

Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati's Talk

Transcription of the same given to Long Term Vedanta Course students at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam at Coimbatore on 28th April 2016

I am coming here for the first time after Pujya Swamiji's Mahasamadhi. Even though we miss the physical presence of Pujya Swamiji, I am sure he continues to bless us in the form of Lord Dakshinamurthy himself. And I heard that the course is going on well and you must have been exposed to a lot of Vedanta in this past two years and I would like to share something general with regard to this traditional teaching.

One of the Vedantik works attributed to Adi Shankaracharya is called वाक्यवृत्तिः. I do not know whether it has been taught here. It may be or you will be able to learn it. It is a simpler work. We can learn it by ourselves also later.

वाक्यवृत्तिः is a brief commentary on the महावाक्यम् तत्त्वमसि written by the आचार्य in verse form. वृत्तिः means a brief commentary and वाक्य refers to महावाक्यम् ॥ So it is some kind of महावाक्यविचारः ॥ And it is a small work of around 53 or 54 verses and in that the आचार्य brings out all the important aspects of Vedantik teaching.

After a brief introduction, he straightaway goes to the महावाक्यम् and points out that grasping महावाक्यम् or any वाक्यम् for that matter, depends upon learning the meaning of the words in the वाक्यम्.

पदार्थज्ञानम् वाक्यार्थज्ञानकारणम् - Without knowing the meaning of the words, we can never know the meaning of the sentence, because sentence is constituted of words only. And, therefore, the student says that "I don't know even पदार्थम् how can I understand the वाक्यार्थम्" Then the Guru goes systematically. First he takes त्वम्पद, the meaning of the word त्वम् - "you", which refers to the जीवात्मा and thereafter, he goes to तत्पद and analyzes the meaning of the word - तत्

"परमात्मा" and then he finally goes to the analysis of असिपद. So the enquiry into त्वम्पद and तत्पद । he calls पदार्थविचारः and enquiry into असिपदम् he calls वाक्यार्थविचारः ॥

And while dealing with each पदम्, he connects with several aspects of scriptural teaching. While analyzing the nature of the individual, he takes all the allied topics occurring in all the scriptures like दृग्दृश्यविवेकः, अवस्थात्रयविवेकः पञ्चकोशविवेकः all allied topics connected with the individual, the student, the listener. Even though he doesn't name them, but he presents all of them beautifully.

And, similarly he goes to तत्पदविचारः also. There he talks about ब्रह्मन्, both in its सगुण version as well as निर्गुण version and connects with all the scriptural portion where ब्रह्मन् is described. The study of this one text will help us collect all the उपनिषद्मन्त्राः, some of them dealing with त्वम्पद, some of them dealing with तत्पद. All those वाक्यम्s are called अवान्तरवाक्याः, secondary statements because they all help us in understanding महावाक्यम्. महावाक्यम् is मुख्यम्. That is the तात्पर्यवाक्यम्. All other statements are called अवान्तरवाक्यम्s.

Thus he analyzes all अवान्तरवाक्यम्s and arrives at the meaning of त्वम्पद and तत्पद. I don't want to elaborate because that is what you have been and you are doing in all the lectures here. I want to concentrate on one particular verse of वाक्यवृत्तिः. I will come to that in due course.

Thereafter, he comes to असिपद, the word which equates जीवात्मा and परमात्मा. As Pujya Swamiji says it is a 'Great Equation'. And then he points out that if you take the direct meaning of जीव and ईश्वर। ऐक्यम् can never be assimilated because जीव and ईश्वर have got diagonally opposite meaning. And therefore, you cannot take the primary meaning. Therefore, you have to go to the लक्ष्यार्थः. You must have done all these. I am assuming these things.

मानान्तर विरोदे तु मुख्यार्थस्य परिग्रहे ।
मुख्यार्थेन अविनाभूते लक्षण सा प्रकीर्तितः ॥

First you employ the direct meaning and try to understand the statement. If it doesn't convey any meaning, then you drop the primary meaning and go to the secondary meaning. And in the secondary meaning, जहति लक्षण, अजहति लक्षण, भागत्याग लक्षण, all are there, you know. And then he comes to the conclusion that you have to apply भागत्याग लक्षण. You have to remove the उपादि of जीव and the उपादि of ईश्वर and arrive at one चैतन्यम्, which चैतन्यम् is undivided. Thus जीवात्म-परमात्म-ऐक्यबोधक वाक्यम् महावाक्यम् or अखण्डार्थ बोधक वाक्यम् महावाक्यम् - revealing the meaning of non-difference between जीवात्मा and परमात्मा, in essence. And thus, the aim of every student is assimilating the message of महावाक्यम् by taking the help of अवान्तरवाक्यम्s strewn all over the उपनिषद्s.

We should know how to identify which अवान्तरवाक्यम् goes with त्वम्पद and which अवान्तरवाक्यम् goes with तत्पद. We have to, thus, connect appropriately and finally the 'Grand Equation' is to be understood. And having completed that, he makes a beautiful श्लोक and it is that श्लोक I would like to dwell today.

अहम्ब्रह्मेतिवाक्यार्थबोधः यावद्दृढीभवेत् ।
श्मादिसहितः तावद् अभ्यसेत् श्रवणादिकम् । ।

You can understand अहम्ब्रह्मेतिवाक्यार्थबोधः - बोधः means knowledge; the knowledge of वाक्यार्थम् - the message of this statement अहम्ब्रह्म. So अहम्ब्रह्मेतिवाक्यार्थबोधः - but the knowledge we receive by analyzing and receiving this knowledge is not enough. He says यावद्दृढीभवेत् - until that ज्ञानम् becomes दृढज्ञानम्, don't be satisfied by receiving this message of ऐक्यज्ञानम्. You have to continue thereafter also.

But for what purpose? - To convert ज्ञानम् into दृढज्ञानम् - knowledge into conviction. This conversion of ज्ञानम् into दृढज्ञानम् is the most important thing because without this conversion we will not be able to reap the benefit of knowledge. We are not pursuing ज्ञानम् for the sake of ज्ञानम्. ज्ञानम् is not the पुरुषार्थः. We are seeking ज्ञानम् only for the reaping the ज्ञान फलम् - of freedom from संसारा or ज्ञान फलम् of मोक्ष - that फल सिद्ध्यर्थम्, we are pursuing ज्ञानम्. And of ज्ञानम् will give फलम् only when it is in the form of दृढज्ञानम्. And, until ज्ञानम् becomes दृढज्ञानम्, a student will have to continue.

Continue what?

श्मादिसहितः तावद् - तावद् means so long; अभ्यसेत् - अभ्यसेत् means repetition; again and again and again, पौनःपुण्येन श्रवणादिकं कुर्यात्. आवृत्तिः असकृत् उपदेशात्. One has to continue the three fold exercises. अभ्यसेत् indicates repeatedly. It may not be just for weeks or months.

It may not be just for weeks or months. It may be for years or decades. It is a life long pursuit. Vedanta is not a crash program. Any crash programme is that which will crash the next day. Therefore, Vedanta is not a crash programme or a rash programme. It is a lifelong commitment. Therefore, अभ्यसेत् What? श्रवणादिकम् . श्रवणम् etc. etc. Means what? We are supposed to know श्रवणम् मननं and निधिध्यासनम् . And then he adds an adjective. While continuing this श्रवण मनन निधिध्यासनम् - not upto the end of the course. Course ends means your श्रवणम् मननं is over in this compound. But it has to continue thereafter also but when a person continues, he has to observe one more point. He uses the word शमादिसहितः.

We are supposed to be familiar with the word शमः. Generally what happens is that, the word which we would have heard once upon a time- in the beginning of the course, we study a text book whose name also we may forget called तत्त्व बोधः. And तत्त्व बोधः begins with four-fold qualification. We are supposed to remember that. And, there also the third one, शमादि षट्क संपत्तिः and in that third also what is the first one? शमः. So by using the word शमः आदिः, Shankaracharya conveys the important idea - we can never never ignore साधन चतुष्टय संपत्ति at any time, except at our own risk. Therefore साधन चतुष्टय संपत्ति, just because it is over with in तत्त्व बोधः, it is not over in our life. They must be maintained. Among them also the third one is very very very important. शमादि षट्क संपत्तिः and there also the first one. The first in the third i.e. शमः is extremely important and to convey that he uses the expression शमः आदि सहितः सन्, making sure that शमः is there, one has to follow श्रवणम् मननं and निधिध्यासनम् . When we fulfill both these conditions -condition no. 1 is शमादि सहितत्वं and condition no. 2 is श्रवणादि अभ्यासः. When these two are maintained and ONLY when these two are maintained, ज्ञानम् will be converted into दृढज्ञानम् . In fact, travel from अज्ञानम् to ज्ञानम् is relatively quicker. By the time you study one or two texts you know what is the message of Vedanta. In तत्त्व बोधः itself, the central message is conveyed. Therefore, अज्ञानम् to ज्ञानम् , the journey is relatively quick but the real arduous journey, long journey with full of pitfalls is the journey from ज्ञानम् to दृढज्ञानम् , प्रज्ञः to स्थिरप्रज्ञः. Do you feel familiar with the word स्थिरप्रज्ञः ? Somewhere it comes. Bhagawad Gita 2nd chapter - स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा. All those descriptions given are the descriptions not of a प्रज्ञः but they are all descriptions of स्थिरप्रज्ञः. If we feel we are missing those descriptions, it only shows that we have not effectively converted प्रज्ञः to स्थिरप्रज्ञः, ज्ञानम् to दृढज्ञानम् . Therefore, शमादिसहितः तावद् अभ्यसेत् श्रवणादिकम्.

Now the next question is "what do you mean by conversion of ज्ञानम् into दृढज्ञानम् " Does it mean that you take a cello tape and fix the ज्ञानम् or you will use a nut and bolt and rivet the ज्ञानम् ? What do you mean by making ज्ञानम् - दृढज्ञानम् ?

In fact when we convert ज्ञानम् into दृढज्ञानम्, we are not bringing about any change in the ज्ञानम् itself, because ज्ञानम् is always uniform and can never change or increase or decrease. अहम्ब्रह्म is अहम्ब्रह्म. There is no question of ब्रह्म, ब्रह्मतर, ब्रह्मतम - तरतम प्रत्यय- is neither possible in ब्रह्मन् nor in ज्ञानम् . So in this process we are not directly attacking the ज्ञानम् itself or transforming the ज्ञानम्, but we are removing certain obstacles, which obstruct the knowledge from doing its function. Knowledge is not able to give its benefit. Knowledge is made incapacitated. Knowledge is blunted or stifled by some other obstacles. Our aim is only removing the obstacles. When the obstacles are gone, unobstructed knowledge is called दृढज्ञानम् . So in Sanskrit सप्रतिबन्धक ज्ञानम् is अदृढ ज्ञानम्, अप्रतिबन्धक ज्ञानम् is दृढज्ञानम्.

You are Sanskrit students. सप्रतिबन्धकम् means what? प्रतिबन्धकेन सह वर्तते ः सह बहुव्रीहि . And अप्रतिबन्धकज्ञानम् means न विद्यते प्रतिबन्धकानि यस्मिन् or यस्य - नञ बहुव्रीहि. Therefore, you have to convert सप्रतिबन्धक ज्ञानम् into अप्रतिबन्धक ज्ञानम् – obstructed knowledge into unobstructed knowledge by removing the obstacles. And, therefore, श्रवण, मनन, निधिध्यासनं and साधन चतुष्टय संपत्ति only function in removing the प्रतिबन्धास. And as even the obstacles go away, the knowledge, which appeared dull before and not able to help us, that very seemingly dull knowledge “becomes” brighter and brighter. Knowledge doesn’t become brighter, the obstacle become thinner.

Generally I give the example – on a Pournami day you can see the moon in the sky during the evening itself. By 6’o clock or so you will be able to see. But you have to look for the moon. It is not bright enough. And as even the night falls, Sun sets and recedes more and more, you will find the moon is becoming brighter and brighter. And on a Pournami midnight once you come out, you need not look for the moon because you cannot miss the moon. Because, all over the sky the moon-light is there. Now between the evening brightness and the night brightness, what is the difference? Can you say moon has become brighter and brighter? There is no increase in the brightness of the moon. Only that, its brightness had been stifled, suppressed by the Sunlight. As even the Sun is setting, the obstacle of the bright Sunlight goes away, then the moon “becomes”- seemingly becomes brighter and brighter. Similarly, initial knowledge received from Gurukulam appears to be dull. We all look to remain the same. The difference is that the obstructions are not yet gone. The more we continue the obstacles recede, the knowledge becomes brighter and it is capable of removing संसारा.

Now the next question is that in the case of the moon the obstacle is the Sun or Sunlight. But in the case सप्रतिबन्धक ज्ञानम् , what are the obstacles which are stifling this knowledge? महावाक्यविचारः gives अपरोक्षज्ञानम् . ज्ञानम् is complete. We should always remember महावाक्यम् does not give परोक्षज्ञानम् . Only अवान्तर वाक्यम् can give परोक्षज्ञानम् . महावाक्यम् can give only अपरोक्षज्ञानम् because it says that “ब्रह्मन् you are”. And therefore, the ‘you’ given by the महावाक्यम् , when the student receives, 2nd person singular must be converted into first person. Teacher says “ब्रह्मन् you are”. And how should the student respond? He should not tell the teacher “ब्रह्मन् you are”. He has to convert ‘you’ into ‘I’.

Similarly, त्वम्पद is converted into अहम्पद. Thus अहम् ब्रह्मास्मि is अपरोक्षज्ञानम् ॥ अपरोक्षज्ञानम् is received at the time of महावाक्यविचारः itself. But that अपरोक्षज्ञानम् is सप्रतिबन्धक अपरोक्षज्ञानम् . It is अपरोक्षज्ञानम् but it is obstructed अपरोक्षज्ञानम् and therefore, incapable of delivering the goods.

...to be continued

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