

IMPACT OF PRANAYAMA ON MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MODERN ERA

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Abstract - Everything around us is energy. Light, heat, sound etc are different forms of energy, which are defined on the Frequency Chart. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but only transformed. This transformation of energy is possible through Pranayama, because it addresses the root/source, i.e. the mind of the practitioner. Breath is the link between your mind and body. Pranayama helps in transmuting our negative emotions and also aids in reducing the density of our thoughts, which eventually leads to changing the landscape of our existence by bringing more clarity, calmness and stability in our thoughts and emotions - and thereby relationships. A human being is a culmination of body, mind, and spirit or energy – each demanding its own workouts. We tend to forget that our mind and spirit, though abstract in nature, are as essential to our fitness as other visible organs. Pranayama practice offers a workout in all these different areas (i.e. physical, mental and spiritual) by enabling us to take in abundant cosmic energy available around us. The very word "Cosmos" means order. So, our cosmos is not chaotic. When we align ourselves with the cosmos, we too are able to heal the body, calm the mind and rejuvenate our spirit. In short, it restores our power to create and reorient our lives

Key Words: Energy, Breath, Pranayama, Mind, Vibrations

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern science has proved today that 'Matter is Energy', meaning thereby that the whole existence is an assimilation of Vibrations or is reverberations of energies. In essence, vibrations are the dynamic expression of energy, forming a universal language that influences everything in the universe, including ourselves. Everything around us is energy, and energy manifests as vibrations at specific frequencies. [1]

Also, Yoga / Pranayama / Meditation is energy at work, wherein one is not the body alone, but layers of energy.

2. FLOW OF ENERGY

2.1 Energy flow takes place in the following manner:-

2.11 Breath - Pranayama.

2.12 Movement - Muscular / Sound / Silent Vibrations.

2.13 Thought - Meditation.

2.2 Every Asana you do, every Breath you take, and every Thought you think is designed to open up energy channels and add harmony within.

2.3 BREATH is the Bridge between Body and Energy. When Breath is Shallow, MIND is RESTLESS. When Breath is Deep, MIND is CALM.[2]

2.4 **Mind.** The mind is a home to thoughts and emotions. A human being thinks 60,000 thoughts in a day. Repeated thoughts become emotions. Emotions crystallize as attitudes. Attitudes shape our life and get stored as memories, which become automatic programming.[3]

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2.5 **Intellect.** Today, we have neglected an important faculty, which is the intellect (Buddhi). Intellect discriminates and tells us what is right and what is wrong. To nourish, sharpen and strengthen this faculty, we need to practice Pranayama and Meditation.[3]

2.6 Since self-improvement begins with Awareness, the same will be possible by following our Breath and aligning with the Cosmic Energy. This brings us in tune with the flow of life.[3]

3. SCIENCE BEHIND PRANAYAMA

3.1 Coming to individual level, our vibrations shape everything we experience. A small shift in our vibrations may seem insignificant. But, adding up over weeks, months and years of practice they amount to complete transformation of our reality. We actually don't see the world as it is, rather we see the world as WE ARE. According to Harvard University study only 15% of success comes from facts, 85% is driven by attitude.

- 3.11 If I am anxious - the world appears threatening.
- 3.12 If I am silently judging - I see faults in others.
- 3.13 If I am content - I see opportunities.
- 3.14 If I am stable - I see clearly and respond calmly.

3.2 Relationships also begin with energy and not with words.

- 3.21 If I carry anger - it seeps into my words.
- 3.22 If I carry expectations - others feel pressured even in silence.
- 3.33 If I carry acceptance - others feel safe without speaking.

3.3 So, I need to purify my internal space.[3] Role of Pranayama in Purifying Internal Space is as given below:-

<u>Energy Leaks</u>	<u>Plugs</u>	<u>Pranayama</u>
Repetitive negative thoughts / over-thinking / chasing perfection	Choose your thoughts, e.g. 'I am enough', 'I do enough', 'I have enough'.	Bhastrika Kapalabhati Kriya
Absorbing others' tensions / sorrows	Do not be a sponge. Be anchored in your peace while offering love.	Bahya Kumbhaka Ujjayi
Sensory / Digital over stimulation	Pause and recharge. Slow is the new fast.	Anulom - Vilom Bhramari Udgeeta Pranava

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3.4 Pranayama offers benefits at three levels :-[2]

3.41 PHYSICAL - Healing the body

3.42 MENTAL - Influencing our thoughts and emotions

3.43 SPIRITUAL - Effect on our subconscious tendencies

3.5 **Bhastrika**. This Pranayama basically works on the Kapha factor, balancing it. It generates tremendous heat in the body, increasing metabolism and balances the Tridoshas. Bhastrika activates the Body, Calms the Mind and helps in generating Gamma Brain Waves (which induces Whole Brain State called Hemisphere Synchronisation, leading to Super Learning).[2]

3.6 **Kapal Bhati**. It is a powerful kriya, which clears the Dead Space in the Lungs and balances the Tridoshas. It throws out the Toxins (both Physical and Mental) from the body as no other Pranayama does. This kriya results in a healthy body, active mind and clarity in thoughts.[2]

3.7 **Bahya Kumbhaka**. It is a powerful and energizing Pranayama, which is a combination of Breath Retention and Bandhas. It positively contributes to Respiratory, Digestive and Reproductive Health. It helps in eradicating disease from the root.[2]

3.8 **Ujjayi**. Ujjayi Pranayama puts us in touch with our emotions. Here vagus nerve is stimulated, which leads to calmness, reduces anxiety and promotes positive attitude. It balances the endocrine system. The sound of breath acts as an anchor for the mind, helping to calm thoughts and reduce stress.[2]

3.9 **Anulom-Vilom**. Anulom-Vilom brings clarity by balancing both our brain hemispheres. Intellectual brilliance does not necessarily translate into emotional sensitivity. We tend to forget that mind and intellect, though abstract, are as essential to our fitness as a strong body. They demand their DAILY Workout. This workout is provided by Anulom-Vilom.[2]

3.10 **Bhramari** Bhramari is a Musical Pranayama, which calms the mind and takes us to a meditative level. Here, we shut out the external world by closing our eyes and ears, i.e. we become 'Antar-Mukhi'. It activates our parasympathetic nervous system, improves sleep quality and calms agitated minds.[2]

3.11 **Udgeeta**. Aumkara Pranayama slows down our brain waves. We start functioning from the Alpha level, which is healing frequency. It insulates against stress and is extremely good for the heart. It balances hormone secretion and stimulates production of Happy Hormones (DOSE).[2]

3.12 **Pranava**. Pranava is a meditative pranayama. In meditation, mind stops processing outside information. The real benefit of meditation is the effect on consciousness itself. It can bring a profound change in the quality of one's life. The brain circuitry is quite literally being re-mapped in meditation. The sense that we are part of something larger than our individual selves remains with us.[4]

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 Clarity is not always found by searching harder but by staying still and silent long enough for understanding to arrive. We have the power to order and orient our lives and the ability to reassemble perceptions. Pranayama is not just a tool to relax your mind but is a Sacred Practice which dissolves fear, negative habits and emotional burdens.

4.2 One doesn't need to change the world. Just change your own energy levels and in doing so you change the world. So let your vibration be a blessing to every space you walk into and every soul you meet. It will be your

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legacy and your silent signature.

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