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SPIRITUAL EDUCATION: NEED OF HOUR

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Abstract:-Spirituality is defined as the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, with others and also with the entire universe. Spirituality is the practice of living in one's natural self, accepting oneself happily with gratitude towards universe. Spirituality is the sum total of virtues like humanity, selflessness, fortitude, compassion, forgiveness, sympathy, love and the respect for the whole universe which the present system of education lacks to impart. The authors here deal with the question why spiritual education at present hour is the demand of higher education and try to come on some conclusion and give recommendations after discussing and highlighting it as it will enhance the education of our students and serve the educational missions of our institutions. As it is the one direction except other geographical directions (East, west etc.), which leads a student towards understanding of self, which can be a ladder towards attainment and enjoyment of self realisation, the state whose ecstasy is hard to explain into in to words. As self realisation will help a student to march confidently towards understanding of the universe, as it unlocks before them the vast world of possibilities, opens the door of progress, imparts a vision of society of great men. But the education system at higher level is far away from this dream. The reason behind this is the lack of values and spiritually-oriented education at higher level. This paper is an attempt to know the ways by which spiritual education is imparted to the students.

Keywords: Spirituality, Higher Education, Spiritual Education.

INTRODUCTION

Everywhere people are looking for a good education, but the question most pertinent is, "What is a good education?"

Good education is an education that makes
a good human being
a good member of a family
a good member of a community
a good citizen of a country
a good citizen of the world

The three schools of humanity—home, school and community—all have a measure of responsibility towards providing every child with a good education. Every effort needs to be made to inspire 'every child' to become both 'good and smart', or 'good' before 'smart'. This is because at the margin it matters more that a person be good and possesses many human virtues and values than that she/he is smart but lacks these virtues and values. The world needs more caring and compassion, and not more competition.

The spiritual poverty of much contemporary education provides few opportunities for today's youth to quench 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 behaviour toward activities, substances or relationships - all of which make teaching and learning difficult, if not impossible. Compulsive or reckless activity, substance abuse, and empty sexuality 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.

A more 'soulful' education seeks to open 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 allows time to tell old and new stories of heroes, ideals and transformation. It encourages students to go deep into themselves, into nature, and into human affairs. It values service to others and the planet.

A spiritualised curriculum values physical, mental and spiritual knowledge and skills. It presents knowledge within cultural and temporal contexts, rather than as facts to be memorised or dogma to be followed. It is integrative across all disciplines emphasising inter-relationship and inter-connectedness. It challenges students to find their own place in space and time, and to reach for the highest aspirations of the human spirit.

What is meant by the term spirituality in religious traditions?

The term spirituality is used in a number of religious traditions, although not in all. It had been defined in diverse ways and the various definitions and descriptions remain controversial. However the term is often used in:

a broad sense to describe the beliefs, values, practices, lifestyle and goals of a particular tradition a more restricted sense to refer to the inner person, an inner journey or the affective or experiential side of a religion Specific traditions usually offer their own definitions with their own particular emphases. Some influential recent attempts to offer an overall definition of spirituality are:

“ that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions 'the spirit'. This spiritual core is the deepest centre of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality.”
Ewart Cousins In McGinn B, et. al. (1986)

“The experiential side of religion as opposed to outward beliefs, practices and institutions, which deals with the inner spiritual depths of a person.” in Goring R Ed. (1992) p.499

“ . . . those attitudes, beliefs, practices which animate people's lives and help them reach out towards super-sensible realities.”
Gordon Wakefield in Wakefield G Ed. (1983) p.361

The spiritually developed person is described in a number of traditions as one who is fully alive or awake, as enlightened or able to see to the heart of things.

What is meant by the term spirituality in non-religious contexts?

The word spirit is used in everyday language in such phrases as 'high spirits', 'low spirits', 'a spirited performance' or 'team spirit'. When speaking of the make-up of a person the phrase 'body, mind and spirit' is often used. The term spiritual is also used when no other term seems adequate. The terms spiritual and spirituality are now also widely used outside traditionally religious and everyday contexts to describe:

aspects of areas such as art, architecture, music and sport,
a wide range of techniques, practices and therapies which seek to liberate and heal people
dimensions of the work of a number of professions, for example much has been written recently about the spiritual dimension of nursing, e.g. Bradshaw (1994)

The term spiritual often has a range of different and sometimes distinctive meanings within these various contexts.

What is meant by the term spiritual development in an educational context?

At its simplest, spiritual development can be described as a concern to foster the growth of the human spirit. However, this definition is insufficient to assist schools as it raises further questions such as:

- what is the human spirit?
- what activities foster the flourishing of the human spirit?
- what aspects of the 'life of the spirit', should be fostered in a school?
- what is the goal of this process of development?

Categories of Spiritual Capacities

Those spiritual capacities, which are both worthy and capable of development in schools, are here placed in 'families'

of similar qualities under the following headings:

self-awareness and self-knowledge
sensitivity and responsiveness
inner strength and resilience
ideals and aspirations
love and relationships
striving and seeking
reflection on experience

It is the specific capacities identified within each 'family' that are of importance and not the set of headings or categories in which they are placed. Some may wish to group the spiritual capacities differently. These specific capacities are considered to be CORE spiritual capacities. Underlying many of the specific capacities is the fundamental human capacity of being able to respond to various stimuli and situations. Promoting spiritual development thus involves developing young people's capacity to be response-able in different contexts.

Spiritual capacities identified

Schools are encouraged to assist pupils to develop the following specific spiritual capacities:-

Self-awareness and Self-Knowledge

Pupils will be given opportunities to become aware of their own:

inner world of thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, personality, needs and wants
gifts, abilities and strengths as well as their limitations and weaknesses
identify, i.e. of an enduring self which continues through the flux of different experiences of life and the passage of time

Sensitivity and Responsiveness

Pupils will be given opportunities to:

transcend the present moment, e.g. in recalling the past, reflecting on the future, or exercising their imagination
become aware of moral obligations, e.g. keeping your word
be moved to deep emotion, reflection and /or action, by aspects of life such as the natural and made world, music, art, architecture, literature, poverty, injustice, innocent suffering, mystery and human achievement
express gratitude and appreciation.

Inner Strength and Resilience

Pupils will be encouraged to develop the ability to:

direct their own future, e.g. through setting targets, planning to achieve them and taking appropriate action to do so
exercise self-control over the expression of instincts and impulses, thoughts and feelings
respond creatively to difficult and challenging experiences, such as turning a crisis or tragedy into an opportunity for bringing about change, e.g. if a child was injured on a busy road it might lead to action to introduce road calming measures and pedestrian crossings
respond with courage to challenging situations e.g. in confronting difficult situations on the playing field, losing a game or resisting peer pressure
be hopeful, patient, persevering and resilient in the face of difficulty, e.g. in learning from the experience of disappointment.

Ideals and Aspirations

Pupils will be given opportunities to:

create and invent works of beauty, value and usefulness
develop worthwhile beliefs and values

Spiritual Education: Need Of Hour

learn about the process of spiritual development, the stages of the spiritual life and the range of religious and secular spiritual traditions
pursue ideals and visions for the future

Love and Relationships

Pupils will be encouraged to:

sympathise and empathise with other people in such a way that it becomes possible to grasp something of another person's inner world and to respond accordingly, e.g. to celebrate another person's success or to offer sympathy and support to someone who is grieving
develop intimate and enduring relationships with other people (and, for some, with God)
value themselves, other people and the environment
seek to create, maintain and repair relationships with others, e.g. to be able to give and receive love and affection, to forgive and be forgiven
display an active goodwill towards others, e.g. to be a modern day good Samaritan
be compassionate
express regret and apologies, when appropriate to do so

Seeking and Striving

Pupils will be encouraged to:

seek for meaning in experiences of change, loss, suffering, beauty, birth, and death and to allow that meaning to influence their lives, e.g. respond to an appeal for children in need
seek to learn from the insights of different spiritual traditions
seek the truth
seek to do what is right

Reflection on experience

Pupils will be encouraged to:

reflect on the way their attitudes and values have been formed by their experience of life
reflect on moral choices, e.g. when it is right to be totally honest with another person
ask questions and seek answers to deep or ultimate questions such as our place in the world, the purpose of life, our origins and final destiny, the nature of ultimate reality and the possible existence of God.
reflect on the fact that we are all mortal

Implications for schools

A number of implications can be drawn from the work to date on spiritual development. The effective promotion of spiritual development requires a school to:

take seriously the 'spiritual rights' of the child, the development of the whole child and the need to develop spiritual literacy
carefully consider what sort of person the school wants each child to become
use an inclusive definition of spiritual development which will accommodate a wide range of different views about what it means to be spiritually developed
recognise the diversity of spiritual traditions and give pupils access to alternative views
display an understanding of the development of the human spirit as something which cuts deeper than the cognitive/intellectual and affective/emotional dimension of a person
encourage teachers to awaken, enliven, inspire and challenge as well as tend and comfort children's spirits
provide opportunities for pupils to 'look inwards' and to reflect on beliefs, values and feelings, hopes, dreams, ideals and aspirations
provide opportunities for pupils to 'look outwards' and to reflect on the natural world, the environment and human achievement, often 'against the odds'

provide planned and unplanned opportunities, throughout the curriculum, for pupils to stand back and reflect on:
the meaning of their everyday experience
deeper/ultimate questions and issues which arise out of their learning experiences
offer a broad and balanced curriculum which is able to provide a rich variety of opportunities to promote spiritual development
carefully select and promote, specific human capacities such as courage and resilience and above all the 'capacity for response.'

What do schools need to do to promote spiritual development effectively?

Spiritual development is a whole school issue and to promote it effectively the school needs to:

appreciate and understand the full range of spiritual capacities which might be promoted in schools
achieve a consensus about the most important capacities to be developed in the school, through a whole school process of discussion and consultation
identify any particular capacities which might be appropriate for the needs of particular individuals and groups, whilst seeking to develop the full range
identify key capacities that are already being developed and in what contexts this takes place and whether opportunities for further development can be created
identify which capacities are currently underdeveloped and identify contexts where further development might take place
identify any key capacities that are hardly developed at all and consider what opportunities exist or can be created, for development to occur
identify the different contexts, e.g. curriculum subjects or collective worship, where opportunities exist to promote the capacities selected.

Policies and procedures in imparting value based Education

A Cell for Value Education may be established at every HEIs to plan, implement and oversee this requirement to inculcate values in the students. At the same time, it requires sustained efforts to practice, absorb, and assimilate values.
It is desirable that in HEIs, human values should permeate and form part of the teaching in all disciplines and subjects.
The HEIs may work towards evolving a syllabus for a compulsory paper of appropriate credits at the undergraduate level of all disciplines, to stress human values and
the duties laid down in the constitution and the same may be suitably supported by the methodology and examination/evaluation criteria facilitating a learner-centric approach.
At the same time, a few institutions having the potential for imparting value-based education may be identified as "Institutions of Excellence" and act as models for all HEIs.
Efforts should be made by HEIs to impart the teachers, by providing the necessary skills and insights into value education by devising suitable orientation courses and extending support to institutions for imparting such training.
Human Values should be the guiding parameters for governance processes at higher education institutions. HEIs should take suitable measures for disseminating this information in the higher education system.
Due recognition should be given to the expanding socially relevant role of open education and to explore the methods of communicating and internalizing "Human Values" among the students. Special attention should also be given to develop appropriate study material for this on a priority basis through proper supportive measures.
It is also recommended that the evaluation criteria of institutions should be transparent to give due weight to the inculcation of human values.

CONCLUSION

Efforts should be made to enable the education of the learner towards sustainable development and thus shall be directed towards:

The development of the learner's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential
The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations
The development of respect for the parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own
The preparation of the student for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin
The development of respect for the natural environment.

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