INTRODUCTION

It was said, that a sound body has a sound mind, whereas now it has been realized that, “a sound body has a sound mind, has some kind of sound spirituality.” Today stress is endemic because of irrational practices, competition, individualism, masculine aggression apathy and materialism. These socio-psychological circumstances make us to look at the relationship between spirituality and well-being. Since ancient times it is relentlessly believed that spiritual engagements further gets a sense of well-being. Researchers in the contemporary psychology have reached a similar conclusion. It has been found that life satisfaction correlates positively with spiritual engagements and spiritual people report tremendous positive feelings as compared to other people. It has been observed that spirituality may help people deal better with negative life events.

“People who believe in God but do not regularly participate in a religious organization, known as personal faith (spiritual) category.” Davis & Smith (1994).

When human have accepted that there is any invisible power to create and conduct the nature, a group of people call that power ‘Ishwar’, another group call ‘Allah’ and the other one call ‘GOD’. These groups formally developed as different religions. In real there is only one divine power with different names, we all have faith and pray for his presence. Spirituality is actually a way or source to pray or worship that divine power. It is a subject to research that why people have faith for and why pray for the higher power – Is it a need or any boundation or fear or just faith. Cited in- Dainik Jagran (Daily News Paper), 2/12/2008.
No one is promised a carefree and stress free life. Suffering and misfortune are inevitable. The suffering in life is not doled out evenly. What we can control and what we can choose is how we take the gift of this life to meet the challenges of health, fate and our relationships. Researchers suggests that people who engage in spiritual pursuits report being generally happy, cheerful, peaceful most of the time, rarely depressed, have excellent physical health, and are satisfied with the meaning and purpose they find in their lives.

In recent past several neuro-cognitive researchers have been attempted to comprehend the impact of spiritual activity on human brain. It has been found that prefrontal lobes of monks are lit even when they are not meditating and this area of brain is responsible for positive emotions.

In the last few years, researchers coming from a range of disciplines including psychology, psychiatry, medicine, neuro-science, theology, gerontology and nursing have found evidence using modern scientific methods that spirituality helps in allaying various mental and physical illness. There are many reasons as to why people are drawn to a religious or spiritual way of life. Many find comfort and guidance from the teachings of wise thinkers and prophets. Having faith in something bigger than us can encourage strength in times of trial and peace.

It is found in the present cut-throat competitive scenario that, spirituality helps people figure out a meaning or a purpose in their lives. The meaning and purpose brings hope and vigor to face the difficulties of life. Spirituality was found positively correlated with life satisfaction and positive affect. In addition, purpose in life found
negatively influence depression and negative affect, while positively influence satisfaction with life and positive affect. Now-a-days transpersonal psychologists approach overtly, directly and systematically spiritual methods including meditation, yoga, prayer, and teachings from sacred texts, for the purpose of healing and transformation. Within the current paradigm, yoga and meditation (spiritual exercises) would best to be seen as exercises of body and mind enabling stress-management, changing brain chemical and neurotransmitter structures to live longer and happier, and as an effective alternative medicine.

It is found in social researches that social support is very beneficial to well-being, and spiritual involvement is suppose to be a great source of social support, and a strong positive relationships between people’s overall well being and having meaning in life. Regular spiritual involvement may go a long way in helping people to overcome their anxieties; it may help people to gain a sense of meaning and purpose in their life. (Sharma Pulkit, et al. 2009).

Religion and spirituality can serve as a coping mechanism, alleviating pain and distress by providing significance, meaning and purpose in life in the face of stressors that are an inevitable part of the human experience. People, who reported improved involvement in spirituality, would have experienced psychological benefits in one way or another. Wade, Worthington & Vogel (2007) have worked with a sample of 271 clients who sought therapy at Christian and secular counseling centers and found that, when spiritual models of treatment were used, more clients reported greater therapeutic change and greater closeness to their therapist, than clients who were less religious/spiritual.
Spiritual perspective found negatively correlated with depression and with negative affect, but positively related to satisfaction with life and to positive affect. As spirituality gives people a sense of meaning in life, which further found positively related with satisfaction with life, and positive affect. Spiritual practices including meditation, prayer, contemplation found intended to develop an individual’s inner life. Spiritual practices often lead to an experience of connectedness with a divine reality. Spirituality is often experienced as a source of inspiration or orientation in life. Spirituality can offer many benefits in life, both emotional and physically. Positive benefits can comfort and improve one’s health. People who have taken time to develop their spiritual life are also likely to better understand their needs.

The main goal of spirituality is to alleviate emotional suffering to liberate and blossom the self. Almost all ancient civilizations had a strong belief in God, soul and spirituality. People, who are spiritual, feel distinct changes in their psyche, their approach towards fellow beings and life becomes positive, and they possess positive personality traits and values in their life. In this way human beings are defined as holistic and have continuously mutual and interactive relationships with other human beings, with their environments and with the higher self (God). They are trying to achieve balance and harmony in their body, mind and spirit.

Findings of the research have been conducted by Tarakeshwar, et al. (2009) revealed that spiritual coping was a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction, anger and passivity was a significant negative predictor of life satisfaction, marital satisfaction and a significant positive predicator of depressed mood.
A recent study indicates that, there is a 'God spot' in human brain. It is a natural spiritual centre placed in neural connections in the temporal lobes. Spiritual health includes both mental and emotional health. It also focuses on self-actualization, creativity and intuition. Spiritual people are at peace with themselves, focus on dedication and devotion in their works, having faith in oneself, dealing easily with issues of anxiety, having compassion, charity and sharing not hurting or harming, practicing joint prayer, laughter, music, yoga and meditation as part of spiritual practices. In this study it is also found that, neither all spiritual people are religious, nor all religious people are spiritual. (Dhar Neera, et al. 2009).

Swami (Dr.) Brahmeshanada, the secretary of the Ram Krishna Mission in Chandigarh, presented his views in his paper - “Spiritual phenomenon in the light of Biotechnology”, “Spiritual Phenomenon is essential not only for individual fulfillment, it also plays a major role in social well-being. It is yoga and not biotechnology that is the path to higher consciousness”. Paper was presented in the International Conference on “Science and Spirituality in Modern India”, - Feb. 5-7, 2006.

Swami Gokulananda, the head of the Ram Krisna Mission, New Delhi, represents his ideas in his study - “Modern Science from a Spiritual Perspective”; there are two fields in which man lives and functions, the first – the external world and the other – the internal. We seek from both of these through experience. Truth gathered from internal experience is metaphysics and spirituality/religion; from external experience, the physical sciences. There is no contradiction between the two, and they are not mutually exclusive but coexist in harmony. A proper blending of the
two help us understand the external and the internal world better. Paper was presented in the same International Conference on “Science and Spirituality in Modern India”, - Feb. 5-7, 2006.

Simons, Simons & Conger (2004) examined the effect of parent’s spirituality on their offspring. They found that parent’s spirituality was strongly related to children’s spirituality and to quality of parenting. Children spirituality was linked to delinquent behavior through traditional moral benefits.

Commonly found beliefs and cognitive processes influence how people deal with stress while suffering from life problems. Spiritual/religious beliefs can provide support through different ways, such as enhancing acceptance, patience, and resilience (flexible, not easily hit). They generate peace, self-confidence, purpose, forgiveness to the individuals’ own features and positive self image. It can be said that positive spiritual coping has been associated with good health outcomes and negative spiritual coping with the opposite.

When we go through the ancient Indian philosophy, it is realized that, to get a balanced development, it is necessary to have harmony in thoughts, language and efforts. Only a true and clean heart could be able to have this balance in personality. This feeling of truthfulness and clean heartedness arises through spiritual orientation. Spiritually oriented individuals’ further leads to spiritual health. Spiritual health is the best gift of God to human. It is a complete physical, mental and social well-being. Maintenance of spiritual health is required for the well-being of all. The way to
maintain spiritual health is to have discipline of the body, mind, heart and enduring personal relationships. (Husain Akbar 2003).

There is a holistic drive exists in each man by virtue of which he tends to be a complete and entire being. This organismic tendency is found in two forms namely - “autonomy” and “homonomy”. By virtue of autonomy an individual adjusts himself to his outer and inner demands, by virtue of his homonomy the individual is prompted to expand and enrich his overall personality, either by appropriating values already transmitted to him or by creating them fresh. In this perspective spirituality plays a vital role in enriching this organismic tendency, which further leads proper adjustment towards the demands of an individual in his entire life.

Spiritual practices are the best cure for stress, anxiety and the best way to achieve peace. As the tendency of multifunction lead complexities of life which causes stress, that further create psychological disturbances and conflicts inside the human-being. These disturbances affect an individual’s behavior, performance, potential and effectiveness in a great extent. Here religion and spirituality can serve as coping mechanisms, alleviating pain and distress by providing significance, meaning and purpose in life. Spiritual exercises helps people to face the stressors of life as these stressors are the inevitable part of the human experience. People who reports improved involvement in spiritual exercises, it seems logical that they would have experience psychological benefit in one way or another.
What is Spirituality?

“We are not human-being having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual-being having a human experience.” By- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Whatever makes you feel peaceful, joyful and content is spirituality. All the acts of kindness and goodness you encounter throughout your day. Having a relationship based on a profound level of mental or emotional communion having deep feeling and belief, including a person’s sense of peace, purpose, connection to others and belief about the meaning of life. Activities which renew, lift up, comfort, heal and inspire both ourselves and those with whom we interact.

The word “Spirituality” flows from the Latin term “spiritus” which means “breath” – referring to the breath of life. It is primarily a dynamic, personal and experimental process. If we agree with the meaning “breath”, - we will find it always within us. It does not belong to any culture, historical epoch, or belief system. It belongs to us. Compassion, discernment (judgment), high ideas, harmony, joy, knowledge, intuition, kindness, openness, patience, self-responsibility, serenity, tolerance, wisdom and a gentle love – are the attributes of true spirituality.

If we add the period of Buddha, Mahavira, and Samkhya around 500 BC, we can see that, in India, more than in any culture, spirituality has been emphasized for almost 2,500 years of recorded history. Spiritual Gurus came from all castes and religions, e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Sufism etc. They were not limited to any particular part of India. In the Indian conceptualization of self, there are four concepts of self –
- the physical self, the psychological self, the meta-physical (atman) self and the social self. (Bhawuk, D.P.S. 2011).

Spirituality is used to describe an inner, subjective experience that makes us feel a strong interest in understanding the meaning of things in life. (Ellens, 2008).

We see spirituality as the thread that joins together the pears of the world’s religions and as the essence that connects all human beings together with all of life. Spirituality is somewhat an umbrella, covering formalized religious experience as well as individual’s transcendental experience. It is one holistic purpose of world’s religions. It is a unified quality of mind, heart and soul. It is concerned with individual subjective experience.

Spirituality is a part of life which guides our behavior as to how to adapt to the internal environment, just as a human being is adapted to live in the external environment. It is a “faith” in higher power, “certainty” about life’s meaning and sacredness, a “strong belief” in the power of love to overcome problems in the mortal world. Spirituality is just a belief that, there is one only to drive the entire universe, apart from any particular code of beliefs, conducts, rules or religious boundaries. This strong belief in the Divine Power develops a strong will-power and makes people more confident. Each sitting of spiritual engagement encouraged people to develop an insight to find a way in the dark, deep cave. These people always cope easily with all kind of traumatic events in life.

Spirituality is not only be a meaningful part of life, it may have very real mental and physiological health benefits. It is one of the most important sources of
strength and direction in people’s live. Spiritual side of human nature remains important to all. It is a unified quality of mind, heart and soul. Spirituality is the personal relationship of the individual to the Almighty. It is a goal to achieve understanding or an improved relationship with the sacred.

**Spiritual orientation helps an individual:**

- To set life goals.
- To accept liabilities.
- Higher thinking and behaving.
- Self-control.
- Obeying moral values and,
- Develops a positive self concept. – This is all because spirituality makes the person disciplined and discipline is one of the most important qualities of an individual to be successful in life.

**Spirituality is:**

- The idea of process or journey of self-discovery and to learning to have calmness in life.
- A connectedness to yourself and to others. Spirituality is personal but it is also rooted in being connected with others and with the world around you.
Spirituality, while doesn’t necessarily solve all the problems or reach conclusions. It is the concept of searching and moving forward in the direction of meaning, purpose and direction for life.

Spilka (1993), reviewed the most contemporary understanding of spirituality fall into 3 categories-

1. God oriented spirituality – where thought and practices are premised in theologies.

2. World oriented spirituality – stressing one’s relationship with ecology or nature.

3. Humanistic (people oriented) spirituality- stressing human achievement or potential.

It is difficult to delineate spirituality as a concept in words. Various authors attempting to define it have emphasized on aspects like feeling connected or belonging in the universe, believing in a power outside one’s self searching for a meaning, seeking one’s ultimate and personal truths, having an internalized relationship between the individual and the divine, encouraging limitless love and compassion, and moving towards personal wholeness.

**Some definitions:**

According to dictionary.com, “spirituality is the quality or fact of being spiritual; immaterial in nature; predominantly spirituality character as shown in thought, life etc.; and spiritual tendency”. http://dictionary.reference.com.
“The definition of spirituality is that, which relates to or affects the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things”.

http://livingworldofwisdom.com/definition-of-spirituality.html

“Spirituality is something deeply religious, something relating to the spirit and sacred matters”.

www.theorderoftime.com/spiritual/spiritualessance.html#The%20definition%20of%20spirituality)

“The quality of condition of being spiritual, attachment or regard for the thing of the spirit as opposed to material or worldly interest”. (Cited in- 10th Edition of Oxford English Dictionary).

“Spirituality is the consistency of action with belief; it is a rule-governed behavior. The rules (beliefs) that govern one’s behavior (action) are a part of coherent system that defines “rightness”. (Reese, H.W. 1997).

“Spirituality is that aspect of human existence that gives its humanness. It has concern with the significance that gives meaning and direction to a person’s life and helps him/her deal with the vicissitudes of existence.” (Swinton, J. & Pattison, S. 2001).
“Spirituality as integrative energy, served to highlight its importance while at the same time seeking to transform its nature.” (Goddard, N.C. 1995).

It could be clear with these definitions that spirituality is the fundamental part of all of our religious and psychological systems. It’s the core of every thought system; it is concerned with deepest and important desires for happiness, peace and a bit of fun. It has always been considered as a natural part of human being, an innate human capacity.

In addition, spirituality can be defined in terms of the direction or mission of one’s life, belief in sacredness; transcendence and feeling of love with intimate ones and need for belongingness.

As Koeing & Koeing, Larson & Larson (2001) surmise, it is suggested that spirituality-

a. acts as a social support system,

b. reduces the sense of loss of control & helplessness,

c. provides a cognitive framework that reduces suffering and enhances self-esteem,

d. gives confidence that one, with the help of God, could influence the health condition, and

e. Creates a mindset that helps the individual (patient) to relax and allow the body to heal it.
The values generated by spiritual involvement such as love, compassion, charity, benevolence (kind & fairness), and altruism- may help to successfully cope with debilitate (weakness), anxiety, stress and depression.

**Dimensions of Spirituality:**

Spirituality is a distinct state that is characterized by physical, affective, cognitive, interpersonal, spiritual and mystical dimensions.

A physical sensation characterized by a positive state of arousal or energy; positive affect characterized by a profound feeling of well-being and joy; cognitive features involving a sense of being authentic, awareness towards values and belief, and having a sense of meaning and higher purpose; an interpersonal dimension characterized by a sense of connection to others for common purpose; a spiritual dimension characterized by a sense of connection to something larger than self, such as a higher power and humanity; and a mystical dimension characterized by a sense of perfection, transcendence, living in the moment and experiences the sacred. (Twigg, Wyld and Brown 2001).

**Measurement domains of Spirituality:**

Miller and Thoresen (2000) proposed three broad measurement domains: Spiritual practices, spiritual beliefs, and spiritual experiences.

**Spiritual Practices**

Through this domain spiritual practices can be assessed easily because it focuses on overt observable behavior. People can be described as spiritual by the
extent to which they engage in spiritual practices, such as prayer, fasting, meditation and contemplation, worship, chanting, offering and public prayer.

**Spiritual Beliefs**

It reflects always through a number of researchers, studies and experiences that our beliefs are very powerful. The content of our belief varies with culture, beliefs about transcendence, beliefs about deity, beliefs about the almighty- the master of this universe and beliefs about something beyond sensory and intellectual knowledge. Belief in the Divine depends upon one’s own life experiences.

**Spiritual Experiences**

This is a fundamental domain to an understanding of spirituality. These experiences might be divided into routine, everyday encounters of the sacred and mystical experiences.

Spiritual practices would be discussed here in detail-

Spirituality is not any one specific philosophy, or set of religious beliefs. It is a journey through many paths and practices that leads to self-discovery. The development of an individual’s inner life is possible though practices, such as- prayer, yoga, meditation, relaxation, breathing exercises etc.

In addition dedication, devotion, faith in oneself, dealing easily with issues of death anxiety, compassion, charity, forgiveness, sharing, not hurting or harming, helping the needy, joint prayer, music- are some other parts of spiritual practices.
Comprehensive research evidences shows that, religious and spiritual beliefs and practices helps to prevent many physical and mental illnesses, reducing symptom severity and enhancing recovery. Spiritual practices generate an atmosphere of mutual understanding among different sections of society and give a spirit of harmony between the people of different religious faith.

Culliford (2005) suggested some other religious and secular practices-

- Ritual practices and other forms of worship
- Pilgrimage and retreats
- Meditation and prayer
- Reading wisdom literature and Scripture
- Sacred music including hymns and devotional chant
- Selfless, compassionate action
- Engaging with nature
- Maintaining stable relationships

Culliford, L. (2005) says, in Indian perspective, people worship the stones, hills, trees, plants, animals, sun, moon, stars and ancestors etc.

**Ritual**- It is a stereotyped expression of emotion or belief or both combined. Ritual is the frame which preserves religion as well as exhibits it.

**Private Rituals**- birth-rite, wedding etc.
Public Rituals- festivals etc.

Spiritual practices encourage an individual to have an in-depth profound self-knowledge. Spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, Chanting etc., are highly devotional attitude towards God. These practices adopts in accordance with an individual’s psycho-physical system, which are regarded as the means of self-realization. Goswami (2001) asserts that, when we engage in such practices as loving our neighbors as ourselves, or loving our enemies, or seeing God in everyone, a sudden quantum leap takes place in which we directly discover the “otherness” of others. We see that other human beings are individual as we are. We even glimpse that we all are rooted in the same self, the universal self.

These practices are highly spiritual in nature. Spiritual practices are the best care for stress; anxiety and depression. This is the best way to have peace. In the year 1999, international yogotsav has been started in Rishikesh. Every year masses of people have come to attend this festival round the globe. Experts proposed the reason behind – the masses attend these kinds of festivals that everyone is searching for peace in this competitive scenario. Cited in- Dainik Jagran – Jhankar, 10/04/2011.

Religious Practices- include frequency of public practices such as church/temple/mosque attendance of private practices such as prayer, reading the scriptures etc. These religious practices refer as a part of the spiritual orientation. It is found most obvious that active involvement in spiritual practices creates an enhancement in sense of purpose and personal growth. An individual can begin his own spiritual journey through experiencing many different minds, body and spirit.
techniques (spiritual practices). These practices help an individual to connect and develop one’s true potential.

In the context of today’s fast moving world, it is found that spiritual exercises, whether there are concerned with traditional/religious practices as prayer, chanting, reading holy books, fasting etc. or with alternative spiritual activities as yoga, meditation etc. – creates tremendous effect on people. These practices develop a strong coping mechanism that strengthens the mental balance of the individual.

**Prayer**- Prayer is an interesting example of a spiritual practice that occurs millions of times per hour worldwide and directed to God or some perceived “higher power”. Prayer means turning to God or Reality. Prayer is a silent communication with God. Through this spiritual practice, we can get closer to God and understand His divine nature. It is the humble correspondence of the human spirit with the almighty. Prayer is the means through which one can attain truth and goodness within his life. Prayer has a definite purpose, it clears the mind, sharpens the senses and hardships.

Prayer relieves negative thoughts and increases happiness. It is the effect of getting into harmony with the all-pervading power of the universe. It is the most searching and profound activity possible for individual, it reaches the depth of individual’s heart and let it free from all negative sentiments. Prayer includes respect, love, pleading and faith. A sincere act of prayer helps in dissolution of mind, intellect and ego.

Prayer is the most powerful form of energy one can generate. Prayer – like radium, is the source of luminous, self generating energy. When we pray, we link
ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe; we arise, strengthened and repaired. Rice (2003) exposed that, spiritual beliefs and practices like prayer have been linked to increase self control and reduce perception of pain. A recent study conducted by Frank, D. Finchan, et. al. (2010), results revealed that individuals regularly prayed for their partners’ well-being, having a perception of sanctified relationship, this kind of perception strengthen their confidence and stress coping mechanism. It is found that prayer got higher rank among the best stress busters.

Prayer that revokes God’s help in response to specific needs, using the individual’s own language rather than a set of memorized prayer. Researchers reported that praying during times of conflict deescalated their negativity and hostility, enhanced positivity and encouraged problem solving behavior. Regularly praying people are better able to cope with stress, they heal faster from illness and experience increased benefits to their health and well-being. When one feel part of a greater whole, it is easy to understand that, you are not responsible for everything that happens in life. Regular praying creates higher positive feelings, lower level of depression and helps better in handling stress.

Harold Koenig, M.D., associated professor of medicine and psychiatry at Duke University, surveyed more than a thousand studies appearing the effect of prayer on health, in his book - “Handbook of Religion and Health”, he found –

➢ Hospitalized people, who never pray, have an average stay of three times longer than people, who attend regularly.
Heart patients were fourteen times more likely to die following surgery, if they did not pray or practice religion.

Elderly people who never or rarely pray, had a stroke rate double that of people who regularly do.

Prayer provides a consistent element of happiness and good health. It also promotes altruistic activity. Prayer reinforces a belief system which works as an ultimate stress reducer.

Dr. David Myers, a psychologist at Hope College, found that prayer is valuable and the efficacy of intercessory prayer in medical setting is mounting. It is highly effective cure for the alleviation of ill health.

The first study found on the effectiveness of prayer was made by Sir Francis Galton. In his study Galton reasoned that many people pray for the health of head of the family (for king). If prayers were answered then head (king) should live longer. Private or family prayer is widely believed to influence recovery from illness. Cited in- Darwins Beagle (2007).

Prayer is a central and important type to all religious practices. It is universal and ubiquitous, crossing cultural and geographical boundaries. In the Indian context, prayer is such an integral part of life that its validity has never been questioned. Poloma and Pendleton (1989) – identified four types of prayer, and related these to five dimensions of well-being. 1. Meditative Prayer- was positively related to existential well-being and religious satisfaction; 2. Ritualistic Prayer- was positively related to negative affect; 3. Petitionary Prayer- was found unrelated directly to any well-being dimension; and 4. Colloquial (informal) prayer was positively related to happiness. They further examined that
Spiritual satisfaction was the strongest correlate of well-being. Persons those who have more positive experiences in prayer, are likely to have greater well-being. It was also found the positive effects of intercessory prayer on self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

Prayer is a means of propitiating God or invoking supernatural forces. Shuler, Gelberg and Brown (1994), in a survey of 50 homeless women, ages 18-44, in the city of Los Angeles, reported that 48% of the sample indicated that prayer was effective in coping, and these subjects were reported fewer worries, fewer depressive symptoms and less likelihood of drinking alcohol.

**Healing Power of Prayer** – It is evidenced that prayer can result in statistically significant improvement in patient outcomes compared to patients who were not prayed for. People reported an experienced feeling of joy and contentment, resulted from prayer. Prayer provides a sense of personal strength. Prayer is consuming and orients one to another state of being. Because of its therapeutic value, prayer is an important resource for coping with problems experienced during the life course. (David O. Moberg, 2005).

As Sharma and Sharma (2006) indicated that, prayer has been used as a self enhancing intervention for centuries. It is inherently a spiritual affair and activity. Different forms of prayer may have differential associations with effective coping, with over all well-being and life satisfaction. In post-cardiac surgery conditions and in other illnesses, it was found that prayer was associated with less current psychosocial distress, and helped in enhancing social support.
Prayer is widely acknowledged in both ancient and recent times as interventions for alleviating illness and promoting good health. It is a mean to communicate with God or deity. Prayer as an act or practice may vary, but every religion believes in this spiritual activity. Prayer in terms of personal worship and devotion, allow the body to heal naturally. Prayer appears to trigger mechanisms to counter stress and promoting positive emotions by releasing body’s natural capacity for healing. It seems to activate the immune, hormonal and cardiac vascular systems to heal diseases illness or injury.

Benson and Stark claim that prayer evokes psychological responses, such as decreased episodes of angina in cardiology patients. Prayer may induce stress reducing effects such as control blood pressure and increase immune function. There is an association found between prayer and hospitalization and shorter hospital stays. Experts in spirituality and health, asserts that people having faith on prayer make the hard things to possible. Each setting of prayer encouraged people to develop an insight to find a way in the dark, deep cave. The majority of people believe in God and they always cope easily with all kind of traumatic events in their lives.

Prayer doesn’t need any language or grammar. It is just to express one’s personal feelings towards the Divine power. It makes people healthy, help them to be calm and balanced, strengthen memory, develops positive energy, controls blood circulation, maintain concentrate and reduces tension. Prayer has a lot of strength. Researches show that medicines are more effective, when combined with prayer. It creates a tremendous effect on cardiac patients. It is found that Science, prayer and treatment are interconnected. Prayer makes us disciplined and helps to reduce tension.
It is a link which creates the relation among Science, spirituality and well-being. Cited in – Dainik Jagran (Daily newspaper) 9/11/2011.

“The greatest prayer is patience…do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind of the present moment” – The Buddha.

**Alternative spiritual practices**

Divinatory practices are manifold in origin, orientation and intended outcome. These practices used to create a spiritually vibrant and positive environment. There are some other forms of spiritual practices; those are strictly unrelated with any kind of religious tradition. As prayers could be taken in both perspectives religious and spiritual, these practices are just spiritual and a way to connect with the Supreme Being, as well as to get a simple sense of complete well-being.

As yoga, meditation, transcendental meditation, music, Osho, Art of living etc., shows a positive effect on a sense of well-being, including optimism, sense of purpose in life, informal help for others etc.

Music gives an inspirational and calming effect. A wide variety of religious, inspirational and secular music may spiritually uplift the individual.

Holding grudges towards others can have a profound negative impact on health. If someone is constantly angry about what someone has or has not done, the body is going to pay the price for it. The spiritual practices of forgiving others helps to release these negative emotions and this can bring a sense of peace and well-being.
The natural energy healing system of Reiky, Acupuncture, reading sacred literature, Feng Shui etc. can help to release negative emotions that restore the spirit and body to health. All these practices are considered to create balance between positive and negative life forces, so that an individual can bring harmony and balance in mind, body and spirit. www.practical-spiritual-healing-guide.com/spirituality-and-health.html.in.

YOGA

“Yoga is nothing but practical psychology.” (Sri Aurobindo). The sensitive mind of modern man is putting demands on the physical system to cope with work pressure. Being unable to meet the challenge, the physical system is collapsing; problems of hypersensitivity and stress arise. Yoga treatment can effectively cure and prevent a gamut of diseases and giving the individual relief from consequent mental and emotional suffering.

Yoga is the union, the integration of body, mind and psyche through moral and hormonal balance, elimination of toxic substance from body, altered immune functions through proper dispersion of ‘Prana’ all over the body. Yoga is a way of life. It is a result of human wisdom and insight on physiology, ethics and spirituality collected together and practiced for the well-being of humanity.

Yoga science is in existence before the origin of the religion or belief a thousand years ago. The basic idea of yoga is to unite the individual soul (atma) with the universal soul (parmatama). Yoga is a set of theories and practices with origins in ancient India. Literally, the word yoga comes from a Sanskrit word “yuj”, which
means “to yog” or “to unite”. It focuses on unifying the mind, body, and spirit, and fostering a greater feeling, connection between the individual and his/her surroundings. Yoga has spiritual roots, with the main goal of helping individual to realize true happiness, freedom or enlightenment. Swami Vishnu—devananda summarized the vast science of yoga in terms of five principles – these are: proper exercise; proper breathing; proper relaxation; proper diet; positive thinking and meditation.

The various yogic practices have been traditionally classified into the four ‘maarg’ (paths), these are – Gyan yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga and Raja yaga. (Madalai Muthu, 2002).

B. Nagaratnamma (2002) has conducted a study, “Effects of yoga in the alleviation of psychosomatic disorders”, according to the study – yoga has occupied an important place in modern life, though it is ancient origin. It is a well-known fact that the World Health Organization is emphasizing an alternative medical procedure. This longitudinal study was taken up to examine the effect of yoga on psychosomatic disorders with special reference to migraine to headache. Findings of the studies show that, Yoga is a very effective natural method of alleviation of psychosomatic disorders. Patients, who were regularly practicing yoga at yoga Kendra, observed a very positive effect of yoga practice in their illness.

Yoga directs and regulates the subtle life force, the very essence of our life. Yoga like ‘Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama’ have shown to reduce stress and hence reduce the risk of cancer. It is found in many researches that behavioral or psychological
factors like chronic stress can aggravate the risk of cancer by the following mechanism:

- Influence of stress on natural killer (NK) cells
- Poorer repair of damaged DNA
- Modulation of apoptosis
- Oxidative stress.

It is found that yoga lowers the blood activation level. Increases of lactate in blood, aggravate stress and anxiety. Yoga is beneficial, low-cost adjunct to the treatment of stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, stress-related medical illnesses, substance abuse, and rehabilitation of criminal offenders. Yoga techniques enhance well-being, mood, attention, mental focus, and stress tolerance.

Yoga is a connection of human to nature and body to mind. It helps to secrease positive hormones from endocrine glands. It is helpful to keep oneself safe from high blood pressure, cardiac troubles, diabetes, joint pain, depression etc. (Anand Om Prakash, 2011).

For all extent knowledge of yoga and its practices, such as ‘yogasananas and pranayama’, the entire credit goes to Maharishi Patanjali. Patanjali systematized various yogic practices and traditions. In this momentous work, he describes the aim of yoga as knowledge of the self and outlines the eight steps or methods of achieving it. These are –
1. Yama or eternal vows (promise),

2. Niyam or observance,

3. Yogasan or yoga postures,

4. Pranayama or breath control exercises,

5. Pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses from distractions of the outside world,

6. Dharana or concentration on an object, place or subject,

7. Samadhi or the ultimate stage of yoga meditation.

Yoga Sutra:

Yoga as a system of thought and practice has a primary reference to the philosophical system that flows from the teachings of the ancient Indian yoga philosopher, Patanjali. Maharishi Patanjali was believed to have compiled his yoga sutra around the 3rd or 4th century BC, but archeological evidences and the study of ancient scriptures suggest that yoga was practiced in ancient India as early as 3000 BC. Patanjali’s yoga-sutra is composed a total of 195 sutras or aphorisms.

As Patanjali says - “Yoga Chitta Vritta Nirodha” i.e. by yoga one can remove the fluctuations of mind and body, will attain peace and pleasure. Cited in – Shankar & Karpal, (2008). “Yoga and moral values”.

Yoga is a practical science in which one searches out the way to deep inner peace. It welcomes all religions and a strong moral foundation is important to progressing spirituality. Studies have shown promising results in health, physical
functioning and mental/emotional well-being. Yoga has a positive effect on quality of life, as well as yoga plays an eminent role in reducing stress and frustration, that results from pain and disability, moreover it increases positive feelings and well-being. People having arthritis feel a tremendous positive change in their disease after regular practicing yoga exercises and this enjoyment is an important predictor of adherence. (Steffany Haaz).

The findings of a study demonstrate that a yogic lifestyle results in a reduction of negative affects, it has therapeutic value for those who carry somatic or psychological problems, and it can be safely used as an instrument of psychological wellbeing. (Bhushan L.I. 1998).

Dr. Om Prakash Anand says that, regular practice of yoga brings positive feelings, thoughts and attitude, which further helps to remove some kind of mental distortions. Cited in- Dainik Jagran (Daily News Paper), 13/06/10.

Yoga attitude and yoga practices reduce the possibility of disease. If disease does occur, it improves the efficiency of self-healing. Yogic attitude ensures that the illness will not make the person miserable. These findings lies under the study, - “Yogic views of life: with special reference to medicine”, that has been conducted by Bijlani R.L. (2002).

Dr. Saroj Kothari (2002), has conducted a study “Yoga and Health”, findings indicated that, yoga is the science of right living and, such as, is intended to be incorporated in daily life. It works on all aspects of the person: the physical, vital, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. Yoga is a potent means to restore and
maintains physical and mental health. Yoga therapy is successful in providing relief in physical diseases, such as asthma, backache, blood-pressure, cancer, diabetes and HIV positive. Yoga has emerged as a ray of hope for the suffering humanity. Yoga is beneficial to people suffering from excessive anger, anxiety, depression, insomniania, psychosomatic problems and stress. Yoga not only improves physical health and psyche but also stimulates spiritual development. Yoga leads to beauty from the inside to out. Through the yogic practices we can revive old Indian traditions and values which are helpful in promoting human relation.

It is indicated that, the psychosomatic spiritual approach emphasizes that we can’t think of a sound health by only caring for one or two components of body, mind and spirit. This results in an imbalance due to which harmony of personality is lost and the person suffers from psychological and psychosomatic problems. Yoga is both a philosophy of life and a science of human personality. The psycho-somatic-spiritual approach of yoga has been found effective in managing stress related problems like asthma, hypertension, coronary heart disease etc. It is found beneficial effects of yogic practices in the management of anxiety, headache, depression, diabetes, gastritis, and neurotic disorders. Yoga is not only curative but also a preventive and promotive science of health and well-being. (Bhushan L.I. May, 1998).

Dean Ornish (1990) found that after following the lifestyle program (includes yoga, meditation, diet, sleep, relaxation, exercise and daily work schedule) for just 24 days, there was a 91% reduction observed in chest pain (angina), a 21% improvement in cholesterol levels and significant improvement was found in blood pressure. They
also reported improved well-being and reduced anxiety as well as depression. A significant reduction also found in the state trait of anxiety.

Results found in a meta-analysis that, the yoga groups compared to supportive therapy groups showed significantly greater improvement in psychological health and a greater reduction in anxiety, depression and distress. (Lin K-Y, et al. 2011).


Yoga can be a great way to do something positive for body and mind and connect with our spirit. Yoga develops the physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual components, thus building up a well-round organic personality. This ancient science believes in a holistic approach to health of which the body, mind and spirit are integral and interdependent parts. Yoga claims to endow perfect physical, mental and social well-being, even under stressful conditions. Yoga emphasizes that we can’t think of sound health by only caring one or two components of body, mind and spirit and ignoring the other. Yoga is a scientific system of self-discovery, self maintenance and self cure. Yoga is said to be an experienced science, is called – unity, balance, control, holistic life approach etc. Through yoga practice we can brings our minds into harmony with the divine power. With this connection we could be illuminated by divine wisdom and energized by the divine power.
June 21st, 2015, the world celebrates the first ‘International Yoga Day. 251 cities of 192 countries celebrate the occasion enthusiastically. In India, 35,985 people have done together the asans of yoga on Rajpath (N.Delhi). It was a world record under Guineas Book of world Records. All the campaign and program has been organized and managed by Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India. To lead the occasion, the prime Minister of India, Sri Narendra Modi said that, ‘yoga is a great source of humanity, love and peace in our life. It helps in our internal development. We should not take it as a matter of religion or community. Very soon it will be a part of our basic education’. Cited in- Amar Ujala (Daily News Paper), 22/06/2015.

MEDITATION

Meditation is also a part of spiritual practice, which is used as a way of reducing the psychological disturbances and psychological mal functioning. Meditation practice reflects a number of health benefits like decreasing anxiety, depression, irritability, moodiness as well as improving learning ability, memory, self-actualization, feeling of vitality and emotional stability.

Meditation is obtained – when the mind is trained to concentrate on an outer or inner object, for a certain length of time all distractions to be eliminated. When the stream of thought flows in a single direction without interruption, towards definite subject, the mind runs unbroken, as it were towards the object, it is meditation.

It brings about a shift towards self-observation and thus may also be useful for facilitating behavioral changes. In addition to relaxation and refocusing of attention, meditation involves self-observation and desensitization to thoughts, fears and
worries. It can promote behavioral self control skills by teaching the individual to unstressed and clean up the mind of thoughts and images. It makes strong enough to resist daily life stressors.

K. Gopu Kumar (2003), NIMHANS Bangalore, has conducted a study to assess the effect of meditation and relaxation practices on mood of nurses. Findings revealed that, the meditation and muscular relaxation technique for a period of 40 days creates tremendous positive responses on all the respondents.

Sujata Satapathy, (2002), I.I.T. Delhi, have conducted a study and found the results that, meditation practice improve the quality of life by combating stress and strain. It has a positive impact on the behavior of the subjects suffering from depression and anxiety and has a synergistic effect when combined with other forms of therapy, including allopathic medicine.

Meditation plays an important role in the provision of psychological and spiritual support. It enables people to relax, clear the mind, achieve a feeling of oneness with the infinite. It helps to accept painful memories and also helps to gather energy and hope. Through meditation, we experience a profound peace, bliss and happiness.

There are various kinds of meditation practices e.g. zen, transactional meditation, mindfulness etc. All these meditative practices may benefit and provide acute support for patients with hypertension, psoriasis, irritable bowel disease, anxiety and depression. (Barrows and Jacobs, 2002).
A study was conducted to compare the effects of spiritual meditation, secure meditation and relaxation techniques on mood and psychological well-being. Overall result suggests that spiritual meditation was shown significant improvement in positive mood and coping temperament. Spiritual intensity appeared to moderate the relationship between spirituality and several measures of mood.

In addition, meditation found significantly alleviates psychological distress and promote psychological development.

Researchers indicate two main types of meditation.

1. The spiritual type
2. The secular type

The most widely studied form of meditation is spiritual–based meditation that is transcendental meditation (T.M.). TM is derived form of Vedic tradition of India, which provides the most ancient and extensive descriptions of cultivating transcendence. TM is a technique that allows attention to settle from active to quieter levels of the mind.

The Vedic psychology of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1969, 1972) provides uniform procedures for the practice of TM. The TM technique is a simple, natural, effortless process practiced 15-20 minutes twice daily while sitting comfortably with closed eyes. www.tm.org/meditation-techniques

Dr. R.B. Dhawan coded his words that the TM technique is a form of mantra meditation; Mantra is a group (combination) of positive sounds or words. These
sounds positively affect our senses and can cure those emotions which lost its natural essence. Mantra creates an electric current (excitement) in our brain. This current or waves help us to concentrate on a particular tasks and think in a desired direction. Cited in- Dainik Jagran (Daily News Paper) 03/11/2009.

Practicing TM is very effective in improving health, reducing stress, anxiety and depression. Regular practice of TM resulted in heightened intelligence, greater clarity, more creativity, better communication skills and more success in interpersonal relationships. TM promotes increasing degrees of orderliness, integration and coherence in the brain leading to a unique style of brain functioning. The enlightened people maintain a low level of excitation, which has a pervasive calming effect on the mind.

Cesar Molina, M.D. FACC, Interventional Cardiologist, Maharishi Foundation, USA (2010) says, ‘the TM technique is a simple, scientifically verified, psychological technique, easily learned by anyone, which promotes full development of the human brain. This is an important tool to fulfill the ultimate goal so the individual achieve his or her full potential’.

A 10 year longitudinal study of 34 subjects practicing the TM technique showed significant increases in ego development in contract to matched control sample. The TM subjects scored at the higher autonomous and integrated stages as compared with controls. (Chandler, et al. 2005).

The EEG records indicate that TM enabling the individual to be less shocked, frustrated or angry. TM has proven to be effective in significantly reducing symptoms of stress, anxiety and anger, it is also effective in improving quality of life and well-being in war-survivors. TM leads to a marked reduction in children’s and adolescents’
behavior problems including aggression, nail biting, and absenteeism from school, bullying and enhances their scholastic performance. (Sharma Pulkit, 2009).

TM is practiced by diverse populations because it is relatively easy to learn, practice, teach and requires no change in lifestyle. (Krisanaprakornkit, 2010).

A secular form of meditation called mindfulness meditation (MM). MM stems from the philosophical and cultural roots of ancient Buddhism. Mindfulness has everything to do with the waking up and living in harmony with oneself and with the world. It wakes us up and let us realizes that we should not miss what is valuable in our lives. If we are not fully aware in present moment, we may fail to realize the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth and transformation.

Many individuals state that meditation is an expression of their spirituality; other people claim that their meditation practice has nothing to do with spirituality. Meditation practitioners and researchers suggest that it has the sacred qualities that contribute to its greater effectiveness. Individuals who meditate, report a feeling of great gratitude, a sense of love and compassion, feeling uplifted, and a sense of connectedness to their well-being. (Pargament, 2007).

Health applications of meditation

Meditation has entered the main-stream of health care as a method of stress and pain reduction. It is found that TM has a great effect on metabolism by lowering the biochemical product of stress (lactic acid) and inducing favorable brain waves. Meditation practices are often used in hospitals in cases of chronic or terminal illness to reduce complications associated with depressed immune system. Dr. Harbert Bension, Mind-body-medical institute, Boston, reports that meditation induces biochemical and physical changes in the body, collectively referred to as the
relaxation responses. This response includes controlling metabolism rate, heart rate, respiration, blood-pressure and brain chemistry.

Studies have shown that Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (M.B.C.T.) and Mindfulness-Based stress Reduction (M.B.S.R.), reduce the risk of depressive relapse, and decrease affective symptoms. Surawy et al. (2005) found highly significant decreases in depressive symptoms in patients with chronic fatigue syndrome. This decrease was consistent at 3 months post intervention.

Meryl Reist Gibbel (2008) examined that those participants who meditate regularly, report increased positive mood and higher levels of spiritual well-being, a greater increase in positive affect and a significant decrease in negative effect. Meditation has been shown to impact the function of serotonin and dopamine; these two neurotransmitters have been linked to depression. Meditation was found most effective in situations that are perceived as high stress in nature and uncontrollable, such as physical pain, genetic illness, criminal victimization (rape, domestic violence) and natural disasters.

**Potential pathways between meditation and decreased depression**

- Increased spiritual experiences
- Greater feelings of spiritual emotions.
- Greater acceptance and increased surrender to the divine.

Rye (2005), indicated on the basis of his studies that meditation found successful in promoting forgiveness of romantic partners.
It is indicated that a short session of regular meditation enhances our memory power. It helps us to adjust in adverse life situations. Cited in – Dainik Jagran, (Daily News Paper) 28/07/10.

Many researchers have concluded that meditation can significantly improve psychological well-being and alleviate depressive symptoms. Studies indicated that participants reported improved psychological health and increased relaxation after meditative practices. Significant positive effects were found in anxiety, psychoticism, obsessive-compulsive disorder, somatization and paranoid ideation. TM found significantly effective in promoting overall self-actualization, acceptance of self and higher levels of positive mood. (Astin, 1997).

By meditating regularly, we develop sustained concentration, this is coupled with reduced stress, tension, renewed energy and improved relationships. It helps us to achieve success in our worldly activities with become more efficient and productive and better equipped to deal with life’s challenges. Meditation practices empower our soul and we rise into dimensions of higher consciousness. http://sos.org/page/benefits-of-meditation.html

Yoga and meditation seems to be the panacea for all illnesses-physical, mental, behavioral, spiritual-affecting humanity. These spiritual practices establishes a value system in life, helps to maintain homeostasis (balanced body and mind) and leads to the development of an integrated personality, which overcomes conflict and develop a refined consciousness. Yoga and meditation needs no equipment and if done with regularity, can be very effective to many of the physiological and psychological disorders.

Spiritual Science Research Foundation: Bringing the known and unknown worlds – A nonprofit research organization, registered in Australia and U.S.A. – promoted some stages of spiritual growth as a model.-
Self realization
(known about the self and about the divine)

Devotion

Spiritual emotion

Faith

Spiritual practices give spiritual experiences that leads to an increase in faith

Increase in faith leads to more spiritual practice

Spiritual practice

Belief

Intellectual/Verbal knowledge
**Spiritual Counseling**

Spiritual counseling explores the meaning and purpose of spiritual experiences in a person and in ways in which it compliments and differs from psychological counseling. It is about helping people to view and make sense of life from a spiritual perspective. It is a positive-creative approach and is designed to help someone to turn life’s adversities into valuable spiritual development tools.

Spiritual counseling is advice and support for a person, who wishes to have more experiences in his/her spiritual nature. Spiritual counseling lightly touches the areas that are normally dealt with personal psychology (relationships, self image, self worth, habits, behaviors), the major focus is on the aspects as faith, devotion, wisdom, compassion, spiritual techniques (such as prayer) and spiritual experiences. **Scintology Auditing** is a unique form of personal spiritual counseling, which helps people to look at their own existence and improves their ability to realize the reality of their self.

**Spiritual Health**

It is the duty of every human-being to be spiritually healthy. Spiritually disciplined people are trained in orderliness, good conduct and have a healthy lifestyle. These qualities are of vital significance for the personality development of an individual. Spiritual discipline can be maintained by the conscious efforts of the individual himself in a nutshell, we may say that spiritual discipline is the discipline of body, mind, heart, attitude and behavior. (Husain Akbar, 2011, pp. 75).
The concept of spiritual health was introduced by Bist in 1978 at WHO. Spiritual health is one of the most important states of the body, mind and spirit. Spiritual health ensures well-being of people and suggests ways such as yoga, meditation, prayer and offering spiritual practices in life to help people. Spirituality is positively related to health and inversely related to disorders. Spiritual health promotes other aspects of health also and helps people to achieve their well-being. Spiritual health enriches life and improves quality of life. A spiritual healthy individual is one who feels close to a supreme being, having spiritual virtues like humility, compassion, forgiving, love and peace. These people have potential to make strong interpersonal relationships and having a clear humanistic idea.

Fisher (1998) defines spiritual health or well-being as “a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and well-being, integrating all the other dimensions of health (i.e., the physical, mental, emotional and social).”

Spiritual health includes all the efforts spent on achieving optimal physical health. Spiritual health is achieved when a person finds a balance between life values, goals, belief systems and their relationship within themselves and with others. (Husain 2008).

One can improve his/her spiritual health by –

- Identify the things of one’s life that give a sense of inner peace, comfort, strength, love and connection.
• Doing spiritual activities as like- praying, meditating, reading sacred/inspirational texts, taking nature walks, doing yoga, attending religious services etc.

As Husain Akbar (2002) coded that, spiritual diseases such as envy, jealousy, hatred, conceit can be avoided through spiritual attendance. Spiritual practices emphasis the inner or natural processes like growth and transformation of energy. It is proved that meditation, prayer, forgiveness and reading scriptures, contribute to healing of body and mind and provide a sense of well-being.

Improving spiritual health may help the individual feel better, prevent some health problems and help to cope with illness.

**Spiritual Development (S.D.)**

S.D. is a process of self transcendence, where the individual is an active agent in shaping his/her own spiritual growth. S.D. involves seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of identity development. It involves developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with the Divine. It is deriving meaning, purpose and direction in one’s life. Spiritual development involves increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power.

Spiritual development helps individual to deal better with spiritual trauma. Spiritual trauma means – the life events included personal illness, injury, bereavement, job loss, divorce/separation etc. pushes the individual towards spirituality but the individual feels unable to have peace even under the umbrella of spirituality- this is the situation
of spiritual trauma. To deal and to cope better with this spiritual trauma, S.D. should be promoted in schools through curriculum, ethos, climate and extracurricular activities. It is helpful to discover personal destiny and direction and to develop their personal identity. Spiritual development contributes to holistic development as – to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, morally as well as spiritually.

A spiritually developed person having a sense of responsibility, having own faith, having a set goal of life, having faith in spiritual practices (prayer, charity, observance etc.), live a joyful balanced and humble life. (Marixan De Souza, 2010).

**Spiritual Intelligence (SI)**

SI is defined as the ability to apply, and embody spiritual resources and qualities to enhance daily functioning and well-being. Spirituality refers to the search for the sacred, ultimate meaning, higher consciousness and transcendence; spiritual intelligence (SI) emphasizes the abilities that draw on such themes to predict functioning and adaptation.

Thousands of years ago lord Krishna in the Bhagawad Gita had discussed about spiritual intelligence. SI provides us a complete sense of observation, thinking, truthfulness and reshapes our personality.

Logical intelligence (LI/IQ) is about rational, logical, rule bound thinking. Emotional intelligence (EI/EQ) is about associative, habit bound, pattern recognizing, and emotive thinking. Spiritual intelligence (SI/SQ) is about creative, insightful, rule making, rule breaking, transformative thinking. (Biswajit Satpathy, 2010).
SI is the ultimate intelligence which operate at three levels – Cognitive, affective and behavioral.

The cognitive component involves seeking answers for existential issues related to peace and cheerfulness, compassion, empathy, fearlessness and love for nature. The affective component involves emotionally gratifying practices like active listening, getting healed of jealous, ego, anger and death anxiety. The behavioral component includes, seeks and does activities like yoga, meditation, forgiveness, truthfulness, altruism, uses suffering as an opportunity for growth, optimistic perspective, moving away from rigid systems and practicing preventive health measures. (Yosi Amram. 2007).

Spiritual Quotient (SQ) is described as a measure that looks at a person’s spiritual intelligence in the same way as IQ looks at cognitive intelligence. The cognitive intelligence represents 5 types of personality factors: social, investigative, artistic, realistic and conventional. It is only SQ that set humans apart from both machines and animals. SQ reflects compassion, creativity, self-esteem, flexibility and gratitude. It is believed that it is through SQ that we are in a position to solve the issues related with meaning and value. It is considered that EQ is the basic requirement for better use of IQ, and the value of SQ represents with the formula – IQ + EQ = SQ.

IQ refers to secondary process that is based on serial neural wiring in the brain. EQ refers to primary, based on associative neural wiring in the brain. SQ refers to tertiary process, based on third neural system in the brain. SQ is all about
holistic approach to life: wholesomeness, self-awareness, compassion, creativity, ability to think, ability to reason out etc. The process facilitates interactions between emotions and logic. Thus it provides a meaning giving center.

It is found that there is no compulsion that religious people have to have high SQ and vice-versa. Self awareness, flexibility, adaptability, capacity to face pain and sufferings, vision, values, not to harm or hurt others, holistic approach – are some of the indicators of high SQ. (Dutta Roshini, 2006).

**Science and Spirituality**

In our Indian perspective science and spirituality have always gone together. Vedic science includes – gathering inner knowledge through reason and experimentation, through yoga and meditation, leading to direct perception of truth.

**Veda** itself means knowledge – to know, to see or to cognize. The Vedas constitute what could be called a science in modern sense. It is found in Vedas a whole range of sciences, from astronomy and chemistry, to psychology and surgery. We can call this integral approach to both the spiritual and material sciences as ‘Vedic Science’. In India, arts and sciences developed in harmony with spirituality.


Science and Spirituality are the dominant forces involving deep intellectual, philosophical, psychological approaches for the well-being of mankind. However, modern education with an over emphasized importance towards the cultivation of
science and technology without a spiritual dimension has caused an imbalance in the self, the society, the nation and the world. Hence, there is a need appears to increase the awareness towards the synthesis of science and spirituality to broaden intellectual perspectives and harmonize the society.

As Dalai Lama (2006) says in the International Conference, “Science and Spirituality in Modern India”, organized by Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, on February 5-7, 2006, “Science gets us physical comforts, spirituality brings us mental calm.”

Here are some more study findings those were presented at the same conference.

1. Although science and spirituality are different in content, both are important and mankind needs both for health, growth and evolution. (Anantharaman, 2006).

2. Both spirituality and science constitute major reference points for man so that he may manage his pragmatic affairs in the world full of uncertainties. If spirituality constitutes the source of morality for man to regulate his relations in society and with nature; science helps him through technology, to mobilize resources for a better life. Traditionally, a hierarchy of spirituality, morality, and technology was believed to have existed. (Roy Ramashray, 2006).

The 7th all India students’ conference on “Science and Spiritual Quest” at J.N. Tata auditorium, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India, September 1-2, 2012, organized by Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata. The conference aimed at bringing together different thoughts about science and spirituality, both and presents an outline about a common vision for the benefit of humanity. As it is realized that the
task of medicine is not simply to strive for absence of disease but to enable an individual to learn about positive mental health and lead ideal life.

Psycho Spirituality concept registered under Health services is an integrated approach of clinical psychology combined with spirituality. It aims at holistic healing, promoting “Healthy mind – Healthy body – Enlightened soul”, through positivism. It is found in many researchers that to recover from chronic diseases and ailments, medical treatment should be combined with holistic activities as meditation, yoga etc. www.psychospiritualindia.blogspot.in
**RELIGION**

Albert Einsteen’s famous remark - “Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”

Religion is a belief in Supreme Being, belief in God(s), practiced through faith, obedience, prayer and worship, specific system of belief about deity, often involving rituals, a code of ethics and a philosophy of life. There are number of religions follow by the people all over the world but eight major ones are – Budhism (South East Asia), Christianity (All Europe and America), Confucianism (Chinese), Hinduism (India, Nepal and Indonesia), Islam (Middle East), Judaism (Israel), Shinto (Japan) and Taoism (Chinese). For many people, religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices and worship involving one supreme God, others people’s religion involve a number of different God, some people’s religion has no specific God to be worshiped. (Tiwari Shiv Shankar, 2009).

The word religion is derived from the Latin word – religare, which means “to bind together”. A religion organizes the collective spiritual experiences of a group of people into a system of beliefs and practices. Religious involvement or religiosity refers to the degree of participation or adherence to the beliefs and practices of an organized religion. Religiosity is the extent to which an individual feels that religious beliefs influence his or her life. It consist numerous components, such as group religious practices attendance, prayer, importance of religion, religious commitment and religious style or religious orientation.
Religion has been defined as the feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred.

It can be viewed as a general **cognitive schema**, which guides how individuals perceive the world around them, as well as their reactions and behaviors in daily life. Religion as a schema, allows individuals to interpret environmental stimuli, and employ heuristics that simplify and shorten the process of problem solving. It is comprised of beliefs, attitudes and patterns of behavior in relation to the supernatural and usually includes a community of believers. Religion encompasses ancestral or cultural tradition, writings, history and mythology, personal faith and mystic experience. It refers to both personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals. Having faith, believing in a set of values and traditions and applying the principals to a way of life-describe the millions of religious people around the world. The identity of a person or group is shaped by religious values, beliefs and affiliation. These values are often passed on to future generations.

Religion as defined by some psychologists/authors –

1. “Religion only refers to an outward expression of belief, it has a negative connotation as something which has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation and retained by habit.” (James, 1902).

2. Religion is, “One’s relationship with a particular faith, tradition or doctrine about a divine or supernatural power”. (Wong, 2006).
3. “Religion as an institution has been instrumental in fostering general well-being, creativity, honesty, liberalism and other qualities.” (Sauna, 1969).

4. “Religion has been associated with longer life span, less depression, higher academic achievement, higher marital satisfaction and less criminal activity.” (Smith, 2003).

5. “Religion is a social institution involving beliefs and practices based upon a conception of the sacred.” (John Macionis).

Man has always believe that there is a power exists, which is beyond their control, which make things happen, over which a person has no control; these powers are called supernatural powers. The name given to this belief in the existence is “religion”. Religion holds together all those who share the same or similar religious attitudes, so religion gives rise to a community. Religion may be seen as one special process among many social processes. It is the product of human minds, a complex social entity that has been passed down through generations.

**The religious process** – with each form of belief and communal practice, moods, that motivate the individual to action. These moods are prompted and encoded through institutional and private religious involvement throughout the life of the person. Beliefs, practices and affiliation conjoin to establish moods that propel the individual into behavior. Religious beliefs allow the individual to take the challenges and tragic discontinuities of life. (Shafranske, 1996).

**Religiosity or Religiousness** was associated with positive coping, optimism, experiencing meaning in life, viewing life as a positive challenges and low anxiety. It
is associated with improved psychological functioning, greater social support, greater cooperativeness and better cognitive functioning. Religiosity refers to the extent to which an individual feels that religious beliefs influence his or her life. Prayer is an important component of religiosity, has been found positively related to increased survival among the elderly, shorter hospitalization, increased optimism and psychological well-being.

Religious commitment refers to the level of devotion to one’s religious beliefs, the degree to which a person adheres to his/her religious values, beliefs, practices and uses them in daily living. Religious commitment found positively associated with academic achievement, moral judgment and has a powerful influence in individual’s lives. Religion believes in tolerance, coexistence and unity of man. Religion teaches us respecting each other and to love each other. It can be said that spiritual demands of an individual are satisfied by the religion or religious exercises.

There are three aspects (dimensions) of religious consciousness – cognitive, affective and conative exists in all religions.

Religious belief is a measure of cognitive component of religion. Individual differences in religious belief may be expressed very differently. Attitude towards religion is a measure of the affective component of religion. This domain is concerned with how the person feels about religion. This domain provides a strong foundation for empirical research in religion and spirituality. Religious practice is a measure of the conative (behavioral) component of religion. There could be some distinctions between the observance of public practice and private practice.
Another dimension of religion is **affiliation**. Religious affiliation is a measure of belonging and self identification with a religious tradition. It is conceptualized as an aspect of individual identity.

**Religious orientation** refers to the level of devotion to one’s religious beliefs, the degree to which a person adheres to his/her religious values, beliefs, practices and uses them in daily living. Cangemi and Englander (1974) concludes that anxiety level does affect self, the intervening steps are insight, self understanding, self acceptance, psychological growth, psychological health and all these intervening steps can easily apply through religious orientation.

The picture of religion emerges as a **three-story building**. At the ground floor, man’s daily life with its multifarious requirements lies, like food, health, education, trade, administration and defense. Proper attention to all responsibilities is the primary duty of the individual and the most essential part of religion. At the next higher level – the first floor here lies the life of prophets, saviors and incarnations, holy books, temples, churches, mosque, symbols, rituals – out of which the aspirant is free to choose any, that suit him.

At the top floor, the highest class of religion appears the quest for God, the creator, the Ruler and Law-maker. The ground supports the other two stories. Likewise **true religion** is only one, though its name, prophet, rituals necessarily vary according to the lands and people they serve. This true religion is universal, it is right conduct, love, compassion, truth, correct behavior, growing knowledge,
dedication and worship of a God who is same for all, who is all, in all and above all. (Lal, R. B. 1978).

Religion is to follow the humanity and human values. It is not a matter of caste or community; rather it is a matter of the divine power only. Cited in – Dainik Jagran (Daily News Paper), 12/12/2008.

Many religions tend to focus on “God figure”. Some religions have more than one God figure (polytheistic) as an object/subject of reverence and worship. The variety of religious practices is consistent with the diversity of cultures and the paths human have sought in order to make sense of their world. Religious practices are given legitimacy and credence in written documents, which may offer an enlightened path for the follower. Christian have their Bible, Hindus study the Vedas or Gita, Jews read the Talmud, Muslims find enlightenment in the Quran and the Chinese may study the writings of Confucius.

Every religion is made up of certain elements. These elements are rituals, belief systems, symbols, organizations and emotions. These are the essential traits of religion.

**Rituals**- Rituals are the integral part of all religions. These are usually repetitive acts that take place at a set time and location. Rituals almost always involve the use of symbolic objects, words and action. Most religious rituals are performed in special places and under special conditions such as in a dedicated or sacred spot. Religious rituals reinforce the basic tenets of religion, and often charged with high emotions.
**Belief system**- Religious belief refer to the belief in the existence of supernatural powers, which take the shape of divine beings, who are not part of this mortal world who are not governed by the ordinary rules of nature. These beliefs vary from society to society and also within societies; from religion to religion, locality to locality and variations can be seen between different communities and groups. Religion is certainly a type of belief system, but not all belief systems are religion. There are several types of religions in the world. These are all similar enough to come together in the category called religion, but different in terms of their beliefs and religious ethos.

**Symbols**- Every religion uses certain symbols with which it is associated. The cross denotes Christianity, the Muslim symbols is the crescent moon and star, the Hinds have the symbol (Swastik), the Jews have the Star of David, and so on. All religions use symbols to create group identity. Religious symbols are a form of communication. If one enter a person’s house or at the sacred place, the religious symbols present convey to others the beliefs and values of that person or religion.

**Organization**- Religious organizations are used to affirm religious beliefs and sentiments, to train people in theory, rituals and doctrine, to organize meetings and gatherings and regularize the relations between religious groups and the masses.

**Emotions**- All religions evoke strong emotions in the believers and followers. Religious emotions are associated with all things that are most sacred and close to the hearts of the believers.
Psychologists have distinguished **two forms of religious experiences**: external religiosity and internal religiosity. As Allport (1950) made distinction between intrinsic religion and extrinsic religion. External religiosity is indicated in the form of attending the places of worships, rituals, and other outward behaviors. Internal religiosity refers to attitude and values. **Spirituality has been linked to internal religiosity.**

Extrinsic religiosity refers to a self-serving outlook about religion that provides belief with comfort and salvation. The individuals in this condition are disposed to use religion for their own ends; such as status, sociability and self-justification.

Extrinsic religious orientation has been related to natural or negative health indexes such as depression, anxiety, identity diffusion, irrational thought and failure to volunteer to help. Persons having extrinsic orientation are more likely to be dogmatic, authoritarian, and less responsible, have less internal control, be less self directed and rarely do better in their studies and work. People with strong religious framework, having greater religious coping methods, (eg. spiritual support, meditation, religious appraisal), that may have been linked to better mental and physical health.

A person with intrinsic religiosity is one who internalizes the total creed of one’s faith and moves beyond mere sacred place attendance. These individuals find their needs brought into harmony with their religious beliefs. Intrinsic religiosity has been related to several positive outcomes including better health, decreased anger, hostility and social isolation along with increased self-esteem. The person having intrinsic orientation have a greater sense of responsibility and greater internal control,
are more self motivated and do better in their studies and work. (Pargament, K.I. 1997).

It can be said that the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion, where as the intrinsically motivated person tries his religion. Allport, (1950) called this aspect of religion as “by gots”. Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis (1993) have referred to extrinsic, intrinsic and quest aspects of religion respectively as religion, religion-as-means, religion-as-end and religion-as-quest.

Religion-as-quest refers to treatment of religion as an open-ended search, as comprising a willingness to review religious doubts in positive manner.

**Functions of Religion**

Many scholars look at religion as simply a type of philosophy, system of bizarre beliefs. Some other define religion as, is all about the belief system playing a particular role in one’s social or psychological life. It is something which binds together a community. In this way the functions of religion could be defined as –

**Psychological Functions**- Religion fulfils psychological needs of the society. It helps in relieving fears and anxieties. In some difficult situations human beings are bonded to take some decisions, religion tells the people what is right and what is wrong, and clears the decision-making confusion. This decision making clarity provides tremendous psychological relief. Religion provides an emotional comfort by assuring about the meaning in life and there is a purpose even in suffering. It helps in coping with stress during difficult situations in life. Religion is a great source of comfort and
solace in times of crises as people receive psychological relief from “divinely given” moral codes.

**Social functions**- Though religion is a personal thing, it has an important social role. Religion performs many social functions and has been a powerful agency in society. By reinforcing group norms it brings social homogeneity. Uniformity of beliefs helps bind people together and reinforces group identity. Religion forms a potent and powerful means of controlling social behavior. It helps people to adapt to changing situations, environment and customs. It helps to adjust in situations like change in marital status, bereavement etc. It is an effective means of preserving and conserving the values and morals in life, through the process of socialization.

It can be said that religion and beliefs are the essential and integral part of human beings. Religion has helped societies in maintaining social harmony and social control by directing people towards rightful behavior. It is found the negative relationship between religious participation and substance abuse. (Hood, *et al.* 1996).

Desmond, *et al.* (2013) suggests that religious youth exhibit higher levels of self control. And this self control helps in controlling substance abuse as marijuana use and drinking.

Religion has a strong effect on **coping behavior**; it has an ability to socialize children to conform to society’s norms. Religion might also promote self control by fostering the belief that everyone is monitored by the Almighty. Religion influences how goals are selected, pursued and organized.
Religion is a powerful institution which plays important role in shaping of social behavior. However, “being religious” is different from “having a religion”. One may belong to a religious group but may not be religious. Adolescents who participated in religious activities, found more extracurricular, less problem behavior, higher grades and motivation and having more support from parents and friends. Religion promotes a sense of psychological well-being.

Many studies have been conducted, which reveals that religion is helpful in coping for two reasons. First it provides a belief system and a way of thinking about stressful life events that lessen distress and enable people to find meaning and purpose in inevitable situations they encounter. Second it provides a source of social support. Religion often confers a sense of group identity for people because it provides a network of supportive individuals who shares common beliefs.

It is also found that people with strong religious belief, report greater life satisfaction, greater personal happiness and fewer negative consequences of traumatic situations in comparison with person who are having lessen sense of religious faith. (George, 2002).

Belief in God fulfills a psychological need which becomes more intense in situation of insecurity, fear, inadequacy and mental/physical illness, when the unsatisfied individual sees the faith in Almighty as satisfying a need in him. The “faith factor” emerges as a significant correlate of mental health index of life satisfaction, happiness, self esteem, hope and optimism and meaning in life. Religious involvement is also associated with high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, stroke and suicidal tendency. Religious beliefs and practices have been liked to increased self–control and reduce perception of pain.
All religions, according to Maslow, have originated, from experiences. The differences among them stem from particularities of time and locale. It is found that peak experience occurs outside the context of organized religion. To Maslow, God means pure cosmic beauty, truth and goodness. God that we can properly be in awe of, identity with, and serve. Humans have an absolute need for something bigger and higher than themselves. Finally Maslow’s view on sacred is the ordinary, cosmic consciousness, finding God within humans. (Maslow, 1979 quoted by fuller, 1994).

There are three religious faiths have been taken in the present research work. These are Hinduism, Islam (Muslimism) and Christianity. It is needful to discuss these topics over here.
Hinduism is one of the most ancient living religions in the world. Originating in India, Hindu religious practices vary a great by country and region of origin. Hinduism is a social system as well as a religion, therefore customs and practices are closely interwoven. Hinduism is the most complex of the major religious traditions of the world. In its broadest meaning Hinduism includes the numerous sects and sub-sects that have appeared within it time to time.

Hinduism is not only a particular religion but the phenomenon of religion as a whole. It is indeed a complex and rich religion. No founder’s initiative, no dogma and no reform have imposed restrictions on its domain. It is essentially also a religion of the learned. Hinduism has no single founder, creed, teacher, prophet who is acknowledged by its followers as central to the religion, and no single Holy book is universally acclaimed as being of primary importance. It is also called sanatana dharma.

For several centuries, the word “Hindu” was used to denote the people belonging Hinduism. From eight century onwards when the mughals began to settle down in the Indus region, they started using the word Hindus to distinguish the natives from the mughals. The word Hindu comes from the Persian word “Hind” or in Arabic “al hind” implying the area of the Indus
valley. It is interesting to note that the Hindus never referred to themselves as Hindus until modern times. It was during in the 18th and 19th centuries that the Hindus started accepting the term of describe their religious faith, which stood in stark contrast to Christianity and Islam.

For some time the word “Hinduism” was used in a restricted sense, to designate the Vedic religion. But with the emergence of new reform movements, which played a very crucial role in restructuring and redefining the social and religious traditions of the country, the word “Hinduism” came to encompass the entire religious tradition that originated from the Vedas and continued through the centuries.

**Sources of Hinduism**

Hinduism is a drawn inspiration from various sources. These are – the Vedas, the Upanishads (the end portions of the Vedas), the Vedangas, the Puranas, the Darshans, the Sutras, the two major epics called the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and a portion of the Mahabharata – Bhagavad Gita.

**The Vedic Literature**- The period in which the Vedas and the Vedic literature developed is called the Vedic age. The Vedic texts may be divided into two broad chronological strata – the early Vedic (1500-1000 BC) when Rig Vedic hymns were composed; the later Vedic (1000-600 BC) to which belong the remaining Vedas and their branches. Therefore the period around 1500 BC as the earliest available evidence of the origin of the Vedic religion that is a precursor to Hinduism.
Accordingly in the beginning of nature, Brahma had given knowledge to some saints; they forwarded that knowledge to their pupils. This process was continued and this knowledge was safe through recitation. These are believed as revealed literature and called “shruties”. Finally the Vedas were put in writing by Veda Vyasa.

The term Vedas is derived from the Sanskrit root word “Vid” (to know) and thus refers to knowledge. The Vedas are divided into the following divisions: Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads.

**The Samhitas** contain a collection of original hymns in praise of various Gods and Goddess. The Vedic hymns or mantras are known as the samhitas.

**The Brahmanas** discuss the various aspects connected with the rituals and clarify the social and religious meaning of the rituals.

**The Aranyakas** contain information on the nature and importance of sacrifice and their relation to man and the universe. This is also called the forest-texts, which are the concluding part of the Brahmanas.

**The Upanishads** form the end portions of the Vedas and constitute the Hindu philosophy known as the Vedanta. The term Upanishad means, sitting near the Guru to receive supreme knowledge. The Upanishads are 108 in number and are written by various sages between 800-500 BC.

The Vedic people played for their progeny, for fertility of their cattle, for earthly prosperity and for the destruction of the enemies. After a large amount of
saints were tried to found the one and only Almighty God, they were worshiping, so many Gods till that time and got confused. Finally they found the Almighty Being (truth) was “fire”. Now Vedic dharma has been changed into Unitheism from Polytheism.

The Rig Veda- The term Rig Veda is the combination of the world Rig means “hymns and Veda means knowledge”. It consists of 1,028 hymns that are classified into 10 mandalas or books. The subject matter of Rig Veda falls into two divisions – the Karma Kanda (the ritualistic) and the Gyana Kanda (the philosophical). The hymns are dedicated to Vishnu, to the Water, to Dawn, to the Purusha (man), to Prajapati, to Varuna, to Brahaspati, to the Liberality and to Night.

The Sama Veda- The prayers of the Rig Veda were set to musical tunes, for the purpose of singing and this modified collection is known as the Sama Veda. The Sama Veda (the book of chants) consists of 1, 549 hymns. Except for 75 hymns, the rest were adopted from the Rig Veda.

The Yajur Veda- The book for Sacrificial Prayers lays down the procedure for the performance of the sacrifice. It contains not only hymns but also rituals. There are two main texts of the Yajur Veda – the black and the white Yajur Veda. The white Yajur Veda contains only hymns, while the black contains commentary in prose in addition to text.

The Atharva Veda- is divided into 20 books and contains 731 hymns and 6000 verses in the form of charms and spells to ward off evils and diseases apart from songs of love, marriage and so on.
The Vedangas, the Puranas, the Darshans (Six schools of philosophy – Indian thought), the Sutras, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana – are also considered the major sources of Hinduism.

These are important texts for Hindus and guide books for life and society in scriptural ancient India. They offer an insight into the background of Hindu religion.

In the present research work “Bhagavad Gita” (a portion of the great epic Mahabharata) has been taken as a major source of Hinduism. The reason behind that, it is a profound text open to all who would listen to it and, is a fundamental to Hinduism. It still continues to shape the attitudes of Hindus and their religious outlook. It is also found that, many of the teachings in Gita are very similar to those found in New Testament of the Christian Bible.

Bhagavad Gita (song of the Lord) is perhaps the most widely read and beloved scripture in all Indian religious literature. It is also known as Gitopanishad. This holy text has a power to counsel and inspire the readers. It has abundant power in its persistence and presence. It was the first Sanskrit religious text ever to be translated into English, by Charles Wilkins in 1785 and by Edwin Amold in 1885.

Bhagavad Gita is one of the most vital and spiritual text of Hindus which holds the preaching’s of Lord Krishana. The Bhagavad Gita occurs in the Bhishma Parva of the great epic Mahabharata (500 BC to 400 BC) and comprises 18 chapters from the 6:25th through 6:42nd and consists of 700 verses in semi – dialogue form, from 100,000 complete verses of Mahabharata has been compiled by sage Vyasa.

Gita is a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna (A son of Pandu) in the great Kurukshetra war, described in the epic Mahabharata, this war was the central plot of this epic. When the opposing armies (the sons of Pandu’s brother Dhritarashtra) stand ready to begin battle, prince Arjuna became gloomy at the thought of having to kill his kinsmen and lays down his arms. Krishna, his charioteer, friend and advisor counsels him that, as a warrior, it is Arjun’s duty to fight. The discussion soon evolves into a general philosophical and religious debate. Krishna’s “sermon of Gita” is concerned with upholding the stability of society through the performance of one’s duty (sva-dharma), and proposed three different ways of releasing the self from transmigration, first is the discipline of action (Karma-Yoga), performed in a selfless spirit without any desire for reward.

He argues for self-discipline, in which a person does their duties according to the prescribed tasks (dharma), without any self interest in the personal consequences of the acts. Karma means social obligations, Yoga means join yourself. (Bhagavad Gita – 2/47).

Krishna further argues about the discipline of knowledge (Gyan-yoga), there is nothing great and pious than knowledge in this world. Knowledge is the pinnacle of all actions. (Bhagavad Gita – 4/33). The third and perhaps and superior way is the discipline of devotion to God (Bhakti-yoga), in which the self worships God and in return hopes for an eternal vision of God. Krishna says that if one wants to worship
God by his soul, he has to fulfill all the duties perfectly. There is no way for decline in life, which always walks on right and true path. (Bhagavad Gita – 18/46). These three are the main teachings of Gita.

There are two forms of yoga by which perfection may be attained. One is the yoga of knowledge, and the other is the yoga of action. In matters of religion, its important contribution is the new emphasis placed on devotion, which has since then remained a central path in Hinduism. For those who must lead a normal life in this world, the Bhagavad Gita gave a moral code and a prospect of final libration. Bhagavad Gita is the most popular literature of Indian philosophy because of its language and thoughts which are easy understandable for common people. As Dr.Radhakrishna says, “Bhagavad Gita is not the literature of any specific community; rather it is a cultural treasure of entire human society, which present Hindu Dharma in its completeness.”

The main object of Gita as preached by Krishna, to solve different problems of human life, to precede human beings towards their duties and liabilities, to inspire moral ethics and helps to cope and face all unfavorable circumstances of life positively. The words had been given by Mahatma Gandhi, “Bhagavad Gita is the universal mother, which is open to all.” The theoretical principals of Gita are easy applicable in practical life, it gives a sense of hopefulness and a passion to do the duties (karma). Gita teaches us self management, conflict management, stress and anger management, motivation, transformational leadership and goal setting. In fact it provides a complete sense of management.
Krishna’s main emphasis in the Bhagavad Gita is “detachment” from the fruits or results of actions performed in the course of one’s duty. Current researches on well-being and stress have found that the main source of our stress and anxiety is fear of failure or negative consequences of our actions. When we concentrate only on our work without the anxiety of future failure or success and just perform our task, we experience “flow” in the work. This flow of experience generates excellence and satisfaction. Therefore detachment from the fruits of our action and flow of experience in the work generate true happiness, which in turn lead to sound health and positive psycho-physiological functioning (well-being).

Its intrinsic beauty is that its knowledge applies to all human beings and does not postulate any sectarian ideology or secular view. Albert Einstein believed in efficacy of Bhagavad Gita, he was a faithful believer of principles of life contained in Bhagavad Gita. By indulgence in this holy text brain of Einstein was activated 4%, the remaining 96% lying dormant all the time. In case of human beings 99% portion of brain always lay dormant. It means generally human beings use their brain only 1%.

(The spiritual scientist - A cyber magazine for those who think).

http://ebooks.iskcondesiretree.info/pdf/Spiritual

**Four Ends of Hindu Life**- This doctrine forms the basis of individual and social life of a Hindu. The four purusharthas are dharma, artha, kama and moksha. The first three together are called the trivarga, the triple pursuit. Their fulfillment stimulates moksha or spiritual freedom.
**Dharma**- Dharma is essential for accomplishing material and spiritual goals and for the growth of the individual and society. Dharma is neither religion nor ethics. It is a righteous way of living. It is recognized as the foundation of all good action and hence the stabilizing factor in life.

**Artha**- It means acquiring wealth by honest means. Economic security is the basis of social stability, individual advancement and spiritual attainment. Without artha no desire can be satisfied. The purpose of living would remain unrealized in the absence of economic well-being.

**Kama**- In its broadest sense, the word kama means desire of every kind and its fulfillment but it had a sexual connotation. It emphasizes the fulfillment of emotional satisfaction, with discipline and in accordance with social ethics.

**Moksha**- It refers to the spiritual freedom and self-realization. Freedom from sensual desire and passion is necessary for attaining moksa and is made possible by the proper co-ordination of dharma, artha and kama. Moksha is attained when the individual becomes liberated from the cycle of birth and death and attains eventual union with the Supreme Being. This liberation is the ultimate goal of Hindu religious life.

Hindu philosophy believes that every individual owes **three debts in one’s life** towards God, saints and family. The debt towards God can be repaid through – service to mankind, reverence for elders and teachers, non-violence, truthfulness, obeying the commands of the scriptures, purity in diet, universality and peace. The debt towards saints and sages can be repaid by – reverence to saints, sages and gurus, transmission of the scriptural teachings and cultural heritage, serving to society and poor without
any expectation. The debt towards one’s ancestors can be repaid by – raising one’s family in accordance with the moral and ethical principles of dharma.

Hinduism believes in the “Ten Great Observances” –

- Patience, firmness and stability (dhruti)
- Forgiveness (kshama)
- self-control and contentment (dama)
- Not to steal or conceal, or not to be selfish (asteya)
- Cleanliness, purity and honesty (sausham)
- Control over senses and sexual energy (indriya nigraha)
- Right knowledge of the scripture (dhee)
- Material and spiritual knowledge or study (vidhya)
- Truth (satya)
- Absence of anger (akrodha).

The varna system and the ashrama system were two important components of the Vedic society. The four varnas are, the Brahman, the kshatriya, the vaishya and the shudra. And the four ashrams are –

The Brahmacharya ashrama – a pupil is put through the upanayana ceremony when he is invested with the sacred thread and is made to hear the sacred mantra by the
priest. He begins his educational career. He lives with his teacher. Children from the Brahman, Kshatriya and the Vaishya varnas were initiated into the ashram.

**The grihastha ashrama**- of a person begins with his marriage. A grihastha or householder was expected to fulfill his social obligations to God, parents and to his children by following the three – debt theory, which is already mentioned above.

**The Vanaprastha ashrama**- A person enters this ashram when his children need no further parental care and support. He becomes a hermit and retires along with his wife to a secluded place, in an environment free from society, to lead a life of meditation.

**The Sanyasa ashrama**- This stage commences at the age of seventy five. The person lives a detached social life. His mission is to impart high spiritual education to all.

**Sacred Symbol or word**- **AUM [ॐ]** Aum (Om) sounds as if it is never ending. It is said to be the essence of the Vedas. In sound and form, Aum symbolizes the infinite Brahman (ultimate reality) and the entire universe.

* stands for creation (Brahma)

∪ stands for preservation or substance (Vishnu)

∩ stands for destruction (Mahesh/Shiv)

So, this is representative of the **Trinity of God**. It also relate to the three gunas (satva, rajas, tamas). These three letters also indicate the three planes of existence – heaven (swarga), earth (martya) and netherworld (patala). Swastik is another sacred symbol in Hindu religion. It represents the four directions (east, west, north and south) of the universe.
Hindu religion accepts the existence of several Gods or deities, but the Supreme symbolized in the Trinity; they are not three independent deities but three different aspects of the same Supreme Being. It is similar to the role played by one individual but in different capacities. There are so many deities worshiped by Hindus, for specific purposes and all deities have some specific powers.

Besides the Trinity, there are some planet deities and animal deities simultaneously worshiped by Hindu people. In planet deities, they are nine in number referred to as nava grahas. These grahas are supposed to have a significant impact on the lives of Hindus. The science of study of these planets is called the Vedic astrology. These nine planets are – the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and the two lunar nodes Rahu and Ketu.

Hindus see divinity in all living creatures. Animal deities therefore occupy an important place in Hinduism. Bull, lion, swan, garuna, peacock, mouse etc. are very common as a source of transport for various Gods and Goddess. Animals also appear as independent divine creatures as cow (gow mata), snake (naag devta).

In Hindu mythology the powers of female deities (Saraswati, Lakshmi, Parwati, Durga, Kali), is pictured in form of divine mother. Through the worship of God in the form of the mother, Hinduism offers a unique reverence to womanhood.

Puja / Upasana- a technique to pray to God in Hinduism, is a form of worship. The word upasana (up-near+asana-sit) means to set near. During ishvara upasana (worship, meditation) the devotee sits near the pratima (image) of ishvara with a single minded devotion to talk or connect with the divine.
When the seeker is primarily concerned with the performance of some specific rituals as yajna, it is **physical upasana**. When the upasana is done in the kind of intense meditation which leads to attain peace is known as **mental upasana**. Worship through recitation, chanting, silently repeating mantras, singing hymns in praise of an ishta deva is known as **verbal upasana**. It is the most common form of Hindu worship, prevalent these days. All can participate in such worship individually or collectively.

So, Hinduism is a living tradition which communicates through the hearts, minds and spirits of millions of adherents. It can be said that it is a total way of life. Its greatest feature is its positive ideas. Hinduism believes in the concept of a harmonious global society that should unite, prosper and live in peace.
Islam is the second largest religion in the world (after Christianity). Islam is a divinely revealed monotheistic faith. Islam is Arabic word which means, the act of resignation (acceptance of unpleasant situation) to God. Islam represents a basic unity of belief within rich culture diversity. In world history, the rise and spread of Islam appeared in the seventh century. The center of growth of this new religion was Arabia, and Mecca is the birth place of Islam. People who believe and follow the faith Islam are known as Muslims. The complete revelation of faith was made through the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century A.D. with the revelation of Quran, Islam came into the world and Muhammad became the Prophet.

He was the last messenger in the long chain of Prophets and with him this process of deputation ended. Prophet Muhammad was born in A.D. 570 in a Quraysh (a tribal) family. He was a deeply spiritual man. One night in A.D. 610 he was meditating in a cave on Mount Hira, the angel Gabriel (Jibreel) visited there and mentioned the name Allah, Prophet came to understand the words of God. Realizing that God had chosen him as his messenger, he began to preach what God had revealed to him. The simple message of Islam is – there is no God but Allah. There were so
many followers began to live their lives as lead by the Prophet. Muhammad continued to lead his community both spirituality and in earthly matters until his death in A.D. 632.

Prophet Muhammad established the **monotheistic religion** of Islam and laid the foundations of the Islamic civilization and culture in Arabia in the 7th century. He claimed Muslims to be equal, there were no lineages or castes in Islam, status of women and rights of the less privileged was reflected in the divine message.

The traditional Islam put emphasis on devotional aspects rather than on rituals. Islam lays great emphasis on practice and virtuous ways of living. Prophet preached the Muslims how to purify their hearts and souls, how to improve their morals and build up their outer and inner life.

Early history in 622, Muhammad travelled from Mecca to Madina in the hijrah (emigration) – this forms the starting point in the Muslim dating system.

The **holy Quran** was revealed to Prophet Muhammad by God in stages, over a period of approximately twenty two years in seventh century. These ecstatic utterances were collected, ordered and made into a book, sometime after Muhammad’s death. Muslim looks upon the Quran as the very words of God himself, which convey a divine message to all. There are 114 chapters in the Quran, written in the old Arabic dialect. Each Surah consists of individual Ayat or verses. There are in total 6,348 verses in the Holy Quran.

This Holy book enlightens people’s lives consecutively from 1400 years. All the chapters except one begin with the sentence “Bismillah ir rahman ir raheem”,

80
which means “in the name of Allah, the most beneficent, the most merciful.”

This is the thought with which Muslims start every action. Translations of the Quran exist in over 40 languages. Muslims believe that, it is the sacred words of God.

Main categories in the Quran are:

- Nature of the Spiritual World
- The Law and Commandments
- Historical Accounts
- The Wisdom
- The Prophecies

The holy Quran contains a wide knowledge about economics, business, astronomy, management, biology, geography, history, politics etc. It is not merely a religious scripture rather a good source to show the right path in life. (Ali Asgar. 2013).

The Hadith and the Sunnah is also the Holy Scriptures in Muslim community. The term Hadith comes from the Arabic root word hdth means “to happen” and hence refers to “to report”, “to give as news” or “to speak of”. The Hadith comprises the traditions of the Prophet in the form of narrative and record. In this text, Prophet said to have shaped and determined the behavior patterns of Muslims. The Hadith provides a rich religious and social history.
The Sunnah is made up of the deeds, speech and approval of the Prophet Muhammad. This text is actually the narrative stories about the Prophet. It includes many aspects of the Prophet’s life as religious belief and rituals, eating, dressing, personal hygiene, marriage, treatment of spouses, diplomacy and warfare.

So, Hadith forms the tradition in Islam and Sunnah is the system of obligation derived from it. Above all the Quran is the primary source of Islam and the book of God, the example of his own way of life.

Islam is the religion which brings peace to mankind when he commits himself to God and submits himself to His will. There are three things are necessary for the followers of Islam – faith, action and realization. Faith in Allah and His Prophets; Action in accordance with that faith; and the realization of one’s relation to God as a result of action and obedience. Islam teaches its followers to serve and to submit, these are the ways one can get peace of body and mind.

Islam Shariah Law and the five Pillars of Islam –

Islam is an Arabic word meaning peace, purity, acceptance, commitment, obedience and submission to the will of God. A Muslim is the believer who accepts God’s sovereignty and completely surrenders to the Islamic law known as the Shariah. This law is the expression of God’s command for Muslim society and constitutes a system of duties that are necessary for a Muslim by virtue of his religious belief. The Shariah literally means “the path leading to the watering place.” It constitutes a code of conduct that guides the Muslims towards a practical
expression of their religious conviction in this world. The Shariah encompasses five main branches:

- Aqaaid (belief)
- Ibadath (worship and prayers)
- Ma’amilah (transactions and business)
- Ma’ashirah (way of life and habits)
- Tasawwuf (manners)

During the earliest decades after the death of the Prophet, certain basic features of the religious-social organization of Islam were formulated as the “Pillars of Islam”. These five pillars are the five obligations or foundations that every Muslim must satisfy in order to live a good and responsible life. The five pillars are a matter between the individual Muslim and God.

The five pillars consist of:

1. Shahadah- This pillar basically refers to the belief in one God. It comprises the basic belief that “La ilaha illallahu Muhammad ur Rasulullah”, means, “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger (Prophet).” This statement is known as “Kalama”. There is only one Supreme Lord of the universe. He is omnipotent, omnipresent and the sustainer of the world.

2. Salat- Performing ritual prayers in the proper way, five times a day, whether done in the mosque or anywhere else. Before a prayer (Namaz)
washing of hands, face and feet are performed. This is called the “wazu”. Praying together helps people to realize that all humanity is one and all are equal in the sight of Allah. During worship there is a set of movements that are performed with the five daily prayers. In the ritual prayers there is no need of a priest as an intermediary.

3. **Zakat** - Paying alms to benefit the poor and the needy. This is the obligatory tax, compulsory of a set proportion of one’s wealth to charity. It is regarded as a type of worship of and self-purification. It is the systematic giving of 2.5% of one’s wealth each year to benefit the poor. Payment of zakat is obligatory by the Quran but a voluntary charity dependent on individual conscience.

4. **Sawm** - Fasting during the Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During the 29/30 days of Ramadan, all about Muslims must give up food or drink of any sort, smoking and sexual activity during the hours of day light. Muslims who are physically or mentally unwell as less than 12 years old, the very old, pregnant ladies, breast-feeding, menstruating, travelling are excused. Due to these reasons who does not fast, they can do fast at a later date or donate (charity) to the poor instead. People are expected to avoid evil thoughts and deeds during Ramadan. This fasting teaches lot self-discipline.

5. **Hajj** - The fifth and final pillar of Islam. It is a pilgrimage to Mecca that every Muslim undertakes at least once in their lifetime if affordable. It is believed that the Prophet Ibrahim was told by Allah to build a shrine dedicated to him. Ibrahim and his son build a small stone structure, which was to be the gathering place for all who
wished to strengthen their faith in Allah. This stone is placed in the structure known as the **Kabah**.

During hajj pilgrimage, the Muslims walk seven times around the Kabah which is how a shrine within the mosque as an essential activity. The kissing and touching of the Black stone (Hajar-al-Aswad) and running between Mt Safa and Mt Marwah seven times. At the 2nd stage of the ritual, the pilgrim proceeds from Mecca to Mina (a few miles away) from there they go to Arafat where they hear a sermon and spend one afternoon. The last right of spending the night at Muzdalifah and offering sacrifice on the last day of ihram, which is the **Id** (festival) of sacrifice.

Muslims believe that **angels** are a part of God’s representatives and serve Him by protecting humans. They believe that angels are created from light. Islam believes in a long line of Prophets that are common to Christianity too – Adam, Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Dawud (David), Isa (Jesus). Muhammad is the final Prophet. He was influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition in his concept of the Day of Judgment as well as in his concept of himself as a Prophet.

Followers of Islam believe in the **Day of Judgment**. It is the day when the life of every human-being will be assessed to decide whether they will go to heaven or hell. At the day the dead will be resurrected to be judged according to the records kept in two books, one containing a person’s good deeds and the other his evil deeds.

**Worship** - Worship is an essential part of all religions. It is motivated by different objectives, assumes different forms and is performed under a different set of rules in each religion. Worship, according to Islam is a means for the purification of man’s
soul and his practical life. (Khan and Iqbal, 2006). Muslim worships in mosque as like church or temple. There is no picture or statues in this place. Muslim believes there can be no image of Allah, who is only a presence. It is more usual for woman to pray at home. Many large mosques also function as religious schools.

Muslims believe in predestination which is the belief that God has already decided what will happen. They believe in salvation in the sense of escaping future punishment, which will be pronounced on sinners on the judgment day. Prophet Muhammad says that, God had predestined some to heaven and others to hell.

There are two sub-divisions in Muslim community Sunni and Shia denominations. When the Prophet died in the early 7th century, he left behind an Islamic state in the Arabian Peninsula with around 1,000,000 Muslim inhabitants. The question aroused that who should succeed the Prophet and lead the Islamic state that created the divide. One group of Muslims (the large group) elected Abu Baker, a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad, as the next Caliph of the Muslims and he was duly appointed. This group has come to be known as Sunni.

The other group (the smaller group) believed that the Prophet’s son-in-law, Ali should become the Caliph. This group is known as Shia. This group believed that it is the divine right of the family of the Prophet to be the Caliph. Both Sunnis and Shias agree that Muhammad was the final Prophet and accept their views using Islam’s sacred scriptures.

There are some differences found between both the groups. The Shias give preference to the Hadith as narrated by Ali and Fatima and their close associates.
The Sunnis consider the Hadith narrated by any of 12,000 companions equally. Sunni Muslims pray five times a day, where as Shias can combine prayers to pray three times a day. The practice of Muttah marriage, a temporary marriage is permitted in Shias but in Sunnis it is forbidden, as they believe the Prophet Muhammad abolished it.

Islam originated and was glorified in the prosperous city of Mecca. The extension of the early Islamic conquest and spread of the Islam religion was due to invitation, missionaries and military expansion. The majority of Muslims are to be found in Asia and Africa.

Islam is more a way of life. Islamic practices express itself in different ways within a vast array of cultures. Islam is a total system of living. Islam is not a religion rather a way of life; it does not recognize distinctions between state and religion. This tradition put emphasis on devotional aspects rather than on rituals. Islam lays great emphasis on practice and virtuous way of living. The spiritual way of Islam is aimed to cure man from indecent habits and to make him a perfect servant of God.
Christianity was founded in the first century AD by Jesus Christ, and has become the largest religion of the world with maximum number of followers. Its groups include the Roman Catholic churches, the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Protestant churches and there are several independent churches of Eastern Christianity as well as numerous sects throughout the world. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox are largely in agreement while Protestantism differs from both on many issues. The term Protestant used for all who claimed to be Christian but opposed Catholicism.

Christianity as a faith focuses on the historical figure of Jesus Christ, who has two dimensions- human and divine. Christian believes that Jesus is the son of God, and revel God to us. He was crucified, died and then resurrected (came back to life), after that he gave the power of the ‘holy spirit’ to His believers. God (the father), son (Christ Himself) and Holy Spirit are referred to as the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the bond that unites people with God. God is personal and the Holy Spirit is a personal presence.

As a tradition, Christianity is more than a system of religious belief. It has also generated a culture, a set of ideas and ways of life. Christianity is thus both a living
tradition of faith as well as the culture. Christians focuses their faith in Jesus Christ as someone who is also a present reality. This tradition believes in the idea of **monotheism**. Christianity believes that God is a person, who is capable of affecting and being affected by other human beings. Christianity originally developed as a part of Judaism, and got separated from that later.

**Jesus Christ** lived from about 3 BC to 30 AD. He was born in a village known as Bethlehem, and grew up in another village Nazareth, where He worked as a carpenter until He was 30 years of age. He did not have a natural father. His mother was Mary and as per the will of God she was a virgin mother. His father- father Joseph belonged to the industrial class, being a carpenter. When Jesus first became conscious of the fact that He was God’s son, it was his early boyhood years. This time He realized His unique relationship to God as His father.

Jesus had 12 disciples who were known as the Apostles of Christ. One of his disciples “Judas” betrayed Jesus at a later stage. Jesus had warned His disciples that He was going to be killed by Romans. He organized a supper for His disciples on the eve of His Passion (a term refer to the suffering of Christ for the sake of humanity). On the day He instituted the Holy Eucharist, in which the bread and wine served as symbol of Christ’s body and blood. This meal has known in religious history as **the last supper**. It was on Thursday.

The next day (Friday) He was made to carry a heavy wooden cross for a long distance uphill and was finally nailed to the cross. This Friday came to be known as the Good Friday. On the Sunday following His execution, some of
His women disciples found that the tomb into which His body had been placed, was empty. Jesus then appeared to them alive, He was seen by many of His followers over the next few days before He was taken up into heaven. This event is celebrated as Easter Sunday when Jesus was resurrected. The spiritual presence of Jesus called Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus saved individuals from spiritual and physical death and helped them attain salvation from their sins (faults, misdeeds and disobedience).

The Bible, the holy scripture of the Christians is said to be a reveled book. It is the work of spiritual inspiration from God and an excellent guide for life. The Bible teaches us what is true and right, to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It is a message directly given by God himself. The Bible is a collection of documents that includes history, legends, poetry, letters and prophecy. It contains a variety of writings, ranging from love poetry to laws, but focuses on the story of God’s relationship with Israel and Jesus’ life and teachings. This Holy Scripture is divided into the Old and New Testaments as a collection of 66 books.

Jews believe the first portion of the Bible, which refers to the Old Testaments. It contains documents from pre-Christian Judaism. The Old Testament is the Christian name for the Hebrew Bible, which serves as the first division of the Christian Bible. Christians strongly believes on Ten Commandments as given in the Old Testaments.
Ten Commandments- God gave commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai and was written on tables of stone.

1. I am the Lord thy God – thou shall not have strange Gods before me.

2. Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

3. Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

4. Honor thy father and thy mother.

5. Thou shall not kill.

6. Thou shall not commit adultery.

7. Thou shall not steal.

8. Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

9. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife.

10. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s house.


The New Testament is the Christian portion of the Bible, consisting of 27 books of different lengths dating from the earliest Christian period. The seven epistles or letters authored by St. Paul were written between AD 50 and AD 60, most of the remaining books were written between AD 70 and AD 100. Most compositions reflect the needs of the community, their religious convictions and cultural heritage.
The present New Testament appears for the first time in the letter of St. Athanasius written in AD 367. All major Christian traditions use the same New Testament.

The Bible does contain a record of religious experiences of some of the most gifted spiritual saints. The real meaning of the Bible is that a Christian should meet Him in prayers and get a spiritual fellowship with Him (God).

There are two holy celebrations in Christianity like- Christmas and Easter. Christmas is the most important Christian holy day that marks the birth of Jesus, the son of God. Christmas has roots in the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. Christmas comes just after the middle of winter. This festival falls on the same date every year (25th December). This has been a time of feasting and celebration. People enjoys the day to the exchange of gifts as a celebration. The other main festival in Christianity is Easter.

This festival celebrates to remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The date of Easter changes each year. On Good Friday, Jesus was executed by crucifixion. His body was taken down from the cross and buried in a cave. The tomb was guarded and an enormous stone was put over the entrance. On the following Sunday (the Easter Sunday), some women found that the stone had been moved and the tomb was empty. They saw Jesus alive; He was seen for days afterward by many people. This is the significance of Easter.

Christianity is the third largest community in India next to Islam. According to history, the Apostle Thomas came to India and started the church here, the church in Kerala originated in at least the sixth century AD. The French Catholic missionaries
began to arrive here in the 16th century and Protestant missionaries came later in the 19th century.

Christians had the most impact the social area, as a moral influence rather than as a religious force. The Christian missionaries challenged the caste system by allowing the low caste people into the Christianity.

Jesus advised people to live together with love. The motivating force behind the Christian life is love and makes relationships with others with full of love feeling. Christian spirituality can be defined as people’s relationship to the Absolute. This power (Absolute) is latently present as a quiet force in the background, as an inspiration and as an orientation in our daily lives. (Mukhopadhyay Rajatsubhra 2012).

There are some common behaviors found in Hindu, Muslim and Christian traditions that we can use for enhancing spirituality and consequently to maintain physical and psychological health. These include practices such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to holy shrines, reading holy books and scripture, studying faith literature and practicing particular rituals (e.g., sacraments holy days). (Husain Akbar 2011, pp. 149).

All the religions in this world teaches some common values to people as, love each other, compassion, humanity, cooperation, make aware towards social and ethical responsibilities and works as a control mechanism. Religion as a belief system affect values, laws, customs, rites and general behavior
pattern. In this way all the religions walks on a common path to play a common role and to fulfill a common goal.

Here are some common things found in three major religions- Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. These similarities found in three holy books- Gita, Quran and Bible.

All three holy books says similar concept about God that,

1. God is one - unique and greatest.

2. God is only - the giver of life and death, the creator, the producer and destroyer of His creation.

3. God is only – the cherisher, the sustainer and the supporter.

4. God is only – the Almighty, omnipresent, omnipotent.

Similar concept about moral and ethical values –

1. Get wisdom and knowledge from your nearest ones.

2. Have an understanding to judge the right and the wrong so that you do justice without any partiality.

3. Do love and pay regard all beings as you.

4. Help the poor, the stranger, the orphans, the needy, the widow, and the beggar.

5. Obey and be kind to the parents.
6. Be diligent and always engage in work.

7. Acquire good characteristics, get rid from all bad habits and guard your tongue for best results

Cited in – Dr. Manmohan Singh (2000). “In search of a world religion”. 
SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

Each religion manifests some aspects of the same truth, but the emphasis may differ according to the need of man of the period or age or race. India represents a bright future for the world in terms of spiritual awakening. The traditional religious system of India helps to provide an awareness of the way of spirit fullness – believing in sacredness, believing in unity and believing in transformation. Conceptually spirituality and religiosity are taken as sharing much in common. As religion is institutionized spirituality. There are several religions having different sets of beliefs, traditions and doctrines.

Thus spirituality is typically regarded as a personal relationship with something divine but religion is a social institution which gratifies the need for belonging, social standing, social support and powers.

The personal form of religion is spirituality and the practical societal form of spirituality is religion.

Religion is concerned with a framework for beliefs, traditions, conduct and rituals; it tends to focus on ideology and rules of faith. Whereas spirituality encompasses an individual’s relations to self, to others and to universe as well as the feeling of inner peace, strength, discipline, interconnectedness and meaning to life. It focuses on experiences and relationships.
Religion and spirituality are intimately interconnected through overlapping concepts, even though these terms are not interchangeable. Where religion is typically more strict and organized, spirituality tends to be defined by each individual on a more personal level. It is viewed as an attribute (much like a personality trait) of an individual. Religion and spirituality are inherently social-psychological phenomena, which develops across the life span, whether dealing with children, adolescents, adults or the aged.

Dull and Skokan (1995), described religion/spirituality as a superordinate schema. Belief in a higher power creates a sense of optimism; control or meaning that would affect stress level and health.

The separation of these two terms was originally prompted by the rise in secularism in the mid-1900. Spirituality became separated from religion and began to acquire distinct connotations, and found associated with the personal experiences of the transcendent. (Zinnbauer, 1997).

Day, 2005, says that spirituality as a sense of connectedness to a large purpose that is associated with a higher power, where religion involves membership in a particular community of faith, rules and belief systems. These constructs are fully independent; people can be both spiritual and religious, neither spiritual nor religious, or just one and not the other.

As spirituality is one’s personal relationship to God and this relationship is maintained through prayer, meditation, reading Holy Scripture etc. (Jolinda Cary, April 29, 2006).
Spirituality and religion are very close concepts on some extent as well as these are distinct from each other.

**Similarities**- Spirituality and religion both focus on the sacred or divine (the higher power, the ultimate reality). People, who are spiritual or religious, have a strong belief on the divine power. There are usually specific practices as prayer, chanting, holy texts etc. that people use to attain a sense of the sacred.

**Differences**- As religion implies a particular faith tradition that includes acceptance of a supernatural reality and being linked to formal religious institutions whereas spirituality is not necessarily bound to any particular religious tradition. Spirituality is just focused on the self, while religion is focused on God.

If we say that someone is deeply religious, we tend to assume, that person regularly attend formal institutional practices and rituals. If we say that someone is very spiritual, it means, that person has some strong beliefs and practices and necessarily attends and attached with formal religious practices and traditions. (Mohan Deepa, Indian Psychology Institute).

Burkhardt (1989) distinguishes between these two concepts, stating that spirituality is the essence of one’s human nature, whether or not it is expressed through religious beliefs or practices.

Dein, (2005) suggest that religiousness has increasingly described as “narrow and institutional” whereas spirituality has specified as “personal and subjective”.

98
Thus these two constructs are different with a thin line separating them. Spirituality emerges through motivational behavioral aspects as patriotism, nationalism, humanism, universalism and doing work for the upliftment of the community/society on a humanitarian ground.

It is often expressed through fine arts, music, literary writings and research endeavors. Spirituality operates in private, it is intrinsic and chosen. While religion may sometimes acts as a driving force. Religious people tend to move for prayer at Church/ Gurudwara or Temple. Religious people have difficulty in interactions as- “my way is right”. Craving for ego, power, control, prestige and arrogant authoritarianism may act as underlying currents of religion.

So, religion defined more narrowly as a formal, ritualized and institutionalized system of beliefs- should not be treated as synonymous of spirituality but a cultural representation of spirituality. (Eckersley, 2007).

A key break from the past is signaled by the shift from perfection to wholeness. The religious ideas of past are often not suited to present need of discipline; morality, social obligations, pity etc., and the need to find a spiritual idea in which old moral conflicts are resolved in a new understanding.

Central to the experience of both religion and spirituality is a search for the sacred (the divine being, the ultimate reality or ultimate truth). Consequently on the higher level of consciousness true religion and spirituality merge. As the great scientist Albert Einstein says, “As the journey of spiritual development of human
being, proceeds we realize the actual meaning and value of true religiousness. Because then, religious enlightenment will occur from logical knowledge.”

As Dr. Rohidas Vaghmare, Cardiologist, Mumbai says, “We consider religion to cope with our daily life insecurities. But today people move from religious rituals to just spiritual orientation with meditation, yoga and to broaden human values.”

In world religion parliament which was held at Simizue (Japan) on 23rd July, 1955, it was asserted – They breathe the same air, take the same light, live on the same earth but they fight for individualism and nationalism. They are ignorant of the real principal of religion.
WELL-BEING

Well-being is concerned with how and why people experience their lives in positive ways, including cognitive judgment (subjective well-being) and affective reactions (psychological well-being). General well-being is a subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life, one’s role in the world, sense of achievements, belongingness without worries etc. It is an outcome of a complex usage of biological, socio-cultural, psychological, economic and spiritual factors.

As Khalique and Khalid (2009) found, that higher the level of life stress, lower is the general well-being.

Well-being is a fundamental component of health through which one realizes one’s own cognitive, affective and relational abilities. Heider (1997) was the first who propose the definition for general well-being; “it is mainly governed by two important factors- personal powers one possesses and environmental powers for exhibition of any behavior”.

So well-being is the process of living at one’s highest possible level as a whole person. It is not a state that is attained ones but is an ongoing, dynamic and fluid process through time and efforts.

Well-being may be referred an individual’s satisfaction with life, with cultural and intellectual conditions. Each individual makes broad judgment about life as a whole as well as about domains such as marriage and work. Thus the measure of well being includes several dimensions as life satisfaction, work satisfaction increase of
positive affect and low levels of negative affect. Well being is – being happy, achieving self respect, taking part in the life of community, appearing in public without shame. These functions make up a person’s being and the evaluation of a person’s well-being.

So, well being is generally defined as a combination of two factors: positive affect (happiness and satisfaction with life and low level of negative affect (stress, depression, lack of confidence).

Gallup has defined well-being as an integration of evaluations (how one rates his/her life) and experiences (what one experiences in life) across five essential elements of living. These elements include:

1. Career (how one spends time during day),
2. Social (quality of relationships),
3. Financial (degree of financial security),
4. Physical (ability to do what one wants free of distress and impairment),
5. Community (feeling safe and involved in community).

(Cited in- Rath, T. and Harter, J. 2010).

Well being is an outcome of a complex usage of biological, socio-cultural, psychological, economic and spiritual factors. It is closer to mental health, happiness, life satisfaction and actualization of one’s full potential. It is found that family support and activities are important correlates or predictors of well-being. The feeling of
happiness and satisfaction subjectively experienced by the individual has been termed as psychological well-being. Freedman (1978) says, one may be dissatisfied with life in spite of having plenty of wealth and family riches. Well being is more a question of our attitude and approach to life situations. In addition cognitive processes such as aspiration level, social comparison, and adaptation level are also related to this concept.

The Eastern and Western concept of Well-Being-

The conceptualization made in the west is to satisfy one’s needs avoidance of frustrations and stress, and a certain amount of control on the environment that enhances the satisfaction of personal and social needs. In the Indian tradition control over the senses is thought to be essential to well-being. It is a state of “good mind “which is peaceful and quite. It is believed that the healthy mind acts but does not react, the mind free from conflicts and perform all duties perfectly. (Mohan K. K. 2001).

The yogic meaning of well being is more than just psychological. It means physical fitness, mental agility and spiritual verve. Further, if a person cannot successfully establish relationship with others, with God, feel unable to maintain balance in body, mind and spirit, which viewed as a disturbed state of an individual. (Bhushan, L. I. 1998).

There are two schools of well-being defining two different viewpoints- The Hedonic and The Eudemonic School. The two types of well-being subjective and psychological well being are based on thoughts of these schools-
1. The Hedonic School

The hedonic school believes that individuals are motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain. They see happiness as the end state or the goal itself. They proposed that three A’s of happiness have been conceptualized as Acceptance, Affection and Achievement. Along with these three ‘A’ true happiness comes from commitment and leading a meaningful life. This tradition believes that gaining pleasure is the most important thing of life.

Subjective well being (SWB)- The concept or theory of subjective well being propounded by Diener (1984). The concept is based on hedonic school of well being. Subjective (emotional) well being refers to the subjective experience of positive and negative emotions. This construct is defined in terms of happiness, life satisfaction and the balance between positive and negative affect. It is a global judgment of life satisfaction.

Subjective well being may be evaluated by examining its cognitive dimension (the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect). If one frequently experiences a high level of life satisfaction, positive affect and seldom experiences negative affects, it could be said that he/she has a high level of subjective well being. The affective part is guided by emotions and feelings while the cognitive part is based on information based appraisal of one’s life for right judgment.

The hedonic school (subjective well being) emphasized on happiness of the individual as a main life goal. Happiness is an emotional or affective state that is characterized by feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction. It is the ability to enjoy life
experiences and it is composed of three related components – positive affect, absence of negative affect and satisfaction with life as a whole.

The “happy person” emerges as a young, healthy, well-educated, well-paid, extroverted, optimistic, worry free, spiritual, married person with high self-esteem, high job morale, modest aspiration, and a wide range of intelligence. As Daugherty, (2005) found that, women who are securely attached to their partners, experienced high satisfaction and stability and who are less securely attached experienced lower levels of happiness which further declined the rate of satisfaction over time.

There are some correlates or determinants of subjective well being that influences it in a wide range.–

These are personality factors, contextual and situational factors, demographic factors, and institutional factors, environmental and economic factors.

Better health is associated with higher SWB and married couple found higher rated on SWB than others. SWB is “U” shaped with age. It is higher among young people, declines in middle age and again increases in older age. As the climate is concerned, global warming might reduces SWB all over the globe. In a broad perspective unemployment affects SWB through 2 channels – first it creates a direct negative effect on people who lose their job as well as an indirect negative effect on the entire population (higher risk of losing a job.) (Diener & Smith, 1999).
It is found in a study that, SWB fosters good outcome in many domains of life as work, relationships, health etc. Low SWB found associated with general health risk and higher rates of suicide. (Koivumaa-Honkanen, 2000).

A **Causal Chain Path Model** was developed by James. E. Kennedy and Kanthamani, which represents a connection among religious commitment, meaning in life and SWB.

![Causal Chain Path Model Diagram]

It is clear through this model that mystical experiences leads to enhance the importance of religion for the individual which further creates a clear sense for meaning in one’s life. A meaningful and goal-set viewpoint helps to enhance SWB in a great extent.

Thus, transcendental experiences to importance of religion to meaning in life to SWB gives a casual chain path model, which means every next aspect is dependent on previous aspect (causal chain). (Kennedy & Kanthamani, September, 1995).

2. **The Eudemonic School**

This school believes that people always try to seek pleasure and peace in their lives. This tradition proposed the degree to which one realizes his/her true potential or
unique capacity, meaning and purpose in life. They accepted cheerfulness, optimism, playfulness, self-control, a sense of detachment, and freedom from frustration, anxiety and loneliness as indications of a good and peaceful life. The concept of psychological well being is based on the eudemonic school of well being.

**Psychological well being (PWB)** – The theory of psychological well-being has been advocated by Ryff (1989). Psychological well-being resides within the experience of the individual. It may be defined as the state of feeling healthy and happy, having satisfaction, relaxation, pleasure and peace of mind. It deals with people’s feelings about everyday experiences in life activities. Such feelings may range from negative mental states (psychological strains) as anxiety, depression, distress, frustration, dissatisfaction etc. to a state which has been identified as positive mental health. This positive mental health is based on a correct self-concept, the acceptance of one’s self, development and growth in life, self actualization, perception of reality, ability to meet situational requirements and efficiency in problem-solving. (Joshi Shobha, Kumari Shilpa and Jain Madhu, 2008).

Perceptions of PWB are directly linked to the intensity of coping efforts and performance. It is defined as a person’s evaluative reaction to his or her life, either in terms of life satisfaction (cognitive evaluation), or positive, negative affect (emotional reaction).

These cognitive evaluation and emotional reaction are the components of SWB and the perception of these components lies under PWB. So, subjective and psychological well-being is inter-correlated terms.
The findings revealed that, negative perceptions and acceptance of PWB are associated with decreased positive affect and with less adaptive and coping efforts. Neuroticism found negatively correlated with PWB, and positive aspect of personality as extraversion has a positive correlation with PWB. (Chaturvedula Sowgandhi and Joseph Catherine, 2007).

Positive psychological functioning or well-being includes such perspectives-
Maslow’s (1968) conception of self actualization,
Roger’s (1961) view of the fully functioning person,
Jung’s (1933), Von Franz (1964) formulation of individualization,
Allport’s (1961) conception of maturity,
Ericson’s (1959) psycho-social stage model,
Buhler’s (1935) basic life tendencies that work towards the fulfillment of life,
Jahoda’s (1958) positive criteria for mental health. (Wong Davidicus. 2012).

Bhogle and Prakash (1995) have found that PWB consists of some factors which include both positive and negative components. A person high in PWB not only carries higher level of life satisfaction, self esteem, positive feeling and attitudes, but also manages tensions, negative thoughts, ideas and feelings more efficiently. So PWB is not just a moderator variable to our performance rather it makes life meaningful and purposeful.
There are many determinants like faith, hope, forgiveness, love and social support which have a noticeable effect on PWB.

**Faith** – A person’s beliefs strongly influences his or her health. Faith increases the body’s resistance to stress. People who have a meaningful spiritual faith are more likely to experience a sustained level of happiness and well-being.

**Hope** – It is a positive attitude which gives strength to face difficulties in life. Optimist people are rarely prone to depression and having a sense of complete well-being.

**Forgiveness** – It is a practice that encouraged by many spiritual traditions. Forgiveness is a release of hostility and resentment from past hurts. Unforgiving people have increased anxiety symptoms, increased paranoid symptoms, and increased frequency of psychosomatic complications and increased incidence of heart disease. Act of forgiveness results better health outcomes and enhance a sense of well-being.

**Love and Social Support** – A close network of family and friends give emotional support which helps to protect people from many diseases. These people tend to resist unhealthy behaviors. Social support provides a buffer against strain caused by psychological stress.

There are many dimensions of well-being guided by researchers. Each dimension provides a total wellness perspective. Each dimension needs to be well
nourished to ensure optimal ways of being and living. Professor Richard Coles (2011) considers many dimensions of well-being.

**Emotional well-being** – The ability to recognize, understand, experience and express a full range of emotions and to channel our emotions into healthy behaviors that satisfy our personal and social goals.

**Environmental well-being** – An awareness and appreciation of the critical role the environment plays in our individual well-being and human activity impacts the environment.

**Financial well-being** – Decision making ability and learning how to use credit wisely, save, invest and plan for the future.

**Intellectual well-being** – An active mind is essential for overall wellness. Being open to new ideas, thinking critically, being creative and curious, being motivated to master new skills is the key to intellectual well-being.

**Occupational well-being** – Achieving personal satisfaction and enrichment in one’s life through work.

**Physical well-being** – Achieving optimal wellness through building physical strength, flexibility, nutrition also taking medical care. Physical health directly affects one’s emotional and psychological wellness.

**Social well-being** – The interaction and contributions to the environment and the community. Maintain satisfying relationships, intimacy and learning good
communication skills. All these contribute to a positive state of social wellness, which contribute to overall well-being.

**Spiritual well-being** – Finding meaning and purpose to life is the basis of spiritual wellness. Spiritually healthy individual lives life with a broader sense of purpose and having peace in all ways. Spiritual wellness gives a sense of easiness which helps in resolving stress.

In the present research work, “Ryff scale of psychological well-being” has been selected to check the level of well-being of the respondents. So, here we are going to discuss the dimensions of psychological well-being given by Professor Carol Ryff (1989). Prof. Ryff has discussed six closely interwoven dimensions of a capable self.

1. **Autonomy** – It is a quality of self-determination, independence and the regulation of behavior from within. The fully functioning person is described as having an internal locus of evaluation, does not look to others for approval and evaluates oneself by personal standards.

2. **Environmental Mastery** – The individual’s ability to choose or create environments suitable to his or her psychic conditions. Maturity and life span development are requiring for the ability to manipulate and control complex environments. Active participation in and mastery of the environment are important ingredients of an integrated framework of positive psychological functioning.
3. **Personal growth** – Optimal psychological functioning requires that one continue to develop one’s potential to grow and expand as a person. Openness to experience is a key characteristic of the fully functioning person. Such an individual is continuously developing and becoming, rather than achieving a fixed state wherein all problems are solved.

4. **Positive relations with others** – The ability to love is viewed as a central component of mental health and warm, trusting interpersonal relations. Warm relating to others is posed as a criterion of maturity. Self actualize people are described as having strong feeling of empathy and affection for all human beings. It is emphasized that positive and strong relation with other people is a very important aspect of psychological well-being.

5. **Purpose in life** – When one has a feeling that there is purpose in and meaning to life, he or she tends to possess good mental health and having a sense of well-being. In later life, as being productive and creative with maturity, the individual has set a goal with a more clear vision and familiar with his/her purpose in life. One who functions positively has goals, intentions and a sense of direction; all these contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful.

6. **Self–acceptance** – An individual’s sense of self acceptance is the most dominating dimension of well-being. It is a central feature of mental health. Holding positive attitude towards oneself emerges as a central characteristic of positive psychological functioning and self-actualization.
So, it is found that well-being may be referred to as an individual’s intra-psychic balance and the relationship of one’s psychic structures with external environment and social functioning for making satisfactory personal and social relationships. It indicates that well-being is not only a matter of an individual but also of the society at large. Positive attitude, positive thinking and optimism are the main features of well-being. An individual having these features in early life, predict overall well-being in later years.
**Spirituality and Well-being**

Coming to the contemporary world, we can say that today mankind finds their selves in a miserable plight. Despite the tremendous achievements of science and technology which have enable us to dive into the sea far deeper than the fish, fly in the air faster and higher than the eagle, hide far deeper into the earth than the reptiles and even to reach the moon and walk on its surface; our mental agony we have to bear is greater than ever in the past. Our life becomes more comfortable and luxurious than ever before but this luxury and comfort brings conflict in our minds. Maintaining good health, however, involves more than just caring for your physical needs. There is something else that plays a powerful role in our well-being.

All of these denotes the great achievements of science and technology but also pushes the humankind in a dark room of frustration as a result of competitive tendency. Anxiety, depression, Blood pressure, Insomnia, Neurotic disorders, psychosomatic disorders is very common in the present scenario. These conditions are capable enough to give us the answer that, why people are approaching spiritual practices more frequently these days, why people are running to learn “Art of living” under the guidance of “Sri Sri Ravi Shankar” and follow the teachings of “Osho” as the modern philosophy of life.

It is all happening because a sound body and sound mind needs some kind of sound spirituality and a sense of spirituality gives peace, patience, maturity and a whole sense of well-being. An understanding of spirituality
gives a strong mental support to nurture our inner world, a feeling of gratification and security. Spiritual people are rarely depressed, have excellent physical health and are satisfied with the meaning and purpose they find in their lives. Spiritual attendance provide social support which protects people from social isolation, gives a sense of belonging, self esteem and equipping them to cope with stress and negative life events.

Spirituality finds helpful to face and cope with traumatic life events because it provides a strong belief system and a positive way of thinking about inevitable stressful situations. Researches indicate that people having a strong sense of spiritual orientation, protects and preserve their relationship by being faithful. Those with a regular spiritual attendance tend to have higher levels of self esteem and more optimistic in life. People are more active in spiritual practices found more positive about quality of relationships and concerned for others.

After realizes the importance of spirituality in human life, there are so many formal institutions have been opened in all over the world. The goal of these institutions is to develop a sense to have a peaceful life and to find satisfaction with a clear meaning of life.

1. **Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health**, Duke University, was established in 1998. This institution is focused on conducting research, training and promoting scholarly activities related to religion, spirituality, health and wellbeing. Here researches shows that 8 minutes deep meditation increases
brain functioning, eliminates stress and gives peace of mind. Spirituality has been found important to caregivers of victims of chronic illness.

www.project-meditation.org/LifeFlow

www.advaita-academy.org

2. **Multi Faith Council**, North West, Ohio works and grows in the understanding, compassion, respect all faiths, cooperation that enables us to live peacefully with all.

3. **The Global Dharma Center**, U.S.A. is a nonprofit corporation with a purpose to inspire and empower people from all cultures around the world and to live with our inherent spiritual nature. Debra and William Miller co-founded this corporation as a sectarian institution in May 2000.

4. **Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA)**, Manila, Philippines is an institution to research on the challenges of Asian faiths, cultures and traditions to build a world where there would be a fullness of life. ISA commits to the search and research of lived spirituality, that is dynamic, transformative and liberating that leads to inter-faith dialogue and collaborations.

**Indian Perspective:**

**The Global Oneness Commitment**, It was an eight year project with the goal of uniting people around the globe to mutual action in order to not only save what we have but to transform the planet to an increase in spiritual awareness. The project was synchronized with the twin venues transits of 2004 & 2012. The project was initiated
by the Global Oneness Foundation based in Stockholm, Sweden in association with the Times Foundation, based in New Delhi, India.

1. **The Indian Psychology Institute**, Pondicherry works to explore and develop what the Indian traditions can contribute to modern insights. The institute helps to understand Indian Philosophy, Yoga and a life affirming spirituality. It helps us to find a clear sense regarding our faith, love, values, meaning and purpose in our life.

2. **Institute of Spiritual Science and World Analytical Research**, Guwahati, Assam, is an institute of self development for success in life, to learn and educate people about the universal religion of human being. The institute helps people to develop moral values, spiritual wisdom, attitude management, and humanism. This institute was founded in October 2nd, 2011.

3. **Spiritual Meditation and Yoga Research School (SMYOGARS)**, Chamoli, Uttrakhand, is not only a yoga training center but also a center for research on Spiritualism, Meditation, Healing and other such ancient techniques. The aim of the institute is to support and help people who are searching for peace. [www.peace.ind.in/programmes.html](http://www.peace.ind.in/programmes.html)

**Ashrams in India**

Even though technique is different, all the Indian ashrams have the same aim, i.e. make people spiritually aware and contribute to the social good. All these institutions are trying to take us on a spiritual journey and teach us the art of living.
1. **Art of living foundation:** It was founded in 1982 by Sri Sri Ravishankar. This is renowned world-wide for its stress-elimination and self development programs based mainly on breathing techniques, meditation and yoga. It is aimed at uplifting humanity and enhancing the quality of life. Art of living is all about leading a normal and enjoyable life. It is more of a technique through which we learn to eliminate strains. It is located at the Panchagiri hills near Udipalya village.

2. **Osho Ashram:** The ashram located at Pune is more like a resort, founded by Sri. Rajneesh (Osho) aims to provide luxurious environment where people can be at ease with themselves. It is commercial and far removed from Indian culture. It helps people to heal their psychological wounds caused by traumatic experiences, rather than personal experiences.

3. **Baba Ramdev Ashram:** Baba Ramdev (Ramkishan Yadav) is known as Yog Guru all over the world. He is the founder of Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidhyalaya (Haridwar), which is the most renowned ashram provides a peaceful atmosphere for yoga and meditation.

4. **Brahma Kumaris:** Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University is a monastic community, founded in India. It teaches “Raj Yoga”, a form of meditation, which emphasizes on the development of mental abilities to learn the true meaning of life and achieve salvation.

5. **Chinmaya Mission:** The mission aims at providing people with the knowledge and understanding of the “Vedanta”. It also attempts to teach them the practical way of attaining the goal of spiritual growth and contentment.
6. **Isha Foundation**: It is founded by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev in 1992, located at the base of the Velliangiri Mountains in Tamil Nadu. Its purpose is to foster people’s spiritual and physical well-being, through yoga and outreach programs. The core of the ashram’s activities is a customized system of yoga, called yoga.


Jones and Colleagues (2010) identified that spirituality is associated with – social support, sense of belonging, having leadership responsibilities, coping skills, problem-solving capability, unit cohesion, friendliness, access to health resources, a healthy lifestyle and diminished risk for suicide. All these factors are some key components of a complete sense of well-being.

A study results show that different dimensions of spirituality exhibited different sense of well-being. Spiritual settings affect people’s emotions, cognitions, behavior patterns and social environment, which finally leads to various kinds of well-being. Results also demonstrate that different spiritual settings provide different path ways to enhance a certain kind of well-being. (Ng Chi Wai 2009).

Results of another study demonstrates that spirituality brings mental peace, joy, love, faith, discipline in life, forgiveness, happiness, feeling of bliss and satisfaction which are the key components of a wide sense of well-being. (Singh Manisha and Kohli Neena 2007).

Pargament and Mahoney (2005) have suggested that spirituality includes positive emotional states such as love, adoration, gratitude, a sense of awe and
elevation and humility. These emotional states have been found very close to a sense of well-being.

Studies show that regular spiritual attendance lead to less psychological distress and depression in different spheres of life. Spirituality found to be helpful in prevention of depression. People with higher spiritual strivings indicate greater purpose in life, better life satisfaction and higher levels of well-being. It is also proved that Spiritual beliefs can shape a person’s psychological perception of pain or disability, as it creates a mindset that enables the person to relax and allows healing on its own. Spiritual or religious attendance provides hope in despair in daily life. (Underwood and Teresi, 2002).

Spiritual attendance and spiritual experiences make the world is seen as more tolerable, more easily accepted, more joyful and it is essential when people face illness/suffering and make efforts to heal. It is well examined and coming through the wide ancient history of our country that, when an individual find difficult to keep his emotions under control because he still continue to react in undesirable ways; The individual get influenced by various negative beliefs that make life difficult for him-he realizes to have an appropriate belief system in order to manage the emotions in the right direction. This appropriate belief system has been framed through the spiritual point of view. The spiritual dimension of life develops a sight which helps individual to take things in a pleasure-sum or an adventurous way rather than a struggle.

It is found in a study that individual spirituality works as a function of providing appropriate support and spiritual components works in the lives of
participants, significantly contributing to well-being and the maintenance of the congruent ‘self’. (Watts Jacqueline, 2009).

A **meaning making coping model** proposed by Park (2005) develops an understanding how difficult notions of spirituality contribute to psychological well-being. This model posits that major life events trigger cognitive dissonance between situational meaning of a specific event and global spiritual beliefs that guide our overall functioning.

The model holds that the larger the incongruity between a person’s spiritual explanation of the event (as loss) and his global beliefs, the greater the psychological distress the person experiences. (Park, 2005).

James E. Kennedy and H. Kanthamani proposed a **causal chain path model** to understand the relation among religious commitment, meaning in life and well-being. The model suggests that transcendental experiences can affect religious or spiritual commitments, which then influences meaning in life and well-being.

This model represents to evaluate whether importance of religion mediates the effect of transcendental experiences on meaning in life and well-being. This sequence from transcendental experiences to importance of religion to meaning in life to well-being gives a causal chain path model.
The model showing that the relationship between well-being and importance of religion can be explained by mediation by meaning in life. The model further suggests that, for the population as a whole- importance of religion is one of several factors that affect meaning in life and meaning in life is one of several factors that affect well-being. (Kennedy and Kanthamani, 1995).

Findings of another study suggest that people who report greater meaning in their lives and more beneficial experiences of spirituality, report greater well-being and lesser psychopathology. Spirituality has also been found a significant component used in psychotherapy for the wellbeing of religious clients. Ball and Goodyear (1991) found that prayers have often been used by the religious counselor for clients as an adjunct to counseling.

**Meaning in life** often seems the question relates to what his or her life is for (what purpose does it serve?), or what he or she will accomplish (what is going to do with life?). Meaning in life is inversely related with negative personality traits, like neuroticism as well as psychoticism. Those who have a clear sense of meaning in life report less hopelessness. It is inversely related with levels of substance use and positively related with substance abuse treatment. It is also found that, people who have more satisfactory spiritual lives, reports greater meaning in life. On the basis of number of studies, it could be concluded that people who say they lead meaningful lives are fairly happy, experience lower level of psychological distress, psychopathological complaints, substance related problems and disruptive behavior (Michael F. Steger).
Spirituality found beneficial in **suicidal tendency** and **proneness to suicidal behavior**. The inverse relationship between spiritual involvement and suicide was first reported in 1897. Studies have found that the risk of committed suicide among spiritual persons is less than the risk among non-spiritual persons. Spirituality provides a complex belief about Higher Power, ethics and relationships, which further leads better health (physical as well as psychological) outcomes. Spiritual sense protects against negative thought process, and having a negative thinking is a root cause of suicidal tendency. Spirituality works as a coping strategy, a source of social support and a system of meanings. (Erminia Colkuucci 2008).

Spiritual involvement predicts greater functioning among people with negative personality traits as well as negative behavioral patterns.

**Depression**

Depression is a very common illness pervasive everywhere today. The increase in competitive tendency creates automatic increase in depressive symptoms. Spiritual involvement is associated not only with less risk of depression, but also with recovery from depression. Spirituality helps depressive persons figure out a meaning or a purpose in their lives.

Religion and Spirituality can serve as coping mechanism of depression, alleviating pain and distress by providing meaning to life and a solution oriented view towards inevitable life stressors. Studies indicate that group prayer was found strongly associated with self-esteem and lower depression
than intrinsic religiosity. It shows the important role of social network in the well-being process.

Today it is well examined and well known that, in the treatment of depressed persons, standard cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with spiritual exercises works much better as compared with only CBT. Propst et. al. (1992) found that religious cognitive behavioral therapy (RCT) reflects significantly fewer post treatment depressive symptoms than those of the nonreligious cognitive behavioral therapy (NRCT).

Anxiety

Spiritual involvement has shown to be associated with less anxiety as well as with proper anxiety coping mechanisms. Various studies found that spiritual involvement can reduce anxiety irrespective of age, caste, creed, ethnicity, sex and demographic variables. Spiritual involvement was associated with less anxiety and fear.

Anxiety and Frustration- Reduced level of anxiety is associated with spiritual activity. It has been found in various populations such as women with cervical cancer, individual recovering from Spinal injury and middle-aged people from cardiac problems. Engaging in spiritual practices leads to a reduction in anxiety in patients with anxiety disorders. Finding of a study indicates that women suffering from anxiety disorders who participated in yoga training programs, had imperious and significant improvements in perceived stress, state and trait anxiety, fatigue and depression. (Shastri Keyur, Lal Vasant, Pande Vishal, 2008).
**Hypertension**

It is a very common pervasive, life threatening disorder that can lead to coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many psychosomatic dysfunctions. It is observed in the studies on hypertension and relaxation response that yoga and meditation showed reduction in systolic and diastolic blood pressure. It is also found that religious and spiritual response is associated with lower blood pressure and less hypertension. Koenig et. al. (2000) examined that frequent attendance in spiritual activities (eg. Prayer and religious meetings etc.), reflect less proneness to hypertension compared with infrequent attendees. It is also evidently showed that religious involvement indeed decreases risk of hypertension and high blood pressure.

**Stress and Post traumatic stress disorders**

Spiritual coping is a ubiquitous mediator between spirituality and mental health at the time of stress. Collaborative approach of religious / spirituality coping is found most beneficial for well-being. In this approach, the individual considers himself and God as partner in problem-solving and solution is perceived by the individual to be a shared process. It is found that positive religious (spiritual) coping religious openness, religious participation is correlated with improved posttraumatic recovery.

**Coping with illness**

Spirituality provides a belief system and a way of thinking to find meaning and purpose. It provides a source of social support which is very helpful at the time of illness or mental agony. Patients with advanced cancer
found to have more positive attitude towards their illness than to before. They feel less pain during treatment. American pain society studied and found that hospitalized patients experienced “prayer” as a method of pain management. HIV+ patients reflect less fear of death and less guilt, those who are spiritually active. It is also found that when people are challenged by a serious illness or loss, they frequently turn to spiritual values to help them cope with their illness. Patients who are active in spiritual engagement and believe that their beliefs are important, responses better with follow-up treatment, with improved physical functioning and higher level of self esteem.

Mortality

Some observational studies suggest that, people who are regular in spiritual exercises tend to live longer. Because it offers better coping mechanism and richer social support. It is found in a longitudinal study that people having frequent attendance of spiritual activities were 23% less likely to die than the non-attendance.

Cardiovascular disease

Recent studies have found that spiritual/religious involvement is associated with lower blood pressure and less hypertension. Importance of religion, spiritual coping and regular engagement in prayer found associated with reduced cardiovascular diseases.
Chronic Pain

Abraido-Lanza, *et al.* (1996) reported that the most commonly used coping strategy to deal with any type of chronic pain is Spirituality. Moderate spirituality found associated with significantly lower pain. Another fact was also found that chronic illness may be a strong factor to motivate or stimulate the person’s value of religion and having faith in God.

Alleviating mental illness

In modern society, life become very fast and tough, Cohesive and supportive family structures are very rare to see. Here spiritual and religious organizations provide much needed social support, which protects people from social isolation. Further a sense of belonging and self-esteem develops and help to cope with negative life events. Spiritual orientation helps people with psychotic disorders as schizophrenia. It has been found that schizophrenic patients find hope, meaning and comfort in spiritual beliefs and practices.

Behavioral problems in childhood and adolescence

It has been observed that children engage in yoga and meditation activity, leads to marked reduction in many behavioral problems including aggression, tying, absenteeism from school and substance abuse. And it has been found enhancement in their scholastic performance. As like children and adolescents, spiritual adults are less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, cigarette smoking or other habit forming substances. Spiritual involvement is associated with decreased risk of substance abuse.
So, go through the experimental evidences, it reflects that spiritual belief and practices may have psychological effects which in turn bring somatic changes. It helps to shield the negative effects on general health and well-being.

Many studies have found that psychotherapy by itself is a spiritual exercise as it provides insight that human beings are interdependent. Today psychotherapists deal with spiritual issues in therapy with meditation, yoga, prayer and teachings from sacred texts for the purpose of healing and transformation. There are so many psychotherapeutic approaches combined with spirituality such as transpersonal psychoanalytic psychotherapy, existential transpersonal psychotherapy, rational-emotive spiritual therapy and cognitive spiritual therapy. (Sharma Pulkit, Charak Ruby & Sharma Vibha, 2009).

**Spirituality and Counseling**

If we want to understand a human-being in all the ways, we must include the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual dimensions in the process of understanding. Today’s fast moving world is surrounded by a firm tendency of jealousy and hostility, due to higher level of competition, than ever before. The root cause of this competitive tendency is known as Ego. Counseling may be a very effective tool in strengthening and managing the ego. Counseling is an interactive process characterized by a unique relationship between the counselor and the client that leads to change in the
client in these areas- in behavior, in beliefs and in the level of emotional distress. The goal of counseling is to help in inner growth and that is possible through spiritual approach and awakening.

Psycho-spiritual counseling tends to show the way to a kind of inner harmony and relief of tension. It is concerned with the growth of emotional and mental process and healing the disturbed individual. (Pahwa Mansi, 2004).

Some researchers have investigated and found that the demographic and health related variables are also important in understanding in the relationship between spirituality and well-being. Studies show that significant correlates of people’s spirituality are religion, family support, social support, physical health, dwelling conditions and socio-cultural factors.

It is found that family spirituality reduced family conflicts, which may have increased family well-being and functioning.

Bookwala & Schulz (1996) have found in their studies that spiritual dependence of one spouse, directly influence the psychological balance as well as the well-being of the other spouse. It was also found that well-being of one spouse was significantly predicted by the other spouse’s well-being.

Koenig, George & Titus (2004) have examined and found that spiritual activities, attitudes and experiences predicts greater social support, better psychological as well as physical health. Spiritual involvement, personal meaning and inner peace were presented as significant predictors of well-being.
Spirituality plays an eminent role in workplace situations that affect the well-being of employees or workers. Due to this reason various training programs are conducted, such as the Art of Living, Transcendental meditation and Yoga in many organizations. Many companies organize workshops on such themes- human values, stress management, spiritual development and arranges motivational lectures. Employees try to explore solutions to their tensions and stress through spiritual point of view, because this view point provides more effective and long lasting solutions to their problems.

The spiritual workshops and lectures represent an attempt to experience spirituality not only in their personal lives but also at work, where they spend a large amount of time.

Conor, J. Byrne et al. (2011) have conducted a study; results indicate that religious beliefs and values positively influence the individual’s choice of a career and values of their professions. These things intervened with the values of their spiritual beliefs. It is also found that spirituality enhances positive emotions of workers, that is shown to be related to enhance their personal accomplishments. Additionally those with positive emotions are more able to empathize and display sincere concern for others.

Spirituality creates a wide impact on health related factors as illness (physical, psychological, emotional), living styles (passive, active), stress management and overall personality development. Spirituality is also found to be correlated with improved post-traumatic recovery and in the process of
reconstruction of self. Spiritual orientation provides a sense of life purpose which further leads to higher level of well-being.

There are numerous studies have been conducted in this area and findings indicated that spiritual orientation improves coping mechanism and strength of personal values. People with a spiritual approach tend to have more positive outlook and better quality of life. Further it is found that personal prayer is most commonly used as a non-drug method in controlling pain, than relaxation, touch or massage. Results of another study shows that parents whose children has died of cancer, 80% of them have received comfort from their spiritual beliefs, as well as having better physiologic and emotional adjustment. (Harvey Idethia Shevon, 2010).

There are various components (factors) that mediate the relationship between religion/spirituality and well-being. Number of studies have been done and found the results that meditation and prayer elicits relaxation response and contributes in the reduction of unhealthy behavior, such as smoking, drug abuse, alcoholism etc. Spiritual participation provides more extensive social support which is connected with better health outcomes. It contributes to a sense of hopeful outlook, which further leads to a strong coping mechanism. Spirituality buffers against the negative emotional states and promotes positive emotional states. (Hussain Dilawar, 2010).

Spiritual involvement tends people to engage in healthy acts and behavior and discourage them to participate in unhealthy behavior, i.e. alcohol
and drug abuse, sexual crime etc. It is found in many researches that people who regularly attend spiritual practices, tend to live longer than those who never, seldom or rarely attended. Religion and spirituality are among the most important cultural factors that give structure and meaning to human values, behaviors and experiences.

Surveys of the general population (masses) found that more than 90% of people believe in the Higher Power and this belief gives them strength as well as confidence. A number of studies have shown an association between increased spiritual involvement and better health outcomes, quality of life and a complete experience of well-being. (Mueller Paul, 2001).

Prof. Akbar Husain (2013) said that, “All human-beings are spiritual in nature. Spirituality is the cure of all hidden wounds and it seeks to purify our true nature. It gives a new dimension to see the worldly problems.”

To summarize, it can be said that religious or spiritual people tend to experience more positive and integrative emotions like happiness, love and compassion. These emotions afford advantages in interpersonal relations and in harsh circumstances in life. Healthy interpersonal relations, appropriate stress management techniques and cool mindedness leads to have a sense of psychological well-being.