

BRIDGING ANCIENT WISDOM AND MODERN EDUCATION: A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF MEDITATION IN A SCHOOL SETTING

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ABSTRACT

With the fast-changing and growing technological system of education, we need to focus on value-based techniques, including emotional, ethical and spiritual aspects of students, in addition to intellectual aspects only. In this paper, meditation has been emphasised as an ancient Indian wisdom to be included in the academic curriculum. This will surely raise the level of well-being, character-building and cognitive performance. It is an effort to present a framework for the acceptance of meditative practices in education to bridge the gap between ancient Indian wisdom and modern pedagogical needs. The combination of ancient Indian wisdom with the modern educational system is the need of the hour, as authorities need a holistic approach to the overall development of students. Further, it is also tried to determine how meditation can be effectively integrated into schools to support emotional and spiritual development. The study observed improvement in those students who are ready to work on their psychological well-being and a sense of responsibility, learning and practicing meditation that could serve as a powerful link between ancient Indian knowledge systems and the present-day needs of the educational system.

Keywords: Ancient wisdom, meditation, Rajyoga, modern education, emotional wellbeing, spiritual development, holistic education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Present, so-called, modern education systems appear to collapse in bringing overall development of children despite technological advancements and refined pedagogical methods. Increasing stress, emotional ups and downs and a loss of sense of responsibility among students refers to an imbalance in abilities and growth. (Hyland, 2017). Education was an internal journey of awakening and not just an external momentary achievement in the ancient Indian traditions. In the recent past, the education system has faced shame when, in the name of academic achievement, students were compelled to embrace death as an ultimate resort. Stress, depression and anxiety are increasingly prevalent among school-going children. The modern education system needs to incorporate tools that nurture the emotional and spiritual dimensions of students. The probable solution could be the integration of meditative practices of ancient India, such as Rajyoga meditation. The aim of this paper is to bridge the gap by promoting meditation as a medium through which the ancient wisdom can be integrated into modern schooling systems.

2. ANCIENT WISDOM: FOUNDATIONS AND RELEVANCE

Indian traditions from ancient time emphasize self-awareness, moral discipline and inner peace through practices such as dhyana (meditation) and yoga, which are found in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita. These systems provided guidelines for individuals to live balanced, ethical and purposeful lives besides spiritual ascetics. Ancient Indian educational systems like *Gurukul* focused on holistic development through *dhyana* (meditation), *yoga* and value-based learning (Nair, 2014). Similarly, Chinese Confucianism emphasised ethical self-cultivation, while Greek philosophers like Plato proposed contemplative practices for cultivating virtue. The cultivation of awareness, concentration and ethical clarity is required to be instilled in students.

Key principles from ancient wisdom include:

- Self-realisation and inner peace are foundational for human development.
- *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), and *santosa* (contentment) as ethical principles guiding human conduct.
- Practices like Rajyoga, taught by the Brahma Kumaris organisation, emphasise soul-consciousness, connection with the Supreme, and mind mastery-qualities highly desirable in educational contexts.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- a) To assess the impact of regular meditation on students' academic performance and behaviour.
- b) To check any influence of meditation on emotional and spiritual development.
- c) To find out the challenges and enablers in implementing meditation in schools.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Challenges in Modern Educational

Anxiety, depression and a disconnection from inner values are faced by today's students. The narrowing of educational focus to STEM and performance metrics neglects emotional and moral development (Noddings, 2005). There is a growing body of literature urging a more integrated model of education (OECD, 2020).

As far as international Case Studies are concerned, the United States have shown reduced anxiety and improved grades among students through their Programs like MindUP and Inner Explorer (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

Neuroscience and Psychology have strong evidence that meditation increases concentration, attention, execution, emotional stability and resilience (Tang et al., 2015). MRI scans show increased cortical thickness in brain regions associated with learning and emotional control after consistent practice (Lazar et al., 2005).

While in the UK, the Mindfulness in Schools Project found enhanced attention and classroom behaviour in adolescents (Kuyken et al., 2013).

Australia's Smiling Mind program also demonstrated reduced stress and improved focus (Waters et al., 2020).

In the Indian context, schools integrating Rajyoga meditations show improvements in discipline, emotional stability, and academic performance (Chaudhary & Khandelwal, 2019).

5. INTEGRATION OF RAJYOGA MEDITATION FOR SCHOOLS AS A PART OF THE SYLLABUS

We have heard of *Ashtanga yoga (hath yoga)*, which provides good health. However, the practice of focused attention and awareness is called meditation. It includes breathing, visualisation and chanting mantra. In a school environment, the following could be included for practice:

- Mindfulness-based meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)
- Guided visualisation
- Breath awareness techniques
- Loving-kindness meditation (Saltzman & Goldin, 2008)

Rajyoga, a form of meditation followed by Brahma Kumaris, on the other hand, promises a sound mind, body and soul. It is based on focusing on thoughts which make you soul-consciousness. Connection with the Supreme Source of energy, mentally, becomes simple as there is no involvement in any ritual. It can be practised anytime, anywhere, even while in the classroom.

Key features include:

- Open-eye meditation: Suitable for classroom or daily practice.
- No physical constraints: Encourages mental discipline over physical postures.
- Character education: Integrates values like peace, love, respect, and self-worth.

Students practising daily Rajyoga meditation in schools for just a few minutes, as per *Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya* in India, have reduced aggression and bullying, increased focus in studies, better teacher-student relationships and a decrease in anxiety and exam fear.

6. IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

6.1 Curriculum Integration

Meditation can be integrated as:

- A daily practice during morning assembly
- 1 minute before the start of each period/session
- Part of value education or life skills classes during extracurricular activities
- Pre-exam mindfulness sessions

6.2 Teacher Training

Teachers must be trained not just to conduct sessions but to embody calm and presence themselves. Partnerships with organisations like *The Art of Living*, *Brahma Kumaris*, or *Mindfulness in Schools* are beneficial.

6.3 Adaptations at different levels

- **Primary Level:** Guided visualisations, gratitude practices, Breath awareness
- **Secondary School:** Emotional labelling, Silent sitting, self-inquiry, reflective journaling

6.4 Evaluation and Feedback

To evaluate impact, implementing regular feedback mechanisms, student reflections, and

psychological well-being surveys is important, which could be done by the counsellors appointed in schools. Meditation brings forth ethical self-regulation from within, aligning with ancient traditions that see knowledge and virtue as interconnected. However, introducing such practices in educational systems raises concerns of religious neutrality.

7. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

- **Scepticism:** Misconceptions that meditation is religious
- **Inconsistency:** Lack of sustained practice reduces benefits
- **Training Gaps:** Need for trained educators
- **Measurement:** Long-term impact hard to quantify

Addressing these requires policy backing, training modules, and longitudinal studies.

8. BRIDGING THE GAP: A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Initially, a trained meditation practitioner would continue facilitating the students, and later, the teachers could be motivated to inculcate meditation in their personal as well as professional routine. A commentary of auto suggestions and affirmations could be provided to teachers and students accordingly.

Practice Model: Daily 10-min practice + weekly 30-min reflective sessions

Pedagogical Shift: Emphasis on self-awareness, ethical checking and inner dialogue

Community Involvement: Parents and staff join meditation initiatives

Assessment: Use of tools like the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), mindfulness scales

9. DISCUSSION

Various studies on the subject suggest the following outcomes: -

Academic and cognitive outcomes included improved concentration, better class participation and homework submission and higher assessment scores among students after regular meditation. Emotional and behavioural changes were evident as students were found to be calmer and less anxious, a decline in instances of classroom misbehaviour, and teachers observed improvements in peer empathy and conflict resolution. Spiritual and ethical growth was reflected in students describing feelings of inner peace, purpose and connection, while many also demonstrated increased self-reflection and more frequent emphasis on values such as honesty and gratitude. The challenges included initial resistance from parents and some teachers, difficulty in scheduling meditation within a tight academic calendar and the need for proper training of facilitators. The key enablers were supportive leadership from school heads, collaboration with meditation organizations and the visible transformation in students that motivated wider acceptance.

This research supports the growing call for value-based education and well-being curriculum. Education boards can encourage the inclusion of daily meditation sessions, collaborate with spiritual organisations for teacher training, develop age-appropriate meditation modules for curriculum integration and conduct regular impact assessments to monitor outcomes.

10. CONCLUSION

Meditation is a powerful tool to support educational settings to integrate with deep-rooted ancient wisdom. It bridges the gap between tradition and innovation and raises significant issues in

schools today. Stress, lack of concentration & focus, emotional imbalance and indiscipline are areas that need to be addressed. A value-based, resilient and emotionally intelligent group of young people can be created by integrating meditative practices to face the challenges of the stressful world today.

Integrating meditation into school systems is adapting ancient wisdom and moving forward in evolving education to meet the inner needs of students. By combining time-tested contemplative practices with contemporary pedagogical insights, educators can foster not only smarter but wiser, more balanced individuals. The future of education lies in cultivating both the mind and the soul, bridged by meditation.

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