

The Idea of God viewed in the Light of the Hindu Philosophy*

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DEAR BROTHERS IN GOD,

It gives me very great pleasure, and I consider it a privilege to present, before this learned Saiva Siddhanta Conference, a paper on “**The Idea of God viewed in the light of the Hindu Philosophy.**” This subject upon which it is the sacred duty of every son of Bharata-kanda-nay of all humanity in the world – to bestow prayerful thought and meditation is so vast and incomprehensible in its nature, so sublime and ethereal in its contents, so uplifting and inspiring in its effects, that, how much frail humanity may sing or preach or write on it, it becomes difficult to understand it in its completeness, and still more difficult to express it to others in clear and unmistakable language. I cannot therefore give you a complete and exhaustive exposition on this subject, nor do I pretend to have gone through the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Itihasas, and the other sacred writings of the Hindus, which require prayerful study and patient and unbiased research. On the other hand, I would be immensely satisfied if this, my poor attempt at setting forth the idea of God as enshrined in the Hindu Philosophy, could create a thirst, in those who have no interest in religion, to drink deep and quench their thirst at the fountain of which Svami Tayumanavar sings.

“எத்திக்கும் தானாகி யென்னிதயததே யூறித்
தித்திக்குமானந்தத் தேனே பராபரமே.”

“All space is Thine, O Parapara, immanent Thou art,
And thou well’st up as a honied fountain of bliss in my heart.”

It is very difficult to have a complete idea of God or to express it so that it can be readily understood. Not only the ignorant and the half-educated but also the educated who have delved deep into metaphysics and endeavored to understand the hidden life of the universe and explain its meaning, have been confronted with the same difficulty.

The ignorant but pious farmer, who gets up from bed in the early hours of the morning and goes to his village temple to worship his God, if he should be asked who his God is, could only point to the temple and the image there as his God. His idea of God is very closely associated with the temple and the image, temple going, the festivals conducted in the temple, the pujas and such other rites and ceremonies. These have a meaning to him, crude but helpful and inspiring. They awaken his emotion, speak to his heart, bring down tears of repentance, and console his troubled soul with the sweet whispers of peace. Without these concrete symbols of worship, God would be to him a formless abstraction devoid of meaning. And it is inevitable that this should be so. For, to the ordinary mind, an idea of God that disregards symbols and

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ceremonies connote but be unintelligible. It is therefore to satisfy the spiritual hunger and thirst of those, who are babes and suckling's and who cannot digest abstract ideas of God, that temples are built and images are consecrated representing God in his different powers and attributes. Whatever may be said against having images in temples and against rituals and ceremonies, no one can gainsay the fact that they are indispensable at a certain stage of the spiritual evolution of man. Macaulay points out this necessity in his essay on Milton. He says: "Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings, but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds." With equal force, says Divyadas Datta in his lectures on Vedantism: "Idolatry in the sense of religious symbolism – and I believe the most orthodox Hindu would take no other view – cannot be open to objection. Symbolism there must be whether in words or things. Verbal symbols appeal to the ear, and the symbols of things to the eye, and that is all the difference between them. Verbal symbolism is language. Who would object to the use of language in religion? But if the one is allowed, why should not also the other? To my mind idolatry, apart from its attendant corruptions, is a religious algebra. And if verbal symbols without the spirit or in a corrupted spirit are not objectionable [but are they not?] so, and to the same extent, formal symbols or stocks and stones also are objectionable. At one stage of its growth idolatry is a necessity of our nature. The tender seed of a religious spirit requires to be carefully preserved in a soft coating of symbols till it has acquired the strength to resist the nipping frost of worldliness and skepticism." It is in this light that the Hindus regard their images. As is erroneously supposed by half informed westerners, the Hindus never worship their idols as "fetishes". We have the high authority of Max Muller on this point. He says, in his origin and growth of religion, "a *fetish* properly so called is itself regarded as something supernatural: the idol on the contrary was originally meant as image only, as similitude or symbol of something else." And, in his biographical essay on Rajah Ram Mohan Roy he says, "Idol is an ugly name, but it meant originally no more than an image. At first the image of a deity like the image of a distant or departed friend is only gazed at with a mixture of sadness and joy; afterwards something like a real presence is felt, and good resolutions are sometimes formed from merely looking at the familiar features of a beloved face." Hence the necessity of temples and images. But this necessity reveals the weakness of man and points out how impossible it is for the ordinary mind to grasp such an idea of overwhelming vastness as the idea of God.

But, has the so-called educated man been able to form a complete idea of God? Education, unless it is pursued with the noble object of steering clear from darkness and ignorance to light and truth, is sure to lead to destruction and disaster. Many who have attempted to find out God with *their own wisdom* have only proved their incompetence and folly. To this class belong the atheists, materialists and agnostics. An atheist once sarcastically remarked that he surveyed the whole heavens with his telescope, but found no God there. Can blasphemy go further? Such men are not confined to one age or one country. In the 5th century B.C., Empedocles declared that all attempts to know God result from a sickness of the mind. Feuerbach of the last century characterized religion as "the most pernicious malady of

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mankind.” Hobbes regarded it as “Superstition sanctioned by the state.” Similar view are held in India too by Lokayutas. But the absurdity of their views was proved in the discussions that took place in India in the councils of the sages, years before the birth of European philosophy. To state here the arguments adduced by those ancient sages would be outside my province. But if it is inquired why some men have even honestly denied the existence of God, it is because they have endeavored either to know God with the aid of their physical senses, or to know more than it is possible for them to know as human beings. That God cannot be known by the mind or the physical senses is the verdict of all sages. Says St. Manickkavacagar:-

“சொற்பதங் கடந்த தொல்லோன்
உள்ளத்துணர்ச்சியிற் கொள்ளவும் படான்
கண்முதற் புவனாற் காட்சியு மில்லோன்”

“He transcends the description of words,
is not comprehensible by the mind,
is not visible to the eye and the other senses.”

Says St. Paul: - “O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the lord, or who hath been His councilor.”

It is in this sense that Herbert Spencer, than whom there are few greater names in European Philosophy, speaks of God as the “unknown and the unknowable”. What he means is that *Deity per se* is “unknown and unknowable”. Commenting on the meaning of these terms, says that faithful Disciple of Herbert Spencer, John Fisk, in his “Cosmic Philosophy,” that “Deity is unknowable just in so far as it is not manifested to consciousness through the phenomenal world – knowable just in so far as it is thus manifested: unknowable just in so far as infinite and absolute – knowable in the order of its phenomenal manifestations; knowable in a symbolic way as the power which is disclosed in every throb of the mighty rhythmic life of the universe; knowable as the eternal source of a moral law which is implicated with each action of our moral lives and in obedience to which lies our only guarantee of the happiness which is incorruptible and which neither inevitable misfortune nor unmerited obloquy can take away. Thus though we may not by searching find out God, though we may not compass infinitude and attain to absolute knowledge, we may at least know all that it concerns us to know as intelligent, and responsible beings. They who seek to know more than this, to transcend the conditions under which alone is knowledge possible, are in Goethe’s profound language as wise as little children, who when they have looked into a mirror, turn it round to see what is behind it”. The atheists are as wise as little children, but only with this difference that they take pride in their discovery, which is nothing but foolishness in the sight of God.

If then the ignorant man finds it difficult to comprehend the idea of God in its completeness, and the so-called educated man disregards it as superstition, is it not possible for us to know God? Are we to remain for ever in hopeless confusion like the blind men who examined the elephant and quarreled with one another as to its form and shape? Certainly not.

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God will not put us to permanent intellectual confusion. He has provided every one in this world with the means of knowing Him and worshipping Him. To the ignorant and the learned, to the superstitious and the philosophical, to men of all color and creed in whatever state of culture they may be, He has shown the path and chalked out the way of attaining salvation or freedom from bondage. This is the main reason why there are different religions in the world, and different schools in each religion. Those narrow-minded sectarians who say that the only religion worthy of the name is their own and that it alone could give salvation and that those who follow other religions are bound to go to hell, are rather to be pitied than despised for their egregious ignorance. That one religion has not and cannot give spiritual satisfaction to all the people in the world is a historical as well as a psychological fact. Max Muller says in his "Vedanta Philosophy:" "It was recognized in India from very early times that the religion of a man cannot be and ought not to be the same as that of a child; and again that with the growth of the mind the religious ideas of an old man must differ from those of an active man of the world. It is useless to attempt to deny such facts. We know them all from the time when we first emerge from the happy unconsciousness of a child's faith and have to struggle with important facts that press upon us from all sides, from history, from science, and from a knowledge of the world and ourselves." The Hindu Religion recognizes this fact; and it is tolerant towards any faith provided that faith leads men from worldliness to godliness. Says Sir Monier Williams in his "Brahmanism and Hinduism:" "And, in real truth, Hinduism has something to offer which is suited to all minds. Its very strength lies in its infinite adaptability to the infinite Diversity of human characters and human tendencies. It has its highly spiritual and abstract side suited to the metaphysical philosopher – its practical and concrete side suited to the man of affairs and the man of the world – its aesthetic and ceremonial side suited to the man of poetic feeling and imagination – its quiescent and contemplative side suited to the man of peace and lover of seclusion." That the Hindu Religion presents no sectarian conception of God, and that it allows every man to worship his God is clearly set forth in the first verse in Sivajnana Siddhiyar.

“அறுவகைச் சமையத்தோர்க்கும் அவ்வவர் பொருளாய் வேறாங்
குறியது முடைத்தாய் வேதாகமங்களின் குறியிறந்தங்
கருவினிலருளான் மன்னியம்மையோ டப்பனாகிச்
செறிவொழியாதுநின்ற சிவனடி சென்னிவைப்பாம்.”

“Let me place on my head the feet of Siva, who stands as the goal of the six forms of religion, and who stands in the various forms conceived of by the various internal schools of Siva faith, and yet stands beyond the conception of all Vedas and Agamas, and fills all intelligence with His love and becomes my Heavenly Father and Mother and fills one and all inseparably.” This may sound strange to some crude thinkers who cannot rise higher than the level of their creed. But as we find in the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, “A truly religious man should think that other religions also are paths leading to the truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.” Thus we see that different religions are necessary, and that they all would lead man to God if followed in truth and in spirit. God is no respecter of person. He is

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“எம்மப்பனெம்பிரா னெல்லார்க்கும் தானீசன்,”

“Our Father, our Lord, Isan of all.”

Isaiah, “the prince of prophets” says, “Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer. Thy name is for ever lasting.” Though difficult it is for man to know God in all His beauty and glory, yet He has not left us to grope in darkness and sin and seek our way to Him as best as we can. But He has revealed Himself in the different religions of the world, so that each may find Him in that religion which appeals to his heart and soul. Here it may be said that the Hindus regard their religion as a revelation. Accordingly they have divided their sacred books into “Sruti” or what is revealed and “Smriti” or what possesses human authority alone. In the former they include the Vedas and the Upanishads. But both “Sruti” and “Smriti” are inextricably bound together as said by St. Tirumular: -

வேதமோடு ஆகமம் மெய்யா மிறைவநூல்
ஓதும் பொதுவும் சிறப்பு மென்றுன்னுக
நாதனுரையிவை நாடிலிரண்டந்தம்
பேதமதென்னில் பெரியோர்க்கபேதமே

“The Vedas and the Agamas are both of them true, both being the word of the Lord. Think that then first is a general treatise and the latter a special one. Both form the word of God. When examined and where difference is perceived between Vedanta and Siddhanta, the great will perceive no such difference.”

All unbiased Hindus would admit that where there is truth it is from God and that it is a revelation of His. Svami Vivekananda observes that the Vedas are eternal as truths are eternal, and that truths are not confined to the Sanskrit language alone.

Having now seen that religion is a revelation of God, let us find out what idea of God we can gather from the Hindu Philosophy.

It is sometimes erroneously supposed that the Hindu Philosophy is different from the Hindu Religion and that the former and not the latter is spoken of in glowing terms by Western Savants. Nothing is further from truth. In India Philosophy and religion mean almost the same. Says Max Muller in his Vedanta Philosophy: - “Nowhere, however, do we find what we find in India, where philosophy is looked upon as the natural outcome of religion, nay, as its most precious flower and fragrance. Whether religion leads to philosophy or philosophy to religion, in India the two are inseparable, and they would never have been separated with us if the fear of men had not been greater than the fear of God or of truth.” Hence when Western savants speak highly of the Hindu Philosophy or Religion the praise must be shared by both.

Here it would be interesting for us to digress for a moment and learn some at least of the opinions of Western savants on Hindu Philosophy.

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Schopenhauer says of the Vedanta Philosophy, "It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

Victor Cousin remarks, "When we read with attention the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East, above all, those of India which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth – truths so profound – which makes such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East and to see in the cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy."

Sir William Jones admits "that it is impossible to read the Vedanta or the many fine compositions in illustration of it without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India."

Frederick Schlegel remarks: "It cannot be denied that the early Indians possessed a knowledge of the true God: all their writings are replete with sentiments and expressions, noble, clear and severely grand, as deeply conceived and reverentially expressed as in any human language in which men have spoken of their God."

Rev. Dr. G. U. Pope speaks of the Saiva Siddhanta as "the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect. The Saiva Siddhanta is the most elaborate, influential and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India."

Max Muller says, "If philosophy is meant to be a preparation for a happy death, or Euthanasia, I know of no better preparation for it than the Vedanta Philosophy."

These opinions coming as they are from scholars of distinguished ability require no endorsement. Whatever system of Hindu Philosophy one may learn, there one would find thoughts that lie too deep for expression, beautiful and inspiring.

To return from the digression – another erroneous supposition, more pernicious than regarding philosophy and religion as different and antagonistic is that the Hindu Religion teaches the worship of many gods and that one can even count them as "thirty-three crores" of gods. Nowhere in the Hindu sacred books, do we find one syllable sanctioning the worship of many gods in the sense that there are many gods, and that they should be appeased for fear of their displeasure. The word "*Devas*" which we meet here and there is derived from the root, "*Div*" = *to shine*, and is used in the sense of "bright ones". Says Max Muller in his "Origin and growth of Religion", "when the poets of the Veda address the mountains to protect them, when they implore the rivers to give them water, they many speak of rivers and mountains as *devas*, but even them though *deva* would be more than *bright* it would as yet be very far from anything we mean by *Divine*." And in the next paragraph he says, "If we could ask Vasishta or Visvamitra or any of the old Aryan poets whether they really thought that the Sun, the golden ball which they saw was a man with legs and arms, with a heart and lungs, they would no doubt laugh at us and tell us that though we understood their language we did not understand their thoughts?" Such is the opinion of him who has made a life-study of the sacred books of the Hindus at their fountain heads; and there is good reason to believe that he is right and that his

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opinion could be taken as final. Now, coming to the idea of God as contained in the Hindu Philosophy we find Him (I) as the Causeless First Cause. In the Rig-Veda it is said:

“In the beginning there was neither nought or aught
Then there was neither sky nor atmosphere above.
What then enshrouded all this teeming universe?
In the receptacle of what was it contained?
Was it enveloped in the gulf profound of water?
Then was there neither death nor immortality;
Then was there neither day, nor night, nor light nor darkness,
Only the existent one breathed calmly self-contained,
Nought else, but He there was – nought else above, beyond.
Then first came darkness hid in darkness, gloom in gloom;
Next all was water, all a chaos indiscrete,
In which the one lay void shrouded in nothingness.
Then turning inwards He, by self-developed force,
Of inner fervor and intense abstraction, grew.
First in His mind was formed Desire, the primal germ
Productive, which as the wise, profoundly searching, say
Is the first subtle bond, connecting Entity
And nullity.”

The truth embodied in this hymn is explained in the Upanishads by the simile of the spider. Just as the spider draws the threads of its wonderful net out of its own body, so, the world is made not only by God, but also of God. This simile, which is given in the Upanishads to illustrate the meaning of God's being the material as well as the efficient cause of the Universe, led some of the earliest missionaries state that the God of the Hindus was a large black spider which sits in the center of the universe and creates the world by drawing it out like threads out of its own body. “*Drink deep or taste not the Pierian Spring.*” To venture upon criticism without sound knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Here may arise the question whether God is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. This question has led to hairsplitting discussions between the Siddhantins and the Vedantins. But a sage would find no difference between these two schools. Svami Tayumanavar sings thus:-

“வேதாந்த சித்தாந்தம் வேறென்னார் கண்களிக்கும்
நாதாந்த மோன நலமே பராபரமே.”

“Thou art, O Parapara, the Bliss of silence, the End of Nadam to those who find no difference between Vedanta and Siddhanta.”

That there is and *must* be a first Cause is clearly brought out in the first sutra in Sivajnanabodham:

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“அவன் அவள் அதுவெனும் அவை மூவினைமையின்
தோற்றிய திதியே யொடுங்கி மலத்துளதாம்,
அந்தம் ஆதி எனமனார் புலவர்.”

In Mr. Nallasvami Pillai's lucid commentary on Sivajnanabodham, this sutra is translated as follows:

“As the (seen) universe, spoken of as he, she and it, undergoes three changes (origin, development and decay), this must be an entity created (by an efficient cause). This entity owing to its conjunction with Anava Mala has to emanate from *Hara* to whom it returns during *samharam*. Hence the learned say that *Hara* is the First cause.”

(2) We find Him as *Immanent* both in nature and in man. The most celebrated hymn, known as Purusha sukta, occurring in the tenth book of the Rig Veda contain the following lines:-

The embodied spirit has a thousand heads
A thousand eyes, a thousand feet, around
On every side enveloping the Earth.
Yet filling space no longer than a span,
He is Himself this very universe;
He is whatever is, has been and shall be;
He is the Lord of Immortality.
All creatures are one-fourth of Him, three-fourths
Are that which is immortal in the sky.”

This same grand idea is echoed in the Bhagavat Gita in the following equally celebrated lines:-

“I am the self in the body of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of every thing. I am Vishnu amongst the Adityas and the all resplendent sun among all shining bodies.”

St. Appar sings of God:

“இரு நிலனாய்த் தீயாகி நீருமாகி
இயமானனா யெறியுங் காற்றுமாகி
அருநிலைய திங்களாய் நாயிறாகி
ஆகாசமாயட்ட மூர்த்தியாகிப்
பெருநலமுங் குற்றமும் பெண்ணுமாணும்
பிறருருவும் தம்முருவும் தாமேயாகி
நெருநலையா யின்றாகி நாளையாகி
நிமிர்புன் சடையடிகள் நின்றவாரே.”

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“As Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Ejaman (of sacrifices) as Moon, the Sun, and Akas as Ashtamurti; as goodness and evil, as male and female, Himself, the form of every form, as yesterday and today and tomorrow, my Lord with the braided hair stands supreme.”

Svami Tayumanavar sings:

“அங்கிங்கெனாதபடி யெங்கும் பிரகாசமாய்

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“Not here, not there, but resplendent – everywhere.”

“பார்க்குமிட மெங்குமொரு நீக்கமற நிறைகின்ற
பரிபூரணனந்தமே.”

“O perfect Ananda! who fill’st up all the space
One sees around etc., etc. etc.”

St. Manikkavacagar sings:

“நிலம் நீர் நெருப்புயர் நீள்விசும்பு நிலாப்பகலோன்
புலனாயமைந்தனோடு எண்வகையாய்ப்புணர்ந்து நின்றான்
உலகேழெனத் திசைபத்தெனத் தானொருவனுமே
பலவாகி நின்ற வாதோ ணோக்கமாடாமோ.”

“Earth, Water, Air, Fire, Sky, the Sun and Moon
The sentient man, these eight forms He pervades
The seven worlds, Ten quarters, He the one
And many, He stands so, let us sing.”

God is not only immanent in nature and in man, but He is at the same time transcendent. This is brought out clearly by the famous “Neti Neti” verse occurring in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which Pranjoti-munivar translates in the following beautiful lines:-

“பூதங்களல்ல பொறியல்ல வேறுபுலனல்ல வுள்ளமதியின்
பேதங்களல்லவியைன்றி நின்ற பிறிதல்லவென்று பெருநூல்
வேதங்கிடந்து தடுமாறி வஞ்சவெளியென்ப கூடன்மறுகிற்
பாதங்கணோவ வளையிந்தணாதி பகர்வாரையாயுமவரே.”

“The sages declare, ‘He is not the five elements, not the senses, nor sensations, nor the antahkaranas, nor the soul;’ He is the deceitful nothing which the Vedas fail to discover.”

The second Sutra in Sivajnanabodham contains in a nutshell, as it were, the relation of God to the World and to the souls – His immanence as well as transcendence. It says,

“அவையே தானே யாயிருவினையின்

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போக்கு வரவுபுரிய ஆணையின்
நீக்கமின்றி நிற்குமன்றே.”

“He is one with the soul’s (Abedha). He is different from them (Bedha). He is one and different from them (Bedhabedha). He stands in samavaya union with His Jnanasakti, and causes the souls to undergo the processes of evolution (births) and return (samharam) by including their good and bad acts (karma)” – Mr. Nallasvami Pillai.

3. We find Him both as *Nirguna* and *Saguna*: *Nirguna* means above the three *Gunas Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas*: *Saguna* means with the *Gunas*. God as *Nirguna* is beyond the comprehension of man. But God as *Saguna* engages in the creation, preservation and dissolution of the Universe, and in that aspect, and in it alone, He is comprehensible by man. It is in this sense that the Vedantins speak of a Higher Brahman and a Lower Brahman. But in fact there is no difference between the two. Says Max Muller in the “Vedanta Philosophy”: “with regard to the subjects taught in the Upanishads, it was the highest aim of the ancient Vedanta Philosophers to show that what we might call the exoteric Brahman was substantially the same as the esoteric, that there was in reality, and that there could be one Brahman only, not two.” And yet, it was necessary, that there should be a qualified Brahman, for continues he: “Thus they distinguish between the qualified (*saguna*) and the unqualified (*aguna*) Brahman, and they allow a qualified Brahman for all practical purposes (*vyavahara*), and more particularly for the purpose of worship (*upasana*), because in a state of worship the human mind requires a qualified and objective God, a God the Father or the creator, though that Father can be a person only, a pratika or face, as the Brahmans call it, of the Divine substance, using the same simile of face, persona, or person, which is well known to us from the writings of the early Fathers of the Church. Thus Brahman may be worshipped as *Isvara* or Lord, as a conditioned personal God and yet be known as in His substance high above all conditions and limits inherent in personality.”

The reason why the Higher Brahman becomes the Lower Brahman or *Isvara* is for the sake of man who cannot realize and worship God as *Nirguna*. Accordingly He assumes different forms out of His supreme love to save erring humanity from the bonds of *Malam*, or corruption.

Thus, we find in the Taittiriya Upanishad,

“His head is surely Love; joy His right wing; delight His left,
Bliss is His self, Brahman whereon He rests.”

With this we can compare these famous lines,

“அன்பும் சிவமு மிரண்டென்ப ரறிவிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாருமறிந்திலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாருமறிந்தபின்
அன்பே சிவமா யமர்ந்திருந்தாரே.”

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“The ignorant say Love and God are different
None know that Love and God is the same
When they know that Love and God is the same
They rest in God as Love.”

The different forms which God as Saguna or Lower Brahman assumes are not material, but purely spiritual and cannot be perceived without His infinite Love, and when perceived cannot be described in words.

Sings St. Appar:

“மைப்படிந்த கண்ணாளும் தானும் கச்சி
மயானத்தான் வாரசடையான் மாசொன்றில்லான்
ஒப்புடைய னல்லன் ஒருவனல்லன்
ஒருரனல்லன் ஒருவனில்லி
யப்படியன் அவ்வுருவன் அவ்வண்ணத்தான்
அவனருளே கண்ணாரக் காண்பதல்லால்
இப்படியன் இவ்வுருவன் இவ்வண்ணத்தான்
இவனிறைவ னென்றெழுதிக் காட்டொணாதே.”

“The Lord with the braided hair lives in the Kanchi burial ground with His beautiful Uma with penciled eye-brows. He has no sin. He is not one of the mortals and is not to be compared with any of them. He has no place and is incomparable unless we can with His grace as our eye perceive Him, His form, and nature; none can paint Him in His real form and nature.”

Sings Karaikkal Ammaiyar, saint and poetess:

“அன்றும் திருவுருவம் காணாதே யாட்பட்டேன்
இன்றும் திருவுருவம் காண்கிறேன் - என்றுந்தான்
எவ்வுருவோ நும்பிரானென்பார்கட் கென்னுரைப்பேன்
எவ்வுருவோ நின்னுருவமேது.”

When thy slave I first became thy form I did not know,
Thy form, even now, I have not seen,
To those who ask me what Thy form is, what am I to say?
What is thy form? Which is it? None.

Sings Svami Tayumanavar:

“அன்பைப் பெருக்கி யெனதாருயிரைக் காக்கவந்த
இன்பப் பெருக்கே யிரையே பராபரமே.”

O, Parapara, my love to increase and soul redeem
Thou hast come as my Spring of Bliss and Love supreme.

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4. We find Him as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Sat denotes pure Being, Chit pure Love or Arul, and Ananda pure Bliss. Accordingly God is defined in brief as Sat-Chit-Ananda. In the Taittiriya Upanishad there is a beautiful story which shows at once what God is and how He could be known: - Brihu went to his father Varuna, and asked him, "Father, make known to me Brahma (the Supreme one)." The venerable Varuna replied: "That whence all beings are produced, - by which they live when born, - that towards which they tend, - and that into which they pass, do you seek that; for That is Brahma." Brihu meditated in devout contemplation, and having meditated profoundly, he recognized "Food" (matter) to be Brahma: for all beings are produced from "Food," when born they live by "Food," towards "Food" they tend, and they pass into "Food." With this he was not satisfied. So, he again went to his father, and asked him, "Father, make known to me Brahma." His father replied, "Seek Him by deep meditation." He meditated again deeply, and found "Life" to be Brahma; for all beings are produced from "Life," when born they live by "Life," towards "Life" they tend; and into "Life" they pass. But still he was not satisfied, so, he again went to his father and asked, "Father, make known to me Brahma." "Seek Him by deep meditation", was the reply. He meditated again and found "Intellect" to be Brahma, for all beings are produced by "Intellect", when born they live by "Intellect", towards "Intellect" they tend, and they pass into "Intellect." But he was not satisfied. So he went to his father for the fourth time and asked him, "Father, make known to me Brahma." "Seek Him by meditation", was the reply. He meditated again and found "Ananda" (Sat-Chit-Ananda) to be Brahma, for all things are produced from "Ananda," when born they live by "Ananda", they tend towards "Ananda," they pass into "Ananda."

Thus by long-continued, persevering and prayerful meditation Brihu was able to find God as Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The Sat-Chit-Ananda God possesses eight attributes.

Says St. Valluvar:

“கோளில் பொறியிற் குணமில்வே யெண்குணத்தான்
றானை வணங்காத்தலை.”

“Before His foot ‘the Eight fold Excellence’ with unbent head
Who stands like palsied sense, is to all living functions dead.”

The eight attributes of God are:

1. Self-existence, 2. Essential purity, 3. Intuitive wisdom, 4. Infinite Intelligence, 5. Essential freedom from all bonds, 6. Infinite grace or love, 7. Omnipotence, 8. Infinite enjoyment or bliss.

It is the duty of every man to contemplate on these attributes of God so that he may grow more and more like Him till he can find Him “closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.” O! What a joy would it be then! What a happiness! What a blessing! Passing description. Only to be known by realization.

Says St. Tirumular:

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“தூக்கிக் கண்டார் சிவலோகமும் தம்முளே
தூக்கிக் கண்டார் சிவயோகமும் தம்முளே
தூக்கிக் கண்டார் சிவபோகமும் தம்முளே
தூக்கிக் கண்டார் நிலை சொல்லதெவ்வாறே.”

“They slept and in themselves realized Siva Loka,
They slept and in themselves realized Siva Yoga,
They slept and in themselves realized Siva Bhoga,
They slept and how can we realize their Sleep?”

Says St. Valluvar:

“இருணீங்கி யின்பம் பயக்கு
மருணீங்கி மாதரு காட்சி யவர்க்கு.”

“Darkness departs, and rapture springs to men who see
The mystic vision pure, from all delusion free.”

St. John the divine, says:

“And, I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

To realize this “luminous sleep,” this “mystic vision,” this “new heaven”, we require the grace of God. Unless “with His grace as our eye” we see Him, we can never realize Him. May His grace therefore be upon every one of us and rest with us now and for ever more!

R. R. G.
