



NRITYAYOGSUTRA - A DANCE THERAPY

Dr. Sangeeta Dinesh Pethkar

Founder Directore, Nrityasadhana Classical Dance Academy, Nashik

ABSTRACT

Context: *Nritya Yogsutra (NYS)* is an innovative dance therapy based on Yoga and Indian classical dance which is regarded as Pancham Veda^{1,2} and mentioned as a form of yoga¹ & spirituality¹. It has newly formulated 78 dance movements to achieve physical health and mental wellbeing. *Nritya Yogsutra* is a graceful dance form of ancient yogic movements (*Asanas*) and *Hasta Mudras* performed on a soothing meditative music through which one can also get the benefits of *Acupressure* and *Chakras* to achieve physical, mental health and spiritual well-being.

Aims: To observe the benefits of *Nritya Yogsutra* yoga dance therapy technique to improve body and mind coordination along with physical and mental health. Also to observe the benefits to reduce stress and increase the quotient of happiness amongst the participants.

Methods and Material: survey conducted on 25 participants for 6 months followed the method of Likert scale and open ended questionnaire. A paper of 20 questions with five options (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.) given to all the participants to answer by tick mark in the given box after the 6 months practice of *Nritya Yogsutra*.

Statistical analysis used: Qualitative.

Results:

74.4 % participants strongly agreed with the *NYS* statement. 23.4% agreed with *NYS* statement and 2.2 neutral answers. There were no answers against the statement of *NYS*.

Conclusions: 97.8% participants answered in favour of *NYS* statements so the conclusion of the survey is that innovative *Nritya Yogsutra* technique is very beneficial to improve the body and mind coordination along with physical and mental health, stamina, flexibility and it also reduces stress and increases the quotient of happiness.

KEY-WORDS: *Pancham-veda, Dance, Yoga, Spirituality.*

INTRODUCTION

In a rat race plastic world, man runs behind materialistic pleasure, climbing fast the rungs of the ladder of achievements and goals; for which we all are having hectic work culture & schedules. Our changed lifestyles are giving us mental & physical fatigue. These eventually lead to health deterioration in men & women alike. So we are in a quest for SOMETHING which will guide us to the root cause of all diseases. To cope up with these problems people pursue different types of exercises, fitness programs. But everything comes up as a compulsory activity where they miss joyfulness, happiness. We forget the psychosomatic origin of all these sufferings.

I feel the solution for the aforementioned problems would ideally be Dance as dance is a natural expression of human emotions and happiness. It can be used not only as an art form but a medium of exercise for physical & mental well-being.

But the question arises whether any type of dance can solve this problem. Nowadays the trend of dance is limited to putting on a recorded song & gyrating to the music. There is no understanding of the movements, lyrics, music and rhythm thus understating their importance in dance. But on the other hand Indian classical dance involves many more aspects.

Indian classical dance, and its association with Vedas, Ayurveda and Patanjali's Yogsutra

Lord Shiva, the cosmic dancer is mentioned as a creator of Indian classical dance in ancient texts^{2,3} It finds its origins in Vedas and follows Vedic philosophy.

Natyashastra (a treatise on Indian aesthetics, literature, dance and arts) written in 2nd century BC, also called Pancham Veda. The sage Bharata the author identifies the fundamentals of art in Vedas. *Rugveda* for articulation of words, *Yajurveda* as a source of ritual, body language and gestures, musical sound and sung note from *Samveda* and *Atharvaveda* for drawing upon the techniques of *sattwika* alludes to the understanding of the physio-psychical system.



INDIAN DANCES ITS ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Natyashastra reveals an amazing and staggering acquaintance with the body system, the anatomical structure, and even the physiological and psychological processes. An impressive psychosomatic system is developed. This suggests that the author was completely familiar with the flourishing system of medicine i.e. Ayurveda. The Indian understanding of the body was based on the theory of the bhutas (elements) and their attributes.

Anatomy placed emphasis on joints rather than muscles. A close analysis of Natyashastra reveals the author's deep understanding of the functions of joints and articulation of movements. He is keenly aware of the manipulation of weight and energy.

Further the theory of Rasa i.e. sentiments is developed as a psychosomatic system by establishing correspondence between the motor and sensory systems. The principal of tension and release are well understood. We know that according to the Ayurvedic system of medicine equilibrium and disequilibrium are created by the balance or imbalance of the five elements of fire, air, earth, water and space. Natyashastra shows the deep understanding of the senses, body and mind relationship. Natyashastra follows the discussion of three gunas in the system of medicine i.e. Rajas, Tamas & Satwik. Natyashastra was well acquainted with Patanjali's Yogasutra.

Natyashastra moves within the parameters of world- view which subscribes to the goal of life as the four Purusharthas and the four Ashrams. Natyashastra shares a worldview which is expressed in Upanishads, the concept of un-manifest and manifest, Samadhi. Rigvedic formulation of the One formless or unformed, the multiple forms and beyond form. Thus Natyashastra serves as an interregnum between the Vedas, Upanishads, early speculative thoughts, the disciplines of Ayurveda, early Jyotishastra and Ganita and Yoga.

Natyashastra occupies supreme place for being the master developer of a system of correspondence between the material, physical and psychical, ethical and even spiritual. It seeks to synthesize diverse disciplines and asserts that arts have latency and potency of bringing together all aspects of life from physical to psychical and even metaphysical- in a meaningful whole. Art provides both pleasure and education and are a vehicle of beauty, duty and conduct.

DOCTRINES OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE AND YOGA^{1,4}

Now let's see the parallel & common factors between Indian classical dance and Yoga. Both are designed to bring about a complete harmonious development of the three fold aspects of human beings: body, mind and soul.

Indian classical Dance and yoga does not recognize body, mind and soul as separate components but treat all levels of a human being as a whole. It approaches each unrealized area of human nature and expands human consciousness beyond the ordinary level of existence. It makes one fully aware and inwardly conscious of one's whole being through the experiences on the spiritual plane.

Therefore it should not be understood as being only a physical discipline or mental discipline or even purely spiritual discipline. It's a unified system of all three.

In both the practices beginning with the physical purification at the gross level, aspirants progress at the subtle phases. Indian classical Dance is an art, aesthetically beautiful, graceful with controlled movements of the body practiced with the music and rhythm which helps to tune oneself with nature easily whereas Yoga devoid of all this.

WHAT IS NRITYAYOGSUTRA

It can be defined as, "NriyaYogsutra is a graceful dance form of ancient yogic movements (Asanas) and Hasta Mudras performed on a soothing meditative music through which one can also get the benefits of Acupressure and Chakras to achieve physical, mental and spiritual fitness."

NriyaYogsutra is profoundly studied and guided by dance, medical, yoga and acupressure experts.

It comprises Asana, Pranayam, Hastamudra, Chakra & also Acupressure, reflexology and furthermore it is a kind of meditation.

NriyaYogsutra has 78 modified and newly formulated dancing steps which can be practiced by anybody & implement it in their daily routine for physical fitness and mental wellbeing.

In NriyaYogsutra almost all the techniques of the body movements are similar like yoga¹⁰ movements e.g. Dwikonasan, Trikonasan, Vrikshasan, Gorakshasan, Ardhandrasan, Ekpadasan and list goes on. It just states || Sthiram sukham asanam || prayatnshaitilyanatsamapattibhyam || Asana fig 1,2



In NriyaYogsutra one will find that the head, neck, eyes, hands, all small joints, legs and every body part from minor to major is used scientifically and systematically which is rarely focused by any other health system. Alertness is seen at all the sense organs due to the use of sound and rhythm. Highest state of bodily awareness and control over mind can be experienced which in turn helps to get rid of conflicts of duality of mind. A balance state of mind is achieved through such a practice.

|| Tato dwandwanabhighataha || 5

Gherand sanhita of swami Swatmaram and Hath Pradipika of Gorakshnath has given so much importance to asana practice and describes it in following verse,

|| Asana bhavet dhrudam (Gherand) ||

|| Hathasya prathamagatwat... (Hathapradipika) ||

The importance of Asanas are vividly described in Vedas and Upanishads as well. NriyaYogsutra is different and special because here one will get all benefits of yogic practices and acupressure together. Scientific use of hands and feet activates acupressure points and reflex zone areas⁶ of that region. RZ fig 1



Moreover as it is a dance, obviously it is accompanied by rhythmic music which has a soothing and melodious effect. Thus leads to positive brain waves.

The controlled and rhythmic movements done with particular grammar makes one fully aware of body and mind, thus keeps a check on breath. The gradual and swift shifting of movements and tempo from time to time, gives the benefits of Pranayam. Now let's see how NYS follows the principles of pranayama as described in 49-53 sutras.

|| Tasmimsati shwasprashwasyorgativichedaha pranayamha || 5

It means when one attains mastery in asanas altering the speed and rhythm of breath i.e. inhalation (Poorak) and exhalation (Rechak) and hold (kumbhak) is called Pranayama. So it clearly states that after the practice of asanas or controlled body movements one should practice pranayama , so is in NriyaYogsutra.

Hasta Mudras 7 are used in yogic practice for therapeutic purposes. But in NriyaYogsutra, Use of Hasta mudra is a wonderful, aesthetic experience without losing its health benefits. This is again its unique quality.

Hastamudra fig 1



Medically Chakras 8,9,11 are known as nerve plexus or endocrine glands for hormonal secretions. According to Yoga these have philosophical importance also. Here with NrityaYogsutra method, Chakras can be practiced easily and more effectively. One can balance and obtain all the benefits of its activation.

ADVANTAGES OF LEARNING NRITYAYOGSUTRA

- Happiness due to creative body movements.
- Experience of real joy.
- A state of physical & mental equilibrium.
- Complete body & mind toning.
- Long lasting and easy to practice.
- Anybody can do it.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

25 people from yoga, dance & other backgrounds given consent to participate in this research. They were of different age groups and sex. They practiced given NrityaYogsutra movements for 6 months 4 times in a week as per the structure of NYS for 45- 60 min duration.

Pre-research - Subjective status of physical and mental health of the participants.

When participants were asked for their physical and mental complaints they share some common sufferings like :

1. Obesity
2. Lethargy
3. Inactive lifestyle
4. Unable to manage work stress
5. Stress due to professional and family job.
6. Fails to balance physical fitness due to overburden at the workplace.
7. Lack of confidence and depression.
8. Stiffness and rigidity in the body
9. Lack of stamina and enthusiasm
10. Pain in small joints, lower and upper back.
11. Lack of coordination of bodily movements.
12. Impatience, restlessness, lack of awareness.
13. Irregular monthly periods.

Following Structure of NITYA NYS STEPS followed by participants for six months as guided by the instructor.(NYS abbrev for NrityaYogsutra)



Sr. No	Steps
1.	Prayer
2.	NYS Warm ups
3.	NYS Hands feet
4.	NYS Namaskar
5.	NYS Asanas: 1) NYS Ekapaad Pranamasan 2) NYS Uttan Hasta Paadasan 3) NYS Tadasan 4) NYS Trikonasan 5) NYS Marjari 6) NYS Aakarn Dhanurasan
6.	NYS Hasta Mudra: 1) NYS Mayur (Overlapped) 2) NYS Pankaj 3) NYS Shukachanchu 4) NYS Karkat
7.	NYS Bhedas: 1) NYS Sama drishti 2) NYS Up-Head 3) NYS Mayur Neck
8.	NYS Acupressure (R-Z) 1) NYS Toe- Heel 2) NYS Flat feet
9.	NYS Pranayam 1) Deep Breathing 2) Nadi Shodhan 3) Kumbhak 4) Bandhas
10.	NYS Chakras 1) NYS Muladhar
11.	Conclude the session with 3 or 11 Omkar followed by prayer.

Every Sunday they were observed through discussions to note physical and mental changes. After 6 months a questionnaire was given to everyone. Likert scale method & open ended questionnaire was followed. An objective type of open ended questionnaire of 20 questions was given to all. Questions regarding NYS practices NYS Namaskar, NYS Asana, NYS Mudra, NYS Head –neck-eye, NYS R-Z and NYS Chakra were asked in the paper. They were supposed to tick in the block given in front of that option. Four options were given to monitor the effect of practice on them. All the participants successfully filled up the given form and submitted it to the NYS coordinator.

DISCUSSION

After seeing the above chart and result of the graph, majority of the participants agreed that they felt relaxed, joyful & peaceful after the practice. They find themselves very attentive and focused during the practice. Their positivity towards life has increased. The rhythmic meditative and melodious music kept them interesting, motivated and consistent in their practice.. Their physical fitness, flexibility, stamina and endurance has increased than before. They agreed that this dynamic and systematic practice has improved body control and mindfulness. Their answers for specific practices were as follows:

1. They found that NYS Namaskar is a dynamic experience to improve stamina, flexibility and to reduce the extra fats around abdomen, waist and thighs.
2. They mentioned that the practice of Asanas is very simple, interesting, and systematic. It helped them to obtain physical and mental health. It improved digestion, decreased respiratory problems, backaches and Improved their body posture.
3. They found mudra practice very graceful ,interesting and beneficial.
4. During R-Z practice, they felt the tapping of feet relieved the pain of lower limbs and improved the strength.
5. Practice of minor organs i.e. eyes, neck and head movements has helped them to improve awareness about every body part and also



ease the stress in those regions.

6. They mentioned that their confidence level and coordination of movements has improved remarkably.

7. They noticed that the method of Chakra meditation is very helpful to concentrate and focus due to which they experience calmness of mind. It was a very effective method to stay with them.

This research work proves that NYS practices are very effective to improve physical fitness and mental health in a joyful manner.

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