

God Realisation - Brahma Nishta

The words God, God-realisation, *Brahman*, and *Brahma Nishta* are constantly heard in discourses and seen in books. But how often do they convey any real idea to persons? In connection with the biography of saints, this question naturally arises, because a saint is ordinarily taken to be a person who has God realisation or, as some persons put it, one who has seen God and is familiar with God. *Madhabhijna* or familiar with Me is the description given of the *Guru*, to whom Lord Krishna directs Uddhava to go²⁶³. Now before one can deal with the subject with confidence, one encounters various preliminary difficulties. Is God a definite object in order that one can get familiar with it just as one gets familiar with one's parents and friends? Or is it like a parabola only partly seen or a peripheral idea? All the objects that we know are objects in space and time. Is God an object in space and time? We see only things in space. Therefore, if one says he has seen God, the inference is that God has been seen in space. There is no doubt a feeling in one's mind sometimes that one has seen a particular object, say, for instance, in visions or dreams though one is unable to say definitely that all such objects are seen in space. The seeing of God is a very common phrase. The term used in literature for it is *Sakshatkara*. That term does not always mean seeing God. *Sakshatkari* is often employed to denote a person in a high religious state of mind or one with extraordinary experience especially in spiritual matters at least possessed of such extraordinary powers as to make people believe that he sees things which others do not. But the usual meaning of *Sakshatkari* is one who has actually seen God. That God is seen or was seen is a statement encountered very frequently in religious books of all the religions. In the Bible, for instance, God is said to have appeared before Moses and Jesus.

That is, they all actually saw God. As seeing and hearing are generally put together, the term hearing God is used often along with seeing. In the Old Testament, hearing some voice from thunder and declaring that that was the voice of God is a common feature. In the New Testament²⁶⁴ when Jesus cried 'Father glorify thy name', then there came a voice from Heaven, saying I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. Jesus said, 'This voice came for your sakes'. In Hindu scriptures and other literature, 'Seeing God' is a very common phenomena and not merely seeing but playing with God and having considerable familiarity with God is frequently found in the biography of medieval saints. Jana Bai is said to have been helped in her work of grinding grain for domestic purposes by God, and she is stated to have shared and eaten the remnants of the Brahmins food with God. At Namdev's cry God ate up the food he offered. In this case, God denotes a particular form and a particular incarnation, namely, Krishna or Vittal, and in several similar cases when a person is said to have seen God, it is a particular incarnation of a particular form that is seen. That is God and that alone is God to a person like Janabai or Namdev, at least at first. There may not be much difficulty for one to agree that a particular incarnation with a particular form might have first led a life on earth with the *sthula sarira*, that is, with the gross body, and later on passed into the *linga sarira* that is astral or subtle body, and from there from time to time, appeared with that particular form or any form it liked, exercising its *yata sankalpa samsiddhi* or creative power. Students of Sai literature will be quite familiar with these facts. Sri Sai is now said to appear, time and again before particular devotees, generally with the form which he wore when he was at Shirdi. People often say that whom they identify with God has appeared before them and talked with them or given them directions or help. That Sai has appeared and is appearing and rendering such help appears to be beyond question, especially to those who have been frequently reading of such experiences. The very latest pamphlet issued by the All India Sai Samaj, 'Is Sai Baba living and helping', now contains unquestionable evidence of Baba's appearing and acting at various places including the Ahmedabad lawyer C.C. Manikvala's house. If seeing God is only of this sort,

then we may take it, that there is very strong evidence of God being seen and moved with. There are many persons who would agree with the truth of the phenomena mentioned, but at the same time would prefer to use the term God in a different sense so as to denote Formless God. We are all, according to Taittiriya Upanishad bound to worship the father, the mother the husband and the *Acharya*, or the *Gurudeva*, as God; and to the worshipper they are God. But to those who are not worshipping them, such fathers, mothers, teachers, and husbands are not God at all but only ephemeral forms.

We shall now in this chapter take up the general stand-Point and find out whether there is God-vision or God-seeing i" the generally accepted sense of the vision of a person or personality accepted by every one or, at least, by vast masses, as God. The difficulty here is that there is hardly any unanimity of opinion as to what God is amongst all persons. There are some persons who do not wish to say that there is any God at all. Even omitting them as a negligible minority, others differ in their ideas of God. The vast mass of persons who talk about and discuss God are persons without any actual experience of God, without any actual realisation or any state of mind which can be even by a remote analogy called seeing the divine. The vast majority are without realisation either of a Personal or Impersonal God. They have no *Brahmanishta* and they are not *Harinishta* or *Mada bhijnam* that is, familiar with a Personal God and those who contact an Impersonal God may be trifling in the view of those highly respectable authorities who say that the Impersonal is the Personal and the Personal is the Impersonal and that differences are without any real justification. Yet there are persons who refuse to accept this view, who contend that up to the last moment of time, the Personal is the Personal even when unseen for a time and can never be called Impersonal; and that the Impersonal is the Impersonal and can never be styled the Personal. We are now entering into the field of religious controversy. But in this book it is safer for us to avoid such controversies especially because there is no need for such controversies, also because Sai Baba deprecated the intrusion of controversy into his biography. The safest course for us to adopt here is to see whether, on the basis of any

particular scripture we can state what God vision or God realisation or *Brahman* realisation is, and how far it is declared possible or impossible. Let us take the Hindu scripture first, for the great majority of our readers are Hindus. Now so far as Hindus are concerned, the *Vedas* and the *sastras* are the determining factors and the *Vedanta* consisting of the *Upanishads* is considered as an essential part of the *Vedas*. In the *Upanishads*, there is a vast preponderating mass of texts and passages in favour of treating *Brahman*, which is the word used mostly in the *Upanishads* for God, as denoting the Impersonal Absolute. And we shall see what God realisation or *Brahma Nishta* would be, after determining what the *Upanishads* say about *Brahman*. The Kenopanishad says,

Yat chakshusha na pascyati Yena chakshumshi pascyati.

Tad eva Brahma tvam viddhi Na idam yad idam upasate.

this means, *Brahman* is that which one does not see with the eye, but that, by means of which the eye sees. That alone is *Brahman* not objects which people in the world are worshipping as god or gods. Similarly about hearing and thinking it is repeatedly stressed in the same *Upanishad* that *Brahman* is not heard, that *Brahman* is not the subject of thought, that is, conceptual thought. Taking this as a fairly clear assertion that *Brahman* is not the subject matter of sensual perceptions, God-vision in the usual sense of seeing a God, is an impossibility. But the *Upanishad* refers to *Yad idam upasate* that is, that which people worship. Those are primarily symbols of *Brahman* and they may be acting as substitutes for *Brahman* with the vast masses. The mass ideas are based on the *puranas* which deal with Polytheism that is many Gods. Let it be noted that they are all with form, indeed the minor gods that is those below Narayana's *Avatar* are like men mistaking their bodies for themselves and treating phenomenal objects as real²⁶⁵

“sarve vimohitadhiyah tava maayayeme Brahmadayah tanuabhrutah bahirarthabhaavah”

that is, *Brahman* and other gods have bodies or forms and deluded by your Krishna's *Maya* treat phenomenal worlds as real. That is how we get the idea of a God talking with and walking with *bhaktas*. In the Old Testament, we read,

Abraham walked and talked with God. So, what Abraham walked and talked with was what people worshipped as God, a Personality, in general, yet at times the abstract *Brahman*. If this is conceded, then the very interesting question arises whether for each of us a distinction should be maintained in practice between the two. Water is the same, though, as the upper part of an iceberg, it may be hard and easily seen. As the lower part, it may be hard and not seen, or as liquid water it may be soft and seen or unseen and as vapour, it is neither seen nor felt as hard or soft. The distinctions are useful for practice though chemically all these forms are the same substance H₂O. If we dive into the definition of God, we may get some further light on the matter, that is, if we dive into the definition of both *Brahman* and God. In the Tattiriya *Upanishad*, *Bhrighu*, son of *Varuna*, asked the latter What is *Brahman*? The reply was,

Yato Va Imani Bhutani jayante Yena Jatani Jivanti.

Yat Prayanti abhi samviscanti Tad Brahma.

this means, That from which all these creatures or things of the Universe are born, that by which all these are sustained, that which they go to and get merged in finally, that is *Brahman*. In one word, the origin and the end of the Universe is *Brahman*. In this definition, the suggestion, rather than the express statement is that *Brahman* is the original cause and perhaps the Impersonal cause. Anyhow, God is usually thought of as the creator or cause. The popular way of viewing God is as the universal cause and protector, that is, treating God as a Person, omnipotent, beyond time, and all-prevading and all-protecting. The Hindu philosopher tries to work out the implications of omnipotence, omnipresence and ends by taking God as Impersonal mainly and uses the term *Brahman* for it. The Universe is manifest but the source of the Universe is not manifest and the source of the stream is the stream. Therefore *Brahman* is unmanifested, at least before creation but after the Universe has appeared, is *Brahman* to be treated as manifest or unmanifest? Here there is a difference of views or of treatment. The view preferred in the *Upanishads* is that everything that is manifested is really the unmanifested and is therefore, *Brahman*.

Sarvam kalavidam Brahma.

this is, the Truth perceived by the Seers only. Yet when objects manifested are seen or dealt with, they are not, as a rule, treated as *Brahman* by the mass. But the *sadhaka* aiming at *Brahma Jnana* must forget or ignore the seen and retain in his mind only the unmanifest cause as the real basis of the seen. A *sadhaka* who begins to think of or deal with *Brahman* takes himself away from each seen or perceived object of the manifest world, mentally at least, and treats it as *Brahman* that is as purely unmanifest. How the unmanifested appears as manifested is a great problem defying the skill of those who tried to reason it out, and for that purpose the *Upanishads* suggest various analogies. Analogy or *upamana* also is a *Pramana* or method of reaching the Truth with the help of which this question can be solved. What is not manifest to the senses or to some of the senses can get later manifested and again disappear from the manifestation. The *Chandogya Upanishad* in explaining *Brahman* through the mouth of a *Rishi* to his pupil *Svetaketu* gives sixteen analogies or arguments. A lump of salt, which is manifest to the eye, if dropped into water, completely disappears, and then to the bare sight there will be no salt. But if the water in which the salt was put is tasted and the taste is compared to the taste of the water before the salt was put in, one notices the difference. The water at the later stage is saltish while in the other stage it was not saltish. Hence the salt which now is not manifest to the sense of sight is still continuing in existence, manifest to the sense of taste. This is the analogy by which the *Guru* tries to inform the *sishya* that *Brahman*, the unmanifest, is still real and can be manifest to another sense or the self beyond the senses. The above refers to the procedure from the manifest to the unmanifest. Now another analogy takes this pupil from the unmanifest to the manifest. The student was asked to fetch a banyan fruit and open it. That was full of seeds. The student was asked to cut open one of the seeds, and he cut it open. Then the question put to the student was, What is there inside the seed? The answer was Nothing, then the teacher taught him This seed when planted rises to be a huge tree which covers the earth and that entire huge mass covering the earth comes from what you call the Nothing inside the seed. That which is not manifest to you when you opened the seed has become this vast

manifestation the tree or forest which your sight cannot ignore. *Svetaketu* the pupil, was given more than a dozen other arguments or analogies from which he could draw the conclusion that the unmanifest becomes the manifest and again merges back in the unmanifest. Therefore, the definition given above by *Varuna* has been condensed in the first *Brahman Sutra Janmadi Asya yatah*, which means, *Brahman* is that from which *Janma* birth, development, and the dissolution of the universe proceed and manifested. Therefore, the vast mass of thinkers and readers amongst Hindus accept the position that the unmanifest has become the manifest and the manifest again becomes the unmanifest. Lord Krishna, in asking Arjuna not to grieve over the coming disappearance or death of all his kinsmen in the battles of *Mahabharata*, says about their souls and other souls,

Avyaktadini Bhutani Vyakta Madhyani Bharata

Avyakta nidhanani Eva Tatra ka Paridevana.

this means, These creatures rise out of the unmanifest. But in the interim period of life are manifest, and at the end they again relapse into the unmanifest. What reason is there for bemoaning this? So, the Hindu mind is accustomed to treat the unmanifest and the manifest as being different modes of existence of the same, and what applies to creatures applies to God also. God also is unmanifest at times and manifest at other times. At most itimes, to most people, or in fact to almost all people, God is 'unmanifest. Nobody sees, hears, or has contact with God at all at ordinary times. But God is declared to manifest himself to some people in certain ways. When something suddenly manifests itself, is it the Universal and Original cause? This is a question which a doubter may raise; but those who have faith in God and expect or believe its manifestation for their benefit have no such doubts. It is the latter class we now deal with and hence doubts of identity have no place here in this book. When H.S. Dixit had a vision and did not know whose form he saw, Baba told him it was Vittal's. In such cases, God-vision leading to God-realisation or *Brahma Nishta* is said to occur. So, let us take up the question as to the circumstances in which God is said to become manifest. A manifestation is possible under limitations. What is manifest

to one may be unmanifest to everybody else, and yet it would be called a manifestation. What is manifest at a particular moment of time may at the next moment become unmanifest. The manifestation to the senses is the usual manifestation referred to. But, to certain minds, the manifestation to the senses is considered a very inferior order of experience. Knowledge obtained by sense experience is discounted by a good number of thinkers, but that which is obtained by the soul itself by its contemplation, without using the physical senses, is considered to afford a more reliable basis for one's conclusion or experience. Knowledge through the sense is called *Jnana* some times. But that which is obtained by the thought power is called *Vijnana*. No doubt the terms *jnana* and *vijnana* are not used in the above sense always and very often *vijnana* and *jnana* denote quite different things from those stated above and they may be used to denote the exact opposite of the above senses. *Vijnana* would be *Vividha Jnana* that is knowledge involving differences and multiplicity, while *Jnana* would denote pure consciousness in which no difference or multiplicity is involved. The way in which God is to be realised is imparted to a pupil by a teacher who himself has realised God and the method or course almost invariably suggested is some form of *Upasana* by the pupil. Das Ganu wanted²⁶⁶ *sakshatkara* of God, and told Baba, Baba, you ask me to make *Saptaha* of *Bhagavata*, that is, to read the whole of *Bhagavata* in seven days. I shall do so, but I must have *sakshatkara* or appearance of God at the end of it. Baba said, Yes. Vittal will appear. But there must be sufficient *bhav*, that is, intensity of concentration on God. Usually, the accepted method for getting *sakshatkara* of God realisation is intense concentration, and, as we have been referring to the *Bhagavata* just now, we may note that the concentration mentioned therein is further described in the *Bhagavata* itself. In the *Ekadasa Skanda*, Uddhava asks how God is to be thought of in words which are remarkably similar to the words used by Baba. Baba said, If you are unable to think of *Nirakara*, concentrate upon my form that is think of Me as God. In the *Ekadasa Skanda* of *Bhagavata*²⁶⁷ the same is advised. Sri Krishna says to Uddhava, Portray in your mind the entire body of Sri Krishna, get all the limbs, the ornaments, the colour, the sheen and other

attributes into your mind. After doing that preliminary work, narrow the field of concentration. Proceed from the whole body with dress and weapons to concentrate on the face alone. After concentrating on that, proceed further to finer concentration remembering that the essential nature of God is not material but ethereal. Uddhava is advised to think of or see within his mind Sri Krishna's face as nothing but ether. Ether is all embracing, subtle, and unmanifest. So, from the manifest, Uddhava is advised to pass on to the unmanifest, with the feeling that it is the same, that is, with the conviction that the Krishna's face that he has concentrated upon is the same as the Universal ether. That gives him naturally help to reach absorption or *laya* in the unmanifest *Brahman*. The net result of the concentration, in fact of all concentration on a Divine Form would be that the soul of the *sadhaka* will be filled with the bliss of the ethereal unmanifest *Brahman* which as Krishna says is the same as *Satchitananda*, that is, that which is perceived as bare Bliss within the soul of the *sadhaka* himself in *Sushupti-or-Turiya* trance proving *Tat Tvam Asi*. This process is one of *sakshatkara* and may also be called God-vision, though at the final stage there is nothing for Uddhava to see outside his body. Uddhava becomes like a piece of salt dropped into the ocean of God and simply perceives or has experience of unlimited *Satchitananda*. This is undoubtedly *sakshatkara*. Seeing God, it cannot be literally. But it may be in a metaphorical sense. Seeing, *Darsan*, is often used in the scriptures to denote knowing with certainty as usually certainty is derived by seeing, *paripascyanti dheerah*²⁶⁸.

Let us however pass on to the other forms of *sakshatkara* which are far more common than the above. Hinduism is preeminently a polytheistic religion for the many. It is only very few who reach unity of God through the Upanishad, and the Hindus revel in the infinite number of gods and saints whom they worship and get *sakshatkara* of and to the vast mass, there is no other, that is, no unmanifested God to experience. If a person goes on intently thinking of his *Ishta Devata*, the latter appears to him and renders help to him in innumerable matters. This is familiar to readers of medieval literature-the history of the saint-and this is what is mostly referred to as *sakshatkara*. There is the vision and the

contact with the *Ishta Devata* and the attainment of innumerable benefits thereby. This is the sort of *sakshatkara* that evidently Das Ganu wanted but did not obtain. But some of these *sakshatkaras*, or rather the vast majority of *sakshatkaras* as a rule, are transient and the benefits are worldly-hence often a bar to Realisation. They appear just for a fraction of a second and then disappear. But still within that very small portion of time they sometimes produce an impression of great importance which may affect the future life of the experiencer. Coventry Patmore who had mystic experiences and expressed the same in some of his verses has given a description of this fleeting *sakshatkara* that he enjoyed. His verses run thus :

What's that, which, ere I spake, was gone
 So joyful and intense a spark
 That, whilst o'erhead the wonder shone
 The day, before but dull, grew dark?
 I do not know; but this I know,
 That, had the splendour lived a year,
 The truth that I some heavenly show
 Did see, could not be now more clear.
 This know I too: might mortal breath
 Express the passion then inspired,
 Evil would die a natural death,
 And nothing transient be desired;
 And error from the soul would pass,
 And leave the senses pure and strong
 As sunbeams. But the best, alas,
 Has neither memory nor tongue!

This may be compared with the experience of universal Bliss at Sunrise in W.W. Wordsworth's youth at Sunrise from the Excursion. H.S. Dixit had a *sakshatkar* of Vittal-very elusive and very momentary and in order to confirm his idea that it was real and that it related to Vittal, he went to Baba. Baba gave him assurance that it related to Vittal and that his experience was real, for Baba knew the

internal state of every one's mind and what occurred to each. Baba however added, Vittal Patil is a very elusive person; tie him fast; else he will elude. This gives us the clue to the exact nature of most of these *sakshatkaras*. They are very brief impressions produced either on the mind or on the senses and create the impression that one has seen his *Ishta Devata* and derived benefits thereby. But like all other sense impressions, these also must fade and be finally lost. If they are to benefit one, Baba's advice has to be followed, that is, there must be such a constant repetition of a *sakshatkara* as to make it a permanent possession. Instead of relying on a momentary glimpse of the view of something divine, one has to work one's own self till the self of the individual disappears in the self of the Universe. This is called *Brahma Jnana* or *Brahman* realisation. Even this may be momentary. In order to become permanent, the *sadhaka* is advised to repeat it so that the impression in the heart is far stronger and more serviceable. If one has really become identified with *Brahman*, death has disappeared. He can say with the Pope,

Oh! Grave, Where is the victory?

Oh! Death, Where is thy sting?

Death has no meaning to a person whose self has become the self of all, that is, who has lost his sense of separateness at once and forever²⁶⁹. Our sense of separateness is due to the fact of our identifying ourselves with our body. That identification is gradually corroded by *sakshatkar* such as those mentioned above. By constantly dwelling on God, that is by *Bhramara Kita* doctrine, As a man thinketh so he becometh, we get only God as our nature and the former identification of self with the body disappears. Baba said: This body is my home. My *Guru Mourshad* has taken me away from this body. That is, his *sakshatkara* of his own nature as that of *Brahman* became so permanent and enduring that the occasional identification with the body, if it should occur again, leaves no effect on the soul. There are stages in a *Jnani's* life, after he has gone through a course of realisation, when former delusions like the delusion that one is the body tend to recur but are overcome, especially with the powerful help of a *Guru*. The *sakshatkaras*, if they are utilised to overcome these delusions of difference,

are the greatest achievements for any soul. Baba evidently with the help of his *Guru* had arrived at that highest pinnacle and if persons have deep and concentrated faith in Baba and adopt the lines he has mentioned and set an example of, then they also can reach a similar state of *sakshatkara* which goes far beyond occasional sights of some divine forms but consists in retaining permanently a feeling of realisation that the self is not the body but the Universal Self. That is the true *sakshatkara* of the Real.