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Knowledge removes the ignorance that causes the notion of bondage

Knowledge is the only means to attain that which is already attained. *Karma* or action is the means for attaining only what is not yet attained. In the case of the tenth man, what is it that will lead him to the tenth man? It is knowledge alone, because ignorance deprives him of the recognition of himself as being the tenth man. Similarly, we already are what we seek to be. We want to be the pleased self. We want to be happy. We want to be free. We want to be limitless. Vedānta says that we already are all of this and our notion of being limited is born of ignorance.

Whatever is real can never cease to exist. Whatever is real would also not bother us; it is unreality that bothers us. Heat is the nature of fire and so fire is comfortable being hot. Coolness is the nature of water and so water is comfortable being cool. Only when we heat water does the water become uncomfortable, because being hot is not its nature. It struggles to get rid of that heat. Similarly, we are struggling to get rid of the bondage. This shows that bondage cannot be our nature. It is upon gaining the knowledge of the self that we recognize that we are always liberated. There is no other way to gain liberation. For being wealthy, one must work. For being famous, one must perform action. For being strong, one must perform action. For appeasing hunger, one performs an action. For going to heaven, one performs an action. Performing action is the means to attain all such unattained things. Vedānta does not at all say that action has no role in our lives. Whenever we want to achieve something that is not achieved already, action is the means we must employ. However, for achieving what is already achieved, knowledge alone is the means. *Nānyaḥ panthāḥ ayanāya vidyate*, there is no path other than knowledge for liberation, for attaining the one true goal of life.

This thought continues in the next *mantra*.

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सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।

सम्पश्यन्ब्रह्म परमं याति नान्येन हेतुना ॥ १० ॥

*sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani
sampaśyanbrahma paramaṁ yāti nānyena hetunā*

सर्वभूतस्थम् - obtaining in all beings आत्मानम् - the self सर्वभूतानि - all beings च - and
आत्मनि - in the self सम्पश्यन् - clearly seeing ब्रह्म - *brahman* परमम् - the ultimate याति -
goes n - not अन्येन - by other हेतुना - means ;

One reaches *brahman*, the ultimate, in clearly seeing one's own self in all beings
and all beings in one's own self—not by any other means. (10)

There is a similar verse in the Bhagavad Gita that speaks of

sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani, 'the self existing in everything and
everything existing in the self.'¹

Sampaśyan means *samyak paśyan*, clearly seeing; clearly seeing in the mind's eye.
One must understand that nonduality is not to be literally 'seen' with the eyes. It
is not that the wise person perceives nonduality with his eyes. When the
knowledge of the self is gained, no transformation or change of perception at the
level of senses takes place. One may have some different experiences, but the wise
person basically perceives the same world that we perceive. The nonduality is to
be perceived in the mind's eye. It is to be perceived as one's own self, understand,
and not even as something that one sees in the mind. "Swamiji, I can visualize
nonduality." No, it is *acintya*, not a thought, and *avyakta*, not an object of percep-
tion. It is one's very self.

If the self cannot be experienced, how is it to be known?

"Swamiji, how can I know the self when it is not an object of perception?" Well,
how do you know yourself now? You do know that you are a limited being. You

¹ BG 6.29

do know yourself that way, don't you? You know that you are and that you are a limited being. Yet how do you know? Do you perceive yourself as a limited being? Rather than struggling with how to know the self, let us recognize that we already know ourselves, because the self is self-effulgent, it is self-revealing, and self-shining, and, therefore, no effort is needed to experience the self or see the self. We already do know ourselves today, except that we know ourselves as limited beings. How is that? It is because the limitations that belong to the body-mind complex are superimposed upon the self.

The self shines as awareness and the body-mind complex also shines in that awareness. The two are lumped together, even though they belong to two different loci. There is clearly a lack of *viveka* or lack of separation as to where limitation belongs and where the self belongs. They are taken to be one. You must understand that the self is already shining as *brahman*. We don't need to become or make ourselves *brahman*; the self shines as *brahman*, as the limitless. At the same time, the body-mind complex also shines, but it shines as an object, whereas the self shines as the subject. Because the distinction between the subject and object is not recognized, the two are lumped together. This is called *aviveka*, nondiscrimination. Therefore, Vedānta teaches of the *dr̥g-dr̥śya-viveka* or separation between the *dr̥k* and the *dr̥śya*, the seer and the seen or the subject and the object. When an object is recognized as the object and is no longer lumped together with the subject, the subject or the self remains without any superimposition. It is not that we have to know the self that is unknown to us; we only have to know correctly the self that is wrongly known, that is all.

If the self were truly unknowable, it would never have become known, and one would also not have any complexes. There cannot be complexes about that which is not the object of knowledge. As we saw earlier in the rope-snake example, there cannot be a superimposition upon the rope if the rope were not the object of awareness. Had there been pitch darkness the rope would not be seen at all and there would be no superimposition of the snake upon it, and, therefore no wrong

notion about the reality of the rope. Of course, if the rope is seen in broad daylight, then also there is no scope for such delusion. Only when the rope is seen as an object, but not known to be a rope can there be even a false notion about it. There can be a false notion only about something that is an object of one's experience.

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The fact that we have false notions about ourselves shows that we are always aware of the self, meaning that we know that we are and that we shine. Therefore, it is not that an unknown *ātmā* has to be known. In that sense, we say that Upaniṣad is not a *pramāṇa*, like the eyes and ears are, as we saw in the discussion of verse four. The eyes and ears provide the knowledge of something that is hitherto

unknown. The Upaniṣads do not provide the knowledge of *ātmā* in the sense of it being such an unknown object or entity. They only enable us to know the self correctly. The self, which is incorrectly known, is made known correctly in being distinguished from that which is the non-self. Thus, nonduality is not to be seen; it is to be known as one's own self, a self-shining, self-existing, and self-evident fact.

Sarvabhūtaṣṭham, in all the beings, *ātmānam*, oneself, *sampaśyan*, clearly seeing; clearly seeing oneself as the self of all. Just as I am the consciousness in this body-mind complex, so also, another person is the same consciousness in his body-mind complex. When the distinction between the self and non-self is clear with reference to oneself, the ability to see the self in others follows naturally. When the distinction between the self and the non-self is clear, we no longer lump the two together and are able to clearly see ourselves as consciousness.

When there is no identification with the individual body-mind complex, there remain no likes and dislikes. The likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions, arise only when the self is equated to the body. In consciousness, there are no likes and dislikes. Names and forms cease to matter. At present, name and form matter, as in this is good, this is not good, this is beautiful or this is not beautiful, likable or not likable, agreeable or disagreeable, desirable or undesirable etc. Whenever the world is looked at through the individual body-mind complex, it is natural that these opinions will be present and one can, therefore, not be objective with reference to what is perceived; we always judge others as limited beings separate from ourselves. When we stop judging ourselves as limited beings, we also cease to judge others. We see the same wholeness or limitlessness manifesting in all names and forms.

Like the same water manifests as the waves and the bubbles and the foam, so also, the same consciousness manifests as the entire world of names and forms. This may be understood in terms of a bangle recognizing that it is gold. First of all, the bangle has settled the account with itself that it is gold. Then, it sees that all orna-

ments are also gold, though in a different name and form; the *vastu*, their essence, is gold alone. Once the ornament sees itself as gold, it can also see other ornaments as gold. Yet, if it sees itself as a bangle, it can only see other ornaments as earrings or other forms. We see everybody else as we see ourselves. Seeing the self in all beings and seeing all beings in the self is the essence of nonduality; it lies in seeing oneself as the self of all and seeing everything as never apart from oneself.

The value of simple living

Yet when does that happen? It happens when we see ourselves as the simple person, as in 'I am,' *asmi*, as in 'I shine,' *bhāmi*, and 'I never dislike myself,' *priya*. *Asmi bhāmi priya* is *sat-cit-ānanda*. We understand ourselves as simple beings when nothing else is joined or added to the self. Right now, when the word 'I,' is used, a lot of things are included, such as the mind, the sense organs, the body etc. For example, when a child comes to visit the grandparents, all kinds of things come with it—there are some toys and some clothes and other such things. So also, along with the 'I,' comes a procession! There is also a mind and an intellect that comes with the sense organs and the body. The child brings everything with it, and wherever it goes, it must have all that. Similarly, we carry all this baggage along wherever we go. So the verse simply says, leave the baggage where it is.

That is why simplicity in the way life is led becomes a *sadhana* or means to recognize that one is a simple, conscious being, with no form, no name, no attribute, and no conditioning, nothing at all. Life should be simple, with minimal needs. That's a *sādhu*, who lives a simple, non-demanding life at the personal level. In order to function in the world, you may keep whatever you need, "To function in the world, Swamiji, I must dress in a certain way." "I must have a certain kind of a car." "Swamiji, a certain kind of house is required." All right. Do what you need to do and have what you need to have, because you have to live in the world. Yet at the personal level, you can always be simple, non-demanding. When you're in

Rome, live like a Roman. Outwardly you're a Roman. Inwardly you are a Vedāntin, a simple, non-demanding person.

“But Swamiji, what will people think? If I become nondemanding, everyone will take advantage of me.” All right, then outwardly appear to be demanding. Outwardly, you act the way the situation demands; that's called a pragmatic way of living. But we should not identify with that. Inwardly, we should retain our identity as it is. What I am saying is that the 'I' is so simple, so unassuming, so non-demanding, so unmanifest, and so non-claiming that it is not even seen or recognized. But it is always there and that alone is the truth; everything else comes and goes.

The truth alone is changeless; everything else is changing. The body, the sense organs, the mind, everything changes. Thus, when one sees oneself as one truly is, there is an appreciation of nonduality as in 'I am the self of all and nothing is separate from me.'

Nānyena hetunā, by no other means than this knowledge can we attain *brahman*. *Brahman* means limitless. We can never attain the limitless other than through knowing that we are the limitless, we are nondual.

To be continued...

When I look at my achievement I find that it is there because of certain opportunities I had, as well as because of my personal effort. I cannot claim to have created or commanded the opportunities; they were given to me. Therefore, there is no place for *mānitvam*, self-worshipfulness, when I see the nature of accomplishments for what it is. For whatever abilities I seem to have I should be grateful. My demand for respect from others will go away when I see its foolishness.

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati