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Meditative yoga for integrated health care**Inderdeep Kaur**

University of Delhi, India

While embracing the latest fitness fads, it is important not only to keep the physical body fit but also one's mind and soul. The Indian traditional practices over centuries have helped achieve total fitness of one self. According to the science of yoga, human body is made up of five basic elements (or tatvas): air, water, fire, earth and ether or aakash. The five fingers of the hand are regarded as representative symbols of these vital elements in the body. The thumb corresponds to the source of balancing the flow of Agni tatva. The Vayu tatva flow is controlled by the fourth (or the index) finger, the middle finger in the mudras is for regulating the Akasha tatva in the body, while the controls of Prithvi and the Jala tatvas lie in the ring finger and the little finger, respectively. When a finger is brought into contact with the thumb in a specific manner, a mudra is formed. Mudras in one or both hands according to Vedas help in maintaining the distribution of the five elements in body. Therefore, the disease caused by the imbalance of an element in the body is cured by a specific mudra. Each mudra makes a circuit between thumb and a finger, stimulates certain receptors present in the finger tips and sends a message to the brain. These messages reach brain centres that get activated and through a series of reactions, energize our system. Since the mudra guides energy flow and reflexes to the brain centre, repetition of a mudra over a period of time makes this subtle action more effective. When a mudra is done with full concentration and is assisted with deep breathing and chanting mantra, a state of calmness is attained, brain waves are relaxed and soul is rejuvenated. This results in a content soul, energized body and a happy mind. An ancient Indian way of viewing body, divides human system into seven energy centres or chakras. When the chakras are balanced, the whole body works in harmony and we feel elevated, energized and fit. It is essential that seven chakras which run from the base of the spine to the head in the human body stay open, aligned and fluid. In case of any blockage in this path, energy cannot flow and the body starts losing its vitality. So, to possess a healthy mind and body, energy must flow freely in these chakras which are possible by practicing the trio of yoga, meditation and traditional practices.

kaurid2006@gmail.com

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