



Role of Spirituality in Armed Forces in Maintaining Physical and Mental Balance with Special Reference to India

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of warfare, where the din of battle drowns the echoes of peace, an unseen force quietly fortifies the hearts and minds of soldiers the force of spirituality. In the hallowed grounds of India's armed forces, this ethereal companion assumes a paramount role, not merely as an abstract notion but as a steadfast cornerstone in maintaining the delicate equilibrium of physical prowess and mental resilience among warriors because in the battles fought on the frontlines, an unwavering mental balance is required amidst adversity.

KEY WORDS

Spirituality, Armed Forces, Mental Balance, India, Resilience, Military Psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality does not regard a cumbersome entity or belief of practices and rituals as one's religion, but it does regard the personal sense of peace, purpose and faith to achieve them. Spirituality forms an entity much like a religion shared among people's mental and physical selves to accomplish their purpose in life or profession (Bufford et al., 2023). The initial steps to spirituality are setting goals and defining the purpose one needs to chase. Spiritual well-being is a newly recognized aspect of health; however, it is not freshly incorporated (Fadaei et al., 2020). Exposure to various physical, psychological and social barriers needs centralizing and channelling one's energy into a focused bracket instead of peripheral healing.

Armed forces personnel face uncountable challenges and milestones in their professional career,

which can leave their behaviour and response towards their environment very much influenced by their surroundings (Jafari et al., 2024). Centralizing their focus on recognizing and improving their internal emotional and mental state is necessary to motivate them to overcome psychological and physical barriers in the present and near future (Karami & Shahmohammadi, 2023).

Main Body

The inter connectedness of spirituality and resilience has garnered significant attention concerning the holistic well-being of armed forces personnel. Recognizing this correlation, a study was undertaken to explore the intricate relationship between spirituality and resilience within the military context. This research aimed to delve into the dimensions of spirituality, drawing from John Hardt's insights, and assess resilience using established scales such as the Conner AM and Davidson's questionnaires (Bilosevych et al., 2025). The study embarked on an exploration of spirituality along the lines proposed by John Hardt, examining its multifaceted dimensions within the armed forces. Hardt's framework likely encompassed various aspects, including the spiritual beliefs, experiences, and practices that resonate with military personnel. This exploration sought to understand how spirituality manifests among service members and its potential influence on their resilience in the face of challenges and adversities.

Concurrently, the study utilized well-validated measures like the Conner AM and Davidson's questionnaires to assess resilience. These tools provided a structured approach to evaluate the resilience levels within the military context, considering factors such as adaptability, coping mechanisms, and psychological strengths exhibited by armed forces personnel. By intertwining these dimensions, the study aimed to uncover the nuanced connections between spirituality and resilience. It sought to elucidate how spiritual beliefs, practices, or experiences might contribute to enhancing the resilience of military individuals in coping with the unique stressors inherent in their profession. Furthermore, the study likely intended to explore whether certain spiritual dimensions correlated with higher levels of resilience, offering insights into potential strategies for bolstering the well-being of armed forces personnel.

Overall, this research initiative aimed to shed light on the intertwined dynamics of spirituality and resilience within the context of the armed forces, potentially paving the way for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to foster the mental and emotional well-being of military service members (Chaturvedula & Joseph, 2007). The results of the study were that the armed forces work long hours and experience psychological strain, particularly when assigned to perilous duties. Since they are expected to eschew those closest to them, they struggle to get the emotional support they need. It is suggested that personalised spiritual training be provided to armed personnel in order to help them develop resilience to handle the day-to-day challenges of their duties.

In the past, psychology was concerned primarily with anomalies and the adverse aspects of personality, but as time went on, the focus turned to constructive psychology, which values spirituality and resilience over other characteristics. As said and believed, armed forces is neither a profession nor a duty but a way of life. Apart from the duties assigned, operations handed, and schedule followed, the army becomes a way of life for the armed personnel as they adapt and shape themselves into this life.

Armed forces represent leadership, unity, integrity, discipline, unity, duty, courage, loyalty, virtue, and sacrifice. Above all, the principles of armed forces are sacred to the armed personnel as well as others. Spirituality is a guiding light for the search for the sacred. However, the principles of armed forces have a hidden relic of personal growth and experience, which is often not talked about (Chen et al., 2018). Armed forces are not merely for service and security on the outside but also an inner experience for themselves to find, discover, learn and grow in their journey. Spirituality helps paint the yellow path towards the attainment of inner experience for the armed personnel.

Elkins identifies six fundamental qualities that define spirituality as a universal aspect of the human experience. First and foremost, spirituality embodies a mysterious energy, an intangible force that transcends the tangible and connects individuals to something greater than themselves. This enigmatic essence often eludes precise definition, yet it pervades various aspects of human existence. Moreover, spirituality entails an overarching aim towards compassion, emphasizing empathy, kindness, and understanding towards others. It serves as a guiding principle that encourages individuals to navigate their interactions with empathy and benevolence, fostering connections and a sense of shared humanity.

At its core, spirituality holds a phenomenological essence, rooted in personal experiences and perceptions. It manifests uniquely within each individual, influenced by personal beliefs, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences. This subjective nature allows spirituality to be fluid and diverse, adapting to the intricacies of individual perspectives and interpretations (Hourani et al., 2012). Additionally, spirituality encompasses a profound capacity to respond to the spiritual—acknowledging and engaging with the unseen or transcendent aspects of existence. This responsiveness enables individuals to explore, connect with, and derive meaning from the spiritual realm, nurturing a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Overall, Elkins' delineation of spirituality highlights its universality, underlying the human experience across cultures and belief systems. It captures the elusive yet profound essence of spirituality, emphasizing its capacity to inspire compassion, navigate personal experiences, and foster connections with the spiritual aspects of life. Spiritual fitness is an area of possible difficulty. At times, sense of meaning and purpose in life is difficult to navigate. It might be challenging to make sense of things at times. The perception of not being associated with something bigger creates a void inside oneself. People begin to doubt their morals, values, and beliefs. Still, it matters who you are and what you do. One can take steps to give life more direction and significance by improving spiritual health.

Armed forces need more than the accepted and embedded principles of life to maintain a balance between their mental and physical selves. Intricate and distinct difficulties like those of armed personnel call for analytical excellence, adaptability, innovation, and an unshakable dedication to brilliance. Armed forces personnel are obligated to forge new paths while maintaining the principles of conduct, integrity, and national security due to the dynamic national and global atmosphere, in addition to evolving cultural standards and advances in technology (Veisi et al., 2019). All the challenges put in front of the armed personnel cannot be overcome by their duty principles. There must be ways devised to achieve the mental and physical peace, resilience, stability and health.

At the core of spirituality lies an ethical compass that guides the actions of the armed personnel amid the chaos of conflict and in high-pressure situations of dilemma and ambiguity. It serves as an invisible armour, reinforcing values of righteousness, integrity, and honour. It also reinforces values of compassion and self-discipline. The ethical framework provided by spirituality becomes a guiding light, shaping decisions and actions even in the crucible of adversity.

In the mosaic of India's armed forces, spirituality embodies a unifying thread, weaving together the diverse cultural and religious tapestry that defines the nation. It fosters a deep respect for differences and nurtures an inclusive environment where soldiers find solace in shared values irrespective of their backgrounds. It is not solely an individual or personal concept. It promotes unity and a sense of belonging among people by fostering camaraderie and teamwork within units. It is an unspoken tradition that an officer's religion is derived from that of the troops. While at home, he may practise any faith; when he is with the troops and in the field, he adheres to the unit's faith.

Spirituality acts as a catalyst within the barracks, weaving an indelible connection among soldiers that surpasses societal divisions based on caste, creed, and language. Its influence transcends these traditional barriers, serving as a unifying element that nurtures camaraderie and unity among military personnel. In the

context of India's richly diverse spiritual tapestry, this phenomenon gains even more significance. India's spiritual landscape embodies a beautiful pluralism, characterized by a myriad of beliefs, practices, and traditions coexisting harmoniously. The barracks, often a microcosm of society, become a melting pot where soldiers, regardless of their individual spiritual affiliations, find common ground through shared values, principles, and a collective sense of purpose. This shared sense of purpose, underpinned by spiritual understanding and respect, forms a strong foundation for the unity and cohesion essential in military operations.

Moreover, India's spiritual diversity nurtures an environment where soldiers are exposed to various perspectives, teachings, and rituals, fostering a culture of acceptance and appreciation for each other's beliefs. This exposure not only promotes tolerance but also strengthens the fabric of brotherhood within the armed forces. Ultimately, spirituality serves as a unifying force within the barracks, promoting solidarity and understanding among soldiers. In the mosaic of India's spiritual traditions, this unity is further reinforced by the celebration of diversity, creating an environment where differences are embraced and respected.

The rigours of military life demand more than physical prowess; they necessitate an unyielding mental fortitude. Here, spirituality emerges as a stalwart confidante, offering respite in times of distress. Practices embedded in spiritual traditions—meditation, mindfulness, and prayer become a refuge, a sanctuary for soldiers navigating the tumultuous waters of stress, trauma, and separation from loved ones. It serves as a source of comfort and solace in the difficult times (Weitzman, 2021). Fostering mental resilience and different coping mechanisms to help with the rigours of life in the armed forces is a very beneficial approach to improving mental health. Spirituality in terms of mental health helps with stress management and emotional support, which the armed personnel time and again seek in their environment.

India's spiritual heritage, rich with practices like yoga and pranayama, extends its healing embrace to the armed forces. Yoga, a timeless discipline ingrained in the country's ethos, not only enhances physical fitness but also cultivates mental acuity and emotional equilibrium. A healthy mind heals all physical discomforts and motivates people to go beyond their comfort zone and achieve their goals and purpose in life. In the pursuit of excellence, spirituality paves the way for discipline and focus. Its teachings on self-control and resilience become guiding principles that are highly valued in military training and operations, moulding soldiers into not just formidable fighters but also disciplined individuals capable of withstanding the trials of combat.

Spirituality not only helps overcome challenges or adds new skills to one's ability to overcome challenges but also makes a strong character. Character is the commander's disposition, rendered by values, morals, integrity and abilities. Within the course of one's life, character development can undergo innumerable ups and downs and progress either productively or adversely. The purpose and motivation of armed personnel need to be sound, as even a modest sacrifice will come at a great price.

India, a land steeped in spiritual diversity, interwoven with a tapestry of beliefs and practices, offers a unique vantage point from which to examine the profound role of spirituality in its armed forces. "The Indian Army draws its ethos from the philosophy and beliefs of the society it serves and is an integral part. It draws its vigour and vitality from the deep sources of strength that have moulded successive generations of soldiers from India's ancient past." India's military legacy reveres spirituality as an integral aspect of soldiering. From the ancient teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, echoing timeless wisdom on duty and righteousness, to the modern-day integration of yoga and meditation into training regimens, the armed forces pay homage to the profound significance of spirituality.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the role of spirituality in India's armed forces transcends mere religious connotations; it embodies an ethos, a way of life that nurtures the holistic well-being of soldiers. It stands as a silent sentinel, safeguarding the physical and mental equilibrium of those who stand guard, ensuring the defence of the nation's

honour and integrity. In the silent interplay between battle-ready warriors and their ethereal companion, spirituality, India's armed forces find a harmonious symphony—a balance between the body's might and the soul's resilience.

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