

# Ātmānam ced vijānīyāt

PujyaSwamiji's transcribed talk

*This the second issue of the serial article*

The self does not become evident to you by operating a means of knowledge. I am sitting here and talking to you and you see me and hear me. Therefore, I am evident to you. I do not become evident to you unless you oblige with your eyes and ears. If the eyes close and you go to sleep, then I am not there for you. I will be talking, but then, you are gone. You need not even go to sleep. If your mind slips away, that is enough. If the mind slips into another pattern of thinking, then I, the Swami, is gone for the time being. The Swami does not become self-evident to you. Swami is evident because there is an operation of a *pramāṇa*. Therefore, the Swami is *pramāṇasiddha*, established by a means of knowledge. The Swami exists in this form because you see with your eyes.

Similarly, anything that happens pertaining to your physical body becomes evident to you. You look at your body and say, "This is how my body is." What occurs in your mind also becomes evident to you. You look at your mind and say, "This is what my mind is thinking." Therefore, your body is evident to you, your mind is evident to you, but the self does not require any means of knowledge to become evident. If the self requires a means of knowledge to become evident, then to whom is it evident? There should be another self because any evidence is to the self. If the self has to become evident to another self, I am talking of that self only. It is the self to whom everything becomes evident. That self is self-evident.

The self alone is self-evident and is referred to by the word 'I'. The moment you say, 'I am' in the 'I am' the self is self-evident. That is the reason why when you knock at the door of your house, and somebody from inside asks, 'Who is that?' you immediately respond, 'It is me.' What comes first is only the self. Thereafter, come other responses like husband, brother and so on.

*Ātmā svataḥ siddhaḥ*, the self is evident by itself. Therefore, you can commit a mistake about that *ātman*. To commit a mistake, all you require is, the locus of mistake must be evident and there must be ignorance. Without the operation of any means of knowledge *ātman* is available for you to commit a mistake. To correct the mistake, you have to look into the self.

To look into the self you have to have a means of knowledge. How are you to look into yourself? You can look into your mind by looking into your psychology. You can look into your past, dig up something from the past, pull out a lot of skeletons that are there in the cupboard within, and find out what exactly is the reason for your getting scared. All these are possible because they are within the area of your objectification. You can always have access to that. Here, however, we are talking of the one who is looking into the mind. How do you look into that self?

One person said, “If all thoughts go away, the buoyant self will emerge.” The self is already evident. It does not need to come out. When you say, “I am sad, I am a *samsārin*,” the self is already evident as a *samsārin*, which is a mistake. In the vision of the *śruti*, the self is Brahman. To know about the truth of the self you require a means of knowledge.

A human being is capable of inference and perception. A cow is also capable of inference and perception. A cow perceives and makes an inference. If you beckon a cow with a bunch of grass in your hand, it makes an inference that you are a desirable person. You beckon the cow and it thinks for a minute, and then majestically it turns towards you. During that time there is a lot of reasoning going on there. Then, it is caught between the horns of dilemma: ‘Should I go or not?’ Then it just decides to go. If you drop the bunch of grass, instead, pick up a stick and raise your hand with an angry look, the cow stops and then again estimates the situation, judges and makes an inference—‘This person is not desirable because he has a stick in his hand and I had been beaten before with the stick; it was not pleasant’. So it runs away from you.

Every animal has perception and inference which it uses for survival. Even bugs have them. A human being has better perception because of improved sense organs through the addition of various instruments. He has better inference. But still, he is equivalent to a cow in the area of perception and inference. A cow does not know itself. That the cow does not have self-knowledge is very well known. It does not even know its own color and form. It does not have that kind of self-judgment, though it has a certain kind of identity. It does not have a self-identity leading to a self-judgment, however. Where, then, is the question of self-knowledge? Therefore, with reference to *ātman* it is ignorant. A scientist also can be ignorant of the self. He may be an expert in handling perception and inference, in handling various means of knowledge at his disposal. He can be a great intellectual, yet he may not know the *ātman*.

To know the *ātman* you require another means of knowledge different from perception and inference. They are the Vedas—a body of knowledge. At the end of each of the four Vedas, the self is unfolded. Therefore, the end section of the Veda is called Vedanta. Vedanta is just a positional name; it is not the end of knowledge. This is clear from the fact that we use the plural also for the word 'Vedanta' because there are four Vedas.

Vedanta is a means of knowledge. The self is the subject matter for Vedanta. Vedanta is not a theory; it is a means of knowledge, like the eyes. The *śabda*, words, of Vedanta are a means of knowledge. That is how we look upon them. You cannot dispute it either; there is a reason for that. Vedanta itself says that it is a means of knowledge. If it is a means of knowledge, then, how can you prove that it is not a means of knowledge unless you operate it? You can disprove it only by using it. When you use it, it proves itself to be a means of knowledge.

If Vedanta is a means of knowledge for the self, then we have to know what it says. Does it say that *ātman* is *śūnya*, emptiness; does it say it is *kṣaṇika-vijñāna*, flickers of consciousness, does it say that body is the *ātman*, does it say that the *buddhi* is the *ātman* or does it say ignorance is the *ātman*? Each one of these views is claimed as being said by Vedanta. We have to prove that it does not say any one of these. Now, it is a question of *mīmāṃsā*, analysis, to find out what Vedanta does say. We look into the *vivakṣā*, what it wants to say.

In this analysis, we look into the whole thing—what is said in the beginning, what is said at the end, what is often repeated, what is glorified and so on to know exactly what it wants to say. It has nothing to do with any opinion. It implies analysis of words that are the basis for clear knowledge.

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1 Vedāntāḥ. ( Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad Bhāṣyam 1.4.10)

2 There are *ṣaḍliṅgas* - six pointers, to find out the *tātparya* - purport of a text: *upakrama-upasaṁhārau*, what is said at the introduction and conclusion; *abhyāsa*, what is repeatedly stated; *apūroṭā*, what is not covered by other means of knowledge; *phala*, that for which result is mentioned; *arthavāda*, that which is glorified; and *upapatti*, reasoning.