



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

A Critical Approach to Human Spiritual Perfection from Deepak Chopra's Perspective Based on Mulla Sadra's Opinions

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I appreciate Prof. Gorjian and Dr. Mazaheri Seif as supervisor and advisor, for helping me to compile the thesis.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 02 July 2021

Revised 11 October 2021

Accepted 24 December 2021

Key Words:

Perfectionism

Human Spiritual Perfection

Deepak Chopra

Mulla Sadra

DOI:

10.22034/IMJPL.2022.13511.1049

DOR:

20.1001.1.26767619.2022.9.29.2.3

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES: New spiritualities (New Age) have a special and new view on the human and its place in the universe, leading to certain anthropology bases. Among these bases is perfectionism (spiritual and biological). Both Chopra and Mulla Sadra have discussed various issues on spiritual perfectionism. According to Mulla Sadra's views, this research seeks to answer the question: What are the objections to Deepak Chopra's spiritual perfectionism?

METHOD AND FINDING: The method is theoretical and it is library research. The study finding is presented under the titles the nature of spiritual perfection, end of spiritual perfection, ways, and obstacles of spiritual perfection. All these titles are explained according to Chopra, and Mulla Sadra separately, and in a comparative way finally.

CONCLUSION: The result of the study and analysis of Chopra and Mulla Sadra's views, based on their works, is that although there are similarities between their views, Sadra's perfectionism is in the direction of attainment of Almighty God. All the ways and obstacles of perfection discussed by him will help the wayfarer in his wayfaring. In contrast, Chopra's perfection is not completely divine and is more biological and looks mainly for inner calmness and solving worldly human problems.

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Article Address Published on the Journal Site:

http://p-l.journals.miu.ac.ir/article_6791.html

NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF AUTHORS	NATIONALITY OF AUTHORS
27	3	(Iran)

Introduction

Perfectionism is one of the critical anthropological foundations of the divine religions, religious and non-religious spiritualities, and schools of thought. Although all religions seek human perfection, they differ in the type and the way of perfection.

Perfection is divided into two categories: spiritual and biological. Some religions and spiritualities believe in both, some of them believe in spiritual kind, and others look for biological perfection.

In this age, religious and secular spiritualities seek human perfection with some made-up teachings or teachings rooted in the divine religions. They believe that humans have evolved biologically, and now it is their turn to perfect spiritually. *(Desroche, 2005: 67)*

As the founder of Ayurvedic mysticism (a kind of secular spirituality), Chopra has a special and unique view about the human. His bases in anthropology are humanism, one-dimensional human (subjectivism), perfectionism, immortality, and creativity.

Perfectionism has a critical role in Chopra's thought. So, he gathered a group of new perfectionism leaders, such as Neale Donald Walsch, Ken Wilber, Ervin Laszlo, Barbara Marx Hubbard, etc, in 2008 at his spiritual center, and with the establishment of the World Perfectionism Leaders Foundation, he gave them the title of "perfectionist leaders."

The main problem of the essay is that what are the objections to Deepak Chopra's spiritual perfectionism according to Mulla Sadra's views?

No independent book, dissertation, or article has been written in response to this question; however, *Hassanzadeh (2016)*, in his dissertation entitled “Ontology and Semantics of Moral Concepts in New Age Movements” and also (*Ibid, 2016*), in the article on “Humanistic Spirituality in Chopra’s thoughts,” has referred to human perfectionism and he has briefly criticized Chopra’s view.

Criticism of Chopra’s views requires a particular system of thought and concept as a basis of criticism. In this regard, Mulla Sadra has a special position because, among Islamic philosophers, he has paid lots of attention to the human and his perfection, so he has based his philosophical system, i.e., transcendent theosophy, on the four spiritual journeys of the human; (*Ref: Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 1: 13*) and he has

devoted at least two of nine volumes of Asfar to human perfection and has very strong foundations in anthropological topics. (*Ref: Ibid, Vol. 9: 185-197 & 229; Ibid, Vol. 1: 38; Ibid, 1996, First Evidence: 6*)

As a result, transcendent theosophy, as a complete school based on theoretical reason, practical reason, intuition, etc, has the essential capacity to analyze and critique Chopra’s spiritual perfectionism.

Background and Analytical Foundations

Spiritual perfection is a kind of perfection that is considered because of the attainment of God or a superior and spiritual being.

Deepak Chopra, born in 1946 in New Delhi, is one of the distinguished contemporary promoters of secular spirituality and one of the most famous

leaders of the "New Thought Movement" or New Religious Movements. He chose metabolism and endocrinology as his medical specialty and immigrated to the United States in 1970. In 1981, he traveled to India and met Triguna, who could guess the history of a person's life and his diseases by taking a pulse examination, and he became interested in activities in the field of Ayurvedic therapies.

Since Chopra's *Mysticism* is mainly based on quantum physics, he was awarded the famous Ig Nobel Prize in physics in 1998. *Time* magazine knew him as one of the 100 Most Important People of the Century in 1999 and introduced him as one of the leading symbols of the century. The magazine also named Chopra "the poet-prophet in alternative medicine."

Chopra has written more than 80 books in different social,

religious, philosophical, and psychological fields, and his books are translated into 30 languages. Twenty-one of his books were on the list of *New York Times* best-sellers.

"*Quantum Healing: Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine*" and "*How to Know God*" are his most important books. The first book is about health, mind, and spirituality, written in 1989 and presented in the form of treatment and nutrition strategies, Eastern mysticism, and humanistic thoughts. The second book is related to theology. In this book, he introduces an impersonal god - a projection of the human mind in a perfection process.

The Nature of Spiritual Perfection

1. Spiritual Perfection, according to Chopra

Evolution from Chopra's perspective has an extensive meaning and includes universe evolution, biological, social, and transformative evolution. Leaders of new perfectionism, including Chopra, believe that humans had another evolution before biological evolution. After biological evolution, he experienced meta-biological evolution. The human then experienced other evolutions, such as the evolution of consciousness and awareness of this consciousness and, at the same time, awareness of evolution.

Then he says:

“Evolution forms in the human mind as a result of experience now. We absorb this evolution to become a part of our being. Human thoughts and creativity are

all formed in response to the human environment. Meta-biological evolution requires the survival of the wisest and most circumspect humans. In all these stages, evolution has been done without effort. It is the nature of existence to grow. Becoming circumspect will be only the next stage in growth. We should do nothing but follow the natural tendency that made us conscious and circumspect in the first stage and then aware of this consciousness.” (Chopra, 2005b: 141)

He also says about perfection:

Perfection in society is very different from true perfection because “the concept of perfection in our society is to play as many roles as possible.

However, the alchemist never sees the situation in this way. In his view, being perfect means getting rid of any role."
(Chopra, 2003a: 53)

As a result, if the human gets rid of all roles, he can be perfect and gain perfection.

Real and spiritual perfection, according to Chopra, is in this way that the human in the seven stages of theology and love can reach God and inner calmness and see the universe as God sees it.

Explaining the seven steps, Chopra says that the reality may be merely a symbol of the functioning of God's mind and if so, the primitive belief that God exists in every leaf of every plant, every creature, etc, may contain the highest truth. At each stage, God makes us a journey that ends

to complete purity and a sense of calmness. (Chopra, 2005a: 80)
So, the human's knowledge of God Almighty is biological. (Ibid: 75)

The human is like a child growing up; he has to evolve toward a complete imagination until a day that he can see everything as God sees. (Ibid: 80)

2. Spiritual Perfection, according to Mulla Sadra

Some scholars, such as Farabi, believe that the concept of perfection is self-evident and clear; the goal and end of any movement are considered the perfection of that movement. (Farabi, 1992: 228)

In Sadra's writings, the three words kamāl, istikmāl, and takāmul are synonymous. Therefore, in another sense, the perfection of an object is from the lower levels to the higher levels, which ends in God Almighty; (Sadr ul-Din Shirazi,

1981, Vol. 9: 121) and perfection is what the species depends on in its essence or accidents. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1975: 232*)

According to Sadra, perfection is a relative concept, i.e., a thing is considered perfection compared to another thing, but it is not considered perfection compared to the third one. (*Ref: Ibid: 361*)

All creatures have talents, but not all of them are on the same level, and their level of talent is different from each other. The thing, that lets talents flourish, is the preparation of certain contexts. All beings seek perfection and, in this way, develop their talents. Hence, perfection is an existential attribute that arises from the development of the inner talents of each being in contrast to the other. For example, the sapling will perfect if it flourishes its essential inner talent to become

a big tree under some conditions. (*Ibid, 1981, Vol. 8: 7*)

3. Comparative Study about Spiritual Perfection

Perfection from Chopra's point of view is very different from Sandra's perspective, among which we can mention the following.

- Chopra considers perfection as something that alchemists, sorcerers, etc, accept as perfection. These titles refer to perfect humans who know the way of perfection and can lead other humans to perfection, while Mulla Sadra considers perfection as approaching the Almighty God. As a result, Chopra's problem is that if perfection means approaching the Almighty God, people who lead others toward perfection should be approved by the Almighty God. Although alchemists

and sorcerers are wise, they were not sent by God Almighty, and there is no reason for their words to be confirmed by God Almighty.

- Another objection to Chopra is that perfection, in his view, is at a low level, and it is not possible to call perfection after his seven stages a spiritual perfection in the strict sense of the word. Although he considers each of the mentioned stages as a journey that has been made by God for us and ends in complete purity and a calm feeling, (*Chopra, 2005a: 80*) man's knowledge of God Almighty is biological; (*Ibid: 75*) because the human brain and mind gain this

knowledge. The brain is a material thing and has no ability to know the abstract God. Although the mind is abstract, its function is dependent on the brain, and it can not know the Almighty God alone, except it can prove the existence of God.

- The exact way of theology that happens in seven stages can not be called spiritual perfection in the strict sense of the word. In the struggle for meta-biological survival, the human acquires the divine species:

"I am the life force and the endless river. I am the source and destination that is still going on despite all the obstacles and barriers. I remember things from my former

life, especially the memory that God, the mother of the universe, embraced me and invited me to dance with him". (Chopra, 2005a: 261)

This is one of the views that shows the humanistic foundations of Chopra's anthropology.

The Purpose and the End of Spiritual Perfection

1. The Purpose and the End of Spiritual Perfection, according to Chopra

Chopra states in a seven-step process that the mind and soul, or in other words, the human and God, reach unity and oneness:

"I do not see a separation between myself and God. In ancient India, the end of separation was interpreted as yoga or unity. The ancient wisers had the power to see their own spiritual

perfection, which caused the mind to be closer to the soul". (Chopra, 2020: 301)

2. The Purpose and the End of Spiritual Perfection, according to Mulla Sadra

Mulla Sadra considers the end of perfection as annihilation in God and introduces the two factors of knowledge and righteous deed as the way to achieve and attain annihilation in God and considers human happiness in connecting with the rational and the abstract beings and approaching the God Almighty. So, human perfection is to communicate with rational beings and the attainment of the Almighty God. To reach this level, the human must engage in divine knowledge and avoid worthless worldly luxuries.

Due to the various scientific disciplines, humans must turn to more important sciences and knowledge. Among the different knowledge, pure intellectual

knowledge, that is, knowledge of God and His attributes is the way to perfection. So the human needs heart and body practice and worship because his soul will be purified and grown due to religious rules and physical asceticism so that the obedience to lusts will not become a habit in his soul due to his lusts and worldly affairs; because it makes the human unable to understand spiritual pleasures such as contiguity to the people near God, seeing God Almighty's beauty, Reasons, and Holy Lights. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 2: 2*)

3. Comparative Study about the End of Spiritual Perfection

Sadra and Chopra have similarities in the purpose of spiritual perfection; Mulla Sadra thinks that the ultimate goal of human creation is reaching the certainty and God's intuition, and he

states that the highest perfection of the creation of the human is divine knowledge and intuition of the beauty of God Almighty. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 8: 136-137*) Chopra also thinks that the end of spiritual perfection is the mind's closeness to the soul. (*Chopra, 2020: 301*)

It should be noted that from Sadra's point of view, the human soul can perfect in three stages based on the substantial motion and attain the Almighty God; a stage before the natural world (before belonging to the body), a stage of nature (belonging to the body), and a stage after the natural world (separation from the body). In the first stage and before it belongs to the body, the soul is in the position of its existential cause, which is a separable reason species. In the second stage, the soul enters the world of nature and begins its work through physical

forces. The third stage is related to the separation of the soul from the body.

The second stage is an important one because the perfection of the soul occurs in this stage which can be divided into three levels, i.e., the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms. In the human stage, a human can reach the position of a divine man by wayfaring the divine path and becoming a divine angel, and he can also follow the path of the devil and become an animal or a devil. This is the level that which a man becomes the actual heaven-born man or the actual devil. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 8: 136-137*)

On the other hand, Chopra interprets the attainment of God or the soul as yoga and unity, which is done with practices such as transcendental meditation. With Transcendental Meditation, a person can go beyond the

five delicate senses and attain consciousness and unity. (*Chopra, 2020: 197*)

An objection to Chopra is that this action is mainly for mind-controlling and inner calmness, as Chopra himself sees Transcendental Meditation as a practice that removes mind barriers and puts it into a state of unlimited consciousness. (*Ibid: 233*) As a result, the human mind calms down and experiences itself in silence shape. The joyousness and consciousness also are in the silence. However, a person cannot feel his consciousness but can feel joyousness. (*Ibid: 238*) As a result, God cannot be reached by some actions mainly for mind and psyche controlling and soul calmness.

In addition, it should be noted that the meaning of yoga is not unity but is done to make the union of the three

forces; body, soul, and psyche.
(Saraswati, 2001: 38)

This is how some yoga scholars, such as Mircea Eliade, describe the teachings of yoga:

"All yoga techniques concern this point; it means doing the opposite of what a person is used to. Overturning all human values is the real goal of yoga". (Shayegan, 2010, Vol. 2: 630)

Ananda Jyuti also believes:

"Yoga is stopping all awareness and cognitive action and reaction". (Saraswati, 2001: Chapter 1, Paragraph 2)

Another objection to the goal of spiritual perfection is that Chopra sees God and metaphysics in the brain and says:

"The presence of God is felt or seen in the mind; every mental thing is connected

to the brain; because millions of nerve fibers must be excited before you can make an observation. God's presence and His light become real if they can be interpreted as a response from the brain, which I have called "God's response." Holy inspirations and revelations pass through the brain". (Chopra, 2005a: 25)

He introduces God as a subjective concept that is the result of the human brain, and "Only the brain can produce the great group of gods"; (*Ibid*) while spiritual perfection, according to Sadra, is to attain God, which is the creator of the universe, and to know and approach Him is done through self-knowledge, worship, and purification.

Ways of Spiritual Perfection

1. Ways of Spiritual Perfection according to Chopra

- **Knowing of God**

One of the things that Chopra talks about in spiritual perfection is the human moving in the seven stages of knowledge of God. The process of knowledge of God by the human brain occurs in seven stages. Each stage is designed according to human questions and perceptions. Chopra's god is an impersonal god whom the human brain raises questions about him, and the same brain also presents its perceptions in response to human questions and needs. At each stage, the human achieves a god according to the questions raised at that stage. The questions are: Who am I? Where is my proper position? The human mind answers each of these questions, which from Chopra's point of view,

is called God's answer, and this answer determines the species of God and the stage in which the questioner is. The god of each stage is different:

- God of protection
- Almighty god
- God of peace and calmness
- God of freedom
- Creator god
- God of miracles
- God of pure existence.
(Chopra, 2005a: 70)

He then points to the end of the seven stages and says that perhaps reality is only a symbol of the functioning of God's mind. *(Ibid: 80)*

- **Getting out of Life Roles**

Chopra has devoted two important books, "Elixir" and "The Seven Spiritual Laws to Success", to the subject of spirituality. To explain spiritual perfection and evolution, Chopra

first tries to find out the truth about humans.

He has started the fourth chapter of his book Elixir with this important question: "Who am I?" and in response, quotes from the alchemist:

What limits the human in the world are names, labels, and attributes. Although having a name is good and useful, it quickly causes limitations. Names only describe a person in such a way that they determine the time and place of birth, and also the person's parents, and also determine in which school he/ she studied and where he/she lives. Finally, human identity is surrounded by a box of words. The box's contents can include titles such as the lawyer, university professor, having three children, etc. These words

and titles trap the untrammelled human being in conditions. (Chopra, 2003a: 50-51)

So, it is human destiny to play various roles, but none of those roles is the human himself. (*Ibid: 48*)

Chopra then quotes Merlin that it is impossible to know the truth of the human because the human is the river of consciousness and has flowed through time, and the weight of the past has accumulated in him.

He considers perfection to have several meanings and believes that perfection in society is very different from true perfection because "the concept of perfection in our society is to play as many roles as possible. However, the alchemist never sees the situation in this way. In his view, being perfect means getting rid of any role." (*Ibid: 52-53*)

As a result, if the human gets rid of all roles, he can be perfect and gain perfection.

- **Love**

Perhaps the most important part of Chopra's spiritual perfection is the perfection through love. He is trying to bring spirituality to human life along with meditation and contemplation and reduce mental and psychological problems:

“Undoubtedly, in every human (mutual) relationship, the common needs of the soul have a special place. The main problem arises when these needs prevent the delicate growth of love in its spiritual aspect. Long before we fall in love, we know our needs amply. Finding a way to satisfy them does not exactly mean getting rid of them. Only love can make us free because the truth of

its existence is an antidote to fear”. (Chopra, 2009: 145)

Love is needed to reach spirituality and grow it. If love enters human life, human spirituality will grow like a tree:

“The most valuable thing that anyone can bring to a human relationship is his latent spiritual energy. This is the thing that you have to present in the deepest way at the beginning of your life with a love story. Just as a tree's life begins with a seed, we also need a seed to grow and train love that is our latent spiritual energy”. (Ibid: 42)

Chopra believes that the development of spiritual energy is not only said by him but is the main concern of all high-minded, wise, and great men in human history. (Ibid: 42)

He does not accept the psychologists' definition of love in the book "Elixir" and considers it as a physical interpretation and says:

In the past, the most fleeting infatuations had a spiritual meaning, and cordiality and connection with God through the beloved were serious points. After Freud, psychologists have believed that falling in love is nothing more than a deception and its passion is unrealistic. This view made us look at love as a temporary and unstable thing and accept that we must ignore the fact that we can be such passionate lovers and immortal and safe. (Chopra, 2009: 46)

He believes that human beings have been born with pure pleasure,

but this situation has darkened due to life's daily and irregular activities. (Chopra, 2009: 84)

It should be noted that there is a difference between transcendent values that are achieved through love and sensual desire. Many people find life in achieving money, power, security, and comfort; (Ibid: 144) but spirituality seeks not to be an attachment to the physical world. A person can be freed from sensual desires and reach pure pleasure with spirituality.

There is no single view on the position of sexual desire in spiritual perfection; Some spiritualities try to suppress it, and others consider it as a cause of human perfection; however, Chopra thinks that the suppression of sexual desires is wrong and believes that these things can lead to the spiritual perfection of the human:

"Poetic (worldly) love is worldly undoubtedly, but

it also has the potential spiritual capacity". (Chopra, 2009: 164)

As a result, however, "pure chastity and piety is a kind of spiritual attribute, but it should not be equated with the suppression of desires". (*Ibid: 172*)

- **Contemplation**

Contemplation is one of the ways mentioned for human perfection. This teaching is for the spiritual perfection of the soul in the divine religions. Still, there is no clear definition of it in secular spirituality. It is not only used in each of the spiritual and biological evolutions but is used in the meaning of meditation in most secular spirituality. (*Rahimzadeh, 1999: 45-46*)

Chopra considers the human to have the ability of creativity and believes that in order to achieve his infinite creativity,

one must practice silence and contemplation every day and avoid judging. In a way, he is silent for a certain time every day in order to calm down his inner conversation and also contemplate in the morning and in the evening.

In addition, he must stop judging things in such a way that he considers them good or bad or analyzes them in order to gain absolute inner consciousness. (*Chopra, 2003b: 16-19*)

- **Choosing a Spiritual Master**

Chopra believes in the choice of a spiritual master in the discussion of spiritual perfection, and he advises people with different beliefs to choose a spiritual master, a guru - the religious leader of the Hindus. A wise teacher with a spiritual advice treasure can be very helpful at the time of coming into conflict. (*Ibid, 2009: 233*)

2. Ways of Spiritual Perfection according to Mulla Sadra

The Almighty God in the Holy Quran has introduced the human as an unstable and fluid being who is moving towards ultimate perfection.

“O human, you are working hard towards your Lord, and you will meet Him.” (Quran, 84: 6)

Mulla Sadra also believes in human fluidity and thinks that perfection is directly related to existence in a way that each existence has fewer existentially limits and defects is more perfect and happy. *(Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 9: 121)*

- **Knowledge and Righteous Deed**

Mulla Sadra considers the end of perfection as annihilation in God and introduces the two factors of knowledge and righteous deed as the way to achieve and

attain annihilation in God. *(Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 2: 2)*

- **The Perfection of Theoretical Reason**

Sadra divides human reason into two types, theoretical and practical, and in each case, he presents tools for spiritual perfection. In the case of theoretical reason, he expresses the union of the wise and the reasonable for the knowledge perfection of the human soul. In this way, the reasonable forms in the human soul cause the soul to grow and improve from the stage of potential intellect to the level of actual intellect. *(Ibid: 319-321)*

As a result, the human soul moves from the sensible world to the reasonable one due to a substantial, intensive motion and enters the world of reasonable with reasoning, and at the time of observation, the luminous essences of the reasonable world

unite with them and reasoning is done. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1981, Vol. 1: 228*)

As a result, the soul's perfection is directly related to the type of perception, and more divine and abstract perceptions cause spiritual perfection to be faster and more intense.

- **The Perfection of Practical Reason**

He then deals with the perfection of practical reason in four stages and makes the following recommendations:

1. doing religious and divine rules and regulations that edify the appearance of the soul.
2. If the first stage is done correctly, that is, if the divine commands are followed, the human will achieve the edification of the heart in the second stage.

3. The human adorns himself with divine forms and good attributes at this stage.

4. At this stage, the annihilation of the soul in its essence occurs. In this way, egoism and conceit disappear, and he puts aside himself and looks only at the Almighty God. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1996: 207*)

The fourth stage is the last stage and level of the reason of the knowledge, and the mystic reaches the God. This stage is not the end of the mystic's journey; there are journeys such as the "journey in the God" and the "journey from the God", but we can not talk about them because the only way to understand and achieve them is by presence and observation.

- **Love**

Sadra also mentions love as one of the factors of human spiritual perfection; because every worship and voluntary movement that has a cause other than love and affection for God is imperfect and will not have any result. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 2002: 139*)

Love and affection for God Almighty is the result of knowledge of God. As a result, more knowledge cause increasing in love and affection, and consequently, the journey to God will be faster and more, and this causes more knowledge from God to flow to the wayfarer. (*Ibid, 1979: 134*)

- **The Perfect Human**

Among the factors in the spiritual perfection of the human is the existence of the perfect man. According to Sadra, the perfect human being is the end and purpose of creation, (*Ibid, 1968: 27*) and the truth of

Muhammad is the goal and cause of the whole universe.

Prophet Muhammad says:

"We who are the last shall be the first on the Day of Resurrection, except that every Ummah was given the Book before us and we were given it after them. It was this day which Allah prescribed for us and guided us to it and the people came after us with regard to it, the Jews observing the next day and the Christians the day following that". (Qushayri Naysaburi, Vol. 7, Hadith. 28)

Mulla Sadra, after the blessed existence of the Holy Prophet, introduces the Imams as the perfect human beings to guide wayfarers to God. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1987, Vol. 1: 575*)

He then introduces the 'ulīyā' Allah and divine prophets as

people who help the wayfarers in their journey because they guide them to the Almighty God as well as mediators of emanation and awareness and warnings to human beings about their defaults and weaknesses. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1979: 12-13*)

3. Comparative Study about the Ways of Spiritual Perfection

There are similarities and differences between the point of view of Sadra and Chopra in the ways and tools of spiritual perfection. Their commonalities are in the three tools, i.e., knowledge of God, love, and spiritual master, but these types of commonalities are only in the title, because knowing God from Sandra's point of view is done in the shadow of self-knowledge and divine revelation.

In contrast, Chopra's knowledge of God is superficial and is done

by questioning and answering through the mind. In the case of the spiritual master, Chopra, in the book "Elixir" introduces people such as alchemists, sorcerers, and gurus as perfect human beings, while the perfect human beings from Sadra's point of view are the truth of Muhammad, the prophets, the infallible Imams, and the 'ulīyā' Allah who God Almighty affirms.

The objection to Chopra's discussion of spirituality is that in the divine religions and Sadra's philosophy, perfection does not take place without belief in God and the divine religions and the help of worship.

In the idea of Chopra, there is no need for special effort for perfection; rather, the human should only surrender himself to the process of nature and go along with it:

"Since life grows and evolves by nature, we do not have to act in a

special way to grow in the right direction. To be dominant on the soul, with all the benefits it has for our health, means allowing the infinite consciousness of mind and body to work together more, and this is what we are willing to do". (Chopra, 2005a: 145)

Obstacles to Spiritual Perfection

1. Obstacles to Spiritual Perfection, according to Chopra

Non-religious spirituality, except the ways to achieve spiritual perfection, has also mentioned obstacles to achieving it. Chopra, in "How to Know God?" dedicates an important chapter to the concepts and knowledge of God in 7 stages and in each stage expresses the obstacles to reaching God according to the same stage:

- **Self-Importance**

Chopra has introduced self-importance as the biggest obstacle to perfection and progress, and he says artists start their paintings and music on a white canvas or paper; they go inside, and an image emerges that, although it is weak in the beginning, is growing. This image causes a desire to be born. If the inspiration is genuine, it will never die, and creator and creation come together, which is called imagination, which is better than a beautiful idea the human tends to perform.

He points to Hemingway to explain that self-importance is an obstacle to progress because, after his fame, his works were reduced to the level of ordinary efforts and struggles. In the process of becoming spiritual, there is a risk of losing connection for people who are still immersed in self-importance. Human has no choice but to

leave it in order to achieve power. This is the greatest lesson that the soul faces at this stage. (*Chopra, 2005a: 192*)

- **Solipsism**

Solipsism is another cause of lethargy, which results in not reaching higher levels. “In stage five, there is a temptation to be locked in yourself. When wishes become more effective, I said that there is no need for external effort. It seems that God does the works, and it all starts with autopilot. However, this should not be an excuse for lethargy. The human still has his role to play”. (*Ibid: 192-193*)

- **Perception of Evil**

Chopra introduces the perception of evil as another obstacle to perfection, and at the sixth level of level of knowledge of God, he says, “at the sixth level, the person has obtained enough insight to comprehend this, he still understands what

is good. This is the power of evolution existing beyond birth, growth, love, truth, and beauty. Chopra considers the perception of evil as well. This is a power opposing the perfection, we call it Entropy, and leading to dissolution, disintegration, lassitude, and sin”. (*Chopra, 2005a: 206*)

- **False Idealism**

Chopra does not see a saint as a witch turning a mirage into ingots of gold; by contrast, the saint is someone who transforms the main basis of the soul, and this is a pure and sincere manner. (*Ibid: 221*)

Hence we should not be idealists as it is an obstacle to perfectionism. We ought to behave like a saint, purely and sincerely.

- **Martyrdom, a Temptation of the Soul**

Martyrdom as a temptation of the soul is another obstacle to perfection troubling human beings at the sixth level. “By this, I do

not mean to depreciate martyrdom; I am just saying that the sixth level is not the end of our journey. As long as we are suffering from temptations, some signs of sin will show up; and these signs result in the last gap between God and the believer. The soul is powered enough to claim that "I" will prove my holiness to God. So there will be nothing and no "self" to be proved at the next level. Reaching that point is the last effort of a saint". (*Chopra, 2005a: 224*)

2. Obstacles to Spiritual Perfection, according to Mulla Sadra

- **The Intention of Sin**

Not only Mulla Sadra introduces the intention of sin as an obstacle to human perfection, but also he believes that if we stop doing devil and unlawful deeds for any reason except for the sake of God, there will

be no reward for them, and they can't protect us against the torment which has been determined because of the evil and unlawful intentions.

Prophet Muhammad says:

"people will be associated together [in the Resurrection day] according to their intentions". (Ref: Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1984: 213)

- **Human and Jinn Devils**

According to Mulla Sadra devil is not just Satan, rather, it refers to any human or jinn who impedes human perfection. Principally, devils try to embellish unlawful beliefs and represent them as the rightful ones in a way that we cannot perceive whether they are really true and rightful or not. Besides, devils represent unlawful deeds as lawful ones; (*Ibid, 1961, Vol. 2: 13*) as God, the most highly, says:

*“say shall we tell you of those who lose most respect of their deeds? * Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works”. (Quran, 18: 103-104)*

- **Ignorance and Misleading Beliefs**

Human needs awareness and insight to be successful in their journey toward perfection. As long as Islam and Islamic philosophy are concerned, the soul's insight is one of the most important resources in our journey and perfection. Therefore Prophet Muhammad says:

“whoever knows himself, knows his lord”. (Ref: Ibn Abi-Jumhur Ahsa'i, 1984, Vol. 4: 102; Fakhr Razi, 1999, Vol. 1: 91, Vol. 9: 460; Ibid, Vol. 30: 721)

Thus Mulla Sadra believes that misleading beliefs are also obstacles to perfection, and they lead to lost heart purity; if the darkness envelopes our heart, there will be no chance for the light of faith to show up. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 1961, Vol. 1: 95*)

- **Faith Weakness and Disbelief**

Mulla Sadra considers faith as an effective factor in perfection. (*Ibid, 1984: 249*) Therefore, weakness and disbelief are obstacles to perfection; but he believes that the faith, by itself, would not be sufficient unless it comes along the whole entity's practice; and this will be counted on just when there is a pure intention, and a truly perfect intention rises from holy wisdom, logical reason, guidance, and Quran. (*Ibid, 1985, Vol. 5: 428*)

- **Worldliness**

According to Mulla Sadra, some people do not know that this world is a place of fear and humiliation in contrast with the Futurity, which is completely safe and cheerful. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 2002: 241*)

Thus such ignorance will increase worldliness and, consequently, the human cannot abandon this world and worldly pleasures, so he cannot move toward Hereafter.

- **Sensual and Moral Vices**

As moral virtues lead to human perfection, moral vices are obstacles to perfection. For instance, Mulla Sadra considers injustice as a factor directing humans to hell. (*Ibid, 1981, Vol. 4: 114*)

- **Lack of Spiritual Master**

To Mulla Sadra, a spiritual master and leader are necessary for the journey, and the lack of such an advisor will impede the joint between almighty God

and the human. The spiritual master should be aware of the guidelines and principles of the journey to lead the person well.

The Master has to be familiar with the holy Quran, the noble narrations, the prophetic traditions, and the infallibles' manners properly to guide others; because there may be some evil revelations for the person going on the journey. So at this point, the master will guide him to the right way.

The spiritual master is like a doctor who teaches the person certain prayer quotes to help his growth and perfection. Therefore the master must be educated in divine knowledge appropriately to guide others at different levels of perfection. This is not possible unless the master is aware enough of the human entity's layers. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 2002: 221-225*)

3. Comparative Study about the Obstacles to Spiritual Perfection

Chopra and Mulla Sadra share certain opinions about obstacles to perfection, including worldliness, lack of a spiritual master, and solipsism.

Chopra considers worldliness as a reason for fear of death. He believes that humans should not be afraid of death as it is the beginning, not the end. Just people who are clutching their memories are afraid of death. There will be no eternal life for them, and they are mortal. The person who is looking for eternal life has to be like an alchemist; he has to die at the moment to find the gates of eternity. (*Chopra, 2003a: 127*)

According to Mulla Sadra, some people do not know that this world is a place of fear and humiliation in contrast with the Futurity, which is

completely safe and cheerful (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 2002: 241*)

Thus such ignorance will increase worldliness and, consequently, a human cannot abandon this world and worldly pleasures, so he cannot move toward Hereafter.

About the spiritual master, they both believe in the authority of the master. According to Chopra, the master is a kind of alchemist, witch, and guru; but Mulla Sadra believes that the spiritual master should be aware of guidelines and principles of the journey to lead the person well. The master has to be familiar with the holy Quran, the noble narrations, the prophetic traditions, and the infallibles' manners properly to guide others; because there may be some evil and substantial revelations for the person going on the journey, at this point, the master will guide him to the right way.

The spiritual master is like a doctor who teaches the person certain prayer quotes. Therefore the master must be educated in divine knowledge appropriately to guide others at different levels of perfection. (*Sadr ul-Din Shirazi, 2002: 221*)

As for differences in their points of view on obstacles to spiritual perfection, we can mention that Mulla Sadra believes in human and jinn devils and faith weakness, whereas Chopra does not so.

Conclusion

We reached the following conclusions regarding the main question of this study, which surveys the criticisms over Chopra's opinions on spiritual perfection based on Mulla Sadra's points of view.

In each component of spiritual perfection, including the meaning of perfection, the destination and the purpose, the way and the means, and obstacles, there are several similarities and differences in Mulla Sadra's and Chopra's points of view.

Chopra defines perfection so superficially, and his definition is not comparable with Mulla Sadra's definition of spiritual perfection, which leads to getting closer to God, the most highly, and merging into him.

About the last destination and the purpose of perfection, Mulla Sadra considers having certainty and intuition about the almighty God as a final

purpose of the creation of human beings. He says that the highest value and level of perfection for the creation of humans is being aware of divine knowledge and joining the almighty God.

To Chopra, finding a close and clear connection between the soul and the mind is the purpose of spiritual perfection. Although with some tolerance, we can say that the purpose of perfection from Chopra's point of view is to join God too, he considers the inner peace as the main purpose of perfection.

In the section on ways, including theology, love, and spiritual master, we can mention some common points, but fundamentally, they are different from each other; because according to Chopra, spiritual masters are people like alchemists and witches, not divine messengers; but to Mulla Sadra, spiritual masters are Prophets, Imams, and holy

saints who are directly connected to God.

Also, in the section on the obstacles, lack of master, worldliness, and solipsism are the common points of view between Chopra and Mulla Sadra.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Islaminasab, Hamzeh Ali. Gorjian Arabi, Mohammad Mahdi. and Hamid Reza Mazaheri Seif (2022). **A Critical Approach to Human Spiritual Perfection from Deepak Chopra's Perspective Based on Mulla Sadra's Opinions.** *International Multidisciplinary Journal of "PURE LIFE"*. 9 (29): 39-71.

DOI: [10.22034/IMJPL.2022.13511.1049](https://doi.org/10.22034/IMJPL.2022.13511.1049)

DOR: [20.1001.1.26767619.2022.9.29.2.3](https://doi.org/20.1001.1.26767619.2022.9.29.2.3)

URL: http://p-l.journals.miu.ac.ir/article_6791.html

