

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

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### ABSTRACT

Meditation is known to foster a positive state of mind and promote psychological well-being. The present study was conducted with the purpose of exploring the relationship between Indian psychology and Positive psychology. An attempt was made to understand the relationship between the Sattva guna and Martin Seligman's PERMA framework among meditation practitioners. For this purpose, a sample of 70 meditation practitioners consisting of 35 males and 35 females, was selected through convenience and snowball sampling methods. The Vedic Personality Inventory (Wolf, 1998) was used to measure the Sattva guna; and the PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016) was used to measure the positive psychological variables, namely Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 30.0.0.0. Results showed significant positive correlation between Sattva and Positive emotions ( $r = .594, p < .001$ ), Sattva and Relationships ( $r = .546, p < .001$ ), Sattva and Meaning ( $r = .610, p < .001$ ), and Sattva and Accomplishment ( $r = .603, p < .001$ ). Sattva and Engagement did not show significant correlation ( $r = .202, p = .094$ ). Linear regression analyses revealed that positive emotions, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment explain 38.8%, 32.6%, 41.8% and 39.4% variance in Sattva guna respectively. Meditation practitioners possess characteristics corresponding to a sattvic personality, experience positive emotions, are able to build and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, have a sense of direction and purpose in their lives, and are able to achieve higher levels of growth and success. This study highlights the positive relationship between Sattva guna and the dimensions of positive psychology in improving the psychological well-being of meditation practitioners.

**Keywords:** *Sattva, PERMA, Meditation, Yoga, Working, Married*

The human personality is a potent reflection of an individual's temperament and character. Each person flaunts a unique personality: an exclusive character that boasts a personal identity. There exists a tremendous amount of literature focused particularly on the Western perspective to personality. Understanding personality traits from an Indian perspective would be incomplete without taking into account the significant role of the Trigunas – Sattva guna, Rajas guna, and Tamas guna, which play an important role in the

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## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

physiological as well as psychological functioning and well-being of an individual. The Triguna model of personality closely aligns with the PERMA model of well-being. Seligman's PERMA model of psychological well-being and human flourishing proposes five essential building blocks that enable flourishing - Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Meditation, yoga, and mindfulness practices have shown to enhance the Sattva Guna. The present study aims to understand the invincible relationship between Sattva guna and dimensions of PERMA well-being among meditation practitioners.

### ***Sattva:***

The word *Sattva* is derived from the Sanskrit words "Sat" and "tva" meaning "existence of truth and reality". The Sattva Guna is characterized by qualities such as harmony, knowledge, balance, peace, equanimity, cleanliness, happiness, calmness, tranquility, kindness and contentment. A sattvic person constantly engages in self-enquiry which motivates him/her to maintain balance, have serenity and positive attitude, invite peace and virtuousness in life, and become creative and constructive in terms of ways of dealing with the environment. It is the Sattva Guna that represents a mind full of awareness and wisdom, one that is free from desires. The pathway towards enlightenment, liberation and transcendence can be navigated by cultivating the Sattva.

### ***PERMA well-being:***

The field of positive psychology puts a major emphasis on the concept of psychological well-being. The PERMA model, designed and developed by Martin Seligman, is regarded as a comprehensive framework that aims to explain human flourishing and psychological well-being under the realm of positive psychology. PERMA is an acronym that stands for Positive Emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A). Each of these elements constitute the five major building blocks. According to Seligman (2011), Positive emotions include subjective reports of happiness, hope, joy, and satisfaction. Engagement refers to focus, interest, or absorption in an activity. Relationships include closeness and connection with family, friends, or colleagues. Meaning refers to a sense of belief or membership in something larger than oneself and may be derived from religion, spirituality, or advocacy. Accomplishment refers to pursuits that occur throughout life for the sake of 'winning'.

### ***Significance & Rationale:***

The present study aspires to understand the relationship between Indian traditional psychology and Positive psychology with respect to meditation. Previous studies have explored the relationship between meditation and Sattva guna as well as PERMA well-being and meditation. Pandey & Dubey (2020) studied the relationship between Trigunas and PERMA well-being among normal adults aged 18-45 years. On the contrary, the present study has attempted to understand the relationship between Sattva and PERMA well-being in a sample of meditation practitioners. Similar results have been found in both. These results can be used to develop an intervention program based on meditation to examine the effect of meditation on enhancing the Sattva guna and psychological well-being of meditation practitioners.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Sattva and meditation:**

Sourav & Indapurkar (2017) conducted a study on the effect of meditation on Manas Prakriti and found a significant difference with an increase in Sattva guna post-meditation. Chanting of the Maha mantra led to an increase in Sattva guna (Wolf & Abell, 2003). Yadav (2019)

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

compared two groups living in spiritual ambience and non-spiritual ambience and concluded that the spiritual ambience group scored 49.75% while the non-spiritual ambience group scored 45.28% on Sattva guna. A study on first-year BAMS students found that Sattva guna increased from 52.92 % pre-meditation to 56.04% post-meditation (Raut & Sourav, 2024).

### **PERMA well-being and meditation:**

Morris et al. (2023) studied the effect of Ashtanga yoga practice on the psychological well-being of yoga practitioners and found that they scored higher on positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment as compared to a control group. Rosy Kulandaiammal and Alafia J. (2023) studied the effect of Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) and found similar results with significant differences on all PERMA dimensions post-intervention. The effects of Shambhavi Maha mudra Kriya in terms of Sadhguru's Inner Engineering Completion Program showed that scores on mindfulness as well as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment increased significantly post-intervention (Upadhyay et al., 2022).

### **Sattva and PERMA well-being:**

Pandey & Dubey studied the relationship between Triguna and PERMA model on a sample of 60 participants in the age group of 18-45 years, using the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) and the PERMA Profiler. Results showed significant positive correlation of Sattva guna with positive emotions ( $r = 0.67, p < 0.01$ ), relationships ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ), meaning ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ), and accomplishment ( $r = 0.51, p < 0.01$ ). The 'engagement' dimension did not show a significant correlation. Post correlation, the researchers carried out multiple regression analysis and found that 45%, 20%, 11%, and 26% variances in Sattva guna were positively explained by positive emotions, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment components respectively. Ravindra & Babu (2021) found a positive correlation between Sattva guna and positive emotional styles. Sattva guna was positively correlated with all dimensions of well-being including emotional, subjective, psychological, and total well-being in a study conducted by Khanna et al. (2015).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present study aims to understand the correlation between Sattva guna and dimensions of PERMA model of psychological well-being among meditation practitioners.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the relationship between Sattva guna and Positive emotions among meditation practitioners.
2. To study the relationship between Sattva guna and Engagement among meditation practitioners.
3. To study the relationship between Sattva guna and Relationships among meditation practitioners.
4. To study the relationship between Sattva guna and Meaning among meditation practitioners.
5. To study the relationship between Sattva guna and Accomplishment among meditation practitioners.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be a positive correlation between Sattva guna and Positive emotions among meditation practitioners.

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

2. There will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Engagement among meditation practitioners.
3. There will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Relationships among meditation practitioners
4. There will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Meaning among meditation practitioners.
5. There will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Accomplishment among meditation practitioners.

### *Research Design*

This research study followed a quantitative, correlational within-group research design.

### *Sample*

A sample of 70 meditation practitioners, consisting of 35 males and 35 females, engaged in different types of meditation practices, in the age range of 25-60 years was selected using the convenience and snowball sampling methods. All the participants were practicing meditation since at least 3 months, were married and were working either as regular employees or were self-employed. Single parents, divorcees, widows, long-distance couples, couples in relationships, homemakers, and students were excluded from the study. The participants belonged to the Indian cities of Pune and Chennai.

### *Instruments*

Two measures were used in this study,

1. **Vedic Personality Inventory:** Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) is a measure of Triguna personality, developed by Dr. David Wolf (1998). It consists of 56 self-report items that are used to measure the trigunas – Sattva (15 items), Rajas (19 items), and Tamas (22 items). The score range for Sattva Guna is 15 to 105. Raw scores are converted into percentages for each guna. Higher percentages indicate higher level of the corresponding gunas. The subscales show evidence of strong internal consistency reliability. The Sattva subscale has an alpha coefficient value of 0.93, while the rajas and tamas subscales have an alpha coefficient value of 0.94 respectively. The ‘r’ value for sattva was found to be 0.58, for rajas to be 0.71, and for tamas to be 0.51, indicating strong convergent validity.
2. **PERMA Profiler:** PERMA Profiler is a measure of psychological well-being, developed by Julie Butler and Margaret Kern (2016). It consists of 23 self-report items that are used to measure the five PERMA dimensions, namely, Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment using 3 items each. The score range for all the PERMA dimensions ranges from 0 to 11. The scores between 6.5 to 7.9 indicate normal functioning, 8 to 8.9 indicate high functioning, 9 and above indicate very high functioning, 5 to 6.4 indicate sub-optimal functioning, and below 5 indicate languishing. All the dimensions show good reliability coefficients except the component of ‘engagement’ that shows lower reliability value. The scale also shows acceptable convergent and divergent validity, with the exception of the ‘engagement’ factor that fails to establish strong validity.

### *Procedure*

In order to collect data from meditation practitioners, a research form was prepared which consisted of a consent form, a Personal Data Sheet (PDS), and the two questionnaires used to measure Sattva guna and dimensions of PERMA well-being. Different meditation organizations were approached and the purpose of the research was told to them along with

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

the inclusion criteria. Participants who were willing to participate in the research were provided with the research form. They were assured about the confidentiality of their responses and informed consent was taken from them. The convenience and snowball sampling methods were used for data collection. The data was collected over the course of two and a half months, depending on the availability and convenience of the meditation practitioners. The responses given by the participants were manually scored according to the respective scoring instructions printed in the respective manuals.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.0.0.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated. In order to verify whether the data was normal or not normal, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was applied, which revealed that the collected data was not normal. On the basis of this result, it was decided to use non-parametric statistics, i.e. Spearman's product-moment correlation. The level of significance was set at 95% confidence interval ( $p < 0.05$ ). Linear regression was used to find out the variances between the variables for the correlations that came out to be significant according to the hypotheses.

## RESULTS

*Table No. 1 Descriptive Statistics of meditation practitioners*

	Sattva	P	E	R	M	A
N	70	70	70	70	70	70
Mean	53.42	7.84	7.03	8.04	8.15	7.47
Std. Error Mean	0.91	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.16
Median	53.58	8.00	7.00	8.33	8.33	7.66
Mode	61.66	8.00	6.33	8.66	8.66	8.66
Standard Deviation	7.65	1.44	1.47	1.38	1.34	1.40
Skewness	-0.11	-0.84	-0.78	-0.77	-0.99	-1.11
Std. Error Skewness	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28
Kurtosis	-0.23	0.76	2.95	0.06	1.28	1.70
Std. Error Kurtosis	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56

*Note.* P = Positive emotions, E = Engagement, R = Relationships, M = Meaning, A = Accomplishment

Table no. 1 shows the descriptive statistics for Sattva guna and the five dimensions of PERMA. According to the Vedic Personality Inventory (VPI) (Wolf, 1998), higher scores represent higher gunas. Therefore, it can be concluded that **meditation practitioners are high on Sattva guna (M = 53.42)**. According to the PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016), **Positive emotions (M = 7.84) are interpreted as normal functioning, engagement (M = 7.03) is interpreted as normal functioning, relationships (M = 8.04) are interpreted as high functioning, meaning (M = 8.15) is interpreted as high functioning, and accomplishment (M = 7.66) is interpreted as normal functioning**, in the present sample of meditation practitioners.

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

**Table no. 2 Correlations between Sattva and PERMA well-being among meditation practitioners (N = 70)**

		Positive emotions	Engagement	Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment
<b>Sattva</b>	Coefficient of correlation	.594**	.202	.546**	.610**	.603**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.094	<.001	<.001	<.001

Table no. 2 shows the correlation between Sattva guna and PERMA dimensions among meditation practitioners. The table shows significant positive correlations between Sattva and Positive emotions ( $r = .594, p < .001$ ), Sattva and Relationships ( $r = .546, p < .001$ ), Sattva and Meaning ( $r = .610, p < .001$ ), and Sattva and Accomplishment ( $r = .603, p < .001$ ). It denotes a non-significant correlation between Sattva and Engagement ( $r = .202, p = .094$ ).

**Table no. 3 Linear regression between Sattva and PERMA well-being among meditation practitioners (N = 70)**

	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standardized coefficients ( $\beta$ )	t	Sig.
<b>Positive emotions</b>	.630	.397	.388	.630	6.694	<.001
<b>Relationships</b>	.579	.335	.326	.579	5.856	<.001
<b>Meaning</b>	.653	.426	.418	.653	7.107	<.001
<b>Accomplishment</b>	.627	.394	.385	.627	6.644	<.001

*Note.* Predictor variables (Constant) – Positive emotions, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment  
 Criterion variable (DV) – Sattva

Table no. 3 shows the linear regression values between Sattva guna (dependent variable) and PERMA dimensions among meditation practitioners. It shows that positive emotions, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment are significant positive predictors of Sattva guna and predict 38.8%, 32.6%, 41.8%, and 38.5% variances in Sattva guna among meditation practitioners.

## DISCUSSION

The present research study was conducted to study the relationship between Sattva guna and the dimensions of PERMA well-being among meditation practitioners.

It was hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between Sattva and Positive emotions among meditation practitioners. Table no. 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation between Sattva and positive emotions is 0.594 with  $p < .001$ . Hence, **the hypothesis stating that there will be a positive correlation between Sattva guna and Positive emotions among meditation practitioners, is accepted.** Pandey & Dubey (2020) studied the correlation between Triguna personality and PERMA well-being and found a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.67, p < 0.01$ ) between Sattva guna and positive emotions. Another study by Ravindra & Babu (2021) revealed a positive correlation between Sattva guna and positive emotional styles. Positive emotions are cultivated as people develop sattvic tendencies. Sattva guna was found to be higher among people living in a spiritual ambience as compared to those living in a non-spiritual ambience (Yadav, 2019). Positive emotions such as joy, contentment, compassion, goodness, harmony, and serenity are directly linked with sattva guna (Krsnadaasa, 2024, section 1.2.2.1.1). The mood regulation and well-being

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

promoting “feel-good” hormone, serotonin is known to be balanced in sattvic individuals. Sattva guna is said to increase with regular meditation, as confirmed by the research conducted by Raut & Sourav (2024). Similarly, positive emotions and mindfulness are positively correlated with each other (Kulandaïammal & Alafia, 2023). Table no. 1 shows that the sample of meditation practitioners in the present study are high on Sattva ( $M = 53.42$ ) and have positive emotions functioning at normal levels ( $M = 7.84$ ). This explains the positive relationship between Sattva guna and positive emotions among meditation practitioners. Table no. 3 shows that positive emotions predict 38.8% variance in Sattva guna among meditation practitioners.

It was hypothesized that there will be no correlation between Sattva and Engagement among meditation practitioners. Table no. 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation between Sattva and engagement is 0.202 with  $p = .094$ . Hence, **the hypothesis stating that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Engagement among meditation practitioners, is accepted.** Similar results were found in research done by Pandey & Dubey (2020) where Sattva guna and engagement did not have a significant correlation. A sattvic mind is characterized by a state of calmness, being settled and balanced. Sattvic individuals are focused on inner peace and harmony in order to achieve a tranquil mind that is withdrawn from the external world and focused on the inner self (Chaitanya, 2016, para 6). They refrain from constant engagement in and avoid stimulation from the external world. The sample of meditation practitioners in the present study includes married and working men and women, majority of whom have been meditating for more than three years. Their intensive experience with consistent meditation practice might have enhanced their self-awareness and they might be constantly in the process of mastering their inner self. This can explain one of the reasons for meditation practitioners to not be visibly engaged in the outside world. They may seem disengaged; however they might be actively performing their role of balancing the other two gunas.

It was hypothesized that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Relationships among meditation practitioners. Table no. 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation between Sattva and relationships is 0.546 with  $p < .001$ . Hence, **the hypothesis stating that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Relationships among meditation practitioners, is rejected.** Pandey & Dubey (2020) studied the correlation between Triguna personality and PERMA well-being and found a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between Sattva guna and relationships. A life of Yoga and dhyana has been linked with humanly qualities such as compassion, loving understanding, respect, empathy, gratitude, responsibility, and fidelity towards others (Bhavanani, 2012). According to Ayurmegha Research Labs (2023), Sattva guna leads to the nurturance of a more compassionate, positive, and empathetic perspective towards oneself and others, which ultimately enhances emotional intelligence and fosters harmonious interpersonal relationships. A study by He et al. (2015) revealed that interpersonal interactions and a complex understanding of others are enhanced through the practice of loving-kindness meditation. The present research study includes married and working meditation practitioners, who are interpreted as high functioning on the PERMA dimension of relationships ( $M = 8.04$ ) and high on Sattva ( $M = 53.42$ ), as shown in Table no. 1. The results point towards harmonious marital and workplace relationships among meditation practitioners. Table no. 3 shows that relationships predict 32.6% variance in Sattva guna among meditation practitioners.

It was hypothesized that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Meaning among meditation practitioners. Table no. 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation between Sattva

## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

and meaning is 0.610 with  $p < .001$ . Hence, **the hypothesis stating that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Meaning among meditation practitioners, is rejected.** Pandey & Dubey (2020) studied the correlation between Triguna personality and PERMA well-being and found a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between Sattva guna and meaning. Sattva guna has been linked with freedom and liberation (Burgin, 2019, para 6), as well as with inner illumination and knowledge (Krsnadaasa, 2024, section 1, para 2). In fact, knowledge is the key to liberation as mentioned in the Upanishads (Krsnadaasa, 2024, section 2.5). Illumination of all the gates in the body (senses) with wisdom and knowledge is a clear sign of the predominance of Sattva guna or goodness. Spiritual inquiry is sought along with the study of scriptures, finding answers from one's own consciousness through dhyana or meditation and pure surrender and devotion to the Divine (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 14, Verse 11). Sattva guna has been linked with knowledge, intellect, goodness, truth, and wisdom. Plato describes truth, beauty, and goodness to be the three pillars of a meaningful life. Finding a purpose in life requires one to engage in inner thoughts through self-reflection and seek answers to the truth and meaning of life. Knowledge and spiritual enquiry about the external world and the inner self are characteristics of Sattva guna. Meditation practitioners in this study are high on Sattva ( $M = 53.42$ ), and portray high functioning on the 'meaning' dimension of PERMA ( $M = 8.15$ ), as shown in Table no. 1. This explains the explicit connection between Sattva guna and meaning of life, thus providing support for the findings of the present study. Table no. 3 shows that meaning predicts 41.8% variance in Sattva guna among meditation practitioners.

It was hypothesized that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Accomplishment among meditation practitioners. Table no. 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation between Sattva and accomplishment is 0.603 with  $p < .001$ . Hence, **the hypothesis stating that there will be no correlation between Sattva guna and Accomplishment among meditation practitioners, is rejected.** Pandey & Dubey (2020) studied the correlation between Triguna personality and PERMA well-being and found a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.51$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between Sattva guna and accomplishment. Research on the relationship between trigunas and goal orientations showed a positive correlation between Sattva guna and mastery goals (Verma et al., 2020). Individuals having mastery goal orientations are concerned with the process of learning and improving themselves through mastering new skills and increasing competence, rather than focusing on the outcome (Ames & Archer, 1998). Mastery goal orientation has been positively associated with achievement outcomes. Research on the relationship between triguna personality and academic achievement among postgraduate students revealed that sattva dominant personalities are high on achievement (Malakar & Bandopadhyay, 2020). Meditation plays a pivotal role in enhancing accomplishment as highlighted in research on pre-service language teachers (Kortschak & Mercer, 2020) as well on undergraduate students (Kulandaialammal & Alafia, 2023) where accomplishment increased after the intervention on mindfulness meditation and Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) respectively. Since the sample of meditation practitioners in the present study includes working men and women, and Table no. 1 shows that their mean scores on accomplishment ( $M = 7.47$ ) are interpreted as normal functioning while Sattva guna is interpreted as high functioning ( $M = 53.42$ ), it can be concluded that Sattva guna and accomplishment are positively associated with each other among meditation practitioners. Table no. 3 shows that accomplishment predicts 38.5% variance in Sattva guna among meditation practitioners.

## CONCLUSION

Meditation practitioners possess characteristics corresponding to a sattvic personality, experience positive emotions, are able to build and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, have a sense of direction and purpose in their lives and are able to achieve higher levels of growth and success. This study highlights the positive relationship between Sattva guna and the dimensions of positive psychology in improving the psychological well-being of meditation practitioners.

### *Implications*

The present study highlights the importance of meditation in enhancing Sattva guna and promoting the psychological well-being of meditation practitioners. The findings of the present study can be used by national and international organizations that promote yoga and meditation to design and implement multidisciplinary retreat programs for the general public with the purpose of uplifting the consciousness of people, thus creating a path for the development of an optimistic and sattvic social atmosphere. It can encourage organizations to include meditation in their schedules so that employees feel more positive and engaged in their work, and higher levels of growth and success are achieved.

### *Limitations*

The present research study does not explore the relationship between years of meditation practice and age and gender of the participants. It does not consider coping factors other than meditation that contribute to the results obtained in the present study.

### *Suggestions for further study*

A pre-test to post-test experimental research design can be used to study the effect of a meditation-based intervention on the relationship between Sattva guna and psychological well-being among practitioners. Moreover, future studies can look for gender differences to check the effectiveness of meditation between male and female meditation practitioners.

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## Relationship between Sattva and PERMA among Meditation Practitioners

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