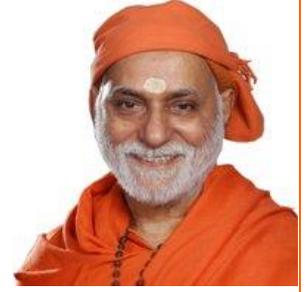


Religion and Spirituality

prabhāta-raśmiḥ

19 May 2011



Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

Today I thought I would say something very very basic and fundamental. At the same time you will find it is also the ultimate. This is the truth about the Supreme reality Brahman and God also. We have got two concepts; one is called religion, another is called philosophy and spirituality. Generally people have a clear difference between the two. One.

Another division is we consider some things to be religious and others to be non-religious; secular. It is better that all of you start thinking about what is religion and what is non-religion or secular, and what is religion and what is spirituality or philosophy? See, everything is actually related to the human individual. The individuals put together become the family, the society, the nation, and the globe. So, the starting point of anything is the individual. It is true that no individual can be there without a society around him and no society can be there except with the individual as its centre. So, they are mutual and complementary.

What is religion? Whenever any kind of an act or a pursuit or an expression is thought of, which is addressed to god or related to god, it becomes religious; any kind of an action, performance or pursuit. What is this secular? Anything other than this. When we get up early in the morning, people say it is not a religious act but when you take a beautiful bath and go to the temple or sit in the pooja room, we consider it to be religious. If you have to take bath, you have to get up. Without getting up, you cannot have your bath. So, getting up is a preliminary or part of the bathing process. So, is it not also religious then? Without having your bath and going to the pooja room, you cannot worship. So even walking from the bathroom to the pooja room; that is also religious. But somehow people are not able to think in this manner. So, they divide between religion and non-religion, religion and secular. This division is actually wrong! If and when you are able to think of religion in such a manner, that the whole life is

comprehended and contained by your religious practice, religious thoughts or religious outlook, that is the right thing. **When the differentiation between religion and secular vanishes and you have a higher and a wholesome point of view, it is called spiritual.**

The spiritualist never distinguishes between religious and non-religious acts. Every act is done by me. Whether I address the act to god or not god, it becomes my act and what am I? I am a *pāmcabhautika* body animated by the spirit. The *pāmcabhūtas* became a bodily coordinate only because the spirit animates matter and energy. So, my own personality is not a dead body. It is a living body. The livingness belongs to the spirit and only when the spirit is animate, it animates the body, I become alive. So, my very life and personality are spiritual! And what about the world? This earth is not a manly product. Everything is created by God and earth also is His creation. Whatever is His creation and whatever is preserved by Him, how can I distinguish Him from this? Both are equally divine and godly. See, when your thoughts about god, thoughts about religion, and thoughts about yourself start becoming revolutionized, reformed and refined, then you will find everything becomes godly and divine.

What is the difference between a spiritual practice and a religious practice? If you ask me, I have this much to say.

In religion everything depends upon and rests upon a God and this God is infinitely distant and invisible. Mark these expressions! He is not close. He is very very distant and he is invisible also. So, all the religious actions are addressed to an invisible and distant god. So, the entire focus is on such a goal, such an ideal. In spirituality that is completely eliminated. Everything that is done is focused on your own personality and the different levels of activity. How many levels of activity are there? The sensory and bodily level, then oral level, distinct in itself. The visible part is over. Now, we have a mental level where using the mind you can think and remember. Then there is a deeper level, a higher level called the intelligence level. I don't want to call it intellectual. So, I always call it intelligential. So, in that intelligence level what do you do? You do poojas, doing pradakshina, folding your hand, doing pranama etc. all these are physical. Chanting the mantras, that is oral. Now, there is something deeper. What is that? Mental - in the mind level closing your lips you start remembering, remembering or repeating things about God. It is mostly repetition and remembrance but when you come to the intelligence level, it is not so. The intelligence becomes active only when there is a specific effort and a need to know something. So, it is always in the way of an enquiry and investigation, an examination, an evaluation.

Is there any god? What is this god? What is this world? Who am I? Am I doing the right thing in the name of religious practice? What is called spirituality? Is there any

religiosity without spirituality or is religiosity itself refined becomes spirituality? So, take up any question about yourself, the world or god and you start enquiring into it with a view to know. That becomes the deepest and the highest pursuit. This is what is enjoined in our Upanishads. They started with praises of the superhuman powers transited into performances, ceremonies; withdrew from them and took to protracted contemplations and finally ended up with specific investigations, examinations, enquiries and interrogations. When you take up something in this manner and pursue it, understand it is the most effective activity.

If physical activity has one benefit or result, oral activity has a hundred. Mental activity has a thousand and intelligential activity has got one lakh effect. This is the comparison. Generally you will find people working in the level of intelligence are few, that is why spiritual people are generally very few. Even in austerity, the hardcore austerity, the physical and sensory levels, they are the lowest. The oral level, it is the higher; the mental level still higher. In the intelligence level if you can practice austerity, that becomes the highest and the best.

When you start thinking in this manner, you will find everything is equally divine and religious. The world itself is a creation of god. Therefore it becomes godly. The earth is godly, the denizens are godly. Our body is itself godly. It is godly made, made by nature. The whole system is working not with your will or wish. There are a number of involuntary operations. I always ask a question, do you light a lamp and then the heart beats or the heart beats and then you light a lamp? Who makes the heart beat?

In our own books like *Śrīmadbhāgavatam* and *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and others you will find, ultimately the exposition is - the supreme spirit is there in the form of life in your body. As such he is called the Supreme Purusha.

namo bhagavate puruṣāya tubhyam - I prostrate before you the Supreme Purusha, who activates my speech, activates my sensory organs, activates my praanas, activates my buddhi, remaining present within my body and by virtue of the splendor, glory and magnificence you have, you are doing all this. I prostrate before you!

Where do you stand now? Which is the god that you are addressing, whom you consider to be distant? Is He distant or is He immanent in your body? As He is immanent, He is also around you, encircling you, He is transcendent also.

So, I would like to say religion completely depends upon God; spirituality rests upon yourself. You try to go into your own physical, oral, mental and intelligential activities.

Try to filter them, reform them, refine them, sublimate them, spiritualize them. Make sure that wrong things are avoided, undesirables are avoided, and desirables are incorporated. And this twin process of eliminating the undesirable and incorporating and including the desirable, it goes on, it goes on endlessly till the last breath. Once you start doing it, you don't have to become particularly religious or ask God, or address God or remember Him. This is actually divinity manifested, divinity pursued, divinity in actual interactional life.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

* * *



Narayanashrama Tapovanam

Venginissery, P.O. Ammadam, Trichur, Kerala - 680563, India

Email: ashram1@gmail.com; Website: <http://www.swamibhoomanandatirtha.org>