

Impact of Spirituality on Life Course

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ABSTRACT: Empirical data says that older age group people are more content in their lives rather than the younger ones. Assumptions about retirement connected with stress and morbidity continue to flourish despite tons of empirical contradictory data. The perpetual mismatch between theory and certain empirical data is one of the things that has led us to believe that we sometimes erroneously project midlife values, activity patterns, and expectations onto old age. Rajyoga being taught by Brahma Kumaris at world spiritual university is a unique spiritual education which facilitates the individual to realise true potential of uplifting one's self-identity or Awareness. The dimensions of life and spiritual knowledge allows the person to enlighten himself to experience the golden era where enlightened individuals called as angels live having higher consciousness and live in an environment of perfect order. This spiritually transcending experience is timely selective to all the individuals, irrespective of caste and creed and religion because the age undergoes transition, and the world has to move towards a better life.

KEYWORDS: Spirituality, Dimensions of life, Retirement, self-identity, Self-identification, Self-awakening, Self-Enlightenment, Self-realisation, Ego, Self, Transcendence, Self-acknowledgement.

INTRODUCTION

Rajyoga being taught by Brahma Kumar is at world spiritual university is a unique spiritual education which facilitates the individual to realise true potential of uplifting one's self-identity or awareness. It also helps in experiencing the true and deeper qualities which manifest and vibrate in a natural way in the state of higher consciousness. When a person realises in the realms of spiritual experiences that he is truly a sentient energy, eternal and immortal being, a soul radiating true qualities like bliss, peace, happiness and serenity he / she becomes the embodiment of all virtues. This unique true self-realisation makes individual to experience detachment, He /She transmits the same experiences in others by virtue of which he / she creates an atmosphere of harmony within the society. This process of transformation gradually uplifts one's overall development through attaining not only physical, social or emotional well being but also spiritual well being. The person experiences a state of immortality that helps in developing feelings of belongingness towards other individuals. This elevated consciousness is called soul-consciousness. It is a way of divinizing the self and attaining self mastery through higher consciousness.

This institute introduced second spect of self realisation which makes the person to experience the power and qualities of soul like peace, bliss, happiness and serenity in a higher order i.e. realisation of God in which this universal energy that is in the form of divine spark of light radiates the rays of happiness, peace and bliss enabling the individual to stay in constant remembrance of that divine light by virtue of which his powers get enhanced many folds. In this process of contemplation one experiences the universal energy as true father, mother, true companion and guide. This bond allows the person to experience the mastery of eight powers which enables the person to lead a successful life. These are: power to tolerate, to accommodate or adjust, to judge, to discriminate between right and wrong, to cooperate, to detach and to face adverse conditions of life. This mastery becomes reality through his constant practice of self-realisation and God-realisation. This is how a person realises and understands this supreme source of universal energy through a varied depth of enlightening experiences which are highly nurturing and elevating. He markedly experiences this source as an ocean of peace, power, love, bliss and knowledge. This spiritual institute also introduced the third aspect of spiritual revelation for cause and effects of cosmic events and day to day happenings of events that lead to happiness or sorrow and benefits or loss to the living world. It reveals that when consciousness shifts from its true awareness of

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peace, bliss and happiness, it then creates a kind of environment and events that take place in a cyclical pattern. Through intense Practice of meditation and developing practice of higher awareness the person is able to travel through his elevated consciousness and able to feel different ages and meet the souls of its hierarchy.

The spiritual knowledge allows the person to enlighten himself to experience the golden era where enlightened individuals called as angels live having higher consciousness and live in an environment of perfect order. This spiritually transcending experience is timely selective to all the individuals, irrespective of caste and creed and religion because the age undergoes transition, and the world has to move towards a better life. According to this institution the hidden secret of wisdom of spiritual transcendence is already there within us but the only matter of concern is that we should allow this seed to germinate and give its fruits in a way that it creates a nurturing environment to explore the secrets of life.

Easy Rajyogi gets up early in the morning to meditate and practices higher consciousness for one hour, Light exercises and jogging for 15 -20 minutes followed by spiritual class for an hour. He consumes light meals throughout the day. He Practises soul consciousness throughout the day even during his routine work and practices pure attitude and feelings to remain emotionally stable. In the evening he meditates for one hour. He meditates before going to sleep. If possible write a self reflective diary in which he tends to write about different social services and shares positive experiences with others. The practice of meditation involves detachment, self respect, unconditional love, easiness, simplicity, contentment, empathy and churning spiritual Knowledge. All these virtues and powers he experiences through creating positive thoughts in the context of creating pure awareness and connecting himself with a higher source of spiritual energy. Inspirative experiences are enhanced through the facilitating workshops and group discussions which are guided through spiritual teachers in each Rajyoga center.

METHODOLOGY

Elderly population (n=200) from across the country was taken as study subjects. A prior verbal consent was taken from them. Amongst this elderly population 100 were recruited into one group consisting of those who practise raj yoga and another group of 100 consisted of the population who doesn't follow raj yoga. A convenient sampling method was used. A pretested questionnaire was used as a study tool to record their opinions for life courses. To administer the questionnaire few personnel were trained on the technique of administering the questionnaire and recording of the replies. Special care was taken in recording the replies to rule out any sort of investigators bias. Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 16 and results were expressed in terms of percentages and whole numbers. A comparative study was also conducted in terms of results to see the difference between followers of raj yoga and non followers on various scales. Gero-transcendence, ego-transcendence and other scales were used to predict the results.

RESULTS

Total of 200 subjects were taken into consideration out of which 100 were Raj Yogis and 100 were those who were not practicing spirituality in any form. The subjects who were recruited in this study belong to the age group of 60 to 95. Mean age of the subjects was 68 with SD 6.5, variance of 42.3 and range of 35. These three perspectives have been measured in two dimensions of gero-transcendence:

1. **Cosmic Gero-transcendence**, which is connected with changes in perception of time, space, life, and death.
2. **Ego-gero-transcendence**, which is connected with changes in the perception of the self and relations with others (Tornstam, 1994).

This interview was conducted with those participants who displayed the highest levels of gero-transcendence to gain further information about the relevance of the concept of gero-transcendence to their lives. In accordance with procedures outlined by Tornstam (1997), participants were read a description of a gero-transcendent individual and were asked to indicate which aspects related to their own life. The three dimensions of gero-transcendence were questioned in separate questions. The Cosmic dimension was the focus of questions about different perceptions of 'time', and 'the relation with ancestors', the Self dimension was the subject of the question about 'discovering new sides in myself', and the dimension of Social and Personal relations in a question about 'changes in relationships'. After the brief description was read participants were asked: "Do you recognize this aspect in yourself?" "Does this description make sense to you?" The participants were then asked to elaborate on their answer. If the person answered that they indeed recognized the characteristic as being descriptive of their life, they were then asked to describe an episode in their life they believed marked the onset of such a feeling.

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COSMIC TRANSCENDENCE

84% of the rajyogis felt that the border between life and death is less striking compared with when they were at the age of 20yrs as compared to that of 78% non rajyogis. Although the results show a marginal decrease, it is a significant factor ($p < 0.05$) so a null hypothesis just on the basis of marginal decrease cannot be accepted as there may be many other factors which play a crucial role. When it comes to importance of individual's life, in comparison with the continuing life as such more individuals who practice rajyoga (84%) reported that individuals life is more important as compared to those who were not practicing rajyoga (72%) and it is also a significant factor ($p < 0.05$)

Another significant factor ($p < 0.05$) of mutual connection with the universe as of now compared with that when the individuals were at the age of 20 yrs also showed an increase amongst rajyogis (96%) compared to that of non rajyogis (82%).

Under the cosmic transcendence factor like experience of oneself to be close to the persons even when they are physically elsewhere also is significant with 85% of the rajyogis have such a subjective feeling as compared to that of non rajyogis (68%)

91% of the rajyogis felt that the distance between past and present disappears as compared to

66% of the non rajyogis and it is also a significant factor ($p < 0.05$)

92% of the rajyogis felt a greater state of belongingness with both earlier and coming generations as compared to 79% of the non rajyogis. So, if all these significant factors are taken into consideration Rajyogis have more of cosmic

transcendence as compared to that of non rajyogis and a null hypothesis of nonrajyogis having more of cosmic transcendence has to be rejected at $p \text{ value} < 0.05$.

EGO TRANSCENDENCE

83% of the Rajyogis reported to take themselves less seriously than earlier as compared to 70% of the non rajyogis which although having a value $p < 0.05$ could be considered as a significant factor.

More of the rajyogis 88% felt that as on today material things mean less to them as compared when they were 20 yrs of age whereas only 66% of the non rajyogis felt the same.

79% of the Rajyogis seem to be less interested in superficial social contacts as compared to 65% of the non rajyogis.

99% of the Rajyogis reported to have more delight in their inner world i.e, thinking and pondering as compared to when they were 20 years of age whereas only 81% of the non rajyogis felt so.

Thus, overall results show that individuals who practised rajyoga showed improvement in their ego-transcendence in comparison to those who were not practising rajyoga meaning thereby that if we are using cosmic and ego transcendence as two scales to measure the ego-transcendence, it was proven that greater number of individuals practising rajyoga showed presence of Gerotranscendence as compared to individuals not practising rajyoga. So both cosmic and ego transcendence are both significant factors and hence the statistically null hypothesis has to be rejected that age is the only factor for the presence of gerotranscendence. Another scale was being used to prove the theory of gerotranscendence which has three factors of cosmic dimension, coherence dimension and solitude dimension. Under this scale each individuals were asked to rate these factors on a fixed 4 point scale.

COSMIC DIMENSION

71% of the rajyogis agreed fully that they are connected with the entire universe as compared to 46% of the non rajyogis.

21% of rajyogis reported high on this scale as compared to 17% of the non rajyogis.

Greater number of the non rajyogis (26%) did not agree or agreed to a little extent that they are connected with the entire universe as compared to 5% of the rajyogis.

78% of the rajyogis reported that they feel totally or highly to be part of everything living as compared to 46% who were not practising rajyoga and 43% of nonrajyogis as compared to 17% of the Rajyogis reported little or not at all to feel a part of everything living.

69% of the Rajyogis reported that they feel a strong presence of people living elsewhere as compared to 47% who were not practising rajyoga and 40% of nonrajyogis as compared to 28% of the Rajyogis reported little or not at all to feel a strong presence of people living elsewhere. 77% of the Rajyogis reported that they feel to live in past and present simultaneously as compared to 52% who were not practising rajyoga and 37% of nonrajyogis as compared to 18% of the Rajyogis reported little or not at all to feel that they live in past and present simultaneously. 11% of the Rajyogis reported that they feel a strong connection with the earlier generation as compared to 31% who were not practising rajyoga and 57% of nonrajyogis as compared to 84% of the Rajyogis reported little or not at all to feel a strong connection with the earlier generation.

All these results showed that all factors are significant ($p < 0.05$) and cosmic dimension is more amongst the rajyogis as compared to those individuals who were not practising spirituality in any another form.

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COHERENCE DIMENSION

76% of the rajyogis reported that they feel that their life is organised and in comparison to 43% who were not practising rajyoga and 9% of nonrajyogis as compared to 14% of the Rajyogis reported little to that they feels that their life is disrupted and chaotic. 85% of the Rajyogis reported that the life they have lived has coherence and some meaning as compared to 58% who were not practising rajyoga and 34% of nonrajyogis as compared to 11% of the Rajyogis reported little or not at all to that the life they have lived has coherence and some meaning.

Overall results showed that rajyogis have more coherence dimension as compared to that of nonrajyogis.

SOLITUDE DIMENSION

82% of the Rajyogis reported that they like to be by themselves rather than with others as compared to 58% who were not practising rajyoga and 34% of nonrajyogis as compared to 12% of the Rajyogis reported little or not at all to that they like to be by themselves rather than with others.

90% of the Rajyogis reported that they like to meet new people as compared to 71% who were not practising rajyoga and 19% of nonrajyogis as compared to 4% of the rajyogis reported little or not at all to that they like to meet new people.

90% of the Rajyogis reported to feel that being at peace and philosophising by themselves is more important for their own well being as compared to 71% who were not practising rajyoga and 19% of non alyogis as omp red to 04% of the rajyogis reported little or not at all to feel that being at peace and philosophising by themselves is more important for their own well being.

So overall results show that individuals practising Rajyoga are more happy remaining in solitude as compared to non Rajyogi.

When all these three factors are taken into consideration which all are significant factors overall results again show the presence of gerotranscendence more amongst the rajyogis as compared to that of non rajyogis.

LIFE SATISFACTION SCALE

93% of the rajyogis reported that they don't suffer from depression or that they are satisfied with their life as compared to 68% of nonrajyogis and 31% of the nonrajyogis felt that they feel depressed and not satisfied with their lives compared to 7% of the rajyogis meaning thereby that rajyogis feel contentment in life. DISCUSSION: Tornstam defined gerotranscendence as "a shift in the meta-perspective from material and rational vision to a more cosmic and transcendent one, normally followed by increased life satisfaction.

According to Tornstam (1999) many elderly people look at their body with disgust, regarding it an indication of overall decline and conclude that both their mind and sense of self-worth have degraded in the same way as their body. The ego transcendent person however, is able to separate spiritual growth and development apart from physical deterioration. This ability to Separate physical and spiritual concern is thought to result in a new feeling of freedom which might result in finding the courage to be one's self, and to no longer fear to ignore both social roles and expected roles . The gerotranscendence person tends not to cling to outmoded ideals but defines self worth in new and unusual ways. This may result in discovering new facets of one's personality or discovering oneself in possession of new talents and abilities (Jerikson 1997 tornstam 1993). Gerotranscendent Individuals may also show an increase in time spent alone in meditation or contemplation. The other dimensional change experienced in gerotranscendence is concerned with an increased sense of interrelatedness with others. This means a gerotranscendence person will begin to have a greater need to view herself / himself as a social being. That is, a gerotranscendent person will re-evaluate the meaning behind the ties. She/he has established with his / her family, friends and other relationships. In other words the gerotranscendence person has a stronger sense of needing to feel part of the human race. This is thought to result in an increased feeling of connections with the past and future generations and decrease in the interest in the superfluous social interactions. A gerotranscendent individual therefore may become more open and responsive to other people while at the same time becoming more selective in their use of such openness . Tornstam states that gerotranscendence might be an intrinsic or natural result of normal living that may or may not involve a revisitation of the past. Tornstam regards gerotranscendence as the natural last phase in life that occurs if one lives long enough and attains the necessary and sufficient personal qualities to make a positive examination of one's past.

Tornstam (1989) argues Gerotranscendence is to be the product of the natural ageing process.

He Acknowledges that this process can be obstructed or accelerated :

CAN SPIRITUAL BELIEFS & SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

FACILITATE THE PHENOMENON OF GEROTRASCENDENCE?

Although the present study aims at finding the degree of gerotranscendence in two groups of elderly people one practising spirituality in the form of rajyoga meditation and other group not practising spirituality in the form of Rajyoga meditation, the results reveal that more degree of gerotranscendence and increased life satisfaction was seen in people who practice spirituality.

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Several research studies done on suphis and other people practising spirituality (Ahmadi-Suphi study, and Belgium social gerontologists study) reveals positive correlations between occurrence of phenomenon of gerotranscendence and their spiritual beliefs and practices contrary to the belief and explanation of Dr Lars Tornstam that gerotranscendence phenomenon is natural phenomenon which occurs at second half of life. We saw when people practise spirituality which has core features of cosmic transcendence and ego transcendence it enhances the degree of gerotranscendence. IS PHENOMENON OF GEROTRASCENDENCE UNIVERSAL?

Although some areas of research show some degree of gerotranscendence in some people and some degree of gerotranscendence seen in other groups of People Deep spiritual practices and spiritual revelations practised by rajyogis since several years shows us that gerotranscendence is a universal phenomenon. All these 100 easy rajyogis who are practising this meditation for several years have similar kind of spiritual –cosmic experiences which are irrespective of previous faiths and belonging to different religions and irrespective of their place, environment and language. What ultimately they say is: IT IS ALREADY THERE YOU HAVE TO AWAKEN...THE SELF. WHAT IS INDIRECT MESSAGE OF DR LARS TORNSTAM TO THE AGEING POPULATION?

It has been estimated that by 2030 the world's elderly population will be 30%. The scenario will be entirely different amongst all the adversities That in today's elderly population is facing is lack of inner strength & Wisdom of living. If all the features of gerotranscendence are allowed to be experienced in an individual the end result will be life satisfaction . & if these transcending experiences are enhanced and able to create a beautiful environment..and this will become a powerful tool for wisdom of healthy ageing which will cross all the barriers of language, religion, nations, caste, creed etc .Ultimate message is spirituality for ageing gracefully.

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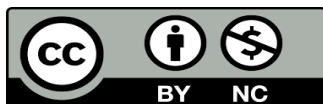
THIS RESEARCH PAPER IS DEDICATED TO ALL THE DISTINGUISHED BK ELDERLY POPULATION PRACTISING SPIRITUALITY IN THE FORM OF EASY RAJYOGA ACROSS 100 COUNTRIES TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR HEALTHY AGEING AND BY THEIR VIRTUE OF THEIR SPIRITUALITY ABLE TO BRING SMILE HOPE AND DIGNITY AND SUPPORT TO AGEING POPULATION OF TOMORROW'S WORLD.

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