

ROLE OF HEARTFULNESS RELAXATION AND MEDITATION IN VALUE BASED EDUCATION

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Abstract

Heartfulness is a simple and practical way to experience the heart's unlimited resources. Students learn effective relaxation and meditation techniques that help them develop calmness from within, leading to reduced stress and anxiety, improved focus, discrimination, wisdom, expanded consciousness, overall wellbeing and ability to excel in whatever they do. The students will be able to really listen to the heart, capture the inspiration that comes from within and master life in a joyful way. In Gurukula system students lived with the Guru and practised values like reverence for the Guru and the value of life. It was in a sense a holistic education. Now, unfortunately schools only teach subjects like science, maths, etc. So, the parents, teachers and the students themselves have to be very much alert to see that they don't go off the rails, become mechanical, money-minded and disoriented to the purpose of life and stick to the values (Rajagopalachari, 2014). At the University of California (UCLA), David S. Black and colleagues, found empirical evidence that meditation leads to reduced misbehaviour and aggression among children and adolescents. The present paper attempts to emphasise the role of Heartfulness relaxation and meditation in value based education. A pilot study was conducted by the researcher to measure the effects of a value based spiritual education program coupled with Heartfulness relaxation and meditation on the students. The findings confirmed that it has a positive effect on their behaviour.

Key words: Heartfulness, practical, experience, inspiration, holistic education, reverence, Relaxation, Meditation, consciousness

Introduction

Students must learn not only what to do but how to do it. What to do is told by the mind or intellect but how to do it, involves ethics, morality, principles of life - and that the heart must tell. They must therefore learn to obey with the heart, not with the head. Heartfulness offers us a way to live life 'consciously' from the heart. Values taught in the cognitive level should be filtered down to the affective as well as the behavioural, thereby making them authentic persons who are true to themselves and becoming fully human. Meditation is a journey from the complexity of mind to the simplicity of

heart. Meditation is defined as thinking continuously about one object of thought. Positive thinking, transformed into positive beliefs and feelings, can be powerful in shaping the life, mind, heart and character of children. Scientists are now studying this concept in many fields - genetics, medicine, psychology, biology and quantum mechanics.

Objectives

To discuss various benefits of Heartfulness relaxation and meditation

To emphasise the role of Heartfulness relaxation and meditation in value based education

Discussion

Heartfulness

Raja Yoga is yoga of the mind, through meditation. In Raja Yoga, the mind is purified so that it is a perfect instrument for the heart's evolution. Sahaj Marg is Raja Yoga refined and simplified for modern life, offered by Shri Ram Chandra Mission. It is a daily routine and balances the material and spiritual aspects of existence. Sahaj Marg means the Natural Path. Sahaj Marg is learned through the Heartfulness approach, which is scientific and based on personal experience. It starts with Relaxation and Meditation.

Five senses only help to look outside. The heart is the centre of feeling which is why a person is often described based on the quality of his heart, such as kind hearted, cold hearted, soft hearted, etc. Heartfulness includes being mindful, it is a giant leap in the expansion of consciousness taking human beings even deeper into the realm of the centre of their existence - the Heart. It holds people together. In practising Heartfulness, one is able to connect oneself to the essence of life, with one's higher, inner 'Self', with the spirit of all things, in activity or manifestation. This is what makes one pause, think and feel as well as love what one does and how one does it. It eliminates darkness, ignorance, imbalance and unrest. Obedience to the heart makes it become stronger and stronger. Eventually, heart guides one's life and it can never go wrong.

Heartfulness Relaxation technique

Heartfulness guided relaxation is offered to children up to the age of fifteen and also to anyone who wants to do relaxation at any time.

Steps to follow

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes very softly and very gently.
- Let's begin with the toes. Wiggle your toes. Now feel them relax.

- Relax your ankles and feet. Feel energy move up from the earth... up your feet to your knees relaxing the legs.
- Relax your thighs. The energy moves up your legs ... relaxing them.
- Now, deeply relax your hips ... stomach ... and waist.
- Relax your back. From the top to the bottom the entire back is relaxed.
- Relax your chest ... and shoulders. Feel your shoulders simply melting away.
- Relax your upper arms. Relax each muscle in your forearms ... your hands ... right up to your fingertips.
- Relax the neck muscles. Move your awareness up to your face. Relax the jaw ... mouth ... nose ... eyes ... earlobes ... facial muscles ... forehead ... all the way to the top of your head.
- Feel how your whole body is now completely relaxed.
- Move your attention to your heart. Rest there for a little while. Feel immersed in the love and light in your heart.
- Remain still and quiet, and slowly become absorbed in yourself.
- Remain absorbed for as long as you want, until you feel ready to come out. (5 to 7 minutes)

Heartfulness Meditation technique

Guided meditation technique is offered to anyone above the age of fifteen. It combines relaxation and meditation.

After relaxation and feeling how the whole body is completely relaxed, the below steps are followed:

- Move your attention to your heart. As you rest there, gently have the idea that there is a Source of light that is illuminating your heart from within and is attracting your attention inward.
- Feel immersed in the light in your heart, and try to become absorbed.
- Remain absorbed within this deep silence for as long as you want, until you feel ready to come out.(20-30 minutes)

Students aged above fifteen are encouraged to try meditation with transmission, yogic cleaning and prayer.

The real purpose of meditation is to reveal the true nature of that object upon which one is meditating. Such revelation comes not as a thought, but as a feeling. Therefore, meditation is a process in which one shifts from thinking to feeling. Meditation elevates the individual in his moral and spiritual standards. It opens the avenues of intuitive knowledge. While in

meditation, the state of mind is free from sensuous thoughts and negative tendencies vanish.

Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel Prize laureate, in conversation with Yogananda (1946), the mystic, indicated that true education can never be crammed and pumped from outside; rather it must aid in bringing spontaneously to the surface the infinite hoards of wisdom from within. Yogananda noted that the students of Shantiniketan in this pursuit observed periods of silence.

Value based education

Gurukula system of education was an enquiry based system, where the student went deep into himself to find out the answers from within. Meditation was part and parcel of such a system. The students lived with the guru under the tree and in thatched huts, and they did everything from milking the cow, watering the garden, plucking flowers for the garlands and picking vegetables. It was in that sense a holistic education. Students learnt to live a life of aspiration to realize the higher self rather than one of ambition and material acquisition.

Need for Value based education

They say education begins in cradle. Value for culture is taught at home. Yogananda illustrated how family was the first school where children were taught values unobtrusively. His father tended to say 'no' to any new proposal. He was reasonable and evenly balanced in his judgements. He was a strict disciplinarian. His aversion to instant acceptance was really only honouring the principle of 'due reflection.' His mother balanced this by teaching only through love. Education has to be a process of learning, character formation and shaping for the future.

But, today education in educational institutions has become commercial. Instead of instilling a sense of aspiration which is noble, related to higher values of life, they instil ambition, preparing for the police service, preparing for medicine, etc. Under situations in modern life, everywhere in the world, to maintain character is a big problem. It is a sad fact that in most of our educational institutions moral education consists of few prayers in the morning. An education which neglects the moral values of existence, the need for restraint in every field of activity, the need to generate human values side by side with intellectual knowledge and understanding of this universe, is a failure.

Today's students have to be guarded, protected, not physically but mentally and morally. The students are to be trained in school properly to inculcate the proper principles in themselves. They have to be educated lovingly and patiently. Yogananda established a school called 'How to Live School'. The concept of this school is to educate the students to enable them lead a balanced life. He was of a firm belief that value-based education was the only way to develop the personality of a child. Change must come, each individual contributing to the change by changing himself or herself. Social change essentially means individual change.

Research studies on relaxation and meditation

An impressive array of studies shows that integrating relaxation and meditation into a school's daily routine can markedly improve the lives of students.

- Herbert Benson, a professor at the medical school at Harvard University, discovered the relaxation response which is a mechanism of the body that counters the fight-or-flight response. The relaxation response reduces the body's metabolism, heart and breathing rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and calms brain activity. It increases the immune response, helps attention and decision making.
- Over 20 randomized controlled studies taken from PubMed, PsycInfo, and the Cochrane Databases, involving the techniques of Meditation, Meditative Prayer, Yoga, Relaxation response concluded that Meditation practices help regulate mood and anxiety disorders.
- Three studies made with Vipassana meditation in incarcerated populations suggested that it can help reduce alcohol and substance abuse.
- In Buddhist traditions the practice of *metta*, or loving-kindness meditation, where the practitioner focuses on developing a sense of benevolence and care towards all living beings, is used. According to a study from *Emory University*, such exercises effectively boost one's ability to empathize with others.
- At the University of California (UCLA), David S. Black and colleagues, found empirical evidence that meditation leads to reduced misbehaviour and aggression among children and adolescents.

Role of Heartfulness relaxation and meditation in value based education

Education is nothing but the feeding of well-regulated programs into the mind, which one can access and use to interpret information to arrive at desirable decisions. It is not necessary that there is a morality to such a decision, because the brain is as amoral as a computer. There comes the role of Heartfulness relaxation and meditation. Moral heart, according to spiritual law gives a moral judgement on whether one should do this or not. Fundamentally, this is the role of the heart because one meditates on the heart.

Shri Rajagopalachari.P, the second president of Shri Ram Chandra Mission founded a school, 'Lalaji Memorial Omega International School', where a well-structured value based education program is offered to the students as a whole school program. Value based education is a balanced system of education that gives equal thought to academics, life skill activities, value system, discipline and love. A proper system of education, a value based education should teach the students inner values which are as important, if not more important than outer values and they are human values like friendship, compassion, mercy and love. Moral principles taught after students are exposed to Heartfulness relaxation and meditation are not merely principles anymore, they form the foundation of future life. No wind of temptation or corruption can shake them nor touch them because the foundation will not permit it.

Every action undertaken will have its effect on physical and mental planes. For instance, the food consumed should be well balanced and nutritious for our physical health to be maintained. This benefit is accrued universally irrespective of the type of food or the country to which one belongs. One's mental and psychological wellbeing is the result of a loving family where the mother cooks and serves the food with love. But when children are taught to take the food in constant remembrance of the Giver with a sense of gratitude, it will have a totally different effect. The action of taking food itself will be elevated to the next level where the soul is also nourished. Similarly, communication is a very useful tool in human interactions. For a smooth and peaceful interaction, various forms of communication like non-violent communication have been suggested by experts. But when this tool is used to have a silent communion with oneself through regular practice of meditation, it is very effective in getting solutions to even the most difficult problems of life. Heartfulness aims to take the education of students to that next level where each and every activity is divinised with an approach that progresses

from a merely material and worldly horizontal growth to a spiritual, vertical growth, soaring higher and higher.

There are two distinct and separate paths in life – the path of the pleasant (*preya*) and the path of the good (*sreya*). The path of the pleasant provides immediate gratification, but ultimately results in disappointment and sorrow. In striking contrast, the path of the good is difficult in the beginning but later it leads to greater happiness and a sense of fulfilment. One is confronted with the choice of taking any one of these paths at every single moment in life. Heartfulness relaxation and meditation techniques help one to have the heart to tell at the most crucial turns of one's existence whether one should do or not do what apparently one has to do. In the words of Shri Ram Chandrajii of Shahjahanpur, the founder president of Shri Ram Chandra Mission, "When in doubt refer to your heart."

Teacher's role

Teachers play a very crucial role too. They help in shaping character and also act as role models. Every teacher is first a values education teacher and then only a teacher in the subject of his/her specialization. This is the most fundamental and basic requirement for the growth and development of values among children. When the teacher herself/himself is practising relaxation and meditation, the interaction between the students and the teacher becomes much more fruitful and yields satisfying results. A value based education syllabus called 'Conscious Living' devised by the Heartfulness Institute caters to the needs of both students and teachers.

Conclusion

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher in Lalaji Memorial Omega International School. This pilot study is basically an empirical study and presented in a descriptive form. It is without a control, hence a nonexperimental design. Students of classes IIIA and IVA constituted the sample for the study. Nine values are taught by the school's facilitators, one in each month of the academic year adopting the methodology as per the guidelines of the school. Teachers begin the lesson by asking the students to close their eyes and go into the quiet place in their hearts. The students are guided into a state of relaxation. Before starting this, first the teacher is trained to centre herself/himself in the heart. The students continue to be in a meditative state for up to 2 minutes.

A survey of the behavioural characteristics of students (revised) by Dr. C. R. Bulach, Elementary school version, is the instrument used to measure the

effect of Value Based Spiritual Education on the behaviour of students. This instrument consists of 30 items used to measure students' perception of their peer behaviour on 16 dimensions as follows: Respect for self/others, property, honesty, responsibility/ dependability/accountability, kindness, cooperation, self- control/ discipline, forgiveness, integrity/fairness, perseverance, diligence, humility, compassion, empathy, patriotism/citizenship, tolerance/diversity, courtesy/politeness and sportsmanship. It has a Likert type scale with five options to rate.

A	B	C	D	E
Almost Never	A Little	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always

Quantitative analysis of the data collected indicated that the earlier the children are exposed to such programs in life the better is the assimilation of values. Some of the students interviewed (qualitative analysis) commented that learning values during Value Based Spiritual Education (VBSE) classes helped them concentrate better and improve grades as well. Through VBSE classes they learnt to respect, shout less, be polite, telling others also to be polite in order to create a peaceful atmosphere, not waste food and obey teachers. When parents were asked if they had observed any changes in their child's behaviour during the year, they all responded affirmatively. Sustenance of values is found to be better in such an atmosphere. All the teachers interviewed indicated that the students had become more interactive and found that their complaining nature has reduced.

Through the practice of Heartfulness relaxation, meditation and self-observation, students will be able to introspect and evaluate themselves. They become calmer, more relaxed and work cooperatively. They develop empathy and help others. They are guided by the heart in making wise choices for their own growth. There will be a shift from self-interest to Self-interest, an interest in the inner, higher self. They develop self-acceptance and confidence, become capable contributors to society, have valuable ideas, and can take on responsibility with energy and skill. Less time is spent on their behaviour management, so there is more time for quality learning.

According to Dalai Lama we can never obtain peace in the world, if we neglect the inner world and don't make peace with ourselves. The main purpose of Heartfulness relaxation and meditation is to direct students towards achieving individual peace as Shri Kamlesh.D.Patel, President, Shri Ram Chandra Mission puts it 'Individual peace contributes to world peace.'

When they interact with family members or anyone else with such a calm state of mind, they will be more understanding in nature which in turn makes them more dynamic. Thus they will also be able to bring about unity and peace in this world, the ultimate goal of any value based education.

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