



## The Centrality of Religion in Various Aspects of Spirituality from the Perspective of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā)

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### Abstract

The relationship between spirituality and religion is one of the most challenging philosophical discussions of the past two decades, with two opposing camps: one advocating "spirituality without religion" and the other emphasizing the "centrality of religion in spirituality." This article examines the viewpoint of Mullā Ṣadrā, one of the greatest Islamic philosophers and a proponent of the centrality of religion in spirituality. From Mullā Ṣadrā's perspective, a truly spiritual life is one in which a person is continuously gaining knowledge of their unique and self-sufficient Creator in all aspects of life and, as a result of this acquired knowledge, follows divine commands and prohibitions at every moment. Ṣadrā al-Muta'allihīn considers the foundation of spiritual life to be faith derived from Qur'anic knowledge and acting according to it. The centrality of religion in Ṣadrā's spirituality means that achieving true happiness and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of all things—which are the most prominent characteristics of the perfect human being—cannot be attained without divine knowledge, obedience, piety, and the resulting reverence.

**Keywords:** Religion, Spiritual Movement, Spiritual Nearness, Spiritual Perfection, Spiritual Heart, Spiritual Elevation, Spiritual Life.

### Introduction

The issue of the relationship between spirituality and religion has created two opposing camps: one side argues for the irrelevance of religion and views life solely through the lens of a spirituality they have defined. In contrast, the other side sees religion, God, and spirituality as inseparable, with each being meaningless without the others. Before delving into the theory of those who support "spirituality without religion," it is essential to first examine the opposing view, namely the "centrality of religion in spirituality," because the primary goal of the author is to offer a scholarly critique, free from preconceived notions, of the viewpoint that advocates spirituality without religion. To do this, it is necessary to first analyze our main claim, the correlation between spirituality and religion, so that it can serve as a basis for critiquing the opposing view. What is the relationship between religion and spirituality in the various aspects of spirituality as presented in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy? In each of the above aspects of spirituality, what position does Mullā Ṣadrā assign to religion?.



## Research Findings

Although the initial assumption of this article was that Mullā Ṣadrā, as a Muslim philosopher and mystic who believes in God, would not fall into the category of supporters of spirituality without religion, the following findings were made: 1. What is the place of religion in spirituality from his perspective, based on his various works? 2. How does Mullā Ṣadrā give a central role to religion in each of the different aspects of spirituality, whether as a path or a goal, in the areas of "spiritual movement," "spiritual perfection," "spiritual life," "spiritual nearness," "spiritual elevation," and "spiritual heart"? These are the main findings of this research and the primary objective of this paper.

## Conclusion

From Mullā Ṣadrā's perspective, a truly spiritual life is one in which a person continuously gains knowledge of their unique and self-sufficient Creator in all stages of life and, as a result, follows divine commands and prohibitions moment by moment. Ṣadrā considers the foundation of spiritual life to be faith derived from Qur'anic knowledge and acting according to it—a faith without which one cannot possess a spiritual heart or have the House of God in their heart. Only by living in this manner can one progress on the path of spiritual perfection toward the ultimate goal of creation. He explicitly considers the commission of religious and rational sins and neglect of constant remembrance of God as obstacles to ascending the ranks of perfection and ultimately achieving spiritual elevation and nearness to God, which are the existential status of the perfect human (the highest of possible beings). To reach such a status, in addition to the instinctual movement and natural prostration that all creatures have toward the Cause of all causes, one must also traverse the best possible religious voluntary movement (spiritual movement specific to humans). Mullā Ṣadrā not only views various aspects of spirituality, both as a path (such as spiritual movement, spiritual perfection, and spiritual life) and as a goal (such as spiritual nearness and spiritual elevation), as inseparable from religion and religiosity, but also believes that benefiting from the fruits and achievements of spirituality depends on full intellectual and practical adherence to everything brought by the last divine prophet (PBUH) in the form of the last and most complete heavenly book, explained by his Ahl al-Bayt (AS), and propagated by religious scholars until now and in the future. The centrality of religion in Ṣadrā's spirituality means that achieving true happiness and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of all things—among the most prominent characteristics of the perfect human being—cannot be achieved without divine knowledge, obedience, piety, and the resulting reverence.

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