

Ethics, Spirituality and Human Life

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Abstract

This paper is an analytical study of the three concepts i.e., spirituality, ethics and human life from the perspective of different religious traditions in India with a view to arriving at the interfacing factors in them. A sound ethical foundation is very important for any seeker aspiring to progress in genuine spiritual life. Human life is the field in which ethical and spiritual values are practiced both as an individual and as a member of the larger society. Genuine spirituality deals with the life and ethical values of a person as well as the society which leads to transformation. Humanistic spirituality represented by Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism; and Religious spirituality represented by Hinduism, Islam, Parsi, Sikh and Christian religions focus on ethical living and the struggles of the people in the present life. Any spirituality to be genuine should address the struggles of the people; promote human values based on ethical principles. Ethical living and a spirituality based on moral values is the solution to the rampant atrocities, violence and injustice in the world.

Keywords

Ethics, morality, dharma, humanistic/religious spirituality, harmony, peace, right living, care for creation

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1. Introduction

Stoics and Epicureans¹ in the West, Confucianists² in China and Carvaka philosophers³ in India approached life from a humanist perspective. Enlightenment, advancement of science and technology and critical study of the Bible further strengthened the secular humanist approach to life. These philosophers did not accept the existence of any supernatural beings or god. Against this approach the theist religious traditions in India considered human life as a temporary stage of existence for the soul to purify itself before it is finally liberated. Unlike the secular humanists' view, life in this world is only a means for the final liberation. But, both the secular and theistic world views accepted the need for ethical living either because of the concern for the other or because of the belief that one will have to experience the results of one's actions in the present life or in the life to come. More than the divine sanctions, it should be the good of the common humanity that should be the basic criteria for deciding the moral principles that determine the laws governing the individual and societal life.

A sound ethical foundation is very important for any seeker aspiring to progress in genuine spiritual life. Well-disciplined life style and intense meditation with the guidance of an enlightened teacher will enable a person to understand the mysteries in spiritual life. During the Upaniṣadic period, spiritual seekers lived in solitude engrossed in meditation. Buddha exhorted his followers to be their “own refuges,” and to live as “islands to themselves.”⁴ A conducive atmosphere both within and around is required for the pursuit of spiritual life. Ethical values are the guiding principles in everyday life. The doctrine of karma is the fundamental principle based on which the ethical principles are formulated in most of the religious traditions in India. This doctrine states that every action (includes thoughts, words and actions) good or bad will have its results which will determine the nature of birth the soul will get in the next life. Karma theory is not fatalistic but there is room for improvement by doing actions purely guided by altruistic motive in a totally detached manner.

2. Method, terms and concepts used in this paper

This paper is an analytical study of the three concepts i.e., Spirituality, Ethics and Human life from the perspective of

different religious traditions in India with a view to arriving at the interfacing factors in them. The quality of human life may be enhanced. People will be better equipped to handle some of the problems in their life from an ethical perspective keeping in mind the larger good of the society. The term ethics is used in this paper as the practice and reflection on the normative as well as the reflection on the meaning and moral conduct. At times ethics, morality and dharma are used as synonyms though they have distinctive meaning in different contexts. Human life is the field in which ethical and spiritual values are practiced both as an individual and as a member of the larger society. All the three concepts are complimentary in promoting peace and happiness of a person leading to the final goal that is liberation. A liberated person's experience of peace and happiness should promote peace and harmony in the society and in the world. The entire creation comes under the purview of such a person's life and world view.

3. Dharma in Hinduism

The concept *dharma* can be traced back to the usage of the noun *dharman* and other verb forms derived from the root *dhṛ* in the *R̥g Veda*. In the 'Hymn of the Man' (*Puruṣasūkta*) there is a reference to the term dharma as ritual laws. "With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice. These were the first *ritual laws*."⁵ RV. 10.90. *Dharma* means that which sustains life (*dhāraṇāt dharmamityāhu*). "The *Law of Dharma* states that every individual is unique and has a unique personality, mission and destiny. We all are unique beings. When you reflect upon life, you recognize that you have experienced this uniqueness."⁶ Each individual is unique and endowed with infinite potentialities. It is up to each one of us to realize these potentialities and actualize them for each one's growth and for the development of humanity. Humanity has reached the present stage of development because of the dedicated work and sacrifice of millions of people in the past. So we have a responsibility to contribute our share for the further development of humanity.

Hindu Ethics (*dharma*) is based on some of the fundamental tenets of the Indian philosophic-religious tradition. They are, the authority of the Vedas and Smṛti, the immortality of soul, the possibility of liberation, the existence of a supreme reality

Brahman, the doctrine of karma and rebirth, the three ways of liberation (knowledge, devotion and action), the four main castes, the four main stages of life and the theory of the four ends of life.⁷

3.1. Dharma as the sustaining force of the universe

Prajāpati, through his life of self-control, giving and compassion enjoins divine authority to ethical principles (*Br.* 5.2.2), the sacred mantras will lead one through the path of good deeds (*Muṇḍ. Up.* 1.1). The four sources of dharma are the Vedas (*śruti*), the remembered sacred texts (*Smṛti*), common ethical code (*sadācāra*) and one's own happiness (*ātmatuṣṭi*), *Manu* 2:12). For John McKenzie, “*Dharma* (morality) serves as a sort of platform over which one may climb to a position from which it becomes easier to teach the higher, but when this position is reached it is no longer needed.”⁸ According to John M. Koller dharma, “In its widest sense it refers to that which sustains and hold together the universe itself.”⁹

Dharma is presented as the cosmic order or cosmic harmony (*Ṛta*) in the Vedas. According to Michael Witzel, “This untranslatable concept thus is similar to the later Hindu *dharma*. The opposite concept of *druh-* (*Avest*, *druj*) “deceiving, cheating action. (Be-)trug” (cf. Engl. be-tray) signifies *active* untruth. Another contrast to *Ṛta* seems to be *nir-ṛti*, the absolute disappearance (*nir-*) of “active, creative truth, law, order,” that is absolute destruction, a sort of hell of absolute darkness, with no food, drink, possibility of children, etc. (*RV* 7.104).¹⁰ Dharma sustains the individual and the society. When dharma is neglected there will arise disharmony, injustice and violence.

3.2. Dharma ensures the welfare of all

Śaṅkaracharya in his introduction to his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, defines dharma as “The law of righteousness (dharma) is what directly promotes the prosperity and emancipation of living beings.”¹¹ Dharma is a system of discipline which is divided into two, the dharma of works (*pravṛtti dharma*) and the dharma of renunciation (*nivṛtti dharma*). The former focuses on embracing works and the latter focuses on renouncing works. These are the two fundamental principles based on which

the stability of the universe is ensured.¹² Human life cannot be individualistic it has to be communitarian. Only in the society an individual's potentialities can be fully actualized. *Rg Veda* stresses the communitarian aspect of human life, united we walk, united we speak and united we feel and think.¹³ According to the creation account in the Genesis (1:28), human is the caretaker of the creation in that capacity each one becomes co-creator with God. An individual has a responsibility (*svadharma*) to promote the common good, (*jagadah sthitikāraṇam*) and the well being of all beings (*lokasaṁgraha*). According to the B. G. Individual dharma is the innate nature of a person. The Gita says, "one's own law of righteousness, though defective, is better than that of another though well-observed."¹⁴ In Manu's code, ethical validation was based on the *brāhmiṇic* interpretation of the sacred texts. The basic criterion for this validation was the hierarchical caste structure in the society. "Since the Brahmins controlled society totally and defined life in terms of ascetical austerity and other-worldly bliss, the overriding moral tone was that of the forest. The Vedic World –affirmation which had been eclipsed in the Ups remained hidden."¹⁵ For Manu the fruit of dharma is fame in this life and bliss in the life to come, (Manu 2:5, 9; 4: 156-58; 12:81). Dharma enables one to establish friendship with all creatures, social harmony with different groups of people and cosmic welfare of all.

3.3. Mokṣa and universal moral values

Though Hindu Ethics, as they are presented in the scriptures, is directly connected with attainment of mokṣa, they give importance to universal moral values. The moral values will help a person to progress towards mokṣa. "They present such a conception of mokṣa that even social morality by itself becomes directly relevant for the attainment of mokṣa. mokṣa for them is nothing other than what Tagore specifically calls realizing oneself into other and others into oneself, or else, realizing the Universal Self within the individual self."¹⁶ Mokṣa has a meta-ethical sphere where a liberated soul is not bound by the moral regulations of the society because such a person has abandoned the society and all possible pleasures for self- realization. He/she has gone beyond the realm of dharma.

Rig Veda's approach to human life is more of life affirming than pessimistic based on heavenly moral sanctions. Some of the philosophers consider Rig Veda without having any clearly articulated ethical principles. “Weber may be forgiven his inaccurate judgment that the *Vedas* contain no heavenly moral sanction. He formulated this position from his insight that the *Vedas* are also devoid of allusion to *nirvana* and to what some would call pessimistically ascetical traits. This discovery is supported by the lack of a Vedic reference to the mystical and other worldly goal of *mokṣa*.”¹⁷ Hindu morality is closely connected with the goals in life (*puruṣārthas*). Ethical precepts (*dharma*), wealth and power (*artha*) and pleasure and love (*kama*) are oriented towards liberation (*mokṣa*), (R. V. I.113.5-6). Ethical values (*dharma*) should be the guiding principles in acquiring wealth and power and enjoying pleasure and love. Rig Veda acknowledges the positive aspects of life in the “Hymn to Dawn,” “Bringing all life-sustaining blessings with her, showing herself she sends forth brilliant lustre..., Arise! The breath, the life, again hath reached us; darkness hath passed away and light approacheth. Shine then today, rich Maid, on him who lauds thee, shine down on us the gift of life and offspring.”¹⁸

After analysing various arguments Roderick Hindery comes to the conclusion, “It may be reasonably supposed that there are concurrent instances of the moral, the amoral, and the tensions between them. Or, if one insists on taking the *Vedas* as some kind of cohesive whole, then it is most logically inferred that the moral, amoral, and their mixtures are all dialectically/complementarily present.”¹⁹

3.4. The Upaniṣadic understanding of ethics

The Vedic morality was mainly centred on the duties and responsibilities of a householder based on the concept of sin and appeasement of gods. But the Upaniṣadic seers proposed a new scheme of morality associated with ascetical life. In the Upaniṣads, ascetical life is considered as superior to that of a householder's life. (Mud. 1.1.12).

“They who practice austerity (*tapas*) and faith (*śraddhā*) in the forest,

The peaceful (*śānta*) knowers who live on alms.

Depart passionless (*virāga*) through the door of the sun.

To where is that immortal Person (*Puruṣa*), the imperishable Atman.” (*Muṇḍa. Up.* 1.2.11).

The Upaniṣadic ethics was developed based on their understanding of ascetical life. Ascetical life redefined ethical values to have a holistic, non-dualistic view of life.

3.5. Non-duality of Brahman and Atman as the basis of ethics in the Upaniṣads

This shift of focus was based on the insight that the Brahman and the Atman are one and the same and the need for “shaking of good and evil” (*Mund.* 3.1.2). Some of the important Upaniṣads asserts the non-duality between Brahman which is the ultimate reality and Atman which resides in jiva. Brahman is inseparably connected with jiva and the world (*Māṇḍ.* 7; *Br. Up.* 1.45; 2.4.14; 4.3.30; 3.7.3-23 and *Chand. Up.* 6.13.1-3). Brahman is the source and foundation of morality and jiva partakes in Brahman's role in sustaining the cosmic order. In the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyi in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* regarding immortality, Yājñavalkya says, “Then, he said: Lo, verily, not for love of the husband is a husband dear, but for love of the Atman a husband is dear.” (*Br. Up.* 2.4.5). This non-dual dimension can be extended to all aspects of life and everything in the world. Non-dual approach does not belittle anyone, does not exclude anyone or anything, but it is an inclusive attitude in altruistic love which includes the nature and the entire creation. “Non-dualistic identification with others in *Atman* is thereby conceived as the simplest, most satisfactory answer to long debated problems about love and self-interest resurrected by modern “philosophical egotism”- what is naturally good for yourself ...is naturally good for the whole country.”²⁰ All are expected to develop universal virtues like compassion, self-control (*Br. Up.* 6.2.16) non-violence, love and concern for all. But liberation is the final goal, liberation from repeated births and death (*saṃsāra*). According to Śaṅkara, in the final stage, virtues become irrelevant for a liberated person (*jīvanmukta*), because such a person is beyond the empirical understanding of ethical values.

3.6 Dharma as the guiding principle in different stages of life

The *Dharmasutras*, elaborately deal with the rules and regulations at various stages of life. A life based on ethical principles through four stages of life that is student life (*brahmacarya*), family life (*grhasthāśrama*), life in the forest (*vānaprastha*) and finally a life of total renunciation (*sanyāsa*) will enable a person to acquire the cardinal virtues like non-violence (*ahimsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), non-possession (*aparigraha*) and celibacy (*brahmacharya*).

These Sutras deal with dharma “proper behaviour,” beginning with that of Veda student, and moving to that of a married man (*grhastha*), his daily and seasonal ritual duties, family life, to the death rituals and ancestor worship and inheritance; some also include the duties of a king and his jurisprudence, the four stages in life, and long sections on atonements for wrong behaviour. These rules have provided the basis for medieval and modern Anglo-Indian Hindu law.²¹

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad equates dharma with truth.²² God is the ultimate source of dharma, each individual contributes to the cosmic welfare by fulfilling each ones responsibilities.

These virtues are to be practiced in the strict sense in thought, words and actions so that a genuine seeker will be blessed with positive qualities like loving friendliness (*maitri*), compassion (*karuṇa*), joy (*mudita*) and equanimity of mind (*upeka*). When attachment is completely destroyed with the grace of God one will get the right knowledge about reality which will give enlightenment and liberation. A liberated soul (*jīvanmukta*) may continue to live in this world for the benefit of other souls which are caught up in the cycle of births and deaths. But the nature and quality of such a soul will be completely different from that of an ordinary person's life. A liberated soul will be guided by ethical values and altruistic principles. Such a soul will see everything in God and God in everything.

4. Dhamma as the foundation of spiritual life in Buddhism

The term *dhamma* (since the term *dharma* is more associated with brahminical literature, in order to refer to the ethical precepts

(*śīla*) in Buddhism we use the Pāli term *dhamma*) is used in the early Buddhist scriptures to refer to just and righteous ruling in the case of kings (*dhammenarajjamkareti*, *Āṅguttara Nikāya* IV.90), as practicing justice or righteousness (*dhammamcarati*, *Majjhima Nikāya* II.78) or as acquiring of possession lawfully (*dhammena*), or unlawfully (*adhammena*, *Majjhima Nikāya* II.257). So the term *dhamma* is used in the early Buddhist literature as right conduct and behaviour towards others and every living being in this world.

As in Buddhism, ethical principles are the basis of Jain spirituality. Jains believe that the soul which was originally pure, because of its association with matter becomes impure. Actions will only increase the impurity of the soul. In order to be liberated one has to have control over all actions. Ahimsa (non-injury) is an important mandate in the Jain religion. Everything in this world is to be treated with love and respect. Proper control over mind, speech and actions is an important aspect in Jain spirituality. Austerities are practiced in life, eating, sleep and dress. Right faith, right conduct and right knowledge are the three jewels.

5. Spirituality and moral values

Many people in the modern world with secular ideas feel uncomfortable with the term 'spirituality.' "George Soares Prabhu, therefore, would suggest the word *dharma* for the word "spirituality." *Dharma* is central to Hindu and Buddhist traditions."²³ Whereas, Samuel Rayan uses the term, "openness and response-ability." This means objective understanding of reality, openness to be invaded by the reality and willingness and readiness to respond to situations and realities in life.²⁴

Traditional spirituality is more concerned about pious devotional practices, rituals and ceremonies aiming at life in the other world so the sufferings and the struggles of people are of no interest to them. Traditional religions developed a spirituality based on this world view. Jordan Aumann defines spirituality from this perspective:

In its widest sense, spirituality refers to any religious or ethical value that is concretized as an attitude or spirit from which one's actions proceed. This concept of spirituality is not

restricted to any particular religion; it applies to any person who has a belief in the divine transcendent power and fashions a life-style according to one's religious conviction. In this context, one can speak of Zen Buddhist, Jewish and Muslim Spirituality as well as Christian Spirituality.²⁵

Christian Spirituality consists of “attitudes, benefits, practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out towards supernatural realities.”²⁶ Traditional spiritualities, supported by rituals and ceremonies, focus more on the transcendental supernatural realities.

Genuine spirituality deals with the life and ethical values of a person as well as the society which leads to transformation. Christian spirituality is partaking in the Christ event (life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus) through personalization of Christ's mystery. Spirituality is a life of total detachment lived in the awareness of the indwelling and all-pervading spirit. Unlike the traditional definitions, these focus on individuals, love, justice and society and the need for transformation of conscience. Spirituality in its wider sense refers to one's “loves and attitudes,” “quality of one's heart and life,” and “right relationship to God, to people, and to the earth.”²⁷

5.1 Humanistic spirituality

Ethical values and concern for the creation were not important for the *Mīmāṃsakas*.²⁸ They focussed on ritualistic spirituality as a means to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Ethical values were the foundation of the humanistic spirituality of Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism. Their ethical values included concern for nature and animals. Carvakas protested against animal sacrifice and exploitation of the ordinary people by the priestly class in the name of gods and life after death. According to Carvakas, even the enjoyment of pleasures, which they accepted as the highest goal of life, should be based on certain ethical principles. Buddha was least interested in metaphysical discourses or dogmas. He was concerned about ethical living of all sections of people: kings, princes, brahmanas, low caste,

masters, servants, monks, ordinary people etc., He was against any kind of caste discrimination in the society; he argued that the nobility of a person is not based on birth but on deeds. Compassion and love were his predominant characteristics. Hence his philosophy can be rightly called an Ethics of practical Religion. Charity was the basis of Buddhist religion. The four Noble Truths, is the essence of the Buddha's teachings, which he explained in his first sermon to his old colleagues at Isipattana. Buddhist spirituality is based on the four noble truths that is there is suffering in this world, there is a cause for suffering, there is an end to the suffering and there is a way to end the suffering. Buddhist spirituality has four important aspects: not harming (*ahimsa*), loving kindness (*maitri*), giving (*dāna*) and compassion (*karuṇa*).²⁹

5.2 The Essence of Hindu spirituality, loving surrender to the Lord

Hindu spirituality is perhaps best represented in the existential struggle of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. Arjuna, when confronted with question to fight or not surrenders himself because he was confused, did not know what is right and wrong, he was unable to take a proper decision. (B. G. 2:7) Then Lord Krishna, guides Arjuna through three ways of liberation i.e., the way of action (*karma mārga*), the way of knowledge (*jñānamārga*) and the way of devotion (*bhakti mārga*). Finally Krishna tells Arjuna, “give up all your actions, take refuge in me; I shall give your liberation,” B G 18.66. Hinduism stresses both the transcendent and the immanent aspects of God. Spirituality for them is both a search and life based on rituals and ethical values. The second Vatican Council speaks about Hindu spirituality:

In Hinduism the divine mystery is explored and propounded with an inexhaustible wealth of myths and penetrating philosophical investigation, and liberation is sought from the distresses of our state either through various forms of ascetical life or deep meditation or taking refuge in God with loving confidence.³⁰

Two aspects are stressed in this description of Hinduism

that is the divine mystery and the concept of liberation.

The spirituality of the Bhagavadgita can be understood from two perspectives, that is Ramanuja's qualified monism and Śaṅkara's absolute monism. For Ramanuja, spirituality is total surrender to the Lord in love and service; for Śaṅkara, it is enlightenment through knowledge about Brahman.

The Yogi who has reached full illumination
Contemplates through the eye of knowledge
Everything in itself, and perceives that
everything is himself
And nothing else.³¹

The term 'yoga' stands for spiritual inquiry in the Bhagavadgita. Gita is the result of the existential agony of a sincere seeker in the person of Arjuna. The seeker finds himself in an acute crisis situation of life. His search for liberation from the existential agony is the main theme and the underlying dynamics of the text. *Sādhaka* experiences disharmony within and seeks harmony (yoga) with himself, with the world and the Divine. Gita represents a constant interaction between human and God represented by Krishna and Arjuna. In this interaction, Indian spirituality emphasizes uniqueness of the goal, single mindedness and continuous pursuit. Mokṣa alone is the ultimate aim of life. Liberation can be attained through a qualitative change in life and values of a person.

5.3 Spirituality is experience of bliss

Yogic spirituality is a unique way to beatific experience (*kaivalya*) and supreme bliss.³² Patañjali defines yoga as restraint of mental modifications, control of thought-weaves.³³ *Chitta* consists of three factors that is mind (*manas*), intelligence (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahaṁkāra*). Meditation *dhyāna*, is an unbroken flow of thought weaves towards the object of concentration³⁴ which leads to the final aim *samādhi*. Practice of yoga is a spiritual pilgrimage towards the very foundation of a person. When, in meditation, the true nature of the object shines forth, not distorted by the mind of the perceiver that is absorption.³⁵ Absorbed in meditation, the seeker sees God within himself and all things in God.

5.4 Spirituality is harmony with creation

In tribal worldview the starting point of spirituality is harmony with creation i.e., the earth, nature, animals, trees, mountains, rivers. An awareness of being one with the whole of creation is therefore, the spiritual foundation of tribal people. One sees the Supreme Being in creation. Tribals, being aware of the presence of the Supreme Being in everything and everywhere, try to live a good, upright, ethical and moral life which is quite a genuine spiritual life. Their natural goodness comprising simplicity, sincerity, honesty, hard work, etc., is certainly the reflection of their inner spiritual life.

The creation constantly communicates with God in silence and in eloquence.³⁶ God has entrusted his precious creation to the care of humans so the earth and the creation are ours, Ps 115. It is a common gift to all, it is our common home.

This shared earth is both the basis and sacrament of gentle human community... We are earth: bits of it which have come to develop a mysterious interiority, the capacity for reflexive thought and for freedom and love.³⁷

The earth and creation proclaim the glory of God. Referring to the canticle of Francis of Assisi, tribal culture all over the world and Indian tradition in particular, Rayan considers the created beings as sisters and brothers and earth as Mother earth.³⁸ The earth and the creation are precious both for God and for the humans, they are to be treated with respect and reverence. An important aspect of spirituality today should be the care and concern for nature. This aspect of respect is there in most of the world religions; what we need to do is “to adopt simple lifestyles, to use things with mental maturity and responsibility to the community, to the earth, to future generations and to the Creator, ensuring that no plant or animal species is lost forever, and that nobody tomorrow is deprived of the blessing we know and enjoy today.”³⁹

6. Human life and ethical living in Zoroastrianism

The underlying theme of the Zoroastrian ethics is the fight between the settled peace loving agrarian community and the

nomadic aggressors represented by two fundamental principles *i.e.*, Truth (*asha*) and Lie (*druj*). Though the human beings are created free, good and evil in the world is the result of human choice (*Y* 30.3-4). Like the primeval twins,⁴⁰ humans in their life can choose good or evil.⁴¹ Those who choose good will be the followers of Ahura and those who follow evil will be the supporters of Ahriman.

Ahura Mazda “the Wise Lord cannot be considered responsible for the appearance of Evil. On the other hand, ahura Mazda, in his omniscience, knew from the beginning what choice the Destroying Spirit would make and nevertheless did not prevent it; this may mean either that God transcends all kinds of contradictions or that the existence of evil constitutes the preliminary condition for human freedom.”⁴²

The supreme Lord was extremely generous to humans by giving three blessings of Immortality, Righteous Order and the Kingdom of Welfare *Yasna*. 34.1. So humans in return through good thoughts (*humata*), good words (*hukta*) and good deeds (*hvarshta*) are expected to express their gratitude to the Lord and lead an ethical life in this world, *Y*.34.2; 45.8. Like theology, ethics in Zoroastrianism also was elaborated during the Sassanian period with the help of Magi. The essence of Zoroastrian ethics 'do in holiness anything you will' places the responsibility of actions on each one. Eternal reward or punishment after death is determined by one's actions in this world;⁴³ souls of the good people will pass through the bridge of *Chinavat* and enter the House of Song (heaven), *Y* 51.15; whereas the souls of the wicked people will be condemned to the House of Lie (hell), *Y* 49.11, 51.14. Zoroastrians give high priority for ethical living⁴⁴ and moderation in life.

“Good life in rich pastures and security against the blood-thirsty men of lies;” “the luck –bringing cow was created for man, not to be neglected, but to graze upon peaceful pastures.” The aristocrats are the hereditary foes of the peasants, and they are also the prophet's opponents. Zarathustra fights for the cause of the oppressed peasant class; and this social reform-which is at the same time the

transition from the way of life of the nomad to that of the agrarian and thus of the settler- is carried out in the name of the God, Ahura Mazda, who will not violence, robbery, and suppression by the nobility but justice and hence a proper ordering of the society.”⁴⁵

Ethical values in personal life were closely connected with an ideal social life as envisioned in the *Avesta* where there was no oppression, injustice and cruelty even to animal.

7. Conclusion

Conflict between good and evil is a reality in the life of individuals and groups. Ethical living and humanistic spirituality may strengthen the good in their fight against the evil. Both humanistic spirituality represented by Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism; and Religious spirituality represented by Hinduism, Islam, Parsi, Sikh and Christian religions focus on ethical living and the struggles of the people in the present life. Any spirituality to be genuine should address the struggles of the people; promote human values based on ethical principles. Ethical living and a spirituality based on moral values is the solution to the rampant atrocities, violence and injustice in the world. Ethical values can bring in lasting peace and happiness in the life of a person. Groups and nations may live in peace and harmony without the fear of the other. Ethical living includes care and concern for the earth, nature and creatures. As co-creators humans have the responsibility to protect and safeguard the creation. The earth and the creation are precious both for God and for the humans, they are to be treated with respect and reverence. A life founded on ethical values can help a person to progress in spiritual life, a life of love, compassion, friendship and mutual help. Then spirituality and morality interface each other in establishing better human communities.

Notes

1. Stoics are Greek school of philosophy which taught that freedom from passions is the goal of humanity 4 BCE and Epicureans another school of Greek philosophy which advocated pleasure as the highest principle 4 BCE. Cf. W. T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*, (London: Macmillan & Co, 1964) pp. 349 and 358
2. Followers of Confucius 552-479 BCE.
3. Carvaka also known as Indian Materialism did not believe in God, soul and life after death.
4. *Dīgha Nikāya*, III. 58
5. *yajñenayajñamayajañta devas tānidharmaniprathamany*, *R V* 10.90
6. Swami Bodhananda, *The Seven Hindu Spiritual Laws of Success*, (New Delhi: Bluejay Books, 2004) p.53.
7. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of life*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947) p. 122.
8. John Mckenzie, *Hindu Ethics*, (New Delhi: Oriental Book Reprint Corporation, 1971) p. 64.
John M. Koller, "Dharma: An Expression of Universal Order," *Philosophy East and West*, 22 (1972) p. 134.
9. Michael Witzel, "Vedas and Upaniṣads, in Gavin Flood (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p.70.
10. *Yah sa dhamrḥ brāhmṇādyai varṇibhiḥ āśramibhiḥ śreyo'arthibhiḥ anuṣṭīyamānaḥ dharma*). Śaṅkaracharya, *Srīmad Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣya*, trans. by A. G. Krishna Warriar, (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1983) p.1-2.
12. *jagataḥ sthitikāraṇam prāṇinām sāksāt abhodayaniśreyashetuh* *Ibid*.
13. *saṅgacadhvam saṁvadadhvam saṁvomanāmsijanathām*, *Rig Veda* 10:191-2
14. *śreyān svadharṁo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭitāt/ svabhāvanīyataṁ karma kurvann'apnoti kilbiṣaṁ*, *B G* 18:47.
15. Roderick Hindery, *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004) p.92.
16. John Mckenzie, *Hindu Ethics*, (New Delhi: Oriental Book Reprint Corporation, 1971) p. 39
17. Roderick Hindery, *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004) p. 48; also refer Kane P. V., *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol IV, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1953) p.156.
18. *Rig Veda* I. 113. 15-17, as quoted by Roderick Hindery, in *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004) p.49.
19. Roderick Hindery, *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004) p.52.

20. Roderick Hindery, *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004) p.63.
21. Michael Witzel, "Vedas and Upanisads," in Gavin Flood (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) p.71.
22. *satyamevayajate na'anṛutaṁ satyena panthā vitatha devayānaḥ, Muṇḍ. Up* 3:1.5
23. Samuel Rayan, "The Search for an Asian Spirituality of Liberation," in *Asian Christian Spirituality*, Virginia Fabella (et al, editors), New York: Orbis Books, 1992. P. 21-22.
24. Cf. Samuel Rayan, "The Search for an Asian Spirituality of Liberation," in *Asian Christian Spirituality*, Virginia Fabella (et al, editors), New York: Orbis Books, 1992. P. 22-26.
25. Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979) p. 17
26. Gordon S. Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, (London: SCM Press, 1983)
27. Samuel Rayan, "The Search for an Asian Spirituality of Liberation," in *Asian Christian Spirituality*, Virginia Fabella (et al, editors), New York: Orbis Books, 1992. P. 18
28. *Mīmāṃsā* is one of the schools of Indian philosophy which advocated actions (*karma*) as the main focus of the Vedas and the only means of liberation.
29. Cf. Stephen Chundamthadam, "Transformative Spirituality," in Samuel Rayan's *Theological Contributions*, ed. by Kurien Kunnumpuram, (yet to be published).
30. Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate* no. 2
31. Śaṅkara, *Atma-Bodha*, 47
32. Patañjali. *Yogasūtras* 4.33
33. *Chittavṛttinirodhah yogah, Yogasūtras* 1.2
34. *Tatrapratyayaiakatanatadhyanam, Yogasūtras* 3.2
35. *Tadevarthamatranirbhāsam svarūpasūnyamiva samādhiḥ, Yogasūtras* 3.3
36. Ibid, p. 117; *Collected Writings*, p.6-7
37. Ibid, p. 119; *Collected Writings*, p. 9
38. Ibid, p. 121; *Collected Writings*, p. 9-10.
39. Samuel Rayan, "A Spirituality for Our Times," in Kurien Kunnumpuram (ed.), *Life in Abundance: Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality*, Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2010 p. 234; also in Kurien Kunnumpuram (ed.), *Selected Writings of Samuel Rayan*, Vol. II, 2012 P. 32.
40. The Wise Lord Ahura Mazda created both the Holy Spirit and the Evil Spirit but the Holy Spirit chose to be good and the evil spirit chose to be wicked. *Yasna* 47. 2-4. Though Mazda is the supreme Lord; He is not the cause of evil in this world. According to this

understanding the origin of evil can be traced back to the freedom of choice both in the case of the primeval spirits and in the case of human beings. In Christian theology angels and the first parents sinned by exercising the freedom given to them which gave rise to evil in this world.

41. "Hear ye then with your ears; see ye the bright flames with the (eye) better mind. It is for a decision as to religions, man and man, each individually for himself. Before the great effort of the cause, awake ye (all) to our teaching." Y. 30.2
42. Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* Vol I (London: University of Chicago Press, 1978) P. 310
43. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (New York: Viking, 1964) PP. 198, 199.
44. The book of Esther in the Old Testament acknowledges the high moral standards of the Medes and Persians. *Esther* 1.19
45. Mensching Gustav, *Structures and Patterns of Religion*, trans by Hans F. Klimkeit, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1976) p. 24.