

PSYCHOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

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Hello, this is Jose Parappully, Salesian priest and clinical psychologist at Sumedha Centre for Psychospiritual Wellbeing at Jeolikote, Uttarakhand, with another edition of Psyche & Soul.

The title of this podcast “Psyche & Soul” alludes to a profound truth, namely “psyche,” that stands for psychology, and “soul,” standing for spirituality, go together.

We normally assume that the two are very different. Not really. Both have to do with everyday life and behaviour and thus have much in common. Good psychology is good spirituality, and good spirituality is good psychology

For a very long time there was mutual animosity between proponents of religion and spirituality on one hand and psychologists on the other. That has changed. Today there is clear acknowledgment that both psychology and spirituality are integral parts of being human and both have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

GROWING INTEREST IN THE SPIRITUAL

This changed attitude is in keeping with emerging trends in society and culture. There is today an increased interest in spirituality on the part of people all over. Survey after survey shows that the number of people who say they are now more spiritual than they used to be is considerably larger than those who feel they had become less spiritual.

Sales of books show that there is a thirst among people today for things spiritual. Already a few years earlier *Chicken Soup for the Soul* had broken new grounds in publishing and become a runaway best seller, and various soups as sequel to the original recipe have been churned out year after year.

A few years ago, a distinguished group of business people representing some of the richest corporations in the world went on a long retreat for the explicit purpose of designating the single overriding need of contemporary society. The conclusion they arrived at, to their own surprise, was this: “the single overriding need of contemporary society is to rediscover, celebrate and incarnate the sacred.”

The rich and famous - business tycoons, media stars, fashion models and sports stars - are leaving lucrative and glittering careers and moving into monasteries, ashrams, Zen Centres, and the wilderness in search of the sacred.

Prayer and meditation groups are in vogue. Quasi-spiritual movements like the *Art of Living* attract thousands of enthusiasts. *Catholic Charismatic* Retreat Centres are mushrooming.

Among the new spirituality seekers the vast majority are young people. For example, more than 80 percent of those attending the *Art of Living* gatherings is said to be young people. The *Jesus Youth* is another testament to this newfound interest among the young in spirituality.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

While there is growing interest in spirituality, there is also disillusionment with religion. Spirituality and religion are related but they are distinct concepts. Both religion and spirituality are born of the awareness of the transcendent—that which is beyond us. In religion the transcendent is often personified as a Supreme Being or Deity –and finds expression in a shared belief system (*Creed*), common rituals (*Cult*), and generally accepted norms of behaviour (*Code*). These are popularly known as the three C's of classical religions.

Spirituality, unlike religion, is a *personal experience* of the transcendent, not necessarily mediated by social or religious institutions – through the 3 C's. This personal experience can be had within and without religious traditions. Thus, we can have a profound experience of the transcendent when we worship together in church, temple or mosque. However, we can also have a profound experience of the transcendent through music and dance, in the beauty of nature, at the seashore or mountain top, or the intimacy of a love relationship, and in any moment of ordinary life.

Spirituality unlike religion, is a very broad concept. It involves everything that enhances the sense of the sacred. True spirituality enables us to be in touch with and feel connected with the divine that is present in our everyday life, and is not limited just to religious worship or practices. When we are spiritual, this sense of the sacred and of the divine permeates the whole of our life, and manifests in the way we live and relate

For introspection

- *Do you see both psychology and spirituality having much that is common? Or do you see the two are quite separate?*
- *How do you feel about the distinction made between spirituality and religion? Are you more of a spiritual person than a religious person?*

Prayer

Spirituality is best expressed in relationships. The sacred takes on flesh and blood in communion, both with the divine, with one another. We know that God wants to have a personal relationship with each of us. Jesus, for example, invites us to abide in him. In Chapter 15, 1-15 of John's Gospel, Jesus uses the metaphor of the wine and the branches, inviting us to deep union with him, and to love one another just as he loves us. We could read this beautiful passage, stay with whatever it evokes in us and express our desire to abide deeply in him and grow in love of him and one another.

Have a pleasant weekend. Be well. Be safe. Blessed.

Thank you for listening.

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