

# Symposium on URAM Based Spiritual Education

**THIRTEENTH BIENNIAL MEETING OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF  
HUMAN IDEAS ON ULTIMATE REALITY AND  
MEANING**

**Presenter: Shiv Talwar**



Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc.  
<http://www.spiritualeducation.org>

# Scope of The Presentation

- About Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc:
  - Purpose, organization, goals and expected outcome
- Definitions of spirit, ultimate reality, spirituality, essence of being
- Definition and measure of spiritual development
- Underlying thought process and rationality of URAM based spiritual education
- Assumptions, ethics, method, scope and a proposed curriculum of spiritual education
- Conclusions and a call to collectively take up the challenge offered by the opportunity presented by the developments in recent history

# Imagine A Global Flower Patch!





# Imagine Each Flower Being a Kid In Today's Global Village!

Would these children grow up loving each other?  
Or loving to blow each other up?

Christians teach Christianity, Hindus teach Hinduism,  
Muslims teach Islam, and so on

Who teaches them:

That each of them is unique and yet the same?

And all of them are equally flowerly?

And the Gardener loves them all the same?

And each is there for a unique purpose?

And equally together they make the flower patch?

# Spiritual Heritage Education Network -1

Name is descriptive of its purpose:

*Education*

in the

*Spiritual Heritage*

of entire humanity using the resources of the

*Network*

A network of educators worldwide collaborating on the Internet to develop and deliver courses on universal spirituality.

# Spiritual Heritage Education Network - 2

- An Ontario not for profit corporation
- Date of Incorporation: Sept 15, 2000
- Registered with CCRA as a charity
- Objective: Education in spiritual heritage of humankind at all levels
- Goal: Build one inclusive human identity
- Head Office: Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
- Details: <http://www.SpiritualEducation.org>

# Spiritual Heritage Education Network - 3

- Goals: Intelligibility and Meaning
- Expected Outcome: Human condition capable of:
  - Understanding of the true face of one's own religion and of the others
  - Tolerance and respect of all religions
  - Mutual understanding, love and respect
  - Non-discrimination
  - Understanding of differences
  - Feeling of unity in diversity
  - Just and sustainable world

# What is spirit?

Spirit to us means any or all of the following:

- Essence hidden under physicality
- Meaning hidden underneath expression
- Life and consciousness
- Intellectual and mental existence apart from the physical existence
- The divine spark underlying all existence



# Ultimate Reality and Spirituality

- Ultimate reality is that:
  - Out of which all is born
  - In which all is sustained
  - Into which all finally dissolves
- Spirituality is the ability to see the oneness of all beings through the oneness of our underlying reality
- One is spiritual to the extent one experiences this unity in diversity

# Essence of Being

Ultimate reality is the underlying essence of all beings. It is understood as the inseparable unity of two principles:

1. Principle of Becoming (Change)

- Everything and every being is continually changing

2. Principle of Being, in the sense of:

- Unchanging Enabler of Becoming – that in us and the universe which itself does not change and which drives the change

- Current State of Becoming

Change and constancy comprise the very nature of all beings.

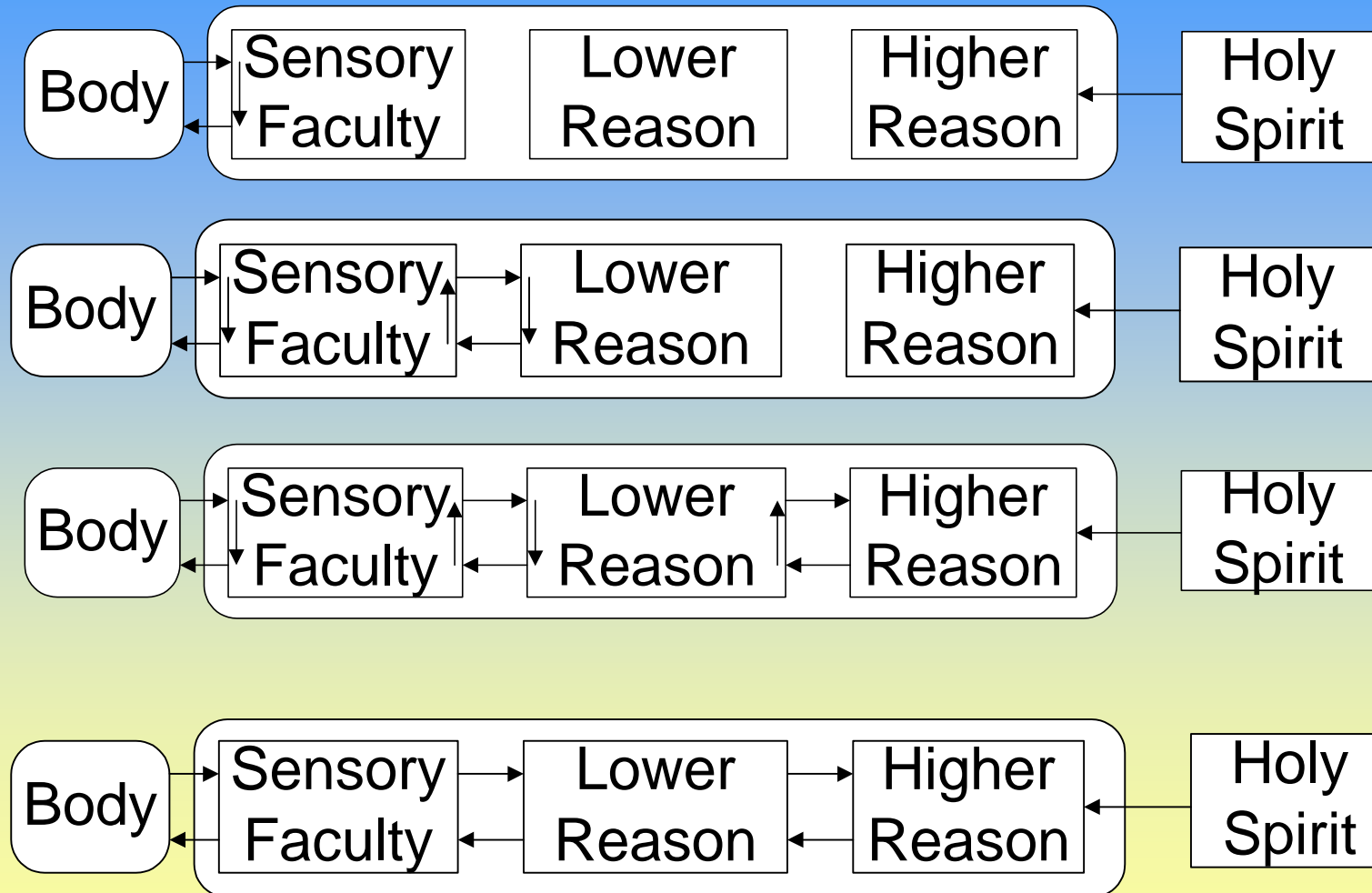
# Spiritual Development - 1

Spiritual Development lies in:

- Taking charge of the principle of becoming as it applies to an individual
- Preventing the limited mind, conscious and unconscious, from taking control of what we become
- Directing the Principle of Becoming in the light of the Principle of Being

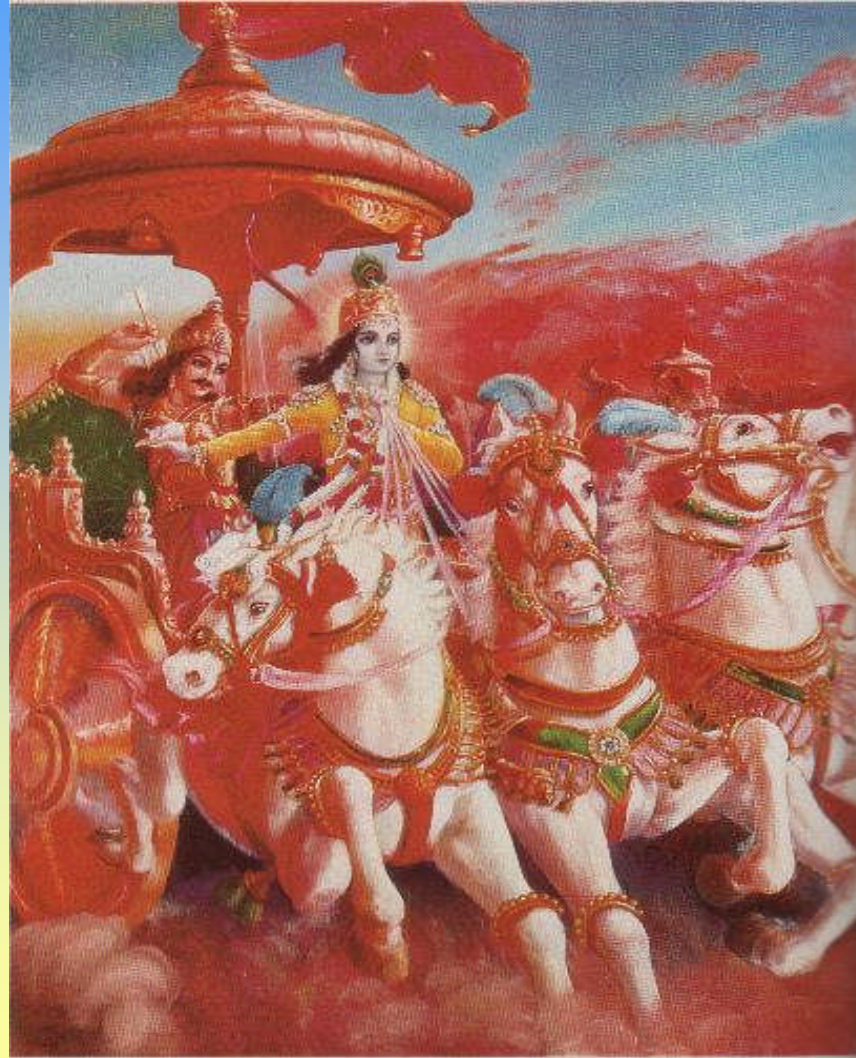
# Spiritual Development –2

## Meister Eckhart's exegesis on the Book Of Genesis



# Journey of Human Life

*Kathoupanishad*



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# Measure of Spiritual Development

- Spiritual development = 0%
  - Born totally self-centered through the body
  - Life run by the sensory faculty alone
  - We see ourselves as separate and divided
- Spiritual development = 100%
  - Perfect ordering of the senses and reason to the spirit
  - Totally centered on ultimate reality
  - We see ultimate reality in ourselves as in all others in a unity of being



# Need for Spiritual Education

- Counter powerful divisive forces
- Promote oneness of human family
- Counter intolerance
- Promote understanding, love and respect
- Build a just and sustainable world
- Develop inner human being in step with developments in science and technology
- Constructively channel human energy

# Nature of Ultimate Reality

- It is the efficient and the material cause of all that exists
- Ultimate reality is ONE by definition
- Being the source of infinity, it is infinite, without limitation of time and space
- Being infinite, it is indescribable in finite words
- We can only have our perspectives about it
- It lends itself to three types of perspectives:
  - Spiritual: in terms of essence and meaning of things
  - Physical: in terms of the perceptible universe
  - Divine: in terms of divine personalities

# Why Ultimate Reality Based Education?

- Intelligent & meaningful explanation of all beings
- Intelligibility and meaning are basic human needs
- Inclusive and harmonizing Concept
- Embraces all knowledge disciplines & all religions
- Being the underlying cause of all, it unites us all and inspires feelings of unity and inclusiveness
- Weakens feelings of divisiveness
- Potential of deep human transformation

# Two Ways of Learning about Ultimate Reality

- Cognitively by studying:
  - Our physical existence
  - Our sustenance
  - Our dissolution
- Conatively through grace by willing the reality to reveal itself through insight and intuition

# More on Learning about Ultimate Reality

- Infinite reality is unknowable completely
- We can only develop perspectives
- Perspectives of ultimate reality are of three types:
  - Spiritual: in terms of essence and meaning of things
  - Physical
  - Divine: in terms of divine personalities
- No perspective is as meaningful and transformative as when internalized and experienced conatively by each individual

# Assumptions in Spiritual Education

- Individual exists and the universe exists
- Proof lies in our consciousness
- There is ONE reality underlying all existence
- Perceptions of underlying reality differ
- An individual perception is not negotiable
- The universe is infinite and so is the reality
- All beings are ultimately ONE in the oneness of their reality
- One can be exclusive in one's own religious commitment and inclusive in respecting others
- Being faithful and reasonable are not mutually exclusive



# Ethics of Spiritual Education - 1

- Ethic of underlying oneness of all in general
- No discrimination, affirmation, denial or diminishing of any religion, culture, race, etc.
- Strictly academic considerations, no preaching and proselytising
- Acknowledge due academic credits
- Complement other education, encompass entire humanity and totality of human experience
- Learning must be multi-disciplined, non-judgmental, non-partisan, inclusive, meaningful and conducive to inner growth

# Ethics of Spiritual Education - 2

- Encourage and promote:
  - Exclusive practice of chosen religion
  - Tolerance, understanding, love, and respect
  - Inclusiveness and sustainability
  - Building of a just human family within the world community
  - Unifying and not divisive
  - Harmony with sense perception and reason

# Method of Development & Delivery

•Method of Mysticism:

Subtle



Gross

•Method of Science:

Gross



Subtle

- Development process for the learning material:
  - Learn & Relearn
  - Interpret & Reinterpret
  - Harmonize
  - Crystallize
  - Educate
    - ❖ Initially internet courses in distance education mode
    - ❖ Goal: As an integral part of the public educational system

# Scope of Spiritual Education

- Human Essence - Various Perspectives on:
  - Spiritual development and human relations
  - Body, mind, reason, thought, will, senses, feelings, sensations, consciousness and the life force
  - Determinants and transformation of human condition
- Universal Essence - Various perspectives on:
  - Underlying reality: Being and Becoming
  - Genesis, sustenance and dissolution
  - Human family in the global community
- Perspectives on meaning and purpose of being human and how to fulfill them
- Spiritual Ethics: Ways of living our spiritual unity

# Types Of Courses

- Individually Developed
  - Relevant courses of individual specialties
  - Taught by the course developer
  - Teacher compensation: Per student basis
- Collaboratively Developed
  - Many developers one teacher
  - Developer Compensation basis: Per module
  - Teacher compensation basis: Per student

# Strategy of Collaborative Development

- Define independent modules in each course
- Module = 3 hours of in-class instruction
- Course = 12 to 14 modules
- Identify experts for developing modules
- Provide guidelines for module developers
- Receive developed modules and integrate
- Post the course on the web



# Core Study Areas

- Ultimate Reality & the Individual  
*Purpose: Intelligibility through various perspectives*
- Meaning & Purpose  
*Purpose: Search through various perspectives*
- Contemplation Methods  
*Purpose: Theory and practice of contemplation for experiential understanding of personal essence and underlying unity, personal search for meaning and purpose*
- Spiritual Ethics  
*Purpose: Practical ways of living the unity of being*

# Supporting Study Areas

- Religious Leaders & Literature  
*Purpose: A study of spiritual exemplars and role models*
- Philosophy & Psychology  
*Purpose: Understanding first principles of spirituality*
- Theology & Mythology  
*Purpose: Understanding through various perspectives*
- Physical & Life Science  
*Purpose: Scientific bases for intelligibility*

# Conclusions

- Universal spirituality is rooted in the oneness of ultimate reality, yet allowing for different perspectives
- Possible to develop courses in universal spirituality without affirming or diminishing any religion
- Scope of such an education is defined & a proposal for a curriculum is presented to complement traditional education
- It is proposed to use human resources worldwide and offer courses worldwide initially in distance mode on the internet
- It is hoped that traditional in-class offerings of developed course material will emerge once we do an excellent job of curriculum development.

# A Special Opportunity

- Physically, the world has become a global village
- We must learn to live as one human family within the earth community in this global village
- Creation of one family urgently needs the oneness of hearts inherent in human spirituality
- Spirituality underlies religion and presents its true face
- Serious URAM students worldwide have an obligation to lead in the shaping of one human family
- Internet enables worldwide collaboration of teachers
- Now is the opportunity to collectively face this obligation
- Let us drop our conditioning to grab this opportunity

# Together, let us act now.

- Recalling the steps characteristic of spiritual education:
  - Learn & Relearn
  - Interpret & Reinterpret
  - Harmonize
  - Crystallize
  - Educate
- Interested in the process for universal good?
- Or interested in helping in any of the other ways?
- If so, please get in touch:  
shivtalwar@SpiritualEducation.org