

SPIRITUALITY IN A NUTSHELL

Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri

Citation format: Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri, "Spirituality in a nutshell ", CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 2, January 2021

Abstract

There are differences of opinion among people about what is spirituality. Some say that developing moral / ethical values in human beings is spirituality. Some say that getting in touch with spirits and spiritual beings in the Cosmos is spirituality. Some say that spiritual association with god / gods in the Cosmos is Spirituality. Some say that every religion has its own spirituality, and the followers are taught how to practice it. Some consider spirituality as an independent religion and claim themselves to be followers of that religion.

We have briefly discussed all these issues in this article and have tried to determine the true meanings of spirituality and its significance in context of the facts of this Cosmos.

Keywords – Spirituality, Religion, monotheism, polytheism, Atheism, psychology, morality

Ethical Spirituality

Human beings have many things in common with animals. They need to eat, reproduce and survive in a hostile environment. Humans are territorial and often fight with each other to safeguard their territories. They also fight with each other for dominance within their own groups / territory which results in conflicts and deadly wars between them and the most powerful and intelligent among them becomes the leader / head of the group of town, tribe, or country.

The thing which distinguishes human beings from animals is the common sense and intelligence. It is their crown which has made them rulers on planet earth.

From time immemorial, sages / scholars / reformers have been explaining people moral values like tolerance, equality, self-control, honesty, health consciousness, etc., to ensure survival and peaceful co-existence of human societies. Together, these values are known as ethical spirituality. Under ethical spiritual certain exercises are suggested by these scholars / sages to achieve these values. One of the most

common exercise in this context across all religions is, faith-based meditation. Certain physical exercises, like faith-based yoga, etc., are also taught to the people.

Human mind is like an ocean in turmoil as many thoughts come and go in it simultaneously. There are other factors related with human mind, like an unfavorable event / accident creates fear. Sometimes people suffer from depression in view of certain loss, accident, or ailment in their lives. The purpose of meditation or meditative exercises is to bring the thought of a person on a single point and to create a hope to get over it. With these meditative exercises nervous system gets relaxed and the human being feels at ease.

Psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, philosophers, etc., also teach people how to control certain emotions and animalistic urges that may result in damaging their brain, heart, and other internal organs. They guide people in getting rid of certain bad habits, addictions, and motivate people for meaningful productive work.

In this context, we have briefly described below 5 major ethical shortcomings that are harmful for individual human and human society as a whole.

(i) Narcissism

Certain people do not realize that they are suffering from extreme behavioral problems like narcissism, egoism, sadism, etc. They are broadly divided into three dangerous personalities, (a) Narcissists, (b) Psychopaths, and (c) Sociopaths.

a. Narcissists

Narcissists consider themselves as unique, privileged and void of flaws. They think they are always right, and rules do not apply to them. They do not accept their mistakes. They consider no one is equal to them. They always let people

down and treat their relatives/coworkers with indifference and contempt. If criticized, they react with rage. In case of failure, they shift the responsibility to others.

b. Psychopaths

There are many commonalities between a narcissists and psychopath. However, when a narcissist does a bad thing, he feels some degree of shame and guilt, but by blaming others, a continues feeling superior rather than correcting himself. On the other hand, a psychopath does not feel any kind of shame or guilt or remorse. They do not care if their behavior hurts others. Psychopaths do not have empathy and often they are cunning and manipulative.

c. Sociopaths

They exploit people intentionally and feel pleasure in it. Sociopaths are great manipulators. The departments of justice, crime and protection in many countries describe these people as intelligent, outwardly cordial, charming, and extremely dangerous. Most of the antisocial elements in human society are found to be sociopaths and psychopaths. Their glaring attribute is, they do not feel guilty of harm they are doing to others. Rather they feel pleasure in seeing people in trouble and pain. It is estimated that over 35 per cent of inmates of prisons around the globe consists of these people.

Many studies have been conducted in this context in medical, psychological, and spiritual fields. These studies suggest certain therapies to help these people, like psychotherapy (talk therapy), medication and meditation. They are counselled to (a) understand the causes of these traits, (b) learn to control emotions, (c) realize the importance of caring and relating with others, (d) learn to trust and collaborate with people, (e) develop tolerance for criticism, (f) not to seek impossible and useless goals, (g) be happy with what they have, and (h) learn to deal with stress and crises, etc.

(ii) Backbiting

To speak about certain deficiencies of a person in front of others in his absence with the intention of insulting him is known as backbiting.

(iii) Defamation

Defamation is a false statement about a person, presented as a fact, that damages the character of a person. Like the statement that you suspect certain person is involved in an illicit relationship or in a murder / conspiracy. This kind of statement does not warrant any substantial proof but creates suspicions in the minds of the people.

Spreading rumors about a person without checking the facts also comes under defamation. Propaganda also comes under defamation. Propaganda is treated as an art in politics. Currently, politicians create certain incidents / false flag operations in society with the help of hired people / state agencies, and based on these incidents, they create a propaganda against certain person / group / section of society. They hire people to create false accounts on social media or open fake websites and carryout a campaign of defamation.

(iv) Jealousy

Jealousy is an emotion that involves feeling of rage and humiliation. One of the reasons for backbiting and slander is jealousy. Jealous person cannot stand the prosperity of others. Jealousy makes people obsessed that often results in aggression in their behavior. Envy is different from jealousy which could be used as a great motivator to create competitive spirit. Envy is a feeling of desire to achieve something similar which is achieved by others. This emotion is a strong motivator for people to work hard and come up in life.

(iv) Hatred

Hate is one of the most destructive emotion. If it is not controlled in a society, it may lead to violent crimes, carnage, and insane behavior. Hate politics has become common these days. As has been described above, the politicians try to create vote banks on hate and division in the society.

Spirits' Spirituality

When we look at the clear sky in the darkness of the night, it is said that stars and planets covered by our physical eyes are about 10 thousand. However, we know that there are billions may be

trillions of stars, planets and celestial objects in the Cosmos.

Philosophers, sages, and scholars say that there are many realms of existence in the cosmos which are inhabited with different creatures. These are known as spiritual beings, spirits, energies, etc., because they do not have physical bodies like humans. They can change their shapes at will, like we change our clothes. It is claimed that most of these spirits see us while our physical eyes cannot see them. In some religions, these spiritual beings are known as (i) leprechauns (short, stocky humanlike creatures), (ii) elves (supernatural creatures), (iii) Jinn, (iv) devas, (v) fairies, (vi) devils, (vii) ghosts, etc.

In our physical world, we have restrictions of movement, sight, etc., but these spiritual beings do not have these restrictions. It is claimed that many of them have easy access to us. They can live near us and sometimes in our homes and we do not realize their presence. Since they do not have physical bodies, they do not need the physical space.

Some people try to establish contact with spirits. It is claimed that once the contact is established, they can make themselves visible to our physical eyes.

Shamanic practitioners are reported to communicate with the spirits of animals, ancestors, and the plant world. Psychics, Soothsayers, clairvoyants, diviners, occults, etc., chant magical spells to get in touch, and speak with entities from invisible realms. In some religions, the powerful spirits in the Cosmos are treated as deities / gods.

Some people repeatedly recite / chant mantras to attract the attention of the spirits and when contact is established or they overpower them with these mantras, they take advantage of spirits' powers and knowledge. With the help of these spirits, they show some supernatural acts to the people. People consider such people as Semi divine beings (Godmen) and refer to them their difficulties, ailments and think that they can alleviate these difficulties. It is observed that often they exploit innocent people.

It is important to note that spirit assisted spirituality is not just to focus attention on spirits

by chanting mantras or repeatedly reciting hymns; rather it is related to get in touch with them, see them, and communicate with them in wakefulness or visions or dreams.

It is said that spirits can appear in any form to the caller, depending upon the image and attributes of the spirit or deity in his mind. Meaning a spirit can appear in different forms to different people, often to solidify the caller's beliefs.

We provide below details of the pantheons/deities/spirits that are revered / worshiped by different people in the world.

(i) It is reported that there are 1,028 hymns in Rigveda, the primary text of Vedic religion during (1500–500 BC). These hymns are for calling specific deities/spirits/pantheons. Most prominent among them are Indra, Vritra, Vala, Agni, Soma, Surya, Vishnu, Sarasvati, etc.

(ii) It is stated that the number of spirits/deities/pantheons venerated and worshiped in Hinduism is over 33 million. The prominent spirits/deities venerated and worshiped by Hindus include, Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Ganesha, kartikeya, Parvati, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Durga, Kali, etc.

In the early Vedic texts, the word Shiva meant auspicious or sacred. It did not relate to any god/deity. However, in later texts, Shiva became a god. He was also referred as Bhrahman. Hindus believe that gods/deities also manifest as incarnations in human form, like Krishna, Rama, etc. Some animals and plants are also revered and worshiped by the Hindus.

(iii) In Buddhism, various spirits / deities are venerated and worshiped. Like, Prajnaparamita, Vasudhara Cundi, Fudo-Myo, Gosanze, Gundari, Daiitoku, Sambhogakaya, Dakinis, Dharmapalas, Asuras, Maras, Caturmaharajakayikas, Yakshas, etc.

(iv) African spirits / deities found within the traditional African religions include, Akan, Ashanti, Bambara, Bahumono, Dahomey, Efik, Gikuyu, Igbo, etc.

(v) American spirits/deities worshiped by various native tribes include; Azaban, Gluskab, Aholi,

Taiowa, Igaluk, Pinga, Goddess Atabey, Juracan, losheka, etc.

(vi) In Greece, thousands of spirits/deities were venerated and worshiped in ancient times. These include Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, Sol, Orcus, Liber, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Vesta, etc.

There are millions of spirits and deities venerated and worshiped by (1) Armenians, (2) Chinese, (3) Egyptians, (4) Germans, (5) Aztec, (6) Berber, (7) Canaanite, (8) Celtic, (9) Guanche, (10) Incan, (11) Jain, (12) Japanese, (13) Maya, (14) Mtatsminda, (15) Norse, (16) Slavic, (17) Sumerian, (18) Yoruba, etc.

Mystical Spirituality

Mystical spirituality is known as Mysticism. Some say that mysticism is related to absorption in a deity/god which can be attained by meditation and contemplation. Some say that it is a philosophy of intuitive knowledge of spirits. Some say it is an experience of the reality of god achieved by contemplation of thought in deep meditation. Some say it is the science of cognitive perception. Some say it is direct communication with god. Some say it is a self-delusion and visionary/dreamy confusion based on occult mysterious activities.

Mysticism is an altered state of consciousness or ecstasy which is practiced in most of the religious traditions. In Shamanic mysticism, the world of spirits is accessed through ecstasy. A shaman is a person who reaches to the world of spirits during a ritual and practices divination and healing. Often it is observed that the person is overtaken by a spirit who communicates with the people sitting around that person who refer to him about their ailments and difficulties. The spirit suggests remedies.

Mystic ecstasies are of different types, viz, (i) theistic, (ii) monistic, (iii) Dualistic, (iv) Pluralistic, etc. In theistic mysticism, the person gets the visualization of different shapes which are generally believed to be the shapes of different deities / gods. In monistic mysticism, the person gets the visualization that the reality consists of a

single element or it is based on the unity of soul even though there may be smaller gods working under a superior god. In dualistic mysticism, the person realizes that the reality of the Cosmos consists of a dual element, good and bad. In pluralistic mysticism, the person gets the experience that the reality of Cosmos consists of multiple elements / deities / gods, who cooperate and / or fight with each other in the Cosmos.

Mystic experiences are broadly divided into two categories, extrovertive and introvertive. In extrovertive experience the person visualizes the unity of the external world. In introvertive experience, the person visualizes nothingness.

Mystic experiences could be spontaneous without any cause, or by repetitive recital of religious mantra/hymns.

Perennialists / Universalists / Theosophists and those who claim truthfulness of all religions in the world, say that mystical experience is a private expression of perennial truths inherent in all religions.

Medical researchers claim that mystical experience is a neurological process of human mind. The feeling of certainty of the experience may be the result of a dysfunction on a part of the brain related to interception and self-reflection.

Some philosophers say that mystical experience is based on the ideas and practices of a mystic. In other words, the mystical experience of a person is shaped by the expectations and concepts of the mystic.

Analysis

(i) Ethical spirituality

Ethical spirituality is related to developing human moral values in people. This is carried by not only religious scholars/sages of all religions in the world, but also by Psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, philosophers, etc., who teach people how to control certain emotions and animalistic urges that may result in damaging their brain, heart, and other internal organs. Thus, this is common across all the people of the world irrespective of religion, ethnic background, and region. In essence, ethical spirituality is part of the teachings of humanistic ethics to the people.

(ii) Spirits' spirituality

Spirits spirituality is based on getting in touch with the spirits/deities/pantheons. In some religions, these spiritual beings are known as (i) leprechauns (short, stocky humanlike creatures), (ii) elves (supernatural creatures), (iii) Jinn, (iv) devas, (v) fairies, (vi) devils, (vii) ghosts, etc.

It is said that spirits can appear in any form to the caller, depending upon the image and attributes of the spirit or deity in his mind. Thus, a spirit can appear in different forms/shapes to different people, often to solidify the caller's beliefs.

As we cannot say for sure if we know the number, type and characteristics of animals, insects, and other species on our planet earth, we cannot imagine the number and type of spirits inhabiting in invisible realms of this Cosmos.

It is claimed that specific deities are responsible for specific work. When we have a closer look, we realize that the god of water is different in every country/religion/region. He / She is different in looks, shape and name. It looks different spirits are appearing to people in different places and claiming themselves to be gods/deities. The logical mind does not accept this chaos in the name of religion as there are hundreds of millions of different gods / deities in the cosmos doing similar things. Can this be the truth of this Cosmos? No, this cannot be the truth.

(iii) Mystical spirituality or Mysticism

Mystic experience is a state of ecstasy in which people visualize or understand certain things and interpret them to people in a way understood by them. As we have described above, mystic ecstasies are of different types, like (i) theistic, (ii) monistic, (iii) Dualistic, (iv) Pluralistic, etc., in which people get different types of visualizations as per their beliefs. In other words, individual belief is the crux of mystic theories and mystic ecstasies claimed by people following different faiths.

Conclusion

Faith based spirits spirituality and mysticism is extremely confusing and a logical mind does not accept that these are based on the facts of the Cosmos. People are confused between

innumerable gods/deities of all kinds worshiped in different parts of the world. Looking at this faith chaos and confusion, many people have abandoned religion altogether. It is believed that there are over 1 billion people in the world who claim themselves to be atheists. Even among the followers of different religions, the number of Atheists/agnostics are increasing rapidly.

Is there an answer to this question which is logically acceptable to all the people of the world? The science cannot answer this question because it replies to the question how and thing exists? It does not have an answer why a thing exists in the first place. Scientists talk of nature and evolution rather than creation and sustenance of this Cosmos. The creation is the subject of philosophy and religion.

Is there a philosophical theory or a religion which is free from the faith chaos discussed in this article?

I have attempted to answer this question in the following.

When we look at the perfection in the creation and functioning of this Cosmos, our logical mind concludes that for a perfect creation and its perfect functioning, there must be a perfect creator who created it and runs it in perfect order.

Most of the religions accept the existence of one omnipotent God who has created this Cosmos and maintains it. There is a reference to this aspect in the Quran, 'if there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both' (21:22).

Philosophers are fascinated with the observation of St. Anselm of Canterbury who said, 'God is the most perfect independent being because a being greater than him cannot be conceived.' Many philosophers say that this is a perfect definition of God, the creator of this Cosmos.

How can we understand and visualize God?

When we look at the things in this cosmos working in perfect order, we get reminded about their Creator. Everything in this cosmos diverts our attention towards God and this is how we know our God.

How do we know God cannot be like his creatures, spirits, humans, etc.?

Everything in this cosmos comes into existence then fades away, like we are born and die. This cannot be case with the creator of this Cosmos because he is creating and supporting this cosmos uninterruptedly.

God cannot be an idol or a spirit or human being because all these things are his creation. He is free from the considerations of face, body, form, space, etc., because these are the attributes of his creatures.

If there is one omnipotent God who has created this Cosmos, how can we connect with him spiritually? When I contemplated and meditated on the set up of this Cosmos, I realized that if we seek his assistance by sincerely turning towards him, we may find a way out. There is a reference to this spirituality in the Quran - 'As for those who strive towards their Lord, He will surely guide them to His way. (29:69).

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About the author(s)



Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000 books on various Islamic subjects. He has written many research articles on religion, history and other subjects. He is also the Editor in Chief of CIFIA Global Journal.