

An Analysis of Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Dr. Swati Tathagat Rokade

Associate Professor, Pemraj Sarda College, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra

Email – swatirokade28@gmail.com

Abstract:

In today's modern world the terms religion and spirituality are used interchangeably, but while they aren't diametrically opposite, neither are they identical. We can define religion as a personal set of beliefs, attitude and practice in religious institutions, while spirituality on the other hand is a way individuals seek to express meaning and purpose to life. Although there are similarities, we can find differences between the two. The current study aims to analyze the religious and spiritual beliefs of an individual and its impact on his/her life. It also discusses how the phenomenon of spirituality is generating new paradigms of consciousness. The article draws on literature on religion, spirituality, sociology, and anthropology to conclude that religion will persist despite secularization.

Keywords- Religion, spirituality, consciousness, sociology, anthropology

Introduction

Around the world there are several different religions with their own profound religious text. Religious convictions serve the purpose of uniting people under similar beliefs and principles and facilitating their communication with a Higher Power and/or philosophy whose purpose was to enhance spirituality. The majority of religions are based on historical or archetypal figures (e.g., Christ, Buddha, Moses, Krishna, Muhammad), and are based on their lives, teachings, and beliefs. Through oral tradition and written scripture, we have preserved the details of their lives as holy or highly evolved beings across the centuries. Religion is a multidimensional construct that includes beliefs, behaviors, rituals, and ceremonies that may be held or practiced in private or public settings, but are in some way derived from established traditions that developed over time within a community. Religion is also an organized system of beliefs, practices, and symbols designed (a) to facilitate closeness to the transcendent, and (b) to foster an understanding of one's relationship and responsibility to others in living together in a community.”¹

A community's religious practices and rituals are based on these figures, which are worshiped and devoted to. Religion on the whole is an objective experience where an individual is usually focused on the externalities like books related to religion, house of worship, rituals and practice, observance etc. There are several hallmarks of religion, including its structure, often based on rules and regulations, which govern its members' behavior to some extent. The

organized structure that encapsulates the religion's particular belief system is made up of moral rules, laws, and doctrines, along with specific codes and criteria. This isn't necessarily an issue. When society was more uncertain in the past, organized religion provided a sense of certainty and provided guidance and comfort to those whose faith was lacking. While speaking about spirituality it connotes an experience of an individual which is broader than himself. Self-referral or internalizing your awareness of your soul is more closely associated with spirituality.

“Spirituality is distinguished from all other things—humanism, values, morals, and mental health—by its connection to that which is sacred, the *transcendent*. The transcendent is that which is outside of the self, and yet also within the self—and in Western traditions is called God, Allah, HaShem, or a Higher Power, and in Eastern traditions may be called Brahman, manifestations of Brahman, Buddha, Dao, or ultimate truth/reality. Spirituality is intimately connected to the supernatural, the mystical, and to organized religion, although also extends beyond organized religion (and begins before it). Spirituality includes both a search for the transcendent and the discovery of the transcendent and so involves traveling along the path that leads from non-consideration to questioning to either staunch nonbelief or belief, and if belief, then ultimately to devotion and finally, surrender. Thus, our definition of spirituality is very similar to religion and there is clearly overlap.”²

As spirituality is primarily an inward journey rather than some kind of external activity, it involves a shift in awareness. Consequently, spirituality is a far deeper understanding than outer worship. This doesn't mean that worship isn't part of spirituality; it's just about how the devotion and worship are directed:

1. Practices, objects, or figureheads external to the organization
2. To your higher self, your soul, or your divinity.

Comparatively, spirituality tends to emphasize an evolutionary mentality and is less concerned with rigidly traditional approaches. In addition to embracing a more flexible and adaptive mindset toward wisdom teachings, this also reflects the understanding that spiritual growth is an evolutionary process, as its name implies. Change and consciousness are part of spirituality. Throughout history, ideas and interpretations have changed based on spiritual practice. Clearly, spirituality differs from religion in many ways; however, these comparisons should not be interpreted as absolutes or as a way to polarize one against the other. It is important to note that religion and spirituality have different ways of practicing. Each practice, however, serves as a vehicle to help you reach the truth you seek. Ultimately, you are responsible for expressing your own subjective expression of awakening through your own paths or combinations of paths.

Role of religion and spirituality

Being religious and being spiritual are two distinct things which can affect the quality of life. These two factors play a diverse role which involve deep emotional social experiences and attitudes like faith, hope, love, hate etc. which assist in shaping personal identity. These may influence consciousness, life-styles, significant relationships, the meaning is given to suffering and distress, coping strategies, and the motivation to receive different types of help and support, especially in case of acute or chronic distress.

They both play a crucial role and can affect the mental health of an individual. Regardless of one's own religious affiliations or beliefs, religion and spirituality have an undeniable impact on the macro-level of cultures. Even people who deny any religious faith and affiliation are affected by religion

and spirituality. In addition to the potential for resonance, interaction, and overlap, these two concepts can also have a lot of overlap. For many people, religion is a wonderful way to explore one's spirituality and develop spiritually by exploring one's beliefs, practices, rituals, prayers, and spiritual exercises. By providing a language, a context, and often a community, a spiritual journey can be pursued. This is a problem, since these definitions only tell a part of religion and spirituality. The notions of genuineness, wholeness, transcendence, and connectedness are expressed in the definition of spirituality in so many instances that religions and individuals acting in the name of some religion have behaved in ways that contradict the notion of spirituality.

Religion, its supreme being, and its doctrines have been used to oppress, abuse, and murder millions of people throughout history. It is impossible to think of a single religion that doesn't fall into this category. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism have all sanctioned or otherwise supported barbaric, anti-spiritual behavior. The development of dogma and doctrines can occur when beliefs and practices, which may have started out as spiritual exercises, mutate into dogma. Religion and spirituality became separated due to the loss of the dynamic spiritual aspects of early adherents.

Conclusion

The current study has focused on the role of religion and spirituality in an individual's life. The current research paper is based on secondary data which is collected through various sources like newspapers, books and the internet. Various national and international research papers have been analyzed for the study. Thus it can be examined the influence of religion and spirituality on decision making and building mental health. It can be concluded that for wholeness and well-being, all human dimensions, such as mind, body, and spirit, are integrated into the spiritual dimension.

As a result of the importance and influence that spirituality and religion have on individuals' subjective well-being, mental health professionals should recognize this issue and incorporate it into their work. Additionally, despite our willingness to acknowledge the positive impact that religious practices and adherence to faith have on well-being, the findings of this study

should lead us not to underestimate that impact. It can be said that there exists a powerful relationship between spiritual awakening and higher quality of life. The higher a person's spiritual level, the better the quality of life and his resilience in facing life's problems. While speaking about religion, it is not yet associated with higher quality of life and high mental health as spirituality. It can be said more than religion that an individual should be spiritual.

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