Role of Spirituality in Self-Development: A Conceptual Study

V R Ramakrishna [1] , T Bala Bharathi [2]

Department of MBA, Viswam Engineering College, Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh-517325, India;

* Corresponding Author: V R Ramakrishna, rams2976vr@gmail.com

Abstract: In present times, there is a great need for self-development to make a person adapt to the present changing world. This makes a person to efficiently maintain intra-personal relation, inter-personal relations and relations with kith and kin. Self-Development makes an individual complete in all aspects. Numerous methods are developed for self-development like Spirituality, Time Management, Emotional Intelligence, Counselling and facilitation techniques, interpersonal relations and like. Of all these the growing need is for spirituality- which is in existence from a very long time. Spirituality helps in the development of character, creativity, behaviour, personality, human values, self-discipline, self-control and emotional balance of an individual and also for the change in the society as a whole. A need is emphasised to nurture the spiritual thoughts and practices from the age of adolescence. This conceptual paper discloses how the components of spirituality reinforce the upliftment of one's self-development.

Keywords: Self-development, spirituality, intra-personal relation, inter-personal relations, leadership, stress reduction.

1. Introduction

The Concept of Spirituality : Spirituality is viewed as universal phenomena that acts as a powerful psychological change agent (Hickson, Housely, & Wages, 2000). Koenig, McCullough, and Larson (2001) defined spirituality as individuals' belief in the possibility of some form of transcendent reality, including the possibility of experiencing that transcendence in some way. Dalai Lama writes in Ancient Wisdom, Modern World that "spirituality is concerned with those qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony, which brings happiness to both self and other". Prayers and/or meditation bring us closer to understanding the values incorporated in spirituality. They can result in spiritual growth and development.

The concept of Self-Development: Self-Development is taking steps to better you, such as by learning new skills of overcoming bad habits. Self-Development is the state or process of improving or developing oneself. Self-Development is the process by which a person's character and abilities are developed – Oxford Learner's Dictionaries

The goal of Self-Development is to attain inner maturity in all aspects of our personality. This maturity endows us with an intuition enabling us to distinguish our immediate needs from our ultimate need. It urges us to wake up from dreams, false hopes and endless desires, and see the light of Reality. Lack of Self-Development creates havoc in our life - Swami Vivekananda

The Need for Spirituality: Spirituality is important for those who understand the intricate connection between the body, the mind and the spirit. Healthy and fruitful life may be lead without spirituality but life improves when we follow some spirituality. By including some type of everyday spirituality into our lives, we may actually increase our ability to be healthier, live longer and decrease the debilitating problems resulting from stress and depression. This should indicate that we should all adopt a spiritual growth plan and seek the answer to "what spirituality.

Spirituality and Self- Development: Self-Development includes development of:
- Self-Confidence
- Education
- Psychology

- Behaviour
- Character
- Creative Thinking
- Ethical Thinking
- Human Values
- Leadership
- Mental Health
- Personality
- Self Control
- Self Discipline
- Stress reduction

Spirituality paves the way for the development, refinement and transformation of the individual in to a better citizen.

Spirituality and Character: "Good Character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good habits of the mind, habits of the heart and habits of action"- Thomas Lickona. A person with good character is open-minded, listens to every side of the story and understands that every story has two or more sides. A person of better character is a good citizen in the world and understands his or her role in the development of mankind. Spirituality and self-esteem are very important in character development. They act as the guiding factors for your actions with self and others. People having strong spiritual beliefs practice and follow a better Character. "Character is who you are when no one is looking". Spirituality and Spiritual nature determines the character- which is the guiding force for action. People with poor character cannot be trusted as they fail to keep their word or promise.

Spirituality and Human Values: The Human Race is continuing with humanity. At present people are not following right Human values. Due to the distrust and misuse of religion, humanity is deprived. Due to the vast benefits of spiritual activities on mind and health a shift is made towards spirituality as a way for maintaining human values. It is the new understanding that Spirituality is the heart of all religions and it has the strength of uniting humans, buildings the values of humanity in them and develops the feeling of brotherhood. "Spirituality is the final common denominator of all the religions and Human values are the final common pathway."

(http://babuji.org.in/objective-of-spirituality.asp)
Spirituality and Human Values helps to transform from criminal attitude to saintly attitude. Spirituality helps in transforming mind and heart pure so that human personality grows to its zenith. It fills the heart with love and compassion, a soul with wisdom and a motto of selfless service. Human values help to visualise unity of faiths and promotes faith in unity.

Spirituality and Behaviour: Behaviour is the aspect in the human which improves his value and also increase his sphere with the outside world. It makes a human to distinguish from others. Spirituality helps in developing the sense of human touch in the heart of the individual. It creates a thought of non-violence. It promotes a habit of not injuring others mentally and physically. Spirituality makes a person to develop a soft and professional behaviour. It also promotes a good manners and good culture.

Spirituality and Psychology: Spiritual beliefs and values contribute to the nurturing of habits related to food, use of alcohol and sexual involvements. Persons coming with a strong and religious background will be supportive to others. Spirituality helps in integrating different aspects of humans- emotions with intelligence or mind, body and soul. These connections are based on beliefs. It helps in transforming from one phase of life to another. Spirituality condemns the behaviour of some people like alcoholism, smoking, gutka usage, fighting attitude, non-vegetarian or sexual commitments. It plays a dominant role on the psychology of youth to lead a good life. Spirituality helps in reducing stress and increase support when a person moves form adolescence to adulthood.

Spirituality and Creative Thinking: Creativity is the use of imagination or original ideas to create something- oxford dictionaries. Creativity is nothing more than seeing and acting on new relationships, thereby bringing them to life"- Joseph V. Anderson, Weirder then fiction: the reality and myths of creativity. Creativity is enhanced through spirituality. Creativity is a process connected to mind which may not be visible. Different techniques in creativity are based on spirituality-which is the combination of mind and soul. A new application is also developed to foster creativity i.e., Creative Spirituality- a combination of creativity and spirituality. If a person wants to be creative, his mind and body should be supportive. To achieve this, spiritual technique will be more helpful. Spiritual approaches of creativity are Religion, Emotion, music, logic, and poetic. Creative Spirituality involves Learning, awakening, knowledge gathering, self-confidence, involvement and understanding. Individual's Spirituality is the basis of creativity as creativity is based on personal influences and beliefs. Using spirituality the individual is able to do self exploration completely.

Spirituality and Ethics: The following are the some of the important quotations on ethics:

- "Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong."
- "Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs."
- "Being ethical is doing what the law requires."
- "Ethics consists of the standards of behaviour our society accepts."

- "I don't know what the word means." (http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/whatisethics.html)

Most of the religions emphasize a very high degree of ethics. Religion sets high ethical standards and also motivates ethical behaviour. But ethics is not confined to religion. Ethics consists of two components- Belief and Practice. Belief is the basis of ethics- which is based on spirituality. Examples are stealing, telling lies, being illegal etc. Spirituality helps in taking ethical decisions, building self-esteem. Spirituality paves for the actions and efforts of life existence. It plays a dominant role in building the character, developing beliefs, development of self-esteem.

2. Related Work

Spirituality and Mental Health: Mental Health indicates a state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.
(www.thefreedictionary.com) . Mental Health is defined as a state of well being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community- WHO Lack of mental health leads to anti-social behaviour, depression etc. spirituality helps a person to know the purpose of his life and about himself. Spirituality has the effect on physical fitness and mental health. People with various mental health problems get a lot of benefit from spirituality. Benefits of spirituality are:

- Increases self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth
- Fosters self-control
- Recovery from stress and mental illness
- Improvement in intra and inter personal relationships
- Improves hope of life

Spirituality and Personality Development: Spiritual Development is the most important aspect of Personality Development. Change in the lifestyles, increase in stress levels are making people to move towards Spirituality. Spiritual development leads to one's personality development in terms of Personal Growth, Stress Reduction, and Management of life, Contentment and Satisfaction and Team Attitude.

Personal growth-spirituality helps a person to be in a better position by making him to follow good habits, develop positive thinking, and open mindedness. Stress Reduction-People with spiritual practices are able to handle stress more efficiently. Meditation and Prayers are the ways of reducing stress. Spiritual practices make a person to have

control over their thoughts, which results in the reduction of stress. Management of Life-Lifestyle of person following spirituality will be always simple and properly planned. They focus on various aspects of life like career, family relations and interpersonal relations. Every decision in the life is properly planned and action is initiated. Contentment-People with spiritual practices feel more satisfied with their lives. At present the life of the people became mechanical due to the discontentment. Spirituality paves the way to understand the meaning of life and lead life with satisfaction. Team Attitude-Spirituality makes a person to respect other cultures and religions also. This creates a mind in the people to work in teams wherever they are. The interpersonal relations are strengthened and work for the common goal.

Spirituality and Leadership: Spirituality is very helpful in building leadership to bring changes in the society. A person with spiritual thinking understands the concept of life in a better way, increases morale and sense of social responsibility. This is evidenced from the experiences of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Rosa Parks, Du Bois and many peace loving leaders. Gandhiji followed Non-Violence and Satyagraha, Du Bois dedicated his life for the peace and emancipation of African-Americans, Luther King led the non-violence movement. Many leaders also stressed the importance of spirituality in their activities. People with spirituality also work actively for social change. Daloz et al (1996) says that more than 80% of their sample of community activists indicated that spirituality or religion played an important role in the formation of commitment". Spirituality develops higher levels of consciousness and self-transcendence. The leadership for social change needs cultivation of spirituality which is indicated by the constitution of the UNESCO" Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed." So the future leaders should develop a sense of spirituality by developing higher consciousness and interconnections to our society.

Spirituality and Stress reduction: Spirituality may be in any form like prayer, belief in supernatural power, meditation or a religious observance. Spiritual practices help to overcome stress and helps in leading healthier and happy life. Some of the methods which reduce the level identified by various research methods are: Prayer-which keeps a person calm, cool minded, reduce blood pressure and increase concentration. Meditation-makes a person to concentrate on God, reducing the thoughts on unnecessary things and worldly matters, this inturn reduces the stress on mind and frees a person from tension, reduces blood pressure. Gratitude Expression-the habit of expressing gratitude to God has an effect on health of the person and also can reduce the level of stress. Extrinsic or Intrinsic-Faith on God may in any way. Some people

express faith on God intrinsically-in a personal way. Others use extrinsically. Both of them have benefits of spirituality.

Trust in God-those who believe more in God is more optimistic. It also develops the internal control and provides many benefits. Trust is essential in abilities, situation and God. Spirituality helps in reducing the stress and improving overall health. It helps in:

▪ Identifying the purpose of life by removing unimportant things from thoughts
▪ A connection with the society will make to increase mental peace
▪ Sharing of sorrows and burden of tough times will reduce the stress
▪ Increasing the Spiritual circles will help to build relationships which are important for sharing the feelings, which intern results in reduction of stress.
▪ Helps to cope up with stress and quick recovery from mental and physical illness

Spirituality and Self-Control: The most important thing what everyone should learn is to have Self-control. It is a thing which helps to maintain happiness, peace and harmony. Spirituality helps to develop self-control in three ways:
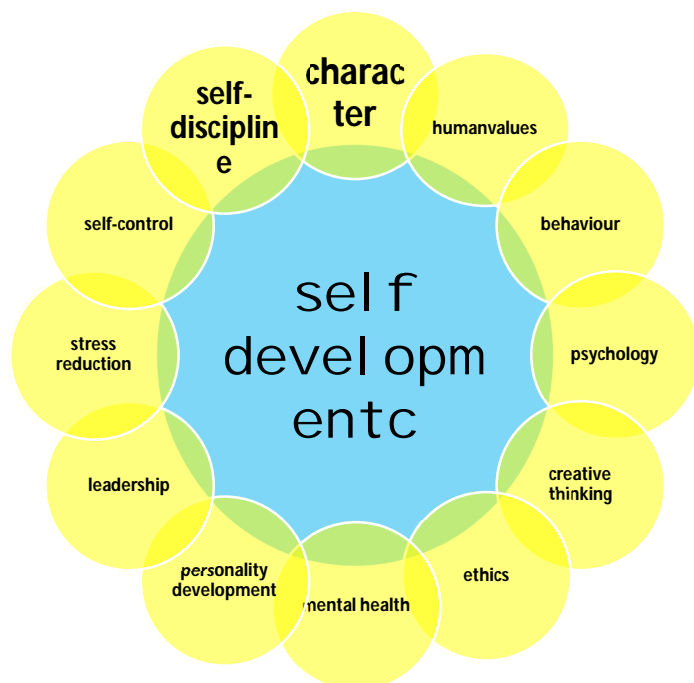▪ By Physical appearance
▪ By Concentration
▪ By Practice

Figure.1 Interrelationship between components of spirituality and self-development

If we sit quiet and maintain silence for sometime it controls the activity of the body. The next is the controlling of the mind. Spirituality helps to control our thoughts also. This inturn also helps to control ourselves. Spirituality also

helps to have control on the some activities like sleeping, intoxications, cruel thoughts, imaginations, emotions and feelings etc., controlling all the above leads to Self-Control.

Conclusion

Self-Development includes development of character, human values, behaviour, psychology, creative thinking, ethics, mental health, personality development, leadership, stress reduction, self-control, and self-discipline. Spirituality paves the way for the development of all the above stated components of Self-Development. The picture depicted above explains how the components of spirituality lead to the effective self-development in an individual.

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