

IN SEARCH OF REALITY



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INTRODUCTION

The Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre has been serving the society by publishing books in English and Marathi on Avatar Meher Baba and the messages He has given to humanity from time to time on different problems and aspects of human life. So far the centre could bring out its publications at moderate prices. However this would be difficult for the Centre in future as the cost of printing is heavily increasing day by day and the prices of books are going beyond the reach of a common man. Besides this, a common man finds very little leisure from his routine mechanical and humdrum life, to read big volumes on philosophical or spiritual subjects. The centre has therefore, decided to bring out its future publications in the form of small booklets, which an average reader will find very easy to go through and which will not be a burden to his pocket. The present booklet is the first step in that direction.

The theme of this booklet centres round an ordinary man. An ordinary man is so engrossed in the physical world and its activities that he does not suspect of any hidden Reality beyond it. His attitude towards God is one of indifference. If at all he believes in God, that belief springs either from his belief in some religious traditions or from intellectual speculation. However, such belief is barren and lacks that inner force which drives a man in search of Reality or God.

A worldly man succeeds in having pleasures of the senses, but still he is often satiated by them. There are some occasions in his life which demand radical readjustment and the giving up of established ways of thought and conduct. The death of a near relative or the frustration out of non-fulfilment of some deep craving give such a rude shock to his psyche that he can no longer accept the type of life which he accepted hitherto without question. Under such circumstances, he becomes utterly desperate. If that desperateness is negative, it ruins his life. But if that desperateness is creative it awakens him to the deeper realities behind the worldly appearances.

Once an ordinary man is awakened to deeper realities of life, his whole attitude towards life changes. He then starts inspecting the usual experiences of his life for possible avenues leading to the life beyond. He looks at everything from a new angle of vision and reinterpretes every experience in the light of its spiritual significance. Once he starts this process, he does not stop till he reaches his destination—Godhood, where he finds that he has come to his own self.

Meher Baba has described the stages a man has to undergo from his ordinary state till he reaches Godhood in a lucid style by giving apt illustrative stories. These are the stages which a Karma yogi has to experience in his journey towards God.

— M. R. Kantak

In Search of Reality

God is Eternal Existence

Philosophers, atheists and others may affirm or refute the existence of God, but as long as they do not deny the very existence of their own being they continue to testify to their belief in God—for I tell you with divine authority, that God is Existence, eternal and infinite. He is EVERYTHING. Whether man knows it or not, there is for him only one aim in life, and eventually he realises this when he consciously experiences his own eternal and infinite state of "I Am God."

Grades of Beliefs in God

Most persons do not even suspect the existence of God and naturally they are not very keen about God. There are others who, through the influence of tradition, belong to some faith or another and catch the belief in the existence of God from their surroundings. Their faith is just strong enough to keep them bound to certain rituals, ceremonies or beliefs and rarely possesses that vitality which is necessary to bring about a radical change in one's entire attitude towards life. There are still others who are philosophically minded and have an inclination to believe in the existence of God either because of their own speculations or because of the assertions of others. For them, God is at best an hypothesis or an intellectual idea. Such lukewarm belief in itself can never be sufficient incentive for

launching upon a serious search for God. Such persons do not know of God from personal knowledge, and for them God is not an object of intense desire or endeavour

True Aspirant seeks Direct Knowledge of Spiritual Realities

A true aspirant is not content with knowledge of spiritual realities based on hearsay, nor is he satisfied with pure inferential knowledge. For him the spiritual realities are not the object of idle thinking, and the acceptance or rejection of these realities is fraught with momentous implication for his inner life. Hence he naturally insists upon direct knowledge about them. This may be illustrated from the life of a great sage. One day he was discussing spiritual topics with a friend who was quite advanced upon the Path. While they were engaged in this discussion their attention was diverted to a dead body which was being carried past them. "This is the end of the body but not of the soul," the friend remarked. "Have you seen the soul?", asked the sage. "No," the friend answered. The sage remained sceptical about the soul, for he insisted upon *personal* knowledge.

Aspirant Has An Open Mind

Although the aspirant cannot be content with a second-hand knowledge or mere guesses, he does not close his mind to the possibility that there could be spiritual realities which had not come within his

experience. In other words, *he is conscious of the limitations of his own individual experience and refrains from making it the measure of all possibilities.* He has an open mind towards all things which are beyond the scope of his experience. While he does not accept them on hearsay, he also does not rush to deny them. The limitation of experience often tends to restrict the the scope of imagination, and thus a person comes to believe that there are no realities other than those which may have come within the ken of his past experience; but usually some incidents or happenings in his own life will cause him to break out of his dogmatic enclosure and become really open-minded.

An Illustrative Story

(transition from close-minded to open-minded)

This stage of transition may also be illustrated by a story from the life of the same sage, who happened to be a prince. Some days after the incident mentioned above, as he was riding on a horse-back he came upon a pedestrian advancing towards him. Since the way of the horse was blocked by the presence of the pedestrian, the sage arrogantly ordered the man out of the way. The pedestrian refused, so the sage dismounted and the following conversation was held: "Who are you?" asked the pedestrian. "I am the Prince," answered the sage. "But I do not *know* you to be the Prince," said the pedestrian and continued, "I shall accept you as a Prince only when I know you to be a Prince and not otherwise." This encounter awakened

the sage to the fact that God *may* exist even though he did not know Him from his own personal experience. Now that his mind was open to the possible existence of God, he set himself to the task of deciding that question in earnest.

Ordinary Man Indifferent to Existence of God

God either exists or does not exist. If he exists, *search for him is amply justified. And if He does not exist, there is nothing to lose by seeking Him.* But man does not usually turn to a real search for God as a matter of voluntary and joyous enterprise. He has to be driven to this search by disillusionment with those worldly things which allure him and from which he cannot deflect his mind. Ordinary man is completely engrossed in his activities in the gross world. He lives through its manifold experiences of joys and sorrows without even suspecting the existence of a deeper Reality. He tries as best he can to have pleasures of the senses and to avoid different kinds of suffering.

Occasions Which Provoke Thought

"Eat, drink and be merry" is his philosophy, but in spite of his unceasing search for pleasure he cannot altogether avoid suffering, and even when he succeeds in having pleasures of the senses he is often satiated by them. While he thus goes through the daily round of varied experiences, there often arises some occasion when he begins to ask himself, "*What is the end of all*

this?" Such a thought may arise from some untoward happening for which the person is not mentally prepared. It may be the frustration of some confident expectation, or it may be an important change in his situation demanding radical readjustment and the giving up of established ways of thought and conduct. Usually such an occasion arises from the frustration of some deep craving. If a deep craving happens to meet an *impasse* so that there is not the slightest chance of its ever being fulfilled, the psyche receives such a shock that it can no longer accept the type of life which may have been accepted hitherto without question.

Unharnessed Desperateness is Destructive; Divine Desperateness is Creative

Under such circumstances a person may be driven to utter desperation, and if the tremendous power which is generated by the psychic disturbance remains uncontrolled and undirected, it may even lead to serious mental derangement or attempts to commit suicide. Such a catastrophe overcomes those in whom desperateness is allied with thoughtlessness, for they allow impulse to have free and full sway. The unharnessed power of desperateness can only work destruction. The desperateness of a thoughtful person under similar circumstances is altogether different in results because the energy which it releases is intelligently harnessed and directed towards a purpose. In the moment of such *divine desperateness* a man makes the important decision

to discover and realise the aim of life. There thus comes into existence a true search for lasting values. Henceforth the burning query which refuses to be silenced is, "*What does it all lead to?*"

Divine Desperateness is The Beginning of Spiritual Awakening

When the psychic energy of a man is thus centred upon discovering the goal of life, he uses the power of desperateness creatively. He can no longer be content with the fleeting things of this life and he is thoroughly sceptical about the ordinary values which he had so far accepted without doubt. His only desire is to find the Truth at any cost and he does not rest satisfied with anything short of the Truth. *Divine desperateness is the beginning of spiritual awakening because it gives rise to aspiration for God-realisation.* In the moment of divine desperateness, when everything seems to give way, man decides to take any risk to ascertain what of significance to his life lies *behind the veil.*

God Or Nothing

All the usual solaces have failed him, but at the same time his inner voice refuses to reconcile itself completely with the position that life is devoid of all meaning. *If he does not posit some hidden reality which he has not hitherto known, then there is nothing at all worth living for.* For him there are only two alternatives : either there is a hidden spiritual reality which prophets have described as God,

or everything is meaningless. The second alternative is utterly unacceptable to the whole of man's personality so he must try the first alternative. Thus man turns, to God when he is at bay in worldly affairs.

Revaluation of Experience in Light of Posited Divinity

Now since there is no *direct* access to this hidden reality which he posits, he inspects his usual experiences for possible avenues leading to a *significant beyond*. Thus he goes back to his usual experiences with the purpose of gathering some light on the Path. This involves looking at everything from a new angle of vision and entails a reinterpretation of each experience. He now not only has experience but tries to *fathom its spiritual significance*. He is not merely concerned with what *is* but with what it *means* in the march towards this hidden goal of existence. All this careful revaluation of experience results in his gaining an insight which could not come to him before he begins his new search.

New Insight Means Experimenting With Perceived values

Revaluation of an experience amounts to a new bit of wisdom, and each addition to spiritual wisdom necessarily brings about a modification of one's general attitude towards life. So the purely intellectual search for God or the

hidden spiritual reality, has its reverberations in the practical life of a man. His life now becomes a real experiment with perceived spiritual values.

Finding God is Coming To One's Own Self

The more he carries on this intelligent and purposive experimentation with his own life the deeper becomes his comprehension of the true meaning of life, until finally he discovers that as he is undergoing a complete transformation of his psychic being he is arriving at a true perception of the real significances of life *as it is*. With a clear and tranquil vision of the real nature and worth of life he realises that *God Whom he has been so desperately seeking is no stranger nor hidden and foreign entity. He is Reality itself and not a hypothesis. He is Reality seen with undimmed vision—that very Reality of which he is a part and in which he has had his entire being and with which he is in fact identical. So, though he begins by seeking something utterly new, he really arrives at a new understanding of an ancient thing. The spiritual journey does not consist in arriving at a new destination where a person gains what he did not have, or becomes what he was not. It consists in the dissipation of his ignorance concerning himself and life and the gradual growth of that understanding which begins with spiritual awakening. The finding of God is a coming to one's own Self.*

Thus the God-realised person does not actually become something different from what he was before

realisation. He remains what he was, and the only difference which realisation makes in him is that *previously he did not consciously know his own true nature, and now he knows it.* He knows that he has never been anything other than what he now knows himself to be and that what he has been through was but a *process of finding himself.*

Spiritual Life Changes The Outlook of Man

Spiritual advancement begins when there is a radical change in the outlook of the worldly man. The worldly man lives mostly for the body, and even in those pursuits which do not seem to have a direct reference to the body, in the last analysis the ultimate motive power is to be found in the desires connected with the body. For example, he lives to eat; he does not eat to live. He has not yet discovered any purpose clearly transcending the body, so the body and its comforts become the centres of all his pursuits. But when he discovers a value in which the soul is predominant, the body is at once relegated to the background. The maintenance of the body now becomes for him merely instrumental for the realisation of a higher purpose. *His body, which had formerly been a hindrance to true spiritual life, becomes an instrument for the release of higher life.* At this stage man attends to his bodily needs with no special feeling of self-identification, but like the driver of a railway engine who fills it with coal and water so that it may be kept going.

Bondage Adds To Value of Freedom

All persons have to pass through the state of bondage but this period of bondage is not to be looked upon as a meaningless episode in the evolution of life. One has to experience being caged if one is to appreciate freedom. If in the entire span of its life the fish has not come out of the water even once, it has no chance of appreciating the value of water. From its birth till its death it has lived only in water, and it is not in a position to understand what water really means to its being. But if it is taken out of water even for a moment, it longs for water and becomes qualified by that experience to appreciate the importance of water. In the same way, if life had been constantly free and manifested no bondage man would have missed the real significance of freedom. *To experience spiritual bondage and know intense desire to be free from it are both a preparation for the full enjoyment of the freedom which is to come.*

Spiritual Path Begins with Longing For Deeper Reality

As the fish which is taken out of water longs to go back in the water, the aspirant who has perceived the goal longs to be united with God. In fact, the longing to go back to the source is present in *each* being from the very time that it is separated from the source by the veil of ignorance, but the being is unconscious of the longing till the aspirant enters the Path. One can in a sense become accustomed to ignorance, just as a person

in a train may get accustomed to the darkness of a tunnel when the train has been passing through it for some time. Even then there is a definite discomfort and a vague and undefinable sense of restlessness owing to the feeling that *something* is missing. This something is apprehended from the very beginning as being of tremendous significance. In the stages of dense ignorance, this something is often inadvertently identified with the variegated thing of this mundane world. When one's experience of this world is sufficiently mature, however, the repeated disillusionments in life set the man on the right track to discover what is missing. From that moment he seeks a *reality which is deeper than changing forms*. This moment might aptly be described as the first initiation of the aspirant. From the moment of initiation into the Path, the longing to unite with the source from which he has been separated becomes *articulate and intense*. Just as the person in the tunnel longs for light all the more intensely after he sees a streak of light coming from the other end, so the person who has had a glimpse of the goal longs to hasten towards it with all the speed he can command.

Om-Point

Ultimately the aspirant has to realise that God is the only Reality and that he is really one with God. This implies that he should not be overpowered by the spectacle of the multiform universe. In fact, *the whole universe is in the Self and springs into existence from the*

tiny point in the Self which is referred to as "OM". But the self has become habituated to gathering experience through one medium or another, and therefore it comes to experience the universe as a formidable rival other than itself. Those who have realized God constantly see the universe as springing from this "OM-POINT" which is in everyone.

Realising God Different from Intellectual Knowledge of God

Of all the objects of human study, God is the best. But purely theoretical study of God does not take the aspirant very far towards the real purpose of human life, though it is always better to study God than to be completely ignorant of His existence. He who seeks God intellectually is infinitely better than the person who is merely a skeptic or an agnostic. But it is decidedly better to feel God than to study Him through the intellect, though even feeling for God is less important than the actual experience of God. However, even the experience of God does not yield the true nature of Divinity, because God, as the object of experience, remains different from and external to the aspirant. The true nature of God is known to the aspirant only when he attains unity with God, by losing himself in His Being. *Thus, it is better to study God than to be ignorant of him ; it is better to feel God than to study him ; it is better to experience God than to feel God ; and it is better to become God than to experience Him.*

God-Realisation

To arrive at self knowledge is to arrive at God realisation. God-realisation is different from all other states of consciousness because they are experienced through the medium of the individual mind, whereas God-consciousness is not dependent upon the individual mind. To know the self as it is, consciousness has to be freed from the limitation of the individual mind. In other words, the individual mind has to disappear while consciousness is retained.

The limited mind is the soil in which the ego is rooted ; and the ego perpetuates ignorance through the many illusions in which it is caught. The ego prevents the manifestation of infinite knowledge already latent in the soul, and is the most formidable obstacle in the attainment of God.

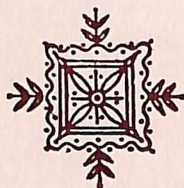
The ego is the centre of human activity, and the attempts of the ego to secure its own extinction may be compared with the attempt of a man to stand on his own shoulders. Just as the eye cannot see itself, the ego is unable to end its own existence. All that it does to bring about self-annihilation only adds to its existence for it flourishes on the very efforts directed against itself. Thus it is unable to vanish through its own activity, though it succeeds in transforming its nature. The vanishing of the ego is conditioned by the melting away of the limited mind which is its seat.

God-realisation is the emancipation of consciousness from the limitations of the mind. When the individual mind is dissolved, the related universe vanishes, and consciousness is no longer tied to it. Consciousness then becomes unclouded and is illumined by the Infinite Reality.

The world of shadows is at an end and the curtain of illusion is for ever drawn. The distress of the pursuits of limited consciousness is replaced by the tranquillity and bliss of truth-consciousness and the restlessness of temporal existence is swallowed up in the peace of eternity.

The Final Account

When the goal of life is attained, one achieves the reparation of all wrongs, the healing of all wounds the righting of all failures, the sweetening of all sufferings, the relaxation of all strivings, the harmonizing of all strife, the unraveling of all enigmas, and the real and full meaning of all life—past, present and future.



**It is better to study God than to be ignorant of Him;
It is better to feel God than to study Him;
It is better to experience God than to feel God; and
It is better to become God than to experience Him.**
