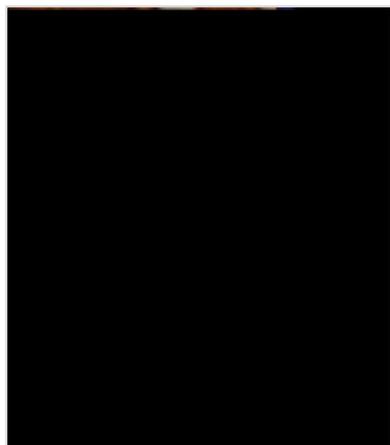


# Spirituality must be an important part of education: Mata Amritanandamayi Devi

K R Balasubramanyam    Last Updated: August 16, 2011 | 18:19 IST



Mata Amritanandamayi  
Devi

Kerala-based spiritual leader Mata Amritanandamayi Devi shares her thoughts on the importance of spirituality in our education system and about the educational initiatives from the Mutt under a Trust named after her. Edited excerpts from an e-mail interview.

## **Should spirituality be a part of education?**

Yes, spirituality must be an important part of education. By spirituality, what I mean is the age-old values that have always sustained and nourished our society and life on this planet Earth. These values serve as the very foundation of a harmonious existence between humans and all of nature, including the plant and animal kingdom.

Everyone knows the goal of education is not to create a generation only capable of understanding the language of machines. Education should help us attain samskara-spiritual culture. If "culture" merely denotes a refined sense of judgment regarding fashion and cuisine, we don't need education to cultivate it. Even the so-called "uncivilized" are proud of their food and clothing.

## **How does spirituality help students?**

Why do you even see spirituality as separate from life? We have made a big mistake by branding spirituality as not part of life. By doing so, we have disconnected the external from the internal. The majority of the problems we see in today's world, I would say, are due to this unhealthy attitude. It is important to create a balance between the external and the internal, the body and the soul.

The body is just a product of the food we eat and the mind is comprised of the impressions we collect from the world. However the soul descends from beyond.

The body is known-material-and the soul is unknown-divine. Existence is comprised of both the known and the unknown. Without this understanding, life will be incomplete. Just as we need both our right and left legs to walk properly, spiritual understanding and material knowledge should go hand in hand.

### **The emphasis these days seems to be more on self-effort...**

Our children, the students, should know that self-effort is not everything. If too much emphasis is given to self-effort and the intellect, which is the modern trend, people will only become too self-centered and egoistic. This is already a major problem that our world is facing.

While they strive to acquire education, a degree and the qualifications to earn a good living, we should help our students understand that education for life is an entirely different thing. Education for life is spirituality-practicing values such as love, compassion, patience, forgiveness, etc. This alone will create a deep sense of responsibility towards our fellow human beings, nature and the world as a whole.

### **What is your vision for Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham?**

While aiming academic excellence and opening new avenues for students to perform in the world using their full potential and talents, the institute should also be able to help students to have a better understanding about life from a spiritual point of view. Contrary to the common belief that the only purpose of education is to gain material achievements and prosperity, the institute should create an atmosphere to help students understand that serving the society with a selfless attitude is also of prime importance.

The world should know that a life of material prosperity well-supported by spiritual goals is very much possible, and that this kind of life alone will enable humanity to realize the dream of peace and happiness while living in the modern-day atmosphere of cut-throat competition and selfishness.

Further I would like the institute to give prime importance to research activities in all areas of science and technology and thereby work for the uplift of society as a whole.

**Where do you want to see it in ten years?**

Since I lay my faith in the present, for me, this moment is more important than the future. So I do not want to predict anything about the future. However, if the institute moves ahead upholding these principles, I am positive that it will become a center of excellence and a model for the entire world.