Visions of Truth
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Dualism and Non-Dualism

Subramuniyaswami, Sivaya United Saivites of Mauritius, you have embarked on a great journey. You have discovered your ancient, perennial roots and are now deeply rooted in the love of Lord Siva. We are inwardly happy for and congratulate you on this most sacred accomplishment, this great step forward on the path of Siva's San Marga. Gurudeva loves you, each and every one of you most dearly.

Saiva Siddhanta, the final conclusions of the awakened soul, who soars above the mountaintop, diffuses through our minds as the distilled essence of the Vedas, Saiva Agamas, Tirumurai and most especially the great Tirumantiram. Saiva Siddhanta is thickly rooted in these scriptures and surges forth as a giant banyan of their expression. These are our scriptures and within our scriptures found both the essential oneness of monism and the evolutionary twoness of theism. Therefore the rishis of the Upanishads, the Siddhars of the Agamas, our Saivite Saints and our Siva Yogaswami Paramparai of the Natha Sampradaya have always taught monistic theism so you too can awaken the natural perceptions of your own soul.

From this mountaintop perspective we can observe, appreciate, understand and be lovingly tolerant of all theological paths to God Siva. This is because we are seeing the outer and inner worlds from our soul's perspective. However, when people see the outer and inner worlds from intellectual states of mind, perceiving a concrete reality of you and I and God and world eternally separate with no union of being, there is a tendency to defend their theology and wage an intellectual war with other theologies. Their intellect is very intolerant, quite the opposite of the soul's natural state of mind. There is no need for you to participate in these kinds of battles.

What is important is for each of you follow the path of our Saivite saints and siddhars. It is a path more of love than of learning more of tolerance than of entanglement. They have made themselves clear. They need no interpolations.

Let us stand together, united in the knowledge of monistic theism as taught by our nayanar saints and the enlightened savants of the Vedas and Agamas. Let us remain high minded in our thoughts and actions. People, who are always on one stage or another on the great San Marga, will at some point lash out and attack you. This is predictable and natural. Set a fine example of tolerance and understanding in your community. Always hold the mountain top perspective.

Remember, from the very beginning of man's encounter with Reality, in both the East and the West discussion have persisted between those who see the world as one and those who see it as made up of two or more. Devotees sometimes ask which is right, monism (which is also knows as advaita or non-dualism) or dualism, dvaita. Both are indeed valid and to be found within the Vedas, the Tirumurai and other scriptures.

To the awakened mind, both are right. The view which integrates both is most advanced, definitely more enlightened and in keeping with the wide tolerance within Hinduism. We recently heard a physicist say that his mentor, Werner Heisenberg, observed that there are two kinds of truth-shallow truth and deep truth. Shallow truth is one whose opposite is false. Deep truth is truth whose opposite may be perceived as an integral part of its own validity. That wise observations of the physical universe also applies to our spiritual knowledge. The deeper mystics do not draw a square to exclude, deny and condemn views which oppose their own. Instead, they draw a circle that embraces the entirety of the vast mystery of Siva's creation.

There are various stages of realization on the path to Lord Siva's Holy Feet. The world and God and soul look a little different form each stage. It really all depends on the window we are looking out of Thus, in exploring monism and dualism one must keep an open mind. This will bring the realization that the view called monistic theism is the summation of them both and is the highest realization, the ancient philosophy that is indigenous to man, preceeding even the Vedic era.

The dualistic or pluralistic conception appears true from one perspective, but it is only a slice of the whole. It is not the whole. Looked at most simply, pluralism came as the philosophical conclusion or realization of saints within the Chariya and Kriya margas, while monism joined with theism is the overwhelming vision within the Yoga and Jnana margas.

Here is another way to explain the same thing. Visualize a mountain and the path leading to its icy summit. As the climber traverses the lower ranges, he sees the meadows, the passes, the giant boulders. This we can liken to theism, the natural dual state God and man are different.

Reaching the summit, the climber sees that the many parts are actually a one mountain. This is likened to pure monism. Unfortunately, many pure monists, reaching the summit, teach a denial of the foothills they themselves climbed on the way to their monistic platform.

However, by going a little higher, lifting the consciousness into the space above the topmost peak of the mountain, the entire truth is known. The bottom and the top are viewed as a one whole, just as theism and monism are understood and accepted by the awakened soul. The knower and the known become one.

Pluralistic Saiva Siddhantins want to make the part into the whole, want to deny, redefine and modify the monism taught by the Nayanars and proclaimed in the Vedas and Agamas. To know the final conclusions, to comprehend the monistic theism of Saiva Siddhanta, they must go a little farther, do more sadhana in order to see these truths from a higher plane of consciousness. As Saint Tirumular admonishes, "Siddhanta without Vedanta is the common Saiva's lot."

The acceptance of both schools gives strength; the rejection of one or the other drains energies through intolerance and limits the full comprehension of God, world and soul. My Sat Guru, Siva Yogaswami, asked me which of these schools of thought was the right one. I told him that both were right in their own way. It all depends on whether you are on top of the mountain looking down or at the bottom of it looking up. He smiled and nodded.

Siva Yogaswami taught that monistic theism is the highest vision of truth. To deny the Vedas is to deny Vedanta, and that is to deny Truth itself. To deny the reality of God and creation is to deny Siddhanta, and that also is a denial of Eternal Truth. We can not find a more shallow course of action than to declare the enlightened postulations of the illumined saints as superficial affirmations or as mad ravings, which someone once told me they were. It should be obvious that purely dualistic postulations can never be accepted as ultimate truth in an age of enlightenment where educated persons reason, think meditate and make choices for themselves.

It is being said that embracing monistic may divide the Tamil peoples. This is folly. Monistic theism is the soul of Saivism and therefore it is the soul of the Tamil people. It is monistic theism that will unite all the Tamils the world over in a one unanimity of belief, worship and understanding.

It is also being said that by preserving pluralism as a unique feature of Tamil Saivism, the Tamil identity is being preserved. This is very shortsighted. It only preserves a partial understanding of Truth and denies the Tamil people their rightful heritage of the fullness and richness of Truth. Dravidian history reveals that a united people are those who all worship the same Supreme God in the same way, pledging their allegiance to the fullness of the eternal truths discovered by their saints and sages. Thus each one is strong in his or her dharma with developed qualities of leadership, compassion, insight, cooperation, and fortitude. Thus each one awakens the burning zeal of sadhana to personally to personally experience these inner Truths.

The results of this unitedness are great civilizations like the Indus Valley, the Chola Empire and the Vijayanagar Empire. But today we find the Tamils a people fractioned among themselves, divided into a multi variety of "isms." The more religious have escaped into the heights of Siddhanta/Vedanta. The more intellectual or Western-educated are ensnared in arguments and Western rationales or have wandered off into Christianity, Islam or Buddhism.

Monistic theism, that all-embracing and ancient path which is common among all Saivite sects, is the solution to international unity among the Tamil peoples in the 20th century as it was 5000 years ago, for its theology closes the door to conversion and puts the heart and mind at peace. Furthermore, it is this mountaintop view of Reality which alone can free the soul from the cycles of birth and death, joy and sorrow. In this age of enlightenment, religion and the

knowledge of Truth that it holds must be unquestionably easy to understand and universally available to all who seek refuge at Lord Siva's Holy Feet.

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