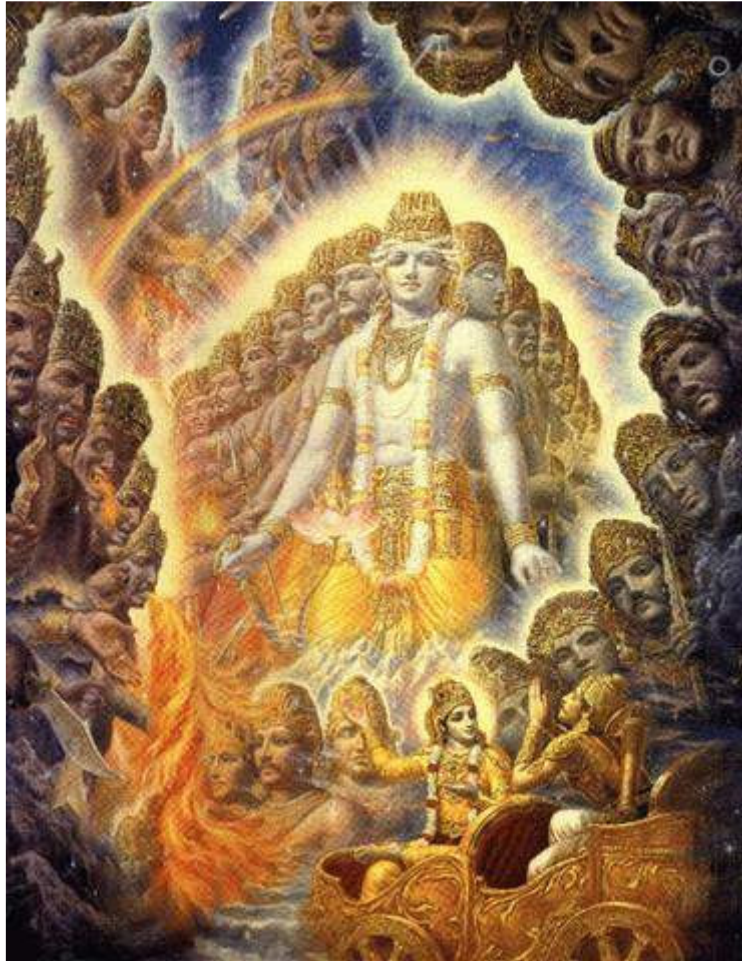


QUESTIONS THAT I ASK MYSELF-



There have been a series of questions that have very often stormed my mind. Questions about God, His very existence; if He exists, then how can one realise Him? What is true spiritual knowledge and what is karma? I'm sure many of my readers have also had these questions troubling them. I tried to find solutions to these intriguing questions. I went to each and every knowledgeable person I knew, and went from pillar to post to check out books which might lead me to their solution. All my efforts were in vain until I chanced upon the sayings of the great Indian saint, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The experience was so enriching and so spiritually satisfying that I could not just keep it to myself. I found that all my so-called 'difficult' questions lay answered in some simple sayings of the great man. Thus, I present before you the very essential facts about life. It's in the form of a series of questions and their answers. Let's begin.

Q: *WHAT IS GOD? DOES HE EXIST?*

The atheist in me says that God does not exist.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa says, "We cannot see stars in the daytime due to the immense influence of sunlight. So, can we conclude that stars do not

exist during the day? Obviously not. Similarly if under the influence of our ignorance, we fail to recognise the Lord, we cannot conclude that He does not exist."

The student of science in me says that if He's present then where's the proof? How does he look? Some friends of mine say that He's formless, while others say he has forms!

Ramakrishna Paramahansa says, "Once a man went into the woods and found a lovely creature on a tree. He came back and told his friend that he saw a lovely red coloured creature. The friend protested that even he had seen the creature but it was green in colour. Another friend of theirs came up to say that the creature was in fact yellow in colour. So they decided to go to the tree and find out. They found a man sitting below the tree and asked him about the creature. He replied that he knew the creature very well and that each of them was right. The creature being a chameleon was sometimes red, sometimes green, yellow or for that matter, sometimes had no colour at all.

Just as the man sitting beneath the tree knew of the various forms of the animal, only he who thinks constantly about God manages to understand his forms as well as his formlessness. Others not knowing the whole truth, simply quarrel among themselves and suffer."

My Muslim friends say He's Allah, my Christian friends say the same for Jesus, and my Hindu friends say He's Krishna. Who's right and who's not, that's the question.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa says, "Reality is one and the same; the difference is just in the name and form. Muslims, Hindus and Christians may drink water from the same lake, but they call it as *pani*, *jal* and *water* respectively; similarly, the same Almighty can be reached even though the methods to do so are different."

So simply put, and yet so interesting, engrossing and uncomplicated.

As if to remove any doubt remaining, he says, "Although the sun is actually much bigger and brighter, we being far away from it, do not realise its true greatness. Similarly, God's greatness is infinite. All doubts and questions about Him arise when we cannot comprehend this infinite greatness. Instead, we should try getting closer to him and our apprehensions will vanish automatically."

My first question to my own self has definitely been answered, and perfectly answered at that!