Spirituality: A Tool to Develop Mental Health among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This paper throws light on the significance of spirituality in the development of mental health. Spirituality has a significant influence on quality of life and is an important aspect of mental health. Lack of spirituality can interfere with interpersonal relationships, which can contribute to the genesis. Spirituality has the ability to promote or damage mental health. Spirituality provides a sense of security and social structure. Spirituality can bring a feeling of being connected to something bigger than yourself and provide a way of coping in addition to our own mental resilience. It can help people make sense of what they are experiencing. Spirituality often becomes more important in times of distress, emotional stress, physical and mental illness, loss, bereavement and approach of death. Spirituality has a significant influence on quality of life and it goes without saying that adolescence is a sensitive period which requires careful guidance so that the youngsters will have a brighter future and be ready to face difficulties. This includes helping adolescents understand their purpose in life. However, this is often the neglected part of our intelligence. Every religion establishes a constant awareness, mindfulness and consciousness of God in everything that a follower says or does. The messengers of God emphasized on developing a good character or by engaging a constant practice of prayer, meditation, remembrance of God and other activities as these actions change the heart and thereby bring one closer to God. Spirituality has been referred to as, "the forgotten dimension of Mental Health Care" (Mental Health Foundation, 1998). With the help of spirituality one can rediscover the holistic meanings of oneself which would help the person in recovery of the mental health. However to achieve the good mental health, one needs to follow the path of spirituality because without one can`t answer those questions that arise in one`s inner soul. "Know thyself" (Oxford Dictionary, 2008) was developed by Socrates many centuries ago. His prescription can be put down as the leading item in any programme for achieving mental health by following the path of spirituality. Both spirituality and mental health are incomplete without each other.

Key Words : Spirituality, Mental Health, Adolescents, Development

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality:

Spirituality refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning, purpose and the way they experience, their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature and to the significant or sacred (Puchalski *et al.,* 2014). As per National Health Service Scotland (2009), Spirituality provides the higher level of intelligence and wisdom which integrates the emotional with the moral. It acts as a guide in integrating different aspects of personality and ways of being and living. It is found in integration of several deep connections_ the connection with one's true and higher self, the connection with the society especially with the poor, the deprived and underprivileged, the connection with the world of nature and other life forms and for some, a connectedness with the transcendent. Spirituality is an experience and awareness of a higher power, a sense of interconnectedness between responsibility to self, other, the planet and higher power. These fundamental beliefs about reality constitute an integrated foundation upon which individuals or groups view the world, derive purpose and meaning, experience , certitude, values,

qualities, motivations and actions derive from our spirituality. Spiritual formation, a goal of which is self awareness and a movement towards Authencity is an ongoing journey. Lauver (2000) discusses women's spirituality and its relationship with health. She writes about spirituality as community and advocates for connection with self, other woman and one's community in the cultivation of spirituality. She also emphasizes the centrality of experience to women's spirituality stating: as women reconstruct rituals, languages and symbols based on their experience, they value and affirm these experiences. A related assumption is a fundamental honouring of goodness of women bodies and their functions.

Mental health:

Mental Health refers to a sound state of psychological well-being or freedom from mental diseases. It can't merely be understood as a state of freedom from mental illness as it was being done in past. Mental health is the condition in which the individual manifest self-evaluation, adjustability, maturity, regular life, absence of extremism, satisfactory social adjustment from his chief occupation. According to Surgeon's General Report (1999) on Mental Health, Mental Health is defined as successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people and the ability to change and cope with adversity.

Spirituality and mental health:

Man is supposed to occupy the pride of position at the top among God's creation. The possession of mind and its manifold manifestations demarcate the 'Homosapiens' from the sub-human species. However mastery of mind alone contributes to the well-being of human beings. This is possible when one's basic needs are met without any hitch. During the last two hundred years modern science has achieved enough and given mankind all materialistic comforts but failed to inculcate morality and discipline in man. In this era of spiritual drought and torpor of human soul, it is very much desired that our old age traditional values should be made open to the people of world. In the same way, we are also aware about the social, economic and political structures based on mutual exploitations, cut-throat competition, spiralling individualism and disoriented morality which are responsible for disturbing our mental peace and degrading

our spirituality. Therefore, in order to disentangle oneself from such shackles one should march towards the destination of mental health and quest for recognition of spirituality.

Spirituality is man's relationship with creator (Wong-McDonald, 2000). Essentially, spirituality includes the experience of connection with God and application of his principles into everyday life (Fabricatore *et al.*, 2000). As per the Tenth Edition of Oxford English Dictionary, spirituality is defined as the quality or condition of being spiritual, attachment to or regard for the thing of spirit as opposed to material or worldly interest. The materialistic evolution can solve the problems related to hunger, poverty, insanitation, illiteracy, environmental pollution, illness and unemployment but only through the process of spirituality, one can achieve compassion, love, tolerance, honesty, integrity, peace, morality, discipline and humanism without which the very existence of mankind will be at stake. The elements required for spiritual development are morality, discipline and meditation. Spirituality is something that arises from within us (internal) - A personal quest for understanding meaning around big questions of life and death (Koenig, 2001). Spirituality moderates the relationship between stressors and satisfaction with life. Bowen- Reid and Smalls (2004) reported that spiritually centered black youth are more likely to engage in health promoting behaviours such as healthy eating, regular physical activity, responsible health practices and social support. It has been hypothesized that spiritually oriented people see the body as God's holy temple and thus rejects the activities that may defile the body. Spirituality has effects of non-religious styles of coping (Pargament *et al.*, 1998). Muzamil *et al.* (2011) found a positive correlation between spirituality and life satisfaction. Smith (2014) found no significant relationship between spirituality and treatment outcome for adolescents in crisis residence. Khan Shaheerat ul Islam (2018) found a significant difference between private and Dar ul uloom secondary school students of Kashmir division on mental health. Spirituality is a globally acknowledged concept. It involves belief and obedience to an all powerful force-The Creator called 'God', who controls universe and destiny of man. It involves the ways in which people fulfill what they hold to be the purpose of their lives, a search for meaning of life and a sense of connectedness to the universe. Spirituality is very much personal and unique to each person and develops qualities such as honesty, compassion, a sense of detachment, faith and

hope. Mental health has two dimensions-absence of mental illness and presence of a well adjusted personality that contributes effectively to the life of the community. Ability to take responsibility for one's own actions, flexibility, high tolerance, acceptance of uncertainty, involvement in activities of social interest, courage to take risks, serenity to accept the things which we can't change, courage to change the which we can change, the wisdom to know the difference between the above, acceptance of handicaps, tempered self-control, harmonious relationships to self, others, including Nature and God, are the essential features of mental health. Spirituality is an important aspect of mental health. Lack of spirituality can interfere with interpersonal relationships, which can contribute to the genesis of psychiatric disturbance. Spirituality has the ability to promote or damage mental health. This potential demands an increased awareness of religious matters by practitioners in the mental health field. Spirituality beliefs begin to develop in childhood and continue throughout life. They can help and guide our decision making and impact many cultural and social aspects. Most importantly, our beliefs can also have a profound influence on mental health and well-being. Spirituality provides a sense of security and social structure and those beliefs can be a strong coping mechanism through trying times. Several life circumstances or situations can challenge faith connections and beliefs like chronic illness, loss of loved one or rejection during times. Spirituality can help a person to tolerate stress by generating peace, purpose and forgiveness. Spirituality can help people to maintain good mental health. It can help them to cope up with the problems. Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his/her own potential, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Being able to express and explore our spirituality is a basic human need and universal human right. Spirituality can bring a feeling of being connected to something bigger than yourself and provide a way of coping in addition to our own mental resilience. It can help people make sense of what they are experiencing. Spirituality often becomes more important in times of distress, emotional stress, physical and mental illness, loss, bereavement and approach of death. Spirituality emphasizes the healing of the person, not just the disease. It views life as a journey, where good and bad experiences help you to learn, develop and mature.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, we reach to the conclusion that the amount of time we spent in exhibiting our follies and weaknesses, harming other people and making them feel dissolute and if at all only a quarter of that time is well spent on treating them well we could perhaps enliven the whole of humanity. Virtuous nature and befitting humane character attributes must replace all material wealth. Ability to help the lower strata of society and to contribute what we can spare for the downtrodden would positively make us richer in all aspects. Respect for fellow-beings, love and sympathetic understanding of another man's thinking, tolerance, good temper, impartial disposition and concern for their anxieties and apprehensions in a truly humane way will be more than adequate to counter balance any point of inadequacy in our mental make-up. Once the nature of unpleasant adversities and its origin are understood by introspection and evaluation, One can think and hear better. If the good is nourished and protected, the very spirit of goodness will protect us from evil. To acquire a sound personality, it is imperative to disown selfishness. Think more of plight of another human being. Human life is very unpredictable, unprecedented and unacceptable at times of personal tragedy and misfortune. Detachment from the material world delinks us from most of human sufferings, elevates us into a life of sublime thought and gives momentum for peace and tranquillity. To possess material wealth more than we require and to lead a selfish life is unpardonable. It is against the morals, values and defiles the human nature. There is something beyond acquisition of wealth and leading a life of comfort, that is spirituality and its empowerment is necessary for the stability of mental health.

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