



# Fostering Spiritual Values Through Integral Leadership Approach: Need Of 21st-Century Leadership Context Of Educational World

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Man in today's world is engulfed in the grief of comfort and mechanized social life. Under such circumstances, man suffers from many social and psychological problems. Such issues arise as a result of declining human values. Education is the only tool that can change the world's current circumstances. So, there is a need to redefine the leadership process worldwide. The leader can foster moral, social, and ethical values among the learners. Adding spirituality to the existing leader qualities and associated school practices is the only way to inculcate and foster values among educational leaders. Spirituality will assist the leaders in attaining positive thinking, inner peace, egolessness, unconditional love, optimism, harmony, humility, responsibility, compassion, justice, simplicity, and reciprocity. The integral educational leadership approach is the only way to integrate different dimensions, including the spiritual aspect of the human being, at the individual and collective levels. The concept of integral leadership is inclined to synthesize ancient knowledge with 21st-century needs and the requirement to balance human life perfectly. Its aim is the holistic development of leaders with spiritual growth. The integral leadership approach strives to perceive supra-ethical good, supra-rational truth, and beauty. It encourages leaders to combine and harmonize their knowledge. It also strives to promote universality and oneness. An essential trait of integral philosophy is to develop each individual's potential to attain knowledge, will, harmony, and skills. Therefore, integral leadership is the best alternative to deal with the world's prevalent, educational conditions and the leader's changing needs.

**Keywords:** Integral leadership, Spirituality, Spiritual Awareness, Educational leadership.

## Introduction

The significant component responsible for the progress and development of any educational institute is the leader and their leadership approach. An academic institute can purposefully transmit its knowledge, culture, values, and skills through the guidance of its school leader. Educational leadership studies have revealed that to change any institution, the school leader plays a prominent role (Abusenenh & David, 2023). Most educational leadership approaches focus on leader qualities and less on an in-depth understanding of oneself. Hence, it is well understood that worldwide educational leaders prefer trait and behavioural-based approaches. It was observed through reviewing the leadership literature that school leaders merely focus on the knowledge domain of leadership. The theories prescribed by researchers rarely include the psychic and spiritual domains. Leaders can develop a holistic personality and help one enter a proper relationship with life, mind, soul, and the people they serve (Roy, 2018).

Conflict arose in South Asia, and political instability disturbed harmony and degraded the moral values among the people. It has been found that these disturbed conditions also create panic, fear, and traumatic moments in the lives of people (Colonel Balwan Singh Nagial, 2022). There are multiple factors responsible for the

conflicts and instability. The most predictable reasons are multiculturalism, various religions, and different ideologies (Kumar, 2019). Conflict is the state of differences among a group of people concerning interests, goals, and values. (van der Dennen, 2005). Here, the role of any leader becomes prominent. The difference in people's perceptions can be resolved through inculcating spiritual values. Inculcating spirituality in education is the only way to develop human and moral values. An educational leader with such values can easily transmit values and morals by becoming an example for the rest. Spirituality reflects faith traits, a search for meaning and purpose, and a transcendence of self, resulting in inner peace and well-being. (Delgado, 2005). Here, the leader's role of providing spiritual education will become prominent. Peace, harmony, and humility can be developed in the student's personality by embedding spirituality in school leaders. As proposed by the famous educationalist, philosopher, and spiritual leader Sri Aurobindo, "Education is nothing but bringing out and nurturing the latent potentialities; integrate oneself with the self, harmonious living of individual with society, country, and humanity to make oneself a complete being or integral human being." (Roy, 2018). Only the integral leadership approach has the potential to cater to the needs of 21st-century school leaders and to deal with the contemporary problems of educational institutions. Integral philosophy in formal or non-formal education can change a leader's perception and stabilise the aroused conditions of the academic world.

### **The Framework of Leadership: Sri Aurobindo Foresight**

Sri Aurobindo strongly believes that to lead educational institutes; leaders should develop leadership approaches according to the needs of the present context of academic society and cater to the needs of learners (Chanda Rani, 2017). The philosophical views of Sri Aurobindo reflect his dynamic nature toward life. In his intellectual work, he firmly believes that modification should be adopted according to society's changing circumstances and needs. Sri Aurobindo asserted, "Education to be true must not be machine-made fabric but a true building or living evocation of the power of mind and spirit of the human being." Critically examining the statement, one can understand that in Sri Aurobindo's point of view, Education should be flexible and inclined to attain the truth of life. Education should be provided to learners to develop the power of the mind and enlighten the true spirit of the learner.

At the time of Sri Aurobindo, he observed and evaluated the prevailing education system and felt the need for improvement in leadership approaches, strategies for providing education, and academic curriculum transactions. Sri Aurobindo analysed that the education facilitator of that time was not aligned with learners' psychic and spiritual requirements and society's expectations. He firmly believes that educational institutions should be led according to the present context needs of the learners and society. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, education should be provided to develop the learners as active members of society who can meet the demands of contemporary complicated life problems. Moreover, education is a means to create and develop human intellectual and spiritual capabilities. In a true sense, education should bring out the hidden power of learners and make them capable of meeting their life requirements. (Ali Seikh, 2020). Education ensures the integral development of the learner. That can be only possible if the school leader, who is an example for academic people, is developed integrally. Here, integral development means the development of the school leaders' physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual domains. So, they may be able to face challenges and fulfil the evolving and expanding demands of complex institutional circumstances.

### **Five Principal Aspects of Leadership: - Integral Leadership Approach**

The integral leadership approach comprises five principal dimensions of leadership related to five major human being activities: physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual. In general, these phases accompany the chronological growth of human beings. Although it does not mean that one aspect replaces another, they keep going with each other until the completion of individual life.

The physical domain of the leader is entirely governed by discipline, method, order, and process. Cultivating physical awareness in an individual leads to awareness related to physical health and other components. Thus, a physically sound leader can lead an academic institute effectively.

The vital aspect of integral leadership philosophy is the most significant and essential component. Whenever the leader's mind is confused about matters, the leader must show endless endurance, persistence, and unshakable willpower to complete any challenging task successfully. Vital education is concerned with developing sense organs, progressing awareness, and control over the character, leading to transformation. Constant and sincere examples would be used as a powerful method to bring awareness of transformational leading factors.

The mental aspect is considered most widely known and practised in the school's activities by school leaders. Progressive school activities are a way to develop the mental aspect of the leaders. A veracious mental education consists of five principal phases. Generally, these phases transit successively. Nevertheless, in some exceptional cases, it may carry forward parallelly.

The five phases of mental aspects are:-

1. Concentration power development and span of attention.
2. Development of capacities to expand, a broader view, and complex thinking.
3. Development of higher-order thinking skills.
4. The development of the mind's ability to that extent is so that one can control and reject undesirable thoughts or think what one wants.

5. Development of a calmness, peaceful mind and ability to accept the coming inspiration.

The three aspects of the integral leadership approach, physical, mental, and vital, deal with external consciousness and are a medium for developing a school leader as a personality. Furthermore, it helps to raise the educational leader to the point of self-consciousness. The next aspect of integral leadership is psychic. Psychic deals with the true aim of one's existence and purpose in life, and its result is the establishment of internal principles of individual life. The development of a psychic being is a process. Leadership development is the product of time and space projections, all the countless conscious and unconscious experiences in manifestation, which form the principles of one leader. With the passage of progressive development, the leader becomes self-conscious and becomes a psychic being. The presence of a psychic aspect in an educational leader will assist him/her in realising the ultimate truth of his life and existing academic circumstances.

The next aspect of the integral approach is spiritual education. Before discussing the spiritual aspect of education, one should know the difference between the psychic and spiritual aspects. Generally, these two aspects of integral education overlap because these terms come under "Yogic Awareness". The aims of these two aspects are different from each other. The psychic aspect deals with the journey of manifestation return to absolute. On the other hand, spiritual education deals with an escape from all earthly manifestations and a return to the absolute. Therefore, the spiritual aspect deals with the journey of manifestation to un-manifestation—the aspect of the leader deals with living the infinite and eternal beyond time and space. To experience spirituality, a leader must no longer have an ego. The spiritual aspect is a vital part of integral leadership that enables leaders to realise their inner existence and connection with others. Spirituality assists the educational leader in finding the depth of being that is universal, limitless, and decentralised.

### **Spirituality Concerning Integral Leadership Approach**

Different philosophers, psychologists and Spiritual leaders have defined the term spirituality. By analysing the central ideas of the existing definitions of spirituality, it has been conceptualised that spirituality is a process that leads toward transforming an eternal being. Furthermore, the path of spirituality leads an individual to attain the synchronisation of body, mind, and soul. In modern views, spirituality has shifted from individual experiences and unworldly experiences to practical transformations in day-to-day activities. Nowadays, spirituality refers to any purposeful activity that leads to personal growth and internal gratification. Spirituality leads to modifying the inner being by reducing self-centeredness and materialistic avarice. Spirituality is considered the progress of the individual "I" to a more cumulative being. It assists the person in shifting from the illusion of materialism to selfless love and liberality.

Each individual as a leader has some unknown inherent qualities, and spirituality helps them realise those hidden positive qualities and put them into day-to-day academic activities. It provides the possibility of acquiring a higher consciousness of the mind.

### **Spiritual Aspect of Integral Leadership: Need of Modern Educational Context of World**

Existing education systems worldwide, including India, are influenced by globalisation and started emphasising knowledge and skill acquisition. Nowadays, education has become a process for acquiring degrees and certificates to grab jobs in the market. Such educational systems are just selling expectations in the name of degrees and diplomas. However, in the true sense, such an educational system only develops the individual as a self-centred and materialistic being. The result of that is that humanity and moral values among individuals are degrading day by day. Psychological, social, and political problems surround individuals. It has been widely debated that the existing education system must take a more holistic approach to solve arousing societal issues. The whole world is finding the solution to the existing educational situation. The only key to unlocking the solutions is sound educational leadership that will help find the root causes of problems and the most suitable solutions.

The ancient Indian philosophy has the potential to revitalise educational systems worldwide. Indian philosophy emphasises the psychic and spiritual aspects of the individual. It inspires individuals to reveal truth over illusion, darkness to light, and immortality over mortality. Maharishi Aurobindo's integral approach has deep roots in the ancient Indian philosophy. The components of integral philosophy are based on the ideas of Indian Idealism, Nyaya Philosophy, Samkhya Philosophy, and Vedanta Philosophy. Moreover, for synchronising body, mind, and soul, the context of the ancient yoga philosophy of India has been taught as an integral part. For synchronising educational leaders' bodies, minds, and souls, spirituality plays a significant role in their leadership. Leadership on a spiritual path or spirituality engages the leader to lead a higher and vaster aspect of life. In addition, this spiritual path gives a broader way of looking at the existing circumstances. Spirituality in an educational leader looks like a sparking light in the centre emitted through the thick cover of external consciousness. Spirituality assists the academic leader in knowing thyself, which is universal, limitless, and termless continuity. It leads to the stage of self-realisation. Furthermore, the essential requirement of a leader to achieve the self-realisation stage is to surrender all to the divine. Giving up all and taking whatever comes is the fundamental rule of spirituality. Spirituality is the only way to nurture the virtues of the leaders. So that values such as morality and humanity, which are at the edge of degradation, can be rejuvenated among the educational learners. Spirituality will assist educational leaders to stay positive, attain inner peace, remain egoless, and spread unconditional love, optimism, harmony, humility, responsibility, compassion, justice, simplicity, and reciprocity (Bharti & Verma, 2018). Spirituality in leadership has various dimensions, such as

Transcendence, Connection, Wholeness, and Compassion (Jones, 2005). Here, we have discussed some sub-dimensions related to the integral leadership approach, such as self-awareness, love, and liberation.

### Self-Awareness

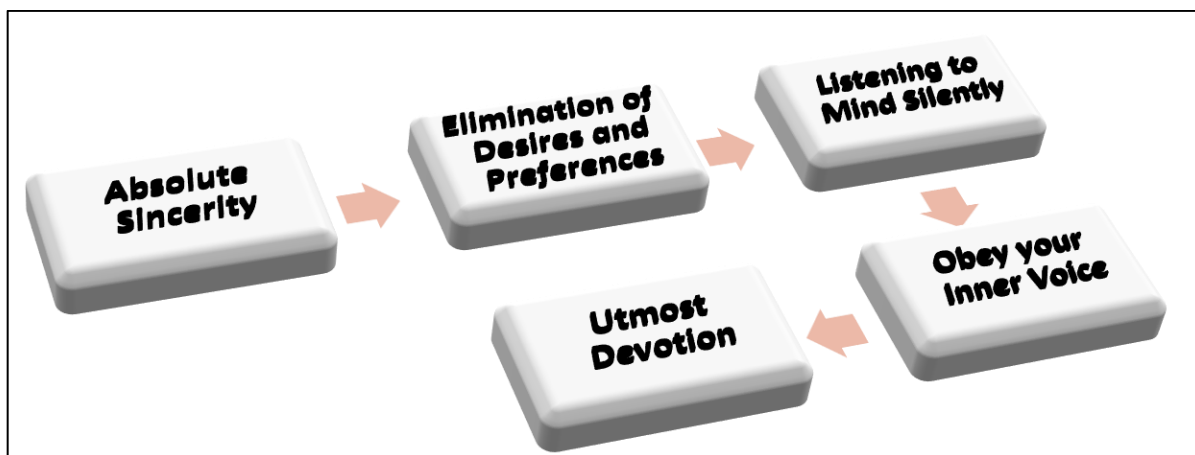
Spiritual development among educational leaders starts with the foundation of Self-awareness. Self-awareness depends largely upon discovering oneself eternally. Discovering oneself is a gradual process that coincides outside and inside the individual. The discovery of self and knowing others leads to a state of awareness. Awareness refers to revealing one's thinking and connection with the inner self. Self-awareness is a state of mind in which an individual can examine and assess his/her inner potential. Moreover, self-awareness can be considered an awakened consciousness beyond the existence state. Furthermore, it is knowing the relationship between the world, people, and their ideas with oneself. The relationship between the whole process and its awareness is self-awareness (J. Krishnamurti - Official Channel, 2014).

Knowing and understanding a leader's thinking and establishing links with one's internal nature refers to a leader's self-awareness (Mishra & Muddgal, 2022a). Self-awareness leads to self-understanding, resulting from analysing the leader's values and attitude. The stage chiefly depends on the gradual progress of discovering oneself, which takes place inside the leader in their surrounding academic environment. Self-awareness is the fundamental pillar of the leader's spiritual development process.

### Virtue of Love

The virtue of love pulls one out of the darkness and brings light. It enlightens the individual and liberates him from the chains of egotism. True love honours the object and its love and asks nothing in return. It elevates the educational leader to where the leader admires something very much. True love brings the ability to rise above suffering and unpleasant suspicion. The feeling of concern for others and oneself is the nature of true love. At the same time, it entails the act of kindness, empathy, thinking, service to others, and compassion. In the views of Maharishi Aurobindo, love means devotion, devotion to the ultimate divine. Devotion is the only way to unite one with the divine. Love also frees the individual from the fear of loneliness and makes the individual unselfish (Bijlani, 2019). The leadership approach must include the virtue of love for the divine, which ultimately brings the feeling of harmony with all stakeholders. The virtue of love entails values such as faithfulness, modesty, honouring, dedication, hope, acceptance, progress, fortitude, morality, humanitarianism, and justice.

Maharishi Aurobindo holds that four prerequisite conditions are required to achieve the state of utmost devotion. The necessary conditions are elaborated on in Figure 1 below.



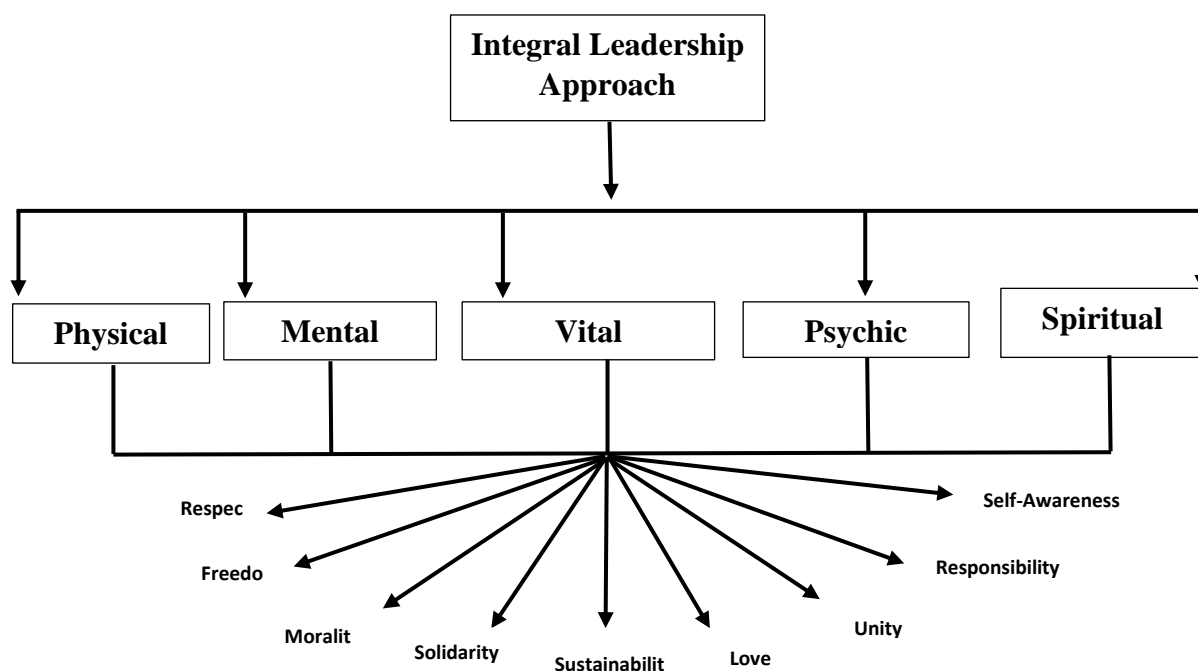
**Fig. 1. Process of Attaining Devotion**

### Liberation

Liberation is the most required state to attain spiritual dimensions in Integral philosophy. Liberation means the feeling of being outside the materialistic world. Further, it is a state of consciousness that feels beyond the normal state of mind. The stage of liberation can be attained when an individual is free from all handcuffs. Practising mindful meditation is the most common medium to reach a state of a liberated mind. Maharishi Aurobindo states that liberation from this materialistic world comes within oneself, not from the surrounding world. The liberation process is connected with leader development and will be achieved according to the leader's innate nature, love, and compassion for others. The integral leadership approach emphasises the development of leaders' internal components, such as free mind and soul. Freedom is found in an unrestricted environment, and its presence is reflected in the flexible thinking of educational leaders. The academic leader will attain the stage of liberty when a leader is in a position where they retain their unique personality. Liberty makes one person free from all internal guilt and feelings of self-disgust. Liberation is the experience of attaining a state of total consciousness with a strong internal locus of control (Mishra & Muddgal, 2022a). It was found from the related literature review that according to Maharishi Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy, the



components of Integral leadership are as follows: Physical, Vital, Mental Education, Psychic, and Spiritual. Several aspects of the Integral leadership approach elements are presented with the help of the figure below.



**Fig 2. Components and Sub-components of the Integral Leadership Approach**

**Source:** (Mishra & Muddgal, 2022b)

### Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout human civilisation, it has been found that several education systems have been developed in different parts of the world. The majority of the educational system in the world is keenly focusing on the intellectual part of the learner. It has been found that the Ideal Greek educational philosophy highly influences Western countries. At the same time, it has also been found that some countries' educational set-ups keenly focus on character-building and inculcating moral virtues. Throughout the development of various educational systems worldwide, it has been found that some of them are based on religious beliefs and practices. One more viewpoint has been recognised, which suggests incorporating all critical aspects in the education system, known as holistic education. These developmental phases of the education field have their educational implications. In the developmental phases of the education system, it has been pointed out that there is a need for a clear and comprehensive concept of education.

In today's world, inquiries are oriented in different disciplines, which are progressive towards the depth of subjects or objects. Such a broader and more in-depth investigation requires an education system that provides individualised, specialised, and comprehensive content and practices from the modern world viewpoint, where man is grieved under many psychological problems. So, there is a need to impart a new dimension in the field of education. Today, men have reached the highest possible peak in every domain of life and have remained unsatisfied with all the comforts. This unsatisfactory condition of human beings makes them curious to rediscover ancient knowledge, values, and culture. Nowadays, there is a need to amalgamate our ancient knowledge, values, and culture with science and technology.

The philosophy of Integral Education states that the integral development of human beings is only possible by integrating five components of the human being through spiritual practices. The integral philosophy of education is the only way to synthesize ancient and modern knowledge, values, and culture with science and technology. The life of human beings consists of a web of components such as physical, mental, vital, psychic, and spiritual. At some stage, individuals could not recognize the actual relations of the aspects above. Uncertainty or puzzle led the individual to remain indulged in inter and intra-conflicts. As a puzzled individual, his/her decision-making ability will ultimately be hampered, and he/she will remain puzzled about making the correct choices in life. One of the probable outcomes of choosing wrong actions or choices would be the resurgence of materialistic primitive barbarian civilization. Furthermore, such situations would overcome humanity if no more ideal synthesis was introduced to humans. In today's world, man is clutched in the grief of comfort and mechanized social life. Only rational thoughts based on a humanitarian approach can overcome such situations. However, today's human beings' logical minds and thoughts cannot mediate between body, mind, and soul.

From the above discussion, it can be realized that knowledge of matter alone is not sufficient. A synthesized educational approach is needed to know the aim and purpose of life for the complete integration of body, mind,

spirit, and soul. An integrative approach would be needed. The integral educational approach is the only way to integrate different dimensions of the human being at the individual and collective levels. The concept of integral education is inclined to synthesize ancient knowledge with 21<sup>st</sup>-century needs and the requirement to balance human life perfectly. It aims for holistic development of personality vis-à-vis spiritual growth. The integral education approach strives to perceive supra-ethical good, supra-rational truth, and beauty. It encourages us to unite knowledge and harmonize it. It also strives to promote universality and oneness. An essential trait of integral education is to develop each individual at their potential to attain knowledge, will, harmony, and skills. The approach believes in imparting individualized leadership plans so leaders can progress according to their interests, capabilities, and potential.

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