

From Personal God to Universal Consciousness

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What is God? Throughout the history of mankind we have grappled with this question. Everybody has their own definition of God. Some believe in it some do not, but everybody talks about it.

Most people have [faith in personal God](#). It provides a psychological pillar of support to them and feel that God will help them overcome difficulties. It is their strength of faith which really helps them rather than anything else. Still they pray to him and offer huge bribes of donations and offerings in the temples! When things do not turn out the way they want, they rationalize that God willed it so.

This is the nature of our brain and mind which makes us believe that some higher entity helps us or will help us so that our lives become better. This belief basically provides mental support so that in the time of crisis it gives us faith and provides solace.

Generally God concept is thought of in two ways. Personal God who helps (or is supposed to help) in our personal lives and the faith in it propels us to do things. Most of the times it is a ritual with hardly any deep faith. A deep faith in personal god was displayed by the Indian saint [Ramakrishna](#) who used to say; one can play with, tell him/her the innermost secrets, etc., etc. He was so immersed in his personal god that it was basically his invisible playmate. He exhibited [Bhakti Yoga](#) in its pure form.

Then there is the Universal consciousness which is beyond the personal realm. [Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras](#) talks about it as an entity which is beyond time and space and yet guides the destiny of the Universe. That is the type of God that Einstein also believed in when he said that God is nothing else but the profound beauty of Universe and its structure.

So how do we reconcile the personal God with the Universal God and how are they related? I would like to explore these issues with the help of my personal examples.

Early spiritual experiences

I had [spiritual experiences from age 13 to 15](#). These came when I started meditating for couple of hours every day. Later on there were many interesting dreams which may be termed as a part of the spiritual experiences.

The early experiences were about the great feeling of oneness with most living beings and also fantastic dreams of getting bathed in very intense white light.

Somehow these experiences made me feel that somebody is watching over and protecting me. It was a good feeling. At that young stage in life the closeness of somebody like that is particularly important and comforting.

One episode brought this out very clearly to me. I must have been about 14-15 years of age. I always had the habit of sleeping after lunch. This habit has continued even today. So after sleeping for an hour I woke up to go to the bathroom. In the bathroom I had a blackout and fell down. During this blackout episode I suddenly “saw” that somebody had tied me up by a rope and I was in a fetal position. I also felt that the person was taking me away when another being came and untied the ropes and I regained consciousness. I never saw the faces of these beings but felt that somebody who was watching over me helped me escape.

[Dr. K. N. Gairola, my father’s friend](#) and our physician was called to our house. He checked my B. P. and other vital signs and said that maybe I needed more vitamins. I used to be as thin as a stick and with my [experiments in eating only vegetarian food and fasting](#), the necessary ingredients required for a healthy body were not being made available to it.

I never believed in any rituals and was dead against going to temples or offering “*Prasad*”. This belief came because of my early spiritual experiences that there is a higher power which is beyond form, and which helps in knowledge giving.

When I went to do [engineering in IIT Kanpur](#) and later on to the U.S., somehow the issues of spirituality were put on the back burner. However, the [engineering and other education in US](#) dramatically expanded the field of vision and I became extremely interested in gravity and astronomy. It also allowed me the luxury of looking at the world in a holistic manner and I was amazed to discover the inter-connection of almost everything in the Universe.

This mind-expanding exercise gave me a new perspective on the powers that govern the destiny of the Universe – and understanding that we, such puny little creatures, consider our small surroundings as the center of the Universe!

This clarity of thought did not materialize at that time, but the seed was planted, and it was almost 25-30 years later when I became heavily involved in writing on issues of spirituality that it became clear. I then realized that [God is nothing else but this marvelous Universe which follows its own scientific laws.](#)

Thus from my own life I realized that when we do not have knowledge about the greater world then the personal god provides the psychological support. As the mind-expanding knowledge is perceived, the personal god is replaced by the Universal Consciousness. Both however can provide tremendous faith and psychological support during personal crisis.

Universal Consciousness

Faith in Universal consciousness comes when we develop a powerful mind. A mind which can question and analyze deeply all the issues also becomes spiritual. That is the whole basis of Yogic *sadhna* or spiritual realization. I believe all of us who are searching for the truth in any field reach this space of spiritual awareness sooner or later.

The quest of Universal consciousness or Cosmic God is also taught in our ancient scriptures like [Bhagavad Gita](#) and [Patanjali Yoga Darshan](#) where it is shown that this consciousness can be attained if we expand our minds and make them powerful through *Sanyam*.

Without such expansion we will be guided by lower [forces of spirits and entities](#) which surround our planet, and which give rise to the concept of personal god. Most of such god worship world over is [shamanic in nature](#). Even Patanjali has written in his Yoga Sutra that as the *Yogi* advances in his *Sadhana* [he will be tempted by such beings, but he should be careful not to get entangled with them.](#)

Sometimes the misplaced faith in personal god leads to religious fundamentalism. This happens because of the person's insecurity and a

desire to control. World history is full of examples and testimony to the religious wars where large number of human lives have been lost because of religious bigotry.

I feel this bigotry can be reduced if we give all rounded education to our children with emphasis on bigger issues in life; love for science and technology; emphasis on ethical behavior; and knowledge that all the different faiths of mankind are important but different paths to achieve the truth. This will help expand the children's horizon and make the world a harmonious place to live.

Einstein's Example

[Einstein has been one of my heroes](#). His life and work have influenced me deeply and I have always been inspired by his spirituality. His biography shows that he used to [write poetry and sing hymns in praise of a personal god when he was 12 years old](#). As his knowledge about the forces affecting us and how the world is made grew, his focus on the personal god petered out and a whole new world of beauty and awe was revealed to him.

In later years he was able to easily replace the notion of personal god with that of Universal consciousness. He always said that he [believed in God who reveals himself in the harmony of all that exists](#). I think he was a very spiritual person in a true sense.

All his life Einstein worked towards developing a theory of everything – basically the relationship between [quantum physics and gravity](#). However he did not succeed. The forces in quantum mechanics which bind the matter in atoms are extremely powerful and gravity does not play any part at such nanoscales. Only at a greater distance and with bigger masses, the gravity becomes the most dominant force. Thus the holy grail of all science is to find a relationship between gravity and other forces working in nanoscale regions like electromagnetic, nuclear, etc.

In the same way the effect of personal god becomes powerful when we are cocooned in our own petty affairs and without the knowledge of greater forces affecting the universe. The transition from personal God to Universal consciousness happens when we become aware of those universal forces. That will be an important step in mankind's [evolution both spiritually and technologically](#).

To my mind the theory of everything will be discovered when we understand God both at the personal and universal level.

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