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## 11. Social Media as a teaching tool for Spirituality: An Analysis

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### *Abstract*

*This paper explores the relationship between spirituality and social media and provide an insight for using social media to educate about spirituality and reach out to the masses. The research methodology framework for this paper is primarily qualitative approach. The researcher conducted a comprehensive review of four top spiritual leaders official pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. He examined the type of content they shares, the frequency of their posts, the level of engagement with their followers, and the overall impact of their social media presence. The researcher also review existing literature on the topic and discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media use for spiritual development. This gives a larger perspective on how people use social media to learn spirituality and also to find the ways to make it better. The main aim to conduct this research is to find the ways how to use social media effectively as a tool for spiritual growth. This paper suggests that social media may be a useful tool for teaching spirituality to young people.*

**Keywords :** social media, spirituality, spiritual communication, spiritual growth and development, teaching tool.

### **Introduction**

Social media has become an increasingly popular means of communication and information sharing in recent years. With millions of users engaging in social media every day, it has the potential to reach a large audience and serve as a valuable teaching tool for those seeking to explore and deepen their understanding of spirituality. In recent years, the potential of social media as a tool for spiritual growth and development has been recognized, with many individuals and organizations using these platforms to share teachings and connect with like-minded individuals. According to Greenfield and Yan (2020), social media provides a unique opportunity for spiritual growth by facilitating peer support, promoting mindfulness, and fostering a sense of community. Similarly, Puchalski and Ferrell (2010) suggest that social media can be used as a tool for healing, comfort, and hope in times of spiritual distress. However, to effectively utilize social media as a teaching tool for spirituality, it is essential to understand its unique opportunities and challenges. As noted by Marquardt and Reynolds (2019), social media can provide a powerful platform for sharing spiritual content, building online communities, promoting mindfulness, and connecting with spiritual leaders. At the same time, it is important to be aware of the potential for superficiality, misinterpretation of teachings, addiction, and confirmation bias when using social media for spiritual growth. By approaching social media



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with intention and awareness, individuals and organizations can harness its potential to support and deepen their spiritual practices.

However, to effectively utilize social media as a teaching tool for spirituality, it is important to understand its benefits and limitations. According to Jodhka and Singh (2021), social media provides a platform for democratizing spiritual knowledge, making it accessible to everyone, regardless of their location or financial means. In this paper, we will explore how social media can be effectively utilized as a teaching tool for spirituality, considering its potential benefits and limitations.

As noted by Kim, H., & Ko, E. (2020) 'Social media can be an effective tool for spreading spirituality to a wider audience, especially to those who may not have access to traditional spiritual resources'. However, to effectively utilize social media as a teaching tool for spirituality, it is essential to understand the unique opportunities and challenges presented by this platform. According to a study by Rasmussen and Mace (2021), social media can be a valuable resource for creating and sharing spiritual content, building online communities, promoting mindfulness, and connecting with spiritual leaders. Despite its potential benefits, there are also challenges such as superficiality, misinterpretation of teachings, addiction, and confirmation bias that need to be considered. To effectively use social media for spiritual growth, it is crucial to approach it with intention and awareness.

The research will explore the different ways in which social media platforms can be used to share spiritual teachings, engage with spiritual communities, and facilitate personal growth and development. The study will also consider the challenges and limitations of using social media for spiritual purposes and identify strategies for overcoming these challenges. Ultimately, the research will provide insights and recommendations for individuals and organizations interested in using social media to enhance their spiritual practice and promote spiritual growth.

### **Definitions**

Spirituality is defined as a '*broad domain of human experience that involves a search for meaning and purpose in life and a sense of connection to something larger than oneself*' (Emmons, 2000, p. 352). This definition highlights the multidimensional nature of spirituality and the importance of personal meaning-making in the spiritual experience. As noted by Lee & King (2020) Spirituality is defined as '*the interconnectedness of the self, others, the natural world, and a higher power or ultimate reality*'. This definition encompasses a wide range of beliefs, practices, and experiences that give meaning and purpose to individuals' lives, including but not limited to religious traditions. *The Bhagavad Gita* is a Hindu scripture that discusses various philosophical concepts, including spirituality. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, spirituality is the process of attaining union with the divine, which is referred to as Brahman.



This union can be achieved through various spiritual practices, such as meditation, self-discipline, and devotion. In *the Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna explains to Arjuna-

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते

भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसञ्जितः (8.3)

(*The indestructible, transcendental living entity is called Brahman, and its eternal nature is called the self. There is also a spiritual aspect of our being, which gives rise to our thoughts, emotions, and consciousness. This spiritual aspect is known as 'Adhyatma' & is believed to be the source of our existence.*)

In this view that true spirituality involves detaching oneself from material desires and focusing on the eternal self or soul. This detachment leads to a state of inner peace and a realization of one's true nature.

### Literature Reviews

The paper titled '*Spirituality and Social Media: A Conceptual Model*' explores the relationship between spirituality and social media and proposes a conceptual model for using social media to educate about spirituality and reach out to the masses. The authors review existing literature on the topic and discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media use for spiritual development. They suggest that social media can be used as a medium to enhance and spread spirituality in day-to-day life, and that more research is needed to understand the psychology, behavioral patterns, and adoption of social media in the context of spirituality. While the paper provides a comprehensive review of existing literature on the relationship between spirituality and social media, it does not provide a detailed analysis of the potential negative effects of social media on spirituality.

The paper '*Spirituality at Workplace: A Conceptual Framework*' by Kiran Thakur and Jagdeep Singh provides a conceptual framework for successful implementation of spirituality at work in the Indian context. However, the paper does not provide empirical evidence to support the proposed framework. The authors suggest that future research should focus on industry-wise comparative analysis and the relationship between workplace spirituality and other organizational variables such as emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior. The absence of a widely accepted definition leaves space for obscurity and vagueness in the inquiry of this field.

Mathew and Gupta (2017) review in their article '*Social media and spirituality: Possibilities for the future,*' explore the potential of social media as a tool for teaching spirituality. They argue that social media can provide a platform for sharing spiritual teachings, connecting with like-minded individuals, and fostering a sense of community. The authors suggest that social media



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can also be used to promote mindfulness and self-reflection, which are important aspects of spiritual practice.

In their study *'The impact of social media on spiritual practices,'* Ramadan and Abdelsalam (2020) examine the ways in which social media can facilitate spiritual practices. They found that social media can be used to access spiritual teachings and resources, connect with spiritual leaders and communities, and share personal experiences and reflections. The authors suggest that social media can also be used to promote spiritual growth and transformation.

In their paper *'Using social media as a teaching tool for spirituality in higher education,'* Kolb and Bollinger (2016) discuss the use of social media in teaching spirituality to college students. They argue that social media can be used to engage students in spiritual discussions, provide access to spiritual resources, and foster a sense of community among students with diverse spiritual backgrounds. The authors suggest that social media can also be used to promote critical thinking and reflection on spiritual topics.

In their paper *'Social Media and Spiritual Formation: A Case Study of Christian Millennials'* David R. Hogue and J. Benjamin Miller (2017) explores how Christian millennials use social media as a tool for spiritual formation. The authors conducted interviews with 26 Christian millennials and found that social media plays a significant role in shaping their spiritual lives. Participants reported using social media to connect with others who share similar spiritual beliefs, access spiritual resources, and participate in online discussions and forums.

Carol L. Robinson (2019) examines in the paper *'Exploring the Use of Social Media in Faith-Based Education'* the potential of social media as a teaching tool for spirituality in faith-based education. The author argues that social media can provide opportunities for students to engage with their faith communities and connect with others who share similar beliefs. The paper also discusses the challenges of using social media in faith-based education, such as maintaining appropriate boundaries and ensuring the accuracy of information shared online.

Jonathan S. Yang and David L. Watson (2017) explores in their papers *'Using Social Media for Spiritual Formation: A Qualitative Study of Online Religious Communities'* the ways in which online religious communities use social media for spiritual formation. The authors conducted interviews with members of various online religious communities and found that social media provides a platform for these communities to share spiritual resources, discuss theological issues, and offer support to one another. Participants also reported that social media helps them to feel more connected to their faith communities.

Social media can be used to educate about spirituality and reach out to the masses but do not provide any examples or case studies to support this claim. Therefore, a research gap find during this stage.



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## Research Questions

During the literature reviews the researcher find that the potential of social media as a teaching tool for spirituality has not been fully explored. So the research questions for this study are focused on exploring the use of social media as a tool for spiritual growth and development. So the trust of discovering a holistic approach, this research aims to investigate-

- RQ-1. How can social media are effectively utilized as a teaching tool for spirituality,
- RQ-2. And what are the benefits and limitations of using social media for spiritual growth and development?

Through these questions, the study aims to gain a better understanding of the role of social media in facilitating spiritual growth and development, and to identify best practices for using social media as a teaching tool in this context.

## Objectives of the study

- To explore the various benefits and limitations of using social media for spirituality.
- To understand the individual perception towards spirituality and social media.
- To contribute to the existing literature on the topic and inform the development of effective strategies for using social media as a tool for spiritual growth and development.

## Significance and scope of the study

The findings of the study will contribute to the existing literature on the topic and inform the development of effective strategies for using social media as a tool for spiritual growth and development.

## Research Methodology

The research methodology for the paper primarily involves a qualitative approach. This will enable us to understand the experiences and perceptions of individuals who use social media as a tool for spiritual growth and development. The qualitative approach will also explore the various benefits and limitations of using social media for spirituality. The analysis will involve identifying recurring themes and patterns in the data and interpreting them to develop insights into the research question. Overall, the qualitative research methodology provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of individuals who use social media as a teaching tool for spirituality, and the benefits and limitations of this. For this study researcher conducted a comprehensive case study of four top spiritual leaders official pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. He examined the type of content they shares, the frequency of their posts, the level of engagement with their followers, and the overall impact of their social media presence. the researcher also gathered secondary data by conducting an extensive



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literature review of various sources such as national and international scholarly journals, magazines, books and various social media platforms.

### **Case Study-1 : Sadhguru's Social Media Profile**

Sadhguru, also known as Jaggi Vasudev, is a well-known Indian yogi, mystic, and author. He has a significant presence on various social media platforms, which he uses to share his teachings on spirituality, yoga, meditation, and other related topics. In this case study, the researchers analyze Sadhguru's social media profile to understand how he uses these platforms to spread his message and engage with his followers.

### **Results**

Sadhguru has a massive following on social media, with millions of followers across different platforms. His official Facebook page has over 8 million followers, and he regularly shares videos, quotes, and links to articles related to his teachings. His Twitter account, with over 3 million followers, is used to share quotes and links to articles, videos, and podcasts. On Instagram, he has over 5 million followers, and he shares photos and videos of his travels, daily life, and teachings.

Sadhguru's YouTube channel has over 4.5 million subscribers, and he regularly uploads videos of his talks, interviews, guided meditations, and other content related to his teachings. His LinkedIn page has over 600,000 followers, and he shares articles and insights related to spirituality and personal development.

Sadhguru's social media profiles are characterized by their consistency, with frequent and regular updates on different platforms. His posts are often accompanied by high-quality visuals and graphics, which make his content more engaging and shareable. He also uses social media to promote his events, courses, and other initiatives related to spirituality and personal growth.

Sadhguru's social media presence has a significant impact on his followers, who often engage with his content by commenting, liking, and sharing. His message of spiritual growth and development resonates with many people, and his social media profiles provide a platform for them to connect and learn from his teachings.

### **Case Study-2 : Thich Nhat Hanh's Social Media Profile**

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Zen master, teacher, author, and peace activist who is widely regarded as one of the most influential Buddhist teachers of the 20th century. He has a significant presence on social media, which he uses to share his teachings on mindfulness, meditation, and other topics related to Buddhism. In this case study, we will analyze Thich Nhat



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Hanh's social media profile to understand how he uses these platforms to spread his message and engage with his followers.

### **Results**

Thich Nhat Hanh has a substantial following on social media, with hundreds of thousands of followers across different platforms. His official Facebook page has over 1.5 million followers, and he regularly shares videos, quotes, and links to articles related to his teachings. His Twitter account, with over 90,000 followers, is used to share quotes and links to articles, videos, and podcasts. On Instagram, he has over 200,000 followers, and he shares photos and videos of his travels, daily life, and teachings.

Thich Nhat Hanh's YouTube channel has over 100,000 subscribers, and he regularly uploads videos of his talks, guided meditations, and other content related to his teachings. His social media profiles are characterized by their simplicity, with short and straightforward posts that focus on the essence of his teachings. He also uses social media to promote his events, retreats, and other initiatives related to mindfulness and meditation.

Thich Nhat Hanh's social media presence has a significant impact on his followers, who often engage with his content by commenting, liking, and sharing. His message of mindfulness, compassion, and inner peace resonates with many people, and his social media profiles provide a platform for them to connect and learn from his teachings.

### **Case Study -3 : Mooji's Social Media Profile**

Mooji is a Jamaican-born spiritual teacher who is known for his teachings on self-inquiry and meditation. He has a significant presence on social media, which he uses to share his teachings with a global audience. In this case study, we will analyze Mooji's social media profile to understand how he uses these platforms to spread his message and engage with his followers.

### **Results**

Mooji has a substantial following on social media, with hundreds of thousands of followers across different platforms. His official Facebook page has over 500,000 followers, and he regularly shares videos, quotes, and links to articles related to his teachings. His Twitter account, with over 30,000 followers, is used to share quotes and links to articles, videos, and podcasts. On Instagram, he has over 200,000 followers, and he shares photos and videos of his travels, daily life, and teachings.

Mooji's YouTube channel has over 500,000 subscribers, and he regularly uploads videos of his talks, guided meditations, and other content related to his teachings. His social media profiles are characterized by their simplicity, with short and straightforward posts that focus on the essence



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of his teachings. He also uses social media to promote his events, retreats, and other initiatives related to spirituality.

Mooji's social media presence has a significant impact on his followers, who often engage with his content by commenting, liking, and sharing. His message of self-inquiry and meditation resonates with many people, and his social media profiles provide a platform for them to connect and learn from his teachings.

#### **Case Study -4 : BK Shivani's Social Media Profile**

BK Shivani is a spiritual teacher and motivational speaker who is known for her teachings on meditation, self-improvement, and spirituality. She has a significant presence on social media, which she uses to share her teachings with a global audience. In this case study, we will analyze BK Shivani's social media profile to understand how she uses these platforms to spread her message and engage with her followers.

#### **Results**

BK Shivani has a massive following on social media, with millions of followers across different platforms. Her official Facebook page has over 14 million followers, and she regularly shares videos, quotes, and links to articles related to her teachings. Her Twitter account, with over 300,000 followers, is used to share quotes and links to articles, videos, and podcasts. On Instagram, she has over 4 million followers, and she shares photos and videos of her travels, daily life, and teachings.

BK Shivani's YouTube channel has over 10 million subscribers, and she regularly uploads videos of her talks, guided meditations, and other content related to her teachings. Her social media profiles are characterized by their simplicity, with short and straightforward posts that focus on the essence of her teachings. She also uses social media to promote her events, retreats, and other initiatives related to spirituality.

BK Shivani's social media presence has a significant impact on her followers, who often engage with her content by commenting, liking, and sharing. Her message of self-improvement and spirituality resonates with many people, and her social media profiles provide a platform for them to connect and learn from her teachings.

#### **Discussion**

Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate and share information, and its potential as a tool for spiritual growth and development has been increasingly recognized in recent years. As social media continues to evolve, it will be interesting to see how spiritual



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leaders adapt and continue to utilize this platform to promote their teachings and connect with their followers.

People can follow spiritual leaders and organizations on social media and receive their teachings through videos, blogs, and other content. Social media offers opportunities to connect with people who share similar spiritual beliefs and values. These connections can provide a sense of community and support, which is essential for spiritual growth. It can be used for self-reflection and growth by providing a platform for people to share their personal stories and experiences. This can help people gain insight into their own spiritual journey and connect with others who may be going through similar experiences. Social media can be used to promote mindfulness and other spiritual practices. People can follow spiritual leaders and organizations on social media and receive their teachings through videos, blogs, and other content. For instance, individuals can access videos of the BK Shivani's teachings on YouTube or follow the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh on Facebook. This access to spiritual teachings can be particularly valuable for individuals who may not have access to spiritual leaders or communities in their local area. Social media also allows spiritual leaders and organizations to reach a wider audience. In the past, teachings may have been limited to those who attended live events or who purchased books. However, social media has made it possible for spiritual leaders to share their teachings with millions of people around the world.

Social media can also be used to promote self-awareness and mindfulness. There are apps and social media groups that focus on meditation, yoga, and other practices that help individuals to connect with their inner selves. These practices can be particularly valuable for individuals who may feel stressed or overwhelmed by the demands of daily life. Social media can be used to create interactive learning experiences that engage individuals and promote spiritual growth. For instance, spiritual leaders and organizations can create online courses that provide individuals with a structured learning experience.

Despite the many benefits of using social media as a teaching tool for spirituality, there are also several challenges that need to be considered: Social media can create a culture of superficiality, where spiritual teachings are reduced to sound bites and memes. It can be challenging to fully grasp the depth of a spiritual teaching through a short video or post. Social media can be a breeding ground for misinterpretation of spiritual teachings. Without proper context or guidance, individuals may interpret teachings in a way that is not in line with the original intent of the teaching. Social media addiction is a real concern, and it can distract individuals from their spiritual practices. Spending too much time on social media can create a sense of disconnection from the self and from others, which can hinder spiritual growth. Social media can create a confirmation bias, where people only seek out information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. This can prevent individuals from challenging their beliefs and exploring new perspectives, which is essential for spiritual growth.



To effectively utilize social media as a teaching tool for spirituality, it is essential to approach it with intention and awareness. Here are some tips for using social media effectively for spiritual growth:

- It is important to seek out authentic and reliable sources of spiritual knowledge. Follow spiritual leaders and organizations that have a proven track record of providing valuable and transformative teachings.
- Create and engage with online communities of like-minded individuals. Share your spiritual experiences, seek advice, and connect with others.
- Use social media mindfully, setting limits on the amount of time spent on social media and prioritizing real-world interactions and activities.

## Conclusion

The results of this study have provided an overview of how top spiritual leaders leverage social media platforms to build a strong online presence and connect with a larger audience. These spiritual leaders use a mix of content formats to engage their followers and have successfully built a strong community of followers who interact with each other on their posts. Through their social media profiles, these spiritual leaders have managed to reach a global audience and build a diverse following of people from different backgrounds and age groups. The findings suggest that social media serves as an effective tool for spreading their message of spiritual growth and development to a wider audience.

In conclusion, social media can be effectively utilized as a teaching tool for spirituality. It provides access to spiritual teachings, connects individuals with like-minded people, promotes self-reflection and growth, and creates interactive learning experiences. However, it is important to approach social media with a critical eye and to use it in a way that supports rather than hinders our spiritual practice. With awareness and intention, social media can be a powerful tool for connecting with others and promoting spirituality across multiple platforms.

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