

“Amritvela Sach Nao”: A Meditative Intervention to Explore Happiness and Coping Strategies in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The need for lasting happiness and peace conveys itself to every soul pan-era, through different experiences of life. This pursuit of happiness takes on a very urgent nature in the current age of Kalyug, and in the face of humankind’s current breakneck speed of ‘living’; a severe chaos unleashes itself on both our perceived external and internal worlds. Collectively re-seeking a refuge within, the importance of holistic wellbeing is re-surfacing in humanity’s understanding wherein the role of psychology and within it, meditation, is immense. Life is an act of long-term coping carried out to reach a state of undisturbed wellness. In this context, Nām Simran, a tool that awakens the experienter to dharma, brings relief, effective coping and consequent experience of perpetual happiness and wellbeing. It has elements of devotional love, acceptance, unified consciousness, and selflessness, all of which find support in previous researches as aiding factors of health and happiness. Keeping these facts in mind, the present study strived to explore the effect of a three-month long Nām Simran intervention on the happiness and coping strategies of young adults. Mixed methods were utilized for analysis, no significant differences were found in happiness and coping levels through pre and post t-test, however, probable patterns of positive reinterpretation, acceptance, restraint, and planning emerge upon closer inspection. These patterns, in the light of themes of affective, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual growth derived from in-depth interviews suggest the need for further research to gain insight into the impacts of Nām Simran.

Keywords: Nām Simran, Amritvela, Meditation, Happiness, Coping Strategies.

“Your visions will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes”

– Carl Gustav Jung

1. Introduction

From the poor woman who provides for five mouths, food that would barely suffice one, to the millionaire who can afford more than enough healthy food and luxuries for ten, there always seems to be something missing in everyone’s life; happiness just out of reach. Despite our lives being full to the brim something still eludes us, regardless of how many goals we pursue or how many achievements line our shelves. Such is the experience of most, if not every mind that is alive and experiencing the current age of chaos termed ‘Kalyug’ in the ancient texts of the Indic subcontinent (referring to India and her neighbouring lands pre-partition) where humans find themselves burning from within by a noise of false wants and unquenchable desires that grant no lasting joy. Here we experience an absence of silence, inner contentment and peace; without just as within – each a reflection of the other.

Responding, Learning and Coping

Thought, which mediates the relationship between stimulus and response, has both the capacity for being conscious, and automated. When a child grows, its thinking is increasingly assimilated as an element of routine; constantly conditioned by the environment it functions in – the being starts resorting to working in an automatized mode. When this being or organism comes in contact with stressors, the effect of such conditionings, no matter how subtle, show in the individual’s systems of responding. The ways in which people utilize different resources or patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour available to them in order to tolerate, reduce the impact of, or effectively deal with stressors is called coping. It is not limited to a single action carried out under visibly high levels of stress but a mosaic of response sets that are utilized over time – an interaction between the person and the environment, each leaving an imprint on the other (Taylor, 2018). As and when any stressor arises in the individual’s life, they could respond in multiple ways depending on various factors. These factors revolve around the individual’s assessment and interpretation of

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the stressor, whether as a threat or challenge alongside the level of challenge or future gain/loss involved (primary appraisal) and evaluation of resources and options available to cope with it (secondary appraisal). Impediments available can further be external; such as tangible, social support and life circumstances, or internal, such as personality factors and usual coping styles (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Strategies that an individual utilizes in the process of coping can be either functional or dysfunctional, when employed to different extents with respect to the situation and resources available. These strategies have been classified into a typology of three (Carr, 2004):

1. Emotion focused – focused on making changes in affective states with regards to stressor.
2. Problem focused – strategies that directly act on the stressor to eliminate or change it.
3. Avoidant coping – put into usage in order to take a back seat from active coping.

Use of active coping strategies, that directly focus on alleviating and eliminating the stressor, is seen to occur more often when the situation is seen as controllable while alternative combination of strategies come into effect under less controllable circumstances. Additionally, coping can be a dispositional as well as a situation-based response where patterns are similar but situational adjustments can occur. (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Scheier et al., 1986)

Meditation and Coping

Automated repetitive cycles of thoughts and behaviours as explained before, are results of conditioning which reduces one's responses to mere 'reactions', i.e. more automation means lesser mindfulness. Awareness that an individual think they have about their judgements and responses, is actually delayed as compared to the actual onset of cerebral activity. This suggests that any 'voluntary' act is initiated unconsciously before the individual is aware of it. Meditation allows the individual to relax, become the watcher of their own selves which expands their awareness of these processes. Meditators were more aware of this time gap between actual initiation and consequent response as compared to non-meditators. Since one is aware of oneself at any given moment, through training and experience they are also able to relax themselves further, even in the most strenuous of situations in order as a result of which they avoid being dragged by reactive conditionings and the focus returns to the living happening in the here and now (Trungpa, 2019).

The Sikh Practice of Nām Simran

In Sikhi, the practice of 'Simran' (also 'Nām Simran') is practiced as an essential component of the path to experiencing 'Ik-Oan(g)kār' (Ik-ਐਓ'ਯ(ਗ)'ਕਾ:ਰ), the reality of Oneness free of separate subjective lenses. On this path

the Gurū is the complete guide, beloved, confidante and everlasting support for their follower. Initially the individual's 'haumay' might be strong. Then they learn about life, its meaning and derive their life energy from the bond between them and the Gurū. Of this process, remembrance, contemp-lation and singing of 'Gurbāni' or meditating on the Oneness is an integral part. Gurbāni is the word of the Gurū, presented in the form of the eternal Gurū of the Sikhs, the Gurū Granth Sahib. Living in such a manner under the Gurū's guidance, the Sikh's haumay dissolves, they embody Gurbāni and their inner and outer worlds completely synchronize as one, whole. Since Gurbāni is the ever-present Gurū, Parmeshvar / Parmātmā themselves (Guru Granth Sahib, 1708/n.d., Natt M:4, Para 5 of 8:4, Ang: 982), the Sikh becomes a realized embodiment of the divine Gurū which is one's True nature.

The Concept of Happiness

There are so many variations in what happiness means to individuals that it can be challenging to define. Some people associate it with the presence of material things or specific people and situations while others relate it to a sense of being pleased by their life situation or feeling content. Typically based on how happiness is conceptualized, theories of happiness fall under two categories – (a) Hedonic happiness that focuses on maximizing the experience of pleasure and minimizing pain and (b) Eudaimonic happiness that understands thriving in life with living a life through the exercise of virtue/good moral character. Another classification for the theories of happiness is as follows (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and life satisfaction, 2002):

1. Need/goal satisfaction theories – associated with reduction of need through its gratification or achievement of goals resulting in satisfaction at a psychological level. Propagated by leaders in psychotherapeutic schools of thoughts such as Freud and Maslow.
2. Process/activity theories – associated with the derivation of happiness through engaging fully in process of doing any activity that is well-matched with or optimally challenges the skill level of the individual, unlike the first type which was goal-focused. Mike Csikszentmihalyi examined these and proposed theory of Flow.
3. Genetic/personality predisposition – studies happiness as arising out of genetically determined personality traits resulting in a stable experience (Costa & McCrae, 1988) across life unlike the first two types where it could fluctuate with life conditions. Lucas and Fujita (2000) found neuroticism and extroversion closely related to the characteristics of happiness.

Sikhi, happiness is a state of Parmānand, an everlasting bliss which as explained previously, is possible by having one's mind completely absorbed in the divine, lotus feet of Harā through 'gurmatt' (the Guru's teaching).

Review of literature

(Nikunj, 2015) investigated that in the past, a system of guru-shishya model for practice of dharma, employing meditation as a key element was exercised widely in the Indic-subcontinent. But currently the masses find themselves disconnected from it to a large extent. Now, however, the study of meditation is being undertaken by these sub-disciplines which research supports as having multiple health benefits – reduced stress, anxiety and negative affect and improved concentration, creativity and wellbeing.

Johnson, et al.; Schneider, et al., (2009) Meditation has been found to have various health benefits : it provides relaxation, reduces stress, anxiety, has physical health benefits and can enhance recovery from negative symptoms of schizophrenia to quote a few Since it brings immense relief from the stressor itself by enhancing the ability to cope, resulting in wellness, meditation might also be utilized as a coping strategy.

Dambrun,(2016); Dambrun, M.; Berniard, A.; et al., (2019) studied that 'Nām Simran' is Sikh meditational practice that has elements of devotional love, acceptance, unified consciousness and selflessness which all find support in previous researches as aiding factors of health and happiness .

Alexandratos, Barnett, & Thomas, (2012); Clay, (2017); reported that research shows that these need to be addressed separately in the current era of sedentary living in order to promote which finds itself deteriorating at the hands of countless widespread patterns of activity that come conjoined with a chaotic pace. Disturbed and reduced sleep, ingestion of preservative/pesticide ridden food, physical activity levels dropping to less than minimal bodily requirements, long durations of time invested on-screen are a few examples of such harmful habits. To aid meditation, one has to be more mindful of these patterns of choices for they drain one heavily, when repeated without a conscious connect within.

Rosalind D. Cartwright (2010) elaborates that this process effects how one wakes up thinking and feeling the next day – a process of identity reshaping in other words. Nām Simran before sleep would thus open the mind to the possible opportunity of carrying this devotional love endowed - process to be carried into sleep, setting the pace for the next morning as well. Ultimately, this practice leads to the experiential realization that Amritvela is not restricted to the ticking hands of a man-made watch, it is experienced beyond man's conception of time in the very breath that one absorbs oneself in Nām.

2. Relevance of the study

For those living in the globalized world of the 21st century, the amount of information and hence experiential exposure is many times more than their ancestors did in one lifetime. The impact of all happenings worldwide is felt tri fold in a sedentary life lived further away from nature and everyone else. Yet news about all disturbing happenings from around the world reach the helpless individual through multiple channels and social media, something that wasn't possible during the times of our ancestors. So, while a need for lasting happiness and peace conveys itself to every soul pan-era, in this 'Kalyug', the way life is lived causes the chaos to resound both internally and externally in an unignorable manner which humanity is academically trying to understand how to cope with. As a result of this experience, a spiritual renaissance throbs in humanity's collective ways – hence the importance of psychology, and within it the role of transpersonal, health, positive and environment psychology are being increasingly recognized as vital to understanding and resolving these deep-rooted cycles of suffering in human existence.

There is a paucity of research about such eastern dharma related practices. Therefore, the present study has strived to explore the effect of a 3-month long Nām Simran intervention on the happiness and coping strategies of young adults. With this background, we proceed to develop an understanding of Amritvela, a term that reveals countless folds of experiential meaning out of which we refer to two – that of a practice carried out at a specific time and its resulting state.

In this manner timeslots are curated, which develop meditative spaces in one's life, especially right before and right after waking up. Research on sleep studies the activity of the mind and body during sleep, to which dreams are a testimony. While sleep is known to rejuvenate the brain and the body, it also is the period of the mind's expression of conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings being linked together.

The following objectives were proposed for the study: -

1. To study the effect of practice of Nām Simran on the happiness levels of young adults.
2. To study the effect of practice of Nām Simran on the coping strategies of young adults.
3. To explore the effects of practice of Nām Simran for three months on the everyday aspects of life of young adults.

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed: -

- H₀₁ - There will be no significant difference in happiness of participants after the N@m Simran intervention.
- H₀₂ - There will be no significant difference in coping strategies of participants N@m Simran intervention.

3. Method

The purpose of the present study is to explore the impact of a three-month long intervention of Nām Simran practice on the everyday life, happiness and coping strategies of young adults. For this purpose, convenience and purposive sampling, carried out through social media platforms invitations was utilized. 45 young adults aged 19 to 23 – 19 females and 11 males volunteered initially out of which 30 completed the process. The participants were undergraduate students who had been residing in Delhi NCR for a year or more. Socio-economically from lower to upper middle-class backgrounds, all participants are from families that identify as Sikh.

4. Design

A longitudinal mixed method study was carried out for the above stated purpose. In order of conduction - first, the quantitative study of the impact of the three-month long practice of Nām Simran (the dependent variable) on the sample's happiness and coping strategies (the independent variables) was carried out. These were assessed using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and COPE inventory, each administered twice, once pre and once post the intervention. Then, after the administration of tests at the end of the three-month period, semi-structured interviews were conducted to study effects that Nām Simran had on participants' day-to-day lives.

5. Data Collection Tools

Data was collected in two ways: through administration of Oxford Happiness questionnaire and COPE inventory pre and post the intervention via google forms, and then through semi-structured interviews subject to theme-based analysis after the end of the intervention.

The Oxford Happiness Inventory

The Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI, Argyle, Martin, & Crossland, 1989) was devised in the late 1980s as a broad measure of personal happiness. The development of the scale and some of its properties were reviewed by Argyle, Martin, and Lu (1995). OHQ demonstrated high scale reliability with value $\alpha(168) = 0.91$. The inter-item correlations for the OHI ranged from 0.03 to 0.58, mean 0.28, and the corresponding values for the OHQ were -0.04 to 0.65, mean 0.28. Considering how identical these values are, the compact OHQ can replace the OHI without disadvantage. The correlation between the results of the full and short scales was greater than 0.90 which shows high discriminant validity.

The COPE inventory

The COPE inventory (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989) is a multidimensional coping inventory designed to assess the variety of ways in which people respond to stress. There are 60 items in the inventory in total. Internal consistency of the COPE scales comes from Cronbach's

alpha reliability coefficients computed for each of them. These values were acceptably high in general for each of the scales, ranging from 0.45 (mental disengagement) to 0.92 (religion). 0.45 for mental disengagement is the only one which fell below 0.6.

6. Procedure

This study was carried out in two phases:

Phase 1:

It consisted of inviting participants via social media (Whatsapp and Instagram), pre-intervention testing and 3-month long process of intervention. Telephonically rapport was formed with each volunteer. Then via google forms all participants were informed about the details of the study and their rights as participants. Following this, informed consent was taken and guidelines about Nām Simran practice shared (Appendix 5). Before the first day of the three-month period, both the happiness and coping instruments were administered with a break of 2-5 minutes in between the two and participants' queries were clarified simultaneously.

Once the intervention began, phonetic reviews were carried out every 7-15 days with each participant to aid the process and help resolve any issues faced in practice. 15 out of the initial 45 volunteers dropped out during the first month of the intervention, having underestimated the time and effort required for it.

Phase 2:

After the denouement of the intervention, the two quantitative instruments were administered again through google forms on the 30 participants who had completed the process. Participants were thanked for their time and efforts. Semi-structured interviews were then carried out with 6 participants who volunteered. These were subject to theme-based analysis while responses to both the quantitative instruments were analysed statistically using paired t-test via SPSS (version 26.0).

7. Results

Table 1 represents paired t test comparison of pre and post-test happiness scores of participants. Table 2 represents paired t test comparison of pre and post-test coping scores of participants under three clusters – self-sufficient, avoidant and socially supported scales. Figure 2,3 and 4 are graphical representations of pre-post test mean scores of participants on the self-sufficient, avoidant, and socially supported coping scales, respectively.

Table 3 shows affective, cognitive, behavioural, and novel effects of N@m Simran on the study group based on the themes observed in the interviews conducted with participants and table 4 represents themes emerging from the overall three-month experience of the participants.

Table 1: Pre & post-test comparison of happiness scores

Happiness scores	Mean	N	Std Deviation	t	df (degrees of freedom)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	3.92	30	0.67			
				-1.81	29	0.081*
Post-test	4.14	30	0.72			

Table 2: Pre and post-test comparisons of three clusters of coping strategies

Cluster of coping Strategies	Pre and post-test scores	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	df (degrees of freedom)	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-sufficient	Pre-test	90.60	30	12.599	-1.732	29	0.094
	Post-test	94.60		11.506			
Avoidant	Pre-test	31.40	30	7.445	0.268	29	0.791
	Post-test	31.07		6.438			
Socially Supported	Pre-test	35.03	30	9.283	-0.029	29	0.977
	Post-test	35.07		8.383			

8. Discussion

Trying to navigate through the conditionings of the mind, body, and the world, is a human quest as old as time itself. Ultimately, life is a continuous process of making and identification of an enduring sense of meaning, and an inability to find meaning results in a state of anxiousness, which is amplified in the current times. Being a part of an increasingly global world community entails drastic increase in exposure to everything – information, options, experiences etc. This exposure grows into incessant noise, set in the lap of a frenzied pace of life. While it impacts everyone, the youth and upcoming generation raised in its midst find themselves at the forefront of this age of chaos or *Kalyug*. It echoes both outside and within humans and they find themselves unable to retreat from its excessive clutter because external remedies alone bring no lasting peace. And so, humans are searching for a haven within.

The practice of Nām Simran finds its propagation and backing in Sikh *sākhās* and scripture. That *Nām* leads to complete change in how we experience any situation despite how stressful it may be – making the situation feel sweet and hence relishable (Guru Arjan Dev, 1708/n.d., *Āsā* M:5 2:42:93, Ang: 394), that Nām is that food which

brings unwavering contentment (Guru Amardas Sahib, 1708/n.d., *Vadhans* M:3, *Paurā* 17 Ang: 593) and is the medication for all illnesses and sufferings (Guru Arjan Dev, 1708/n.d., *Gaurā* Sukhmani M:5, *Padā* 5, 8:9 Ang: 274) is stated therein. There is a paucity of modern research studying this practice hence the present study introduced a three-month long Nām Simran intervention among young adults to study its impact on their happiness levels and patterns of coping. Keeping the objectives in mind, two hypotheses were formed.

First null hypothesis stated that there will be no significant difference in happiness scores of participants after the Nām Simran intervention. Since the p value obtained for difference between happiness scores of the participants pre and post-test was 0.08 at alpha 0.05 (table 1), it is not significant hence the null hypothesis will be retained. This could be a reflection of the fact that multiple extraneous variables play out in the day-to-day life of any individual, such as their home environment, which was not being controlled in the study. Being undergraduate students, they often quoted hectic college schedule and examinations burden when explaining their inability to carry out the practice regularly. Additionally, since the sample group were youth from middle class families, multiple avenues granting instant gratification would be available to them. In reviews they reported habitual visual stimulation received through YouTube videos, binge-watching shows and video games as strong distractions.

Second null hypothesis was regarding the effect of the intervention on coping strategies of the participants. In order to analyse the strategies, the fifteen scales of the COPE inventory were studied under three clusters of self-sufficient, socially supported and avoidant strategies.

The first cluster of self-sufficient strategies included positive reinterpretation, active coping, religious coping, humor, restraint, acceptance, suppression of competing activities and planning. Statistical analysis tabulated as table 2, shows p value of self-sufficient strategies to be 0.094, which is more than 0.05 (alpha), hence it is not significant. Similarly, for the second cluster of socially supported strategies (focus on and venting of emotions, use of instrumental social support and use of emotional social support), p is 0.791 which is greater than 0.05 hence it is not significant. The third cluster of avoidant coping strategies (mental disengagement, denial, behavioural disengagement and substance use) has a p of 0.977 > 0.05, which is not significant either. Since none of these are significant at 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis will be retained implying that the coping patterns of the participants have not changed significantly after the intervention. The corresponding t scores of the three clusters however might be indicative of the emergence of a pattern.

Both the t scores of self-sufficiency related strategies and socially supported clusters at - 1.732 and -0.029 have a

Table 3: Affective, cognitive, behavioural, and novel effects of Nām Simran on study group

Theme	Salient features	Verbatim
Emotional resolution	<p>Soothing of stress and anxiety</p> <p>Reinterpretation of experiences</p> <p>Acceptance and Faith Decreased worries</p>	<p>P1: "The more I followed the practice, the lesser I felt anxious too... my anxiety was about life in general, about my own self and personality, not any particular situation/people. Whenever I would be idle or on my own anxiety would hit me very deeply."</p> <p>P3: "2-3 weeks back my great grandmother passed away and reading Gurbani helped me a lot... I think it helped her too, her soul. Reading about the Truth; troubles pass more easily having Mahārāj's wisdom with you.</p> <p>...I am more at peace with myself because I am doing Simran regularly. It's teaching me how to accept my problems and solving them one at a time where I can do something about it because my head is clear now."</p> <p>P5: "I had been physically and mentally ill and chronically fatigued when the practice started. Simran always gave me hope... that things not immediately in my control will also work out even if it takes time."</p> <p>P6: "Due to exam stress and deadlines I stuck to the Simran routine even more closely because it eased my stress."</p>
Emotional intelligence	<p>Non-reactivity Insight</p> <p>Effects on self-regulation</p>	<p>P2: "I get angry a lot usually. With Simran I feel I am not as impulsive in my anger... I have become more introspective and aware of my own self, how I am, what my tendencies are and why/what causes me to behave or respond the way I do. In the past, at night before going to bed I would look back on my day, sometimes recognizing my mistakes but now I seem to be able to recognize them when they are happening/about to happen. That's an improvement because I can actively work on it."</p> <p>P4: "Even if someone would say something disrespectful/upsetting etc in those days, I found it very easy to stay at peace, without needing to react to them."</p>
Dreams	<p>Visions of loved ones</p> <p>Subtle feeling of wellness</p>	<p>P2: "I started to see my grandmother frequently in my dreams... she isn't talking to me, just watching me do everything I'm doing. She had passed away when I was very young, I was very close to her."</p>
		<p>P6: "Once Simran at night got set in, I felt calmer and was able to fall asleep on time. Even if I had dreams, they would be positive ones. When my sleep would open in the middle of the night, I'd do Simran while lying down and go back to sleep very relaxed."</p>
Thoughts and productivity	<p>Concentration</p> <p>Enhanced clarity and planning</p> <p>Time Management</p> <p>Sorted, less chaotic pace of thoughts</p>	<p>P1: "Simran helps me overcome thoughts that try to push me down. I used to overthink a lot especially when on my own and feel confused about everything, all decisions from the small ones to life in general. Now I feel clearer about everything in life and what steps are right and I must take."</p> <p>P2: "It helps me concentrate better. The whirlpool of thoughts that flood my head about work or pending tasks come one by one, in a clearer manner so I didn't feel over-whelmed/out of control or worried about work."</p> <p>P6: "Thoughts that initially would rush a lot into my head decreased in speed, intensity and when they came, they seem to come in a more organized way, like answers and in an order. Things felt more balanced.</p> <p>After two months, I saw great differences in my ability to manage my time and thoughts, productivity levels went up, my health improved, and I felt better. My studying speed and ability to focus increased so I didn't have to get up often while studying."</p>
Novel experiences during meditation	<p>Feeling vibrations</p> <p>Effects of a designated sacred space</p>	<p>P1: "one thing that really stuck for me is placing hands on knees, palms open, facing upwards...I would feel some sort of... vibrations there during simran, I would feel vibrations around my head too. There are times when my entire body feels some sort of heaviness and at times, I feel a little lighter."</p> <p>P2: "We have a separate room where all gutka sahibs (books of sacred prayers) are kept, it is used solely for prayer. I sit there every day; it is as if that area itself has an enriching positive aura of its own. One time when I was doing paath (prayer) and Simran when I felt as if she [beloved grandmother - who had passed away when participant was very young] was there right next to me, very close ... because I was so engrossed in the process, I think I lost any sense of self and separateness that one has normally."</p>

Table 4: Themes emerging from the overall experience

Theme	Salient features	Verbatim
Experience during Nām Simran	Loss of sense of self Absence of negativity Relaxation Concentration Insight	P1: "I would feel calm and realisations would dawn on meduring meditation." P2: "When doing Simran, there is a complete absence of regative thoughts that would bother me at other times. Sometimes I go into this zone of complete concentration on pāth and Simran... losing awareness of my surroundings and I feel completely at ease. Anything that would worry me otherwise is unable to bother me." P3: "Focusing my mind and tongue on speaking the words and simultaneously listening to them with the ears has worked a lot for me. I am able to concentrate because of this engagement of all senses."
Impact on the day	Re-energization Acceptance Positivity Enhanced productivity Patience Increased human interaction	P1: "Days where one starts feeling very weak or low make one turn to Simran... I feel more positive and energized afterwards" P2: "I would be euphoric; the amount of positivity seems to be boundless on days I do Simran and feel like sharing it with everyone! I also felt more creative and would be very productive during that day." P3: "I've been messing up a lot, my confidence and all since I came to college. Through Simran, I am doing pāth more willingly too, so I feel happier, more confident throughout the day." P5: "It makes me be able to accept the day however it goes, even if not exactly as I'd want. Things are not all in my control I know that, so I feel secure doing nitnem and simran knowing they happen how they have to." P6: "After two-three weeks of starting it, my simran practice stabilized and became very energizing for me. On each day that I meditated, I felt more at ease, like everything I had to do, I would be able to get it done so no hurries. So, I felt more patient with everything and. politeness came naturally. My interaction with humans increased because I felt like talking and interacting with them. I found the energy to invest in others."
Resulting spiritual Exploration	Prayers imbued with feeling Previous monotony broken	P1: "... in the past, prayer and things related to it would become dry repetition of the same words done for the sake of doing what 'should' be done. But I now understand the meaning and feel it through Ardās." P2: "Since I added Simran to my nitnēm of Japji Sahib, it became something fresh to me. Doing the same old as a routine, one can start defocusing from it just because it feels so regular." P3: "As a result of Simran I've been doing pāth also more regularly and more willingly whereas in the past I would feel like skipping it on some days, you know how that goes.."
Hurdles faced	Adjusting sleep schedule Laziness Fatigue from work Difficulty in concentrating Loud thoughts	P2: "On Sundays I'd be very tired, so I'd wake up by 10 and do it then." P3: "It was difficult to wake up before Simran. Im focusing on speaking and then listening to my own voice during simran, so I am active and awake but feel sleepy again afterwards." P5: "Before going to sleep my mind tends to wander more, its overactive. It barely stays focused for 3-4 seconds of Simran in one go. It is tough to concentrate during Simran anytime otherwise too; I can hear my own thoughts. But it was tougher before I started doing Simran, my mind wanders less now during it." P6: "At the start I would forget, get lazy or some work would come up, so I'd skip it and sleep. I would feel very sleepy early morning, so it was difficult to concentrate on it at the start then got used to it."
Health habits inculcation	Reading books Exercise and Yogasana practice Improved sleep schedule	P1: "I didn't have a habit of reading, wanted to develop it so when you suggested spiritual texts like 'Se Kineheya' could help, I started with that... currently reading a political satire. I have found a treasure of a hobby in it now! it gives me great pleasure and peace. ive also resumed exercise in combination with yoga that I am finding out about by following Youtube videos." P2: "I used to wake up in the night and check the time often... in the morning get up late and miss the first college class on quite a few days. During the past three months that has not happened, I had deep sleep, sometimes with dreams of my grandmother, so would awaken feeling well." P6: "I used to sleep from 5-8am before I started this routine then it shifted to 12-6 which is so much better - I'd be awake well in time for all classes. At the beginning I felt nice if I could stop the alarm and sleep more in the morning but once I experienced waking up, I felt annoyed if I missed it and things would fall out of place on those days."

Theme	Salient features	Verbatim
Ardās, Kirtan & Kathā	Confiding and relieving of burdens Communicating with the Gurū Addition of Perspective	P1: "I am learning the importance Ard ās now, of humbly asking where I am able to completely convey whatever I am feeling to Maharaj - the only One that remains constant throughout. whenever my dhyaan is focused during Simran, it happens because of the thought that 'Maharaj whatever mistakes I made today, I see them now, please give me sojī so I may not repeat them in the future' P4: "I started listening to worldly songs for 15-20 days in between. I had a constant headache start from that same day and my focus broke. Unable to sit and do paath or Simran from that day onwards - I felt distant from within. Then I went to the gurūdwārā, did an Ardās and it soon got alright. Ardās makes a lot of difference." P5: "I listen to a little kirtan and kathā some days and my anxiety gets managed by that a little. The kathā about meaning of Japji Sahib helped me a lot because it opens up my thinking/ perspective about life. For example, when I heard that the divine could not be reduced to the limited intellect, it amazed me! (laughs gleefully)"
Post-intervention	Continued practice Motivation	P1: "I still do it at whatever time I am able to wake up in the morning. When I initially joined in, I never thought it would work out. But with the regular conversations reinforcing me to practice it, it happened! I am incredibly grateful." P4: "I am continuing with it now and intend to keep it that way because without it, life would feel incomplete again, it brings satisfaction within." P5: "Yes, it has helped so I will keep exploring it." P6: "I wake up on 6 am even when I'm late to sleep due to workload and so pāth and Simran before the day starts. It has increased my motivation, determination, and commitment in life itself. And my general laziness has decreased."

negative value which means post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores. Difference in the self-sufficient cluster has been added to the most, by scales of positive reinterpretation and growth, and planning have slightly higher contributions than the other scales (figure 2). Patterns of enhanced emotional regulation among meditators has found support in previous studies. For instance, Gootjes, Franken and Strien (2011) report increased positive affect and cognitive emotional regulation among yogic meditation practicing group.

Cognitive emotional regulation involves the thoughts an individual has after experiencing a negative event – a situational form of positive reinterpretation in action. Socially supported strategies have a minimal difference in pre-post comparison (figure 4). This might point towards relatively stable tendencies to rely on others' support. These results could be representative of what is deemed culturally appropriate since the individual exists as part of a social context which is given great importance in India – norms that are evolving under globalization. On the other hand, the t for avoidant strategies is 0.268, a positive value indicating slightly higher pre-test scores which means participants reduced resorting to such strategies a little, specifically behavioral disengagement (figure 3). For participant 5, this was a positive indicator, "I had been physically and mentally ill, overworked and chronically fatigued... Simran always gave me hope that things not immediately in my control will also work out in their own manner even if it takes time." In the current case, seen in conjunction with rise in acceptance, planning and positive reinterpretation evident from participant 3's response, "I am more at peace with myself because I am doing Simran

regularly. It's teaching me how to accept my problems and solving them one at a time where I can do something about it because my head is clear now.", it might be an indication of a helpful impact moving towards more action-oriented active coping.

Additionally, interviews conducted with participants with regards to their experiences during Nām Simran and its impact on their day-to-day life were studied, out of which multiple themes emerged. These themes have been presented under two tables, table no. 3 – covering the cognitive-affective, behavioural and unique effects of the practice as shared by participants, and table 4 – giving an overall review of the three-month process. In the light of the additional guidelines given to the participants regarding cultivation of other habits that aid/ hamper the process, these themes have been elucidated below.

The effects were spread over a wide range, with the most common theme being effective disentanglement of emotional catches - reduction of stress and anxiety happened at the initial stage, further clubbed with gradual acceptance and reinterpretation of experiences to bring feelings of hope and positivity. Participant 1 recalls her feelings of restlessness being reduced, "Whenever I would be idle or on my own anxiety would hit me very deeply..it was about life in general and my own self. Simran lessened this anxiety the more I did it." And participant 3 recalls being able to cope with the death of a loved one through Gurbāni and Simran, while one other participant recalls relief from physical symptoms of what could be a case of guilt.

Examination period was found to be less stressful by participants 1, 3 and 6. This lower perceived stress could

be a result of increased acceptance generated by N@m Simran; a pattern of mindfulness meditation which has found support in previous studies (Hosemans, 2015).

The second theme emerges from this space of resolved emotions. Participants have reported being able to stay peaceful and non-reactive despite provoking situations, *"I get angry a lot and unleash it in the heat of the moment. These realizations would come to me when I analyze my day before sleep, in retrospect, but with simran I've noticed myself being aware of my emotions right when they're about to happen...I can actively work on it and not just review it later."* Decreases in emotional reactivity, increased well-being and self-regulation, have previously found support in a reviews of researches around mindful meditation (Keng & Robins, 2011). A component mutual to both mindfulness and N@m Simran is bringing awareness to the breath. In N@m Simran, it is additionally imbued with the repetition of simran and prem or devotional love. When strong thoughts enter this headspace, they are not interacted with but allowed to pass non-judgmentally while attention is refocused on N@m Simran or to any portions of Gurbani that directly talk of the problem one is facing – where the remedy provided by the end of the hymn again is the divine and their N@m.

The third theme is centered on cognitive enhancement; improved focus and clarity of thought caused by meditation, accompanied by enhanced ability to plan and manage time.

Participant 6 experienced all of these in co-occurrence which steadily increased after having practiced N@m Simran for over two months, *"I started seeing great differences in my ability to manage my time and thoughts, productivity levels went up, my health improved, and I felt better. My studying speed and ability to focus increased so I didn't have to get up often while studying either."* Fostered by non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts, meditation helps refocus the mind – which in turn provides a calm headspace to think clearly. This allows for planning and increases in productivity. Pilot studies have found improvements in cognitive functions such as attention, processing, memory, executive function among elderly meditators (Gard, Hölzel, & Lazar, 2014). These improvements have been greater among meditators as compared to groups practicing relaxation (Lavretsky, et al., 2012).

The fourth theme is about participants' sleep and dream patterns. Right before sleeping, participants were suggested to do N@m Simran for about 5-10 minutes. Since everyone is tired by the end of the day, most kept the duration to 5 minutes while others observed their usual 'Sohela sahib' prayers, did an ardās and then slept. Participants 2 and 6 noticed their dreams turn into comforting spaces, as a result of which, they would wake up feeling positive and well.

Participant 2 describes it as, *"I started to see my grandmother frequently in my dreams...she just lovingly watches me do everything I'm doing. She had passed away when I was very young, I was very close to her."* Participant 6 had a very disturbed sleep pattern before the intervention which she shifted from 5-8 am to 12-6 am which added to her wellbeing and improved every activity she performed in the day. She too reports positive dreams, if and when they would happen, and deep undisturbed sleep otherwise. Initially when she would wake up in the middle of the night while she was still trying to make the shift, she would do Simran whilst lying awake in bed and wake up feeling well rested in the morning. Understood simply, this could be a result of previously discussed decreases in stress and anxiety, aided emotional resolution and resulting insights and calmness in the individual which they link to their N@m Simran practice. A deeper understanding suggests that the mechanism of sleep, dream and waking states are all moderated by meditation. Whether this level of restful awareness develops in deep sleep through N@m Simran can only be explored through follow-up research work.

The fifth theme addresses participants' novel experiences during N@m Simran practice. This was done in a space each individual had specifically allotted for the purpose, which was either low on or completely rid of any other usage/distraction. Participants 1 shared experiencing a vibration like sensation on her palms facing the sky and around her head while participant 2 reported losing any sense of their own perceived self with complete focus being on the simran.

"One time when I was doing p@th and Simran when I felt as if she [beloved grandmother - who had passed away when participant was very young] was there right next to me, very close...because I was so engrossed in the process, I think I lost any sense of self and separateness that one has normally." Says participant 2, who has these experiences every now and then in the room built for the purpose of reciting and meditating on Gurbāni. She also recollects being able to smell karah parshād (religious food offering in Gurudwaras) in this room while offering prayers while the room is completely empty except for the gutkā sāhibs and there is no chance of the fragrance having entered from somewhere outside. It is important to note that this parshād is the participant's most beloved dish, a source of pure joy and the reason for her visiting the Gurudwāra as a child. The only way to gain understanding about these experiences is in the context of dharmic sākhis and history that throw light on how the Guru divine would bless their bhagats in different ways. In simple words, it is the experience of bliss revealing itself in ways most beloved and well-known to the participant.

The second themes table (table 4) derived from the interviews tabulates the overall review of the three-month

process. Theme one covers experiences while carrying out Nām Simran – all participants reported engaging their senses in Nām Simran one by one to be greatly beneficial. This started out with a relaxation of body muscles, then awareness of deep breaths filling and leaving the lungs, followed by chanting of Simran with the tongue, listening to what has been spoken and focusing the mind on it, a process participant 3 found highly helpful,

“Focusing my mind and tongue on speaking the words and simultaneously listening to them with the ears has worked a lot for me. I am able to concentrate because of this engagement of all senses.”

On days that participants successfully did Nām Simran, they experienced multiple positive benefits throughout the day (theme 2) – these range from acceptance, re-energization, positivity, enhanced productivity and patience towards others. *“I would be euphoric; the amount of positivity seems to be boundless on days I do Simran and feel like sharing it with everyone! I also felt more creative and would be very productive during that day”,* shares participant 2.

Participant 6 also reported feeling patience and kindness towards others and not avoiding human interaction, *“So I felt more patient with everything and...politeness came naturally. My interaction with humans increased because I felt like talking and interacting with them. I found the energy to invest in others.”* Since Prem and Nām form the practice of Nām Simran, carried out by the grace of the beloved ever-present Guru, aspects of being loved and sending love, utilized in loving-kindness meditation are already incorporated in Nām Simran and Ardās.

The participants who already had a prayer routine felt new life had been breathed into an otherwise monotonous turning activity (theme 3). As a result, participants felt their prayers, imbued with feeling while doing them; having gained understanding through Kathā and Ardās as suggested in guidelines. *“...in the past, prayer and things related to it would become dry repetition of the same words done for the sake of doing what ‘should’ be done. But I now understand the meaning and feel it through Ardās.”,* recounts participant 1.

Major hurdles that the participants faced were apropos of effort required to change their mechanical routines, waking up early and shifting to healthier habits. They observed that they had unending trains of thoughts inside their own head which were very loud and attempting to subdue them did not help. Acceptance through Nām Simran for these thoughts came gradually, as participant 5 recalls, *“My mind barely stays focused for 3-4 seconds of simran in one go, it seems overactive. It is tough to concentrate because I can hear my own thoughts. But it was tougher before I started doing Simran, my mind wanders less now during it.”*

Additional impacts of practicing the guidelines, which included role of Ardās, Kirtan & Kathā in guiding the practice and health habits inculcation (sleep and exercise), are also thematized in table 4. Participant 1 resumed exercise and developed a new hobby of reading.

Participant 2 reflects on her sleep having improved coupled with pleasant dreams, if any, *“I used to wake up in the night and check the time often...in the morning get up late and miss the first class on quite a few days. During the past three months that has not happened, I had deep sleep.”* Through Ardās, Kathā and Kirtan, participants felt more connected with Nām Simran, as participant 5 shares, *“The kathā about meaning of Japji sahib helped me a lot because it affects my thinking/perspective about life.”* While Kathā gave them greater understanding and deep feeling, Ardās proved to be a space of intimate confiding and relief.

Post-interventive attitude towards meditation is positive amongst participants, who are continuing the practice at a leisurely pace.

9. Conclusion

Overall, the interviews suggest positive changes happening at all levels of functioning for the volunteers – cognitive, affective, and behaviorally. Certain novel experiences resulting from the practice of Nām Simran have also emerged. However, as implied by the statistical analysis of pre and post-test happiness and coping strategies scores, this is a gradual process. And in this process, patterns of acceptance, positive reinterpretation and active coping, with slight decrease in avoidance coping could be observed upon closer inspection. From this study we have been able to gather a baseline understanding of the emerging impact of long-term Nām Simran. It implies that meditation puts into effect mechanisms that not only bring relaxation but also bring a shift in cognition, affective patterns, behavioral and biological functioning. And all these interact continuously to create gradual improvement in the individual’s perception and experience of life as a meaningful, joyous process. This study has been but a pilot, only starting out to observe the expanse of Nām Simran’s impact on human functioning.

10. Limitations of the present study & Suggestion for further researches

Mapping the intervention was rendered difficult given the long-distance virtual guidance, coupled with access to a wide variety of distractions as the study groups’ age, familial and socio-economic conditions allowed them. Both the practice and evaluation of this three-month intervention relied on participants’ truthful self-reporting. Their reliability can be established further if the intervention is carried out in person or interviews with people who live with the participants are carried out. Due

to time-restraints, reviews could not be conducted weekly, the sample group remained small and in-depth interviews could not be conducted with more than six participants. Further researches could benefit from taking these limitations into consideration and extending the duration of the intervention to comprehensively understand the effects of meditation.

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