

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As per sanatana dharma in the days of yore, man worshipped Godhead reciting vedic chants considered as co-eval with God according to the time, the day and the season of the year.

Quite often man worshipped God in the form of nature simply in ecstasy or in awe. Iconic worship either individual or congregational came later with the advent of Agamasastra and Tantric form of divine worship. In the preface to the book on congregational worship Rev

Leadbeater describes the thought-form generated when a group of persons perform congregational worship with Gayatri mantraincluding nyasa procedures, led by a priest (1).

19Agama sastra lays down elaborate procedures for worship and stipulates strict adherence by the priests with the ultimate aim of welfare for the whole mankind. One of the procedures is Nyasa which is ordained as mandatory prior to every mantrajapa.

Swami Mangalateertham (2) writes ‘the feature of systematic rotation of the different parts of the body originates from the tantric practice of nyasa’. Deep relaxation technique (DRT) is a salient feature of Integrated Approach to Yoga Therapy for Positive Health (3). Though the word ‘Nyasa’ is not explicitly stated in this therapeutic practice, reciting the syllables A, U and M and visualizing the three regions of the body is tantamount to nyasa practice. Further in the book titled ‘Cancer and Yoga’, Nagendra, Nagarathna and Telles (4) explain the expansion of awareness from the gross material body to the most subtle bliss body

stage by stage for total cure and pain management caused either by the disease or therapy induced. Read together, there is a promising area of research to use nyasa, an ancient lore from sastra in yoga therapy for cancer.

(A note on quotations, transliteration and translation: All Samskrutam slokas in ‘Select quotations from Agamasastras and Puranas’ on P 36 are transliterated and translated. A few quotations in text are only translated. Vedic mantras have in addition Swara notations. These notations are difficult to incorporate. Therefore these are not quoted. Vedic mantras are referred only in Table 9 ‘Vedic pramana for nyasa’).

2.0 LITERARY SEARCH ON NYASA

2.1 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

It will be useful to understand the nuances of Samskrutam for an appreciation of the concept and practice of nyasa. We therefore highlight some of the characteristics in this section.

Swami Bhajanananda (5, p76) writes, ‘Language is not only a system of symbols and signs for communication, but forms the very foundation of human knowledge....the followers of all world religions claim that knowledge of transcendent reality can be gained only through language recorded in the scriptures’. The cognitive function of a language is well established in sastras of sanatana dharma. Much later this idea is developed greatly by western scholars, with Noam Chomsky in the limelight. He holds the view that language is generated from underlying deep structures in the brain through a series of transformations.

Letter in Samskrutam is called *akshara* meaning that which does not decay. Akshara is also one of the 1000 names of Vishnu. There are fifty aksharas in Samskrutam. All the fifty aksharas are believed to have evolved from the eight aspects of the primordial sound – the word AUM as shown in Appendix 1. All letters have eight characteristics as shown in Appendix 2. For the three aksharas A, U and M which form the primordial word ‘AUM’ the eight characteristics are shown in Appendix 3.

The science of phonetics called in Samskrutam as *siksha* is well developed, having six qualities, *varna* (alphabetical order), *svara* (accent), *matra* (a measure), *balam* (strength), *sama* (a metrical system) and *santana* (continuity). The effect a proper pronunciation of