CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Implications Spirituality have long maintained the integration of mind, heart and spirit that in turn can lead not only to a more meaningful life but to a healthier one. Until the past decade, however, the impact of spiritual behavior on subjective well-being was an unexplored area of psychological investigations. An emphasis on spirituality as protective of spiritual well-being is a more recent focus. With the development of rigorous methodological standards, and appropriate measurement, it is now possible to test these ideas empirically. Increasing evidence indicates that the spirituality has positive outcomes which includes finding meaning in life, developing better coping skills, spiritual growth and development, psychotherapy, searching ways of spiritfulness, and enhancing well-being and health. The present work is one of the attempt to examine the effect of purpose of visit to holy shrine and spiritual orientation on subjective well-being. In the present study, spiritual believers (i.e. who have faith in visiting holy shrines) have noted the value of such experiences for maintaining their subjective well-being in the face of various psychosocial problems.

What determines whether spiritual behavior, practices and experiences respond to stressful or traumatic events? And yet the answer to such question is not fully known. The normal human perceptions marked by a positive sense of self, beliefing in sacredness, unity, and transformation, mission in life,
relationship with the divine force, and an optimistic view of the future may enhance subjective well-being that not only help people in managing the daily hassles but that assume special significance in helping people cope with intensely stressful and life-threatening events. In the case of life-threatening illness, spirituality may act as the buffer against the reality of advancing disease and in improving health-related quality of life, and the psychological benefits or growth associated with the disease. Spirituality, perhaps, develop the ability to remain optimistic and the ability to find meaning in adverse experiences. Overall, it appears to be psychologically protective.

The psychosocial routes of spirituality are not entirely understood. In the present investigation, it is attempted to identify the psychosocial factors by which positive psychological states may exert their effects in solace seeking. These include for: getting immersed with Sufi/Saint; settlement of their children; employment of self/children; marriage of the children; coping with the stressors; recovery of the illness of self/family members; when feeling miserable or experiencing discomfort with life; attaining inner harmony or peace; maximizing harmonious relationship with the spiritual preceptor; being financially secure; pursuing spiritual goals; developing a sense of personal power and confidence; developing goodness, integrity and love; maintaining spiritual health; achieving mission or purpose in life; coming closer to God, a Supreme Being; development of inner resources in order to live peacefully and wholeheartedly; extending self awareness and developing spiritual strength; defeating the evil spirits; and
coping with the feeling of helplessness. These psychosocial factors are associated with subjective well-being that in turn lead to maintain spiritual health. The findings of the present study provide hints about the purpose of visit to holy shrine by which subjective well-being may affect and in turn solace seeking may be perturbed.

The psychosocial factors of spirituality we have studied are affectively valenced, and so satisfaction with life may be implicated in these effects. For example attaining harmony or maximizing harmonious relationship with the spiritual preceptor may develop a way of spiritfulness i.e. believing in unity that may lead to satisfaction with life. People might increase their SWB by having high level of spiritual orientation. That is, SWB can be increased by believing in a larger meaning or force in the universe.

If the results of the present study has merit, it suggests that psychologists should concentrate on peoples' satisfactory behaviors which are structured around peoples' wisdom and inner resources and finding intrinsic and extrinsic mysticism within which they are, likely to be genuinely reinforced for developing their capabilities rather than focusing on feelings and perception. Spiritual believers should concentrate on reinforcing spiritual experiences toward spiritual growth and development. That is, they should focus on performing the spiritual exercises to improve their behavior or holistic health.
Further Research Suggestions The present study raises several issues that must be solved in prospective studies if psychologists are to develop “spiritual psychology” a field of Indian psychology.

First, how should psychology quantify spiritual belief, spiritual behavior and spiritual experience as dimensions of spirituality? If more reliable psychometric measures for assessing the spirituality can be developed, psychology may integrate well with spirituality.

Second, there is a need to study the synthesis between spiritual life and practical life that is reflected in the spiritual principles. Spiritually oriented people should remain in touch with their feelings and perception. They should possess empathy and be able to love and should manifest anticipation, altruism, mission in life.

Third, psychology needs to understand best how to enhance spirituality through religious beliefs and practices, behavioral approaches, and cognitive approaches. My own suggestion is first to increase religious practices and rituals and religious meditative techniques and second to facilitate psychological beliefs such as optimism, personal control or affirmation and a sense of meaning.

Fourth, the impact of spiritual orientation on psychological resources (e.g., optimism, hope, life orientation, well-being) should be investigated in further studies. Such type of studies would give an answer of related question: Can these psychological resources not only buffer people psychologically against
adverse responses to stressful events but also actually influence health in a beneficial direction?

*Fifth*, as we recognize the value of spirituality and the quality of subjective well-being more generally, we still need to study that our understanding of how positive and negative states affect spiritual health or well-being. Such findings help to illuminate mechanisms connecting pleasant and unpleasant emotions to various types of health (social, physical, psychological or mental) endpoints from well-being to mortality.

*Sixth*, there has been long recognition that an optimistic mind and exhilarated spirit accompany a healthy body. King Solomon suggested “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). In the present century, the integration of body-mind-heart-spirit is likely to be tackled, and this scientific breakthrough could then serve to expand the basis for relevant clinical practice (i.e., spiritual psychotherapy).

*Seventh*, I suggest that adding the concept of “wisdom” to spiritual psychological investigation is a worthwhile challenge. In its application to spiritual development and growth, wisdom makes explicit the goal of orchestrating mind and virtue toward human excellence and good quality of well-being. There is no empirical evidence to make explicit the link between knowledge and behavior.
Finally, cognitions have an independent long-term influence on SWB. It is not known whether the cognitive factors such as hope and optimism, correlate with SWB. In the area of SWB, researches may undertake this task.

Further work on the psychology of spirituality and well-being seems to be a cornerstone of the foundation of new dimension of psychology. An unanswerable question for the psychologists is whether spiritual orientation of people will increase their SWB.