**Restoring Inner Peace in a Science Dominated Society**

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**Abstract**: This is an age when materialistic pursuits and desire for instant gratification dominate. This then leads to compromises in principles and hence a rise in conflicts between societies and nations. These work against universal peace. Spiritual awakening (or heightening spiritual awareness), of individuals and thereby of organizations, is the way to restore inner peace based on a universal brother-and-sisterhood among humankind. This paper presents an in-depth look into this issue. It will be discussed in the context of fundamental spirituality. Finally we point out that what really determines one's happiness is not so much one's material possessions but one's relationship with nature. A loss of harmony between the sublime/spiritual/divine in nature and within us is depriving us of a truly delightful and peaceful living within ourselves and among the nations. Since we are surrounded by nature, it should be within our reach. All we need is to awaken to the reality. Unfortunately, misuse of technology, for example smart phones, can connect us to the rest of the world but can disconnect us from immediate surroundings. We must learn to substitute quiet watchfulness for our science dominated hectic pace and amusements to restore peace in society.

**Introduction**

The modern era is often referred to as the IT (Information Technology) Age. In this scientific and technological era most of our decisions and plans are strongly influenced by the objective and deterministic sciences. Information overload and competitiveness are ever on the increase. Competitiveness among individuals and competition for corporate power, efficiency and profits facilitated by science and technology is leading to greed and a ruthless climate; this then leads to compromises in principals and hence a rise in conflicts between societies and nations. On the individual level, materialistic pursuits and desire for instant gratification have led to a feverish pace of living that is adding to a stressful living. The human mind is too often tormented and at times finds itself inadequate to handle all these stresses. This is not to suggest that we should shun science and technology. There have been many positive impacts of science in society, for example industrial and economic growth, higher standards of living, and lives being saved with research in science. But the depletion of natural resources, weapons of mass destruction, global warming, and pollution of air, water, and environment as noted above are some of the negative

impacts. This paper attempts to examine ways to minimize the negative influences of science on our thinking and mental state so that we can spare ourselves the torment to our inner peace.

We have often been taught to be good. But *how* to be good is not taught. Inherent in the IT Age is the belief that the more the information, the better it is. Better in which way is the question. Commercially, it may be so. But for one's inner peace, it is not necessarily so because it is not the lack of information that is at the root of one's ability to change. An alcoholic knows much about the harmful effects of alcohol, yet is unable to change. Similarly, we may embark upon doing good deeds after reading a few books about the benefits of service, yet some may be able to continue, and some may quit. Each one of us is born with different baggage or inherent qualities. Information alone cannot change those. A teacher, a leader, a priest or a book informs and throws light on what is good, or what is bad. But certain habits dictated by inherent baggage may remain as hindrance to one's spiritual progress. It is only spiritually advanced understanding that can help us address this "stuck" baggage and put it away from us so we can taste the real inner peace and tranquility; hence the need to understand fundamental spirituality.

Some may question why people not interested in inner peace and tranquility in fact need it. For clearly there are people who seem to enjoy and take pride in their fast-paced, stressful existence. But the effects of excessive stress on human health are well known. And a society at large that is more content and caring will necessarily also benefit such disinterested people because the wholesomeness that it will bring about in their lives can itself be a rewarding experience. It can help them enjoy their work and day-to-day life in a more fulfilling way.

**Consumerism, Modern Living, and the Need for Spirituality**

Consumerism is an underlying driving force of economy in modern times. Often a producer decides consumers' tastes. This happens in a subtle way through commercials or other means, while customers may not realize at all that they are being influenced in this way. Special sales lure customers, especially because they think they are saving money. At times, one invents a need to buy an item simply because it is at such a reduced price. In addition, the availability of credit cards converts the impulse to buy into a reality, thereby stuffing one's present with the future (Singh, 2012). We need to look at the impact of the aforementioned scenarios on the quality of life in terms of ethical and inner peace of an individual. In this regard, a developing movement to promote marketing gracefully is encouraging. Business books by Lynn Serafinn (2011) and Charles Eisenstein (2011) describe an aim to keep the emotional, economic, and ecological balance of our plant.

Even our vacation time is consumed by cramming it with activities. Long ago, Josef Pieper warned us in his book about leisure that "unless we regain the art of silence and insight, the ability for non-activity, unless we substitute true leisure for our hectic amusements, we will destroy our culture and ourselves" (Pieper, 1963).

We are often asked when returning to the office after a weekend, "What did you do this weekend?" for which people want to be ready with an answer that reveals how active they have been. However, at times, doing nothing may be doing something; "chilling" is not bad, after all. For instance, there is always music in the hills and among the trees and birds, provided our hearts

are quiet to hear it. On one of the Donohoe's TV shows, he interviewed individuals with an age of 100 years or older. The question that was asked of them related to the reasons for their being so healthy despite their long age. After all the answers were given, Donohoe prepared a list starting with the most significant reason. Regular exercise, diet control, and successful life were not among the top reasons. The top reason was the simple (non-complicated) life in harmony with nature. One of the couples said they would sit for extended time under the veranda of their home and listen to the songs of birds, the soft whispering of the wind, and behold the beauty of nature with green trees and blue sky. Accordingly, it is the reflectiveness of nature that cultivates spirituality, and vice-versa.

We should recognize that the quality of life experienced by the spiritually gifted is beyond anything that has been provided by money-related business and organizational systems (Prabhupada, 1979). Evidence continues to grow for a spiritual purpose of life (Zammit, 2013). What is spirituality? Flagg and Finnemore (2014) say that the nobler our character and ideals and aspiration and efforts, the greater is our spirituality; further that spirituality is evidenced less by words than by deeds. It has been argued (Singh, 2012) that in the spiritual vacuum, there is an opportunity for fascination with and immersion into all kinds of technology at the expense of human relationships.

The twentieth century giant of science, Albert Einstein, warned that when technology will take over human relations the world would be full of idiots. We appear to be heading that way. This appears to be further supported by the practice of knowledgeable leaders of technology and others to limit how much technology their children may use at home because its habitual use retards brain development; the "short cuts" achieved with devices result in knowledge being not well absorbed. Steve Jobs for example told a reporter that his three children have not been allowed to use an iPad at home, and the CEO of 3D Robotics said "we have seen the dangers" (Bilton, 2014). For this reason schools, like the Waldorf School in Los Altos, California (Silicon Valley), have been formed which have no computers anywhere.

Drowned by the information revolution, other aspects of our life, our humanity, and our understanding of each other are apparently overshadowed. We are being swamped with information virtually all the time so that we don't have time for our real self, for nature, and for the true beauty of our life. Accordingly, we need to emphasize an understanding of not only moral and ethical values but spiritual aspects of life, in contrast to the perceived monetary benefits accruing from technology consumerism. What spirituality is and how it can help realize peace and beauty of life is discussed below.

**What Is Fundamental Spirituality?**

Spirituality is the level of our moral consciousness to do right – the nobler our character and ideas and aspirations and efforts, the greater our spirituality (Flagg and Finnemore, 2014). Apollo 14 astronaut and engineer Edger Mitchell, while returning from the moon to earth, felt filled with an inner conviction that we all participate in a "universe of consciousness." This led him to found the Institute of Noetic Sciences in 1973. Where do we come from? Our source is the source of the universe. The explanation is consciousness. Erwin Schrodinger, 1887-1961, and Max Planck, 1858-1947, both said consciousness is fundamental. Since the level of one's moral

consciousness and nobility of one's character is evidenced in spirituality, it is by far the most important of one's noble qualities (Flagg and Finnemore, 2014).

Flagg and Finnemore further observe that the way to restore inner peace based on universal brother-and-sisterhood among all humankind is by awakening or heightening the spiritual awareness of individuals and so of organizations and society. They say that fundamental spirituality entails: personal responsibility regardless of anything; developing our own humility and sincerity; guarding our integrity; taking in stride what each day has to offer; correcting what we can and accepting graciously what we cannot; showing consideration and respect for others and serving selflessly; being a channel for good; and expressing love, beauty, and spirituality at every opportunity. In particular, they stress that a spiritual life must be a simple life. For simplicity helps free one from habits, prejudices, misconceptions, and self-satisfaction that tend to make one blind to spiritual truth. And when people cease to live simply, they lose their perspective of what is spiritual. Deepak Chopra (2014) in his book *The Future of God* points out that "to make spiritual life as real as everyday life should be the practical goal." How then can we realize this?

**The Manifestation of Spirituality**

In this technology-dominated culture, what can help us promote spirituality and inner peace? Smart phones can connect us to the rest of the world, but misused they can disconnect us from our immediate surroundings. A loss of harmony between the sublime/spiritual/divine in nature and within us is depriving us of a truly delightful and peaceful living within ourselves and among nations. Since we are surrounded by nature it should be within our reach. All we need is to awaken ourselves to it—the reality. However, information overload and multitasking aspects of the modern era tend to shut us away from that. But technology can create a virtual reality for us. Accordingly, for technology-dominated society to go hand in hand with the ethical, moral, and spiritual values of humans, a greater emphasis should be placed on the understanding of the interface between spiritual and materialistic life. We need to reach a balance between the education of science and spirituality.

We believe that society must give a higher priority to fundamental spiritual values in all its activities and especially in education. Young children, of pre- and elementary-school age, need to have the basic values we mention instilled by parents and schools while they are so impressionable. At high school and university levels, where there are possible slippery grounds due to various distractions and temptations, youngsters who are grounded in some measure of spiritual (not necessarily religious) values, in family cohesiveness, and in moral and ethical values are more successful in avoiding the pitfalls than others. In larger society we need to continually pressure leaders, politicians, and all people and organizations with influence to further emphasize fundamental spiritual values, giving them reasons why if necessary. This could be greatly assisted by an international organization (Spirituality Watch?) that monitors fundamental unspiritual activities and regularly reports on them to help sensitize and remind us all of desirable behavior.

Other ways to promote the development of spirituality would be to encourage people to find and consider teachings on higher wisdom, put them into effect, and be an example to others; in quiet moments to ask to be used for good and for leaders to be spiritually inspired (the power of prayer); and to meet with others in small groups to discuss the issues, to encourage such groups to spread, and to publicize and coordinate their activities in all ways possible.

Unfortunately, we never achieve a feeling of contentment in a climate where catchy commercials are continuously showered on us, thereby inflaming greed or a feeling of deprivation if we cannot afford the advertised goods. This can allow a certain kind of unhappiness to creep into our minds. Since in the spiritual vacuum there is an opportunity for fascination with and immersion into all kinds of technology at the expense of human relationship and general well-being, we need to fill this void by demonstrating that the benefits of enhancing spirituality in one's life can be many times more than those acquired by an entirely materialistic life.

**Conclusions**

1. Negative impacts on inner peace of a feverish pace for materialistic pursuits and a desire for instant gratification can be minimized by highlighting spiritual awareness.

2. A disconnect between ourselves and the sublime/spiritual/divine in nature is depriving us of true peace and delightful living. The manifestation of fundamental spirituality can help restore this connection.

3. For healthy competition, to minimize conflict among nations and to minimize pitfalls for youngsters due to undesirable distractions, we need to introduce the teaching of fundamental (nonreligious) spirituality in our education system.

**Acknowledgements**

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