

Spiritual Heritage & Education Today

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Abstract

This paper defines and synthesizes the basic and profound spiritual heritages from both the East and West to illustrate what is missing in education today. The discussion focuses on health and happiness, the essential elements for human existence and its quality. It examines both religious and non-religious holistic practices in our traditions that nourish, enhance, and develop quality, knowledge, and sustainability of humanity in connection with the universe and cosmos as ONE. This paper discusses the considerations and the means for integrating such spiritual heritages and practices in education classrooms today and shows the necessity, urgency, and significance for the survival and sustainability of humanity and Mother Earth.

1. Introduction

In the past century, formal education, as a system and a phenomenon, has seen drastic expansion and development all over the world, from the tribal village in Africa to the urban city of millions in China, from the mountains of South America to the shores of India. The basic education at the elementary level is a common component of children worldwide. According to the World Bank 2012 World Development Report, the percentage of relevant age reached 100% in 2009 in the world for both genders overall. For secondary education, the percentage of participation for the relevant age group is 69% for male and 67% for female students. Junior or middle school, is a mandatory requirement in the overwhelming majority of nations (The World Bank, 2012). Higher education has provided access to students from a wide spectrum of ethnic, social, economic, and cultural backgrounds that would not have the privilege to enter the “ivory tower” as previously operated and perceived. Formal and systematic education has become a right and an integral part of people’s lives and existence. The participation rate of the relevant age group in 2009 is 26% for male and 28% for female students, (The World Bank, 2012, p. 409). The total college and university student enrollment was 150.7 million in 2009 and the increase since 1990 was 22% in North America to 216% in Africa (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2009).

While the expansion of education at all levels has reached a historic height, the content of education has also changed drastically from the oral tradition and faith or ritual based heritage and values, to general learning of basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, and then again to many specialized fields that focus on knowledge, professional careers, and financial benefits. The purposes of education has shifted from the shaping and developing the “philosophical king” of Plato’s era, to the “enlightened gentlemen” during and after the Renaissance, then the “scientists” of the modern age, and now “the good citizens and working force of the masses” (Ozman & Craver, 2012, Windolf, 1997). With these significant changes in education as well as the separation of religion and public education in the majority of the nations worldwide, the traditional teaching and practices of cultural and spiritual heritages have faded or been overcrowded and overtaken by practical and professional subject matters such as law, business, finance, and newer teaching methods and tools including computer, website, and iPad.

Interestingly, as we gain tremendous external knowledge, skills, and financial wealth, and open and create new frontiers with sciences, technology, and medicine, our education systems seem to become inclusive, comprehensive, and powerful. Yet, at the core, there is a growing lack of spirituality, human values, and quality. Health and happiness, the basics of human life and existence are noticeably missing throughout our educational systems. While the world is becoming smaller with airplanes and high-speed internet, the human race has never before so fragmented and separated from the family and community physically, psychologically, and internally.

The questions can be asked – Is the traditional spirituality obsolete in the education of modern society? What is the relationship between spirituality and education? What role does spiritual heritage play in this day and age? How does it impact education and the welfare of humanity and why? This paper will examine the definition of spiritual heritage, synthesize and explore the basic and profound commonality in the Eastern and Western traditions, and discuss and analyze their implications for educational practices today.

2. Spiritual Heritage Defined

What is spiritual heritage? Philosophically, the initial step of any scholarly endeavor is to examine and define the focal concept and establish the foundation of intellectual discourse. The consensus of definition perhaps is easier to reach for “heritage” – which is the knowledge, property, and wisdom that is obtained, acquired, and passed down from one’s biological and cultural lineages. Heritage lays down the common foundations for a human being, an ethnic group, a nation or the entire humanity as the essence of the existence is maintained and developed. However, when it comes to define “spiritual” or “spirituality,” the challenge is paramount. There can be many different definitions or perspectives based on one’s views, roots, and cultural contexts.

In English, the word of “spiritual” has multi-layers of meaning, including “relating to sacred matter,” “ecclesiastic” or “religious” values, or “of supernatural phenomenon” (Webster’s Universal Encyclopedia Dictionary, 2002). While the historic context and development in western history often connects and equates the spiritual matters with religions and churches, the scope of spirituality extends far beyond the ritual and religious practices. “Being spiritual” or “spirituality” is embedded in social, cultural, and historic contexts, and different perspectives on the term of “spiritual” or “spirituality,” result in a rich mosaic of human understanding of the properties of this term.

At the heart of spirituality, despite of the differences, it is a human endeavor to fully grasp and develop the consciousness to connect with the higher realms of the universe and the cosmos, whether it is with or through an omnipotent God, or powerful natural and supernatural forces. Such effort or practice opens to and integrates with all elements in all forms, dimensions, and times, with a clear focus to better the self as well as all beings. This pursuit comes through a variety of pathways, which may be religious worship, meditation, yoga, martial arts, or contemplation. As a form of self-realization, spirituality is not only a subjective, abstract, and mental inner process, as many would perceive. Actually it is a holistic process that employs the entire being, physical, mental, psychological, and metaphysical, as well as the entire environment in which the human being resides.

Spiritual heritage, therefore, focuses on the wellbeing of a person as well as humanity that fosters cultivation, enlightenment, and state of the highest consciousness of Oneness. It consists of beliefs, values, rituals, and daily practices, all inclusively. While it is largely inherited, it is also transmitted through the continuous choices of each individual or group. The role and function of spiritual heritage is to sustain human beings, or cultural group, and humanity through time tested knowledge, wisdom, and insights.

Spiritual heritage consists of multiple layers or aspects based on an individual or collective consciousness along their spiritual journey. It starts with basic belief in and respect for a higher power or powers. Some embark on this learning path with a simple desire and practice to develop good health and longevity through the spiritual connections. Some seek an inward self-awareness and development through spiritual connection and guidance for deeper understanding of higher self. For others it is an altruist commitment to serve all humanity with spirituality. Some are simply being One with all there is, possess no personal motives and desires, and reach complete Oneness and peace. Regardless, which layer and for what purpose one engages in spiritual learning and growth, or whether one wants to be partake in the process, the reality is that each and all are inevitably on this journey and bear the full impact, consequences, and outcomes knowingly or unknowingly.

3. Basics of the Spirituality

Based on the above definition of spiritual heritage, it is simply beyond the scope of this paper to discuss our spiritual heritage in its entirety. This paper intends to synthesize three basic concepts – spiritual connections, centers, vibrations/frequencies, and related practices across all spiritual processes that impact significantly on health and happiness.

3.1 Spiritual Connection

The primary and significant hallmark of spirituality, whether through religion, science, or other metaphysical pathways is the recognition and integration of spiritual connectedness with higher beings or forces beyond human and physical realms. Such connections may come through God, Goddess (or Gods and Goddesses), Buddha and Bodhisattvas, and deities such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam (Smith, 1991). Or the connections relate to natural and cosmic forces including the sun, the moon, earth, wind, stars, galaxies, and light. The native American profound link with Mother Earth (Allen, 1992, McFadden 2005), the Hawaiian worship of volcanic force and power through Pele (Lee & Willis, 1990), and the traditional Chinese five elements of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth (Wing, 1979) illustrate the power and impact of natural forces and phenomena on humanity.

The highest respect and honor for these connections manifest the human understanding and consciousness that humanity is one of the links in the totality of the universe and is part of the creation of the entire cosmos. In honoring and making these spiritual connections, humanity situates itself in the context of the macro or mega-reality of all species and elements and the complete environment. These realization and view are reached partially through the persistent and ongoing of human efforts of searching for truth and knowledge within and without. Contrary to the focus primarily on the human alone, an approach that is ego-centric and closed and that isolates humanity unrealistically, the spiritual focus on the human in relation with the universe and forces around on all planes and in all realms presents a fluid and interdependent integration with the reality seen or unseen beyond the physical. Thus it renders a comprehensive and inclusive universe and cosmos.

Such consciousness and understanding point out and explain human imperfection, misconceptions, and limitations on the one hand, and on the other hand, they provide the possibility and pathways to perfection, truth, and freedom through the chosen spiritual connections. The realization of such extensive relation and connection with all makes the seemingly chaotic challenges and twists and turns in life endurable and explainable experiences. More importantly, such events and occurrence become meaningful lessons and potential growth for human being. At the same time, they provide obtainable goals and inspiration for human beings to work together toward enlightenment, deliverance, and empowerment.

The actual ways of spiritual connections may vary from teaching to teaching, practice to practice, or religion to religion. The first common spiritual connection is for humans to follow the spiritual teaching and principles and disciples or believers. Often such connection is formed regularly through organized institutions and rituals as well as individual practices. The spiritual power, may it be God or the Earth, provides all the guidance entirely. Another way of spiritual connection is to make the connection as a channel or medium, seeking guidance and sharing that with fellow men and women. The channel or medium often will become masters, gurus, or leaders that serve a constituency of their followers. Yet, some will integrate through the spiritual connections with the spiritual entity, thus becoming prophets, God, or Oneness with the spiritual power. While certain practices are restricted to one approach only, in the course of historic practices, some integrate all three means and it is a combination, which utilizes one approach or another as spiritually guided and as appropriate. For some spiritual practitioners, it is a gradual evolution from one stage to another with progressive growth and approaches as illustrated through Taniguchi's work, *Truth of Life* (2006), till the final destination of void.

Regardless which pathway each believes and chooses to pursue, the spiritual connection offers a deeper understanding of one's true self and nature as well as the vast and unknown universe. The process is very much captured in Plato's allegory of the Cave in his *The Republic* (Plato, 1960). At the same time, it provides a new sense of higher purposes and goals such as self-cultivation, betterment, and social and cultural transformation and harmonization. While many who start with personal cultivation and individual focus soon find through the spiritual connection that they are very much connected and related with all, the destiny of all humanity and universe. For instance, in Buddhism, while there is a difference at the beginning between Theravada, which focuses on one's own cultivation and enlightenment, and Mahayana, which teaches and shares the personal journey with all humanity (Harvey, 1990), as the cultivation continues and elevates, the seemingly varied approaches merge as one during the process and at their destination – selfless, formless, emptiness.

The spiritual connection for an individual who seeks, embraces, practices, and understands is not only a philosophical, abstract, and mental process.

It manifests and integrates at all levels, physical, emotional, environmental, and spiritual. Of the many impacts, first those who seek and practice spiritual connections create a reality that offers meaning and rationale for their existence. The practice offers one the understanding of life and reasons of various aspects of challenges, and human efforts to make meaning and sense through the spiritual connection provide an acceptance of life as is as well as an uplifting purpose or goal. While the actual life of the spiritual practitioner may not be easier, the life and all the challenges, more often than not, are more endurable for the practitioner due to his or her spiritual belief and practice. The fear, insecurity, and uncertainty that associate with individual loneliness and isolation, and negatively impact on human physical and emotional wellbeing can be kept at bay. For instance, for Buddhist believers, the physical life is viewed as full of “suffering.” The spiritual scriptures teach an understanding and commitment to go through such suffering so that one can be delivered and reach nirvana (Bodhi, 2012; Jing Gang Sutra, 1980). This awareness and knowledge bring meaning and purpose into the current state and make the physical life livable. Moreover, those who form a spiritual community also provide important social and human support and offer compassion and assistance at times of need.

The spiritual connection requires spiritual principles such as honesty, altruism, respect, love, compassion, peace, and honorable conduct. They form the moral guidelines for the practitioners in their spiritual practice as well as daily life. As a result, such consciousness and awareness influence their interactions with other human beings and environments. When the spiritual principles are followed in real life, they assist the individual in creating a harmonious relationship with all the people and elements around them. Consequently, the individual has a higher probability of good health and happiness, especially according to the natural and spiritual cause and effect laws, with the condition that the individual follows the spiritual principles.

In addition, the practices that develop spiritual connection such as meditation, chanting, and spiritually guided movements have tremendous physical, emotional, and mental benefits as well as spiritual ones (Zhong, 2007). The research has documented the impact of these practices on reducing human stress, hypertension, blood pressure, emotional imbalance, pain, and unhealthy weight etc. (Northrup, 2010). While the actual ways to develop, maintain, and expand spiritual connection can be numerous, the primary effectiveness resulted from the focus on the positivity within and without the human body at all levels, the tranquility and calmness that enhance the immune system and the emotional and mental body, and the spiritual connection allows the fully engagement with the energy, vibration, and spiritual field of a higher level. The ultimate goal for the spiritual practitioner is to transcend the physical and mental reality to a higher plane.

Therefore, the impact of spiritual connection on the human being is a holistic one, and it composites the entire spectrum from physical body to spiritual being. It contributes to the wellbeing of an individual and humanity in health and happiness inclusively.

3.2 Spiritual Centers

Historically various methods have been developed in support of the spiritual cultivation and transformation of the human being. While the spiritual path is a holistic one, there are particular areas in the human physical body that are the focal points of development in particular. These areas are the foundations and pathways for spiritual connection and development. At the same time, they are the cores of human physical and emotional health. Based on the spiritual traditions, the focus and names of these centers vary – some focus on one, or three, five, seven, nine or more. The most commonly known is based on the Buddhist system of seven centers (Selby & Selig, 1992). They are called “Chakras,” “Fields of Essence,” “Soul Houses,” and “Spiritual Points,” and many other terms in different cultures, languages, and practices. This paper will highlight the most basic and important three:

Lower Dan Tian (LDT)

LDT is also called “the Second Soul House” in some spiritual and energy practices, “the Sacred Chakra” in Buddhist zen and yoga meditation, “Mana” in Hawaiian spiritual hula and practice, and “Golden Urn” in Daoist tradition. It refers to the post-natal energy center built inside our physical body, which is approximately one and half body inches (the width of the knuckle of our right thumb) and two body inches inside. This area also is between acupuncture points “Qi Hai” and “Qi Xue” (means “Ocean of Qi” and Opening Place of Qi” in Chinese). Much of the spiritual practice is to balance and center all the physical and emotional energy to this area for the focus and foundation of spiritual development (Myss, 1996).

In other words it is the physical base of spiritual purification, alignment, and transformation. At the same time, it also serves as the headquarters and the root of spiritual connection and manifestation. The understanding of the importance and impact of this spiritual center and the persistent and deliberate practice of its development affect the physical, emotional, and mental health of an individual and determine the path and outcome of his or her spiritual journey.

The importance and impact of this center are well understood in medicine and many other fields of human professions and activities. As early as 5,000 years ago, the Chinese ancient medicine text *Yellow Emperor's Canon* (Yellow Emperor, 2002) already described the "Qi" – life force and energy flows and "Dan" – the essence of Qi and their concentrated locations in the human body and their impact on health and treatment of illnesses. In contemporary time, research has indicated the effective impact of building the strength and centered focus and energy in LDT on blood pressure, anxiety, hypertension, and many other physical conditions. For other fields, especially kinetic fields such as martial arts, dance, and sports, the foundation of all training is exactly this area, for physical, emotional, and mental balance, flexibility, focus, grounded-ness, and many other benefits. At the same time the focus on this area ensures safety and soundness of movement and decision-making.

The actual practices for enhancing and building the LDT are numerous, the goal is the same to make the inner connection with the center of one's core in order to live and connect with all movement, tasks, and connections socially, culturally, and spiritually. It is not an exaggeration to say this is the foundation of human life, intelligence, wisdom, and spirituality.

Message Center (MC)

The MC is between the two nipples, in the center of the chest. For acupuncture, the point is called "Shan Zhong" (Ma, 2007). It is also called the Forth Chakra or "Heart Chakra." This spiritual center is in charge of all information or messages within our human physical, emotional, mental and spiritual body in connection and relations to all the information, messages, or forces outside our beings. Whether one has positive energy openness in this area affects the person's attitude, disposition, kindness, love, and compassion. More importantly for spiritual practitioners, it impacts on the quality and ability of spiritual connection.

A closed MC can result in the shutdown of information flow in all aspects, thus creates serious challenges in a person's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual being. Depression is a common result of a closed MC in connection with other factors. A closed MC affects a person's social, professional, and personal interactions adversely. An opened Message Center, on the other hand, gathers positive information and messages through all elements within and around the person. It leads to an open heart and open-mindedness as well as to positivity, generosity, kindness, and compassion among many beneficial qualities. It enhances immune systems and all aspects of a person's development, may it be professional or spiritual. In Chinese there is a saying describing a person with an open MC as "a heart as vast and open as a valley." When a person is happy, it is "Kai Xin – open hearted." While for a closed MC, it is "small hearted" or when a person has sad emotions, it is described as "wounded heart." These illustrate the relationship between MC and good health and happiness.

Gate of Life (Ming Men, MM)

Ming Men, in Chinese is the Gate of Life, is an acupuncture point. In Chinese medicine, it is the key point of the "Du" meridian, which travels up the spinal cord and on the back with numerous acupuncture treatment points. In spiritual practices, it is also named "kundalini," and associated with the lower back of our torsos. Since it is in the vicinity of kidneys, any spiritual practice of MM impacts on the latter significantly. MM is considered the prenatal energy center, gathering, storing, and protecting the positive energy that we are born with and that is essence of our spiritual and physical being as well as those of our ancestors and spiritual lineages.

Based on the nature and location of MM, it has profound meaning and role in a person's spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. As its Chinese name indicates, it is the gateway or door of life. When it is open and positively connected with the source of our being, we live healthily. Another acupuncture point "Chang Qiang," associated with Du Meridian, explains the function of this area well by its name as well – meaning "forever strong." When this energy center is not properly maintained and protected, the gate or door to life will literally closes, and a person is no longer able to maintain his or her life force and thus ready to transition to the next journey.

Among the infinite roles and functions MM has, two are prominent: First, it sends the essence of energy (or food) up the spinal core to our brain to support all the cognitive and affective functions. Along its way, it impacts on all the neighboring organs, meridians, and systems. Second, MM works with kidneys, which regulate water element inside of our body. Since 70-80% of our physical body is of water, the health of this area dictates that of our entire life force. For male reproduction system, MM is viewed as the birthplace of the essence or “Jing.” It also connects with bladder and affects impotence, back pain, weak knees, bones etc.

MM, together with MC, and LDT form the most basic and powerful GOLD Pyramid as the foundation of human health and happiness, physically, emotional, spiritually as well as socially and morally.

3. Spiritual Vibrations & Frequencies

Another key practice in spirituality across humanity is through spiritual vibrations and frequencies. Such practice comes in the form of chanting, mantras, singing hymns, spiritual dances, spiritual instruments such as singing bowls for Tibetan Buddhism, church organs for Christianity, wooden fish for Buddhist scripture recitation (Lee, 1985; Zhong, 2007). Sciences and physics indicate that all sounds and movements create and transfer vibrations and frequencies of energy. Such energy vibration and frequencies have their own property and have various impacts on human physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual body based on each person’s specific conditions and needs. Spiritual vibrations and frequencies differ from regular sounds, movements, and their vibrations in the sense that they come from the following venues:

- 1). The spiritual songs, dances, and instruments are used exclusively for spiritual rituals, ceremonies and activities. They carry special spiritual teaching, message, and meaning.
- 2). Mantras and spiritual chanting mostly come directly from spiritual connection and thus carry higher and specific spiritual vibrations and frequencies, higher than regular human ones.
- 3). The spontaneous spiritual vibrations and frequencies in the form of songs, movements, poems, etc. are created through direct spiritual connection, independent of human mind. They carry spiritual messages, teaching, energy, and power.

Their usage during the spiritual practices aim at building the focus and concentration, making the spiritual connection, creating a strong spiritual field and community, and promoting cleansing, purification, healing, awakening, and enlightenment. For instance, Sufism’s spiritual dance creates a trance for them to make a pure connection between themselves and spiritual world. Native Americans’ powwow is a sacred gathering to connect with their ancestors, Mother Earth, nature, and spiritual lineages. Daoist chant teaches the essence of their spiritual practices and principles. *Da Bei Zhou* (the Great Compassion Mantra) of Avalokiteshvara (Guan Yin, God or Goddess of Compassion) in Buddhist practice is used for centering one’s attention fully on spiritual practice, purifying, teaching, learning, and healing.

Although people are generally familiar with various religious practices, most may not be fully aware the deeper reasons and profound impact behind such practices, even among those firm believers. It is also important to point out those who practice and serve with spiritual vibrations and frequencies are not limited to religious believers, and they include many who are doctors, scientists, professionals, and ordinary human beings who have been seeking truth and learning consistently through a variety of pathways in their lives.

Spiritual vibrations and frequencies are the means as well as a manifestation of spirituality (Saso, 1995). Realistically, all spiritual vibration and frequencies are natural vibration and frequencies, which are functioning at a higher level due to the integrated consciousness between human and natural or super natural forces. They are holistically connected and integrated with spiritual centers (all vibration and frequencies must come and go through such centers) and direct spiritual connections. Together, they form the basic triad of all spiritual paths that lead to spiritual fulfillment as well as physical and emotional health and happiness. In this process, the Triad is within infinity, while the direct spiritual connection is the key and spiritual vibration & frequencies are the natural occurrence and manifestation, and the spiritual centers are the means and pathways for the realization and integration of being.

4. Relevance for Educaiton Today

While this paper has focused on spiritual heritage, its definition, and three of its main components up to this point, the question can be asked, what is the relationships with education today or if there is any? Or why do we even need to connect these two seemingly separate elements? In human modern history, the separation of church and state as well as that of religion and public education has been the norm in many nations. This has continuously created heated debates and conflicts among the different belief systems. Why, then, is it necessary to confuse the matter by introducing spiritual heritage to education or mixing the two for further complication?

4.1 Needs for integrating spiritual heritage

In order to address the above question, we will examine the issues in the following aspects:

First, education is seeking knowledge and truth for human survival and development. Spiritual heritage has played a significant role throughout history for just those purposes. It encompasses collective insight, practices, and wisdom of all human races, cultures, and history at all times. More importantly, spiritual heritage is not a narrow or abstract subject. It integrates and impacts on every aspects of human life, personal or collective, physical or mental, and beyond. Actually spiritual heritage itself is the content, process, result, and outcome of education to a large extent. As spiritual heritage focuses on the human relationship and connection with all components, heaven and earth, in all universes, at all times and the very source and destiny of human existence, to leave out spiritual heritage in education is to educate incompletely, teaching the shell without the substance.

Secondly, the spiritual centers and connections are the foundations of human holistic health, including physical, emotional, mental elements and beyond. Currently, the formal education systems focus on many subject matters, however, health is not really addressed besides the minimal PE classes and extra curricular sports. Actually the latter is perhaps the major source of broken bones and sprains among youngsters, which may impact their entire life-time. Due to the change of life styles, today's youth have many health challenges. In affluent nations, obesity, ADHD, drug addictions, diabetes, and mental confusion become prevalent. While in the developing countries, AIDS, malnutrition, TB, and hepatitis continue to harm their health and threaten their lives. Certainly with the advancement in medicine and technology, new drugs and treatments have prolonged human lifespan in the entire world. However, at the same time, medical expenses have skyrocketed and have become daunting even for some of the wealthy nations. The World Health Report (2005) showed that in 11 million children under 5 years die worldwide from preventable illnesses and half million women die during or soon after childbirth in that year. The basic and proven spiritual practices on human health are very much needed in the current education system. The development of science and technology has made the world much smaller and highly interactive. All this has brought a unique opportunity to teaching and sharing the effective spiritual practices in this regard. What used to be highly guarded spiritual secrets now are openly shared and taught worldwide by spiritual leaders. The shared teaching and knowledge promote important synthesis and new development that have not been done in previous history. The internet enables the teaching and sharing of spiritual practices to spread. However, the commercial and opportunist spiritual teaching have also become prevalent. Formalizing the quality spiritual teaching for good health in established educational schools will prevent the danger of misuse of spiritual teaching.

Spiritual centers and practices impact greatly on human intelligence, creativity, knowledge, and decision-making. In this regard, they are powerful venues and tools for education. In the 1980s, Gardner and his colleagues developed the theory of "multiple intelligence," illustrating eight ways (musical, verbal-linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, mathematic-logical, interpersonal, naturalistic, visual-spatial, and intrapersonal) for people to improve and manifest their creative abilities and knowledge (Garner, 1983, 1985). This theory brought a new perspective into formal education where the traditional practice of "one-size-fits-all" dominated and added diversity and multiple facets to cognitive theory, understanding, and practice of human learning and growth. While the categorization of intelligence and creativity may be beneficial for organized and formalized teaching and learning, it is still very limiting in terms of the full potential and capacity there is for humanity. Spiritually, while the source of all beings and forces is one, the actual manifestations are infinite. The integration of such practices of spiritual centeredness and connectedness will transform human learning from individual centered, mind dominated and human focused to natural guided, cosmos focused, spiritually connected learning and growth. It takes on a much more inclusive, relational, and comprehensive approach and opens the horizon infinitely and unlimitedly. The benefits are simply unfathomable.

For instance, the practices could assist ADHD students to center and focus in their learning process, and they can help those with math-phobia to connect with their inner abilities, confidence, and engage in learning in a creative and relevant way.

More importantly, the spiritual heritage encompasses the natural and spiritual principles, and provides human moral and ethical guidance. Such principles and guidelines not only apply to human to human interaction but also consists of interrelations with all species, all elements, and all forms (or no forms), at all times, in all realms or dimensions. To understand such principles and live by them is the key of human survival. In education today, the purpose is to educate learners with knowledge, morality, and abilities so that they will be productive and good citizens of democracy. However, the greed, ego, and selfishness in a highly competitive world driven by capitalism and technology, educational systems worldwide have produced more graduates yet the moral decay and corruption are rampant. Few are at peace from within and there is definitely no peace in this world. Few are genuinely happy, while all seem to be richer (or poorer). The core of spiritual heritage provides exactly what human beings need the most in order to live in good health, peace, and happiness.

Based on the reasons discussed here, the question is not whether to integrate spiritual heritage into education, it is how to do so with deliberation and effectiveness.

4.2 Considerations for integrating spiritual heritage

In order to integrate spiritual heritages with education today, the recommendations and considerations are as follows:

Due to the nature of spiritual heritage, the integration needs to be infused into all levels and subject matters of education. It needs to be learned not simply as book knowledge, but as ways of living and learning. Spiritual heritage is to be lived and practiced through out one's education and life. As Dewey (1916) points out, "Education is not a preparation of life. Education is life itself." At the same time, it does take systematic planning, development, and implementation. For education today is very much subject oriented, the interdisciplinary teaching often is marginalized at best or completely left to the wayside of the curriculum. Curriculum development for spiritual heritage can be structured in a module format that can be flexibly integrated with literature, math, history, physical education, music, arts etc. at different levels at all times.

The spiritual heritage honors all pathways to enlightenment and positive cultivation that are good for the individual, humanity, and the universe. The open-hearted approach can focus on the similarities of all the spiritual principles, practices, their impacts and benefits, instead of the past practice of rivalry and competition among various religions and traditions. It is a celebration of our rainbow heritage and a respect of individual choice without judgment or condemnation of traditions and teachings other than our personal paths. Such teaching promotes understanding and unity of humanity, and all elements in the cosmos, not an egocentric superiority or racial or gender domination. The current multicultural education has provided theories and models for diversity and they are yet to be expanded to an inclusion of spiritual heritage.

The principles of spiritual heritage have provided deep insight regarding knowledge of humanity and the universes around us – we are all profoundly related with ALL elements around us throughout time and beyond. The consciousness and understanding of such connectedness is very much the foundation of individual and human learning, growth, knowledge, life, society, and destiny. At present, most of the teaching in formal education is subject matter oriented, field specific, external, and knowledge is compartmentalized, materialized, and profit oriented. The integration of spiritual heritage in education will bring a balance with an inward journey, interrelated approach, and scientific principles that work beyond the mechanical and physical world including all spheres of existence and non-existence. More importantly, it brings the knowledge regarding who we are, truly are and becoming, and our personal chosen purposes and meaning to the forefront of our otherwise drifting or conformed existence. The spiritual cultivation and enlightenment develop love, compassion, freedom, creativity, and peace that bring joy and inspiration to our education.

Certainly, health and happiness are the foundations and goals of effective education for the individual, humanity, and society. Spiritual heritage, in all traditions, offers a vast range of tested and proven practices through thousands of years of human history or even longer.

Contrary to the common perception that it is extremely difficult to learn and grasp, and that it can only happen when one commits seriously to one particular religion, the most profound and powerful spiritual practice is the most simple and easy to learn and practice and anyone can learn and practice. For instance, here are two examples of practices that develop spiritual centers:

LDT – Stand upright and relaxed, feet apart shoulder-wide, and close eyes for better concentration. Send and gather all your energy from head to toes to your LDT. Allow the energy to flow naturally there and form an energy pool or ball. Connect with the energy inside your LDT with all the positive energy and light around you from heaven and earth.

Enjoy the connection for 1 minute, 5 minutes, or as long or short as you want. Your energy is balanced and charged instantly. This will benefit your health and everything you do. The spiritual connection will gradually enhance your holistic being.

MC – In the same position above, open your arms to the fullest and open your heart at the same time. Again connect with the positive compassion, love, joy, light, and peace within your MC. When you are done gather all the new openness and love and light and pack them into your LDT.

MM – Put both hands behind your back on MM. Connect with the positive energy, light, love, and wisdom from your ancestors and spiritual lineages. Feel the warmth and peace. Send your love and gratitude back. Again, enjoy the connection for 1 minute, 5 minutes, or as long or short as you want. Your conscious and deliberate connections with the source of your birthplace and lineage recharge the energy you need in life and provide spiritual wisdom and peace beyond description.

The challenge for the effectiveness is all in the persistent practice. Here is where education comes in. Through integrated and ongoing spiritual heritage at all levels, spiritual heritage can be shared, sustained, and developed at all levels. Once a person could see and experience the benefits, the person is more likely to apply and engage in the practice by choice and with persistence. Thus it can become a part of one's life instead of just book knowledge. For the successful integration of spiritual heritage in education today, it takes a whole village or the world of spiritual leaders and practitioners, teachers, students, parents, curriculum developers, administrators, and policy makers.

5. Conclusion

Spiritual heritage is indeed all encompassing, omnipresent, and omnipotent. While it is vast and infinite across all cultures and times, the essence of spiritual heritage has profound themes that transcend time and places. The richness and diversity of its manifestation provide infinite possibility and venues for education to integrate spiritual heritage into the educational process holistically, consciously, and systematically. This effort helps education align more profoundly with the human endeavors of seeking truth, creating peace, developing while sustaining the environment. This paper advocates strongly for such integration through formal and informal education at all levels and stages of human life. Such endeavor actually can start with very basic and simple approaches by teaching spiritual connection, building and practicing to balance and focus energy in the LDT and opening MC. Seemingly easy and insignificant, such teaching and practice when it is continued persistently have the great potential to affect human health and happiness positively and can enhance the quality and depth of education. Education without integration and development of our spiritual heritage destruct the world and humanness while true education imbedded with the essence of spiritual heritage enable us to center, focus, and live with good health, happiness, and harmony in peace forever and beyond.

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