

A Study of Psychological Correlates of Spirituality

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Abstract—All human beings are virtuous by God as they get controlling mind and an attitude towards something with the help of which they can experience spirituality. People have different psychological thoughts and beliefs relating to God. Some people feel the immense pleasure in performing religious activities while some believe in the thought “Aham Brahmasmi” i. e. I am part of the divine and they feel pleasure in activities which motivate them to achieve peace. Religion in psychology is considered as a specific fundamental set of beliefs, thoughts and practices generally agreed and controlled by a number of persons. It is the psychology of a person which commands their mind in deciding at which path they can attain the eternal feelings of the universe and accordingly they will develop their behavior towards religion and spirituality. This study is based on review of various previous researches and is an attempt to find out how Psychology helps human nature towards religion and spirituality through which they achieve divine experience.

Keywords: Religion, spirituality, Psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

A human being is something more than his body. There is a subtle essence in him, which makes him alive and conscious. Human personality functions at different levels, which can be broadly classified as Physical, Emotional, Mental, Intellectual, Moral and Spiritual.

The physical level refers to the body, which exists in the case of all beings. The senses and the organs of action are situated in it. The body undergoes continuous change from the birth to death. The emotional level refers to the various sentiments, which are expressed under different circumstances. It also exists in all beings. The mental level refers to the mind which is the inner sense that coordinates the sensations and brings together the impressions. Thus a man is able to understand the color, sound, smell, taste, form etc. belonging to a particular object. The intellectual level represents the higher capacity of mind, which assists a person to judge what is wrong and what is right; what is truth and what is falsehood and the like. All the great achievements of man are due to the fact that he is blessed with intellect. The moral level springs from the intellectual level. When a man knows the right path he decides to proceed on it, but this doesn't always happen. At times he is aware that what he is doing is wrong that is, he is not prepared to rise to the higher level, though he knows it. The spiritual level is the highest level reached by a man. Unless a man leads a good, moral life, he cannot expect to rise to this level. It is

said in Kathopanishad, “If a man doesn't desist from evil conduct, if he doesn't control his senses and have a balanced and tranquil mind, he cannot realize the Atman by mere intellect

Today, we tend to differentiate between organized religion and spirituality. When asked whether they are religious, many say they are spiritual but not religious in the traditional sense. Spirituality means something different to everyone. For some, it's about participating in organized religion: going to church, synagogue, a mosque, etc. For others, it's more personal: Some people get in touch with their spiritual side through private prayer, yoga, meditation, quiet reflection, or even long walks.

Research shows that even skeptics can't stifle the sense that there is something greater than the concrete world we see. As the brain processes sensory experiences, we naturally look for patterns, and then seek out meaning in those patterns. And the phenomenon known as “cognitive dissonance” shows that once we believe in something, we will try to explain away anything that conflicts with it.

Psychologically speaking, religion is conceived, created and perpetuated by virtually every culture throughout history to provide meaning, comfort and succor in the face of the stark, disturbing, anxiety-provoking existential facts of life: suffering, misfortune, meaninglessness, isolation, insecurity, disease, loss, and ultimately, death.

On the negative side, religion, as Freud rightly recognized, can be a neurotic or sometimes psychotic means of dogmatically avoiding, denying or defending against the primal realities of existence and refusal to accept full responsibility for one's thoughts, desires, feelings, impulses, choices and actions. This misguided, infantilizing, illusory, rigid or delusional form of religiosity, frequently found in fundamentalism, can be exceedingly dangerous, since it engenders the psychological projection of power, responsibility, good and evil onto some external entity, be it God, Satan, demons or demonized enemies in God's name. Few theologians today would deny that, throughout history, organized religion has itself been the divisive source of myriad evils: from the Crucifixion to the Inquisition to the recent rash of radical terrorism murderously

engaged in with such religious fervor in the holy name of Allah.

The term *spirituality* is coined from the Latin word *spiritus*, meaning “breath of life”. In modern dictionary the word spirituality is a translation of the term *Ruhnaiya* (in Arabic) derived from the adjective *ruhani* which means, mind or animating principles as distinct from body. The definition of spirituality provided by the tenth edition of Oxford English Dictionary is as follows: “the quality or condition of being spiritual, attachment to or regard for the thing of the spirit as opposed to material or worldly interest.” Belief in the spiritual reality continues to characterize majority of people, be it belief in a Supreme Being or order, life after death, an ultimate reality or supernatural beings, like angels and demons. Whatever behavioral scientists and health care professional may themselves believe the spiritual side of human remains important to many or most people.

Spirituality is also inextricably connected to creativity--and vice-versa. It signifies a positive approach, an accepting, embracing even loving attitude toward life, suffering and death. Creativity can be a profound spiritual solution to life's problems. The exquisite presence of this assenting attitude toward life is plainly palpable in Beethoven's last string quartets, composed joyfully just before his death, despite his total deafness, isolation and intense physical suffering. Clearly, Beethoven had creatively arrived at some sublime conciliation with his demons, with his difficult, tragic, lonely life, and with his own mortality.

One of the first and the foremost frequently cited attempts to define spirituality was by Allport and Ross (1967). They proposed a form of spirituality that was characterized by a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. This distinction went beyond mere public religious behaviors to the subjective experience of religiousness. Intrinsic religiousness refers to the extent someone internalized and lived by their commitment to their religious beliefs (Park, Meyers & Czar, 1998).

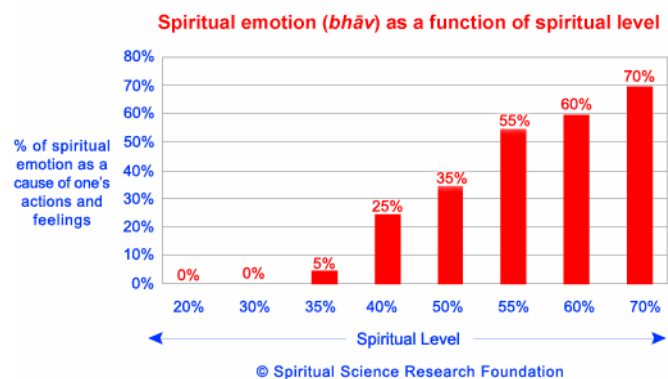
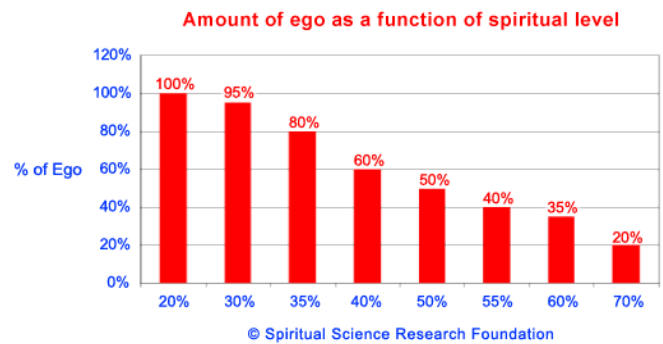
Perrin (2007) defines spirituality in terms of spirit. According to him, the spirit refers to human consciousness, a constitutive dimension of human beings, and to capacity for self-consciousness. The spirit involves the deepest dimension of life. Kabbani (2008) regarded spirituality as a powerful weapon. He called it a struggle between acceptance and non-acceptance, belief or unbelief.

A functional definition of spirituality which has been adopted by the California state psychological association task force of spirituality and psychotherapy___ “courage to look within and to trust”: implying that what is seen and what is trusted appears to be a deep sense of belongingness, of wholeness, of connectedness and of openness of the infinite.

Each of us faces essentially the same task: to assertively and constructively affirm ourselves and our lives. To accept our human fate, to find and fulfill our personal destiny, to muster the courage to confront existence and to accept--even embrace--life on its own terms, including our own and others' intrinsic *demonic* tendencies and most difficult of all, to forgive ourselves and others for their selfish, hurtful and destructive acts.

Jung was one of the first to see that despite their disillusionment with and rejection of organized religion, many of his patients' problems were religious in nature, requiring the development of their own personal spiritual perspective during the healing process of psychotherapy. In this sense, psychotherapy, when properly practiced, is an inherently spiritual venture.

These are some of the findings extracted from Spiritual Science Research Foundation which throw some light on the relationship of spiritual level and amount of ego (Chart 1. 1) and Spiritual emotion (Bhav) as a function of spiritual Level. (Extracted from *Spiritual Science Research Foundation*)



2. CONCLUSION

Understanding the psychology of spirituality is of tremendous importance in today's times. It may be stated that the task of both psychotherapy and spirituality is to accept and redeem rather than avoid, deny, cast out, eradicate our devils. The

understanding of spirituality may contribute to mental health and wellbeing. The knowledge of spirituality can provide a deeper understanding of people's problems and can help them develop resilience and aid recovery. A new holistic or 'psycho-spiritual' theory need to be developed which may provide practical advice to explore and make use of spirituality in handling psychological disorders.

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