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Understanding the Importance of Mental Concentration from the Perspective of Positive Psychology and Yoga for Effective Value Incultation among Learners

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Abstract:

The quality of life depends on the quality of experiences, the quality of experiences depends on the quality of intakes through our senses and it is the mind which decides the exposures to the senses. Thus, control of mind is at the core of leading a quality, worthy life. Though value incultation has become a part and parcel of our school curriculum to develop the learners' worthy members of a society and nation, there is some reasons for which the aim of value incultation is not achieved to its optimum level. The present paper is a search – (i) to find out the of gap between

the knowledge and application of values, (ii) to study the importance of mental concentration from the perspective of positive psychology., and (iii) to find out the techniques of mental concentration through yoga psychology. Content analysis method has been followed for the present study. The works of Swami Vivekananda, 'Flow' by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and 'Yogasutra' by Patanjali have been analyzed to understand the mind, its function and its management. The study has found out a scientific method of mental concentration and mental concentration given by yoga psychology which will help to lead a quality, successful and worthy life on the part of all whoever follows the method of mental concentration.

Key words: *Quality life, quality experience, mental concentration, yoga psychology.*

1. Introduction :

The education system of ancient India had put great emphasis on the value promotion among the learners. There had been a holistic approach as it was consisted of two types of education- 'para vidya' and 'apara vidya' which helped them to understand their real self so that through self-management they can lead a peaceful and harmonious life. In present times when there is the "erosion of the essential social, moral and spiritual values and an increase in cynicism at all

levels”(Education for Values in School-A Framework, 2016)¹, different commissions, committees and policies like-The National Education Policy (N.E.P Draft-2019)², National Policy on Education (N.P.E- 1968, 1986)³, ; National Curriculum Framework-2005 (N.C.F-2005)⁴, National Focus Group on Education for Peace (NCF-2005), National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000)⁵; Delor’s Committee Report “Learning: the treasure within” (1996)⁶ time and again emphasized the inculcation different values that should be in the school curriculum and the strategies through which the values can be imbibed among the learners. New Education Policy-2020 has focused on the values like- non-violence, truth, honesty, peace, forgiveness, tolerance, mercy, equality, etc. (4.6.8.1). The National Focus Group on Education for Peace (NCF-2005) in the section-6: Education for peace: values and skills has focused on the values and skills like- love, truth, purity- both physical and mental, ahimsa, a spirit of service so that peace and harmony in a multi-cultural nation like us can be restored. For developing the values NCFSE, 2000⁷ suggested “A comprehensive programme of value inculcation must start at the very earliest stage of school education as a regular part of school’s daily routine.”⁸. The Delor’s Commission Report “Learning: the treasure within” (1996)⁹ opined, “Education in tolerance and respect for other people, a prerequisite for democracy, should be regarded as a general and ongoing enterprise.”¹⁰ Now, in the curriculum of CBSE, ICSE and of different states the moral education or value inculcation has become a part and parcel of the regular curriculum to a certain extent. But in spite of that the degradation of moral and ethical values among youngsters in an emerging issue.

2. Aims & Objectives:

- i) To find out the cause of gap between the knowledge and application of values.
- ii) To study the importance of mental concentration from the perspective of positive psychology.
- iii) To find out the techniques of mental concentration through yoga psychology.

¹ National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2016). *Education for Values in School- A Framework*. New Delhi, India: Gulati, S. & Pant, D.

² Ministry of Human Resource Development Government of India. (2019). Draft National Education Policy, 2019. New Delhi, India: Author.

³ Government of India. (1968 &1986) National Policy on Education, 1968 & 1986. New Delhi, India: Author.

⁴ NCERT (2005). National Focus Group on Education for Peace. New Delhi. National Council of Educational Research and Training.

⁵ NCERT (2005). National Curriculum Framework – 2005. New Delhi. National Council of Educational Research and Training, 36-42

⁶ Delor, J. (1996). *Learning: The Treasure within*. Report of UNESCO of the International Commission of Education for the 21st century. Paris : UNESCO.

⁷ National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2000). *National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2000*. New Delhi, India: Author.

⁸. Ibid; Footnote-7

⁹ Ibid; Footnote-6

¹⁰ Ibid; Footnote-6

3. Literature Review:

Research studies have shown that degradation of moral and ethical values among youngsters in an emerging issue (Bhakta & Dutta, 2017; Boruah, 2017)¹¹. Besides, the aim of moral or value inculcation which is to develop among learners a balanced emotional health so that the problems like- anxiety, fear, depression, restlessness cannot affect the mental health of the learners especially the adolescent learners and youngsters, is not achieved optimally. Depression, anxiety, fear is very common among the adolescent school-going children (Jayashree et.al. 2018)¹². This leads to a critical analysis of the present value inculcation programme. Different research studies on value orientation reveal that presenting a role model before the students is the best way of value inculcation (Thornberg & Oguz, 2013)¹³. Teachers are the powerful source of value inculcation (Collinson, 2012)¹⁴. As only an enlightened lamp can enlighten others, the value-based life of teacher is the best way to motivate the learners for value inculcation. That's why the proper value orientation of the teachers is important (Sucharita, 2011)¹⁵. So, mental concentration is important to inculcate values among learners especially.

4. Operational Definition of the Key Terms:

- **Mental Concentration:** For the present study Mental Concentration refers to the technique and power to manage our own mind so that it can work according to the purpose of our lives that is based on values.
- **Effective Value Inculcation:** Here Effective Value Inculcation refers to implementing the knowledge of values to every activity performed in the day-to-day life.
- **Positive Psychology:** Here self-management, purposeful living through serving others, quality living, etc. these aspects of positive psychology are focused.
- **Yoga:** For the present study it refers the eight fold means as proposed by sage Patanjali in his "Yogasutra".

¹¹ Bhakta, K., & Dutta, N. (2017). Degradation of moral and ethical values among Indian youths: an emerging issue. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, 3(6), 336-340.

Boruah, P.J. (2017). Degradation of moral values among young generation in India: an emerging issue. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 4(12), 188-190.

¹² K. Jayashree, K., Mithra, P.P. & Nair, M. K. C. (2018). Depression and Anxiety Disorders among Schoolgoing Adolescents in an Urban Area of South India. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, 43(1). S28-S32.

¹³Thornberg, R., Oguz, E. (2013). Teachers' views on values education: A qualitative study in Sweden and Turkey. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 59(1), 49-56.

¹⁴ Collinson, V. (2012). Sources of teachers' values and attitude. *Teacher Development*, 16(3), 321-344.

¹⁵ Sucharita, R. (2011) *A study of moral judgement of secondary school students in relation to some variables* (Doctoral Dissertation, Sri Padmavathi Women's University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, INDIA)

5. Methodology:

The present study comes under documentary analysis. Content analysis method has been followed as data collecting tool for the present study focusing on mind and its components, how it works, its nature and need of managing it, etc. Different research studies have been analysing particularly their findings on value degradation and its causes. Then the works of Swami Vivekananda particularly his 'Raj Yoga', 'Flow' by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and 'Yogasutra' by Patanjali have been analyzed to understand the mind and its vrittis, its function and its management. In the present study there are two variables. Mind management is the independent variable and value inculcation is the dependent variable.

6. Data Analysis & Interpretation:

6.1 Data Analysis:

Meta analysis of the research studies that have found out value degradation and its causes have been done. Then the works of Swami Vivekananda particularly his 'Raj Yoga', 'Flow' by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and 'Yogasutra' by Patanjali have been analyzed to understand the mind and its vrittis, its function and its management. Sutras from 2 to 49 from the book "Patanjali Yoga Sutras" translated and commentary, written by Swami Prabhavananada have been analysed in the present study. The whole book "Raj Yoga" by Swami Vivekananda has been analyzed.

The analysis is based on three focal points-

- i) Mind and its components,
- ii) Mind and its functions
- iii) Techniques of controlling the mind through the practice of mental concentration.

6.2 Interpretation:

i) Objective-I: The cause of gap between the knowledge and application of the values:

Research studies have found out that there is a gap between the theory and practice of character education at the high school level by investigating the teachers' knowledge of character education, their belief in character education and their role as educators for character development and in character education both in the school and in their own classrooms (Jakubowski, 2013). Though the students have theoretical knowledge regarding moral value the implementation of the value in their real-life situations is not adequate (Kanzal et al., 2016)¹⁶. Attitude plays very important role in implementing anything into action. Only knowledge is not sufficient to be a good human being. Sense training is very much important for the

¹⁶ Kanzal, V.R., Subikshalasshmi, G., & Goswami, L. (2016). Moral Education: current values in students and teachers' effectiveness in inculcating moral values in students, International Journal of Indian Psychology, 4(1), 81.

implementation of the values into action. The experience that we have forms our attitude and it is our attention that takes the inputs through our five senses. So, in order to change our attitude, the control over what we take is important. It is our own mind that decides for us through our intellect what is to take and what not. That's why unless one has control over mind, one cannot change one's attitude and character. So, an uncontrolled mind is responsible for the gap between the knowledge and application of values. As Swami Vivekananda said, "The mind uncontrolled and unguided will drag us down, down, for ever- rend us, kill us; and the mind controlled and guided will save us, free us." (Vivekananda, 1963)¹⁷.

ii) Objective- II: Importance of mental concentration from the perspective of positive psychology.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, one of the pioneers of Positive psychology who worked on the aspect of concentration for more than thirty years opined that the quality of our lives depends on the quality of experience and the quality of experience depends on the quality of concentration - "People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us can come to being happy... Contrary to what we tend to assume, the normal state of mind is chaos...when we are left alone, with no demands on attention, the basic order of the mind reveals itself...Entropy is the mind state of consciousness-a condition that is neither useful nor enjoyable."(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990¹⁸). According to Csikszentmihalyi, the 'natural' state of mind is one of chaos and 'psychic entropy'. As Csikszentmihalyi explained, psychic entropy is a phenomenon where the mind will be in disorder because it is inundated by problems, which means that thoughts are scattered and it is difficult to think clearly and pay attention to the goals which are a priority.

Besides, the marshmallow experiment by Walter Michael of Stanford University with 4 years old children very clearly shows that the self-management plays very vital role to bring success in life. As those children who delayed their gratification to get the better rewards, after 14 years when Michael studied them, it was found that they excelled in their lives than the children who failed to control their selves. The very alarming fact is that even fourteen years of formal education could not help them to manage their selves. As a result, they have wasted their energy and time by taking wrong decisions in their lives. According to Swami Vivekananda -"Ninety percent of thought-force is wasted by the ordinary human being, and therefore, he is constantly committing blunders; the trained man or mind never makes a mistake...Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration" (Vivekananda, 1963)¹⁹. Here lies the importance of mental concentration.

¹⁷ Vivekananda. (1963). *The complete works of Swami Vivekananda Volume VI* (7th ed.). Advaita Ashrama, India.

¹⁸ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

¹⁹ Ibid- Footnote-17

iii) Objective -III: Finding out the techniques of Mental-concentration through yoga psychology.

According to Swami Vivekananda the difference between the highest and the lowest human being or in other words the successful person and the failure one is nothing but the degree of concentration. "To me the very essence of education is the concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts." (Vivekananda,1963; p.38-39)²⁰

Mental concentration has three aspects-

- i) Intense focus on a particular thing,
- ii) Blocking out all the distractions,
- iii) Holding the power of concentration for an extended period of time.

6.3 The techniques of mental concentration as suggested by the sage Patanjali in Yogasutra:

yogaścittavrttinirodhaḥ /²¹ *Yogasūtra*.I.2

For the purification and enlightenment of the mind (*citta*), the *Yoga* gives eight-fold means which is called *Aṣṭāṅgayoga*. These eight-fold means are as follows: *Yama* means the various forms of abstention from evil doing, restraining harmful thoughts and impulses. It controls body, mind and speech. *Yamas* are of five kinds, *ahimsāsteṣya brahmacaryāparigrahāḥ yamāḥ* / *Ibid.*, II.30 viz, -(i) *Ahimsā* (non-violence), (ii) *Satya* (truthfulness), (iii) *Asteṣya* (non-stealing), (iv) *Brahmacārya* (celibacy) and (v) *Aparigraha* (non-acceptance of gift). Vyāsa says that *Ahimsā* (non-violence) means total abstention from any sort of injury to living beings by thought, speech and action. *Satya* (truthfulness) consists in word and thought being in accord with facts; truth in thought, word and deed. *Asteṣya* (non-stealing) means abstinence from theft both physically and mentally. *Brahmacārya* (celibacy) means the controlling or restraining of the sense organs to protect chastity in thought, word and deed always and in all conditions. *Aparigraha* is non-acceptance of gift.

Niyama means the various observances for cultivating good habits. The *niyamas* are five in number. *śaucasantoṣatapaḥsvādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāniniyamāḥ* *Yogasūtra.*, II.32

They are *sauca* (purity), *santoṣa* (contentment), *tapa* (modification), *svādhyāya* (study) and *īśvarapraṇidhāna* (devotion to God). *Śauca* (purity) means external as well as internal cleanliness and maintaining purity in external and internal aspects of an individual. *Santoṣa* (contentment) means satisfaction in whatever we get by our effort and being grateful for whatever we have. *Tapas* mean practising austerity and rigorous endeavour to achieve the goal. Through *Svādhyāya* (study) we can obtain philosophic and spiritual knowledge by studying good books which can

²⁰ Ibid- Footnote-17

²¹ Swami Prabhavananda(1953) Patanjali Yoga Sutras. Sri Ramkrishna Math, Chennai ISBN-9788178231082 Retrieved from <https://estudentdavedanta.net/Yoga-Aphorisms-of-Patanjali.pdf>

inspire our spirit. *Īśvarapranidhāna* (devotion to God) means devote all our success and failure to God to be an instrument at his hand. *Āsana* means the posture of sitting. Sitting in *ardha-padmasana* is good as it does not create any physical discomfort which can distract the attention. *Prāṇāyāma* is the regulation of the breath. Breathing has an inseparable relation with the mental state. Deep breathing helps to concentrate the mind. During the practice of meditation, we should breathe normal. *Pratyāhāra* is the fifth stage in the path of *Yoga* where the mind withdraws from sense objects to initiate the mind so that it can be given to a desired image, subject, etc. This helps the mind to develop the power of detachment so that it can be applied whenever necessary. This capacity of detachment is very important for developing the mind a perfect instrument which can be used to enrich the life. *Dhāraṇā* means fixing the mind on any particular object of purity and inspiration. *Dhyāna* (Meditation) means holding the focus on the object for a longer period of time without any break. *Samādhi* (concentration) is the final step in the practice of *Yoga*. At this stage the realization human being goes beyond the body-mind complex and realize the real nature of all existence which is consciousness, existence and bliss. This realization of pure consciousness gives tremendous power to mind to control the life for development as control is the central of development.

Thus, through the eight-fold path of yoga anyone can achieve total control over the mind, can manage it and use it to develop life. Swami Vivekananda said, "The essence of education is the concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will" (Vivekananda, 1963²²). So, the learners are to be trained for controlling their mind. Mental concentration can have two aspects- one which is practiced during a particular time of a day (at dawn and at dusk when the natural environment remains quiet and the inner world of the human beings as well to a certain extent). At that time mental concentration can be practiced by holding an image (an inspirational one is good) for an extended period of time by keeping aside all the distractors and the second aspect of it continues throughout the day in all actions. Through this type of conscious practice mind gradually becomes concentrated and the arousal of base and useless ideas are controlled and wastage of mental power is also checked. By doing so, we can prevent the mind from getting perverted and immoral and make it flow along the right direction. Good company and good books are indispensable for achieving this. It is only when we stay in good company and read good, elevated books that we realize what is meant by good thought, good impulses and good feelings. The young learners are to be motivated and monitored in this process of mental concentration, the cornerstone of self-management.

7. Findings and Recommendations:

²² Ibid- Footnote-17

- i) Though the students have theoretical knowledge regarding moral value the implementation of the value in their real-life situations is not adequate.
- ii) Lack of integration of mind management in the curriculum of the school and lack of value orientation and training on the part of the teacher is responsible for the gap between the theory and practice of moral values.
- iii) Mental concentration is essential to change attitude and values towards the desired purpose of life.
- iv) The quality of life depends on the quality of experience and the quality of experience depends on the quality of concentration.
- v) The gap between knowledge and practice of value is because of the lack of sense training as attitude plays very important role in implementing anything into action.
- vi) Mental concentration is very essential as it brings self-management which plays very vital role to bring success in life.
- vii) Mental concentration is crucial to regulate the chaotic 'natural' state of mind and 'psychic entropy'.
- viii) 'Yama' and 'Niyama' helps to regulate life which is the base of mental concentration.
- ix) The eightfold path of yoga is very effective to control the mind of the learners.

8. Suggestions:

- i) As molding a personality at a tender age is easier so mental concentration should be given proper emphasis from the early ages of children.
- ii) The teachers should be trained so that they can guide the learners to practice mental concentration.
- iii) Mental concentration should be integrated in the curriculum and made a compulsory practice for learners as it is the base of value education as well as the secret of success.

9. Conclusion:

In a nutshell value inculcation is the need of the hour. It was followed by the scholars in the days of yore. It is also acclaimed by the modern educationist and psychologist. Though there are various attempts to incorporate value inculcation in the formal system of education but it has failed to produce expected outcome because the very basis of value inculcation-mind management has been avoided or ignored. Controlling or mastering over mind is the primary criterion for achieving any good quality of character, so, it should be given utmost importance. Swami Vivekananda said, "If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will."

(Vivekananda, 1963²³). Therefore, mental concentration should be followed with proper scientific method. The first thing is to know the method and the most important factor is to apply it in its true spirit- only then an expected outcome can be achieved in the form of behaviour modification and focused attitude among the learners. It will be very much helpful to build their own life and become a worthy citizen of the nation which is the aim of education in general and value inculcation in particular.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEK6wlanmgY&t=581s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=locVfGW40gM&t=1658s>

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²³ Ibid- Footnote-17

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