

TEACHER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT- A PRIORITY OF THE PRESENT AGE

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Abstract: *The author discusses the concept of teacher personal development with the purpose of revealing the necessity of including aspects that, up to the present, have been ignored. The new context of globalization and development based on knowledge and innovation has opened the necessity of an increased focus on the quality of teaching. As a function of human psychology, quality cannot be pursued without considering intuition, creativity and introspection skills. The paper examines the possibility of stimulating the inborn capabilities of teachers by resorting to a recent method of activating the Individuation process postulated by C.G.Jung.*

Keywords: *Self Realization, transformation, thoughtless awareness, physical health, yoga*

Purpose of the paper

The paper aims at revealing the necessity of enlarging the scope of Teacher Personal Development with a view to including elements that, up to the present, have been neglected by the existing educational programs and plans.

General context

If we are to refer to the general context of a unified Europe, we could start by saying that globality and the unprecedented development of science and technology have created the necessity of an increased focus on knowledge and innovation. The new models of economy are known to require a holistic image of innovation where its different components are dealt with as an assembly involving teams and resources engaged in new types of production, marketing and organization.

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It is in education where innovation needs to be promoted in the first place because it is at this level that pupils and students internalize the idea of creativity, the need for producing new solutions and the openness to novelty. But how could such an enterprise be successful without the expertise of teachers who should possess the competence of developing creational skills in their learners in the first place? In one word, education should start not with the pupils or students but with the didactic staff. And, it is for this reason that Teacher Development comes out as a priority in the present educational documents. However, the new teaching abilities and skills have an integrative nature that is still difficult to define. Skills like awareness of the actual learning needs, sensitivity towards learners as persons, enabling students to perceive their weak and strong points as well as master their emotional sides, helping them to enforce self respect, tactfulness and sense of collectivity are still vague and left to be solved by teachers' own intuition and interest. It is true that the educational process is primarily centered on developing learners' personalities. But, in order to ensure the best possible development of learners' motivation, attitudes and skills, teachers are supposed to undergo the same process beforehand. Until and unless educators have not been properly transformed as personalities, the educational process at large will remain half-baked. Part of the reason is that, unfortunately, despite of the richness of materials elaborated, the teacher personal development still appears to be a slippery concept that can mean a multitude of things to a multitude of individuals.

Teacher development – Background

The development of the teacher's personality is basically a function of human psychology that, unless underpinned by accurate psychological guidelines, could end up in neglecting essential zones in the human beings involved. Personal development does not mean, in our opinion, conformance to external parameters but a set of subtle features pertaining to the uniqueness of human nature. The psychological dynamics underlying personal development involves a scale of needs (Maslow) ranging from the lower (physiological needs, safety needs etc.) to the higher (social needs, esteem needs, actualization needs). The top level is Actualization or Integrative psychology involving value sharing and full responsibility to the needs of the respective parties. It is at this level that masters and learners fulfill their needs of Actualization where intuition and creativity appear to be invaluable conative dimensions. However, intuition or insight has not been explicitly included in the present materials on personal development. Among the reasons, one might list the insufficient data on the topic, the difficulty of training by using the conventional methods, the preconceived ideas created by the previous exposure to other types of training or the deeply felt reluctance to

accept novelty with its involved changes in the perception of oneself and of reality. Intuition usually implies the perception of hidden relations among things that seem totally unrelated to the ordinary mind and also a strong attraction towards the New and the Strange. This function of the human psyche is related to the unconscious which includes elements outside conscious awareness that are organized into archetypes usually reaching the conscious mind in the form of metaphorical images present in dreams and revelations or in the form of abstract representations (mathematical, geometrical or chemical symbols and figures).

Alongside Rational Thinking, Feeling and Sensation, Intuition plays an important role in the human psyche. Thus, equal consideration has to be given to all these four components underpinning personal development as a complex, dynamic process the governing Principle of which is the Self. Being the controller of the entire process of evolution from the original state of unconsciousness up to the highest state of enlightened awareness, the Self actually guides the dynamics of Self Realization or Individuation. A concept created by Carl Gustav Jung, Individuation refers to the discovery of the Self and replacing the Ego by it as the center of personality. Closely related to Maslow's actualization, the Self Realization generates the awareness that the individual is part of a higher psychic entity (the Self) from which it is however, distinct. The final outcome is a revolutionary transformation of the individual who acquires a higher, subtler perception of Reality and Truth thereby becoming detached from his/her previous trivial and limited motives and ways.

If we were to refer to the relevance of Self Realization to the teacher development we might stress out the fact that such a practice and resulting state would have good chances of helping teachers to effectively articulate their own approach to Personal Development. Personal development is strictly personal and limited to the unique and also universal nature of the respective person/teacher. As such, it cannot be either artificially forced from outside or mimicked by an elaborate, self imposed attitude. On the contrary, Teacher Development is a process and a new state that has been reached after a gradual transformation from a previously unmotivated, self complacent, non-ambitious individual to a new level where he/she is able to perceive the Truth about himself/herself as part and parcel of Reality, to assume his / her latent qualities and manifest them within the harmony of the entire cosmos. Second, the new stage enables individuals/teachers to attempt raising their own learners to the same heights of intellectual and spiritual knowledge where the latter are motivated to abandon routines and frozen ideas and "take the sky as the limit".

But, how relevant ascending to such levels would be for teachers in particular? To begin with, teachers are human beings not essentially different from other segments of population. Their primordial concern is

physical health, safety and a certain level of prosperity as prerequisites of all life achievements. As far as health is concerned, it is generally accepted that, despite its progress and sophisticated technology, conventional medicine is still short of answers to the treatment of a long series of illnesses (e.g. the psychosomatic diseases) which are increasing every year. The etiology of high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, psychic disorders etc. is still largely unknown, a fact which accounts for the rather low life expectancy especially in the advanced countries. In order to control the invisible zones of the human body, doctors resort to chemical drugs that are responsible for producing reactions like stress, lack of energy, sleep disturbances, irritability or depression.

Despite the current advances in physics that have discarded the mechanistic views on man and matter, both conventional medicine and the large public are still reluctant to move over to a holistic, global conception that integrates biological, social and psychological phenomena into a single whole. It is in this context that the cultural heritage of “yoga” which is known to encompass both the physical and the psychic aspect of human beings has gained a considerable momentum. Unfortunately, the false so called gurus who have been distorting and trading the ancient yoga for money – making purposes and destructive purposes have given a serious blow to the good name of yoga. The result is that people reject it altogether or, at best, reduce it to a science of physical and breathing exercises.

Most of the persons, however, are ignorant of its true essence which consists in the union (“Yoga”- to join, Sanskr.) of the Primordial Energy situated in the sacrum bone with the cosmic energy storing the entire information of the Universe. The reappraisal and updating of this ancient philosophical literature in India on this topic was made possible by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, a modern Indian personality, who has rediscovered SahajaYoga (“Sahaja”- spontaneous, effortless, in Sanskrit) originally described in Markandeya Purana centuries ago. Her contribution to developing a new type of intelligence called Spiritual Intelligence consisted in enabling people to awaken the above- mentioned energy (called Kundalini in Sanskrit) due to the subtle, inborn capacities of our Central Nervous System. Irrespective of one’s way of life and religious beliefs, the person whose Kindalini rises and pierces the limbic zone in the brain, feels a subtle breeze from the palms and top of head. To begin with ,the repeated experience, which is consistent and verifiable, results in various diseases getting cured. Thus, the regular practice of Sahaja Yoga triggers the cure of migraine, anxiety, neurosis, arthritis, spondylitis, diabetes, asthma etc. ,a fact which has been supported by clinical observations and systemic research conducted within numerous doctoral projects, mainly in India, Rusia and Australia.

The raising of Kundalini gives the human being the Self Realization or the state in which one realizes that he/she is not the physical body, not the emotions, not the thoughts but a higher, spiritual entity called the Self. It is in this state that the individual gradually becomes aware of the qualities of his/her subtle energy centers located along the spinal chord. Sahaja Yoga, different in some ways from the other types of yoga, transforms people who, in their turn, start transforming their environment (other human beings and objects). As a by- product of Self-Realization, one starts enjoying physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being to which each subtle center contributes with its powers.

In order to give the reader an idea of what these qualities imply and of how relevant they are for the balanced, healthy state of human beings-hence teachers- we shall provide below a short enumeration of the subtle centers and their specialized functions.

The first center

It is situated in the sacrum bone, governs excretion and genital organs and is also involved in the equilibrium of all the other centers. When “awakened”, this center brings forth vitality, good health, purity of desires, innocence, self-control, wisdom, confidence and a sense a right direction. **The second center**, located in the aortic plexus (two centimeters below the navel) controls the kidneys, lower part of liver, pancreas, spleen and intestines. When in balance, it bestows good memory, focused attention, creativity, the power to see the truth and sense of aesthetics upon the individual. This center can be damaged by excessive thinking and planning and also by excessively emotional states and pondering over the past events. **The third center**, located at the navel, is the center of welfare through which man uses nature’s resources and becomes prosperous. It governs the stomach, liver and intestines and, on the subtle level, it operates in the field of business planning, financial problems and logic. The damage can come from bad diet, miserliness, household worries and panic. The next center is rather a zone encompassing the abdomen that provides the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood and also the ability to raise one’s attention out of the “ocean of illusions” into the awareness of reality. **The fourth center** is represented by the cardiac plexus the function of which is to provide immunity and a state of courage and confidence. It can be damaged by impure, materialistic desires, worldly attachments and selfishness. **The fifth center**, located in the cervical plexus, governs the organs situated at this level and also the qualities of self respect, detachment, diplomacy, compassion, discretion and integration into the collective. The feeling of guilt, criticism, sarcastic talk, aggressiveness or inhaling of smoke can seriously impair this center. **The sixth center**, present in the optic chiasma (center of the forehead), governs the eyes and also the

power to get detached from the past through forgiveness. The attack may come from wobbling, impure eyes, unstable attention and inability to forgive. **The seventh center** – present in the limbic area of the brain – incorporates all the lower centers and integrates them into one single whole. Upon Self Realization, it is awakened and spontaneously provides man with the awareness that makes him/her perceive the all-pervading energy holding the universe together. In this vibratory awareness, one feels energy/vibrations in his palms and top of the head as messages about his/her own state of health and also about the physical and emotional state of other people. Moreover, these vibrations can be used to cure one's own energy centers and also the centers of others.

Thus, Sahaja Yoga appears, in our opinion, to be relevant to our times because it touches life at all levels and has the power to embrace not only the health, emotions, behavior and intellect of people but also human relationships, economics and spirituality of life. It is true, however, that these vibrations, which are similar to electro-magnetic waves, are not fully understood at this moment. It is only their effects that can be measured by scientific devices and that have contributed to the concept of Holistic Care by which an individual should be treated as a whole including his/her environment as well. The 2nd c. BC sacred writings considered yoga to be the basic technique to strengthen the body health for higher states of consciousness, a fact which preserves its validity even today when the challenges of modern life are higher and when man's inner, latent potentialities need to be developed in all directions.

The cause of man's troubles, hence teacher's troubles is that he/she is not in balance - a serious obstacle to personal well being that can be overcome by the sixth sense of vibratory awareness mentioned above. Imbalances and diseases that attack the person's / teacher's equilibrium, health and efficiency in his/her family and working environment could be "cured" by practicing Sahaja Yoga. This includes norms of psycho – social behavior involving thoughts, attitudes, family relations, social behavior and culture in order to ensure the proper functioning of the energy centers in the body. Thus, Sahaja Yoga has updated the ideal behavioral pattern already mentioned in ancient texts, that triggers the optimal functioning of the entire organism in the absence of which, imbalances, stress and eventually diseases occur. Through the control of people's own emotions (anger, hatred, fear, frustration, helplessness etc.) their attitudes and perception of events change to a state of predominant peace calm, sense of security and confidence in front of life changes.

Already in practice in different parts of the world, the method of Self Realization represents the actualization of the laws that challenge people to abandon the previous stage of limited knowledge and experience and ascend to

a new level of global knowledge and holistic integration. At this stage, the individual becomes thoughtlessly aware, thereby spontaneously perceiving the condition of another person or of the collectivity. At a still higher level, man becomes a Universal Being endowed with a powerful sense of vibratory awareness that enables him/her to perceive the truth about his environment and even to produce beneficial, “healing” effects on society and nature.

Our Solution

The scientific studies performed on Sahaja Yoga effects upon the human well being have shown that the practice of meditation can bring about considerable improvement in the human health, body and brain. Although a poorly understood discipline, meditation appears to help develop the unconscious micro- behaviors that produce widespread effects on physical and psychological functioning. Sahaja Yoga meditation is different from other meditation types because it promotes the experience of thoughtless awareness based on the original tradition. This seems to be the only method creating a state in which the excessive agitation of the mind is neutralized and still enabling one to focus on the “present moment” while maintaining alertness and effectiveness. The technique, that is extremely easy to practice, allows the energy centers in the human body to be enlightened. Their qualities become cleared and “enlightened” thereby changing one’s consciousness to a level which fulfills one with peace, balance, alertness and increased spontaneous knowledge. The advantage is that Sahaja Yoga meditation produces a characteristic theta wave activity (visible in EEG detectors) in the front and top of the brain which does not appear in other techniques and is directly associated with enhanced concentration, stress relaxation and feeling good inside.

The research conducted by the Medical Research Program (MRP) in Sydney, Australia, has revealed the peculiarities of the Sahaja Yoga meditation as opposed to other techniques or conventional relaxation. The Surveys demonstrated that the Sahaja Yoga participants improved their coping resources for personal and external challenges, thus suggesting that this technique could be an asset of teacher staff training programs. Therefore, if we are to acknowledge the profound effects of the thoughtless awareness / mental silence in the Sahaja Yoga meditation that remove anxiety and improve cognitions, perceptions and the whole body-mind wellbeing, the possibility of including it in the teacher development courses appears to be promising. Such an enterprise could be designed and implemented as a pilot study involving teacher volunteers enrolled in meditation groups and parallel control groups. The pre and post – experiment variables and measures should be conducted by resorting to rigorous scientific standards. The outcomes of the research stages

and the quantitative and qualitative feedback could also be a starting point for further teacher educational research.

Conclusion

If we are to refer to the chances of including Sahaja Yoga meditation in the present teacher development programs we would say that an outward, clear answer is difficult to give. On the one hand Self-Realization cannot be imposed by guidelines or regulations because the decision is strictly personal and depends on the inside need for filling in the spiritual gaps in one's life. Second, another difficulty is that the trainers conducting the meditation sessions suggested above have to be practitioners themselves. The last, more problematic obstacle comes from the difficulty of accepting the very theory involved. The reason is that our culture as well as the entire western tradition is still skeptical about yoga in general, mainly on account of the unauthorized systems circulated. Also, the theory presented appears to include unconventional and still controversial ideas. Last but not least, the existing studies on the topic are predominantly found in Indian scientific literature that are not easily accessible to the western world. Nevertheless, teacher development is part of the inextricable law of progress and symptomatic of the deeper historical necessity whose origins are found at the very core of the psyche. Our opinion is that, maybe, the time has come for our genuine development as teachers to shift from external, materialistic measures to the deeper world of the human psyche governed by the Self.

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