

A STUDY OF SPIRITUAL VALUES IN SIKHISM TO IMMUNE THE MENTAL HEALTH FOR JOYFUL LIVING

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ABSTRACT

The issue of mental health is often overlooked in adolescents, who comprise almost 16 percent of our population. In these formative years, individuals go through a range of physical, emotional and social changes, some of which can make adolescents vulnerable to mental health issues. If the mental health issues are not addressed at the right time and in the right manner, they can extend to adulthood and drive the way individuals feel, think and behave. This can severely impact an individual's overall well-being, thereby limiting the chances for an individual to live a meaningful life with purpose. Spirituality is closely linked to mental health and is often a recommended approach to deal with mental health issues. Religious texts at times, play a significant role in introducing us to spiritualism. They can slowly transform us from a believer to a seeker, seeking what we do not know, thereby opening the possibility of knowing. Sikhism, despite being a relatively younger religion is rich, with unique points on spirituality, which may not be widely known. Sikhism arose essentially as a Prophetic religion with a Divine Mission to usher a new, progressive value-system, social order, economic pattern and political setup, characterized by the ideals of justice, equality, democracy, republicanism and secularism. (Ahluwalia, p. 50, 1987). Sikhism believes more inversion than conversion of others. Sant Rajinder Singh points out, "We want to go within, because the treasure house of divinity is within ourselves (1995, p.251)." This study aims to highlight how spiritual values of Sikhism are linked to mental health and boosts the overall well-being of one's life.

Keywords: *Sikh Rehat Maryada, Gurmat, Spirituality, Mental Health, Sikh Life-Stress Model*

The word "Sikh" means "Seeker of Truth." Sikhism originated in Northern India and is the world's fifth-largest organized religion. There are more than 25 million Sikhs throughout the world. Sikhism stands for the equality of women and men and denounces any discrimination pertaining to gender, race, caste, creed, religion, or colour. Sikh scripture promotes ideals of equality and the freedom to pursue paths of peace and prosperity.

According to the Sikh world-view, the major source of suffering in life is the perception that the ego (ahankar) is one's authentic centre (GGS, 1993, p. 466). Unlike the psychoanalytical concept of the ego, wherein the ego is the organized conscious mediator between the person and reality, the Sikh concept of the ego is the experience of "I" and the sense of being different from others. The ultimate Sikh religious goal is to experience unity with EkOnkar (the one cosmological essence that unifies all diversity), the human tendency is toward

ego-centredness. The tendency of ego is different from others results in a struggle for existence and permanence (Kaur, 1985). This struggle for existence and permanence is regarded as the major source of stress and despair in life (Maskeen, 1993).

Sikh Rehat Maryada (Sikh Code Of Conduct)

History judges a nation by its collective character and conduct. It is believed that human life is full of problems and pains. Discipline in life is the basic tool to address and solve these problems. The ultimate aim of human being is to overcome the problems and lead a pure and pious life to attain unity with God. According to Sikhism, the remedy of pain lies within.

Dukh Daroo Sukh Rog Bhaia: Sikh religion is a practical way of life. The Sikh Gurus prescribed comprehensive rules and a code of conduct (Rehat Maryada) for the Sikhs to be followed truthfully in their day to day life.

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The distinctive Sikh code of conduct is feature of fundamental importance to the life of the Panth that is the Sikh religion. The Sikh code of conduct can be traced from within Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Rehtnamas and practical life of the Gurus.

Guru Nanak Dev says,

Reflecting on the Name, man's mind is accustomed to serve others.

Stilling one's ego, one is deemed to have practised worship, penance and self mortification.

When man hears the Lord's Name, he becomes emancipated in life.

Through such a true way of life, he is blessed with eternal peace.

Ang (1343)

Guru Nanak Dev is the founder of Sikhism. He started the institution of Sangat and Pangat which is the first step to Reht Maryada ladder. According to Sikhism, the mission of human life is the attainment of God and this realization is possible by observing the principles of truth in their true spirit. It is desired of a Sikh to live upto the discipline of Bani (Nam Simran) and Bana (Wearing of Five Kakars and keeping piety of outlook) to attain the ultimate goal.

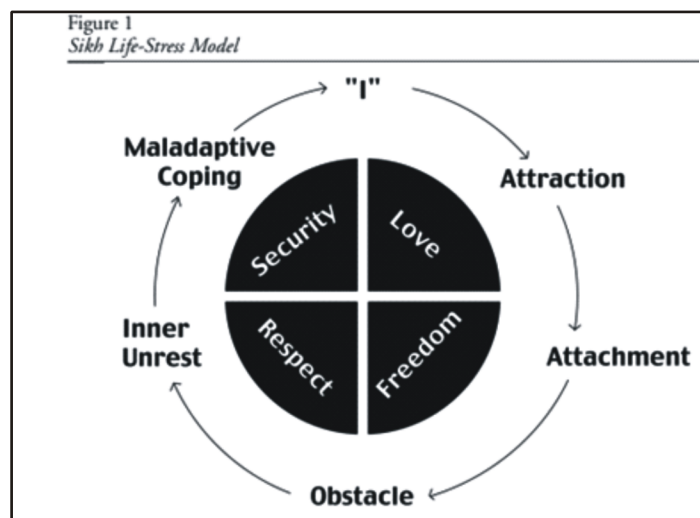
Sikh code of conduct provides social, cultural, religious and spiritual precepts for governance of Khalsa corporate life. Sikh faith is established on observance of the principles and rules formulated by the Sikh Gurus in the true sense. Sikhism is a way of life and the game of love needs truth and commitment on that way. In micro sense, it is

concerned with individual life style (Gurmat and Reht Maryada style of life) of a Sikh but in macro sense, it is concerned with his corporate style of life (Sangat, Pangat, supermacy of Akal Takht and Wand Chhakna etc) conducted and governed truly at all the times and at all the places and in every behaviour according to the Word of God.

The Life-stress Model

The life-stress model (see Fig. 1) can best be described as an existential approach or philosophy premised on the assumption that human beings are motivated by the ego's desire to fulfil four core human needs: security (surakhia), love (prem), respect (izzat), and freedom (azaadi) (GGS, 1993, pp. 75–77). In contrast to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, wherein lower needs are to be satisfied before the fulfilment of higher needs (as cited in Hergenbahn, 1997), the four core needs in the life-stress model are interconnected and pursued simultaneously.

- Security is the need to be, and to feel, safe in relation to the physiological, emotional, and material aspects of life.
- Love involves the need for intimacy with other human beings, including the ability to love and to be loved by others.
- Respect is the need to be treated with dignity as well as to be recognized for one's self-worth.
- Freedom involves the need to be free from adversity and to have the liberty to pursue personal ambitions and aspirations.



These four core needs can be pursued by either the individual ego or the collective ego (i.e., family, clan, religious sub-sect, or ethnic group).

It is the cultural norm for many Sikhs, particularly the elderly, to fulfil the four human needs at the group level, and that the fulfilment of the four core needs is regarded as a natural process. To satisfy these needs, the ego, or the "I," becomes attracted (duniaveedhian) to external sources, such as people (lok), objects (duniaveevastu), activities (sargarmee), and places (jagha) (GGS, 1993, pp. 75–77). As the attraction to these external sources strengthens, it turns into attachment (moh). While attachment has a role in forming bonds in the world, it also creates the desire (trishna) to possess those people, objects, activities, and places that are perceived as fulfilling the need to be secure, loved, respected, and free. Essentially, the ego's attachment to outside sources for a sense of fulfilment is a major driving force in human behaviour. For Example, a woman may be attached to her partner and children in order to fulfil her need for love and emotional security. The attachment to her home may fulfil the need for material security. Lastly, her attachment to her career can fulfil the need to be financially secure, respected for her self-worth, and free to pursue her own ambitions. There are many occasions in life when the ego is unable to successfully fulfil all of the four needs. Obstacles can block the ego from fulfilling any of the human needs; more often than not, the obstacles are dealt with habitually.

It is the Sikh view that the ego-dominated personality does not deal with obstacles insightfully, but rather habitually (Maskeen, 1993). Such habituated responses are grounded in the Sikh belief that all thoughts, actions, and emotions create an impression on the hidden record or unconscious sphere (chitrgupt) (Sandhu, 2004). Human beings are regarded as conditioned, a process that is not limited to the present human life, but one that has occurred in previous lives. A human being is therefore conditioned by, or bound to, a plethora of thoughts, actions, and emotions that have accumulated throughout the cycle of transmigration. The accumulation of impressions on the unconscious sphere makes it difficult for the person, when

faced by an obstacle, to think, feel, and behave in any manner other than the one to which he/she is conditioned. Obstacles (rukaavat) can be either internal (andar) or external (baahar) to the person (Maskeen, 1993). For example, internal obstacles can consist of self-doubt, low self-worth, or low self-esteem; external obstacles can include the loss of employment, an illness, or the death of a loved one. Whether the obstacle is internal or external, it creates mental (mansakh), emotional (bhavuk), and/or physiological (sareerakh) unrest within the person (GGS, 1993, p. 932; S.S. Maskeen, personal communication, summer 1994).

The Sikh World-View Regarding Mental Health

The Sikh world-view regarding mental health encompasses, like many other indigenous approaches to healing, a holistic framework, wherein the mind, affect, and body are interconnected. When an obstacle arises, all three domains are influenced. For instance, imagine a person who loses his or her employment due to organizational downsizing. With the loss of employment, he or she may have a devalued sense of self-worth, feelings of hopelessness, or somatic symptoms. To subdue these unpleasant thoughts, feelings, and physiological responses, the person is susceptible to indulging (kaam) in maladaptive behaviour (GGS, 1993, p. 304), such as taking alcohol and narcotics, engaging in gratuitous sex, or other forms of sensory manipulation. Such a maladaptive coping response to alleviate the discomfort caused by inner unrest, however, provides only temporary solace, with the ego inevitably continuing its pursuit for security, love, respect, and freedom (Maskeen, personal communication, summer 1994). Thus, the person remains caught in the continuous cycle of life-stress, wherein the inner unrest caused by the obstacle and the subsequent coping responses become habituated in the person's psyche

Sikhism and Social Structure

Family is the basic structure and unit in Sikhism. It is a strong and noble Sikh institution. Family was most important to all the Gurus who preached life of a householder rather than of renunciation. The Gurus believed that the family

must procreate and continue the existence of the society. The family has economic and educational functions to perform so that family life becomes smooth and happy.

Sikhism teaches the followers to build a social structure on the basis of universal brotherhood, love for each other, equality, fraternity and Sarbat-Da-Bhala. It believes in individual as well as collective prosperity. It preaches that the human beings are sons and daughters of the same universal father (God). All of them have the same aim of realizing the ultimate Reality. Human race is one.

“Manas ki jat sabhai ekai pehchan bo”

(Akal Ustat Patshahi Das -Dasam Granth, p-19 part 1.)

Sikhism recommends an active life in which family has a great role to play. Life of a householder is the best institution to fulfil the Sikh ideal of contributing to the development of the human society. Here the children learn to know the individual as well as the corporate Code of Sikh Conduct through this institution.

Family in Sikhism is a training school for social, cultural, political and spiritual makeup. It is a training school for Seva and Charity. From the family of birth, the religious and ethical ideas are implanted in the child. It is worth to mention here that Bhai Mani Singh took all the traits of sacrifice from his forefathers. Guru Arjan Dev Ji implanted the spirit of sacrifice in the wider family by offering his life to upkeep righteousness.

The Sikh families believe in monogamy. The marriages are normally arranged by the parents with consent of the children. Extra-marital and pre-marital relationship is not allowed in Sikh families. Marriage is considered to be a sacrament. According to the concept of Lavan (Marriage hymns), divorce is not encouraged in Sikhism. It is expected of the couple to help and support each other in the family to attain God.

Sikhs believe in Nam Simran while living a family life which has all the elements of love, optimism, laughter, pride, pity, joy, gratitude, respect, purity, service and sacrifice. Those who live in the situations of God loving families, carry with them into society an urge to strive, the ability

to work toward an ultimate goal to attain God, an acceptance for the opinions and defects of others, responsibility, good judgment, sense of kinship plus an unshakable belief in the benefits of sharing and co-operation with human beings. All of these family values are needed in today's world.

The Sikhs usually live in extended and joint families under one roof. The parents and grand parents take care of their children and grand children. The members of the family help each other economically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. The children are molded in godly crucible by the parents who take all the possible measures to develop their personality according to Sikh values of culture and religion. The children learn from their families about the concept of universal brotherhood and desire to progress as a world unit by praying for universal welfare.

Spirituality and Mental Health

Spirituality is a globally acknowledged concept. It involves belief and obedience to an all-powerful force usually called God, who controls the universe and the destiny of man. It involves the ways in which people fulfil what they hold to be the purpose of their lives, a search for the meaning of life and a sense of connectedness to the universe. The universality of spirituality extends across creed and culture. At the same time, spirituality is very much personal and unique to each person. It is a sacred realm of human experience. Spirituality produces in man qualities such as love, honesty, patience, tolerance, compassion, a sense of detachment, faith, and hope. There are some reports which suggest that some areas of the brain, mainly the recessive ones, are involved in the appreciation and fulfilment of spiritual values and experiences.

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 frustration tolerance, acceptance of uncertainty, involvement in activities of social interest, courage to take risks, serenity to accept the things which we cannot change, courage to change the things which we can change, the wisdom to know the difference

between the above, acceptance of physically or mentally challenged people, 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.

Religion is institutionalized spirituality. Thus, there are several religions having different sets of beliefs, traditions, and doctrines. They have different types of community-based worship programs. Spirituality is the common factor in all these religions. It is possible that religions can lose their spirituality when they become institutions of oppression instead of agents of goodwill, peace and harmony. They can become divisive instead of unifying.

Conclusions

Emotional and mental health is important because it is a vital part of your life and impacts our thoughts, behaviour and emotions. Being healthy emotionally can promote productivity and effectiveness in activities like work, school or caregiving. It plays an important part in the health of your relationships, and allows you to adapt to changes in your life and cope with adversity. Even with the best of intentions, sometimes unknowingly, we find ourselves conducting ourselves mindlessly through life. We do routine tasks to match our aspirations, taking care of obligations, inhabiting habit patterns, and meanwhile longing for a time when the to-do list is empty. Our minds are caught in mental whirlwinds while we are missing out on what is already there in our life. Then suddenly we feel isolated, lonely and look for a purpose for life. Actually, joyful living is a self - commitment to be conscious of choosing to do things that will give us peace, appreciation, wonder, awe and presence.

According to Sikhism, the concept of family values is the only way to attain prosperity and world peace. The family values in the broadened sense are needed to save the world living under pain and frustration. The concept of family life in Sikhism, teaches love and respect towards parents, grandparents and society at large. It cares for the vulnerable. It provides psychological foundation for the future and helps in improving the quality of

life. It provides emotional care for its members and opportunity to practice democratic decision making. Sikh family preserves human values, cultural identity and historical continuity.

To summarize the relationship between spirituality and well-being, in lines with Levin (2001) is the most appropriate way to conclude:

As we have seen the most personal aspects of our spiritual life have a direct impact on the working of our body and mind.....how we connect to God or the divine, when and where we worship, how and how often we pray, these issues have implications for our happiness and life satisfaction, our ability to physically function, and our capability of coping with life changes, especially as we grow old....our relationship with God influences how we get along with others, how we respond to stress, how we deal with daily events, and how we feel about ourselves (p.91)

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