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Our preoccupation with the experiences themselves and the details of the experiences tends to absorb all our attention, and what truly needs to be attended to escapes our attention. What we should be doing is paying more attention to the changeless thread that connects and informs all the changing experiences. The Buddha said that everything is momentary, *sarvaṃ kṣaṇikam*. Vedānta says that if you see things to be momentary, to change constantly, there must be a changeless entity with reference to which can you say there is change. There must be a point of reference against which you can measure the distance or change. Suppose you are indifferent to the changes, it is called having dispassion, *vairāgya*.

Why is *vairāgya* so important in gaining this knowledge? It is important because a *virakta* or dispassionate person is not bothered about what does not matter. What happens in any of the three states does not matter. Some people spend a long time thinking about and analyzing their dreams; their lives are centered around dreams. They have all kinds of experiences, good and bad, and they seek consultation to understand what these experiences might mean. Instead, the real value of the dream is that we can apply its lessons to develop a proper attitude toward the waking world. The experience of the dream helps us understand the reality of waking; just as we can be indifferent to the dream, knowing it to be *mithyā*, we can be indifferent to the waking state as also being *mithyā*.

The Upaniṣads describe the dream not so much to explain the details of the process or mechanism of dreams, as to explain the unreality of dreams. When you wake up from a dream, you know that it was just a projection, an appearance, and unreal. It is said that when the dream experience happens, the *jīva* is located in a very fine nerve, which is finer than even a strand of hair; that is where all the experiences of the dream take place. There is no room there for the mountains and trees that you see in the dream. One reason why the dream cannot be real is that

there is no room to accommodate the dream objects, and the second reason is that, when we dream, the dream takes place within ourselves, although, at that time, we think that the dream world is outside us. When we are experiencing a dream, we think that the trees and mountains are outside, that they are other than us. Yet, when we wake up, are they available for us to see, or do they merge back into us? Before we began to dream, we alone were; when we wake up, again, we alone are. However, in between, there has been an entire dream-world. Where did the dream-world arise? It arose from us alone, because we alone were before the dream. Where does it merge? It merges into us alone, again because we alone remain after the dream. Therefore, in between, it is us and no one or nothing else. When we wake up we realize that the dream was within, and that the appearance of the dream as having been outside of us is false. The dream is a projection, it is *mithyā*. The dream illustrates the concept of *mithyā* very beautifully. The author of the Pañcadaśī¹ says that the appearance of an object that is nonexistent is *mithyā*, such as an elephant seen in a dream.

The experience of deep sleep helps us understand *mokṣa* and is cited to explain *mokṣa*. In deep sleep, there is an experience of *ānanda* even without any external source of happiness being present. This shows that the self is of the nature of *ānanda*, which is experienced when all identification is consciously given up. There is only an awareness of one being *ānanda*, ever-free and ever-liberated. However, the difference between deep sleep and *mokṣa* is that there is the darkness of ignorance in one and the light of knowledge in the other.

Once it is clear that the dream is *mithyā*, an appearance of what is really not there, we can examine the waking state. In what way is the waking state different from a dream? Assume that I was talking to an audience in my dream, just as I am now. All of you were there in my dream, sitting here amidst all these beautiful trees and mountains, and I was sharing the teaching of the Kaivalya Upaniṣad with

¹ Pañcadaśī 2.70

you. There was a similar setup of subject-object duality in the dream, just as there is now. So how is the waking state any different? You might say that dream-objects are fleeting, while the objects of the waking state are stable. However, from the standpoint of the reality, what is the setup in the dream? It is the subject and object setup. What is the setup during the waking hours? It is the same subject-object setup. If the whole dream-world is *mithyā*, the subject-object setup of the dream-world itself is also *mithyā*. Please understand this.

Wherever there is a subject and object setup, it is *mithyā*. The subject-object setup obtains in the waking state, as much as in the dream state, and so it is also *mithyā*. We can therefore say that just as the dream is *mithyā* the waking state is also *mithyā*, and let it go. Once it is understood as *mithyā*, it is possible to let go of it. As long as waking is thought to be real, it will persist as something real and hang on. That is why understanding *mithyā* is so important.

If the waking-world is understood as *mithyā*, it will not bother us any more. We cannot entertain likes or dislikes towards that which is *mithyā*. We cannot react to *mithyā*. We can only react to something real. For instance, if we are hungry and see an apple on the dining table, it attracts us. Our mouths water, because we love the apple. When we approach it and pick it up, only to discover that it is a waxen apple or a wooden apple, we put it back. Now that apple doesn't matter to us. Even if someone else takes it, it will not matter. Where, until then, we might have waited for a chance to grab and eat it before someone else did, now its being on the table doesn't evoke any reaction. In the knowledge of its being *mithyā*, there is no reaction. Only as long as it is real can anything cause attachment or aversion, or any other reaction.

Vedānta teaches that the entire waking world is *mithyā*. So we need not be bothered about it. Let it be where it is; let us be where we are. All emotional attachment for the world then goes away because all the objects are *mithyā*. How much need can there be for holding on to what ultimately is *mithyā*? One might remain an emotional person, but is not controlled by emotions any more. Once such clari-

ty is gained, the individual starts viewing the waking-world just as he or she would view the dream-world upon awakening from the dream.

As the Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotra says, “The universe, like a city seen in a mirror, is within oneself. One sees the world as though it is created outside, while, all along, it remains in the substratum of the self, just as in a dream.”² When we wake up from a dream, we realize that the dream-world was a manifestation of ourselves and all duality had resolved into the self. Similarly, when we wake up to the reality of our true nature, we realize that all that exists is one consciousness. The one nondual self alone is manifest as the entire waking world. The entire variety of the universe has its origin in the self, the true nature of the *jīva* that sports in the three ‘cities’ of waking, dream, and deep sleep. Just as the dream-world arises from the self, so also, the waking world arises from the self. Therefore, the self, which sports or transmigrates from one state to the other state, is the substratum of all experiences or the substratum of the entire universe.

Ādhāram, substratum; *ānandam*, joy; *akhaṇḍabodham*, indivisible consciousness. What is the nature of the self? What is the nature of the ‘I’ that pervades all experiences and informs all experiences? It is the connecting thread; it is the substratum, the *ādhāra*, of all experiences. It is *ānanda*, wholeness and happiness, *akhaṇḍa*, undivided, and *bodham*, of the nature of knowledge. The ‘I’ is thus the undivided awareness, which is boundless, of the nature of *ānanda*, and the common denominator across every experience. Every experience is different from every other experience. The commonality of all experience is *asti bhāti priya, sat-cit-ānanda*. It shines as awareness and *akhaṇḍabodha*, undivided consciousness.

The objects of consciousness are divided, but consciousness itself is undivided, boundless. This consciousness is the true nature of the self, the common denomin-

² विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं

पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।

viśvaṁ darpaṇadṛśyamānanagarītulyaṁ nijāntargataṁ

paśyannātmani māyayā bahirivodbhūtaṁ yathā nidrayā (DS1)

ator, the undeniable and non-negatable substratum. Everything else is changing and, therefore, subject to being negated or displaced and excluded by everything else. It is like gold, which is not excluded by any ornament. Whatever is never excluded, denied or negated by every experience is *ādhāra*, *ānanda*, *akhaṇḍabodha*. From that alone do all the three worlds emerge and into that alone do all the three worlds merge. On what platform does the play of waking, dream, and deep sleep take place? It happens on the platform of the self that is the substratum, the undivided knowledge, *ānanda* or happiness.

Here the three states of experience are described with reference to the individual self. However, the Upaniṣad says, understand that you are not the individual self, you are the universal self. In what way is the individual self also the universal self?

The next *mantra* describes this:

एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।

खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥ १५ ॥

*etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca
kham vāyurjyotirāpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhāriṇī*

एतस्मात् - from this जायते - is born प्राणः - the life force मनः - the mind सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च - and all the organs खम् - space वायुः - air ज्योतिः - fire आपः - water पृथिवी - the earth विश्वस्य - of all धारिणी - support

From this is born the life force, the mind, all organs, space, air, fire, water, and the earth that supports all. (15)

This verse continues the biography of the *jīva*, the one that goes through the waking, dream, and deep sleep experiences. From him is born the cosmic *prāṇa*, the vital air, the cosmic mind, which knows and creates, all the sense organs, and the five elements of *ākāśa*, space, *vāyu*, air, *jyotiḥ*, fire or light, *āpaḥ*, the waters, and *pṛthivī*, earth. From the self that is *saccidānanda*, *ādhāra*, *ānanda*, and *akhaṇḍabodha*, the substratum, undivided happiness or wholeness and awareness, is born the entire universe beginning from *prāṇa* or *hiranyagarbha*. Another word for

iraṇyagarbha is *sūtrātmā*. *Sūtra* means the thread that connects everything, and *prāṇa* is the *sūtrātmā* because *prāṇa* is the *kriyā-śakti*, the cosmic energy pervading the entire universe of sentient and insentient beings, and responsible for the vitality and activity of the entire universe. *Manah* here stands for the cosmic mind, which is the totality of *jñāna-śakti*, the power of knowledge, and *icchā-śakti*, the power of will.

The entire universe is born from this self. Yet the poor *jīva* feels helpless all the time. He feels he has no control over anything. In the waking state, he feels helpless because of what the world does to him, beginning from the spouse to everybody else. In the dream also he is helpless, and, in deep sleep, he does not know what he experiences anyway. This helpless, hapless creature is the substratum of this whole universe! He is the self of the whole universe. From him is the universe beginning with *prāṇa* born, by him is it sustained, and unto him does it finally resolve. Therefore, the one who is the self of the three states of experience is in fact the self of the entire universe.

We see the famous *mahā-vākya* or great statement, *tat tvam asi*, that thou art, being unfolded in these *mantras*. The *mahā-vākya* reveals the identity between the *jīva* and *brahman*. The *jīva* is indicated by the *tvam-pada* or the word 'you' or 'thou', *brahman* is indicated by the *tat-pada* or the word 'that,' and *asi*, which indicates 'are' or 'art,' indicates the identity between the two. The *tvam-padārtha* or 'you,' was described in the verses that examined the three states of experience. The *tat-padārtha* or the cause of the creation was described in the fifteenth verse, which we have just discussed. The next verse, the sixteenth, declares the fact that both of them are the same.

यत्परं ब्रह्म सर्वात्मा विश्वस्यायतनं महत् ।

सूक्ष्मात्सूक्ष्मतरं नित्यं तत्त्वमेव त्वमेव तत् ॥ १६ ॥

yatparam brahma sarvātmā viśvasyāyatanam mahat
sūkṣmātsūkṣmataram nityam tattvameva tvameva tat

To be continued...