

## **Three Levels of Realisation**

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## Introduction

Studies in anthropology suggest that the concept of God is interwoven in the nature of man. It is for this reason that societies in every age harboured the idea of a Being called God. It is interesting to note that despite its existence in every age, the concept of belief in God was never the same.

The major religions of the world can be divided into two broad categories—the Aryan and the Semitic, with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in the first and Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the second. The basic difference in respect of beliefs of the Aryan and Semitic religions can be briefly described in terms of monism and monotheism respectively.

Although both traditions—monism and monotheism—have the idea of God in common, there are fundamental differences in their conceptualization of God. In the Aryan tradition, God is an all-pervasive force rather than an independent reality. Monism posits the totality of a single reality, with all the diverse phenomena of the natural world seen as different manifestations of the same reality, according to this concept, therefore, there is no real difference between the creator and the creature. Thus in monistic theorizing, the concept of an individual, personal God does not exist.

In Semitic religions, particularly in Islam, the concept of God is entirely based on monotheism. This concept can also be termed dualism, that is, the Creator and the creature, in their nature are completely different from one another. God has a real and eternal existence. As the Creator of all things, He is distinct as an entity from all that He has created. His creatures in their seemingly independent existence totally depend upon the will of God. The sole possessor of all power, God has created man to live for a specific period of time, during which he is sent into the world to be tested. It is this concept of the Creator as totally distinct from creature, which sets the Semitic religions apart from the Aryan.

Another concept is that of man-oriented spirituality in, which the target of the spiritual quest is to be found within one's own self. According to this school of thought, reality is located inside our own personality and we have to simply look inside ourselves and establish contact with our inner self to find a treasure of spirituality. This philosophical concept of God can be inferred from *Acharya Rajneesh's* book, "*Kundalini Andar Base*." It equates man's inner self to a vast, mysterious ocean, which remains under normal circumstances, undiscovered for man.

The proponents of this school of thought believed that spirituality can be attained by harnessing the reserves in the heart of man. Since heart was nothing but an organ that pumps blood, they could not reach realization of God by adopting this course. In this way *marefat* or God-realisation, which in-effect was the biggest need of man, remained unaddressed.

To elaborate my point further, I shall take the example of Alchemy. The concept of alchemy was aimed at deconstructing and reconstructing matter in the pursuit of turning common metals into gold. Despite being the obsession of scientists and philosophers spanning several millennia and multiple continents, alchemy failed to yield desired results. This was because on the basis of unproved speculations, the scientists divested their energies to obtain gold through conversion of other metals when in actual fact nature had stock-piled gold in mines. Such an endeavour was bound to fail.

The above example clearly illustrates why those who sought God-realisation within themselves, could find nothing and ended up being bereft of realization. While he discovered many things, man failed to fulfill his prime need of attaining God-realisation.

This brings us to the broad classification of the various levels of realization namely, Ritualistic, Rational and Intuitivel. In the next few pages, I shall try to explain it further.

### **Ritualistic Level of Realisation**

Despite advancing in all other fields, modern man remains enmeshed in the ritualistic form of religion. It is most unfortunate that while these people understand the religious 'rituals' they have no understanding of their Creator. Their spiritless practices are representative of a reduced form of religion. A scholar said,

*"Every religion begins as an ideology but after some generations it is reduced to a culture."*

Such is the level of realization of the so-called practising Muslims of today. I say so because true spirit transforms an individual such that he emanates love for God and His creations; God becomes the focus of his existence.

An American writer opined, "*The greatest concern of Islam is God.*" This expression is the embodiment of the true spirit of submission to God. Unless man makes God the sole concern of his life, his actions are no more than a ritual. God-oriented life for man thus starts by his remembering God. He begins to feel the presence of God. Everything serves to remind him of God. His mornings and evenings are spent as if he is living in God's neighbourhood. Just as rain replenishes the crops, so does he remain ever immersed in the remembrance of God.

I read an article in an American magazine entitled, "*Return to Religion*" which describes that the huge crowds that throng churches, temples and mosques today signify the return of the new generation to religion. I however, do not agree with this explanation. To my mind, the present-day phenomenon is one of "Return to Rituals" and not of return to religion.

Worship of God is much more than just superficial rituals; it is total submission. If one worships God, then one devotes oneself entirely to one's Lord, fearing Him, loving Him, having hopes in Him, and concentrating on Him alone. Worship of God is total self-surrender; it is much more than occasional observance of mere formalities.

### **Rational Level of Realisation**

The French philosopher, Rene Descartes said, "*I think, therefore, I am*". Extending this further, someone said, "*I am, therefore God is.*" Such is finding God at rational level.

In the days of Newtonian advances, "matter" was considered to be the building block of Universe. Einstein took this idea further and proposed that "energy" was the actual building block of universe. Later, David Bohm propounded that in reality, "consciousness" forms the building block of universe. Both philosophical and scientific studies have therefore led man to conclude that there is a mind behind the functioning of the Universe – the mind of God.

But finding God at rational level is incomplete. This is because study of philosophy and science can only lead man to the concept of a "probable" God. In finding God such, man runs a huge risk because any untoward incident in his life will make him question the existence of God. Such understanding is not deep and lacks emotional attachment with God.

For example, Geo-centric theory was discarded in favour of the Heliocentric theory on a purely rational basis. Since the argument of heliocentric theory did not have an emotional basis, it was not difficult to shed the idea and replace it with new facts.

Once the Prophet of Islam met a wrestler called, *Rukana* in Mecca. He challenged the Prophet to a duel and declared that if defeated, he would give up his opposition. When the Prophet defeated *Rukana*, fervent still in his denial, he invited the Prophet for another encounter. Facing defeat yet again, he conceded.

(*Seerah Ibn Hisham*)

Attempting to prove God at rational level is similar to *Rukana's* challenge. In other words, defeat of *Rukana* was not the proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad, rather it was a matter of coincidence that a situation emerged which led *Rukana* to lose his own challenge and concede defeat thus.

Similarly, the belief in existence of God does not develop by gaining a rational proof for God's existence. When individuals, whether men or women, discover God, it means that they have found the truth. And this truth pervades their whole being. This feeling of having discovered the truth becomes such a thrilling experience that it fills them with an everlasting conviction. For one who discovers God, the entire universe becomes an open book of God for him. Every leaf of a tree becomes a page of the Divine Book. When he sees the sun, he feels as if God is lighting His heavenly torch so that he may read His book clearly. The Universe becomes, as it were, a supernal university and he its student.

Finding God is to find his centre of love. Man by birth is a seeker of a Supreme Being Who is far above him, Who is free from all limitations and Who may form the centre of his feelings, in short, a Being after finding Whom the grown man becomes as satisfied as a child after being held in the embrace of his mother. When God is found such, He becomes the centre of man's love. The following verses of the Quran present glad tiding to those who discover God with all His glory,

**“Those who say, when afflicted with a calamity, ‘We belong to God and to him we shall return.’”**

**(2:156)**

**“... And stands in awe of none but God: such people may hope to be among the rightly guided.”(9:18)**

## Intuitive Level of Realisation

A renowned Muslim theologian, Imam Fakhruddin Raazi proffered several rational arguments through his lifetime to prove the existence of God. It is said that when he was on his death-bed, Satan came to him and asked him why he believed in God. Raazi gave a rational argument but Satan refuted it. Thus began a series of arguments where each time Raazi presented a reason, it was disputed by Satan. At the end of it, Raazi cried out, *"I believe in God without an argument."* Satan left silently.

The above anecdote is an apt illustration of the conviction that belief in God demands. This everlasting conviction removes all frustrations from man's life. Therefore, losses are no longer such for in spite of them, he never loses the feeling that his greatest asset, i.e. God, is still with him.

God is therefore indispensable to man. His life is incomplete without God. A philosopher has aptly remarked that had there been no God, we would have had to invent one. Fortunately, God exists in reality. We can believe in God with conviction, not as a supposition, but as a fact. And we can accord Him the place He deserves in our lives.

The discovery at this level is vast and when man grows in his realization to such a level, his personality undergoes a transformation and he surrenders to God completely. The concept of God is interwoven in the psyche of man as naturally as his other senses. But, after birth, he lives in a society, which continues to condition him. In this respect, the human mind can be likened to an onion. In the centre of the onion, initially, there is a small kernel or the natural state of the mind. Then layers start forming, one upon the other over this inner kernel. This process continues until the inner kernel is totally covered with external layers. Now, apparently, layers alone are visible. The kernel is completely covered and remains invisible. To find the kernel of the onion, all the external layers have to be removed. Similarly, all the conditioning has to be removed in order to restore the natural man to his pristine nature and uncover the prowess of intuitive realization.

Here I would like to narrate an illustrative incident of Gautam Buddha. A milkman, deeply influenced by Gautam Buddha insisted that Buddha visit him and share his wisdom. In lieu of this, the milkman offered to present milk to Buddha. He agreed. In the evening when Buddha set out to visit the milkman he took with him a container in which he intentionally put some mud. The milkman took the container

but just as he was about to pour milk into it, the milkman realised that the container had some impurity. The milkman cleansed the container and removed all the impurities. He then poured the milk into it and gave it to Buddha. Upon getting the container, Buddha got up to leave. Surprised, the milkman asked Buddha why he was leaving before imparting wisdom. Buddha replied that he just had had imparted wisdom. Unable to comprehend it, the milkman urged Buddha to explain the learning to him. Buddha told the milkman that our mind is similar to the container and the thoughts that preoccupy us are like the impurities in the container. In order to attain wisdom, we must purify our mind and make it free of all impure thoughts. Buddha asked the milkman to cleanse himself of his thoughts for only then will he be able to imbibe any further learning. Just as physical items can be contained in the container, spirituality can be contained in intuition, container of God. Man however harbours negative thoughts in this container - lust, anger, vengeance, and hatred - that pollute his thinking.

According to a Hadith, God calls out every morning,

**“Is there anyone who seeketh, whom I shall bestow upon my blessings.” (Mishkat)**

When an individual is able to develop his intuition to the level of God-realisation, his life enters a new phase – that of the building of a positive personality in consonance with the Creator’s spiritual principles – another name for which is God-oriented living. Just as the earth is the sun’s satellite and its existence would have no meaning without this relationship, in the same way, all of man’s activities should be God-oriented rather than self-oriented.

Finding God is a source of indescribable happiness for man but seldom does he reach that stage because realisation can be put only in a ‘clean container’. Since realizing God is an inherent urge in man, failure to find Him at the intuitive level leads man leads him to accord the place of God to something other than God. This place is sometimes accorded to a certain human being, sometimes to a certain animal, sometimes to a phenomenon of nature, sometimes to a certain material power, sometimes to a certain supposed concept and sometimes just to the self. In other words, even if one fails to discover God, or he becomes a denier of God, it is not in his or her power to stifle the urge in his nature to find God.

## **Towards the end**

The consciousness of God is inherent in man. The target of the spiritual quest of man is that the creature – man – has to discover and realize God – his Creator, to whom he is accountable. Realising God through rituals serves as physical reinforcement of or prompter to religious ardour. Such a realisation is an act of underestimation of the greatness of our Creator. Finding God at rational level is also incomplete because any argument or suffering can turn such beliefs antagonistic and consequently turn man away from God.

Finding God at the level of intuition is the real find. In this matter the relationship between God and man can be likened to an electric wire and the powerhouse. When the wire is connected to the powerhouse, electricity is produced, and the place is lit up. In this way, light is the result of the wire's connection to the powerhouse of God.

Realisation at this level, serves the purpose of displacing the 'lid' which exists between man and his Creator. In one word, the lid between God and man is negative thinking. Human beings are placed in situations where they have to face hardships from time to time at every moment throughout their lives as part of their test. Difficulty and sadness are integral part of the creation plan of the Creator. No man has the power to extricate himself from this life of trial and tribulation. This arrangement is to remind man of the fact that the present world has not been made as a place of luxury and comfort, but rather as a period of trial. But people, owing to their lack of awareness of God's creation plan, do not understand this. So, they continue to react negatively to situations and by giving such a response, prove themselves — in the eyes of God — to be failures in the examination he has set for them.

It is imperative to realise that society is full of differences. Every day we experience some provocative situation, every day we face some unwanted behaviour from others and every day we suffer anger and tension because of conflicts arising out of differences. Then what to do? The answer is that we must adopt the cow culture. God has created a model in the form of the cow. We have to develop in our personality what may be called the capacity for conversion; the ability to turn negative experiences into positive thinking.



In the 1930s, I was a student of a village madrasa in UP. There I studied an "Urdu Reader" in which there was a poem composed by the well-known poet, Ismail Meerathi. It was titled "Hamari Gaye" (Our Cow). One of the verses went like this:

*"Kal jo ghas chari thi ban mein,  
Doodh bani woh gaay ke than mein."*

It means that the cow is a special kind of animal. It takes grass and in return gives us milk. In other words, the cow is a divine industry that is able to convert non-milk into milk. Cow is therefore an industry of conversion and a demonstration for man to become the same so that he activates his mind and is able to convert each negative thought into a positive one. The fact is that everyone enjoys freedom. But everyone is free to misuse his freedom. It is this misuse of freedom that creates problems. As we cannot abolish people's freedom, we have no option but to learn the art of problem management. Man must therefore develop cow culture in him.

Finding God at the level of intuition, the true form of discovery demands that man does away with negative thinking. Just like the mother, who is the biggest source of conviction for a child, God should become the source of conviction for a soul that has discovered God with all His attributes. Such conviction produces unprecedented trust.

The nature of every human being constantly urges him or her to recognise the need for God. Without God, our lives cannot be complete. Without the help of God, we cannot succeed in life. Man's position is further illustrated by the following example. A hundred years ago, a ship sailed from the coast of America to Africa. When the ship was far out to the deep sea, a severe storm broke out. The ship began to shake and jolt. All the passengers were in a state of great fear and anxiety. At this time of crisis, one of the passengers saw a little girl sitting in a corner of the deck. She was playing with her dolls, quite undisturbed by the storm. On seeing this, he became curious and asked her, "Do you know what is happening to our ship?" She asked, "What is the matter?" The passenger told her that the ship was caught in a dangerous storm. The girl calmly replied: "You know, my father is the captain of this ship. He is not going to let it sink." The girl's faith in her father saved her from being a victim of fear at this crucial moment.

The same is true of a person who has realized God. He has the same childlike faith in his Creator, God Almighty. But his is a faith of far greater intensity. When catastrophe threatens, he can say with much stronger conviction that God Almighty is the captain of the ship of his life: He will never let it sink at any time or in any situation.