

Valluvar And Spinoza : On God and the Love of God

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Spinoza (1632-77), a Dutch Jewish philosopher, is praised by some as 'the only really great modern western philosopher who develops what can be properly called a personal philosophy of life! He is known for the following books: *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, *Tractatus Politicus*, *The Principles of Descartes's Philosophy and Ethics*. Many great thinkers the world over became his admirers among whom Goethe, Lessing, Heine, Nietzsche, George Eliot, Einstein Freud, Bertrand Russell and George Santayana Ay regarded themselves as strongly influenced by him. Though Leibniz Owed much to him, he is reported to have Concealed his debt and abstained from praising spring a "Hegel saw Spinoza's philosophy as a particularly important dialectical stage on the road to his own absolute idea".

Spinoza himself was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Descartes and his political theory owes a great deal to Hobbes.

Spinoza's *Ethics* deals with three different subjects: metaphysics, the psychology of the passions and the will, an ethic based on the preceding metaphysics and psychology. It is presented as a deductive system in the manner of Euclid, it's five parts being, (1) 'Concerning God' (2) On the nature and Origin g the Mind (3) Concerning the Origin and Nature of the Emotions (4) Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions & Of the Power of the Intellect or of Human Freedom. It of begins with a set of definitions and axioms and is followed by a series of theorems proved upon the basis of what precedes them. For instance, this is how he tries to prove the proposition that "love towards God must hold the chief place in the mind":

For this love is associated with all the modifications of the body (V, 14) and is fostered by them all (V, 15) therefore (V,11) it must hold the chief place in the mind, Q.E.D.'

The proposition, V, 14, states: 'The mind can bring it about, that all bodily modifications or images of things may be referred to the idea of God' The proposition, V, 15 states: 'He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions loves God and so much the more in proportion to as he understands himself and his emotions'.

The proposition, V, II, states: 'In proportion as a mental image is referred to more objects, so is it more frequent, or more often vivid, and occupies the mind more'.

This 'proof' is explained by Bertrand Russell in the following words :

"Every increase in the understanding of what happens to us consists in referring events to the idea of God, since, in truth, everything is part of God. The understanding of everything as part of God is love of God. When all objects are referred to God, the idea of God will fully occupy the mind Thus the statement that love of God must hold the chief place in the mind' is not primarily a moral exhortation, but an account of what must inevitably happen as we acquire understanding.

We are told that no one can hate God, beets, the other hand, he who loves God cannot endeavour that you should love him in return.

The statement that God can love no one should not be considered to contradict the statement that God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love. He may infinite love Himself, since that is possible without false belief; and in any case intellectual love is a very special kind of love.

There is a further advantage in love of God as compared to love of human beings: 'Spiritual

unhealthiness and misfortunes can generally be traced to excessive love of something which is subject to many variations. But clear and distinct knowledge begets a love towards a thing immutable and eternal' and such love has not the turbulent and disquieting Character of love for an object which is transient and Changeable.

Blessedness, which consists of love towards god, is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; we do not rejoice in it because we control our lusts, but we control our lusts because we rejoice in it.

To Spinoza, God is not merely the physical universe for the essence of God is expressed in an infinite number of attributes of which physical extension is just one. The physical world is thus God's body, God in his physical aspect, rather than the totality of what God is.

God or the universe is both an infinite physical thing and an infinite thinking thing as well as an infinite number of other infinite things the nature of which is hidden from us.

In Spinoza's view, the active behaviour of the mind consists in what he calls adequate ideas, the passive behaviour in inadequate ideas.

Adequate ideas necessarily constitute more genuine knowledge. Knowledge has three main grades in order of its adequacy: (1) knowledge by hearsay and vague experience (2) Knowledge by general reasoning (3) intuitive rational insight.

The first type of knowledge yields emotion and activity of an essentially enslaved kind; human liberation consists in movement through the second to the third type of knowledge. Only at that level do we cease to be victims of emotions which we don't understand and can't control. The third type of knowledge ultimately yields the intellectual love of God, which is Spinoza's version of salvation.

What does Spinoza think about a religious view of the world?

He was against all forms of religion which he regarded as life-denying and which to view the present life as a mere preparation for a life to come. He asserts that our primary aim should be joyous living in the here and now. This should ideally culminate in that quasi-mystical grasp of our eternal place in the scheme of things and Oneness with god or nature, which he calls the intellectual love of God. Love of God, in this sense, should be the focal aim the wise man's life.

He thought that much of the religion as conceived by most people is mere superstition, causing intolerance and in many ways unhelpful as a basis for a genuinely good life. But he also thought that for a majority of people, who are incapable of the philosopher's intellectual love of God, a good popular religion could act as a morally worthy substitute, providing a less complete form of salvation available to all who live morally and love God.

Spinoza has his non theory of the emotions. He contends that though the human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God, the passions distract Us and obscure our intellectual vision of the whole. "Everything in so far as it is into itself endeavours to persevere in its now being." Hence arise love and hate and strife. 'He who conceives that the object of his hate is destroyed will feel pleasure'. 'Hatred is increased by being reciprocated and can on the other hand be destroyed by love! Spinoza believes that all wrong due to intellectual error; the man who adequately understands his own circumstances will act wisely and will even be happy in the face of what to another would be misfortune. He makes no appeal to unselfishness; he holds that self-seeking, in some sense, in, and more particularly self-preservation, govern all human behaviour. 'No virtue can be conceived as prior to this

endeavour to preserve one's own being. But his conception of what a wise man will choose as the goal of his self-seeking is different from that of the ordinary egoist.: the The mind's highest good is the knowledge of God, and the mind's highest virtue is to know God.' Emotions are called 'passions' when they spring from inadequate ideas; passions in different men may conflict, but men who live in obedience to reason will agree together.

Pleasure in itself is good, but hope and fear are bad; humility and repentance are also bad. 'He who repents of an action is doubly wretched or infirm? Spinoza regards time as unreal and therefore all emotions which have to do essentially with an event as future or as past are contrary to reason. "In so far as the mind conceives a thing under the dictate of reason, it is affected equally, whether the idea be of a thing present, past, or future?"

We are more concerned about a disaster in our own time than in the time of Jenghiz khan. According to Spinoza, this is irrational. Whatever happens is part of the eternal timeless world as God seek it; to Him, the date is irrelevant The wise man, so far as human finitude allows, endeavours to see the world as God sees it, under the aspect of eternity.

We may claim that we are right in being more concerned about future misfortunes, which may possibly averted, than about past calamities about which we can do nothing. But Spinoza's answer to this is that only ignorance makes us think that we can alter the future. What will be, and the future is unalterably fixed as the past. It is for this reason that hope are condemned; both depend upon viewing the future as uncertain and these from therefore spring from lack & wisdom.

When we acquire a vision of the world which is analogous to God's, we see everything as part of the whole and as necessary to the goodness of the whole. Therefore 'the knowledge of evil is an inadequate knowledge.' God has no knowledge of evil, because there is no evil to be known; the appearance of evil only

Best arises through regarding parts of the universe as if they were self subsistent.

Spinoza's aim is to liberate men from the tyranny of fear. A free man thinks of nothing less than of death; and his wisdom is a meditation not of death, but of life? In so far as a man is an unwilling part of a larger whole, he is in bondage; in so far as, through the understanding, he has grasped the sole reality of the whole, he is free Spinoza does not, like the Stores, object to all enutions, he objects only to those that are passions', i.e. those in which we appear to ourselves to be passive in the power of outside forces. An emotion which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.'

'He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions, loves God, and so much the more as he more understands himself and his emotions. The intellectual love of God is a union of thought and emotion.

Making a critical estimate of Spinoza's importan philosopher, it is Bertrand Russell justly says that it is. necessary to distinguish his etties from his metaphysics. Spinoza's metaphysic is the best example of what may Called 'logical monism' - the doctrine, namely, that the world, as a whole, is a single substance, none of whose parts are logically capable of existing alone. Russell obsewer that the whole of this metaphysic is impossible to accept, it is incompatible with modern logic and with scientific method Facts have to be discovered by observation, not by reasoning; when we successfully infer the future, we do so by means of principles which are not logically necessary, but are suggested by empirical data. And the concept of substance, Upon which

Spinoza relies, is one which neither science. Nor philosophy can nowadays, accept.

But with regard to Spinoza's ethics, Russell feels that something, though not everything, can be accepted even when the metaphysical foundation is rejected. Spinoza is concerned with showing how it is possible to live nobly even when we recognize the limits of human power.

What he says about death is worth considering. Nothing that a man can do will make him immortal and it is therefore futile to spend time in fears and lamentations over the fact that we must die. To be observed by the fear of death is a kind of slavery; Spinoza is right in saying that 'the free man thinks of nothing less than of death?

What about revenge? Russell says that it can't be **wholly condemned** for it is one of the forces generating punishment and punishment is sometimes necessary. Moreover, from the point of view of mental health, the impulse to revenge is likely to be strong that, if it is allowed no outlet, a man's whole outlook on distorted and more or less insane. Russell approves of Spinoza's stand that a life dominated by a single passion is a narrow life, incompatible with every kind of wisdom. Revenge as such is therefore not the best reaction to injury.

For Spinoza, all sin is due to ignorance; He believes that hatred can be overcome by love. Hatred is increased by being reciprocated and can, on the other hand, be destroyed by love. Hatred which is completely vanquished by love, passes into love, is there upon greater, than if hatred had not preceded it.'

Spinoza believes in the ultimate goodness of the universe and therefore thinks that if you see your misfortunes as part of the concatenation of causes stretching from the beginning of time to the end, you will see that they are only misfortunes to you, not to the universe, to which they are merely passing discords heightening an ultimate harmony. Russell rejects this saying that particular events are what they are and do not become different by absorption into a whole. Each act of cruelty is eternally a part of the universe; nothing that happens later can make that act good rather than bad, or can confer perfection on the whole of which it is a part. When one has to endure something that is worse than the ordinary lot of mankind Spinoza's principle of thinking about the whole is a useful one. Russell confesses that there are even times when it is comforting to reflect that human life, with all that it contains of evil and suffering, is an infinitesimal part of the life of the universe.

Spinoza, developing a personal philosophy of life radically differed from most of the western philosophers and almost all theologians and religionists since he regarded all forms of religion as life-denying as they viewed the present life as a mere preparation for a life to come. He firmly believes that our primary aim should be joyous living in the here and now. This should culminate in that quasi-mystical grasp of our eternal place in the scheme of things and one's mess with God or nature which he calls the intellectual love of God. Because of this belief, Spinoza could win the admiration of eminent intellectuals from varied fields of knowledge such as Goethe, Lessing, Heine, Nietzsche, George Eliot, Einstein, Freud, Leibniz, Hegel, Bertrand Russell and George Santayana. But in the case of many of these, the main reason for the choice of such a concept might have been, that it helped them escape the ordeal of choosing any one of the major religions of the world which would have done considerable damage to their international reputation.

But the Indian religions with their innumerable. Sects & studied deeply offer various visions of God and man-God relationship as subtle as Spinoza's intellectual love of God and as broad

based as the emotional attachments *to* god recommended by the six divisions of Hinduism.

Nalluvar's "Inexcation to God" lends itself beautifully to many interpretations acceptable to all the religions of India. Parimelalakar sep Safely Contends that it has to be taken as the praise of the Hindu trinity- Siva, Vishnu and Brahma - who share among themselves the divine task of Creation, protection and destruction. All the epithets used in the ben couplets are suitably interpreted bringing in on of the numeous legends or puranas associated with them wherever required.

The God who walked on flowers may refer to Vishnu or even to Buddha who is seated on the lotus flowery. When the god is described as valarivan (perfect - intelligence) it is found applicable to any of the three or even Buddha. Hence the ten couplets are interpreted without oring any allegiance to nay one of these gods; and English translations are also done accordingly,

V.V.S. Iyer's translation:

1. A is the starting-point of the world of sound; even so is the Ancient One Supreme the starting point of all that exists.
2. Of what avail is all thy learning of thou worship not the holy feet of Him of the perfect intelligence?
3. Behold the man who taketh refuge in the secred feet of Him who walked on flowers; his days will be many upon the earth.
4. Behold the men who cleave unto the feet of Him *who* is beyond preference and beyond aversion; the illls of life never touch them.
5. Behold the men who sing earnestly the praise of the lord, they will be freed from the pain-engendering fruits of action both good and evil.
6. Behold the men who follow the righteous ways of Him who burned away the desires of the five senses; their days will be many upon the earth.
7. They alone escape from Sorrow who take refuge in the feet of Him who hath no equal.
8. The stormy seas of wealth and Sonse delights cannot be traversed except by those who cling to the feet of the sage who is the ocean of righteousness.
9. Worthless indeed like the organs of sense which do not perceive is the head that boweth not at the feet of Him who is endowed with the light altributes.
10. They alone Cross the ocean of births and deaths who take refuge in the feet of the food bord; the others traverse it not.

The Saivite claim that the god referred to here is Sivan is persuasively presented by Swami Vipulamanda who points out how Campantars 'Tiuccivapurattutto tiruppatikam' resembles the first chapter of Tirukkural in certain Significant respects. The ninth couplet refers to God as en kunaltan; the sight attributes are individually mentioned in the first light couplets loliek call Him ஆதி பகவன், வாலறிவன், மலர்மிசை யேகினால், வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமையிலான, இறைவன், பொறிவாயில் ஐந்தவித்தூன், தனக்குவமையில்லாதான், and அறவாழி அந்தணன்' The eight qulities possessed by God as listed in the Caiva Agamas are described as தன் வயத்தனாதல், தூயவுடம் பினனாதல், இயற்கை உணர்விதைல் முற்றுமுணத்தல், இயல்கலைலே

பாசங்களினிங்குதல், பேரருள் உடைமை, முடிவில் ஆற்றனுடைமை, வரம்பில் இன்பமுடைமை.

The very Same attributes are indicated in the following phrases of Tēvāram hymns:

பதும் நன்மலரது மருவிய சிவன், அந்துலில் அவர் அறிவுருவியல் பரன், முழுவதும் அதிவகை நினைவொரு முதலுரு வியல் பரன், பொறி யொழி அருதவருயல்பவர் தனதடி அடைவுகை நினை பரன், 'அறியும் அயணும் அதிவரிடம் முதல்வன்.'

Vipulananda's interpretation of the first couplet is also remarkable:

‘எழுத்தெல்லாம்’ implies the universe of words. ‘உலகு’ implies the universe of things. Very much like the vowel ‘அ’ which stands first in the world of words, Standing first in the world of things, at once exists independently and permeates the universe.

A Jain Scholar, Chakravarthi Contends that Timkkural is a Jain work Composed in the first Century B.C. The ultimate goal of life, according to Jainism, is to transcend

‘Samsara’ and reach the spiritual goal of 'moksha ' for liberation. Right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct - these three together constitute the path of liberation. Some religions promise salvation by mere faith; others insist on knowledge as a condition of salvation; some others stress right Conduct as the means of Salvation Part Jainism demands the Cooperation of all these there; the path of salvation is revealed by Apta or the lord, who does it out of love and mercy for the suffering mankind.

A Jaina saint pictures God in the following words:

Him who is the leader in the path of salvation,
Him who destroys the huge mountain of Karmas,
Hem whose knowledge apprehends the whole of reality
I worship with the object of obtaining
Similar qualities for myself.

Keeping the Jain Conception of divinity in mind, Chakravarthi translates thus the ten couplets of the first-Chapter of Tirukkural:

All the letters of the alphabet have the letter ‘a’ as the beginning. Similarly the world has as its beginning the first world, the All-Knower. (1)

Of what avail is their learning if they do not adore the benevolent feet of the Lord, the All-knower
par excellence. (2)

Those that adore the feet of the lord who walked Over the divine lotus will have an everlasting life in the world above. (3)

Those take refuge at the feet of the hard, who has neither desire not aversion, will never be subjected to the woes of life. (4)

The two kinds of dark karmas will never approach those that sing the praise of the lord. (5)

Those who walk the faultless path ordained by the lord who conquered the five senses will live in happiness. (6)

Except for those who seek refuge at the feet of the unique incomparable lord without a second. it is hard to find relief from the sorrows of thought. (7)

Unless men cling to the feet of the benevolent Lord whose symbol of spiritual sovereignty is the wheel of dharma, it is hard for them to cross the ocean of life or samsara. (8)

The head that does not bow at the feet of the lord And the eight-fold excellence is worthless as a head with defunct sense organs which do not respond to Sense stimuli. (9)

Those that take refuge at the feet of the word will smely Cross the ocean of life. The others have certainly no chance. (10)

In all these the lord refers to the Thirtankara, who after quitting the body, has become pure self or paramatma - On the other hand, the word 'teyvam' is translated as gods or as destiny and not as God.

The Bhakti Movement had it's origin in Tamilnadu in the bone-melting songs of "Nayanmars and Alvars and spread to various parts of the subcontinent during the period frou 650. A.D. to 950 A.D., when the Tamils had contact's with the Outside world from the **Northern India**, from the Eastern seas and from Sri Lanka in the South to and to Arabia in the West. Service to the poor, affirmation of life and emphatic rejection of world negation, acceptance of music as a powerful medium of expression, belief in the one-world concept, love for God expressed in terms of love between man and woman and emphasis on righteousness were the chief aspects of the Bhakti cult. Ramanija served as a powerful intermediary in spreading the message of the Alvars and his disciples continued the task of mediation later.

The songs of the Alvars were written in Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, Gujarati and Bengali scripts for the bengjeb of the Vaishnavites of these regions. The devotees of Siva and Triumal preached a religion of hope and love a religion of beauty and innocence and a no religion of Communion and social service. "They see God in the five elements, earth, water, fire, air, space, in the seen and the moon as well as in the soul of every living being.

Of all the Bhakti poems, Tinuvacakam by Manikkavācakar, a Laivité samt poetes may be

Chosen as the one which highlights the emotional **attachment** to God as an alternative to the intellectual. 2 love of God proposed by Spinze. In this poems, using a variety of folk-long motifs, the poet pours out his fears and hopes, joy's and borrows in a number impassioned lyrics that give a heart-rending account of his spiritual journey marked by frustrating hard ships and blissful encounters with the supreme Being.

"Civa puranam", the most popular section of the poem, serves as a splendid preface:

Hail, Namaccivaya! hail, foot of the Master!

Hail, foot of Him who doesn't leave

My heart even for an instant!

Hail, foot of the Gurumani that rules kōkali!

Hail, foot of Him, who becomes and draws

near at the Akamam!

Hail, foot of Him, the One and the many as
well as the king!

(1-5)

I was grass, shaub, worm, tree,
Several kinds of beasts, birds, snakes,
Stone, man and demon, hosts, asuras,
Saints and gods, I have grown weary
My great master, born in every species
Within these mobile and immobile forms of life (26-31)

“**Tirantappakuti**” traces the nature and development of the Universe.

He is the heaven to the heavenly beings
He resembles an insect but possesses all,
He gives the sun it's lustre day by day,
He kept in the sacred moon it's coolness
In mighty fire He kindled the heat;
In pure ether He kept the pervasive power,
He gave energy to the ambient to wind
He endowed the streams that shine
In shade with the sweet Saviour
In the expanded earth, He kept it's strength
He has enclosed in several cells
Me and many more croes like me. (1-12)

Tiruccatakam consists of a hundred harmonious verses meant to exhibit the progress of the soul through the successive stages of religious experience till it loses itself in the rapture of complete union with the Supreme.

'Tirupponmūcal' (The sacred golden swing) rings the purification by grace. The decad known as 'Annaippattu (The Mother Decad) is in praise of the soul's plenitude.

Terultacankam (The Sacred Ten Song: The Royal Insignia) **is an** exquisite address to the parrot asking it to 24 identify the king's name, land, city, river, mountain, vehicle, weapon, drum, garland and banner

“Koyil mutta tiruppatikam” (The Ancient sacred Temple - Song) implores Sive to bestow His grace on the poet.

Shall I remain like a dog that jackals Chase and scare?

My teacher, even now bestow your grace on me.

Kōyiltimppatikam (The Sacred Temple - lyric) describes the Characteristics of Sacred enjoyment.

You have given me yourself; what you
have got is myself. O Sankara, who is
Skilful? I have gained the rapturous
bliss that knows no end.

In 'Cettilappattu' (Misery of life) the poet expresses the desire for the end of life and for the eternal bliss in Siva. In 'Aṭaikkalappattal' (The Refuge - Decad), the poet tells the master that- He is the do only safe refuge for him.

In 'Acaippaltu' (The Decad of Desire) the poet pinpoints the yearnings of his soul.

"**Yattirappattu**" (Decad of the Pilgrimage) celebrates the soul's pilgrimage through the world of sense to union with Siva on the silver mountain. Panṭaiya nan marai (The Ancient Sacred Scripture) sings the reality of divine grace.

The eyes that see Him are all a rapture
of delight; the saints who cherish Him
are freed from the cycle of births;
the Great One dwells for ever in
Perunturai. My heart, praise Him
endlessly.

In "Accoppatikam" (Decad of the Wonder of Salvation), each verse addresses Live variously as Fallier, the Mystic Dancer, the Teacher, the Lofty one, the Master, the Blissful, the Author of all things and the Mother.

It was thus

That the Father granted me grace
O Raptome! Who is so blessed as I am?

For a vast majority of people it may be very in difficult to understand and accept the Spingga's proposition about the intellectual love of God and his total rejection of all forms of religion. But he asserts that our primary aim should be joyous living in the here and now. Love of God should be the focal aim of the wise man's life Though he thought that much of the religion as conceived by most people is mere superstition Causing intolerance and in many ways wood unhelpful as a basis for a genuinely good to life, he accepted that for & many who are incapable of philosopher's intellectual love of God, a good popular religion could act as a morally worthy substitute, providing a less complete form of salvation available to all who live morally and love God. But it can't be denied that almost all the Eastern and western religions suggest the ways and means of living morally though with regard to the nature of God And man-God relationship they are clear-cut in their views and never so sophisticated and subtle as Spinoza's. And many of them enable the Common man to # identify himself with God and take Him as the only safe refuge available. And he need not undertake the anduous search for the intellectual love of God, whatever that may mean.