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Spirituality... Beginning of a quest

NOTE: This article aims at shedding some light on the spiritual secrets of our religion. The knowledge given is in no way complete, yet it is enough as an introduction to ‘reality’. The writer in no way expects credit for the article as this knowledge was obtained by the blessings of Guru and some great books.

It is 10.05p.m. On the 25th March, 2004.

As I struggle internally for my quintessential answers, not ‘important’ from my worldly perspective, it was natural urge to write down what is religious philosophy at this ‘stage’ of my life as-i-see-it.

It started at a very early age, an age to play toys, videogames, GIJOE’s, etc.

An age when the little human is supremely optimistic and has a cavalier attitude towards future, since for him the present is everything. The one feels ‘secured’ in his little world with many guardians. Non-Existence (or death) is a rather ‘unknown’ term to him. The mind is very vibrant at that stage. But as age progresses, we learn to discriminate between “right” and “wrong”. We realize steadily, the futility of certain actions and the fruitfulness of others. We become aware of life’s ‘uncertainty’. Its duality ‘principle’ makes it uncertain, from one cycle to another life rotates. (Duality principle means that everything in this world has a dual E.g. Good and Bad, Man and Woman., happiness and sorrow, Etc)

As in any case, the first is always an idea. The idea or rather fact of Non-Existence (death) suddenly struck me at an early age. It was this very fear and insecurity of death that started the spiritual quest. As it is the only system that deals thoroughly with it.

According to science, living beings are creatures whose consciousness begins at birth and ends at death. During this interval, the human grows physically, mentally, acquires skills, perpetuates, gets diseased, decays and finally dies i.e. this pattern is observed in life of all humans. Further analysis leads to the first step of faith—the Knowledge of eternity.

This Knowledge destroys the fear of death as Non-existence. It presents death as merely transmigration. But, principle of eternity does not comply with the world of senses. The very core of this knowledge, its basis rests on the idea of the SOUL. It is not the knowledge but the realization of soul that liberates us from the fear of death.

Our belief in God as yet is just as an illusion. We believe in God just because all others do. We treat god as a support system. That when everything fails, God is the school of thought to be leaned upon.

But in today’s age when reason is so predominant (rightly so). We do need reason or logic to believe in god. The logic is so obvious that it is often overlooked.

Do we believe that everything happens by chance or by reason? Reasonable people will agree to reason. Thus we must initialize a way of thinking by which every event should be analyzed according to cause and effect.

Thus, the biggest question of creation gets answered there itself. Creation implies creator. Creation cannot be a chance-event(eg. the big-bang theory states that the universe just started with a bang, they give no importance to the events prior to the creation of universe, rather they feel it is unimportant ...huh it's an effort to shrug off their inability to Perceive pre-creation state)as many of our scientist friends believe. Lack of reasoning itself is a proof why chance theory should be discarded. So many complex events (some even unimaginable) cannot take place without an intelligent executor.

This way of thinking establishes firmly the belief on Creator or God. According to the Vedas, God is defined as the source of everything-creator, sustainer and destroyer.

Vedas and Geeta actually deal comprehensively with the science of the God.

Now we get a bit deeper.

There are two schools of thought in Vedas.

One is Saguna Brahma(or personal god theory) and other is Nirguna Brahma (or impersonal god theory)

In saguna bhakti, devotees worship a personal god Eg.Ganapati, Krishna, shiva, etc According to this school of thought God is one (but has many manifestations) and he is a being, like us, but distinctly different. This god is a PERSON yet he is infinite and nothing exists apart from him. He is the super soul and we all souls (living entities) constitute his spiritual energy while the inanimate things (matter) form his inferior energy. The soul acquiring distinct identification (ego) enters this dream state of 'existence'. This distinct identification independent of God creates 'avidya' or ignorance of our relationship with God. This ignorance forces us into this dream world of Life. The world as we perceive is an illusion and is not the reality. So spirituality is reestablishing that eternal relationship with God by acquiring Knowledge and practicing it. Thus the goal of life is liberation from this dream world and return to the eternal abode of the almighty. We can equate this to the "human cells" that are provided the dream state in the film "THE MATRIX". There are some 8 million species of life that soul passes before getting a human body. This human birth is the most precious as it provides the only opportunity to break the shackles of illusion and enter Reality by acquiring knowledge of God and soul, which cannot be done in other life forms. If 'Reality' is not realized in this birth, after death the next form of life is decided on account of our Karma. Thus we continuously are strangled in this cycle of repeated births and consequent deaths.

Now let us discuss Nirguna (impersonal God) Theory .This theory is very difficult to understand since it is very unrelational. It describes God as formless and Infinite. Human mind is incapable of grasping the idea of infinite , we just get a slim understanding of the Infinity .How do you define infinity? Infinity should include everything that we know to exist and also that about which we are unaware. Thus infinity should be all-inclusive without start and end and obviously without any middle. Thus the infinite cannot be measured , cannot be understood , cannot be described , cannot be perceived completely. Also the Infinite cannot have distinct parts , it must be a complete whole without a second .Thus this understanding is a total contrast to duality theory

which describes souls as being “parts” of the supreme soul .Language cannot describe it since it presupposes duality.

The Advaita philosophy of the Vedas deals comprehensively with this idea . Shri Adi Sankaracharya made huge contribution to this understanding through a lot of arguments and rigorous intellectual exercise into the mystery of God.In Advaita , the supreme reality is known as “Brahman”. This Brahman is devoid of attributes , which are nothing but words and can never capture the essence.

Saguna theory is considered for the temporary pupose of explaining creation to the deluded mind. Advaita holds Atman to be identical to Brahman, and this is where it is radically different from other schools of spiritual thought. In realizing Brahman we lose our individuality .i.e. there lies no difference then Atman and Brahman. An analogy that can be drawn here is that of a drop and the ocean , the drop on entering the ocean loses its identity , nay , the drop becomes the ocean. Dualists fear this loss of individuality, and hence protest against Advaita (which literally means non-dual).But in saying that the Atman on realizing its true nature merges into Brahman , we are presupposing duality, hence in reality there is no difference between Atman and Brahman. This has serious moral implications. Since Brahman is the only one underlying reality, this diversity that we observe in nature is but an illusion. Thus various diverse living entities are but different manifestations of unity, which implies that in hurting any other living entity I am actually hurting myself. Thus , the moral value of not hurting another creature has its roots in the Vedas .

Having briefed ourselves of the causal part of existence-Brahman, we shall now move towards the all important question of “the way out” i.e. understanding Liberation.

A materialist may ask “why should I seek liberation?” .The answer to this question lies in our understanding of life. If we analyze Life, we’ll soon realize that it is essentially a struggle, between “you” and everything “outside”. This constant struggle is what we call “life”. This struggle ends with death which is the only constant in our lives. But liberation is not death .It is beginning of a new life.

The goal of humanity is happiness. But it is our poor understanding of happiness that makes us limited and miserable. We realize that all our lives we constantly struggle behind the object of our desired happiness, even the acquisition of that object brings us, but momentary pleasure. Thus even the desired emotion of happiness is transitory. Here I shall reveal the crux of all understanding. As everything has a dual, this transitory worldly happiness must have a dual i.e. “eternal blissful state” in other words Liberation. This is the state that all major religions aim for humanity. Thus, liberation has been defined as the ultimate goal of all our earthly wanderings. The question is then How to attain it?

The way to liberation has been explicitly stated in the Geeta. There are two ways defined for us, one is Total renunciation of all worldly responsibilities i.e. Sanyas. The other way which I feel is the ideal one for this Kaliyuga is “Karmayoga”. This path is that of “Action”, the dynamic way to Liberation. But it is the understanding of “Action” that holds the key to Karmayoga. As of now we consider action to be initiated and proceeding

from our very own being. This deluded understanding of Action or karma binds us. Action can either produce “attachment” or Liberation. We must understand the SOUL is ever constant and changeless. Action in its very own meaning involves change. Thus the State of mind where “Action” is separated from “Self” is Karmayoga.

To clear the picture a bit, we must understand the three “modes of Action” or “Gunas”. The gunas are “Sattvic” or mode of goodness, “Rajasic” or mode of intense action and “Tamasic” or mode of evil. At any moment of our lives ,we are “in” one of these three modes of action. When we feel that a person is very kind, He is in Sattvic mode for most of the time or when we feel that a person is very bad, it is because he is in “Tamasic” mode for most of the time. It’s the knowledge of these gunas and Rising above them which is the goal of Karmayoga. Karmayoga does not stop you from action rather commands you to engage yourself in ceaseless work but with an “unattached mind” i.e. to consider yourSELF to be a nondoer. Thus you never are bound by any action. However karma yoga is a life’s work. Both paths of Karmayoga and Sanyasyoga lead to the same supreme reality.

In whatever position of life, karma yoga commands us to fulfill our duties with utmost sincerity and efforts. Karmayoga was the path prescribed to Arjuna by Lord Krishna . It is this path that shall bring end to the vicious circle of moral and material poverty. It is Karmayoga that shall bring a new dawn of Spiritually and Materially strong India.

“Arise, Awake, Destroy this illusion and enter Reality. Open your eyes, O Divine one, What binds you; what deludes you; You alone can stop this march to perdition. Break these chains and proclaim the divinity inside .For the Supreme truth, the only reality is waiting to be discovered.”

---Aniruddha S Deshpande---