CHAPTER-4

Aim and Objectives
4.0 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was intended to obtain a greater understanding of the technique, cyclic meditation, measuring indicators of psycho-cognitive changes, anxiety state, repetitive motor activity and indicators for levels of attention. Hence changes in the following variables were compared following cyclic meditation as compared to a comparable period of supine rest;

(i) Performance in a digit-letter substitution task (DLST),

(ii) Performance in a letter copying task (LCT),

(iii) Repetitive motor response through a circle dotting task (CDT),

(iv) Performance in a Wechsler memory scale (WMS),

(v) State anxiety through state trait anxiety inventory (STAI), and

(vi) Midlatency auditory evoked potentials (MLAEPs) recorded at Cz electrode site referenced to linked earlobes (A1-A2).

4.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In several previous studies meditation practice has been shown to reduce physiological arousal (in terms of metabolism, sympathetic activity and levels of attention). However, the results varied across meditation techniques and for a given meditation technique, results varied across meditation practitioners. In spite of this inter and intra meditation variability, there remains a view that meditation is a state of hypo-arousal. Hypo-arousal may suggest that mental alertness is reduced. Indeed, this is often looked upon as a possible drawback of practicing meditation.
That is, that one may become hypo-aroused and hence less alert. The present study was planned to measure variables indicative of performance (i.e., performance in a digit letter substitution task, letter copying task, circle dotting task, Wechsler memory scale), and also of state anxiety, as well those indicative of information processing at different cortical and sub-cortical levels (i.e., MLAEPs). This was considered important to get a comprehensive model of the meditation technique, in this case cyclic meditation.

4.3 HYPOTHESIS

Cyclic meditation combines ‘stimulating’ and ‘calming’ practices, based on a statement in an ancient yoga text which suggests that this combination may be helpful to reach mental equilibrium. The underlying idea is that for most persons the mental state is routinely somewhere between the extremes of being ‘inactive’ or of being ‘agitated’ and hence to reach a balanced, relaxed state the most suitable technique would be one which combines ‘awakening’ and ‘calming’ practices.

The hypothesis of this study was that the practice of cyclic meditation would induce a mental and physiological state characterized by reduced anxiety along with improved cognitive performance.