



## Research Article

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### BENEFICIAL EFFECT OF TWELVE WEEKS SRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMA CHANTING ON STRESS, COGNITION AND AUTONOMIC FUNCTIONS: A PILOT STUDY

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#### ABSTRACT

Vishnu Sahasranama means 1000 names of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. The 1000 names are in the 108 slokas are segregated and recited individually. In the present study, we have observed the effectiveness of Vishnu Sahastra nama chanting for stress management in a research scholar. The participant was given a training session of pronouncing the namas by Sanskrit expert for week days. After that he started chanting Sri Vishnusahastram every day at 8 am for 12 weeks. DASS-42 questionnaire and serum cortisol was used to assess of stress, blood pressure was recorded to assess autonomic functions and spatial, verbal memory test and MMSE were used to assess cognitive functions. All outcome measures were recorded before (baseline values) and after 12 weeks of chanting (post intervention). 3 readings were taken for 3 consecutive days and mean value was recorded. Depression, anxiety, stress and cortisol was significantly decreased and blood pressure was regulated within normal limits and MMSE scores and spatial memory was significantly improved followed by chanting. Though there is improvement in spatial memory, it is not statistically significant. Our study provides preliminary evidence for beneficial effects of Sri Vishnu Sahasranama chanting. We recommend further detailed studies in this area to recommend practicing Sri Vishnu Sahasranama chanting regularly.

**Keywords:** Vishnu Sahasranama, Stress Management, Autonomic functions, Cognition

#### INTRODUCTION

Vishnu Sahasranama means 1000 names of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. The 1000 names are in the 108 slokas are segregated and recited individually. According to Upanishads, Vishnu means a Person who is present everything and everywhere. Vishnu was considered as one of the main forms of God of Hinduism and he is the supreme god for vaishnavas (followers of vishnu). Vishnu Sahasranama was the answers from Bhisma to the questions posed by Yudhishtira present in Anushasana Parva of the Mahabharata. Other versions exist in the Padma Purana, Skanda Purana and Garuda Purana. In Vishnu sahasranama, it was explained that those who listen or chant these names daily will get health, wealth, self satisfaction, patience, wealth, become confident, improvement of memory and will be free from negative emotions like fear, anger, jealousy etc.

Successful completion of PhD is a complex matter. Previous studies have reported that research scholars experience a variety of difficulties during their studies<sup>1-4</sup>. The distress faced by research scholars may be high.<sup>5</sup> Earlier studies reported that the experience of PhD training may be influenced by the learning environment<sup>6,7,8</sup>. Hence it was suggested that, more effective means are needed to help research scholars to overcome the problems encountered during their Ph. D. studies<sup>9</sup>. In the present study, we have observed the effectiveness of Vishnu Sahastra nama chanting for stress management in a research scholar.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted at Department of Physiology, Little Flower Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre (LIMSAR), Angamaly, Kerala, India. The study was approved by institutional ethics committee (EC/1/10/2015) and written informed consent was obtained from the participant.

**Medical history:** Mr. X, a 32 years old PhD scholar of health sciences, with height 170.18 cm, weight 75kg. He reported that he was in high levels of stress and it was reflected in psychological questionnaire as well as cortisol levels, which were found to be border line. Blood pressure values were found to be in stage 1 hypertension<sup>10</sup>. He was neither using any medication nor following any stress management technique.

**Family history:** Participant's father had hyper tension.

**Social history:** The participant was working as Asst. professor & Head of the Department in a reputed college in Kerala. He was married 3 years ago.

**Sri Vishnu Sahasranama chanting:** The participant was given a training session of pronouncing the namas by Sanskrit expert for week days. After that he started chanting Sri Vishnusahastram<sup>11</sup> every day at 8 am for 12 weeks.

**Outcome measures:** All outcome measures were recorded before (baseline values) and after 12 weeks of chanting (post intervention). 3 readings were taken for 3 consecutive days and mean value was recorded.

**Assessment of stress**

- A. **The DASS is a 42-item questionnaire:** used to assess depression, anxiety and stress levels<sup>12,13</sup>.
- B. **Serum cortisol:** Serum cortisol was assessed by using Chemiluminescent Microparticle Immunoassay (CMIA), ABBOTT.

**Assessment of autonomic measures**

Blood pressure was recorded from the right arm in the sitting position using diamond digital blood pressure monitor-fully automatic M60, manufactured by Industrial Electronic and allied products. Pulse rate was recorded by using pulse oximeter<sup>14</sup>.

**Assessment of cognition**

- A. **Spatial and verbal memory test:** It is a standardized test to assess spatial and verbal memory scores<sup>15,16,17</sup>.
- B. **The Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE):** It is a standard tool to assess mental status systematically and thoroughly<sup>18</sup>.

**RESULTS**

Results are presented in Table 1 to Table 3. DASS depression, anxiety, stress and cortisol was significantly decreased followed by chanting (Table 1). Systolic and diastolic blood pressure was significantly decreased (Table 2) and spatial memory was significantly improved (Table 3).

**Table 1: Stress levels and self esteem followed by Vishnu sahastram chanting**

Parameter	Baseline	After 12 weeks	P value
DASS depression	19±1	11±1	0.0006***
DASS anxiety	15.67±0.58	9.67±1.15	0.0013**
DASS stress	30.33±2.52	19±1	0.0019**
Serum cortisol (µg/dL)	18.64±1.52	8.9±1	0.0008***

Data was presented as Mean ± SD. (\*P<0.05 is significant, \*\*P<0.01 is significant, \*\*\*P<0.001 is significant)

**Table 2: Autonomic parameters followed by Vishnu sahastram chanting**

Parameter	Baseline	After 12 weeks	P value
Systolic BP (mmHg)	138.67±8.08	120±4	0.0231*
Diastolic BP (mmHg)	95.33±4.62	76.67±5.77	0.0119*
Pulse pressure (mmHg)	43.33±9.87	43.33±7.02	1.0000

Data was presented as Mean ± SD. (\*P<0.05 is significant, \*\*P<0.01 is significant, \*\*\*P<0.001 is significant)

**Table 3: cognitive parameters followed by Vishnu sahastram chanting**

Parameter	Baseline	After 12 weeks	P value
MMSE	26.33±0.58	29.33±0.58	0.0031**
Spatial memory	8±1	10±0.0	0.0257*
Verbal memory	7.33±1.15	9±1	0.1318

Data was presented as Mean ± SD. (\*P<0.05 is significant, \*\*P<0.01 is significant, \*\*\*P<0.001 is significant)

**DISCUSSION**

Mantras are the impulses which create vibrations in each cell of our body and influence brain. In Sanskrit it was said that “Manana trayate iti mantra” which means that Mantra saves us from worries. Mantras chanting or listening will purify our mind. Hence the psychological response due to repetition of the mantras can only be experienced and can't be expressed<sup>19</sup>. Mantra recitation is a part of physiological process of speech and influenced by buddhi (intelligence), manas (Mind), agni (flame), and vayu (air)<sup>20</sup>. It was mentioned that chanting Vishnu sahasranama regularly will help us to achieve the goals professional and personal, relax from stress and improve positive thoughts. In our study we have observed significant decrease in depression, anxiety and stress levels followed by chanting. Systolic and diastolic pressures were controlled and remained within normal limits. Significant improvement was observed in spatial memory followed by chanting.

**CONCLUSION**

Our study provides preliminary evidence for beneficial effects of Sri Vishnu Sahasranama chanting. We recommend further detailed studies in this area to recommend practicing Sri Vishnu Sahasranama chanting regularly.

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