

# CHETAN DATTA PODURI

## THE NEED FOR RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN COUNSELLING PRACTICES: APPROACHING THROUGH CARDINAL SINS

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**Abstract:** In the present article, the author tries to discuss subtle differences between several types of counselling – religious, spiritual, philosophical, psychological and the combination Spiritual/Religious/Philosophical (SRP) counselling. In the process, arguments for the need to include religion in counselling are pointed out. Further, taking the example of cardinal sins, the importance of religion is discussed from a psychological perspective. This is because 84% (5.8 billion) of the world’s population (6.9 billion) in the year 2010 CE followed one religion or the other. Towards achieving this, the present study tries to identify equivalents of the seven cardinal sins of Catholicism in other religions like Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. The significance of this article is in the observation that professional counsellors can identify various instances of including religion in their sessions. Also explored in this article are the reasons for the transgression by sinners as proffered by different religions. Some religions like Hinduism and Judaism identify the root cause for sinning to be thoughts in the minds of the sinner. Islam also mentions that sinning leads to depression and anxiety. Hinduism attributes some types of sins to weariness, old age, and illnesses. Therefore, this study also tries to identify the equivalents of the “seven cardinal sins” in the international classification of diseases (ICD-11) or the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5). While many religions prescribe reformation and repentance as remedial measures, Islam seems to have blurred the distinction between “sins” and “crimes” whence there are punishments for even the first instance of sinning. Most religions punish the sinner only upon persistent repetition of the sins. The blurring of the distinction between sins and crimes makes the civil law of many a country consider sins as punishable crimes.

**Key words:** religion, counselling, SRP counselling, philosophy, psychology, cardinal sins, ICD-11, psychiatry, depression, anxiety.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Religion and spirituality: the thin red line

In the published scientific literature, religion and spirituality have been used interchangeably by various authors (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005, 21–42). In simple terms, religion and spirituality were considered synonymous by earlier authors. All the definitions of religion by earlier authors can be grouped into three levels. The first level of definitions involves appeasing God(s) or Supernatural power(s). The traditional definition of religion is in terms of a superpower or divinity or God(s) while psychologists have defined religion in terms of an individual's solitude. For example, Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005, 21–42) define religion as a system of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power with practices of worship or other rituals directed towards that power. The second level of definitions of religion involves an individual's solitude. Melton (2008, xi) defines religion as what an individual does with his/her solitariness. The third level obviously involves society. Sarwal (1996, 9) defines religion as the main means for establishing an order in society while trying to maintain harmony amongst its people.

Continuing, The Hutchinson Dictionary of World Religions' definition of religion matches that of Zinnbauer and Pargament definition. However, the Hutchinson Dictionary clearly mentions that the rituals appeasing or beliefs in a supernatural power(s) or God(s) are not essential. This is because the founders of religions like Buddhism and Confucianism failed to define God(s) during their lifetime. Importantly, these two religions did not receive any of their scriptures from the divinity. The concept of God(s) in these religions was introduced by the later-day clergy (Helicon 2005, 643; Poduri 2022, 61–80).

However, it may be noted at this point that a section of the present-day physicists acknowledges the existence of a superior intelligence (SupInt) to human intelligence (HumInt) (Poduri 2022, 61–80). Therefore, to make the definition of religion holistic, it makes sense to include, if possible, God(s), the individual and the society in any definition of religion. Thus, for the present we define religion as what a person does in his/her solitude to appease the God(s) or Supernatural power(s) or SupInt and thereby establish an order in the society as the individuals of a particular religion are in harmony with each other. Note that this definition of religion includes all the three levels mentioned earlier, that of the individual, the society, and God/Supernatural Power/Divinity.

Before we proceed further, because there are multiple religions in existence today in any given geographic location, the first obvious question that arises is how can religion (as defined above) maintain harmony? In ancient times, the rule was *cius regio, eius religio*

[Translation: whose realm it is, the religion] (Helicon 2005; Potz 2017). In the present times, while the adage continues, of the 195 countries in existence on this planet, only 93 are listed as secular irrespective of the fact whether they actually practise secularism or not (Anonymous-1, 2022). Approximately 84% (5.8 billion) of the then world's population (6.9 billion) are religiously affiliated in the year 2010 CE (Hackett and Grim, 2012; Stonawski et al. 2015, 101–116). In simple terms, only 16 persons out of a randomly selected 100 people did not follow any religion.

Till about 1980 CE, religion and spirituality were synonyms in the minds of both the laity and the scientific community. Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005, 21–42) mention that with a general decline in traditional religious institutions, there was a paradigm shift with spirituality slowly replacing religiousness in popular usage. In other words, spirituality came to be recognized as an individual informal effort at a search for universal truth (whatever it might be) giving a meaning and definition to existence. Now, spirituality increasingly refers to the individuals' beliefs while religion is a group activity and represents a formal belief with a considerable overlap. So, in the modern context, both the terms are related but not identical.

With these arguments in mind, let us paraphrase the definition of religion presented earlier. Religion is the spirituality practiced by individuals (perhaps in a coordinated manner) in their solitude to connect with the God(s)/Divinity/Supernatural Power/SupInt, and thereby establish an order in the society as the individuals of a particular religion are in harmony with each other. This revised definition of religion despite including spirituality still contains all the three levels identified earlier – individual, society and divinity. Thus, henceforth, from a counselling perspective, religion by default includes spirituality.

## **1.2. Philosophical counselling vs. psychological counselling**

Having arrived at this clear relationship between religion and spirituality, the present author feels prudent in shifting the discussion to describing the need for these aspects in philosophical and psychological counselling. For this let us start at the very beginning by defining each term – counselling, philosophy, and psychology. To begin with, counselling refers to any method of treatment that involves treating (especially psychiatric disorders or disorders of the mind and mental processes) wherein a specialist talks and listens to his/her patients/subjects about the patients' condition and (may advise on) how to deal with it.

While psychology is defined as the study of the mind and mental processes, Proudfoot and Lacey maintain that an embarrassing situation arises in defining philosophy. This is because the very question “what is philosophy?” is a philosophical question. Nevertheless, to summarize the

vast information presented under the heading Philosophy in the Routledge Dictionary, and in its simplest form, philosophy is the love of wisdom. To give a formal definition, Philosophy refers to an apriorism that involves gaining knowledge in general about the man and the Universe, with the process involving ethics, morals, humanity, logic, and physics (read as science). This study, Philosophy, traditionally lacks any definite and systematic procedures for results. Hence, Mathematics, strictly speaking, is outside the purview of philosophy (Bateman et al. 2005; Proudfoot and Lacey, 2009, 301-304).

Psychological counselling is a form of treatment for mental disorders wherein a specialist and the patient talk and together analyse the patient's condition thereby assessing the past conditions which may have contributed to the present situation or to the emotional turbulence or the mental disorder (Bateman et al. 2005). Thus, even though a clear distinction exists between psychoanalysis and psychological counselling, counselling involves more listening thereby and does not involve diagnosis or assessment. The typical setting for a counsellor is in-house or not-for-profit organisations or government departments and/or helpline services (Anonymous, Deakin University, 2021).

For much of the 20th century CE, academic psychology did not address religion. As already mentioned, religion impacts billions of lives on this planet both in a positive manner and in a negative fashion. Examples of where religion works in a positive manner are in the observations that religion organises a person's daily life, gives guidance, providing ultimate reasons to endure life apart from completing the societal obligations.

The events of 1992 CE in Northern India wherein a historical mosque built by the Moghul Emperor Babur was destroyed; and that of September 11, 2001 (commonly known as 9/11 incident) wherein the North and South towers of the World Trade Centre (WTC) in New York City, USA were totally destroyed, serve as negative examples of religion (Paloutzian and Park, 2005, 3 - 21; Britannica-1, 2019). Recent negative events involve the controversy of ruling party members making comments on Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and hunting for Hindu temples in Islamic Mosques in India. Both these episodes affected the international relations of India to a certain extent.

For more than 40 years (between 1920 - 1960s CE), the systemic scientific research on psychology neglected religions. But when the research on religions got revived, it was mostly about racism & prejudice (skin colours), aggression and violence, poverty, female gender inferiority, and religion per se. Note that a division of Psychology of Religion was established only in the year 1976 CE in the American Psychological Association (APA), if we consider APA to be playing a defining role on various aspects in the Scientific community (Paloutzian and Park 2005, 3-20).

So, why was religion abandoned by various researchers? Psychologists like Sigmund Freud and JH Leuba, rejected religion explaining that it is a projection of human wishes and desires (Safra and Aguilar-Cauz 2006). Furthermore, many popular psychologists believed that no experience can be the subject of analysis while it is being undergone. For example, Telepathy cannot be subjected to analysis. Categorising Meditation or After Glows would in the present author's opinion represent an extreme form of academics. Thus, religion ended up being a neglected aspect in Psychology/counselling.

Arguing somewhat in similar lines, Frunză (2018, 162–178) mentions that psychological therapy is a practice that is inspired by philosophy rather than religion. Hagiu and Bortos (2022, 3–18) mention that philosophy is a way of life. They also add that in Romania, philosophical counselling is based more on the academic side. In other words, a clear drifting from religion and spirituality has been noted, with philosophical counselling increasingly becoming synonymous with spiritual counselling. Going with the popular belief and given the very ambiguous nature of philosophy (as described earlier), this author also for the present considers philosophical counselling and spiritual counselling as synonymous but would want to argue in favour of including religion in the counselling process.

While psychological counselling may use several techniques [like talking therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), art therapy, etc], spiritual counselling hardly uses any of the techniques. On the contrary, spiritual counselling focusses on the 'meaning of life' through a holistic approach (hence the synonymity with philosophy) rather than identifying the deep personal matters and their associated psychological processes, something which psychological counselling does (C 2022). Thus, the aim of spiritual or philosophical counselling is not to find an answer, a solution or mode of treatment, but is about accumulation of the 'philosophical capital' so that the patient can lead a more 'joyous' life (Schuster 1991, 219–223; C 2022). Including religion in this process offers the scope of sharing this 'joyousness' with society and divinity.

Theoretically, this situation of affairs, so to speak, leads the patient to a range of at least five options: Spiritual counselling (subdued individual affair), Religious counselling (usually a flamboyant issue), Philosophical counselling, Psychological counselling, and the final one, a combination, spiritual/religious/philosophical (SRP) counselling. Academically speaking, each type of counselling has its own boundaries and limitations employing their own strategies and techniques.

However, in the present article, for reasons already mentioned, spirituality and religiousness are interrelated. Thus, the five options now get reduced to two: Psychological counselling and spiritual/religious/philosophical (SRP) counselling. This kind of a reductionist approach might be in stark disagreement with some of the earlier authors like Ross,

Kennedy and Macnab (2015), Frunză (2018, 162–178) and Frunza, Frunza and Grad (2019, 60–74). The present author sincerely believes that by adopting such a reductionist approach patients can overcome the dilemma in choosing between religious and spiritual counselling, a genuine problem identified by Frunza, Frunza and Grad (2019, 60–74). Also, such a reductionist approach makes both types of counselling truly interdisciplinary. By these arguments, unless the patient is psychologically detached from the mortal world, s/he is never given a choice since humans by default live in “society” creating a need for including of religion. Keeping in view the recommendations of Hațegan, (2021, 146–160), it is advised that both types of counselling be done by qualified specialists.

## **2. The context of “sin” in counselling**

### **2.1. Defining the sin - types**

Two types of “Sin” have been recorded in the Britannica Encyclopaedia of World Religions and both concern religion. The Akkadians or adherents of Mesopotamian religion believe that Sin, the Moon God, is the father of the Sun God, Shamash. In some myths, Sin is also considered the father of Ishtar. Ishtar refers to the Planet Venus. Sin means Crescent Moon while the word Nanna means Full Moon.

The other Sin is the one with which we are concerned for the present. The encyclopaedia says that Sin also refers to the moral evil committed by humans from a religious perspective and are defined by various religions to have been committed deliberately and purposefully as a violation of the will of God (in Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). These sins are viewed by the society as a defiance of God’s commandments or as hatred against God (Safra and Aguilar-Cauz 2006). It is this latter type of Sin that matters in SRP counselling, and as we progress through the article, the full importance of “sin” in psychology is revealed. However, from a religious perspective, sins are those actions of individuals for which there is no civil punishment. Crimes on the other hand are those for which there is a specific punishment for every act committed.

### **2.2. Sins – a little history and this study**

Iliev et al. (2019) trace the origin of the notion of the seven deadly sins to the deserts of Egypt around 4th century BCE because of combining ideas and traditions from all the important races of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. Subsequently, the ‘Seven Deadly Sins’ were popularized by the Catholic clergy as part of Christian confessional

practices (Helicon 2005; Iliev et al. 2019).

In the present study, the author searches for answers to a few questions concerning ‘sins’:

- (i) What constitutes a ‘sin’ in various religions?
- (ii) What is the reason proffered by each religion for ‘sinning’? and
- (iii) How does the modern world consider the different cardinal sins?
- (iv) Does taking up the example of ‘sin’ become mandatory during SRP Counselling?

For this purpose, internet resources like Google Scholar, online libraries like the British Council library, India were utilised using author’s private credentials. Christian/Catholic Cardinal Sins were taken as the starting point and equivalents for the same in other major religions like the Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism identified and collated as Table 1. Diseases based on these cardinal sins, if listed, in the international classification of disease (ICD-11) (WHO 2021) or the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) (APA 2013) are also included as separate columns in Table 1. The last column in Table 1 gives the prevalence of each of the identified mental disorders (where world statistics are not mentioned, only American and/or European population) as mentioned in DSM-5.

**Table 1.** List of the seven catholic cardinal sins, and their equivalents in Hinduism, Buddhist, Judaic, Islamic, Zoroastrian, and Psychiatry.

S l. N o.	Catholic Cardinal Sins	Hinduism (vyasanāni)	Buddhism	Judaic (chet)	Islamic (Maşdar)	Zoroastrianism (gunāh)	ICD-11 Code	DSM-5 Code	Prevalence#
1	Superbia (Pride/Hubris/vainglory)	Brahmavarcasam/udhataatvam	No equivalent identifiable as Buddhism is mostly a reformist religion	Pride	First Fault	Pride	Personality disorder (6D10)	Narcissistic Personality Disorder [301.81 (F60.81)]	0 – 6.2%
2	Avaritia (Greed/Avarice)	Yaśas/mātsaryam/lobha/jihīrṣā/arthopājanam/mātsaryam		Stinginess	Usury/Encroaching the property of orphans/Excessive Riba	Hoarding	Hoarding disorder (6B24)	Hoarding Disorder [300.3 (F42)]	2 – 6%

3	<i>Luxuria</i> (Lust)	<i>Rūpam/punyaganḍha/strikāmyā/ratī/kāma/nikṣatvam</i>	No identifiable equivalents in the listed 70 Major sins (Kabair)	<i>Avon</i>	Fornication/ Adultery	Lust	Compulsive sexual behavior disorder (6C72)	Voyeuristic Disorder [302.82 (F65.3)]	12% (♂); 4% (♀)
4	<i>Ira</i> (Anger/ Wrath)	<i>Krodha/manyauroṣa</i>		<i>Peshā</i>	—	Vengeance	Anger (MB24.1)	Observed with several disorders	—
5	<i>Gula</i> (Gluttony)	<i>Aśanāyā</i>		Gluttony		—	—	Overeating (MG43.1)	Bulimia Nervosa (BN) [307.51 (F50.2)]/ Binge-eating disorder (BeD) [307.51 (F50.8)]
6	<i>Invidia</i> (Envy)	<i>Dviṣṭī/īrṣyā/asūya</i>		Jealousy	Jealousy	Jealousy	Alcohol-induced psychotic disorder (6C40.6)*	Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD) [301.7 (F60.2)]/ Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) [301.81 (F60.81)]	APD: 0.2 – 3.3%; NPD: 0 – 6.2%
7	<i>Acedia</i> (Sloth/ Dejection)	<i>Tandri/ālasyam</i>		Sloth	Sloth	Sloth ( <i>Būṣāsp</i> )	Personality disorder (6D10)/ Sleeping Disease virus (XN132) / Narcolepsy (7A20)	Hypersomnolence Disorder [307.44 (F51.11)] / Narcolepsy	1%***
<p><b>Note(s):</b> * — described/considered as alcohol induced jealousy; ** — More commonly seen in females than in males; *** — 1% of European and US general population. In those who consulted for sleep disorders, the prevalence is 5 – 10%; # — International prevalence as mentioned in DSM-5; ♂ — Males; ♀ — Females; <b>APD</b> — antisocial personality disorder; <b>BeD</b> — Binge eating disorder; <b>BN</b> — Bulimia nervosa; <b>DSM-5</b> — Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; <b>ICD – 11</b>: International Classification of Diseases 11<sup>th</sup> Edition; <b>NPD</b> — narcissistic personality disorder. Other abbreviations and symbols carry their usual significance.</p>									
<p><b>In addition to those references cited in the text, for compiling this table the following additional sources were also consulted:</b>                  (Klawans, 1998, 391–415; Helicon, 2005; Bodewitz, 2007, 317–339; Eisenberg, 2008; Sarma, 2009; Vevaina, 2010, 111–143; APA, 2013; Sunitzky, 2016; Iliev <i>et al.</i>, 2019; WHO, 2021)</p>									

### 2.3. Co-existence

The mythology of many-a-religion clearly indicates that God(s) and Man coexisted for some time on Earth when the world was free of sins. Subsequently, in almost all religions, owing to one reason or the other, God(s) abandoned the Earth leaving man in a more mortal world. Thus, began an increase in sins and crimes around the world. Simon (2003, 1–34) mentions that in the myths of the Egyptian Golden Age, men and Gods originally lived together. Later, Amun-Ra, the leader of Egyptian mythological Gods, withdrew leaving the man to himself in an earthly world.

A similar concept exists in Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). Here, Adam and Eve are believed to have transgressed in the tenth hour of creation and by the twelfth hour, they are banished from the garden of Eden (Bashevkin, 2019, 14–26). In this process of transgression, two ideas of ‘sin’ are introduced – Shame and Lateness. After eating the forbidden fruit, both Adam and Eve realise they are ‘naked’ (read as the introduction of the concept of Shame). When they hear God walking in the garden in search of them (read as the co-existence of God and Humans), they felt ‘ashamed’ and hid behind the trees to avoid God. Finally, they acknowledge their ‘sin’. This is identified by many authors as ‘lateness’ to respond to the call of God. Ever since they are banished to the mortal world. Quran further adds that all mankind is from Adam and Eve (Montville 2016, 245–256). This episode is referred to variously as the ‘Original Sin’ or as the ‘Fall of Man’ making humanity ‘predisposed to sin’ (Helicon 2005). Once the God(s) have left this world to the humans, it may be noted that ‘sinning’ has increased.

The revelation of Quran by God (Allah, the Highest) to the Prophet [peace be upon him (PBUH)] and the ‘Night Journey’ (al-Isrā) or as al-Miraj (‘the ascent’; Sura 17:1) of the Prophet (PBUH) may perhaps also be considered as yet another instance of interactions of God and Man (Helicon 2005; Nor 2011, 59–74). Prior to this, God sent the Torah mi-Sinai to the Jews in Hebrew and the Gospels to the Christians in a similar manner (Eisenberg 2008; Montville 2016, 245–256). All these instances can be seen as one proof of God-Human relations.

Gods and humans coexisted even in Hindu scriptures till 23 January 3102 BCE (Gregorian Calendar). This is the date when Lord Krishna is believed to have relinquished the mortal form and ascended to his eternal abode, marking the beginning of Kaliyuga, the beginning of the ‘human world’ bereft of Gods (Simon 2003, 1–34; Anonymous-Fandom 2021). As per Hinduism, presently, we are living in Kaliyuga, which represents the last of the four yugas that make up the cycle of creation, characterised by wickedness and disaster, leading to the destruction of the world in preparation for a new creation and yuga (Helicon 2005). Today, in

Kaliyuga, only a quarter of the original virtues remain, and evil armed with disease, fear, despair, hate and ill-will rules the world.

Ezekiel's description of other-worldly wheels and creatures in the middle of 6th century BCE (Mooney 2002, 1–6) Claude 'Raël' Vorilhon, on 13 December 1973 CE encountered with Elohim leading to the development of the growing Raëlian Movement (Hanson 2005; Östling 2014, 368–382), and Vernon Howell's experience similar to the Prophet's (PBUH) 'Night Journey' in 1985 CE (Gallagher 2014, 67–80), represent modern examples of God-Human dealings.

### 3. Sins in different religions

#### 3.1. The depiction of sin

Although minor variations exist, each of the religions included in the present article has similar definitions for sins. All these definitions can be summarized as individual actions against the will of God(s) essentially being rooted in the pride of the transgressor involving violations of the established socio-religious and ritualistic rules (Helicon 2005; Quinn 2005; Bodewitz 2007, 317–339). Thus, when cross-referred with the definitions of religion and spirituality, any violation of societal rules automatically and mandatorily brings a discussion on 'sins' into context.

Christianity has seven cardinal sins. Hinduism has a broad list of sins and combinations of sins and vices and includes all the seven Christian Cardinal Sins (see table 1). The list of 'sins' in Hinduism arises because of 'passions', 'evil qualities', 'dosas' (translated as 'wrong passions'), *vyasanāni* (vices) (faults in characters), or ills having their origin either in 'lust' (*kāma*) or anger (*krodha*). Hinduism attributes some types of sins (say, for example, sloth or sleeping during the daytime) to weariness, old age, and illnesses (Bodewitz 2007, 317–339). Digging deeper into Hinduism, we also notice that some of the sins are caste-based (discussed subsequently).

All the sins in Judaism are classifiable into three groups of three sins each. The first group classifies sins as unintentional sins (*chet*), sins caused due to lust (*avon*) and intentional sins committed in the spirit of rebellion (*pesha*). The second classification groups all the sins as (i) sins against God; (ii) sins against another person; and (iii) sins against oneself. In yet another grouping, the sins are simply identified as idolatry, sexual misconduct, and murder. In Judaism, sinning comes into the picture if someone violates one of the 613 commandments described in the Torah. As per the Jewish belief, transgressions arise because a person's inclination, called *yetzer*, leads them astray into sin. Conceptually, *Yetzer* is similar to the Freudian 'id' – a pleasure-seeking instinct at the expense of reasoned choice (Klawans 1998, 391–415; Eisenberg 2008; Pelaia 2019).

Islam, on the other hand, defines sins (*maşdar*) as those actions which cause discomfort (or pinches) to the transgressor's soul, and which is disliked by people to become informed. There are two types of sins in Islam: Minor (*Saghira*) and Major (*Kabair*) sins. Minor sins (*Saghira*) are defined as those actions that displease the God/Allah for which there is no specific punishment but has a negative psychological effect on the sinner. Major sins (*Kabair*) are those sins which are prohibited by Allah (the Highest) and the Prophet (PBUH) in the Sunnah. The number of Major sins (*Kabair*) mentioned in various Islamic scriptures fluctuates from 7 to 70. Repetition of a minor sin (*Saghira*) by the same individual makes it a major sin (*Kabair*). In Islam, sins are punishable crimes (Domun 2012; Khan 2015, 186–191; Huda 2019). Thus begins the blurring of distinction between sins and crimes.

Buddhists also believe in Good and Evil. Five primary sins have been identified: patricide, matricide, murder of an arhat (a saint), drawing the blood of Buddha and creating a schism. All these are violent actions and are considered as sins. This is because Buddhism fundamentally believes in non-violence and preaches ascetism for salvation (Silk 2007, 253–286).

Sins in Zoroastrianism are considered disgraceful acts by the people and the clergy which are detrimental to public or personal good. Two different types of classification of Sins in Zoroastrianism exist. The first classification divides sins into three groups: bad thought (*duşmata*), bad deed (*duşuarşta*), and bad words (*duşuxta*). The second classification also divides sins into three factions but gives a different grouping: (i) Sins against the God; (ii) Sins against the King (rebellion); and (iii) Sins against the ordinary people who oppress each other (Ghalekhani and Haqiqi 2019, 512–544).

### **3.2. Sins in Christianity**

Cardinal sins in Christianity are defined as 'faults in the character of an individual' (Bodewitz, 2007, 317–339) rather than as crimes or vices. Crimes are best defined as a 'failure to obey law' (Bashevkin 2019, 27–40). The second column in Table 1 lists the seven Cardinal Sins. In Christianity, other sins are classified as mortal sins (aka Formal sins) and venial sins (aka Material sins). Mortal sins are those that are confessed and forgiven else they lead to damnation. These are confessed to a Priest. Venial sins, on the other hand, are confessed privately to God. Between these two, Venial sins are less serious (Helicon 2005). Nevertheless, Christianity believes that humanity is in a 'state of original sin' which has been described in the section "Co-existence". The reader at this stage must note that killing of soldiers in wars is not considered as murder in almost all cultures (Bodewitz 2007, 317–339). However, excessive killing of soldiers is despised by the God(s). Formal sins involve personal guilt (Safra and Aguilar-Cauz 2006).

#### 4. Why psychology? Reasons for transgressing

From the discussion presented above, in most of the cases 'sins', either in the religious context or in the modern context, can be considered as behavioural problems committed unintentionally or as uncontrolled transgressions or as violations of the established socio-religious norms by the transgressor. To summarize the voluminous works of Bodewitz (2007, 317–339) and Bashevkin (2019), sins start off as thoughts, progress to become fantasies and preoccupations, and thence to a passionate level. At this stage, the individual ends up being a transgressor. Bashevkin further adds that in Judaism, despite prewarning, if the individual commits a 'sin', then it calls for punishment.

Bodewitz (2007, 317–339) on the other hand mentions that sinning in Hinduism is caste specific. Certain actions permitted for Kings (Kshatriyas) are considered sins if done by members of other castes and vice versa. For example, the murder of a brahmin without a valid reason is considered a sin while the murder of other non-brahmin members of the society is not a sin. Interestingly, the killing of an embryo (abortion) belonging to any caste is considered murder for the simple reason an embryo represents a future brahmin. In its original form, castes in Hinduism were according to social needs and individual action (Swaminathan 2014). Thus, theoretically, anybody can become a brahmin. Several examples exist in Hindu scriptures wherein people born into one caste eventually became 'brahmin'. Also, Kings (Kshatriyas) are permitted to have a certain amount of 'lust' (kāma) or anger (krodha) to discharge their duties effectively. Similarly, hunting, gambling, womanizing, etc., are considered vices of Kings and not sins. The scriptures also recommend that the Kings commit them (Bodewitz 2007, 317–339).

However, Hinduism also identifies 'sloth' (Tandri) with weariness, illness, and old age. While old age is part of the natural process, weariness, and illness must be seen with a medical perspective. Most notably in this direction is the unacceptable sleeping during daytime. Nevertheless, almost all the religions studied for the present have clearly indicated that the basic reason for sinning lies in the very nature of human behaviour as mentioned earlier. Islam on the other hand mentions that the sinners are rewarded by depression and anxiety (Khan 2015, 186–191). Thus, it makes sense to consider Psychology in this study as the sin originates in the mind at the first. When the passions are committed by the transgressors regularly and at an abnormal level, psychiatric intervention is advised. Consequently, it makes sense to identify the mental disorders associated with each cardinal sin (Table 1).

## 5. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, if we look from a health perspective, religions precede (or rather say, sired) modern science in general and medicine. This statement is supported by the observation that many religions consider sins as having originated in the minds of the offender while also simultaneously attributing some number of sins to illness and old age. While almost all religions recommend reformation for sinning rather than punishing, only Islam punishes the sinner. Minor sins (Saghira) in Islam are forgiven while repetition makes a minor sin a major sin and punishable. Similarly, Judaism mentions that if the transgressor sins even after forewarning, then the sinner deserves a punishment. Buddhism mentions that sinning shortens the life of the sinner (Silk 2007, 253–286). But a habitual and persistent sinner deserves some psychiatric treatment if not sincere psychological counselling.

With the advent of Islam which introduced punishment for sins, the thin line between sins and crime became obscured. This made the civil laws of many-a-country to incorporate punishments for sins. An example in this direction is 'slander'. Slander (referred to as lashon hara in Judaism, and spazga in Zoroastrianism) are not punishable sins. The Judaic Talmud says that in fact everyone is susceptible to lashon hara (Bashevkin 2019, 27–53; Ghalekhani and Haqiqi 2019, 521–544). Hinduism considers slander arising out of anger (krodha) and must be avoided by Kings (Bodewitz 2007, 317–339). While there is no punishment for slander, Hinduism considers usage of abusive words (väkpärusyam) and assault (dandapärusyam) even by Kings as punishable offence (Bodewitz 2007, 317–339; Nabanita 2017).

Presently, laws relating to abusive words (väkpärusyam) are found in Section 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). This is known as the law of defamation (Nabanita 2017). Islam considers slandering as one of the Major sins (Kabair), and hence is punishable (Khan 2015, 186–191). With this sociological shift in the concepts, some authors went to the extent of describing the "policeman as the new age priests" (Bashevkin 2019, 3–13). Bashevkin also adds that in the public mind, 'sins' and 'crimes' have become synonyms in the modern times. To clarify, for 'sins' the remedy is three 'R's – realize, reform and repent, while for the 'crimes' there is punishment. All these arguments make us say with confidence that religion/spirituality is an essential part of counselling be it psychological or philosophical.

## List of abbreviations used:

Aka — also known as; APD — antisocial personality disorder; BCE — Before Common Era; BeD — Binge eating disorder; BN — Bulimia nervosa; CBT — Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; CE — Common Era; DSM-5 — Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition; ICD – 11: International Classification of Diseases 11th Edition; NPD — narcissistic personality disorder; PBUH — Peace be upon him; Other abbreviations and symbols carry their usual significance.

## Disclaimer

At the time of submitting the original manuscript, Chetan Datta Poduri (CDP) was not attached to any employer and was freelancing. On 29 June 2022, CDP entered a ‘Deed of Contract’, with an education society of repute in India for working in one of the colleges maintained by them at Hyderabad, Telangana, India. Consequently, CDP feels prudent in mentioning that *the opinions expressed here represent his own and need not necessarily that of any of his employers, either the former, or the present, or the future.*

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