

SPRITUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH: SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

PROF (DR)ARCHANA SAWSHILYA

ADITI MAHAVIDYALAYA, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, EMAIL: drarchana@aditi.du.ac.in

Abstract

Spirituality promotes distancing oneself from comparisons, envy, ego, anger, dishonesty, and greed. Individuals should embrace spiritual principles that encourage engagement without attachment, honesty, love, and forgiveness towards themselves and others. Many health-related issues arise from within the mind, rapidly manifesting in the body, leading to problems such as tense shoulders, sluggish livers, cancer, or other health conditions. The main attributes associated with spiritual health include transcendence, a sense of purpose and meaning, fidelity, harmonious interconnectedness, integrative power, multidimensionality, and holistic existence. Spiritual teachings across cultures have consistently emphasized specific cognitive and behavioral frameworks that individuals can adopt to maintain health and achieve fulfillment in life. Changing one's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns is a slow and ongoing journey. Today, health cannot be regarded as complete without incorporating the spiritual dimension. Numerous studies have shown that spiritual practices have a positive impact on various lifestyle-related diseases. So far, the scientific community has successfully highlighted the beneficial effects of spirituality and spiritual practices concerning conditions such as cancer, hypertension, depression, and smoking cessation. The relationship between the physical, mental, and social aspects of health is now widely accepted. Developing the concept of the fourth dimension of health—individuals' Spiritual Well-Being—is essential. A state of existence is defined by an individual's capacity to manage everyday life challenges in a manner that allows for the discovery of one's full potential, sense of purpose, and inner fulfillment.

Keywords—Spirituality, transcendence, integrative power, Holistic existence, hypertension, Fourth dimension of health.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of spiritual health has attracted considerable attention within health and nursing sciences, leading to multiple studies. However, it remains a multifaceted and ambiguous concept, with no consensus on its definition. This vagueness presents difficulties for holistic nursing, making it crucial to clarify the concept to enhance nursing knowledge. The main attributes associated with spiritual health include transcendence, a sense of purpose and meaning, fidelity, harmonious interconnectedness, integrative power, multidimensionality, and holistic existence. Ultimately, well-being and moral development were recognized as the results of spiritual health. Spiritual health is a vital aspect of total health, and establishing a precise theoretical definition could promote a common understanding of this concept. Clarifying this idea would also support the implementation of spiritual care interventions and the evolution of nursing theories. The human spirit is often the most overlooked element of our being. Currently, public health experts are facing a surge in non-communicable diseases connected to various lifestyle choices. The main lifestyle-related risk factors identified include dietary practices, insufficient physical activity, tobacco and alcohol usage, and stress. At the same time, societal values and norms that individuals deem acceptable exert influence on their behaviors.

Spirituality is marked by a sense of joy, active and significant participation in daily tasks, an appreciation for inspiring poetry, music, and art, as well as the enchanting marvels of nature that go beyond the ordinary. It promotes distancing oneself from comparisons, envy, ego, anger, dishonesty, and greed. Spirituality entails delving into one's own self in relation to the world outside and making contributions, regardless of size, to the ongoing evolution of human culture. To achieve personal healing, it is essential to rid oneself of feelings of jealousy, envy, and animosity. Instead, individuals should embrace spiritual principles that encourage engagement without attachment, honesty, love, and forgiveness towards themselves and others. Many health-related issues arise from within the mind, rapidly manifesting in the body, leading to problems such as tense shoulders, sluggish livers, cancer, or other health conditions. Nevertheless, connecting with one's deeper self enables individuals to experience profound spirituality, which inherently fosters healing on physical, mental, and social levels. Generally, people turn to spirituality during times of crisis or unrest, as it provides them with tranquility and a connection to something greater than themselves.

. Spirituality is a dynamic concept, exploring new ideas to discover a wider understanding of life. Spirituality can be seen as a complex theoretical notion defined by experiencing transcendence through inner tranquility. It can alleviate the pressures of daily life, particularly when practiced with intention. Research indicates that spirituality can have positive effects on both mental and physical health. Individuals often seek comfort in spirituality when facing self-doubt, a loss of self-control, or challenges related to physical and mental well-being; it is a widely embraced idea within secular communities. They aspire to find meaning and significance in their daily lives, to make sense of existence, and to connect with something greater. Spirituality serves as a means of integrating personal experiences with the concept of something more significant and timeless than oneself.

People engage with spirituality to:

- Enhance their connections with themselves and others
- Discover purpose in their lives
- Find solace during challenging times—such as illness, grief, relationship breakdowns, and job loss
- Gain an understanding of beliefs surrounding the afterlife (even when one believes there is no life after death)
- Nurture and cultivate hope .

Physical health or wellness can only be said to exist when the body is free from illnesses and injuries. To maintain mental well-being, it is crucial to find peace and eliminate negative or distressing thoughts. Practicing meditation and engaging in meaningful activities are effective strategies for keeping the mind healthy. To continue making progress, it is important to sustain spiritual health. Individuals who are spiritual tend not to cause harm to themselves or others. For mental wellness, achieving peace of mind and being free from negative or worrisome thoughts is key. Practicing meditation and taking part in meaningful activities are the best ways to maintain mental health. To foster ongoing growth, nurturing spiritual health is essential. One can promote spiritual development by engaging with self-improvement literature and implementing its guidance into their lives as soon as possible. Spiritual teachings across cultures have consistently emphasized specific cognitive and behavioral frameworks that individuals can adopt to maintain health and achieve fulfillment in life. Changing one's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns is a slow and ongoing journey. Each person reacts to such transformations based on their dedication and perceived necessity for such changes. Recently, there has been considerable discussion in academic and intellectual circles regarding spirituality's effect on community health. There is significant pressure to redefine health's meaning and the interventions within present healthcare systems.

Today, health cannot be regarded as complete without incorporating the spiritual dimension. Numerous studies have shown that spiritual practices have a positive impact on various lifestyle-related diseases. So far, the scientific community has successfully highlighted the beneficial effects of spirituality and spiritual practices concerning conditions such as cancer, hypertension, depression, and smoking cessation. The relationship between the physical, mental, and social aspects of health is now widely accepted. Consequently, there is a need to gather insights to employ a redefined cognitive-behavioral approach for addressing health and illness. A clear necessity exists to expand our focus beyond the traditional health triangle that includes physical, mental, and social dimensions in the context of community health.

Developing the concept of the fourth dimension of health—individuals' Spiritual Well-Being—is essential. A state of existence is defined by an individual's capacity to manage everyday life challenges in a manner that allows for the discovery of one's full potential, sense of purpose, and inner fulfillment. Reaching this state can be achieved through personal development, self-realization, and transcendence. Current studies indicate that spirituality mainly emphasizes deep involvement in daily activities while retaining a sense of detachment, promoting a relentless quest for universal love, compassion, and balance to replace negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, ego, and hatred, which in turn enhances the application of one's abilities and even surpasses them. It demonstrates the journey from 'Becoming' to 'Being' and extends 'Beyond' to attain optimal health.

My explorations with Truth While living within a spiritual community, the members have tackled their emotional struggles that adversely affected their lives. Almost all physical health issues are connected to psychological problems, including ailments like cancer and bone disorders. Spirituality has the potential to cure insomnia, alleviate stress, combat depression, and diminish suicidal thoughts. Engaging in spiritual awakening and connection enables various techniques to foster relaxation and enhance individual well-being. For instance, studying astrology aids individuals in recognizing and accepting that their experiences of sorrow and happiness are influenced by the planetary alignments at their birth. The circumstances of their birth, which are shaped by timing, location, and family background, are a result of past life karma and debts that cannot be changed. Thus, individuals must yield to the divine, acknowledging that what has happened is beyond their control. However, to bolster their resilience in confronting challenges, they should seek divine support, as worship can appease the planetary deities, reducing suffering. This represents a scientific viewpoint, rather than being an act of superstition. As an example, the year 2025 was marked by numerous calamities in India and elsewhere, such as earthquakes, fires, and other disasters. Comparable events were noted in 2007 and 2016, with anticipation of similar occurrences in 2034, attributed to the negative influence of Mars. Although we cannot change these events, but through spiritual connection, we can endeavor to lessen their impact. A higher state of consciousness provides us the strength to accept the adversities of life. This has been tested and verified, independent of one's beliefs. Have you ever reflected on how Lord Rama was ready to be crowned but was instead banished, and how his father's demise stemmed from the grief of separation from his son? There is a tale suggesting that in his previous life, he caused the death of Shravan Kumar, who was escorting his ill parents on a pilgrimage, and upon learning of their

son's death, the blind parents cursed Dashrath to endure a similar fate due to separation from his child. This exemplifies the concept of karma, where our deeds—both harmful actions and negative thoughts directed towards others—are accounted for. Such insights become evident only when one achieves spiritual advancement and awakening.

If a person begins to think and act in this manner, can they ever truly experience pain, depression, or anxiety? No, because they will consistently be blessed and exist in a state of bliss. During the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous people lost their lives, and significant crises arose, leaving many without support to alleviate their grief except to reach out to God and pray for healing. Forming a connection with the divine, alongside prayer, meditation, and healing practices, served as the sole source of comfort for them. I encountered countless individuals seeking relief through prayer and healing techniques. Besides medical treatment and hospitalization, they discovered a divine entity to connect with, particularly when they were separated from loved ones and fearful for their lives while in quarantine.

Spirituality does not disregard Death or Birth; rather, these are essential realities. Spiritual awakening provides understanding regarding the principles of death and birth. Death marks a new beginning, a liberation from worldly suffering, and the length of life is determined not merely by medical intervention but by the Almighty. Throughout my journey in spiritual healing, I met many who prayed for the soul's release from the body whenever they were in distress. A spiritually enlightened person welcomes Death with joy as an undeniable facet of existence. It is an absolute truth that if one is born, they must eventually die. On a fundamental energy level, we are all equal, whether one is a high-ranking official, a successful entrepreneur, a politically powerful figure, or a street beggar, a rickshaw driver, or anyone else.

Our identity is simply formed by our birth into various families, regions, or nations, along with differing identities and faiths. The soul resides in a specific body recognized by others through its name, but this soul will eventually transition to a different body, embarking on a new life journey. This knowledge is shared in the Gita. The soul is everlasting; it moves into a new body once the current one ages and dies. Therefore, why hold onto hatred for others, demean them, compete, or create chaos within families and society? Our identities are not defined by our names or titles; we are all connected, walking a sacred path and existing in a spiritual reality. How does one attain spirituality? Many individuals have wrongly associated spirituality with adhering to religious customs, fasting, and making offerings to their deities. While these practices can be means to demonstrate one's relationship with the Divine, the true essence of spirituality lies in surrender, devotion, and commitment to the Almighty. Fasting, which means withholding food, particularly Tamsik food, signifies a small sacrifice for God; celebrating divine occasions such as birthdays (Janmashtami), earthly celebrations (Ganesh Puja, Navratri), and observances like Ekadashi fosters a feeling of connection to the Divine, leading to joy and unity with Him. Participating in these practices lends purpose to life and nurtures feelings of relaxation, excitement, and happiness. There is an absence of depression or anxiety. Conversely, when you chase material desires—like fame, power, and prestige—and engage in immoral actions, discomfort and restlessness chill your spirit. Expressing anger and frustration toward others or harboring envy leads to internal turmoil, as harsh words and negative feelings create pain and sorrow for those around you. Enveloped in ego, you may not notice it, but the soul within your body senses the vibrations of others. It experiences suffering and laments its existence, leading the body to release toxic substances that could cause various health issues. This is not the genuine aim of our lives or existence. The illusion of achieving power, status, dominance, and wealth disrupts mental balance and makes life challenging, often pitting us against others and leaving them exposed. The pain and sorrow from others should not drive our motivations; we must stop. Negative energies can shape our lives. If our inner voice supports us and brings ease, we should move forward; however, if we feel anxious or distressed, it signals that this is not the right path for us. We should pause our actions; otherwise, we risk enduring physical and mental suffering since our deeds do not align with our true aspirations, bringing misery into our lives. Human life is meant for nurturing spiritual wisdom in an eternal relationship with the Supreme power of God, and we must provide the teachings of transcendental awareness to lead a purposeful and fulfilling journey. Once we partake in transcendental service through spiritual awakening, we will liberate ourselves from all the illusions created in the mind that negatively affect our mental and physical health. An in-depth understanding gained through spiritual education serves as the ultimate shelter for all of us; failing to do so leaves us vulnerable to material distractions that can cause both mental and physical distress. We need to connect with Him not just by following rituals but through our devotion and dedication, experiencing the energy of SHIWOHUM within our consciousness.

Comprehensive understanding gained through spiritual education serves as the ultimate refuge for all of us; if not, we risk being misled by material influences, leading to mental and physical ailments. We need to connect with Him, not merely by adhering to rituals, but through our devotion and commitment, experiencing the energy of SHIWOHUM within our own consciousness. We are nothing but a source of light, a cosmic energy residing in the spiritual realm.

The relationship between spiritual health and various lifestyle diseases strongly indicates the need for interventions aimed at corrective measures, which could significantly alleviate the burden of lifestyle-related illnesses. Acceptable spiritual practices correlate positively with survival rates, decreased high blood pressure, shorter recovery times from depression, a reduction in the number of cigarettes smoked weekly, and lower instances of severe medical conditions. Instead, these practices lead to enhanced quality of life, greater cooperation. It is found that individuals with strong spiritual beliefs tend to grieve the loss of a close relative or

friend more effectively compared to non-believers. Spirituality softens the grieving process. Such beliefs, regardless of adherence to religious practices, contribute to recovery from tragedies.

Regardless of whether one actively participates in religious observances, these beliefs assist in recovering from personal tragedies. This is supported by the statement that spiritual beliefs influence grieving processes and should be considered in comprehensive care approaches. Such empirical evidence encourages the incorporation of physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions to achieve better health outcomes for patients. For the success of this holistic approach, it is crucial to observe universally accepted spiritual practices aimed at fostering integral transformation and a lasting sense of well-being. Spirituality should be clarified by encouraging desirable spiritual practices and attitudes that promote optimal health, fulfillment, productivity, and creativity. The notion that spirituality embodies gloom and a joyless existence is a misconception.

One could argue that spiritual health alone does not cure illnesses, but it undoubtedly empowers individuals to manage their behaviors and lifestyle choices, serving as a form of immunization in the realm of clinical health. If contemporary medicine is genuinely to be regarded as a healing practice, it must incorporate three concepts it has, for too long, overlooked. It needs to focus not just on individuals' physical health, but also on their emotional and spiritual well-being. It must consider not only the mechanisms behind illness but also its significance in people's everyday experiences. It should acknowledge that both the ability to heal others and the potential for self-healing must transcend the physical realm. Health professionals, however, should pave the way for empirical research on spiritual well-being, its assessment, and its appropriate application across various health and other contexts.

In conclusion, introspection and reflection serve as powerful cognitive and behavioral tools. Today, public health professionals have little choice but to engage in these methods, perhaps more than ever before. We are, in essence, a manifestation of light, a cosmic energy existing in the spiritual dimension. The connection between spiritual well-being and various lifestyle-related diseases strongly suggests the necessity for interventions aimed at corrective actions, which could greatly ease the burden of these conditions. Engaging in acceptable spiritual practices is positively associated with better survival rates, lower high blood pressure, quicker recovery from depression, a decrease in weekly cigarette consumption, and fewer cases of serious medical issues. Instead, such practices enhance life quality, increase cooperation, and indicate that individuals with robust spiritual beliefs typically cope with the death of a close relative or friend more effectively than those without such beliefs. Spirituality tends to ease the grieving process. These beliefs, whether associated with specific religious observance or not, play a role in overcoming personal tragedies. This notion is supported by the idea that spiritual beliefs affect grieving and should be integrated into a comprehensive approach to care. Such empirical findings advocate for incorporating physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects to achieve improved health results for patients. For this holistic strategy to be effective, it is essential to engage in universally accepted spiritual practices that promote complete transformation and a lasting sense of wellness. Spirituality should be clarified by promoting positive spiritual practices and attitudes that encourage optimal health, fulfillment, productivity, and creativity. The belief that spirituality is synonymous with sadness and a lack of joy is a misunderstanding. While one might contend that spiritual health by itself is not a cure for illnesses, it undeniably equips individuals to manage their behaviors and lifestyle choices, functioning as a form of immunization in the context of clinical health.

If modern medicine is to be truly considered a healing discipline, it must integrate three concepts it has, for too long, overlooked. It needs to prioritize not just individuals' physical health, but also their emotional and spiritual wellness. Additionally, it should consider not only the underlying causes of illness but also its importance in people's daily lives. Finally, it must recognize that the capacity to heal others and the potential for self-healing must extend beyond the physical realm.

The present time demands innovative thinking, transforming self-communication, adjusting attitudes, and embracing openness. We must expand our understanding of health beyond the conventional health triangle to incorporate spirituality as a vital fourth dimension. Continuous efforts are essential for embarking on an introspective journey to capture the rhythm, melody, and inspiration of one's inner self. Health practitioners need to engage in creative thought and take initiative. Now is the time for health professionals globally to delve deeper into this subject and emphasize the incorporation of spiritual health into holistic care. When individuals experience stress, lifestyle-related challenges, disorders, and illnesses, it becomes imperative to integrate comprehensive preventive, diagnostic, and rehabilitative health approaches that include spiritual well-being. This can be executed by clinics, hospitals, and therapeutic centers through the adoption of effective spiritual practices that lead to better health outcomes, improved quality of life, and reduced economic strains on governments. Historically, a link was established between religious practices and mental health difficulties. Figures in psychology, such as Freud and Charcot, viewed religion as a sign of pathology related to mental health issues in their patients. As a result, psychology largely distanced itself from religion and its less formal counterpart, spirituality, for many years. This view is now considered opposed to the fundamental nature of the human experience. Spirituality is a broad (almost universal) characteristic of humanity that people engage with in different ways but often seek similar outcomes. Individuals aim to find meaning and significance in their everyday lives, to understand their existence, and to connect with something greater. Spirituality differs from religion, which is often associated with specific rituals, institutional relationships, and social connections, while spirituality focuses more on personal experiences of the transcendent. Religion is widely regarded as a social construct, while spirituality is typically considered on an individual level within a certain context. Although they originate from similar concepts of transcendence, spirituality and religiosity should not be regarded as synonymous. They represent distinct realms that may overlap

in some meanings. Transcendence serves as a common element found throughout various spiritual concepts. Research indicates that spirituality has a positive impact on physical health and mental wellness, as well as other favorable health results, including subjective well-being, quality of life related to health, coping skills, recovery from mental health challenges, and a decrease in addictive behaviors or suicidal ideation.

Spirituality can support and enhance mental health in several ways:

It fosters a sense of purpose and significance that aids in coping with difficult life situations.

*Consequently, spirituality serves as a complex theoretical concept, essentially involving transcendence, which means going beyond or above "the real I." In this context, spirituality is characterized by experiencing transcendence through inner peace.

Strategies to Remain Grounded During Transitions

***1. Reflect Internally And Stay Connected With Yourself**

When confronted with any change in life, instead of being overwhelmed by various aspects of the transition, we should focus inward and draw on our reservoir of positivity. This practice helps us nurture feelings of stability, calmness, and resilience, empowering us to take intentional steps to adjust to the situation.

*2. Alter Your Perspective Away From Current Situations - Often, when we face unexpected changes concerning our health, finances, relationships, or career, we become anxious about what has happened, questioning their causes and our ability to handle them. Instead, we should view the change from a broader perspective and look for the potential benefits that may emerge from it. *3. Take Steps To Accept Change* - Sometimes, change can surprise us, leaving us feeling disoriented as we resist it, attempting to impede its progression. However, we must recognize that change is an inevitable part of life that will occasionally occur. By adapting to it and adjusting proactively, we can reduce unproductive thoughts and preserve our mental and emotional energy.

4. Transform Yourself and Progress Forward - In the midst of change, concentrate on personal growth, enhancing your strengths, and moving towards your ideal self. Change conveys the message that with our inherent qualities of peace, love, joy, and power, along with our precious time and thoughts, we can create new and enriching experiences that benefit both ourselves and others.

5. Keep Divine Guidance Close and Seek Clarity - Many individuals often remember God more intently when facing difficult changes in their lives. However, it is wiser to maintain that connection consistently. The stronger our relationship, the sooner God can offer guidance, protect us during transitions, and lead us through them.

*6. Mindfulness, which involves fully engaging in the present moment, has been shown to improve both physical and mental well-being. Many people are currently dealing with considerable stress or know someone who is—this is a shared reality.

Those struggling with mental health often find it challenging to keep their minds from wandering. Intense emotions can frequently direct one's attention toward negative thoughts. Combined with daily stressors, these difficulties can feel overwhelming. Mindfulness, emphasizing awareness and presence, is an effective strategy to enhance both physical and mental health. Regularly practicing mindfulness can be particularly helpful during uncertain times, as it reduces stress and fosters a sense of calm. With commitment, individuals who practice mindfulness can stay conscious of their experiences, recognize their emotions, make healthier choices, and avoid falling into negative thought patterns. Just as muscles need to be exercised, our brains require training to become more mindful—and we are here to supportively engage in this process. For example, during mealtimes, focus exclusively on eating—no emails, no TV, no distractions—just the act of nourishing yourself. This focused engagement allows you to observe your thoughts and feelings without criticism while directing your full attention to the present activity: in this case, eating. By slowing down and being aware of what is happening "right now," you can calmly reflect on both your internal experiences and your environment without feeling overwhelmed.

In this perspective, you can respond thoughtfully without overreacting and make decisions that align with your fundamental beliefs. Everyone is capable of cultivating mindfulness. Similar to other skills, it becomes easier with consistent practice. Many people find themselves drifting mentally, so it requires effort to bring awareness back to their current experiences and to connect with their feelings and thoughts. "The level of freedom from intrusive thoughts and the level of focus on a singular thought are indicators of spiritual advancement." This statement underscores the significance Sri Ramana Maharshi places on the value of concentration and the necessity of cultivating a focused mind in the pursuit of self-realization.

*writer –Prof dr.Archanaa SSawshilya Professor in political science ,university of Delhi , is also a spiritual cosmic Reiki energy healer with her expertise in Astrology,Neumerology, Palmistry ,Vedic switchmantras and yantra sadhana .She is a life coach healing people with Past life regression and Akasic Record reading with the help of Angelic Guidance

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