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## Spirituality as the Heart of All Development

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**Abstract:** The ideal of development as a continuing process of growth, creation, improvement and positive change has yielded to a reality more frequently marked by destruction, division, deprivation and depletion. The difference between the cherished ideal and the cruel reality finds its roots in a poverty of values and spirituality. That poverty, hunger and other deprivations persist in an age of global plenty is not an issue of logistics, technology or financing so much as a question of values and morality. Setting a clear and defined course of action that we all agree on with regard to the development agenda is important but we must not forget that the world cannot be changed with words and plans alone: it can only change when our values, attitudes and actions change. The crisis of the non-implementation of action plans is itself a crisis of values.

**Keywords:** Spirituality for Social Work, Development, Psychological problems, Heart of Development

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# **Spirituality as the Heart of All Development**

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The ideal of development as a continuing process of growth, creation, improvement and positive change has yielded to a reality more frequently marked by destruction, division, deprivation and depletion. The difference between the cherished ideal and the cruel reality finds its roots in a poverty of values and spirituality. That poverty, hunger and other deprivations persist in an age of global plenty is not an issue of logistics, technology or financing so much as a question of values and morality. Setting a clear and defined course of action that we all agree on with regard to the development agenda is important but we must not forget that the world cannot be changed with world and plans alone : it can only change when our value, attitude and action change. The crisis of the non-implementation of action plans is itself a crisis of values.

## **1. From a Materialistic to Deeper Values**

This is not decrying the important achievements that have been made in recent years in areas such as health, life expectancy and the reduction of poverty. Nevertheless, our world remains under the dark cloud of an excessively materialistic paradigm one of

the consequences of which is that development is too often a narrow concept largely understood only in economic terms. This narrow concept of development can find its roots in a narrow concept of the self that neglects the larger reality of heart and soul. Dims the inner light of the spirit and values and forget essential one-ness of the human family.

Lasting development within society will not happen without development of the individual. We need to move from an overly materialistic approach to one that includes the broader and deeper realities of human life and experience: the inner world of our thoughts and values and the innate spirituality on which our worth and dignity are based. We will not be able to get the outer world in order until we have first learned to get our inner world in order and transcend short-term selfishness, consumerism, disregard for others and a corruption of value. We will not see the changes we look for in the world around us – such as the elimination of poverty, violence and injustice- until we first bring about those changes in ourselves.

Spirituality provides us with the much-needed language of the heart. It is the heart that communicates with feelings that can transcend barriers and melt division. True identity of self builds self-respect leading to better understanding. Learning attitude and harmonious relations. Spirituality engenders the awareness of self-responsibility knowing that all problems can be solved with the right attitude.

Some of the practical ways to apply spirituality are: to focus on developing spiritual values in life, to treat others equally with a balance of love and right judgment; practice short times of silence throughout the day-it brings clarity to the mind and harmony to the emotions study inspiring spiritual texts. Keep good company and have positive attitude towards all.

Spirituality lends itself to a holistic perspective in which both spirit and matter, soul and body are real. Among its many rich fruits spirituality offers us a methodology to deepen our awareness of our inner being. From this awareness may follow steps to

develop or change the self in ways that are conducive to the kind of world society we want.

A spiritual understanding of the self indicates that human worth is not derived from matter and material possessions or measured in consuming, having and doing. We then see poverty not just as relating to a material state; in fact the near-bankruptcy of values such as honesty, love, respect, care and compassion is the greatest poverty afflicting the world today as well as itself causing material poverty. Values and spirituality then are at the heart not just of who we are but also of the political, social, economic and environmental issues we are facing. It is also they, rather than words and numbers that constitute the foundations of the world we are seeing to build.

Nature is not just a resource to be exploited, a potential source of economic growth, but a sustaining and sacred presence to be treated with respect and care. In a world of social disintegration and individual loss of meaning, spirituality offers us a sense of purpose and the ability to reconcile the tensions that challenge our being and living together as we strive for which is good, meaningful and positive.

Helping us to recognize the common identity we share with fellow members of the human family, spirituality's concept of power is one of sovereignty over the self rather than of controlling others. Distinguishable from religion, and possible doctrinal divergency, spirituality is concerned with the primary challenge of putting our inner house in order. It is not antithetical to material progress but believes that such progress yields a bitter fruit and carries within itself the seeds of its own demise if values such as responsibility, justice, honesty, sharing and respect are not its guiding polestar.

Our struggle for development cannot rely on technological revolution alone or be judged in economic terms without also taking account of fundamental human values and the spiritual dimensions of the individual. Human beings do not live by bread alone and development is to sustain people and life rather than

being an end in itself. It is also soon apparent that securing access to basic human needs itself depends on the presence of values and values that sustain people – such as respect, honesty and love – are also values that sustain development.

It is clear, therefore, that sustainable development, and development that sustains all people, depends at least as much on inner transformation and growth as on material progress and prosperity. We need to ask ourselves what are the values and principles that underlie our practices and that we would like to be the guiding force in our choices and decisions. Transcending notions of materialism and material gratification as being the essence of life, we may come to higher purpose of developing the inner self, inculcating moral values and expressing our skills and talents in service of others.

Action with regard to such personal and spiritual capacity-building is required within every sector and level of society as both formal education at school but also at home in the community and workplace. Such education, as a creative and transformational process, will touch the heart as well as the mind and give shape to good governance and policies on crucial areas such as the use of resources, healthcare, industrialization, economic activity and technology.

The Brahma Kumaries World Spiritual University therefore believes that achieving the goals of sustainable development requires that we place a high priority on learning and education that is not only functional, practical and relevant in content but which also has spiritual and moral principles and values at its heart and the overall development of the whole person and society as its aim. This is the truly indispensable basic foundation of education.

In the realm of social sciences, aspects of transcendence and actualization that qualify spirituality have been discerned through health research, ageing research, counseling and positive psychology.

## 2. Spirituality and Social Work

Four category of existing literature on spirituality and social work are the conceptual models of spirituality used in social work, association of core spirituality tenets with teleological ethics of the profession, aspects of spiritually inclined social work practice and micro and macro domains of intervention.

### Conceptual Models of Spirituality used in Social Work

Carroll (2001) has described seven conceptual models of spirituality used in social work – the vertical horizontal approach, five levels of consciousness model, integrated approach, self-other-context-spiritual (SOCS) circle, holistic model of spirituality, the whole person model and the two-dimension holistic model. The underlying assumption herein is the spiritual self of the individual which needs to be addressed and all transactions being within the reference system of that self. All other aspects of existence converge into or diverge from that spiritual self.

In the vertical-horizontal approach, the vertical dimension has to do with relationship with **GOD** and the horizontal dimension has to do with relationship with self, others and environment. Within the five levels of consciousness or existence – physical, emotional, mental, existential and spiritual. All the previous levels need to be geared up to the highest and actualized level of existence which is spiritual

The self-other-context-spiritual (SOCS) circle contains a presentation of four life realities - Self, other, context and spiritual. Within the largely interactionist mode, there is a true cognition whence the spiritual is taken cognizance of and that eventually leads to desirable harmony. The holistic model of spirituality considers spirituality as the centre of person surrounded by psychological, spiritual, biological and sociological aspects of the individual. The outer circle is then synergetically the wholeness of the spirituality of the person in relation with all domains of existence.

In the whole person model, the traditional clinical dimension, integrative dimension and the spiritual dimension are involved. The spiritual dimension at the top includes affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects; the traditional clinical dimension at the bottom level includes physical, emotional, and social dimension and the in between space, the integrative dimension provides the space through which the traditional dimension interacts with the spiritual dimension. This linking of virtual spaces and dimensions then leads to well-being of the individual. The two-dimension holistic model proposes the transpersonal dimension and the bio-psycho-social dimensions. Both these dimensions chart out into infinity, hence indicating the infiniteness of the spiritual context and the total space between the two dimensions is wherein the growth occurs.

### **Core Spirituality Tenets and the technological Ethics of the Profession**

The core spirituality tenets of inherent equity and transcendence find associations with ethics of social work.

### **Aspects of Spiritually Inclined Social Work Practice**

The aspects of spiritually inclined social work practice include the components of spiritual assessment, spiritually inclined interventions and phases of spiritual development and sustenance.

### **3. Micro and Macro Domains of Interventions**

In the domain the core is the self and the concept of being and existence, issues affecting which are disharmony, dependency and suffering, which affects the sense of well-being. The source may be located within the self and significant other. Through spiritual ontologies and epistemologies, the endeavour is to traverse the vital and psychic domains of the self towards the transpersonal domain. In this domain, the spiritual metaphors, constructs and experiences are unearthed, which then lead to transpersonal development and elevated concepts of selfhood.

In the macro domains of intervention, the core is cosmic consciousness deriving from notions of theistic existentialism. Issues of imbalance of the cosmic order and disharmony are primary, sources of which may be colonization of the lifeworld and distortion of worldviews. Through spirituality catalogues, the effort is to re-instate harmonized worldviews, transcend to larger macro-cosmic domains with metaphors of equality, transcendence and reverence for life, The eventual outcome is cosmic transcendence and synergies of being and becoming.

**Diagram 1: Micro Domains of Intervention**

Self and Being-consciousness	Vital, Mental, Emotional and Physical Domains	Transcending to Transpersonal Domains
Existence and Well-Being	Spiritual Ontologies and Epistemologies	Spiritual Metaphor, Constructs and Experiences Unearthed
Issues of Disharmony, Dependency, Suffering	Sources within self and significant other	Transpersonal Development-Supramental Realisation and elevated conceptions of selfhood



**Diagram 2: Macro Domains of Interventions**

Cosmic Consciousness	Re-instating Harmonised Worldviews	Transcending to Macrocosmic Domains
Theistic Existentialism	Spiritual Ontologies, Epistemologies and Cosmologies	Equality, Transcendence and Reverence for Life Metaphors
Issues of Imbalance of the Cosmic Order, Disharmony	Source-Colonisation of the Lifeworld and Distortion of Worldviews	Cosmic Transcendence and Synergies of being and Becoming

#### 4. Spirituality in Social Service

The former President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, launched the people's Foundation for Development of Enlightened Citizenship, a body of meant to motivate people – particularly those spiritually inclined – to take up social causes.

The President recalled some of his experiences during his travels through the country. He recounted that on a visit to the Jal Mandir in Bihar, he happened to see lotus flowers blooming in a lake. The sight reminded him of a couplet written by Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar 2000 years ago, which gives the axiom of life.

The couplet says that whatever the dept or the state of cleanliness of the pond, the lotus flower springs out and blooms majestically looking towards the sun. Similarly, human life can be transformed into a purposeful high only when a great aim engulfs the mind of the individual.

The President recalled several pleasant and spiritual experiences on visits to holy places of various faiths in different parts of the country. In all these places, he said, he found that great souls had propagated the philosophy of a good life and, above all, these centres with a multi-religious environment provided a harmonious ambience motivating people to live in peace and happiness.

The Message, the President said, that he got from his experiences at all these holy places was that when people visit a shrine, their minds are focused on GOD, either to thank Him for all that He has given, or to plead for divine assistance. Such minds are conditioned to serve GOD in whatever way possible. Such an elevated state of mind, the President proposed, should be channelized for the good of the society and nation. He said at least five million Indians on an average visit major places of worship daily. Most of these devout pray for their happiness and prosperity. Along with their prayers, the President suggests, these devotees could take one of the following vows, which could be displayed at these places of worship:

1. I will be responsible for educating at least five students for three years.
2. I will activate at least one pond in my neighbourhood or nearest village.
3. On return from this place of worship I will remove all enmity within my family and withdraw any court cases.
4. On return from this place of worship I will plant five fruit-bearing trees.
5. I will not gamble and succumb to any addiction.
6. I will treat male and female children in my family equally in educating them.

7. I will lead from now onwards a righteous life free from corruption.
8. I will not abuse bad words and make my tongue dirty.
9. I will help the persons when they are in need.

Even if ten percent of the devotees take any one of these vows, the President said, it would bring peace and enrich social life. Righteousness, Mr. Kalam explained, is what makes a human being into a perfect citizen. That is why, he said, people who wish to have moral harmony in the world, in their nation and society, should first cultivate their personal lives by inculcating righteousness and a sincere will. This is the foundation of a happy, prosperous life for all, from the emperor down to the common man.

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