

## EFFECTS OF MEDITATION ON MENTAL HEALTH

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## ABSTRACT

The worst impact of COVID-19 was on the mental health of persons whether staying at home or working. There were several reasons like lockdown, work from home, stuck in routine, increased household workload, loss of job, fear of falling ill, following of COVID appropriate behavior etc. People were stressed and psychosomatic problems increased many folds. This epidemic reemphasized the importance of modes preserving Mental health and taught valuable lesson that such conditions are unavoidable and things get normalized at their own pace. We can't change external things but ourselves only. Besides, we have to accept what is coming. For mental health, positive mind & acceptance is the protection key but to cultivate such mind set, we need to train our mind. Meditation is one such method which stabilizes our mind, train it, makes us peaceful and develop endurance. **Material & Methods:** A research study done on 20 volunteers to see the effect of meditation on mental attitude, statistically evaluated and found significant in changing the parameters positively. **Result:** Meditation was found highly effective in developing mental positivity and acceptance. In short span, it was brilliant to see enthusiastic results and can be a game changer in the field of mental health owing to ease, affordability and assessibility of the process.

**KEYWORDS:** Mental health, Meditation, Positive attitude, Acceptance.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a vital part of one's life which is needed to be accurate to live a happy life. It directly affects the social health as well as quality of life. It is not easy to maintain it at optimum & hardest to recognize any problem as people want to hide their psychological problems due to social fear. Psychological problems are easily misinterpreted as psychiatric disorders & person with improper mental health is equated to lunatic by laymen.

With increasing awareness among people about health, now persons are opening up and coming forward with their mental health issues. But it happens when problem progresses from symptom to disease. At initial stages either they fail to notice or shy away in revealing or to share with anyone. It only gets revealed when they need professional help. It would be much better if people start following promoting & preventing measures for mental health as they do for physical health. They need to be educated, sensitized & awareness regarding mental health should be spread at priority.

In this context if we see, *Ayurveda* keeps holistic view of health & when defines health parameters, vividly involves mental aspects. Whether it is determination of *Prakriti*, disease & cure, Psyche is always well thought

off in every *Ayurvedic* concept. Also *Yoga* deals with full fledged psychology whether to control mind, refrain it from sinful acts or emergence of extraordinary powers, particularly *Dhyana* is directly said to curb the mental afflictions<sup>[1]</sup> by training the mind and senses to move inward from outer world (mundane activities) and connecting to the consciousness. It illuminates the soul and person become judicious, follows moral conducts effortlessly.

*Asatmayeindrismyoga* due to *Pragyapradha* i.e. sinful acts is said to be the leading cause of diseases (Physical /mental) & miseries. Excessive or wrong utilization of mind is responsible for abnormal mental conditions.<sup>[2]</sup>

Yoga refrains persons from sinful acts by controlling mind as *Suchetas* is responsible for good actions. (*Bhela samhita*)<sup>[3]</sup>

We develop mental stability, purity, focus, concentration & righteousness which is clearly reflected as good behavior.

**How to procure mental health?**

In my view, the level of mental health depends upon mind of an individual because-

The mindset has two directions i.e. *Samkalpa* (positive) & *Vikalpa* (Negative).

मनोनामसंकल्पविकल्पात्मिका अंतःकरणवृत्तिः॥ (Vedantasar) *ShabdakalpadrumaTritiyaKhand.*

Mind regulates the indulgence of a person in virtuous and nonvirtuous acts.<sup>[4]</sup> How individual perceives situations, how he responds to life events, what is his ambition and how he takes failures, this all depends upon *Manovritti*. If mind is not properly driven & filled with negativity it surely affects mental health.

No doubt, everyone wants a happy and fulfilling life full of achievements but life does not always give us what we desire. It is our attitude of handling failures and setbacks which imparts quality to life. There are two main assets of a person which are mandatory for mental health.

One is **Positive mindset**- If our mind is positively oriented, we remain hopeful and see brighter side of life, we cope up better with down phases of life. Positivity gives us hope and optimism which in turn makes us more resilient. A person with negative attitude faces so many problems in all aspects of life be it personal, professional or social. Negative mind never yields anything positive. That is why, psychosomatic disorders are in full bloom & crimes are also increasing nowadays.

**Acceptance**- It is another attribute which makes person less stressed. If we can not change something, better is to accept it. More a person resists, more turbulence he invites. But acceptance is not easy to develop. Every person has a different psychology, different belief system so he reacts according to his own concepts. "Satva" "concept of *Ayurveda* clearly indicates tolerance level and reaction of an individual to diseases.

#### Is it possible to cultivate positive Mindset & Acceptance?

Definitely yes, because mind can be trained. There are numerous references in ancient texts which indicates controlling of mind & and refrain it from negativity.

➤ सत्त्वावजयःपुनरहितेभ्योऽर्थेभ्योमनोनिग्रहः। (Ch. Su. 11/57)<sup>[5]</sup>

➤ अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यातन्निरोधः। (P. Yo. Su. 1/12)<sup>[6]</sup>

➤ ध्यानहेयास्तदवृत्तयः। (P. Yo. Su.2/11)<sup>[1]</sup>

In this paper I would like to present a research work which involves increase in positivity of mental attitude & development of acceptance **due to meditation**.

#### Aims and Objectives of the research work

- Assessment of meditation practices on developing positivity in Mental Attitude
- Evaluation of development of acceptance

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

##### a. Conceptual study

For meditation, mental attitude and its *Ayurvedic* counterpart, description from various classics of *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, modern science & internet was taken.

##### b. Clinical study

For clinical study, 20 apparently healthy volunteers attending the OPD of our hospital were selected to do the meditation. The principle of this research work is based on the following *Sutra* of *Maharshi Patanjali*-  
ध्यानहेयास्तदवृत्तयः॥ (P. Yo. Su.2/11)<sup>[1]</sup>

Each individual practiced the given meditation techniques as follows-

Place (*Desha*) - *Agya Chakra* or *Bhroo Madhya* (*Shrimad Bhagvad Geeta 8/10*)<sup>[7]</sup>

#### Thought taken- - All the Men and Women of the world are my Brothers & Sisters.

Duration of meditation per day - 10 minutes morning and 10 minutes evening.

Total duration of trial - 3 weeks

Follow up - After 3 weeks

The process of meditation was divided into two parts-

- Focus at night- Volunteers were asked to focus on abovementioned thought (*Dharana*) & meditate on their chosen *Pradesha* i.e. *Agya Chakra* before going to sleep.
- Cleaning at morning- Volunteers were asked to clean their *Desha* (*Agya Chakra*) with the thought that "All the impurities, grossness & heaviness are melting and going out in the form of Smoke from the front" and imagine that as this process is going on, the structures behind are glowing". This was advised to done in the morning earliest. This was a kind of active meditation.

#### Evaluation of intensity of meditation practice

A **seven point criteria** was made and the intensity of meditation practice was being assessed on this criteria from the first day up to end of the trial.

- Willingness
- Sincerity
- Focus
- Acceptance
- Devotion
- Feeling
- Love

These were recorded just after completion of every session except point no 6 i.e. feeling which was assessed just before beginning of next session.

#### Criteria for assessment of attitude

For assessment of attitude, a **LIKERT SCALE**.<sup>[8]</sup> was developed and **grading was done** before & after practicing meditation to see the effect on attitude's positivity

Likert scale is a semantic scale to measure the attitude .It consists of following steps:

- Step 1-Statements collection
- Step 2-Direction judging
- Step 3-Discarding of neutral statements

- Step 4-Formatting the items to measure intensity.
- Step 5-Pilot test
- Scoring-To bring all the individual item scores on the same level, negative was given reverse scoring pattern.

Now this LIKERT SCALE questionnaire was given to volunteers before starting the meditation and they were requested to attempt the questions instantly & honestly. After that the formats were collected and data was noted down in a table as before trial (BT) score. All the volunteers were subjected to meditation as mentioned above for 21 days. After 21 days, on the day of completion of trial, again LIKERT SCALE questionnaire was given to them and requested to attempt like before. All the data was noted down as after trial (AT) score. The difference between BT and AT score was noted down.

#### Selection of volunteers

**Consent:** Written consent was taken before trial.

#### Inclusion criteria

**Table 1: Overall intensity of meditation practices Before and After study.**

| Criteria for overall Intensity of meditation practices for 20 volunteers | Average before trial=Total BT score /20 | Average after trial=total AT score/20 |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Willingness  | 62.3                                    | 72                                    |
| Sincerity  | 59                                      | 67.5                                  |
| Focus  | 36.35                                   | 66.35                                 |
| Acceptance   | 43.75                                   | 63.6                                  |
| Feeling  | 42.1                                    | 56.75                                 |
| Devotion   | 47.5                                    | 71.45                                 |
| Love   | 43.1                                    | 70.1                                  |
| <b>Total average % of intensity of meditation</b>                        | 47.7                                    | 66.8                                  |

**Table No. 2: % Change in positive attitude of whole group after meditation practices.**

| Total BT of 20 volunteers | Total AT of 20 volunteers | Total difference | Total % change |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 11357                     | 11717                     | 360              | 3.16           |

**Table 3: Statistical analysis of criteria of intensity of meditation Before & After trial.**

| Sr. No. | Criteria of Intensity of meditation | Average % during trial | $W_{critical}$ | $W_{Stat}$ | Significance(value) P value | Significance           |
|---------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1.      | Willingness                         | 66.6                   | 40             | 50.0       | Willingness p=0.130         | Insignificant          |
| 2.      | Sincerity                           | 64.76                  | 46             | 58.5       | Sincerity p=0.145           | Insignificant          |
| 3.      | Focus                               | 54.62                  | 52             | 11.5       | Focus p=<0.001              | Highly Significant     |
| 4.      | Acceptance                          | 58.75                  | 46             | 30.5       | Acceptance p=0.007          | Moderately Significant |
| 5.      | Feeling                             | 59.167                 | 46             | 40         | Feeling p=0.026             | Significant            |
| 6.      | Devotion                            | 55.624                 | 40             | 13         | Devotion p=<0.001           | Highly Significant     |
| 7.      | Love                                | 60.018                 | 40             | 12.5       | Love p=<0.001               | Highly Significant     |

**Table No. 4: Statistical analysis of change in positive inclination of attitude of volunteers.**

| Total Score on Likert Scale BT | Total Score on Likert Scale AT | Total Difference | Total % Change | $W_{critical}$ at 0.05 level | $W_{Stat}$ | P(value)  | Significance       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 11357                          | 11717                          | 360              | 64.58          | n=20<br>$W_c=52$             | 0          | 0.0001115 | Highly significant |

1. Apparently healthy volunteers willing for trial.
2. Group of 18 – 30 years irrespective of sex, Race, Religion and Socio-economic status.

#### Exclusion criteria

1. Volunteers beyond 18-30 years age group.
2. Volunteers with associated chronic ailments like D.M., Cardiac disorder, Renal disorder and Alcoholic liver disease, Chronic hemolytic anemia, Psychiatric disease etc.
3. Pregnant and Lactating mothers.

#### Laboratory investigations

The routine hematological examination viz. Hb gm%, TLC, DLC, ESR, FBS, B. Urea, S. Creatinine, S.Uric acid, S.Cholesterol, SGOT, SGPT was done before trial to rule out any pathology.

#### RESULTS

Collected data was sorted out & processed further by subjecting to statistical method i.e. WILCOXAN SIGN RANK TEST.

The data shows meditation practices are highly significant in increasing the positive inclination of mental attitude in apparently healthy volunteers.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Impact of meditation practices on acceptance (table no. 1&3)

- The table no 1. clearly shows an incremental effect of meditation on acceptance from 43.75% to 63.6%. With time people develop likeliness & level of acceptance increase in them as in the beginning, our feelings are not that intense .Efforts & time change everything.
- As per table no 3,  $p$  value = 0.007 shows this is moderately significant factor. Obviously one takes time to accept new process. But we can not overlook the fact that just sitting in meditation imparts promising results of positivity enhancement in mental attitude.

### 2. Impact of meditation practices on positivity in mindset ( table no. 2&4)

- As shown in table No.2, total % change in positive attitude was 3.16 % which is quite enthusiastic as its very difficult to change thinking, habits and attitude.

If such a small period & duration can yield positive results then meditating for longtime will definitely do the wonders.

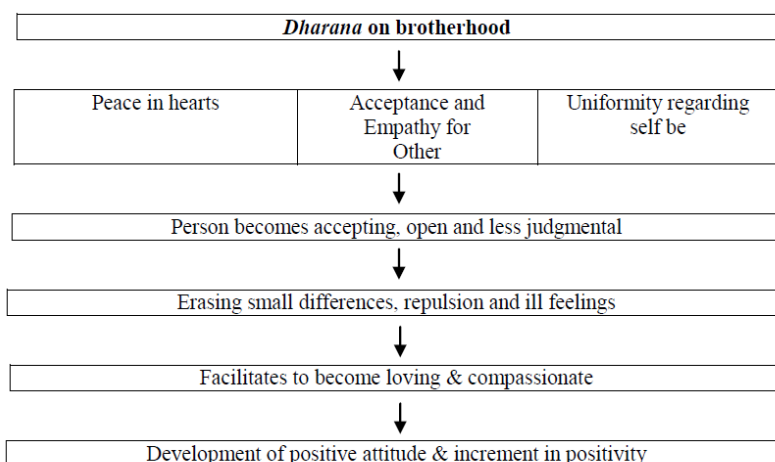
- As per table No.4, highly significant effect ( $p < 0.0001115$ ) was observed on change of attitude after doing Meditation i.e. Meditation process was found to be highly significant in changing human attitude.

### Probable mode of action for attitude change in this research trial

It may be due to its *Dharana* taken which is

### *All the people of the world are mine brothers and sisters.*

1. This signifies the uniformity for each other. Uniformity of origin from same source leads to empathy and acceptance for the others.
2. Person becomes more open, less judgemental and loving for each other.
3. This erases small repulsions, apprehensions and ill feelings for each other which further removes the negativity in attitudes for each other.
4. Positivity in attitude increases.



Apart from this research work,I would like to present some findings of researches which clearly indicates the effect of meditation on mental health;

### Benefits of meditation on mental health

1. Meditation improves psychomotor vigilance & may decrease sleep need.<sup>[9]</sup>
2. Meditation increase grey matter concentration in brain.<sup>[10]</sup>
3. Meditation reduces stress & anxiety in general.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup>
4. Meditation helps in regulating nonpsychotic mood and anxiety disorders.<sup>[14]</sup>
5. longterm meditation increase the ability to generate gamma waves in the brain which inturn signifies intense focus.<sup>[15]</sup>
6. It decreases depression<sup>[16] [17]</sup>

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