

Spiritual Healing and Rajyoga Meditation in Schizo-Affective Disorder, Depressive Type - A Case Report

Dr. Bhupendra Singh,¹ Dr. Smita Pandey²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Geriatric Mental Health, K.G. Medical University, Shahmina Road Lucknow, U.P., India

²Lecturer Clinical Psychology, Institute of Behavioural Sciences, Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

Abstract: ***Objective:** Spirituality and meditation has been used effectively in rehabilitation of the patients with mental illness, particularly in depression and anxiety. Though, rarely it has been used as the core therapy (or with routine medications) in the patients with psychotic symptoms. We studied the effect of spiritual healing in a case diagnosed as schizoaffective disorder, depressive type. **Material and Methods:** Spiritual healing and Raj yoga meditation were prescribed with the routine medications as the medicines alone were not showing any significant improvement. The major sessions lasted for 15 days and further follow ups continued for every 15 days till two months. **Results :** A series of scales were administered before intervention and after intervention for different domains that are listed as Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale, Scale for Positive Symptoms, Scale for Negative Symptoms, Global Assessment of Functioning and Social and Occupational functioning. The individual showed significant improvement on depression, anxiety, stress (79.57%), positive symptoms (73.61%), negative symptoms (60.00%) , Overall Functioning (33.33%) social and occupational functioning (33.33%). **Discussion:** Spiritual healing and Rajyoga Meditation has been seen to be effective in treating the case with psychotic symptoms.*

Keywords: Schizoaffective Disorder, Spiritual Healing, Rajyoga Meditation, Self Realization, Self Acceptance

1. Objective

Spiritual healing and meditation has been known to be useful in many psychiatric disorders [3,4] Also it has been proven to be useful in the psychological manifestations of physical disorders [6,7] More popularly, spiritual healing has been applied for stabilizing the mood and for removing negative thoughts and ruminations [3,4]. In general, people who meditate regularly experience less anxiety and depression [1]. They also report more enjoyment and appreciation of life, as well as better social relationships [1]. Meditation produces a state of deep relaxation and a sense of balance, or equanimity. The consequence of emotional balance is having greater insight regarding one's thoughts, feelings, and actions that facilitates greater sense of calmness, empathy, and acceptance of self and others [1].

In a study, meditation and relaxation were compared with the control group to see the effects on psychological distress, positive states of mind, distractive-ruminative thoughts, behaviours, and spiritual experience. Though, both the groups improved significantly with the control group but the meditation group was found to be relatively more efficacious as compared to the other groups [4].

Though, many case studies have been reported improvement through meditation along with medication in different diseases, but till now, to our knowledge no such study or cases have been reported to have been treated with meditation (along with routine medications) for the patient of schizoaffective disorder. Therefore, we present a unique case with Spiritual healing through Raj yoga Meditation.

2. Materials and Methods

The case X was a 35 year old working female, of middle socio-economic status who had been relapsed despite being on adequate dosages of medication. She was already under the treatment of a renowned psychiatrist where she was given Aripiprazole (30 mg); Escitalopram (10 mg) and Iloperidone (12mg). Since, her treating psychiatrist did not want her to increase the dosages further as she was a working lady as basically she was a scientific research professional requiring the good use of her intellectual faculties and cognition and it was suspected that further increase in her medications may increase her sedation, affecting negatively her cognitive abilities thereby probably impairing her work abilities. Therefore, she was considered for Spiritual healing sessions but in adjunct with medications.

This was her fifth such episode where the precipitating factor was the separation from her husband. She was married nearly, for five years and was tortured by her husband and in-laws daily. Initially she was abused financially and later the abuse became verbally and physically aggressive, which acted as a severe stressor. The patient complained of hearing voices, her mood used to remain sad; had crying spells and she felt anxious, she believed that voices are trying to control her, and the voices were in the form of running obscene commentary. She could not sleep properly and her appetite was fluctuating. Her work got affected due to the distress from voices and sometimes she started muttering to self. The duration of the current episode was two months. She was diagnosed as suffering from schizoaffective disorder, depressive type as per ICD -10 (F25.1).

Spiritual healing in this case, was based on the principles of Brahmakumaris, particularly Self Realization and Rajyoga Mediation. The sessions of spiritual healing started with the introduction of self “Who am I”, basically to realize oneself. The healer make the lady realize that you are a soul and that the soul never dies. She was explained that the soul was considered as immortal. Further she was explained that it could be understood as a form of energy, which can be transformed. She was also made to understand of how the mind works through intellect that takes the shape of habits. Mind was defined to her as her thoughts and feelings. Intellect was told to be the product of judgment and decision-making. Habits were defined as nothing but due to repeated actions it becomes “samskars”.(Fig:1) She had been explained that if one is sad and angry one starts blaming the people or circumstances, but actually it could not be so. She was sad because of her own and thoughts and attitudes and this could be changed through conscious efforts. So she had to take charge of herself and stop blaming others. She had to take her own responsibility because the solution lies within her and not someone else [10].

Then further she was asked to look inwardly, check her thoughts and feelings and purify her thoughts if something was going on negative or hostile against anyone. She was explained further that if anyone had done anything wrong against her it was the reaction of the energy that she had spread in the past due to her deeds or actions that she was paying back to the person. She was explained further to check her thoughts continuously and when she would become conscious that she was thinking negatively about someone, she must change it towards positive. She was told that she could apply different techniques to make it easier to be her habit like either she could write it down and then change it towards positive or she could do it in her mind as well. When she would become aware of the thoughts, she need to be aware of dealing with her guilt as she did not need to waste more of her time on feeling guilty rather she had to correct herself. Further, she was told to learn how to forgive and forget others and move ahead in the remembrance of the “Supreme Soul”, which is the ocean of love, energy and forgiveness [10] (Fig 2). She was also taught how to connect with the supreme soul through her mind and intellect to increase her mental power. Then, she was taught meditation with guided imagery in the form of commentary.

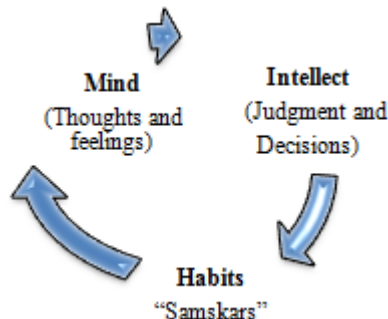


Figure 1: Cycle for Mind , Intellect and Habits



Figure 2: Cycle of Spirituality and Meditation

3. Results

The patient stopped crying and her depressive symptoms improved considerably. Her anxiety and stress due to the psychotic symptoms also improved reasonably. She also improved in her occupational and work functioning. The sessions lasted for 15 days and she used to meditate with guided imagery for the first two months at home. Later she started meditating on her own without guided imagery. She used to come for regular follow ups. These follow ups lasted for two months for every days. At the end of two months her mood was better, though she was still having mild hallucinations but it could not distract her any more. The scores and improvement is evident from Table:1. The scores improved from 93 to 19 (79.56%) on Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale; from 72 to 19 (73.61%) on Scale of Positive Symptoms; 30 to 12 (60.00%) on Scale of Negative Symptoms; on Global assessment of functioning (GAF) and Social and Occupational Functioning Scale (SOFAS) the score improved from 60 to 80 (33.33%).

Table 1: Improvement in Assessment Scores

Scales	Baseline Assessment	Final Assessment	Improvement
DASS	93	19	79.56%
SAPS	72	19	73.61%
SANS	30	12	60.00%
GAF	60	80	33.33%
SOFAS	60	80	33.33%

4. Discussion

As we could see that, the case has improved much on the symptoms of psychological distress, upset mood and negative thoughts and ruminations by her involvement in the process of self realization process, bringing a significant change in her attitude [3,4]. She stopped blaming her husband for what she has not got in her marriage and accepted the reality [4]. She understood that she had been reacting on the basis of the law of action and reaction. She could also forgive the family and in-laws for what they have done as she realized that this attitude would not be hurting herself, more than anyone else [9]. She also realized that the voices that she was hearing were not real, rather those were false sensations. Hence, she realized that these voices cannot harm her and the only thing that could harm her is her own

thoughts and ruminations of the mind. Therefore, she changed her perceptions towards her thoughts and attitude regarding voices [7]. The negative and fearful-anxious attitude towards voices reduced after she understood that the voices heard were not the problem, but it had been her own attitude for the voices that was causing problems. The impact of voices had reduced after realizing that it was not only the voices that were causing problems but her attitude towards the voices that was causing harm. This brought insight into her attitude, behaviour and self [6]. She remained analytically self focused checking her thoughts [9] and thereby changing her feelings from sad to happy as a result of which shortly, she started remaining, calm, cool and happy being.

Watkins and Teasdale [9] elaborated similar effects due to adaptive analytical and experiential self focused treatment on ruminations and depressive symptoms. Similarly, on another study it was found that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), a group intervention designed to train, recovered recurrently depressed patients to disengage from dysphoria-activated, depressogenic thinking that may mediate relapse/recurrence [5,8]. Reports from consumers, researchers and clinicians all point to the potentially strengthening role of spiritual resources of recovery [2].

This was a rare case of Schizo-affective disorder showing improvement in the psychopathology and having better adjustments. Earlier, spirituality and meditation were just thought to be treating for anxiety and depression only [2] but the present study has increased the scope of treatment with spirituality and meditation in psychotic disorders as well .

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Author Profile



Dr. Bhupendra Singh completed his MBBS Graduation in 2004 and MD Psychiatry Post Graduation in 2009 from the prestigious institute King George's Medical University, Lucknow UP, India. After completion of three years Lectureships he joined as Assistant professor in 2013 in the Department of Geriatric Mental health of the same institute. He has special interest in Spirituality and Meditation and is associated with Brahmakumaris for the last twelve years. He also did Post Graduate Diploma and M.Sc. in Value Education and Spirituality from Annamalai University, Tamilnadu India