

Moral and Ethics in Spirituality - New Delhi Times - India's Only International Newspaper

By Dr. Pramila Srivastava



In our daily lives, we face issues that tend to divide us on our moral grounds and make us think of the “good and bad” factors of our life. A large, empowering part of our personalities is based on the exposure to morals and ethics that define the character of an individual. Morals and ethics are terms used interchangeably, in our daily lives but are reasonably different from one another. Moral and ethics are loosely related to the whole concept of “good and bad” or “right and wrong”, being different in how the individual perceives these concepts and how the society and their community define these concepts for them. Therefore, morals are more individualised as compared to ethics, which are largely created by the public for the individuals to follow as norms.

It is clear that the ultimate goal of spirituality is to awaken our true nature so as to reinforce it in our daily activities and eventually, formulate a huge part of our personality and being. Spirituality is more than what religion is, which is why an individual may not be religious but spiritual, thus establishing that spirituality is an act that transcends all. The perfect combination of compassion and self-awareness plays a massive role in extinguishing all the negativity and self-doubting behaviour from one’s mind. Morality refers to personal or cultural values that help us choose how to behave in a social setting, which is precisely why it is so closely linked to spirituality. Being an individual who holds high morals means that the life being led by this individual is honest and virtuous, and that he or she holds a clear conscience, with stark knowledge of what is right and wrong. This helps an individual to become self-aware, which is the cornerstone for spirituality.

It paves the way for an individual to be content, happy and at peace. An individual with high morality will display behavioural characteristics that show him or her to be humble and rational, thus positively establishing that there is a link to the spiritual self as well. Ethics, on the other hand, are guidelines and norms that are set by the community that an individual grows up in and is expected to follow so as to clearly distinguish between “right and wrong”.

Communities set these guidelines for an individual so that all the behaviours and actions fall within the gambit of behaviour that is allowed by the community, for the sake of betterment and proper functioning of the society. This is why, ethical behaviour is practised by individuals to become more self-aware of their actions and behaviours.

The true path of spirituality has been highlighted by Buddhist ethical precepts that guide an individual on the “Five Precepts of Right Behaviour”, that specify non-harming by not killing any living being; by not taking what is not given; by refraining from sexual misconduct; by avoiding the misuse of intoxicants, and by practicing ‘Right Speech’, which is defined as speech that is true, kind and necessary.

However, in the present world scenario, it is difficult to follow these precepts, though just as necessary and important, as it has become a lot more complicated. Many individuals join the armed forces or become gardeners who use pesticides, thus, in essence, violating the precepts and hampering the individual’s ethics. Therefore, it is important to understand that one must indulge in habits and behaviours that support the whole idea of spiritual practice, which keeps up the basics of ethics.

Spirituality can be considered as a determining factor when it comes to making decisions that involve ethical thinking because it allows more holistic, inclusive and peaceful state of consciousness, thus influencing the kind of decision which will be made by the individual.

Such individuals who have high spirituality will, instinctually, hold high moral and ethical values, which will serve as the basis of motivational force, and are less likely to be a part of unethical and illegal activities which serve detrimental, in the longer run for the society. Inculcating the habit of ethical decision-making will be beneficial for the whole humanity as the balance between spirituality and morals can only be maintained when individuals embrace these characteristics, as a part of their basic traits.

In an era that is clouded with greedy judgements, crisis and wars against humanity, decisions that are spiritual and ethical in nature help the establishment of new moral values that are in a stark contrast with the designated ‘way of the world’.

They make an effort to maintain a much-needed balance that is required to fan the small embers of humanity, so that they are not vanquished in the strong winds of hatred and peril.

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