

Ātmānam ced vijānīyāt

PujyaSwamiji's transcribed talk

With the December 2019 issue, the article 'Sraddha-bhakti-jananayogad-avaihi' has been concluded. From this issue a new serial based on the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad Manta 4.4.12 is being started. This is the transcribed talk of Pujya Swamiji. --Editor

Introduction

Ātmānam ced vijānīyāt ayam asmīti pūruṣaḥ kim icchan kasya kāmāya śarīram anusañjvaret. This is a mantra from the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad.¹ Why should we inquire into this mantra?

In the vision of the *upaniṣads*, the self is to be understood because in its vision the self is the whole. It is obvious, the *upaniṣads* recognize the mistaken notion of the self on the part of the self-confused, self-judging human being. So, this misconstrued notion of the self will go only in the wake of knowledge. This knowledge has to be well ascertained so that there is no vagueness or doubt.

Even when one is corrected of one's mistake by another, there is no certainty that the corrected view is the truth. One mistake can be replaced by another. For some people everything seems to be right. Somehow, both the error and knowledge are integrated; it seems to be a synthetic approach. The synthesis is due to lack of clarity. Really speaking, there is no knowledge here. Everything becomes acceptable to some people.

Any school of thought is worth your consideration if it is consistent. However, you cannot say Vedanta is another school of thought. In academic institutions they will present what the different schools of thought say about *ātman*. One school of thought presents *ātman* as inert, another presents *ātman* as *śūnya*, zero, yet another presents *ātman* as flickers of consciousness, the fourth one considers *ātman* as *paramāṇu*, a particle, and the fifth one considers the very physical body as *ātman*. Then, they say that there is another school of thought called Vedanta, which says *ātman* is *pūrṇa*, whole. This is how academicians will present Vedanta as another school of thought. You have to nod your head for all of them. It is the academic approach. The vision of Vedanta is not subject to negation. Therefore it is not another school of thought.

1 Brhadāranyakopaniṣad 4.4.12.

The very fact that these contenders discuss the *ātman* variously, reveals that none of them are right, since they mutually negate each other. They are daring into an area where they have no access. *Ātman* is available for you only to commit an error. It is not available at all to correct the error. So, when there is clear knowledge about *ātman*, you will not nod your head for every school of thought. What is wrong is wrong. A *doṣa*, defect, should become very evident. A *paṇḍita-lakṣaṇa*, defining characteristic of a *pandit*, is *doṣa-darśana*, seeing only the mistakes. If you know a given language and if there is a mistake in somebody's writing, you can detect it as you read. It does not reveal a disposition of fault-finding, but only a capacity to know what is right. Fault-finding is not a proper disposition and swallowing everything is also not a good disposition to have in learning. If I advance fallacious reasoning, you should be able to understand the fallacy in the reasoning. It means you are alert. It does take such a mind to understand anything.

Knowledge is not accommodative at all. You can accommodate an ignorant person, but you cannot accept and follow what he says on the subject matter about which he is ignorant. If a person is ignorant of a given thing, it does not mean he has committed a sin. There is nothing wrong in being ignorant. People think it is wrong to be ignorant or it is below one's dignity to be ignorant. That is not correct. When you are ignorant of something, it is better to own it. If someone knows, he or she happens to know. If someone does not know, well, he or she does not happen to know; that is all.

Knowledge does not accommodate opinions because it is always true to the object of knowledge. Knowledge cannot be other than its object; it has to be in the same form as the object of knowledge. You do not have any choice in this. A flower is always a flower. Again if it is a rose, it is a rose; if it is small, well, it is small. If it is a red flower it is so, and not violet. It is not available for understanding differently. Knowledge is always true to the nature of the object. It does not lend itself to your sweet choice; you have to know the object as it is. Such knowledge is called *niścaya-jñāna*, clear knowledge. Once it is clear knowledge, then you do not need to improve it.

However, we always improve our knowledge. This improvement or addition or amendment is in the field of *aparā vidyā*, knowledge pertaining to various objects. The knowledge by which the self is known is *parā vidyā*. Everything else that you relate yourself to, that you objectify, is *anātman*. Knowledge of *anātman* is called *aparā vidyā*. It has no end because there is always scope for improving it. One cell is good enough to keep generations going. Generations of scientists can spend their lifetime on a flower. There are things under study which open up new disciplines of knowledge. In these days of specialization, people in different disciplines work on one given thing.

You can keep on falsifying what another person said because it is always subject to revision. You will never run out of subject matter for Ph.Ds. All you have to do is simply falsify what another person discovered and you get your Ph.D.

You always know more from the position of what you already know. It is the peculiar status of knowledge. It is a wonder how we really know. You cannot understand anything more than you know. How did you get to know something first? It is always a wonder. You can never see more than you know. But you are able to reach a situation from where you can see something more. Again, having reached this point, you can always go one step further. So, there seems to be a progression in *aparā vidyā*. Therefore, *aparā vidyā* has no last word.

This is not so with reference to *parā vidyā*, self-knowledge. Self-knowledge cannot be improved upon. In fact self-knowledge alone can be called knowledge because what cannot be improved upon is knowledge. I define knowledge as *abādhita*, what cannot be negated, what cannot be improved upon. Then, there is only one thing that will pass as knowledge, and that is self-knowledge.

I will prove it.


Self-knowledge is definite knowledge. You have different opinions about this self, holding the self to be other than what it is. You say, "I am a *saṁsārin*." '*Saṁsārin*' is a technical word. *Saṁsārin* does not mean a person who has wife and children. If so, you are liberated if you do not have wife and children. The one who finds himself or herself struggling—bound, subject to birth and death, *kartr*, a doer, *bhoktr*, an experiencer of the fruits of action—is called a *saṁsārin*. How do you commit this mistake of taking yourself as a *saṁsārin*?

You can always commit a mistake about an object that is available, and is in front of you. For instance, you can commit a mistake with reference to a rope that is in front of you, available for your perception. Wherever there is a possibility of knowledge, there is a possibility of error. That means wherever there is access for a means of knowledge, there can be an error. When a rope is available for direct perception, you can commit a mistake. Due to varieties of reasons, you can take the rope for a snake. The rope appears as a snake for you, without itself undergoing any change. This is what we call a mistake.

Similarly, the self must be available for me to commit a mistake. If I extrapolate from the rope-snake example, which means the self should be an object for me. If the self is available for me, in front, as an object, then I can commit a mistake. But the self is not available in front of me because the self is 'I'. How can 'I' commit a mistake?

That proves a point. Since, in the vision of the *śruti*, you have committed a mistake, you need to understand the whole situation differently. In order to commit a mistake the object need not be in front of you. Anything that is *prasiddha* or *siddha*, evident, ever present, is subject to an error. *Ātman*, the self, is evident. You cannot say the self is not evident. If you say, "I say that the self is not evident," then the one who says is the self, the 'I' which is self-evident. In this world there is only one thing that is self-evident and that is the self. Nothing else is self-evident.

.....to be continued



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Maha Sivaratri Puja

We welcome you to participate in the Maha Sivaratri Puja at the Gurukulam on Friday, February 21, 2020. We begin with the Nitya-Puja in the morning, which will be followed by Akhanda-nama-japa, Ekadasa-Rudrabhiseka Special Puja & Maha-arati in the evening.

PROGRAMME

<i>Nitya-Puja</i>	...	5-30 AM
<i>Akhanda-nama-japa</i>	...	8-00 AM to 1.00 PM
<i>Ekadasa-Rudrabhiseka</i>	...	4-00 PM
<i>Maha-arati</i>	...	7-30 PM
<i>Maha-Prasadam</i>	...	8-00 PM

*P.S. Please send your Puja Offering Rs.250/- to reach us on or before 20-02-2020. Use the form given below. Please make your Cheque or DD payable to Sruti Seva Trust, Coimbatore. Alternatively amount can be transferred for the credit of Sruti Seva Trust to Indian Overseas Bank, Chinnathadagam Branch, A/c. No. 064301000007129. IFS Code IOBA 0000643
In case of Electronic Transfer please intimate details over e-mail at office@arshavidya.in
You may also be one of the sponsors of the day by offering Rs. 5000/-or more.*

PUJA OFFERING

Enclosed is my offering for the Special Puja on the day of Maha Sivaratri on 21-02-2020

Name (IN BLOCK LETTERS)	Nakshatra	Gotra
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

} Rs. 250/-

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