

The Spiritual Scientist

An Ezine for Those Who Think

Published by VOICE, ISKCON, Pune

SO WHAT IS YOUR SQ?



"While computers have IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and animals can have EQ (Emotional Quotient), it is essentially SQ (Spiritual Quotient) that sets human beings apart," observe Danah Zoher and Ian Marshal in their book *SQ: Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence*.

Till the first half of the 20th century, the mainstream scientific notion was that we humans are just complicated machines, with computer-like brains. The consequent attempts to measure intelligence in terms of information processing ability led to the development of IQ, which tests our logical, mathematical and linguistic skills; the higher the IQ, the more brilliant the person, so said the theory. Computers can have high IQ; they know the rules and follow them without making mistakes. But in real life, high IQ people didn't always turn out to be the most wealthy, famous, successful or happy.

In mid-1990s, Daniel Goleman revealed findings in neuroscience and psychology that stressed the importance of Emotional Quotient (EQ). EQ enables us to be aware of our feelings and those of others. This awareness is vital because we fail to behave rationally when we are overpowered by emotions. Therefore Goleman argued that EQ was a basic requirement for the use of IQ. Animals can be said to have EQ; they have a sense of their environment in terms of emotions – dangerous, safe, unpleasant, pleasant - and know how to deal with it – fight or flight, for example.

The transformative power of SQ distinguishes it from IQ and EQ. While IQ and EQ help in dealing with situations, SQ allows us to ask if we want to be in that situation in the first place through questions like -

"Is my job giving me the fulfillment I seek?"

"Are my relationships with others mutually satisfying?"

"What are my priorities in life?"

"What is the purpose of my existence?"

SQ motivates us to create new situations if necessary. Thus it determines our happiness as also our ability to meaningfully utilize IQ and EQ.

SQ has many characteristics, most of which center on perception of the unchanging, non-temporal, divine aspect of life. The word "spiritual" is interpreted differently by different people and accordingly SQ also has different parameters. Theistic SQ – SQ as measured by one's level of God consciousness. Interestingly, theistic SQ has a scientific basis. In the 1990s, research at the University of California led to an identification of a 'God-spot' in the human brain. This area, located among neural connections in the temporal lobes of the brain, lights up during scans with positron emission topography whenever research subjects are exposed to discussion of spiritual topics. The existence of the God-spot indicates that the brain is programmed to ask ultimate questions. This finding falsified the earlier allegation of some psychologists that religion was a neurosis, a mental disorder.

Scientific findings found even more revealing. In the highly acclaimed Handbook of Religion and Health, published by Oxford University Press, Harold G. Koenig, MD; Michael E. McCullough, PhD; and the late David B. Larson, MD, carefully reviewed no fewer than two thousand published experiments that tested the relationship between religion and everything from blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and stroke to depression, suicide, psychotic disorders and marital problems. Some of their findings are:

- ? **People who attended a spiritual program at least once a week lived average seven years longer than those who don't attend at all.**
- ? **Religious youth showed significantly lower levels of drug and alcohol abuse, premature sexual involvement, criminal delinquency and suicidal tendencies than their nonreligious counterparts**
- ? **Elderly people with deep, personal religious faith have a stronger sense of well-being and life satisfaction than their less religious peers."**

Koenig's Conclusion: "A high SQ faithfulness to God appears to benefit people of all means, educational levels and ages."

Scientists are also discovering how harmful a relatively low SQ can be to your health. One recent study looked at individuals whose idea of being successful means having the biggest house on the block or newest luxury car. The consequences of this secular view of life are devastating, explains Ohio State University psychologist Robert Arkin: "The cycle of materialistic pursuits is disappointing and exhausting in the long run and can make people perpetually unhappy."

Interestingly, the modern concept of SQ parallels the Vedanta-sutra principle of brahma jijnasa (spiritual enquiry), which is also unique to human beings. Like the threefold intelligences IQ, EQ and SQ, the Vedic guidelines encompass our three-dimensional existence - body, mind and spirit. To attain lasting happiness, we need to go beyond gratifying our bodies and pacifying our minds to harmonizing our souls with the supreme soul, God, through devotional service. Amazingly, the characteristics of high SQ people, as stated below, are almost identical with those of advanced spiritualists mentioned in the Bhagavad-gita. Consider for example the capacity for holistic thinking – the ability to see connections between diverse things- considered the hallmark of high SQ people. When people with high IQ / low SQ look at the world, they see only space and time, mass and energy, logic and reason. This vision prompts analysis, but offers no sense of direction in life. People with high IQ /



high SQ also see connectivity and design, purpose and meaning, faith and mystery. This vision enables them to see the hand of God and so gives them direction in life.

The other strikingly similar qualities are given below (with the corresponding Gita verses in braces) -

Self-awareness (2.13)

An ability to face and use suffering (2.15)

The ability to be inspired by a vision (2.41)

A desire and capacity to cause as little harm as possible (12.13)

Most importantly, the Vedic scriptures delineate a practical and potent ABCD formula for dramatically increasing our SQ and happiness.

A - Association: Interacting with and learning from high SQ people like devotees of God enables us to see order amidst chaos, plan amidst change

B - Books: Studying spiritual books like the Bhagavad-gita answers life's fundamental questions and empowers us with inner direction and motivation

C - Chanting: Regular meditation on the holy names of God like the Hare Krishna mahamantra bestows spiritual tranquility even amidst material adversity.

D - Diet: Eating vegetarian food sanctified by offering to God nourishes our body, purifies our mind and awakens our soul.

The Bhagavata Mahapurana (7.7.21) urges us to become spiritual gold-seekers, "An expert geologist can understand where there is gold below the earth and extract it from the gold ore by various processes. Similarly, a wise person can understand the spiritual dimension within the material body, and, by spiritual excavation, attain fulfillment in life." Most people spend their entire lives unaware of the treasure of peace, joy, love and wisdom that lies within their own hearts, just as uninformed people living in a gold ore area stay unaware of the treasure below them. The treasure in our heart is spiritual – it is our eternal loving relationship with God, Krishna. Modern science by acknowledging the primacy of SQ has started discovering this latent wealth. The ABCD formula of Krishna consciousness enables us to spiritually excavate and fully utilize this treasure.

According to Robert Emmons (The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns, 1999), spiritual intelligence helps one to transcend the physical and material, experience heightened states of consciousness, sanctify everyday experience, utilize spiritual resources to solve problems, and, be virtuous, showing such traits as humility, gratitude, forgiveness and compassion. This suggests that just as financial capital is the basis of any business, the spiritual capital – SQ – is the basis of our business of life. It fills us with divine confidence in all our endeavors.

Lest we neglect our spiritual enrichment, modern management guru Stephen Covey reminds us, "We are not human beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings on a human journey.