

Spiritual Health and Self Actualization

Neera Dhar¹, Ankur Yadav²

¹ Professor & Head, Department of Education and Training, National Institute of Health and Family, New Delhi

² Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, National Institute of Health and Family, New Delhi

* Correspondence: [ankuryadav41\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:ankuryadav41[at]gmail.com)

Abstract: *The author conducted a research study to define and measure the spirituality of an individual. In this study, the researchers have identified determinants or the personality traits in an individual which can suggest that the person is having qualities of a Self-Actualized being. A Self-Actualized is deeply concerned for human dignity and welfare irrespective of cast, creed or religious beliefs. He /she will pursue this concern with courage irrespective of the sufferings on the path. A Self-Actualized works, to realize his/her true potential, understanding of the true nature of the things around, understand the meaning and purpose of this life.*

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1. Introduction

The author conducted a research study to define and measure the spirituality of an individual. In this study, while the health as defined by WHO has been relied upon through the health triangle of Physical, Mental and Social dimensions, the fourth dimension of health, 'the spiritual health' has been defined and a reliable and valid scale has been developed to measure the spiritual health: **DEFINING AND MEASURING THE 4TH DIMENSION OF HEALTH : SPIRITUAL HEALTH SCALE (SHS - 2011)**.

When we talk about evidence based medicine, the existing evidence suggests that spiritual practices help in coping with day to day problems of life on one hand and also in dealing with disease situation.

In last more than one decade, there has been scientific search for the relationship of the spirituality with intelligence, with emotions and also well-being. Measurement instruments have been developed to measure spiritual intelligence (Wigglesworth 2008), which is a spiritual correlate to intelligence quotient and emotional quotient. Like emotional quotient, spiritual quotient is assuming importance in scientific research and philosophical/psychological debates.

It is only for the 'last two decades or so', that modern system of medicine has started realizing the mind-body axis of the disease and health (Dossey 2001). Before this, morbidity was related to body and its functions and accordingly, the focus was on the human body and physical surrounding. Perhaps this is the reason that no serious attempt has been made to develop a spiritual health scale per say, across the globe. The existing standard scales which are to measure spiritual intelligence, spiritual well-being, and spiritual assessment, all are focusing on psychological, managerial or emotional aspect of an individual, having spiritual influence, and not the relationship of spirituality with health. Though the standard tool on spiritual health does not exist, but research studies are available to show relationship between spiritual practices and health.

Spiritual practices could lead to a more productive life and overall well being. Spiritual practices help one in coping with the adversities of the life. Even in adverse physical and

social circumstances, one is able to perform one's duties and responsibilities effectively.

Empirical evidence is available to indicate a direct relation between religious involvement, spirituality and positive health outcomes. Positive values, attitudes, beliefs and strength that one acquires through spiritual practices contribute to the sense of well-being, health and happiness. Spiritual practices have a positive correlation with survival, low blood pressure, less remission time from depression, less number of cigarettes smoked per day per week, less severe medical illness, better quality of life, cooperativeness, etc. (Bansal et.al 2003).

Researchers suggest a positive relation between spiritual well-being /practices and positive health outcomes, like greater self-confidence, assertiveness and fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression. Evidence shows that spiritual well-being is positively related with self-ratings of physical health and vitality. Spiritual health/wellness is positively related with adjustment to dialysis treatment and cancer induced pain. (Edward 1996).

Studies in USA indicate that patients and physicians would like to consider spiritual health factors in the medical care and its assessment too. Studies in USA indicate a positive correlation between patients' spiritual/religious commitments and health outcomes and would also like physicians to consider these factors in their medical care practice. Subsequently, they have suggested spiritual health assessment as a first step in medical care practice. A formal tool called HOPE has been designed for the purpose. Here H stands for sources of hope, comfort, strength, meaning, peace, love connections; O stands for role of organized religion for the patients; P stands for personal spirituality and practices; and E stands for effects on medical care (Anandarajah, G. et.al 2001).

Rahul et.al(2008) in their cross-sectional study on "Spirituality and health: a knowledge, attitude and practice study among doctors of North India", found that 65.65% had a strong or very strong belief in the spiritual dimension of health; 55.22% believed in the preventive role of spirituality; 80% believed in the curative role of spirituality and a similar proportion held the view that spirituality has an important

role in day-to-day patient care; and 92.5% wanted to know more about the scientific work being done in the field. Regarding the role of spiritual dimension of health in preventing and curing of diseases, 55.22% of the doctors opined that a spiritual person falls ill less frequently. A large majority (87.39%) also believed that a spiritual person copes better with illness, and 80% believed that they recover faster. The most significant finding was that 93.48% of the doctors believe that a spiritual person deals better with stress, and 81.74% felt that a spiritual person faces or deals better with death.

Research indicates a close relationship between love for God or feeling of being loved by some Higher Reality with greater self-esteem, higher levels of self-efficacy, sense of mastery, less depression, less physical disability and greater self-rated health. The John Templeton Foundation, USA has invested on more than 24 research studies on forgiveness (Levin 2001). 'Unconditional love is the most powerful stimulant of the immune system – the truth is; love heals' (Siegel 2001). In his remarkable programme for cancer patients, he facilitated them in experiencing love with other emotions like forgiveness which 'mobilize the immune system and engender health'.

"Renewing the spiritual dimension provides leadership to your life --- I find renewal in daily prayerful meditation---immersion in great literature or great music--- harmony and rhythm of nature--- personal mission statement---to promote the welfare and good of other people and to be genuinely happy for other people's success (Covey 1989)".

Ayurveda, an ancient healing system of India also has the central philosophy that physical health cannot be achieved without emotional, mental and spiritual health. Thus, Ayurveda, being a Science of Longevity of man focuses on improving the quality of life. As per Ayurveda, health is not mere absence of disease but is a state of balance in which doshas (humors), agni (metabolic fire) and malas (products of excretion) are in state of equilibrium and the cheerful state of soul, mind intellect and sense organs is designated as health.

Referring to Ayurveda healthy lifestyle in which social activities are claimed to be best medicine for good mental and spiritual health, Hebbbar (2011) says, "if you are lonely, selfish person who cares only about you, yourself and your family and friends and your home, etc. when the people near to you hurt you it hurts the most. But, if you are socially active, it is very easy to find the answer for the questions like: For what I should live in this world? For what would reason, should I continue living? Having blessed with this beautiful gift of life, having absorbed so much of love and happiness from our beloved people, it is our right and duty to give it back."

India needs to adopt a proactive approach in introducing spiritual health in its health system. It is high time that it should be urgently taken by health professionals as an area for empirical investigations, measurement and subsequently to be applied in various health settings for better health outcome and ensuring a higher quality of life and reducing

economic burden and hence, a tool is pre requisite to measure the spiritual health.

All these empirical evidences are post exposure and effect of spiritual practices of individuals which are not devoid of cultural/religious bias. This goes without saying that such an evidence is culture/religious dependent.

2. Methodology : Spiritual Health Scale (SHS 2011)

The investigators of the study, have developed a scale to first define and then measure the Spiritual Health of an individual.

In this study, Spiritual Health has been defined as:

A state of Being where an individual is able to deal with day-to-day life in a manner which leads to the realization of one's full potential; meaning and purpose of life; and happiness from within.

The 4th Dimension of health, the Spiritual Health has been measured through the *cognitive, behavioral and affective* aspects of the personality.

Identification of 3 Domains of Spiritual Health

These have been divided for the purpose of this study in three domains of **Self-Evolution, Self-Actualization and Transcendence**. For each domain 2 constructs have been identified and against each construct there are determinants which qualify for the construct. The items of the scale, capture the interpretation of the domain in general and that of constructs & determinant in particular.

The items of the scale are devoid of religious dogmas and cultural bias.

3. Results and Discussion

Spiritual Health Scale (SHS 2011)

Self Actualization- 2nd Domain of Spiritual Health in SHS 2011

Today, the progress made through the application of science and technology has created unlimited means for the comfort of human race. But, this progress in the material world is showing inverse relationship with the health and happiness of the individuals. Today stress, anxiety, loneliness and high levels of aspirations have become the common way of life.

Worldwide, there is a constant search for cause of the present physical, mental, emotional, social disease and ill-health, which this generation is facing or suffering from. This quest has led the researchers to find out the causes of the present day chaos. In this endeavor, the world is looking for probable answers in the eroding value systems, emphasis on materialism and deepening attachment to self and possessions. World Health Organization (WHO) is also conscious of it. It is now exploring beyond the physical, mental and social dimensions of the health and is keenly

looking forward for some answers in the spiritual aspects and their inter-relations, if any, with individual's health and diseases.

The **self, actual and realization** appears to be three different entities to begin with. The self is identified with all mundane attributes as the sum total of ego, jealousy, hatred, anger, conditional love etc. Backed by the existing attitude orchestrated through mundane attributes, the common human beings behaves in the manner which we all see and experience daily at different times and under different situations. These behaviors are the result of cognitive and effective perception of situations and events by the individual.

When we talk about Self Actualization, this will depend on what we understand by Actual. The word Actual has been defined- Existing in fact or reality or truly existing. Synonyms to actual are -concrete, de facto, effective, existent, factual, genuine, real, sure-enough, True.

For the purpose of this analysis we will further discuss one of the synonyms, the Real.

The Real means that which is occurring or existing in actuality, having objective independent existence, and which is, Fundamental. The Fundamental is, serving as an original or generating source(primary), serving as a basis supporting existence or determining essential structure or function(basic), belonging to one's innate or ingrained characteristics (deep-rooted).

The Actual is one which is existing in fact or reality. Whatever we see in this world, and also perceive through our five senses are having objective independent existence.

A basic definition from a typical college textbook defines self-actualization according to Maslow simply as "the full realization of one's potential", and of one's 'true self'.

A more explicit definition of self-actualization according to Maslow is "intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately of what is the organism itself...self-actualization is growth-motivated rather than deficiency-motivated."

In this article the effort is to deal with the second domain Self-actualization and how it has been contemplated in the study to achieve it. It has already been discussed earlier that few determinants have been identified and by consciously working towards gaining control over those determinant there is possibility to actualize self . According to Maslow Self Actualization is "intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately of what is the organism itself.

or the purpose of this study Self-Actualization has been defined as reaching to a state of *Being* where the individual is consciously aware and responds to the situation, events, people and environment with "*Engineering From within*" and "*Deeper Meaning-Purpose of Life*".

In this study the researchers have identified determinants or the personality traits in an individual which can suggest that the person is having qualities of a Self-Actualized being. A Self –Actualized is deeply concerned for human dignity and welfare irrespective of cast, creed or religious beliefs. He /she will pursue this concern with courage irrespective of the sufferings on the path.

A Self-Actualized works, to realize his/her true potential, being fully aware of his thought and action without being egoistic about the growth. The outward expression is that, what meets the eye is not real and is able to extract fun out of most difficult situation.

When there is understanding of the true nature of the things around (everything is impermanent) ,he /she is fully involved in his/her daily duties and responsibility at the same time detached .This attitude helps in allowing the self to explore the inner Self.

The awareness of the functioning of inner self helps in positive growth culminating in the sense of responsibility to the environment and the people around for their welfare.

These attributes of a Self-Actualized helps him/her to understand the meaning and purpose of this life. The available literature on Spiritualism focuses on the singular aim of this life, which is to realize the true potential of human birth for the welfare of the World around.

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