

Meta-analysis of Theoretical and Practical Vision on Forgiveness and Wellbeing in Ancient and Contemporary Literature

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Abstract

Given the turbulent period and multiple challenges at intra and inter personal levels that human beings face today, health and well being is a major global issue. Moreover, the tendency of human beings to retaliate and to seek revenge after being insulted or victimized is deeply ingrained in the biological, psychological and socio-cultural milieu. Thus an innate proclivity to reciprocate negative interpersonal behavior with more negativity is visible everywhere.

The problem of human aggression and violence has thus been pushed to the forefront of social science researches with the recognition that prevention is the most effective strategy for their management. In this connection, Forgiveness is an important corrective mechanism to the proclivities towards avoidance and revenge- typical negative responses to interpersonal transgressions.

Broadly, this paper explores the concept and process of forgiveness and its relationship with health and wellbeing as recorded in diverse ancient philosophical doctrines, religious texts and scriptures cross-culturally. Further, the objective is also to delineate the conceptualization of forgiveness and its health correlates as discussed in contemporary psychological and medical sciences.

For the purpose the investigators studied and analyzed the relevant and available ancient and contemporary literatures at primary and secondary sources.

Exploring the concept of forgiveness in various ancient and contemporary texts amazingly indicate the conceptual and empirical similarities. Forgiveness is the most important virtue and concept that brings peace and harmony in the life. People who forgive are happier and healthier than those who hold resentments. The act of forgiveness is good for soul and have significant benefits of health and wellbeing.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Well-being, Personality Disposition
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Introduction

The issue of aggression and violence has been pushed to the forefront with the recognition that prevention is the most effective strategy for its reduction.

Helping young people avoid and overcome emotional problems in the wake of violence is one of the most important challenges one can face.

Promoting healthy development is as important as preventing problems and will serve the same end. As a responsible member of society one should do well to help individuals correctly identify their strength and use them to increase and sustain their respective levels of well being.

Forgiveness is one of the most important personality traits which can help an individual to cope with the grief and loss, and support to heal his/her hearts and rebuild life because revenge is not the answer, Holding on to bitterness and anger can cause problems of their own and FORGIVENESS is a crucial part of healing mechanism.

People have learned and practiced forgiveness for a long time only in a religious and philosophical context. It is a core value in various religions and cultures of the world. It is traditionally a concept of faith. Psychologists didn't study forgiveness until recently. Only in the last few

decades has forgiveness attention from psychologists and social psychologists. It wasn't until the 1980's that the number of papers and books forgiveness began to appear. With the recent development in the Positive Psychology movement forgiveness is being recognized as a Positive Psychology attribute. Forgiveness is being also associated with psychotherapies. The role of forgiveness in spiritual development has also been studied. Recently psychoanalysis, dialectical behaviour therapists and cognitive behaviour therapies have found an important role of forgiveness in healing mechanism. Forgiveness is a survival of human being. The present paper address forgiveness as concept, forgiveness as in ancient in contemporary literature and its relationship with wellbeing.

Forgiveness as a Concept

Forgiveness has been considered as a key human virtue and moral act but recently with the advent positive psychology it is being seen as a positive psychology that with great healing forgiveness is the mental emotional and/or spiritual process of ceasing to feel resentment or anger against another person for a perceived offence, difference or mistake or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution. There is no common definition. Forgiveness is a conscious choice to move away from pain, hurt, resentment and revenge that arises from an injustice, hurt, offence or betrayal. It can reduce the force these feelings and emotions otherwise have and thereby contributing to emotional, mental and physical well being. It strengthens and develops over ability to live freer and happier life. It is an attitude that helps to transform towards a life of peace, compassion, mercy, joy and kindness.

Forgiveness in Ancient Text

Most world religions and philosophies include teachings on the nature of forgiveness, and provide an underlying basis for many modern day traditions and practices of forgiveness. Some religious doctrines or philosophies place greater emphasis on the need for humans to find some sort of divine forgiveness for their own shortcomings; others place greater emphasis on the need for humans to practice forgiveness.

West and Forgiveness

More than any other world religion, Christianity actually defines itself around forgiveness, by giving central place to the cross of Christ and to his act of atonement for people's sins. Motivation in the early Christian tradition is clear : forgive because you have been forgiven. Jesus' parable of the *Unforgiving Servant* (Mathew 18) defines a dynamic of grace, initiated by god, in which it is only possible to live in God's blessing, the kingdom, by living out a lifestyle of forgiveness to others. 'We love because God first loved us.' (1 John 4.19)

Despite some common over-simplifications of Judaism as a religion of righteousness achieved through following rules, the Old Testament presents faith as arising from the grace of a merciful God, whose greatest gift to his people was the Law (torah) itself. Judaism reflects many subtle tensions between a graceful heart and legal complexity, with many

insights into 'hard-heartedness.' The great 12th century Judaic thinker Maimonides said in "The Laws of Repentance" that forgiving is commanded of the righteous man. If you have wronged someone, you must repent, and if you have asked the injured for forgiveness and he has refused to forgive, you must ask him again and again. Ask him three times and if he has not forgiven you then he is to be regarded as *cruel*. "It is forbidden to be obdurate and not to allow yourself to be appeased."

Islam teaches that life on earth is a period of testing and preparation for the life to come. The angels in heaven record a person's good and bad deeds. People should therefore try their best to be good and help others, and then trust in God's justice and mercy for their reward. Death is the gate to eternal life. Muslims believe in a last, or judgement, day when everyone will receive the record of his or her deeds on earth. The record book is placed in the right hand of the good, who then go to heaven. It is placed in the left hand of the wicked, who go to hell. the Koran says, "If anyone does evil or wrong to his soul but afterward seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah often forgiving and most merciful.". (S.39, A.53)

Confucianism, though suppressed in China until recently, still exerts a powerful influence on Chinese culture. The most important early Confucian philosopher, Mencius (4th BC), believed people were born good. He stressed the need to preserve "the natural compassion of the heart" that makes people human.

India and forgiveness

"If we have injured space, the earth, or heaven, or if we have offended mother or father that may Agni, fire of the house, forgive us and guide us safely to the world of goodness."

Atharva Veda 6.120. VE, P. 636

The Vedas are full of verses which speak of the Divine within man, and therefore Hindu Dharma today implores us to let go of grudges, resentment and especially self -contempt. If others harm you in thought word or deed, do not resent it. Rather , let it awaken compassion, kindness and forgiveness. Use it as a mirror to view your own frailities; then work diligently to bring your own thoughts, words and deed into line with Hindu.

Vedas says that forgiving others is good for your health. it is when hate and resentment become a way of life that we begin to worry and wonder what life is all about.

May my body become pure.

May I be free from impurity and sin.

May I realize myself as the light divine.

May my mind become ever pure.

May my self become pure.

This prayer from Yajur Veda says that whatever sins have been committed by me, in thought, word or deed, may the Supreme lord, the source of all strength, wisdom and purity, forgive me and purify me of them all.

On an individual level, all can strive to give up the urge to "get even" heeding the Vedic admonition " Here they say that a person consist of

desires. And as is his desire, so is his will, And as is will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap" (Shukle Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5 URR, P-272)

The Hindu who is consciously aware within his soul knows that he is the time traveller and may incarnate, take a body of flesh, in the society he most opposed in order to equalize his hates and fears into a greater understanding which would result in the release of ignorance.

Hinduism strongly encourages forgiveness as a core value in the path of spiritual improvement. All people are imperfect and must extend forgiveness to others, even if an offender has not repented, if they are to be forgiven themselves. In the Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Section XXVIII, King Yudhishtira said in reply to Draupadi, "Forgiveness is virtue; forgiveness is sacrifice, forgiveness is the Vedas, forgiveness is the Sruti. He that knows this is capable of forgiving everything. Forgiveness is Brahma; forgiveness is truth; forgiveness is stored ascetic merit; forgiveness protects the ascetic merit of the future; forgiveness is asceticism; forgiveness is holiness; and by forgiveness is it that the universe is held together."

In the world-view of reincarnation, *karma* (people's good and bad deeds) determine their future destinies in this world, in heaven, or in hell. Good deeds lead to rebirth in a higher state, perhaps as a wealthy person. Evil deeds may lead to rebirth as a slave or even as an animal. Hindus, and also Buddhists who share this world-view see the highest religious goal as being to end all attachments to worldly things and so free oneself from the effects of *karma*. Forgiveness or compassion is one of the major ways of doing this, and Vishnu is the most powerful deity of great compassion.

*Kara charara krutam vaak kaayajam karmajam vaa
shravan naya najam vaa maanasam vaaparaadham
vihita maavihitam vaa sarvametam shamasva
jai jai karunabdhe shri maha deva shambho.*

Whatever I have done with my hands or feet, or speech, my body or my actions,
Whatever I have heard or seen, or thought, all my mistakes,
Whatever knowingly or unknowingly, please forgive them all,
Great all forgiving God, Mahadeva Shambhu.

In Buddhism, forgiveness is seen as a practice to prevent harmful thoughts from causing havoc on one's mental well-being. Buddhism recognizes that feelings of hatred and ill-will leave a lasting effect on our mind *karma*. Instead, Buddhism encourages the cultivation of thoughts that leave a wholesome effect. "In contemplating the law of *karma*, we realize that it is not a matter of seeking revenge but of practicing *metta* and forgiveness, for the victimizer is, truly, the most unfortunate of all. When resentments have already arisen, the Buddhist view is to calmly proceed to release them by going back to their roots. Buddhism centers on release from delusion and suffering through meditation and receiving insight into the nature of reality. Buddhism questions the reality of the passions that make for forgiveness necessary as well as the reality of the

objects of those passions. "If we haven't forgiven, we keep creating an identity around our pain, and that is what is reborn. That is what suffers."

Jains classify forgiveness as; gifted by the one who forgives, earned by the one seeking it; and natural as a part of our divine nature. Forgiveness can be earned by prayers, *pratikramana* and *prayascitta*. Natural forgiveness, on the other hand is automatic and effortless and proving that to err is human and to forgive is divine. Mahavira said we soul forgive our own soul first. To forgive others is practical application of this supreme forgiveness. *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma*. Anger begets more anger and forgiveness and love begets more forgiveness and love. Forgiveness benefits both the forgiver and the forgiven.

The Passages of Sikhism express God's forgiving nature, it is ever God's desire to forgive. "Anyone that is fallen into the grip of lust, wrath, or attachment, Attached to stingy greed, Guilty of the four cardinal sins and evils, And demonic sins like murder; who never has attended to scriptures, holy music, or sacred verse- By contemplation of the Supreme Being, with a moment's remembrance of God shall he be saved." (Sikhism. *Adi Granth*, Sri Raga, M. 5, P. 70)

Cultures and Forgiveness

In a cultural context, we must look not only at the social family structure, but also at the political and judicial processes of the cultures. All judicial systems are specifically designed to extract some payment for the wages of sin.

African

Forgiveness is a natural part of African culture. Africans recognize that the forgiver is more powerful than the party that injures. Traditionally African society is communal. Individualism, so valued in western society, is less valued in African society. In African cultures, forgiveness becomes the most powerful way of maintaining the community. Africans recognize that it is necessary for the injured party to confront the issue. With forgiveness as the intended outcome, the injured party resolves the issue, gaining power and respect within the community. Across Africa today, communal forgiveness is in action. Because forgiveness is a natural process for African societies, it expresses itself as a communal process.

Middle Eastern

The cultures of the Middle East are bound up in a theological and sociological conflict regarding forgiveness. All the major religious traditions that spring from the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have deeply rooted beliefs in the act of forgiveness. With the majority of people living in the Middle East being Muslim, the rigid theology of Islam plays a large role in how forgiveness is perceived. In most Middle Eastern nations, there is little separation of secular and religious life because holy law supercedes secular law in Islamic traditions. This causes ongoing conflict between the secular leadership (most of whom are dictators), and the theological leadership. All these conflicts leave little room for forgiveness. The inability of the Jewish and Arab factions to find common ground and live in a communal state of acceptance is a prime example of

this problem. There are factions committed to each others destruction. Each side is expressing a willingness to "die instead of forgiving." The rising death toll between Palestinians and Israelis is a clear example of the willingness to die.

Asian

"The cry for no tolerance easily becomes a cry for no mercy. Make no mistake: it is essential to maintain law and order. Real peace is not possible without it. But neither is peace possible without mercy, which is the basic ingredient of forgiveness and compassion, the true basis of a civilized society. We may take sides against crime, but we should be careful that we do not take sides against the "sinners".
 "1 Asian cultures are as varied as their individual people, so it is not really possible to identify a broad based context that forgiveness lives in. The theological groups of Hindu, Buddhist, and a multitude of sects based upon ancestor worship make the views of forgiveness varied. The fact that forgiveness is a part of all the religions, and even a part of Chinese ethical and moral values in the writings of Confucius, shows how deeply rooted in everyday life is the act of forgiveness. Communalism is a fundamental part of Asian society. Forgiveness is therefore a fundamental part of the culture. It becomes apparent that in order for a communal society to function, forgiveness must be a fundamental part of the social process. In Asian societies there is a greater self responsibility for injustice. An integral part of the family and communal structure is the individual's responsibility not to bring shame or disgrace to the family or community. For example, in Japanese society, we see this carried to the point of "Sepuku" (ritual suicide) as a method of atonement for failure or acts of disgrace. One possible reason for the process of forgiveness to be so prevalent in Asian societies is the closeness with which people live with one and other. The extended family and limited availability of physical space may contribute directly to this. In Hawaiian society, there is a communal process for dealing with forgiveness and righting a wrong. It involves the injured party being willing to work towards forgiveness and the injuring party being willing to participate in the spirit of reconciliation. A HAKU (an unbiased mediator) that is respected by all organizes the process which will go on until a resolution is reached. The Hawaiian process is one both of a cultural and a spiritual nature since both are tightly bound in the culture. It is the willingness of all involved parties that allows the Hawaiian process to work.

Hispanic

Hispanic culture is heavily influenced by a predominately Catholic Christian base. The act of forgiveness is a moral as well as an ethical one. Of interest is the distrust of secular powers such as governments and police. The settlement of disputes in most Hispanic cultures is always a family affair. It would not be normal to involve the police in a dispute, though it might be reasonable to involve the local priest. I have deliberately left out Western Culture from this section since it is involved almost totally within the context of individual forgiveness. The focus of Western culture on the values of the individual

make this a more complex subject than just a cultural one since it is opened up to the individual's personal view point.

Forgiveness in contemporary text

Since 80' researchers have explored the psychology of forgiveness with the tools of social science. Although its origins are within the ancient religion, forgiveness, through research and academic discourse, has now taken its place within the positivist and humanistic traditions. To date researches have not agreed on a unanimous definition of forgiveness Enright, Freedman, and Rique (1998) considered Forgiveness "a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her" (pp.46-47). Exline and Baumeister (2000) defined Forgiveness as the "cancellation of a debt" by "the person who has been hurt of wronged"

For better understanding it is helpful to distinguish among the three senses in which the term "forgiveness" can be used (Mc Cullough & Witvliet, 2002). Forgiveness can be defined as a response, a personality disposition, and as a characteristic of social units, at the level of the psychological functioning of a transgression recipient, Mc Cullough and his colleagues (1997, 1998) recognize forgiveness as the convergence of three distinct but related motivational systems. Specifically, they defined forgiveness as a suite of transgression related motivational changes toward a transgressor in which revenge and avoidance related motivations subside, and motivations toward benevolence or goodwill increase or re-emerge (McCullough et al.,1997). Moreover, McCullough and colleagues contend that forgiveness functions as a result of increases in empathy for a transgressor. Essentially, forgiveness occurs when victims are able to act not on motivations inspired by their initial experience of righteous indignation and hurt perceived attack, but on a desire to restore community, or at least a stance of good will, with their transgressors.

As a personality disposition, forgiveness reflects a trait-like tendency to forgive other across a variety of interpersonal transgressions. Most investigators who have examined forgiveness as a personality disposition have relied solely on self-reports of general tendencies to forgive typical transgressions (Mauger et al., 1992; Mullet, Houdbine, Laumonier Parrott, & O'Connor, 2001 Hebl & Enright, 1993; Tangney, Fee, Reinsmith, Boone, & Lee, 1999). By contrast, McCullough and Hoyt (2002) estimated people's dispositions toward avoidance, revenge, and benevolence motivations across several transgressions(both actual and fictional) and then explored the relationships of these trait-like measures of forgiveness with the traits in the so-called "Big Five" or "Five Factor" personality taxonomy (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1987). Results showed that stable, trait – like individual differences accounted for 22-36 % of the variance in people's endorsements of avoidance, revenge, and benevolence in response to an array of transgressions. In particular, "Agreeableness"

predicted lower revenge motivation and greater benevolence motivation, while "Neuroticism" predicated greater avoidance motivation and lower benevolence motivation.

As a quality of social units – marriages, for example (Fincham, 2000) – forgiveness resembles attributes similar to trust, intimacy, or commitment. A variety of relational factors have been found to be responsible for forgiveness. Not surprisingly, people are more inclined to forgive transgressors for less severe offenses (Boon & Sulsky, 1997). They are also more likely to forgive committed versus less-committed relationship partners (Finkel et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 1998) and apologetic versus unapologetic transgressors (Bono & Crano, 2002; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Girard & Mullet, 1997; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Moreover people are more prone to forgive if they attribute less responsibility and intentionality to the transgressor (Bono, 2002; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Fincham, 2002).

In 1996 Dr. Robert Enright from the University of Wisconsin put forgiveness on the map. And he is considered the father of forgiveness studies. Dr. Enright developed the 20 step Process Model of Forgiveness. Psychologist and author Everett Worthington is also one of the leading lecturers on the subject, year ago, a teenage robber killed Dr. Worthington's mother in her home. Worthington developed pyramid model of forgiveness to help him forgive his mother's killer. This model involves; recall the hurt, empathize, altruistic gift of forgiveness, commit to forgiveness, holding into forgiveness another model came from Dr. Fred Luskin. He formulated a nine step process to forgiveness.

Forgiveness has always been a matter of concern for religious teachers, philosophers, ethicists, researchers and academicians. Exploring comprehensively the ancient and contemporary text suggest that both agree on the same lines in its conceptual and practical implications. Forgiveness is found to be the key to happiness and wellbeing. The act of forgiveness constitutes a mental bath, letting go of something that only poison us within. It breaks the cycle of anger, sorrow, and bitterness and help to make peace and harmony to our life. Forgiveness positively related to better physical and mental health, healthier relationship and improved psychological well being.

Forgiveness and wellbeing

Forgiveness is associated with improved physical health and mental health. Psychophysiological and neuroimaging studies demonstrate the possible biological underpinnings of forgiveness. Forgiveness has been employed as an educational tool with beneficial effects and has also been shown to be beneficial for victims of abuse and unfaithfulness.

Theories and researches have begun to shed light on several dimensions of forgiveness. Darby & Schlenker (1982) were the first researcher to notice age related trends in forgiveness. Consistent with them, other researchers have found that people

appear generally to become more forgiving as they age (Enright et al., 1989, Girard & Mullet, 1997; Mullet & Girard, 2000; Mullet et al., 1998; Park & Enright, 1997; Subkoviak et al., 1995; Enright et al., 1989; Enright & Human development Study group, 1994) hypothesized that reasoning about forgiveness develops along the same trajectory as does Kohlbergian moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976).

Forgiving people report less negative affect such as anxiety, depression, and hostility (Mauger, Saxon, Hamill & Pannell, 1996). Forgiving people are also less ruminative (Metts & Cupach, 1998), less narcissistic (Davidson, 1993) less exploitative and more empathic (Tangney et al., 1999) than their less – forgiving counterparts. Forgivers also tend to endorse socially desirable attitudes and behavior (Mauger et al., 1992.) Moreover self-ratings of the disposition to forgive correlate negatively with scores on hostility and anger (Taney et al., 1999) as well as with clinicians ratings of hostility, passive-aggressive behavior and neuroticism (Mauger et al., 1996).

With in the Big Five personality taxonomy (John & Srivastava 1999), the disposition to forgive appears to be related most strongly to agreeableness and neuroticism (McCullough & Hoyt, 1999). Adjectives such as vengeful and forgiving tend to be excellent markers for the agreeableness dimension of the big five taxonomy and other research confirms the link between agreeableness and forgiveness (Ashton et al., 1998; Mauger et al., 1996). Researchers have also found that forgiveness is related inversely to measures of neuroticism (Ashton et al., 1998; McCullough & Hoyt, 1999). Thus the forgiving person appears to be some one who is relatively high in agreeableness and relatively low in neuroticism/negative emotionality.

In general forgiveness is correlated positively with mental health and wellbeing. In a study Hathaway & McKinley (1943) found that low scores on forgiveness were strongly related to depression, anger, anxiety and low self-esteem. Results of varied researches on forgiveness, mental health, physical health and well being suggest that they are positively correlated. When people adopt forgiving response, they accrue psychophysiological benefits.

Although researches are beginning to illuminate several facets of forgiveness, many more remain. Forgiveness has been shown to be beneficial, more research is required, especially in the psychiatric setting. The role of resentment and bitterness in the causation of psychiatric disorders remain largely unevaluated and requires further study. On valuable research approach would be to understand forgiveness in specific relational contexts. There is a need for improvement of methodological quality. This research area would benefit greatly from additional experimental research. It is possible also to manipulate forgiveness in laboratory settings and clinical settings. So that the possible effects of forgiveness can be studied experimentally.

Forgiveness researches based on controlled studies would have important implications for healthcare and education. Forgiveness, Training and Intervention could be offered as part of primary as

well as acute and chronic care health programmes. Forgiveness holds unique and practical solution to conflict resolution and violence reduction. Age specific, gender specific forgiveness training programme in home and at work settings could be developed to foster more positive emotions, to heal and open our hearts to love as well as strengthen and build our capacity for compassion and understanding and thereby improving our overall wellbeing.

Major scientific discoveries in mental health have been pioneered in forgiveness studies. For those who achieved forgiveness, anxiety and depression, along with improved self-esteem and hope, were improved (Ingersoll-Dayton, Campbell, & Hwa-Ha, 2011).

Toussaint and colleagues (2014) studied a comparison of 735 fibromyalgia patients with healthy versus depressive styles. Healthy, depressive, reactive, and low affect are four styles of relative positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) levels. As anticipated, a healthy affect balance style was less prevalent in fibromyalgia patients, at about 12%. Those with a depressive affect balance style were about 51.8%, and 4.4 % a reactive affect balance style. This was consistent with the researcher's hypothesis that a depressive affect balance style was more likely to have worse outcomes across the domains of higher levels of pain, stiffness, sleep disturbance and dyscognition, greater fatigue, higher levels of depression and anxiety (Toussaint, Vincent, McAllister, Oh, & Hassett, 2014).

Forgiveness is currently being assessed with growing interest as an essential tool in coping with chronic pain (Offenbacher, Dezutter, Vallejo, & Toussaint, 2015). Emotional regulation is more useful for situations not amenable to change, while problem-focused coping is more effective in changeable situations. The authors suggest an important connection between social stress,

Raj and colleagues (2016) explored the experiences of adults who practice forgiveness, specifically, the indicators of forgiveness, the childhood antecedents, and the benefits of forgiving behavior. The themes emerged show that the childhood antecedents of forgiveness are parental influences and early childhood experiences. The indicators of forgiving behavior include positive emotional state, empathy and perspective taking, and religiosity. The themes identified are enhanced sense of well-being, improved self-acceptance, and competence to deal with challenges. Forgiveness enhanced physical and psychological well-being. The findings of the study have several implications for religious leaders, teachers, parents, mental health professionals, and trainers.

Forgiveness is a character strength and process that, when practiced, is associated with improved psychological well-being, physical health outcomes, and longevity. Forgiveness can serve as a protective factor that buffers against poor health and psychological consequences. Common misconceptions about forgiveness can serve as barriers to the desire to cultivate this protective strength, as forgiveness is often conflated with

permissiveness, and perceived as permission for a transgressor to engage in hurtful conduct. The benefits of forgiveness, however, are most significant for the individual who has been transgressed, rather than the transgressor. Failing to forgive, or unforgiveness, is the practice of engaging in ruminative thoughts of anger, vengeance, hate, and resentment that have unproductive outcomes for the ruminator, such as increased anxiety, depression, elevated blood pressure, vascular resistance, decreased immune response, and worse outcomes in coronary artery disease. Practicing forgiveness enables the transgressed individual to reduce their engagement in rumination thus reducing their experience of anger, resentment, and hate. Forgiveness, then, is a pathway to psychological well-being and health outcomes(Norman, 2017).

Scientists at Radboud University in the Netherlands conducted several studies to see if mindfulness, or paying attention on purpose with an open and accepting attitude, is related to our ability to forgive. As anticipated, people who meditated reported being more mindful, but meditator (no longer how long they had been practicing) were not necessarily more forgiving than non-meditators. It was a person's "mindful disposition," or tendency to be inherently mindful, that was most strongly linked to a forgiving attitude(Bullock,2019)

Whatsoever, the empirical evidences from the age old religious philosophical and recent past suggest a strong linkage between forgiveness, well-being and overall health status of people in general. More so, the unconditional nature of forgiveness paves towards self-expansion, spiritual growth and higher meaning in life.

Conclusion

An extensive and in depth literature search was conducted to understand the origin, meaning and usage of the term forgiveness as mentioned in various types of transcripts. For the purpose, synonyms and cognates in English and Hindi languages, statements, quotations, illustrations and authored books were entitled. Further, looking at the vast, inclusive and multiple meanings attached to forgiveness, different definitions were analyzed and categorized for their specific content.

Table 1: Statements/Illustrations from Ancient Scriptures

| Statements | Source |
|---|--------------------------------|
| We forgive others to gain control of our lives from hurt emotions | Genesis 4:1-8 |
| We forgive in obedience to God. | Matthew 6: 14-15, Romans 12:18 |
| "Forgiveness is Brahama; forgiveness is holiness; and by forgiveness is it that the universe is held together". | Mahabharat |
| Dhriti kshama damo stute yai shaucamindri nigrahdividya Satyakrodho dashakam dharma lakshanam | Adi-Manu |

Table 1 mentions few statements and illustrations from ancient religious and philosophical doctrines and quotations made by eminent scholars time to time. The close examination of these deliberations points out that various mythological characters and religious and philosophical leaders have addressed and advised about the nature and significance of forgiveness in specific context over time.

Table 2: Contemporary Concepts

| Key concept | Author/year |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Voluntary process | Walters (1984) |
| Overcoming of negative affect | Enright & the human Development study group (1991) |
| Change of psychological state | McCullough (1998) |
| Trait forgiveness | Lawler-Raw, Kathleen (2010) |
| State forgiveness | Lawler-Raw, Kathleen (2010) |

It is quite evident from Table 2 that forgiveness has been defined and understood in multiple ways and contexts. It is clearly indicated that the forgiveness is having the dispositional and trait like qualities as well as situational contexts. It is a voluntary process and willful act aiming at resolving the negative feelings about interpersonal transgression. Further, forgiveness may be with reference to self, others or god as well. It is also having cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Finally, it is a powerful therapeutic process of change in psychological states of an individual.

Forgiveness is a core value and faith taught in various religions and cultures all around the world. The role of forgiveness in spiritual development has also been recognized universally. Further, it may also be noticed that while extensive religious and philosophical texts and researches have explored the relationship of forgiveness and well-being, fewer studies have addressed forgiveness and health in totality including all the dimensions-physical, mental and spiritual. The holistic approach to find the relationship of forgiveness and the health outcomes all together is crucial. In an effort to extend the knowledge base concerning the relevant variables all together, the present study examined the relationship of forgiveness and well-being on the basis of selected ancient and contemporary literature. The results of the present study provide a unified vision based on diverse texts from religion, philosophy and psychology; and research synthesis of review pertaining to forgiveness and well-being. Forgiveness has been a matter of concern for religious teachers, philosophers, ethicists, researchers and academicians since ages till today. Exploring comprehensively the ancient and contemporary text suggest that all agree on the same lines for the conceptual and practical implications of forgiveness. The overall content epitomize that the word forgiveness has multiple connotations and varied usage across time, religion and culture. It is indicated that the forgiveness is

having the dispositional and trait like qualities as well as situational contexts. It is a voluntary process and willful act aiming at resolving the negative feelings about interpersonal transgression. Further, forgiveness may be with reference to self, others or God as well. It is also having cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Finally, it is a powerful therapeutic process of change in psychological states of an individual. Thus, the vast panorama of empirical studies on forgiveness in relation to various indices of well-being and their analysis and synthesis is indicative of significant role of forgiveness in alleviating negative symptoms and enhancing overall wellbeing. The overall results of meta-analysis indicate that given the variability in effect size and sample size, the average weighted mean effect for all the studies was found to be 0.36, which is indicative of the relationship between forgiveness and various dimensions of well-being.

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