

Ātmānaṁ ced vijānīyāt

Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Sarawati's transcribed talk

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

VIJĀNĪYĀT CET -- SUPPOSE HE KNOWS

The word 'cet, suppose' implies self-ignorance and self-confusion while the word 'vijānīyāt' tells us that *ātman* has to be known. The word 'cet' also indicates *ātma-vidyāyāḥ durlabhatvam*, the rarity of gaining self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is neither easy nor difficult. In fact, no knowledge is easy or difficult. Even the simple arithmetic of $1+1=2$, becomes difficult for a two-year-old child to understand because the child is not yet ready. You cannot do anything about it. You have to simply wait.

For self-knowledge there must be some preparation. If you want to learn calculus you must have some minimum knowledge of mathematics. If you do not have even arithmetic, there is no question of learning calculus. It is not that you are not qualified to learn anything, but you have to get prepared. You have to reach a point from where you can learn calculus.

Similarly, for self-knowledge you do require a qualification, which is not academic. It is maturity. Maturity implies the presence of *viveka*, discriminative understanding, and *vairāgya*, dispassion. *Viveka* and *vairāgya* are pointed out in a *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* mantra:¹ “*parīkṣya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇaḥ nirvedam āyāt nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena*, examining the experiences of life and ascertaining that freedom cannot be gained through action, a *vivekin* gets dispassion.”

Anything you experience here as a *karma-phala*, the result of your own action, is called *loka*. The type of *loka* is pointed out here by the word *karma-citān*, gathered by *karma*. *Parīkṣya* means analyzing the varieties of experiences that one undergoes in life. Having examined them, this *vivekin*, discerning person, accomplishes *nirveda* meaning *vairāgya*, dispassion. Dispassion is towards certain things and towards even the *lokas* here as well as *lokas* promised elsewhere.

¹ *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 1.2.12

Chāṇḍogyopaniṣad says:² “*tad yathā iha karma-jito lokah kṣīyate evameva amutra puṇya-jito lokah kṣīyate*, just as any field of experience gained here as a result of action is found to be lost in time, so too are the fields of experiences gained in other worlds as a result of *puṇya*, good actions.”

Any action that you do here is limited in nature. You cannot do a limitless action because, any action that you do is always done at a given time and place with limited instruments in a given manner for the purpose of gaining a given result. If you take one step forward, you can go only one step forward and not two steps. A step taken forward is only forward, not backward or sideways. Any result of action done is what is illustrated here. Once there is an illustration, there is also logic.

The logic is: any *karma-phala* is finite because its cause, the *karma*, is finite. When the cause is finite, the effect, that is, *karma-phala*, cannot be infinite. The effect being finite, naturally the discerning person sees this limitation in *karma*. If you say, “Let it be finite”, then there is no problem. You do finite *karma* for finite results. You may be doing it for seemingly infinite time. But the question is: For whose sake do you want *karma-phala*? Is it for *karma-phala*'s sake or is it for *karma*'s sake, or is it for your sake? It is *ātmārtha*, for your sake. It is not for the *anātman*.

If I do *karma* for my sake, then what is it that I seek through the *karmas*? I am not seeking finite results. If I am satisfied with the finite results, then I will stop seeking, once I get the finite results. But it is not so. I continue to seek, which only reveals that I see myself as a finite being. As long as I see myself as a finite being, the non-acceptance of the self will continue to be there. I will be always struggling to become free from the sense of limitation. This is *viveka*.

Puṇya is also a result of *karma*, but is only an intermediary stage in *karma-phala*. The final *karma-phala* is what you get later when you encash your *puṇya*. It is like the money you get by doing some job. This is the *drṣṭa-phala*, the seen result. Money itself is not the *karma-phala*. You do not eat the money. What you buy with that money and enjoy is *karma-phala*. So too is *adrṣṭa-phala*, the unseen result. You perform certain good *karmas* and they

² *Chāṇḍogyopaniṣad* 8.1.6

produce an intermediary *phala* called *punya*. It is called *adr̥ṣṭa* because it is not seen. Good *karma* results in *punya* and wrong *karma* results in *pāpa*. *Punya* will give you *sukha*, happiness, and *pāpa* will give you *duḥkha*, sorrow.

Punya takes you to *lokas*. Having gone to the *lokas* you enjoy. You have to pay for the enjoyment and you pay from the cash called *punya* that you have already gathered. You cannot accumulate new *punya* there. For every dance performance that you see in heaven, for every music concert that you hear there, you have to pay from the *punya* cash. When you keep on paying, it is not going to last. A time comes when, with reluctance, you have to pay the last cent. That particular set of *punya*, which takes you to heaven, gets expended; you are back again to square one.

A discerning person sees: What I am seeking in life is not really a finite thing, which is why I am always seeking. If I am seeking a limited thing, then for limitless time I have to seek. What I seek is really limitless. I cannot seek what is limitless through *karma*, because³ what is limitless cannot be an end product of *karma*. You cannot produce what is limitless. Either it is already there or it is non-existent. If it is already there, then you do not produce it. If you miss what is already there, you have to seek eternally. If you seek the limitless, then you do not require finite *karmas*. It does not mean finite *karmas* are useless, and therefore, you should stop eating, for instance. Finite *karmas* would produce finite results. If you are seeking *nitya*, that *nitya* cannot be the result of any action.

.....To be continued

³ *Nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena* (Muṇḍakopaniṣad 1.2.12):

nāsti - not; *akṛtaḥ* - *nityaḥ*, limitless; *kṛtena* - through *karma*.

“While traveling to a particular destination, people may enjoy a few things along the way, but they do not lose sight of their destination. Self-knowledge need not be any different. “

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati