

Spiritual Practices and the Role of Paranormal Communication in Religious Traditions

Upali Weerakoon

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

Distinct as they may be, spiritual practices and paranormal communication often intersect in intriguing ways, capturing human fascination for centuries. Religious practices, which encompass rituals, prayers, and sacred activities, are deeply rooted in the beliefs and traditions of specific faiths. These practices, which vary widely across different religions, typically involve ceremonies, spiritual beliefs, and communion with the divine. In contrast, paranormal communication refers to the supposed interaction between living and non-living entities, such as spirits or ghosts. Although these phenomena are often linked to specific cultural or personal beliefs, they are not usually framed within formal religious doctrine. Common themes in paranormal communication include encounters with the spirits of the deceased, ghostly apparitions, and hauntings. In Sri Lanka, a country with a rich, multi-religious cultural heritage, spiritual practices have long been influenced by a blend of local and global traditions, shaping diverse supernatural beliefs. Many of these practices are believed to assist individuals in overcoming life's challenges and in healing the soul after death. A notable example can be found within the Hindu religion, where belief in gods and goddesses plays a central role. Practitioners often seek to channel the souls of deceased relatives into their bodies through elaborate rituals. A study conducted at five major Hindu temples in the Munneswaram Grama Seva Division in Chilaw, Sri Lanka, explored this phenomenon. Data were gathered through interviews and participant observation, offering valuable insights into how these divine practices are understood. The study revealed that such rituals are believed to transfer the soul of a deceased relative into the practitioner's body, which can restore the unseen power of local temple priests, fulfill personal wishes, and, in some cases, even harm an individual's enemies. During these rituals, practitioners believe that supernatural forces temporarily enter their bodies, causing them to be momentarily manipulated by these powers. This state of possession by spiritual forces is thought to be a means of resolving personal challenges and providing the individual with the strength to overcome difficulties. Thus, these practices blur the line between spiritual devotion and paranormal communication, with participants navigating both realms simultaneously to achieve healing and empowerment.

Key Words: Spiritual practices, paranormal communication, Religious practices, supernatural beliefs, gods and goddesses.