

## Knowledge of Īśvara

By Swami Shankarananda

If I have to believe in a God that God must be someone who is beyond my perception, my inference, and who should not be contradicted by my perception and inference. All those concepts of God, if I can dismiss rationally it is silly to continue to have those concepts. The beauty of our scriptures lies in its vision. It is the vision of God which is a challenge for you. It does not present a God other than what you see, what you are. It says, all that is here and the one who observes all that is here, all these are Īśvara. What are you going to do with this? Where is the question of belief? Being an equation it is a challenge; any equation is a challenge. In the vision of someone Matter is equal to Energy; it is clear to that person; and to you it is not clear. And therefore, you have a challenge in your hands. You have to know what that vision is; how true it is.

Here is a belief; it is a different type of belief. Here is a belief, you can call faith; trust is a better word. There is a trust that this man must be saying something true, I have not understood so far. Just because I don't understand I don't dismiss what is being said, because it is said by a person who has some credentials and therefore, I don't question the credibility of the statement, the validity of the statement. I question my own limitations of knowledge. So the benefit of doubt is given to the one who has the credentials. The person who says is not just somebody; he is someone who has the authority to say, like an Einstein. When he says  $E = MC^2$ , even if I don't understand suppose what he says, the benefit of doubt is given to him. Even though I try to understand what he has said, what he has written about this, how he has arrived at the equation I go through all this but nothing makes any sense to me. Just because the whole thing doesn't make any sense to me I don't dismiss the person, whereas I give the benefit of doubt to the person; I take his words in good trust and continue to pursue my enquiry. That is something reasonable; that is what a rationalist will say. (6.00) In fact the rationalists are the problem. Rationales are acceptable. We want people who are rational but not rationalists. Rationalism does not belong to one particular fellow and nothing said here is irrational.

You tell me what is irrational here? So the whole jagat is Īśvara; it is a challenge for you.

One fellow tells, "There is no God. If there is God I give him two minutes", and the entire audience in the beach is waiting for two minutes. *Ellarum thirumbi thirumbi*

*parkara, engeyavathu vararannu.* (says in Tamil - Everybody is looking around to see whether he is coming somewhere) Nobody is coming, except for *thengai, mangai, pattani, chundal* Avandhanya (says in Tamil – except the man selling a snack, a mixture of coconut, mango, peas etc nobody is coming. He only is God). (Laughs out loud). Except this boy nobody is coming. So, naturally this fellow says, after two minutes, if there is God he would have come. He is not there. I say if there is a God sitting somewhere he would definitely come there, but if the God is the one who is already talking, as though he is God, and the people who are listening are also God, and everybody else, the *thengai, mangai, pattani, chundal* man is also God; and the *chundal*; is also God. Then how can he ever come?

That is the reason why when you offer 108 *modakams* to Gaṇeśa, if Gaṇeśa is a fellow, circumscribed by his own dimensions etc. as an individual, he would definitely extend his trunk, and take all the 108 *modakams* in one sweep after all or he would at least have a bag of his own and put them in his own place because you offered to him, if he has got a place of his own. The problem with Gaṇeśa is where will he keep it; inside is Gaṇeśa, outside is Gaṇeśa and everywhere is Gaṇeśa. Therefore, he can't place the *modakams* elsewhere which is his place from the place which is your place. But the *modakams* offered where they are placed that is also his place. The cover of every *modakam* is Bhagavān and what is inside is also Bhagavān. That is the reason why all the *modakams* are left on the plate. Thank God. If he begins to take away all the *modakams* you offer, you will go over and talk to everybody, *parthiyodi engathle* (says in Tamil - did you see what happened in our house?). Thus you would go over and talk to everyone. Do you know what happened? I offered 108 *modakams* and suddenly they all disappeared. Gaṇeśa took all of them. Thus it would make a big news. *Dinathandhi* would also perhaps have a headline *vizhungivittar* Ganapathy (Ganapathy swallowed). Then there would be a huge headline. There would be lot of news. Thank God that he does not take away, for he cannot take away.

And therefore, what is this vision, this concept of God? This concept is it something that you can simply dismiss? You cannot dismiss this concept. You can only appreciate this concept; dismiss is impossible because you have no choice for dismissing. I do not present a God other than what is here. Therefore, don't you have a challenge? You have a challenge in hand. I say space is God. I say *Vāyu* is God. I say *Agni* is God. I say *Apaḥ* God it is. And then I say *Prithivi* is God. Everything else is God and the one who talks is also God etc. Then where is the question of anyone proving that there is no God etc.?

That is why if anybody tells me there is no God I will ask him what is your concept

of God, tell me. Which God you are dismissing? When you say this type of God I am dismissing I will say you are only dismissing without proper reason, I will give you all the reasons how it should be dismissed. Then you come back to this. Therefore, this is a challenge. Our scriptures are a challenge. For challenge sake you should accept. Just for your intellectual challenge you should accept this. If not for anything else you should accept this for just a challenge. If you have got a *buddhi* you better accept this challenge because it is not an ordinary challenge; it is a life time challenge for everyone.

After all, when you dismiss God also you should have thought about it because otherwise why should you dismiss that? There are so many countries in Africa; we don't know these countries existed. Suppose somebody says there is one country called Wollongongong. You don't care to dismiss that country because you don't worry about that; you don't think about Wollongongong. There are so many countries; this is also one of them. Who cares whether that country is there or not? You didn't care to dismiss that country but you have to dismiss God because it is your in-dweller. It starts as a three-year-old when you begin to wonder about all these things. Because you come to know when there is something in the fridge, you know it is not the fridge that is providing you. You slowly come to discover that in time that somebody is there who is putting it there. You know that very well. And therefore, when you look at this world naturally you are going to ask questions, because anything that is in front of you is always provided, and naturally, the question is who provides etc. starts when you are young. Who is that? And you have to silence it there is no one. There is no one. Who is that? There is no one.

First what comes is there is one. Then you have to say no; first we have to think of God and then we have to say he is not. And naturally you have that challenge in your hand. And therefore, as we saw this challenge is such a beautiful challenge for it just releases you. Generally, when you meet with the challenge and then perhaps when you are successful in the bout and then you have some joy lasting for some time and then you look for another challenge to surmount. But then here is a challenge, a challenge you meet with and then relief is complete. The smallness of you, the insignificance of you disappears as you will see later.

Therefore, as we saw, the Lord being both the *nimitta kāraṇam*, the maker, and also the material cause, the *upadana kāraṇam*, there is nothing that is away from that Īśvara. Therefore, every phenomenon in the creation is Īśvara. Therefore, you can look at the Lord, the *nimitta kāraṇa*, can be invoked through a phenomenon. Thus a lightning is a phenomenon; the *parjanya*, the clouds can be a phenomenon; water is an element which is a phenomenon; *Agni*, the fire is a phenomenon; time,

*kāla*, death or time, is a phenomenon. Is there a culture where death can be worshipped? Lord Yamaraja, death is always something everybody is frightened of; we worship death; why, because that is another law. That is the law. If that law is not there, the law of change is not there. *Kālaḥ*, he is called *Kālaḥ*, why because it is the Lord of time as it were; and the time *kālo bhakṣati*, *Kālaḥ* is someone who just swallows *jagat*. *Kālo jagat bhakṣakaḥ*. The *kālaḥ* is *jagat bhakṣakaḥ*. He just swallows and devours the entire world; *jagat bhakṣakaḥ*, the great devourer of the entire world. Who can say that I am away from *Kālaḥ*. A fellow was saying I have conquered time; then one heart attack and the fellow is gone. All the Rāvanas are gone already. They all thought they had conquered time. Bhasmāsura thought he was great and he had such a great power; the poor fellow put his own hand on his head. And you find all empires at all levels have all gone, all tyrants had their last days. Death always has its last laugh but we are not frightened of that Lord Death. We give him a pedestal and worship him also, as Yama; he is a devatā.

Why? Why, because any phenomenon in the creation is non-separate from Īśvara. And therefore, I look at the Lord, please do understand here, I look at the Lord from that phenomenon stand point, the Lord becomes the *adhiṣṭhāna devatā*. Therefore, you can have as many Gods as you can count the phenomenon. You can have any number of Gods. Only we can say there are many Gods. Others cannot say because he is the fellow sitting above and can be only one. For us it is not one God; for us, as I have told you, there is only God. There is a lot of difference between One God and the Only God. This 'one God' is just a lip service to God. If he is one God, I ask where is he? *Akkada unnaru*. (says in Telugu) There is a song, a very interesting song. (Sings a song in Telugu)

*Ākkadavunde Pandurangadu ikkada unddade, Ikkadavunde Pandurangadu akkada undāde.*

*Entha pedha vākyamadi? Cūdandi.* (What a big statement. Look at this.)

*Akkadavunde Pandurangadu*, he is there in Pandaripura, *ikkada unddade* (He is here). It is all in our culture. *Ikkadavunde Pandurangadu akkada unddade.*

*Idhuvarayum nanna irukku* (It is good until this) Then afterwards, *rendaiyo, rendaiyo Pandaripuramu pothanu*. (Laughs out loud) First he said the Panduranga who is there in Pandaripuram is here, the Panduranga here is there. That means he is everywhere. That is fine. Once you say he is everywhere, *rendaiyo, rendaiyo*, means please come Sir, come Sir, let us go to Pandaripuram. There is one song like this. Very interesting song.

If he is somewhere in Pandaripuram alone, somewhere above, he is one God. One

God business is real business. He is really business. One God is business, I tell you. There is one God, therefore, *ekkada unnaru* (where is he)? He must be somewhere. There is only one God. They say we have modernised the religion. This is the modern religion. There is only one God and he is a clean God.

The only problem with that is that there is a Satan and he is always putting spokes in his wheel. God wants to do nice things, goody things and then Satan comes and creates problems for you. You have to be very careful about Satan. God also has to be careful. You still call him God; restricted by Satan. God wants to come to you, Satan comes first. God does something nice, Satan walks behind and destroys everything he has done. This is God. If he is one God, Just please listen to this; if he is God, other than you, other than the *jagat*, he is the one who created this world like a donut, sitting there he dropped the donut of *jagat*, and he is sitting there somewhere, and this one God, just imagine, did you ever imagine this God is different from everything else. And therefore, every insect will be after him. After all he will be different from insect because he is only created the insects without knowing what they can do. And then amoebas etc. all of them will be after him because he will be restricted because all his creations have got some power which he does not. Every insect has got some power; every human being has got some power. And all these powers will be excluded from *Bhagavān* and therefore, this *Bhagavān* will not be *Bhagavān* because he will not be almighty. He may be like one of my uncle mighty; uncle also gets sick; naturally this Lord also will fall sick one day because every mosquito will get him. Mosquitoes are more powerful. I gave you a logic once upon a time. Mosquitoes are more powerful than human beings because a human being uses a net to catch all animals but when it comes to the mosquito he gets inside a net. (Laughs out loud) And therefore, mosquitoes are more powerful than human beings. You shake the logic, let me see. And they will definitely get him.

Therefore, you are only giving a lip service to the Lord. You call him Lord and in the next sentence you finish him. Therefore, there is no one God; we don't say there is one God; we say there is only God. Challenge for you Sir. There is only God. That means what? That means I can have any number now because there is only God, everything is God. Therefore, in any one phenomenon I can look at the Lord, as a *devatā*. Therefore, I can look at the Lord, in a given aspect because every phenomenon is an expression, a manifestation, a *nama-roopa* of that *Bhagavān* and therefore, through the material cause if I look at the Lord, then the whole if I look at I call *Parameśvara* and if I look at the Lord from a given phenomenon which the material cause has expressed itself in that form, then that becomes the *adhiṣṭhāna*



*devatā*. Therefore, we have *devatās* and *devatās*.

When I look at the Himalayas, as mountain, then there can be an Īśvara on the *parvata*. When I look at the river after all it is a flowing water, it is a river, what is there in the river you will say. What is there in the river is only water, if it is there, whenever. What is there in the river is water. But for a Hindu, he knows it is a river, but what makes him say this is sacred, and what sanctifies that river, is the *adhiṣṭhāna devatā* of the river. The *Prithvi* is after all is *Prithvi* the earth, a *jada*, but it is not *jada* because it is also part of Īśvara. And therefore, it becomes the *adhiṣṭhāna devatā*. If I look at it, just as earth, through the earth I look at the Lord then the *Prithvi* becomes a *devatā* like; the Lord becomes the *devatā*, with reference to *Prithvi*. *Prithvi matha* we can say, gender male or female it is all the same for us and therefore, we say *Prithvi mātā*. We don't make any big distinction, we say *prithvi mātā* or any one element like *Vayu* is *devatā*, *Varuna* is *devatā*, *Agni* is *devatā*, even *Akāśa* is *devatā*. There are *dig-devatās*. East *devatā*, then again West *devatā*, then there is North *devatā*, South *devatā*; and in between also there again *isānya devatā* etc. all these are *devatās*.

Look at our culture and then you will understand. That is the reason why when you are building a house, naturally we do puja, *vastu* puja, for all the directions etc. All the *devatās* we invoke. "Hey, Please let me have the grace of all of you". We invoke their grace; why, because I don't look upon it as a piece of land. *Bhūmi* puja we do. Every year before sowing the seed they do puja to the *bhūmi*. As a boy I have gone year after year to that place to a particular field they will go and then they will do puja. I used to think what puja they are doing? for what? for this *kalimannu* (clay soil). What for they are doing puja. In the beginning I used to wonder what puja and afterwards And slowly I felt there must be something.

My mother used to tell me I should go around this field. I have to go around the field? I would say, "Why should I go around? I have nothing to do going around the field. What would I do? I don't know this cultivation; I am not going to take care of the water etc. and the paddy fields. You should go around the field, for what? I don't do anything". "You don't do anything. You are supposed to be the *yajamāna* and the crop should see you, the standing crop should see you".

The crop should see me? What are you talking about, this crop should see me? The crop is not going to see me. Then she would tell me 'you go' and then I go. Then I go and come. Once or twice I went as routine; these crops when they have this paddy, the ear of paddy, with the weight of the paddy, in the wind they all nod their head. I thought they recognised me. She said they should see the *yajamana*. They should see, then only they give. What a concept, my God what a concept! Be-

fore I till the land I do puja to the land and even as the crop is standing I go; they tell me the crop should see me. We don't look upon anything as less sacred; anything more sacred.

That is why when somebody tells me Swamiji I have no time for religion, I say you have no time for religion if religion is separate from the world, from your life, from your breath. Therefore, you don't require; why do you create sacred and secular. Then afterwards you say I have no time for sacred, I have time only for secular. We don't have anything secular therefore, the question of time does not exist at all. I have no time at all is meaningless for us because when everything is sacred then what is not sacred tell me. When I take a bath I say *asmin* bucket *jale gange cha yamune caiva, Godāvari Sarasvati Narmade Sindhu Kāveri, jale asmin sannidhim kuru*. I am not adding anything, *jale asmin sannidhim kuru; asmin* bucket *jale*; means what? *In this* bucket of water I invoke, I bring all Ganga, Yamuna etc. I need not go to Ganga and Yamuna to bathe.

This is a religion of *bhāvana*. It is the question of looking at these as it should be looked at; it makes such a difference. It is food on your plate. If it is offered to the Lord and brought it is *prasāda*; this is *bhāvana*. It just changes; your own attitude is different. Therefore, any one thing being what it is, is not separate from Īśvara. We have any number of Gods, and still we say not one God. You forget this one God business. One God is pure business alone. You put him sufficiently away so that you can get along with what you are doing. But then there is only God. That is the reason why we can have many Gods. If somebody says I have got a new God, alright we can take that person also into account. That is another type of puja. In fact, in this country there were many tribes each one had some *devatā* and all of them we accepted. As you just drive through Tamilnadu or Orissa or any place you go there are varieties of forms you can see standing there on the roadside. These roadside Gods, they all seem to receive daily worship because you see on their faces *kumkumam* and *chandanam*; whether you wear them or not they seem to get them alright, and therefore, I know they are worshipped. And how do they look? All kinds of odd looks they have got. Any form and any expression of worship is acceptable totally. It is acceptable to us. It is totally accepted and validated and then it becomes one of our forms of worship. There is no tribal God; there is only God. There is a tribal form of worshipping Īśvara. There is no tribal God. Therefore, we didn't try to modernise our tribal tradition because they are as valid as any other form.

*To be continued...*