

# Does God Exist?

PRASANTA RAY

This apparently simple question has intrigued, enticed and baffled great minds for centuries, and yet remains unresolved till today. Therefore, it is surely a mighty question!

Let me begin with this apocryphal story: When asked by Napoleon why his works made no mention of God, Pierre-Simon Laplace, the great French scientist and mathematician, had retorted: 'I had no need of that hypothesis.' (Some have said he meant not God *per se* but a God who *intervenes* in the working of the universe.)<sup>1</sup>

Many 'rationalists' are dismissive of the 'God hypothesis' on the basis (a) that there is no credible evidence of God, and (b) that the 'God hypothesis' is not necessary to explain and predict the natural phenomena because science does that eminently. And *this is the view of many in today's 'age of reason'*.

There are, of course, allied issues: (c) If God exists, then can He be perceived and approached for anything? (d) How is He?

Let us, in our own way, seek answers to these questions.

## Definition and evidence of God

What if I asked you 'Does Suprum exist?' Wouldn't you ask me to first define 'Suprum'? And so, what if I then glibly announced my finding that 'Suprum doesn't exist'? Wouldn't you wonder whether I was talking through my hat?

So, it would be logical to ask: 'If God doesn't exist, then how have you used the word "God" in the first place—how have

you defined "God"?' *Petitio principii*, or 'begging the question', is the logical fallacy of directly or indirectly presuming, without proof, that which is to be proved. Don't we suspect something similar here?

*Clearly here, the issue of definition is inseparably entwined with the issue of evidence. Can you define that which you find to be utterly non-existent, never ever having existed in any manner, form or mode? Your answer would possibly be something like this: 'A ten-foot tall man does not exist' is an acceptable finding even when the definition of 'ten-foot tall man' is fully valid and understood.*

Okay—but realize that actually, here, the definition of 'man' is universally understood and *his existence accepted*; the real issue is that of a special kind of man. Realize that *even beginning to define an entity presupposes some knowledge concerning it, and so, of some form or mode of existence of at least something similar.*

The definition that is most widely accepted is that 'God' is anthropomorphic, a human(-like) person. This is illustrated by Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling painting of 'Creation of Adam'. Such human-like Personal God is considered to be one, all-powerful, all-capable, and usually all-merciful too. 'Human' is universally known and accepted; only a certain *kind* of human is the quest—a superhuman.

Most of us contemplate and seek a superperson God—a super Mr God or Ms Goddess—the one-and-unique, supreme creator, administrator, father or mother

figure, hearer of prayers, dispenser of rewards and punishments, and so on, having all great qualities and capabilities in the superlative degree! And then, not having any credible evidence of such a superperson, many rationalists conclude that God does not exist!

Isn't it that the primary issue with the rationalist-atheists is the *definition* of 'God' and not the *existence* of God? *Putting the cart before the horse, aren't they creating the Suprum phantom, and then seeking and not finding Him?*

There is another issue. The veracity of the premise that 'God exists' needs to be decided on the basis of evidence. Little quarrel with that. But mark that the Indian Evidence Act, as other similar legislation elsewhere, speaks of a fact or premise being 'proved' or 'disproved' or 'not proved'. As to the premise 'God exists', theists say it is 'proved', atheists say it is 'disproved' and agnostics say it is 'not proved'. Since God's existence is debatable in the beginning, lack of credible evidence either way would leave the issue debatable in the end as well: 'not proved'. *Couldn't it be that the rationalist-atheists mistake 'not proved' for 'disproved'?*

### Scientific explanation and prediction

The fact from which the atheistic view arises is that no science has unearthed any evidence that proves 'God' the superperson. Okay—but then, no science has unearthed any evidence that disproves such God either. Unless, of course, *a la Laplace*, you tend to seek scientific explanation and prediction itself as evidence 'disproving'—not 'not proving'—the existence of God!

So, let us ponder this most important issue. An imagined story will do (as in *gedanken* experiments of science—'thought experiments'):

Having landed on earth unnoticed, some tiny

Martians have been secretly prowling the factory premises of Ford Motor Company for a year, all the while carefully studying the engine and other mechanisms of cars. They soon successfully predict a certain car's overheating from coolant pump malfunction, another's sluggish acceleration due to valve leakage, and a third's brake failure from low-quality brake pads. Returning to Mars, the team jubilantly report their successes in explaining automobile mechanisms and how they work, and, to cap it all, in correctly *predicting* car performance!

And what is the philosophical upshot of this among the Martians? Why, it's obvious to them: the 'Homo sapien hypothesis' is unwarranted! Homo sapiens don't exist! I ask: Are you serious when you say that the ability to explain or correctly predict, necessarily implies that that which is explained does not have a maker/controller—that the question of its origin and existence is a non-issue?

### Modern scientists' conceptions of God

It would be interesting now—and pertinent too—to closely study the views of some famous scientists who are widely considered to have played seminal roles in the evolution of modern science. First Isaac Newton:

Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who set the planets in motion. *God* governs all things and knows all that is or can be done.' (Emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

How came the Bodies of Animals to be contrived with so much Art, and for what ends were their several Parts? Was the Eye contrived without Skill in Opticks, and the Ear without Knowledge of Sounds? How do the Motions of the Body follow from the Will, and whence is the Instinct in Animals? Is not the Sensory of Animals that place to which the *sensitive Substance* is present, and into which the sensible Species of

Things are carried through the Nerves and Brain, that *there they may be perceived by their immediate presence to that Substance?* And these things being rightly dispatch'd, does it not appear from Phænomena that *there is a Being incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, sees the things themselves intimately, and thoroughly perceives them, and comprehends them wholly by their immediate presence to himself.* Of which things the Images only carried through the Organs of Sense into our little Sensoriums, *are there seen and beheld by that which in us perceives and thinks.* And though every true Step made in this Philosophy brings us not immediately to the Knowledge of the first Cause, yet *it brings us nearer to it, and on that account is to be highly valued.*' (Emphasis added).<sup>3</sup>

This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the *counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being.* . . . This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but *as Lord over all;* and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called 'Lord God' . . . or 'Universal Ruler'. . . . The Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, (and) absolutely perfect.' (Emphasis added).<sup>4</sup>

He who thinks half-heartedly will not believe in God; but *he who really thinks has to believe in God.* (Emphasis added).<sup>5</sup>

Now, Albert Einstein who says,

I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the harmony of all that exists, not in a God who *concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind . . . a superior mind that reveals itself in the world of experience.* . . . this may be described as 'pantheistic'. . . . I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the type of which we are conscious in ourselves.' (Emphasis added).<sup>6</sup>

Says Charles Darwin:

Another source of conviction in the existence of God, *connected with the reason*

and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather *impossibility* of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the *result of blind chance or necessity.* When thus reflecting I feel *compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man;* and I deserve to be called a Theist. . . . But then arises the doubt—can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animal, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions? . . . I cannot pretend to throw the least light on such abstruse problems. *The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us;* and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic. (Emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>

Louis Pasteur:

His son-in-law writes: '*Absolute faith in God and in Eternity,* and a conviction that the power for good given to us in this world will be continued beyond it, were feelings which pervaded his whole life; the virtues of the gospel had ever been present to him.' (Emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

Finally, Pierre-Simon Laplace, who on 17 June 1809 wrote to his son:

I pray that *God watches over your days. Let Him be always present to your mind,* as also your father and your mother. (Emphasis added).<sup>9</sup>

Here, mark, we see theism and agnosticism—theism even in Laplace—and *don't see atheism.* That the ability to explain and predict does not obviate the need to posit a 'God' of some kind seems to be sort of axiomatic to these great scientists. At the same time, mark also that they too, barring Einstein and Newton, in their creative imagination, do not seem to venture far from the same superperson God. Interestingly,

even Darwin, who probably has been most influential in modern times in discrediting the concept of a Creator-God, swings between theism and agnosticism. The God-concept seems to be acceptable, the definition is the issue. *Can't there be, shouldn't there be, haven't there been, alternative—including non-anthropomorphic—definitions or conceptions of God?*

### Traditional Indian conceptions of God

Indians have been widely regarded as basically religious, God-believing. Therefore, ancient Indian scriptures, and the *darshanas*—spiritual philosophies or worldviews—can be justifiably considered happy hunting-grounds for a search for alternative conceptions of God, or Divinity or the First Cause.

It is important to note that though India's spiritual career *originated* in what are claimed to be the 'revealed' truths or supra-normal experiences, recorded chiefly in the Upanishads, India's spiritual philosophies or worldviews have been developed by hundreds of thinking and reasoning persons over millennia. Those are *not* the scriptures per se but rather thinking persons' reasoned 'takes' on, interpretations of those scriptures—of possible models of the universe and its creation, of possible afterlife, heaven, hell, rebirth, of free will and destiny, of human life and its denouement—and this fact accounts for the multiplicity of *darshanas* and the diversity of opinions in them on the 'God' issue.

Astonishingly to newcomers, even though the Indian religious ethos is awash with gods and goddesses—deities, *devas* and *devis*, and not God, *Ishvara*, *per se*—the concept of a superperson God is not prominent in these much-respected *darshanas*. Only some two of the six *āstika darshanas* that consider the Upanishads

sacrosanct—namely, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaisheshika, Mimāṃsā and Vedānta—speak expressly of a superperson God! The remaining four *āstika darshanas*, along with the other, *nāstika*, ones of Buddhism and Jainism, speak only of spirituality and its science, if anything. The *nāstika*, empiricistic-materialistic, *darshana* of Chārvāk-ism denies God and spirituality, both. God the superperson has generally not been seen in India as a necessary inference or a major logical requirement, as ultimate truth! (As stated above, the deities are *devas* and *devis*, and not the 'God' that is the subject-matter here).

Let us take critical note of a game-changing conception of 'God' in some *darshanas*, notably, Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism or monism). God, the superperson has been subsumed in a higher and infinitely comprehensive and paramount conception of the One-and-Only-Infinite-Eternal-Universal-Spirit—often called Brahman. Brahman has been conceived of as being beyond normal human experience and past all human perception-description-definition-imagination-conceptualization-understanding, but with Brahman's manifestation/s, or appearance/s, being within normal human cognitive and conceptual reach. 'God' *per se*—supreme *Ishvara*—is the highest and most universal conceptualization of manifested Brahman. The various gods and goddesses—deities, *devas* and *devis*—are representations of various aspects or parts of Brahman's manifestation. Thus, Brahman is distinguished from Its many and varied manifestations.

Newton and Einstein now deserve very close attention. Einstein conceives of a 'superior mind' that 'reveals' itself. Note the distinction he draws between God—'superior mind'—and His manifestation—'revealing itself'. How Vedantic! Newton

sounds even more astonishingly Vedantic when he says, ‘that which in us perceives and thinks’—implying that, not the body, senses, mind, but there is somebody/something in us that is the real perceiver and thinker. Also mark Newton’s questions ‘How came. . .?’, ‘How do. . .?’ ‘Does it not appear. . .?’ which imply a logical necessity to infer a deeper truth. In the following *Kena Upanishad* passage we find incredible echoes of Newton’s questions, ‘Who set the planets in motion?’, ‘How do the Motions of the Body follow from the Will, and whence is the Instinct in Animals?’:

Sent by whom, flies out thither the mind?  
 Harnessed by whom, roves thither the first  
 breath?  
 Who sends out the speech which we speak?  
 Who is the Deva (deity, god) that harnesses  
 the ears and eyes? (1.1)

Remarkable? Well then, there is more. Mark Newton’s use of the words ‘that which’. And then note that ‘Nāsadiya Sukta’ of the *Rig Veda* uses the expression ‘*tat ekam*’—‘that one’—to signify such One-Universal-First-Cause-Perceiver-Thinker. Sometimes, the Upanishads, in non-dualistic expressions such as ‘*Tat tvam asi*’—‘That thou art’—refer to Brahman as ‘That’. How Newtonian!

Of immense import is Newton’s idea of the Being who really sees and comprehends:

... there is a Being *incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent* who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, *sees* the things themselves intimately, and thoroughly perceives them, and *comprehends* them wholly *by their immediate presence to himself*....

He finds it awkward to say that he, the human-person of flesh and blood, sees and comprehends; he considers it reasonable to posit an incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent Being that does not quite ‘see’

through the senses but ‘by their immediate presence’—‘realizes?’—and is ‘*that which in us perceives and thinks.*’

Let us listen to the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*:

You cannot see the seer of seeing; you cannot hear the hearer of hearing; you cannot think the thinker of thinking; you cannot know the knower of knowing.<sup>10</sup>

Again, how Newtonian! You simply cannot go behind the First Cause! But—where Newton distinguishes himself from ‘that which in us perceives’, the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* equates the two in non-duality; also, where Newton sees a perceiver-thinker Being within himself, the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* sees One-Universal-Perceiver-Thinker ‘within everything’ in non-duality:

This is your Self that is within everything.<sup>10</sup>

But his refined mind finds it awkward again to visualize different Beings in different persons. So he proceeds to conceive of one Being, the same non-dualistic-like One-Universal-Perceiver-Thinker ‘within everything’: ‘a Being ... omnipresent ... in infinite Space...’ and ‘Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite...’ How non-dualistic! Notice his use of ‘Supreme’ before ‘God’, probably signifying, Indian-style, a meaningful distinction between God *per se*, *Ishvara*, and deities, *devas* and *devis*.

When Newton says ‘this Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all’, he deviates from non-dualistic Vedanta by not seeing the ‘Being’ as the soul of the world—for *Ishvara* is understood also as *antaryāmi*, meaning the ‘inner controller’—but does echo a meaning of the Sanskrit word ‘*Ishvara*’: ‘lordliness’! Would you want to call these views of Einstein and Newton atheism—or even agnosticism?

Don't they sound so like theism?

Swami Vivekananda opens a new dimension of understanding by saying this:

Man does not manufacture God out of his own brain; but *he can only see God in the light of his own capacity, and he attributes to Him the best of all he knows. Each attribute is the whole of God, and this signifying the whole by one quality is the metaphysical explanation of the personal God.* Ishvara is without form yet has all forms, is without qualities yet has all qualities. As human beings, we have to see the trinity of existence—God, man, nature; and we cannot do otherwise. (Emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

‘... without form yet has all forms... without qualities yet has all qualities’? Any real meaning in that? Well, yes. In fact, it is profoundly meaningful. There are two ways of addressing it. One, from the point of view that the Absolute, the infinitude, necessarily includes—as partial, delusive views—the relative, the finite; Two, from the point of view of the subject’—man’s—necessarily relative-finite perception of the absolute-infinitude. Attributes belong to the relative-finite. ‘The All’ cannot have attributes *as the all*, but can and does have attributes in its partial, relative-finite views or appearances or manifestations. Man’s sensing, cognizing, intellecting faculties, by its very nature, and being born and bred in relative-finite phenomena, cannot deal with the absolute-infinitude. It is through attributes that man can perceive and think; therefore it is that *man’s god* has attributes even though God per se, transcendental, does not. ‘Each attribute is the whole of God’ is how deities, gods and goddesses, *devas* and *devis*, are contemplated and appear.

It is noteworthy that in Vedanta, Brahman is called *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* = Absolute Existence, Absolute Consciousness, Absolute Bliss! See that it is

not ‘existent’, nor ‘conscious’, nor ‘blissful’. The import of this is awesome: attributes or adjectives belong to—indeed, manufacture—the relative-finite; they simply cannot apply to the Absolute (Brahman)! Adjectives, as it were, become nouns in Brahman! But all this is imagination only, you may say—where is the proof? This is where we have to hark back to what we have discussed above: the Upanishads are records of revelations or realizations—proof—and the *darshanas* are interpretations or reasoned imagination.

It is necessary here to digress a bit to take note of the fact that Indian traditions include ‘*shabda*’—testimony of the reliable experienced—as a valid tool of knowledge—*pramāna*—alongside other tools such as *pratyaksha*, direct experience, *anumāna*, inference, and *upamāna*, analogy. But, in the modern day, many tend to instinctively disregard the Upanishads—which are all *shabda pramāna*. Is that a sensible thing to do? When you consult makemytrip.com or peruse Wikipedia, don’t you invoke *shabda pramāna*? In court proceedings, aren’t *shabda pramānas* used and accepted as a matter of routine? Be that as it may, clearly, one has to necessarily proceed from interpretations of Upanishadic *shabda pramānas* towards first-hand *realization*—direct proof. ‘The proof of the pudding is in the eating’. It is impossible to arrive at any knowledge of God before such realization. Vivekananda again:

A God known is no more God; He has become finite like one of us. He cannot be known He is always the Unknowable One.<sup>12</sup>

Doesn’t Darwin too say:

*The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us. . . .*

‘Realization’ is not ‘knowing’, *it is far beyond and above knowing—transcendental.* It bears repeating that the Absolute-

Infinite, The All, simply cannot be apprehended by us, because our faculties, even imagination, can work through finitude, attributes, adjectives. And this renders the very question ‘Does God exist?’ somewhat meaningless: *that God exists but is ever unknowable is not the kind of answer one sought. But that is the right answer!* And herein lies the solution to the ‘Does God exist’ conundrum.

The God-question is so very human! Says Vivekananda: ‘The concept of God is a fundamental element in the human constitution.’<sup>13</sup>

Also:

The highest ideal of every man is called God. Ignorant or wise, saint or sinner, man or woman, educated or uneducated, cultivated or uncultivated, to every human being the highest ideal is God. The synthesis of all the highest ideals of beauty, of sublimity, and of power gives us the completest conception of the loving and lovable God. These ideals exist in some shape or other in every mind naturally; they form a part and parcel of all our minds. All the active manifestations of human nature are struggles of those ideals to become realised in practical life.<sup>14</sup>

And what is this concept of God like? Vivekananda says again:

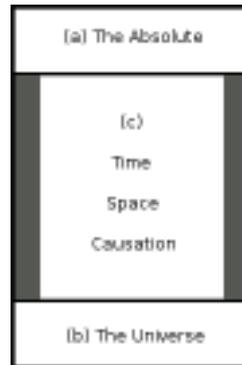
All the gods are little beings to you, all the ideas of God and Father in heaven are but your own reflection. God Himself is your image. ‘God created man after His own image.’ That is wrong. Man creates God after his own image. That is right.<sup>15</sup>

Well, coming to think of it, aren’t these apparently contrary expressions actually the same? Till actual realization? And thus is demystified the otherwise mystifying super-person God. Vivekananda goes on to expatiate on these:

The one question that is most difficult to grasp in understanding the Advaita

philosophy, and the one question that will be asked again and again and that will always remain is: How has the Infinite, the Absolute, become the finite? I will now take up this question, and, in order to illustrate it, I will use a figure.

‘Here is the Absolute (a), and this is the universe (b). The Absolute has become the universe. By this is not only meant the material world, but the mental world, the spiritual world—heavens and earths, and in fact, everything that exists. Mind is the name of a change, and body the name of another change, and so on, and all these changes compose our universe. This Absolute (a) has become the universe (b) by coming through time, space, and causation (c). This is the central idea of Advaita. Time, space, and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen, and when It is seen on



the lower side, It appears as the universe. Now we at once gather from this that in the Absolute there is neither time, space, nor causation. The idea of time cannot be there, seeing that there is no mind, no thought. The idea of space cannot be there, seeing that there is no external change. What you call motion and causation cannot exist where there is only One. We have to understand this, and impress it on our minds, that what we call causation begins after, if we may be permitted to say so, the degeneration of the Absolute into the phenomenal, and not before; that our will, our desire, and all these things always come *after that*.<sup>16</sup>

The famous Rigvedic ‘Nāsadiya Sukta’—Hymn of Creation—has this line—‘... the gods themselves

are later than creation. . . .’

See? The gods themselves are in the lower side, (b)! But, having posited a super-person God, how is it that we yet do not in any way experience—and even doubt—Him? As so often, Vivekananda’s explanation appeals:

It is creation in the human soul that covers up God; that is why there is so much difference in God-ideals. Only when creation stops can we find the Absolute. The Absolute is in the soul, not in creation. So by stopping creation, we come to know the Absolute. When we think of ourselves, we think of the body; and when we think of God, we think of Him as body. To stop the gyrations of the mind, so that the soul may become manifested, is the work. . . . Still the mind but for one moment, and the truth of your real nature will flash upon you. . . .<sup>17</sup>

‘*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*’, so says an Upanishadic passage asserting monism: all that we see, hear, feel, think, dream—everything without exception—is nothing but Brahman in its many and varied manifestations. *Ishāvāsya Upanishad* says: ‘Enveloped by the Lord must be This All—each thing that moves on earth.’

Says Vivekananda: ‘Put God behind everything—man, animal, food, work; make this a habit.’<sup>18</sup>

*Does God exist? Well, well!*

### God alone exists, nothing else

‘*Neti neti*’ (‘Not this, not this’) is the definition of God. ‘Not so, not so!’ Isn’t this common sense? And is there any other way? If you cannot define what ‘God’ is, as you cannot, why not try to say what God is not? That is the ‘*neti, neti*’—‘not this, not this’—approach, followed by many spiritual practitioners in India to get their mind to discard the relative-finite and let the Absolute-infinitude occupy it.

The Upanishads have spoken of The

Absolute as *abāngmanasogocharam*—‘beyond access of speech or mind’! How beautiful! How true! Only the relative, the finite, is accessible to speech and mind. ‘*Neti, neti*’ means what Vivekananda advises: stop the gyrations of the mind!

### ‘Do you believe in God, Sir?’

That is the audacious question young Narendranath Dutta—later, Vivekananda,—asked of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, point-blank. Modern, rational, strong, fearless, and prodigiously multi-talented Narendranath was keen to get a definitive answer, not any humming and hawing! The answer must have startled him; let’s hear about it in Vivekananda’s own words:

. . . I crept near to him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life: ‘Do you believe in God, Sir?’ ‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘Can you prove it, Sir?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘How?’ ‘Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.’ That impressed me at once. ***For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world.*** I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life. (*Emphasis added*).<sup>19</sup>

(Of a later incident): The magic touch of the Master [Ramakrishna] that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was astounded to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! . . . everything I saw appeared to be Brahman. . . . I realized that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that *the words of the scriptures were not false*. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy. (*Emphasis and words in parentheses added*).<sup>20</sup>

Swami Nikhilananda gives Ramakrishna’s words as follows:

Yes, I have seen God. I see Him as I see you here, only more clearly. God can be seen. One can talk to him. But who cares for God? People shed torrents of tears for their wives, children, wealth, and property, but who weeps for the vision of God? If one cries sincerely for God, one can surely see Him.<sup>21</sup>

How is God? That's what you ask? Well let's get it straight from the horse's mouth—Ramakrishna:

How infinitely superior is the joy of God to the pleasure of 'woman and gold'! To one who thinks of the beauty of God, the beauty of even Rambhā and Tilottamā appears as but the ashes of a funeral pyre.<sup>22</sup>

How is it that doubts still assail us so? Let's listen to Ramakrishna's parable (not verbatim): One morning a man is reading the newspaper when a friend of his appears and says, 'You know, I saw an old building in my neighbourhood collapse in a heap yesterday morning!' 'Oh, is that so?' asks

the intrigued newspaper-reader. 'Well, let me see. . . .' He scans the entire newspaper carefully and turns to his friend shaking his head. 'Wrong you are. . . . No building collapsed yesterday.' 'But I saw it with my own eyes,' protests the astonished friend. 'Nope,' says the unmoved newspaper-reader: 'My dear, you hallucinated!'

And herein is the rub! *Shabda pramāna* is mindlessly given the short shrift! Let us visit a courtroom where a trial is on for an alleged murder in a ground floor apartment. The Prosecution produces three witnesses who aver seeing the murder being committed, one from a moving vehicle, another when walking past, and the third from across the road. As the accused shivers, the Defence rises to the difficult occasion: it produces thirty witnesses who aver that they had not seen the murder being committed!

Will you decide the God-question by counting votes for and against? ■

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- 21 <http://www.vivekananda.net/PDFBooks/BiographybyNikhilananda.pdf> p. 15.
- 22 *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 385.

\* Sri Prasanta Ray is the former Chief Commissioner of Income Tax and a Vedanta enthusiast.