

DOUBT IS THE BEGINNING, NOT THE END OF WISDOM.

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Abstract

Doubt and wisdom can be said the two sides of the same coin as without the one neither exists. With doubt comes reason and once reason is established it follows faith leading to ultimate wisdom. All the great and renown ideology, philosophy, faith or religion of the world were found on the basis of doubt that led to further steps leading to ultimate destination called wisdom where doubts and reasoning acted as the important catalyst to attain the same. As Swami Adiswarananda puts beautifully the correlations between reason and faith as: *“The thesis of reason about the presence of God is that God is “nowhere”, while the thesis of faith is that God is “now here.”* (page -79,2016). Unlike the western world and its traditional philosophy and approach, Eastern Philosophy specially our Indian thought system is foregrounded on the base of doubt leading to the ultimate wisdom. If, necessity is the mother of invention then our doubts too are the steps to wisdom.

KEY WORDS: DOUBT, WISDOM, PHILOSOPHY, CULTURE, RELIGION, FAITH, MYTHOLOGY, WESTERN ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

Though it sounds absurd, but it is a fact, that wisdom and doubts are the two sides of the same coin which are to serve as a foil to each other justifying and signifying each other's existence. Hence, it will not be wrong to say wisdom without doubt has no root; doubt without wisdom has no fruits. They are very closely linked to each other each of the is incomplete without each other.

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Indian Mythologies, Literatures including the Folk traditions are full of examples references to the stories where our Gods, deities and Heroes had to prove their worth - the ultimate wisdom through doubt. The Swayam bar of the Mithila Princess, Sita was a test to overcome sage king Janaka's doubt about the suitability of the groom for his beloved daughter. As soon as the divine bow is broken by the Ajodhya Prince Ram,

Janaka breaks free his doubt and is enlightened ultimately on finding Ram as the perfect and only deserving match for his daughter Sita.

In every age, in all the stories across the world and culture the Heroes had to establish their supremacy be it their might, right, intellect, worth or wisdom through their utter perseverance without dwindling from their path of austerity, efforts and constant perseverance.

There is such similar story in our mythology where Hindu God, lord Ganesa established his supremacy of wisdom over war lord Karthikeya who in return was suspected/doubted by all present there. The story goes that once, Sage Narad the messenger of God also known as trouble stirrer reached Kailash. The abode of Siva with a mango in hand that he proposed to offer to only one of the sons of Siva-Parvati who deserved it the most. Lord Siva was confused as he could not decide which one of the two were best. At this, Parvati arranges a race between the two and says who so ever completes the three round of the entire world (the three lokas, earth, heaven and the hell) and will return first will win Narad's mango. At this Siva agrees and the eldest born Kartika rushes mounting on his peacock determined to come first. However, Ganesa did not move an inch and continued to sit behind his parents playing with his rat. As Karthikeya was about to complete his third and the final round, Ganesa gets up, and quickly runs around his parents thrice and declares himself as the winner. At Kartikeya's disagreement Ganesa explains as – “you went around the world and I went around mine. Tell me which world matters more?” Ganesa further explains – “the world is objective; my world is subjective. The world is rational and scientific; my world is intuitive and emotional. The world is global; my world is local. Both are truth but what matters more, asks Ganesa?”

Truly, every culture views the world through different lenses. Hence such questions and their answers are never universal but cultural. Perhaps, that is why from Doubt comes wisdom, from Wisdom comes beliefs and from beliefs come behavior that either makes us aggressive or accommodating.

DOUBTS AND FAITH AS SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Religion compels one to believe sometimes even leading to blind faith and to some extent to superstition. The ideas, the stories, the symbols and rituals may seem to be absurd to the outsider, but they will always make perfect sense to the believer while Science judges everything and everything is measured. All thoughts are expected to be legitimized through fact, evidence and mathematics and science.

THE MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

The period of A.D. 400 -1400 is counted as the era of medieval philosophy in the History of Western Philosophy. During this period philosophy was used as a handmaid to theology. Greek philosophy of Plato – Aristotle, Stoicism and neo – Platonism was used to elucidate theology, to defend it against attacks and to further the interest of religion.

The celebrated philosopher of the age St. Augustine is perhaps the first one who initiates the process wisdom through doubt. The theory of knowledge, as per St. Augustine is very much mixed up with faith and knowledge. According to him, “faith seeks, understanding finds” and these very terms ‘seeks’ indicates doubt while ‘finds’ indicates wisdom. But the pertinent question is how we humans can actually know anything as true or certain? Hence, comes the perception. If there is a perception, then there is also a perceiving being. If one doubts, then it means there is someone to doubt. It is doubt that at once leads to the existence of doubting and the reality of consciousness. Doubt itself hints at the idea there is the standard of ‘truth’ for finding which a person doubts. Doubt and certainty are correlative terms hence, in doubting we know the standard of certainty by implication.

As mentioned already, the medieval thought however progressive, were used to defend religion in portraying the church and the God as the supreme power. The traditional belief of the medieval time that man was created by the supreme God and was placed in his position by the supreme power so, any attempt to transgress the same was sin hence man’s imagination and doubt was harnessed to a greater extent thus, stupidity and ignorance was the feature of the age.

RENAISSANCE THE PRODUCT OF DOUBT

It’s the Renaissance philosophy/belief that challenges the traditional belief of the medieval era. Where unlike God man is the Centre of attraction. As the Greek Philosopher Protagoras declares – “man is the measure of all things” which represented a break from the Middle Ages creating a modern understanding of Humanity.

Thus, the major shift in Religion, Medicines, Science, Mathematics, Art, Culture, Literature and Architecture from conservative to humanist was the outcome of doubt, reason and inquiry. Among others, the reformation brought in the religion was one of the greatest achievement of the age brought to surface by Martin Luther who challenged the papal authority criticizing the corruption rampant in the system with his 95 theses published which brought reformation leading to wisdom and enlightenment. Once again, the term Renaissance is nothing but the birth of wisdom after doubt, inquiry and speculation.

CONCLUSION

The European World till now (even today) is guided by the scientific outlook of the universe where Science can predict, control and guide the destiny of the man. But it’s a pity, that we in India yet have not overcome our religious world view though we enjoy the fruits of Western Science and technology. We have established double standard snobbery in our character where there is a plurality of approach and attitude in everything – one for our own self while the other for the outer world. Thus, we are Secular but practically intolerant; we are Progressive in our appearance but Conservative in our thought; we are cultured in our manner but savage in our behavior; we respect and celebrate our Goddesses but humiliate women on the street and public places;

we fight for the mother tongue to be used as a medium of instruction in the curriculum but feel proud to converse in foreign tongue. A nation full of duality where virtually *Vande Mataram* has become *One day matarm*.

Finally, concluding this essay Rabindranath Tagore's, prayers to God for his country to become the heavenly abode of Freedom based on Rationality, love, faith, brotherhood and compassion comes to the fore front, naturally his lines from the Gitanjali cannot be skipped:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high.

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments,

By narrow domestic walls ...

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

...

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

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