

## **Spiritual Exploration and Interfaith Dialogue**

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### **Introduction:**

It is inconceivable that any discussion of spiritual quests can occur outside of human society. Therefore, the scope of this article is unique to human civilization. A human being comprises two distinct parts, the body and the mind. According to Buddhism, those two parts are *nàma* (mind) and *rūpa* (body). However, according to other religious teachings, they may have some differences. For example, creationist religions have attributed the mind to the soul. However, the body and mind, which are unsatisfied with the enjoyment of the sensual pleasure, make a person sick. That physical and mental illness creates a big social crisis. Various philosophies and religions have emerged throughout human history to find solutions to that problem. Religious thoughts that have arisen in this way have worked to provide the necessary guidance and knowledge for a peaceful human society. It can be considered acting in a special situation rather than a general situation related to man. It is also not wrong to consider this as the result of a spiritual quest related to man.

### **The Objective of Research**

All religions of the world have not forgotten to talk about the spiritual development of man. The peculiarity is that the nature of the matters discussed under that topic takes a different form from religion to religion. The purpose of this article is to clarify what is the spiritual quest of man as taught by Buddhism and how it differs from related matters taught in Hinduism, Catholicism, and Islam

There, an examination of the ideas presented by those religious teachings is also carried out to prepare human behavior. The reason for this is that spiritual high status cannot be aspired without behavioral adjustment. To attain a higher spiritual state, there must be an improvement in the normal human behavior. Accordingly, the issue of how to create guidance and awareness in the individual for the exploration of the spiritual condition is also discussed here. And finally, guidance and awareness offered to explore the spiritual state came about fully examined here.

### **Research Methodology:**

All religious teachings associated with this discussion are currently preserved as holy (religious) books. Therefore, following the library research methodology, the idea of the absolute end of life presented by the Buddhist, Hindu, Christian (Catholic), and Islamic religions is presented here. Then, according to the qualitative research method, various religious opinions related to the ultimate goal are presented in balance with the Buddhist teachings about liberation.

## Discussion:

It is the Buddhist recognition that the world is based on suffering (*dukhe loko patiññhito*). That is, the truth that Buddhism points out is that the world exists based on suffering. Therefore, one who does not like sorrow (*dukkha pañikkūla*) likes happiness (*sukha kāmā*), seeks happiness (*kāma gavavesino*), and tries to escape from sorrow. Because of this, he makes grief a problem. According to Buddhism, suffering can be overcome by understanding it, not by running away from it. For Buddhism, that is the purpose of spiritual exploration. That means not to run away from suffering, but to understand it and work to get rid of it.

The need for spiritual exploration and focusing on it is an idea presented as a fruit of the effort to find solutions to the problems faced in daily life. Man faces various hardships in his daily life. In such cases, he would be satisfied if he could solve the problems in front of him. In every case that is not the case, man is tempted to seek comfort or satisfaction in giving (Given in all other cases, man is tempted to find comfort or contentment). This has been discussed throughout philosophical history and religious history. Such an idea is revealed by the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

Prince Siddhartha does not set out to explore the unknowns of the world. To find a way to avoid the discomfort and dissatisfaction that arose in the mind from association with the world. Indeed, it is correct to say that it is a journey intended to calm the mind. Renunciated ascetic Siddhartha followed the policies implemented by contemporary religious organizations for some time and inquired whether his expectations could be fulfilled by them. But realizing that the spiritual quest he was looking for was not contained in them, he achieved solace through his solitary experiences.

He has shown the weaknesses in the religious principles he explored through his sermons after attaining enlightenment. *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, and *Sandaka Sutta* can be named as eminent discourses that are presented such ideas.

Man is used to looking for his happiness and comfort not from within himself but from outside. Due to this, he is facing various problems unknowingly. It is also not easy for a common mind to understand this. A spiritual exploration can provide a comprehensive understanding of this. This can be revealed from Siddhartha's character. As a result of failing to experience the happiness and comfort of life that Prince Siddhartha led in the royal life, loneliness left the entire kingdom including the royal life, and entered the life of ascetic. This has been shown by the sermons delivered by him, who attained enlightenment as a result of his spiritual research for six years. The *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikaya* is one of the cases that reveals this. He recognized the lay life as one with obstacles and thought that by avoiding them one can attain spiritual enlightenment. Accordingly, the life of labor has been appreciated in the *Pabbajjā Sutta* as free like the unobstructed sky.

There is something beyond human perception and it has been shown by many religions that it brings comfort or happiness to the life of human beings. Man is motivated to believe and follow those religions because those religious teachings provide guidelines for realizing it. According to Buddhism, that condition which is convinced by various religious teachings is not the end of life's journey, but a comfort in the middle. But Buddhism has introduced it as the end of the journey of life or liberation. Accordingly, it can be pointed out that the idea of Nirvana, which Buddhism points to as the ultimate goal of spiritual exploration, is different from other religious teachings.

### **Inability to live happily:**

Man does not need many material comforts to live happily. We must realize that basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and medicine are sufficient. Unless this is the case, happiness and comfort will become a dream. Because of this, there is a need to engage in spiritual exploration to live happily. But one can argue that the more material goods and equipment there are, the easier and more comfortable living and life will be. It is this work that has been done by the products of new inventions since the ancient times of human civilization. When we think carefully about this, there is also an important point. That is, along with the abundance of physical resources, life has become very complicated. There is another important point here. That is, one day we will have to give up this life. Until then, no links to us will exist to help us. The Buddhist teaching is that if we can achieve something spiritually then it will help us. Therefore, spiritual exploration is a matter that adds meaning to the life now as well as the life after death.

We should think about how easy and calming it is to live with nature. In a well-ventilated environment full of trees, leaves, and animals, and streams and rivers flowing, one gets to experience a strange spiritual revival, a soothing freedom. It is not possible to experience that freedom and mental well-being in a crowded and busy environment with roads full of vehicles. But can a lustful mind distinguish this? That is the unsolved question before us.

The reason why the mind is not attracted by a beautiful sensualist and why spiritual people like such places is not the lack of appreciation of spiritual qualities, but the difference in the emotions that arise in the mind. Spiritual exploration means that man works to bring out the moral qualities within himself. Normal human nature is to act under the emotional states of greed, hatred, and delusion. This is why man faces various difficulties in his daily life.

According to Buddhist teachings, it is enough to be concerned about developing *sāla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration), and *prajña* (wisdom), to establish spiritual qualities in oneself. This practice plays an important role in both worldly and spiritual life. The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo aññaḥāgiko maggo*) is described as *Mārga Satya* (the truth of path) in the *Caturārya Satya* (four noble truth) sermon.

It is also described as the liberation or ultimate peace obtained by following the *Pàramità* (perfections) and *Bodhipakshika Dharmas* (requisites of enlightenment).

According to Hindu thought, there is an eternal truth behind everything mundane. It is true. It is the spiritual healing that man must attain. It is also sometimes known as Brahma coexistence. Hindu philosophy has offered various ways for this. It is a state sometimes attained through belief in Brahman. Accordingly, they practiced the bhakti path of working with faith in God. On another occasion, spiritual healing (spiritual truth / *parama satya*) was shown as a condition to be obtained through the proper performance of the sacrifice. It has been introduced as *Karma Marga* (path of deeds). After some time passed, spiritual healing was pointed out as a condition to be achieved through yoga meditation. For that, they practiced meditation. But in the end, they thought that spiritual healing (realizing the ultimate truth / *parama satyavabodha*) was a condition that should be understood logically by guiding the intellect. Thus, achieving mental development through meditation is the path of meditation, and attaining absolute truth through reasoning is the path of enlightenment. Thus, Hindu philosophy has presented four paths for spiritual exploration (*parama satyabodha*) namely the path of karma, the path of devotion, the path of meditation and the path of knowledge. By the time of the Upanishads, it has been emphasized that these four paths are not separate, but that one can attain moksha by mastering all four paths.

According to the Catholic religion, man should not disobey God. (Proverbs-3) One should trust in God. The ultimate goal of a man should be to go to heaven after death and see the face of God. For this, we must act by obeying God's orders. One should love one's brother (neighbor). As shown in the third book of Moses, Story of Levi in the Old Testament, lust must be given up. Virtue and good qualities should be practiced (pages 156-157). For this, the spiritual qualities of the mind should also be developed by meditating alone.

Hinduism, Catholicism, and Islam can all be described as theistic religions in which God is accepted. All three religions have stated that God is the savior of man. Thus, God's role in the spiritual purity of man is a very important one.

The Hindu religious acceptance of the afterlife is that there is rebirth after death according to one's karma. It acknowledges that bad karmas lead to a hellish birth and good karma a birth that can connect with God. Thus, the person is encouraged to accumulate good *karma* during his lifetime.

According to the Hindu religious concept, life is divided into four stages. It is known as *Catur àrama Dharma* (there are four corresponding to four different periods). They are;

1. *Brammacàri*
2. *Gruhasta*

3. *Vànaprasta and*
4. *Sanyàsi.*

Accordingly, childhood is called the celibate period (*brahmacàri*) when attention should be paid to education. At this time, the main task is to develop the skills necessary for living when the youth comes. The period of youth is called *Gruhasta* (householder life) and that period is the period of enjoying life, accumulating wealth, and living lustfully. Marriage, adoption of children, and accumulation of wealth are done at this time. The stage when life is degraded by sensual pleasure is called *Vànaprastha* (anchorite). This time should be considered as a time when the person is frustrated with his work. It is also the time to leave the comforts and meditate. This can also be called an opportunity to work to bring out spiritual virtues. The fourth stage is called *sanyàsi* and it can be called the stage oriented to life habits with practices oriented towards a spiritual state even more than the *Vànaprastha* stage.

Through Catholic religious teaching, love of one's neighbor is encouraged to achieve spiritual development. Islam divides the workings of the human mind into four parts. that is,

1. *Kalbu*
2. *Naff*
3. *Ruh and*
4. *Akal*

*Kalbu* is the part where man learns about God. Through this part of *Kalbu*, man gains respect for God and an understanding of God's teachings. This knowledge plays a major role in human behavior.

Thus, with the wisdom that man gets, he takes steps to prepare his life. The *naff* part of the mind is hazardous. When the *naff* becomes powerful, various evil conditions emerge in man. Man does evil and cruel deeds because of the strength of *Naff*. Man is drawn into sin by this part of the mind.

Therefore, man is responsible for recognizing this suppressing that bad nature, and developing good qualities. The development of *naff* is called when man develops higher qualities in his mind. There are seven stages in the process of developing *NAFF*. that seven steps are;

1. *Lavuvàmà*
2. *Ammàrà*
3. *Mul Imà*
4. *Mutuma Innà*
5. *Ràlià*
6. *Marlià and*
7. *Càmilà.*

It is best to recognize these as instances of the nature of the human mind. Man acts on what he sees with his eyes and what he hears with his ears without being selective and acts on them with unlimited desire based on this *lauvàmà* state which creates devotion to the desires of the mind. This can be identified as the condition that directs man to evil through the senses. This *lauvàmà* situation can be introduced as an example of the lowest functioning of human behavior. The rest of the situation can be pointed out in cases where those bad traits are systematically controlled and virtues are implemented. *Ammàrà* can thus be pointed to as a controlled instance of bad, evil traits. It is through this *ammàrà* state that man brings his bad, evil traits under some control. *Mulimà* is a time when the higher qualities of the mind emerge. It is when this *mulimà* state of mind is activated that one becomes interested in acting with kindness, compassion, and altruism. *Mutumainnà* represents some advanced state of mind. In this state, man can perform various miracles. This expresses the ability to do certain extraordinary things that an ordinary person cannot do through developed virtues. It is accepted that a person who has developed the mind to the highest state can perform many miracles. *Ràlià* is another advanced state of mind. *Ràlià* can also be called an opportunity where the mind is developed better than an ordinary person. Its highest stage is called *Marlià*. *Marlià* is a very advanced case of mind control. A person who has set his mind to that state can control his wrong behavior. He is almost infallible. In the Kamila state of mind, a person becomes spiritually close to God. But he cannot be God.

### **Conclusion:**

Spiritual exploration is about working differently from the normal way of life. It can be called a method of finding solutions to the problems faced in normal life. As discussed above, the objective of every religion is to elevate man to a higher level. Also, religion encourages man to act in society as a person with good characteristics by freeing him from the bad characteristics that are evident in him. There are differences in the methods followed by each religion for that. But when considered objectively, their aim seems to give man a high status even after death.