



Nurturing Spirituality: In Conjunction with Integral Education

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Abstract

Spirituality facilitates a deeper contemplation of reality, and it provides a better understanding of the self and the daily struggles of life. Spirituality develops the divine potential of learners and prepares them for life by giving them the tools they need to keep on learning through their experiences. It enables them to develop more completely and comprehensively. In a way, it is training for life. This research paper explicates the meaning, importance, and understanding of spirituality as a part of Integral Education. The researcher in this paper has tried to study the different practices at home to ensure the development of spirituality among learners. In this study, the researcher tried to explore the dimensions and components of spirituality and establish its relevance in the present day. The study also explored how spirituality can be integrated into the daily lives of learners to help them grow as better human beings and lead a value oriented life.

Keywords Integral education · Spirituality · Spiritual education · Self-awareness · Love · Liberation

Introduction

The education today is engrossed by large-scale consumerism and increased demand for self-fulfillment through materialistic gains. In a way, the whole social system of Indian societies is undergoing a great transformation. The recent years have witnessed an increase in crimes committed mainly by adolescents which has in a way increased concern about the schooling and education system. An understanding of values and inner self can help in restoring the essence of education. The researches

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have shown persistent darkness within the education system and lack of basic humaneness among learners (Bengsten, 2017).

Learning of all kinds shall help in the complete development of the learners. Though the accumulation of material wealth is considered to be the hallmark of success today. However, a person's real success should be measured instead by the values that he or she expresses such as empathy, care, love, enthusiasm, and humaneness (Emerson, 2009).

There is a need to rekindle the desire of personal, social, and professional moral values by integrating the subjects of moral values in the practices at home, especially with the children at a younger age.

Education is intrinsically linked with the development of values, if devoid of the potential to nurture values the education loses its soul. The school years, especially the elementary level, is very crucial as the learners are in a malleable age. All that has been taught learned and imbibed determines how learners would live their life in the future. Education must aim at stabilizing social order, conserving and transmitting the cultural heritage and traditions in the society. In other words, it can be said that education is the instrument of reconstruction. Consciousness and reality are of cardinal importance and forms the components of 'Satchidananda'. It develops the power of thinking intuitively and elevates the mind of an individual (Andries, 2005).

Education-based on values and moral enrichment can help develop peace, a better quality of life, sustainability, a joyful environment, and harmony in a global society. Value-oriented education can curb such separatist tendencies and can help in the growth of the intellectual capacities of learners. Character formation includes the development of traits such as purity, honesty, tolerance, obedience, fortitude, and humanistic tendencies. Morals and values are an integral part of education. India has always had the social background of being morally enriched, currently, though the Indian societies have progressed with changing times, however, due to large scale of diversity and cultural variations, the problems such as intolerance, corruption, caste discrepancies, discrimination still prevail within the societies of India (Basha & Ramana, 2018).

Spirituality is a subjective construct that lies beyond the boundaries of classroom learning. The researches have shown the value education and spiritual education have a positive impact on core educational objectives. Integrating activities for the overall development of learners in daily lives can help in better development. The understanding of values helps in enhancing the day-to-day experiences of children and at the same time helps them to develop in a wholesome manner (Cowley, 2017).

India being the land of values and the moral high ground has always been rich in the literature and texts which has been a source of spiritual education to generations. The epics such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, stories from Panchatantra have given utmost importance to developing an ideal character in men and women. The whole foundation lies on the assumption that man is distinct from other species only because of his strong value system and virtue. This paper tries to pave a way to balance the education in the contemporary era by fulfilling the intellectual, cultural, and materialistic needs of the students.

Curriculum today must aim at inculcating ethical ideals and values that can shape learners into noble citizens. This whole idea can be very well be summarized in the

thoughts of Swami Vivekananda which still holds that, with the rise of materialist ideas and there is a constant struggle for power and glory, the individual tends to forget his inherent divine nature and becomes merely a money-making machine (Swami Vivekananda, 1971).

The human mind in order to become an instrument of truth must be open to wider consciousness, understand the inner self, and question the intellect. Continuous questioning of the intellectual capacities keeps the actions in check and helps a person develop in truest of sense (The Mother, On Education 2002).

All education must aim at giving happiness. A feeling of joy and content is the only key to a meaningful education. Individual happiness is the basis of education. On similar lines, it is also argued that education must bring out the inherent qualities of an individual. It must aim at enhancing what is already present inside.

Education must enable an individual to develop the potentials already present in them and polish their qualities. The prevailing education must aim higher and shall enhance the potential of learners in every possible way instead of shackling him in the constraints of content knowledge. Education has a much higher aim, it is life-giving, in a more integral way it is the assimilation of noble ideas (Life and Teachings: Swami Vivekananda, Jnana Yoga, 1902).

To pursue learning, the mind must be prepared. Knowledge comes from within, not from the outer world. It is the inner voice, the consciousness that needs to be awakened. The process of education brings out the inherent in a being; education hence must be based on values of freedom and liberty. Liberty comes from the inside and then the outside (Das, 2009).

It is the responsibility of parents to throw light on the strengths of the child and facilitate means to bring out and nurture those qualities. The question of how spirituality, education, and activities in daily life are linked has been much discussed upon. They are more often considered to be of separate domains, spirituality is more of a comprehensive concept and is a gradual process of achieving the higher planes of realization, whereas education is more of an instrument or means. From Sri Aurobindo's point of view, this spirituality and education are compatible with one another, for him 'Education is the gateway toward attaining the ultimate spiritual satisfaction.' (Ranade, 2007).

In other words, his educational aims are purely metaphysical. Education is the gateway to divine life. Integral Education follows the path of fourfold austerities and fourfold liberation to reach the ultimate aim of Life Divine, namely Tapasya for Love, Knowledge, Power, and Beauty & Liberations of four kinds, i.e., Emotional, Physical, Mental, and Vital (Ghosh, A. The life Divine 1919).

Research questions

1. What is the concept and relation of spiritual education to Integral Education?
2. What is the influence of spiritual education on the daily life of children?

Objectives

1. To study the concept of spiritual education as a dimension of Integral Education.

2. To explore the aspects of spiritual education.
3. To study the influence of practices at home on the spiritual development of children.

Research Methodology

The present research study is based on qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews of parents. A total of 30 parents across different types of families from Delhi and Ghaziabad region were randomly selected for this study.

For the understanding of Spiritual aspects of Integral Education and its implications on daily life, an in-depth study of the existing literature on Integral Education was done.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher has followed the ethical guidelines as laid down by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Informed consent was taken from all the participants in the study. They were also informed that they had the option of withdrawing from the study at any point they wanted to. And proper measures were taken into account to maintain the confidentiality of all the participants.

Concept and Relation of Spiritual Education to Integral Education

Modern education which is mainly based on materialistic gains emphasizes inculcating skills and knowledge related to the acquisition of materialistic pursuits and hence in a way neglects the development of virtues. Humanity at large is at the point of moral degeneration and disregard for values.

It has been largely contested that conventional education needs to be more holistic in its approach. Various philosophers have turned toward eastern philosophy for inspiration to revitalize the educational thought. The east has always been considered a cradle of civilization, philosophy, and thought.

The term spirituality has been explained overages by different philosophers, psychologists, and academicians. On common grounds, spirituality is a process of transformation of the 'Inner-being'. In the present time, it may refer to values and subjective experiences of life. In a more traditional sense, it means the process of evolution of an individual to a higher being. It is moreover achieving the stage of synchronization between body, mind, and soul. In the modern, the meaning of spirituality is a blend of humanistic psychology, mystical and esoteric traditions eastern traditions. The meaning of spirituality has shifted from experiences and the utopian understanding to a more practical transformation in day-to-day life. It may refer to any kind of meaningful activity, personal growth, or feeling of inner contentment. It involves transformation by reducing our self-centeredness and greed for material luxuries. It is the journey of transforming from 'I' to a more collective being from

the illusion of self-centeredness and materialist existence toward selfless love and generosity (Bijlani, 2018).

Every human being carries hidden qualities within them; it is also the possibility of achieving a greater consciousness beyond the frame of leading a normal life. Spiritual education enables an individual to participate in leading a higher and vaster life. It is like a light that shines at the center of the being radiating through the thick covering of the external consciousness. There are various aspects of spiritual education, but a few which would be explored in this paper are—Self Awareness, Love, and Liberty. Spiritual education helps in finding depths of inner being, the being which is universal, limitless, and has term-less continuity. To achieve this stage of self-realization and self-awareness, one has to give up all comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment, or happiness. Be an accepting, open personality to take whatever comes forward (Dutta, 2011).

Spiritual Education and its Influence

The philosophy of Integral Education contests that education of a human being starts before birth, right at the time of conception in the mother's womb. Education hence becomes a two-way process; the mother herself progresses with the knowledge and then passes that knowledge onto the unborn child. So, it becomes imperative for the mother to have good thoughts, noble feelings, and remain as harmonious as possible. Integral Education is only considered wholesome when based on five different aspects, i.e., the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual. These phases flow chronologically in synchronization with the development of an individual. Spiritual education as a part of Integral Education aims at enabling an individual to realize their eternal existence. It helps in finding the depths of being, that which is universal, limitless, and decentralized (Dowsett Norman, 2009).

The first and foremost step toward achieving spirituality is giving up all negative thoughts, personal gains, material comforts, and rise above indulgence and selfishness. It teaches us to take pleasure in all one does and remain calm in the face of all circumstances. It also motivates us to be on a constant road to progress and never forget the set goal in life. It gives freedom of mind and provides joy in selfless acts. The spiritual education is a life-long process and at the same time the starting point of every education. The best qualities that can be inculcated with spiritual education are sincerity, honesty, compassion, respect, patience, selfless love, self-control, peace, and calmness.

Three Broad Aspects of Spiritual Education

Self-Awareness

It is the state of mind where one can evaluate and assess their inner qualities. It can be understood as a state of being awake, conscious, and beyond everyday existence. It could be described as knowing the relationship with the world, ideas, and people. It is different from transcendence as it is more concerned with relationships.

Awareness does not mean specialization in that relationship. On the contrary, it demands full recognition or awareness of the total process of relationship (Krishnamurti, 1970, p. 67).

Awareness refers to revealing the process of one's thinking and the connection with inner nature. It leads to self-understanding which is the result of introspection of values and attitudes. The stage of self-awareness largely depends on discovering the self within, which cannot be achieved by conventional ways; it is a process that gradually progresses inside and outside the classrooms. Self-awareness is the foundation upon which the process of spiritual development begins.

Love

The virtue of love brings one to the light from the darkness. It illuminates and frees from the shackles of self-centeredness. For Sri Aurobindo, Love is devotion; it is the means to the ends of uniting the inner self with the divine self. True love is devotional, fearless, and unselfish. It reveres the object of its love and asks nothing in return. It is sublime and rises above pain and jealousy (Bijlani, 2019). Love is the feeling of genuine concern for self and others. It involves compassion, caring, thoughtfulness, service to others, and humanitarian actions. Love for Aurobindo is devotion, the unity with divine and feeling of selflessness. Love gives complete freedom from the feeling of 'I'. The true love must aim at sacrifice,

Sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice always, but only for the sake of God and humanity, not for the sake of sacrifice.

The education must aim at nurturing this virtue of love toward the divine and inculcating the feeling of generosity among learners.

Aurobindo holds that there are four necessary conditions to achieve the stage of utmost devotion:

- The first Condition is—Absolute sincerity.
- The second condition is—Overcoming all the desires and preferences.
- The third condition is to silence the mind and listen.
- And, the last condition is—To obey.

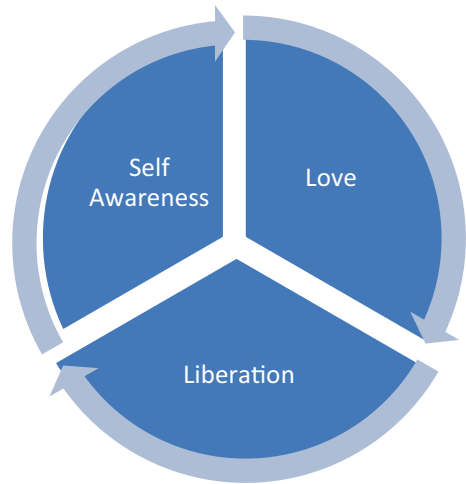
Love is the unification of self with the divine and amasses within its boundaries all the other virtues of sincerity, humility, gratitude, perseverance, aspiration, receptivity, progress, courage, goodness, generosity, equality, and peace.

(CWM: 13, Page: 226 2004).

Liberation

It is the most essential quality of the spiritual dimension in Integral Education. It is the feeling of existing beyond the physical world; in other words, it can also be explained as a state of mind that goes beyond the normal feeling of living in a physical state. It can be achieved when one is free from all shackles; the most common way to gain this state of mind is by practicing mindful meditation.

Fig. 1 Aspects of spiritual education



Sri Aurobindo holds that “Goodness, liberation, and truth must come from within and not from without” (Ghose and Alfassa, 1972b).

The process of liberation involves the development of students according to their nature and their innate love of nature and compassion for all beings. Integral Education puts more emphasis on the inner human dimension of freedom, freedom of mind, and freedom of soul. On similar grounds, freedom is found in no form of government, and it is in the heart of the free man. In a way, liberty can be achieved by retaining individuality. It also enables one to be free from all the inner guilt and feeling of self-loathing. Liberation is the feeling of achieving the stature of complete consciousness where an individual has a strong internal locus of control (Sen, 1985) (Fig. 1).

Based on an in-depth study of the literature on Integral Education, the following dimensions and related aspects could be summed up by the researcher. Broadly Integral Education has five different dimensions, which are as follows:

1. Physical Education
2. Vital Education
3. Mental Education
4. Psychic Education
5. Spiritual Education

The aspects related to the above-mentioned dimensions are presented in the table below:

S. No	Dimensions of Integral Education		Aspects
01	Physical Education		Physical Fitness Activeness Team Work Discipline
02	Vital Education		Personality Development Sensory Awareness Organization Skills Thought Control
03	Mental Education		Mental Silence Concentration Attentiveness Wisdom
04	Psychic Education		Tolerance Truthfulness Clarity of Thought Sincerity Cleanliness
05	Spiritual Education	Self-Awareness Love Liberation	Self-respect and dignity Respect for others Spending time with family Cooperation Sense of responsibility

Analysis and Discussion

The Indian philosophy at its core believes in the evolutionary cycle of development. The transcendence from matter to life, life to mind and consciousness can be seen comprehensively in terms of inner consciousness and the spiritual consciousness. Every human being is unique and urges to evolve during a lifetime in the best possible ways. Spiritual education as a dimension of Integral Education is life-embracing and has its place in all aspects of life. It takes into account every part of being, i.e., the body, feelings, soul, and the intellect (Bahai, 1998).

Based on an analysis of the transcripts from semi-structured interviews of the parents, it was evident that virtues play an imperative role in the development of learners. More than 70% of parents agreed that education based on holistic values and virtues is essential for growth and prosperity in every sphere. Approximately 60% of parents said that learners in the present day are turning into individuals who can compete professionally but cannot accept absence and defeat. In such a situation, spiritual education can help them in scoring inner peace and sense of completeness. More than 80% of parents held the view that learners today fall easy prey of anxiety, depression, and isolation. They have higher levels of negativity and often cannot take criticism in the right sense, they easily become individuals who can understand materialism but cannot see the innate goodness of other people. The children are

capable of focusing on their senses but cannot empathize with others in their sorrow and pain.

The analysis of data from responses of parents also reveals that taking personal care and interest in health, education, and hobbies generate positive feelings and thought. Self-respect stimulates self-worth and internalizes moral values and helps in building a strong character. In the responses from the personal interview of parents, it was quite evident that spending a considerable part of leisure hours to sit with one or more of family members, to relax with them, and to exchange experiences helps in understanding self, enhancing bonding of love, caring and sharing.

When asked about what could be the possible ways and activities in which learners can develop more holistically in a spiritual sense, more than 65% of parents held the view that activities such as spending time with family, refraining self from hurting others, having a helping attitude and abstaining self from bullying behavior could develop different dimensions of spirituality among children.

In response to the same question, more than 72% of parents agreed that taking responsibility for one's actions, respecting others, participating in household chores, going in family functions, and appreciating others also helps in the integral development of children. All these activities not only help the children to inculcate the humane values but simultaneously help them in knowing themselves better as a person. Practices such as concentrating for a few seconds before going to bed may help in restoring the fatigued nerves and can renew the vigor with a calm mind.

The percentage distribution of the above-mentioned data is represented in the graph below, which shows the distribution of parents' responses on various aspects of spiritual education (Fig. 2).

Spirituality and spiritual education can enhance the quality of life, the simple acts such as to question one's mind, "what gives you happiness or can money buy every happiness?" can help understand the real needs. The ways in which happiness is achieved also contributes, "Means justifies the ends." Improper means to achieve happiness can never provide satisfaction. The simple acts of kindness, respect

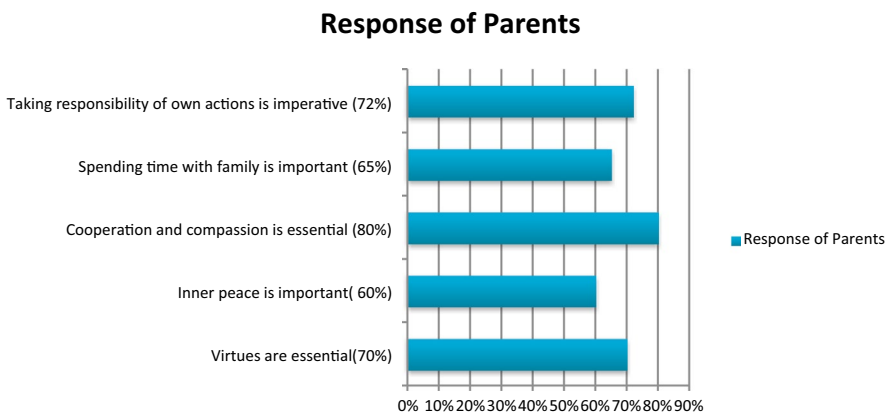


Fig. 2 Response of parents

toward all beings, and self-awareness can help children in developing as a better human (Spirituality and Self-Help: The Happiness Within 2017).

The word home and family symbolizes the foundation and sense of belongingness. A home provides the most primary informal climate to grow. The researches have shown that parents play a crucial role in the development of children and in providing them a better environment to develop in an integrated way. Parental supervision, involvement, and motivation can enhance the quality of life of the children. The tasks assigned to children by parents can help them to learn qualities such as compassion and justice. 'Spirituality' in a more practical sense as defined in Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo refers to what is right and good for us and the others. It also involves relations with the other beings and the inner self. Spiritual education with the help of parents can consciously assist in the formation of consciousness of the child at a very early age. This also helps in inculcating the feeling of "inner reward and punishment." A child's actions must not be defined on the basis of fear and greed. For example, "a child who hurts someone knowingly or un-knowingly should feel the inner grief, guilt, and uneasiness." Spiritual education can help in teaching the "inner-reality" to the children, the eternal existence, and realizing the self as part of the eternal being (Joshi, 2009).

Conclusion

Spirituality helps us in knowing our self. It promotes harmony between all beings and leads us toward mutual co-existence and sustainable development. It teaches us the art of fulfilling our needs rather than consuming the resources provided to us and saving it responsibly for the generations to come. The consciousness and a sense of connection to all will facilitate us toward spiritual and sustainable living (Ghose and Alfassa, 2002). It requires a fundamental change in our perspective and habits. With the advancement in technology and materialistic luxuries, the accumulation of wealth and pursuits have become the indicator of wellness, but the inner satisfaction in a way takes back seat.

The central idea implies that spirituality cannot be taught, Gurdjieff in this matter holds that,

One cannot teach spiritual development, one can only create the conditions wherein the development can take place

Spiritual development is defined under three different aspects: self-awareness, love, and liberation. This understanding of spirituality is an attempt for a more common understanding of the different aspects associated with spirituality and its importance incomplete development of children. It is quite evident that the present learning practices are devoted to the intellectual questioning, but does not try to develop a true vision and intuitive intelligence of the children. In other words, it can be said that being oblivious to spiritual education is leading to a surge in the incomplete growth of children.

The integral development of the children is a life-long process and it truly gives meaning to life. It is imperative to develop qualities such as sincerity, honesty,

straightforwardness, courage, unselfishness, self-control, perseverance, and peace among children. Nurturing them with love, knowledge, and nobility can lead to the increasing growth of latent faculties with complete transformation in its entirety (Ghose and Alfassa, 1972a).

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Consent for Publication The participant has consented to the publication of this work.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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