

Transformation of Personality by Integral Yogic Training and Practices

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The study was undertaken to see the effect of 4 – month's integral yogic training and practices imparted in Bihar school of Yoga (BSY), Munger on adjustment in home, health, social and emotional areas and some personality traits viz., neuroticism, psychoticism, extraversion, ego – strength and security. For this a experimental – control before – after design was followed. Four months training and practice of Raj Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnan Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Mantra Sadhna, Community Living and Yogic Diet constituted the intervention programme. One hundred four subjects admitted in a certificate course in yogic studies of BSY, Munger served as experimental group and the same number of students reading in colleges of Munger served as control group. The tests administered to the groups were Bell's Adjustment Inventory, Eysenck Personality Questionnaire and Mohsin Security – Insecurity Test. The results revealed that as a consequence of integral yogic training and practices there was improvement in adjustment in all areas, rise in security and ego – strength and decline in neuroticism and psychoticism.

Keywords: Integral yogic training, adjustment, traits

Integral yogic training here refers to comprehensive yoga training imparted in BSY, Munger which included 4 – month's certificate course. During this period selected aspects of Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Hatha Yoga are learnt and practised by the students. Besides these, students also perform Mantra Sadhna and live a community life and take yogic diet. Raja Yoga includes sadhna and meditation that allows one to develop a strong will and controlled mind. Karma Yoga unfolds one's hidden potentials while preparing his psychological being to face and confront with life's day to day activities. Bhakti yoga cultures the feelings and brings about emotional integration in personality. Jnana yoga is the yoga of wisdom which trains and trends the reason sharp and subtle. Hatha Yoga refers to complete system of psychological exercises aimed at the perfect mastery over the body and the mind. Mantra Sadhna refers to the repetition of the mantras by which certain change is experienced gradually in personality. Yogic diet refers to simple, natural and pure vegetarian food which promote longevity, intelligence, health, happiness and delight. In Bihar school of Yoga, Munger there is practice of community living. Students admitted in different courses as well as the Sanyasis and Swamis living there permanently interact with each other with cool and non –

reactive temperament. They have helping attitude for each other and practise Bhajanas and Kirtanas together in a hall with scheduled routine. They work together in the garden and also take lunch and dinner in dining hall and are served similar foods.

A number of recent studies have emerged to suggest the positive effects of yogic practices on psychological wellbeing of man. For example, yoga training and practices have been evaluated to reduce psychological distress such as anxiety and depression Woolery, Myers, and Stenlieb (2004), and promote over – all personality development (Ray et al, 2001). Triveni and Aminabhavi (1999) found that yoga practitioners as compared to non – practitioners showed significantly a lower level of neuroticism, anxiety and depression. Sudha, Jyotsna, Sumita and Nalini (2006) observed that yoga practitioners as compared to their non practitioner counterparts show significant decrease in psychological distress. Shari and Jayan (2007) found that intervention of yogasanas with relaxation and breathing exercises and meditation was effective in decreasing stress as well as health problems. Kumar and Ali (2003) reported significant enhancement in the subjective wellbeing of the students who had undergone meditation practices for continuous forty days. Malathi, Damodaran,

Shah, Patil, and Maratha (2000) observed a significant improvement in 9 of the 11 factors of subjective wellbeing in the healthy volunteers at the end of 4 months of yoga practices. Kamakhya (2004) noted a remarkable positive change in PG Yoga student's anxiety and subjective wellbeing after practice of yoga nidra daily for half an hour. Jadhava and Havalappanavar (2009) in a study on Naturopathy and Yoga Science students of Karnataka following before – after design with an interval of one year found a significant decrease in both state and trait- anxiety level and positive change in the subjective wellbeing of the subjects. Ojha and Sinha (2010) in a recent study using pre-post experimental-control group design found that five positive indicators of psychological wellbeing viz., self-esteem, self-efficacy, ego-strength, life-satisfaction and emotional stability significantly improved and five negative indicators of psychological wellbeing i.e. anxiety, insecurity, alienation, identity crisis and loneliness decreased as a consequence of 6-month regular practice for one hour daily.

Thus we note that yoga accomplishes all round personality development. It accelerates the positive aspects and retards the negative aspects of personality. Yoga solves the problems of man by bringing bliss into his life. Realizing its immense importance the authors tried to study the effects of integral yoga practised by students admitted in Bihar School of Yoga, Munger in a 4 – month certificate course on adjustment in home, health, social and emotional areas and some positive and negative personality traits viz., extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, security and ego – strength.

Hypotheses:

In order to see empirically the effects of yoga the following four hypotheses were formulated:

- (i) Since the subjects of experimental and control groups were drawn from the same population of college students and were matched in respect of some personal and social variables, they would be homogeneous in respect of all areas of adjustment as well as positive and negative personality traits at pre-testing session.
- (ii) Due to yogic training and practices by the experimental group and absence of the same in control group the two groups would differ

significantly in all areas of adjustment as well as positive and negative traits at post-testing session.

(iii) The control group due to normal activities during intervention period of 4 months would not display any significant change in either areas of adjustment or positive and negative traits at post-testing session.

(iv) As a consequence of 4-months of continuous yogic training and practices the experimental group would show significant increase in all areas of adjustment and positive traits but decrease in negative traits at post-testing session.

Method

Participants:

In order to see the effects of integral yogic practices a pre – post experimental- control group design was followed. One hundred four students admitted in a 4 – month's certificate course in yogic studies of BSY Munger served as experimental subjects and the same number of students reading in degree colleges of Munger participated as control subjects. The two groups were matched in respect to age, sex, educational level, area of residence and family income. The age of the subjects ranged between 19 and 23 years. There were 67 males and 37 females in each group.

Tests used:

The following tests were administered to the subjects twice, i.e. initially just before the beginning of the certificate course and finally just at the end of the training course.

A Hindi adaptation of Bell's Adjustment Inventory by Mohsin and Hussain (1970) which measures adjustment in four areas viz. home, health, social and emotional, was used. The test – retest and odd – even reliabilities of the inventory were 0.89 and 0.93 respectively. High score on the test reflected poor adjustment while low score indicated good adjustment.

A Hindi adaptation of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) by De and Thakur (1985) which assesses extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism dimensions of personality. The test – retest reliabilities of the scales ranged between 0.73 and 0.78 and their odd – even reliabilities varied between 0.80 and 0.86.

The Hindi adaptation of Barron's ego strength scale by Hasan (1970) consisting of 32 items to be answered in terms of 'True' and 'False'. The odd – even reliabilities of the scale was 0.78 and its test – retest reliabilities with intervals of 2 and 5 weeks were 0.86 and 0.82 respectively.

The S-I test constructed by Mohsin (1978) as a measure of social and emotional security versus insecurity. It consisted of 60 items to be replied in terms of 'Yes', 'No' and '?'. Its split-half and test-retest reliabilities were 0.88 and 0.72 respectively.

Results

To interpret the data intergroup and intragroup comparisons were made. To find out the homogeneity, if any, between the two independent groups-experimental and control at pre-testing session, a two tailed t-test with alpha <0.05 was applied. To find out if the difference has occurred between the two groups at post-testing session again a two-tailed t-test was used. But for evaluating the differences occurring within the experimental or control group after an interval of 4-months, performance of the each group at two occasions viz., pre-and post testing were compared by using one tailed t-test.

It may be observed from Table 1 that at pre-testing session experimental and control groups do not differ significantly ($p>0.05$) with respect to their mean scores in any of adjustment areas or in any of traits. However the two groups differ significantly ($p<0.01$) at post testing session in respect of their mean scores in all areas of adjustment and in four out of five traits. This difference might be supposed to have occurred as a consequence of yogic training and practices undertaken by the experimental group and normal activity performed by the control group during 4-month intervention period. Hence hypotheses 1 is proved and hypotheses 2 also is accepted only with exception to extraversion.

However in order to see the changes occurring from pre-testing to post-testing the mean scores of each group at two testing sessions were compared. The data appear in Table 2.

It is apparent from Table 2 that the mean scores of experimental group on adjustment in all areas are significantly ($p<0.01$) higher at pre-testing but lower at post-testing. It may be recalled that low scores on adjustment inventory indicates better adjustment and high score shows poor adjustment. Further we note from Table 2

Table 1. Comparison of mean scores of experimental (yogic training) and control (normal activity) groups with respect to adjustment and traits at pre-testing session and post testing sessions (figures in parenthesis indicate SDs).

Adjustment Areas:	Pre-Testing session		t-ratio	Post-Testing session		t-ratio
	Exp. Gr. Mean score	Con. Gr. Mean score		Exp. Gr. Mean score	Exp. Gr. Mean score	
1. Home	11.9 (-6.88)	11.82 (-6.08)	0.09	9.07 (-6.09)	11.88 (-6.12)	3.31*
2. Health	9.95 (-4.76)	10.12 (-3.75)	0.19	7.94 (-3.61)	9.97 (-3.8)	3.98*
3. Social	15.92 (-6.07)	15.86 (-6.18)	0.09	12.92 (-6.07)	15.9 (-6)	3.55*
4. Emotional	12.51 (-6.94)	12.58 (-6.35)	0.08	10.34 (-6.22)	12.65 (-6.11)	2.78*
Traits						
1. Psychoticism	5.12 (-1.94)	5.2 (-2.2)	0.29	4.35 (-2.06)	5.1 (-2.18)	2.93*
2. Neuroticism	8.64 (-3.87)	8.55 (-3.5)	0.18	6.82 (-3.6)	8.66 (-3.65)	3.68*
3. Extraversion	10.1 (-3.21)	10.2 (-3.25)	0.16	10.42 (-3.04)	10.45 (-3.12)	0.06
4. Ego – strength	19.35 (-5.55)	19.5 (-5.35)	0.43	21.69 (-5.13)	19.6 (-5.26)	2.90*
5. Security	140.41 (-20.34)	140.6 (-20)	0.07	147.98 (-20.12)	139.95 (-20.15)	2.88*

* $p<0.01$

Table 2. Comparison of experimental (yogic training) and control (normal activity) groups in respect to adjustment and traits at post-testing session (figures in parenthesis indicate SDs).

Adjustment Areas:	Experimental group		t-ratio	Control group		t-ratio
	Pre-Testing	Post-Testing		Pre-Testing	Post-Testing	
1. Home	11.90 (6.88)	9.07 (6.09)	4.71*	11.82 (6.08)	11.88 (6.12)	0.10
2. Health	9.95 (4.76)	7.94 (3.61)	4.24*	10.12 (3.57)	9.97 (3.80)	0.47
3. Social	15.92 (6.07)	12.95 (6.07)	5.82*	15.68 (6.18)	15.90 (6.00)	0.08
4. Emotional	15.51 (6.94)	10.34 (6.22)	13.60*	12.58 (6.53)	12.56 (6.11)	0.15
Traits						
1. Psychoticism	5.12 (1.94)	4.35 (2.06)	4.28*	5.20 (2.21)	5.10 (2.18)	0.37
2. Neuroticism	8.64 (3.87)	6.82 (3.60)	5.35*	8.55 (3.50)	8.66 (3.65)	0.55
3. Extraversion	10.10 (3.21)	10.42 (3.04)	1.52	10.20 (3.25)	10.45 (3.12)	1.14
4. Ego – strength	19.35 (5.55)	21.69 (5.13)	7.09*	19.50 (5.53)	19.60 (5.26)	0.27
5. Security	140.41 (20.34)	147.98 (20.12)	4.70*	140.60 (20.00)	139.95 (20.15)	0.59

*p<0.01

that the mean scores of the experimental group at post-testing session in comparison to those at pre-testing session have risen significantly ($p<0.01$) in respect of ego-strength and security, but fallen significantly ($p<0.01$) in respect of neuroticism and psychoticism. However, the difference in extraversion scores remain insignificant ($p>0.05$). It may also be observed from Table 2 that almost no significant change ($p>0.05$) has occurred in control group from pre-testing to post-testing session in any of adjustment areas or in any of traits. Hence it transpires that transformation in personality is effected by integral yogic training and practices. Therefore, hypotheses 3 is confirmed but hypotheses 4 is proved with exception in respect of extraversion.

Discussion

The findings reveal that integral yogic training and practices lead to acceleration in positive aspect and retardation in negative aspect of personality and these are in broad conformity with several previous studies cited in preceding pages. This change may be due to the practices involved in integral yogic training. The integral yogic training was founded upon the precepts of practice, awareness, attitude, action, vivek and vairagya. The practice involved techniques of introspection which allows one to find out the source of disturbance, ill – feeling and to

harmonize that. Awareness involves an understanding of the environmental conditions, situations and events which influence us. Attitude involves a knowledge and understanding of how we as individuals can have positive and creative outlook in life. Action involves an understanding of how we act, think and interact in the world along with others. Viveka involves the faculty of discrimination, the faculty of knowing the just and the unjust, the right and the wrong. Vairagya involves detachment from the experience of the sensory and sensual perceptions.

Yoga teaches us to reduce the feeling of 'I-ness' because this 'I-ness' is the cause of maladjustment. All conflicts take place due to the feeling of 'Doer' or 'I-ness'. Karma yoga teaches us that we are not the 'Doers' we are only an instrument of God. We all are created by God and all are the same. These teachings change the mind of practising subjects and their home and social adjustment is improved. Meditation influences the emotional functioning. Breathing exercises affect the mood and brings mental stability (Harvey, 1983) which ultimately leads to good emotional adjustment. The health adjustment improves due to positive changes in the cardiovascular, respiratory, skeletal and other organic systems during yoga practice which includes asanas, pranayama and meditation. From the review of past studies by Rao (1995) it is beyond reasonable doubt that long term

practitioners of yogic techniques have a remarkable voluntary control over their psycho – physiological problems.

We have found significant decline in two pathological traits viz., neuroticism and psychoticism, and enhancement in two positive traits viz. ego strength and security. Such changes may be due to the practices involved especially in Raja Yoga. Actually Raj Yoga presents some simple practices and techniques that when followed, very effectively change the mental make – up. The major point in the practice of Raja Yoga is an understanding of three modes of nature (the Gunas) and the way they operate in the human personality. The three Gunas operate in all levels of creation – material and mental. These are inertia or dullness (Tamas), restlessness or externalisation (Rajas) and harmony (Sattwa). Tamas or inertia keeps the energy locked up, which is expressed in personality as laziness, dullness and attitudes of pessimism and sense of procrastination. Raja Yoga especially meditation trains one to sublimate Tamas into Rajas and then to canalise Rajas into Sattwa (or harmony) through which immense creativity and progress can be cultivated. Sattwa is the state of mind in which harmony, joyousness, expansion and contentment flow in abundance. As practices and study of Raja Yoga continue, one can understand and control these modes of nature for improvement in psychological wellbeing.

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