

Spirituality is about quest and truth of identity of human beings

Quest for reality is what distinguishes human beings from other animals. There are so many mysteries in the universe. But among them the quest for identity of human beings always has been there. This quest for identity of human beings is addressed by spirituality. Just as every branch of knowledge has its own particular domain, **the domain of spirituality is the quest and truth of identity of human beings**. So let us begin our investigation on identity of human beings.

Human being is endowed with body-mind complex

Human being is endowed with body-mind complex¹ consisting of body, motor organs, senses, and mind². Body consisting of blood, bone, flesh etc is the structural support for motor organs, senses and brain. Performance of actions such as walking, running, grasping etc is done with the help of motor organs. With senses human beings can perceive the external world. And both performance of actions in the external world and sense perception is not possible without having mind, whose counter-part in the body is brain. Mind decides what needs to be done and accordingly sends signal to motor organs. Also it is mind that synthesizes information coming from all the senses and because of which finally perception occurs. Apart from this the various experiences of human being such as: various physiological feelings (hunger, thirst etc), emotions, feelings, decisions etc are within mind only.

1: Please note that by the term body-mind complex neither duality of body, mind is suggested nor its unity.

2: For simplicity, here no distinction is made between mind, intellect etc. Also no distinction is made such as conscious, sub-conscious & unconscious mind etc.

Because there is correspondence between body and inner experience, one identifies oneself with body

There is a reason for considering oneself as body. This is because there is a definite correspondence between the inner experience and body. Even though body is also perceived just like any other object in external world but there is a difference. If any part of the body gets hurt then there is an inner experience of pain, which does not happen with other objects in world. If one walks then there is corresponding inner experience of pressure on legs, movement of body etc. **Because there is this correspondence between body and inner experience, one identifies oneself with body**. Or simply put one's body and mind are connected.

Inner experience is what matters most for any individual

Although both body and mind are essential, yet it is the inner experience that matters for any individual. Without inner experience even if there is body or senses, it is useless for the individual. In fact it is even doubtful if the individual can be said to exist if there is no inner experience. In fact it can be said that that which has got inner experience is sentient being and that which does not have inner experience is inert matter. And human being is definitely a sentient being.

Entire perceived world is within the mind of the individual

Although according to common sense, it seems like there is objective reality independent of its being perceived, but what any individual knows is his/her inner experience only. One never knows the object in external world directly. Knowing the object itself means some form of inner experience in the mind of the individual. So what any individual knows is the content of his/her mind only. **So the entire perceived world is nowhere but in the mind of the individual**. Hence mind has got special status for the individual. Not only external world is known through mind, but the desires one has, the inclinations, likes, dislikes one has are according to how one's mind is. Hence the famous statement: **Man is Mind**.

Question of identity still remains open in spite of importance of inner experience

Life is bundle of experiences is a famous statement and it seems true because without having experience it seems like either individual is unconscious or individual does not exist at all. In a way what we have is experiences only. **There is a feeling that 'I exist' but when we inquire into 'who am I' then no answer can be found**. Because what all is there is just constantly changing experiences. One cannot possibly say that 'I am this experience' or 'I am that experience' or 'I am the bundle of experiences'. This is not a satisfactory answer. Why? Because, experience comes and goes, but one still remains. So there is this feeling of continuity of existence of one's own self. Even though there is such a feeling, yet when one inquires 'who am I' then nothing can be found which is other than the experiences and which is continuous.

Basis for identity

Let us first reflect on the notion/feeling behind 'I exist'. On what basis can we say that identity for individual is? Or simply put: **what is the basis for identity?** If we reflect on it then we can arrive at following criteria about identity:

1. That which is part-less
2. That which is not temporary
3. That which is unaffected over time

Nothing in the phenomenal world satisfies the criteria for identity

Now if we observe, everything in the phenomenal world is exactly reverse of all the above criteria. **Nothing in the world is part-less. Everything is collection of parts.** Even though for the purposes of communication we say: one car, but car is actually a collection of various parts. A particular arrangement of various parts is known as car. And when these various parts of car are dis-assembled and kept on floor, even though nothing substantial is lost, but yet car cannot be seen. Where the car has gone? Hence anything that is collection of parts cannot be truly be said to exist. And nothing in the phenomenal world can be found that is part-less. Even, atom is a collection of electrons, protons etc. And subatomic particles are collection of quarks etc.

Also **what we know/perceive is qualities only.** We cannot say for sure whether there is something that possesses the qualities. What we can say is there are qualities only. Hence according to this view also identity is not applicable to anything in the phenomenal world, including body, mind.

After realizing that nothing in the phenomenal world satisfies the basis for identity, one comes to the summit of one's own intellectual understanding in terms of search for one's identity in the phenomenal world. It is at this point where one realizes that intelligence, logical reasoning, the way of proof, the way how Science proceeds are not the methods for realizing one's own identity. It is exactly where Spirituality rescues one in search of one's own identity by providing one more wing to the individual called: **Faith.**

Faith indispensable not only in spirituality but in any field of knowledge.

Sometimes one might get the feeling that reality can be proved but it depends upon the intellectual acumen. But it can be shown that **reality can never be proved and faith is in fact essential for everybody (those who are not realized) independent of the intellectual acumen.** This can be explained as follows:

For this discussion it is assumed that by reality we mean that which is the reason of all other reasons. Everything else must follow or can be explained based on reality, and reality is the most basic. Of course reality may not be so, may be reality is such that everything cannot be explained based on it. But however for this discussion we are assuming that reality is the most basic thing and based on it everything else must follow.

Reality is inherently unprovable because it is most basic thing & upon which everything else depends.

To develop any theory, some assumptions are made, which are known as axioms. In this discussion it is assumed that no theory can be developed without having any axioms. Also it is assumed that the theory which is developed based on axioms cannot prove the axioms itself. Theory is developed based on axioms & theoretical proof and which can be validated also based on experimental evidence. But axioms cannot be proved, may be at the most axioms can be experimentally validated, which is not the proof.

However reality can be verified.

Today's axioms may not remain as axioms tomorrow. As the theory develops and as the technology improves, we go deeper and deeper by finding out deeper/inner or hidden axioms. But the process of proof remains same i.e. assume certain axioms and develop the theory. So in a way it is really a process of finding out the deeper axioms and trying to establish how everything else follows based on the axioms. **There is a proof for the developed theory but always there never is any proof for the axioms.** And the process of finding the deeper axioms is not based on any proof. One always believes that axioms are true and then tries to develop the theory.

Faith is the head of the intellect

Now can the reality be proved? Suppose let us assume that reality can be proved. Then it means that we must have followed same process in order to prove the reality i.e. assume certain axioms and then derive the reality. So here it seems like the axioms that are assumed in order to prove the reality are more basic in nature than our supposed reality which we are trying to prove, which is not what reality is according to our understanding of the reality. **Since reality is more basic in nature, it can never be the result of any proof. It has to be ONE axiom based on which everything else should be explainable.** Ironically this also means that reality can never be proved and all the doors of proof to prove reality are closed and there is only one way to realize/know the reality and that is: Faith.

Reality is inherently unprovable. However, reality can be verified or validated based on the test that everything else must follow or should be explainable based on reality.

Faith in Spirituality is the belief in the existence of Pure Consciousness

Hence it is now clear that Faith is in fact essential in order to know reality. And similarly faith is essential to know one's own self. **What is this faith that is required in Spirituality?** This faith can be explained in short sentences as follows:

- **There must be something that is opposed to phenomenon, called as the Noumenon, which is part-less, quality-less, continuous and eternal.**

To the entity that possesses above characteristics, Shastra refers it as **Shuddha Chaitanya** i.e. **Pure Consciousness or simply Consciousness.**

So in short Faith in spirituality is the belief in the existence of pure Consciousness.

Perception is that inner experience which illumines objects in external world. And that which illumines inner experience is Consciousness.