

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

Choosing The Right Path

Question: How can we know the right path?

Answer: I will answer your question by telling you the criterion to know the right path. Then you can decide for yourself.

Various religious paths fall three basic categories:

Exclusivism: Followers of the exclusivist path claim that their way is the only exclusive way to God. They further claim that all those who don't accept their path are destined to go to hell – forever. Religious exclusivity sometimes degenerates into fundamentalist violence. This further puts off intelligent people, who are already skeptical of the claim to exclusivity. After all, if God is unlimited, why should one particular religion have monopoly on the path to God?



Pluralism: Pluralism is the notion that there are many paths to God. Nowadays, this notion is sometimes expanded to say that there are as many paths to God as there are people. While this notion seems to promote religious tolerance, it often breeds spiritual impotence. A religious system can be compared to a university meant to train students in knowledge and love of God. The claim to exclusivism is like the claim of a medical student that his college is the only college that can produce doctors. This is obviously a fanatical and fallacious claim. The claim to pluralism, on the other hand, is like the even more fallacious claim that any building anywhere can produce doctors.



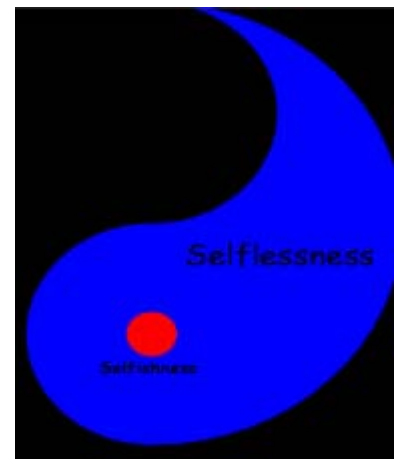
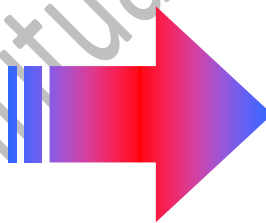
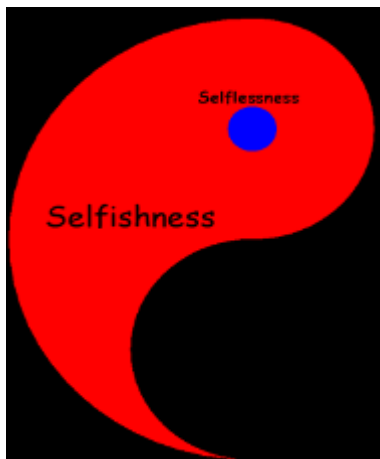
Inclusivism: This teaches that there are not many paths, but basically one path with many levels on it. The levels on the path correspond to the motives with which people approach God: fear, desire, duty and love, with pure love of God obviously being the highest level. The path to becoming a doctor is essentially one: study the medical subjects, learn the relevant skills and pass the various levels in the medical course.





There may be different universities to teach medicine, but that doesn't mean we unthinkingly accept every building everywhere as a medical college. Unfortunately, an uncritical acceptance of all paths is today portrayed as a sign of religious tolerance. But the real way to know the right path is to see if its practitioners are having:

1. Systematic, profound knowledge of God, knowledge that can answer all the fundamental questions of life and can establish God as the essence and goal of existence.
2. Deep inner love for God that expresses itself by:
 - a. Constantly wanting to worship him, chant his holy names, share his message and remember him and his connection with all the things, events and people that one comes across in life.
 - b. Making one detached from all selfish, godless indulgences like illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication and gambling.



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