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**SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS IN RELIGION: CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN  
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study explores the relationship between spirituality and religion from a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. As every religion has particular spiritual dimensions according to its beliefs, the paper seeks to analyze the specific dimensions of spirituality in significant religions. The study's research design is purely qualitative as it uses the textual narrative method to investigate the visions of scholars on the conception of spirituality. The study's major findings reveal that spirituality is not a dormant illustration of religion. Christian scholars tried to link spirituality with society and the Church. Most Buddhist and Hindu scholars believe that religion does not need to gain the true light of spirituality. The Islamic concept of spirituality is likely to stick with religion. Therefore, it is suggested in continuation of the present study that future researchers consider the factors that push persons to become spiritual souls. Moreover, future researchers can also pay attention to the subconscious mind by giving a solid distinction between the sub-consciousness and spirituality of a person.*

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**Keywords:** Spirituality, Religion, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Islamic

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background:** The search for the ultimate reality has always been a part of man's inner explorations. In general, there are three recognized paths to attempt to reach the ultimate reality in this world: theology, spirituality, and religion. The philosophy behind theology focuses on logical reasoning to examine the possible meaning of reality, life and existence. Religion is more concerned with the set of beliefs and systems of rules. Nevertheless, spirituality is you believe in

your heart before you follow your head. Though the fountain heads for these three paths are not the same, there are certainly similarities and overlapping. Great philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates attempted to make great contributions to theology. Holy books are the sources to reveal hidden facts through religion. And spiritual leaders tend to develop human sensibility through self-recognition and inner soul. The three are taken to be the same, and religion and theology are the embodiment of spirituality.

However, spirituality is now frequently interpreted as something which has released itself from the limits of conventional religion. Over recent decades, a notion of spirituality evolved without an apparent religious background (Drazenovich, 16 March 2005). Spirituality, now, refers to the 'higher' side of life in pursuit of meaning, harmony, association, and superiority (Tacey, 2001). It is an individual expedition for the fulfillment, while religion is more attracted to social values and common behaviors and practices and, thus, more modern and regularized (Chater, 2001). Some writers perceive spirituality to be supreme, broader and more comprehensive; however, for others, religion is spirituality's sub-division (Tacey, 2005). Some view spirituality as attributing to no religion (Chater, 2001), whereas some writers declare it naivety, simplism and intellectually deficient faith stripped of religious tradition (Tacey, 2005).

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are some shortcomings in this research. The lack of reliability resulting from data collected through purely qualitative methods could make it questionable and thus limit the scope of analysis. Future researchers may address this by using a quantitative method or mixed-method approaches. This study is based on the spiritual and religious connection from the CDA perspective. It was a challenging task to gather accurate and reliable data. The second most potential limit of this study is partiality. With the use of the qualitative research paradigm, the subjective elements tend to hinder the respondents' interest. The topic spiritual dimensions in religion was likely to intrigue the personal opinions of the researchers and thus gave it a biased outlook. Conscious efforts were made on the part of the researchers to make the study as objective, structured, detached, and systematic as possible, and hence acceptable and useful.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The paper primarily aims to explore the concept of spirituality that has a much wider-ranging impact on human sense and sensibility than religion. Religion probably is more concerned with rules and obligations. However, spirituality is a great way to seek peace and comfort. Some people consider it an organized religion, but some think it is an irreligious exercise requiring an association through meditation and spiritual self. This study aims to examine the dichotomy between spirituality and religion and to present a suitable resolution to the conflicting ideas among people about their relationship. The objectives of the research are below:

- To explore spirituality as a part of religion.
- To examine the phenomenon of being spiritual but not religious.
- To reveal the dimensions of spirituality in religion.
- To justify spirituality and religion to be the same.
- To investigate the characteristics of spiritual people.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

For the last few decades, there has been an up-growing debate about the dichotomy between spirituality and religion. Some people think of themselves as spiritual but not religious. The problem here is to resolve the basic conflict: Is spirituality a part of religion or a separate entity? Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a newly emerging discipline that has the potential to reach some conclusions in this regard.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- How far is spirituality a part of religion?
- How to be spiritual but not religious?
- What are the spiritual dimensions of religion?
- How are spirituality and religion the same?
- What are the potential characteristics of spiritual and religious people?

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

All religions have their recognized spiritual dimensions. Some are truthfully spiritual-based and believe in practicing moral behaviour to understand the enlightened reality of the world. For example, Zen-Buddhism is a pure and exclusive spiritual religion that teaches

morality, compassion and achieving enlightenment through practice rather than the doctrine of beliefs. The notion of Buddhism is established on the exploration of content and determination in life through the transcendence expedition of the inner self. However, there have been religions that are not spiritually- dependent but have realized some spiritual dimensions.

There have been many complex and diverse discourses on the overlapping conflict between spiritual dimensions in religions. The use of the mind, trends, and capacities in the knowledge of the origin of the world, the devotion to Allah, the quest for God's happiness, modesty, respect and trust which is to be shown by human beings in all the acts, is called spirituality, according to Islamic literature (Mesbah, 2003). The eminent form of Islamic mystical spirituality is the Sufi culture, which aims to release people from diversity, eliminate any cognitive procedure and physical actions that lead them to material and animal desires, and remove hypocrisy. Uninterrupted worship is the principal approach in Sufism. It can be achieved by prayer in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Those who are successful in achieving this unification have particular features to be seen by anyone because even their exterior appearance, which possibly reflects their inner state, leaves its mark (Islam has a spiritual dimension for the spiritual perfection of humanity, 2002).

Moreover, recently, following Cornwall (1986) and Parboteeah, Hoegl, and Cullen (2008), Biaggi (2013) offers a conceptual model of Christian spirituality formed by three dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioural. First, the affective dimension of spirituality is named communion with God, describing a personal relationship between the individual and God. Second, the cognitive dimension of spirituality is labeled as belief in God's truths, representing the acceptance by faith of the core beliefs of Christianity. And third, obeying the moral laws is spirituality's behavioural dimension that marks the outward acts that Christ's followers show (Cornwall, 1986). In Hindu ideology, Spirituality is an independent practice defined as *ksaitrajna* (Sanskrit). There are three ways for spiritual practice in Hinduism: *nana*, *Bhakti*, *karma yoga*, wisdom, commitment, and unselfish action (Lohtefeld, 2002).

Furthermore, Buddhist spirituality is the one that is due to the termination of the nature of misery by acknowledging reality. Unlike

many religions, Buddhism is not centered on God, giving human beings a different conception. Instead, it is known that truth is embedded as persons in our own lives. So far, every religion has standardized domains that fulfill the expectations and ambiguities of its followers. There have been many discourses to resolve the overlapping conflict between spiritual and religious dimensions.

There has been a growing interest in the "Spiritual but not religious" notion in the past few decades. Barna (Research Group) developed two main categories that fit into "Spiritual but not religious" to get an awareness of spirituality outside the framework of organized religion. The first group is those who call themselves "Spiritual" but protest that their religious identity does not matter too much in their lives. The second group focuses on those who do not claim faith and say they are "Mystic"; however, they identify themselves as non-believers, agnostics and independent persons (Meet the Spiritual but not Religious, 2017).

By considering the spiritual concept of Islam and Christianity, we know that spirituality may become a part of religion. But some religions realized on the grounds of spirituality, such as Buddhism, presented another upraising vision. The matter at hand is which factors lead a person to think of himself as "Spiritual but not religious". The analysis of the complex discourses shows that there are still some gaps to fill: What circumstances and characteristics are considered for a person to become spiritual? The present paper aims to assess which factors bring the different domains of spirituality in religions and how far Spiritual dimensions in Islam and Christianity are separated from that in Buddhism.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design and Tools:** The study uses a purely qualitative research paradigm. This paper's focus is to scrutinize scholars' perspectives on the conception of spirituality that is being uplifted in this paper. The study uses the following research tools: Textual narrative methods such as biographies, audio-video recordings, journal writings, and autobiographies.

**Sampling and Population:** The purposive sampling technique is used for textual narrative analysis in which the works of 10 highly authentic scholars in the field of spirituality and religion from all over the world are involved in this research indirectly. In this regard, the

works of three well-known scholars from Christianity, three from Buddhism, two from Islam, and two from Hinduism are selected for data collection. Because Buddhism is essentially based on spirituality, more data is taken from this religion. The information is collected from the stories and experiences of scholars, Audio-video recordings, biographies, and autobiographies. Following are the scholars and the works which are considered in this study:

**Hinduism: Sri Sathya Sai Baba** and the works related to him are:

- a) Science, Society, and Spirituality- The Sathya Sai Synergy by Prof. Vishwanath Pandit
- b) Spirituality: The inward Path Article 01 by Radio Sai Team
- c) What is the meaning of Spirituality? From Sathya Sai with students.Blogspot.com
- d) What are the qualities of a spiritual aspirant? Audio lecture of Sathya Sai

**Arvind Sharma** and the work which is considered is:

- a) A Guide to Hindu Spirituality by Arvind Sharma

**Buddhism**

**Tara Brach** and the video recordings which are taken from her lectures are:

- a) The Path of Spiritual Surrender Part 1 and Part 2
- b) Spiritual Reparenting
- c) Vulnerability, Intimacy and Spiritual Awakening

**Alan Watts** and his lectures, which are considered in this study, are:

- a) Why is spirituality important?
- b) Is Spiritual attainment the ultimate hook?
- c) The source of Spiritual Authority

Moreover, one Quotation from Alan Watt is taken for data analysis.

**Dalai Lama** and the works are:

- a) Dalai Lama on Religion and Spirituality
- b) Dalai Lama on Buddhism as a Spiritual Guidance, not a Religion (Interview)
- c) Beyond Religion- Awakening the self (Interview)
- d) My Spiritual Journey book by Dalai Lama

**Christianity**

**Karl Rahner** and writings, which are considered are:

- a) Karl Rahner's definition of Spirituality by Declan Marmion
- b) Reflection on the experience of God in Karl Rahner's theology- Gifts and Implications by Mary Steinmetz.

**Lillian Daniel** and the book and lecture which are taken are:

- a) When "Spiritual but not Religious" is not enough: Seeing God in Surprising places, even the Church. (Volume by Lillian Daniel)

**Paul Tillich** and the work which is taken is:

- a) Spirituality and Tillich's life: Some Reflections by Frederick J. Parrella

### **Islam**

**Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's** lecture is taken, which is:

- a) Islam and Sufism (Lecture and Interview)

**Jalaluddin Rumi's** writings which are considered are:

- a) ADAB for a peaceful world- A study of Rumi's concept of Sufism
- b) The poem "The True Sufi" by Jalaluddin Rumi

### **DATA COLLECTION**

To find the answers to research questions, the data is collected through the textual narrative method from the views of scholars. From the perspective of Hindu scholar **Sri Sathya Sai Baba**, "Knowledge without devotion is useless, and devotion without knowledge is ineffective". In a discourse in Prasanthi Nilayam, Sathya conveyed that all religions speak of the same universal values: love and harmony. You will become God himself by leading your own life as a human being and treating yourself like a soul. "To the right of the Spiritual Heart is Physical heart". Follow only the spiritual heart (Spirituality the inward path Article 01, Jan 18, 2018). As the external form of human beings grows, the feelings should also grow deep (What is the meaning of Spirituality, n.d.). In Prema Vahini, Sathya explored some qualities of a spiritual aspirant that are considered for data analysis (Baba, July 2010 ). From the perspective of Hindu Scholar Arwind Sharma, in his book "A guide to Hindu Spirituality", the Hindu tradition of Vedanta claims that Brahman, the ultimate reality, is also the sole spiritual reality. There are two traditions of Spirituality within Hinduism, the theistic and absolutistic. The school of Advaita and Vedanta claims that spiritual pursuit consists of little else than the experimental realization of this insight.

There are two approaches, i.e. outward approach, which looked at the universe and sought to discover its ultimate ground, looked at the individual from the inside and sought to find the ultimate foundation of one's personhood. The ultimate basis of the universe and the ultimate ground of the self are identical (Sharma, July 10, 2006).

In her video lecture, "The Path of Spiritual Surrender", the Buddhist Scholar, Tara Brach explored that realizing the identity of a separate self, open to the truth and fullness of who we are, leads an individual to know about himself or herself. To release and learn the inner self, we don't need religion. In another talk about "Spiritual Reparenting", she presented her views that if we don't get enough nourishment in childhood, we are prone to anxiety, depression, dependency, and other forms of deprivation. Our body, heart, and spirit separate us. Another Buddhist spiritual teacher, Alan Watts, expressed some thoughts about Spirituality and Religion in his lecture "Why Spirituality is important". He emphasized the phenomenon of "Religion of no Religion". The ultimate spiritual attainment is to live between materialism and Spiritualism: "Zen does not muddle spirituality with reasoning about God while one is peeling potatoes. Zen spirituality is just to peel the potatoes". A great Buddhist spiritual teacher, Dalai Lama, made a strong differentiation between religion and spirituality. He explored that "Religion I find is linked with the beliefs in the claims of the redemption of a religious tradition or another-an aspect which is the recognition of any metaphysical or theological truth including an idea of heaven and hell. Spirituality deals with certain qualities of the human spirit, such as devotion, compassion, patience, forgiveness, and accountability, which bring delight to self and others (14th, Oct 8, 2002). In his book *My Spiritual Journey*, he took a side that we can do without religion, but not without spirituality (Lama, March 5, 2009). Spirituality is, thus, more important than religion in Buddhism.

Moreover, a Christian scholar, Karl Rahner, reasoned that the term "Spirit", when applied to the individual, means self-presence and questioning. God's definition is not an understanding by which an individual masters the mystery, but it is letting the mystery snatch oneself. The Rahnerian notion of spirituality consists essentially of an experience of God and the involvement of the Church. Rahner described spirituality as "simply a question of coping with our life's



work in a Christian way” (Marmion, 1996). The scholar and writer, Lillian Daniel, explored in her book, "When "Spiritual but not religious" is not sufficient: Seeing God in Surprising Places, even the church” and stated that the term “I am spiritual but not religious” was commonly used as a blanket statement of belief. Private spiritual life leaves people self-obsessed and uncertain and prevents them from getting religious treatment and support (Daniel, 2013). Furthermore, according to Paul Tillich, the invasion of the Holy Spirit into the human spirit occurs not in lonely individuals but in social communities. Tillich calls it theonomous spirituality, a spirituality characterized by the spirit that perceives the presence of heavenly spirit as ultimately possible anywhere, not necessarily within the boundaries of Church and doctrine. Three spiritual themes can be reflected in his sermons. First is inner and outer life, which means Tillich condemns any spirituality recognized as a departure from the world. The second is Spirituality and Theonomy, and the last is Spirituality and Paradox (Parrella, 6 Nov 2004).

Moving toward the religion of Islam, the Islamic scholar, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, shared some views in his lecture that Sufism is a parallel religion and not a part of Islam: spirituality is not restricted to Islam only but is meant for humanity regardless of any religion, cast or creed. Unlike other Sufis, Moulana Rumi, a mystic poet, mentioned that spiritual attainment could not be gained without practice. During the spiritual journey, a person does not have to read books or attend madrasa, but it must continue applying respect (“adab”) to our lives. By breaking worldly desires, one can reach the stage of “Fana” (annihilation of selfishness) (Zinira, November 2, 2016 ). His poem “The true Sufi” is also taken for data analysis: What makes the Sufi? The purity of heart and showing the king's arrow enters in.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The data is collected by focusing on the research works, personal stories, and audio-video recordings of the mentioned scholars. It can be deduced from the perspectives of Sathya Sai baba on Spirituality and Religion that all the religions in the world teach us about love. It can be emphasized that if a person leads his life like a devoted person and forgets about his materialistic desires, he can become God. As human beings physically grow, their emotions and feelings must also grow inwards. It is also explored that one can become a Spiritual

person only if one has an equal love for all, free from partiality. A spiritual person does not care about worldly pains and discomforts and does not compare himself with a lay person. He makes a clear difference between material and Spiritual people: worldly people will run after success and pleasure (Avidhamaya), and it will not be necessary for a spiritual person to have Religion and Worldly pleasures (Vidhamaya).

Furthermore, Arwind Sharma's perspectives differ because he talked about spirituality according to Hinduism. His book concludes that Brahman means "world soul" and Atman means "individual soul", so both Brahman and Atman are related. The ultimate soul is identical to the individual soul. Further, he does not just talk about the self for gaining spiritual attainment. The outward approach views the ultimate ground of the world, and the inward process sees the inside of the individual self. And both the ultimate foundation of the universe and the ultimate ground of self are strongly related.

Moreover, based on the video lectures of Tara Brach, it is concluded that to know about your inner self and to reveal the truth, first, we must release the identity of our separate self. In this regard, there is no need for religion. Being religious or non-religious is not important in this path. Furthermore, human beings are not properly nurtured in childhood inwardly. That's why they are inclined towards depression, anxiety, and suffering. This thing disconnects our inner self from our heart and spirit. So, inward growth of oneself is as important as outward. This perspective of Tara Brach is strongly adherent to Sri Sathya Sai baba's Philosophy. Both talk about the significance of inward growth. According to Alan Watts, to become a religious person, one has to leave all the rituals of the religion and try to be simple and ordinary. He emphasized that those persons who give no sign of faith are religious. There are two kinds of dimensions, i.e. world of Particulars, which is related to worldly things and the World of unity, which is concerned with Spirituality. He believes the ultimate spiritual attainment is to live between Materialism and Spirituality. But the Hindu Scholar, Sri Sathya Sai, has a different philosophy because he emphasized that to gain spiritual attainment, one must leave all worldly things.

Talking about Buddhist Spirituality, Alan Watts points out that Zen is not to think academically about God/Spirituality/Religion.

Instead, the goal is to do something without higher-level thinking. A mundane act like peeling potatoes requires little cognitive thought and, often, while doing such actions, one gets in the rhythm of the act, almost like a meditative state. The Spirituality of Zen is to think about God without doing the great act. Furthermore, according to Dalai Lama, religion is concerned with traditions and beliefs such as prayers, teachings, and rituals. However, Spirituality is related to feelings such as love, harmony, patience, and compassion. One perspective of the Dalai Lama is somehow related to Tara Brach's views. Dalai Lama emphasized that we can survive without religion because human feelings such as love, compassion, and harmony are independent of religion. So, we cannot live without Spirituality, but we can live without religion. Tara Brach also said that we don't need religion in this regard.

In some senses, Karl Rahner's views about Spirituality are different from Dalai Lama's. Karl Rahner believes that Christian Spirituality involves both Church and individual. However, Dalai emphasized that Spirituality is not a matter of religion. So, Buddhist Spirituality has different dimensions from Christian Spirituality. It is further explored from the data that the concept of God is not like that you hold God; rather, it is letting oneself be indulged in the mystery of God. Moreover, through the experience of God, we can attain Spiritual perfection, and this experience cannot be gained through words and concepts and reading books but through living and suffering. Another Christian scholar and teacher highlighted the concept, "We are Spiritual but not religious". She emphasized that if someone creates their Spirituality, it will create dangers and deprives the person of religious thoughts and distances them from the larger society. Furthermore, the exceptional act is to discover God in the middle of errant human beings rather than in sunsets and mountains. Similarity can be traced from the views of Alan Watts and Paul Tillich because both condemn any spirituality that bound the person to escape from this world and live a solitary life. Paul Tillich's views contrast with Karl Rahner's, who believed in Church Participation for gaining spiritual attainment, but Tillich said that we could do it without the Church.

The Islamic concept of Sufism is considered different from other religions. In the light of Ghamidi's lecture on Sufism, it is analyzed

that Sufism is an equivalent religion, not a part of Islam: spirituality is not restricted to Islam only but is meant for humanity regardless of any religion, cast or creed. Sufis can also reach some stages to Prophet Hood. Furthermore, Rumi tried to involve adab in Spirituality and emphasized the importance of humanity. Dalai Lama's concepts can be related to Rumi's as both taught human beings to develop feelings of love and break all worldly desires. In his poem "True Sufi", Rumi highlights the qualities of the real Sufi person. In this poem, he says that a perverse person is not a true Sufi, but a person who faces all the hardships and remains happy is a true Sufi.

#### **FINDINGS**

This paper aimed to present the differences between religion and spirituality and demonstrate religion's spiritual dimensions. Findings reveal that every religious scholar explained the concept of spirituality according to their views. There is a conflict among different scholars, even belonging to the same religion. Most Buddhist and Hindu Scholars highlight that to attain the true light of Spirituality, there is no need for religion. Hence, according to them, Spirituality is not a potential depiction of religion. Furthermore, a truly religious person leaves all the ritual practices. Findings show that every religion has different spiritual dimensions. Christian Scholars endeavour to link Spirituality with society and the Church. They view that a person is not supposed to escape from society for spiritual attainment. Through the experience of God, we can attain the perfection of spirituality. Buddhism is based on Spiritualism. The teachings of Buddhist scholars reveal that Spirituality is concerned with feelings of love, harmony, etc., and religion is concerned with beliefs and faiths. A spiritual person must abandon all worldly desires. Some Buddhist scholars emphasize that for spirituality, a person has to live both in spiritualism and materialism domains. The Islamic concept of spirituality is taken different from that of other religions as they religion into it. The great Sufi Moulana Rumi shared that a true Sufi does not care about materialistic happenings.

The analyses of the scholars' views help define the essential characteristics of a spiritual aspirant. They face all the hardships and have an equal love for all. They do not care about the hardships and discomforts of life. There is no difference between good and bad for Spiritual persons. The spiritual aspirant needs no religion in this regard

because, for him, it is a matter of practice, not beliefs. To attain the highest path of truth, one must practice instead of believing in words.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The study's results show that Spirituality is not considered a potential representation of religion in ultimate cases. In daily life, feelings such as harmony, sympathy, empathy, and love exemplify the utmost significance in making peace and stabilization in society. However, spirituality and religion can be considered the same from some perspectives because both teach us about humanity and equal love for all.

The Qualitative research paradigm is applied to this research. In this paradigm, there is a chance of the unconscious involvement of the researcher's opinions in the study. In future research on the topic, quantitative and mix-method paradigms can be practised as the area demands the pure unbiased attitude of the researcher. Further research is recommended to determine which factors push persons to become spiritual souls. Furthermore, it is recommended for future researchers to pay attention to the phenomena from the perspectives of religion and spirituality, which is most influential and beneficial for the living society. This research paper sought to answer questions about the conflict between religion and spirituality in different dimensions. It is recommended that the coming researchers be attentive to the question of which belief (Spirituality and Religion) is stronger for maintaining peace and reducing extremist views from the world.

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