

# Cultivating Positive Mindsets: The Role of Gratitude in Fostering Pratipakṣabhāvanā in Young Adults

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** New generations of youth raised in environments dominated by digital devices and consumptive lifestyles face unprecedented challenges. This study explores Pratipakṣabhāvanā, an ancient Indian technique that fosters gratitude, as a potential way to combat negative thinking and enhance resilience among youth.

**Objectives:** The study investigates the influence of negative thinking on young adults and the effectiveness of Pratipakṣabhāvanā as a coping strategy. The goals aimed to analyze the philosophical and historical base of Pratipakṣabhāvanā, especially its function as a promoter of positive mental attitudes and how gratitude practices transform a pessimistic mind into a positive one.

**Methods:** The study employed thematic analysis to discern patterns and themes in the participants' responses. A systematic survey method was used to collect data from 75 adult university students, investigating their encounters with negative and positive ideas and methods of conveying gratitude.

**Results:** Thematic analysis yielded five key themes: Ātmabodha (self-knowledge and self-actualization), Saṁvāda Bandhava (nurturing relationships and community support), Santoṣa Svasthya (health and wellbeing), Buddhi Prakāśana (wisdom and for educational opportunities), Adhyātma Anubhava (spiritual enlightenment and empathy), and Kalā Saṁskṛti (spiritual awakening and for empathy). The themes portray the potential for cognitive restructuring and emotional resilience in young people.

**Conclusion:** The results illustrated the application of Pratipakṣabhāvanā in fostering positive reevaluations of challenging situations by participants from a modern educational setup. A combination of classical Indian and contemporary Western psychological theories provides a comprehensive way to optimize the mental health of young people. The results have implications for mental health practitioners, legislators, and schools.

**Keywords:** Gratitude, Indian philosophy, Positive thinking, Pratipakṣabhāvanā, Indian Young Adults.

## INTRODUCTION

Today's youth face significant challenges, including pervasive stress, pessimism, rumination, and self-destructive attitudes, often exacerbated by digital media influences (Chahar Mahali et al., 2020; Iqbal et al.,

2023; Jones & Heerey, 2022; Király et al., 2020; Kryš & Reininger, 2023; Racine et al., 2021; Twenge et al., 2019). These challenges stem from social media (Ciharova et al., 2021) or other aspects like automaticity of thought (Colvin et al., 2021), academic stress, employment insecurity, pandemics, and changing social norms (Murphy et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2024). Future generations may be affected by long-term mental health problems, lower productivity, and decreased global economic production (Trautmann et al., 2016).

To connect with a generation that demands technologically integrated, culturally sensitive, and comprehensive solutions, traditional and modern approaches to mental health need to be combined (Blignault & Kaur, 2020; Kalibatseva & Leong, 2014; Pham et al., 2021). In this context, the ancient practice of Pratipakṣabhāvanā, involving the deliberate replacement of negative thoughts with positive ones (Iyengar, 2019), when combined with gratitude, has shown significant enhancement of well-being, resilience (Fredrickson et al., 2003), and a reduction of negative affect (Seligman et al., 2005; Wood et al., 2010). While research has explored gratitude's effects on mental health, the specific role of Pratipakṣabhāvanā in fostering resilience among young-adults remains underexplored. An integrative approach offers a promising strategy for cultivating positive mindsets and exploring negative thought patterns in contemporary youth.

### **Pratipakṣabhāvanā: Definition and Historical Roots in Indian Philosophy**

Pratipakṣabhāvanā, where 'Pratipakṣa' means opposite and 'Bhāvanā' means thoughts or emotions, is a process of intentionally developing opposite thinking to counteract negative predispositions. This idea comes from Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra, notably Sūtra 2.33, which suggests that when one is upset, one should replace one's negative ideas with good ones (Bryant, 2009). The idea is to exchange negative cognition with constructive ones that assist clear-mindedness and equilibrium, fundamental in reaching higher states of consciousness (Patañjali & Feuerstein, 1979). The Bhagavadgītā also explains how one should cultivate positive thoughts to purify the natural evil character and emphasizes the effectiveness of Pratipakṣabhāvanā for personality and spiritual growth (Easwaran, 2007).

Pratipakṣabhāvanā resembles some modern cognitive-behavioral techniques (Rock, 2020). It involves alternative cognitions, such as helping someone to work towards cultivating an opposing, more positive thought. While mental training is merely a beginning, it serves to build new neural connections, repaving the neural circuitry of the brain (Davidson & McEwen, 2012), which further allows for creating space for Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Gerson, 2019). This approach promotes metacognition and the capacity to pay attention, resulting in a slow but steady replacement of negative cognitive attitudes with positive ones (Seligman et al., 2005), promoting gratitude. These can be combined to give young adults a model for how they might avoid thinking negatively, the specifics of which are discussed later.

### **Overview of Gratitude**

Gratitude, derived from the Latin word 'gratia' meaning gratefulness, represents an emotion, attitude, habit, trait, or coping response (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Rooted in dharma as a spiritual emotion and moral virtue, it stems from humility and appreciation of higher powers (Radhakrishnan, 1994). It allows us to interpret negative situations positively, boosts positive memories, and focuses on positive stimuli, which consequently foster emotional well-being during stress (Alkozei et al., 2018). Gratitude is often viewed as a means for attaining spiritual growth and harmonious living (Ghose, 1970).

Psychological benefits of gratitude, like positive appraisal, resilience, and equanimity, are rooted in Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Sivananda, 1994). Gratitude as a therapeutic technique within the framework of Pratipakṣabhāvanā helps promote inner peace, spiritual growth, positive self-perception, and higher self-esteem (Iyengar, 1996). It also improves attention, memorability, and accessibility of events (Watkins, 2014). Moreover, gratitude being as a focal point in positive psychology enhances emotional balance, contentment, and harmony, which align with traditional Indian perspectives on spirituality and mental health. As a cornerstone of positive psychology (the study of positive emotions, strengths, and virtues contributing to optimal functioning and flourishing), gratitude has a profound impact on emotional well-being and mental

health. Based on empirical studies, gratitude exercises can effectively reduce the frequency and intensity of negative thoughts, mirroring *Pratipakṣabhāvanā*. For instance, daily gratitude journaling significantly buffers negative effects and increases overall well-being (Seligman et al., 2005). Moreover, brain regions associated with reward, moral cognition, and emotional processing is facilitated by gratitude as well (Fox et al., 2015). Hence, integration of the same as a therapeutic intervention for promoting mental health and resilience in youth is a viable approach.

### **Connection between Gratitude and *Pratipakṣabhāvanā***

Gratitude has been consistently linked to resilience, with various studies showing that regular gratitude practices contribute to positive mental health outcomes and reduced stress. One of the ways to switch from negative to positive thinking is to take note of what one is grateful for. Research has demonstrated that regular practice of gratitude can increase well-being and life satisfaction while simultaneously decreasing negative emotions (Deshpande et al., 2008; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Substantiated by research on Vietnam War veterans, which demonstrated that practicing gratitude was associated with higher levels of both hedonic (pleasure-related) and eudemonic (meaning-related) well-being (Kashdan et al., 2006).

Grateful individuals often recognize more positive aspects of their lives, making it easier to cope with stress or adversity (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). People, who score lower on well-being, subsequently receive more validation from exercises designed to promote and measure gratitude (Rash et al., 2011). This means that cultivating gratitude via *Pratipakṣabhāvanā* can be quite a powerful way to enhance emotional equilibrium and well-being.

In conclusion, practicing gratitude, particularly through *Pratipakṣabhāvanā*, effectively shifts focus from negativity to positivity. Research also supports its ability to improve well-being, reduce negative emotions, and enhance emotional resilience, offering a practical method for fostering a balanced mental and emotional state.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study taps into incorporating Indian traditional concepts, particularly *Pratipakṣabhāvanā*, with gratitude in modern times. It aims to fill the yawning gap in awareness and practical application of ancient Indian wisdom that remains largely unexplored through conscious efforts towards addressing mental & emotional well-being among young adults, at the same time providing them with resources needed to foster positive mindsets. The outcomes of the research have implications that are crucial for legislators, mental health professionals, and educational institutions. *Pratipakṣabhāvanā* can be included in the curriculum with gratitude activities that will equip students with some essential attributes like resilience, emotional regulation, and a can-do attitude toward addressing modern-day socio-economic problems. Furthermore, through the study, policymakers can learn to harmonize between traditional approaches and contemporary teaching methods, which offer an integrative learning experience. Evidence-based gratitude interventions could also be developed by mental health professionals to prevent the negative consequences of mental illness, which can imbibe the practice of gratitude among young people. Fostering gratitude and positive thinking through *Pratipakṣabhāvanā* contributes to both academic success and personal growth, thereby preparing young adults to meet contemporary demands with resilience and balance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research is centered on the potential of increasing the well-being of young adults through the use of gratitude-infused *Pratipakṣabhāvanā*. Thus, by presenting the historical and philosophical background of *Pratipakṣabhāvanā* in Indian traditions, the objectives of the study are as follows,

1. The study is designed to explain the applicability of gratitude practices like *Pratipakṣabhāvanā* for overcoming negative thinking and cultivating positive mindsets.

2. The study seeks to contribute to the knowledge base of educational organizations, policymakers, and mental health practitioners to embrace structured gratitude interventions in academic curricula, and enhancement of individuals' psychological and emotional strength.

## METHOD

### Participants

The study included 75 participants—51 males and 24 females—all pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. The target was specified: to dig into their experiences with negative and positive thoughts, as well as their expressions of gratitude. Aiming to gather diverse perspectives on mindset and gratitude, the inclusion criteria were defined as engagement with the content of the talk show, thereby employing convenience sampling. This method allows capturing varied perspectives and emphasizes the role of gratitude in fostering positive thinking in the lives of students.

### Data Collection

Data was collected through a structured survey following guidelines for research set by the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2002) informed consent, participant welfare, ethical considerations, research registration, risks and costs, etc. The survey, which was used for the exploration of negative mindset and gratitude, asked predefined questions to ensure that responses were more consistent, allowing comparison. The survey asked about identifying negative thoughts, ways to reinforce positive thoughts, gratitude-related questions including advice that had the greatest impact on them, mentors who have influenced their lives or otherwise meaningful gifts, and a prompt to write words of appreciation. This technique was opted for because it allowed reaching a larger pool of participants, minimized chances of contamination in responses, promoted demographic variety, and facilitated the ease of data analysis using coding and thematic analysis. Despite the limitations of only being able to probe participants once and not in real-time (e.g., after every questioned answer provided), this method gives a solid foundation for understanding these constructs within students, which may then pave the way for interventions that can be further targeted at academic settings.

### Procedure

A rigorously structured survey questionnaire was adopted to explore the impact of gratitude on Pratipakṣabhāvanā, particularly among young adults. The instrument allowed analyzing participants' negative thought patterns and their strategies for fostering positive cognitions, as well as various dimensions of gratitude. A clear and accessible language was adopted to formulate the questions.

A purposive sample consisting of 75 students was recruited based on their familiarity with the concepts of Pratipakṣabhāvanā and gratitude. The briefing was established, specifically about the objectives of the research, participants' roles, and ethical considerations, before data collection. The voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any point was ensured through informed consent.

The survey questionnaire encompassed multiple domains, structured as follows:

#### 1. Negative Thought Patterns

What are some typical negative thoughts you experience in your daily life?

How do you replace these negative thoughts with positive ones?

What methods do you use to reinforce these positive thoughts?

## 2. Gratitude

What is the best advice you have received, and why are you grateful for it?

Who has taught you the most valuable lessons, and why are you grateful to them?

What is the most meaningful gift you have received, and why are you grateful for it?

What do you reflect on daily that you are grateful for?

What is your most memorable college experience, and why are you grateful for it?

What hobby or activity brings you the most joy, and why are you grateful for it?

What skill or talent do you have that brings you joy and why are you grateful for it?

Participants, towards the end, were appreciated for their involvement. To ensure accuracy for the analysis of the gathered data, the responses were meticulously transcribed as well.

Thematic analysis was selected, allowing rich and nuanced data along with identifying patterns and themes (Smith, 2015). This methodological approach satisfies the exploration of the interrelationship between gratitude practices and the cultivation of positive thoughts among the young adult cohort and offers valuable insights into personal well-being strategies.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was performed to identify the main patterns and themes throughout the survey data. Categories were formed as a result of combining common codes, which became larger themes. Coded material has features in common, and categorization involves combining them according to their meaning. This process attempted to allow a comprehensive investigation involving central recurring themes or ideas. The themes included gratitude for self-realization and personal growth, nurturing relationships and community support, gratitude for health, wisdom, and spiritual enlightenment, and how it fosters Pratipakṣabhāvanā in young adults. In Figure 1, a flowchart is depicted of the same along with themes, sub-themes, and codes from them.

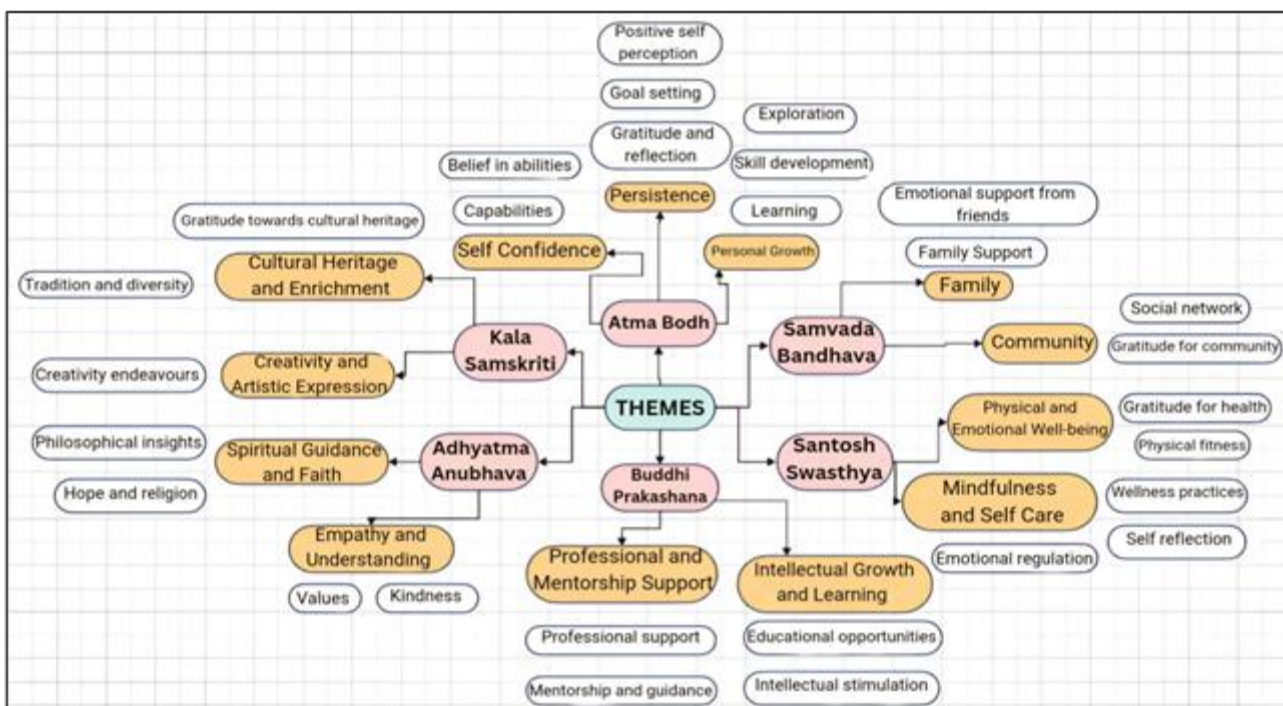


Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of Thematic Analysis.

## RESULTS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The results section explains the themes emerging as a result of thematic analysis of participant responses regarding negative thought patterns and gratitude, in an attempt to understand how gratitude inculcated practices like Pratipakṣabhāvanā can be used to foster positive mindsets.

### Ātmabodha: Gratitude for Self-Realization and Personal Growth

As per the Advaita Vedānta, every human being is born in this world to ultimately come to know his/her true nature through the process of Ātmabodha, or self-knowledge (Deutsch, 1973; Sharma, 2006). Ātmabodha, or self-realization, represents personal growth fostered through gratitude practices, aligning with the Advaita Vedānta perspective of self-awareness. Self-discovery through gratitude has been one of the main takeaways in the learning as to how one can tap on Pratipakṣabhāvanā amongst youngsters, as participants experienced these encounters to be moments of realization and growth.

Participants reported gratitude-focused reflections through regular journaling and meditation, illustrated by responses like, *"I journal the good things I do each day"* or *"I remember the many good things and people in my life and feel grateful for them."* Such integration with Ātmabodha may foster a sense of self-reflection, assisting in breaking the chain of negative cognitions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Rash et al., 2011).

Thematic analysis of the responses elaborated that participants wholeheartedly appreciated persistence and goal setting, elucidated through responses like *"I will set small goals to achieve daily"* and *"Will start preparing well before the actual dates."* Studies (Deutsch, 1973; Krishnananda, 1992) have already talked about this: a constant effort and desire to take your true nature will allow you to actively attract self-knowledge. Through this, irrational thoughts can be recognized and distinguished from the real self by juxtaposition, a prerequisite pre-step for Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Gerson, 2019; Sharma, 2006; Smith, 2018). Responses such as *"If you will stay in your comfort zone, then you will not be able to grow"* and *"Working in my weak areas and developing a positive attitude"* can be understood to emphasize growth (Dweck, 2006), highlighting the idea that valuing learning from experiences and developing skills, allows for viewing challenges as opportunities. This is reinforced by responses like *"I will counter negative thoughts with the positive skill level affirmation,"* tying back into Pratipakṣabhāvanā.

Responses include *"Overcoming personal setbacks has made me appreciate the strength within me."* *"I am capable, worthy, and deserving of respect. I have unique talents and qualities"* and *"I am a smart woman with amazing rhetorical skills"* exemplify how the integration of gratitude practices with Ātmabodha and Pratipakṣabhāvanā can create a positive effect on self-awareness, confidence, and efficacy (Atad & Russo-Netzer, 2022; Wilson, 2016).

Thus, this integration of gratitude practices with Ātmabodha and Pratipakṣabhāvanā offers an effective model for encouraging positive thinking, which could help in psychological well-being, ultimately leading to more resilient, stronger individuals.

### Saṁvāda Bandhava: Gratitude for Nurturing Relationships and Community Support

Another powerful illustration of how gratitude helps to grow Pratipakṣabhāvanā is the level at which family support plays a dynamic role. Everything around the family revolves, and consistently, participants show great gratitude for how their families help them to feel good or grow. Research shows that a grateful disposition further strengthens emotional resilience and psychological well-being when it comes to a supportive family. People who regularly practice gratitude report having higher levels of positive emotions and life satisfaction. This thankfulness alters one to switch negative patterns with an optimistic concept; it provides mental balance and supports emotional states of well-being in the path of Pratipakṣabhāvanā Freud (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Friends and communities give emotional support as well, which can help build a positive mindset. Respondents often said they were appreciative of the emotional support that friends and community group members provided, saying those relationships helped them through tough times, like "*I am grateful for having such a loving family and supportive friends in the hostel.*" This is also backed by research, which has found that social support received from friends and communities does affect stress as well as emotional health (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The feelings of gratitude towards friends and communal support this nurtures empower one to thwart negative emotions and thoughts. As one respondent stated, "*I am grateful for the supportive and loving relationships in my life every day, as they bring me joy and strength.*" Research has found that external stressors predisposing to greater community support are associated with less mental illness and more resilience (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001).

Participants expressed how they often feel better able to come up with positive thoughts and fight back against negativity if they were a part of a close-knit community, as elucidated through responses like "*I am grateful for my healthy and caring family and a beautiful set of friends that I get to interact with every day.*" There is much research showing that when people express gratitude for social support, it increases perceptions of being socially supported and feelings of well-being (Lambert et al., 2009).

Social networks are not confined to immediate family and friends but also cover social interactions that serve as an emotional support system in general. Interviewees emphasized that (when used appropriately) social media can act as a valuable force for good, creating virtual spaces where people bring each other up and provide support. A participant wrote, for example: "*I enjoy talking with people, reading, and listening to songs. I also find joy in listening to various stories of people who did great in their lives.*" Such engagements within social networks enable people to keep a positive outlook by taking note of the experiences and successes that are shared here, which is an integral part of Pratipakṣabhāvanā. Studies have also shown the importance of social networks and coping to well-being (Ellison et al., 2007).

The theme of thanking for loving relationships and community support highlights the importance that these elements carry in creating Pratipakṣabhāvanā among young adults. Focusing on the good stuff, such as family, friends, the community and social networks, will help to defeat negative thinking patterns that plague those with a positive mindset. Not only does this practice make for good personal well-being, but it also binds people together, thereby creating a supportive atmosphere that aids in mental and emotional growth.

### **Santoṣa Svasthya: Gratitude for Health and Well-being**

Acknowledgment of well-being and health is one essential process for cultivating gratitude to foster Pratipakṣabhāvanā, a concept of the Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali dealing with Santoṣa, which refers to contentment and happiness. Being thankful for health also relates to Svasthya – about the elements of the body (Saraswati, 1977). The concept of “Santoṣa Svasthya” combines satisfaction with personal health & emotion and offers orientation for creating Pratipakṣabhāvanā.

The responses range from a rudimentary appreciation of the chant ‘*having food to eat*’ to a more profound appreciation for being alive and healthy amidst supportive people and the blessings of parents; these can be grouped into physical and well-being on the one hand and mindfulness and self-care on the other hand. To build Pratipakṣabhāvanā, one has to accept that health is an important aspect to smoothen the process. Acknowledging health is crucial for developing Pratipakṣabhāvanā. Participants highlighted this with responses such as “*Integrating healthy eating and sleeping habits into my daily life has made me healthier*” and “*good health*” as something to be grateful for. Such responses align with the principles of Pratipakṣabhāvanā, highlighting how positive thinking practices can strengthen the neural pathways associated with positive emotions (Hanson, 2011).

Another key theme under Pratipakṣabhāvanā is valuing physical fitness as observed among the responses. For instance, participants expressed this through responses, expressing their gratitude for things like “*good health & fitness*” and “*a fit body.*” Similarly, when participants were asked about skills or talents that bring

them joy, responses included *“dance to relieve stress and stay fit”* and *“table tennis and dance for fitness.”* These responses demonstrate how gratitude encourages mindfulness and body awareness, which allows individuals to connect deeply with their physical capabilities (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), and at the same time, it fosters Pratipakṣabhāvanā by encouraging being mindful of negative thoughts and consciously replacing them with positive ones.

Another major module in the cultivation of Pratipakṣabhāvanā is wellness. The participants strongly stamp such responses as a benefit of *“healthy eating”* and activities like *“swimming,” “running,”* and *“yoga”* as relaxing and improving their mental stability. These practices will foster shifting from negative emotions to gratitude, supporting a positive mindset and in line with Pratipakṣabhāvanā. The participants also focused on emotional well-being and self-care. One mentioned, *“I did put a lot of time on myself to stay still and think about my life and teach myself,”* while another acquired the skill of *“self-care.”* All such practices are very important in cultivating Pratipakṣabhāvanā because they help cultivate a mental framework for sustained emotional well-being and resilience.

Gratitude for mindfulness and self-care is vital for developing Pratipakṣabhāvanā. Within this category, aspects such as self-reflection and emotional regulation, along with mindfulness, are essential for developing Pratipakṣabhāvanā. Participants shared practices such as using *“mindfulness to catch and redirect negative thoughts”* and being grateful for *“waking up with a fresh mind every morning.”* Others mentioned, *“I usually meditate and realize that these negative thoughts are nothing but that, just thoughts,”* and *“I choose to shift my perspective and see challenges as opportunities for personal growth and resilience.”* Additionally, one participant said, *“I will replace the negative thought with the affirmation that I am capable and worthy.”* Consistent mindfulness and self-reflection deepen our understanding of thought patterns and emotional triggers. Self-reflection helps identify habitual patterns as well (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Together, these practices enable us to consciously replace negative thoughts and emotions with positive ones, embodying the essence of Pratipakṣabhāvanā.

### **Buddhi Prakāśana: Gratitude for Wisdom and Educational Opportunities**

In the broader and spiritual context, wisdom is represented by the Buddhi Prakāśana theme which includes the appreciation of educational chances, social relationships, and personal development, including resilience and academic success. Perhaps this nurturing of Pratipakṣabhāvanā contributes to healthy ways of thinking and therefore healthy functioning.

What emerged was an appreciation by participants of competencies associated with wisdom in relationships that enhanced their affective state and further development. Appreciation of received wisdom could enhance self-efficacy because grateful people would feel capable of handling other tasks in the future (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Some of the answers are as follows: *“Time management, patience, and determination are the values that my grandfather has instilled in me, which I am grateful for,”* *“I have had good mentors in my professional career,”* and *“My teachers encouraged me to think and learn.”* The practice of gratitude is based on the act of repaying what others have invested in you, and Pratipakṣabhāvanā ensures that one shifts their focus to that.

Participants also expressed immense gratitude for educational opportunities, which encouraged well-being in academic pursuits. Participants expressed, *“I am grateful for the resources I have got here at IITD.”* *“The opportunity to pursue higher education has opened doors I never thought possible,”* and *“Access to resources and scholarships has been instrumental in my academic journey.”* Students who show gratitude towards guidance are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and persistent, contributing to academic excellence (Froh et al., 2008). Religious people adopt failures as progress and encourage academic endorsement as well as resiliency (Emmons, 2007). Studies show that effective educational material promotes self-efficacy and confidence, leading to positive affect, curiosity, creativity, and purpose (Dweck, 2006) and stimulating curiosity and creativity; this is the application of Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Ryan & Deci, 2000).



Besides achievements, there is a corresponding appreciation of opportunities and success as it was mentioned by the participants. Some of them were, *“To clear JEE Advanced and get into the reputed colleges”*; others wrote *“To complete the research projects and present them at the conferences”*, *“To get the job which I dreamt of”*, *“To develop coding skills”* and *“To win the Inter IIT-Gold medal.”* Gratitude for success fosters personal growth, enhances self-esteem, and promotes a mindset shift toward optimism and proactive problem-solving - central to Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Bringing in the paradigm of gratitude practices with Buddhi Prakāśana and Pratipakṣabhāvanā is a potential way to develop the explicit connections between wisdom, gratitude, and mental transformation for leading a positive change. In the process of positive thinking, three major areas of thinking should be developed: thinking that brings ‘wisdom,’ thinking that allows one to keep learning, and thinking that introduces gratitude sentiments. It offers favorable employment for individual development and helps to bring out a more friendly and tolerant population in a society.

### **Adhyātma Anubhava: Gratitude for Spiritual Enlightenment and Empathy**

Gratitude as the way to Pratipakṣabhāvanā can be built on the understanding of the role of gratitude in spiritual progress and in cultivating empathy. This has a connection to the Adhyātma Anubhava, the spiritual realization of oneness with Brahman in Advaita Vedānta (Vireswarananda, 1978). Likewise, both concepts, Adhyātma Anubhava, and Pratipakṣabhāvanā aim at achieving the ultimate goal of peace and transformation; while Adhyātma Anubhava provides a chance to taste the experience of transcendental reality and integration, Pratipakṣabhāvanā contains a technique that shows how to approach, transform and neutralize unfavorable thoughts, which are useful to prepare the mind for the deeper spiritual experience (Vivekananda, 1947).

Gratitude for spiritual guidance is a theme that contributes to cultivating Pratipakṣabhāvanā. As observed, one participant described, *“My family has introduced me to spirituality and spiritual leaders since childhood, and I am deeply grateful for that.”* This commitment can help in sustaining Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Desikachar, 1995; Seligman, 2011).

Pratipakṣabhāvanā, too, is promoted by gaining philosophical insight. For instance, one participant was relieved by saying, *“There is much to be thankful for every day... It assists those of us to be rational and reasonable, not fully angry.”* This also illustrates how philosophical counseling allows for such cognitive reorientation to acceptance of the fact that negative feelings are fleeting and therefore do not have to dictate one’s worth, thereby fostering Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Goleman & Lama, 2003).

The development of gratitude is aided by faith and spirituality. Higher power or faith helps provide the motivation or the zeal required for Pratipakṣabhāvanā whereby efforts are made to think positively. Self-inquiry practices, such as meditation and prayer, improve concentration, emotional regulation, and tranquility and facilitate Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Sivananda, 1960; Tolle, 2004). As observed, one participant shared strategies like *“Just think about the situation and then devote everything to God,”* *“Everything happens for a good reason,”* and *“Don't worry.”* Another participant mentioned, *“I will thank God every morning and will start reminding myself that it is fine.”*

Empathy and understanding seem to be fundamental components of practicing Pratipakṣabhāvanā. Patience, tolerance and compassion training are part of developing positive mental attitudes corresponding to Pratipakṣabhāvanā (Krishnananda, 2003). Indeed, people expressed happiness and gratitude for showing empathy to others, as one responded, *“To show empathy to the others, which will help me to understand and facilitate the others in their conditions,”* and another participant pointed out, *“Showing empathy to the others”* as one of the hobbies. To counteract negative thoughts, one participant explained, *“Understanding everyone is not the same.”*

The values of empathy and kindness are also essential for cultivating Pratipakṣabhāvanā, as inferred from the survey responses. To illustrate, participants expressed daily gratitude for *“The importance of empathy”* and

the “*feeling of empathy.*” One participant fostered positive thoughts by saying, “*Read books and watch movies to develop empathy and understand the problems of others.*” Empathy reduces negative emotions by fostering a compassionate outlook. This shift supports Pratipakṣabhāvanā by replacing negative thoughts with positive, empathetic ones (Lama, 2009).

### **Kalā Saṁskṛti: Gratitude for Artistic Expression and Cultural Heritage**

The disciplines of arts and culture, as illustrated in the theme of Kalā Saṁskṛti, exhibit how these enable the development of positive traits and ways of thinking about oneself. For instance, participants noted, “*Engaging in creative activities fills me with gratitude for self-expression and innovation,*” and “*Expressing myself through art brings me joy, and I appreciate the freedom it provides.*” These responses emphasize the contribution of creativity to positivity. Consistent with Pratipakṣabhāvanā, creative involvement leads to a divergent thought train, one which can re-direct negative vibrations in our minds towards gratitude or self-praise (Burkitt, 2012; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010)

Paired with the recognition of artistic expression is a profound appreciation for the participants' heritage, evidenced by responses such as, “*I am grateful for my cultural heritage and the traditions that define who I am,*” and “*Diversity in my community has taught me to appreciate different perspectives.*” It speaks to the role of cultural identity, a sense of home belonging, and how living with awareness or not can expand our worldview, as evidenced by responses like “*Cultural experiences have broadened my perspective and filled me with gratitude.*” Such an expanded worldview could help people be better able to reframe negative experiences, a critical aspect of Pratipakṣabhāvanā. The appreciation of cultural heritage, which could reinforce a positive mindset by enhancing psychological well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and resilience through practicing Pratipakṣabhāvanā in adolescents has been established to have a substantial influence on young adults (Yasui et al., 2004). Participant responses like “*I am thankful for the beauty of art and music that enriches my life*” and “*Artistic expression brings joy and inspiration, and I'm grateful for the creativity it fosters*” reinforce this.

Thus, the idea of the Kalā Saṁskṛti confirms the symbiosis between art, culture, appreciation, and gratitude, as well as the positive thinking exercised due to Pratipakṣabhāvanā in young adults. It has usefulness for creating comprehensive views of the processes that may be useful when designing interventions.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The following section concludes the results in line with the objectives.

Objective one of the study was to explain the applicability of gratitude practices like Pratipakṣabhāvanā for overcoming negative thinking and cultivating positive mindsets. It was concluded from the following themes. The present study focuses on the complex relationship between Pratipakṣabhāvanā and gratitude, suggesting how their synergistic potential is enhancing the well-being of young adults. Through thematic analysis, six core constructs emerged: Ātmabodha (self-knowledge), Saṁvāda Bandhava (relational connectedness), Santoṣa Svasthya (health and well-being), Buddhi Prakāśana (intellectual growth), Adhyātma Anubhava (spiritual enlightenment and empathy), and Kalā Saṁskṛti (creative expression). The themes highlight how systematic practice of gratitude can facilitate positive cognitive restructuring along with emotional resilience (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude practices rooted in the framework of Pratipakṣabhāvanā influence multiple facets of young adults' lives. Based on the findings, Ātmabodha helps develop self-awareness, fostered by gratitude-based reflection that also aligns with the research on mindfulness and personal growth (Zinn, 1994). Similarly, the important role of social support in mitigating stress and promoting emotional well-being is conveyed by Saṁvāda Bandhava. The connection between gratitude and physical health is another aspect defined by Santoṣa Svasthya, validated by research on the mind-body connection (Segal et al., 2018). Another emerging theme, Adhyātma Anubhava, highlights compassion and faith for developing inner peace (Lama, 2009). Finally, the themes of Buddhi Prakāśana and

Kalā Saṃskṛti focus on intellectual and creative pursuits that foster a sense of life satisfaction and purpose (Deci & Ryan, 2004).

Objective two of the study was to contribute to the knowledge base of educational organizations, policymakers, and mental health practitioners to embrace structured gratitude interventions in academic curricula, and enhancement of individuals' psychological and emotional strength. The themes identified through thematic analysis helped in explaining the objective two of the study, in the following ways. Contributing to the research on the effectiveness of gratitude interventions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), Pratipakṣabhāvanā sets an all-inclusive approach that links together both ancient wisdom and contemporary psychological frameworks. It provides general implications for educational institutions, mental health professionals, as well as policymakers. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these practices along with their cultural variations. It suggests that examining the role of technology in delivering gratitude-based interventions is necessary. Researchers can further clarify the mechanisms underlying the relationship between gratitude and well-being. This can further contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions for young adults (Zinn, 1994).

In conclusion, this study highlights the possibilities of Pratipakṣabhāvanā and gratitude practices as tools to empower young people with enough strength to deal with the hardships of life positively and with optimism and a profound sense of well-being.

### Limitations and Scope for Future Research

The present study, while investigating the interplay between Pratipakṣabhāvanā and gratitude practices in enhancing the well-being of young adults, has its limitations. Although it involves 75 participants, the sample size is relatively small, and thus the statistical power of the findings that allow generalization to a larger population may be restricted. Furthermore, the number of males in the sample present caution in generalizing the findings to young adult females. The convenience sampling technique used in participant recruitment can cause selection bias independent from each study, which undermines the representativity of the sample. The use of self-report measures via questionnaires creates issues related to the accuracy and validity of the data since it is rare for participants to provide accurate, socially undesirable answers. The use of retrospective self-reports opens up the possibility of memory bias and inaccurately reporting the thoughts and experiences of the participant. Qualitative results are affected by the subjective bias of the researcher and their level of consistency, which hinders their validity. Also, further studies with bigger sample sizes must be used with other professional groups, as generalizability is paramount. This is likely to go a long way in reducing selection bias and improving the generalizability of our findings. Explaining such perspectives using mixed research methods, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, may eventually offer deeper insight into the phenomenon being studied.

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