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Training in Aura Reading: Results from a Small Quasi-Experimental Study in India (Research Note)

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The aura is believed to be an invisible field surrounding the physical body, interpenetrating and extending beyond it. The present study examines whether appearance of an aura-like phenomenon around the hand can be perceived visually after a short training session. A quasi-experimental research design was employed with 47 participants with a mean age of 19 years. Results from before and after attempting to view an aura-like phenomenon around the hand were analyzed using Contingency Coefficient analysis. The results suggest that an aura-like phenomenon can be detected around the hand since the participants narrated several experiences that were novel ($p < .001$). We found a significant increase ($p = .009$) in the number of reports of positive thoughts among the respondents during the session in which an aura-like phenomenon was experienced.

Keywords: *Prana, aura, aura-like phenomenon, bioplasmic, positive thoughts*

The Tittiriya Upanishad describes five layers of human presence (Frawley, 2005), namely, annamaya kosha (food sheath), pranamaya kosha (energy sheath), manomaya kosha (mental sheath), vignanamaya kosha (cognitive sheath), and anandamaya kosha (blissful sheath) which envelope the atma or soul. The discussion that follows will focus on a phenomenon traditionally associated with the pranamaya kosha, which is associated with pranic energy (Raina, 2016) or the life energy believed to keep the body alive and healthy.

The concept of prana, or subtle energy and methods of its use for healing has been known from ancient times (Jain & Mills, 2010). Prana is not the breath; it is believed to be that which causes the motion of the breath, the vitality of the breath as described by Vivekananda Swami (2015). Prana is also associated with feelings and emotions. It is the medium of exchange in the whole psychophysiological system

and is responsible for various physiological functions within the body (Raina, 2016).

Traditionally, there are three principal sources of prana: the air, from which is derived air prana; the earth, from which ground prana is obtained; and the sun, from which solar prana is gained. During the process of inhalation, air prana is absorbed by the lungs and energy centers of the bioplasmic body. Bioplasmic is a term combining bio, meaning life, and plasma, a term Master Sui (2015) has used to refer to the physical human body and the electromagnetic field believed to surround it—often referred to as the human aura (Jalil, Taib, Abdullah, & Yunus, 2011; Kowalewski, 2004).

Advanced yogis or saints are sometimes represented with a dazzling halo of light around the head area (Sui, 2015), which may be an effort to represent an aura-like phenomenon (ALP). Biophoton images using sensitive optical instruments

have revealed the existence of emission of light by plants (Creath & Schwartz, 2004), which might be an analogous phenomenon to what has been described as a human aura. In a study by Kafatos et al. (2015) using photomultipliers, it was reported that living organisms give out a pulsating glow. According to Priyal and Ramkumar (2014), human aura consists of light of various colors.

It has been suggested that measurement of fields around the human body might be used as a holistic method for medical screening (Lee, Khong, Ghista, 2006), because this field is thought to represent the physical, mental, emotional, and the spiritual condition of the person (Prakash, 2015). In a study by Rowold (2016) on the human biofield, it was found that the quality of life of participants was accurately related to information obtained by practitioners from the biofield. Similarly, Rubik (2004) carried out a study to estimate the state of health of the organs by evaluating ALP around the fingers and suggested that positive changes in the aura might enhance the health of the subjects. Preliminary work with acupoint protocols thought to influence a human ALP are showing some promise (Feinstein, 2018).

Experiencing perception of an ALP does not necessarily require special talent or a spiritual gift. With proper training and guidance, along with some degree of concentration and appropriate conditions, it has been suggested that one can view the air prana, ground prana, and aura surrounding trees (Jois & D'Souza, 2017a; Jois, Manasa, & D'Souza, 2017b; Sui, 2015). In a study conducted by Schwartz et al. (2004), there were varied descriptions of subtle energy experiences among individuals, and training was found to improve bioenergy awareness.

In a study conducted by Jois and D'Souza (2017a), a statistically significant number of participants experienced a positive change in the well-being while having the experience of viewing air and ground prana. Increased positive psychological states were experienced by depressive subjects when an ALP was manipulated during a pranic healing session (Rajagopal et al., 2018). Whether or not these experiences are in some way veridical, they appear to have a beneficial effect on the individuals having the experience.

An ALP can reportedly also be felt and seen around the hands (Jois, Manasa, D'Souza, Prasad, 2017c), but to date, few studies have been conducted on the perception of an ALP around the hand. It has been suggested that the best conditions for seeing ALP with the naked eye involve dim illumination, the use of peripheral vision, and a relaxed, attentive state of mind (Milán et al., 2012). A method to measure an ALP around the human body, including around the fingers, was developed by Lee, Lee, and Ahn (2004).

Study

The current study tested whether short training would result in an experience of ALP around one's own hands.

Method

This study introduced a simple technique for inducing perceptions of ALP to 47 young adults and asked participants what they experienced as they viewed their hand, as well as about the emotional impact of engaging in the exercise.

Sample

Opportunity sampling resulted in a sample of 47 bachelor's level students aged 17 to 25 (mean age = 19.34) working to obtain a degree in Naturopathy and Yoga Science from a government Nature Cure and Yoga College in Mysuru, South India. Of these, 26% were male, and 74% were female, from a variety of religious backgrounds including Hindu (85%), Muslim (11%), and Christian (4%) (Table 1). Students from urban backgrounds represented 62% of the sample, with 38% from rural communities, with no prior experience in attempting to perceive ALP and with no previous instruction in methods such as Reiki or pranic healing, that is believed to use ALP for healing purposes. Individuals with impaired sensory perception, such as poor vision, were excluded from the study.

Procedure

A quasi-experimental design was used in this study. None of the authors had any previous association with the students. The first author approached the Principal of the college and sought permission to conduct the session. After obtaining the oral permission from the principal of the college, two classes were chosen by the principal

for the study purpose. All students in the selected classes volunteered to participate in the study. Participation was not tied to any compensation or reward. Consent was obtained from students prior to the commencement of the study. Students were informed that they could opt-out of the study at any point of time without any penalty or prejudice. Students were invited to be open-minded in expressing their experiences, to discourage anticipatory effects. Sessions were conducted by a pranic healer (the first author), and efforts were made to minimize power differentials in the context of the experiment. The entire study took about 15 minutes to complete, to ensure that eye strain was unlikely to be a factor in participant experiences.

In Session 1, participants were asked to observe their hands without any guidance. Participants were given time to write their experiences in response to an open-ended questionnaire (see details under Measure). In Session 2, participants were guided to view an ALP surrounding their hand and fingers (Sui, 2015). These steps included the following instructions: (1) Curl your tongue and let it touch your palate; (2) place your hands against a light background, preferably white or cream; (3) focus your eyes few inches away from the hand; (4) just be neutral; (5) relax, inhale and exhale slowly. Participants were asked to record any resultant experiences in writing.

Demographic	Variable	N	%
Gender	Male	12	26
	Female	35	74
Age	17–20	33	70
	21–22	14	30
Religion	Hindu	40	85
	Muslim	5	11
	Christian	2	4
Locality	Urban	29	62
	Rural	18	38

Table 1. Participant demographics

Measure

A brief open-ended questionnaire was used to record participants' experiences. Participants were not informed about the purpose or scope of the study. The same two questions were asked after Session 1 and Session 2, as follows

- What could you see as you looked at your hand?
- How did you feel about yourself emotionally now?

Coding

Participant's experiences of Session 1 and Session 2 were categorized into different domains as physical, psychological, and bioplasmic—with bioplasmic used to record experiences not fitting easily into the first two categories. The recorded experiences of hand descriptions such as redness of the hand, sweating, creases in the palm, and sensations of cold, were categorized in the physical domain. Positive and negative thoughts or emotions experienced during the sessions were categorized in the psychological domain. Positive experiences included happiness, excitement, relaxation, calm, strength, boldness, and comfortableness. Negative experiences included tension, disturbance, confusion, and stress. Bioplasmic experiences included perception of an outline or ALP around the hand and perceptions of the shape or contour of an ALP. ALP might be described as a thin white line, a dark outline, a light covering the hand, a thick white line, a moving white line, and so forth. Also recorded here were reported colors associated with ALP such as white, black, red, grey and yellow.

Results and Analysis

Participants' responses were consolidated, coded, and similar expressions were grouped together. Results were tabulated and interpreted, then analyzed statistically using contingency coefficient analysis and chi-square tests. In Session 1, a total of 134 coded responses were collected, and in Session 2, 252 responses were collected. The experiences of the participants were grouped into categories such as physical domain, psychological domain, bioplasmic domain, and additional expressions.

Physical domain. Chi-square test revealed a significant decrease in the hand descriptions of the physical domain in the sessions of pre-viewing of

aura and post-viewing of ALP around the hand ($X^2=37.38$, $p < .001$; see Table 2).

Psychological domain. Chi-square test showed a significant increase in positive thoughts ($X^2=6.8$, $p=.009$), and a significant decrease in negative thoughts ($X^2=6.63$, $p=.010$) in Session 2.

Bioplasmic domain. Chi-square test for observations on the presence of outline of the Aura region showed a significant increase ($X^2=38.71$, $p < .001$) in the session of post-viewing of ALP (Table 2). As depicted in Table 2, chi-square test with respect to the contour of the Aura region (Table 3) showed a significant increase ($X^2=26.19$, $p < .001$) in the session of post-viewing of ALP. When chi-square test was conducted on the responses of participants to the perception of different ALP colors (Table 4), the result indicated a significant increase in the participant's observation of colors ($X^2=16.0$, $p < .001$) in Session 2. With respect to reports of phenomena such as glowing, or a blurred or shining image, Chi-square analysis revealed a significant increase in Session 2 ($X^2=18.32$, $p < .001$) as shown in Table 2.

Discussion

While trying to view the hand in Session 1, the normally visible physical aspect of the hand is typically seen. In Session 2, participants were introduced to the technique of viewing ALP around one's hand. Participants expressed novel sensations and feelings that were found to be substantively different from normally visible physical aspects.

Physical domain. As noted, descriptions concerning the physical domain were dominant in Session 1. As ALP-related reports increased in Session 2, physical domain descriptions decreased.

Psychological domain. Session 2 produced a substantial increase in the number of psychological responses, with an approximate doubling of positive experiences and a reduction of negative experiences as compared with Session 1.

Bioplasmic domain. There were no bioplasmic domain responses in Session 1. In Session 2, numerous bioplasmic responses reported the presence of, color, and contours associated with an ALP.

In the present study, we have reported results that open up prospects for further investigations into the viewing of an ALP, the benefit of this experience, and its possible utility in the domain of therapeutic work.

Description	Session		X^2	p-value
	1	2		
Hand descriptions	60	0	37.38	<.001
Positive thoughts	50	96	6.8	.009
Negative thoughts	24	4	6.63	.010
Outline (bioplasmic)	0	62	38.71	<.001
Contour (bioplasmic)	0	43	26.19	<.001
Colors (bioplasmic)	0	16	16	<.001
Additional comments	0	31	18.32	<.001

Table 2. Participant coded responses

Limitations

The study used a relatively small sample of 47 students, and there was no control group. The measure used was not standardized, and young students at a holistically oriented school may have been more susceptible to belief in ALP. Despite precautions, the researchers may have used language that subtly suggested desired outcomes, and students may have been motivated to give answers they believed to be desirable.

Outer line	N	%
Thin white line	34	58
Dark outline	10	17
Light covering the hand	8	14
Thick white line	5	9
Thin line moving	1	2

Table 3. Contour of aura-like phenomena

Color	N	%
White	12	60
Black	3	15
Red	1	5
Grey	3	15
Yellow	1	5

Table 4. Colors of aura-like phenomena

Conclusion

In the current study, it was found that participants had the experience of perceiving an ALP around their hand after training. There was an increase in reports of positive thoughts and experiences associated with the perception of an ALP

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