

The Intellectual and the Spiritual

The central issue with the intellect is that mind, in a broad sense, is able to logically estimate the facts that we use to form our conceptions. The logic is based upon reasoning, which is the foundation of intellectual life. Observation, analysis, classification and various combinations are all based upon logic. Thus, granting the crucial role of the faculty of reasoning, one endowed with greater reasoning will be better able to observe, compare, choose, combine and to judge. A higher reasoning power makes one better able to deal with these functions.

Intellectuality is based upon conceptualization, which itself is based upon perceived facts. Unless certain facts are already known, intellectuality will not work without certain basic sensory elements acquired by the sense organs (smell, taste, touch, sight, hearing). These sensory elements are dull in themselves, virtually lifeless. The effects they produce differ according to individuals (even when the sensory faculties in respective individuals are roughly the same), thus leading to various assessments and appraisals of sensory experiences depending upon intellectuality, which itself is based upon reasoning.

This is a general outline of the intellectual faculty, which includes the ability to understand and which also explains the use of refined expressions. On a daily basis, intellectuality is the basis of all education. The intellect is especially appreciated when it releases constructive, higher-type thoughts, while deficiencies in intellect can create problems. Intellectuality can offer one many positive attributes, and yet it is not enough.

All that the intellect is capable of expressing and producing is based entirely upon sensory data and perceptual phenomena. However productive or brilliant are its thoughts, the intellect has its limitations.

Despite all of the explanations, which the intellect can provide, one cannot reach far enough with the intellect alone. Also, the continuous thought-creations, reasoning and speculation, which come along with intellectuality, can counteract a practice of mental concentration. This then can become an obstacle to stopping mental activity. Mainstream persons may not always understand and evaluate this aspect, yet it is obvious in spiritual practice, a fact which is frequently ignored.

Dual Approach

Those undertaking the spiritual life might broadly be grouped as the intellectual and the non-intellectual. The more intellectual individuals may be typified with a strongly overactive mental nature, characterized by the constant accumulation of thoughts. Non-intellectual individuals show more of an ordinary mind that does not bother about higher expressions of the intellect. These individuals may be relatively calm without necessarily displaying dullness.

Some spiritual aspirants are able to approach the spiritual field as a purely intellectual subject matter. Even people who are less developed intellectually can think in terms of spirituality, despite the fact that they may not be able to answer complicated questions about their stand. Intellectually developed people are then in a better position when it comes to spirituality. Strictly speaking, however, it makes no difference whether an individual belongs to one or the other of these two categories—intellectual or non-intellectual. Most often, it's the opinion of other persons that underlines the difference.

We can distinguish two further categories of individuals:

- a) People who cannot think or conceive anything beyond sensory phenomena; and
- b) People who feel that even the highest points of sensory achievement are inadequate, and who are further able to conceive the existence of a field beyond the sensory borderland.

There is a conceptual difference as regards what is the end-point. Whatever the utility or futility of seeing things differently, anyone who enters the first category of persons will hardly be convinced. Such persons may easily judge other people as fools who would do better to undergo psychoanalysis! But there are the few, however, who believe, think and know in terms of spirituality. What distinguishes this minority of people from the majority is precisely the perception and view that sensory results are inadequate. In this, they also distinguish as exceptional beings that stand at a higher level.

Usefulness of Spirituality

What we call spiritual is a field beyond the field of thought, intellectualized or not. But what is the usefulness of spirituality? It is not easy to answer this question.

Listening to someone speak of the value and usefulness of spirituality will only motivate a few to seriously undertake a spiritual quest that is more than verbosity and the simple exercise of intellect. On the other hand, anyone endowed with a fair understanding will choose and follow a spiritual path without reasoning so much. Surely, reasoning can often be of great help, but it can also be omitted altogether when entering the realm of spirituality - even though intellectuality may be of use there. Anyone who enrolls on a spiritual path can easily do without reasoning, which has only a secondary role in this context. Spirituality can be approached without necessarily having to depend upon reasoning or understanding. The spiritual will be understood irrespective of one's level of intelligence.

The human sensory field includes three distinct basic fields:

1. The intellect (or *viksipta*);
2. The emotional (or *mudha*); and
3. The action (or *ksipta*).

The pattern of action (*karma*) is also a way of approaching the spiritual, regardless of the number and nature of thoughts, high or low, which is in the background of action.

It is in the field of intellect that our thoughts are actualized via knowledge. The emotional aspect of mind is distinct from the intellect or action, but influences both these two factors.