

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's Kāśī Pañcakam

With the commentary Tatva Prakāśikā
by
Svāmi Tattvavidānanda Sarasvatī

Verse 3

कोशेषु पञ्चस्वधिराजमाना बुद्धिर्भवानी प्रतिदेहगेहम् ।

सक्षी शिवस्सर्वगतोऽन्तरात्मा सा काशिकाऽहं निजबोधरूपा ॥

koṣeṣu pañcasvadhīrājamānā buddhirbhavānī pratidehageham ।
sakṣī śivassarvagatho'ntarātmā sā kāśikā'haṁ nijabodharūpā ॥

प्रतिदेहगेहम् Pratidehageham – in every home of the body, पञ्चसु
pañcasu–five, कोशेषु koṣeṣu – in the sheaths, अधिराजमाना adhirājamānā –
shining as the presiding deity, बुद्धिः buddhiḥ – intellect, भवानी bhavānī –
consort of Śiva, सर्वगतः sarvagataḥ, - all-pervading, अन्तरात्मा antarātmā – the
inner ruler, सक्षी sakṣī – the witness, शिवः śivaḥ, - Śivaḥ, सा sā – that, काशिका
kāśikā – Kāśī, अहम् Aham – I am, निजबोधरूपा nijabodharūpā – having the
form of one's own awareness.

I am that city of Kāśī in the form of my own pure awareness. The all-
pervading witness, who is the inner ruler, is Lord Śiva. The intellect shining
as the presiding deity in the five sheaths in everybody is the consort of
Śiva.

Sā aham, I am that. Sā is that reality. We cannot describe the reality with any
other words except saying That. The truth is so simple and so profound that
language cannot reach it. Truth is existential, not linguistic. Yet, it has to be
communicated only through words. Therefore, we use words which signal the
truth. One such word is tat, that. Om tatsaditi nirdeśo brahmaṇāstrividhassmṛtaḥ
(Gīta, 17-23), Brahman is referred to in three ways, Om, tat, and sat. Sā is
a form of that alone. Saḥ is masculine gender, sā feminine, and tat neuter,
but the meaning is the same. The gender belongs to the language, not to the
light of awareness.

I am that Kāśikā, the self-shining Awareness. The multiple experiences of the
waking and dream states shine in It. Deep sleep, which is absence of all
experiences, is also an experience, and it shines in that awareness. That Awareness
is the substratum, the light of lights, in which all human experience shine. That
is my essential nature.

Kāśikā is jñapti, knowingness, the Atman, the Infinite, which reflects in the finite body-mind as sakṣī, witness, witness of all cognitions and actions. It is the witness to the entire movement of the mind, which is broadly classified as waking consciousness, dream consciousness and the unmanifest consciousness of deep sleep. We become conscious of something only because of the contact of the infinite with the finite; that is the manifest consciousness. The Atman as it reflects is the sakṣī, witness, in all the three states.

Atman is sarvagata, pervading all. Generally, we think that 'all' is outside. Outside of what? It cannot be outside the waking consciousness. The pot is outside the body but not the knowingness. What kind of existence would it be that is outside the space-like consciousness? Existence cannot be divorced from knowingness. When we say 'all', that 'all' is indeed the content of the consciousness. The light of knowingness pervades the entire content of the waking consciousness. The content can be broadly divided into two categories, known and unknown; knowingness pervades the known as well as the unknown. Or, if the content is divided as in and out, then the space-like knowingness pervades both in and out. That light in which the entire consciousness shines is free from all opposites. It is free from pleasure and pain, comfort and discomfort, friend and foe, honor and dishonor, self and non-self. Divisions and opposites bind. As long as we are perturbed by these opposites, we are in bondage.

The opposites bind us due to identification of different kinds. Sometimes, the identification can be very gross such as the body-identification. Sometimes, it is very subtle like intellectual arrogance. Every identification makes us victims of pairs of opposites. Be nirdvandva, free of opposites. Rise above the identifications and abide as the light of lights, the awareness of the being, sākṣī of all bodily and mental experiences.

Fortunately, the dream state is very short lived and does not bind us much except in rare cases where the dreams become a nightmare. Though we abide as the witnessing awareness to the sleep state, it does not bind us. All bondage is centered on the waking consciousness. Therefore, we need to be unperturbed, uninvolved and disinterested witness to the content of waking consciousness, and thus, transcend it. We should not get caught in the web of opposites. Just as electricity of the powerhouse appears as a glow when it comes into contact with a filament, so also the infinite Atman, Kāśī, comes into contact with the finite body-mind and reflects in the five sheaths.

In life, there is the fundamental mistake of identification at different levels, because of which they become kośās, sheaths, which bind. There is bondage only when we identify. The identification amounts to a sin. The Infinite is embedded in the finite, like a shining sword hidden by the scabbard. The sheaths are, annamaya, physical body, prāṇamaya, vital force, which causes all the movements of life, manomaya, mind, vijñānamaya, the sense of doership and ānandamaya, enjoyership or the ego. Body and mind are sheaths only when

we identify with them. If we do not identify by remaining as the witnessing awareness, they are no more sheaths. Similarly, if one does not mistake himself as a doer, the intellect is no more a sheath, in spite of activity that originates in the intellect. Similarly, when we relinquish the enjoyership, the ego is not bondage any more.

There is bondage only because of the mistake of identification. This mistake is called *māyā* or *āvidhyā*. The ignorance of the individual or *āvidhyā* is part of the cosmic *māyā*, which is the cause of this entire universe. It is the creative power of Brahman. Symbolically, it is presented as *Bhavāni*, the consort of *Śiva*.

You are not the body, because you are aware of it. If one were the body, one will not know the body. As Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi says, *deho na jānāti*, the body does not know (*Saddarśanam*, 26). But one knows the body and therefore, one is not the body. The eyes do not see themselves. One knows when the eyes see and also when they do not. Therefore, one is not the eyes. A thought is the means of cognizing an object such as a pot but it cannot cognize itself. One knows the thought and also its absence. Therefore, one is not the mind. One is the intelligence behind the thought, always aware of the thought. Therefore, identification with the mind or its thought is a mistake.

The same logic applies to doership. One is not a doer unless one identifies with the body and the organs of action. Similarly, there is no enjoyership in the absence of identification with the sense organs. Therefore, there is a very fundamental mistake in life of identifying with the five levels of the finite medium called *upādhi*. And we have to correct this mistake. Mistakes like investing in a wrong stock are not as harmful as this cognitive error. Another name for such a mistake is *avidyā*, ignorance, which has its origin in the cosmic principle of creation. *Pratidehageham*, this is a universal mistake. *Bhavāni* is the cosmic principle.

Śiva is the universal Being. It is our essential nature. We have to identify with the being. Don't identify with the five categories mentioned above. *Śiva* is *puruṣa*, the fullness of Being, and *buddhi* is *prakṛti* or *Bhavāni*, the medium in which the fullness of the Being reflects. As the Gita says (13 – 22) *puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi buñkte prakṛtijān guṇān*, *puruṣa* suffers the qualities of *prakṛti* due to identification with *prakṛti*. *Bhavaṁ samsāriṇām karoti iti Bhavāni*, *Bhavāni* or *prakṛti* makes *Śiva* a *samsāri* .

Once one knows oneself as *sākāśi* and desists from every identification, the sheaths are decimated and the apparent difference between the individual and Godhead ends. The body and vital forces continue to function normally and spontaneously by the momentum of nature. On the other hand, as we identify, the bondage remains in place. Be a witness to the mind, to the ego, and to all enjoyments. As we witness the ego, it cannot survive; it simply resolves. A functional ego may arise, but it is harmless. Mind becomes pure even as you begin to watch it; such an ego won't bind you. I am *sākṣi*, I am *Śiva*.