



Religion and Philosophy

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Abstract :

This article explains in a simple way the Dvaita and Advaita philosophies, which are fundamental to the evolution of 'Sanatana dharma' - which we now call 'Hinduism'. It is still evolving, as our knowledge of science advances.

Key Words: Religion, God, Quality, Brahman, consciousness, Devotion, Non-duality.

Religions are God-centric. All organized religions are about worshiping God, appeasing God, fearing God, asking for favours in return from God for offerings given, asking for deliverance from suffering - Religions are the storehouse of the art and science of God-worshipping. This is clearly a dualistic approach where there is a God different from us. We are different and separate from God. Hence there is a God somewhere who is all powerful and can release 'me' from my pain and suffering; there is a separate "I" who is wanting and waiting for that freedom. There is a subject and object - this is 'duality'.

Indian philosophies have a different take on the concept of God. At the entry and intermediate level of the learning process

(Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya and in the early parts of Mimamsa), the concept of God is based on a dualistic approach. This is because a huge majority of humanity has not yet expanded their consciousness enough to graduate themselves to an advanced non-dual understanding. Hence deep-rooted devotion to God or Goddess (multiples of them) is extremely important in their *Sadhanas*, which give rise to a way of life for them in line with their level of understanding. However, when their understanding and knowledge evolves enough, in Vedanta, the concept of non-duality is introduced. Devotion is still required, but this devotion is embedded in love and not in a fear or favour driven mind.

This is a gradual unfolding process of

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teaching and learning from entry level to advanced level. In non-duality (*Advaita Vedanta*) all that there is Brahman (Consciousness or *Prajnana*). There is nothing that is different from *Brahman* or Consciousness. Everything in life is *Brahman* or Consciousness disguised and under-powered as something differently enabled. When this understanding is there, who can pray to whom? One Brahman praying to another *Brahman*? Is that not absurd? That does not mean that there is no Devotion to *Brahman* or Consciousness (read “God”) in *Vedanta*. There is Devotion to *Brahman*. Why is that required? That is because the statement that everything is *Brahman* is true only from the perspective of *Brahman*. Even though we are a disguised and underpowered version of the same *Brahman*, for now, we are still not that all knowing, ever present, every joyful *Brahman*. Reality of non-duality does not contradict the experience of duality. Even after understanding the non-duality we still engage in dualistic practices like taking care of the body, going to office, still eating and drinking and so on and so forth. We, therefore, need to lead a life of duality knowing fully well that we are not dual. Devotion is still needed very much. A lower version of *Brahman* active in daily praying to the highest version of absolute, non-dual *Brahman*. But that does not alter his acting. Likewise, even with the highest nondual understanding one needs to be absolutely rooted in devotion, according to Indian thoughts.

It must be noted that the concept of multiple Gods, Goddesses etcetera are all concepts for the benefit of the entry level humanity, who are not yet ready for advanced understanding. Without realizing the underlying principles behind the concept of multiple Gods at entry

level, the anthropomorphic representation of God and Goddess will make very little sense. Just as modern scientists have developed mathematical equations and scientific notations to explain the order and lawfulness of the universe, supremely conscious and evolved *Vedic* sages with immense intuitive powers developed form-equations and sound patterns to express the order, harmony, lawfulness, energy structures and dynamics of the universe. The form equations are deities and sound patterns are *mantras*. These are various cosmic forces that provide for and maintain the universe and we in it. To use an analogy, it is like the equation “ $E=MC^2$ ” is meaningful for some but total gibberish for others. For those who have not yet evolved to a level of consciousness of those sages, these heavyweight abstracts were given as symbolic shapes and images - much like the A, C, D picture cubes given to kindergarten children. All that will make sense as we advance in our state of consciousness

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