

INTEGRATING SPIRITUALITY INTO EDUCATION FOR PROMOTING VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Though the spirituality and spiritual practices can influence learning and well-being of the students, educational institutions often ignore spiritual aspects of learning. Educational institutions are aiming to achieve academic excellence, forgetting the real purpose of education. This paper explores the role of spirituality and spiritual practices such as meditation for promoting values among young generation which help them to transform themselves so that they become better citizens of the nation. The need for value based education is also discussed.

KEYWORDS

Integrating Spirituality, Education, Promoting Values

INTRODUCTION

The future of the nation is determined by the future of the youth of the nation. India is heading towards being the youngest country in the world [1]. With a median age of 29 by 2020. The population in the age group of 15-34 is expected to rise from 430 million in 2011 to 464 million in 2021. This presents our nation a great opportunity to assume a position of global leadership by harnessing and engaging our nation's demographic dividend [2]. However there are many challenges in leveraging this talent supply due to the lack of skills, self-confidence and training of the nation's youth. If the research findings are to be believed there would be a demand-supply gap of 82-86% in the core professions; IT industry would face the shortage of up to 3.5 million skilled workers. In short our markets will grow, creating an increase in jobs and need for skilled manpower, but against the demand there would be a scarcity of skilled workforce [3]. Furthermore the social change caused by deterioration of the joint family, disinclination of youth to follow in the family guild /profession or business, rapid urbanization and economic growth has contributed to a state of affairs that place today's youth in a position of making difficult choices with little guidance.

In terms of approach self-motivated inner development to bring out the highest inner potential in the youth may need to be balanced with external stimuli/ programs to bring about a dynamic shift across a large audience.

Today's young generation is always influenced by two factors mainly, external factors such as parental pressure, teacher's pressure, physical environment, relationship with others and internal factors such as psychological changes, attitudes towards others, feeling of anger, fear, worry, stress etc. Hence the body

and mind are not in sync with each other which results in un focused mind, anxiety, anger and finally to depression. Increasing the productivity of an individual is a challenging task. When the potential of a student is increased, they can do more work in a limited time. Hence the importance of meditation and allied areas must be explored in the educational institutions. Meditation can contribute to improve mental focus and concentration among students. It also helps to relieve the mental tension and stress thereby improving the concentration and leading to better grades. It will enhance the student performance at both education as well as home front.

If the youth are taught to develop their cognitive intelligence, it helps them to become original thinkers; imbibe emotional intelligence to develop team spirit and a rational risk-taking attitude; inculcate moral intelligence to blend their personal ambitions with national goals; cultivate social intelligence to defend civic rights of the weak, defend gender equality, and develop the courage to fight injustice; and develop spiritual intelligence. We can develop a superior species of human beings - youth who can be relied on to contribute to making the country a global power within the next two decades.

One of the essentials in the making of a man engaged in spiritual pursuit is moderation. It is like very wide term and covers every phase of human activity. It means balance in all senses and faculties, nothing more or less than what is naturally required at the time for any specific purpose without its slightest impression on the mind. Generally, today, we find moderation disturbed in almost all cases. The reason mainly is that we attach undue importance to whatever thing comes to our view and we strengthen it by the force of our thought with the result that it grows stronger over all others. We cultivate this habit and apply it to different things with varying intensity. The result that follows is nothing but disturbance and mental conflict and it is the root cause of all our troubles and miseries.

To cultivate moderation we have to pay special attention to external way of life too, e.g. gentle and polite language, courteous dealing, sympathy and love with fellow beings, reverence to elders, unrevengeful nature and so on. These habits are generally helpful in our making. Moderation is a characteristic of nature. If we gain complete moderation we are in a way in conformity with nature and it is the very essence of spirituality. [4]

II WHY SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality seeks to bring people together in an enormously transcendental synthesis of oneness of humanity, where human values such as love, compassion, mercy, kindness etc can be crystallized by the practice of meditation on the heart. As a bird needs two wings to fly, so a human being needs the two wings of existence, the spiritual and the material, to lead a natural and harmonious life (Balancing

material and spiritual lives). Spirituality teaches us to balance our aspirations in these two fields. However, in today's world the demands of material living call out so loudly that they often capture the lion's share of our attention. By contrast, the call of spirituality, sometimes referred to as 'the still, small voice within', is subtle and quiet. Considering the demands of daily living that compete for our attention, it takes a special determination to make room for our inner life.

Here we come to the wisdom of following a daily meditation practice. When we make time to nurture our spiritual development, the inner Self responds with a lightness of heart and a deeper feeling of peace and calmness. A new understanding of our inner Self reveals a longing to return to a condition of oneness with God, and with all life. As we invest ourselves in our spiritual growth our understanding develops, our capacity for growth expands, and we experience greater energy and enthusiasm for meditation. We begin to look forward to our spiritual practice and to anticipate its nourishing benefit. Eventually, it becomes a natural and indispensable part of our existence [5]. Spirituality has two aspects: one is the personal evolution and growth; second is the human elevation. Spirituality trains us to be capable of higher responsibility, a higher life, a higher purpose and a higher fulfillment. We are always busy with fulfilling our material needs forgetting the real purpose of our existence. It directs attention on the infinite, ultimate source of all beings, which is nameless, formless and attribute-less. If practiced regularly, it can bring together people of all cultures and religions and perhaps the most potent force for bringing about human integration.

WHY MEDITATE?

In our modern lifestyles, most of our time and effort is directed towards material well-being, and we often find that our lives have become overly complicated and lacking in spontaneity. We long for inner change and growth. Pulled in different directions by multiple goals, we are unable to prioritize these or to find the balance that gives us a sense of well-being and joy.

Meditation trains our mind to regulate itself and leads us beyond the outer activity into the inner silence of our hearts, where we find ourselves connected to our Divine essence. A balanced state develops in which we are less affected by the ups and downs of everyday life. Our natural capacity for wisdom and right action begins to manifest, allowing us to better prioritize the conflicting demands of life [6].

Sustained practice of meditation allows us to feel a deep and abiding connection with our inner selves, and in turn gives a lasting direction and meaning to our lives.

Meditation really means to think constantly, continuously of one subject. Whatever we think of, that becomes the object of our meditation and we will become that upon which we meditate. The students are supposed to think continuously about

their education. If this is done properly, naturally they become well educated because their mind is continuously thinking about the studies.

But as students, what concerns them is what has meditation to do with education. Now when we learn how to meditate properly by putting our mind on one object continuously, we develop concentration. So concentration is the result of meditation and not meditation means concentration. Concentration is the end result of meditation.

So, what is the relevance of meditation? Now we are struggling with our merely human minds – some of which is stupid, some of which is very sensible, something is under our control, and something is rebelling. Sometimes students are not able to study. They sit with their book open with the best intention of studying hard, but they are not able to study because of too many distractions, be it a call from friend and not able to resist the call, or mother watching the TV which is pulling them there, or nice smell from the kitchen. All these are not because they are tempting them, but because their mind is not in their control.

Meditation trains us to become the master of our minds. It must obey what I say; not I obey my mind. Education must be produced only by application: application of the mind and the mind must be able to concentrate, and that concentration can only be developed by meditation. There is no second way. Without meditation your whole educational edifice is built on something like sand. Therefore we have degrees but no knowledge. Meditation gives the power of instant and total illumination to the mind on anything that it may be applied. Secondly because it is a process of training yourself to master yourself, the material ambitions take a second place and you get the confidence that if I can master myself, I can master anything else.

Meditation confers on us a total integrated blessing by making us educated in the true inner sense, educated to values and not to facts, educated to our inner needs, not to apparently social needs, that I must do better than my peers, I must earn more money than my brother, not things like that, but to the true value of existence. In this way, meditation is the foundation not merely for education but for our existence [6].

ROLE OF VALUE BASED SPIRITUAL EDUCATION (VBSE)

Values have always been held as a necessary part of human existence as far back as evolution in the thought of human social existence began. It has been there in all cultures of the world and was considered necessary to improve the quality of life.

In India, this has dated back to the Vedic times, which are considered very ancient. The Rishis were always consulted by even the mightiest kings about the values regarding both the responsibilities of the king himself towards his kingdom and the people thereof, but the individual responsibilities of each citizen. They were held in

high esteem and were the vehicles of values. For instance, Guru Vasishta, who held the position of Acharya in King Dasharatha's kingdom was a consultant on practically every issue that needed a decision by the king. Rishi Vishwamithra who was another great sage, was given the honor of having King Dasharatha's four illustrious sons Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna in his Gurukula as his disciples.

Today's education is merely mugging up of facts and there seems to be no effort made by the syllabi and by those imparting education to go beyond the bounds of mere facts into knowledge itself and later onto wisdom and intuition [7].

VBSE is all about helping children to develop both Head and Heart to achieve successful career and be a good human being as well; to be a scientist as well as Saint. It teaches us that "Education is for life and Life is for Evolution". Human beings can attain a worthy and harmonious life only if they are able to rid themselves, within the limits of human nature, of the striving for the wish fulfilment of material kinds [8]. The goal of VBSE is to raise the spiritual values of students thereby making them good citizens who can lead balanced life [9]

CONCLUSION

The concept and utility of the spiritual bent of mind lie outside the belief framework despite the fact that the overall influence of spirituality is being perceived by mature minds in varied manners. An attempt is made in this paper to understand the need for integrating spirituality in education for promoting values and how spiritual pursuit helps the students to search the meaning and purpose of life, to become a more self-aware and enlightened person. The student's inclination to engage in a Spiritual Quest grows significantly when they are matured enough to understand the need for spirituality. This growth can be facilitated by meditation and self-reflection, having faculty who encourage them to explore the questions of meaning and purpose, involvement in religious activities, and by participation in charitable activities.

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