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Spirituality: The pillar of true education

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Abstract

There has been a constant discussion on the role of Spirituality in education. Everyone knows that the goal of education is not to create a generation only capable of understanding the languages of materials and machines. Education should help us to attain SAMSKARA- spiritual cultural values. If culture merely denotes a refined sense of judgment regarding worldly things, we don't need education to cultivate it. The question is why do we see spirituality as something separate from life? This attitude has already created a big problem by branding spirituality as not part of our day to day life. Due to this thinking, we have disconnected the external from the internal. It is important to create a balance between the external and the internal, the body and the soul. The present paper focuses on how spirituality connects human values to human conscience.

Keywords: Spirituality, education, philosophy, knowledge, human values, conscience etc.

Introduction

Speaking of spirituality, a Sufi Master once said, "A river passes through many countries, and each claims it for its own. But there is only one river." The word 'Spirituality' comes from the Latin root 'spiritus', which means "breath" and refers to the breath of life. Spirituality is based on the belief that there are two dimensions of reality, the material and the non-material. Material reality refers to the world of tangible things, the things we know through the five senses. But there is another dimension that is just as real; this is the non-material realm, the world that artists, mystics, poets, prophets and philosophers have described for thousands of years. It means something different to everyone. For some, it's about participating in organized religion: for others, it's more personal. Some people get in touch with their spiritual side through private prayer, yoga, meditation, quiet reflection or even long walks. This article explores spirituality as a form of intelligence. According to the great scholar Waaijman, "the traditional meaning of spirituality is a process of reformation which aims to recover the original shape of man as the image of God."

Since the 19th century spirituality has been often separated from religion and has become more oriented on subjective expression and psychological growth. Though it still denotes a process of transformation but in a context separate from organized religious institution, termed "spiritual but not religious (SBNR). Modern spirituality is centered on the "deepest values and meanings by which people live". It embraces the idea of an ultimate or an alleged immaterial reality, and envisions an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his/ her being. It does not mean loneliness or solitary state. Spirituality refers to the state beyond all attachment and hatred, and makes us understand the unity and oneness of all mankind. It alone can rescue man from the grip of insatiable desires, endless worries and numerous troubles.

The philosophy

Education in the East and the West has always had its foundations in the metaphysical, epistemological and axiological outlook of the philosophers. In India the philosophical traditions have continued since ancient times to the present day. Therefore, one finds agreement on the broad issues concerning educational practice between the ancient and modern thinkers. This is the foundation of contemporary philosophy of education. All modern educationists hold the view that not only should the educator be equipped with the knowledge of a variety of subjects, but also that he should have his/her own philosophy of education, without which the teacher cannot efficiently solve the problems of day to day teachings. Fichte rightly said, "The art of education will never attain complete clearness in itself without philosophy. Hence, there is an interaction between the two, and one without the other is incomplete and unserviceable. "In fact, Indian thinkers have special emphasis upon this.

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Yajnanalkya said that "only that is education which gives a sterling character to an individual and renders him useful for the world." Even the more recent educationists have stressed the importance of the spiritual aspect in education.

This spiritual tradition has been carried on by contemporary philosophers of education in their integral approach, synthesis of idealism and pragmatism, rationalism and humanism, diversity in unity and harmony of the individual and society. It was due to this emphasis on the spiritual meaning of education that Swami Vivekananda said, "Spirituality is the inner most core of education." In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The child's education ought to be an out bringing of all that is best, most powerful, most intimate and living in his nature, the mold into which the man's action and development ought to run is that of his innate quality and power". The father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi, also expressed the same idea when he defined education in these words, "By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child. Literacy is not the end of education not even the beginning. It is one of the means whereby men and women can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education."

Spirituality and learning

Authentic spirituality involves the development of depth, wisdom, passion, love and is not something one can get by simply reading a book. Ironically, one of the major obstacles to this kind of spiritual development is organized religion. In Indian culture, we have associated spirituality with traditional religion and, as a result, many people think nurturing the soul means going to places like temples or churches and actively embracing the rituals, beliefs and practices of organized religion. This is unfortunate as those who have no interest in institutional religion tend to assume that matters of the soul have nothing to do with them. Such perceptions have done great damage to the spiritual development of those who have no interest in formal religion. Nevertheless, today there are many highly spiritual people who are not religious. There is no doubt that for thousands of years religion has served as a path of transcendence for millions of people, and it will continue to serve this function for years to come. Personal spirituality in its most radical form means 'taking responsibility for our own spiritual development and learning to know that how to nurture our own soul. The journey towards spiritual maturity is not simply an intellectual journey but one that involves the heart as well. The universe becomes our temple, the earth our altar and daily life our sacred bread. The oral traditions, wisdom literature and spiritual libraries of the world become our scriptures, and all humanity, regardless of nation, race, color or creed becomes our congregation.

Therefore, on the basis of many researches done by great scholars, we can say that what spirituality teaches us, cannot be taught by anyone else. The spiritual person has a sense of responsibility to life. He / She is 'meta-motivated' and understands that it is in losing one's life that one finds it. The most important learning is the idealism of spirituality. The spiritual person is a visionary committed to the betterment of the world. Spirituality teaches to be committed to high ideals and to the actualization of positive potential in all aspects of life. The spiritual person is solemnly conscious of the tragic realities of human existence. Deep awareness of human pain, suffering and

death gives depth to the spiritual person and provides an existential seriousness toward life.

Significance in school education

The word 'education' has its origin in the Latin word 'educatum' that is composed of two terms, 'E' and 'Duco' means developing and progressing. In its most literal sense, therefore, education stands for becoming developed and progressing from inside to outside. Education, thus, is the process of developing the inner abilities and powers of an individual. The term is also often connected with the Latin 'educere', meaning propulsion from the internal to the external. This Latin term means to educate through a change brought about by practice usage. In general usage, the term education is used either in its narrow sense or in its moral liberal connotation. A large majority of people use the term to mean the training or studies under taken for a few years in some educational institutions. This is the restricted meaning of the term. It implies education provided according to a fixed curriculum by a particular set of people in a specific place.

According to almost all contemporary scholars of education, education is a process of man-making. Man making means character formation. As our honorable Dr. Radhakrishnan rightly pointed out, "The fate of a nation depends upon character. A country whose people have low character can never become great. When we want to build a great nation, we should educate more and more children in such a way that they may have strength of character." In a moral character, Radhakrishnan placed 'world fraternity' as the highest virtue. His aim of education is humanist and internationalist. When today's children become adults, they will have to face and deal with the ways of the world. They will need all parts of their nature fully developed to be prepared for the life they will have to lead.

Teachers in school these days are focused on the development of the mind, and to some extent the body, but the emotional and spiritual sides are entirely neglected. The need of the hour is that to develop all these aspects of children's nature, to give them a confidence and sense of self that can best prepare them for the future. The question we will look at together is how spirituality can be the part of school education. In ideal condition, children are born into a family and derive their sense of place from the family. If the upbringing is good, then children know their place in the family and this gives children a sense of security and a good education for development. If they are brave, they look beyond their community, beyond their nationality and to a sense of the place where they truly belong. When children have a sense of place, of their position in the family, in the world and in the universe, they feel at home: This is truly a spiritual experience "Vasudaiv kutumbakam".

Can spirituality be 'taught' to children? It is not possible to 'teach' spirituality directly to children; however, we can make it much available to children, so that the spiritual side of a child remains open. Above all, our aim should be to help the little child to develop completely, so when he reaches to responsible and he is open to spirituality, and can begin to seek what he needs to feed that part of himself and to connect to the spiritual world. We can nourish a child's spiritual nature by balancing his head, heart and body and also taking care of his complete development. However, modern education needs to balance the work of the mind together with the full development of heart and the body.

We need big hearts in order to be open to spirituality. And singing, music, art, drama, movement and development of a social conscience are essential to develop the heart. As for the body, children need to learn control and respect for their body. Their body will serve them as an instrument for the rest of their lives, and they need to have that relationship with their body. We can help them to develop strength and coordination. We should encourage them to push their body, to make efforts to be confident and to love their work.

What is lacking in modern school education is very clear. The spiritual nature has to do with potential and who has more potential than a child? A powerful mode for children is that in which the adults around them recognize that there is something higher in us, in the children before us and in the world. This recognition of something 'higher' can guide actions; can counter their self-will and egoism. This is our job, as adults, to keep the door open to the spiritual world for children. If after the age of 18, the young adult is truly an independent learner, he will seek out what he needs. This message could be more meaningfully understood in the words of J.G. Bennett from 'The Spiritual Hunger of the Modern Child' that 'These spiritual needs are not really such profound things that only people of very saintly character and extraordinary spiritual powers can do anything about. They are largely concerned with such qualities as trustworthiness, 'sincerity and truthfulness that create the feeling that, 'I am in an environment that I can trust'.

Relevance in higher education

The spiritual poverty of much contemporary education provides few opportunities for today's youth to grasp their deep thirst for meaning and wholeness. Misguided or unconscious attempts by students to attain some sense of fulfillment often result in varying degrees of addictive behavior towards activities, substances or relationships - all of which make teaching and learning difficult, if not impossible. Compulsive or reckless activity, substance abuse and vacant mind can result from students trying to escape the pain of an inner emptiness. In the classroom this can manifest as lack of interest, lack of self-worth, lack of compassion, lack of self-discipline and lack of spirit. Here, we must consider the significant contribution made by Dr. Radhakrishnan to Indian higher education. This contribution was made through the University Education Commission report. According to this report, the objectives of the higher education are as follows:

1. To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret old knowledge and benefits in the light of new needs and discoveries.
2. To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life, to identify gifted youth and help them to develop their potential to the full by cultivating physical fitness, developing the powers of the mind and cultivating right interests, attitudes and moral intellectual values.
3. To provide society with competent men and women trained in almost all the spheres of life, who will also be cultivated individuals, imbued with a sense of social purpose.
4. To strive to promote equal social justice and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education.

5. To foster in the teachers and students and through them in society generally, the attitude and values needed for developing the good life in individual and society.

In the same manner, in his address to the students of Allahabad University, Jawahar Lal Nehru said, "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth". Nehru explained the social objectives of education in human development.

As we know, education is a safeguard against narrow-mindedness of all kinds. Therefore, there is a need of 'soulful' education that opens the mind, warm the heart and awaken the spirit of each student. It would provide opportunities for students to be creative, contemplative and imaginative. It encourages students to go deep into themselves, into nature and into human affairs. It values service to others and the planet. A spiritualized curriculum values physical, mental and spiritual knowledge and skills. It presents knowledge within cultural and temporal contexts, rather than as facts to be memorized or dogma to be followed. It challenges students to find their own place in space and time, and to reach for the highest aspirations of the human spirit.

Education in spirituality in higher education is an opportunity for developing balanced individuals who can appreciate the divinity in nature, the relevance and the meaning of all organism. It is also an exercise to appreciate different faiths, different pathways to relate to the divine, seeing the unity between "the seer, the seen and the sight." No education system can see any conflict in the development of such a spiritual approach which will empower the learner to harmonize his inner nature with the external nature.

Conclusion

What we need today is not a new system of education or a new social order, nor even a new religion. What we need is the development of morality and devotion to truth. The value of values comes from valuers, that is, we are the source of value. It is humanity, and not the standards implicit in social practices that are the ultimate source or value. The new age philosophy is based on an ethical evolution, that is, a development in human virtue. Therefore, this knowledge needs to make its way into the school and the college text books and also teacher training colleges.

Our educational systems must be based on a transformative vision that sees each person as one with the wider community of the earth. The educational institutions' curriculum needs to be based on the philosophy of integral education which involves the cultivation of both secular and spiritual values. The urgent task before educational policy makers, teachers and parents is to facilitate children to realize their true nature, and to foster moral and spiritual excellence. We must develop a more holistic and integrated way to understand the world around us. The educational system in each country of the world is a pivotal structure in educating tomorrow's leaders. Character is the most precious gift of education. Therefore, it may be said that the destiny of a country is decided by the ideals implanted in the heart and minds of the children. Organizations like University Grants Commission, NCERT and NCTE should start thinking and provide opportunities for such

development approaches to curriculum in order that the future generation of learners are able to actively participate in structuring a more healthy society and provide a leadership to an increasingly complex social structure.

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