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SPIRITUALITY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SACRED SCRIPTURES OF THE WORLD RELIGION

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Abstract

Spirituality is a systemic practice and mostly experience of a religion. This is the most powerful, comprehensive and profound experience. The purpose of this study is to investigate importance and the purpose of spirituality in world religion? And how much religious scriptures emphasized upon their followers to attain it? Most of the religious sacred texts have described that human being as a spiritual being. The physical domain needs personal hygiene too because it is pre-requisite for spirituality. Some purposeful physical activities of self-control help to attain high level of spirituality. Our five senses and apparent body need to be bounded by some set rules and religious laws. Spirituality can be achieved by some physical and mental training and control. This is the most prominent feature in world religion and even persuaded to be practiced at particular sacred places. Methodology of this research study is descriptive. This research study has found that purpose of spirituality in world religion is to be closer to the Lord. Although the tools and methodologies to achieve spirituality in world religions' are different but the purpose is almost same as given in their prescribed religious literature.

Keywords

Spirituality, Scripture, Religions, Physical, Sacred Text

1. Introduction

Spirituality is voluntary and systemic programmed of self-discipline and self-denial in order to attain some high valued spiritual state. So it is important to understand popular concept of spirituality. The common concept is mostly linked with a particular attitude towards life. It is mostly believed in that, the material body is evil and spiritual constituent is alone good. This is metaphysic' separate soul and body, God and world, material and spirit into sharply contrasted realities. Anthropologist have studied that some such persons were founded in almost all religions. Spirituality is the result of their continuous personal restless efforts and meditation. The practices of some religious devotees are fasting, sexual continence, living in seclusion, living in voluntary poverty and inflicting pain upon them. Such practices of spiritual purification are common in major religions.

1.1 Terminological Meanings

The word, spirituality' was derived from the French word "spiritualite" and taken over to other languages especially since 1960 s, by catholic theologian. In Middle Ages 'spiritualis, mean pertaining to monasticism. "Spirituality is a modern form of active Christian holds contemplative element to be important". (Stuckrad, 2006, 4/1808)¹. The word 'spirituality' is converted from ancient word 'hālig means (whole, complete), so the spirituality captivates entire human life. (Sheldrake, 2016) ²"Twenty four different meanings for the word spirit have been described". (Brown, 1993).³

1.2 Problem Statement

In today's mechanical life style, men are in mental stress and need peace of heart & mind. So the religion comes forward to satisfy this human need. Spirituality is the common element in world religion and has universal value. This research study investigated the importance and the purpose of spirituality in the light of religious scriptures of major religions.

2. Literature Review

Spirituality is a mostly used term especially in contemporary religions of the world. Almost all worldly religions are familiar to the term, its meanings and purpose. "Spirituality is increasingly being recognized as a real phenomenon and not merely a 'mental illusion". (Rose, 2001)⁴In religious philosophy the existence is a reality distinct from matter. This existence- may be call as mind, or spirit. Some believes that mind or spirit is the only reality that exist seven after the death of a person. It is a kind of metaphysics.

Mostly the “spirituality” deals in collective form rather than individual. Mostly religious practices and rituals have been performed to attain spirituality with individuals as well as in mutual grouped. A man cannot reach the level of humanity without *pure Soul*. It is also thought that a man without soul is like an empty shell. Spirituality concerns with characterized particular believe and practice. This is a totally unified approach and the core concept is related to personal holiness.

According to *Swami Vivekananda* (1863–1902) “Our life-blood is spirituality. If it is right everything is right. The political, social, any other material defects even the poverty would be cured, if that blood is pure.”(*Vivekananda*, 3/288)⁵ it is also said that spirituality is directly related to soul. According to Hindu religious scriptures, soul is eternal; it can never be ended or finished. It penetrates from one to another being as the result of their good or bad deeds. To make our self-pure, the repentance, abstinence (reluctance of the self towards the world), Patience, thankfulness and sincerity are all tools toward the spirituality.

3. Spirituality in Human Society

Our world, since the emergence of human beings has been under the influence of the concept of supreme power. This force and mighty power has always fascinated humans. Humans are spiritual beings and desired to be a part (somehow) of this Mighty power. Man urged to see or visualize the Mighty Lord and to become beloved of the supreme power. So different tools and means were designed in all communities to provide some beautified ways to satisfy this basic instinct.

Actually man had a concept of God in some way or other. It was in his nature to bend down in front of a mighty power that can fulfill all his needs and wishes. There was a strong desire to perform rituals to please the mighty one. The religious persons and especially devotees have been using the sources provided by the sacred text and religious traditions. Spirituality is basically a tool to be closer to the mighty one.

Human beings had believed in a supreme power in any form and for catharsis of this nature of man, religion declared sacred places for spirituality. People started believing that if they visit these places they will be purifying spiritually, in thought and deeds. Spirituality may be regarded as practices or exercise done for attaining some valued spiritual or mental state that found in all major religions of the world yet they often criticized by philosophers.

3.1 Types of Spirituality

Five types of spirituality described by ‘Koenig’ can be subsumed as “Mighty one; God-oriented, humanistic-oriented and worldly-oriented. These types are being in practice of all religions of the world. Some have main and central focus to attain the favors of the mighty one and some shows mutual respect for entire humanity.

Like all other expression of human life, religion has a collective as well as an individual aspect. Some religious practices of spirituality are in individual form like Buddhism, Jainism etc. Some religions like Hinduism, rituals and rites are performed collectively. So most of the social scientists viewed the religion as a primarily or entirely as a construction of social forces or entities.

3.2 Similarities in Religion and Spirituality

The concept of spirituality deals with values, forgiveness, justice, hope & faith in humanity and trust. It is a continuous process throughout a human life.

- The common thing is the concept of God or a Mighty Power to believe in but call by different names.
- Both believe in that super- natural one had power that we don’t have.
- Both are related to cognitive phenomena.
- Both have relationship either emotion or affection.
- Both desire to have a relationship of the high level with the particular power.
- Both connect with this higher power with fear and trembling.
- Both relate with family background and sometime got in inheritance genetically.
- Both religion and spirituality have rituals like meditation and yoga sessions.
- Both have fear if not to be succeeded, as a result deserves shell-fire etc.

4. Spirituality in the Light of World Religious Scriptures:

Judaism religion says about spirituality that

“if a man sows the seed of goodness and virtue, the Lord will reverse it and add much more in his integrity, dignity”. (Corinthians)

Christianity also emphasized on inner purity as the bible says;

“Actual illumination and brightness of a person is his ‘insight’, not the apparent eyes, if the inner eyes (insight) are dull and blur,

there will be shadows of darkness entirely".(Methew)

Islamic spirituality is God-oriented. According to Islamic, senses correspond to the spiritual entity. So training of senses emphasized in Islam. Quran says,

"We have regarded humans with great dignity and respect.

We granted them senses to use, but they don't utilize their senses;

eyes and ears etc. So they are like non-human, they are misguided

and neglecting the day of judgment". (Al-Quran)

In Hinduism, purification of the senses is a prerequisite for the purification of mind and soul. As mentioned in Hindu scripture: He can see wisely, only with the eyes of "wisdom". In Hinduism, Sensual and ceremonially cleansing process is a symbolized as ability to receive super natural powers.

In Buddhism' righteousness and high level morality is required to approach the demanded spirituality level by Buddha. If a follower of Buddha wants to reach the final destination of 'Truth', he must go through the levels of purity (inner-outer) set by Buddha.

"Your eyes are reserve and retain. If the eyes of your mind faded,

you could not see the prestige and the potential, of truthfulness"(Tripitaka).

The fundamental foundation of Buddhism is Spirituality; its central point was enlightenment and inwards spirituality of an individual. On the other side we see, in Buddhism, there is the system of rituals for spiritual purification (Suddhi) found in Pali scripture. Three rites and practices to gain suddhiare asceticism, baptism and fire rituals. Buddhist takes very less diet in daily routine that mostly consist of vegetable only. Buddha emphasized upon inward purification of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, apparent body and even thoughts in mind and says not to do evil things so you can make others safe and be helpful and kind.

Danapunaya, Svarga (morality and heaven), Evils of papa/kama (immoral acts/pleasure seeking), Nekkhamma (Value of renunciation), Four Nobel truths are the gradual levels of spirituality enable the merger of one's self with Buddha. (Bodhi, 1992)

This hierarchy of legitimate, progressive practices defines as "syllabus" for advancing in spiritual attainments. *Punya* provided the chief orientation points and goal in Buddhist layman's

world view and Dana (generosity, giving, charity) has always been starting practice for accumulating (*punaya*), the lifelong measures of spiritual advancement.(Tyagi2006)⁶

5. Spirituality in World Religious practices

In Judaism the concept of soul and body is not divided into two; body and soul separately form. So it is basic need of a man to be spiritually so high that can reach to the actual goal and the destiny of heaven. To attain high level of spirituality there is need to get preparation first. This preparation is mostly in physical form in all religions. Basically physical cleanness can achieve by the use of water, or by bath or some other such practices defined by a religion. If major uncleanness occurs, some sacrifices demanded and ceremonies conducted as mentioned in these verses of Torah to make sacrifice a lamb, pigeon or turtle-dove etc.(Leviticus 15:17-18, 11:25-40, 12:8)

Loss of purification is caused by idols.(Biblical Ezekiel 22:3) As the book of Genesis say;
“Prophet Jacob conveys his family to be free of idol worship and clean you”. (35:2)

The Christian spirituality system is concerned with inwards purification rather than outwards. Christianity defines what defiles a person. Within and out of a person’s heart, those are evil thoughts, greed, sexual immorality, deceit, theft, murder, cheat, malice, slander, lewdness, envy, arrogance, adultery and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person. As bible teachings, purify your heart and your senses; eye to be closer to the Lord. (Mathew 5:8, Luke 11:34-35) So bible describes;

“A true follower prays to his Lord; ask for a clean heart without all worldly filths so that it glows and shines like snow”. (Psalm 51:7, 10).

So purifying conscious is more important than merely physical to be spiritually high. Purification of the body is an apparent condition, a purified conscience and character is actually demanded by the religion. As teachings of Christianity say that

“Those people who are pure to their Lord, everything is pure to them but if they involved in dishonesty and misconduct, they are corrupted minds and hearts.”(Titus)

To attain the highest level of spirituality in the Christianity, the primitive church had been practiced some rites and rituals as the rite of baptism (1 Peter 3:21); the renewal of a former undefiled state, confession in front of priest. (Mark 1:44, 1 John 1:9) Some other rituals also practiced as the preparation process to achieve high of spirituality at different occasions as a death, and a new birth and transfer from generation to generation.

In Islam, there are five pillars to be practice as the foundational rituals. The Profession of Faith, or Testimony of Faith is (*Shahada*); *Shahada* is the most foundational expression of Islamic. It is confession to Allah that “There is no God but Allah (SWT) and Muhammad (PBUH), is his prophet.” This confession is not sufficient in verbal but actual confession is the confession of heart. 2nd obligatory duty to a Muslim is to offer prays, five times a day. 3rd is *zakat*. *Zakat* is to give alms to poor and needy. 4th is fasting in the holy month of *Ramadan*. 5th pillar of Islam is pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) according to the last month *zil-hajj (hijri year)*. (*Al-Jathiyah*45:6, *Al Baqara* 2:3,5,43,45,153, 29:45, 15:98-99, 35:29-30, 20:14, 6:162-163, etc,*Al-Tawbah* 9:60,*Al Baqara* 2:183, *Al- Emran* 3:97, *Fātir*,35:18)

Islam defines that Successful is he who purifies himself and all above believes and worship practices are for the Lord. The person shows his purity and sincerity, when he practices all ritual, which fear their Lord in secret, maintain the prayer and *zikar* of heart (remembrance of the God in heart). A true devotee seeks only the pleasure of his Lord and submits his life and death, are all for God, without a partner. Purity of the heart and soul is the core point that is commanded by Allah to be spiritually high and to be closer to the mighty one.

After committing all practices rewards are promised by Allah to those who purified themselves, stay forever in *jannah*. The spirituality is for the sake of oneself and preparation for their return to the God. In Islamic Mysticism four stages are mentioned of *Tazkiya* (Spiritual Developmental process).

- 1st cleanse inner self (*Tazkiya-e-Nafs*).
- 2nd purification of the heart (*Tazkiya-e-Qalb*).
- 3rd empty filthy thoughts (*Takhliya-e-Sirr*)
- 4th lightening of the spirit (*Tajliya-e-Ruh*); “Passing through these disciplines, Sūfismake spiritual progress and attain ma'rifat /gnosis and *Reality* is then revealed to them.”⁷(Rabbni, 2005, p 71)

Spiritual practices of Hindus are self-transformative practices such as austerity (*tapah*) (*Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p:363), celibacy (*brahmacharya*), regulated breathing (*pranayama*), concentration (*Dharana*), contemplation (*dhyana*), contemplation of God (*nidhidhyasa*) and silence or restraint of speech (*mauna*). Mention may also be made of mental worship (*manasa puja*), recitation of God's names (*japa*), devotional singing (*kirtana* and *bhajana*), devotional services (*charya*) such as sweeping the temple floor, preparing the ritual material and serving the guru. The six yogic practices (*kriyas*) namely *Netī* (nostril cleaning), *Dhautī* (cleaning of the digestive and respiratory tracts), *Naulī* (cleaning of the abdominal region with circular motion), *Basti* (cleaning of the lower abdomen), *Kapālabhātī* (cleansing of the brain), *Trāṭaka* (a meditative technique to awaken the third eye) are also purification practices only.⁸ Ablutions in sacred waters (*Ganga*), *Karma Yoga*, sacred objects in nature and five daily sins are also set rules to attain high level spirituality. Hindus perform some rituals to be purified spiritually. Cow is very sacred to them. To purify the body from any interior defilement that may have been contracted there is no more efficacious way than by the performance of the *Pancha-gavia*.

(*Chandogya Upanishad*, VIII. 5.1 - VIII. 5.4, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23-24, *Manu Smriti* 1.106, *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, *Mahabharata*, *Anusasana Parva* 27: 26-97-100, *Bhaja Govindam*: 20, *Bhagavad-Gita* 4:8, *Rig-Veda hymn* 10.87.16)

Spirituality rules were designed by Buddha, in Buddhism. So Buddha has given four truths to find out the reasons and solutions to avoid of agony and pain, that are in pali; “*Dukkha*, *Samudaya*, *Nirhodha* and *Magga*.” (Anandājoto Bikkhu, 2016)

The Eight Aspects, of Enlightenment are the basic rules for Buddhist practices of spiritual purification. *Mahayana Buddhists* had presented the enlightenment (final teachings) of Buddha. It is called *Nirvana*.

Spiritual process cannot complete without following above mentioned rules according to Buddhism. Freedom from all worldly human desires leads to satisfaction. Serenity and Liberation from desires causes awareness to rise.

Importance of spirituality can be seen in Sikhism as well. The teaching of Sikhism is that the filth and impurity of body can wash and clear but the pollution of sin cannot be clean by virtue. A true Sikh should not only take the name of the Lord verbally but also engrave it on his soul by constantly good practices. The only thing that pleases the God is good deeds.

Not only some believes are necessary to be spiritually purify but some ritual and practices are also very essential; a Sikh must engage himself in remembrance of God (*Naam Japna*) *Simran*) on daily basis. One must be committed to Selfless service (*Sewa*) to community and shares his wealth with the needy and poor's (*Wand ka Chakna*). A sikh according to their religious scripture, should defend his life from the evil internal forces; Attachment (*Moh*), Lust (*Kham*), Anger (*Krodh*), Ego (*ahankar*) and Greed (*Lobh*)

6. Conclusions

Although all religions have their own specific believes, faiths, rituals and practices, but they all believe in the Ultimate Reality. This is a spiritual Reality that goes beyond common human experience. Nature has given many qualities to human being for the expression of thoughts and ideas. Religion and spirituality leads them to the right ways. Spirituality can serve as a force for good as well as a force for destruction. All the worldly religions serve humanity. Humanity has the same kind of issues and problems to be entangled with. Morality for the humanity is same, only the practices are different.

Basically spirituality as well religion plays a vital role to eliminate individual differences and bring them closer aims to learn more about spirit of truth, pure love and respect. We find many examples in different ancient Greek, Egyptian, Indian and Arab societies. In spite of some basic differences of different religions there are some common elements. So Spirituality is a common factor between the world religions.

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