

## Self-transcendence through *Futuwwah* and *Dharma*: Islam and Hinduism Perspectives

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### Abstract

As a field of study, psychology has been on the path of sustained evolution. From psychoanalysis to Logotherapy, we have come a long way. The advent of spirituality, positive thinking, and the renewed interest in human potential have led to the emergence of various sub-fields in psychology. From denying the role of religion and spirituality in the therapy setting to designing interventions around these concepts, we have approached a contemporary phase in understanding human behavior and attitudes. A novel concept born out of the evolution of psychological concepts is the idea of self-transcendence. According to Maslow, there is a progressive movement towards uncovering people's potentials and being the best version of the self. Maslow proposed that a self-actualizing individual would eventually have to move up the hierarchy of needs and transcend the ego to relate to something beyond it. This process, known as self-transcendence, is often facilitated by selfless values and moral behaviors that allow the ego to transcend itself. The present paper looks into Maslow's theory of self-transcendence as recorded in two particular religious philosophies; *Futuwwah* (Islam) and *Dharma* (Hinduism). Both *Futuwwah* and *Dharma*, despite cultural and religious differences, foster similar values and moral acts in people. The current paper attempts to establish that the moral acts prescribed in *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* would eventually lead to an individual's self-transcendence. To do so, we will first attempt to define self-transcendence, theories of self-transcendence from multiple disciplines, and related concepts such as peak experiences and flow. Further, the

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paper will strive to explore traces of self-transcendence as expressed in religious philosophies, namely; *Futuwwah* and *Dharma*.

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*Psikologi sebagai bidang studi telah berada di jalur evolusi yang berkelanjutan. Dari psikoanalisis hingga logoterapi, kami telah menempuh perjalanan panjang. Munculnya spiritualitas, pemikiran positif, dan minat baru pada potensi manusia telah menyebabkan munculnya berbagai sub-bidang yang berbeda dalam psikologi. Dari menyangkal peran agama dan spiritualitas dalam pengaturan terapi hingga merancang intervensi seputar konsep-konsep ini, kami telah mendekati fase kontemporer dalam memahami perilaku dan sikap manusia. Sebuah konsep baru yang lahir dari evolusi konsep psikologis adalah gagasan transendensi-diri. Menurut Maslow, ada gerakan progresif untuk mengungkap potensi orang dan menjadi versi terbaik diri. Maslow mengusulkan bahwa individu yang mengaktualisasikan diri pada akhirnya harus naik hierarki kebutuhan dan melampaui ego untuk berhubungan dengan sesuatu di luarnya. Proses ini, yang dikenal sebagai transendensi-diri, sering kali difasilitasi oleh nilai-nilai tanpa pamrih dan perilaku moral yang memungkinkan ego melampaui dirinya sendiri. Makalah ini membahas teori transendensi-diri Maslow seperti yang tercatat dalam dua filsafat agama tertentu; *Futuwwah* (Islam) dan *Dharma* (Hindu). Baik *Futuwwah* dan *Dharma*, terlepas dari perbedaan budaya dan agama, memupuk nilai-nilai dan tindakan moral yang sama dalam diri manusia. Makalah saat ini mencoba untuk menetapkan bahwa tindakan moral yang ditentukan dalam *Futuwwah* dan *Dharma* pada akhirnya akan mengarah pada transendensi-diri individu. Untuk melakukannya, pertama-tama kita akan mencoba mendefinisikan transendensi-diri, teori-teori transendensi-diri dari berbagai disiplin ilmu, dan konsep-konsep terkait seperti pengalaman puncak dan aliran. Lebih lanjut, tulisan ini akan berusaha menelusuri jejak-jejak transendensi-diri yang diungkapkan dalam filsafat-filsafat keagamaan, yaitu; *Futuwwah* dan *Dharma*.*

**Keywords:** self-transcendence; *Futuwwah*; *Dharma*; religion; spirituality; peak experiences; flow Islam

## Introduction

The term ‘Self-transcendence’ is now prevalent across mass media. The concept is publicized to the extent that it is a topic of conversation for even a layperson. Magazine articles list out ways to achieve self-transcendence, and psychologists incorporate it into therapeutic settings. The pervasive nature of this subject is truly astounding given the widespread

usage of the concept in everyday mundane activities, be it related to mental health or not. Recently, a trend on achievement-oriented mental health has been on the rise, with people recognizing the importance of acknowledging themselves, their potentials, strengths, and weaknesses to become their best possible selves. This is where self-transcendence comes in; Self-transcendence is based on the idea that human beings possess the potential for development by creatively using existing resources and strengths to achieve a sense of holistic well-being (Runquist & Reed, 2007). “*Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos*” (Maslow, 1971). Abraham Maslow penned these beautiful words referencing a theory that would later make an appearance in various academic circles. The ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ theory by Maslow (1943) is a motivational theory depicting human needs in a hierarchical structure. From the bottom upwards, these needs are listed as physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Later on, Maslow extends this theory by including four other needs; namely cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualization, and self-transcendence needs (Maslow, 1973). These new needs were then called Being needs or B-needs.

When one hears of the word ‘self-transcendence’ the clichéd image of a saint donned in minimal clothing, meditating on a rock somewhere in the middle of a forest may come to mind. Or the white swirls of a whirling dervish may spring up. The popular belief is that one has to be suffering to transcend, and this suffering comes through religion. While this link with religion is understandable, we are of the view that what brings on transcendent experiences is not religious sacrificial rites, rather it is the values and morals that religion encourages in its followers. This paper aims to identify the patterns of self-transcendence recorded in religious philosophies, such as the Islamic (*Futuwwa*) and Hindu (*Dharma*) philosophy to understand the links between religion and self-transcendence.

Originating from Islam, *Futuwwah* is a term used to describe the aggregate of all such values and virtues, which distinguishes the chivalrous

youth (Arnakis, 1953). These values include hospitality, compassion, generosity, and nobility of manner. They are taken out of the examples set out in the Quran, Hadith, and the lives of the prophets and their followers (Nazir et al., 2020). A *Futuwwat-nama* is the codified version of all such values that make up the "perfect" human being. The current paper will take examples from Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami's *Futuwwat-nama*, '*Kitab al-Futuwwah*'.

Further, Hinduism as a religion, while fundamentally different from Islam, shares the same values as the *Futuwwah* in its multiple scriptures. Originating in India, this religion encourages one to follow the path of *Dharma*, the moral order that combines religion, law, and justice (Doniger, 2014). *Dharma* is to uphold one's duty towards the human community and work for its progress, it is a show of model behavior that would eventually result in spiritual salvation (Hacker, 2006). According to Hinduism, a soul after its death is reincarnated if the soul has pent up 'karma' (the sum of a person's actions in the present and past lives) left to be accounted for. When the 'karma' is accounted for, the soul then transcends itself and becomes at one with the Supreme Being.

*Futuwwah* and *Dharma* are both ways of living, that when followed ceremoniously, can lead to an understanding of the self, others, and the world. *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* encourage a deep connection with natural beings. Cultural and religious differences may result in different motivations, and thus expressions of both *Futuwwah* and *Dharma*. However, evidence suggests that both *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* inculcate in people a similar set of universal moral and ethical behaviors such as hospitality, brotherhood, and prosocial behavior, among others (Nazir et al., 2020). The universal nature transcends even conceptual boundaries to help create self-aware and selfless people.

### **Self-transcendence**

What sets Maslow's hierarchy of needs apart from other needs theories is that Maslow's hierarchy ends with the ego transcending itself.

Similarly, through religious rituals and practices, individuals are able to attain a higher level of consciousness or ego transcendence, at least for the short period that the particular ritual is practiced. Maslow (1973) explains a progressive movement or a growth motivation towards the being needs, specifically, self-actualization and self-transcendence. In other words, people are consciously or unconsciously striving to achieve the B-needs and transcend the ego regardless of whether they practice religion or not.

Self-transcendence is also defined as “the phenomenon of experiencing the self as expanding both backward and forward in time” (Reischer et al., 2021). At the same time, the phenomenon has been used to refer to both the process of expansion and a progressive movement beyond an individual’s self-boundaries (Levenson et al., 2005). Simply speaking, self-transcendence instills in people the capacity to move beyond a sole focus on the self to finding value in their past and present lives, have meaningful relationships with others, learn to give and receive help, and have the readiness to learn about the world around (Runquist & Reed, 2007). This phenomenon allows one to feel connected to humanity, to nature, and the cosmos, thereby allowing the self to be preoccupied with existential concerns rather than the dreariness of mundane life (Reischer et al., 2021). A self-transcending individual is now concerned about the meaning in life and death and what lies beyond it. This allows an individual to be more open-minded and significantly broaden their worldview. Viktor Frankl, the founder of Logotherapy, proposed that self-transcendence is quite important for human beings to create and find meaning in their lives (Garcia-Romeu, 2010). Not surprisingly, self-transcendence has consistently been associated with concepts such as purpose in life, hope, sense of coherence, positive affect, self-esteem, and well-being (Reed, 2003; Reischer et al., 2021).

Self-transcendence is simply the act of transcending one’s self and relating to that which is beyond or greater than the self. In other words, the process of self-transcendence can be described as being motivated by certain values that allow the individual to transcend the self or the ego.

Values that allow human beings to move from selfishness to selflessness, such as compassion, altruism, and prosocial behavior, aim to better their families and society at large (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016). These values are the stepping stones to leading a life that encourages one to look beyond the self, and when practiced ceremoniously, the ego transcends itself. Wong (2016) in his paper, 'Self-Transcendence: A Paradoxical Way to Become Your Best' defines self-transcendence as a way of life that allows one to become their best selves. However, the path to becoming your best self is paradoxically to be selfless (Wong, 2016).

Given the effects of self-transcendence permeate major aspects of an individual's life, various disciplines have studied this phenomenon in different contexts. Two major theories on self-transcendence have emerged from the disciplines studying age and lifespan development. The first being the Nursing theory of Self-transcendence proposed by Reed who defines self-transcendence as the follows: "the capacity to expand self-boundaries intrapersonally (toward greater awareness of one's philosophy, values, and dreams), interpersonally (to relate to others and one's environment), temporally (to integrate one's past and future in a way that has meaning for the present), and transpersonally (to connect with dimensions beyond the typically discernible world)" (Reed, 2003, p. 147). This expansion can happen intrapersonally by reflecting one's internal experiences, personal philosophy, and goals (Fiske, 2019). Interpersonally, this expansion helps individuals connect with others and the environment, and temporally expanding helps people make sense of their past and future (Fiske, 2019). Finally, transpersonal expansion helps people connect with a higher dimension or a higher spiritual being (Fiske, 2019). In simpler terms, self-transcendence regulates an individual's relationship to the self, others, the environment, and ultimately, the cosmos. The process is highly fulfilling for transcending individuals, who can make meaning out of their experiences, learn from them, and gain knowledge about themselves.

The second theory was provided by Tornstam from a gerontology perspective. Tornstam (1997) defines self-transcendence as "a shift in

metaperspective, from a midlife materialistic and rational vision to a more cosmic and transcendent one, accompanied by an increase in life satisfaction” (Tornstam, 1997). Tornstam elaborated on his definition of transcendence as a natural response to aging in people (Antonucci, 2001). ‘Gerotranscendence,’ as it came to be known, is defined as a sudden and unprompted process of self-transcendence seen in older individuals. Although the process has been tied to the natural physical development in people, both Reed and Tornstam believe that transcendence can be realized by individuals irrespective of their age through spiritual and religious practices, or by coping with certain trauma in life (Levenson et al., 2005).

Self-transcendence has often been studied for its relationship with the concept of wisdom. For example, self-transcendence shares similarities with Habermas’ (1971) conceptualization of the emancipatory form of knowledge. Emancipatory knowledge can be defined as involving increasing freedom from biological and social conditioning (Levenson et al., 2005). Here it is understood that as individuals reach a certain age, they are motivated by a developmental trajectory with liberation or freedom for its ultimate destination. Self-transcendence is part of a developmental trajectory that leads to wisdom (Levenson et al., 2005). It is important to note here that liberation or freedom is equivalent to attaining wisdom. According to Curnow (1999), wisdom can be studied by its four features: self-knowledge, detachment, integration, and self-transcendence. In this case, self-transcendence is made possible by an individual’s ability to detach from external conceptualizations of the self and diffuse the boundaries between the self and others (Levenson et al., 2005). Levenson and colleagues (2005) also provide their two cents on the subject by proposing that self-transcendence is indeed equivalent to wisdom and refers to the diffusing of self-based boundaries to empathy, understanding, and integrity. Self-transcendence, by its qualities, can open up new avenues to people wherein they may practice being empathetic and understanding.

## Self-transcendent Experiences

There are instances in an individual's life where he experiences a dissolution of the self and a connection to others and to nature. Such transient states or experiences are referred to as 'self-transcendent experiences'. These experiences are encountered along a spectrum of varying intensity that ranges from normal-everyday experiences to potentially transformative and transcending ones (Yaden et al., 2017). Therefore, anyone can experience self-transcendence at varying levels of intensity. Self-transcendent experiences include states of mindfulness, flow, self-transcendent positive emotions such as love and awe, peak experiences, and mystical experiences (Yaden et al., 2017). Mindfulness is often explained as momentary and nonjudgmental awareness. Flow, a concept we will explore a bit more in detail, later on, is defined as a state in which the self seems to fade away as the individual merges completely with the action they are engaged in (Yaden et al., 2017). Self-transcendent positive emotions are also known as moral emotions and include elevation, compassion, admiration, gratitude, love, and awe (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). These emotions are also associated with religious experiences. Peak experiences encourage a merging of the self with the universe. This concept is further explored in the coming sections of the paper. Finally, mystical experiences are perhaps the most intense of all self-transcendent experiences. The self is all the more merged with its surroundings (Yaden et al., 2017).

## Peak Experiences

Religious practices pave the way for 'spiritual experiences' that allow individuals to transcend the ego. These come under another concept proposed by Maslow called 'Peak experiences'. Peak experiences are a testament to the close relationship religion and self-transcendence share. Maslow's Peak experiences were introduced as short-term, momentary awareness of the self mainly of cognitive and perceptual experiences. Peak experiences provide a sudden clarity of who we are as people. It gives us



an idea of our roles as individuals in an ordered universe and society (Christopher et al., 2002). Peak experiences cause the self-actualizing individual to transcend the self and rise beyond it (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). The biggest misconception regarding self-transcendence is that it is achieved and abandoned, but in reality, it is a continuous process.

Maslow (1971, p. 255) describes peak experiences as feelings that describe when; “the lovers come closer to forming a unit rather than two people, the I-Thou monism becomes more possible, the creator becomes one with his work being created, the mother feels one with her child, the appreciator becomes the music or the painting or the dance (and it becomes him), the astronomer is ‘out there’ with the stars.” Peak experiences are therefore a means by which an individual actualizes himself and transcends beyond the self. That is, as people walk the path of self-actualization they are already on the path to self-transcendence.

The very essence of religion is based on illumination or some sort of divine revelation experienced by a prophet or seer. Consequently, it's been assumed that these revelations and illuminations can be considered as peak experiences (Maslow, 1964). This does not in any way condone the idea that it is only these mysterious other-worldly men who are susceptible to peak experiences. Moreover, both *Futuwwah* and the Hindu ideal of *Dharma* generate in people, values previously mentioned, such as prosocial behavior towards others and society, doing good deeds, showing compassion, etc. The *Futuwwah* mentions; Through Abu Bakr al-Diwanji, we hear that the Prophet said, “The best of my people will enter Paradise, not because of their achievements, but because of the Mercy of Allah and their quality of being satisfied with little for themselves and their extreme generosity toward others” (Sulamī & Bayrak, 1983). Similarly in one of the Hindu scriptures, “Of what use is the strength, health, and longevity of one who does no public good?” (Vyāsa, 4:21-22.). These are but some examples of how *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* inculcate good values, attitudes, and morals, among people, which would essentially bring them liberation from the binds of their own egos.

## Self-transcendence and Religion

Self-transcendence has often been characterized as interpersonal transcendence and transpersonal/cosmic transcendence. As the term suggests, interpersonal self-transcendence refers to an individual's connectedness to other people, and transpersonal self-transcendence is their connectedness to nature or the divine being/God (Reischer et al., 2021). This is where the relationship between transcendent experiences and religion becomes even clearer. A person establishing an intimate connection with a higher power, a deity, or God can transcend himself. Not surprisingly then, studies have established a significant relationship between self-transcendence, religion, and spirituality (Garcia-Romeu, 2010). This finding has found its support in studies that revealed individuals involved in religious practices, score higher in self-transcendence than those not as involved (MacDonald & Holland, 2002).

Similarly, individuals who underwent spiritual experiences also scored higher in self-transcendence than those who did not have such experiences (MacDonald & Holland, 2002). Practices involving altruistic behaviors like volunteer work, meditation, and prayers are highly effective in enabling self-transcendence in people (Fiske, 2019; Levenson et al., 2005). Practices like meditation allow for stability in thoughts and emotions, lowers anxiety, and provide people with an "inner peace" that is instrumental to the process of self-transcendence (Levenson et al., 2005). Most religious practices nowadays, which are ardently practiced despite the clutter of daily struggles, allow transcendent experiences to be easily available to even the most ordinary of men. One doesn't necessarily have to be a saint to experience self-transcendence; instead, one just has to have all the desirable qualities of being 'human'.

The spiritual perspective regarding self-transcendence posits that transcending individuals would feel a sense of connection with a higher power or a divine being greater than the self (Runquist & Reed, 2007). This does not diminish the self in any way, rather the self is empowered to rise above its constraints. Self-transcendence and religion or spirituality,

for that matter, are strongly intertwined. Transcendent experiences are characterized by an intense positive emotion, otherwise known as 'flow'. The phenomenon of flow refers to powerful positive emotions that an individual may experience when engaged in a specific behavior or activity. The state of flow has been linked to religious, peak, and transcendental experiences. The feelings experienced in a flow state are akin to euphoria and transcendence. Flow also shares similarities with peak experiences considering both these states of human consciousness make way for self-transcendence. Positive emotions and the state of flow are related to an individual's openness to people and the world. These emotions are seemingly necessary for people to be curious about things outside of the self, allowing for self-transcendence.

Religions around the world are connected to the concepts of flow, peak experiences, and positive emotions. Religious rituals often act as fuel to states of flow and peak experiences. Collective religious rituals enable positive emotions and interactions between people, nature, and the world (Van Cappellen & Rimé, 2013). Religion assures people of the existence of a transcendental being above the realms of human reality. In the case of religion, this transcendental being may be referred to as God. However, that may not be the case for everyone. As such, religion and the phenomenon of self-transcendence encourage people a sense of purpose and meaning in life and interconnectedness with people and nature (Van Cappellen & Rimé, 2013). Therefore, the phenomenon of self-transcendence and the ritualistic religion that people practice evokes similar emotions, such as gratitude, admiration, love, compassion, elevation, and awe (Van Cappellen & Rimé, 2013). These emotions are self-less and linked to the welfare of others and society in general. Furthermore, these emotions have been associated with increased helping behavior and volunteer time among people (Van Cappellen & Rimé, 2013).

To summarize, self-transcendence is often facilitated by positive emotions, a state of flow, and peak experiences. Such experiences are relatively common in individuals engaging in religious rituals, thereby making self-transcendence more accessible to people following certain

religious rituals. It is important to note, however, that following religion or practicing rituals are not a prerequisite for undergoing flow, peak experiences, or self-transcendence.

Religion places people in the path of transcendence. According to Simmel, a religious person is preoccupied with a deep-set yearning for transcendence (Montemaggi, 2017). They turn back to their inner selves and capitalize on their experiences as individuals, allowing them to experience transcendence. Simmel emphasizes that life is more than just living, and so, people are always striving for the absolute that seems almost unattainable (Montemaggi, 2017). To some, this absolute takes the form of God or a divine being. This quest for the unattainable is what inadvertently leads an individual to self-transcendence. It is only by being cognizant of the self, others, and the world that the individual can achieve self-transcendence. Therefore, it is not the mystical realm that pulls an individual towards transcendence, but rather an individual's capacity to identify his knowings and not-knowings (Montemaggi, 2017).

Therefore, there is an unavoidable relationship between self-transcendence and religious experiences. Although the available literature on the concept of self-transcendence tells us that religion is not entirely necessary for transcendence to occur, it is nonetheless a driving factor. Studies exploring the concept of self-transcendence with religion have inadvertently considered self-transcendence a mystical and often magical process. However, the psychological understanding of the same brings the process to the human realms, where it is understandable and attainable for even the non-believer. That being said, religion does give people advantage by laying out guidelines of behavior that would make self-transcendence possible. The coming sections of the paper will look into the visible traces of self-transcendence as recorded in two philosophies born from religion.

### *Futuwwah*

One of the pioneers in the *Futuwwah* ideology is Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami, who in his *Futuwwat-nama* "Book of Sufi Chivalry"

reveals the true meaning of compassion, love, friendship, generosity, self-denial, hospitality, and the right actions associated with these virtues (Sulamī & Bayrak, 1983). *Futuwwah* is both distinct and similar to Sufism as it shares the same roots. Both *Futuwwah* and Sufism believe in spiritual finality, a mystical union of the soul with God or the Supreme Being; the only difference being the path followed to achieve it. This union, which is very similar to Maslow's self-transcendence, involves shedding the ego and transcending it through moral behaviors. According to Sulami, the *Futuwwah* ideology, which can be traced back to the Islamic way of life, is the way of the *Fata* or the ideal youth. It describes the perfect individual whose hospitality and generosity will continue until he has nothing for himself, and has spent everything for the sake of his friends. "Love is the essence of *Futuwwah*; love for God, love of His creation, love of Love" (Sulamī & Bayrak, 1983).

"He gave the title *fata* to the one He loves because the one who bears the sign of *Futuwwah* and is called by its name gives all the love that he had for himself, for his family, for his property and children, to Allah. He empties his being of everything and leaves it to the Owner of All Things" (Sulamī & Bayrak, 1983). This is the sign of a self-transcending individual.

Another definition of the *fata* was given by Qushayri in his *Risalah*; "the *fata* is he who breaks the idol" and adds on by saying "And the idol of each man is his ego". This is the essence of *Futuwwah* and self-transcendence. The self should learn to let go of his ego and learn to love others before him, and God before everything else. Much like a person's *Dharma*, the *Futuwwah* comes full circle as the individual attains divine reality (Sulamī & Bayrak, 1983). Additionally, *Futuwwah* is assumed to be intimately connected to values like *Ihsan*- perfect goodness, *Mahabalah*, and *Ithar*- selflessness (Şeker, 2016), reiterating previously made points, on how prosocial behavior is one of the signs of a self-transcending individual (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016) along with love for others, for nature, and God. *Futuwwah*, much like self-transcendence, is a state of mind that involves placing others above oneself. It is being generous, altruistic, and forgiving (Sulamī & Bayrak, 1983). The *Futuwwat-nama*, a codified version of these values, encourages the ideal of love; love for

mankind in the form of a strong brotherhood, love for God, and all his creations. Sulami's "Book of Sufi Chivalry" reports extensively on the same. Some of which are;

"Be compassionate, and prefer the interest of your brethren to your own egotism" (Sulami & Bayrak, 1983).

"In a tradition that comes to us through Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Baghdadi, Sari al- Saqati informs us of the following characteristics of the Sufis. They refuse to act for the fulfillment of their egos or to obtain anything that has a taste of willfulness, lust, pleasure, or whim. They are able to resist the commands of their egos" (Sulami & Bayrak, 1983).

To be able to see your own ego, act in opposition to its wishes. A wise man said, "When someone has a question about will and cannot find a guide to answer him, let him watch his ego's desires and do the opposite. Then the truth of the matter will be known" (Sulami & Bayrak, 1983) .

To sum what has been stated so far, the *Futuwwah* codes embodied in the Futuwwat-nama are said to light the path to the ultimate truth, not by hearing it or seeing it, but by being at one with it. The reverent love for the Divine Being brings about a change in humans, from not thinking of the self and engaging in prosocial acts for the betterment of society and humanity in general. This urge to move from the self to the self-less drives one to transcend the ego. The *Futuwwah* urges believers to engage in prayers and other rituals such as the obligatory fasts and reading of scriptures. When done with sincerity these acts may bring about peak experiences that open the path to transcendence.

### ***Dharma - Hinduism***

Religion seeks to delve into human lives as it tries to uncover the purpose of human existence. Like other religious ideologies, Hinduism also maintained that people strive to achieve complete awareness of the self, transcend it, and finally embrace the divine reality. This level of reality can be achieved through practices of Yoga, Ahimsa, Bhakti, and Karma (Buch, 2003). The essence of yoga lies in its process; a collection of exercises that allows one to maintain control over oneself, thereby accomplishing an ideal level of mental concentration. Ahimsa is an act of nonviolence and is quite instrumental in fulfilling the practice of yoga

(Buch, 2003). Bhakti or divine love is an act of devotion that embodies the appreciation one has towards the Divine being. Lastly, Karma is the accumulation of actions one has performed in life and it emphasizes the importance of morality and knowledge as a method to be at one with God (Buch, 2003). These practices embody the values one must preserve, of which a good conscience and a sound character are paramount. All moral actions should be performed with a personality backing them, for it is the personality behind an action that uplifts individuals from an egocentric plane to the cosmos-centric plane (Buch, 2003).

Varying perspectives of the Vedanta school as described by different philosophers explains the process of self-transcendence. However, to fully comprehend the idea of being one with the ultimate being, one has first to understand three other concepts in Hinduism; namely Samsara, Karma, and Moksha (Das, 1989). Samsara refers to the cycle of life and death wherein after a soul is dead it transmigrates to another being and is reborn. Karma is the law of causation that decides the movement of the soul, for example, good deeds done in life moves the soul up the ladder of life, furthering its movement towards Moksha. Moksha is the stage when the soul breaks free of the cycle of rebirth and merges with the divine being (Das, 1989). According to Hinduism, this is the path of transcendence that a person would find himself in.

Sankara's version of the Vedanta emphasizes the importance of maintaining detachment by doing deeds without expecting anything in return. Furthermore, practices such as meditation were recommended to help the self reach its highest potential and further transcend the ego (Das, 1989). Ramanuja's form of Vedanta maintains that Bhakti or the love for the divine helps break Samsara (the cycle of rebirth). Therefore, ardent love for the ultimate spiritual being is needed to help the soul transcend its physical form. Consistent reading of scriptures and the practice of meditation helps in this process (Das, 1989). The Vedanta details how human beings should aim to strip away their physical form, for that is how one can bring about higher consciousness.

Another perspective is brought to us by Kakar (1968), who mentions four stages in the Hindu life cycle. The first of which is called the Brahmacharya (celibate student), during which the student is focused on gaining knowledge and sufficient skills that would help him in procuring a profession and providing for a family in the future. The next stage known as Grihastha (Householder) is when the individual is engaged with love, family, and the pursuit of wealth. The third stage Vanaprastha (Social worker) is defined by an individual's dwindling attention to family affairs or pursuit of wealth. Instead, the focus is shifted towards the society and social causes. The final stage in the Hindu cycle of life is Sanyasa (aesthetic) during which the individual renounces all worldly pleasures in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment in solitude, after which the individual would return to society only to serve humanity (Kakar, 1968). The Hindu stages of life strongly correspond to Maslow's hierarchy wherein the shift from selfish needs to social needs is depicted and reflects the transition to self-transcendence (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016).

Both the *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* way of life emphasizes on being selfless, generous, kind, and compassionate while at the same time going out of their way to help others. When followed, these are codes of conduct that bring about the emergence of an ideal society. These qualities are what Maslow called "Trans humanistic" and later termed transpersonal, both of which describe a motivational state in which individuals seek something beyond personal benefit and instead work for the benefit of others or the society in general. This ensures identification beyond the ego (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Therefore, it is assumed that the moral acts prescribed in the Islamic (*Futuwwah*) and Hindu (*Dharma*) traditions will naturally lead to the stage of self-transcendence.

## Conclusion

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, the present paper explored the idea of Self-transcendence in relation to the religious philosophies of *Futuwwah* and *Dharma*. The concept was inspected in terms of its definitions from various disciplinary perspectives. Various



theories of self-transcendence were also discussed in the paper's initial sections. As a result, different perspectives on self-transcendence were achieved. However, the paper specifically focuses on Maslow's theory of self-transcendence and attempts to draw parallels between this concept and the *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* ways of life. Descriptions of transcendent experiences in these philosophies are uncannily similar to how Maslow describes them, bringing us to the assumption that what religion propagates is the same as what Maslow proposed, self-transcendence. The paper explores the practices mentioned in *Futuwwah* and *Dharma*, and how it relates to Maslow's conceptions of peak experiences and the transpersonal nature. Similar to how Maslow describes achieving self-transcendence, the *Futuwwah* and *Dharma* philosophies outline certain moral values and behaviors which would result in the same outcome. These include helping others and society, which would enable the self to realize itself and transcend beyond the ego. Therefore, what would move a person toward self-transcendence is the work they do for others and their regard for all beings other than the self. This is what religion also tries to foster in its followers. It is reasonable to assume that religious rituals offer an avenue to express and experience self-transcendence. It would be wrong of us to infer that only the religious, or the followers of specific religious ideologies, are privileged enough to attain self-transcendence. This is a process that is open to all. However, the link between religious practices and self-transcendence should not be discounted.[w]

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