

Education for Happiness

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Abstract

Human life revolves around happiness. Everything we do, we do to attain happiness as the ultimate product. Happiness means differently to each person depending upon his personal experiences and expectations, making it difficult to be defined. The aim to establish a common ground for happiness drives the research to define happiness in scientific terms. Education being the foundation of one's life, can be defined as a learning process that an individual goes through in the early years of his life, normally up to twenty-five years of age. Playing a crucial role in fostering one's physical and spiritual development, and his quality of life, both being nothing but the keys to happiness, the purpose of education too, revolves around happiness. Recognizing the gap between education and happiness in the current education system, the paper also attempts to enlighten the Vedic education system which is known for its glory in the ancient times. The paper culminates into new perspectives towards suggestions for education for happiness.

Key words: happiness, education, physical and spiritual development, quality of life, Vedic Education system.

Introduction

In spite of having stress, tension, worries, hardships, problems, difficulties in life everybody wants to be happy. Happiness plays a vital role in human life. Education is tool to create happiness in our life. It is observed that students learn effectively when they are happy. Today's education system can be made more interesting and joyful to create happiness. Inculcating the attitude to be happy in whatever conditions we have in our life, should be the aim of education. And we find the roots of happiness in spirituality that is in our ancient tradition of Vedic education system. If we instil some of the principles of Vedic education system in today's modern education, then it will create a good foundation for the students to live happy, healthy, contented life in 21st century. The present paper has focused on all these aspects.

The concept of Education

Education is the process that facilitates learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, and habits. Education has been defined in various ways by the thinkers. According to Swami Vivekananda, “education is the manifestation of perfection already in men”. But to him, the prevailing education system did not enable a person to stand on his own feet and did not teach self-confidence and self-respect. He was of the opinion that education is not only collection of information but more than that which should enable human being to form good character and live contented life which leads to the enlightenment. Mahatma Gandhi defined education as “all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man - body mind and spirit”. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore “education is that which makes one's life in harmony with all existence and thus enables the mind to find the ultimate truth which gives us the wealth of inner light and significance of life”. He also has focused on enlightenment. Mahatma Phule has said that education is a tool for a social change. If we think about the views of western thinkers, for example Aristotle, he has defined education as “paying emphasis in all round balanced development and the creation of a sound mind in a sound body”.

Today we observe that the students are becoming stressed out overburdened under the tension-loaded education pattern. They are running in a rat race in a competitive world, resulting in the emphasis of education shifting from peaceful learning to a hunt for marks and ranks.

The Vedic education system is known to be an efficient education system in the ancient times of our country. Popular for its spiritual principles of peace and happiness, it becomes an area of interest to understand its characteristics and some of its features could be adopted in today's education system for the over-all wellbeing of a student.

It is essential to understand the meaning of happiness before propagating into the area of education revolving around it.

What is happiness?

Happiness is the ultimate pursuit of human life. Dalai Lama, a spiritual leader, has said “whether one believes in religion or not we are all seeking something better in life - the way motion of life is towards happiness”. In the opinion of William James, the chief concern of life is happiness. John Stuart mill has also said that happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain. According to Steve Maraboll, happiness is not the absence of problems, it is the ability to deal with them. The various definitions of happiness highlight the need for a more condensed one. Happiness is a state of being or a state of consciousness of a person. Thus, an attempt has been made to define happiness in scientific terms by understanding the scale of consciousness calibrated by an American psychiatrist David Hawkins.

David Hawkins' scale of consciousness

According to David Hawkins, we are all born with a level of consciousness, an energetic frequency within the vast field of consciousness. And with The Map of Consciousness, we can truly understand the total spectrum of human consciousness.

Using a unique muscle-testing method, Dr. David R. Hawkins conducted more than 250,000 calibrations during 20 years of research to define a range of values, attitudes, and emotions that correspond to levels of consciousness. This range of values-along with a logarithmic scale of 1 to 1,000-became the Map of Consciousness, which Dr. Hawkins first wrote about in his best-selling book, *Power vs. Force*.

With the Map, Dr. David R. Hawkins laid out the entire spectrum of consciousness, from the lower levels of Shame, Guilt, Apathy, Fear, Anger, and Pride; to Courage, Acceptance, and Reason; all the way up to the more expanded levels of Love, Ecstasy, Peace, and Enlightenment. These “higher” energy fields are a carrier wave of immense life energy.

The Map of Consciousness is based on a logarithmic scale that spans from 0 to 1000.

Name of Level	Energetic "Frequency"	Associated Emotional State	View of Life
Enlightenment	700-1000	Ineffable	Is
Peace	600	Bliss	Perfect
Joy	540	Serenity	Complete
Love	500	Reverence	Benign
Reason	400	Understanding	Meaningful
Acceptance	350	Forgiveness	Harmonious
Willingness	310	Optimism	Hopeful
Neutrality	250	Trust	Satisfactory
Courage	200	Affirmation	Feasible
Pride	175	Scorn	Demanding
Anger	150	Hate	Antagonistic
Desire	125	Craving	Disappointing
Fear	100	Anxiety	Frightening
Grief	75	Regret	Tragic
Apathy	50	Despair	Hopeless
Guilt	30	Blame	Evil
Shame	20	Humiliation	Miserable

The emotions of joy and peace which are the fundamentals of happiness, lie in the high frequency range at the top of the map of consciousness.

Thus, happiness can be defined in scientific terms as a state of consciousness of a person holding a high frequency value on the scale of emotions. However, in the current education system, we observe a majority of students under stress and grief which arises from various pressurizing factors such as submittals, deadlines, exam pressures, marking system, etc. This lowers the vibrational frequency of the student and keeps him

from experiencing life in a wholesome way, to be a happy human being. It is essential to understand the education system better to identify the roots underlying the current state of being of students.

Students' happiness in the current education system

Academic stress involves mental distress regarding anticipated academic challenges or failure or even an awareness of the possibility of academic failure. During the school years, academic stressors may show in any aspect of the child's environment: home, school, neighbourhood, or friendship. Kouzma and Kennedy reported that school-related situations – such as tests, grades, studying, self-imposed need to succeed, as well as that induced by others – are the main sources of stress for high school students. The impact of academic stress is also far-reaching: high levels of academic stress have led to poor outcomes in the areas of exercise, nutrition, substance use, and self-care. This academic stress leads to unhappiness among the students.

The Indian Education System

The Indian school education system is textbook-oriented that focuses on rote memorization of lessons and demands long hours of systematic study every day. The elaborate study routines that are expected by high school students span from the morning till late evening hours, leaving little time for socialization and recreation.

The poor ratio of number of available institutions to the aspirants for college education ensures that the students face tremendous competition in getting admission to tertiary education. In addition, the majority of senior high school students who specialize in science undergo further stress as they tend to appear for entrance examinations for admission in engineering, medical and other specialized professional courses. The pressure of preparation for examinations creates a high degree of anxiety in many students, especially in those who are unable to perform at a level that matches the potential they have shown in less stressful situations.

School Disciplinary Measures

Although disciplinary measures in schools vary from institution to institution in India, corporal punishment is practiced in most of the schools in India. Corporal punishment is often used for violation of school rules, for not being able to answer questions in the class, not completing home-work, and for coming to school late. In the recent past there has been lot of discussion and debate about positive and negative aspects of corporal punishment. To date there is no specific law for prevention of corporal punishment in schools in India.

Anxiety and Stress in School Children

Anxiety as a disorder is seen in about 8% of children and adolescents worldwide. There is a still larger percentage of children and adolescents in whom anxiety goes undiagnosed owing to the internalized nature of the symptoms. Anxiety has substantial negative effects on children's social, emotional and academic success.

Psychiatrists have expressed concern at the emergence of education as a serious source of stress for school-going children – causing high incidence of deaths by suicide. Many adolescents in India are referred to hospital psychiatric units for school-related distress – exhibiting symptoms of depression, high anxiety, frequent school refusal, phobia, physical complaints, irritability, weeping spells, and decreased interest in school work. Fear of school failure is reinforced by both the teachers and the parents, causing children to lose interest in studies. This is similar to the scenario in the East Asian countries where psychiatrists use the terms 'high school senior symptoms' or 'entrance examination symptoms' to indicate mental health problems among students.

To understand the nature of the education system which is proven to revolve around students' overall – body, mind, soul – well-being, let us study the Vedic education system.

Vedic Education System

The education system which was evolved first in ancient India is known as the Vedic system of education which was based on the Vedas. The Vedas occupy a very important place in the Indian life. The basis of Indian culture lies in the Vedas which are four in number – Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda.

The Vedas were usually taught at gurukuls. Gurukul was a residential schooling system popular in ancient India. At the gurukul, all were considered equal. The guru (teacher) and shishya (students) lived in the same house or near each other.

Before the British rule, gurukuls were the preferred form of education in India. During colonial times, the British imported their centralized system of industrial-era education while systematically de-emphasizing Vedic education.

Simplicity of living, a strict schedule and respect for the teacher are principles emphasized at a gurukul. Equality and independence are impressed upon the students by having all of them clean and pick up after themselves. Spirituality is impressed upon the students through prayer, yoga and meditation. In today's competitive world, this can help children reduce stress and anxiety. Vedic education is more than just an education system, it is a way of living. This focus on all-round personality development is an attractive aspect of Vedic education.

The aims and functions of Vedic Education System are as follows:

Development of Perfect Personality:

Vedic education greatly gives importance to the personality of students. Various traits of personality were developed through the following methods:

1. Self-Respect: A feeling of self-respect should be developed in the students through education. The student feels that he was the torch-bearer of the culture of the race. A well-educated youth was to be honored to develop a sense of self-respect in students.
2. Self-Confidence: Self-confidence was instilled into the mind of students right from the start of education when the Upanayana ritual was observed to admit them in Gurukuls.
3. Self-Restraint: The very simple life of a student at the Ashrams created self-restraint in them. Self-restraint helps to improve their personality.
4. Discrimination and Judgement: Vedic education developed the power of discrimination and judgment in the students to enrich their personality.

Inculcation of Civic and Social Duties:

The aim of education during the Vedic age was to make the students realize their civic and social duties. Thus, students were trained to lead a social life and not to be self-centered. Also, they were taught to co-operate with others and to perform their duties as a son, as a husband, father, neighbor, as a friend, and as other relatives and citizens of the state efficiently and consciously was a must for the students. Also, the teacher teaches the students about their duties towards their family, their village, their society, and their country. Teachers teach the students to serve the guests, the poor, the suffering and the down-trodden.

Promotion of Social Efficiency and Welfare:

The Promotion of Social Efficiency and welfare was also one of the aims of education during the Vedic period. The teacher teaches the students not only to improve the mental, cultural, physical, and spiritual aspects of life. But teaches them vocational training. The students were expected to adopt their parental vocations for earning their livelihood. There was the provision in the education of that time that when students leave the Gurukulas after the students complete their education, they should be able to earn to support their families. Thus, each family trained its children in the vocation which the family follows generation after generation. The purpose was to make each individual socially efficient.

Character Formation:

The Vedic period views Education as a means to impart moral values. So, the teachers teach the students moral values like respecting elders, to be honest, loyal, worthy, etc. The very atmosphere of Ashrams and Gurukulas where students stay under the direct guidance of gurus was full of high morality. Students strictly follow the rules and regulations. In everyday life, students have to follow the rules of etiquette and good manners towards their seniors, equals and juniors, their teacher and other members of Gurukulas and Ashrams. The rituals and daily prayers helped in forming their character.

Education for happiness

1. A paradigm shift
The focus of the education system should be diverted from the three M's – marks, money and materialistic achievements to that of physical, mental wellbeing essential for one's happiness.
2. Instilling Vedic principles
Introducing the Vedic principles highlighted in the above discussion, such as character formation, civic and social duties, etc., including practices of yoga, pranayama and meditation should be emphasized in the current education system.
3. Lessen academic stressors
Burden of study in school, high expectations (from self and parents) heavy home assignments, projects, competition etc.
4. Congenial school atmosphere
There should be no corporal punishment which violates students' happiness. The school environment should not create anxiety among the students.
5. A shift from textbook oriented teaching learning to the teaching learning of practical reality.

Conclusion

The map of consciousness by Dr. David Hawkins enables happiness to be defined as an emotion of a high frequency value and associated with a high level of consciousness. Certain factors of the education system prove to be inductive of low frequency emotions such as stress and fear into the students. The reason for the current state of the education system is mainly economic in nature. Students are stressed due to the competitive nature of the marking system because good marks ensure better employment and financial security. Amidst this race, the true essence of education, learning and happiness retreats into a backseat. While today's education system is centered on the economic axis, the ancient Vedic system focused on the spiritual learning and growth of a student, essential for the expansion of his consciousness, thereby fostering happiness in his life. This study reveals that to revive the education system for happiness, it is crucial to draw inspiration from the Vedic system of education.

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