

Tapping Spiritual Intelligence in Distressed Times Like Covid-19

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Abstract

All people are granted the potentials and tools for self-determination to empower them to make life meaningful. It is not simple knowledge, technology, health, or wealth that makes us vibrant and joyful but spiritual intelligence and its application. Other than the socially or media given narratives, individuals have to make their narratives for a full life. Self-care and Self-empowerment are the only immediate solution we have at hand. This stressful Pandemic is the right time to look into how much spiritual intelligence we manifest and apply in life. Spiritual intelligence is ability central to real-life issues; it is manifested in interconnected attributes: faith, humility, gratitude, and integrative ability, ability to regulate emotions, morality, and moral conduct. A spiritual anchoring and vision will enhance one's spiritual intelligence scale.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence, Pandemic, Self-determination

Introduction

At this moment, humanity is struggling under the weight of a pandemic caused by the coronavirus Covid-19. The nation's resources, might, and powers of medical science could not fix the problem. Most things in our time are assuming a global nature and human maladies too! Millions around the world are suffering, families are devastated, the economy is in shambles, and governments are confused about what to

do next or how to manage this pandemic. Financial woes eventually will bring a greater emotional and spiritual crisis.

Who prevails over adversity? The simple answer is: it is people with ample spiritual muscles and resilience. Some people become overwhelmed by life's challenges and tragedies. They suffer significant symptoms of emotional and physical distress and need help and support in the recovery. Adverse life events affect people and make them bitter, angry, resentful, and anxious. On the other hand, some people seem remarkably able to maintain their bearings in the face of adversity. The resilience we witness in great personalities is often because of their spiritual intelligence. A time like this calls forth different resources as our traditional resources and coping powers are outwitted by the pandemic.

Where Do We Stand?

There was abundant medical research to show that negative emotions—hate, fear, panic, rage, despair, anger, could produce powerful changes in the body's chemistry (Ramanathan, 2018). Both Hippocrates and Aristotle unambiguously emphasized the role of emotions in health and illness (Cousins, 1989). The 2014 ACA Code of Ethics mandates counselor self-care throughout all levels of professional functioning. Counselors must role model and instill self-care across myriad clinical settings and varied client circumstances. The utilization of positive psychology enhances counselor education programs through the encouragement of self-care, self-actualization, and wellbeing.

Positive religious coping has frequently been associated with better mental health outcomes when dealing with stressful life events (e.g., natural disasters, domestic abuse, divorce). The COVID-19 pandemic, and the associated infection prevention and control measures (curfew, quarantine, restricted travel, social distancing), represent a society-wide stressor. Religiosity is a valued sense of belonging to a religious creed, which elicits commitment to related practices—for example, praying, fasting, and reading holy scriptures (Miller et al. 2012).

There is more evidence to suggest that religious/spiritual context exert their impact on well-being and the effect was mediated by self-transcendent positive emotions like awe, gratitude, love, and peace (Cappellen, Toth-Gauthier, Saroglou, & Fredrickson, 2016). Anyone in the health or healing field does not doubt that we could make ourselves ill. What about our ability to make ourselves well? The question is

pertinent as we are witnessing the helplessness humanity is facing in the wake of Covid-19. Spiritual Intelligence (hereafter referred to as SQ) opens up a new horizon and reconciles the insights of psychology and the grace of the spiritual. Each healing modality wants to prove their competence and sometimes engage in unhealthy competition rather than doing something cooperatively for mankind. Obsession for scientific proof is good in itself but not always good for humanity's well-being.

Present Covid Scenario

Emotional intelligence and its advocates in recent decades underscored the power of positive virtues and emotions in maintaining health and a sense of wellbeing. We know viruses and bacteria are agents of diseases. It does not mean that we are helpless. Any aggressor looks for weak opponents to conquer or to show its strength. We need not assume the role of the victim. Sense of vulnerability and victim feeling makes us all the frailer and weaker, so much so, that the aggressive virus and bacteria are finding us as the easy target. Unconsciously, we might be turning ourselves into an easy target for the present Coronavirus. We are so anxious, worried, and lost as a community and nation. Stating the numbers of death, and affected people, media is making us overly anxious and nervous.

Language can cause illness and can help to overcome illness too. I started this example to drive home how much our media and popular TV chats spike up our fear for diseases like corona and kill our immune systems by creating panic and stress. Words processed properly can lead to recovery and words badly processed can lead to illness and death (Cousins, 1986).

Untapped Resources

When we can add our inner resources to the resources of medical sciences, we are at the best. Therefore, being not aware of the spiritual energy and spiritual resources is dangerously foolish. Siegal (1986) counsels getting well is not the only goal. Even more important is to learning to live without fear, to be at peace with life and ultimately death. Each one is looking on to oneself as a possible target or victim of the dreaded disease. In the wake of a rapidly spreading pandemic, your options may be limited, but still, there are options you have not fully tapped.

Spiritual Intelligence related researchers found that a sense of meaning, a will to live, a positive attitude, spiritual values, and resources are powerful enough to defend and offend the illness making factors. Ronel (2008) defined spiritual intelligence as the ability to understand the world and oneself through God-centeredness and to adapt one's life accordingly. As medicine makes a different impact on the recipients and not everyone is saved with the doctor's expertise and efficacy of the medicine, so too, with other beneficial factors. Though attitudes, emotions, or spiritual resources cannot substitute for scientific medical treatment, such factors can be combined to make an integrated strategy to fortify ourselves in these kinds of situations. We need to acknowledge that along with those things there are many intangibles like spiritual resources and spiritual intelligence that have a bearing on health and healing.

New Breakthrough: Spiritual Intelligence

Till the latter part of the 20th-century Intelligence Quotient was deemed as the best form of intelligence. That is intelligence based on rationality, and logical reasoning, analytical skills, and abilities to store and retrieve information. When emotional intelligence was proposed, criteria for intelligence stressed cognitive abilities in contrast to behavior traits in understanding human performance. Following emotional intelligence's pattern, spiritual intelligence too stressed the non-intellectual attainments (Mayer, 2000). Thus, it is more of personality excellence and striving to be whole.

Amram (2007) developed an ecumenical grounded theory of Spiritual intelligence based on interviews with 71 people of different traditions. These people were designated as spiritually intelligent by their associates. From these interviews, he developed seven major themes of universally significant elements of SQ. The themes are:

- a) Consciousness, b) Grace, c) Meaning, d) Transcendence, e) Truth, f) Peaceful g) Surrender and h) Inner directedness.

Among the advocates of SQ, there is no congruent understanding regarding the nature of it. Despite the variability in understanding and measuring scales, there exists a set of skills and abilities that are distinct from behavioural traits and experiences which can satisfy established intelligence criteria. Therefore, SQ is defined as a set of mental abilities that contribute to the awareness, integration, and adaptive application of the non-material transcendent aspects of one's existence for a greater

sense of meaning and wholeness. Not being aware of the potential or not recognizing its presence makes life more impoverished and devoid of any value.

“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but we are spiritual beings having a human experience.” These words of –Pierre Teilhard de Chardin changed the very understanding of spirituality, spiritual resources, and its purport in human life (McDonald, 1994). Spiritual intelligence is a higher dimension of intelligence that activates the qualities and capabilities of the soul/spirit as well as integrating all other human potentials for a meaningful life. A high spiritual and intelligent power is assumed by the advocates of spiritual intelligence. By connecting to this higher source of intelligence, one can become more creative and altruistically loving, thus shall be able to empower oneself and others.

In a globalized society, all sciences are related to one another in unity with human consciousness. Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Veritatis Gaudium* (2018), exhorts religious scholars to use findings of the sociology of religion and psychology of religion for scientific analysis of theological data and their comprehensive interpretation. To know humans and nurture humans, we need to draw inspirations and insights from different disciplines and shall use different methodologies. It is at this juncture spiritual intelligence draws our attention. Covid-19 poses a question to all believers. Is death an ultimate tragedy in life? If our vision is such or almost a similar one, naturally we would be fearful and anxious in this pandemic time. Death is not the ultimate tragedy but dying without living fully and not connected with our potentials. The longevity of life is no concern of nature or God as is evident from observing life on earth of all species including humans. Spiritual intelligence is an ability central to real-life issues, it is manifested in interconnected attributes: faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, ability to regulate emotions, morality, and moral conduct. The thread that runs through these attributes is the purification of the mind on the way towards God by detecting and attempting to remove thoughts, emotions, and actions of selfish sources (Kempis, 2002).

Human Resourcefulness

Inglefinger (1980) reminds physicians that 85% of human illness is within the power of the body’s own healing system. Hence the importance of how our body works; how it collaborates with other

human faculties and potentials in meeting serious challenges. It is negative emotions that prevent us from attaining our potentials; fear, doubt, and pessimism from the underdeveloped self-drive humans away from happiness and contentment. According to positive psychology researches, Baumgardner and Crothers (2009), negative emotions tend to narrow our thoughts to a limited set of possible actions.

In a perceived threat we have a different coping mechanism. But sometimes humans don't explore the different avenues and let themselves drowned in fear and anxiety. For example, it is not true that the only way to deal with high blood pressure is through powerful medication. Overweight and high blood pressure are related, so also emotional issues and stress may jack up high blood pressure. A diet low in salt, exercises, reducing emotional tensions, seeking psychological help, or meditation all may help to cope with this. It is our narrow and skewed perceptions that make us think we are out of our resources. Human beings who are creative and intelligent always have more arsenals in their armory to use. Human beings as creative and intelligent there are always some more arsenals in our armory to make use of. We are spirits fundamentally and the awareness of our fundamental nature will take us a long way in our impasse. Truth told untimely and out of place affects the whole human system beyond reparation. This is why after a diagnosis of a patient and its abrupt revelation can seriously affect the recovery and equilibrium of the patient.

False Religiosity

As Covid-19 has begun its marathon, a few religious radicals connected it as the punishment of the misdeeds of humanity. Human misdeeds and divine punishment is a favorite theme for many. The concept of a deity sitting in judgment on human behavior is common to cultures in almost every age and place. A one to one connection to God's intervention on everything that happens in human life will ward off human responsibility and freedom. Religious beliefs shall engender hope rather than guilt feelings and despair. Nothing is more characteristic of God than forgiveness. The surest way to intensify illness and block healing is to blame someone or God for one's illness. To everyone is given ability, and we are to use it...It seems by the number of bags of gold each receive, that this may be a sign that each of us has a different talent and ability...God wants us to use our abilities the best we can.

SQ a Knowing Process

Whether someone asks you the question: Who are you? Or you haven't yet asked the question to yourself; still, you are answering the question by your attitudes, values, behaviors, and thoughts. SQ is deeply related to knowing oneself fully and being strengthened in the process for greater love and service to humanity. To those who acquired spiritual intelligence through this knowing process, ill-health or terminal illnesses make little difference in their approach to life. They live out the remaining sparkles of their life most humanly. We don't have to mortgage our lives and happiness entirely to external sources. Vasudev (2020) was recently asked what consolation he has to offer for the Corona sufferers. He said, "This is not a time for consolation but realization. It is difficult to sleepwalk through a crisis." Authentic and full life rises from knowing oneself; that is having an understanding of my essential nature, genuine needs, strengths, potentials, and limitations and applying this knowledge in a concrete context. Therefore, Socrates said, 'Know Thyself.' To know one's self is not a one-time action; it is a continuous never-ending process because of your deeper self-partakes in the infinite and therefore inexhaustible. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: 'What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared with what lies within us.'

Spiritual Dumbness Vs Spiritual Intelligence

According to Zohar, Marshall, and Marshall (2000) who coined the term spiritual intelligence, we live in a spiritually dump hardly reflective culture. To live happily and with a sense of meaning and well-being, we need to create hope and meaning where it is missing. Amazingly, all you need is within you, only need to be aware of its existence first and then need to make a thorough introspection to tap the resources at your disposal. SQ is concerned with the inherent potential in human beings for self-realization to experience a greater sense of meaning, worth, and fulfillment. Not being aware of the potential or not recognizing its presence makes life impoverished and devoid of any value or discipline.

It can be assumed that the whole nation developed some mindfulness during Covid- 19 time which was normally deemed as an individual matter. As people are sitting in their homes, their 'self' is ever-present to them and it borders on a state of collective mindfulness. In the state of mindfulness, problems open up possibilities nudging one to ask, is there anything that can be done? There are numerous examples in news

in the days of the Corona pandemic, how individuals heroically came out, made their own life worth and meaningful by altruistic services and love, and in the process enriched which made the recipient happier.

A greater sense of gratitude is also arising in many lives for the little things they have and the small things they could enjoy. There were fewer complaints about the lack of luxuries. Blessings of simplicity came to our homes and taught us that we don't need all those things we imagined imperative for a happier life. We came to realize how much we need and how much we don't need. SQ taught us that values are greater than valuables.

The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the dumbness and darkness in the nation's heart as well as the spiritual intelligence in some measures. Many ordinary folks, thought of as ignorant masses showed heroism and courage of extraordinary scale. Many like Jyothi Kumari, Anirudh Jahare, Mohammed Yakooob set aside their travail to give succor to fellow migrants to reach their far-off home. Pushed off a truck ferrying migrant, Yakooob refused to abandon the dying Amrit Kumar. Yakooob cradled Amrit to his end with little help from anybody. There is also the story about Catholic priests who gave up their ventilators to the young who need to survive for the sake of their families. In times of darkness, one is capable of setting a new kind of fire inside. This kind of fire comes from the innermost self and its intelligence. Most People being plunged into the hectic pace of everyday life, this fire often gets blown off. Just as physical fire needs certain ingredients and the right environment to flare up and blaze, humans need spiritual/noble thoughts in the mind and subconscious.

A quiet downtime and connection to one's self-set off the latent spiritual fire. Closeness and proximity with evolved souls also spark off this fire. Unfavorable times create distress and gloom; it challenges people to think of what is worth and valuable at the end of the day. We realize our essential nature not in times of comfort but more in times of distress and discomfort. Luxuries are often like carbon dioxide that blows out the oxygen in the fire. SQ is interested to focus on the elements like oxygen that keeps the light in full blaze.

Nurturing Spiritual Self and Intelligence

Recent research reports on the development of the human brain and transcendence; in particular is the work of Joseph Chilton Pearce (2004). *The Biology of Transcendence*. Hestates that the brain is wired to move

beyond the little ego, the little world into an ever-expanding world of transcendence and connectedness to all people, to all of creation and the divine. Present neuro-science shows us that we are slowly wired for a bigger picture until we come to the full realization that all are an integral part of the One.

Spiritual intelligence integrates our being, having, and doing. Values, desires, ideals, and even vulnerabilities all come together to produce a person functioning in a moderately harmonious way (Groeschel, 1987). It is like a triangle where each side supports the others. *Beingness* is the experience of being present to oneself and at rest within oneself. *Havingness* is the ability to accept and allow things and people in our lives and developing good relationships. *Doing* is a movement, activity that allows the creative energy to flow from you to others and from others to you.

By nurturing awareness arising from the spiritual self we can promote flexibility, resilience, hope, and power of endurance to break ingrained patterns of behaviour that sap our energy. By focusing on the problems that can be solved individually and collectively sharing what we have and sharing our responsibilities, humans can overcome many apparent puzzles that have no answer. This kind of intelligence we witnessed in the recent flood that engulfed the state of Kerala and now with Covid pandemic all over. People showed extraordinary unity by their humanity, love, and spirit of service. SQ helps us to move and make a shift from our default responses. We learned wonderful lessons about peaceful coexistence and the need for pro-existence.

The goal of positive psychology is to complement and extend the traditional problem-focused psychology that has proliferated in recent decades. Positive psychology is concerned with positive psychological states (eg, happiness), positive psychological traits (eg, talents, interests, strengths of character), positive relationships, and positive institutions. We describe pieces of evidence of how topics of positive psychology apply to physical health. Research has shown that psychological health assets (eg, positive emotions, life satisfaction, optimism, life purpose, social support) are prospectively associated with good health measured in a variety of ways.

Gratitude

According to diverse positive psychology studies, gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve

their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. It is related to longevity, energy level, better sleep, and stronger immunity. A physical event that took place cannot be revoked, but is endowed with a spiritual intelligence you can draw out the negative energy from it and can infuse it with positive spiritual energy; thereby, you can redeem it for the present and future. Emerson remarked: “Great men are they who see that the spiritual is stronger than any material force.” As we relate the world with our spiritual core, the web of relations assumes a different character.

Positive emotions are highly valued and frequently sought. Beyond just being pleasant, however, positive emotions may also lead to long-term benefits in important domains, including work, physical health, and interpersonal relationships. Research thus far has focused on the broader functions of positive emotions. According to the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions expand people’s thought-action repertoires and allow them to build psychological, intellectual, and social resources. New evidence suggests that positive emotions—particularly gratitude—may also play a role in motivating individuals to engage in positive behaviors leading to self-improvement.

Conclusion

The novel coronavirus is causing major interruptions to our lives. This disruption, coupled with the threat of contracting this potentially deadly virus, is leading many people to experience anxiety, stress, and depression. We are called to redefine our true self and nature. We are challenged to reinvent our identities raising our spiritual intelligence. If we take in, all that the print media and virtual media speak, we will end up in big psychological bewilderment. Raising our spiritual intelligence (SQ) is not a luxury or an option but a vital necessity to awaken our potentials to become the architect of our lives and our own well-being. Pargament asserts: “When people sanctify, they look at life through a sacred lens” (2007, p. 35). Spiritual intelligence is perceived as an ability to understand the world and oneself through God-centeredness and to adapt one’s life accordingly. Spiritual intelligence is considered as developmental, built through the accumulation of separate experiences, as manifestations of spiritual intelligence appear in an individual’s life increasingly. Since spiritual intelligence is developmental, people may practice its development at any stage. Kalo summarizes this process: “to persevere on self-correction and not to let loose, free from fear, strong in hope, independent on the result” (2000, p. 110).

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