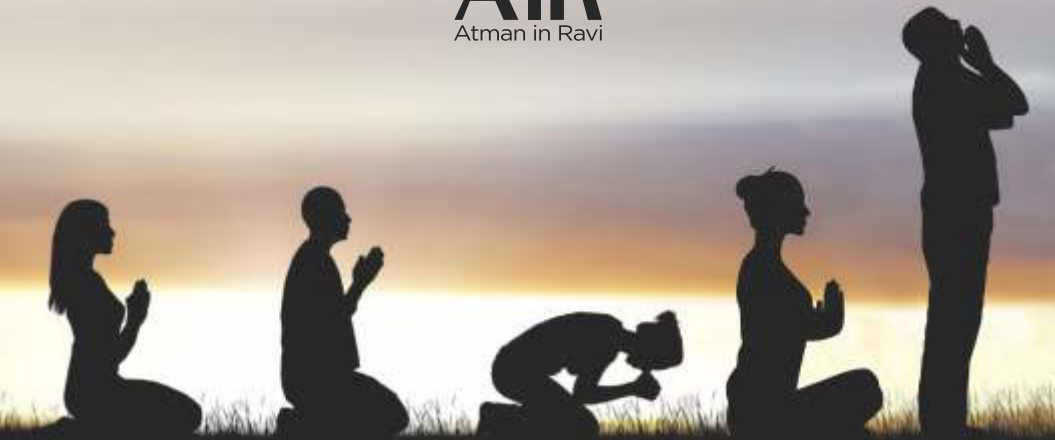


Religion!

A Kindergarten to Spirituality!!

By
AiR
Atman in Ravi



Religion starts our journey to God...
Spirituality takes us to the Destination

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*Religion is just a Kindergarten,
It teaches the ABC of GOD.
It sets the foundation of Spirituality,
And makes us believe in our LORD.*

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*We need Religion, though it is full of myth,
To realize God, we can do nothing without it.
It makes us have Faith in God, and takes us to His door,
But it is Spirituality that makes us cross the shore.*

PREFACE

Most of humanity has a Religion. It is said that over 80% of people are either Christian, Muslim, Hindu or affiliated with some Religion of the world. Less than 1/5th of humanity is either atheist or agnostic which means that this part of humanity either does not believe in God or is doubtful about the existence of God.

When we are born, we start following a Religion based on our parents and family - we don't choose our Religion. We believe in our Religion and its scripture. Very few of us question our Religion or delve deep into the roots and origins of it. Each Religion says that its God is the Creator of this world and we grow up having faith in our Religion.

We have blind faith and we follow rituals without questioning, believing in the superstitions we are taught. We practise religious dogmas without understanding what we are doing. Very few of us actually touch the subject of Spirituality - a study of the Spirit, the Soul or the Life-Energy within us.

A deep study reveals a shocking Truth that less than 1% of humanity stops and asks questions about the validity of what their Religion preaches. This tiny minority passionately follows the path of Spirituality with the aim of Self-Realization and God-Realization. It is amongst these that a blessed few realize the Truth about life and are liberated from misery and sorrow. They realize the Truth about God and understand that whatever they were taught was very basic. Their biggest Realization is that Religion is just a kindergarten to Spirituality.

Religion is only the first step towards our Ultimate Goal of Self-Realization. It builds the foundation of our faith and

understanding of God. Then, most unfortunately, we get so pulled into rituals and superstitions that we do not pursue a path that makes us investigate the Truth about God. While most of us don't know who God is, where God is and what God is, we know God is. We know God exists. God is the Power that has created the universe. Unfortunately, we human beings think of God as a person, a statue or as a saint. We forget that God is a Power that no human being can paint. This book, *Religion! A Kindergarten to Spirituality* will lead you forward in your journey towards God. Whatever be your Religion and whichever be the faith you follow, you don't need to change that. You just need to go one step further, with deep love and longing for your God, until you realize your God within the very temple of your heart.

Spirituality is not another Religion. It is beyond Religion. Those who start with Religion, get stuck in the kindergarten of theology. We need Spirituality to help us graduate and be blessed with the Truth about God. We need to go beyond Religion, go beyond the dogmas, the rituals and the superstitions that we grow up with to discover the absolute Truth about the Divine.

This book will help you go beyond the kindergarten of Spirituality, your own Religion and graduate you to become a master in Spirituality and help you achieve the Ultimate Goal of Self-Realization and God Realization.

*GOD is accepted by most humans on earth.
Most of us believe in GOD, once we take birth.
But it is sad though in God we believe,
We get stuck in the myth and our Goal we do not achieve!*



WHAT IS RELIGION?

While the whole world talks about Religion and it seems that we know everything about it, one would be surprised to realize that Religion is actually not what we think it is. We think that Religion is the way to God. Yes, sure it is the way to God for kids who are just born, for toddlers who have not developed their intellect but for adults, Religion, in fact, becomes a roadblock that stops us from Realizing God. While it builds our basics in understanding God, it doesn't let us go further in realizing the Truth about God. Let us understand why this is so. Let us peep into Religion and get to know how it is just a kindergarten, the basic foundation to reaching destination God.

Definition of Religion

If one tries to find out what is the meaning of Religion, the definition can be anything like 'praying to a God or Gods' or 'belief in a faith'. Most people across the world have a Religion, barring a few who are atheists or agnostics. The others are either Christians, Muslims, Hindus or belong to some other Religion. What does this mean? It means that they follow a particular path of faith or belief system. When we follow a Religion, it means many things. It may mean that we just follow it casually or we can be devout in our religious practices, following every ritual, superstition, and dogma. Religion teaches us about God, the Creator, one who has supernatural powers. But it also does a lot more. It makes us believe that this God can heal us, cure us and make our dreams come true.

While there are many Religions in this world, most Religions have a similar path, except that the destination is their own God. They believe that only 'their God' is the 'real God'. This is what makes Religions different from each other. I may believe in my God and you in your God, so we are of different Religions, though we both believe in God.

What is the need of Religion?

Does this world need Religion? If a vast majority, over 80% of humanity follows a Religion, then it seems obvious that the world needs Religion. But what is the need of Religion?

Religion is needed for one major activity of humanity - Prayer. We human beings pray because we need something - either we need a wish to be fulfilled so that it can make us happy or we pray for something that can solve our problem and take away our misery. Thus, we go to a church, a mosque or a temple. It seems God is a solution to our problems, just as God is a magician who can make our dreams come true. But is this so?

When man realizes that there is a Power beyond human comprehension that controls the results of his actions, he realizes the existence of a Power we call God. Man also realizes that he often becomes helpless with certain acts of nature and he has no other option but to go to God. Actually, nobody knows who God is, where God is or what God is, but we know that God is. Otherwise, how would this universe run? Who is causing this earth to rotate on its own axis, causing day and night? Who is controlling the revolution of the earth around the sun causing seasons and everything else that happens on the

planet? Obviously, there is a Power, and each Religion believes that its God is the one who is governing the universe. Thus arises the need to follow a Religion as it is the Religion that will make us happy, peaceful and eventually, either get us to heaven or deliver us from all our sins, whatever the Religion advocates. Thus, it becomes absolutely necessary to follow our Religion. Otherwise, we would be deemed to be miserable, so it seems!

How did Religion come about?

Many philosophers and theologians argue about the origin of Religion. Unfortunately, since there are no written records, one can only assume and presume, but one can never be sure about the origin of Religion. Historians say that the tall pillars that were found in excavations of ancient civilizations probably indicate that this was part of Religion. Some philosophers say that certain scrolls and parchment indicate that this was a religious practice. But nobody can be absolutely sure about the origin of Religion. What seems to be a fact, is that ancient man who lived in civilizations that are referred to as pre-historic, a period where no written records are available, prayed to Gods to save him from the perils of nature. What else could man do when he was faced with storms, floods, and famine? He was perplexed, confused, and helpless. So, he turned to God to help him. This turning to a superpower for help, most often led by a religious leader, slowly formed into groups of people creating a Religion.

Religion is based on a theology, certain organized belief systems and rituals followed by a group to pray to a superpower that is referred to as God. This seems to be the only logical assumption that caused Religions in this

world to happen. Imagine this world of eight billion people having eight billion Religions! It is just not possible. So, it seems logical that groups of people got together and agreed to certain religious thoughts. They made it a set of beliefs that became a theology and formed into a Religion that they followed. Slowly, Religion became popular and others also followed it, if they agreed to their principles. Those who did not agree, drifted away to form another Religion. Even today, we see new Religions being formed when a saint advocates a new set of beliefs and creates a new following. This apart, the rest of humanity just grows up into a Religion and follows it.

When we study the civilizations of ancient man, it is deciphered as seen from their written records, as well as it is presumed from the archaeological remains that are found that ancient man used to pray to several Gods of nature, the God of Wind, the God of Sun and the God of Water. As facts began to be documented as written records, what we now call 'history', these Religions gained visibility and this gives us a hint of how Religion seems to have started.

Each Religion has its own theology

If we study the various Religions of the world, we find that while all Religions teach us to pray to God, each has its own belief system. It seems, civilizations started by praying to Gods of nature and then, evolved to the various Gods that are known today. Also, each Religion follows certain practices that are unique to that Religion and this must be based on some belief. Otherwise, why would they do so? Christians believe that Sunday is the day of God, while Muslims believe it to be Friday. Hindus who have thousands of Gods, sometimes pray to one God each day -

Monday is the day of Shiva, Tuesday of Hanuman, Wednesday is the day of Krishna, Thursday is the day of Vishnu and Friday, of Shakti. Even on Saturday, the Hindus pray to Shani to eradicate their misfortunes and on Sunday, Surya Deva, the Sun God. These are obviously practices that have developed over time.

Some Religions insist on vegetarianism, while others permit the killing of animals for food. Each Religion believes in its own unique philosophy. As long as each Religion does so peacefully, there would be no problem. But because each Religion has followers who believe that their Religion is the best, it is superior to other Religions and that the belief-system their Religion advocates is right and that of other Religions is wrong, they become fanatics who want to convert the whole world to follow their Religion. There seems to be a lot of stress in the world today due to Religion. It is sad because actually Religion, which is supposed to be a subject of God and relates to Peace and Happiness, has today become a root cause of anxiety in the world. Many wars and conflicts have been waged in the name of Religion and it is both shameful and sad that the world has reached the brink of intolerance. Religions promote the supremacy of their God when in reality we all realize that the world has one God, one Power. Different Religions give this one Power different names and believe in the same God through different Religions. The paths are many, but the destination is one. In reality, the God of all Religions is 'One Power', the Power that is the Creator of the Universe. It seems illogical to believe that the Christian God made the Sun, the Muslim God the Moon and the Hindu God made the seas. This irrational thinking has come about only because of the various Religions in the world, each believing its

theology to be the best and each considering other Religions as inferior.

Religion helps us live a moral life

While today, Religions are causing so much stress in the world, it is nothing compared to the agony the world would face without Religion. Each Religion is instrumental in making this world a peaceful place. Just imagine a world without Religions. There would be chaos as humanity would be living like savage animals, each individual would become selfish and passionate about his own lust without any ethics and values.

Today the world by and large, is peaceful. Thanks to Religion! Most of humanity lives a moral life because they follow a Religion. It does not matter which Religion they follow, there are good human beings in each and every Religion. After all, that is the objective of Religion - to help people pray to God and to follow the rules and the commandments of the Creator, and thus irrespective of which Religion man belongs to, Religions have a major positive influence on the people around the globe and make the world a peaceful and a moral place.

Religion makes us believe in God

What is the major objective of Religion? It is to make man believe in God. Followers of Religion believe that there is a Creator and that this world did not just come about as claimed by certain scientists. They know that the mountains and the seas, the rivers and the trees, the butterflies and the bees, you and me are the cause of some superpower called God and we believe in that God!

If there was no Religion, children who were born would not believe in God. Today, because we are born into a family that follows a Religion, we are taught as we grow up to believe in certain rituals and superstitions of our Religion. This seems to be very important as it builds our faith. Sure, the method of prayer may not be the best possible but how else could a child be taught to pray to God? A child has to be taught to be amazed by Santa Claus so that he believes in the magical power of God, just as he is taught to pray to Lord Ganesha, the endearing Elephant God.

Different Religions use different methods to make children believe in God. Unfortunately, while we as kids believed in these fairy tales, we live and die following the myth and we don't realize the Truth about God. Religions are the reason why humanity believes in a Power called God, be it Jesus, Allah or Shiva. The name of God is just an identity of a Power that is beyond human comprehension. But it is Religion that has caused us to believe in God.

Religion starts our journey to God

While many of us today seek God and go out of our way to reach God, it is Religion that starts this journey to God. As kids, Religion does the trick but it continues even after we grow up. Our life journey, our philosophy, and our lifestyle are, by and large, controlled by our belief-system which is born out of the Religion that we follow. Each community has strict rules and laws that they adhere to. Why? It is because of their Religion. If it was not Religion then we would do whatever we like based on our convenience. We would not donate ten percent of our income for the less fortunate ones. This is a major belief in

the majority of the world population and it makes such a large difference in the world today.

Because Religion makes us grow up and makes us go to church every Sunday or to the mosque every Friday or to the temple every Monday or Thursday, we feel that connection with our God as we grow and we become addicted, in a way, to prayer and to God. When we pray and our prayers are fulfilled, we become even closer to our God. We don't just believe in God, we also completely trust God. Our enthusiasm, our entire life is controlled by God. Throughout the year, we celebrate so many festivals created by our Religion that this keeps us connected to our God. Be it a birth, a marriage or a death, all these important events are influenced by Religion. Religion has created such rituals that make us link both our good times and bad times with God.

Unfortunately, it is only a kindergarten

While Religion is so important, it is most unfortunate that it is only a kindergarten. What does this mean? It means that Religion teaches us about God, makes us live a good moral life, and gives us certain rituals and superstitions to follow, but thereafter, it doesn't lead us to the Ultimate Truth about God and help us unite with the Divine, although directly or indirectly, it preaches that this is our Ultimate Goal of life.

Each Religion is committed to its God and makes us blindly follow its scripture and theology. We grow with it and do not question anything that it advocates. This happens because we fear that questioning can be misunderstood as blasphemy, showing a lack of respect for our religious customs. Though it is very important to

build the basic foundation of our trust in God, we get stuck in the kindergarten of Religion. We don't grow beyond that to realize the Truth about God.

Imagine, we went to a school, we learned the alphabet and got stuck in nursery! We did not graduate with any specialized knowledge. Would that make us good global citizens? Absolutely not! We need to grow beyond a kindergarten to achieve anything in life. So it is with Religion! We need to grow beyond our Religion to learn the Truth about God. We need to go on a quest to realize the Truth about the self and God. Most unfortunately, Religion does not do that. It teaches us the basics of God and then gets us to go round and round, in the merry-go-round of life till we die, without realizing the Truth.

Most of us don't grow up beyond Religion

It is sad that most of us, probably 99 % of the believers in God, do not grow up beyond Religion to realize the Truth about God. God is a Power, the very Life Energy within us, the Spirit, the Soul. But even though we read this a million times, hear it a thousand times, we still don't know this because we are so ingrained in our religious beliefs that it becomes impossible for us to go beyond our Religion to become Spiritual. It is like being in the kindergarten class all our life. How sad, isn't it? But this is the Truth!

We are adults in all senses but in Religion, we are just nursery kids, kids that are at the ABC level of life. We have learned nothing about the Truth of God. We so blindly believe in our Religion that we have not discerned the Truth of the Spirit. Although most Religions, if not all, proclaim that the *kingdom* of God is within and that wherever you go, God is with you, we are so blind that we

just do not understand the Truth of God. We live and die in the kindergarten of Religion and we don't Spiritually graduate in life.

We can do very little with it, but nothing without it

In today's world scenario, some people think that Religion is of little use. The modern world seems to believe that Religion is just a set of dogmas, myths, rituals, and superstitions that make no sense and this is very dangerous because more and more people will stop following a Religion and believing in God.

While we can do little with Religion, we can do nothing without it! Can we graduate in computer science and biotechnology and become a genius without going to kindergarten? However advanced we may grow into space technology, we can do nothing without kindergarten. So, it is very important to have Religion in our life. Without Religion, man can do nothing! Man cannot grow into anything without the power of Religion. Religion is absolutely necessary for man's growth in the world. We should never underestimate the power and the need for Religion. The world definitely needs Religion and just as a graduate needs kindergarten to become anything in the world, Religion is needed for a believer in God to believe in the Divine and ultimately realize the Truth about Spirituality and God. Let us not underestimate the power of Religion!

*Religion teaches us the basics of the Truth.
It tells us about God but doesn't take us to the root.
It makes us believe in rituals and superstition,
But doesn't help us achieve our Goal of Liberation.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 1

What is Religion?



- While there are many Religions in this world, most Religions have a similar path, except that the destination is 'their own God'.
- There is no doubt that each Religion is instrumental in making this world a peaceful place teaching ethics and morals to its followers.
- The name of God is just an identity of a Power that is beyond human comprehension. It is Religion that starts our journey to God.
- When man realizes that there is a Power beyond human comprehension that controls the results of his actions, he realizes the existence of a Power we call God.
- The modern world seems to believe that Religion is just a set of dogmas, myths, rituals, and superstitions that make no sense - this is very dangerous for the world because if more and more people stop following a Religion and believing in God, there will be chaos and anarchy.
- While we can do little with Religion, we can do nothing without it! We can't graduate without attending a kindergarten.
- But it is sad that most of us don't grow up beyond Religion to realize the Truth about God. We live and die in the kindergarten of Religion and we don't Spiritually graduate in life.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Anybody who is asked this question will feel that it is a very simple subject. It is about the Spirit, the Soul - what else? While it surely is about the Spirit or Soul, very few people actually understand the true meaning of Spirituality, how essential it is for us to achieve our Ultimate Goal of life and what a key role it plays for us to be peaceful and blissful. Let us discover the true meaning of Spirituality.

It is the study about the Spirit or the Soul

While Spirituality is known to be all about the study of the Spirit, the Soul or the *Atman*, it is a lesser-known fact that the very life itself, that is within us, and the power of our breath - is the Spirituality that we are talking about. The moment there is no breath, there is death. This happens when the Spirit inside us, the Soul, the *Atman* leaves us.

While this seems simple, there are many unanswered questions about the Spirit. Where does the Spirit go at death? When and how does the Spirit enter us at birth? What exactly is this Spirit that we are talking about? Is it the life force that gives us breath or is it some magical power that is inside our body? When we try to understand the body composition, most people feel it is made up of the body, the mind, and the Soul or Spirit. But while we can see the body, and feel the presence of the mind, we are unable to feel the Divine Presence of the Soul. We know it is there, within us. We realize it is the life force that keeps

us alive, but where it is and how it functions is unknown to most people.

Spirituality - a shadow of humanity

In fact, Spirituality is a shadow of humanity, wherever there is humanity, there is Spirituality. If there is no Spirituality, humanity ends. So, it seems that Spirituality is the cause, humanity is the effect. Humanity exists because of Spirituality. If we remove Spirituality, there will be no humanity. While this is easily said and seems to be understandable without any complication, it is very difficult for one to realize its true meaning. This actually means we are nothing other than the Spirit. While we may look like a body-mind-ego complex, in reality, we are the Soul that is embodied in the prison of the body, mind, and ego. But we don't realize this fact. We don't realize that Spirituality, in fact, is not the shadow of humanity, it is the very essence of it, it is the cause of it!

Consider the ocean and a wave - the ocean is the cause, the wave is the effect. It is not that the ocean exists because of the wave. Rather the wave exists because of the ocean. So also, it is not that the Spirit exists because of us, but rather we exist because of the Spirit. If there was no Spirit or Soul, we would not have existed.

Understanding Body, Mind, and Spirit

It may seem that we are a human body and a mind that has a Spirit. In reality, it is something else. We are a Spirit that has a human body and a mind. When we started our journey as a fertilized human cell or a zygote, we had no body. We were just energy, the energy that is the Spirit or the Soul. This Soul that started its journey after

fertilization, evolved and grew up to develop a body around it. In fact, every cell of the over 30 trillion cells in our body, has the Life Energy in it. It is not that the Spirit exists just in the heart or the brain. It is everywhere, from the top of our head to the tip of our toe. The Spirit, the Soul or the *Atman* is in every cell of the body.

Science has discovered that while we may seem to be a mass of flesh, each cell of the human body is broken up into molecules, atoms, electrons, neutrons, protons until we reach the tiniest particle known as Quarks. Even these tiny subatomic particles are not matter, but energy as discovered by scientists in their laboratory test of Quantum Physics where they discovered the 'Wave-Particle Duality'. Each cell of the human body, according to science is nothing but energy.

What is this energy? It is Divine Energy that flows in each cell of our body, a true miracle created by the Creator. We need to start a quest to truly understand our human body. Let us realize that we are not what we seem to be. We are embodied Souls that are far more powerful than what we have ever imagined. We need to interpret and understand what we are not. Thereafter, we will come to realize what or who we truly are.

Realizing what we are not

To get to the bottom of the root and to understand who we truly are, we must start with the understanding of what we are not. Are we the gross physical body? How can we be the gross body that is constantly changing? In about every 7 years, science tells us that every cell of our body is reborn. That means, if somebody has crossed 49 years of age, they have already changed their body 7 times. This is

the 8th edition of them, so as to say because the physical body has changed 7 times as its cells die and regenerate. So, while there is no doubt that we have a body, we are definitely not the body, just like we have a house but we are not the house, we have a car but we are not the car, and we have clothes but we are not the clothes. We may wear clothes, live in a house or own a car, but that does not make us become any of these. Therefore, we are not the body, although there is no doubt that we have a gross body.

Then what are we? Are we the mind? If you study carefully, you will realize that you have seen your eyes, your hair, your hands, and your legs and even an x-ray of your heart and brain. But have you ever seen the mind? The mind is an imposter! It does not exist in reality but it stops us from realizing that it is an imposter. It is our biggest enemy! ME, the Mind along with the Ego stops us from the realization of the Truth. The mind is a rascal! If we try to find the mind, we can't. The mind is a bundle of thoughts that appears to be the mind. Once we realize that the mind as such does not exist, we will transcend it.

Our quest will make us realize clearly that we are not the body that we appear to be. We are not even the mind that proclaims, "This is me." Then who are we, what are we?

Inferring what we truly are

We realize that we are not the body that we appear to be. We are not even the mind that is so vibrant because if we try to find the mind, we realize there is no mind. But there is no doubt that we exist. Don't you know that you exist and that I exist? If we introspect deeply, then we realize that we are the Spirit, the Soul, the *Prana* or the Life Energy that is within. This is Realization by Inference.

There are things that cannot be proved, like the Law of Gravity. While we are absolutely sure the law exists, it cannot be proved until we experience it and we realize that such a law is in existence by inference. We can only intuitively know it by realization of the Truth or by inference. Therefore, we know by inference we are the Soul, the *Atman* or the Spirit.

The Life Energy within

If we are the Life Energy within, not the body and mind that we appear to be, then what exactly are we and how do we realize the Truth? The fact is that we are energy and that this energy is a part of the universal cosmic Divine energy. We are the Soul, the Spirit, the Life Energy that arrives at birth and departs at death. This Life Energy or Soul is in each of our cells. Sadly, most of us don't realize it. Spirituality is all about this realization. It is known as self-realization and then God-Realization.

Spirituality is going beyond Religion

If one is interested in the subject, then one must spend more time contemplating Spirituality, eventually renouncing all the myth, the rituals, the dogmas and the superstitions of Religion. To become Spiritual, one does not have to be highly religious. Many people think that we need to pray a lot, spending time in the temple, mosque or church. They don't realize that Spirituality is about realization. It is about opening our 'real eyes'.

Spirituality is about questioning our belief system, starting from our Religion, our scriptures and everything that is connected with our faith in God. Spirituality is about asking questions and investigating what is

unknown until we realize the Truth. It is being passionate about God and Liberation and nothing else.

While a Spiritual person lives in this world as a normal person, the fact is that a Spiritual person evolves beyond body, mind, and ego to be the *Atman*, the Spirit or Soul. The Spirit is a dot of the cosmic power. It is a manifestation of the Divine. Those who realize this Divine Truth are liberated from all misery and sorrow and are unified with the Divine. Thus, Spirituality is far beyond Religion. While Religion is just a kindergarten, Spirituality is graduation. It not only makes us believe in the Divine but makes us realize that we are nothing but Divinity, a manifestation of God. We need to realize this Truth, and in fact, this is the Ultimate Goal of our life.

*Spirituality is the study of the Soul,
It takes us towards our Ultimate Goal.
It makes us understand we are not ego, body, and mind,
And then it helps us realize the Truth and God we find.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 2

What is Spirituality?



- Spirituality is known to be all about the study of the Spirit, the Soul or the *Atman*.
- Just as the ocean is the cause and a wave is the effect, similarly, Spirit is the cause and we are the mere effects. It is not that the Spirit exists because of us, but rather we exist because of the Spirit.
- It may seem that we are a human body and a mind that has a Spirit. In reality, we are a Spirit that has a human body and a mind.
- When we started our journey as a fertilized human cell or a zygote, we had no body. We were just energy, the Spirit or the Soul and later developed a body around it.
- Science has discovered that while we may seem to be a mass of flesh, each cell of the human body is broken up into subatomic particles, and even these tiny parts are not matter but energy.
- This energy is Divine Energy that flows in each cell of our body, a true miracle created by the Creator.
- Let us realize that we are not what we seem to be. We are embodied Souls. This is called Realization by Inference.
- To become Spiritual, one does not have to be highly religious. Spirituality is about questioning our belief system and realization of the Truth. It is about opening our 'real eyes' and being passionate about God and Liberation.



RELIGION IS A KINDERGARTEN TO SPIRITUALITY

While we know what Religion is and we have some idea about what Spirituality is, we need to realize one very important fact - Religion is a kindergarten to Spirituality.

What does this mean? It means that if we want to achieve the Ultimate Goal of life, and be liberated from misery and suffering, then we need Religion. It does not matter what Religion we follow, but we need a Religion that will help us build our basic foundation of faith, hope, trust, and enthusiasm. Without Religion, we cannot evolve Spiritually and thus we cannot achieve the Ultimate Goal of life.

Religion teaches us about God

Religion is the way to learn about God when we are just children. When we are born, we need guidance in every matter, not only from our parents and family but also from our teachers at school. How else would we learn to brush our teeth, to write, to speak - all this is taught to us. Similarly, as kids, we are introduced to God through religion.

If there was no Religion, we would learn everything else but not know anything about God. We are taught as kids to go to church, temple or mosque. Every time we mention these places of worship, it does not mean that it does not include other places of worship like a gurdwara or monastery or synagogue. It may be any place of worship

as per the Religion we follow, but we are taught to go there and to pray. We are taught to fold our hands. Religion does many things – it makes us understand God, believe in God and also love and trust God. It makes us follow certain rituals and superstitions that makes God real in our life. While these may or may not be relevant in our achievement of the Ultimate Life Goal, Religion must be appreciated for its role in building our belief as we grow up. Our parents and teachers teach us both, to love God and to fear God. This has a positive consequence. It builds in us morals, values and ethics that make us good human beings.

How else could children understand God?

If there were no Religions, then it would be up to parents to teach children about God. In that case, each parent would teach something different to their children and there would be no organized thought about God. This would only be confusing because as kids would speak to their friends, they would differ in opinion. Even with organized Religion, we can still see the amount of conflict in thought between one Religion and another. If there was no Religion, one wonders what would be the scenario. Of course, there are people who believe that probably if there was no Religion and if all kids were just taught to believe in God, it would be much better. Then there would be no war between one Religion and another. There would be no competition as to whose Religion was better. The basic purpose of Religion is primarily to teach kids about God. While Religions intend to teach this, in their over enthusiasm to grow the popularity of the Religion, people misinterpret the message and become fanatics. That is a pity!

Thus, Religion is actually meant to be only a kindergarten, nothing else! Once we understand that God exists, then it is for us to use our intellect and discover the truth about God. After all, nobody has seen God, met God, but everybody can experience God. God exists everywhere, in the sun, the moon, the stars, the birds, the animals, and the flowers. All these are said to be creations of God, but in reality, they are manifestations of God. They appear as they are, but in reality, they are God appearing as nature. This is what Religion should have taught us but unfortunately, because of the personal Gods of each Religion, we have been taught to believe in our Religion and our personal God and nothing else.

Every myth has a purpose with it

While Religions do a lot of good, they are to be blamed for one thing. They teach us a lot of myths - things that are far from the Truth. Why is this so? As kids, we cannot understand God easily. Thus, Religion has no other choice. It is difficult to teach kids that God is formless and nameless. How would kids understand this logic? Kids need to know that God lives somewhere and does something. This is something even adults who are over 50 or 60 still don't clearly understand. So how can we expect kids to understand that God cannot have skin and bone, but that God is a Power? Thus, Religion uses myth and superstition to teach us about God. While these are in principle, not the Truth, they may have certain important benefits. They build our faith in God. They build our love for God and eventually, they take us towards God.

Every ritual has a purpose. For example, in Hindu temples, we are told to break a coconut. In reality, this is an

exercise that is meant to help us overcome our anger. But not many people pay attention to the thought or reason that goes behind the ritual. We get caught in the myth.

Once, a father was explaining to his child that the moon was up in the sky. Instead of looking at the ball of light in the heavens, the child thought the finger that was pointing to the moon was the moon.

Such is the case with many rituals. In Shiva temples, we perform *Abhishekh*, which symbolically means that we cleanse ourselves when we pour water, milk, honey, curd, and sugar on the Lingam, the symbol of Lord Shiva. But people understand this ritual very differently. They think it is us giving God a shower. Ridiculous! But that is what a myth does. While the purpose may be positive, a ritual is misunderstood and this makes Religion impractical and useless. If the ones who teach Religion and who explain it to us were careful, then we would understand the true meaning of prayer and God. Millions of people repeat religious slogans known as mantra and say "*Om Namah Shivaya*," "*Om Ganapatyae Namah*," and "*Om Namho Bhagvate Vasudevaya*" but they don't know the meaning. They don't even realize what they mean. They chant these Spiritual and Religious mantras for decades and die repeating the mantra without understanding its meaning. It actually means "*Om*," a symbol of the Divine, "*Namah*," Namaskara or bow down, and then the name of God. It means "O Divine! I bow down to You as a manifestation of Shiva, "*Om Namah Shivaya*," "O Divine! I bow down to You as a manifestation of Ganesha, "*Om Ganapatyae Namah*," "O Divine! I bow down to You as a manifestation of Vasudev or Krishna, "*Om Namho Bhagvate Vasudevaya*." When will we stop praying without understanding what

we are saying? Should we just pray or should we understand what we say to God?

These are just some instances or examples of how myths can be both useful as well as harmful. But each myth that was created was actually done so with a positive intention.

Religion does not take us further

While Religion teaches us the basics about God, it does not make us realize that we are a manifestation of the Divine. It does not make us realize the Truth about God. It lets us believe in the myth and we live and die believing the mythology of Religion. We don't go on a quest to discover the Truth. It is sad to mention here that this is because most Religions are selfish and want followers to be blindly loyal to that Religion rather than discover the Truth about God. If we discovered the Truth, then we would not really follow Religion and we would stop going to our temple, church or mosque. This would be the end of Religion. So, Religion it seems, has no option but to let people remain in ignorance so that people continue to follow Religion, praying to a God with name and form.

Religion should only teach the basics, the ABC about God to us and then let us discover the Truth. This is the role of Religion and this should be the role, nothing else!

A kindergarten can only do that much

What does a kindergarten do? Does it teach us mathematics, science, and computers? No, it does not! It just teaches us the basics. It teaches us a language and

common-sense practical learning that prepares us for primary and high school, and college education. Imagine if kindergartens were to start teaching us the university curriculum. That would be madness. Kids would go crazy. They would not understand anything. So it is with Religion! It is just a kindergarten to Spirituality.

Unfortunately, Religion imprisons us to be in a kindergarten throughout our life. We get hung on to our Religion, its myth, superstitions and become addicted to it. Religion must make us understand that God exists. In fact, it should encourage us to provoke our minds and our intellect to delve further and realize the Truth about God. Instead, it makes us slaves to myth, rituals, and superstitions and we live and die believing in the mythology of Religion. As adults we should understand what has gone wrong with us, and what is going wrong with our children and while we encourage our children to follow Religion, we should not encourage them to follow myths, rituals, and superstitions blindly. We should encourage our children to explore God, the Truth about God and realize the Power called God.

Going beyond basics

As intelligent human beings, we must go beyond basics. We must try to realize the Truth. We must open our 'real eyes' to see what is myth and what is the Truth. Unfortunately, we are blind. While less than 1% of the world is visually blind, 99% of the world is Spiritually blind. We must open our Spiritual eyes and go beyond the basics of Religion to realize the Truth about God.

God is our goal, our Ultimate Goal and He does not live in institutions that most people misunderstand as the abode

of God. God is omnipresent, present everywhere, omnipotent, all-powerful, and omniscient, knows everything. We should not limit God to be a person, a saint or a statue. God is a Power beyond human comprehension.

If we just live and die following the dictates of our Religion, we will remain ignoramus and not find out the truth about God. We need to go on a quest, a search to find out the Truth about God, about heaven and hell, about life and death. This is not taught to us by our Religion. Our Religion teaches us the basics and then makes us go on a merry-go-round all through life till we die. It is most unfortunate that while Religion is an excellent kindergarten to Spirituality, it is an enemy to our Ultimate Goal of realizing God. It, in fact, stops us from this Goal.

We need to liberate ourselves from the rituals, dogmas, superstitions and the mythology of Religion, and search for the Truth. We do not need to change our Religion because all Religions have the same agenda. They are all good kindergartens. We need to get a TC, a Transfer Certificate from our kindergarten and apply to the university of Spirituality, a path that is beyond Religion. It is not affiliated to any Religion. It is only focused on the Truth about life.

Searching for God

As intelligent beings, we need to go on a passionate quest in search of God. We need to ask: who is God, where is God and what is God? We need to understand what our Religion is saying. We need to respect the fact that our Religion is teaching us about God, about faith, hope, and trust in the almighty. This is absolutely fine. But then, we need to ask questions. We need to find out where God

could possibly be. Could God be made of skin and bone? If we were to go to heaven or hell, who goes, as the body is cremated or buried right here on earth. We should not accept rituals with blind faith. We should not follow superstitions just because somebody told us to. We need to go within and we need to question everything that we do till we realize the Truth.

Our goal is God, the Creator, the one who gave us life. We must fall in love with our God, whatever be our Religion. This must be clear that Spirituality is not about changing our Religion but going beyond it. It is about using our Religion as a basic foundation and then climbing beyond the basics of our Religion to discover God, the Truth about God and to realize God in the temple of our heart. In fact, all Religions mention somehow, somewhere that the *Kingdom* of God is within, that God is wherever we are and that we are the manifestation of the Divine. No Religion denies this but it is in fine print. The other dogmas and rituals overtake this Truth and we sink in the myth of our Religion.

If we really love our God, whether it is Jesus, Allah, Shiva, Krishna or any God that we believe in, then, we must go in search of our God. It does not matter if it is the Holy Spirit, our Father in heaven, our beloved prophet or our saint. Our passionate love for our God must lead us to that God, take us to where that God is and until then we must not rest. This is our goal of life, our Ultimate Goal and we must achieve this.

Questioning every belief

While it may sound like we are going against our Religion, we need to question every belief that we have been taught.

We need to question every ritual and superstition that we are told about. This is the only way to realize the Truth about God.

In Hindus, there is a belief called *Vastu* which means the 'science of architecture'. It means that our happiness and our misery is based upon certain *Vastu* or the way our homes and offices are built. So, if we want to be happy, we need to break our doors, windows and rebuild our home as per *Vastu*. In China, a similar Energy principle is called Feng Shui. As intelligent beings, why do we follow this myth? Why do we let superstition overtake our intelligence? We believe in palmistry and astrology and behave like little kids who are told fairytales. Till when will we believe in the dogmas of Religion? When will we question this myth and realize the Truth? We should not be embarrassed or feel shy to question our Religion. After all, we are doing it because we are in search of God. For this amazing quest, asking questions is just one way of reaching the final Truth. If we are scared to ask questions, if we are controlled by our Religion and do not question, then we will live and die in ignorance without realizing the Truth.

There is no doubt that Religion is good, all Religions are excellent kindergartens, but can we live all our life in kindergarten? Imagine a 70-year-old still learning ABC in a nursery class. Well, that is the case with most of us. Many Religions just zap their followers with beliefs that are blindly followed and we live and die in the kindergarten of life. It is time to break this tradition, not to blindly accept every myth we are taught to follow, every ritual and superstition. We must break free from this imprisonment and realize the Truth.

Evolving from kindergarten till we graduate

We need to ask questions and find answers till we graduate. How does it happen in life? Don't we evolve from kindergarten, then to middle school and high school and finally to university till we graduate and get our Masters? So it is with life! We need to go beyond Religion. We cannot get stuck in the kindergarten of Spirituality.

Our goal is to discover the Life Energy within, the Spirit, the Soul or the *Atman*. We need to discover that life that is within us, that life which gives us breath, without which we would be dead. We need to discover the Truth about that. It means we need to ask questions about who we truly are. Are we the body, the mind or the Soul? What are we in reality? Why are we here? What is the purpose of our life? We need to ask questions until we discover the Truth. It is called self-realization and God-realization by most Religions of the world. We need to question until we find the answers. It will be like a giant jigsaw puzzle. We need to find the pieces one by one till finally, we solve the puzzle. We must get all the pieces in place and we must see the clear picture for ourselves.

To realize the truth, we need the help of a Spiritual Master or Guru, who takes us from darkness to light, from ignorance to wisdom. We need to find a Spiritual Master who will help us realize the Truth. Of course, finally Truth cannot be taught, for what is taught may be true or not, but what is realized intuitively is the Truth.

Ultimately, we need to realize the Truth and that comes from our own self-effort. We need to ask questions and investigate until we finally realize the Truth. We have an intellect and this will intuitively make us realize the Truth.

If our quest is true and genuine and we passionately seek our God, we will find God. But we need to ask questions, we need to go beyond Religion and we need to Spiritually evolve climbing from one peak to another, from one realization to another, overcoming one myth and another, till we finally see the Truth, plain and pure as it is and then we will realize God. First, we need to graduate from the kindergarten of Religion to start this journey. If we remain in the kindergarten all our life, then we will never start to graduate Spiritually and we will never realize the Truth about ourselves and about God.

Most of humanity just goes around in circles

It is a real pity, that most of humanity does not graduate. They do not evolve, do not go beyond their Religion and they remain in kindergarten all through life. As kids, we grow up from wearing short pants and start wearing long pants. But Spiritually, we are still in our short pants. We have learned nothing, we just go round and round in the merry-go-round of life and we finally die. We don't discover the God we so passionately want because we are held as hostage in the kindergarten of Religion. Unless we have the courage to step out and ask questions, unless we have the common sense to question every myth and superstition, we shall never evolve and realize the Truth and God.

The choice is ours. If we really seek God, want God, Love God, then we must go on a quest to find God. We must realize that we don't have to change or leave our Religion. We need to use our Religion as a kindergarten and then we need to graduate. We need to go beyond and realize God, and that is our Ultimate Goal of life.

*Just like children are taught about Santa Claus,
Religion shows us God and then makes us pause.
We get so carried away by the fairy tale,
Soon our life gets over and it's sad we fail.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 3

Religion is a Kindergarten to Spirituality



- We need Religion to help us build our basic foundation of faith, hope, trust, and enthusiasm. Religion is the way to learn about God when we are just children.
- As kids it is difficult to understand that God is formless and nameless. Kids need to know that God lives somewhere and does something.
- It is up to us to use our intellect and discover the truth about God. After all, nobody has seen God, met God, but everybody can experience God.
- God exists everywhere, in the sun, the moon, the stars, the birds, the animals, and the flowers. All these are said to be creations of God, but in reality, they are the manifestations of God.
- This is what Religion should have taught us but unfortunately, because of the personal Gods of each Religion, we have been taught to believe in our Religion and our personal God and nothing else.
- Don't we evolve from kindergarten to middle school, then high school and finally to university till we graduate? With the help of a Spiritual Master, we need to go beyond Religion. We cannot get stuck in the kindergarten of Spirituality.



RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

To understand a little bit more about how Religion is a kindergarten to Spirituality, it becomes essential to study the Religions of the world.

From records available, one of the oldest Religions is *Sanatana Dharma*, a faith which went on to become Hinduism much later. This faith is said to have emerged about 5,000 years ago. Another prehistoric Religion is believed to be Jainism, but its origins are confusing as it was organized much later, around the 7th Century BC.

Around the Middle East, Judaism is said to have started over 3,000 years ago and this Religion branched into Christianity and Islam, all these being monotheistic - Religions that believe in one God. Another Religion that is over 3000 years old is Zoroastrianism. This also was started in the region around the Middle East and was yet another monotheistic Religion.

In the area around China, the Religions that are known are Taoism and Confucianism. These emerged about 2500 years ago and spread to other parts of the Far East including Korea and Japan. While there are many other small Religions across the world, notable amongst them are Buddhism and Sikhism that have spread their influence globally.

What are the major Religions of the world today?

It is said that 3 major Religions are responsible for more

than half the earth's population today. They are Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.

Christianity

Christianity is the world's most populous Religion. Though it is broken up into hundreds of denominations, most of the followers, Americans, Canadians, and Europeans, directly or indirectly, believe in Jesus Christ from whom Christianity derived its origin and name. Christians are expected to know and obey God's commandments. They trust in their God, Jesus, putting him above everything else. They believe in and follow the Bible, the scripture of Christianity. The general practices include baptism, confirmation, and communion. Most Christians go to church every week, mostly on Sundays. They celebrate Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Many Christians revere the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the triple manifestation of God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They respect the church as a mediator between man and God, though some reject this concept.

Christians believe that Jesus died to atone for the sins of humanity. His sacrificial death opened up the gates of paradise which had been shut by Adam and Eve's transgression. This is the original sin committed by man and is peculiar to Christianity which believes that we are all born sinners.

Christianity believes in the concept of heaven and hell and the day of judgement after death. Most Christians accept the existence of devils, angels, and spirits. Christianity lays emphasis on humanitarian values and Christians are encouraged to donate one-tenth of their earning as tithe. In their enthusiasm to spread their Religion, Christian

missionaries have established schools, colleges, hospitals and orphanages throughout the world through which they have spread the message of Christianity.

While Christianity is a great Religion and helps Christians build faith and live with hope, the question that remains unanswered is how would we ultimately go to God as the body dies and is buried on earth. Then who will go to heaven or hell?

Islam

One amongst the most popular Religions of the world, it is the fastest-growing Religion, mostly followed in Africa, the middle east, large areas of Asia and Europe. Islam is derived from the word *salaam*, often interpreted as peace. Many people also believe that it comes from the word Submission or surrender, meaning, surrendering to one God.

The message of Islam was revealed through the prophet Mohammed nearly 1500 years ago through the angel, Gabriel and preserved in the Holy Quran. The followers of Islam are called Muslims – those who submit themselves to the Will of God.

While Mohammed is considered to be the founder of Islam, its roots date back to earlier prophets like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Muslims refer to God Almighty as Allah. They strictly avoid drinking alcohol and eating pork. They also believe in angels and the final day of judgement.

Muslims are expected to pray 5 times every day facing Mecca. They must fast and follow several restrictions during the month of Ramzan. Every Muslim must make a

pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime at least. Muslims have a religious duty known as Jihad, meaning struggle. The actual meaning is to struggle to resist sin like temptation, doubt, disbelieve and despair. But some Muslims think that *Jihad* is a struggle to make the world adopt Islam. Those who fight in this *Jihad* are said to get treasures not only in this world but paradise in the next.

Muslims give very great importance to the Quran, the book of Divine guidance. While Islam is a very passionate Religion and Muslims follow its teachings to go to paradise or *Jannat* after death, the question that still remains unanswered is who will enjoy the paradise if our body is dead and buried under the soil, right here on earth? Who will go and enjoy paradise?

Hinduism

Hinduism is said to be the world's oldest Religion, and while it is full of rituals, superstitions, and dogmas today, it started off as the Hindu faith or the Sanatana *Dharma* about 5000 years ago. Today's Hinduism advocates 4 goals of life – *Dharma* – righteous duty, *Artha* – wealth, *Kama* – desire and *Moksha* – Liberation. Hinduism believes in thousands of God and unlike the Bible or the Quran that are the only scriptures of Christianity and Islam respectively, Hinduism has several scriptures including the Vedas, the Bhagwat Gita, the Ramayana, the Puranas, and the Upanishads.

While the Hindu faith started off with one God, formless and nameless, whom they referred to as Brahman, the faith transformed into a Religion that has a multiplicity of Gods and deities. What hasn't changed between the ancient Hindu faith and modern-day Hinduism is the

Ultimate Goal of Life, Moksha or Liberation. Today's Hinduism celebrates several festivals like Diwali, Ganesha, Durga pooja, Ram Navami, Janmashtami, and Maha Shivaratri. Each festival is celebrated in devout fervor of the God that is believed in. The Religion has lost its original sanctity, which was based on the teachings of the Upanishads, the essence of the Vedas, texts that were received by the Rishis, the Hindu saints and sages 5000 years ago.

The essential message of the original Hindu faith is that we are not the ego, mind, and body, but the *Atman*, the Divine Spirit. This has got completely diluted in the complicated rituals and dogmas prescribed in modern-day Hinduism.

While the Ultimate Goal of Hinduism is still Moksha or Liberation, one can get easily confused by the contradictory beliefs of the original Hindu faith and modern-day Hinduism.

What are the other Religions in the world?

Apart from the main Religions listed above, there are many other Religions that are popular in the world today. Let us glance at what these Religions advocate. They may be different as they span from East to West, but there is one thing they do not fail the test. They all believe in a God whom we have to face when we end our life.

Buddhism

Founded by a Hindu Prince Siddhartha Gautama in the 5th century BC, who became Buddha or the Enlightened One, Buddhism is an evolution of Hinduism and was intended to eliminate all the myth, the rituals, the dogmas, and

superstitions. It focused on non-violence and the attainment of Nirvana through belief in the 4 noble Truths and following a middle path known as the 8-Fold Path. While Buddhism spread not only in Asia but around the world, it is divided and subdivided today, and it has lost the original message that was preached by the Buddha, whose essential teachings were truly enlightening. This is one Religion that clearly does not define the role of God in life. But since it believes in Karma and Divine justice, it obviously accepts the role of a Divine Power without specific mention to God and more focus on how we should live.

Sikhism

Another Religion that originated from the original Hindu faith, with a positive blend of Islamic and Sufi influences, Sikhism is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak during the 5th century in Northern India. Its place of worship is called the Gurudwara. Sikhs are often identified by the turban they wear.

Judaism

One of the most ancient Religions of the Jewish people of the world, it seems to have originated over 3000 years ago as outlined in the book of Genesis. Abraham is regarded as the founder of not just Judaism, but what later went on to become Christianity and Islam. The most popular prophet after Abraham was Moses, known for the parting of the Red Sea and the 10 commandments. The followers of Judaism are known as Jews. The Jews consider YHWH – Yahweh as their God, but over the centuries, after Judaism split into Christianity and then into Islam, Judaism ceased to be one of the main Religions of the world. The principal

belief of this ancient Religion is that God exists. He recreated the Universe and controls it. He is Spiritual and not physical.

Confucianism

In and around China, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam, people believe in the teachings of Confucius, a philosopher who lived around the 5th century BC. This went on to become the Chinese traditional Religion as it blended with Buddhism and other local beliefs. Its followers do not particularly believe in a God but follow a lot of rituals including the worship of ancestors.

Taoism

Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism is said to have lived around the time of Confucius. The Taoists believe in the universe being energy or “Tao” (pronounced as Dow). They focus on health and vitality and on the Chi – the *prana* or breath. Taoism is also famous for its Ying Yang concept – the universal law of opposites. Just as in other Religions, Lao Tzu became popularly venerated as a God, but due to the communist influence, most of the Chinese Religion’s heritage was destroyed.

Jainism

Another ancient Religion of India dating back to the pre-historic age got formally instituted only in the 7th century BC when excessive rituals of Hinduism became intolerable. Jains believe that this whole world is created by life and Soul. They give importance to non-violence. Like Buddhism, Mahavira, the most popular revered Jain Saint, advocated that the world is full of suffering and we

must overcome desire and transcend the eternal cycle of death and rebirth and escape from misery. They called this Nirvana or Moksha. The Jains strongly believe in Karma. Due to their belief that focused on non-violence and renunciation, Jainism called for great sacrifice and self-denial or Tapasya to attain the Ultimate Objective and it continues to be popular mostly in India.

The Bahá'í Faith

One of the world's youngest Religions, the Bahá'í Faith or Bahaism, believes that God revealed Himself through a series of Divine messages to Bahá'u'lláh. The key belief is to have a unified world. It began in Persia or Iran and spread across many parts. It believes that God is beyond human comprehension.

Zoroastrianism

It is one of the oldest monotheistic Religions of the world. It believes in one uncreated Creator whom the Zoroastrians worship as Ahura Mazda. The Religion is said to have originated between the 10th century BC and the 6th century BC. It is accepted by the world that it had considerable influence on the western Religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as they have concepts of one God, a day of Judgement and heaven and hell.

Shintoism

The word Shinto is derived from 2 Japanese words – Shin and Tao which means the way of the Gods. It has no founder and no scripture. It is an amalgamation of many local and regional traditions of Japan. It believes that action is more important than words. Its focus is on *Kami*

or Spirit and its goal is for its people to understand this Divine power of nature. It is known as the most popular Religion in Japan. Prayers are done both at home and public places. Shintoism coexisted with Buddhism and has close ties with the beliefs of Hinduism.

New religions keep evolving every day

As we reach the end in our study of the Religions of the world, what do we realize? We realize that where ever there is civilization and existence of man, a religion also exists. Some people who are new to the study of theology wonder, how Religions evolved in continents like America and Australia. These were discovered barely a few centuries ago and since there was no inhabitation, there was no religion. Countries, that wanted to conquer the world, including Britain, Spain, and Portugal, not only conquered lands but also planted their Religion to grow and spread their Religion.

If one looks into the civilizations of pre-historic times, there was no organized Religion. The tribal people followed certain rituals, beliefs, and practices which eventually became a Religion or became associated with some other Religion. For instance, in ancient Irish Celtic culture, popularly known as Paganism, a popular folklore called for keeping a small needle in front of young newborn children so that fairies would stay away thinking it was an iron rod. Such superstitions existed in ancient civilizations and people blindly believed in them. People feared God as they feared the perils of nature and they prayed to various types of Gods depending on their superstitious beliefs.

As the world evolved, Religions got more organized, and

followers chose to stick to one of the practical, popular Religions.

What do all Religions believe in?

If we look at religions, it is interesting to see how each Religion has got divided and subdivided into so many factions. They believe in one God, but they are not able to have consistency in their belief. Why? Because there is no simple truth that everyone can agree on. The truth is one, it's simple, it is to do with Spirituality, something beyond Religion. Unfortunately, the world gets easily carried away by a saint and very soon a new Religion is born.

Every now and then, somewhere on earth, a new Religion is born and so is a new God. God is not something that man can define or create. God defined is God denied. Religion, unfortunately, defines God as a person, a name who has form. God is beyond name and form. God is a Power, a Power beyond human comprehension. While each Religion helps us build our faith in God, unfortunately, it is not able to give us the Truth about God. Instead, Religions without realizing it, confuse us by calling their Saint their savior or their Prophet as God, thereby leading us on a wrong path in our search for the true meaning of God.

If we go further into studying Religions, none of them are wrong or bad. It is just that they give us a limited perspective. God is a Power, of course, He can do anything. He can perform any miracle. But is God someone who is made of bone and skin? This is a question that Religion ignores to answer. God is a Power that is within.

All Religions directly or indirectly talk about this. The Bible says the *kingdom of God is within you*. The Quran says *where ever you go, I am*. Hinduism says *Aham Brahmasmi* or *Shivoham*. What do all these terms mean? They mean that God is with us, within us. It also means the same thing that God is a Power, a Power that is everywhere, a Power that makes our heart beat, a Power that makes this entire universe continue existing. It's not that Religions refuse to accept this Truth. They do. But somewhere due to mythology, we get caught in some superstitions, rituals, and dogmas and we lose sight of the Truth.

Thus, we need to evolve Spiritually. We need Spirituality, not another Religion, but an advanced study of God, of the Spirit that is within and of the Power of the Creator. We need to go beyond Religion and realize the Truth through Spirituality.

While there are so many religions in the world, it is not surprising that over 10 to 15% of the people in the world today do not believe in God or they are not sure if God exists.

Some people are Atheist and some people Agnostic

The Atheist refuses to believe that there is a God. The main reason for atheism seems to be Religion. Some of these Atheists are confused with the concept of God and refuse to believe that somebody with skin and bone could be the creator of this universe. They get misled by the thousands of Gods that dozens of religions have created and they probably cannot digest the very concept of God.

There may also be a possibility that Atheists have not been correctly influenced by their family, teachers, and friends.

What would be the other reason for them to disbelieve in God, the Creator of this universe? Why would somebody with basic common sense refuse to accept that there is somebody who has created this universe? How could all this come about without a Creator, a Creator who we call God?

There are some people who are Agnostics. They are not sure whether God exists. That is perfectly okay. These agnostics can go on a quest and realize the Truth. It does not mean that agnostics do not believe in God. It probably means that agnostics do not believe in Religion. They are unable to accept the concept of God as per religion and they need to go on a Spiritual quest to find out the Truth.

Religions don't have the answer

With all due respect to all the Religions of the world, all these Religions talk of a personal God, a God that their followers believe in. It may be so that the ones who started the Religion, the ones who were responsible for it, may not have believed in a personal God themselves like the Buddha, Guru Nanak amongst others. However, today the followers of these Religions consider the one who originated the Religion to be their God.

All these Religions do justice in making us believe in God, helping us grow our faith, our hope, and our trust. But none of them directly help us realize the Truth about self and God. There might have been some ancient Religions that had some Concepts to help us realize God, but today these concepts are set aside. Instead, Religions have created their own rituals, dogmas, and superstitions that take us away from the Truth about God.

Today, it is said that the world has thousands of Religions, but none of them can help us realize God. They all help us build a foundation about God and then put us into a spin and we are lost in our Religion.

Therefore, if we truly want to realize God, we need to graduate from Religion, the kindergarten and go to Spirituality which is the university that will help us discover God.

*Religions are so many and Gods even more,
Not one or two, there are over a crore!
But if you stop and think of it,
That there is more than one God, it is nothing but a myth!*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 4

Religions of the World



- If one looks into the civilizations of pre-historic times, the pre-historic man had no organized Religion. The tribal people followed certain rituals, beliefs, and practices which eventually became a Religion or became associated with some other Religion.
- From records available, one of the oldest Religions is *Sanatana Dharma* which emerged about 5,000 years ago. This is a faith which went on to become Hinduism much later and became diluted with myths, rituals, dogmas, and superstitions.
- It is said that 3 major Religions are being followed by half the earth's population today. They are Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.
- If we go further into studying Religions, none of them are wrong or bad. It is just that they give us a limited perspective.
- With all due respect to all the Religions of the world, all these Religions talk of a personal God, a God that their followers believe in.
- Today, it is said that the world has thousands of Religions, but none of those can help us realize God. They all help us build a foundation about God and then put us into a spin and we are lost in our Religion.
- Therefore, if we truly want to realize God, we need to graduate from Religion, the kindergarten and go to Spirituality which is the university that will help us discover God.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Religion is different from Spirituality. It talks about belief in its GOD, its exclusive God. The moment a Religion talks of its *own* God and its *own* scripture, it becomes different from Spirituality. Spirituality is all about the study of the Spirit, the *Atman*, the Soul or the Life Energy within, which is none other than God. It is a study of the Universal Power that manifests everywhere on earth as the Divine Spirit or Life Energy. Let us understand the difference between Religion and Spirituality.

Religion accepts myth while Spirituality seeks the Truth

Religion is based on mythology, it makes its followers accept myth, whereas Spirituality refuses to accept myth. It is all about realization of the Truth. All the Religions of this world are based on mythology, myths that have become a part of their belief system. But Spirituality does not accept such myths. It questions mythology, questions every belief system and asks questions to justify the same in the various Religions of the world. There is so much folklore and traditional thinking in Religion that there is no encouragement to questioning these rituals and superstitions. Nobody is permitted to ask questions that are against the Religion for respect to the Religion. As per Spirituality, everything that we do must be justified and logically accepted, not followed just because it has been traditionally followed since ages.

Spirituality starts where Religion stops

Religion is the kindergarten to Spirituality. Just as school starts where kindergarten stops, so does Spirituality take over from Religion. It is unfortunate that Religion does not give its followers an answer to questions about God, clarifying all doubts. Most Religions have blind faith and traditional belief systems. There is no justification or explanation. It is the word of their God that matters. Spirituality is about realization of the Truth. It encourages questions, investigating concepts and beliefs, and helps people realize the Truth. Just as kindergarten stops at a basic level and then our education is taken over by advanced study, so also Spirituality takes over the philosophy of life and our belief system from the basics of Religion.

Religion prays to a God outside. Spirituality prays to a God inside

Another key difference between Religion and Spirituality is that they believe in different Gods. God in Religion is that one unshakable God, be it Jesus or Allah or Krishna or Shiva. Their God is one who has a name, a form and is a personal God. But Spirituality talks of God as a Power, a Power beyond human comprehension.

In Spirituality, God defined is God denied. God is not a person or a saint, God is a power that no human can paint. But Religions identify their Gods as a living saint or a mythological God that is said to have existed centuries ago. The followers of Religion believe in a God that is outside, but Spiritualists believe that God is within. God is the very Power that makes our heart beat. It is the power that gives us life, without God there would be no breath, there would be death.

Religion talks of God in Heaven, Spirituality talks of an Omnipresent Power

Religion insists that their God is in heaven or in Kailash or Brindavan - a place, an abode of their God. But Spirituality does not accept this theory. As per Spirituality, God is a Power beyond human comprehension. God does not live in temples or churches. God is omnipresent, a power that exists everywhere. This earth itself is a manifestation of the Divine. Religion limits its God but gives its God power that is limitless. Spirituality believes that God is everything. There is nothing other than God, everything is a manifestation of the Divine.

Religion follows, Spirituality questions

Followers of any Religion just follow the Religion. They are not encouraged to question God or the scripture, neither are they allowed to question the rituals and superstitions that the Religion believes in. It is a blind belief and nothing beyond. But Spirituality is all about asking questions, and understanding the Truth. If we don't understand, then we don't follow the path. In this particular point, Religion and Spirituality are at loggerheads as they are totally opposite in their belief system. Religious followers would often get upset if one asks questions about their Lord or their rituals and consider it blasphemy. But Spirituality encourages asking of questions and investigating to realize the Truth.

Religion believes, Spirituality realizes

Religions of the world ask their followers to believe in their God, to believe in their scriptures as the word of God. There is no proof or logic to it. It is God and thus they must

believe. But Spirituality doesn't encourage blind faith. It asks its followers to ask questions, investigate until they realize the Truth. There is no question of blind faith or blind belief. Everything must have a logic or an inference to believe in.

Religion fears God, Spirituality loves God

Most Religions ask their followers to fear God, to refrain from doing certain things as it would displease our God. But Spirituality is all about loving God and doing things not so much to please God or out of fear of God, but rather to love God. Spirituality is practical, as long as we are sure that it is not bad or wrong, we can do anything.

Religion prays to a God that we don't know, Spirituality knows the God that we pray to

What does this mean? We may pray to a mythological religious God, but we really don't know this God, who this God is or where this God is. But we are taught fairy tales about this God. In reality, such a God does not exist. Maybe such a Saint existed centuries ago, but we really don't know this God personally. Spirituality is different. It calls for knowing the God that is within, it is experiencing God within the power of the heartbeat. It is building a living connection with God, the Soul, the Spirit or the *Atman*. It is realizing God every moment that we live. Spirituality is seeing everything beautiful as the Divine.

Religion is theology – a study of God. Spirituality is philosophy – a way of life

Religions are based on their very own theology, each Religion has its own principles and belief systems. These

are often subdivided in each Religion, but the followers are asked to strictly follow the respective theology.

But Spirituality is more about philosophy or a way of life. It is a guiding system or belief system that guides us to live a moral and ethical life in pursuit of realizing God as the Spirit within and as a Power that manifests everywhere and in everything on earth.

Religion has no final answer, Spirituality has

Religions of the world have a mythological answer to their God, but Spirituality has a logical answer. Although in Spirituality there is no name and form of God, it seems more real than the mythological Gods of Religions. What is the final answer given by Religion? That we will go to our God in heaven? The question is - who will go? At death, we see that the body lies here on earth only to be cremated or buried. But in Spirituality, there is a clear realization that we are the Divine Soul that is liberated at death only to be united with the Divine. Therefore, while Religion has a mythological explanation of heaven and God, Spirituality has a more realistic approach and it shows a way to become one with God.

Religion says we go to God, but Spirituality says God is within

This is a key difference between Religion and Spirituality. Spirituality realizes that the Spirit within or the Soul or *Atman* is nothing but God. We are nothing but a manifestation of the Divine. We are Divine Energy. But Religions talk about going to God after our life. It is strange because we see at death that the body is either cremated or buried, then how, as per Religion, do we go to God when

we clearly return to dust? Thus, Spirituality has a realistic answer - that we are not the body that we seem to be. We are the Spirit, the Soul or the *Atman*. At death, if we don't realize the Truth then ME, the Mind and Ego, is reborn based on our Karma. But if we realize the Truth that we are the Divine Soul, then at death of the body, the ME, Mind and Ego, is transcended and we, the Divine Soul, merge with the cosmic or Divine Soul.

Difference between Religion and Spirituality

There are many differences between Religion and Spirituality. They are quite opposite in their concepts. The only similarity is that both believe in God. They both start at the same point but then branch into two distinctly different streams of thought.

Spirituality needs Religion. It is the root of Spirituality. By itself, Religion is just a root, it can do nothing without Spirituality. It can make us exist, believe in God and then die, only to be reborn. But Spirituality gives us the opportunity to realize the Truth and to be liberated. Both Religion and Spirituality are needed together for us to grow into an ethical human being who can finally be liberated and can finally unite with the Divine, our Ultimate Goal of life.

What is the difference in prayer in Religion and in Spirituality?

Both Religion and Spirituality believe in prayer. This is one thing that they do not differ in. However, Religion prays to their personal God but Spirituality prays to the power that is within and everywhere. In Religion, we pray to ask God to fulfill our desires just as we ask God to solve

our problems. But in Spirituality, we pray in Divine surrender and acceptance asking God for nothing else, except to help us realize the Truth and to help liberate us from this world of illusions and to become one with the Divine.

*Religion accepts the myth, but Spirituality the Truth.
Religion starts the God journey but doesn't take us to the root.
Spirituality is the one that takes us within...
To realize we are the Soul, not just bone and skin.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 5

The Difference between Religion and Spirituality



- The moment a Religion talks of its own God and its own scripture, it becomes different from Spirituality. Spirituality is a study of the Universal Power that manifests everywhere on earth as the Divine Spirit or Life Energy.
- Religion makes its followers accept myth, whereas Spirituality refuses to accept myth; it is all about realization of the Truth.
- Religion is the kindergarten to Spirituality. Just as school starts where kindergarten stops, Spirituality starts where Religion stops.
- Religion does not give clarifications to all doubts of its followers while Spirituality encourages questioning every ritual, every myth which religion considers as blasphemy.
- Most Religions ask their followers to fear God, to refrain from doing certain things as it would displease God. But Spirituality is all about loving God and doing things not so much to please God or out of fear of God, but rather to love God.
- Religion prays to a God that we don't know, Spirituality knows the God that we pray to. It is building a living connection with God, realizing we are the Soul, the Spirit or the *Atman*. It is realizing God every moment that we live. Spirituality is seeing everything beautiful as the Divine.
- Spirituality needs Religion. It is the root of Spirituality. Religion is just a root, it can't do anything other than making us exist, believe in God and then die but Spirituality gives us the opportunity to realize the Truth and to be liberated.



THE PRISON OF MYTHS, RITUALS, AND SUPERSTITION

It is very sad that more than connecting us to God, Religions have created a prison of myth, ritual, and superstition, which imprisons us in ignorance. They promote so many dogmas that we get paralyzed in these religious concepts. We live and die in this darkness and though we love God and believe in God, we are unable to realize God.

All Religions believe in myth

It is not just one Religion, but rather all Religions believe in myth in some way or the other. Religion starts with praying to God and loving God but beyond that, Religion becomes a theology that practices so many rituals, dogmas, and superstitions that the focus on God is lost. We are so very focused on the act of performing the ritual that we forget God. Our goal is God, but Religion makes that second to the practices that we are made to follow. Whether it be going to church on a Sunday, a mosque on Friday or a temple on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday or celebrating Easter or Maha Shivratri or Ramzan, be it celebrating the birthday of Jesus or fasting during Ramadan, Religions have many rituals that seems to be an act of faith but unfortunately they take away our attention from realizing God.

All Religions have these rituals to follow. Sometimes, it is not the saint who started the Religion but the followers who institutionalize these rituals. However, the rituals are

now not just a part of the Religion but a priority for its followers. Unfortunately, we get caught in this maze and we remain distant from realizing God.

Why do we teach our children about Santa Claus?

Although we know that Santa is a myth, why do we still teach our children about Santa? Why are we coaching our little ones to believe in a lie? This is the problem with all Religions. We teach children certain things that make it a core part of their belief system. As they grow, they are unable to get out of it. They become prisoners of these myths and this stops them from realizing the Truth. Hindu families teach their kids that Lord Shiva one day got angry and cut off the head of his son, only to later replace it with the head of an elephant! This now becomes the world-famous Lord Ganesha who is prayed to with reverence. There is no harm in praying to a God but believing that these are the real Gods that we must pray to offering them Ladoos, Indian sweets and other offerings that please the Gods are an act of ignorance. We can offer God anything with our love but we must be conscious that our God is all-powerful and needs nothing, not the sweets or other offerings which are in any case sourced from his creation. Spirituality believes that more important than all these rituals is to go on a quest and to realize God.

Although we know that several superstitions and rituals are meaningless, we still follow them hoping they will bring us “good luck”. In the end, we become miserable because of our own ignorance, ignorance that is triggered by Religion and can finally be overcome by Spirituality.

Does God actually have an elephant head?

We all know this with our common sense as something

false, something that is purely mythological. Why then do we continue to believe in such forms? And not just that, we continue to teach our children and future generations to believe in these myths. Isn't it really sad that instead of helping our families to overcome myth, we encourage them to follow these mythological tales?

In Hinduism, it is said that if you die in Kashi, you will go straight to heaven. How can we educated people believe in such stories? People pack up all their belongings and go live in Kashi waiting to die! It's not just in Hinduism, but in all Religions of the world such strange superstitions exist. We believe in heaven and hell on some distant planet, although we know that we don't go there, as the body is very much cremated or buried on planet earth. Then how is the myth of us going to heaven to be rewarded or to hell to be punished true? Why do we believe in such myths and let our children grow up with them?

Who has seen heaven or hell?

While many Religions talk of heaven and hell, has anybody actually seen these physical destinations? These are just a figment of the imagination of some religious scriptures. Even the Bible says, "the *kingdom* of heaven is within you". But still, its followers believe the teachings, that post-death, we will go there for the final day of judgement. Instead of spending our time searching for the Truth, we live and die believing in mythological tales that take us nowhere. Whether it is heaven or hell, *Jannat* or *Jahannum*, it hardly matters! This is not about criticizing the beliefs of any particular Religion. It is about myths in all Religions of the world that most unfortunately, make us distant from God. This is not the objective of Religion, but without realizing it, Religion creates a gap between

God and His followers, something it does not intend to do. It just happens due to rituals, dogmas, and superstitions.

The body perishes here, but Religion takes it to God

In ancient civilizations, there was a lot of fog on the Truth about death. While till date, nobody has uncovered the mystery of birth and death, we see that every human being born on earth dies. At death, the life inside the human departs leaving the body here, to be cremated or buried. Where then is the possibility of us going to a distant heaven or hell, if the body itself returns to dust? Still, we innocently follow our Religion and believe that after our life is over, we will go to face our God in heaven if we live a good life or a hell if we are sinners.

When will we question these beliefs to discover the Truth? Religions continue to hold us against their dictate by insisting on this belief to be true and that it must be followed. Instead, if we try to go on a quest and understand who we truly are, body, mind or Soul, we could realize the Truth about God. If the body becomes dust then who actually goes to heaven or hell, and if we go, then how do we travel there, and if we somehow reach there, then who experiences the judgement if the body has perished? Will it be by some magic that the body will be recreated or will it be through another body in another birth that we will face the final date of judgement?

Religion must be very clear in its theology and not confuse its followers. This is what makes us live and die in ignorance and we don't realize the Truth.

Religions imprison us in Ignorance

It's very sad, but it's true that though Religions don't intend to, they imprison us in prisons of ignorance which lead us to misery and sorrow. We don't realize the Truth about God and we remain distant from God. We are unable to truly love our Divine Master though we have such strong devotion and yearning for God. This is because of the unintentional misunderstanding that is created by Religion which causes us misery and sorrow.

Because of superstitions, we start to believe that if we go around the pedestal of God one time or a hundred times or a thousand times, then we will find God. We believe that God can be found on a faraway pilgrimage and we spend all our life, our money and our time preparing to go on that pilgrimage when in reality, God lives in the temple of our heart. When will we overcome ignorance and realize the Truth?

As long as Religions exist and continue to make us believe in the myth, we shall live and die in ignorance. They are not a few, but hundreds if not thousands of rituals, dogmas, and superstitions that the world follows which in reality have no meaning at all. Still, being sincere to our Religion, we follow these dogmas and in the end, we reach nowhere.

Blind faith will lead nowhere

As intelligent beings gifted with an intellect, we must realize that our blind faith in our Religion will lead us nowhere. We are just going to go on and on till we die. Sure, our acts may be symbolic in showing our love for God, but if we don't even understand who is God, where is

God and what is God, then how can we achieve God? We need to overcome our blind faith and ask questions. We need to truly love our God and aspire for our God. That is our challenge and as long as we blindly believe in our faith, our Religion and our scriptures, we shall just go around in circles and reach nowhere.

If we truly want our God and we want to realize the Truth, then we must not have blind faith. We must talk to our God, listen for answers and then go in quest of God, with true love in our heart. Thus, it is said that though less than 1% of this world is visually blind, more than 99% is Spiritually blind. This is really sad as we blindly follow the directions of our Religion in innocence, not realizing that we will never ever reach our God.

The intellect must overcome Religious dogmas

Isn't it time that we use our intellect to discriminate the Truth from the myth? Shouldn't we question what we have been taught to find the Ultimate Truth or should we just blindly continue to believe in the teachings of our Religions?

Why have we human beings been gifted with an intellect? Of all living beings, we are the only ones who are blessed with a full-fledged intellect. That's why we pray in the first place, but should we just pray as ignorant beings or should we realize the Truth about God and then pray?

Should we be slaves to our ignorance? Should we be imprisoned in rituals and superstitions or should we realize the Truth? What should be our life goal and our life objective? It's good that we all believe in a God, a Power that created us and this universe, but should we not try to

find out the Truth of this Power? Who it is, where it is and what it is or should we blindly read our scripture and go by it? Many people are proud to follow their scriptures with total devotion and dedication and it seems with total ignorance. It is unfortunate that most of us are born with an intellect but it seems we take that gift from God to our graves. We don't use our intellect to discriminate and to realize the Truth.

It's time to overcome the myth and discover the Truth!

For centuries, we have just blindly followed Religion and its scriptures and prayed to God that seems to be known to us, but unfortunately, it is not the real God that we are seeking. We are seeking to find our Master, our Creator, and our God, but we end up praying to a saint or a statue, one who has been created by God. Instead of going further in our quest and finding God, we get stuck in our belief system and stop our search for the Divine. Sad, isn't it?

Isn't it time to overcome the myth and discover the Truth? Will we just continue to live and die, believing in mythology and then continue to teach our children what is not true? Should we not question this myth to discover the Truth?

We want God, we seek God and Religion surely teaches us about God. It builds our faith, our hope, our trust and our belief in God and for this, we must be ever grateful to our Religion. But then, beyond that, Religion stops us from going forward. Should we not go within and discover the true Spirit, the Soul, the *Atman* that is within and that is beyond any Religion? All Religions talk of God being within, but when it comes to practically executing this, they fail to do so. They just continue to make us believe in

myths, in rituals, and superstitions and we end up with the Religion's dogmas, instead of realizing God.

We need to have the courage to go beyond our Religion to find God, otherwise, we will just live and die, following rituals but never realizing God. The choice is ours.

*Our ignorance imprisons us behind bars.
We believe the myth that God lives up in the stars.
We just blindly follow what Religions tell,
And wait to go to heaven or hell!*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 6

The Prison of Myths, Rituals, and Superstitions



- It is not just one Religion, but rather all Religions believe in myth in some way or the other.
- Religion starts with praying to God but makes us so much focused on the act of performing ritual, that we forget God.
- Our goal is God, but Religion makes that second to the practices that we are made to follow.
- There is no harm in praying to a God but believing that these are the real Gods that we must pray in a certain way, is not correct.
- We know that several superstitions and rituals are meaningless, we still follow them hoping they will bring us 'good luck'.
- We believe in heaven and hell on some distant planet, although we know that we don't go there, as the body is very much cremated or buried on planet earth.
- Religion must be very clear in its theology and not confuse its followers. This is what makes us live and die in ignorance and we don't realize the Truth.
- As intelligent beings gifted with an intellect, we must realize that our blind faith in our Religion will lead us nowhere. Instead of going further in our quest and finding God, we get stuck in our belief system and stop our search for the Divine.
- We need to have the courage to go beyond our Religion to find God, if we really seek God. The choice is ours.

REALIZE THE TRUTH

Since we know that Religion is just a kindergarten to Spirituality, should we not stop now to realize the Truth? Should we not make a sincere effort to overcome the ignorance in which we are deeply sinking? If we truly love God and want to realize God, become one with the Master, then it's time to realize the Truth.

Human beings are gifted with an intellect

If we enquire, we will find that we human beings are the only creatures on planet earth who are gifted with an intellect. Why is this so? Because we are supposed to use it to discriminate and to realize the Truth. We are supposed to differentiate between the myth and the Truth and come to the final conclusion about God.

Although we are the rare ones who are specially gifted with this instrument called the intellect, we don't use it to realize the Truth. We become slaves of ME, the Mind and Ego and we live and die in ignorance. Why is this so? It is because the mind which we think is king and is everything is actually our biggest enemy. Along with the ego, it stops us from realizing the Truth. It is the mind that lets us blindly follow the religious doctrines, which is not the right thing to do. If we want to realize the Truth, we must go beyond Religion on a Spiritual journey to realize God.

The mind is a monkey. Kill it!

The mind is a monkey. It thinks up to 50,000 thoughts a

day. Because of this constant thinking, we are caught in the myth of life and we are unable to use the intellect to discriminate. The intellect needs the mind to slow down if it must work effectively. But the mind is a monkey, it jumps from thought to thought. It does not let us contemplate in silence. If we really want to realize the Truth, then we must transcend the mind. Before the mind kills us, we should kill it, otherwise, we will just live and die without realizing the Truth.

The mind is provoked by our five senses. The sense organs are deeply rooted in the world or *Samsara* and are craving material things. In this journey of constant desires, we need God and our Religion promises us that it is “God” who will fulfill all our desires, just as God will solve all our problems. So, we get trapped in this craving, seeking and praying and our mind keeps us imprisoned by the myth and superstitions of Religion, without helping us discriminate and realize the Truth.

Ask questions about God

If we truly want to find God and want to realize God, then we must ask questions about God. Where is the God we are praying to? Is God actually made of skin and bone or is God something else? Is the God of our Religion actually God of this universe or is there something missing? We need a raging curiosity to ask questions if we want to ultimately realize the Truth about God.

Every Religion says its God is the God of the universe. Does this make sense? We should ask which God is the real God, which scripture is the real scripture and we should be able to use the intellect to differentiate between myth and Truth. It's not so difficult, if only we make up our mind to

realize the Truth and use the intellect to help us do so.

Religions tell us that we must do so many things to please God. We must even offer God our money, our wealth. We need to use our intellect to discriminate and to ask, does God need our money or just our love and devotion? Why would God want our money? What would God do with our money? We must be smart to differentiate and to understand the Truth.

Whatever Religion we belong to, there are many theories in each Religion that are supposed to lead us to our God. There are theories related to the origin of God and the power of God, and also how to pray to God. There are many such Religions that we need to investigate. We need to ask questions and probe each thing that does not make sense.

God is birthless, just as God is deathless. If our Religion talks of the birth of God or the death of God, we need to find out, we need to ask who actually dies. God cannot be born or die in the real sense. Yes, God may manifest as somebody who seems to be born and seems to die. But the Truth is very clear that God is never born, nor can God ever die. God is a Power. It is this Power that makes us come alive at birth and it is this very Power that causes death when it leaves. Those who realize the Truth, realize that the Spirit is God. Without God, we are nothing.

When will we realize the Truth? It is only when we ask questions and investigate every religious theory that we will overcome the myth. We should not be embarrassed or ashamed to question the theories of our Religion. After all, we are not trying to condemn it. We are trying to go beyond our Religion to realize God. For such a noble

objective, there is no harm in questioning the dogmas of our Religion until we ultimately find God. Some Religions may consider this blasphemy but this should not stop us from our quest.

To realize the Truth, we must stop, ask questions and investigate. We cannot blindly believe. For instance, the law of Karma. What is the guarantee that such a law exists? It is based on universal laws that run the universe. If somebody told you that they planted mangoes, but they got apples, would you believe it? Of course not! Because the universal law states, *as you sow so shall you reap*. It is a universal law that we get what we give. Such is the law of Karma! Due to this law, not only are our present circumstances decided, but the very birth of a person gets controlled by their past actions. However, it is not easy to understand all this without the help of a Spiritual Master.

Importance of a Spiritual Master

To realize the Truth, we need a Spiritual Master. Just as we need a good teacher to help us graduate and get our Masters, we need a good Master to help us evolve Spiritually. This Master is often referred to as a GURU, one who takes us from 'GU' or darkness to 'RU' or light. We need a Spiritual coach, a learned wise sage who can help us realize the Truth.

How else can we bust the myth of Religion? As kids, we grow up and we are embedded in the belief systems that we are taught. Now to unlearn the myth, we need some learned person who can make us understand what the myth is and what the Truth is. Otherwise, we will just believe in the lie until we die.

However, we must be very careful of the Spiritual Master that we choose, otherwise, it may be like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. If we get a Spiritual Master who misleads us, then we are going to reach nowhere. We want a Spiritual Master who can help us realize the Truth. A Master will guide us on how to activate our intellect and use it, how to live with discrimination seeking the Truth, how to discipline our body and mind that imprison us, how to live with detachment and dispassion and ultimately, how to pray and show our love for God.

We are so caught in the doctrine of Religion that we don't question whether it is right or wrong. Our Guru or Spiritual Master is the one who will mould us, teach us, make us understand what the Truth is. He will help us discriminate and reach the Ultimate Truth. He will show us how to live a life of meaning and purpose. He will show us a way to God and to escape from suffering and be liberated. Thus, it becomes a key challenge in our life to find the right Guru, the appropriate Spiritual Master who can lead us to God.

Read in-between the lines

Most unfortunately, we human beings trust our Religion blindly and the priests and the saints who advocate it. We don't read in-between the lines. We finally realize the myth only when we search for the Truth. When Religion tells us something, we need to delve deeper and ask how and why. We should not follow it blindly. If there is something illogical, we must question and demand an explanation. Of course, we cannot define God, but we can question every ritual and ceremony that our Religion advocates. This will help us to ultimately reach our goal of God-Realization.

It starts with Self-Realization

How will we realize God? It starts with self-realization. Once we realize the self, we can then realize God. We must go on a quest to discover who we are and why we are here. This is called self-realization. Once we are self-realized and know who we are, then we go on to the next step of God-Realization. We will find out who God is, where God is and what God is. Of course, this is possible if we follow the path – first, starting with our Religion, then going on a quest asking questions, till we ultimately realize the Truth and God

Discover what we are not

Self-realization means knowing the Truth of who we are. To know this, we must first discover who we are not. Are we the body? Of course not! The body is constantly changing, our cells are dying and are being reborn. How can we be something that is constantly changing? We must realize that we are not the body.

Are we the mind? If we try to find the mind, we can't. We can discover our eyes, nose, ears and even our heart and brain through an X-ray, but we cannot find the mind. It is impossible because the Truth is that the mind doesn't exist. It's an illusion. It's just a bundle of thoughts that is known as the mind. Although it is in illusion, it does not spare us from negative thoughts like fear, worry, anxiety, revenge, and jealousy.

However, if we are not the body and we are not the mind, then who are we? We exist, don't we? We know that we exist, but in reality, who are we?

When we find out what we are not, when we realize we are not the body and we are not the mind, then we realize the Divine Truth that we are the Soul, the Spirit or the *Atman*.

We are a manifestation of the Divine

Those who go on a quest, realize the Truth that we are not what we seem to be. We are pure energy. This is not just Spiritual talk but has been scientifically proven. There are many methods to realize this Truth and it is up to us to choose which method we would like to rely on.

Go on a quest or a search

A seeker of the Truth, one who wants to realize God must go on a quest, a search. This means that the seeker must retreat from this alluring world for that short period of time, until they realize the Truth. The seeker may have to give up for the moment, or for some time, active responsibilities because this Spiritual quest is all-consuming. We cannot do it casually. When we go on a quest, we need to cut off from the world for the period of the quest. We need to have nothing else on our mind but God. If our mind is wandering, we will never realize God. We must give up the world for a particular period of time and probe the Truth about God. We can go through all the scriptures and Religions of the world, and they will lead us to the Ultimate Truth if we are genuine in our quest and if the grace of the Divine is upon us.

As we go on a quest, we must probe the various methods of realization to realize the Truth. What are the various methods of Realization?

There are 10 established methods that one can

contemplate and introspect on if one is truly passionate about realizing the Truth. Several methods help us discover answers to our questions. Any of these methods can help us in the Realization of the Truth.

1. The Law of Causation: This is made up of three principles:

- a) Every effect has a cause
- b) The effect is nothing but the cause in another form
- c) If you remove the cause, there is no effect

Based on the Law of Causation, one realizes that a gold ring is actually not a ring. Why? Because if you remove the gold from the ring, nothing remains. There is no ring without the gold. It appears to be a ring but actually, it is gold. Gold is the cause – the ring is the effect. Similarly, mud is the cause. The pot, the plate, and the statue may appear to be so, but in reality, they are not. They are only effects of the cause - mud. If you remove the mud, there would be nothing. Without the mud, there would be no pot, no plate, and no statue. We human beings appear to be the body – the gross physical body and the subtle mind. But in reality, we are the Divine Life Energy that gives life to the body-mind complex. At death, when the Life Energy departs, there is no breath. The body immediately disintegrates into dust and becomes nothing. It is only an effect of the cause, the Life Energy that departed. Life Energy is the cause. Without the Life Energy, we return to dust. We become nothing. This Law of Causation makes people realize the truth. The truth that we are not the body or mind. We are the Divine Life Energy, the Soul.

2. The Peeling Method: Another method of realizing who we are is called the virtual peeling method. If we virtually peel a live human body like an onion, layer by layer, and keep every cell with blood in beakers on the table, organs in trays, and flesh and bones along with the rest of the body, we will find everything except the one who was alive. The room in this virtual experiment is completely sealed and airtight. Where did the person who was alive go? Now, if we try to stitch back the body with the help of expert surgeons and medical equipment, we may probably recreate the body but we cannot put back life into it. The one who was alive in the body escapes into Consciousness. This virtual peeling method makes us realize we are not the blood, nor the bone or the skin but the Life Energy within.

3. The Consciousness Method: Another way to realize who we truly are is to reflect upon what is popularly known as the consciousness method. We human beings experience different states of consciousness. When we are awake, the body and mind are conscious. When we sleep, the body is not conscious, but if the mind dreams, it is conscious. When the mind also sleeps, neither body nor the mind is conscious and we experience a feeling of peace, which makes us say, "I slept like a log" when we wake up. If we notice, we experience the waking state, the dream state, and the deep sleep state. We are neither the waker nor the dreamer nor the sleeper, but the one who experiences these three states. Who are we? We are the Consciousness, the *Atman*, the Spirit or the Soul.

4. Meditation: To realize the truth, some people meditate. What is meditation? It is slowing down the mind. It produces up to fifty thoughts per minute. Meditation is

about focusing on one thought. In such a state, one realizes the truth. Normally, the mind jumps like a monkey and does not let us contemplate the truth, that neither are we the body nor the mind. Although we know it, we are not able to realize this truth because of the rascal mind. Meditation helps reveal the truth. It stops the mind from the constant jumping from thought to thought and makes it focus on one thought with concentration. It is at this point that we realize we are not the body, nor the mind, but the Soul.

5. Questioning: Most seekers on their quest progress on the journey by asking questions – existential questions like what came first: the chicken or the egg? The chicken screams, “I came first. If there was no chicken how could the egg ever come?” “Hello, Mr. Chicken,” retorts the egg, “If there was no egg how would you be born?” The questioning method ultimately leads us to the answer - Who are we? We should not give up and believe that some questions have no answers. We must persist to find answers. The tree came from a seed but the seed came from the tree. What came first? We were born from our parents and our parents from their parents. Could our forefathers be apes? Questions like these make us investigate and ultimately help us realize the answer to who we truly are. We are a manifestation of the Divine, a fraction of the pure Divine Energy.

6. The Negation Method: Ancient scriptures suggest that we use the method called 'negation' to find out who we are. This calls for us first to know who we are not. We are not the body, there is no doubt about that. We also know we are not the mind. Then who are we? There is no doubt that we exist. From birth to death, our existence is referred

to as our life journey. The only element that may be 'us', is that life that arrives at birth and departs at death. We are That!

7. Understanding what makes us beautiful: We human beings are very proud of our beauty, but stop and think – the most beautiful human being decays and disintegrates at death. Why? What happens? The real beauty is that Life Energy that departs at death. We become still, stone-like, we stink and become incapable of being maintained unless we are embalmed or preserved under special conditions. The Egyptians preserved the 'Mummy', the bodies of their dead but these were not those that were truly alive. This should make us realize that we are actually the beauty that departs at death, not the bodies that decay after we depart. We are the Life Energy that causes the beauty in us just as it causes the beauty in a beautiful bird or an exotic butterfly. The moment this Life Energy leaves, all the beauty starts to disappear.

8. The Seer and Seen Method: Another method of realizing who we are is Spiritually coined as 'The Seer and Seen' method. We see a ball with our eyes. The ball is the object. The eyes are the subject. The eyes seem to see the ball. But if we remove the eyes and keep them on the table, can we see the ball? Of course not! The eyes are wired to the brain and it is the brain that sees the eyes seeing the ball. The eyes become the object and the brain the subject. Next, we find that the mind is wandering and although we are staring at the ball, we don't see somebody grabbing it because our mind is wandering. Who is conscious that the mind is wandering? The mind itself becomes the object and we, the observers, become the subject. We realize that we are not the eyes or the body. We are not even the brain.

We are the observers, the ones who are conscious, and the ones who actually see. This 'Seer and Seen' method takes us further into realizing the truth of who we are. We are the Consciousness that is alive within.

9. Our 'given' names: Our names are just our names - our identity. Our names are not us. "Who are you?" the Saint asked the American who came to be blessed. He said, "I am John." "That's your name," said the Saint. "I asked who you are." "Oh! I am an American." "I didn't ask for your nationality. Tell me who you are." "Oh! I am a lawyer." "That's your profession, Mr. John. Who are you?" "I am the son of Tom and Mary and the father of Sarah and Rachel." "Did I ask you for your relationships? Please tell me, who are you?" "I am a millionaire from New York." "That is your financial status - I am not asking that. Tell me, who are you?" The American was embarrassed. After a lot of introspection, he realized the truth. He thought he was his name but that was only his name, he had no idea of who he truly was. Now he was inspired to search for the truth that he was not what he appeared to be on the outside but rather the one who was alive inside.

10. Scientific Reasoning: Those who want to find out who they are through a scientific method may also do so. Science, too, endorses that we are not matter, but rather trillions of energy particles that appear to be the body. For so many centuries, science and Spirituality were at loggerheads. But recent experiments in science have tabled several theories that are in sync with Spirituality. One such theory is the belief that energy can transform to matter and matter to energy. This formula is popularly known as $E=MC^2$. Is the scientific belief enough to make us realize who we are? Scientists who study quantum physics

and quantum mechanics go deep into studying the smallest particle of matter at subatomic levels. Recently in one such experiment, the smallest particle known as Quark, suddenly disappeared. The scientists were flabbergasted. As they were wondering whether matter had transformed into energy, the particle reappeared. They coined a new theory called 'Wave-Particle Duality'. No more were matter and energy to be considered separate from each other as one could transform to the other. This scientific truth should lay to rest our doubt of who we are. There is no doubt we are not the matter that we seem to be but the energy that creates life in us.

Those who are sincere and want to realize the truth of who they are can use any of these methods to realize the truth. It is so obvious that we are not the body. Science declares it, death endorses it, beauty proclaims it, and virtually peeling the body will confirm it. Several methods endorse that we are not the mind. We observe the mind watching the world. We meditate to calm the mind. And we reflect that we are not the dreamer.

Whatever be the method of realization, where does the realization of the Truth lead us to? It makes us realize beyond doubt that we are not the body that we seem to be. It also makes us realize that we are not the mind. It leads us to the Ultimate Realization that we are the Life Energy within, often referred to as the Soul, the Spirit, the *Atman*, *Chi* or *Prana*. Seekers of the Ultimate Goal of life, the realization of the Truth, are sometimes shocked to know that the realization of the Truth is not achieving the Ultimate Goal. It is just the beginning of the journey. Once we realize the Truth of who we are and why we are here, then we start our journey of Liberation, the Ultimate Goal of life.

The moment we finish our quest, the moment we realize the Divine Truth that we are not the ego, mind or body, we are the Divine Soul or Spirit or *Atman*, we are then liberated to start a new journey, a journey of unification. But however, this is later, first, we must be clear about our realization. When there is realization, there is no doubt whatsoever. We don't question our realization. We realize it is the Truth.

What happens once we realize the Truth that we are the Divine Soul? We realize that we are no different from each other. If I am pure energy and you are pure energy, then we are both from the same source of energy. We come from the same source and we go back to the same source. Not only do we realize this, we realize that our Spirit is nothing but a manifestation of the Divine. It is God-Energy. It appears at birth and leaves at death. Thus, at death, we have no breath because the soul departs, but we realize this only after we go on a quest.

Once we realize the Truth, then we see everything beautiful as a manifestation of the Divine. We don't see the beauty separate from Divinity. We realize that all the beauty in this world comes from God and goes back to God.

We may use any of the methods of realization to realize the Truth. If we use our intellect to transcend our mind, we can easily realize the Truth. But if we let our mind be the charioteer of our life chariot, then we will never realize the Truth. We shall just go around in circles till we ultimately die. The moment we realize the Truth, we realize that we are not the ones we thought ourselves to be. That was a case of mistaken identity. It's high time we realize the Truth and are ultimately liberated from the prison of misery and sorrow.

*When will we ask questions about what we are not,
When will we find out the truth that we forgot?
We have an intellect that discriminates wrong from right,
But for this we must confront our mind with a fight.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 7

Realize the Truth



- If we enquire, we will find that we human beings are the only creatures on planet earth who are gifted with an intellect but we should use it to discriminate reality from illusion and realize the Truth.
- We become slaves of ME, the Mind and Ego and we live and die in ignorance. It is because the mind which we think is king, is actually our biggest enemy.
- Along with the ego, our mind stops us from realizing the Truth. It is the mind that lets us blindly follow the religious doctrines, which is not the right thing to do.
- If we want to realize the Truth, we must go beyond Religion on a Spiritual journey to realize God. God is birthless, just as God is deathless.
- God may manifest as somebody who seems to be born and seems to die. But the Truth is very clear that God is never born, nor can God ever die. God is a Power.
- We all need a Spiritual Master who can help us realize the Truth by activating our intellect and teaching us how to use it and how to pray and show our love for God.
- There are 10 established methods that one can contemplate if one is truly passionate about realizing the Truth, namely: the Law of Causation, the Peeling Method, the Consciousness Method, Meditation, Questioning, the Negation Method, Understanding what makes us beautiful, the Seer and Seen Method, Our 'given' names, and Scientific Reasoning.



REALIZATION LEADS TO LIBERATION

Why is it so important to realize the Truth? Realization leads to Liberation. Once we realize the Truth about Spirituality, we will be liberated not just from all misery and sorrow in this life, we will also escape from possible rebirth and be unified with the Divine. How can we be liberated?

We suffer due to ignorance.

Because we continue to be in the kindergarten of Religion all our life, we live a life of ignorance. We suffer due to this ignorance. We believe in the myth and we don't realize the Truth. It's sad but we human beings, although gifted with an intellect, get carried away by our mind and suffer from our ignorance. It is only when we go on a quest to realize the Truth, it is only when we transcend Religion and move upwards to graduate to Spirituality, that we will overcome our ignorance and will be blessed with realization. This realization will liberate us from our ignorance. Meanwhile, we would live in a prison of misery and sorrow, but post realization we will be liberated and experience a life of true bliss peace and joy. But first, we need to overcome our ignorance and for this realization is not enough. Once we realize the Truth, we need to destroy our ignorance through our intellect. That is the key to Liberation, otherwise, we will continue to suffer all through life.

Our Religion imprisons us

What is the cause of our suffering? It is ignorance no doubt, but who causes this ignorance? The one who reads this for the first time may be shocked that it is our own Religion that causes us to be imprisoned in misery and sorrow. In the guise of connecting us with God, we trust the myth that we are taught by Religion and we do everything for our God, not knowing who God truly is. We go to a God in our religious institution, not realizing that God lives within the temple of our own heart. We thus remain prisoners of our own ignorance and stay far away from our Lord. We are searching for God outside when in reality, God is inside.

It is not that Religion intends to do this. It's most unfortunate that Religion is only a kindergarten and we continue to be in this kindergarten all our life. It is for us to realize the Truth and make a progress from Kindergarten to University. We need to leave the kindergarten and get admitted into a university. Because we are staunch believers in our God, we don't doubt our belief one bit. We blindly believe and this blind faith imprisons us. Our Religion remains as a silent spectator. It does not raise an alarm that we are suffering due to our ignorance. It continues advocating the myth about God and this is sad.

Sure, we need to pass through the kindergarten of Religion but to be in the kindergarten all our life is just not practical. Religion must help us get relieved from our mythological beliefs and to be introduced to a new thought process, a new quest in search of God. As long as we are imprisoned in our Religion, we will never realize the Truth and never achieve Liberation. Even post realization, we need to transcend our

religion and not feel bad in going beyond Religion to reach God.

Do we *truly* love God?

If we *truly* love God, we won't let Religion stop us. We will move on. We don't need to leave our Religion, but with it being our basic foundation, we will go in quest of our God, our Lord whom we love so much. If we *truly* love God, then we will not believe the myth to be the Truth. We will passionately search for God till we realize the Truth. This is our Life Goal, our ultimate challenge of life.

As long as our love for God is mediocre, we will just follow our Religion and live and die in ignorance just like most of humanity does. But if we are among those few fortunate ones who are passionately in love with God, then we won't take these fairy tales as real. We will question each and every ritual and object to superstitions and dogmas because we are so much in love with our Lord. We want God, we seek God and we will not rest till we find God. That is the Spirit of a true seeker who wants God and nothing else in life. Such a seeker does not accept answers that are not logical, does not believe in myth. Such a true seeker goes on a quest for God and does not stop till he realizes God and is ultimately liberated from the myth that Religion advocates.

Be passionate to seek God

We human beings are so passionate when it comes to worldly things. Have we not seen people passionate about their love? They do anything, they even kill themselves for the sake of the beloved. Don't we see passion in the world's successful people? They can do anything to

succeed - they will go to the extent of using foul means to achieve success. It is their passion, their obsession to achieve success in their field of endeavour.

But what about God? Are we passionate and obsessed about God? Is God our priority? Is God the goal of our life? If so, then we will change our passion from seeking worldly things to seeking God. We will make God a priority in our life. We will make God our obsession and we will start a quest with all our passion to seek God. When we realize the Truth that God is not a statue or a saint, but rather a power that dwells within, we will not stop at our realization.

Although our Religion does not agree to this, we will pass by our Religion because we are so passionate to find God. We will go beyond our faith and belief, a task so difficult, but because of our passion for God, we will sacrifice everything and go on an advanced journey towards God. Only this time, the journey is not outward but rather inward, for God dwells within. When our passion is very strong, then we will turn inward to realize God within.

Liberation is our Ultimate Goal

We human beings at the outset don't realize that we have a purpose in life. Our life has a meaning, a goal, an objective to fulfill - that is to realize first, who we are and then, to go beyond and be liberated so that we can be unified with the Divine. That is our Ultimate Goal of life. Our Ultimate Goal is not just to be happy nor to just make others happy. Sure, it is good to do that, but how can we be happy without realization of the Truth and without Liberation? The only way to eternal peace and joy is Liberation that comes post realization. Thus, it becomes so important to

transcend the kindergarten Religion and move on. We need to go beyond our simple faith in God. We must be ready to give up anything, to renounce everything for the sake of finding our God and being unified with the Divine.

For this, we need to graduate Spiritually. We need to take the help of our Spiritual Master. We need to yearn for God, even shed tears in entreaty for the sake of our lord. It's not just by blindly following myth, rituals and superstitions that we will find God. There is no way for this body to go to heaven. We all know that. We must use our intellect to firmly realize the Truth and then once done, we will be liberated to unify with the Divine.

The reward is Ultimate Bliss and Peace

Why should we do all this? Why should we first go on a quest then realize the Truth and finally be liberated? Because Liberation means a lot, it takes away all our misery, our pain and sorrow. It eliminates our lifelong suffering as we realize the Truth. And this is only possible if we graduate Spiritually. We cannot be in the kindergarten all our life and then be liberated. Throughout life, we experience both joy and sorrow but once we realize and are liberated, there is no more sorrow in our life. Misery comes to an end with Liberation. We don't suffer as the body. We transcend the misery of the mind and we don't experience the agony of the ego because we realize we are none of these. We are the Soul, the Spirit, the Divine Life Energy. This realization liberates us from all suffering of the ego, mind, and body and this is Ultimate *Ananda*, Bliss, and Peace.

If we have the courage to go beyond the kindergarten of

Religion, then we finally graduate in our Spirituality and realize the Truth. As we overcome all the stress, worry, fear anger, frustration, anxiety, jealousy, hate, revenge that most mortals experience, we are blessed with a life without all these negative emotions as these toxins disappear on realization. Once we graduate Spiritually, then we move from realization to Liberation as we leave behind all these negative emotions.

Our enemy is ME

However, if we want to experience this Ultimate Peace and Bliss, we need to destroy ME, our own Mind and Ego. It is this ME that makes us prisoners of our own ignorance. It makes us live in the kindergarten of Religion all our life. Although we have an intellect and we know the Truth, we don't realize it. We will only realize it when we open our "real eyes", our real Spiritual eyes. This will lead us to Liberation from the myth and with it, all the sorrow and suffering will cease.

What should we do? We must realize that we are the Divine Soul and the body, mind, and ego are fetters, prison bars that stop us from escaping from the prison of ignorance and suffering. We need to break free from this prison and be liberated.

We must first realize we are not the body that craves and desires. We must then be free from the mind, the illusory rascal that we cannot find. But it still exists as an illusion only to make us fear and worry and then suffer. We need to eliminate this suffering by transcending the mind. We then need to destroy the ego. We can't as long as we are alive, but we can go beyond it, we can transcend it. Once we transcend the ME, the mind and ego, then we can be liberated. Otherwise, even though we have realized the

Truth, we will still have to keep fighting the battle within and ultimately, we may not be free and liberated. So, we must be conscious of this enemy, ME and we must fight it before it defeats us.

Living as a liberated Soul

Finally, our challenge is to live as a liberated Soul. This occurs after several stages in life. First, we realize that Religion is just a kindergarten of Spirituality. We check out of Religion and check into Spirituality. Slowly but surely, we realize the Truth, but this is not the end. We need to then transcend ego, mind and body and be liberated, living not as the ego, mind or body but as the Soul.

What does it mean to live as a liberated Soul? Although we are imprisoned in this physical body till death, we live as a *Jivanmukta*, one who is liberated while alive. We live as a *Stithpragya*, one who lives with a steady intellect. This is our challenge - to be liberated when alive.

Most people believe it is not possible to be liberated when alive, but this is the only way to be liberated after death. There is no way to do so after we die. We have to be liberated before we die and to finally unify with the Divine at death. This is our ultimate challenge of life.

In this journey from kindergarten to university, from Religion to Spirituality, we need to overcome ignorance at every step, just like in our education. We did not know but education is to educate us, to make us know. So is our quest for the Truth - to know the Truth about God and ultimately to let our realization liberate us till we are finally unified with the Divine.

*When we realize the Truth, we are free,
From myth and superstition, we can forever flee!
Then we are liberated from misery and pain,
We can live with Peace and Happiness again!*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 8

Realization leads to Liberation



- Realization leads to Liberation. Once we realize the Truth about Spirituality, we will be liberated not just from all misery and sorrow in this life, we will also escape from possible rebirth and be unified with the Divine.
- Because we continue to be in the kindergarten of Religion all our life, we live a life of ignorance. We suffer due to this ignorance.
- We trust the myth that we are taught by Religion and we do everything for our God, not knowing who God *truly* is.
- It is not that Religion intends to do this. It is most unfortunate that Religion is only a kindergarten and we continue to be in this kindergarten all our life.
- If we truly love God, we won't let Religion stop us. We will move on. We don't need to leave our Religion, but with it being our basic foundation, we will go in quest of our God.
- The only way to eternal peace and joy is Liberation that comes post realization. Liberation is our Ultimate Goal. Thus, it becomes so important to transcend the kindergarten Religion and move on.
- Once we realize the Truth, we need to destroy our ignorance through our intellect.
- To achieve this goal, we need to graduate Spiritually with the help of our Spiritual Master.

DISCOVER GOD WITHIN

What happens when we pass through a kindergarten, pass primary school, high school, college, and university? We ultimately achieve the goal of knowledge, of wisdom and we become a Master. When we go on a Spiritual quest taking the help of a Spiritual Master, we ultimately realize the Truth about God. The only difference is that in university, many students are able to achieve the knowledge that they are seeking but in Spirituality, very few are able to realize the Truth about God. This is because it is not just knowledge and wisdom that matters, we also need the grace of the Divine. If we are not passionately in love with God, we may know the Truth about God, but we will never realize God. This is not an easy task. It is taking the road less travelled. It is not going with the herd, but rather being like a bird that flies up in the sky seeking God. Our goal is to find God, to discover God. How will we do that?

Realization makes us understand that God is not on a distant planet somewhere far away. God lives right here, in the temple of our heart. How will we be able to realize the Truth? Of course, first of all we need to let go of our beliefs that we learnt when we were kids. We need to let go of the kindergarten of Religion to evolve Spiritually. If we want to discover the ocean, then we have to have the courage to lose sight of the shore. As long as we tie our boat to the shore, we can never discover the ocean, the ocean of divinity, the ocean of Truth, the ocean of God. If we want

God, then we must have the courage to do everything to reach the Divine.

The mind stops us from realization

Those on a quest realize that God is not a statue, God is not a saint, God is not a picture that anyone can paint. God is a power, a power beyond human comprehension. God is the Creator of this universe. Not just the Creator, in fact, everything in this universe is a manifestation of God, which means that everything is God. There is nothing else! It appears as the mountains and the seas, the rivers, and the trees, as you and me. But in reality, everything is God. Everything is made of God. It appears as, but the appearance is an illusion. The Truth is God. Nothing else.

However, the mind stops us from realizing the Truth. The mind is a rascal, it gets trained by Religion. As kids, we are taught that God is Jesus or Allah or Shiva, somewhere up in the sky. The mind has registered this and does not want to budge because the mind is a slave, an enemy to self-realization.

For instance, if we take a ring, a chain, a bracelet and we ask the mind what these are, the mind will say, these are all jewellery, the ring, the chain, and the bracelet. But the fact is these are not jewellery. These are just gold. If we remove the gold from all the jewellery, there will be no ring, no chain, no bracelet. It's not a difficult thing to realize, but the mind refuses to accept this because it has been programmed to believe these are a ring or a chain. Even though the mind is made to realize that they appear as jewellery, the cause is gold, but still the mind refuses.

Even science admits that we may appear to look as human

bodies, but the fact is that we are energy, Divine energy. But the mind does not accept this. As long as the mind refuses and remains in the kindergarten of Religion, believing that we are who we seem to be, the body, mind and ego and God is who God is believed to be, the statue or the saint, we will never realize the Truth. It needs us to go beyond the mind to realize the Truth.

Transcending body, mind, and ego

Since we human beings are so strongly personated as ME, Mind and Ego alive in a body and we believe this is *my* house, *my* car, *my* family, we are unable to break the thought chain to realize the Truth. To break free from the influence of Religion and go beyond the kindergarten, it first calls for us to transcend the ME (Mind + Ego) and body.

We need to contemplate that these are not what they appear to be. The body is constantly changing, it is not permanent. Finally, it will die. The mind is an illusion, where is the mind we cannot find. The ego that says, "It's me" is someone we cannot see. We need to break this barrier of body, mind, and ego to go beyond to discover God.

We are not the body

Sure, we have a body, there is no doubt. But why do we say this is *my* hand, *my* head, *my* heart? Because the one who is saying it is not the body. If we were the body, we would not say it. Now, let us recall the virtual experiment in a room that is airtight and sealed. We remove each of the body parts, the eyes, the nose, the ears, the teeth, the hands, the legs and even the kidneys. The body is now

connected to a machine but is still alive. We go one step further and we remove the blood, the muscle, the tissue, and the skin and we are just left with the skeleton. Every cell of the body is on the table. But where is the person who was alive?

What does this show? Every part of the body in this virtual experiment is on the table, but where am I? Where did I go? This is my body but this is not me and further, the room that is used for the experiment is an airtight room. So, where did I escape? If I am not in the body anymore, even if we stitch back the body, I don't reappear. Then where did I go? This is a point to ponder on. So, I have a body, but I am not the body. I am the Life Energy that lives in the body that gives life to the body, but I am not the body. This is very important to understand before we can discover God.

Where is the mind you cannot find!

Just like we did a virtual experiment to find me and we found that we were not the body, now let us try to find the mind. If I ask you to identify your eyes, your nose, ears, hands, legs, you can. Even if I ask you to identify your brain, heart, stomach, lungs, kidney with the help of an X-ray or MRI, you can. But can you identify the mind? Have you ever seen the picture of the mind? Where is the mind? You cannot find! Because the truth is that mind actually does not exist. It is a subtle part of the body, that is an illusion. Unless we go beyond Religion, we will not realize this Truth because Religion talks so much of the mind and makes us believe that we are the body, we are the mind, which in reality we are not. Unless we cross these wrong beliefs, we cannot discover God.

Now that we know we are not the body and we are sure we are not the mind then who are we? We are none else than the Life Energy, the Divine Soul, *Atman* or Spirit. We are that energy that is not the ME - Mind and Ego that we thought nor the body that we are not sure about. We are none other than Divinity.

The Energy within is God

For someone to believe that the energy within us is God is very challenging. Immediately, the mind questions, "How can the energy within be God?" All the Religions of the world tell us that God is a power that lives in heaven, far away on a distant planet. How can we accept this theory that God is within? Can we see God? If we tear open the body, can we find God? No! Then how can we believe that God is within?

The first point to note is that in life, there are some things that can be proved and some things that can't. They can be inferred. What does this mean? You can prove this is your mobile phone by using your fingerprint to unlock it. It proves it's yours. I can't unlock it with my fingerprint. So, there is proof. However, there are some things that cannot be proved. For example, can we prove that gravity exists? We cannot prove but we can infer. How? If we throw the very same mobile up in the sky, will it fly away into the sky? No, it won't. Why? Because of gravity. The law of gravity exists in the universe and this law infers that because the mobile phone is drawn back to the centre of the earth, gravity exists. We infer that gravity exists though there is no proof. So also, we have to infer that since we are not the body and we are not the ego or mind, but we exist, then who are we? We are that Divine Life Energy that

arrives at birth and departs at death.

What happens at death? Our body is intact but the Life Energy that was in the body disappears. Thus, it is said that we departed, expired or passed away. This is just our dead body. If we are not the body at death, then we were never the body. We are alive in a body but we are the Divine Soul, the Spirit or the *Atman*, not the body. We realize this through inference.

This very power that is called Life Energy is the God Power within us. This is to be realized. The power in me and the power in you at death merges to become one power. It is just like air in two balloons. As long as the balloons are inflated, they seem to be two balloons, but on deflating the balloons, the air in both the balloons merges to become one. So does our Soul. It is the Life Energy in us that is actually the Divine Life Energy we call God.

All this seems to be a Spiritual jigsaw puzzle. Yes, sure but we need to put the various parts of the puzzle together to see the full picture. We are not the body, we are not the mind or ego. We are a Power, the Soul.

God is not a statue, nor is God a saint. God is also a power. So, if everything is nothing but a power then it seems obvious that it is one Power, God-Power, that is everywhere. We cannot presume that there are different power centres because that will put us in another circle that goes nowhere.

Is our source of energy one source? It is the Divine source, it is divinity itself. But we are unable to realize this Truth because we are so programmed by our Religions that we continue to be in the kindergarten all our life, not

transcending ego, mind, and body to discover God within the temple of our heart. This is our biggest challenge of life.

God is everywhere, in everything

When one goes on a passionate quest, one discovers that God is everywhere, in everything. Only this discovery is intuitive and internal, so it is not called discovery. It is called realization. It cannot be proved but it can be inferred by those who graduate in Spirituality.

If one probes where this earth, this universe, this cosmos came from, who created you, me and everything on the planet, who manages the show called life with 8 billion people, who made the mountains, the seas, the rivers and the trees, who created all the animals, the birds, the fish and the insects, it must be a humungous Power, a Power unknown to man and beyond man's comprehension.

While that is true, one thing seems obvious - everything that we see comes about from energy. Even science agrees and it is based on the world-famous equation $E=MC^2$. What does this equation state? This scientific theory states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but can only be transformed from one form to another. It means that energy can become matter and matter can become energy.

Recently, in an experiment, scientists took the smallest particle of the cell, not just atom, but even smaller particles, smaller than electron, proton, and neutron - the Quark. They were studying this smallest particle under a sophisticated microscope and suddenly, the particle disappeared. The scientists were flabbergasted. Where did the particle go? As they were contemplating, the particle

reappeared. They coined this to be a new discovery and named it “Wave-Particle Duality” based on $E = MC^2$.

What does this prove? It proves that everything in this world is nothing but energy, God-Energy. God is there, everywhere, in everything. In fact, there is only God, only divinity, nothing else!

It is like the waves, the bubbles, the froth in the ocean and the icebergs, they are all made of the one thing - water. The water may appear as different forms, but the cause is one.

God is the cause, we are just effects

Based on the Law of Causation, one realizes that a gold ring is actually not a ring. Why? Because if you remove the gold from the ring, nothing remains. There is no ring without the gold. It appears to be a ring but actually, it is gold. Gold is the cause – the ring is the effect. Similarly, mud is the cause. The pot, the plate, and the statue may appear to be so, but in reality, they are not. They are only effects of the cause - mud. If you remove the mud, there would be nothing. Without the mud, there would be no pot, no plate, and no statue.

God is the cause and we are just effects. If we remove the cause or God, nothing remains. Everything is God. We must realize this. This will make us discover God within. We are energy. God is energy. Our energy is God-Energy. This is the Truth and nothing but the Truth.

The Truth is ‘God is Beautiful’

Those who live in the kindergarten of Religion are amazed by the beauty of nature. They live and die thinking that

God created nature. Those who evolve Spiritually go beyond to realize the Truth. They don't experience God as the Creator of the beautiful nature. They realize that God is the beauty in the nature that they see. They don't believe that God made the beautiful birds in the sky and the gorgeous fish in the water, just as he made you and me. They see God in the birds, in the fish and in you and me. They see all this as a manifestation of the Divine. They realize the Truth that God is beautiful and not that God has created the beauty by some raw material unknown to us or by the various chemicals or molecules of matter. Rather they realize that God exists in each molecule of matter, in each and everything that appears on planet earth. You and I look as two separate human beings, but the Truth is that we are manifestations of the Divine, so is everything beautiful. Everything beautiful is Divine. It is not created by the Divine, but it is the Divine itself, manifesting as nature that is beautiful.

99% of the world is blind

While less than one percent of the world is visually blind, it is sad to know that 99% of us are Spiritually blind. This is because we have tied the blindfold of Religion on top of our eyes. We blindly believe in Religion and remain in that kindergarten all through our life till we die.

When will we overcome this blindness, this ignorance and realize the Truth about God, that God is divinity that appears in all of nature, that God lives in the temple of our heart, that God is in you and me, just as God is everywhere, in everything? When will we realize this Truth?

Why is it so that 99% of us are Spiritually blind? Did God

make us so? No, we did, by creating Religion that became not just a kindergarten, but also our university. We live from birth to death in the kindergarten of Religion thinking that this kindergarten is a university of God, of the Truth. This is a myth. We need to break this myth. We need to realize the Truth that God is within each one of us. God is the power that is everywhere in the universe. The sun is God, so is the wind, the water in the rains, the seas, the trees are God just as the birds and the fish. All these are God appearing as these beautiful creations of God. But as long as we believe that God is a statue, a saint that lives in the Temple or Church, we will never discover God in the temple of our heart. We will never discover the Truth about God and we will live and die in ignorance without discovering God.

God can't be discovered, God must be realized

Finally, if you want to discover God, remember one thing. God cannot be discovered. God has to be realized. What does this mean? It means that just like gravity cannot be discovered but has to be inferred, so also God has to be inferred. God has to be realized intuitively. When we give up our blind faith that we grow up with, along with rituals and superstitions, and if we love God and seek God with devotion and dedication, then the Divine grace may fall upon us to realize this Truth.

We human beings live and die without realizing the presence of God. We don't feel the power that is within all along. We are like the musk deer. All through life, the musk deer passionately seeks the fragrance of the musk, which actually lies in the receptacle of its own navel. It goes round and round in a frenzy searching for the

perfume till it finally falls off a cliff and dies. The hunters tear open the navel and retrieve the musk. We are searching for God on the outside, whereas the power is all along inside. The moment we realize we are the Divine, we become realized Souls.

But remember, we have to realize God not discover God. God is not on a continent that an explorer can discover. God is not on a planet that astronauts can find. God is a Power, a Power that is everywhere, in everything.

But we need to discover this power through realization. We must realize God and if we have to realize God, first we must realize the self. We must realize who we are and then we will realize God within the temple of our heart. If we are passionate about God and truly love God, we can realize God.

*It's foolish we look for God in the sky,
We don't ask questions; we don't ask, "Why?"
God lives within, in the temple of our heart,
But this Spiritual journey, we never start.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 9

Discover God Within



- When we go on a Spiritual quest taking the help of a Spiritual Master, we ultimately realize the Truth about God that God lives right here, in the temple of our heart.
- We need to let go of the kindergarten of Religion to evolve Spiritually. If we want to discover the ocean, then we have to have the courage to lose sight of the shore.
- God is the Creator of this universe. Not just the Creator, in fact, everything in this universe is a manifestation of God, which means that everything is God. There is nothing else!
- However, the mind stops us from realizing the Truth. As kids, we are taught that God is somewhere up in the sky. The mind has registered this and does not want to budge because the mind is an enemy to self- realization.
- To achieve our Ultimate Goal, we need to break this barrier of body, mind, and ego to go beyond to discover God.
- It is through inference that we can realize that we are that Divine Life Energy that arrives at birth and departs at death.
- The theory of “Wave-Particle Duality” based on $E = MC^2$ proves that energy can become matter and matter can become energy.
- It proves that everything in this world is nothing but energy. Spiritually speaking, this energy is God-Energy.
- God cannot be discovered. God has to be realized. God must be realized not just within but everywhere and in everything.



DON'T CHANGE YOUR RELIGION, JUST CHANGE YOUR BELIEF-SYSTEM

What is this book inspiring you to do? It is not a religious book. It is a Spiritual book. It is not promoting any Religion, nor is it condemning any Religion. All the Religions in the world are the same where Spirituality is concerned. This book is not motivating you to change your Religion. It is asking you to go beyond Religion. It is claiming that all Religions are a kindergarten to Spirituality. It says that all Religions are good, but only good enough to teach us the basics. It is not criticizing any Religion. It's just that Religion cannot do more than building a foundation of our belief system.

What then is this book about? It is asking for us to change our belief system, to break away from myth, to investigate and realize the Truth about God. It is asking us not just to accept whatever people say, whatever a Religion advocates and whatever our leaders proclaim. We must use our intellect to realize the Truth. We must be passionate about God, and our love for God must take us closer to the Truth about God. How should we do this?

All Religions are good

The first step is to realize that Religion is good. In fact, all Religions are good. They teach us the basics. God exists. God is the Creator. God is all-powerful. God can do anything. God is everywhere, in everything. Religions are excellent in teaching us the basics. Then, somehow they make us go round in circles and we get lost in myth,

dogmas, and superstitions. Their intention is not to confuse us, but most unfortunately, all Religions are very confusing. For instance, we know that the Buddha spoke against idol worship. He said that we must go within to realize the Truth. He had some amazing realizations in his own life which later were put together as Buddhism. If one visits the Buddhist temple in Singapore one would be shocked to see that in each room, there are over a thousand idols of a Buddhist leader. They have so many idols of Buddha, so many Gods, so many Bodhisattvas, that it completely confuses people! Who are these Gods? This is very different from what the Buddha taught. But that's the case with all Religions. Just like a game of Chinese Whispers completely changes the original message, Religions have lost their meaning over time and today Religions are no better than kindergartens. Every now and then, there comes to be on earth a saint who spreads the true message of God. However, it is a matter of time before a new Religion is formed in his name and the original message of God disappears into insignificance.

We need to stop here. Let us be clear that no Religion in this world is better than the other. They teach us the basics of God and that's it. We need to take a Spiritual exit, a path that goes within, that moves away from Religion. Not against it, but further onward, forward, Godward, inward, so that we can evolve and grow beyond Religion to Spirituality. That's the way to evolve and realize God.

All Religions teach us good basics

The world today has hundreds of Religions, though the majority of the world believes in less than five major Religions. So, which is the best Religion? It hardly matters!

Whatever be the Religion, they all teach us good basics. Religion teaches us to live a moral life, to live with ethics, to do good and to spread peace. This does not mean that there are no unscrupulous elements in each Religion that hijack even the basics and provoke people in the wrong way. We know of several such examples, but we cannot blame Religion for that. There are a few people who try to spoil the name of Religion but let us avoid those isolated cases. Religion, by and large, teaches humanity good basics.

However, as we grow, it is for us to use our intellect to question all the belief systems and choose what is right. We don't have to continue believing in all the things we were taught. Sure, we should believe in a God, a power, the Creator. We need to be grateful to God. We must pray and we must praise God. All Religions say this. If any Religion does not teach these basics, then it is not a Religion at all. Religions tell us to respect our parents and our elders. Does any Religion deny this? All Religions ask us to share our wealth with the poor and serve them.

The problem starts when Religion, the kindergarten starts giving a university class. Then the ABC of God is not enough to make us graduate Spiritually. We need to realize this. This is the essential problem. The problem is not in the basics, it's in the advanced knowledge that Religions don't educate us with. Each Religion says that its God is the most powerful, its God is the only God and others are fake or not real. This is wrong. Because of this false advocacy, people get influenced and this causes unrest in the world today. The world is gripped by religious differences. There is war and terrorism, and so much anxiety in the world due to Religion. Isn't it strange

that something like Religion, something about God is causing anxiety and stress in the world? How ironical that Religions should bring the world to such a state!

Let Religion remain at its basics and it will be good for all. Then we must use our inner conscience, our intellect and our own wisdom to discover the truth about God.

The problem is that we don't graduate

Where does the problem start? In school, we go to kindergarten, but do we get stuck there? Of course not! We remain in nursery till we learn the basics. Then we go to primary school, high school and university. But unfortunately, in Religion, we don't graduate. Even a man of 80 is still in the nursery. He is still repeating the ABC of Religion and has not graduated Spiritually. What a pity! This is the problem. We must learn to graduate beyond Religion and realize the Truth about Spirituality. We must realize that we are not the body and mind, we are the divine Spirit. We must realize this Truth if we want to grow Spiritually. Sadly, most of us don't grow Spiritually. We remain in kindergarten all our life and so we remain ignorant and we suffer.

We don't need to change our Religion

Many people make a mistake thinking that they need to change their Religion. No, of course not! We don't need to change our Religion. All Religions are kindergartens. We need to grow beyond Religion.

We need to grow beyond personal Gods. We need to realize that God is not a religious God. God is a power, a universal power, a cosmic power that governs the whole

universe. God is beyond human comprehension. We must realize this. We don't realize this because we are stuck in the kindergarten called Religion. Then, we move from one kindergarten to another kindergarten. How does that help? We are still learning the same ABC of Religion. It's of no use! Changing our Religion does not help us at all.

We need to evolve, grow, and graduate from Religion to Spirituality. We need to go on an inner quest, a search for God, then only will we realize the Truth. Changing Religion will only make us repeat the nursery class till we die. Many people make this mistake. They think one Religion is bad and they move from one Religion to another and they think that they have found God. No, sadly not! God cannot be found through Religion. God has to be discovered through self-realization and finally, through God realization. God has to be realized Spiritually and Religion can only be a good kindergarten, that's all.

We must change our beliefs

One thing is very important. Whatever Religion we belong to, we need to question our belief system. Whatever we believe in, whatever rituals we perform, whatever prayers, poojas and ceremonies that we perform, we need to ask questions as to why we are performing this. We should not be ignorant and continue to follow our belief system. This is wrong. We need to ask questions and we need to investigate until we realize the Truth. This is a challenge for us before we discover God.

If we believe that we will go to heaven after we die, then we must ask the question, where is heaven? How will we go there and if we die and our body is buried on earth, then

who will go to heaven? Just believing Religion and its theology does not help. We need to be practical and ask relevant questions that will help us realize the Truth. Just because our Religion tells us that we will go to heaven after we die and we will have to face the final day of judgement, we still need to ask questions as to who will face the final day of judgement, how will we be rewarded or punished and who will eventually face this? Such questions will help us change our beliefs and ultimately make us realize the Truth. It's no using changing our Religion. Rather, we need to change our belief system.

Fall in love with God

How will we ultimately graduate Spiritually? The key is love and devotion for God. If we truly love our God, whoever that God is, then we will seek God passionately and this will lead us to the Truth. We will ask questions and these questions will get us the answers and finally, we will discover God. But if we don't love God, if we rather love the world, then we will be immersed in the pleasures of this world and we will forget God. Not many people in this world go to a church every Sunday, to a mosque every Friday. If they do because they are forced to, it's of no use. Even if they go every week, but their mind is elsewhere, how will it help? If they are devout but only devout out of fear of God, it is meaningless. The key is love for God.

We need to truly love God. We need to have gratitude for God. We must be grateful to our Lord who has given us life. We need to appreciate God for this wonderful universe. All this is a way to love God. It is said that one must have a triple yearning for God to discover God - love that a miser has for gold, love that a young child has for its

mother that it has just lost and love that a lover has for his beloved. If we love God with this triple yearning, then we are sure to realize God.

Refuse to accept the myth

If we want to discover God, the first thing we need to do is refuse to accept the myth. Whatever Religion we belong to, as we have said several times, does not matter. Spirituality is not against Religion. It respects all Religions and endorses that Religion is a good foundation to believe in God. But the problem is that Religions become overwhelming in their mythological tales. They go overboard to convince people about God. Then they talk of God's miraculous powers. Since people don't understand the truth, Religions make superstitions and rituals that make people get bound to Religion. In a way, we get drugged and we cannot leave this addiction. It's sad because, in the bargain, we are believing in all the myth of Religion. We need to break this. We need to question every myth. If we are performing a prayer, we must ask for the relevance of the prayer. If we are repeating a mantra or a hymn, we must understand it. If we are performing a ritual, we must ask why.

Unless our "Why?" is answered, we must not do anything. We must stop all blind belief. We must stop all mythological rituals. We need to break the myth as we realize the Truth about God.

That is the first thing we must do starting today. Whatever be our Religion, we must differentiate between myth and Truth. If we are told a fairy tale about God, we must not accept it. We must ask questions about our God, where

God is and who God is. We cannot just accept mythological tales. We must investigate, go deep within till we realize the Truth. Then only we will realize God.

We must keep on and on, till we realize God.

Do we really love God? Are we true in our quest, our search for God? Then remember this - we need persistence! We need to keep on keeping on. Keep on till we realize God.

We must find out more about our God. Investigate where our God was born. Who is the father and mother of God? How can God be made of skin and bone? Where did God come from and where did he go? If there is some mythological tale, then we must not blindly accept it, but keep on at it. If we keep on searching for God, we will realize God.

God has to be realized. It is an intuitive experience. Don't expect even your Spiritual Master to hand God over to you. It's not possible! God is everywhere. Unfortunately, we are blind. To realize God, we have to open our "real eyes", then we will see God! When we realize God, we will discover God. But it is possible! It will happen if we keep on and on.

Finally, if we love God, we want God, we must be still. We must listen to God. God speaks but if we are living in so much noise, then we cannot listen to the sweet voice of God. Of course, God exists. We all know it! We must not doubt this!

Once a scientist questioned the existence of God. He went to a Spiritual Master and stayed there for several days and

eventually he agreed to disagree. He said, "There is no God!", despite the Master's effort to explain that God exists. On the final day, as he was leaving, he came to say 'goodbye' to the saint. He saw a beautiful globe and he asked, "Where did you get the ornate golden marble globe from?" The saint said, "Oh! I don't know. It just appeared on the table one day." The scientist got angry and he said, "If you don't want to tell me, then just say you won't tell me! But telling me that it just appeared is nonsense!" The saint got an opportunity to tell the scientist, "You don't agree that this little globe has to have a manufacturer, but you think that this big globe called the earth, just came about. How is that possible? There must be a Creator of this earth, a Creator we call God." The Scientists eyes were opened and he realized that a Creator exist.

While there is no doubt that God exists and only fools can deny this, it is not easy to realize God. We need Religion and we don't need to change our Religion. However, Religion is only a kindergarten and it teaches us basics. We need to go beyond Religion, we need to realize the Truth about God, only then can we realize God.

*If you really want God, be ready to change.
Don't just believe the myth, that's all so strange.
You don't need to change your Religion and your God,
You just need to further your quest to find your Lord.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 10

Don't change your Religion, just change your Belief-System



- The purpose of this book is neither to promote nor condemn any Religion. All the Religions in the world are the same, a kindergarten to Spirituality.
- We don't have to change our Religion. We need to go beyond Religion. All Religions just teach ABC about God.
- We need to change our belief system, break away from myth, investigate and realize the Truth about God.
- Religions are excellent in teaching us the basics: God exists, God is the Creator, and God is all-powerful. Though their intention is not to confuse us, but most unfortunately, all Religions are very confusing.
- Let us be clear that no Religion in this world is better than the other. They teach us the basics of God and that's it. We need to take a Spiritual exit, a path that goes within, that goes beyond Religion.
- As we grow, it is for us to use our intellect to question all the belief systems and choose what is right.
- The problem starts when Religion, the kindergarten starts giving a university class. Then the ABC of God is not enough to make us graduate Spiritually. We need to realize this.
- Sadly, most of us don't grow Spiritually. We remain in kindergarten all our life and so we remain ignorant and we suffer.
- To Realize God, we don't need to change our Religion. We just need to go beyond it.



IF WE LOVE OUR GOD, WE MUST GO ON A QUEST

Those who are reading this book are probably interested in either Religion or Spirituality. But for sure, they are interested in God.

How do we find God? How will we reach God? How will we know God? If we truly seek God, we need to go on a quest, a search. My mentor, my Guru, Dada J. P. Vaswani called it a *Talaash*, an intense passionate search for God. If we truly love God and we go in search of God, we will eventually realize God.

Do we really love our God?

What do we see in the world today? People achieve that which they are passionate about, be it becoming a world champion in sports or art. The champions work their way to the top. They are obsessed with their passion. So it is with God. If we truly love God, if we shed tears in the love for God, if we seek God over and above everything else in life, there are good chances we will realize God. Of course, God cannot be discovered. God will be realized inside the temple of our heart. But the first condition is that we must truly love God, more than a miser loves gold, more than a lover loves his beloved. We must put God as a priority, above and over everything else in life.

We don't know who God is, where God is, what God is, but God is

This is true, isn't it? God exists. You and I are proof of this.

But nobody really knows God. God defined is God denied.

If I ask you to see me with your ears, can you? You will laugh. You will say, "How can I see you with my ears?" Like that, we human beings have been given many senses. But we have not been given the sense to comprehend God. God can be realized, but God is beyond human definition and comprehension. This is the first realization that we must have. If we think that we shall meet God in heaven or in the place where God is supposed to be staying as per our scriptures, we shall live and die with this myth. But we shall never realize the Truth!

When we go on a passionate quest to find God, we realize first what God is not. God is not what all Religions proclaim God to be. God is a Power. This is our first realization that God is a Power that is omnipresent - present everywhere, omnipotent - all-powerful, and omniscient - all-knowing. God can do anything, he is the Creator of the Cosmos, of you and me. God is capable of doing any miracle. This world is His creation. In fact, it is His manifestation. We must realize this Truth that without God, nor would this world exist nor we. We are all just effects. God is the cause. If we remove God, there will be nothing. When we go on a quest, we realize this.

Start your quest

Any journey must be started, we cannot just speak of a journey, and so it is with the journey to seek God. If we want God, if we want to know the Truth about God, if we want to realize God, we must start our quest. We must search for God, be it in the religious scriptures, in the places of worship, in Spiritual books or philosophical books, we need to search for God. We can meet people and

talk of God. We must ask Spiritual Masters to guide us.

Here it is important to note that without the help of a Guru, a Spiritual Master, who has himself realized God, it becomes very difficult to find God. Imagine trying to learn a language without a good teacher. This may be possible but to find the Divine without a Spiritual coach is probably impossible. We must realize that all this is preparing for the quest. Finally, the quest must be non-negotiable. We should not leave any possibility to return. Make sure that you burn your ships. If you are truly passionate in your quest for God, you will realize God

Ask relevant questions

When you go on a quest to find God, you need to ask relevant questions. Of course, they may be basic questions to start with, but it's better to build a foundation and then climb up till we reach God.

So, first of all, does God exist? Sure, you may instantly reply, "of course!" But it's a good question to start. Then we ask the question - who is God? How many Gods are there? Which God of which Religion is the real God? Where does God live? Is there a heaven or hell? What will happen to me after death? Who dies? Am I body, mind or Soul?

There are several questions that we can ask about God, Religion and Spirituality. We can even browse concepts like Enlightenment, Liberation, Realization and find out what these are. There are many global concepts like Karma or resurrection. We need to enquire about everything related about God. What is God? Is God a Power? What kind of power? We need to ask all these questions until we

If we love our God, we must go on a Quest

find the answers.

Realizing God is like working on a giant size jigsaw puzzle. We first put the pieces that we know together to get some picture. Then there are the missing pieces. We put these pieces in place one by one until we finally get that "AHA!" - that moment of realization. But it starts by asking relevant questions. This is followed by deep investigations. We must not stop and take no for an answer when we don't find an answer. We must know that an answer exists. We must not give up on any question that comes to our mind, even if it is a question that has not been answered since time memorial. Like the question, what came first, the chicken or the egg. The world will say, "Oh! you cannot answer that". But if we go on a passionate quest, we can find answers to all questions about life and God till we finally realize God.

Study every possible scripture

To find God, study of scriptures is very important. This will lead you to the answers. Not all the scriptures will make sense, but God will come to your rescue. When you are on a passionate quest, each scripture will answer some part of that big giant jigsaw puzzle of God.

The Bible may tell you *the kingdom of God is within*. The Surah of the Quran may say *wherever you are I am*. The Upanishads may say '*Tat Twam Asi*' - Thou Art That. Whatever the scriptures say, we must read, evaluate and pick up pieces of our Spiritual puzzle so that we can eventually realize the Truth.

It is said that there are 3 steps to realizing God. First, we read or listen and take in all the information. The second step is to analyze and evaluate what seems right and what

seems wrong using our intellect. The third step is to meditate on the findings. We must go into silence and we will realize the Truth. But how can we do this without reading scriptures? It may be Spiritual books that are written by saints of Religions or it may be books by Spiritual Masters or philosophical books or some blogs on the internet or videos on Youtube by Spiritual Masters. One does not know which piece of Spiritual knowledge will trigger the right answers for us to realize the Truth.

Eliminate what is not tenable

This is very important. As we study all possible information about God and try to realize God, we will find some things that make no sense. We will be able to easily reject certain information that we know is more religious than Spiritual. How do we find out that? The moment there is a selfish objective, we should reject it. A truly Spiritual Master or scripture will be pure without any expectation. We must be able to distinguish this from any fraudsters or fake information that will mislead us from our goal of God. We can achieve God if we take the help of a learned Spiritual Master who is selfless and who has himself been coached by a learned Spiritual Master. This is the best way to eliminate what is not tenable.

We must ask the question, “After we die, will we go to heaven or hell?” If we feel this is ok, then we must pursue it. If we feel it is not tenable, then we must reject the thought. If a scripture says that we will be reborn, then we must ask who will be reborn. Then we must analyze. If somebody says that there are cases of rebirth, then we must probe the theory of Karma or the Law of Cause and Effect and study it. We can also study certain scientific

laws that today match Spiritual realizations. But in all this, one thing is very important. We need to eliminate what is not tenable. If we mix what is myth and the Truth, we will be confused and we will not realize God.

Ultimately we will realize the Truth

When we go on a quest, we find small pieces of the puzzle we are trying to solve. Then, our Spiritual Master will help us solve something. Then, scriptures and books will give us a few answers. If we are passionate and we don't give up, we will ultimately realize the Truth and solve our Spiritual puzzle.

We must realize that less than 1% of humanity goes on a quest to find God. But even from this 1% of humanity, less than 1% finds the Truth about God. So, it is not that everybody who goes on a quest will find the Truth. But those who are sincere, those who love God, those who use the help of a Spiritual Master, those who give up allurements of this world and those who renounce are the ones who finally and ultimately realize God. Sometimes, it seems that God will test our devotion and dedication. We will reach a dead end but we must realize it is not the end, it is just a bend. We must not stop and must continue going on and on, until we realize the Truth.

Evolve from Religion to Spirituality

Once we start our quest and go in search of God, we need to evolve. We need to give up the kindergarten of religion and graduate into Spirituality. If we keep on accepting mythology, rituals, superstitions and myth that come from Religion, we will never be able to progress in our quest. Of course, it all starts with our love for God because

that will bring upon us a Divine grace that will help us achieve success in our quest for God.

Those who don't go on a quest will never find God. But even those who go on a quest are not sure to find God unless they follow the process laid down by their Spiritual Master. First of all, we must have the courage to question the dictates of our Religion. We must not blindly believe whatever we have been taught. We need to delete all that which is not tenable and we must find out what is logical and practical. Our passion for God must be so strong that we do not accept no for an answer. If we want God, we will find God anyhow and we will not believe in any myth.

A young Hindu man was told that, "If you want Shiva, the God you believe in, then you must go to Kailash." He went all the way to China, from where he visited the Manasarovar and Kailash. He had an amazing pilgrimage but he did not meet Lord Shiva. He didn't realize that this was superstition the Religion had laid down on innocent believers who lived and died with the myth. He was lucky that he was on a quest and he realized that all the Gods do not live in the places that Religions talked about. This is a myth but it is considered to be the Truth by most. It is sad but true. God exists everywhere, in everything, but we don't realize this.

There was once a woman who lost her diamond nose ring. She was searching for it outside her house. But she couldn't find it. Many neighbours joined the search, until a smart neighbour asked her, "Where exactly did you drop the nose ring? Do you know it?" "Of course!" She replied, "I am absolutely sure I dropped it inside the house." "Then why are you looking for it outside?" For which her answer was, "You don't understand, there is no light inside my house!"

We should not be like this old woman looking for God in

the wrong place. Our quest must be so deep and so passionate that we must ultimately realize God in the temple of our heart.

Before I end this book, I will share my personal experience, my personal quest and my personal realization. I will share every Truth that I realized. I will expose the myth that I lived with for 48 years until I realized the Truth. I too loved my God beyond everything and my faith started when I was just 8 years old. I have been fasting every Monday for the last 45 years and I continue to do so. Why? This is not necessary! Because now, I don't pray to my God, but I pray through my God, I am connected to the Divine all the time. I see God everywhere, in everything. Let me share the story of my quest and realization. Maybe it will guide you to realize the Truth, if you sincerely go on a quest.

*What happens to those who go on a quest,
those who put every belief, every scripture to test?
Those whose love for God is real and true,
they realize God within, but they are very few.*

SUMMARY CHAPTER 11

If we love our God, we must go on a Quest



- God cannot be discovered. God will be realized inside the temple of our heart.
- God exists. You and I are proof of this. But nobody really knows God. God defined is God denied.
- Can we see with our ears? No! We need to understand that although we human beings are gifted with many senses, we have limited comprehension. We cannot define God.
- Finally, the quest must be non-negotiable. We should not leave any possibility to return.
- Without the help of a Guru, a Spiritual Master, who has himself realized God, it becomes very difficult to find God.
- When we go on a quest to find God, we need to ask relevant questions.
- There are 3 steps to realizing God. First, we read or listen and take in all the information. The second step is to analyze and evaluate what seems right and what seems wrong using our intellect. The third step is to meditate on the findings. We must go into silence and we will realize the Truth.
- Once we start our quest and go in search of God, we need to evolve. We need to give up the kindergarten of religion and graduate into Spirituality.
- If we are sincere in our quest for God, we will realize God within.

AFTERWORD



MY JOURNEY FROM RELIGION TO SPIRITUALITY

For 48 years, I lived a life of ignorance. I was very religious, very devout and I loved my Lord very much, beyond anything else. My God was Lord Shiva, one of the Trinity of Hinduism. He is known as the destroyer, the God who has the third eye and can destroy the universe in a flash if He opens it.

My faith in Lord Shiva started when I was eight when my grandfather taught me to pray. He led me to believe that if we want to be happy and successful, then we must live a religious life. I followed his guidance and went to the temple every Monday, I even fasted for the sake of my God and hoped that Lord Shiva would answer my prayers. It is absolutely true that whatever I asked Lord Shiva in my prayers, they were all fulfilled.

My faith grew day by day as I continued to live with trust and enthusiasm, believing entirely in Lord Shiva. I used to celebrate *Maha Shivratri*, the annual festival of Lord Shiva every year with so much religious fervor, that it created vibrations in the entire community and more and more people started believing in Lord Shiva.

After two decades of my faith in my Lord, I had a vision one day to build a huge Temple that would become a place of Faith where dreams would come true. I had no money, no land, not even an architect, I just had a Divine spark of inspiration that came to me from Lord Shiva. With faith in my heart, I started the project and in a matter of two years

the project was completed. It was a miracle because I had nothing to make this project happen, but He sent me everything that was needed.

A 65-foot statue of Lord Shiva stands at the Shivoham Shiva temple on Old Airport Road, Bangalore as a proof of my faith and God's benediction. His grace and kindness was upon me for making this dream come true. I can write a whole book on my religious experience, but what I would rather say is that it was a great foundation, an amazing kindergarten for my Spiritual evolution.

There's no doubt that my faith in Lord Shiva has been instrumental to receive His grace which helped me to realize the Truth. This goes on to mean that anybody who wants to realize God should not underestimate the importance of Religion because Religion is the foundation for our Spiritual Evolution. We cannot be liberated from this world and from misery and sorrow without the grace of God.

What is of more significance is my transformation. I realized that I wanted my God, Lord Shiva so badly, that I visited all the pilgrimages. I realized what Religion had taught me was just a myth, it was not true that Lord Shiva lived in Kailash or he lived in Amarnath or Kedarnath. My Faith continued till I was 48 years old. I blindly believed in the scriptures and what the pujaris or priests told me. I must admit that many religious people made a fool of me many a time. I realize it now that it was my foolish ignorance that made me accept it.

One day, my mother told me to go and perform some Pooja because my business was not doing very well and my family life was also experiencing some stress. Based on

her request, I went and met a religious saint who told me that my problem was that I had killed a cow in my previous life! He told me that I must perform some prayers and that I must donate a golden cow to undo the bad karma of my last life. I agreed to do it and I asked him how I could make this golden cow. He told me not to worry and that he will do everything. I just had to go for the prayers which I did the following month. When I asked him where the golden cow was, which we were supposed to be offering to the Lord so that I could be forgiven for my sin, he said that it was buried under the rice used for the prayer that was kept on the table. He had already prepared it for me so that there would be no waste of time. I did the Pooja and humbly paid him 20,000 Rupees for making the gold cow which I did not even get to see.

It was only later that I realized how foolish I was to get carried away by the priest's fairy tale! I was living a life of myth and ignorance like millions of others around the world who were being taken for a ride by certain unscrupulous people. By participating in the ritual, I was facing a bigger problem - beyond losing money, I was losing sight of God.

The one whom I loved so much and so deeply was being sacrificed by my belief in mythology, superstition and rituals. I was a victim of religious dogmas and I realized my foolishness now. My foolishness lasted for 40 years until one day my Spiritual Master Dada J. P. Vaswani asked me to go on a quest to realize the Truth. He had guided me for over 25 years, holding my hand and building my faith in my Lord Shiva. He never advised me to leave Religion and he knew that eventually my belief and faith in God would lead me to the truth. He was the

one who guided me to start a quest, to investigate, to ask questions and to realize the Truth. He did not discourage diverse views and he often visited the Shivoham Shiva temple where we prayed and sang bhajans or Spiritual songs. However, he knew that I was meant to realize the Truth and God and he guided and helped me to do so.

In 2012, Dada made me start my Talaash, my quest or my search for God. He knew me for 25 years and he knew my love for God was very genuine. He had also encouraged me to do humanitarian work and we opened several orphanages and served thousands of people in the name of God. The Shivoham Shiva Temple had become a big religious tourist destination. My business went through ups and downs, but ultimately, we made huge sums of money. He advised me to shut down the business and use the rest of my life for living a meaningful and purposeful life.

With that guidance, I went in search of God, that being my passion and obsession. I must admit that all my life, whatever I had dreamed of, I had achieved, whether it was because of my faith or hard work or just the Divine grace. I had never missed any goal in my life. Either the goal was achieved or transcended into something bigger.

Now was the time for the biggest goal of my life. I went in search of God and the Truth, by shutting down my business. I had by then become an author, an inspirational speaker doing HIS work - Humanitarian, Inspirational and Spiritual work.

My Spiritual Master guided me and told me that Ultimate Happiness came from Enlightenment and realization of the Truth. This was Greek to me as I understood nothing

about it. Being religious for 40 years, I had no idea about Spirituality. It was when I was 48 that my Master led me on a journey that changed my life completely. I had experienced one transformation, from a businessman to a philanthropist. This was the second - it was a metamorphosis!

To put it all together, my life from the age of 8 to 48 was a life of success and of religious blessings. I was the happiest man in the world and I had travelled to over a hundred countries, having enough financial backing and security. I needed nothing else. I could have continued living, enjoying every moment of my life, if my Master had not asked me to go on a quest to realize the true purpose of life. I, like any innocent believer, believed that God was Divinely present in the temple and that I needed to go to the temple to pray and I encouraged all others to do so. Even though I was so religious and it seemed like I was so blessed, I did not realize that I was living a life of complete ignorance not knowing the Truth about God.

As I was enjoying life traveling from country to country. I went and showed my Spiritual Master pictures of Antarctica and the Penguins. Then he asked me, "Are you just going to live like this until you die or are you going to find out the purpose of life?" I didn't know what he was talking about but I knew that I was looking for something deeper. I wanted more happiness and I wanted my God. I also wanted purpose and I did not know that he was sending me on a quest that would lead me to everything that I was seeking.

I left everything and I went on a Retreat into the mountains with every possible scripture, Spiritual book and philosophical text I could lay my hands on. For two years I studied all the possible Religions as well as the books of all

the famous Spiritual philosophers. I covered all Religions - Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and every other “ism” that exists in the world. I studied Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism and I did not leave anything. But after studying everything, I was flabbergasted to realize all this was just mythology. So, I went back to prehistoric times, I studied all the civilizations of the world and I tried to find what the Spiritual Masters had said 5000 years ago. I then eliminated all the things that did not make sense and I continued my quest and my search to find the true meaning of God. I set aside 9 questions that I wanted my quest to answer.

My search essentially focused on nine questions:

1. We all know how a child is conceived and born, but how is a life created in the womb?
2. What happens after death? The body dies but what happens to the one who was alive?
3. We all believe in God. What is the reality? Who is God? Where is God? What is God?
4. Most people believe in heaven or hell but where are they located? Can we go there?
5. Does the Law of Karma actually exist? A law that states that the actions of this life will be the cause of our rebirth.
6. Is rebirth or reincarnation real? Are we really reborn after we die?

7. We talk of a Soul. But what exactly is the Soul?

8. What is the purpose of life for us human beings who live on earth?

9. What is Enlightenment, Salvation, Liberation, Mukti, Moksha or Nirvana? All Religions talk of this being our Ultimate Goal, but what exactly is this?

With these 9 questions in my mind and nothing else to stop me, I went deep into my quest. I used to meet my Spiritual Master, Dada Vaswani every month without fail and ask him hundreds of questions and he would patiently answer every question and explain to me the Truth. I realized that some of the things that he was explaining to me is what he had told me 20 years back, but it seems I had turned a deaf ear to it then or I was so Spiritually blind that I had not realized it.

When I went on a quest to find out answers to these nine questions, I was shocked to know that I was living a life of ignorance for the last 40 years. Although I had believed in God, I had not even started my Spiritual journey and I realized that most of humanity, about 99% of the world's population, doesn't even know anything about this subject. After I realized the Truth, I made this my life mission - to help people realize the Truth and to fulfill this purpose, I am writing this book.

I cannot explain every single thing that I did in my quest but what I can do is to list answers that I found to the questions that I was in search of

1. We all know how a child is conceived and born, but

how is a life created in the womb?

I realized that we were not the body or the mind that we seem to be. We are the Divine Soul. We think that we are created by our parents and that is quite right. But it is not the entire Truth. The Truth is that we come alive as a zygote when two cells of our parents are fertilized, but the life that comes inside that tiny fertilized cell is the Soul and that only happens with the grace of God. Man is incapable of creating life. Life is a gift from God.

2. What happens after death? The body dies but what happens to the one who was alive?

The body dies, but we are not the body. We are the ME - mind and ego. Due to our ignorance, we continue to be reborn again and again because we don't realize we are the Divine Soul. If we realize this, then we will not be reborn as we will be liberated and we will be united with the Divine.

3. We all believe in God. What is the reality? Who is God? Where is God? What is God?

Of course, God exists. But God is not a statue and God is not a saint. God is a power, a power beyond human comprehension – an omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Power – knows everything, is all-powerful and present everywhere. God is the Creator of the universe. It is with His universal laws that the cosmos continues to exist in a perfect manner.

4. Most people believe in heaven or hell. But where are they located? Can we go there?

Heaven and hell are not physical locations that exist somewhere in outer space. They are just mythological

religious concepts that make us believe in God and make us live a moral and ethical life by stopping us from committing sin and get us to do good so that we will receive good.

5. Does the Law of Karma actually exist? A law that states that the actions of this life will be the cause of our rebirth.

Of course, the Law of Karma exists, the law of the boomerang which states that what you give is what you get. However, our goal is to transcend this by realizing that we are not the ego, the doer of the action. If we do not realize the Truth, then we will be reborn again and again based on our karma. But if we realize the Truth that we are the Divine Soul, at death we will be liberated and we will unite with the Divine. However, most people live with ignorance and die only to be reborn as per their Karma.

6. Is rebirth or reincarnation real? Are we really reborn after we die?

Of course, we will take another birth if we do not get liberated. Our mind and ego, ME, will reappear in another body to redeem our past actions and Karma. At death one of the two things happens, the physical body returns to dust and the ME (Mind+ Ego), based on its Karma, will be reborn in a new body. If however, we realize that we are not the ego, mind or body, then we will be liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth.

7. We talk of a Soul. But what exactly is the Soul?

The Soul is nothing but God manifesting as the Spirit, the Life Energy within. It is God itself. But because of ignorance, we do not realize this Truth. The Soul is also known as the Spirit, the Atman, the Life Energy, the Chi or the Prana. It is

the cause of our life and when it departs there is death and no breath.

8. What is the purpose of life for us human beings who live on earth?

The purpose of human beings' life is to realize that we are the Divine Soul, not the body that we wear. We are not even the mind. Our goal is Liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth and for the Divine Soul or Atman to be United with the Supreme, and escape from the cycle of continuous rebirth and suffering.

9. What is Enlightenment, Salvation, Liberation, Mukti, Moksha or Nirvana? All Religions talk of this being our Ultimate Goal, but what exactly is this?

All these terms mean one and the same thing. These terms speak of the goal of all the Religions of the world. But it looks like they are different when in reality they are one and the same thing. The ultimate objective is to overcome ignorance, to realize the Truth and to be liberated so that we can be united with the Divine. As long as we live and die in this world as the body, mind, and ego, we will suffer physical pain, emotional turmoil and agony of the ego. This is what we must overcome and we call this Enlightenment or Liberation, Moksha and Nirvana. This is the Ultimate Goal of our life.

When I was on a flight from Paris to Bangalore on the 31st of August 2014 flight AF 192, I got the answers to these 9 questions that I was in search of. It was a moment of "Aha!" for me, a great moment of Spiritual exhilaration. My search for the Truth had come to an end. I had found answers to all the questions that I was seeking and I had realized the Truth about myself and about God. It was not that I did not know about all these facts but I had not

realized the Truth. It was like a big Jigsaw Puzzle and suddenly it seemed that I put the pieces together and could see the entire picture clearly.

What did I realize after my quest? There are many profound realizations that have helped me live a life without fear, worry, and anxiety. I live a life of peace and Bliss being conscious of the Divine at all times. The most essential realizations of my life were that I am nothing, I am just a manifestation of the Divine. Science declares that our body is made up of about 37 trillion cells and I realized that each cell has the presence of the Divine energy which is God. We live in ignorance and we think we are the body-mind complex, but this is the biggest lie that we believe in and this is what makes us suffer.

I realized that this world is nothing more than a cosmic drama with this Earth being a humongous stage. We are about 8 billion people who are acting on this stage along with many other special effects, animals, birds, insects and sea creatures. Actually, all this is not real! It is *Mithya*, an illusion. Everything is a manifestation of the Divine. Everything is energy appearing as matter including this whole earth and the universe. Even science agrees that matter and energy are interconvertible and in reality, what we think as matter is actually energy. This realization transformed my life and my thinking completely changed.

Because we think this world to be real, we suffer. We believe that all possessions are ours and our relationships will be forever. Although we see the truth unfolding at death, we do not want to face the reality.

I realized that we, human beings are unhappy because we want more and more achievements. We do not live a life of

contentment and fulfillment. More so, we are miserable because we are ignorant of the fact that we are not the body, mind, and ego, but we are in fact, the Divine Soul.

My biggest realization was that the Ultimate Goal of life was Liberation which came from realization of the Truth and then unification with the Divine. We human beings do not realize this and we behave like a body-mind-ego complex. Because of our Karma, we are reborn again and again to redeem our past actions. When will we be liberated from this constant cycle of death and rebirth? It is only when we realize the Truth and we are liberated that we can escape from this world called *samsara*. We will unite with the Divine and we will live a life of Eternal peace, bliss and joy overcoming all misery and sorrow.

What does all this indicate? This shows that I too lived a life and I was religiously bound for 40 years. I too was in a kindergarten for 40 years until I realized the Truth when I went on a quest. Then I realized the Truth about life. Unless we human beings go on such a quest, we will live and die in ignorance. I was lucky that I had a Spiritual Master who made me start my *Talaash*, my search or quest. If not, I would have lived and died in myth and superstition, believing in Religion and being in kindergarten till my death.

31st of August 2014 was a turning point in my life. Now I live a completely different life, not as Ravi Melwani that I was for 48 years, but as AiR, the *Atman* in Ravi or the Soul in Ravi. I realized that I was not the body that I wore, but rather the one who wore the body. I was the Soul, the Divine Soul. In fact, what this meant was that I am nothing, the Divine Soul was everything. I was living in ignorance,

till I realized the Truth. I was like a caterpillar crawling through life and my realization made me into a beautiful butterfly, free to fly in the sky. I would, ultimately, if it is the grace of God, be United with the Divine when the body would die. It is not as easy as it seems because the Journey of realization is tough. Our biggest enemy is ME, our own Mind and Ego which stops us from realizing the Truth. The Mind and Ego cease to exist once we realize the Truth and so they oppose such a realization. But because I had the grace of the Divine and I was passionate in my quest and because of my love for God, I realized that I myself was a manifestation of the Divine. God lived in the temple of my heart. God was in everything that I could see. I realize that everything beautiful in this world is not created by God but rather it is a manifestation of the Divine. This was because of my Spiritual realization. I was not who I thought I was for 48 years. I had many more realizations about death and about life, about God and about heaven, and I could see so very clearly the reality of life. This entire world is Maya or a cosmic illusion. Everything is a projection in God's Theatre known as His Leela. This is His play and only He knows why He has done this. We are just actors, we come and we go. Our goal is realization and Liberation and ultimately unification with the Divine.

I am so grateful to the Divine for helping me pass through the kindergarten of Religion and evolve to the graduation of Spirituality where I have realized that I am nothing. I'm just an instrument of the Divine and I act on His behalf. I believe my mission of helping people to realize the Truth is also something that the Divine does. I am just like a flute, the music is being played by the Divine. I try to remain in Divine Union called Yoga, trying to help people realize the

Truth by writing books, recording videos and giving talks. I sing Spiritual songs called *bhajans* through which I try to make people realize that we are the *Atman* or the Soul. We are not the body that we wear and this is an illusion which we must overcome. Unfortunately, we cannot overcome this illusion until we go beyond the kindergarten of Religion and get admitted in the University of Spirituality. This is essential for us to realize the Truth about our self and about God.

Buddha realized this about 2500 years ago. He overcame the myth and the superstitions that people believed during his time but unfortunately, after his lifetime, it is a Religion named after him that has created so many myths. All Religions have myths and it is for us to be able to overcome the myth and realize the Truth. We must go beyond Religion and Spiritually evolve to know that we are the Divine Soul and our goal is to become one with the Divine.

May this book, 'Religion! A Kindergarten to Spirituality!!' inspire you to seek God, to go deeper into the Truth and to realize that you are the Divine Soul. After reading this book, I hope you will question all the myths and the superstitions that you believed in all these years. May you overcome the dogmas that you have been following, till you ultimately reach destination God and you realize Him within the Temple of your heart. This is the Ultimate Goal of life and I hope and wish that this book triggers in you a spark to start a Quest to help you realize the Truth. Realization is the first step of Liberation. We need the Divine Grace to be liberated and finally to be united and achieve the Ultimate Goal of life, becoming one with the Divine.

*My journey to God started when I was eight,
I had blind belief, I just stood at His gate.
But it must be due to His Divine Grace...
That I now see God in every face.*

POEM



RELIGION!

A KINDERGARTEN TO SPIRITUALITY!!

*Religion is just a kindergarten
It's just a preparatory school
It prepares us for formal education
So that we don't grow up to be a fool*

*Spirituality is graduation
University that follows school
It helps us become graduates
So that we can jump into the world pool*

*What would we do without Religion?
Without ABC where would we go?
If nobody taught us the basics
We would end up with a poor show*

*But can we live our entire life
Learning in a nursery?
Imagine growing up as big adults
Just learning ABC*

*We all need to progress
We all need to grow
We need all kinds of knowledge
So that our life boat we can row*

*While learning is important
And it is a must to go to school
If we want to achieve our life goal
Then Spirituality is the tool*

*Who is God, where is God, what is God?
If answers we want to know
Then we must go on a Spiritual quest
Knocking door to door*

*We can't just believe in Religion
From birth until death
For it only teaches the basics
It is just like taking breath*

*From Religion we need a transfer
From kindergarten, we must grow
We must ask questions about God
Not just accept what scriptures show*

*Of course, we need Religion
We can't do without it.
But if we only stick to Religion
We will only learn the myth*

*Religion starts our journey to God
It builds our faith and hope
It teaches us to pray
And how in life we must cope*

*But Religion doesn't have answers
It doesn't take us to God
It doesn't show us a way
Where we can unite with our Lord.*

*Spirituality is a university
It's all about going on a quest
It is not an easy game
And we must pass the test*

*What is Spirituality all about?
To realize we are the Soul
To be liberated from this alluring world
This is our Ultimate Goal*

*While Religion makes us imprisoned
In myth, ritual, and superstition
Spirituality makes us realize the Truth
And then gives us Liberation*

*What is the Truth Spirituality shows?
We are not ego, body, and mind
We are the Spirit, the Divine Soul
This Truth, it helps us find*

*Spirituality is not just knowledge
It is realizing the Truth about self
It first teaches us what we are not
And puts the Truth on the shelf*

*If we are not the body and the mind
Then in reality who are we?
Of course, we know we exist
Then the inner Spirit we must be*

*There is a Power inside us
That comes to us at birth
We may call it the Soul, the Spirit, the Atman
It's with us till we are on earth*

*But ignorance makes us blind
Making us think we are body and mind
We don't realize we are the Soul
With realization this we find*

*Realization can't be taught in schools
We may read many a book
But until we Spiritually evolve
Ignorance will catch us by the hook*

*Spirituality is a long journey
It needs a Spiritual Master
He will help us realize the Truth
And to God, we will go faster*

*What is the essence of Spirituality?
What is this all about?
It is our true Love for God
To God a direct route*

*But God can't be found in temples
Nor in church or mosque is He
God is a Universal Power
There is not a place where He cannot be*

*God is in you, God is in me
God is everywhere on earth
God is that Power that gives life
Without God, there can be no birth*

*It is not so difficult to realize
At death, we come to know
The body just lies on the floor
But where did the Spirit go?*

*The Spirit is the Lord that is inside us
The Truth is that we are He
We are not the Body, Ego, and Mind
Spirituality makes us see*

*Our Souls are not different
At death, we see our Souls pair
Just like when we deflate two balloons
The air merges with the air that is everywhere*

*God is a Power that is everywhere
God is Energy too
God is in you, God is in me
Spirituality shows us this is true*

*But why is it that we don't realize
This simple Truth about God?
Because we are going round in circles
Praying to our religious Lord*

*We must go beyond our Religion
A lot further we must go
We must march to our Lord
And Spiritually we must grow*

*We need not change our Religion
All Religions in the world are good
But they cannot make us realize God
They give us our basic food*

*Religions are good we must know
They teach us faith and hope
They teach us to believe in God
But sadly, tie us with a rope*

*If we truly love God, then we must
On a Spiritual quest, we must go
Our goal must be to realize God
Before the end of our life show*

*Most people believe in Religion
They pray from birth to death
But they never realize the Truth about God
Performing rituals till their last breath*

*But life is given to us
So that God we must know
We must evolve Spiritually
And our Soul to God must go*

*It is not possible with Religion
We all need Spirituality
Kindergarten can do the basics
But we need a university*

*So, make a resolution today
A quest that you will start now
You will not stop until you realize God
Take this solemn vow*

By
AtR
Atman in Ravi

ABOUT THE AUTHOR – AiR



AiR – *Atman* or the Soul in Ravi, is an embodied Soul whose only mission in life is to help people realize the Truth.

He was born in Bangalore on October 15, 1966. At a very young age, Ravi V. Melwani mastered the craft of business and became a very successful businessman who revolutionized retailing in India with the stores KidsKemp, Big KidsKemp, and KempFort.

After making millions, he realized that life is not just about making money. He shut down his business at the age of 40, transformed his life to RVM, living by the RVM philosophy – Rejoice, Value Life, and Make a Difference. He started doing H.I.S. work – Humanitarian, Inspirational and Spiritual work. His mission was to 'Make a Difference' in this world before his journey was over.

As a part of the humanitarian initiative, a charitable hospital and charitable homes were set up with an aim to provide free medical treatment and care to the poor, destitute, and needy. Today, over 600 homeless and suffering people are served and cared for in destitute homes and provided with free shelter, food, clothing, and medical care.

A School of Inspiration was set up that inspired the lives of many people through motivating talks, inspirational books and videos, and thought-provoking quotes.

A Shiva Temple was built in the year 1995 in Bangalore, which is now known as the Shivoham Shiva Temple. AiR

now believes that Religion is just a kindergarten of Spirituality, and we all have to go beyond Religion to truly realize God.

One day, his Guru provoked him to introspect: What is the purpose of life? Is life just meant to seek pleasures and to live and die without any purpose? What happens after death? Will we be reborn? Where is God? Several questions like these took him on a quest, a search for the Truth. He gave up his life of Achievement and Fulfilment in search of the final peak of life: Enlightenment.

After a few years of intense search in retreat, deep in the mountains, he realized that we are not this Body. We are the Soul, the *Atman*. He changed his name to AiR – *Atman* in Ravi. He metamorphosed to AiR and gave up his entire life as RVM and started living as an instrument of God doing His Divine Will. This led to several Realizations that formed his new mission of life – to help people Realize the Truth.

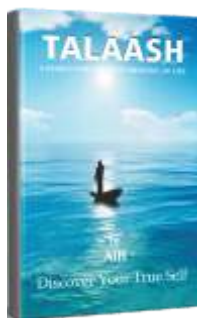
Since then, AiR's life has been dedicated to reaching out and helping people to eradicate the ignorance that we live in. Truth is Truth but our Mind does not realize that. With AiR's own Realization, he has published several books, written bhajans, blogs, quotes, poems and taken up several other initiatives that can direct people towards the Truth. His vision, now, is to help people to Ask, Investigate, and Realize. He believes that unless people ask questions, they will never start a quest and even if they start the quest unless they really investigate, they will not realize the Truth. This Truth cannot be learned in a school, college or university, it must be realized. AiR has dedicated his life to helping people realize the Truth.

OTHER BOOKS BY AUTHOR



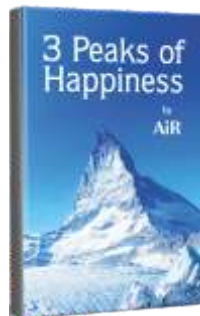
1. Talaash

'Talaash' means Search or Quest. This book by AiR is his personal journey to realize the Truth where he shares his Realization that we are not the Body and the Mind that we seem to be. We are power. The Divine life force is known as Soul, Spirit or *Atman*. This search and quest by AiR made him transform his life. It is a quest that made him realize the Truth. It might be just that book that inspires you to Liberation.



2. 3 Peaks of Happiness

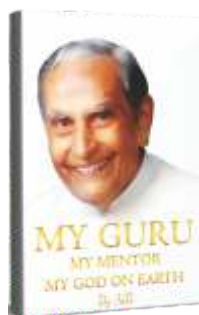
3 Peaks of Happiness by AiR is a simple book that talks about the quest of all humanity. Everybody wants to be happy. But is everybody Happy? No. The reason is we are stuck on the first peak of Happiness – Achievement. 20% of the people are lucky to climb the second peak of Happiness – Fulfilment, which comes from contentment. But there is a third peak beyond. The third peak of Happiness will liberate you from the prisons of misery and sorrow and give you eternal Joy and Bliss.



3. My Guru, My Mentor, My God on Earth

My Guru, My Mentor, My God on Earth is a book by AiR in

which he shares his experiences with his Guru who was not just his Guru and Mentor, but also his God on Earth. We all need a coach, a teacher to help us understand, guide us to live life and this book "My Guru" will inspire you to find your Guru or to make your relationship with your Guru more fulfilling and meaningful.



4. I will Never Die. Death is not "The End"

In the journey of his life, AiR realized many Truths. One of the Truths was that he would never die. The Body will die, but the one who lives in the Body never dies. We are not the bodies that we wear; we are the ones who wear the Body. Death is not the end. It is a bend to transcend. This book reveals the Truth about Death.



5. Death is Not "The End". Death is "Liberation"

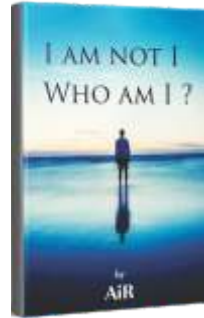
Death is Not "The End". Death is "Liberation" – the second book in the series of books on death by AiR – touches upon the secret of the Kathopanishad, which talks about what happens at death. One of two things happen – if we think we are the Body and Mind as a doer, we are reborn. But if we think we are not the Body and Mind, but the Energy, we are liberated to eternal Joy and Peace.



6. I am not I. Who am I?

I am not I. Who am I? – is a very interesting book by AiR,

which talks of his quest and Realization that we are not who we think we are. We have a house, but we are not the house. We have a car, but we are not the car. We have a Body, but we are not the Body. We may have a Mind, but we are not the Mind. Who are we? Realize the Truth.



7. The Mind is a Rascal

Can you believe that the Mind is a rascal? You always thought that the Mind is king – it is everything. But just try this. Sit quietly for an hour, and try to find the Mind. Where is it? You will find the Mind doesn't exist. This amazing book by AiR will teach us that the Mind is our enemy. It is the one that makes us suffer. It is time to find the rascal and to kill it. How do you do it?



8. A Cosmic Drama

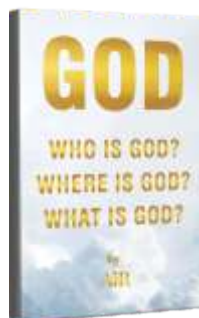
This book authored by AiR challenges us to think that whatever is happening in life is not real. It is nothing but a drama. The earth is a big stage, and we are all actors who come and go. There is no need to worry and cry till we die. If we understand the Truth, we can enjoy the show called life.



9. Who is God? Where is God? What is God?

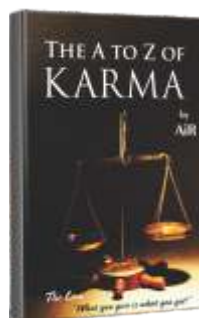
Well, this might seem to be a simple set of questions, but

nobody really knows the answers. We all know that God exists. We pray to a God as per our Religion but what is the Truth about God? Has anybody seen God? Where is God? This simple book will change your perception and belief about God and bring you closer to this Power called God. It will help you realize God.



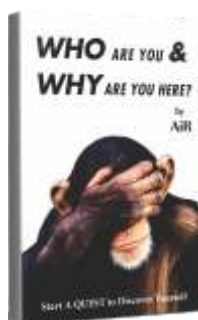
10. The A to Z of Karma

Most people are aware of the concept of Karma – the Law. What you give is what you get. But not everybody knows the A to Z of Karma, that we can actually transcend Karma, escape from it and achieve Moksha, Nirvana, Liberation or Enligthenment. This book reveals the secret – of eternal Joy and Peace - a life without any misery or suffering.



11. Who Are You & Why Are You Here?

'Who are you and why are you' here is a simple book which challenges us to discover the secret of our life. Most of us think we are the Body-Mind complex, but in reality, we are not. The Body will die and return to dust. Where is the Mind, we cannot find. Who are we in reality? And beyond that what is the purpose of life on earth. This book will give you all the answers.



12. The 4th Factor

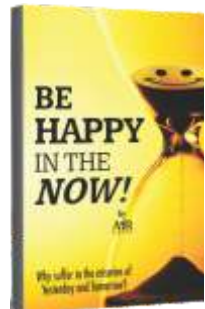
Man thinks that he can achieve anything. He believes that

there is nothing in this world he can't do. But, he doesn't realize that his efforts and equipment are not enough to decide the results of his actions. Sometimes, he does his best but things don't work out the way he wants. He then realizes the importance of the 4th Factor, a factor that makes the possible, possible and without its consent even the possible becomes impossible.



13. Be Happy in the NOW!

Every human being on earth wants to be happy. There is nobody who enjoys pain. People want to achieve Happiness but they fail to realize that Happiness is the journey itself, not the destination. Then, what is the secret of eternal Joy, Bliss, and Peace? It is being Happy in the NOW. We seem to be like helpless monkeys jumping from one branch to another, from yesterday to tomorrow. And in the bargain, we lose the gift of being happy in the present. With this book, AiR hopes to inspire people to live life moment by moment, if they really want to be Happy.



14. Questions You Must Answer Before You Die

Most of us live and die but we don't ask the question – Why? We just exist! We don't want to invest time in asking essential questions that are actually needed to lead a fulfilling and blissful life. There are so many critical questions that we must answer before our journey of life is over. What will happen to us after we die? Who created

this universe? How can we be happy all the time? Who is God, where is God, what is God? Like this, there are so many questions which we are ignorant about and somehow, we believe that ignorance is bliss. We blissfully live in ignorance till we die. Isn't it time to stop and ask questions?



15. Suffer No More

Suffer No More is a personal experience of overcoming anguish, anxiety, distress, and grief. We all suffer physical pain. But while there is pain, can we do away with the suffering? We live in this ignorance, this myth, that suffering is an unavoidable part of life. We can be free from suffering if only we realize that we are the prisoners of negative emotions that continue to make us miserable. Suffer No More is an analysis of suffering, what causes it and how we can overcome it. If one wants to truly live with eternal Joy and everlasting Peace, it's possible! This book will help you Realize the Truth and Suffer No More!



16. Success is not Happiness... Happiness is Success

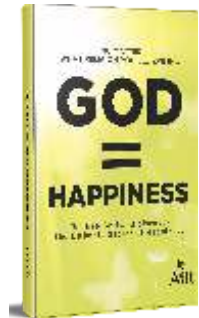
Everybody wants to succeed. If one goes deep into the psychology of winning, one will realize that people want to win because this makes them Happy, just as failure makes them miserable. People want to succeed and they do everything possible to win because they want to be happy. In fact, humanity, by and large, believes that Success is like a cause, of which Happiness is the effect. In

the present book the readers will discover the reality that Success equals Happiness is an illusion. It's time for us to realize the Truth. Instead of chasing Success to be Happy, we should try to be Happy. That is true Success.



17. God = Happiness

We understand what it means to be happy, especially when we compare it to those times when we are miserable and unhappy. But how exactly is our state of Joy or sorrow connected to God, remains a mystery. Yes, we pray thinking of God as somebody in heaven who controls our Happiness. But is this true or is there something else that we are ignorant about? In his quest to discover Truth and the purpose of life, the author found answers that liberated him from misery and sorrow. He also realized that people didn't know where exactly to search for Happiness. All pray to God but do we know the Real Truth about God? This book is not about Religion. It takes us far beyond Religion to Realize the Truth about God and how God is Happiness.



18. Life! Realized!!

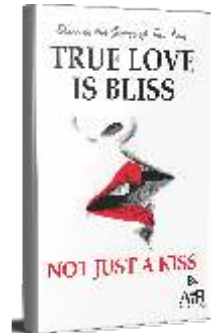
The present book is a personal reflection of the author who has written several books on life, happiness, and almost everything that matters in the life journey. He spent many years of his life chasing success and money but then, he took an exit from this first peak of happiness - Achievement, transformed his life and started living with

Contentment and Fulfillment. He realized that what mattered the most was his Life Realization. There were many questions in his mind and after a profound investigation, he discovered the Truth. He decided to pen down all his realizations together to share them with the world. Those who wish to start a quest of self-realization and God-realization must read this book as it will direct them towards the path which will help them realize the Truth.



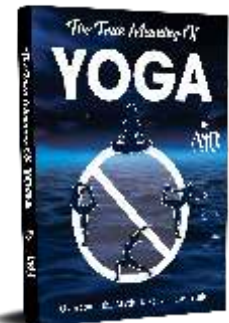
19. True Love is Bliss...Not Just a Kiss

True Love is bliss, not just a kiss. It is sad that Love which is the source of joy and happiness, is not understood by the world. The world thinks of Love to be just hugs and kisses, romance and sex. Is this True Love? No. True Love is Love from the Soul. It is Divine Love that manifests as Love from the day we are born to the day we die. Stop! Discover True Love and live your life with eternal bliss and joy.



20. True Meaning of Yoga

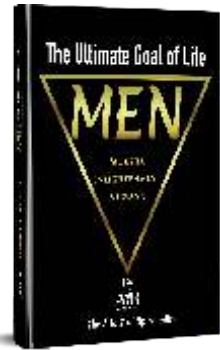
Yoga, today, is primarily taught as a set of body postures or *Asanas*. Some take it a step further and include breathing exercises referred to as *Pranayama*. But this is not true Yoga! This may be good for our physical well-being but true Yoga is something completely different. Those who think that Yoga is just about stretching the



body will be in for a big surprise when they read this book. Yoga, in reality, is a Union with the Divine. This book attempts to explain everything about Yoga, its actual meaning and significance, how it must be practiced and how through Yoga, one can be liberated and experience Ultimate Divine Peace and Bliss.

21. The Ultimate Goal of Life, MEN - Moksha, Enlightenment, Nirvana.

What is the Ultimate Goal of life? The whole world believes it is to be happy, to escape from misery and suffering. If we want to escape from all misery to live a life of Eternal Peace and Everlasting Joy, the answer is MEN - Moksha, Enlightenment, and Nirvana. These are the three most tenable concepts that help us reach our Ultimate Goal of Liberation and then Unification with the Divine. The words may be different, but this is the one secret to everlasting Happiness. Let us discover how to live a life that teaches us the A to Z of Spirituality and helps us achieve Bliss and Peace. This book will show us a path that is beyond religion, a path that will make us Realize the Truth and will liberate us from misery and sorrow.



And Now

22. Religion! A Kindergarten to Spirituality!!

Coming soon

23. Why Bad Things Can't Happen to Good People!

If you have any questions on life, rebirth, liberation or anything related to spirituality, you can visit Ask AiR, and AiR will answer your questions.

Please visit the link if you would like AiR to answer any questions.
www.air.ind.in/ask_air/

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Religion!

A Kindergarten to Spirituality!!

Whatever be your Religion, this book will help you realize God. Most of us get stuck in rituals, superstitions, and dogmas and fail to graduate in our Spiritual journey. We blindly believe in whatever we are taught since the time we are born. Before we realize it, we live and die with the myth, not realizing the Truth that will lead us to Self-Realization and God-Realization.

Every Religion proclaims that their God is the God of the universe. Does it mean that there are thousands of Gods? We know this is not true. In reality, there is only one God!

Spirituality helps us graduate beyond Religion to realize the Truth that there is only one Universal Power – the Creator whom we call God. This book will help you grow up from the kindergarten of Religion and evolve until you Spiritually graduate and Realize the Truth. You will be liberated from misery and suffering and attain the Ultimate Goal of life, Eternal Peace, Everlasting Bliss and Happiness.

*Who creates the sunshine, who creates the rain?
Who makes the earth go round, again and again?
There is a Creator, a Power called God,
We must go beyond Religion to realize our Lord.*

A.i.R.

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