



A Conversation between HH Kanchi Periyaval and Sri Kothimangalam Swamin (KSV)

This conversation occurred when Sri KSV was about 30 years old. Sri KSV told me about this when I was studying under him in Mysore about 10 years back. We have recorded this on audio.

HH Kanchi Periyaval had a vidwat sadas (conference of scholars) where several scholars were invited. In this Sadas, it seems different scholars were asked to summarize and present different Darshanas. Sri KSV presented several darshanas including Advaita Darshana. HH Kanchi Periyaval was very impressed and commented: “Can any other scholar particularly from an Advaita background present VisistAdvaita sampradaya or Madhva sampradaya in the way Sri KSV has presented Advaita? Then some scholars tried to present but were not up to the mark. Then HH Kanchi Periyaval presented the title “Pandita Ratnam” to Sri KSV and gave him a memento made of Gold with the title “pandita Ratnam” etched on it. This is about 70 years back. During those times Kanchi Mutt was not really wealthy. Only few sishyas were visiting the Mutt during those times. Even in such difficult times, HH Periyaval gave him such an expensive award in appreciation of his scholarship.

After the award ceremony, HH Kanchi Periyaval asked Sri KSV:

“I am impressed with your knowledge of Vedanta. You are young. I want to get your view on this issue which is bothering me. I cannot believe that these Shaiva-Vaishnava sectarian fights are continuing even now. When will they come to an end?”

Sri KSV answered:

“This is not that difficult. People believe that Shiva has a form with a trishula (trident), damaru (drum), agni (fire), matted hair etc. Similarly, they believe that Vishnu has a form with 4 hands, crown, gadha (mace), chakra (discus), shankha (shell) and other weapons in his hands. If you take away the trident from Shiva and the mace, other weapons from Vishnu, what will remain? – Only Atman (celebrated in the Upanishads as the ultimate in the statements such as “AtmA vA arE drastavyO shrotavyO mantavyO nidhidhyAsitvyah”).

When people can elevate themselves to the level of maturity -“BhrU-yuga-atIta-drishti” – a state of meditation which can facilitate the movement of consciousness of a person from the lower chakras (which make a human being have baser emotions or animal tendencies) to the higher chakras beyond the point between their eye-brows, then they cannot see any form. At that state they see Self as effulgent luminous entity which is termed as “Jyothi” or “param-shudar in tamil” or “light”. Once they get to that level of maturity, the fighting will come to an end.”

HH Kanchi Periaval: “Very well said. Will your sampradaya people accept what you just said?”

Sri KSV:

“I have stated the truth. If they agree it is well and good. If they do not agree, they do not know the truth”. The important information to know is that Shaiva, Vaishnava gAnapatya, Kaumara etc. are mathas. Matha means that which is related to the human mathi, or buddhi or intellect. It is clearly said that the truth (satya) is beyond the grasp of mathi in the Upanishads :

Atma is beyond the intellect. Intellect cannot comprehend Atman. Hence, in the past, when people could not maintain their atma-jnana at a high level of the AdhyAtma or Brahman, they had to come down to the level of their intellect. Then came the different mathas such as Vaishnava, Shaiva etc. due to mathi-bheda, difference in intellect.

HH Kanchi Periaval was very happy. Then Sri KSV took leave from the Kanchi Mutt.