

The Transformative Role of Spiritual Learning from Ancient Times to Modern Era of Education

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Abstract

Spiritual learning has woven itself through human educational systems from ancient civilization to contemporary classrooms, evolving while maintaining its core purpose of nurturing wisdom and inner growth. Ancient spiritual traditions, from Vedic education in India to monastic schools in medieval Europe, established foundations for holistic learning that integrated intellectual and spiritual development. Throughout history, spiritual education has transcended mere religious instruction, encompassing character formation, ethical reasoning, and the cultivation of universal human values. The ancient Greeks incorporated spiritual elements through philosophical inquiry, while Eastern traditions merged meditation practices with academic pursuits. The digital revolution has created new platforms for spiritual learning, enabling global access to wisdom traditions and practices. Virtual communities, online courses, and digital resources have democratized spiritual education, making it accessible across geographical and cultural boundaries. Yet, this transformation maintains the essential human connection that spiritual learning demands. Looking forward, spiritual education continues to bridge ancient wisdom with modern pedagogical approaches. It offers solutions to current educational challenges by nurturing whole-person development, promoting mental well-being, and fostering a sense of purpose and interconnectedness in an increasingly complex world.

Keywords: Spiritual Learning, Vedic Education, Modern Pedagogical Approaches, Digital Revolution, Holistic Learning.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lay emphasis on the development of cognitive capabilities of each individual. The profound legacy of India's ancient text and timeless wisdom has been guiding light for this policy. The Indian philosophy, the pursuit of knowledge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragyaa), and truth (Satya) has been deemed to be the highest human inspiration. The education system of India delves the ancient text not just for gaining knowledge but focuses on significance of personal growth and pursuit of wisdom through self-realization. The Indian education system is diverse and comprehensive including a wide range of subjects from ancient to modern times such as Vedas, astrology, mathematics, Upanishads, fine arts, philosophy and many more, whose influence has a strong impact on the world.

In today's education system, academic success is often seen as the primary determinant of a child's future. This intense focus on competition can lead to significant psychological challenges, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and confusion, ultimately affecting children's overall development. To counter these negative effects, it is crucial to foster intellectual growth that respects and nurtures a child's individuality. It also aims to delve in understanding the world in a deeper context for a sustainable growth and the role of spiritual learning through various resources, can play as a roadmap for spiritual emancipation.

Spiritual Learning

Spiritual development is a process by which we attain self-knowledge and God-realization. We have a physical body, and we have a mind and intellect. Spiritual growth involves the realization that we are not the body and the mind, but, in reality, we are soul. Throughout our lives we have become so identified with our body and mind that on our own we cannot separate our true self from them. A spiritual teacher can help us realize our true self. In fact, the great teachers of ancient Greece exhorted us to do so with the words, "Know thyself." This expression is written on the entrance of the Delphic oracle.

Spirituality is a worldview that suggests a dimension to life beyond what we experience on the sensory and physical levels. In practice, this might entail religious or cultural practices and beliefs surrounding a higher being, connection with others and the world as a whole, and/or the pursuit of self-improvement.

Having a connection to some type of spiritual belief has been a source of comfort and relief for many people. Although spirituality is highly individual, its meaning is often shared and expressed in group activities such as church services and holiday rituals. Research has linked spirituality with well-being and health in the face of life challenges

Zohar's Principles of Spiritual Intelligence

In his article, "Spiritual intelligence: A new paradigm for collaborative action", Zohar (2005) identified three forms of human capital; the material capital, social capital and the spiritual capital. He observed that growth of material capital among people is related to IQ, the rational intelligence which is controlling 'What I think?' and having a direct connection with the material prosperity. The social capital is the EQ or the Emotional intelligence of people, which decides about their harmonious existence in the society. Even more fundamental than social capital is spiritual capital, which reflects what an individual exists for, believes in, aspires to, and takes responsibility of. Spiritual intelligence which involves discovering for everybody, 'What I am?', 'Who I am', and 'Where I am' are the source of spiritual capital of the society. Zohar believed that all human beings are born with the capacity to use these three intelligences to supports their survival in the society. Some may be strong in one and weak in others, but each of these intelligences can be nurtured through the experiences of living in the society. He reported that spiritual intelligence is fostered by applying some principles to the understanding and regulation of life. He identified twelve principles of spiritual intelligence, which were derived from the theory of complex adaptive system. Biology admits that human physiology is a complex adaptive system, which can create order out of chaos in the body. Similarly, human mind is more complexly adaptive. The systems of human mind are holistic, emergent, and respond creatively

to changes in the environment. The human mind has constant creative dialogue with the environment. According to Zohar, each one of us is a conscious complex adaptive system, both physically and mentally, and both of them are going together. It is such a great collaboration that any desire to build or create will bring about flexible boundaries and will be in constant dialogue with itself and its environment. According to Zohar, this transaction between the physical and the mental characteristics is a cosmic ideal. Zohar's continued effort and research in understanding these cosmic relationships among physical, mental and environmental led her to develop 12 principles of spiritual intelligence, which he subsequently called the foundational attributes of spiritual intelligence.

- Self-Awareness
- Field
- Independence
- Spontaneity
- Humility
- Being Vision and Value-Led “Why?” Questions
- Holism
- Ability to Reframe
- Compassion
- Positive Use of Adversity
- Celebration of Diversity
- Sense of Vocation

Education System in Ancient India

The man-made world and history are full of solid with strong proof of our rich education system of India; weather you can talk about the oldest university, Numerous ancient texts, scriptures, various cultures, architectural structures, civilizations and library in the world. It has been making historians and scientists amazed and therefore to rethink the importance of ancient education system with spiritual wisdom today, for both, the eastern and western world. This is why the entire world has been looking towards an Ancient Indian History to seek for researching and studying the ancient arts, science and insight and thus to build a peaceful world for peacefully leaving.

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam has said, “The purpose of education is to make good human beings with skills and expertise. Enlightened human beings can be created by teachers”. The steadiness in between this and another world can lead us into harmony. In Indian culture we have been avoiding the term which are known as “teacher” and “professor” today, we always have been putting emotions and taught by our guardians to be used the term “GURU Ji” (Guru is he who dispelled the darkness in terms of ignorance and makes you able to have a clear vision with brilliance). The “Shikshak” is known as Teacher, it is same for the word which is known as “School” which means “Shikshalaya”; we used to call it as Vidhyalaya, where the art, science and spirituality all are has been teaching in terms of balance and super dynamic studies for people.

Spiritual Learning in Ancient India

Spiritual learning in ancient India was a central part of the education system, which focused on the holistic development of the individual:

- **Gurukul system**

Students lived with their teacher, or guru, in a forest hermitage or residential school called a Gurukul. Students, called "shishyas", learned through oral instruction, practical experience, and moral teaching.

- **Vedas and Upanishads:** Teaching and learning followed the tenets of the Vedas and Upanishads, which emphasized fulfilling duties to oneself, family, and society.
- **Values:** Students were taught values such as humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance, and respect for all creations.
- **Festivals:** Festival celebrations helped to instill religious piety and good moral behavior.
- **Self-realization:** The ultimate goal of life was self-realization and spiritual enlightenment.
- **Oral tradition:** Education was primarily oral, with knowledge transmitted from teacher to student through dialogue, recitation, and memorization.
- **Diverse curriculum:** The curriculum covered a wide range of subjects, including Vedas, Upanishads, Vedangas, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, ethics, philosophy, literature, and performing arts. The legacy of Gurukul education continues to inspire modern educational practices.

- **Yoga practices**

The practice of Yoga is believed to have started with the very dawn of civilization. The science of yoga has its origin thousands of years ago, long before the first religions or belief systems were born. In the yogic lore, Shiva is seen as the first yogi or Adiyogi, and the first Guru or Adi Guru.

In ancient time, Yoga was being practised under the direct guidance of Guru and its spiritual value was given special importance. It was a part of Upasana and yoga sadhana was inbuilt in their rituals. Sun was given highest importance during the Vedic period. The practice of 'Surya namaskar' may have been invented later due to this influence. Pranayama was a part of daily ritual and to offer the oblation.

Other practices were also followed by scholars, which mainly included:

- Meditation
- Religious practices
- Prayer
- Havan and yagya
- Chanting mantra

Spiritual learning at present

In a fast-paced and technology-abounding world, the revival of interest in spiritual training is something one can easily feel. In our modern times, humans are mixed up and unable to understand the differences between the search

for meaning, purpose and value of life in the interests of personal growth and selfish approach. Personal growth is seen as part of social processes in which the goodness of others is the prime objective of an individual. Loving heart and peaceful mind are overwhelming one 's existence and multiplying one 's energy. Our personal growth is hindered by selfish approach because it limits our energy and ignores the spiritual dimension of life. Egoistic guides only someone to represent the tiny circle of individual interests. Much of the strength is wasted in battle and concern.

As the human race deals with the complexities of the contemporary life, the ancient lessons of the spiritual doctrines offer a directional light, which become a source of solace, resilience, and an intimate knowledge on what it means to be a truly alive creature.

Role of Spiritual Learning in NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 incorporates spiritual learning as a key element to develop students' inner wisdom and well-being. Research indicates that spiritual intelligence contributes to happiness and creativity in educational settings. The policy recognizes spiritual health as an essential component for creating balanced, resilient learners who can navigate academic and personal challenges effectively.

Conclusion

The journey of spiritual learning through history reveals its enduring influence on education and human development. From ancient wisdom traditions to contemporary educational frameworks, spiritual learning has evolved while maintaining its core purpose of nurturing the whole person. This integration of spiritual elements with modern educational practices creates a balanced approach that addresses both intellectual growth and inner development.

The transformation of spiritual learning methods, from oral traditions in ancient times to digital platforms today, demonstrates its adaptability while preserving fundamental teachings. Modern educators who incorporate spiritual elements into their curriculum report enhanced student engagement, improved emotional intelligence, and better stress management among learners.

Looking forward, the synthesis of spiritual learning with contemporary education offers promising pathways for developing well-rounded individuals. This balanced approach helps students navigate complex modern challenges while maintaining connection to timeless wisdom. As education continues to evolve, the inclusion of spiritual learning principles remains vital in fostering complete human development and creating meaningful learning experiences.

The ongoing relevance of spiritual learning in education underscores its universal value across cultures and periods. Its ability to complement academic instruction while nurturing personal growth makes it an essential component of holistic education. This harmonious blend of ancient wisdom and modern teaching methods paves the way for educational practices that honor both intellectual achievement and spiritual development.

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