

## If I am morally upright, why do I need God?

The moralist philosophy holds that religion and the scriptures have been only created by some wise men called sages, for the peaceful upkeep of moral principles. In fact, the moralists say that it is ultimately only morality that is important and if we are moral in this world, it helps in maintaining a good society. According to this theory, the conception of God, sin and piety is only created for inducing some fear and dutifulness in the masses so that there is no chaos. Such theory although appearing logical, is in actuality preaching veiled atheism. In other words, by using God as only a crutch for moralists' purpose, these philosophers reduce God to their moral police at best, or at worst as an imaginary character created for sociological convenience.

The theory of moralists is based on very strong foundation, referring to the instructions of all major religions of the world. These moralist philosophers point to various scriptures like the Koran, Bible, Guru Granth Sahib, some sections of Vedic literature to support their theory. They quote the commandments of these scriptures, which are largely moral, which helps a person lead a comfortable life in the civilized society. But the moralists' theory faces a stumbling block, when faced with the perplexity of how the moral standards vary from one scripture to another. This however, is conveniently answered by the moralists, that the moral standards set in these scriptures were just to suit the civilization in which they were written. This in fact, they say proves the moralists theory that religion after all was only created for moral upkeep of the society.

The moralists also point to various sections of Vedas which induce the followers to perform various pious activities such as fasting, charity, sacrifices etc, by which the Vedas promise prolonged enjoyment in heavenly planets in the life after. These sections of Vedas also warn the followers to avoid certain vices such as stealing, illicit sex, gambling etc which would result in suffering in hellish planets in the life after. These inducements and punishment offers just go to prove how Vedas also are best moral science text books for the peace in society.

But the explanations of these moralists face a grim challenge when faced with the content of the essence of Vedic literature, Bhagavad Gita. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna is inducing His friend and disciple, Arjuna to perform large scale murder by promoting a world war, while Arjuna is reluctant and is quoting the moral codes from Vedas in refusing to fight the war. Lord Krishna, The Supreme Lord Himself, is asking Arjuna to reject the flowery statements of Vedas, and take to His personal instructions as in Bhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna specifically says,

yām imāṁ puṣpitām vācam  
pravadanty avipaścitāḥ  
veda-vāda-ratāḥ pārtha  
nānyad astīti vādināḥ  
(BG 2.42)

*“Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the Vedas, which recommend various fruitive activities for elevation to heavenly planets, resultant good birth, power, and so forth. Being desirous of sense gratification and opulent life, they say that there is nothing more than this.”*

Let us analyze why Lord Krishna urges to reject the flowery words of moral codes in Vedas and rather promote His instructions.

The majority of the world religions and also the majority of sections of Vedic literatures serve as a manual to lead a lawful and comfortable life in this material world. However, in Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna likens this material world to a prison house, a miserable, yet temporary place of reformation. (*duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam*) In other words, the prison is not meant for settling down into a comfortable place, but rather the miseries in the prison should induce a person to work towards getting out of there and going back to his original place in the civil society. While in the prison, however, the government also formulates a Prison Manual, for maintaining law and order in the prison house itself, as the inmates are all criminals and habitual offenders. The strict followers of the prison manual are awarded timely, and the offenders or law breakers in the prison are further punished. But even with awards or punishments, all are still prisoners in the jail! Similarly, for the peaceful maintenance of this material world, many religious scriptures lay down codes of conduct and award the law abiding prisoners of this world. The law breakers of the material world are rightly punished. But the scope of the teachings of these scriptures doesn't extend to a formula of reforming the prisoner and eventually freeing him from the jail of material world. That formula is mentioned by Lord Krishna specifically in Bhagavad Gita. This is the special prerogative of Bhagavad Gita over all other scriptures of the world. Lord Krishna specifically states in the Bhagavad-Gita about the line of action to be followed to get out of this world and regain our original constitutional position, back home, back to Godhead as follows:

mat-karma-kṛṇ mat-paramo  
mad-bhaktāḥ saṅga-varjitāḥ  
nirvairāḥ sarva-bhūteṣu  
yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava

*“My dear Arjuna, one who is engaged in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of previous activities and from mental speculation, who is friendly to every living entity, certainly comes to Me.” (BG 11.55)*

In the above verse, Lord says, “Certainly don’t perform sinful activity (papa karma) and thereby suffer, but there is no use of just performing pious activity alone (punya karma), for even such activity would only keep you still in this world, which is by definition a place of misery. However, you perform the activities for Me (mat karma), for My activities are Supreme (mat parama), by performing which you become My devotee (mad bhaktah).” The Lord further describes the nature of His devotee as devoid of all material attachments to his fellow beings (sanga varjitah), but at the same time being friend to all living entities, seeing them as Lord’s part and parcel and hence having no enemies (nirvairah sarva bhutesu). Thus the Lord emphatically states such a devotee as His Confidante (yah sa mam=He is Mine). Thus in effect, Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita is promoting His activities (devotional service) alone which can free one from the material world and take one to spiritual world, rather than performing pious activities (punya karma) and remain in this world.

‘My activities’ (mat karma) or devotional service (bhakti) are practically performed in this age and time by chanting the holy names of the Lord namely the maha mantra, ‘Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare. Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare’

Is Lord Krishna then prohibiting us from even following the prescribed rules and regulations mentioned in various scriptures? No! On the contrary, Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita is only further elaborating and letting us know the purpose of following such rules. An analogy would help us understand this better.

Living by moral principles is like following the traffic rules while traveling on a road. The traffic rules help in smooth and safe travel. However the purpose of travel is not to follow the rules, but to reach the destination. If a traveler doesn’t know his destination, how long will he follow the rules? May be for some time out of deference. But most likely he will soon give them up due to boredom or expediency. Worse still, if he feels that the traffic rules are delaying or obstructing his reaching the destination and that he can get away even after breaking the rules, why will he want to stick to the rules?

Similarly moral principles help in orderly social interaction. But our modern education gives us no knowledge about the goal of social transaction and of life itself. Consequently the few people, who stay moral out of deference to culture or tradition, give up when circumstances threaten or tempt them. Worse still, the incessantly glorified goals of modern consumer society—pleasure, wealth, luxuries, power, prestige and fame—encourage and even necessitate immoral behavior. The Bhagavad-Gita (16.8-15) explains how a materialistic worldview leads to insatiable lust greed, which impels corrupt action. Most people feel that, by being moral, they stand to lose a lot and gain nothing tangible. Moreover, our godless scientific education gives us no knowledge about any higher order natural laws of cosmic accountability. And the fallibility of our human penal system is all too well known. Result? Morality appears entirely dispensable, especially for those who feels they are sufficiently shrewd or powerful. In such a socio-cultural environment, how can we expect mere platitudes to inspire people to be moral?

The saying “Morality means lack of opportunity” catches the tottering utilitarian modern approach to morality: many moralists are so simply because they do not have the opportunity to be immoral. Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita asserts that morality without spirituality is baseless and therefore short-lived. If we seriously want morality in society, we need to introduce systematic spiritual education centered on a positive goal of life. Lord Krishna informs us of a non-sectarian universal spiritual goal of life—develop pure love of God. We are all spiritual beings and are meant to rejoice in an eternal loving relationship with the supreme all-attractive spiritual being, God. Being intrinsically spiritual, our real happiness lies, not in material acquisition, but in spiritual realization of our innate love of God. Therefore the more we love God, the happier we become.

Love for God results in love for all living beings as our brother and sisters in the one universal family of God. When we love all living beings, we will no longer desire to exploit or manipulate others for our selfish interests. Instead our love for God will inspire us to love and serve each other. This will create a culture of warmth and trust, which engenders moral behavior, unlike the modern culture of alienation and suspicion, which fosters immoral behavior.

Genuine spiritual practice, even in their preliminary stages, triggers our innate value system. We intuitively realize that God is our greatest well wisher. Subsequently we voluntarily and lovingly chose to lead morally and spiritually principled life, knowing it to be in our ultimate interest. And as we experience inner happiness by loving God, we no longer feel that we are missing anything due to morality. Being freed from selfish, lusty, greedy and egoistic drives, morality ceases to be the ‘difficult but right choice’ but become the easy and natural course of action for our spiritual growth.

The members of Vedic Science Club are hence urged to take to these ‘Lord’s activities’ by regularly performing mantra meditation in association of fellow members. On more details of techniques of getting out of this prison house of material world, the participants of ‘Vedic Thinker Course’ are requested to thoroughly study the booklet provided, ‘Beyond Birth and Death.’