



RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

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Abstract

Religion and Spirituality are the two terms which are deeply debated and discussed terms at different forums, workshops, seminars, and symposia both at national level as well as globally. Religion to my mind seems to be created by man whereas spirituality is the science of the soul or spirit that is created by almighty God or Cosmic Intelligence. This paper would expose the hollowness of all religion of the world and reflect the pettiness of the religious, dogmas and rituals which do not have any logical significance or meaning. Religion divides where as spirituality, Integrates; this would in a nutshell be the essence of the research paper. This paper is approximately divided into 10 sections which are 1. Concepts of Religion and Spirituality 2. The soul has no religion 3. Duty and Karma 4. Need for a Living Master 5. Ethics and Morality 6. Brief teaching of great mystics.



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Further the paper is spread with beautiful and thoughtful quotes of great Indian saints and Sufi masters from the literature of great Holy Scriptures of different religions.

Concepts of Religion and Spirituality: When we study the writings of Saints we often come across strong denunciations of religious rituals, customs and various forms of external observances. Sometimes their criticism is so strong that it invites the wrath of the orthodox. However, an analytical study of their writings makes it clear that it is not with hostility that the

Saints criticize these rites and customs. They come to this world with a message from the Lord. They come to unite mankind with the Truth. So strong is their desire to disseminate true knowledge that they are even prepared to lay down their lives in doing so. They are fearless and free from any animosity towards anyone. Though they may be persecuted by the orthodox priesthood, they bear no malice or resentment towards anyone. A Saint is like a surgeon who makes an incision and is undeterred by the patient's cries. His aim is to heal the patient by removing pus and other toxic matter from the wound. He does this for the patient's own good, although the patient may not realize this and may consider the surgeon callous. Likewise, Saints treat worldly people, the victims of ignorance, with their lancet of truth to remove from their minds the poison of prejudice, bigotry and fanaticism. Saints bring complete spiritual health to their patients; and, to ensure that no trace of the poison is left in their system, the Saints spare no remedies, even if the patients find these measures very unpleasant. Saints take all precautions to ensure that there is no relapse. At first sight, the Saints' rejection of ritual can appear as a needlessly censorious attitude. A closer look, however, makes it clear that they intend to, and would like us to, distinguish between the false coin of ritualism and the true coin of spirituality, which alone can lead to salvation. To point out that something worth a penny is being valued at a pound is not an act of denunciation — it is only pointing out its correct value. It is a way of bringing about a transition from ignorance to knowledge. Saints tell us that rituals, customs and external observances are meant at best to induce us to lead a spiritual life. They are not the spiritual life itself. They are like kindergarten classes in the realm of spiritual education in which the highest attainment is the mystic experience. The mystical — the truly spiritual — experience transforms an ordinary mortal into a divine being. It emancipates him from the never-ending cycle of birth and death. With this knowledge and understanding, Sultan Bahu, like other mystics, has expressed his views on different aspects of ritualism. He considers it futile to get embroiled in external forms of orthodox religion thereby giving up the inner search for spiritual realization. He sharply criticizes the practice of mamas, the observance of religious fasts, and the undertaking of pilgrimages. True lovers of God, who have attained the spiritual treasure within themselves, do not need these external crutches: People think that religion, like property, is inherited from ancestors. Their ego is attached to it as it is to their property. They do not have the courage to relinquish such bonds and make an unbiased search for truth. Only the rare few — faqirs and dervishes — are bold enough to sever such relations in their spiritual quest. Sultan

Bahu urges seekers to spurn false pride, cast away religion and fear of public opinion, and give up all carnal desires as the price of achieving their goal.

I am neither a *Sunni*, nor a Shia :

both make me sick; both cause me heartburn.

The arid part of my journey ended
when I turned away from both
and plunged into the ocean of oneness.

***Whatever we sow, it is that we shall reap
-this life is field of actions.***

Guru Arjan

***I have with me a whole treasure of learning, but
where is the sigh of the morning and the tear of the
early night?***

Khwaja Hafiz

The Soul Has No Religion: There's only one religion in this world: the religion of love - love of the soul for its own origin, for its own father. To follow that path which can lead us back to the Father - that is our religion. When you arrest that path into organizations and that path is forgotten and not tread by anyone, then we have so many divisions. Then we are worried about changing religions; but it is immaterial then what religion we follow. Saints neither create any religion nor do they condemn any religion. They only point us to that path which leads back to the Father - you can give any name to that religion. They're not very anxious to give it a name. But followers do give some names to that organization, ultimately, when it grows. We all know that the Lord is one, that the Lord is within every one of us, that the path leading back to the Lord is also within every one of us, and that we have to seek that path within us in order to find our destination. That is our religion. You can follow that path as a Zoroastrian, a Christian, a Muslim, or a Sikh -it's immaterial. If you're just sitting in your meditation in your skirt, in a sari, in a suit or in any other clothes, it's immaterial. These religions have become just like clothing. They don't change your essential human values. They do not improve you, nor do they deprive you of anything. Our real religion is within us- it is to follow that path which ultimately takes us back to the Father; and that religion is that of sound and light, which you'll find is given by all mystics of the world if you go deep into their teachings. It is immaterial whether you follow that

path by becoming a Christian or a Hindu or a Sikh. Whether you're attending to your meditation in a sari or a skirt, it doesn't make any difference at all. You have to become unconscious of what you are wearing; you have to become unconscious of all the religions in order to follow that path because your path, your meditation, is your main religion. But we give more importance to these rituals, ceremonies, dogmas, parentage and environments with which we have been brought up because our mind has been conditioned by these things, and it becomes very difficult for us to jump out of these dogmas and rituals. Our religion is devotion to the Father - give any name to that devotion. But our mind becomes so conditioned by the religion in which we have been brought up that unless the same path is shown to us from the point of view of that religion, we refuse to follow it. Christians, if you show them the same path from the Bible, they'll follow it at once; if you show Sikhs the same path from the Granth, they'll follow it at once. The path is the same, but our approaches have become different. The essence of every religion is absolutely the same. We have different rituals and different ceremonies, of course. These are always introduced by the priestly classes after the departure of the founder, because after a certain period, the people forget the real teachings of the saints and lose the essence. All that they pay attention to is just rituals and ceremonies and dogmas. However, that is not actually the teachings of the saints. The teachings of the saints are meant simply to lead us back to the Lord. Every saint tries to tell us that there is one God — there cannot be two - which he has created the whole universe, and that God is within every one of us. The human form is given to us just for the purpose of realizing the Lord within our own body. And we have to search for the Lord within us, because this body also as referred to by various saints as the temple of the living God. Nobody is going to bother there whether you were a Christian, a Sikh, a Hindu, or a Muslim, nobody will ask you these questions. There what is judged is our love, the intensity of our love, our desire to go back to the Father, how strong our inclination is to go back to the Father, how much we have been able to withdraw from the senses, withdraw from the riches of the world, withdraw from this creation, and how anxious we are to go back to the Father. Those things will be weighed there. Our baptism will not be seen there; our religion will not be considered there; what type of dress we used to wear; from which country we have come; what color we carried with us-what honorable degrees we had all through our life - nobody is going to bother about these things. All that counts is that love and devotion for the Father.

The soul has no religion. The soul has no color, no creed. It is a drop of that divine ocean. We have to let it grow in love and love and love and love so that it will become one with the Father. The Lord has created humans. We have divided ourselves into so many religions, so many castes, so many creeds; and religion has become the base of so many countries, so much strife, so many wars, and we have become bloodthirsty, cutting each others' throats. Religion is the cause of all that. How can these religions take us back to the Father? The real thing which religions should fill us with they've absolutely forgotten. We have closed our God into brick and mortar, and every weekend we open the locks. We collect there. We talk about things for half an hour, collect money and come back home, satisfied that we have done our job as a member of that religion. These things are not going to count. We don't have to search for him in bricks and the mortar and water and jungles. He's right within us. We have to search for him within, nowhere outside at all. The Lord has given us a complete temple in which to search for him. That is generally the subject matter in which these references come.

With the Name in the heart, one is exalted above all.

Guru Arjan

I live only to do your will; my lips move only to praise

*You. O Lord, whoever comes to truly know You, casts
out everything but You.*

Ansari of Heart

Duty And Karma: All these are karmic relationships. We have done certain karmas for which we have to come back to this world. Whatever we have sown in the past, we are reaping some of the results now. So we have certain karmic relationships with our mother, father, wife, daughter, son, friends, associates, country and the like. Those karmas have resulted in our birth in this particular body and at this particular time. We have to fulfil all the karmas, the destiny allotted to this life. You cannot escape from your karmas. So to discharge those karmas you perform your worldly duties. But in discharging your karmas, you have a purpose in view; that is to go back to the Father. Otherwise, if you discharge your duties and at the same time continue sowing new seeds for the next life, you will again come back to this world. This you cannot escape, because the seeds you have already sown in the past, the results you must reap now. You are not supposed to sow any more seeds that would entail your coming back to this world again to reap the results. So, in order to avoid sowing new seeds, we have to travel the spiritual path leading

back to the Father. Whatever you have already sown, you cannot escape from that now. You have to get its result. So to go through that destiny is our karmic duty, which means our worldly responsibilities, our duties towards our parents, society, associates and so forth. You see, one gets whatever one is destined to get. Everything is written in one's destiny, which he has to go through in that life. If he is not to be killed in war, he will never be killed in war. If he is to be killed in war, nobody can save him from the war. But since if one is joining the army, naturally he is supposed to do his duty. Mind is all karma, nothing else. Mind is all wrapped by karmas. Whatever karmas we have committed in the past we are reaping now; they are all wrapped around the mind. Even higher mind has karma. Karmas follow us even right till Trikuti. Even after the soul has escaped the mind, has gone beyond the realm of mind and maya, still we have fate karma which we have to go through during the span of life. But then you have control over the karmas. Karmas are still there; without karma nobody can remain here for one minute. When the soul gets release from the mind, it shines, it becomes whole, but that doesn't mean that all karmas are finished while your destiny is still there to go through. Without karma we can't exist even for a second, but then you're master of the karma, you're not a slave of those karmas. As Christ said: I can leave this body when I want to; I can take this body when I want to.

What grudge does the goldsmith bear the lump of gold when he beats it with his hammer? He frees it from all blemishes, that its true beauty might shine, that it may be worn about the neck.

Dadu Dayal

Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.

Saint Matthew

Need For A Living Master:The relationship of the soul to the Father is that of love. What is love? To merge into another being, to lose your own identity and to become another being: that is love. Ultimately the soul has to merge back into the Father, has to become the Father and to lose its own identity. So that is why Christ said, God is love. It has the characteristic of a love, where you do not exist anymore, only the Lord exists. That is love. When we are attached to worldly faces, worldly objects, then where is that love for the Father? Mind is the same. It cannot

remain attached to so many people. Christ said in the Bible: If you are attached to your father and mother more than me, you are not worthy of me. Worthy of me means worthy to become me. Unless you become me, you cannot become God. We cannot love God because we have not seen him. How can we love him whom we have never seen, when we don't know what he looks like, when we don't know where he lives, what type of face he has, or if he has any face at all.

We love worldly faces, worldly objects. We have common blood with our brothers, with our mothers, with our sisters. We have companionship with our wife, with our friends. We love our property that we have bought with our hard-earned money. We love our religions, because we are born in those traditions. But how can we love the Father, whom we have never seen, whom we have never known, when we don't know what he looks like? Worldly love will pull us back to its own level. Only the love of the Father can take us back to the level of the Father. So saints say that when the Father wants to pull us from this creation to his own level, he sends his sons to our level, and he marks us or allots us to that mystic, to one of his sons. So when we are drawn to the company of a mystic or a saint, whom we know, whom we see, in whom we develop faith, from whom we ultimately learn love and devotion because he talks about the Father, then our soul's natural instinct is to go back to the Father. Christ said: I and my Father are one. Why does he say that? If you love me, you will love the Father; if you love the wave, you love the ocean. Because the wave cannot be separated from that ocean. The wave you can see; the ocean you cannot see. So he says: If you love me, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. If you come unto me and I come unto you, ultimately you will come unto the Father, because I and the Father are one; there is no difference between us. So the Father creates his own love in us through his sons, through his mystics. And the mystics attach us to the shabd and nam within, by which they detach us from this whole creation and attach us to the Father. They don't need our love at all. They only build that much faith and love in us so that we may get attached to the shabd and divine name within. We follow their advice, we follow their footsteps, their teachings so that we may withdraw ourselves from the senses and attach ourselves to the divine melody or shabd and divine name or kalma or tao within. And that love of shabd and nam within is so much higher and purer that we automatically forget worldly love, worldly faces, worldly objects. That is the nature of the mind. If you find something much more beautiful, you automatically run away from the other things to which you are attached. That better attachment automatically detaches us from worldly faces and worldly objects. So mystics, with the help of shabd and nam, detach us from

the whole creation and permanently attach us to the shabd, to the divine Father within. This is his divine law, cosmic law, by which he pulls us to his own level from this creation, which he has created, which he has designed. Only he can pull us back to his own level. It is often said that if you have no hunger, no matter how delicious the food may be before you, you will never eat. And if we are hungry and there is no food on the plate, we have nothing to eat. But if there is food on the plate and we also have hunger, our hands automatically move to our mouth, we start eating. It is not in our hands to have that food on the plate and to have that hunger and thirst. He gives us that food, he gives us that hunger and thirst, and we are eating and drinking by his grace, to satisfy our hunger and thirst for the Father. Everything is in his hands. He makes us worship him and pulls us to his own level. That is what Jesus has said, and that is what the Indian mystics are trying to teach us.

*When ego ceases to be, it is then that you will find
Your beloved Lord. Therefore, O wise man, try to lose
yourself, and find humility.*

Maulana Rum

*So long as man clamours for 'I' and 'mine', his works
are as nought; when all love of the 'I' and the 'mine'
is dead, then the work of the Lord is done.*

Kabir Sahib

Ethics and Morality: Actually, we have to be truthful and honest with ourselves. When we are truthful with ourselves, then we can live with ourselves; otherwise we are always at war within ourselves. We are always miserable within ourselves if we are not honest and truthful with ourselves. So we shouldn't try to deceive ourselves. We must face facts, and we must understand the reality, and we must be honest with our own feelings, with our own self. And if you are honest with yourself, you'll be honest with others also. If you are deceitful to yourself, you'll be deceitful to others also. One always knows whether one is being honest with oneself or not. You don't require anybody to tell you about that; you know within yourself whether you are truthful to yourself, honest with yourself or not.

You see, it is very difficult to explain every little thing in detail. But the main things are explained to us and if we are able to stand on these main principles, then we will also be able to get other qualities. If with the help of meditation we are filled with love and devotion for the

Father, all other qualities will just come like cream on milk in us. Automatically we'll be filled with those qualities also - we'll be very soft-hearted; we will not injure anybody; we will not deceive anybody; we will not cheat anybody; we will not like to hurt anybody. All these qualities automatically will come in us, if we are attending to our meditation. So it's very difficult to lay down "don't do this" and "do that" — we ourselves know what to do. Our whole attitude towards life changes — by meditation. Morality alone is not sufficient to take your soul back to the Father. You have to be moral to go back to the Father — morality ; is essential. It is a base on which you have to lay the foundation;!you have to build your meditation on morality. But morality itself is not sufficient to take you back to the Father. Morality comes automatically when you're filled with love and devotion for the Father. That is the outcome, just as cream comes on the top of milk. Similarly, all these moral qualities will come in a disciple when he's following the path, living the life of mystics. You will be helpful to other people, other humans; you will want to help them, you will want to be kind to them, you will want to be good to them, you will not deceive them, you will not cheat them, you will be humble, you will have patience. Automatically you'll be filled with these qualities. They are the effects of meditation; they are the effects of following the path. They are essential prerequisites on which you have to build your meditation, but they alone are not sufficient to bring you back to the Father. Cleaning a vessel is not sufficient, unless you also fill the cup with milk. To lead a good moral life is just cleaning a vessel, but cleaning a vessel for what? To fill it with love and devotion for the Father, with spirituality. So cleaning is essential before filling — without cleaning a cup, you will not be able to put milk in it. To be moral is essential for building your meditation, but cleaning alone is not sufficient unless you fill your cup.

Yes, brief is life;

So be not vain of thy small worldly works,

But sing, sing, and ever sing

Nam, the Name divine!

Mira Bai

*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me,
he will keep my words: and my Father will love him,
and we will come unto him, and make our abode
with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my say-
ings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the*

Father's which sent me.

Saint John

Brief Teachings Of Great Mystics: The core of the teachings of Kabir is worship of the Name of the Lord. What is this Name that Kabir praises so highly? The Name is the first emanation of God. It is this Name that has created and sustains the entire physical universe and millions of other universes. The saints say the Lord is nameless (anaami). Kabir refers to him as the Nameless Being. The 'Name' of the Lord mentioned in the Vedas, the Bible, the Qur'an, the AdiGranth and in works written by true saints is something far different from the hundreds of names that devotees have, out of their greatlove, given him. These names can be uttered by the tongue, but that real Name is unutterable. It can only be heard by spiritual ears. It is God in dynamic form, the Lord and Creator manifesting as spiritual light, sound and spiritual power.

The Word or Name is omnipresent and omnipotent. Many different words have been used to describe this power.* All are different ways of indicating the fundamental power that works throughout every particle of the universe. Kabir declares:

Beyond all letters and words

Is the Name I speak of.

I have brought with me the original Word

To this transient world.

The Word or Name of the Lord existed before the creation. It exists today and will exist forever. It is the life of all life. Kabir says, "From that Word the world-form has sprung." The Gospel of Saint John explains this same point very clearly: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with : God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. Kabir taught that worship of the Name is the very soul of all existing religions. It is the core of the teachings of Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, and the Sikh scriptures contain teachings of the Word or Name in their purest form. Christ was a true mystic. As the Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics states, "Mystical experience is as old as humanity, is not confined to any one racial stock, is undoubtedly one of the original grounds for personal religion and does not stand or fall with the truth or falsity of the metaphysically formulated doctrine of mysticism." The Word is the life of our souls; it is the life of the mind and the body, and its withdrawal means instant death. Of course, physicians give hundreds of different reasons for

death, but these are material reactions. The real cause of death is always the withdrawal of the Name or Holy Spirit, the essence of the soul, from the body at the appointed time.

What is Truth?

Without Truth there is no happiness

Though you may try a million tricks.

KABIR

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Gospel according to John

The Roman government placed Jesus Christ on trial on the charge of attempting to overthrow the government and putting himself up as 'king of the Jews', a phrase frequently used by the crowd that followed him. Christ explained to Pontius Pilate, who heard the case, that he had come not to establish a worldly kingdom, but to "bear witness unto the truth" and said that "everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice". On hearing this Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" He did not wait for an answer and left the chamber, possibly to consult some law books. But law books give not the meaning of truth, nor do ordinary people understand it. Truth, in the mystic sense as used by Kabir and other perfect saints, has nothing to do with speaking the truth or dealing with historic or other truths or with gauging political, social or economic conditions accurately.

Kabir and other saints use the word 'Truth' to refer to the Word or Name because the Word has always existed and will never change or perish. In the mystic sense, nothing in this world is Truth because everything that is created is changeable, everything decays and therefore is false. Human beings die and so do all living creatures, so do the sun, moon and stars, so do all sages, yogis and prophets, gods and goddesses. Only the uncreated Lord, the Supreme Being, the unchangeable and imperishable One, the Word or Holy Spirit which created and sustains the entire creation—only this is Truth. Kabir says:

Truth is that

Which is immutable and permanent;

What comes and goes,

What changes and perishes

Is false.

Mysticism is the science of searching for God within one's own body—which Christ described as the temple of living God—using the research methods prescribed by a true master. All religions

have at their core this mystic search for the Lord within. Mystics decry people going to man-made temples and mosques and pilgrimages in order to realize God.

The Old Testament also makes it clear that the chief message of saints is love for the Lord. Psalms says, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints." RabiaBasri, a Middle Eastern saint, goes so far as to say, "O my Lord, if I worship thee from fear of hell, burn me in hell; and if I worship thee from hope of paradise, exclude me thence; and if I worship thee for thine own sake, then withhold not from me thine eternal beauty."

Another story relates that while walking along the banks of the Ganges one day, Kabir saw a group of people sitting around a pundit who was haranguing them on the holiness of the waters of the Ganges. "The water of the Ganges washes away the vilest sins," said the pundit. Hearing this, Kabir approached the pundit and asked whether he was speaking from personal experience or was indulging in hearsay. When the pundit replied that he was speaking from experience, Kabir went to the Ganges and brought a potful of water in a wooden vessel and asked the pundit to drink it. "How can I drink water brought by a low-caste man like you?" asked the pundit. "It is defiled by you." Kabir then said, "If the water of the Ganges gets defiled by the mere touch of a wooden vessel carried by a low-caste weaver, how can it wash away our sins?"

It is said that a faqir once sent a message to Kabir saying that he was going to meet him. On the day the faqir was to come, Kabir got hold of a pig and tied it up in the compound in front of his house. The faqir was shocked to see the pig there since, according to Islam, any association with this animal contaminates one's mind and body. He asked, "Why do you keep that swine here in front of your house?" "My swine is outside the house," replied Kabir, "but yours is living right inside you." Kabir was referring to the mind full of passion as the swine dwelling in his body. The faqir was cured by this shock treatment. In another story, Kabir ridicules the degree to which people are impressed with name and fame. A village washerman had a donkey who performed his duty faithfully at all times, except when the temple priest blew the conch in the evening to call the people to temple. Then the donkey would cease working and begin to bray loudly. The washerman at last came to the conclusion that, because his donkey responded in this manner to the sound of the conch, it must have been a sadhu in its previous birth. Therefore, the washerman named his donkey Shan-kheshwar Swami, which means Swami of the Lord of the Conch. After some years the donkey died and the washerman went into mourning. To all those who asked him why he was in mourning, he replied, "Don't you know that Shankheshwar Swami has passed

away?" And so the word went round the village and soon every man had shaved his head, beard and moustache as a sign of mourning. From one village the news quickly passed to the next until at last the news reached the capital. Hearing the news, the king decided to go into mourning also. The queen, however, did not like the idea of the king shaving his head, beard and moustache, and asked the chief minister to find out exactly who Shankheshwar Swami was. Inquiring from one person to another, the chief minister at last reached the village of the washerman. "Who was this Shankheshwar Swami for whom everybody is mourning?" asked the chief minister. "It's a pity we never met him." "Did you not know Shankheshwar Swami?" replied the washerman. "He was, my donkey who used to bray at the call of the temple conch.

*Rare is the human birth, it occurs not again and
again- like ripe fruit once fallen cannot be rejoined
to its branch.*

Kabir Sahib

*In the court of the Lord, devotion and love alone
count; devotion and love alone count, for devotion
please the Lord.*

Paltu Sahib

Conclusion: Finally I wish to conclude the paper with the beautiful thought of great contemporary mystic Charan Singhji Maharaj former Master of Radhasoami Satsang Beas , Dera, Punjab and I quote "When Ocean does not have a religion, how can an ordinary drop of ocean have one, when Sun does not have any religion, how can ordinary rays have one, similarly when the Almighty FATHER or GOD or LORD does not have any religion how can ordinary souls have one".

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