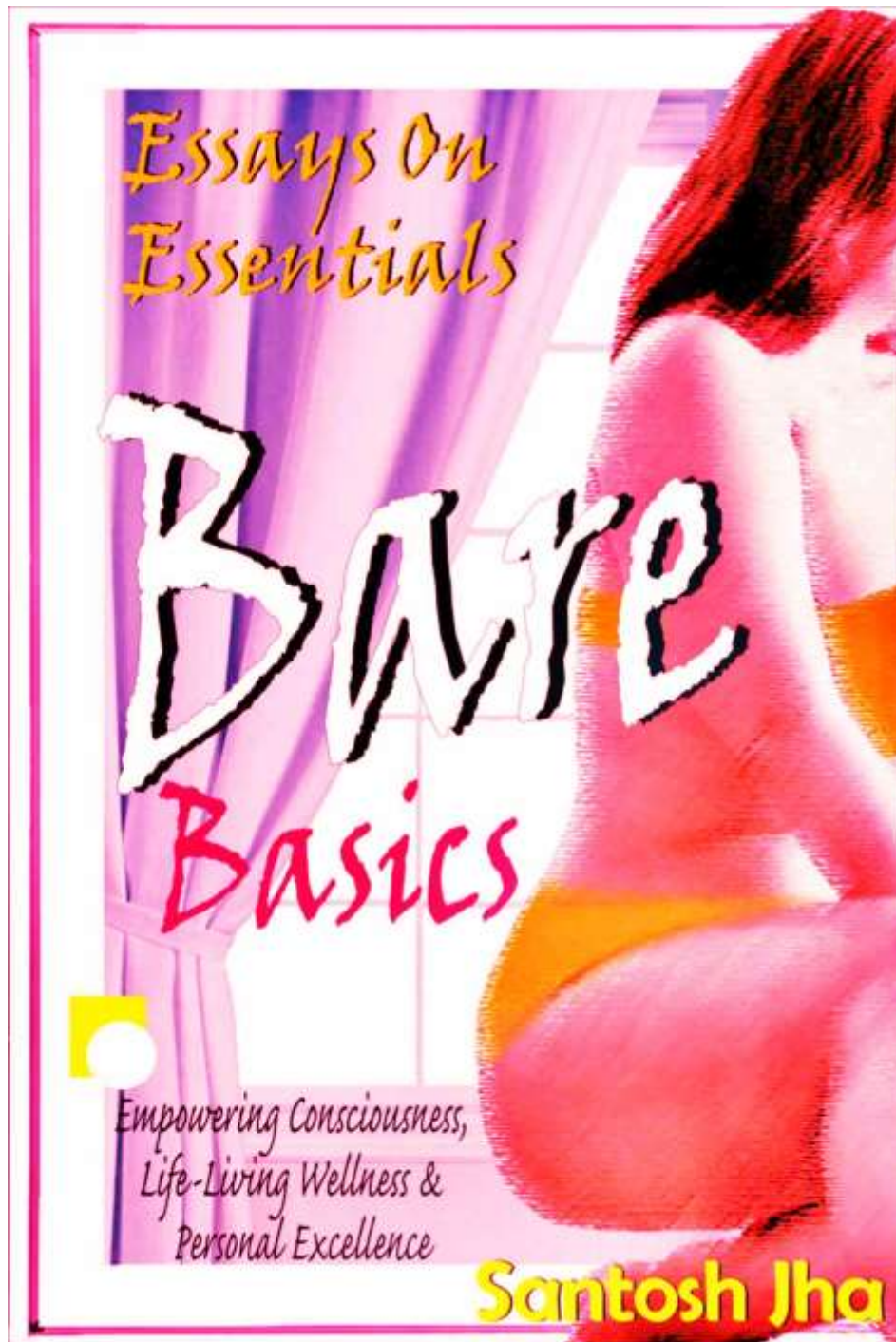


Bare Basics

By Santosh Jha

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Preface

The experts say – consciousness is essentially localized. This may sound a confusing idea but its simple manifestations we all see in our lives. Mind consciousness, our very dear sense of ‘I’ or ‘I Am’, is essentially a mechanism, which is best at action-reaction functions. Our senses feed information to our brain and the mind consciousness behaves and acts as conditioned reaction to these stimuli. Usually, we are all in a routine of life, which suits us fine. Our daily hours, weekend leisure and even monthly calendar is a fixed and repetitive chain of action-reaction schedule. That is why, our consciousness is considered localized – attuned to ambient milieus and the cultures we live in. However, it is a belief that growth of person and his or her personality is largely dependent on how much he or she is challenged in the milieus, which keep changing and presents new inputs of imagination and thinking. Of course, we have challenges in life but either they are not new, or there is virtually nothing much we can do. Like, the traffic we face daily is a huge challenge but we have almost accepted it as we cannot do anything to better it. The pollutions in the physical as well as cultural milieus are bigger challenges we face daily but we know; we probably cannot help improve anything. In such environment or either complacency or helplessness, we usually get into a groove of a consciousness, which also becomes a fixed and static routine entity.

This surely is not ideal situation for empowerment of consciousness, life-living wellness and personal excellence. We all need to be challenged and these new challenges must make us evolve almost on daily basis. This evolving is our life-living wellness mantra. And the best way to do is to come to the bare-basics of life's incessant challenges. Our consciousnesses must be jolted out of the inertia of complacency and status quo. This new socio-cultural as well as physical environment we live in is surely very challenging. We are into a new millennium and we have developed a lot but still, our life-living challenges also have evolved faster than us. We need to feel challenged and evolving all the time so that we have better preparedness to face life's ever-growing troubles. The best challenges we can present to ourselves are those, which are still the bare-basics in humanity's struggle for survival and excellence.

The bare-basics about wellness and goodness of life and living and challenges associated with them are ubiquitous. They have been there in different forms since millions of years. They still are. However, new issues of wellness and goodness have been added, as we all are heading for a world, which is fast becoming complex, resulting in far more conflicts and conundrum.

The new millennium has heralded a new thinking. It was brewing up for over two decades but now as we moved into 21st century; we have a wisdom to answer many questions of wellness in a completely new light. The answers have come up, as there has been a change in perception about the three core notions – Consciousness, Cognition & Causality, essential for wellness and goodness of life. It is time to revisit the bare-basics of life-living wellness and personal excellence and confront them with the new wisdom of the new millennium, which in the past, were addressed either with extreme 'scientific positivism' or with dogmatic 'religious reductionism'. The 'new thinking' believes; answers are in the integrative and assimilative domain as both wisdoms have unbelievable commonality. The new thinking is all about an

assimilative and integrative approach and technique, drawing holistic resources from both traditional as well as modern wisdoms. The essays in this book attempts to revisit and confront the bare-basics of life-living spectrum. They happen to be essays on essentials...

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Reiterating The First Essential

THERE ALWAYS HAVE BEEN QUESTIONS and there is no denial to the fact that questions shall always remain there. This probably is the best news for humanity as questions always help us extend our domain of consciousness as well as our collective and personal wisdom. Number of questions we accept, more we open ourselves to newer probabilities of realism. There is probably no single tool for humanity, which is more useful in empowering consciousness, life-living wellness and personal excellence. History of humanity substantiates this simple hypothesis.

However, we usually happily restrict ourselves to fewer questions as initially; questions unsettle our comfort and us. It is natural that people with fewer questions shall have wherewithal of lesser answers. It is said, 'ignorance is bliss' as many believe, more questions and more answers may be good for a wise but it surely does not make him or her happier. However, it is also said, 'it is always better to be a wise dissatisfied (unhappy) than a fool satisfied (happy)'. This debate is endless!

We can, for a while accept the hypothesis that true knowledge somehow can lead us to larger wellness and personal excellence. And true knowledge is a cyclic process of accepting more questions and evolving improved answers. Evolution of humanity in millions of years has been a process of this cyclicity. This is absolute utility for us.

The imagery of an open window, as used on the cover of the book is a huge symbol of how we should never constrict our knowledge by closing our minds to many questions and ideas, which we feel uncomfortable with. Questions must never be restricted entry in the consciousness, as it is essential and bare-basics for our growth as human being.

Our knowledge is the base material from which most of our joys, wellness and excellence are created. This knowledge is a product of a magnanimous mind consciousness, which allows and lets even uncomfortable and unfriendly ideas and questions sink in. What sinks in stays and knowledge is a function of this memory of fruitfully processed experiences, which stays after deep sinking in. Therefore, the first intelligence in all humans is the innocence. This intelligence of innocence is in being an open window person, allowing this sinking in to happen so that utility and fruition stays.

There are questions and they are important because only when we accept questions, we move to discover the answers, which are already there. Truths or answers cannot be created as they are already there to be deciphered. This is the singular objective road to knowledge building. However, wisdom or knowledge comes in stages; they are not usually arrived at suddenly. Like answers, questions are also born and evolved in time and space dimensions. Long history of humanity shows us how key life-living questions evolved in stages and their answers too came in stages. That is why we have to constantly move away and beyond our current state of mind consciousness, which has the instinctive inclination for accepting and be happy with comfort of inertia of few questions and subjectively created answers.

For the larger society, rooted in inertia and *status quoism*, a question is like a poisonous snake. People with baton of socio-economic and political authority are so panicky of the venom of non-conformity, which a question has the potential to unleash, that they are quick to thrash its head. Often, even innocuous and well-meaning questions and questioners are killed in the panic over the threat to peace and

order of suitable conformism. The bare basics of life cannot be done away with. It shall come back in different dimensions and we cannot run away from it life-long.

Questions are important. God is the biggest question. The religion is the mother of all questions. The greatest tragedy of humanity is that today religion smothers more questions than it was suppose to answer. Regrettable it is that on the name of religion, mediocre and conformist answers are being forced on masses and many meaningful questions are not even allowed to breathe.

Even you would have noticed and witnessed how your family members or society members often stifle key and basic questions, which one has and are asked innocently. Often, kids have the best of and most questions of bare-basic nature and they would often be hushed up and told that it was bad manners. Often, discipline is considered the primary virtue and even innocuous curiosity of kids would be bracketed as undisciplined behavior. Discipline should not be accepted as the greatest morality as it is often a non-reciprocal tool of outdated notions of societal conformity, which smothers basic questions of life-living wellness.

In contemporary socio-cultural milieu, even when liberal attitudes are supposed to ensure a free and fair living environment, one is not always confident of the righteousness and justification of one's natural inquisitiveness about bare-basic questions. However, you have to be as the nervousness that one can see, which questions generate among those who were responsible for answers is enough to assure someone that righteousness is more on the side of the questioner than the answerer. If not, why would questions scare? The force, with which the authoritative layers attempt to smother questions only reflect the reality that there is something that they fear the questions would expose – either their incompetence or ignorance to answer them or the larger hypocrisy of humanity.

The realism that asking question is a greater virtue than giving answers must be accepted in modern liberal societies and cultures. Keeping a question alive, not allowing it to die prematurely requires a lot of courage, character and conviction. This needs to be respected and encouraged. Almost everyone claims to have the answers; some of them probably have. Most of them even fight for their answers to be the only justified one. Many have the authority to impose answers or the refusal of it on people. Only few however have questions and the courage to stand them.

If necessity is the mother of inventions, inquisitiveness is the primary energy behind all inventions, all creations. This is first essential, which needs to be accepted and encouraged. An inquisitive mind, which magnanimously and compassionately accepts all questions, even when they are not comfortable, is the sure winner as by this simple action-behavior, he or she ensures his or her empowerment of consciousness, life-living wellness and personal excellence.

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What is ‘Fact’ and what is ‘Fiction’ in Life’s Realism?

It seems; realism – as a subjective self accepts – is brain’s choice (mostly randomized) of elements from the ambient milieu. Therefore, both ‘Fact & Fiction’ are equally entitled to being Realism. There are both tangible and intangible elements in any milieu. Consciousness (subjective self) as the navigation mapping mechanism, facilitated by the brain, accepts both elements with equal ease.

Interestingly, all tangibles acquire form and content from the intangibles of life and all intangibles attain utility and suitability from tangibles. Therefore, it seems, realism is an eclectic mix of Fact & Fiction. However, it depends on early childhood milieu and

initial experiences of a person, whether this mix has more fact or more fiction. It seems, in contemporary milieu of most popular cultures, both men and women are growingly having a subjective consciousness with more fiction and less fact inclinations.

I present below, a discourse, which I came through in public domain. The entire idea may seem hugely confusing but believe me, it is a huge benefit to challenge our subjective perceptions about realism. There is always a benefit in extending the limits of our consciousness self. The preface above is just an introduction to what always is probability at any stage of our living experience. We remain caught between our perceptions of fact and fiction. It seems, this conundrum is our mechanism. However, understanding this mechanism can surely help in deciphering some bare-basics of life-living experiences. It goes like –

“If there is anything about which we feel sure, it is that the world we experience is real. We can see, touch and hear it. We can lift heavy and solid objects; hurt ourselves, if we're not careful, against their unyielding immobility. It seems undeniable that out there, around us, independent and apart from us, stands a physical world, utterly real, solid and tangible. But all is not what it seems.

First, the apparently solid table in front me is, it turns out, far from solid. And second, we assume that we are directly experiencing the world around; that the colors we see and the sounds we hear are there, around us, just as we experience them. But even an elementary study of the processes of perception show that in this, too, we are much mistaken.

All that I see, hear, taste, touch, smell and feel has been created from the data fed to me by my sensory organs. All I ever know of the world around are the images produced in the mind. I think I am seeing the tree "out there", in the world around me. But all that I am actually experiencing is the image created in the mind.

This simple fact is very hard to grasp. It runs totally counter to all our experience. There seems nothing more certain than the fact that I am seeing the world as it is, around me. But however nonsensical it may sound, this is the conclusion we are forced to make.

The world we experience around us is no more "out there" than are our dreams. However real it may seem, it is, in the final analysis, all in the mind. We never experience the physical world directly; all we ever know is the image of the world generated in our awareness. And that image is no more "out there" than are the images of our dreams. We may find it hard to come to terms with the fact that our normal waking experience of reality is a manifestation within the mind, but in many other instances we readily accept that we create our experiences.

The entire concept of virtual reality is founded on the understanding that the brain is a reality generator as much as an information processor. In all these instances of illusory or artificial realities, we readily accept that the confusing or abnormal perception stems from the way the brain creates our experience of reality. Yet when it comes to our normal waking experience, the base state in which these so-called "illusions" occur, we adopt the opposite position. We feel that we are experiencing the world as it is, "out there" in front of us. But how could the illusory perception be an image in our mind, yet the world in which the illusion occurs be the physical world around us?

Many other creations of the mind we dismiss as hallucinations. These are typically experiences, which occur under the influence of drugs, and during illness, extreme fatigue or stress. For one reason or another the electro-chemical processes are modified in some way, leading the brain to generate a different image of reality. One may perceive unusual colors or patterns, perceive time and space differently, or experience some other "non-ordinary" manifestation in consciousness.

We call such images "hallucinations" because they do not concur with our normal experience of reality, or with the reality that other people experience. We say we are seeing things that are not really there. But, surprising as it may at first seem, this is what we are doing all the time. Even in normal, everyday perception, the kind we all agree upon, we are seeing things that are not really there. Color, sound, smell, and all the other qualities of experience are not qualities of the physical world; they exist only in the mind.

The fact that we create our experience of reality does not imply that there is no underlying reality. When a tree falls in the forest, there is a specific event that is happening in the physical world. There is something that gives rise to my perception, and to your perception -- and to the perception of a bird sitting on one of its branches. But we know nothing of that event directly. All we know are the experiences created in our minds.

As a contemporary analogy, we might liken the situation to the image created on a computer screen. Within the central processor of the computer are numerous bits of information, encoded as electronic states in the circuitry of the chips. Software in the computer processes this data, putting it into a form that when sent to the monitor causes it to light the screen in particular ways. The image that is created may be derived from the data in the central processor, but it is not the same as the data. The computer is not producing some faithful imitation of an image held in memory. All there is, is code; microscopic electronic switches that are either "on"; or "off". There is no color or light in the computer code, and the spatial layout of the data on the chip bears very little resemblance to the layout of the final image.

It is important to distinguish between two ways in which we use the word "reality". There is the reality we experience, our image of reality; and there is the underlying reality that we never know directly, but which is the source of our experience. In Indian philosophy these two realities are sometimes referred to as the Absolute and the

Relative. The Absolute is the underlying reality. It does not change according to who is experiencing it. It is, as it is, an independent reality. The Relative is the reality we observe, the reality generated in our minds. There is just one Absolute; but there are numerous relative realities, each relative to a particular experiencer at a particular point in space and time.

How we construct our image of the world is determined by our sensory organs and nervous system. Most human beings have very similar sensory organs -- my eye, for example, is virtually identical to yours -- and the neural processing of the sensory data follows very similar pathways. We receive the same data, analyze it in the same way, and so create very similar pictures of reality -- unless, that is, a person is color-blind, near-sighted, or tone deaf, in which case we make allowances for our different perceptions

The fact that we seldom disagree on our experience of reality reinforces our assumption that we are seeing reality as it is. But if we could communicate with other creatures we would find our naive assumption severely shaken. Dogs, for example, hear higher frequencies of sound than we do, and their noses detect a far wider range of molecules. If we could put ourselves in a dog's mind we would find a somewhat different perception of reality.”

Our tacit assumption that we perceive the world as it is, has become so deeply ingrained that it is very hard indeed to appreciate that our image of reality is a construction within our own mind. Even when we intellectually accept the fact, as eventually we must, it is still extremely difficult not to see the image we have created as "out there".

In fact, we will probably always see it this way. But that is not to say it is not possible to see it otherwise. It may be that spiritual adepts who have made a deep personal investigation into the nature of the mind, explored the workings of their own

consciousness, and witnessed the arising of experience, have come to see it that way. Throughout the mystical and spiritual literature of the world are examples of individuals who have claimed that the whole world is within them rather than around them, as most of us experience. Thousands of years back, rational humans warned us all that what we all accept as real is ‘maya’... science is not new to us....

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The Transcendental Question And True Answer

It is only normal and justified for an individual. Everyone has this question, which he or she is entitled to ask and has all the rights in the world to know the answers. The simple, innocuous and straightforward question is – “What is the purpose of life, what is the aim, what is desirable for an individual to do in life?”

For all humanity in all ages, the answer is the same and looks as simple and pointed as the question itself. The answer is – “Physical-mental-spiritual growth”. In modern terminology, it needs to be said that the answer is – all-round, multi-dimensional growth of all beings.

But, is that simple...! no..no... it ain’t. It is like, every father telling his kid that the only aim in his life is to become a good and successful human being.... and the kids dare not ask, “how?” The father feels his duties have ended there, and all he has to do is to provide all sorts of physical resources and comforts to his kid.... rest is the kid’s burden....!

Most persons live life this way. They have been told what their aim and purpose in life is but, they do not know ‘how’ to go about it. Almost everyone knows and accepts the

generalizations of the goodness of life and living idealisms. However, the practical particulars are not easily and generally available to most. Somehow, it is a cultural standpoint that each one has to create these particulars of life on his or her own.

The father tells the kid that he or she shall be successful only after years of learning in a good school where good teachers lead him to the right knowledge each day, guiding him and actually shaping him or her to attain success at a particular stage of life. We all need gurus and constant guidance. The simple reason for this is – all goodness needs internalization and this needs constant and persevered repetition of goodness for the brain to create and master the required pathway for its excellence.

There is a similar hint in one of the great books of Indian religion. It says – ‘one has to be a student all his or her life. And he or she can have a guru and teacher in either parents, siblings, friends, beloved or spouse. Rather, relationships, community in general are meant to be for mutuality.

Each relationship you have, serves twin purposes – he or she is your guru as well as a student. We learn from each other and grow together in relationships.

That’s the true beauty and joy of relationships. Relationships are strong and bonded well if this mutuality of making learn as well as learning goes simultaneously for both. Relationships end when this mutuality ends. And the beginning of this mutuality is honesty and innocence.

When honesty happens in a relationship, true friendship happens and when friendship happens, growth happens and it becomes a mutual progression of the two people in relationship.

Sadly, there is a huge deficit of trusts in modern day relationships. Moreover, we all have become so busy in personal pursuits that we have almost forgotten the art and joy of growing together. Mutuality is the worst casualty of contemporary culture of instant

self-gratification and self-worth, defined in terms of individualistic consumptions and possessions. Naturally, everyone knows the goodness in its macrocosm, but the essential support system of family-friends-companions that leads us to the microcosm of goodness is missing. The confusion and conflict about the aim-desirability-purpose of life is only natural.

The second trouble is that out of the three aspects of growth – physical, mental and spiritual – most people in modern times are predominantly focusing on only the physical part. That is why, the most essential ‘mental-spiritualism’ aspects that are crucial for a perfect balance is missing.

The goodness and wellness of life-living idealism is in simple positioning of being multi-dimensional in growth and having a perfect poise in all these dimensions. In modern societies across the globe, the health experts warn that the golden homeostasis (all round balance) of human body-mind mechanism is missing hugely and the resultant diseases and attitudinal crises are results of the body-mind not coping up with the prevailing degenerations caused by the imbalance.

That is why, even when, a person finds himself or herself successful and complete in physical aspect of growth, he and she is very poorly grown up in mental-spiritual aspects. This lop-sided growth often creates lots of chaos, conflict and confusion in life. Sadly, even friends-relatives-spouses support only in physical growth. Very few are there to help you grow in totality and completeness. The missing mutuality and multi-dimensionality in lives are causing huge chaos and conundrum.

Find good support system for your well-being. Understand and accept that the word ‘well-being’ encompasses the poise in all three aspects – physical as well as mental and spiritual. Moreover, accept spiritualism as distinct from religion and popular spiritualism. Spiritualism is all about your inner poise, macrocosmic homeostasis and good internalization of life-living idealisms.

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Let Them Be With Their Business

It is indeed sad, often tragic and chaotic that humanity in the contemporary world is destined to live in an intellectual universe where questions of billions of mind are being answered by a bunch of socio-cultural and religious-spiritual leadership who themselves do not seem to have access to right and true answers. Moreover, they are themselves a confused lot as most are averse to upgrading their egoistic minds and continuation of their archaic knowledge.

The questions have always been there – ‘who are we, why are we, what is life for, the aim, the purpose, the righteousness and the exalted path, etc’. The answers fall either in the realm of religion, philosophy or science... and all these realms are unable to come to a singularity of universal wisdom. Though claiming to have right answers and also, claiming that only they know the answers.... sad... tragic...!

In reality, all the religions of the world are archaic, rooted in the timeliness of the knowledge that still holds truth but definitely need to be rephrased, reformed and upgraded, given the modern-day realisms in the field of knowledge that humanity has today. The religions are thousands of years old and when the set of knowledge that created them, are presented to contemporary generations, they sound like poor fiction to most young minds. It happens as they grossly miss their context in contemporary milieus. The trouble is, most religions refuse to upgrade themselves and most contemporary leadership dare not play a tune against the populist demands and mindsets.

The philosophies, psychologies and even science are evolving. They are more authoritative and well placed when they deny that what religions say and what traditional morality based on spiritualism entails are not always right. However, when they are asked as to what is the right answer, they come up with another set of still evolving answers, half-baked truths and often extra-polated facts. The more rational of the scientists however are ready to admit that science may have some answers but human mind is still not evolved enough to have all right answers.

The good thing however, with all aware and rational minds is that in all fields of human knowledge, be in science, philosophy and religion, which usually provide answers to human inquisitiveness, those who really are intellectuals, do admit that there is nothing called ultimate in human knowledge and wisdom (answers) are always an evolving entity. They also admit the answers are in holism of all wings of human knowledge, never in parts.

However, tragically, such people are in very poor minority and their voices of rationalism also remain minority voices. And as usual, the media of the day are always interested in stifling this minority voice and play puppets in the hands of those majority, who foolishly but stylishly and ingenuously claim, they have the answers and only their answers are right ones. Media has its own compulsions of going with populism of the day.

So, what is the golden prescription for common man? It is very simple. Use this evolving knowledge as a weapon to make best out of it. God is or not, there is life after death or not, life's purpose is in material well-being or not... etc. Don't be involved in this debate. Use whatever way it suits you and still allow others to have their own ideas. If you feel god is; good enough, remain happy but never be antagonistic and retributive to those who say god ain't. Just admit and be compassionate to all ideas and all sorts of dualism and opinions. Choose what suits your wellness and live a life that is happy, fulfilling and meaningful.

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