



MEDITATION AND ITS IMPACT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

In the present era, our society is facing challenges of hurries and worries. In the present scenario society is using the mechanical appliances and electronic gadgets for simplifying their life. Society is unable to get peace and facing lots of physical and psychological problems. Self realization and self satisfaction can be achieved by the practice of meditation. Present paper is an effort to provide some solutions regarding the problem. This review article has been completed by the help of different studies which are carried out in this area.

Meditation is a practice in which an individual trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or as an end in itself. A particularly ambitious form of meditation aims at effortlessly sustained single-pointed concentration single-pointed analysis, meant to enable its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any life activity. As a result of excess mental stuffing engagements and burden of scientism, people face mental and physical inefficiency and fatigue that manifest numerous physical and mental disorders/problems and diseases. Now the science itself is advocating people / sufferer that they should go back to spirituality from where actually we had started growing, to attain normal state of physical and mental health and to ensure total well being. In this paper different aspects of meditation and mechanisms of meditation are considered. In the present paper the modern psychology has categorized different factors of the mind. Further the impact and benefits of meditation are highlighted.

KEYWORDS: Meditation, Psychology, Health.

INTRODUCTION

The word meditation carries different meanings in different contexts. Meditation has been practiced since antiquity as a component of numerous religious traditions and beliefs. Meditation often involves an internal effort to self-regulate the mind in some way. Meditation is a practice in which an individual trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or as an end in itself.^[1]

Modern psychology also supports it, in form of "introspection". Therefore by instead of confining our travel to the outside world, we should start to make deeper journeys into the depth of inner space and wake up the mind so that the entire

psychiatric and psychosomatic problem can be flushed out and ultimately absolute peace, happiness and harmonious health could be attained. Meditation helps relax the person which engages the rational brain instead of the emotional brain. So, by stopping negative/anxious thoughts, we disengage the emotional brain and we get a more rational or logical perspective on our thought patterns and ultimately the life situation we may be faced with. We also therefore reduce the physical effects of these hormones ruminating.^[2]

DESCRIPTION OF THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MEDITATION:

1. *Tatra pratyakatanata dhyanam (Yo. su Vibhuti Pada / 2)*

2. *Sarvsariresu chaitanyaikatanata dhyanam (Mandala Brahmaopanisada 1/1/7)*

There are three types of meditation or *Dhyana*:

Sthulam jyotistatha suksmam dhyanasya tribidham viduh,

Sthulam murtimayam proktam jyotistekomayam tatha,

Saksam bindumayam brahma kundaliparadevata (Gheranda sahita 6/1)

1. **Gross:** When a yogi meditates upon a particular figure, like his Guru or any deity, it is gross or *Sthula* contemplation (meditation).
2. **Luminous:** when he meditates upon Brahma or *Prakriti* as a mass of light, it is *Jyoti* or luminous meditation.
3. **Subtle:** when he meditates upon Brahma as a *Bindu* (point) and the *Kundali sakti*, it is called the subtle or *Suksma* meditation.

Sthuladhyanam

Close your eyes and imagine that there is a sea of nectar in your heart; in the middle of the sea there is an island of precious stones, the sand of the island consisting of crushed diamonds and rubies. The island is surrounded on all Sides by *Kadamba* trees, laden with sweet flowers. Next to the *Kadamba* trees there is a row of flowering trees like *Malati, Millika, Jati, Kesara, Champaka, Parijata* and *Padma* and the whole atmosphere is covered by the fragrance of these flowers. Now, contemplate that in the middle of this garden there is a beautiful kalpa tree, having four branches that represent the four *Vedas*. Beneath the *Kalpa* tree, there is a rich pavilion studded with precious gems and in the centre of this pavilion there is a priceless throne inlaid with jewels, and on the throne sits the Deity he contemplates upon. Now meditate upon this particular deity, it's appropriate form, ornaments and the vehicle of that deity, as explained to you by your Guru.

Jyotirdhyanam

Listen to the contemplation of light. By practicing *Kundalini* resides in the yogi attains success and realises his own true self. The *Kundalini* resides in the *Muladhara*, in the form of a serpent. The *Jivatma* lives there like the flame of a lamp. The yogi should contemplate

upon this flame, imaging it to be the luminous Brahma.

Suksmadhyanam

The *Kundalini* of a yogi is awakened by some great piece of luck and good fortune. When awakened, it joins the *Atma* and gets out through the passage of two eyes and wanders around the *Rajmarga* (the Royal Road). While it wanders, it is very difficult to be seen because of its subtleness and restlessness.

For attaining success in *Suksma dhyana* the yogi should practice *Sambhavi Mudra*, (gaze without winking in the space). By doing so, he will be able to see his *Suksma sarira*. The *Suksma Dhyana* is a secret knowledge, a rarity even for the *Devas*.

Modern concept of Meditation

The word *meditation* is derived from the Latin *meditatio*, from a verb *meditari*, meaning "to think, contemplate, devise, ponder".^[3]

Meditation is something that most people have heard about, few have any true conception about and even fewer have actually experienced. Like all other subjective experience it cannot really be described in words. The aspirant must try to find it for him to know what it is really about. Medical science experts expressed the feeling of meditation by saying as "top spiritual feeling, pleasure and transcendent is same as the peak sexual orgasm that the person can't explain rather it has to be experienced only, this is what the taste of meditation can be". As we have seen, meditation lies in the internal practice of yoga under eight fold path of Patanjali or Raja yoga.

Meditation refers to a family of self-regulation practices that focus on training attention and awareness in order to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and/or specific capacities such as calm, clarity, and concentration".^[4]

Thus concentration is a prior stage of meditation and meditation is to dive deep into mind via uninterrupted concentration of consciousness. For meditation it is required to understand the layers' of mind. Therefore let us see how the modern psychology has categorized different factors of the mind.

1. **Lower Mind:** This part of mind is concerned with - the activation and coordination of the various activities of the body, such as respiration, circulation and abdominal activities and so on. This area of mind also give rise to instinctive urges and it is from this part of mind that complexes, phobias, fears and obsession manifest.[2]
2. **The middle mind:** This part of mind is concerned with the data that we use during the waking state, and this part of the mind analyzes, compares and reaches to conclusion in relation to incoming data and gives us answers. "This is the realm of rational or intellectual thinking.[2]
3. **The higher mind:** The higher mind is the area of so called super conscious activity. It is the source of intuition, inspiration, bliss and transcendental experience. It is the source of creativity and deeper knowledge for genius. So these categories of mind has direct link with the state of meditation because when we meditate we are able to take our consciousness (awareness) to the different part of our mind.[2]

TYPES OF MEDITATION

There are two Main types of Meditation

- **Active Meditation:** Active meditation is that which is done while performing daily activities of life such as when one walk, talk, eat, play etc. This is in fact the aim of yoga to allow one to meditate while being involved in worldly activities. In such a meditative state the work or external activities will be performed with more energy efficiency and perfection. Active meditation can be performed well after achieving competency in passive meditation.
- **Passive Meditation:** - Passive meditation is static which is practiced or performed in one sitting pose and makes it still the restless and wandering mind at one point by concentrating on consciousness (awareness). Successful passive meditation will automatically lead to active meditation. The deeper one dives into mind in passive meditation the more one is likely to be able to live a perpetual/eternal meditational state even while performing worldly duties.

OTHER TYPES OF MEDITATION:-

1. **Basic Meditation Techniques:** This involves sitting in a comfortable position

and just trying to quiet your mind by thinking of nothing. It's not always easy to do this if you don't have practice with it. But a good way to begin is to think of yourself as an 'observer of your thoughts,' just noticing what the narrative voice in your head says, but not engaging it. As thoughts materialize in your mind, just let them go. That's the basic idea.

2. **Focused Meditation Techniques:** With this technique, person focus on something intently, but don't engage thoughts about it. Person can focus on something visual, like a statue; something auditory, like a metronome or tape of ocean waves; something constant, like your own breathing; or a simple concept, like 'unconditional compassion'. Some people find it easier to do this than to focus on nothing, but the idea is the same -- staying in the present moment and circumventing the constant stream of commentary from your conscious mind, and allowing yourself to slip into an altered state of consciousness.

3. **Activity Oriented Meditation Techniques:** With this type of meditation, person engage in a repetitive activity, or one where person can get 'in the zone' and experience 'flow.' Again, this quiets the mind, and allows person brain to shift. Activities like gardening, creating artwork, or practicing yoga can all be effective forms of meditation.

4. **Mindfulness Techniques:** Mindfulness can be a form of meditation that, like activity-oriented meditation, doesn't really look like meditation. It simply involved staying in the present moment rather than thinking about the future or the past. Focusing on sensations you feel in your body is one way to stay 'in the now;' focusing on emotions and where you feel them in your body (not examining why you feel them, but just experiencing them as sensations) is another.

5. **Spiritual Meditation:** Meditation can also be a spiritual practice. (It does not have to be, and certainly isn't specific to any one religion, but can be used as a spiritual experience.) Many people experience meditation as a form of prayer - the form where God 'speaks,' rather than just listening.

Person can meditate on a singular question until an answer comes (though some would say this is engaging your thinking mind too much), or meditate to clear their mind and accept whatever comes that day.^[5]

WHAT HAPPENS IN MEDITATION

The experience of meditation is different by different aspirants, their description of the experiences depending on the depth or height of the meditation. So yogic text suggest the aspirants to go through meditation by him and not to get attached to other people experience. Your experience can be different and more spiritual in meditation, but here are some common evidences that are highlighted which everyone can feel during the primary and secondary stages of meditation:

- State of non-Anxiety -No disturbance in mind.
- Normal course of action -Fear and Phobia Disappears.
- No worry of ups and downs -Fading the Barriers of Religion.
- Forget past and future -Efficiency and Perfection.
- Joyful Life -End of Ego.
- Wake up dormant capacity -Self-Realization.^[6]

IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF MEDITATION:

Meditation induces relaxation, both physical and mental. For this reason meditation brings excellent health and can alleviate and cure many types of diseases. The patient will be able to exercise more power himself over his health for the removal of his ailment. Therefore meditation has the following effects and benefits:

Psychological and Emotional Benefits

- Reduces anxiety and depression by enabling body to balance its own neurochemical system.
- Allows making better decisions and improving critical thinking.
- Breaks unhealthy habits by helping detach emotions associated with an action from the action itself.
- Improves communication with yourself. When person better understand thought processes, person has more control over what they think.

- Helps person stay in the present moment. When person let go of the past and the future, people live 100 % in the now, which affects all aspects of people life and relationships.

1. **Improved mood and working memory - even under stress:**-Meditation is not an activity designed to take us away from the problems of life, rather it helps us face them with our full capacity. Everybody has to deal with stress at some point. Whether it is work, school, or family life, our ability to deal with circumstances is sometimes pushed to the limit.

Dealing with circumstances that seem beyond your control can result in negative mood, anxiety, or chronic stress. New studies have proven that meditation actually improves mood and working memory; even in times of extreme pressure.^[7]

2. **Alleviate mental distractions:** -Training the mind to stay focused is a major motivation for practicing meditation. Brain scans show that experienced meditators process distracting thoughts with ease, and then quickly return to a state of focus. Fortunately the rewards of meditation practice don't take years to cultivate. In a recent study it was shown that less than a week of practice resulted in significant improvement of cognitive abilities across a range of tests.^[7]

Meditation also has positive effects and reduces the symptoms of some mental disorders. ADD, anxiety, and depression are all marked by an increase in distracting or otherwise unwanted thoughts. Meditation trains the mind to free itself from detrimental thought patterns.

Counteract Mood disorder: Meditation is the sure way to counteract pessimism, depression, tension and so on, states of mind which most people have accepted as a normal part of life. Meditation switches off negative states and replaces them with states of well-being.

3. **Decrease Fatigue:** Meditation might be a better stimulant for person than a cup of coffee. If you find yourself in need of a mid-day nap, or just didn't get enough sleep the night before, it might be time for a meditation break. Several studies have shown a link between meditation and mental alertness. Sometimes meditation

can act as a replacement for sleep, with higher gains in performance.^[9]

4. **Reduces stress:** It is thought by many, that stress and stress hormones can have long term physical affects and it is widely believed many cancers are stress related. So by meditating and therefore unblocking the negative energy field in the body, you are having a hugely positive effect on the human body and you are reducing this risk of contracting these diseases.^[10]

A stressful multitasking test was given to all the managers before and after the eight-week experiment. In the final test, the group that had participated in the meditation training reported less stress during the test, than the other groups.

5. **Better memory:** One of the things meditations has been linked to be improving rapid memory recall. Catherine Kerr, a researcher at the Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging and the Osher Research Center found that people who practiced mindful meditation were able to adjust the brain wave that screens out distractions and increase their productivity more quickly that those that did not meditate.^[10]
6. **Better focus:** Because meditation is a practice in focusing our attention and being aware of when it drifts, this actually improves our focus when we're *not* meditating, as well. It's a lasting effect that comes from regular bouts of meditation. Focused attention is very much like a muscle, one that needs to be strengthened through exercise.^[10]
7. **More creativity:** Researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands studied both focused-attention and open-monitoring mediation to see if there was any improvement in creativity afterwards. They found that people who practiced focused-attention meditation did not show any obvious signs of improvement in the creativity task following their meditation. For those who did open-monitoring meditation, however, they performed better on a task that asked them to come up with new ideas.^[10]
8. **More compassion:** Research on meditation has shown that empathy and compassion are higher in those who practice meditation regularly. One experiment showed participants images of other people that

were good, bad or neutral in what they called "compassion meditation."

The participants were able to focus their attention and reduce their emotional reactions to these images, even when they weren't in a meditative state. They also experienced more compassion for others when shown disturbing images.^[10]

9. **Emotional stability:** The causes and effects of emotional experience exist throughout the body and the brain, and as such they are deeply linked to physical and psychological stress.

Meditation enhances positive emotions and mood, and appears to make people less vulnerable to the stresses and upsets of daily life. Research shows that meditators are better at regulating immediate responses to negative stimuli and have reduced activity in the amygdala a region implicated in response to threat. These findings reflect greater emotional resilience among meditators as well as less psychological distress and anxiety.

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