

Can belief be reasonable?

Often when we quote Vedic literature, especially Bhagavad-gita or Srimad Bhagavatam as evidences for topics like Soul, God, reincarnation, life after death, spiritual world etc., we often encounter this common argument, “Who has seen all these? This is all only a matter of belief. If you believe they exist, they do, if you don’t they don’t. In this advanced 21’st century should we still hold on to these ancient and primitive beliefs without tangible evidences?”

Interestingly however, let us look at how belief/faith plays a major role even in many so called scientific issues and even in our daily life. Faith or belief which we say if reasonable is employed very much in our day to day transactions. In fact without a reasonable belief we can hardly survive normally in our everyday lives.

For instance, as Srila Prabhupada explains in his small booklet ‘Beyond Birth and Death,’ “Actually, the process of belief and revelation is not foreign to us. Every day we place faith in something that we have confidence will be revealed later. We may purchase a ticket to go to India, and on the basis of the ticket we have faith that we will be transported there. Why should we pay money for a ticket? We do not just give the money to anyone. The company is authorized and the airline is authorized, so faith is created. Without faith we cannot take one step forward in the ordinary course of our life. Faith we must have, but it must be faith in that which is authorized. It is not that we have blind faith, but that we accept something that is recognized. Bhagavad-gītā is recognized and accepted as scripture by all classes of men in India, and as far as outside India is concerned, many scholars, theologians, and philosophers accept Bhagavad-gītā as a great, authoritative work. There is no question that Bhagavad-gītā is authority. Even Professor Albert Einstein, such a scientist, read Bhagavad-gītā regularly.”

One’s rejection of Vedic truths on the premise that they are based on faith and cannot be proven can be nullified by just going through this simple article which points out the flaw in such thinking pattern:

Straight Talk Enter the Laboratory

*“Soul is reality,
regardless what your beliefs may be.
Experiments? Proof?
But are you willing to enter the laboratory?”*

Ram said: Two hydrogen and one oxygen atom make water.

Sam said: Atoms! Give me a break! These little things you can’t even see. You put a few together, and out comes water ... You expect me to believe that?

Ram said: It’s a fact. Two hydrogens and one oxygen make water.

Sam said: I’ll believe it when I see it. Prove it to me!

Ram said: All right.

Sam said: You’re crazy. You can’t prove it!

Ram said: I can prove it to you. Just come into my laboratory and do the experiment. The first step is to look in this ...

Sam said: Oh yeah. Right. Good one. The laboratory. You want me to go into your laboratory and do your experiment your way—that’s brainwashing.

Ram said: No ... If you’ll just take a look in this microscope ...

Sam said: I’m not gonna do any of your crazy rituals! What are you trying to do, convert me!? You people are nuts. You believe all these crazy things. Two hydrogens and one oxygen make water! Gimme a break!

Ram said: I can show you if you’ll look in this microscope ...

Sam said: I’ll never follow your rules! You can’t prove anything to me!

Sam said: God exists. If we focus our efforts and devotion on God, our lives will become complete.

Ram said: God! Gimme a break! This mythological character you can't even see. Worship Him and you'll feel dandy ... You expect me to believe that?

Sam said: It's a fact. God exists. We become complete through devotion to Him.

Ram said: Yeah right. I'll believe it when I see it. Prove it to me!

Sam said: All right.

Ram said: You're crazy. You can't prove it!

Sam said: I can prove it to you, just come into the laboratory and do the experiment. The first step is to remove the blindfold of attachment to material ...

Ram said: Oh yeah. Right. Good one. The laboratory. You want me to go into your laboratory and do your experiment your way—that's brainwashing.

Sam said: No ... If you'll just begin chanting *Hare Krsna* ...

Ram said: I'm not gonna do any of your crazy rituals! What are you trying to do, convert me!? You people are nuts. You believe all these crazy things. God and spiritual worlds and ... Gimme a break! You can't show me God.

Sam said: I'll show you. Let me just explain ...

Ram said: Just show me God!

Sam said: *I'm trying to tell you where to look.*

Ram said: I'll never follow your rules! You can't prove anything to me!

*Soul is reality,
regardless what your beliefs may be.
Experiments? Proof?
But are you willing to enter the laboratory?*

Unfortunately, there is a certain dogma in modern scientists' minds, when it comes to accepting the information of non material phenomena from Vedic texts such as Bhagavad-Gita. The spiritual philosophy explained in the Bhagavad-gita and other Vedic texts, is a science in its own right, for it is systematic, coherent, verifiable and repeatable. Unfortunately, many modern scientists define science as a study of matter alone, thus rejecting spiritual truths as 'unscientific' right from the beginning without any proof whatsoever. This a priori restriction of the scope of science is evident from geneticist Richard Lewontin's remark,



"We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfil many of its promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated 'just so' stories because we cannot allow a 'Divine Foot' in the door.

Such dogmatic rejection of a Divine Foot militates against the scientific spirit of enquiry. As stated by pioneering atomic physicist Robert Oppenheimer, "[In Science] there must be no barriers for freedom of inquiry. There is no place for dogma in science." Only after science breaks free from its anti-spiritual dogma can it start discovering spiritual truths.

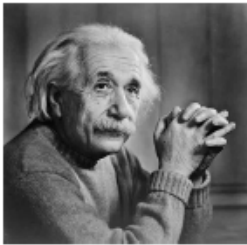
Still, science will at best discover only preliminary truths, not advanced. Here's why. Every field of knowledge has its own distinctive methods. To gain advanced knowledge of that field without adopting its methods is often impossible. To illustrate let's consider different scientific instruments of increasing complexity:

1. We can measure our bodily weight quickly using a weighing machine. However, to measure the weight without using the machine, we have to adopt the cumbersome process of standing on one side of a weighing scale and stacking one kg weights on the other side until the two sides balance.
2. We can measure the distance from the earth of a particular star in a distant galaxy with a telescope. However, to measure that distance without using a telescope, we have to adopt the expensive and impractical process of boarding a spacecraft and flying until there while keeping an eye on the distance meter- assuming of course that we stay alive until then.
3. We can measure the speed of a fundamental particle using a particle accelerator. However, if we wish to measure that speed without the accelerator, it's impossible.

Just as science has its distinctive methodology, so does spirituality. So, scientific methodology can discover basic principles like the existence of soul and God. However, spiritual methods like devotional mantra meditation alone will enable us to verify experientially advanced spiritual principles like the identity and the personality of God.

However, the current trend in modern science is to put blind faith in the unproven assumptive theories of modern scientists, but a dogmatic approach of denial of our own scientific Vedic literature. In the Vedic Science Club, through this Vedic Thinker course, we wish to open the eyes of the Club members to another reality, another dimension of science, A very real and authentic science, that is Vedic Science.

To conclude, let us look at the extent of blind belief that is prevalent in the name of modern science today, in the words of the greatest Physicist Prof. Albert Einstein,



Far greater than the faith that scientists require in their research is the faith that common people have in the findings of scientists. The extent of unquestioning faith that scientific findings command is seen in the following observation of Einstein: "Tell a man that there are 300 billion stars in the universe, and he'll believe you.... Tell him that a bench has wet paint upon it and he'll have to touch it to be sure."