

Mudras for Women in Enhancing the Level of Oomph - A Pilot Trial in Virudhunagar

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ABSTRACT: *In the recent past modernisation of cultures, urbanisation and industrialisation have greatly influenced our way of living and we have tended to drastically deviate from those well established ancient principles practiced and professed by our sages. We are trying to seek apparently comfortable living conditions where physical activities have been replaced by labour saving machines and appliances and thus have grossly confronted the nature. Due to mechanic life the stress starts in the mind and slowly its effects can be seen on the body as well. It is very important to address this issue at the mind level. The immediate outlet to reduce stress in a safe and nurturing environment can be done by using mudras. The word mudras is derived from Sanskrit word Mud + Dhra meaning bliss +dissolving. Mudras dissolves duality and brings the deity and devotee. Mudras are hand, body or eye positions that facilitate certain energy flows in the body and by forming a specific mudra one can induce certain states of mind and consciousness. Mudras are an important part of religious practice. There are hundreds of these symbolic hand gestures, and each has a specific meaning. Mudras have been practiced throughout history, and we have evidence dating as far back as 1500 BC that hands were used in religious expression: When we practice mudras the nadis and chakras constantly radiate prana which normally escapes from the body and dissipates into the external world. By creating barrier within the body through the practice of mudra, the energy is redirected within. The aim of practicing mudra is to bring good health and equanimity of mind to its practitioners at all times under various pressure, inadequate sleep, depression and tensions. This study compiled the data for 25 women who had been coming continuously at least for 6 months daily except Saturdays and Sundays. Results : All the practitioners were assessed using Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, Numeric pain rating scale, Hospital anxiety and Depression scale and Barthel index score. Out of 25 women in this group, 3 practitioners have quality sleep, 19 women relieved from stress, while 1 woman couldn't balance the diabetic due to dietary indiscretion during festivals and for 2 women there was no change in body and mind. Out of 25 the 20 women before they come to practice daily they took 3 times tablets habitually for some reasons. But after their regular practice they took only one tablet and 10 women never take any tablets. Conclusion : Maximum changes were seen in autonomic variables and breath rate during the state of effortless meditation (dhyana). During mudra practice there was an increase in skin resistance and reduces in stress and tension which led to the harmonious among family and society.*

Key words: *Dharana, Mudras, Prana, Practitioners and Stress.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

In the recent past modernisation of cultures, urbanisation and industrialisation have greatly influenced our way of living and we have tended to drastically deviate from those well established ancient principles practiced and professed by our sages. We are trying to seek apparently comfortable living conditions where physical activities have been replaced by labour saving machines and appliances and thus have grossly confronted the nature. Due to mechanic life the stress starts in the mind and slowly its effects can be seen on the body as well. It is very important to address this issue at the mind level. The immediate outlet to reduce stress in a safe and nurturing environment can be done by using mudras. It is a hand exercise that produces happy endorphins. Mudra exercise is powerful sources for calming the mind and the body.^[1] Mudras delineate the manner in which the human being can be enhanced by proper integration of physical body, mind, bio-magnetism and life force. Mudra the hand gestures or poses are often used in yoga practice, meditation, and for healing purposes. For thousands of years people have been practising Mudras (also known as Hand Yoga). Some may think that these gestures are limited to Asia but in fact people have been doing different variations of Mudras in all parts of the globe for millenia. People say that these activities have been used to elevate consciousness, improve health and to gain more physical and spiritual power.

1. What is Mudras

The word mudras is derived from Sanskrit word Mud+Dhra or bliss +dissolving meaning that which dissolves duality and brings the deity and devotee.^[2] Mudras are hand, body or eye positions that facilitate certain energy flows in the body and by forming a specific mudra one can induce certain states of mind and consciousness. They generally work by preventing the dissipation of prana (life-force) from the fingertips. In order to do this, one brings the fingers together in various ways, which helps create certain subtle energy circuits.^[3] These circuits then channel prana along particular pathways to affect the mind/body mechanism in specific ways. Although their effects are subtle, the changes they produce can be sensed by those with refined awareness. Mudras are psychic, emotional, devotional and aesthetic gestures or attitudes. Mudras can be experienced as attitudes of energy flow, intended to link individual pranic force with universal and cosmic force. They are combination of subtle physical movements which alter mood, attitude and perception, and which deepens awareness and concentration. A mudra may involve the whole body in a combination of simple exercise, pranayama. Intense practice can lead to awakening of the pranas, chakras and kundalini.

1.1. Meaning of Hand Mudras :

According to custom Mudras are typically used during meditation and pranayama as a way to direct energy flow throughout the body. According to yoga philosophy, different areas of the hand stimulate specific areas of the brain. By applying light pressure to these areas of the hand, we will “activate” corresponding region of the brain, similar to reflexology. Mudras also symbolize various feelings, emotions and representatives of various states of being. In modern days we have many hand movements and symbols that are associated with a certain meaning: clapping, palm out meaning stop, holding the hands up signify surrender, even the crude gesture of “flipping the bird”.^[4] Since the entire universe is made up of five elements : fire, air, space, earth and water and the body is also composed of these same five elements, the fingers of the hand have been used traditionally to represent these five elements individually. Hand positions play an important role in many societies and religions.

1.2. Mudras in Religion

Mudras are an important part of religious practice. There are hundreds of these symbolic hand gestures, and each has a specific meaning. Mudras have been practiced throughout history, and we have evidence dating as far back as 1500 BC that hands were used in religious expression: the Egyptian deity Ra was shown as a sunburst with each ray terminating in an open hand.^[5] Classically, Mudras used in Hinduism and Buddhism portray esoteric realities and are used to affirm ones commitment and practice, for visualizing, to establish concentration and much more.^[6] In Islamic mysticism, hand gestures are often used to help produce an altered state of awareness. Sufi dervishes pose their hands in specific mudra like signs while dancing, and some Sufi sects trace the ninety-nine names of God on their bodies with their right hand while focusing upon God through chanting. Mudras have been depicted in Christianity. Christ is often painted with his right hand in prithvi mudra, which is said to provide stability and cure weaknesses of the body and mind.^[7] There are also depictions of Christ with his right hand in pran mudra which is said to increase vitality and protect the body against disease. A Mudra is a symbolic hand gesture used in Hindu and Buddhist iconography, performing arts, and spiritual practice, including yoga, dance, drama and tantra. Not just a piece of art, these gestures is often used in the Indian classical dances to depict creatures and situations.

1.3. Mudras in Bharathanatyam

There are a total of 28 mudras in Natya shastra written by sage Bharata in second century. It mentions that the dancer should sing the song by the throat, express the meaning of the song through hand gestures, show the state of feelings by eyes and keep track of the time with feet. Bharata Natyam Mudra - fifty-five root mudras are classified as Asamyukta Hasta - 23- one hand gesture like Pataka, Tripataka, Mayura, Shikhara and Kapitta Samyukta Hasta - 22- two hands gesture like Anjali, Kopotam, Swastikam and varaha.^[8] Even in Yoga physical, mental and spiritual practices that aim to soothe and pacify a person – these gestures are used during meditation that directs the flow of energy into one’s body. While some mudras, as depicted, are from the dance family, some are from the yoga family as well.

II. How do Mudras Work:

The nadis and chakras are constantly radiate prana which normally escapes from the body and dissipates into the external world. By creating barrier within the body through the practice of mudra, the energy is redirected within. Once the dissipation of prana is arrested through the practice of mudra, the mind becomes introverted, inducing states of sense withdrawal (pratyahara) and concentration (dharana).^[9] Each mudra sets up a different link and has a correspondingly different effect on the body, mind and prana. This helps the practitioner snap out of instinctive habit patterns and establish a more refined consciousness

2.1. Aim

The aim is to bring good health and equanimity of mind to its practitioners at all times under various pressure, in adulat sleep, depression and tensions. Nowadays large numbers of persons attend clinics or follow other practices for reducing stress and for improving physical look. For them the practicing of mudras with concentration focuses on the development of personality of individual in the following levels.^[10]

- Physical Level: Makes the body work more efficiently
- Mental Level : Enhances the power of imagination, creativity and will power.
- Intectual Level : Enhances the power of sharpness and concentration.
- Emotional Level: Enables to systematically sharpen and sensitise the emotions.
- Spiritual Level: Helps to move towards the causal state of mind by introspection.

This study was undertaken to find the effects on physique, social behavior, feeling and emotions, ability manage stress, interaction with family and friends in case of a group of women who performed Mudras regularly.

III. Methodology

There has been a regular of Bharathanatyam and Yoga mudras practices in Arunachalanadar Dhava Maiyam and UdayaYoga Maiyam in Virudhunagar from 6 to 7 in the morning and evening for women for the last 10 years. The women covered in the present study were 50 in the age group of 40 to 69 who had mudra practice regularly for continuous 6 months.^[11] Mudras were practice which is suitable for all climates were followed. None of the internal parts of the body are subjected to any strain. Some of the following Mudras^[12] were practiced by women

- ❖ Yoga mudras –Mana mudra, Hasta mudra, Kaya mudra, Bandha mudra, Adhara mudra.
- ❖ Bharatha mudras - Pataka, Tripataka, Mayura, Shikhara, Anjoli, Kopotam, Swastikam.
- ❖ Buddhist mudras- Abhaya, Bhumisparsha, Dharmachakra, Dhyana, Varada,Vajra,Vitarka
- ❖ Om mudra – helps for peace and tranquility and to maintain mental stability.
- ❖ Yoni mudra - helps nervous system to be calmed, stabled, relax and maintain mental clarity
- ❖ Kubera Mudra – helps for wish fulfillment and manifesting desires
- ❖ Bronchial Mudra - helps for people suffering from respiratory ailments
- ❖ Matangi mudra – helps in breathing rhythm around solar plexus and balances energy in this area
- ❖ Dhyani Mudra – reduce depression,for meditation, and concentration
- ❖ Uttarabodhi Mudra - helps for relaxation and recharging body batteries
- ❖ Linga Mudra- helps in restore confidence energy enhancing.
- ❖ Laughter Mudra - induces wisdom and lightness in demeanor.
- ❖ Bhudi Mudra- restores fluid balance of the body and treats dryness (problems like dry mouth, dry lips, dry throat, dry skin, dry eyes, burning sensation in the urine)
- ❖ Hridya Mudra –reduce heart disease, Asthuma and respiration related disease
- ❖ Jala Mudra – assist blood purification and skin diseases
- ❖ Prana Mudra – removes eye problems, nervous problem and charges all parts of the body
- ❖ Surya Mudra – decrease obesity and cholesterol
- ❖ Vayu Mudra – free join pains and stomach problems
- ❖ Prithvi Mudra –boost for peace of energy and mind
- ❖ Gyana Mudra – increase brain power,sleep quality, reduces depression and stress
- ❖ Varuna mudra – beneficial for dehydration and works as natural blood purifiers
- ❖ Shunaya Mudra – decrease the disease of gums and ear problem

By trained mudras with concentration is the simple technique of learning how to pay attention and understand the various levels of our self – the body, the breath and the mind. As for as food, it is concerned that simple, fresh, nutritious food that is not over cooked is best for the trainees.

In the training group out of 50 women, there were 20 who were in menopause symptoms, stress, disorder in sleep, tension and some were having different ailments like asthma, diabetic, spondylosis (neck and back pain) and 30 were having no complaint. During the training, the trainee were taught to analyses their thoughts and regulate their action, moralise desires through which the trainee could analyses them and decide how to act them, neutralize anger, eradicate worries- which can be achieved by analyzing them, finding out the causes and how to deal with them, realize self- consciousness. On knowing cause and effect system under the law of nature and the benefits of autosuggestion and blessings, the individual can produce good and welcoming results, which help them free from stress, tensions and reduces their ailments like asthma, ear and nervous problems, cholesterol, depression, skin diseases, diabetic and spondylosis.

IV. Results and Discussions:

In this paper I have compiled the data for 20 women who had complaints in body and mind and also who had been coming continuously at least for 6 months daily (November 2014 – April 2015) except Saturdays and Sundays. Though originally I have collected data for 20 women, but due to personal reasons 5 of them could not maintain regularity and they reported to leave the practice to the teacher after a gap of two or three months in between the fixed span of six months.

It is worth mentioning here that the mudra practitioners were told the importance of balanced diet and they were instructed to do normal daily activity as before joining class. The practitioners were measured by used questionnaires, interviews, directive observation and in some cases Doctors testing with consulting. All the practitioners were assessed using **Numeric Pain Rating Scale (NRS)** indicate the intensity of current, best, unpleasant and worst pain levels on a scale of 0 - no pain to 10 - worst pain. **Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)** is an instrument used to measure the quality and patterns of sleep and differentiates “poor” “disorder” and “good” sleep. **Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)** has been validated for use in primary care and designed to assess both anxiety and depression and **Barthel Index Score (BIS)** is to establish degree of independence from any help, physical or verbal, however minor and for whatever reason. The data obtained during the present study are shown in the following Table. The table below shows the difference between Before Practice (BP) and After Regular Practice (ARP) for 6 months. The table shows the practitioners feature by the domain given as by the following description.

NRS -- No pain (NP) / Adequate (AE) / Dullness by Little Pain (DLP) / Worst pain (WP).

PSQI -- Pleasant (PT) / Good sleepers(GS) / Poor sleepers (PS) / Disorder sleepers (DS).

HADS – Normal (NL) /Mild (MD) /Moderate (ME) /Severe.(SE)

BIS -- Independent (IDP) / Occasional (OL) / Needs help (NH) / Major help (MH)

Assessment about the Condition of the Practitioners ^[12]

S.N	NRS (BP)	NRS (ARP)	PSQI (BP)	PSQI (ARP)	HADS (BP)	HADS (ARP)	BIS (BP)	BIS (ARP)
1	DLP	NP	DS	GS	ME	MD	MH	OL
2	WP	AE	PS	GS	SE	MD	NH	OL
3	DLP	NP	PS	PT	ME	NL	NH	IDP
4	AE	NP	GS	PT	ME	NL	NH	IDP
5	WP	NP	PS	GS	ME	NL	MH	OL
6	DLP	NP	GS	PT	NL	NL	OL	IDP
7	AE	NP	PS	PT	ME	MD	NH	IDP
8	AE	AE	GS	PT	MD	NL	NH	IDP
9	DLP	NP	GS	GS	ME	NL	MH	OL
10	AE	AE	GS	PT	ME	NL	OL	IDP
11	WP	NP	PS	GS	ME	NL	MH	OL
12	DLP	NP	GS	PT	NL	NL	OL	IDP
13	AE	NP	GS	PT	ME	NL	NH	OL
14	DLP	NP	GS	GS	MD	NL	NH	IDP
15	AE	NP	GS	PT	MD	NL	OL	IDP

The above table clearly explains that the conditions of the practitioners in various aspects like, reduce from pain, release from stress, fresh in mind, good in sleep, do their work without the support of others, able to adjust with society and in reduce diabetics is achieved via practice. All the irregular practitioners showed gain in body weights and increase in other parameters as compared to the general trend shown in case of regular mudra practitioners. Out of 15 women in this group, 10 practitioners relieve from stress, 3 women were active in coordinating their family business and 1 woman has no change in body and mind while 1 woman gained the diabetic due to dietary indiscretion during festivals. The 20 women before they come to practice they took 3 tablets daily three times for some reasons. But after their regular practice they took only one tablet and 10 women never take any tablets. It’s really miraculous for me. The practitioners said that the practice of mudras are easy to follow because whenever they feel free they do the mudras they don’t need particular place or time.

V. Conclusions:

The studies noted the significant of maximum changes seen in autonomic variables and breathe rate during the state of effortless meditation (dhyana). The noteworthy witness from the point of data was see reductions in low-frequency heart rate variability – a sign of sympathetic nervous system activation – in depressed women. By practicing this, women were able to control their emotions and they were able to concentrate and balance both personal and social life. Studies show that the practice of mudras led to increase in skin resistance and reduce in stress and tension which led to a harmony among family and society.

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