

Ātmānaṁ ced vijānīyāt

PujyaSwamiji's transcribed talk

This is the fourth issue of the serial article, continued from previous issue.

*In Sanskrit we have three words qualifying knowledge: *pratyakṣa*, direct knowledge; *parokṣa*, indirect knowledge and *aparokṣa*, neither direct nor indirect knowledge, that is, immediate knowledge. Having talked about *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa*, now *aparokṣa* topic is started....*

We have another type of knowledge that is peculiar, which is neither direct nor indirect. When I say that knowledge is not direct, it becomes, naturally, indirect. Suppose, I say it is also not indirect; in the negation of indirect knowledge, I negate both. So, it is neither *pratyakṣa* nor *parokṣa*. It becomes *aparokṣa-jñāna*, immediate knowledge, knowledge that does not require either direct or indirect means of knowledge.

Now, let us take *ātman*, 'I' the self. Is 'I' *pratyakṣa* to you? Is it an object seen by your eyes or heard by your ears? No. It is not an object because 'I' is the self, who uses the eyes and the ears. Naturally the self cannot be an object of the senses. Therefore, it is not *indriya-pratyakṣa*.

Someone says, "You must look within yourself and know the *ātman*." Who is to know the 'I' *ātman*? If I have to know the *ātman* other than the one who is present now here, then that becomes *anātman*. *Ātman* cannot be *sākṣi-pratyakṣa* because *ātman* is *sākṣī*. Therefore, *ātman* is neither *indriya-pratyakṣa* nor *sākṣi-pratyakṣa*.

If *ātman* is not *pratyakṣa*, does it become *parokṣa*? If it does, it means you are inferring the *ātman*. You may say, "I infer that I am." "Why?" "Because I am married. The logic is that no woman will marry a nonexistent being. Because I remain married, I must be existent." No one infers his or her existence like this. 'I am' is not born of inference; it is 'me' who makes use of the means of knowledge called inference in order to arrive at knowledge.

Inference is a kind of thinking process, with the help of which you are able

to understand certain connections between two different things. When you are walking on the road and hear the sound of a particular horn, you move to the left because you know a scooter is coming behind. You can infer the type of vehicle by the difference in the sounds. When a truck comes, it makes another sound. You do not turn back to see what is coming in order to move aside. You know that by the time you turn back you will be knocked down. So, you have the knowledge of the connection between various sounds and the vehicles that make the sounds. The knowledge of the connection between two things is the basis for inference. This is *vyāpti-jñāna*, invariable concomitance. The invariable concomitance means that if one thing is there, the other thing must invariably be there. If you see the smoke, there must invariably be fire. Fire must be there or must have been there. The fire might have gone, but still there can be smoke. Therefore, we use the phrase 'must have been there'. Fog is not smoke. It looks like smoke but it is not smoke. Fog does not come from fire, whereas smoke always comes from fire. The source of smoke is fire. When one is there the other must be there. Only then is an invariable concomitance established, which could be used to infer fire when there is smoke. We extensively use *vyāpti-jñāna* in our day-to-day life to make a lot of inferences.

Ātman, the *sākṣin* is the one who makes use of inference based on sensory data. The *sākṣin* exists even before perception and inference. Before perception I am there. Before making an inference I am there. Therefore, the knowledge 'I am' is born of neither *pratyakṣa* nor *parokṣa*. It is also not born of *śabda*, words. You do not say 'I exist' because somebody told you so. Suppose, somebody else comes and says, "You do not exist" you do not become non-existent. So, *ātman*, 'I' is not *parokṣa* either by inference or by words.

The self-evident, 'I' is *nitya-aparokṣa*, always evident. Being self-evident, *ātman* never becomes out of mind. Out of mind is out of sight, but *ātman* never becomes out of mind because it is always there. The mind may be

awake or it can go to sleep or it can dream. The mind can come and go, and it has various forms of thinking. You know all the conditions of your mind. In all the various forms of thinking, in all the three states of experience, *ātman*, 'I,' always is.

With reference to the various conditions of your mind you can say, "I am a waker, I am a dreamer, I was a sleeper." You say in the morning at least, "I slept well," which reveals that 'I am' is there in sleep also. The distinguishing feature of sleep is that the mind is not there. Neither there is the experience of this body, nor the experience of this world. But you cannot say, "I was not there in sleep." If you do, how do you know you were not there? There must be a witness to point out 'I was not there'. Unless you were there, you cannot say, "I was not there." When you say, "I was not there", all that you mean is your mind was not there. Therefore, I am there very much in sleep since I am able to narrate the experience later in the waking state.

In dream, the mind was there, but this body was not there, this room was not there, this time and place were not there, all the people here were not there. It was a different time, space and situation in dream, which is why it is called dream; otherwise that also would become a waking state. You are dead to your physical body and physical environment in the dream. You create a world of your own. The mind was there without your having any say over it. This is the dream state. But *ātman* was there in dream, which is why you are able to narrate your dream experiences also. Similarly, in the waking state, characterized by the presence of the physical body and the physical environment, *ātman* is very much there.

Therefore, *ātman*, 'I' never becomes *parokṣa*. Nor is it an object of *pratyakṣa*. Yet it is evident, and therefore, it is *aparokṣa*. What is self-evident alone is *aparokṣa*. There is only one thing like the self; everything else is not self and becomes evident to the self. *Ātman* alone is *nitya-aparokṣa*. Everything else is either *pratyakṣa* or *parokṣa*.

Now, suppose somebody comes and tells you, “You must dive deep within yourself and discover the *ātman*.” Deep within what? Who is to dive? I am the one who goes about diving. We are talking about this ‘I am’. This *nitya-aparokṣa-ātman* is referred to in this *mantra* as ‘*ayam pūruṣaḥ*, this person’ who is immediately known, who is ever evident.

This person takes himself to be varieties of things. ‘I am’ itself does not have any problem. If you stop there, there is no problem. But then, adding a lot of things after ‘I am’ is the problem. Suppose a person gives his name, ‘I am Subramanya’. That name is a loaded name. Subramanya is also the name of the Lord. But this local Subramanya, also known as Subbu, is heavily loaded with sorrows, tragedies and also facts redounding to his credit. He says, “I am the father of five daughters, Swamiji. Three daughters are yet to be married.” You can feel the load from the very tone in which he talks. This Subbu is loaded with all his biography, his *gotra*, lineage, his family problems, including the biography of his grandfather and great grandfather. The connections are loaded. Everything is okay up to ‘I am’. The ‘so and so’ stands for a number of things, said and unsaid. There are a lot of things one cannot say aloud. Therefore, it is a loaded ‘so and so’.

Naturally, one is necessarily led to take oneself to be a *saṁsārin*. In other words, ‘I am a *kartr*, a doer; I am a *bhoktr*, experiencer, of the results of my action now and also later; I am a *martya*, a mortal’—these are all the conclusions one has about oneself as a *saṁsārin*. The person also believes in the *śāstra*, and therefore he further thinks, “I am someone who is distinct from the body, who will survive the body and go to other worlds later and enjoy the results of action. I hope I will go to heaven. At least for some time I hope I will remain there.” Another person who does not believe in the *śāstra* says, “I am only this much. I am all the cells and particles only. All the cells just put together on this bonal frame, I am.” This is the conclusion.

If this conclusion is true, then there is nothing to know. However, we cannot accept that this conclusion is true; there are valid reasons for it. That is

the reason why when there is an announcement ‘Swami Dayananda is talking about the self’ I find at least a hundred people sitting even in Stockholm. They do not know anything about me, they have not seen me or heard me before, yet I find the people sitting there listening to me talk about the self!

I do not know you. How can I talk about you? I am not telling you ¹*nādi-jyotiṣa* or anything. I am addressing an audience. In fact, you are the one who has to talk about yourself to me. When you come to listen about yourself, it means you have a doubt. The doubt is ‘I do not think I know myself; that *ātman* is not known to me.’ Everybody has this problem. Everybody has an insight about the self that it is different from what one takes oneself to be. It is not wishful thinking. You may want the self to be different because you cannot accept the one that is there. So, you may wish that the self be different from what you take yourself to be now. No. It is not wishful thinking. It is real thinking born of an insight.

There is an insight about yourself, the self that is more than you think yourself to be. You have some moments in your life when you find you are totally different, you are totally acceptable to yourself. Those moments of joy, moments of happiness, give rise to an insight, ‘I can be more than what I am.’ You want to be that one always. When you hear that someone is going to talk about the self, you always feel like listening. Therefore, there is a case for the existence of self-ignorance.

...to be continued

¹ *Nādi-jyotiṣa* is a form of astrology where a person, through one’s thumb impression, gets complete details of his or her life; believed to be from ancient palm-leaf manuscripts.