mind will be empty....

Individually this meditation should initially be practiced for at least half an hour a day. Early morning is usually the best time as there are fewer thought-forms in the air and we are not saturated by the activities of the day. Meditating before falling asleep is also a good practice. But this meditation is not a rigidly prescribed discipline—it should not be forced. As in all Sufi practices if there is too much effort it is not spiritual. And sometimes one is unexpectedly drawn into meditation. The heart, awakened from within, calls one. Then if possible one turns away from outer activities and sits in silence for a few minutes or even hours, called by love into the innermost chamber of the heart.

(A Brief excerpt from “The Sufi Meditation of the Heart” by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee)

From: http://www.goldensufi.org/a_meditation_of_heart.html (The Golden Sufi Center)

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Shri Ram Chandra Mission

The **Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Shahjahanpur)** (also named **SRCM**) is a non-profit organization, a new religious movement. It was registered in 1945 in Lucknow, India, by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (aka Babuji) (1899–1983) in memory of his spiritual teacher, Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (aka Lalaji) (1873–1931), whom he met a few times before Lalaji's death in 1931, and to promote the method of Sahaj Marg which Babuji invented and registered in 1945.^[1] The Shri Ram Chandra Mission (Chennai) was registered in San Luis Obispo, California, USA, in 1997.^[2]

Beliefs and practices

The stated purpose of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission is to "awaken the divine consciousness and support on the path of evolution", and according to the movement, its modified form of Raja Yoga starting at step #7 of Patanjali's Raja Yoga^[3] is not based on "mechanical methods involving austerity and penance unsuited to current living conditions" but on "simple and natural means". The proposed practice claims to be seeking to be "universal", "easily practiceable" and one can quickly "get to find yourself in what is sought unsuccessfully on the outside".^[4] The Sahaj Marg system uses the cleansing of the past impressions (samskara), meditation on the heart and the support of a living (self-titled and self-appointed) spiritual master.^[5] The role of the spiritual teacher is said to be essential, according to the books published by the SRCM, as "he is well aware of all issues and all matters of spirituality and is claimed to have walked the path to realization or enlightenment of the soul, thus ending the cycles of life". He allegedly knows what to do for the traveler.^[4] "He is regarded by the practitioners as "a living example, a teacher by his writings and by his words. "It is God who is the true Guru, Master, and from him (God?) alone that we receive the light", wrote Ram Chandra in his book *Reality at Dawn*.^[6]

Organization

The current President and spiritual Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California, USA in 1997 (SRCM California-1997), is Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (aka Chariji) (b. 1927). The current President and spiritual master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in Lucknow, India in 1945, (SRCM-Shahjahanpur-1945) is Navneet Kumar Saxena, the founder's grandson. Chariji was the disciple of the founder, Sri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, (aka "Babuji") who himself was taught for a short while by Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, aka "Lalaji" having met him a few times.^[7] The SRCM claim that Lalaji rediscovered a very old method of spiritual training, the so-called inherited knowledge of the sages of ancient India, and which is based on the transmission of divine energy or "pranahuti".

Lalaji and his lineage claim that Lalaji was the first "non-Muslim" Master of the Naqshbandiya Sufi Order and that his Master was Hazrat Maulana Shah Fazl Ahemad Khan Naqshbandi Mujaddadi Mazahari r.a. (Huzur Maharaj) of Raipur (Kaimganj), Uttar Pradesh, India. Lalaji was initiated on January 23, 1896 at 05 P.M. and was conferred full Master-ship on October 11, 1896, which he remained to his death on Aug. 14, 1931. The teachings of Lalaji are the teachings of his Master, Huzur Maharaj, of whom he was declared "a perfect copy" by an independent panel of other religious disciplines.

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission is now present on all continents, and books by Sahaj Marg are now translated into twenty languages and used in many ashrams.^[8]

Reception

The Shri Ram Chandra Mission registered in California in 1997 (SRCM California, 1997) and headquartered in Chennai, India, is an NGO recognized by the UNDP (Department of Public Information) as a "non-profit organization" in Denmark, the United States and India.^[9]

In France, the SRCM is organized as a non-profit organization established in 1986, but has been classified as an orientalist cult with over 2,000 members in the 1995 report established by the Parliamentary Commission on Cults in France.^[10] Around 1995, it counted about 60 tutors for 600 abhyasis.^[11] The anti-cults association GEMPPI denounced the "indigence doctrinal and philosophical talks among followers, unrelated to the Eastern religious systems". Its President stated that one sole life of total and absolute obedience to the Master of SRCM is supposed to interrupt the cycle of reincarnation. "Critical reflection and autonomy of thought are stifled in this ideological movement which claims to be revolutionary in its ideas".^[12]

In Belgium, the 1997 parliamentary report established a list of 189 movements which contained the Shri Ram Chandra Mission.

The inclusion in the parliamentary report on cults has been criticized by lawyer Lawrence Hincker, who said that "this system of meditation, called Sahaj Marg, does not lead to a life away from the world. It integrates all aspects of man, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without charge or austerity or penance or self-negation".^[13] According to the sociologist Bruno Étienne, an expert on religious issues, the SRCM publishes books as any other group but does not proselytize, and has never been convicted: "To us, it is fully a NMR (new religious movement), modern religious group, although based on an ancient tradition, and subject to serious arguments advanced by others more knowledgeable, we do not understand why it is criticized on the list of the damned".^[14] Raphaël Liogier, Director of the Observatory of religious and university professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Aix-en-Provence, said he did not understand the inclusion on the cult list of an association that is fully recognized in India.^[15] The Centre d'Information et de Conseil des Nouvelles Spiritualités (CICNS), a French association for the defense of religious freedom and conscience, said the movement is victim of slander on the Internet.^[16]

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External links

- SRCM (California-1997) Official site (<http://www.srcm.org>)
- Critical views on Shri Ram Chandra Mission France (<http://www.prevensectes.com/sriram.htm>)
- Lalaji's NaqshMuMRa Nexus (<http://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/home>)
- Sufi Saints and Sufism (Dr. RK Gupta) (see section on Lalaji in Sufism (<http://sufism.weebly.com/>))

Sahaj Marg

Sahaj Marg (Hindi translation, the *easy* or *natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1] [2] [3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 - 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

Practice

Sahaj Marg is offered free of charge to peoples all around the world. Sahaj Marg system of meditation is practiced by over 400,000 practitioners (*abhyasis*) in over 92 countries.

The daily practice includes:

- Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
- Evening cleaning of past impressions (i.e., imagining the day's events evaporating out one's back and being replaced with divine light; 30 minutes);^[5]
- A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes) ;^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

- Group meditation sessions known as 'Satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (Sat = Truth and Sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;^[5]
- Cleaning sessions or individual sittings with a preceptor (trained prefect) are also available free of charge and they can be scheduled on a one-to-one basis.

Generally individual sittings are taken every other week but if necessary they can be had every week based on preceptor's availability.^[6]

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, it's founder and president, called "Babuji."^[6] Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and died in April 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique called *pranahuti*;^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicans' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.^[6]

Controversies and schisms

There are some break away groups and some controversies have spun out on who controls the domain and trademark names of the group after the death of its founder in 1983 (Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur). The court verdict was given in favor of his nominated representative.^[9]

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[10]

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Sahaj Marg

Sahaj marg (*The Natural path*), a form of Raja Yoga,^{[1][2][3]} is a heart-based meditation system.^[4] The essential features of Sahaj Marg system are Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer. The "cleaning" of impressions (called *samskaras*) is claimed to be unique to this method. Meditation is on the "mere supposition of divine light" in one's heart and it is done for 30 – 60 minutes every morning. Cleaning is done to remove the accumulated grossness in oneself. It is undertaken in the evening after the day's work is over and lasts for 30 minutes. The bed time prayer is 10 minutes.^[5]

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The daily practice includes:

1. Morning meditation on the supposition of divine light in the heart (30–60 minutes);
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3. A prayer-meditation at bedtime (10 minutes);^[6]

Weekly practices includes the following:

1. Group meditation sessions known as 'satsangh' are held locally twice a week - Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. Satsangh is translated to association with truth (sat = Truth and sangha = association or together or group) Satsangh's are held in many centers around the world ;
2. Cleaning sessions.
3. Universal prayer: The fundamental elements of sahaj marg practice—morning meditation, evening cleaning and night-time prayer meditation—are primarily meant for personal spiritual growth and development. The universal prayer is a feature of the practice that is dedicated to the welfare of all. The instructions for the prayer are as follows:
 "At 9:00 P.M. sharp every abhyasi, wherever he or she might happen to be at the time, should stop his or her work and meditate for fifteen minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are being filled up with love and devotion and that real faith is growing stronger in them. It shall be of immense value to them, which their practical experience only shall reveal."
4. Constant remembrance: Meditation, cleaning and prayer make up the basic elements of the sahaj marg practice. Practice becomes dynamic and infused with life and feeling when it leads to the remembrance and experience of our connection with the divine within. One cultivates this ongoing connection through a specific training of mind and heart referred to as constant remembrance.

History

The organizational body, Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), was formally registered in 1945 by Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, its founder and president, called "Babuji." Babuji was born on April 30, 1899 in Shahjahanpur, a large town in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India and left his mortal coil on April 19th, 1983 at the age of 83.^[7] As part of the Sahaj Marg spiritual practice, Babuji adopted a technique taught by his master Lalaji called *pranahuti*^[8] or yogic transmission, whereby the "divine essence" was said to be transmitted directly into the practicants' hearts in order to speed up their spiritual evolution.

Whispers From The Brighter World

Four Whispers (books) have been published, the last released in May, 2012. Fifth whispers(book) released in may 2013

Activities

The SRCM is a non-governmental organization registered with the UN DPI (Department of Public Information).^[9]

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