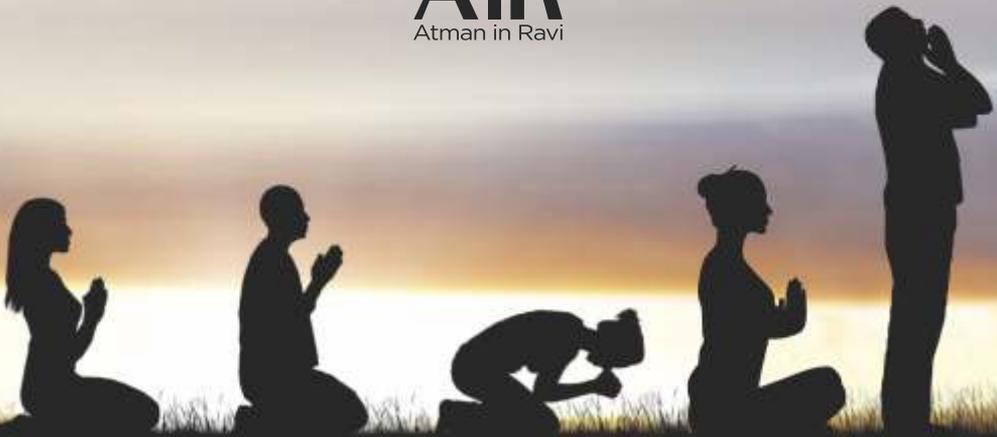


Religion!

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

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