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## THE POWER OF MEDITATION AND ITS IMPACT ON GENERAL HEALTH AND DAILY LIFE

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### Abstract

Meditation is an effective practice that promotes physical health, mental wellness, and emotional balance. This study aims to examine the role of meditation in improving physical and mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and lifestyle-related problems while enhancing concentration, emotional stability, and overall well-being. The study also seeks to understand the impact of meditation on daily life and human behaviour. Regular meditation encourages positive thinking, self-discipline, patience, mindfulness, and healthy social interactions, which contribute to a peaceful and productive lifestyle. Furthermore, this study aims to create awareness about the importance of meditation for healthy living. In today's stressful world, meditation provides a natural and affordable method for maintaining a healthy body and mind. The findings highlight the significance of adopting meditation as a regular habit for achieving long-term health and inner peace.

**Key Words :** Meditation, Mental Wellness, Human Behaviour, General Health and Physical Health

### INTRODUCTION

Meditation plays a significant role in improving both physical and mental health by creating balance between the body and mind. It helps reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and negative thoughts by calming the mind and promoting emotional stability. Regular meditation improves concentration, memory, self-awareness, and mental peace, which are essential for maintaining good mental health. Meditation also benefits physical health in many ways. It helps lower blood pressure, improves sleep quality, reduces fatigue and strengthens the immune system. By relaxing the body and controlling stress levels, meditation may reduce the risk of stress-related diseases such as hypertension and heart problems. It encourages healthy breathing patterns and promotes overall relaxation.

Meditation has a positive impact on daily life and human behaviour by helping individuals develop calmness, patience, and self-control. Regular meditation improves concentration, emotional balance, and decision-making abilities, allowing people to handle daily challenges more effectively. It reduces stress, anger, and negative thinking, which leads to healthier relationships and better communication with others. Meditation also encourages mindfulness, which helps individuals stay focused on the present moment and perform their daily activities with greater awareness and confidence. People who practice meditation regularly often become more disciplined, positive, and emotionally stable. It can improve work performance, academic focus, and social behaviour by promoting a peaceful and balanced mindset.

Creating awareness about the importance of meditation is essential for promoting a healthy and balanced lifestyle. In today's busy and stressful world, many people suffer from mental pressure, anxiety, unhealthy habits, and lifestyle-related diseases. Meditation is a simple, natural, and effective practice that helps improve physical health, mental wellness, and emotional stability. Regular meditation reduces stress, improves concentration, promotes better sleep, and supports overall well-being. It also encourages positive thinking, self-discipline, and inner peace, which are important for leading a healthy life. Despite its many benefits, some people are unaware of how meditation can positively affect their daily lives. The main aim is to educate and encourage people of all age groups to practice meditation regularly. By spreading awareness through education, health programs, and social activities, individuals can adopt meditation as a healthy habit for achieving long-term wellness and a peaceful life.



## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To Examine the Role of Meditation in Improving Physical and Mental Health
- To Understand the Impact of Meditation on Daily Life and Human Behaviour
- To Create Awareness About the Importance of Meditation for Healthy Living

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the analysis of the secondary data and published in the various journals, annual reports and websites.

Descriptive research includes surveys and fact-finding inquiries of different kinds. The primary purpose of descriptive research is to describe the situation as it exists at present. In this study, the researcher used secondary data to develop an understanding of the pivotal role of meditation and its impact on general health and daily life. The study mainly aims to understand how meditation influences human thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviour, ultimately contributing to a healthier, happier, and more productive daily life.

## TYPES OF MEDITATION

Meditation is an umbrella term for the many ways to a relaxed state of being. There are many types of meditation and relaxation techniques that have meditation components. All share the same goal of achieving inner peace. Ways to meditate can include:

1. **Guided Meditation:** Sometimes called guided imagery or visualization, with this method of meditation you form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing. You try to use as many senses as possible, such as smells, sights, sounds and textures. You may be led through this process by a guide or teacher.
2. **Mantra Meditation:** In this type of meditation, you silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts.
3. **Mindfulness Meditation:** This type of meditation is based on being mindful, or having an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment. In mindfulness meditation, you broaden your conscious awareness. You focus on what you experience during meditation, such as the flow of your breath. You can observe your thoughts and emotions, but let them pass without judgment.
4. **Qi Gong:** This practice generally combines meditation, relaxation, physical movement and breathing exercises to restore and maintain balance. Qi gong (CHEE gung) is part of traditional Chinese medicine.
5. **Tai Chi:** This is a form of gentle Chinese martial arts. In tai chi (TIE-CHEE), you perform a self-paced series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner while practicing deep breathing.
6. **Transcendental Meditation:** Transcendental Meditation is a simple, natural technique. In Transcendental Meditation, you silently repeat a personally assigned mantra, such as a word, sound or phrase, in a specific way. This form of meditation may allow your body to settle into a state of profound rest and relaxation and your mind to achieve a state of inner peace, without needing to use concentration or effort.
7. **Yoga:** You perform a series of postures and controlled breathing exercises to promote a more flexible body and a calm mind. As you move through poses that require balance and concentration, you're encouraged to focus less on your busy day and more on the moment.
8. **Focused Attention:** Focusing your attention is generally one of the most important elements of meditation. Focusing your attention is what helps free your mind from the many distractions that cause stress and worry. You can focus your attention on such things as a specific object, an image, a mantra, or even you're breathing.
9. **Relaxed Breathing:** This technique involves deep, even-paced breathing using the diaphragm muscle to expand your lungs. The purpose is to slow your breathing, take in more oxygen, and reduce the use of shoulder, neck and upper chest muscles while breathing so that you breathe more efficiently.
10. **A quiet setting:** If you're a beginner, practicing meditation may be easier if you're in a quiet spot with few distractions, including no television, radios or cell phones. As you get more skilled at meditation, you may be able



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to do it anywhere, especially in high-stress situations where you benefit the most from meditation, such as a traffic jam, a stressful work meeting or a long line at the grocery store.

**11. A comfortable Position:** You can practice meditation whether you're sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions or activities. Just try to be comfortable so that you can get the most out of your meditation. Aim to keep good posture during meditation.

**12. Open attitude:** Let thoughts pass through your mind without judgment.

**Some general guidelines for starting meditation are as follows: -**

- Set aside a place to meditate. You'll build up a special feeling there, which will make it easier to get into a meditative state more quickly.
- Keep your eyes closed, or focus your gaze on the object you've chosen.
- Slowly and deeply take a quiet breath.
- Keep your mind focused on the inside. If it wanders outward, slowly move it back to the centre. In this mindfulness we can also focus our attention on our navel.
- Breathe peacefully and comfortably. When you exhale, try to take away your fantasies, wrong thoughts, and feelings.
- For this, you can also chant aloud. In this, Om recitation aloud can help in taking out the thoughts.

**EFFECT OF MEDITATION ON PHYSICAL HEALTH**

With meditation, the physiology undergoes a change, and every cell in the body is filled with more prana (energy). This results in joy, peace, enthusiasm as the level of prana in the body increases. On a physical level, meditation:

- ❖ Lowers high blood pressure
- ❖ Lowers the levels of blood lactate, reducing anxiety attacks
- ❖ Decreases any tension-related pain, such as tension headaches, ulcers, insomnia, muscle, and joint problems
- ❖ Increases serotonin production that improves mood and behaviour
- ❖ Improves the immune system
- ❖ Improves sleep

Even though meditation is a mental activity, its effects on human physiology has received much attention. Few Indian studies have attempted to examine and establish the neurological correlates of yogic practices, including meditation, the development of brain imaging technique has thrown the ball in the Western court. The unavailability of adequate infrastructure and needed scientific temperament within the country has made very few centres move parallel to the Western labs. Some of physiological effects are summarized here.

- 1. Meditation Provides More Energy & More Efficiency:** Meditation clears one’s mind and increases one’s energy levels. Meditation can stimulate the vague nerve, which promotes positive emotions and relaxation. A recent study shows that meditation reduces exhaustion among entrepreneurs as it reduces workplace stressors, bringing you calmer and energy. Efficiency naturally increases as you feel more energized and have more clarity of mind.
- 2. Heart Rate:** Meditation activates our bodies, “rest-and-digest” functions, which counteracts our “flight-or-fight” responses. Integration the practice into a daily routine has been linked to lower heart rate. which may lower your risk of heart disease. Studies have indicated that heart rate slows down during quite meditation and quickens in the moments of ecstasy during meditation. However, very pronounced decrease in heart rate is found among long term practitioners only.
- 3. Reduce Aging:** Meditation can slow the aging process. One of the main reasons meditations slows the aging process is because it reduces stress. Studies show that meditation keeps you young and improves longevity. One of the main reasons for this is its diminishing effects on stress, a factor that has a negative impact on the body.
- 4. Blood pressure and hypertension:** Meditation techniques appear to produce small yet meaningful reduction in blood pressure either as monotherapy or in conjunction with traditional pharmacotherapy. Transcendental



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meditation and mindfulness-based stress reduction may produce clinically significant reductions in systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

5. **Reduce neural activity:** Meditation reduces pain-related neural activity in anterior cortex, insula, secondary somatosensory cortex, and thalamus. Evidence from many studies indicates that during meditation alpha activity increases significantly.
6. **Metabolism and respiration:** Many studies have shown that during meditation oxygen consumption is reduced (sometime up to 50%), carbon dioxide elimination is reduced (sometime up to 50%) and respiration rate is lessened.
7. **Skin resistance:** Low skin resistance (measured in terms of galvanic skin response) is a good indicator of stress. As expected, high skin resistance has been documented by many researchers especially among practitioners.

### EFFECTS OF MEDITATION ON MENTAL HEALTH

Many perceptual and cognitive abilities are associated with meditation practices. These abilities may range from normal to paranormal. Many scientific investigations have been conducted to measure various psychological and behavioural effects of meditation.

1. **Help overcome depression and Anxiety:** Meditation has been shown to be as effective in relieving symptoms of anxiety and depression as antidepressants. It increases the prana level (life force) in the body. According to Ayurveda, as prana level increases, anxiety decreases automatically. The Art of Living's Sahaj Samadhi Dhyana, a meditation technique has been shown to alleviate symptoms of late-life depression.
2. **Perceptual ability:** Visual sensitivity was measured by detection threshold and discrimination threshold using simple light flashes. The significant improvement in visual sensitivity after the meditation retreat. Other studies also reported similar decrease in visual threshold and increased auditory acuity after the meditation enhanced attentive ability reduction of perceptual noise increased reaction time and enhanced perceptual motor speed.
3. **Improves Focus, Attention, and Memory:** Meditation improves concentration and helps one to be in the present moment. If you observe, the mind vacillates between the past and the future. We are either angry about the past or anxious about the future. Meditation helps bring the mind to the present. As that happens, focus and attention span improves. Meditation also improves grey matter in the brain, which improves memory.
4. **Helps in Healing and Managing Pain:** Studies show that meditation helps manage chronic pain effectively. Regular meditators with chronic pain are able to live with a pain that is manageable. Experiences also show that meditation can help heal from chronic conditions.
5. **Memory and intelligence:** The number of months of practice predicted the higher performance on nonverbal intelligence test. Other researchers also reported similar results of improvements in cognitive abilities.
6. **Improves relationships:** As you meditate and your awareness improves, you are less likely to blame others and indulge in negative emotions like anger. Your hold onto events reduces, and you become the person who let's go of that small squabble easily.

### MEDITATION, MIND, MOOD AND HEALTH

We cannot see or touch stress, but we can feel its effects on our mind and body. Initially, stress speeds up our heart and breathing rates and elevates our blood pressure. When we are constantly under stress, our adrenal glands overproduce cortisol hormone. The excessive release of this hormone affects the function of our brain, immune system and other organs. Chronic tension can cause headaches, anxiety, depression, heart disease and even premature death. Although we may not be able to eliminate the roots of stress, we can reduce its effects on our bodies. Meditation is the easiest and most effective way to de-stress the body as well as the mind. Meditation is a process in which we shift our concentration from external objects to the inside.

**Meditation for a Healthy Heart:** When you're having a stressful day at work or are overwhelmed at home, strange "stress hormones" called cortisol, adrenaline, and norepinephrine are released. Higher amounts of these hormones get into the blood and these speeds up our heart rate and blood pressure and prepares our bodies for challenges, also known as our "fight and flight" response. This stress related to heart and lungs damages our kidneys etc. It is some of the leading causes of death in



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America. That same meditation activates our body's "rest and digestion" functions, counteracting our "flight-or-flight" responses. Incorporating exercise into a daily routine has been linked to lowering heart rate and blood pressure, which can reduce your risk of heart disease.

**Short breaks of meditation can help kids in school:** Some schools have begun to implement meditation into their daily schedules, and with good effect: A San Francisco district introduced a twice daily meditation program in some of its high-risk schools – and found that it resulted in suspension of students. A decrease was observed, and GPA and attendance increased. Studies have confirmed the cognitive and emotional benefits of meditation for school children, but perhaps more work will need to be done before it can achieve more widespread acceptance.

**Meditating to diagnose a mental problem:** Two areas of the brain play a special role in our mental health: the amygdala and the Default Mode Network (DMN). The amygdala is the area of the brain that controls concentration, memory, and emotions, such as fear, anger, and sadness. Although "feelings" are not inherently bad, they can sometimes go awry.

**Meditation reduces activity in the "me centre" of the brain:** The most interesting studies conducted over the years at Yale University found that mindfulness meditation reduces activity in the Default Mode Network (DMN), the brain network responsible for the brain. wandering and self-referential thoughts - the "monkey minds." The DMN is "on" or activated when we are not thinking about anything in particular, when our mind is simply wandering from thought to thought. Since mind-wandering is usually related to being less happy, belligerent, and worrying about the past. Several studies have shown that meditation calms the effect on the DMN and even when the mind begins to wander, due to new connections, meditations are better able to break out of it.

**Its effects are rival antidepressants for depression, anxiety:** One research study looked at the relationship between mindfulness meditation and its ability to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, and pain. Researcher Madhav Goel and his team found that the effect size of meditation was moderate at 0.3. If this sounds low, keep in mind that the effect size for antidepressants is also 0.3, which creates an effect of attention. Meditation is, after all, an active form of brain training. "Many people have this idea that meditation means sitting and doing nothing," says Goel. Meditation is no magic bullet for depression, as there is no cure for it, but it is one of the tools that can help manage symptoms.

**Meditation can alter the volume of the key areas of the brain:** In 2011, Sarah Lazarus and her team at Harvard found that mindfulness meditation can actually change the structure of the brain: in eight weeks of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). an increase was found. Cortical thickening in the hippocampus, which controls learning and memory, and in certain areas of the brain that play a role in emotion regulation and self-referential processing.

### Understanding the stress response

Stress is an unavoidable part of life. But learning to manage it successfully can do much to improve your mental and physical health. That's why it helps to understand just how your body reacts to stressful situations and why the so-called fight-or-flight response, which can be life-saving in the case of an immediate physical threat, becomes detrimental when stress is a chronic feature of daily life.

#### What is stress?

We all encounter stress in our lives, though we might use different examples to describe it. But whether the particular stressor you're confronting is a sudden car crash, a loud argument, or the ache of arthritis, each potential or actual threat triggers a cascade of stress hormones that produce well-orchestrated physiological changes.

#### The importance of stress reduction

Sceptics have long believed that meditation and other stress reduction techniques are nice but ineffectual practices that do little for you. Nothing could be further from the truth and now we have the science to prove it. Intriguing new research suggests that regularly eliciting the relaxation response a natural counterbalance to the stress response can act on our genes in ways that may evoke multiple health benefits and help reduce the harmful effects of stress. Small studies of



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various stress reduction techniques, as well as comprehensive programs, suggest that it's quite possible to improve many measures of health by making the strong mind body connection work in your favour.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that meditation plays a significant role in improving both physical and mental health. Regular meditation helps reduce stress, anxiety, and negative thoughts while improving emotional balance, concentration, and overall mental wellness. It also contributes to physical health by promoting relaxation, better sleep, and reduced risk of stress-related diseases. The findings further show that meditation positively influences daily life and human behaviour. Individuals who practice meditation regularly tend to develop patience, self-control, positive thinking, and better decision-making abilities. Meditation also improves relationships, work performance, and social behaviour by encouraging mindfulness and emotional stability.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of creating awareness about meditation for healthy living. Encouraging people of all age groups to practice meditation can lead to a healthier, happier, and more peaceful society. Therefore, meditation should be adopted as a regular habit for achieving long-term well-being and inner peace.

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