

Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad

Extracts from Pujya Swamiji's Sandeepany Gurukulam talk 1976.

*Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam Yat kiñca jagatyām jagat
Tena tyaktena bhujīthā, mā grdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam*

Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam – all that you see here, idam, Īśvarena vāsyam, this world is covered by Īśvara, vāsyam means, may this world be enveloped by your knowledge that the world is pervaded by Īśvara, Īśvara buddhyā. I see, hear, smell, taste and touch the world. That means I know the world in a five-fold way to begin with. Yat kiñca jagatyām jagat. - In this world of time and space, jagat, anything that is there, sentient or insentient, inert or conscious, all worlds, seven-up and seven-down, that is called 'this.' Anything that is other than you is referred by 'this' as opposed to aham 'I'. That is true of this physical body of ours. But our response to the world is as though 'this' body is 'I'. Sometimes I have 'my' sense and sometimes 'I' sense. But even 'this body' has to be perceived by 'I', so 'I' require no proof of existence. Everything other than 'I', my body, my sense perceptions, my thoughts are known by 'I' like even things other than my body are known by me. Then what is this 'I'? I told you, 'I' do not require proof or evidence, I am self-evident. Everything else that is 'idam' is evident to 'I'. But I impose problems of 'idam' on I, and that is 'atasmin tad buddhiḥ,' seeing something that is not there. Tasmin tadbuddhiḥ is knowledge. Atasmin tadbuddhiḥ is error. This is the essence of Vedanta, reality appreciation.

Even the various roles we play in life, father, son, employee and employer are taken as 'I.' What is to be understood is the role is played by me, I am not the role. All our experiences are variable but the 'I' is invariable. Even our thoughts are variable, between two thoughts, in that silence 'I' is. I exist and I am conscious. Coming back to what was referred to earlier all objects including the thoughts are covered by Īśvara, Īśvarena vāsyam. This can be explained by an example. Now look at any object, say, a pot. Pot is only a name, potness is an attribute, pot is not the object; the object, substantive, is clay. Clay again is only a name, molecules are the object, molecule is only a name, atom is the object, like this when we reduce, finally we end up with the conscious being 'I' the observer of all the concepts leading to a pot, being the only existent. This analysis we can do to all objects including our thoughts. 'Vācarambhanam vikāro nāmadheyam, mṛttiketyeva satyam.' The conscious being is nirviśeṣam Brahman, the truth of 'I'. So 'I' covers everything, the substantive of everything, Īśāvāsyam, the sat of everything. So the 'I' the conscious being, Brahman, the svarūpa of Īśvara is mistakenly appropriated to be the possessor of body, putra, other objects, thoughts, aham kartā, aham bhoktā iti jagatyām jagat; jagatyām, in this changing world of flux, all the time moving.

So all idam has been explained as Īśāvāsyam, the satyam of that is sat 'I'. The truth of aham is also 'I'. Then what is sarvam, sarvam is vikāro nāmadheyam, name and form, useful for vyavahāra, is always variable, and is referred by the reality word mithyā, anirvacanīyam, neither existent as substantive, sat nor non-existent and useful like even a pot.

If we analyse everything around us, there is in-built knowledge, order, connectivity among everything known and unknown. As explained, this knowledge alone is manifested as name and form, word and meaning. This all-knowledge, all śakti, māyayā appearing as all elements, pañca bhūta, all elementals and forces, mithyā being their reality, abide in the conscious being.

The māyā śakti, the avidyā, the lack of recognising māyā śakti and the consequent misplaced understanding of 'I' and mine and the capacity for discriminative understanding to see the reality of satyam and mithyā, all are already given. But the duḥkha is because of misappropriation of what is not 'I' as 'I' and the resultant sense of loss of what is assumed as mine, my body, my possessions, etc.

So the reality of creation, what is referred to as manifestation in the śāstra is mithyā. For eg, time is a great mithyā, if you analyse what is present, it reduces itself to further present, further present,.... reduces to 'now' which is free of 'time' as a unit. So what's time, mithyā, neither existent as measurable unit nor non-existent because we do refer in our vyavahāra, time, past present and future. Likewise space and the rest of the pañca bhūtas are mithyā non-separate from the sat, the conscious being, aham (I), Brahman – sat, cit (all-knowledge) anantam (limitless). The Lord that is invoked in the temple is combination of pañca bhūtas.

Ākāśa is worshipped in Chidambaram, vāyu is worshipped in Kalahasti, agni is worshipped in Tiruvannamalai, water is worshipped in Tiruvanaikoil, Earth is worshipped in Kanchipuram as a Liṅga, formless form, pṛthivī, an ant-hill like. A mountain, river, a tree, all are worshipped as Lord. It is an appreciation of all that is here is the Lord. So the whole creation is Īśāvāsyam....jagatyām jagat. Further, to comprehend the possibility of everything around us, the jagat both by knowledge and in terms of material being the same conscious being, sat, Swamiji explains by the model of dream wherein the materials, events and all activities, the kartā and bhoktā are all nothing but me, the dreamer. When you get up from the sleep where in you experienced the dream, you are able to appreciate that the dreamer, all the materials and all activities and the creation thereof, the time and space in the dream, all are nothing but me, the conscious being. By the same logic, all experience, materials, śakti, forces, events, etc in the waking are all nothing but the same conscious being, sat misappropriated māyayā, avidyayā as 'I' and mine, kartā, bhokta, etc, and the resultant sukha, duḥkha.

Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā, mā ḡrdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam

Tena kāraṇena, by that reason, the reason being one Īśvara alone, there is no 'I' body, my things, wealth, etc, so tyaktena bhuñjīthā, that knowledge of oneness, there is only one conscious being, by that knowledge, by clear understanding of this truth, let this knowledge be nourished by renouncing the ignorance, avidyā, which is the product of māyā, and all the products of avidyā, so all being in the realm of Īśvara, our life is one of being managing trustee of what is given, even our minds. Let this understanding not be vitiated by our appropriating what is not 'I'. Swamiji by an example of a single-bedroom apartment in a multi-storey building in Mumbai, explains for understanding what the flat owner possesses.

All the four walls, the ceiling and the floor are equally owned by other neighbours. He has to clearly understand what he does not own, the land, the other flats in the building, the common areas, etc. Then only he can play his role of being the owner of the apartment properly. mā ḡrdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam, anybody's wealth, covet not. Nobody owns anything, everything being Īśvara. There is not anything to covet, let that vision of your being everything as a conscious being be appreciated, you are not the owner of any given thing, let that vision not be vitiated. The upaniṣad raises the ākṣepa, kasya sviddhanam, or advises not to appropriate.

Gandhiji used to say, that even if all the scriptures of the world were to disappear, this one verse will retain all the wisdom that is necessary.

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