

The Nature of Spirituality - October 27, 2020

Too often people see religion and science opposing each other. At the time of Galileo's conflict with the Church, the majority of educated people subscribed to the Aristotelian geocentric view that the Earth is the center of the Universe and the orbit of all heavenly bodies. Opposition to heliocentrism and Galileo's writings on it combined religious and scientific objections. Religious opposition to heliocentrism arose from biblical passages implying the fixed nature of the Earth and this should not be so. Galileo was sentenced to formal imprisonment at the pleasure of the Inquisition. Those who challenged the current system of belief were targeted, jailed, even executed (Inquisition).

Thus, for centuries our occidental spirituality has sought to transform religious truth into a catalog of logic and intellectual certitude. On the other hand, the eastern philosophy, such as the Hindu religion, does not require that we limit or conform our direct experience to an intellectual dogma. Here, one's personal apprehension is calibrated in accordance with the releasing of the grasp and the certitude of the ego. The true faith grows through the vision of the soul where spiritual revelation may be apprehended. In today's modern time, systems of religions seem to be referring to experiences long past and are not in sync with today's world of new discoveries.

However, the beliefs which foster and promote the spiritual life must live in accord with both nature and the progress of scientific discovery. Unlike as for Galileo, modern discoveries should be accepted and adapted to our spiritual views. In the material world, the scientific progress is advanced through continuous experimentation that leads to the understanding of causes and effects.

In this sense the institutionalized religions never updated their ethics in the light of scientific progress. That only compounded the causes of an apparent conflict that exist between religion and science. Both, one and the other, should be advancing in harmonious coexistence.

Another issue also lingers in the prevailing belief that past spiritual experiences cannot be replicated. A lot traditional religions kept alive the narrative of spiritual revelation and rightly so, however it would be acceptable to make the today's spiritual experiences to have the same authority in terms of spiritual validity as those of centuries ago. Therefore, there cannot be a continuing rupture between reason and intuition, with science seemingly to ignore the validity of intuition, and viewing spiritual seekers as age old backward thinking. Many however do try to

bridge that gap, but generally the intellect wins out over the direct experience. Even those following on a quest tend to think of spirituality as being opposed to materiality, but in fact truth is everywhere, and in everything.

The spirituality of the east in the Hindu tradition acknowledges the advancement of each individual in their personal quest without subjecting them to the dogmatic validation of the official religion. Clairvoyants are widely accepted in the east, while still controversial in the west. In other words each individual's own progress feeds and nurtures the accomplishments of the soul without the need to be sanctioned by an expert, or even to be judge on how spiritually 'advanced' one is. It was mistaken for church officials in the sixteen century to Judge St Theresa of Avila as having lost her faith, when instead, she had achieved transcendence over dogma, or even anything material. Just as a loving Mother adjusts for the various needs of her children, the Divine Mother gives freedom and grace to each individual to find their own path according to their own abilities. This view has been consistent in Hinduism, giving sometimes the display of a variety of Gods in the Pantheon of that religion, allowing therefore for a variety of religious experiences and iconographies.

However, it is understandably essential for any religion to honor and keep its traditional heritage, and treat it as sacred. The sacred core that surrounds the experiences of its tradition becomes a well that nourishes their followers as a constant source of inspiration. The religious experiences are indeed rich with beauty as illustrated in artistic representations with a reflective light that yet illuminates our path of progress. Moreover, the scriptures render witness to the existence of blissful states outside time and space, beyond the intellect and reason, hence demonstrating the life of the Spirit. However, what the religions do not teach in these days and age is that similar states of grace can be experienced and renewed likewise.

In the face of the tribulations of life from its trials, perplexity, and grief, mankind does not have the time to collect their thoughts or meditate. One looks for an easy way out, a type of formula, the recipe for daily life established by the traditional religions. We allow for spiritual 'professionals' to step in for us as a 'proxy' and do the work on our behalf, advising us, building the bridge to God, and even assuring us on a secure afterlife.(Obviously, some of these teachers are good, and some are not). Allowing the values of a living tradition constantly updated will permeate through our internal faculties to humanize our nature, and raise us to a superior level.

As helpful are the beliefs of our mothers and fathers, which procure for us the precious witness of times past, one should not prevent the present time from its right to discover the truth in its own right. Nothing will ever stop us from having and making our own experience, provided we have determination, a willingness to open our soul and to discover that what is beyond the 'norms' or the frontiers of what we have been taught before.

As precious are the echoes of the 'divine voice' in the men and women of the old days, one should realize that today God never stops revealing his wisdom and his truth in accordance with today's scientific developments and progress. The grace of Enlightenment is ever-present in all times, but cannot permeate through the layers of our materialism, and the 'status quo'. The 'spiritual experience' is available now and forever to all seekers, and the love and latitude of experiences available for those who fear not.

As measurably as our spiritual knowledge seems to progress, so will be the development of our 'internal' theology based on our own experience.

Unfortunately, we are seeing established religions refraining or denying the validity of our personal experience, making it an inaccessible goal, completely inconsistent with the reality of life.