

What Effects Does Spirituality Have On Human Life?

The Role of Self-Knowledge in Spirituality

The story of man and spirituality has been full of ups and downs. In ancient times, religion played a more prominent role in people's lives, and living in nature provided people with more opportunities for self-reflection and thinking about the meaning of life. This fulfilled to a great extent the human need for spirituality. With industrial progress and lifestyle changes, religion gradually became less significant in human life. Many people disregarded their religion and willingly started to eliminate religion from their lives, freeing themselves from various religious commands.

This process reached to the point where some people considered life empty and meaningless, and ultimately they decided to remove themselves from the cycle of life. This is while God had already warned that, "We did not create the heavens and the earth and what lies between them In vain" ¹. Yet, there are still many people around the world who fall victim to removing meaning and spirituality from their lives and become trapped in a mechanical life.

Two questions are raised here:

- Is spirituality an innate and indispensable need in human life?
- Is religion a set of various dos and don'ts that only serve to determine ethical boundaries?

In this article, we are going to find the answer to the first question together. You can read the answer to the second question in the article "[What Is Religion?](#)"

¹. Quran, 38:27

Spirituality and Thinking

Spirituality is the opposite of materialism and corporeality. Spirituality can be defined as feeling the need to build a relationship with an existent beyond the material world. We feel the need for something only if we have previously experienced it. So if we have the need to have relationship with an existent beyond matter, it means we have experienced it before .

Spirituality is linked to meaning, and meaning goes hand in hand with reflection and thinking. When we properly define what it means to be a human being, we will seek to define our characteristics and won't easily ignore the fundamental questions of life, such as “Why am I here? What role do I play in this world? And where will I ultimately go?” Finding the answers to these questions can change the direction and meaning of our lives.

You Also Need Spiritual Food!

A thirsty person needs water, and she cannot enjoy even the most delicious foods unless her thirst is quenched. In this regard, our spirit has a structure similar to our body. It gets hungry and needs nourishment, but it needs the right food. When we feel this need within ourselves, not even the best material blessings can satisfy it because every need has to be responded in a certain way. For example, when we feel hungry, nothing but food can satisfy our hunger. Our hunger cannot be relieved by buying a beautiful house. This response may distract our attention for a moment, but immediately after that, we feel even more hungry. It is just like a child who is separated from his mother, and, despite the efforts of others to make him calm, he remembers his mother with the slightest sound or sign and starts crying again.

Signs of Spiritual Hunger

When a person is hungry and her need is not met, she becomes peevish, irritable, nervous, and short-tempered. Interestingly, the soul experiences a similar situation. If we neglect our soul, it becomes restless, agitated, impatient, and irritable. We even lose our ability to establish a healthy relationship with the people and things around us. After we see that our efforts to meet our needs are useless, we become frustrated and depressed. If we do not provide our heart with suitable food, it is constantly irritable, to the extent that this irritability may become a habit and turn us into a stubborn and hot-tempered person.

Tendency toward Spirituality

Maybe that is why there is a growing trend toward spirituality these days. People are actually looking for a way to calm their restless souls. Every day, we see more people enrolling in meditation and yoga classes, trying to provide suitable food for the spiritual dimension of their existence through positive thinking, kindness, and attention to nature and the supernatural world. They succeed to some extent, but the food that just satisfies their needs is certainly different from the food tailored to their needs. They are as different as chalk and cheese.

The spiritual food we personally seek for our souls is significantly different from what our Creator has designed for us. One is for satisfying momentary needs and overcoming frustration, while the other brings lasting happiness, peace, and love within us. One maintains our current state of being, while the other prepares the grounds for our spiritual elevation.

Spirituality: What the Human Dimension Needs

We cannot satisfy the needs of our human dimension until we get to know ourselves as human beings and identify those needs. Our heart and soul need food, yet instead of meeting the needs of our spiritual part, we focus on other aspects of our existence, just like a mother who entertains her child with toys instead of embracing her. We neglect the needs of our human dimension so much that we eventually become depressed, but we try to get over this state by changing our furniture, cars, etc.

If we return to the example of the mother and child, our relationship with the human dimension of our existence is similar to a mother who cares a lot about the physical and nutritional needs of her child. She regularly measures his height and weight based on growth charts. She quickly takes action if she notices the slightest problem. However, she remains completely indifferent to what her child sees and hears, failing to provide a suitable intellectual environment for him. And before long, she has to deal with an unruly and restless child. Since we have material and spiritual dimensions, we have both material and spiritual needs. To reach our true status as human beings, we must take all aspects of our existence into account; otherwise, we will get out of balance.

Depressed Religious People

The question is, if spirituality feeds the spiritual aspect of our being, then why are so many religious people depressed, hopeless, aggressive, and anxious? How is it possible that a part of our existence is properly nourished, but instead of continuously growing, it constantly moves backward.

If our spiritual dimension requires religion and spirituality, why are many religious people unable to live a happy and peaceful life? Why are they constantly looking for excuses to quarrel with others? And why does even the slightest problem disturb their peace?

This is where the necessity of self-knowledge and awareness of the different dimensions of human existence becomes clearer. Someone who knows herself knows that each food corresponds to a certain dimension of her existence. Spiritual nourishment feeds the spirit, heart, or spiritual dimension of our existence. If we are not aware of this part of our existence, we unknowingly seek nourishment in ways that are incompatible with our specific needs. It is as useless as adjusting the light to hear better! In this case, this food does not meet our needs or help us grow spiritually. Instead, it turns us into a religious animal which is at a great distance from the exalted human being within.

In this article, we discussed the story of the human being and spirituality as well as how spirituality deepens our point of view. We said that just as our body needs food, our non-material dimension also needs spiritual nourishment. We talked about the efforts humans make to calm themselves, stating that undoubtedly what God has designed for us is the best. We learned that spirituality relates to the spiritual dimension of our existence and should not be used for the lower dimensions of our being, because it would turn us into depressed religious individuals.