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## Meditation: A way of complete living

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### Abstract

Only a healthy bud can blossom and in the same way, only a healthy being can succeed. In modern lifestyle, an individual has high exposure to anger, hate, fear and other negative emotion. Meditation helps an individual overcome these emotions to facilitate a calm, peaceful mind and healthy and stress-free body. Meditation is any form of a family of practices in which practitioners train their mind or self-induce a mode of consciousness to realize some benefit. The earlier clear references to the meditation in Hindu literatures are in the middle Upanishads and the Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavat Gita. According to Gavin Flood, Brhadaranyaka Upanisad refers to meditation when it states that “having becoming calm and concentrated, one perceives self (atman) to oneself”. Meditation is to make our mind calm and peaceful. If our mind is peaceful, we will be free from stress, worries and mental discomfort as well as our body will be healthy.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the present literature is to find out whether meditation makes our mind calm and peaceful and whether it helps to inculcate holistic living.

**Conclusion:** The researchers concluded that the practice of meditation brings coolness to the brain; it is like servicing the whole body and mind complex. Meditation develops happiness, contentment and calmness. It reduces anger, irritation, hate, anxiety, tension and fear. Meditation maintains lower blood pressure, lower the levels the blood lactate, improves immune system, increases body vitality, controls insomnia and increases overall health of the body.

**Keywords:** Meditation, modern lifestyle, stress-free body, blood pressure

### Introduction

The English meditation is derived from the Latin word ‘meditatio’ which means “to think, contemplate devise, ponder, and meditate”. Meditation is that which gives you deep rest. Meditation is an activity in which the practitioner just sits and allows the mind to dissolve. The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation. In meditation we divest ourselves of all material conditions and feel our divine nature. We do not depend upon any external help in meditation. Meditation is universal. It transcends all divides like religion, country and culture. It is a gift given to mankind to access the infinite spirit not limited by any identity. It is the only tool that can aid a person to return to innocence.

The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life - the mind meditation. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not material – the soul thinking of itself, free from all matter – this marvelous touch of the soul. Modern lifestyle has high exposure to anger, hate, fear and other negative emotions. These human emotions have a high tendency to duplicate and spread. Meditation helps an individual to overcome these emotions to facilitate a calm peaceful mind and a healthy stress free body.

Within Patanjali’s *astanga* yoga practice there are eight limbs leading to *moksha*. These are Ethical Discipline (*yamas*), Rules (*niyamas*), Physical postures (*asanas*), Breath Control (*pranayama*), Withdrawal from the Senses (*pratyahara*), One-Pointedness of mind (*dharana*), Meditation (*dhyana*) and finally *Samadhi*, which is often described the union of the ultimate aim of all Yogis. There are many, many schools and style of meditation within Hinduism. Yoga is a generally done to prepare one for meditation, and meditation is done to realize union of one’s self, one’s atman, with the omnipresent and non-dual Brahman. This experience is referred to as *moksha* by Hindus, and is similar to the concept of *Nibbana* in Buddhism.

In modern psychological research, meditation has been defined and characterized in a variety of ways; many of these emphasized the role of attention.

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Meditation refers to 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 specific capacities such as calm, clarity and concentration (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006) [18]. Meditation is a stylized mental technique, repetitively practised for the purpose of attaining a subjective experience that is frequently described as very restful silent and of heightened alertness, often characterized as blissful (Goleman 1988). Meditation is any form of a family of practices in which practitioners train their minds or self-induce a mode of consciousness to realize some benefit. The earlier clear references to the meditation in Hindu literatures are in the middle *Upanishads* and the *Mahabharata*, which includes the *Bhagavat Gita*. According to Gavin Flood, *Bhadaranyaka Upanisad* refers to meditation when it states that “having becoming calm and concentrated, one perceives self (atman) to oneself” (Flood 1996) [12].

### The purpose of meditation

The purpose of meditation is to help to learn in order to make our mind calm and peaceful. If our mind is peaceful, we will be free from stress, worries and mental discomfort and as well as our body will be healthy. Many have found concentration, self-discipline, equanimity, personal empowerment, psychic sensitivity, sensory enhancement, self-awareness, personal insight, self-understanding, character reformation, and improved health through meditation.

### Importance of Meditation

1. Meditation is food for the soul: it nourishes the universal values of compassion, caring and sharing, responsibility, non-violence and peacefulness. It helps us bond with others. These are important values to guide us and make us accept all of mankind as our family: more so in times when the world is being fragmented.
2. Humankind has an innate tendency to look for a joy that does not diminish, and meditation fulfills this important need.
3. Even when everything is going fine for us we often find ourselves being restless. Meditation can relax our stress – conscious and unconscious – and give us the sense of comfort and stability that every human being craves.
4. It helps us meet life’s ups and downs with centeredness, *confidence* and resourcefulness. Importantly, it gives us resilience so that we can not only can we remain unshaken by storms of emotions that come in everyone’s lives, but also get back on track sooner.
5. Meditation is the greatest grief-counselor.

### Types of Meditation

In brief, there are dozens of specific styles of meditation practice, and many different types of activity commonly referred to as meditative

### There are few important types of meditation given below.

1. **Mindfulness Meditation:** The most well-known type of meditation, mindfulness meditation, is about being aware of the images, sounds, smells and so forth happening around us. It is an introspection into the stream of consciousness, because one literally just lets one’s mind be fluid and flow from one thought to the next, not really focusing on one particular thing. This helps us to gain a more calm, clear and non-reactive state of mind.

2. **Focus Meditation:** If the idea of clearing one’s mind of all thoughts is stressful, focus meditation is effective because one can focus on a sound, object, mantra, or thought. The key here is to just focus on one of these things and stay committed to that thought or object.
3. **Movement Meditation:** Movement meditation may seem intimidating, it can be extremely uplifting and relaxing at the same time. Sitting with one’s eyes closed, one simply focuses on the breath and tries out different gentle, repetitive flowing movements. Rather than focus on a sound, object and thought, one turns one’s attention to the movement. A slow left or right swaying motion may be therapeutic, or one could try moving one’s entire upper body in a slow circular motion.
4. **Mantra Meditation:** Mantras are words that are chanted loudly during meditation. It may seem odd to be making loud noises during a meditation session, but it is actually the sounds that become the object being focused on. In yoga, the mantra ‘Om’ is regularly used since it delivers a deep vibration that makes it easy for the mind to concentrate on that particular sound.
5. **Spiritual Meditation:** This type of meditation is for those who regularly participate in prayer, as it is based on communicating with God. Just like the other styles, one must become calm and quiet and then begin to focus on a question or problem one might have. This style of meditation can feel not only relaxing, but rewarding as well.

### Technique of Meditation

**Even Breathing:** The practitioner inhales slowly, counting to eight, holds the breath for eight more counts, and then exhales slowly to the same count. Without pausing, s/he inhales again- holds- exhales, each to the count of eight. This is called the measured breathing exercise. This is repeated three to six times. One can vary the count according to one’s pulmonary capacity, but always it should be kept equal during inhalation, holding and exhalation. The practitioner finishes the practice by inhaling deeply, then exhaling completely.

**Meditation Proper:** After forgetting the breath, the practitioner concentrates deeply at the point between the eyebrows. One keeps one’s mind focused and one’s energy internalized. One absorbs oneself in the peace generated by the practice. S/he continues for at least five minutes. S/he finishes with a prayer to the Divine, offering his/her self into the light of God.

**Body Relaxation:** It is common for new meditators, in an effort to concentrate, to tense the body unconsciously, deep concentration, however, is possible only in a state of complete relaxation. Practising the tense and relax exercise is an effective way to release stored up bodily tension. Together with the breathing exercise, these are preliminary exercises taught by yogic adepts to help prepare the body and mind for meditation.

**Still Posture:** Moving one’s body even slightly sends the energy into the muscles. The purpose of yoga is to withdraw that energy inward and upward, to the brain. Thus, any physical movement during meditation will counteract the meditative effort. One should refuse to move for first five minutes of meditation, and one will find that the body will grow calm of its own accord. Physical and mental restlessness will subside the longer one sits still.

**Eye Position:** Eyes should be closed and hold steady, looking slightly upwards, as if looking at a point about an arm's length away and level with the top of one's head. It is essential to keep one's gaze gently raised to that point throughout the practice. This will magnetize one's spiritual eye and draw the energy to the highest spinal center, the seat of spiritual awakening in the body.

**Pray:** One can begin meditation with a prayer. This will help to remember the purpose of meditation. The Divine or your higher-self is to be invited, to help in the practice.

**Duration of Meditation:** It is entirely up to the practitioner. Enough time is to be allowed to sit still and enjoy the calm meditative state.

**Place of Meditation:** If possible, an area should be set aside exclusively for meditation. A small room, a corner of the bedroom, or even closet can suffice, as long as it is well ventilated. All one really needs is a chair or a small cushion to sit on, and perhaps a small altar. One should face east if possible, and place a wool and silk blanket on the floor to insulate one's body from the floor subtle magnetic currents of the earth.

**Proper Meditative Posture:** One can sit on the floor in any of the several poses, cross-legged, half-lotus pose or full lotus pose. Two things, however, are essential: one's spine must be straight, and one must be able to relax completely without slouching.

Meditation is an ancient method of employing the mind-body connection to achieve specific developmental goal. Over the four thousand years since the beginning of yoga, the developmental goals have shifted.

#### **Meditation: increases prana (life energy)**

*Prana* (vital life energy) is the very basis of health and well being, for both body and mind. You can gain 'Prana' through meditation. When the body is alive with more *prana*, an individual feels alert, energetic, and full of good humor. A lack of *prana* results in lethargy, dullness and poor enthusiasm.

#### **Meditation: dealing with illness**

It is said that the root of an illness is in the mind or consciousness. So, by attending to the mind, clearing it of any disturbances, the recovery speeds up. Illness can develop from:

- Violation of natural law: Such as over eating.
- Imposed by nature: Such as common cold, an epidemic.
- Release of past impressions or Karma.

Nature itself provides a cure for these illnesses. Health and illness are a part of physical nature. By participating in meditation, the stresses, worries and anxieties drop-off and this gives rise to a positive state of mind, which has a positive impact on the physical body, brain and nervous system, then illness change.

Health and illness are part of physical nature. One should not worry too much about it. When one worries about illness, one is giving more power to the illness. We are a combination of health and illness. A positive state of mind blunts the intensity of illness.

Meditation prevents stresses from entering the body system and also releases accumulated stress. Health, happiness and positive state of being well up.

The practice of meditation brings coolness to the brain; it's like servicing the whole body-mind complex.

#### **Benefits of Meditation**

##### **A. Individual Benefit of Meditation**

- i) **Bodily benefits:** Lower blood pressure, lower the level of blood lactate, improves the immune system, increases body vitality, controls insomnia and increases overall health of the body.
- ii) **Mental benefits:** Emotional stability, anxiety decreases, anger reduces, happiness increases, intuition develops, clarity and peace of mind, induces ability to focus, reduces tension and fear.
- iii) **Spiritual Growth:** Consciousness development, meditation brings harmony in creation, personal transformation and realization of self.

##### **B. Social Benefits of Meditation**

- i) **Violence free society:** Meditation develops happiness, contentment and calmness. When increasing number of people practice meditation, it has a calming effect on the environment. This is a potent way to achieve a violence free society.
- ii) **Value based society:** The effects of meditation include happiness, respect for the environment and others, appreciation of diversity in nature, a strong sense of social values. These qualities an individual level, helps develop a value based social system.
- iii) **Trusting, happy and content society:** These are the objectives of any society. Meditation empowers a society to achieve these qualities.

#### **Conclusion**

The researchers concluded that the practice of meditation brings coolness to the brain; it is like servicing the whole body and mind complex. Meditation develops happiness, contentment and calmness. It reduces anger, irritation, hate, anxiety, tension and fear. Meditation maintains lower blood pressure, lower the levels of the blood lactate, improves immune system, increases body vitality, controls insomnia and increases overall health of the body.

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