

# The Sikh spiritual model of counseling

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## Abstract

In accordance with the holistic principles of modern medicine, this paper will present the Sikh religious and spiritual view of mental health. With the continuing migration of a large number of South Asians, especially the Sikhs, to Western countries, mental health professionals should be aware of their clients' world-view and cultural/religious specific models of counseling. Use of Sikh spirituality can reduce stress; help in treating psychosomatic disorders; and improve mental health of the individual and of the community. This paper will conclude that as the Sikh religion is a universal religion, everyone can use Sikh spirituality. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

**Key words:** Sikh, spirituality, cross-cultural counseling, South Asian

## Introduction

When South Asian clients are given Western counseling, they inevitably terminate counseling after their first interview (Ivey, 1979). This is because Western counselors do not understand the client's world-view (Torrey, 1972). This results in clients being stereotyped as inappropriate for talking therapies. So there is a need to respect cultural/religious specific beliefs as offering an equally valid, though different perspective (Johnson and Nadirshaw, 1993).

Appropriate cultural and/or religious interventions can be developed by utilizing and respecting the uniqueness of culture-specific belief systems, traditional healing resources, practices and helping styles (Nwachuku and Ivey, 1991; McCormick,

1996; Arthur and Stewart, 2001). The culturally able competent counselor is able to (a) be aware of his/her own assumptions, values and biases; (b) understand the world-view of the culturally different client; and (c) develop appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Sue et al., 1982). One should be aware of the differences in the cultural values and beliefs among the members of a specific cultural/religious group (Sue and Sue, 1990). Clients should therefore be encouraged to guide the therapist regarding their value system.

## Definition of health

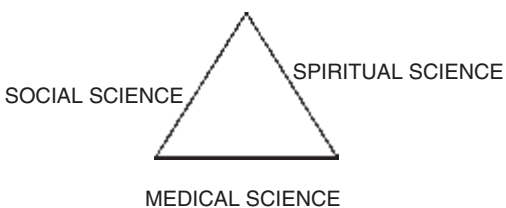
According to the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), 'health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-

being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. All these aspects – emotional, physical and social – must function together to achieve overall health. Spirituality is essential in emotional and mental well-being. These aspects can be explained in an equilateral triangle in which all three sides and angles are equal, where medical science, spiritual science and social science are equally important to achieve perfect health (Figure 1). I will discuss in this paper how it can be achieved through Sikh Spirituality. Because this model has come from Sikh Spirituality, it is necessary to start with an overview of the Sikh religion.

## Sikhism

Sikh means disciple and the Prophets are called Gurus, which means Teacher. The first Guru, Nanak Dev, founded Sikhism in 1469 AD. He endeavored to create a casteless society from the existing four castes of Hindus (the most practiced religion in India at that time), priests, 'Brahmin'; warriors, 'Khatries'; merchants, 'Vaishias'; and menial workers, 'Shudras'. Muslim rulers were exploiting Hindus and high-caste Hindus were exploiting low-caste Hindus. Guru Nanak's first sermon delivered in 1499 AD stated: 'No one is Hindu or Muslim. All are children of God, so they are equal.' It is your deeds which make you great, not your religion or caste (Singh, 1987).

### HEALTH TRIANGLE OF INVOLVED DISCIPLINES



Thus Guru Nanak Dev laid the foundation of 'Human Rights for All' in 1499 AD. He endeavored to create a casteless society in which there will be mutual coexistence and cooperation because of the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind. There are 10 consecutive Gurus who contributed in different ways to the spiritual, social and idealized behavior formation of the Sikh.

Work started by Guru Nanak Dev was continued by the second Guru, Angad Dev, who propounded the concept of voluntary service, *sewa*. The third Guru, Amar Das, started community kitchens, *langar*, where everyone, rich and poor, of all castes and creed, sits together and eats food prepared in the common kitchen, which brings humility and equality. The fifth Guru, Arjun Dev, emphasized the concept of tolerance and martyrdom. To check the overwhelming popularity of Sikhism, the Mogul Emperor of the time, Jahangir, tortured the Guru by boiling Him in a pot of boiling water, making Him sit on a red-hot plate and pouring hot sand on His head. The Guru ultimately achieved martyrdom in the river Ravi. The sixth Guru, Hargobind, took two swords, one for temporal and the other for spiritual, *Miri* and *Piri*, to protect the oppressed from the oppressor. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, sacrificed his life to save the Hindu religion from extinction at the hands of Aurangzeb, the Mogul Emperor of the time. The Guru taught the Sikhs that they should be prepared to help the needy even at the cost of their own lives.

The tenth and the last Guru, Gobind Singh, completed the task started by Guru Nanak Dev by baptizing the Sikhs on 30 March 1699 AD, and made Khalsa, the Pure Ones, from the Sikhs, the disciples. He called them Saint-Soldiers, the Soldiers of God. Guru Gobind Singh then begged to be baptized Himself by the baptized Sikhs, and joined the Sikh brotherhood. He said: 'Now you are my

Guru and I have become your disciple, your *Chela*'. This form of humility is unique to Sikhism only. All the Sikhs belong to the same brotherhood and do not belong to any caste, thus completing the work started by Guru Nanak.

After baptism all men take the surname Singh, which means lion; and women take the surname Kaur, which means princess. All baptized Sikhs should carry five articles of faith for their outward appearance. The first of these is *kes*, or uncut hair. Humans are born with hair and no one has the right to interfere with nature. *Kanga* is a wooden comb to keep one's hair tidy. *Karha* is an iron bracelet, worn on the right wrist. It signifies that Sikhs harbour no illusions or false notions. It is also a symbol of the endless Entity. *Kach* is a short drawer, symbolic of the Sikh's truthful character. *Kirpan* is a sword to protect the oppressed from the oppressor. The Sikh Gurus always preached that a Sikh's outward appearance, i.e. the wearing of these five symbols, is of no importance unless they are accompanied by true sincere devotion and ethics (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 488). It took the contribution of 10 Gurus and 239 years for the spiritual, social and idealized behavior formation of the Sikh, called the Saint-Soldier, the Soldier of God. No one has the privilege of such a vast and manifold training as the Sikhs get from their 10 Gurus.

The teachings of the Gurus are preserved in the holy book, Guru Granth Sahib. The fifth Guru, Arjun Dev, compiled the first version of Guru Granth Sahib in 1604 AD. It contained the hymns of the first five Gurus, and 30 Hindu and Muslim saints. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, compiled the final version in 1706 AD, by including the hymns of the ninth Guru, Teg Bahadur (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993). Guru Gobind Singh declared that he would be the last human Guru. He then bestowed the status of the Guru upon the Guru Granth Sahib. The place of Sikh

worship is called Gurudwara, where the Guru Granth Sahib is placed on a raised platform.

## Universality of Sikhism

The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy scripture of the Sikhs, but its appeal is to all mankind. It serves as a remedial manual for the ills of mankind (Singh, 2005).

- The Guru Granth Sahib is the Holy Book, which contains teachings from the Sikh Gurus, Hindu and Muslim saints.
- The Sikh religion is strictly monotheistic, believing in One Supreme God who is Absolute, All-pervading, the Eternal, the Creator, the Cause of Causes, without enemy and hate, both imminent in His creation and beyond it. He is not the God of one sect or nation but the God of Grace (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 1). Because there is only one God for all humanity, no one religion can claim a franchise on Him.
- Guru Nanak Dev's first sermon, which decreed that we all are children of God and are equal, laid the foundation of Human Rights for All in 1499 AD (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 1136).
- Sikhism believes in mutual coexistence and cooperation because of the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 97, 611, 671, 1299, 1349–1350).
- The Gurus visualized a welfare state with no economic exploitation, political repression, social injustice, and freedom for all (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 26, 345).
- Conflicts should be resolved through dialogue instead of fighting (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 661, 1185).
- Sikhs respect all religions. It is not the religion, but deeds, which make you great (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 747).
- The foundation stone of Harimandir Sahib (the Golden Temple), a central place of worship for the Sikhs, was laid by Mian Mir, a Muslim saint.

## Principles of Sikhism

In Sikhism, life is not sinful in its origin, but rather emanates from a Pure Source. The True One abides in it. Sikh philosophy, history and character flow from this principle (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 463, 1349).

Sikhs do not believe in the caste system, idol worship, rituals, superstitions, gods and goddesses, karma and reincarnation. I use this with clients who believe in superstitions and do not take medicine but go to priests and witch doctors.

Sacrifices, austere living or gifts of money cannot manipulate God.

Sikhism does not accept the ideology of pessimism. It advocates optimism and hope. I use this in clients with Depression, or with suicidal tendencies.

### Gender equality

A majority of world religions (including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) have placed women in a secondary position to men. As an integral part of the religio-cultural heritage of many nations, this organization of sex roles has been a major cause of conflict, frustration, stress and mental disorder among women (Bridges and Spilka, 1992).

Guru Nanak Dev conferred dignity on women and raised their status in society. It was due to Him that womanhood gained social equality and religious freedom (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 473). I use this in counseling couples presenting with spousal abuse.

### Marriage and morality

Marriage is considered to be a holy union of two souls. The Gurus laid a great emphasis on moral character and wanted both man and woman to rise above animal life, as they are spiritual beings as well. I use this in couples where there is a family problem due to an extramarital affair.

### Sikhism and medicine

Sikhism does not believe that mental illnesses are caused by spirit possession or violation of some religious principles and healing done through supernatural powers or rituals. In fact the third Guru made hospitals to treat the sick, the fifth Guru treated lepers and the eighth Guru treated smallpox patients.

I use this to counsel clients who are superstitious and think that their problems are due to witchcraft and do not take medicine.

### Sikhism and science

The principles of Sikhism can be proved by science. Gurus demonstrated concepts rather than giving only philosophical arguments. For example, according to the Sikh view, creation is manifested through God's Word (Singh, 1982, pp. 38–39). In the pre-cosmic state there was a deep void and complete darkness (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 1023, 1035). Then God through His Word created air and through air created water and then His whole creation (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 19). There are millions and millions of suns and other planets like ours. His creation is unlimited and infinite (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 5).

People at that time believed that the Earth was supported by the horns of a bull and that earthquakes come when the bull changes a horn. Guru Nanak Dev said that if this is so, then there must be another Earth to support that bull – and who is supporting that Earth? He said all these planets including our Earth and Sun are moving under God's Order.

The Gurus prohibited the smoking of tobacco, the use of intoxicants and adultery (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 554). Today most people know that smoking causes cancer and adultery sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV AIDS. Intoxicants affect mental and physical health.

### Sikhism and democracy

The sixth Guru made the high seat of temporal affairs, AKAL TAKHAT, in the same complex as HARI MANDIR, the Golden Temple, signifying that religious, spiritual and political affairs go together in Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh created a democratic system with an executive council and general assembly. The executive council, which also has judicial powers, consisted of *panj pyaras* (five chosen ones). The general assembly is composed of *sadh sangat* (congregation of Sikhs) and has the final word in deciding socio-religious affairs (Singh, 1982, pp. 100–101). Thus the Guru sowed the seed of democracy, socialism, secularism and collective leadership in India in 1708 AD.

### The concept of saint-soldier

If a weapon is given into the hands of a saint, that weapon will not be used to torture and kill indiscriminately to gain money and power. The saint will use weapons to protect the oppressed from the oppressor, and not for oppression. This means:

- War should be waged as a last resort.
- Territory should not be annexed. Looting and booty are forbidden as war has been waged to deliver justice and not to punish the perpetrators.
- Only a minimum of force should be used. When the objectives have been achieved, the fighting should cease and attempts to establish peace should be made.
- Women of the defeated party should not be violated.

### Psychology based on Sikhism

*Maya* is the term used for the temporal world and human attachment to it, called 'worldly attachment'. The Sikhs believe that *maya* is the universe created by God for human beings to enjoy and is real. However, too much

attachment to *maya* is not good. Humans can make choices and if one falls victim to *maya*, one cannot blame God. While living in this world of *maya*, we encounter five evils which are *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar*, i.e. Lust, Anger, Greediness, Attachment and Pride (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 600). One has to keep these evils under control. One does not have to be a Sikh to accept that these five are in fact evils.

The Guru says that one should live in the world of *Maya* like lotus flowers in a pond. The lotus lives and takes its nutrition from the pond, but it does not get wet and dirty with mud from the pond.

*Haumai*, pride, is the term the Gurus use to account for the flaw in human personality. Ego is the interpretation of the word. The Guru says that *haumai* is a great disease (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 466). Acceptance of humility and rejection of pride, ego, *haumai* are the main principles of Sikhism (Singh, 1982, pp. 62–63). Ego affects positive relations with others. It affects the working, social and family life of the individual. Ego-bound individuals get stress and mental health problems when triggered. Learning to control ego by accepting humility as prescribed in Sikhism can directly improve the mental health of the individual. True humility is the recognition of one's imperfections. The material conception of life enables us to find faults in others by ignoring our own. According to Gurbani (Sikh scripture), humility is a formidable weapon (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 470, 628). It can be used to free us from ostentatious, assuming, arrogant, scornful, stubborn and self-justifying behavior.

Persons possessing true humility (*Gurmukhs*) are full of inner joy. In contrast, proud, ego-oriented people (*Manmukh*) do not even seem to laugh much. If *Manmukhs* do laugh, their laughter is phony, shallow and contemptuous. They have anything but inner joy and peace. Thus, true humility is

becoming *Naam* or God-immersed, contented, attaining intuitive understanding, being free of arrogant pride and ego, enjoying inner peace and joy, abiding in truth, performing pious deeds, being liberated, satisfied, fulfilled, kind, merciful, modest, full of inner beauty and free of sinful mistakes, untouched by sorrows and the pains of material life.

Humility does not mean one should not assert one's rights. Being a true devotee does not mean to give up rights. Being a humble servant of God does not mean that you let others walk all over you. Humility teaches equality, not manipulation. This is the reason, *Gurmukh*, a truly humble person is equated to a saint as well as a soldier (*Sant-Sipaah*). Thus, without true humility, there can only be manipulation, anxiety and hurt. Most world conflicts could be resolved if all world leaders could relinquish ego, *haumai*, and accept humility to improve the mental health of the world populace.

## Application of Sikhism in practice

By practicing the following five virtues, one can improve and maintain one's mental health:

1. **Truth:** Truth occupies the first place in the virtues recommended by the Sikh Guru. In Sikhism, greater than truth is truthful living (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 62, 488).
2. **Contentment:** A contented mind is free from envy, greed and jealousy. Without contentment it is impossible to acquire peace of mind (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 279).
3. **Patience:** Patience gives courage to put up bravely with all the slings and arrows of an outraged future (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 607).
4. **Perfect Faith:** Perfect faith in God and considering the Guru's teachings as infallible and following these in daily life (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, pp. 31, 288).
5. **Compassion:** Compassion implies considering another's difficulty or sorrow as one's own, and helping to relieve it as far as possible. Forbearance, particularly when one is in a position to punish one's opponent, is a great asset (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 299).

## Meditation

The Sikhs believe that the prime cause of disease is rooted in the mind. The mind by its very nature is a non-stop thinker and creates a continuous stream of thought patterns, some evil and some pious. These thought patterns are the cause of the disease. Ordinarily the mind functions on two planes, the conscious and the unconscious. But, there is another level, called the 'super conscious', where one becomes a different person after meditation.

Study on transcendental meditation has shown that the electroencephalograph has an increase in alpha-wave activity indicating greater tranquility of mind, decrease in the heart rate, 20% decrease in oxygen consumption, diminished effects of epinephrine and other stress-related hormones and increased skin resistance (Wallace and Benson, 1972).

With meditation, clients and psychotherapists have recorded improvements in anxiety, depression and the development of insight (Kabat et al., 1992; Kutz et al., 1985).

In Sikhism, meditation is not only done to gain control over involuntary vital body functions as shown in the study of transcendental meditation by Wallace and Benson, but also to gain peace of mind (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 6). This can be achieved by combining meditation with spirituality, called spiritual meditation. Spiritual meditation is done on the *Naam* of the Supreme Teacher, *WAHEGURU*, to achieve a super-conscious and blissful state in which one finds oneself close to or one with the God in addition to relaxation of body and mind.

One can meditate at any time, but the best time according to the Guru is in the early ambrosial hours of the morning before sunrise, after a body bath (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 2). Personal hygiene has been given great importance by the Gurus.

Naam Simran (loving remembrance of God) is the universal religion because the practice of Naam Simran does not require any ritual. It requires a person simply to stabilize his/her mind in the remembrance of the Supreme Soul. Simran does not differentiate between persons on the basis of religion or nationality. Naam Simran is a way of life that is based on correct conduct and moral values and ensures a human being peace of mind in all circumstances. It is spiritual science and moral hygiene that cures the mind of tensions and worries (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 305). It rids the soul of the dross and dirt and clears the conscience of evil influences (vices).

Those people who go beyond meditation into the realm of spirituality report that they sense closeness to God while meditating. Such people have had better health and more rapid recoveries (Wallis, 1996).

## Prayer

Praying in the congregation with full conviction and faith (*Ardas*) is said to be better than praying alone. A Sikh in his/her prayer does not ask for the betterment of him/herself, but for entire humanity as per human rights for all.

## Socioeconomic concept of Sikhism

As per the Guru's teachings, one is required not only to earn honestly but also to share one's earnings with the helpless and poor people (Singh, 1982, p. 70) according to the concepts of:

1. Kirat Karna: Honest Living (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 467).

2. Wand Chakna: Sharing with others (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 1245).
3. Naam Japna: Meditating on the Naam of God (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 305).

## Sikh view of mental illness

Though Sikhs are religiously a separate entity, they share many beliefs and practices with the broader South Asian community. Many South Asians believe that mental illness is caused by the evil eye (*jado-tuna*), possession of demons and evil spirits (*bhuta-preta*). Many believe that it is a punishment of God for their sins in a previous life and it is their *karma*. Rituals to please gods by reciting the Holy Scripture, visiting temples, taking a bath in holy rivers, ponds (*sarowars*) and exorcism are practiced (Das, 1987; Singh, 2000). The mental health professional is contacted only after all these rituals fail. There is a stigma attached to mental illness. Sufferers hide it from the community and even from relatives. They do not talk openly about their problems with the doctor, so they tend to somatize the symptoms, making it difficult to diagnose the condition.

Sikhs, like other South Asians, do not believe in talk therapy. However, the number of clients seeking counseling has shown a manifold increase since the author started using Sikh religion and spirituality as the basis for counseling.

## Spirituality in everyday life

Spirituality is not worship or rituals to please God, but deeds and a positive attitude towards the self and others to make life joyful. Happiness does not come from external sources but from within. Being rich does not bring happiness, nor does being poor bring unhappiness. It is the attitude towards money that makes one happy or unhappy. In the same way one's attitude towards illness brings unhappiness. If one

changes one's attitude towards one's illness, one will feel happy while being sick (Blitz, 1996).

Research has shown that religion and spirituality are important in the recovery process for many who have mental illness (Sullivan, 1998). The emotional support spirituality provides is through the comfort it gives, feelings of being cared for, and feelings that one is not alone (Lindgren and Coursey, 1995).

## Spiritual liberation

Spiritual liberation in Sikhism is to liberate oneself from *haumai*, ego (Singh, 1992). In Sikh terminology, one should be *gurmukh*, God centered, and not *manmukh*, self-centered. This can only be achieved through human effort. This can be used in counseling clients who have lost all hope that one has to try, and should be optimistic. Sikhism teaches human effort and optimism over pessimism.

The Guru's concern is with humankind and its destiny. He taught that several distinctive and unique features set it apart from the rest of His creations and characterize humanity. They are as follows:

- We have the power to discriminate between good and bad. We can make choices.

- We have the ability to choose between different forms of action, i.e. we can use our earnings to help the needy, improve our homes or gamble.
- We have the opportunity to enter a conscious unity with God through choices that we make.

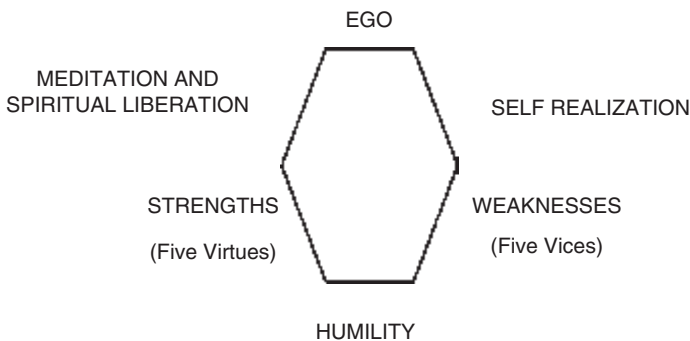
The spirit of the human being is raised with a belief that one is not a helpless creature, but a responsible being with a will of one's own, which can do a lot to shape one's destiny.

According to the hexagon model shown in Figure 2, it may be achieved in six steps.

They are:

1. *Ego*. To understand what *haumai*, ego is, and how it affects us.
2. *Self-realization*. To realize that my current problem is because of my ego, and that I have to get rid of this ego.
3. *Five Vices (Weaknesses)*. To realize that, for my current problem, among five vices, which one is hurting me most? One has to learn how to keep these vices under control.
4. *Humility*. To counter ego, one has to accept humility.
5. *Five Virtues (Strengths)*. While learning how to control five vices, one has to develop five virtues.
6. *Meditation and Spiritual Liberation*. Once these five steps are completed, and true humility has

THE SIKH SPIRITUAL MODEL OF COUNSELING





been achieved, one is spiritually liberated. Meditation combined with spirituality gives peace of mind in all circumstances.

This model can be explained better through the following two case vignettes.

### Case 1

Mr X, a non-practicing Sikh, lost C\$47,000 on the stock market in three days. He became depressed, started drinking heavily and attempted suicide by ingesting Tylenol tablets. His family physician started him on Paxil (an antidepressant). After four months of treatment he was still depressed and talking of suicide. He was then referred to me. I discussed with him my hexagon model. He agreed to work with me on this model. I helped him to realize that his ego has been hurt due to loss of his life savings. I then discussed with him five vices and he realized that it was his anger (*krōdh*) and greediness (*lobh*) that were affecting him most. He was angry with himself because he had lost his life savings and wanted to punish himself. During our further discussions he understood that the best way to get over his hurt is to accept humility, and accept that he is poorer now and that he has to strengthen five virtues. I explained that he has to have perfect faith in God. We discussed that whatever God does is for our betterment. It is our perception that is wrong. It is difficult to understand how losing your life savings is good for you, but one day you will say that God saved me that day from a bigger loss, which is your life. You can earn money again. You should be content with what you have now, that is your life and your family who love you so much, rather than crying for what you do not have. You should live a truthful life and work hard. Do not try to get rich overnight. Do not get attached to *maya*. *Maya* should not control us; we should control *maya*. Life and death are in the hands of God,

so we should not try to end it. We should be optimistic in life and not pessimistic. After six sessions he continued with appointments as and when necessary. He started regular meditation and stopped drinking. After two months he stopped Paxil on the advice of his family physician and started regular work. I saw him after six months and again after a further six months. He was drinking alcohol socially, never had any symptoms of depression, and was doing regular meditation and encouraging others to follow this model even to keep mentally healthy.

### Case 2

Mr Y, a conservative Sikh, was referred to me with a history of spousal abuse. I greeted him in the Sikh traditional way with folded hands. His history revealed that before immigrating to Canada, he was the sole earner in the family and his wife was looking after the household chores. She was a full-time housewife and never worked outside the house. There was no spousal abuse at that time. Since moving to Canada, the wife had also obtained gainful employment outside the house and started asserting her rights. She demanded that he share the household chores, which he refused. That led to conflict and resultant spousal abuse. I explained to him that I would work with him on my hexagon model and the Western model of anger management. I discussed with him the change in roles with both husband and wife working outside the house. Because the wife was also earning and was asking him to share work in the house, he felt that his traditional role as provider in the house was threatened, as was his ego (*haume*). I explained to him that Gurus have given equal status to women and so does modern society. If she can work outside the house you can also very well work in the house. After discussing five vices we recognized that anger (*krōdh*) and pride (*ahnkar*) were affecting him. He decided to

work on them. He was given an anger management course based on the Western model. He learnt that anger can also be controlled if he accepts the changed situation in his family and adopts humility. Among five virtues, he learnt that he has to lead a truthful life by giving his wife due respect, being content, and having patience and compassion even if he feels that his wife is demanding too much from him. Both husband and wife also had this model explained to them together and how to work on their differences and control their egos (*haume*). I also explained to his wife how her ego was affecting her. She was demanding that he should do household chores because she was also earning now. This demand was damaging to her husband's ego. It is better to negotiate than to be demanding. It is better to be humble than have an ego. It was also explained to them that the best way to control stress is regular meditation. Both of them worked on this model. Spousal abuse stopped and they started living their life as they lived in India.

Now I shall add a few lines regarding improving the mental health of the community and of mankind. Civil unrest in nations, terrorist threats and wars with their accompanying mental health problems can be avoided by utilizing the following Sikh principles:

- Everyone adopting the principles of *miri-piri* and saint-soldier.
- Decision-makers making a collective decision after giving up ego, in complete humility as stated by the Sikh Gurus.
- Considering all of humanity as equal and the children of God in the true sense of the Sikh Brotherhood (Sikh Panth).

- War to be waged as a last resort only after all other methods have failed. War should be waged according to the concept of the saint-soldier.

## Conclusion

Various studies have shown that those clients receiving religious psychotherapy showed significantly more rapid improvement in anxiety symptoms than those who received supportive psychotherapy and drugs only (Azhar et al., 1994; McDowell et al., 1996; Razali et al., 1998; Azhar and Varma, 2000). The integration of spirituality can play a key role in mental health programs as comprehensive, empowerment-focused and culturally attuned approaches to recovery from mental illness become more widely adopted (Fallot, 1998). Taking this into consideration mental health professionals should use cultural/religious specific models of counseling. As the Sikh religion is a universal religion, this model can be used in conjunction with Western counseling for everyone. There is also great scope for the use of Sikhism in the preventive, promotive and curative aspects of mental health. With all these qualities, the *Khalsa* (Baptized Sikh) is the ideal future international hope for humanity. The need of the day is to enable these principles to reach mankind all over the world.

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