

ATMAJNANA – ITS NATURE

Swami Shuddhabodhananda Saraswati (Mumbai) is teaching Mandukya Upanishad and Karika with Shankara bhashya since April 2018. LIVE Teaching is available on YouTube and Facebook. These classes are on every Sunday 05:25 P.M. to 06:25 P.M.

In the course of teaching the most important mantra 7 from Mandukya which contains unfoldment of *atma* in a unique way was being taught around April, 2019. The said *mantra* ends with a conclusion and exhortation '*sa atma, sa vijneyah*' (That is *atma*. Its *vijnana* has to be gained). A prominent question arises as to what is meant by '*vijneyah*' or *vijnana*? Bhashyakara has not commented on this word. Considering a lot of ambiguity and confusion regarding the exact nature (*svarupa*) of *atmajnana* or *Brahmajnana* this topic was discussed at a very great length. Vedanta is very precise about the goal to be accomplished and the means (*sadhana*) to be taken to. Beating around the bush cannot help. To ascertain the nature of *atmajnana* a lot of questions need to be answered on the guidelines of *shastra*. In view of the importance of the topic Sri Swamiji discussed them in detail with thorough scriptural corroboration in 15 sessions. Below this, quite a number of these questions are given. They will give an idea about thoroughness of analysis (*mimamsa*) adopted during the teaching. The analytical teaching will have answers to these questions at one place or other though not serially. In some cases the questions are not expressly asked though they are implied therein.

The questions are :

What is an experience? ; What is meant by the word experiential? ; What is the knowledge? ; Is there any relation between experience and knowledge? ; Is there a rule that an experience can never be the knowledge? ; Or is there a rule that the knowledge can never be experiential? ; Or is it that in some cases the knowledge is experiential and in the other cases it is not experiential? ; If so, what is the criterion?

What is a *pramana* (the means of knowledge?) ; Is there a rule that because *pramana* gives the knowledge, it can never be experiential? ; Is *pramana* independent or does it depend on some *saamagris* (pre-requisite?) ; Is Vedanta an independent means of knowledge? ; Or are there any other independent *pramanas*? ; Is a *pramana* infallible always in imparting the knowledge? ; Or does the *pramana* fail at times? ; If *pramana* fails, when is it so? ; What is *svatahpraamaanyam* ?

What is *pratyaksha* ? ; What is *paroksha*? ; What is *aparoksha*? ; What is the *aparoksha* entity? ; What is *aparoksha-jnana* ? ; Can the understanding of *shastra* be *aparoksha-jnana* ?

What is the distinction between *paroksha-jnana* and *aparoksha-jnana*? ; What is *aparokshanubhuti* ? ; What is *atmanubhava/Brahmanubhava* ? ; What are the implications of *atma* being *anubhava-svarupa* or self experiencing principle? ; Is there any distinction between *anubhava-svarupa atma* and *jnapti-svarupa atma* or self-evident knowledge principle *atma*? ; Are *sat, chit, anand* three distinct entities or it is one and the same entity/*atma*?; What is *triputi*? ; What entity enables them to come into existence? ; Is *triputi* an indispensable factor of experience or there can be experiences independent of *triputi*?

What is the meaning of the word mystic? ; Is Vedanta mystical? ; Can the knowledge of *atma* in its real nature be gained without being aware of it at least for a while? ; If one has to be aware of *atma* in its real nature in which state of mind it is possible? ; What is *Brahmasakshatkara*? ; Is *Brahmasakshatkara* a mere understanding of Vedantic scriptures? ; What is the *prajna* in *sthitaprajna* described in Bhagavadgita? ; What is *chittaprasada*?

What is the *prapancha-pravilapana*? ; When *mithatva* can be ascertained? ; Is the *darshana* of *satya-adhithana* necessary for *mithya-nischaya* ? ; Has *samadhi* any relevance in Vedanta? ; When can one be face to face as it were with *atma* in its real nature like seeing our face in the mirror? Is it possible? If yes, when or in which state of mind? What is *vivek-prajnasamadhi* ? What is *andha-samadhi*? What is the distinction between *vivek-prajnasamadhi* and *andha-samadhi*? Does *Bhagavadgita* speak of *Samadhi* ? Does *bhashyakara* Shankaracharya highlight the role of *samadhi* in Vedantic pursuit? ; What is *shodhita tvam* or 'I' in its real nature? ; When do *maha-vakyas* operate? ;What is the pre-requisite for *maha-vakyas* to operate? ;What is the *apavada* of *adhyasta prapancha* ? ; What is *moksha*? ; Is there freedom from birth and death in *moksha*?

Is *atmajnana* referred to in the *Paatanjala Yogasutras* ? ; Is there any alternate means to *Paatanjala ashtangayoga*? ; What is *aparayattabodha* ? ; What is *yogi pratyaksha* ? ; What sage Vasishtha says about the nature of *atmajnana*? ; Do the Upanishads speak of seven stages of *atmajnana* called *sapta-jnanabhumi*? ; Do the intensity or quality of *atmajnana* differ in different *lokas*? ; Which is the best *loka* to get the *atmajnana* from practical stand point?; Does the *chaitanya* nature, self-experiencing principle nature or self-evident knowledge principle *atma* cease to be there at any time and whereby self-experiencing experience of *atma* stops?

Does the self evident *anubhava-svarupa* or *jnapti-svarupa atma* depend on the presence or absence of *upadhi*? ; Is the *nitya Brahma nanda* experiential? ; Can the entity *ananta* / limitless be distinct from *paramananda/Brahmananda* Brahman? ; Has *Bhashyakara* Shankaracharya pinpointed where exactly *atma* in its real nature can be known? ; What is meant by *atma vijneyah* in the seventh mantra of *Mandukuopanishad*?

All such topics were discussed to ascertain the exact nature of *atmajnana-brahmajnana* with thorough corroboration of Vedanta *shastra*. All Samskrit passages were thoroughly explained in English. A thorough clarity regarding the nature of *atmajnana-brahmajnana* is essential pre-requisite of Vedantic pursuit. For the benefit of serious *mumukshus* and Vedantic teachers a set of 16 edited videos of this teaching is uploaded on YouTube (with the first one as a prelude).

Tune to :

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[Report by Raghunandan Bangalorekar]