



Philosophy of Religion

Revision Classes : Q & A

Previous 20 Years

Part I

Notions of God: Attributes; Relation to Man and the World (Indian and Western).

1. Is Hinduism polytheistic ? Give reasons for your answer. (2018/10)

- Define : theological system ; multiple gods ; compare with monotheism & monism
- Hinduism fulfills the criteria , multiple divinities , however reduced to three , each is supreme in his own right ; so it has elements of henotheism also
- **polytheism and monotheism** coexist in a relationship much like the parts of a wheel
- **Brahman** is the supreme reality , source of everything , all is manifestation of it ; according to one view it the **AUM** which is the supreme power
- In this way, Hinduism **reconciles the Vedantic monism with Vedic polytheism**: All the individual Hindu gods (who are said to be saguna, "with attributes") are subsumed under the godhead (nirguna, "without attributes"), from which they all emanate.
- **Brihadaryanka Upanishad**
- Comparison with other theistic religion : Christianity and Islam

2. The terms "Sacred" and 'Holy' have come to serve as generic names for the object of religion. Do you agree that one can have God as the object of religion? Discuss. (2018/20)

- **Define religion** ; in traditional religion sacredness & holiness are necessary elements attached to the transcendental power beyond man.
- Such “**power beyond man**” is not necessarily god. There might be religion without God. But even in such religion sacredness must be attached to transcendental power.
- **God can be object of religion** because both the terms sacred and holy are attached with God.
- Sacred, holy, divine, hallow are terms that are mostly used in terms of things and concepts that are not ordinary but connected with God or godly things. Thus, we have holy bible and sacred texts or scriptures.
- In terms of religion, **holiness** may be defined as completeness in religion, or perfection in religion. And in religion god is considered as complete & perfect.
- **Sacred** refers to anything that **needs to be venerated**. It also differentiates mundane thing from godly things. All things related to God becomes sacred. Because an object is associated with the divine or a deity, it becomes sacred for the followers of the religion. For example ,sacred text , places , symbols , etc.

3. Critically discuss the relationship of man with God in the Yoga system of philosophy. (2017/10)

- In yoga school **God is an object of devotion** for a man who seeks to meditate and stop chitta vritti thereby attaining kaivalya.
- Devotion to God , part of Niyam ,
- God is **surest means for concentration** and removal of obstacles for astanga yoga. It is the means for the the chittavrittinirodha.
- God is the **special Purusa** , omnipotent but is not the creator God. There is no concept of union of an individual with the God.
- Yoga school explain the course of world due to interplay of Prakriti and Purusa

4. What is a non-theological concept of God ? How is it different from theological concept of God ? Discuss with arguments. (2017/15)

- Traditional concept of God ; why God needed
- **Non theological** : different from traditional concept
 - Buddhism , Jainism , advaitvada
 - Samkhya / Yoga
 - Spinoza : refutes creator God
 - Process theology
- **Theological** : creator , sustainer , destroyer ; personal attributes ; grace , devotion , prayers
- **Deism , Pantheism**

5. Write a critical note on the attributes of God. (2015/10)

- See printed notes
- Define God , attributes , paradoxes
- Omnipotent
- Omniscient
- Necessity

6.Elucidate the status of man in the realm of between immanence and transcendence.
(2014/20)

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- Both of these theories attempts to explain the **nature of divinity** on one hand while on the other it explains the **relation** between divine and finite realities including man.
 - **Religion** : sum total of all answers
 - Define **Transcendence** : “wholly other” , beyond space & time. , Define **immanence** : all pervading , inner dwelling force of the world
 - **Status of man** :
 - Shankara : levels of reality
 - Ramanuja : whole & parts
 - Spinoza : two levels : attributes & modes
 - Plato : ideas & copies
 - **Different theories** : deism , pantheism , panentheism

7. Is god indispensable for religion ? (2013/10)

- Define religion - Traditional , Religare
- In both definitions God is not necessary element
- Mention basic / essential features of religion
- Religion without God
- **Indispensible element** : transcendental/supreme power beyond man : **why**
- **Debate** : Theist v/s atheist ; God is dead ; matter of faith

8. Explain the distinction between deism and theism . (2012/20)

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- Notion of God ; Different **theories** explaining relation between God and man & world
 - Comparative study : **similarity & differences**
 - **Deism** : hidden god , absentee landlord , transcendental , superior engineering , no room for devotion, miracles , revelation , evil not explained ; purpose of creation not clear
 - **Theism** : both immanence & transcendence , c-s-d , personalistic aspect , devotion/bhakti/grace , revelation , miracles , evil/suffering explained ; purpose of creation : lila ; karma theory ; happy sin - soul making
 - Science – Religion ; evoluionary stages : early & later stages
 - Other theories

9. Discuss the salient features of traditional orthodox religion. 2011 – 15 marks

- Define religion : traditional and as a religare
- Essential features
- Religion with and without God
- Critical survey : Why religion ? ; influence : good , bad
- Can we live without religion ; true religion

10. “Religion is not just false, it is harmful.” Discuss. 2011/ 15 marks

- What is religion , its promises , importance in life
- View of atheist and anti religion ; opium of masses
- **False** because it does not fulfill promises / aspirations (see previous question)
- **Harmful** because : atrocities , killings , exploitation , superstitions , fanatical , violent , divisive
- **Counter view** : positive aspects of religion
 - **3Ms** : Misunderstood , Misinterpretation , Misuse of religion
 - Religare : binding force
 - Spiritual , source of values ; politics without religion is deadly sin

11. “To be man is to strive to be God.” Discuss. 09/30

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- God has **created man on his image**. Therefore we are created to be like God. He also gave us this little thing called **free-will**. God gave us this power to make our own choices which also means that we are accountable to God and to all others for each and every choice we make.
 - Out of abundance of love he has given free will so that **we can become worthy of his fellowship** , to become like him.
 - To be like him we have to **overcome temptations of choosing wrong**. Each time we overcome our spirituality and value system rises to another level. In that way **holy will** is gradually evolved.
 - Self realization ; part of God through bhakti
 - To know is to be
 - Aham Brahmasmi
 - Spinoza

12. Comment on the statement – “Religion only promised, but never fulfilled the promise.” 08/30

- **What is religion , purposes & promises of religion-** end of sufferings , blissful afterlife, salvation, eternal happiness, fulfilment , etc. ; hope , peace , unity
- Mention **widespread disaffection** and the growing **trend towards atheism**.
- **impossible to say** if the promise is fulfilled while being alive. ex- resurrection belief of Christianity, reincarnation of Hinduism. The kingdom of heaven on earth and judgement day as stated in the bible are yet to occur as real-life events in our world.
- fails the test of verifiability.
- **Conclude- faith**, in which case, **questions about promise fulfillment become completely redundant**. Example Kierkegaard knight of faith. Moreover, To think about promise fulfillment by religion is to ask logical cost/benefit questions, which may not be applicable to religion at all.

13. Can deism be satisfactory theory in the context of God of grace and devotion? Discuss. 08/20

- Deism v/s theism (repeat question)
- No , because in deism god is hidden & like absentee landlord. He is over & above the world. There is no personal relation between him and devotee
- No room for grace & devotion deism
- God of grace & devotion demands **personalistic notion of God , attributes , c-s-d , prapatti**

14. God is not the subject to the law of logic. Critical notes. 07/20.

- reason v/s faith ; reason plays secondary role (proofs of God) ; perfect v/s absolute God
- Logic is a **part of nature of God** , logic comes from god
- **Logic is not power apart from god** to which god has to submit. God is all powerful , logic is his law , self made laws : **Spinoza** ; Perfect god cannot be subject to anything
- God possess infinite knowledge and the knowledge of **humans is limited** to their observations and their ability and capacity to reason. So, what seems superfluous and flawed may be true
- **Faith , fideism** : accepts certain things which cannot be explained by reason , logic.
- God's **attributes and paradoxes**
- **God is beyond logic and ordinary language** – mention **Paul Tillich, BLIKS, Mystical experience, Revelation etc**

15. Traditionally omnipotence has been seen as one of the attributes of God. But, according to some critic, the notion of omnipotent being is paradoxical. In response some theist has tried to resolve the alleged paradox. Describe the paradox and explain the attempt to resolve it.

07/60.

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- God , Attributes and paradoxes ; God has to be omnipotent : perfect entity , delivering promises
 - paradoxes : **stone** , counting infinity , making square circle , **problem of evil**
 - **Resolution**
 - Perfect v/s absolute god
 - God cannot do logical absurdities, he can do anything that's possible according to his nature
 - laws of logic were derived from God
 - **beliefs of Hindus** : many incarnation , while God can do anything but it is not possible for all his incarnations to do them.
 - Faith , fideism
 - According to the **Tractatus**, then, even attempting to formulate the omnipotence paradox is futile, since **language cannot refer to the entities the paradox considers**

17. The difference between impersonalistic and naturalistic conception of God. Critical notes. 06/20.

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- Both are an attempt to explain **relation between man and God & universe** ; We can also say in the evolutionary process naturalistic notion led to theistic to polytheistic to monotheism and finally to monism
 - **Impersonalistic** : Spinoza , Brahman ; no personal attributes ; every determination is negation - unqualified monism ; no room for worship , prayers , grace , devotion ; Pantheism
 - **Naturalistic** : personification & deification of the nature ; Such polytheistic anthropomorphism in course of time was replaced by a spiritual monotheism by trying to find out a single creative cause of the universe. **Henotheism** ; henotheism may be described as an unconscious groping towards **monotheism**. Ultimately monotheism was displaced by **monism**

Might have characteristics of both personalistic & impersonalistic God

18. “If God is omniscient, then humans are not free”

- free will v/s determinism ; God’s attributes and paradoxes ; omniscience and free will are incompatible ; If God made the game, its rules, and the players, then how can any player be free?
- Problem of evil & free willist defence
- **Attempts to resolve**
 - i. Debate perfect v/s absolute god ; only logical possible things
 - ii. free will is to be understood only as freedom from coercion, and anything further is an illusion.
 - iii. God's perception of time is different , **beyond time** – sees as “now” : no today/tomorrow for God
 - iv. Karma theory , fatalism and omniscience – prarabdha karma and agami karma
 - v. Process theology

19. Is God dead (Nietzsche) or living (faithful people)?

- This statement reflects debate between **atheist and faithful theist**.
- Nietzsche was an atheistic existentialist didn't mean that there was a God who had actually died, rather that our idea of one had.
- "God" is a **fiction** created by human beings. Thus, **God "dies" when there is no good reason to believe that God exists**.
- **We no longer needed God as the source for all morality, value, or order** in the universe, there is no need for divine legitimacy for political system; philosophy and science were capable of doing that for us.
- However, **for faithful God is living**. God is the source of morality, immanent & transcendent, answers our prayers, etc.