



SPIRITUALITY-THE FORGOTTEN REALM

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Abstract

Spirituality is known as the forgotten dimension of our lives. It is getting in touch with your spirit which is our true essence. It is only when the exterior becomes blurred that we need to see inside ourselves and need to take guidance from within. It is only in the deep recesses of our heart that we get true knowledge about ourselves. With this new found knowledge we need not look anywhere out of us or seek approval from others. We would be guided from within. Spirituality differs from Religion in the sense that it offers more freedom to the aspirant. This paper deals with the concept of Spirituality and talks about how to practise it through varied forms.

Keywords: Disillusioned, Meditation, Prayer, Spirit, Void.

In the midst of our busy lives and schedules, there are times when we feel a deep void inside of ourselves. There are moments when we feel disconnected, disoriented and disenchanted with the frantic and hectic way our life is progressing. To overcome this stressful and confused lifestyle, some people take recourse to various types of addictions. They get into bad company of frivolous people. 'Eat, drink and be merry' becomes their motto. Unable to find that peace of mind, some people turn to anti-social activities and become a menace for society. They start taking pleasure in harming others and try to derive gratification from it. They live their own life in misery and make others' lives miserable. Still, they are not able to fill up that void that exists within their hearts. Consequently some people become disillusioned with their lives and commit suicide.

This is the time when one needs to stop, hold their breaths and reflect on their lives and aspirations. This is the time to introspect. This is the time to connect, not with anybody outside of ourselves, but with our own selves, our inner selves. The popular American essayist, prophet and seer, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself". Our pre- conditionings and the way we are brought up is, sometimes so misleading that we start identifying ourselves only with our bodies. We adorn our bodies, and take care only of its needs and desires. This disunity results in discord, in our lives. We start feeling that there is chaos, turbulence and pessimism arising within us. It is this moment when Spirituality comes, to help us out of our predicament.

The word Spirit comes from Latin 'Spiritus', meaning breath, wind or life principle. It is that which gives life to the self. So, it can be said that spirit is not so much about ideas but is about lived experience. It is embodied in our actions and attitude. It is active, not passive. It can be termed as a dynamic reality that expresses itself in the body. Spirituality says that life is more than just taking care of our bodies. Before being connected to others, we firstly have to connect with our own selves. Spirituality is said to be that knowledge which connects us to our own selves.

The greatest thing about spiritual knowledge is that it attunes ourselves to something we never thought as existing within us. Therefore, we need not look anywhere else to derive satisfaction. Spirituality casts off all our thinking which we all have been conditioned to live with, namely, that we are limited and petty human beings, incapable of doing higher things in life. It says that we are more powerful than we ever imagined ourselves to be. A great and divine light exists inside each of us. We may think that we are limited to just our physical bodies and state of affairs- but spirituality comes in and says that there is more than this.

When one moves ahead on the path of spirituality, one finds that there is a very small and quiet place hidden within each of us. To reach that silence is the goal of each spiritual aspirant; and when he succeeds in finding it, one after the other veils of ignorance are lifted from his heart. The things which seemed so dear till now, seem to be futile. The race after money, power, bodily desires start fading away. New patterns of life begin to emerge, new interests start to develop. A person is no longer his old self. He acquires a new persona; a special grace engulfs him now. He is more at peace with himself because he is connected with his true self, which guides and protects him at every step. The seeker now knows that he does not look anywhere out of himself to seek answers. The treasure lies within him, and he has to explore it in order to find himself.

There are four Principles which govern our well being in the spiritual realm. These Principles leave nothing to chance but attribute everything to the higher powers and thus urges the seeker not to be worrisome and disturbed by small incidents in their lives. These four Principles of Spirituality are :



- **The First Principle:** Whosoever you encounter is the right one. This means that no one comes into our lives by way of mere chance. They are intentionally put into our lives-either to teach us something, to help us or simply to be with us in the journey of life.
- **The Second Principle:** Whatever happened is the only thing that could have happened. Things could not have taken another turn. They happen in a particular way because they were destined to be that way. Every single situation in life which we come across is absolutely perfect even when our ego and understanding force us to believe otherwise.
- **The Third Principle:** Each moment in which something begins is the right moment. Everything begins at exactly the right moment –it is never too early or too late for something to have happened. When we are ready for it, for that something new in our life, it is there, ready to begin.
- **The Fourth Principle:** What is over is over. When one phase of our life ends, it helps us to evolve. It helps us to get matured and experienced. Good, positive experiences give us memories whereas bad ones teach us lessons.

These Principles forms a core part of finding a spiritual meaning to our lives. They help us in building up on our spiritual selves. Spirituality helps us in our life in various ways :

- It helps in the development of a purpose in life.
- It helps to generate hope.
- It helps us to address and resolve conflicts and problems in relations. This may involve reconciliation and forgiveness. Hence, Spirituality cannot be confined to a personal realm only. It moves beyond the personal, and affects society at large.

All of us are spiritual beings, and have the spark of divinity within us. It is up to us to recognise this spark within and nurture it so that it becomes a mighty flame.

People often confuse Spirituality with its conjoined twin, Religion. But both of these have some major differences. There are major demarcations as to when can we call a person deeply religious or simply spiritual.

Religion is focused in Social institutions. It is very often imposed on others and is bondage. It is more related to external beliefs and doctrines, sacred traditions and community based worship.

Religion is concerned also, with the maintenance of boundaries. Spirituality does not have the same concern as it is more about breaking down of barriers and the boundaries which the element of transcendence in the Spirit finds difficult to define.

Religion tends to be prescriptive, with meaning being transmitted through various external sources. Spirituality involves the discovering of meaning within oneself because it depends on reflection and introspection at different levels.

Spirituality can be kick started by religion- but that is precisely where the connection ends. In times of distress, people often tend to move towards religion-which is concerned on the experience of the divine, that which is supernatural. Spirituality, on the other hand, places one's belief in oneself, thus equating it with the Divine and realising this divinity within.

Practising Spirituality

The practice of spirituality can take many different forms. While many people seem to be content with a walk in the garden and a connect with their surroundings, the more profound ones can be found to connect with themselves through Meditation, Prayer, Dance, being amidst natural surroundings etc.

Prayer: Prayer is an excellent form of communing with the higher powers. It is one of the most important aspects of spirituality. It is, in simple terms, talking to God. When we pray, we shift the entire burden of our lives to our deity and ask for help, guidance and protection. Also, some people confuse the purpose of prayer to be just to ask for something. But Praying is not limited to this purpose only. It should start with giving thanks to our deity for whatever blessings we have been bestowed with, in our life viz., food, shelter, parents, teachers, and friends. We also have to ask for forgiveness for any mistakes consciously or unconsciously committed by us during the day. Prayer is known to bear its fruits if it is done to ask for the spiritual progress of others, and to ask for the welfare of our near and dear ones.

Worship: Normally, considered synonymous to Prayer, worshipping God is another way in which we can be connected to the higher powers. Though, mere rituals and ceremonies do not hold any significance especially if done half-heartedly and simply for show-off, still rituals and religious ceremonies hold a special place in our culture and society and do connect us if done sincerely and devotedly.



Chanting: A **chant** (from French chanter, from Latin cantare, "to sing") is the rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds, often primarily on one or two main pitches called reciting tones. Chanting or *Japa* is one of the powerful mediums through which the divine can be realised. Different sounds have different effects on human psyche. If a soft sound of wind rustling through leaves soothes our nerves, the musical note of running stream enchants our heart; thunders may cause awe and fear.

The sacred utterances or chanting of Sanskrit Mantras provide us with the power to attain our goals and lift ourselves from the ordinary to the higher level of consciousness. They give us the power to cure diseases; ward off evils; gain wealth; acquire supernatural powers; worship a deity for exalted communion and for attaining blissful state and attain liberation.

Dance: For some people, dance proves to be an excellent mode to connect with the divine. Dance is both therapeutic and spiritual and raises the seeker's consciousness to the level of pure ecstasy and bliss. It is both healing and transformative. Some religious sects often take ritualistic dancing as a step to attain the state of God realization. Popular among them are 'Sufi Whirling', whirling dance of the Sufi *dervishes* where they dance as if they are in a trance, Praise Dance or Worship dance in the Christian community, *Kuchipudi* and *Kathak* in India and Belly Dancing in Arabic Cultures.

Music: Music is God's spiritual language. It is a language which can be understood without lyrics. It is the ultimate expression of connecting with the Supreme. Like Dance it can be both healing and transformative. Soulful music has the power to capture hearts, transform people and heal them of various ailments. In fact, there is a whole new branch of Therapy, known as the *Raga-Chikitsa*, where chronic ailments can be treated with the playing of some specific Indian *Ragas*. Music soothes one's mind, and brings the nerves to a standstill so that we can hear the silence that is within us, which connects us with our source.

Meditation: This is a method which has been much talked about and is being practised by many, the world over. It is only when the mind is still, that one can see the reality. It is only when the path is clear, that one can reach one's true potential. Meditation is one such spiritual practice which clears the mind and brings it face to face with the true self of humans. Meditation as a spiritual discipline is a highly recommended and a very powerful tool to commune with the divine and obtain clarity in thoughts. Most people prefer the early mornings to meditate, but it can be done at other any time of the day too.

Spirituality deals with the simpler things of life. As such, one does not need to follow any strict regime in order to observe it. A simple smile, a warm hug, a caring attitude and kind words do not require much from an aspirant and go a long way to make both the giver and the receiver happy. Spirituality concerns itself with mental happiness and satisfaction and once we get in the habit of making others happy, the universe would take care of our happiness too.

The beauty of spirituality is that once we commit to it, a world of opportunity and new experiences opens up before us. The moment we decide that spirituality is "for us", it's as if the doors of enlightenment swing open and we finally start to see the light.

Spirituality is a Concern for the wholeness of life in which the person longs for meaning and purpose to his life, and once he attains it, he is no longer himself, but becomes one with the Universal life force. Being spiritual is not weakness or escapism; rather spirituality gives us the strength to face hardships and difficulties which come our way. Spirituality encompasses all human beings to give & receive love & to experience hope

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