

DOES GOD EXIST?

Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda

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NOTE: Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks.
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Does God Exist?

*sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām
asmad āchārya paryantām vande guru paramparām*

Ēshwara Pūja (worship of God) is something which every religious person, especially a Hindu is supposed to do every day. We have got certain special occasion in which the very same Ēshwara Pūja is done more elaborately. Thus, Ēshwara Pūja or worship of God is very natural to a devotee.

When we do this form of worship regularly, sometimes we begin to get a fundamental doubt. Any thinking intellect will develop this doubt at one time or the other. *I am very religiously and devotedly worshipping God but is there a God really existing anywhere?*

A very fundamental doubt can come. *Does God exist?* The moment we get this doubt, we often feel very bad because we are supposed to have implicit faith in the existence of God. But in-spite of this deep faith, this doubt is bound to come in a thinking intellect.

Even if we don't develop such a doubt, there are other people, there are atheists, they are agnostics, there are irreligious people, and in Tamilnadu we have a DMK or DK to raise this fundamental question. And this can come to us also transferred from them.

So if somebody asks a question - does a God really exist at all? Are we supposed to blindly, unquestioningly accept the existence of the God or is there any proof for the existence of God? A Scientific proof or a religious proof, or a logical proof; Is there a proof for the existence of God?

Even if we don't raise this question, if somebody raises this question to us, *how will we answer? How are we to answer? Does God really exist?*

Is there a proof or evidence for the existence of God? What will be the answer?

This question has been dealt with by several people in several ways because this problem does not belong to our religion only. Every religion has to face this question because all of them accept a God whether it is Islam, whether it is Christianity or whether it is Hinduism.

Even though many people have tried to answer this question, it is getting more and more complex and complicated only. Recently I read a book by a British author who is supposed to be a structural engineer, who has studied this issue for several years, and he has brought out a book “Beyond Reasonable Doubt”.

He is trying to discuss this issue and after I read that book I got more doubt than before reading. So the question is how our Vedic tradition approaches this issue. *If you ask a traditional teacher, does God exist? Is there a proof for the existence of God? What will be the answer of a traditional teacher?*

A traditional teacher will not answer this question. On the other hand, he will put another question. *What is the other question? When you are asking the question whether God exists or not, what do you mean by the word God?* - Because the word God is used by several number of people and each one has got his own or her own concept of God.

So when you ask me the question, how do you I know what is your concept of God? If I am going to answer the question, I will use the God having my own meaning. Thus, you will use the word God in a particular meaning and I will use the word God in another particular meaning. There will be utter communication gap and more problems will come.

Therefore, never answer the question does God exist. Put only a counter a question - *what is the definition of God according to you?* And if this

definition is not made clear, giving a proof for God without definition will create more confusion. That is why, in tradition we always say *lakshana pramānābhyām vastu siddhihi*.

Never give a proof for something without giving a definition for that thing. Giving a proof without giving a definition will create a communication gap. This I understood through an experience I had several years before. I asked one of my students to bring an orange fruit from the fruit basket which was kept inside the room.

I said bring an orange from the fruit basket as I want to give Prasādam to someone. And this student went inside and then came back and said Swāmiji, there is no orange fruit there. *Can I bring some other fruit?* There are several other fruits. *Can I bring some other fruit?*

Then I said, no I myself have kept the fruit there. And there was orange also. Please check carefully. I don't want any other fruit, I want orange only. This Sishya (student) went inside again and came back and said there is no orange fruit Swāmiji, I have searched thoroughly. *Then what to do?* I wanted to avoid getting up and now I had to get up.

I went inside the room and the right on the top, I see an orange fruit. Then I took the fruit in hand and asked this Paramānanda Sishya - there is an orange fruit right on the top. *How do you say there is no orange at all?* He says, Swāmiji this is not an orange fruit. Now I am doubly surprised.

Now I am keeping the orange fruit, really big Nagpur orange fruit which is golden yellow and he says it is not orange fruit. *Then I asked him then what is this blessed fruit?* He says Swāmiji, this is *Kamala Phalam*. I don't know whether you know but some people know orange by the word Kamala Phalam.

Then I got one more curiosity now. *Can you guess? If this is Kamala Phalam, then what is the blessed orange fruit?* Then he gave a

description of the orange fruit according to him. From the description I understood that his orange fruit is Mosambi. *Now tell me whether orange exists or not?*

Whether orange exists or not never answer that. From his angle, orange does not exist Mosambi exists and from my angle, orange exists but his orange, that is Mosambi does not exist. *Did you get sufficiently confused?* This is what is happening with the regard to God also.

So with regard to orange, our problem was not to prove. *pratyaksha pramānam* is there for me also and for him also. Direct perception proof is there but still we had the problem. The problem was not caused by proof or evidence. The problem was caused by the definition.

Therefore, before thinking of giving a proof for God, a traditional teacher says, first let know the definition of God so that when both of us used the word God, we will have the same concept. Once the communication gap is bridged, then I can ask - *what is the proof for the existence of God which has been defined by us in a common manner?*

Once we have understood the definition, thereafter we can tackle the problem. *What is the definition of God according to our Vedas or our scriptures in general?* According to Vedas or the scriptures, God is defined as *Chaitanya - chaitanya swarūpāya, gnyāna swarūpāya, pragnyāna swarūpāya, vignyāna swarūpāya, chidrūpaha.*

In English, *Chaitanyam* can be translated by the word *Consciousness*. According to the scriptures, God is equal to the consciousness principle. Now the next question is - what exactly is meant by the word consciousness. That also the Veda clearly defines -

ēna rūpam rasam gandham shabdhan parishāduscha maithunān ētē naiva vijānāti kimatra parishishyate ētatdvai tat.

Yamadharma Raja teaches Nachiketha the student and defines. That principle because of which every one of us is conscious of everything around us, that consciousness principle is equal to God. That consciousness principle because of which everyone is aware of, conscious of everything around us is equal to God.

Once this Lakshanam of God is made clear, we can go to the next question. *What is that? Does the defined God exist or not?* That is the question. Now we have defined God as consciousness therefore, we can rearrange and phrase the question. *What is the question now? Does God exist is equal to does consciousness exist or not?*

So if anybody asks the question does consciousness exists or not, what will be your answer? Are you conscious of the surroundings or not? What will he have to say? That very question is possible because he is a conscious being. Therefore, the very question is possible because of the existence of consciousness only.

Therefore, it is ridiculous to ask for the proof for the existence of God. Vidyāranya says in the *Panchadashi - jihvā mē nāsti vēstiptihi lajjāyai kēvalam ythā*. *It is like a person asking, tell me whether I have got tongue or not?* It is self-contradictory and ridiculous. Similarly, the question whether there is consciousness or not is a ridiculous question.

The consciousness being God, the very question whether God exists or not is ridiculous. If a person asks for the proof, don't give the proof for Gods existence. Proof is not the problem, give the definition of God. In fact, he will not ask for the proof. If after defining God, if he asks for the proof, it only proves his foolishness.

It is not a proof for God's existence. After defining God properly, if a person asks such a question, it only proves that the questioner has not listened to the definition properly. Even an atheist cannot ask this question because even he has consciousness.

So whether it is a scientist, whether it is an atheist, whether it is agnostic any one of them, doubt the existence of God only because he has not been told the proper definition of God. Therefore, first talk about Lakshanam of God. *What is the definition of God?* Consciousness or Chaitanyam is God.

The second is - what the proof for God? What is our answer? Every experience of yours is because of consciousness. Therefore, every single experience is a proof for the existence of God. Lord Krishna tells in the Bhagavat Gita –

*utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhunjānam vāgunānvitam
vimūdhānānu pasyanti pasyanti gnyāna chakshusaha*

Every experience of life, every activity of life is possible because this person is conscious, because the person is endowed with consciousness. Still this person raises question regarding God. Krishna says, *vimūdhānānu pasyanti pasyanti gnyāna chakshusaha* - the one who has systematically studied the scriptures and one who has properly understood the definition of God, will never have the problem.

Every moment I am in the proximity of God only. So Lakshanam of God, and proof for God is very clear. Now there is one more question which is the extension of this. If we define God as Chaitanyam, and if we point out that *Chaitanyam is that by which we experience everything, tell me what exactly is the nature of that Chaitanyam?*

What is the nature of that consciousness will be the last question (*Lakshanam, Pramānam, Swarūpam*). Regarding this consciousness and its nature which is very evident for all of us, regarding this nature of consciousness all the scientists are thoroughly confused. Science has not understood what the phenomenon of consciousness is.

Even now researchers are going on in different branches to find out what exactly is the principle of consciousness because of which the

body is alive and sentient. Varieties of theories are coming and each one is contradicting the other and they are not able to solve this issue even now. This subject matter has become so embarrassing that each scientist says that this topic belongs to the other branch of science.

Nobody wants to discuss this issue in his branch. Whether it is an electrical phenomenon, whether it is cellular phenomenon, whether it is neurological phenomenon, consciousness they don't understand. Only when they understand the nature of consciousness, they will understand the nature of God whereas, our scriptures do talk about the nature of consciousness.

According to the scriptures, consciousness is a totally non-material entity. It does not come under matter principle; it does not even come under even energy principle; because energy is a version of matter. Consciousness is a non-material, non-energy principle which they generally translate as spirit in English - Mater and spirit.

But I don't want to use the word spirit. We will use the word Chaitanyam. Krishna tells in the Bhagavat Gita,

*yasmākhara matītōham aksharādapi chōttamaha
hatōsmi lōkē vēdē cha pradhītaha purushōttamaha*

I am that spiritual principle which is different from matter and which is different from even energy. That non-material principle is consciousness. That consciousness which is ever experienced by us is equal to God.

This consciousness principle, non-material principle which is in every material body, that non-material consciousness principle is beyond all the laws which govern the matter, or the material universe. All the physical laws and all the chemical laws which belong to the material universe cannot affect this non-material consciousness principle.

That *Asanga Chaitanyam*, *Transcendental Chaitanyam* is *Purushōttamaha*, God. Not only that, every material object is conditioned by even time and space which is an integral nature of matter. It will be governed by, limited by time and space. Consciousness is not governed by even time and space.

Therefore, the scriptures use the expression *Ananta Chaitanyam*. This *asanga ananata chaitanyam* which is non material principle, which is in every one of us, that is equal to God.

*ēshwarah sarva bhūtānām hruddēshērjuna tishtati
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrā rūdhāni mayaya*

Just as this visible fan is activated by independent, invisible electricity, similarly, this visible body including the internal organs like brain is activated by the invisible, non-material consciousness principle. I don't say consciousness is electricity; be very careful.

I don't say consciousness is electricity. That is an example because that is invisible. This also not a visible thing, but every moment we experience the presence of this consciousness principle. This *Ananta, Asanga, Chaitanyam* is God whose existence nobody can doubt.

Understanding this Ananta, Asanga, Chaitanya Rūpa Ēshwara alone is the aim of every human being. It is called *Ēshwara Darshanam* or *Ēshwara Prāpti* which is presented as the goal of the scriptures. Now the question will come - if this is God (*Ananta Asanga Chaitanya Rūpaha Ēshwaraha*) - we can get this definition almost in Ashtōttara or Sahasranāma.

Chidrūpini, Chaitanya Rūpini or if you take *Vishnu Sahasranāma, Sākshirūpa, Kshetragnya Rūpa* different words are used. This definition you will find in all the scriptures. *Now the question is, if this is God then what about Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and all these Gods which are all also described in the scriptures?*

We read about the Trimūrthy's - Brahma is supposed to be in Brahma Lōka, Vishnu is supposed to be in Vishnu Lōka, and Shiva is supposed to be in Shiva Lōka. And Brahma is described as a person with four heads and Saraswati sitting on his tongue. Imagine his condition!

Vishnu is supposed to be in Vaikunta upon the Ananta, Lakshmi Devi massaging and Shiva is supposed to be in Shiva Lōka, Parvathi occupying half of the body. *What about these Gods which are also described in the scriptures? Do such Gods exist or not?*

Now we should remember that when scriptures use the word God, the primary God is Ananta, Asanga, Chaitanyam alone. All the other entire finite personified Gods which are located in so many places, which are elaborately described in the Purānās and scriptures, are only a temporary presentation of God for the sake of our Sādhana.

They are only *Gowna Ēshwaraha* - A temporary presentation of a compromised version of God. *Why compromised version?* It is because this God is located, this God is given a date of birth, this God is given a day of death, this God also come down and travels and all. So this compromised version of God is *Gowna Ēshwaraha* which is temporarily presented for the sake of refining our mind.

Once we have used the Gowna Ēshwaraha for the sake of Sādhana with a refined mind, we can come to know the *Mukhya Ēshwara*, the primary God. Therefore, this Gowna Ēshwaraha is also extremely important for our Sādhana purposes because for doing Pūja, we require a shrine or altar.

You cannot put flowers all over. To do Pūja, to do Abhishēkam, to offer Shodasha upachāra, we require Gowna Ēshwara. So Karma requires Gowna Ēshwara, Upāsana or meditation requires Gowna Ēshwara, for Dhyānam purposes we require descriptions of Ēshwara.

Since the tastes of people are different, we have got several versions of Gowna Ēshwara, which is very useful for us both at the individual level as well as at the collective level. Therefore, in the Purānās we have got infinite number of stories regarding each God and his or her appearances and exploits.

If you read the Tiruvelayār Purānam, there are so many stories and if you read Bhāgavatam, there are so many stories. They are very useful for Sādhana. All festivals are based on such stories - whether it is Shivarātri or Rāma Navami. *How can we have festivals if we don't have Gowna Ēshwara?*

Every festival is based on one Gowna Ēshwara or another Gowna Ēshwara. We have got so many temples based on such stories. We have got Kumbha Mēlās based on such stories. India is able to enjoy a rich religious culture only because of this Gowna Ēshwara. So we should have Gowna Ēshwara for providing such a religious atmosphere.

Recently I went to one place called Ramtēk near Nagpur (last week). There is a hill temple of Rama there. And the moment I entered, they started a story. They said Rama was in Vanavāsa and this place is in the outskirts of Dandakāranyam. Here Rama was addressed by several Rishi's and they showed a huge hill of skeletons.

Rama saw a huge hill of skeletons and he asked the Rishi's what it was. They said there are so many Rākshasās in their Dandakāranyam, and they have killed all the Rishi's and their bones, their skeletons are here. Then Rama took a vow that he will make you use of Vanavāsa for destroying all the Asurās.

Since he took a vow in that place, that place is called Ramtēk. In Hindi Tēk means a Pratignya, vow. Wherever you go, there is some Purānic story, some Sthala Purānams or the other so that our whole country is

associated with one form of God or the other, so that we will have that religious attitude all the time.

We should not ask proof for the Gowna Ēshwaraha. Gowna Ēshwara is Ēshwara with a personal version which is to be utilized only for Sādhana purposes. Don't ask for the proof for the existence of Gowna Ēshwara. That is not intended at all. You should not ask such questions.

We are not to probe into the Gowna Ēshwara because this is a temporary version purely for the sake of practicing Pūja, practicing Dhyānam and also for enjoying a rich religious culture. All our music compositions of the great composers are all possible because of such Purānic stories.

All our dances are possible because we have got rich stories of these Gods and Goddesses. All movies are possible because of such stories. We don't required a Walt Disney or Harry Potter, we have got rich stories, fantastic stories all centered around Gowna Ēshwara. Divinity is kept intact.

Art is possible, painting is possible, sculptures are possible and music is possible, dance is possible. Therefore, don't ask for the proof for Gowna Ēshwara. Use Gowna Ēshwara for Pūja, refine the mind and understand the Mukhya Ēshwara.

If you try to probe into Gowna Ēshwara - I would like to see Shiva with five heads and I would like to have Darshan of Muruga with six heads etc. If you try those things, you will get into problems. Gowna Ēshwara is not for probing; Gowna Ēshwara is not for Darshanam.

If you work for their Darshanam, you will only get into mysticism and mystery. And you won't know whether you are having real Darshanam or whether it is a hallucination. We need not work for the Darshanam of Gowna Ēshwara. We need not probe into the existence of Gowna Ēshwara.

We use this personified God for Karma Yoga, Pūja and Dhyānam etc. *Thereafter, when we get the fundamental question - does God exist?* We will go to the original Ēshwara who is *Ananta Asanga Chaitanyam*. If you ask if the personified God existent or not, my advise will be never probe into that. Enjoy the stores as they are without probing or questioning.

Later, come to the Mukhya Ēshwara. You will never have a problem. The greatest problem in the present society is that they are all asking for the proof of Gowna Ēshwara. If you ask for a proof for the personified God, you will have eternal problem. Do Pūja, know the real God and be free. This is Vedic approach to *Ēshwara*, *Ēshwara Gnyānam* and *Ēshwara Prāptihi*.

*Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaath Poornam Udachyathe
Poornasya Poornamaadaaya Poornameva Vasishyathe*

Om shanti shanti shantihi



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