

### 3.

#### God, Soul, World

Every system of knowledge has to explain life, world and God.

The materialists and the sciences based on materialism do not accept God and soul, while some philosophies like Samkhya do not accept God but accept soul.

Every religion has to accept the truth of Conscious reality beyond this world, which makes life continue in some form or the other after death. Otherwise, religion has no significance.

In religion, we have monotheistic concept of God and the Indian idea of God.

#### The Problems with a monotheistic God

\* The Problem of Evil in the world that necessitates two realities

\* The problem of merciful and just as co-existing in the same

\* The problem of God's will and free will

\* Omniscience and omnipotence implies that God knows of our sinful tendencies and yet does not stop us. Thus God seems to push sinner into hell, knowing very well that we would go there, and also not stopping us from doing which we should not, even though He can do so.

#### Why accept the words of the sages?

The Indian spiritual traditions, in general, accept God, soul and the world variously, which has come to us from the words of the sages.

But why should we accept what the sages said thousands of years ago?

The fact is that our life runs mostly on our faith in the words of the elders of a subject. For example, we have faith in the words of mom, teachers, scientists etc. at various stages of our growth.

When it comes to spirituality, sages are the elders and the masters.

Why believe them?

1. They were unselfish, learned and contemplative
2. Their words have been verified innumerable times by others too.
3. We too can verify those truths.

#### Test of Truth

Indian spiritual traditions do not accept a truth simply because it has been uttered by someone or is written somewhere. It follows the three tests of truth:

1. *Shruti* – It should have precedence. This may not be true for science, but is true in spirituality.
2. *Yukti* – It should be logical
3. *Anubhuti* – It should be verifiable.

The entire Indian spiritual traditions conform to these three tests.

### **God -- Infinite, and hence both Impersonal and Personal**

God is infinite. Being infinite, He can have any number of forms and there can be any number of paths to attain Him.

As opposed to it, there is the materialistic approach to God, which objectifies God as being the one God, as in Vaishnava tradition.

This is not wrong, but is also not fully correct.

God in the Vedas is called *Purusha*.

God is Infinite. He cannot be known through the senses or reasoning. Anyone can experience God in the stillness of pure mind.

That is the proof of God.

The Upanishads coined the terms Brahman and Isvara to denote the Impersonal and the Personal aspects of God.

Later sacred books named and described the Infinite variously. A person chooses that name and form which suits their mentality.

### **Om – the symbol of God**

Any name that describes His infinite nature is His name. ॐ (AUM) is the most sacred and common symbol of God for the Hindus. Every mantra begins with Aum.

God is the matrix of everything, and the three letters of Aum is the matrix of all sound. At the more fundamental level, words, ideas and objects are one. Aum thus represents God since both are matrices of words and objects.

### **God and His Shakti**

The impersonal, infinite God is perceived by the mind as Brahma - the creator, Vishnu – the sustainer, Shiva - the destroyer. They are one but appear different.

The power of God is variously known as maya, shakti, prakriti etc. Creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe are carried out by this power.

The divine power of God is popularly perceived as feminine and is worshipped as Lalita, Durga, Kali, Parvati and others.

Every form of God is true, but one's special bond is with a particular form of God, known as *Ishta*. All prayer and worship are directed towards *Ishta*.

One can choose one's *Ishta* and pray to Him/ Her with sincerity. The usual practice is to go to a spiritual Guru to learn all about the *Ishta*.

### **Avatara**

The ever free God appears in the worlds by His divine power. When He appears on this earth, He is known as *avatara*. There are infinite avatara. Ten most famous are Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Kalki.

God incarnates to reinforce spirituality through His words or deeds. Sometimes He has to eliminate the opposing forces of spirituality and righteousness.

Evolutionary push is given by an avatara that makes living beings get out of the trajectory of the species in which they are locked. That is how beings move towards mukti.

### **Creation – Two approaches**

Creation did not come out of nothing, nor will it ever merge into nothingness. It came from God, stays in God and dissolves in Him, by the power of His will.

Creation is eternal and cyclic. It did not come into being at some point in time.

Nothing existed at the time of creation, so there is no way to explain the process of creation. The hymns in the Vedas about creation are for prayer and meditation.

The Vedas describe creation as an act of God in multiple ways. Of these, *Nasadiya Suktam* and *Purusha Suktam* are more famous. These hymns describe how God is the source of creation, and how it is impossible to understand the process.

*Purusha Suktam* is chanted during formal worship, and many Hindus chant it daily as a prayer.

### **Spread of Creation**

According to popular stories, God created the great causal waters (*narah*) from which everything was to proceed. The Impersonal God now appeared with the divine form, resting on the waters of the great cause. The causal waters being the resting place (*ayan*), the Lord is known as Narayana.

Narayan then manifested as Brahma, the creator God, who started the new cycle of creation in which everything had the characteristics that they had in the previous cycle.

At first Brahma created the worlds through his mind.

The slowness of the creative process prompted Brahma to divide himself into a male and female. Human beings were born of this split.

The mixing and intermixing of the creation made earlier by the mind, and the new creation by the body, resulted in rapidly populating the world.

Everything in the universe has come directly from God. Everyone and everything is divine. The goal of life is to realise this truth and become free eternally.

### **Jivatman, the Soul**

As the conscious principle in every being, God is known as Atman. When atman appears to identify itself with the body and the mind, it is known as *jivatman*, which transmigrates at the time of the death of a body to take up a fresh body from the infinite stock of matter in the creation.

The concept of soul in the Western world is different from Atman, or even Jivatman. Soul is a finite entity, eternally inferior to the Supreme consciousness.

In contrast, Atman is one with the supreme consciousness. Jivatman, i.e., us, too are supreme consciousness but because of ignorance, it mistakenly thinks itself to be body-mind-ego complex.

Thus soul can only reside in heaven, while Atman is every free.

Being a product of divine maya, the number of Jivatman is infinite.

### **Existence – High and low**

The worlds are collectively known as *Brahmanda*. It consists of the visible and invisible universes.

The souls with similar mindset stay in a particular sphere of existence. There are infinite numbers of subtle spheres. These are known as *lokas*.

Each *loka* is a temporary place of stay, made possible by the psychic force of a being. Once that force is expended, the soul moves to a more suitable *loka*.

The highest loka is where one can be in the eternal company of one's Ishta.

Until one attains spiritual freedom through divine oneness, one has to transmigrate from one sphere to the other.

### **Karma, the acts that bind**

The psychic force that makes the soul transmigrate is generated by what one thinks, speaks and acts. The sum total of action is known as karma, and its result (known as *karmaphala* or simply karma) catches up with the person sooner or later.

The results of karma take time to come. Only the karmas of noble souls fructify quickly. Very powerful karma, good or bad, give quick results.

Karma is suffered by the body and mind. Atman is never affected by these.

Each soul is one with God, but maya, the divine ignorance, makes the soul forget its true nature. The soul then keeps moving and experiencing from *loka* to *loka*.

What we experience in life is the resultant of

1. Our past karma
2. Our present action
3. Acts of others.

It is erroneously paraded that we experience only what we have done in the past.

Also, it is an excellent model to explain the world and existence. Without it, our fate would be determined by:

1. God's will, implying God to be partial
2. Blind Chance, making us helpless in this cruel world

On the other hand, Law of Karma implies that

1. We are responsible for most of what happens to us.
2. We are free to change our destiny.

There can be no better model for our existence than this.

### **Mukti, Freedom**

The goal is to get out of the cycle of these worlds and be one with one's true nature. This is mukti, freedom. This can be attained in this very life. This is *jivanmukti*.

Once a person realises the Divine as the underlying truth in everything, his/her accumulated karma gets destroyed and they attain spiritual freedom.

The idea of mukti is the greatest gift of the Hindus to the mankind. The Hindu sacred books emphasise the importance of *jivanmukti* by outgrowing every duality of emotions and existence.

The goal of the Hindus is not to go to some heaven after death, but to attain the state of *jivanmukti*. This is the great distinctive feature of Hindu religion.

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