



## Religions and Spirituality

Spirituality is like the fragrant emanation of our essence, it is the expression of the SELF, the manifestation of our intimate reality, the expansion of our secret, the radiation of the divine Presence like the air that surrounds us and penetrates all things. It is still the light which radiates in all but in particular from a center which is the heart of the Man.

In this sense it is written:

"God is the light of heaven and earth. His light is manifested as that which comes from a niche (the body of man) where there is a torch (the Divine Presence) and the torch is in a crystal (the heart) and this is like a sparkling star. This torch is lit in a blessed tree: the olive tree that comes neither from the East nor from the West and whose oil is close to light without the fire touching it (the naturally luminous soul). Light on Light (the divine Presence on the predisposition of the soul)! God guides towards his light who, he wants. God proposes to men parables, God is knowledgeable in all things" Koran 24-35.

This text is interesting in that it points out that man is spiritual in nature : the soul is like luminous oil that is easy to ignite, it is in grace. On this predisposition, however, intervenes another light, another grace, that of the Presence, that which is knowledge. This second grace is that which is given in the spiritual paths called religions.

### The religions

Religions are the managers of this light spread over the world. To represent the relationship of spirituality to religions, another image is also possible: spirituality is to religion what water is to a river. Water comes down from the sky like rain, like divine graces in their freedom. Water also comes out of the earth with the generous spontaneity of a spring. But man, always anxious,



needs to master, to possess, to locate, to conceptualize. If he finds a source, he will try to capture it according to his system, for example by putting it in a plastic bottle!

Religions are like rivers, which this time for pedagogical reasons, will capture this water, limit it, condition it by banks in order to guide it towards the ocean...where the banks will again disappear.

Man was created free, without prohibition, without obligations, in this original place called paradise which symbolizes this consciousness and this maturity of a golden age where man lived happily in a harmonious state which in fact translates the consciousness and the realization of the Unity of his being with all things. Then, as we have learned from most of the sacred texts, a first prohibition arises: "You shall not touch the tree in the middle of the Garden! At this moment freedom is limited by a prohibition. There are no obligations yet; these will come after the famous fall of Adam and Eve. Prohibitions and obligations will in fact appear progressively more and more complex as man moves further and further away from Unity. There is a fundamental correspondence to be noticed between this distancing from Unity and the complexity of man's life woven with prohibitions and obligations which religions will make a characteristic code of their identities. With time and the development of the number of individuals, complexity increases mathematically according to a well-known law. The example of this complexity appears clearly in the ritual prescriptions and prohibitions imposed in Judaism as opposed to the prescriptions of the Upanisads of India 5000 years earlier.

## Return to Unity

As the time nevertheless is subjective and cyclic it happens phases of return to the origin. Proposed phases of return to the origin corresponding to a simplification as for example Christianity after Judaism. These moments of springtime in history correspond to the manifestation of the great Divine Envoys who testify to a kind of divine forgiveness, a return of grace. In Arabic as in Hebrew, the word "*tawba*", which can be translated at first sight as "repentance", also means "return" in the sense that true repentance implies both the turning of man towards the center and the return of God towards man. Now, the root of this same word also implies the idea of a spiritual deposit "*tabût*" of which history will retain forms as varied



as those of: the Ark of the Covenant, the Grail or the Black Stone of Mecca. It is the deposit of trust that God gives to man at each repentance as a new covenant. At this moment, the rules of religions change since it is a new pedagogical contract adapted to the historical situation of man but always with the perspective of leading him back to the realization of Oneness, to the original simplicity. Religions thus appear as this management of water which is the natural spirituality in the man aspiring to find his original freedom, i.e. the perception of the One in all things, expression of the harmony.

### Why do we need to manage water?

Because water can also very well disperse, get lost in the earth, as our spiritual impulses so often get lost if they do not have an orientation, a discipline, a method. In the river, water can organize its bed, there is a management of the flow. Certainly, it undergoes the conditioning of the banks and the meanders of the river, but that is how it is led to the ocean. This is also how religions organize the orientation of the spiritual forces of humanity towards the immensity of the Presence according to a divine pedagogy. Accepting a path, a method, a discipline may seem constraining in terms of freedom, but it is precisely through these constraints that it is possible to be led to spiritual liberation, like the river that joins the ocean. The analogy is clear, but obviously it has its limits, because to spice up the scenario the Lord created man with his charming and so characteristic subjectivity. This is why, as in our civilizations, there has always been legislation, learning and application procedures, more or less pedagogical, and even a police force.

### *Chari'a, Tariqa, Haqiqa*

What is very important to underline if we want to understand the meaning of religions in relation to spirituality is their role of self-protection. A Sufi master who wanted to express by an image this role of protection of the religious law said that this one is like the shell of the coconut which preserves the milk which it contains. The shell is indigestible, hard, but it protects the milk which without it would be corrupted. Religious law, through the codes of prohibition and obligation, can therefore be understood as a garment that protects the spiritual gift that has been



given to us. In India, where truths are expressed in their nakedness, there are renunciants, the "*sanyasin*" who live naked, induced from the ground.

In the countries of Christianity and Islam, on the contrary, the truths are veiled and the beings wear more and more clothes. Nevertheless, it is possible to achieve a balance between these two attitudes. In a religion such as Islam, there are three levels from the outside in:

1. The *Shari'a* : the Law, is the set of prohibitions and obligations which are intended to protect the practitioners from any slippage by giving them a clear and strict framework.
2. The *Tariqa* : it is the initiatory way, the interior practice of a spiritual experience which corresponds to a progressive unveiling of the essence. It is lived inside the Sufi brotherhoods.
3. The *Haqiqah* : it is the essence of truth, the ultimate reality.

The spirituals in their inner calls do not separate the three stages which appear on the contrary as organically linked and complementary. The spiritual impulse is supported, structured by a method, by a path which leads to the purest expression of spirituality, to the unveiling of the essence. It is a fact well known to spiritual masters that the communal attitude of spirituals, like their respect for the law, enables them to avoid the very dangerous slippages which regularly occur in these experiences of unveiling.

## The truths

As a teacher for 30 years I have seen it very often, some people fly away quickly through spiritual openings and mystical states but the descent that follows is often bitter. It is like holding your hand under the sun near the ground: you see its shadow. You choose to raise your hand higher: the shadow disappears. Should we believe at this moment that the shadow has disappeared for good? No, the shadow returns as long as the body is there.

Our identification with the body is the creation of the mind, which in turn creates illusion. One could say: as long as we are not free from the bondage of the body we are not free from the garment of the law. **Of course it is not a question of the law which is a rigid form, it is a question of the right law as a reflection of the Cosmos, that of harmony, that which manages the movement of the planets, that which manages our body.** In the way of certain



teachings, as in Vedanta for example, the expression of truths is majestic and sharp, magnificent and sublime.

## The truths laid bare

This is often terribly destabilizing and dangerous. This is how some disciples get lost and forget all protection when they hear: "You have always been established in the Self! You are the reality! You have always been realized but you are not aware of it!"

We have seen what the "paths of Kathmandu" have given us, where so many young people have listened to these Indian truths with enthusiasm, believing that they were finally freed from their Judeo-Christian guilt and had lost all reference points. It is well understood that this teaching of Vedanta is sublime. It is ultimate ! It is to be realized or better, it IS. But it is also terrible in the majestic manifestation of its transcendence. It is because it was difficult to convey in its nakedness in this period of Kali Yuga, which is the winter of consciousness, that other expressions of spirituality manifested themselves in the form of religions teaching the truths by a progressive unveiling. There is thus a wisdom in this divine pedagogy which gave the religions that came afterwards: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

## Samadhi Awakening Experience

Having spent time in India, I lived next to people who had achieved awakenings and then Samadhi that lasted for months. It was necessary to take care of them like small infants. These states are sublime but difficult to manage in daily life. In my case, I was lucky enough to experience *Samadhi* in a progressive way, but I experienced returns where I could no longer move or speak. In these moments, the consciousness identifies itself with an immensity like the ocean where no landmarks exist. No support is possible, no comparison is possible. These states of consciousness, this immersion in the Being are expressions of this nakedness of reality. We perceive that there is no separation between things and that everything is ONE. By coming back to oneself progressively, it is necessary to integrate what has been revealed in this way of the essence. One is then like the diver who has been in the water for a long time and needs to wrap himself in his towel when he comes out. The garment of religion and practice is then very precious to allow us to integrate what we have just lived. It is even more essential when the consciousness is established in the perception that we are not a separate individual, therefore



that the world is within us and concerns us as much as our own body. To transform oneself, to realize oneself is therefore also to transform the world, to participate in its realization.

## Unity and Multiplicity

The whole history of humanity is destined to lead us to the unveiling of our deepest identity which is this luminous essence. It leads us by a formidable pedagogy to the Assumption of the human conscience, to the knowledge of the unity in the multiplicity. This is done through the unfolding of a single soul that manifested itself in a binary way: that of Adam and Eve. It unfolds in the shimmering reflections of a single light on the mirrors of the world. Adam's soul carries the education-word which in Arabic is called "*tarbiya*" and which, as in Hebrew, has the same root as "*Rabb*" : the Lord. The soul of Eve carries the maternal mercy which makes mature the "*Rahma*" word of the same root as "*rahîm*" the mother's womb.

These two poles of the Divine Presence: Majesty of Transcendence of the paternal type and Beauty of Immanence of the maternal type are the parents of the world. We continue to be born at every moment in a maturation that takes place in the womb of our cosmic mother and we continue to be educated by the cosmic Father. These two poles of the Divine Presence are manifested through all the spiritual influences at work in the world.

## The golden age or a new birth

This bipolar manifestation of the Divine Presence seems to lead the whole world to its second birth, that of the Golden Age. After the winter, life teaches us that there is a spring. This is good news for those who feel lost, but it is natural and obvious for those who are aware of the Universal Law of Cycles. In the different religions, it is precisely a kind of end of cycle announced, a renewal, but not like the one of the return in grace by the manifestation of a divine envoy who readapts the eternal teaching. It is a renewal of the whole world and the cosmos.

The Indian tradition, for example, speaks of the one who comes at the end of the Kali Yuga cycle, the last avatar, a being who at birth possesses the consciousness and the power of his mission, the Kalki avatara. This one does not change the law or anything by his own will, he is the witness and the support of a transformation that is taking place in his time and of which he



is like an axis for humanity. The Buddhists speak of the same figure while waiting for Maytreya, the Jews are waiting for the Messiah, the Muslims are waiting and preparing the coming of Imam Mahdi who will in turn prepare the second coming of Jesus in his glory.

These different ways of naming the same figure should not obscure the fact that it is the same consciousness at work in the world. It is a specific grace that leads us all together, not separate, to realize that we are all ONE.

Everything happens as in the four phases of a birth:

- 1 - the phase of osmosis in the mother's womb where the child is conditioned ;
- 2 - the contractions or the reactive phase which is translated in the world by all the wars ;
- 5 - the turning of the child which is the phase of a heroic action ;
- 6 - the birth which is the harmonious convergence of all efforts, the moment when everything is naturally triggered.

The advent of the golden age obeys this law: there will be the great battle of Armageddon (*malhamat ul kubra*) like the contractions then the reversal then the birth. The world is heading towards this advent whether it likes it or not, but there are men who accompany this movement and others who resist it. To be a witness of our time should consist in becoming aware of this marvelous movement in order to know how to accompany it rather than to delay it.

Yes, we are predisposed to this total freedom, beyond the particular religions, as the water of the river frees itself from the banks to the ocean, but this will only be possible at the advent of the golden age. In this time of the golden age, spirituality will be spontaneous, people's lives will follow exactly the laws of the universe, there will be no more separation between religions and spirituality. People will dance in tune with the music of the cosmos, a music that expands the heart like the blue of the sky and the sea, a blue sound!

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