

LETTER TO EDITOR

MEDITATION FROM AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Dear Sir,

Reading through Prof. Bhaskaran's excellent and thought provoking article "Meditation from a Mental Health Perspective" (IJP, April 1991), we were struck by the thought that this is largely a neglected field in Indian Psychiatry.

In our personal lives, we are often consulted by relatives, friends and non-mental health professional colleagues for problems of a situational nature, or problems of living, which rarely warrant a psychiatric diagnosis. We cannot undertake formal psychotherapy in this population, nor are drugs or conventional behaviour therapy procedures (such as Jacobson's progressive relaxation) quite appropriate. We have, instead, suggested meditation in many such cases, almost invariably with good results. While meditation is most helpful when psychic or somatic anxiety is present in a nonclinical population, we have also observed its utility in recalcitrant, diagnosed case (Andrade and Andrade, 1991).

It is ironical that despite the rich tradition in meditation that India enjoys, meditation lacks popularity amongst clinicians and reasearchers alike in the field of mental health ; other disciplines, instead, are demonstrating the value of meditation (e.g. Nagarathna and Nagendra, 1985). Such neglect is particularly unfortunate as meditation might find greater sociocultural acceptance in the average Indian citizen methods of relaxation (psychological or psychopharmacological) derived from the West.

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References

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Nagarathna, R. and Nagendra, H.R. (1985). Yoga for bronchial asthma : A controlled study. *British Medical Journal*; 291, 1077-1079.