

'A child trusts its parent totally and feels fully secured. So too an adult must learn to trust *Ishwara* totally.'

Pearl of Wisdom, Pujya Sri Swamiji

Commentary by Swami Shuddhabodhananda

Who is *Ishwara* (the ultimate God/Divinity principle)?

Consider the following Upanishadic statements:

Sarvam khalu idam Brahma. All this *jagat* is Brahman (*Ch.U.3-14-1*). Ever-existent principle *sat* alone was there before this Creation. (*Ch. U. 6-2-1*). Brahman is the knowledge principle which itself is happiness principle. (*Br. U. 3-9-28*). This Brahman is limitless eternal happiness unlike fleeting sense-pleasures born of contact between senses and the sense objects (*Br. U. 4-3-32/bhāsya*). All these statements establish that Brahman, the pure awareness principle (*chaitanya*) is the basic existence, knowledge and happiness principle. It is the ultimate reality, the basis (*adhithāna*) of entire seeming Creation. Brahman is actually non-dual, totally free from Creation. Yet, due to its ignorance through the creative power called *māyā shakti* it falsely appears as *jagat*.

Brahman conditioned by the creative power *māyā* gets the status of *Ishwara*. Brahman is the true nature of falsely appearing trio called *jiva*, *jagat* and *Ishwara*. But for practical purpose no distinction is made between *Ishwara* and Brahman in the realm of *vyāvahārika-sattā*, the empirical existence. The Creator principle of *Ishwara* effects the birth (*utpatti*), sustenance (*sthiti*) and dissolution (*laya*) of the entire cosmos besides being the dispenser of results of actions (*karmaphala-data*). He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and *satyasankalpa* (true in resolve). *Ishwara* is totally indispensable to all who have no abidance in the direct knowledge of Brahman. So long as we are identified with our embodiments and interact with the world, *Ishwara* is our friend, philosopher and guide. Everyone can claim *Ishwara* as the most dear and intimate entity who never deserts those who seek him. He is the only one in the entire cosmos who can be called 'mine' with full confidence keeping one's hand on the chest. There may be many others who would like to help us, but their capacity is very limited. At best they can accompany us upto the burial ground or the crematorium.

Where is *Ishwara*?

In fact the question should be where *Ishwara* is not? Everything including all of us is *Ishwara*. There is nothing other than *Ishwara*. There is only *Ishwara*. This is the truth and nothing but the truth. And yet, in our ignorance we imagine him to be different from us yonder the

clouds or sitting in heaven, *Vaikuntha*, *Kailāsa* or *Brahmaloka*. Someone said that these are his 'care of' addresses! The permanent address of *Ishwara* as disclosed by Lord Krishna is our heart (*antahkarana*) (B. G. 18-61). He is always there in all the living beings as *antaryāmī* (indweller) enabling all our functions at the levels of our gross body, vital airs (*prānas*), mind and intellect.

Here is an interesting incident about *Ishwara's* abidance in our heart. Mahabharata war was over. Dharmaraja was coronated. One fine afternoon Droupadi asked Lord Krishna rather in a tone of complaint as to why he delayed rescuing her when she was humiliated and insulted in the royal court of Kauvravas. Krishna replied: 'Droupadi, please recall how did you address me at that time. You said, Oh, Vrindāvanavihāri. I had to come from Vrindāvana. Obviously delay is bound to be there. Again you called, Oh, Dwārkādhisha, I had to go to Dwārkā and return. But when you addressed me as Oh, Hridayesha (indweller), I was there the very same moment'.

How to invoke *Ishwara*?

Everything is *Ishwara*. All names and forms are *Ishwara*. He can be invoked in any name and a form that appeals to oneself. But one should bear in mind the *Ishwara* that I invoke in this name and form is the same invoked by others with different names and forms. Criticising and condemning other names and forms of *Ishwara* is neither religion nor devotion. It is fanaticism exhibiting one's ignorance by condemning indirectly the very divinity principle one adores in a different form. There cannot be any superiority or inferiority. Everything belongs to *Ishwara* because he only created the entire *jagat*. Actually there is nothing that we can give to him which truly belongs to us. If at all there is something that is exclusively our own, it is our self-ignorance and consequent defects in our disposition. *Ishwara* is ready to receive it and return after thorough cleansing provided we have staunch unconditional love (devotion) towards him. He is a master dhobi (washerman). The devotion (*bhakti*) is limitless love towards *Ishwara* (*Narada-bhaktisutra* – 2). That love does not expect something in return. It is not a barter deal.

To actualize our love externally, *Ishwara* accepts anything offered by us with total *śraddhā* (trust) in him. It can be a leaf, flower, fruit or water (B.G. 9-26). Our worship and offerings should be always with due *śraddhā* (trust). Our *śraddhā* is *Ishwara's* food. He enjoys *śraddhā* (*Brahmandapurāna*, *Adhyātma Ramāyana*, *Kishkindhakanda*, 4-30). *Ishwara* has no duty because he is *poorna* (limitless happiness). He has nothing that is not accomplished nor he has anything to be accomplished. Yet he is always engaged in actions for *lokasangraha* (welfare of the world) (B.G. 3-22). *Ishwara* is *bhaktavatsala* – kind to devotees. He incarnates from time to time to protect the good, punish the wicked and to establish dharma (B.G. 4-8). Love (devotion) with total *śraddhā* alone is the best means to invoke him.

Ishwara's assurances

Ishwara has assured beyond any trace of doubt that he will safeguard the welfare of earnest devotees and protect them. Here are some of such promises. 'I look after the welfare (*yoga-kshema*) of those who always think of me with total surrender and single pointed attention' (B.G. 9-22). 'Arjuna, know for certain that my devotee never comes to ruin' (B.G. 9-31). In Ramayana we have a glaring instance wherein Lord Rama announces his vow as *Ishwara*. Vibhishana with his four ministers seeks asylum at the feet of Rama. Sugriva counsels Rama that they be killed since demons can never be relied upon. Rama smiles and gives an inkling of his power by saying that he can destroy and again Create the cosmos in a trice. Then he declares: 'My vow is to grant fearlessness from all beings to the one who surrenders me even once and entreats saying, "Oh, Lord, I am yours"' (*Brahmandapurāna, Adhyātma Ramāyana, Yuddhakanda, 3-12*). In the entire history of Puranas and Divine incarnations, never a devotee has come to ruin having trusted *Ishwara*.

Ishwara is totally trustworthy

From the foregoing observation it should be clear that the only entity in the entire cosmos worthy of our total trust is *Ishwara*. Our trust in *Ishwara* is wavering because we link it to the fulfillment of our unending desires. For majority of us, 'God is great', when our desires are fulfilled. Otherwise 'God is fraud'! More often than not when we think that our prayers are not answered, we lose our trust in *Ishwara*. Actually prayers if taken to properly can never go unanswered. It is said that genuine prayers result in four types of responses from *Ishwara* as the case be. (i) 'Come on, take this what you want'. (ii) 'It is not yet time to get what you ask for'. (iii) 'My dear, what you ask for is not good for you'. (iv) 'My Child, I have better plans for you'. But we are so obsessed with the fulfillment of desires that we totally ignore the other possibilities. What is needed is full confidence with a sense of total security in what *Ishwara* does for us. It is for our good in the long run.

To speak in legal language, our trust and confidence in *Ishwara* must be like handing over our power of attorney to him. If we cannot do that, of what worth is our devotion (love) in the absence of unquestioned *śraddhā*, (trust, faith)? Let us rest assured that *Ishwara* is love incarnate. He has no iota of selfishness. There is nothing that he needs. He is *poorna* – ever-existent limitless happiness without any trace of sorrow. Let us have total trust in him as that of an innocent child in its parent wherein it always feels secure without any doubt about it. The trust must be deep rooted as in the case of a gigantic tree that is evergreen and not superficial like paddy plants which dry the moment the field becomes dry.