

Ātmānaṁ ced vijānīyāt

PujyaSwamiji's transcribed talk

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

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 on¹—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.

What does this clear knowledge of the self do? This knowledge eliminates all the *anarthas*, everything that is undesirable, along with the root system. The root system here is ignorance alone. All your *anarthas* are only due to lack of self-knowledge. Therefore, it destroys the ignorance that is the root cause for all the problems by revealing what the self is. Positively, this knowledge makes you gain Brahman. Brahman means *pūrṇa*, the whole. It makes you discover that you are the whole, which means everyone is interested. The word 'upaniṣad' itself creates an interest in inquiring into it, by telling you the result of this knowledge.

AYAM PŪRUṢAḤ THIS PERSON

The *mantra* 'ātmānaṁ cet...', that we have taken up for unfolding, reveals the fulfillment of a person who has the knowledge of the self. There are five steps in a *vyākhyāna*, unfoldment, of any *mantra*. First is *padaccheda*, resolving the *sandhi* and separating the words. In Sanskrit when the words are in succession in a given sentence, they undergo a grammatical phonetic change called *sandhi*. In *padaccheda* the words are separated and shown individually. The next step is *padārthokti*, giving the meaning of the words. *Pada* can be a compound also. The third step is, therefore, *vigraha*, resolution of the compounds.

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

When the meaning of the words in the compound is given, one also explains, in the process, how the compounds are resolved. Since many *vigrahas*, resolutions of compounds, are possible, we have to find out what is appropriate. *Vigraha* is an important step in an exposition.

The fourth step is *vākya-yojana*, connection. It covers a number of things. The meaning of the whole sentence is arrived at in keeping with what has gone before, what is coming later and the syntactical connection between different words in the sentence. This harmony in meaning is *vākya-yojana*.

The final step is *ākṣepasya samādhānam*, answering the objections. When you arrive at a particular meaning, somebody can say that it is not right. It is called *ākṣepa*, an objection. You have to answer all the objections. You also raise objections and answer them. Then what you have said 'stays'. This five-fold presentation is called *vyākhyāna*, an exposition or an explanation of a given sentence.

The padaccheda for the *mantra* is: *ātmānam, cet, vijānīyāt, ayam, asmi, iti, pūruṣaḥ, kim, icchan, kasya, kāmāya, śarīram, anusañjvaret.*

Ayam pūruṣaḥ, this person, *ātmānam vijānīyāt cet*, suppose were to know the *ātman*. How does one come to know about this *ātman*, in which way does one know? One knows the *ātman* as '*asmi iti*', 'I am'. Then the second line of the *mantra* gives the result of this knowledge. *Kim icchan*, desiring what; *kasya kāmāya*, for whose purpose; *śarīram anusañjvaret*, would he get afflicted along with the body? *Śarīra* means the physical body or subtle body. This is the *padārthokti*, just the meaning of the words in the *mantra*.

There are no compounds in this *mantra*, only some words that have to be explained. Now, let us look at *ayam pūruṣaḥ*, this person. *Pūruṣa* has the same meaning as *puruṣa*. The lengthening of the vowel 'u' does not make any difference. Why is the person called *puruṣa* in Sanskrit? In English we have the word 'persona'; the mask of the person. *Puruṣa* has a similar meaning, with a little difference.

This body is called *puri*, a city. It is not a city, but is likened to a city. It has all the characteristics or features of a city and its problems. It has all the various systems of a city and it is a walled city. Your anatomy becomes a wall, as it were. The gates are the various apertures in this body like the eyes, ears, nose etc.

In this gated city there are different departments; there is a food department, there is a distribution department and so on. They are the five *prāṇas*. There is a minister who is the *buddhi*. Then there are the intelligence people in the form of the five senses who bring in data. There are *sahakārins*, people who help get things done. These are the five *karmendriyas*, the hands, legs and so on. A city must have a king. That king is called *puruṣa*. The one who lives in this *puri*, body, is 'you' the *puruṣa*.

There is a demonstrative pronoun '*ayam*' along with the word '*puruṣa*'. *Ayam* means 'this' which never becomes 'that'. That which never gets eclipsed and from whom you can never draw yourself away, is '*ayam*, this.' This is you, the self which is never subject to become 'that'.

In Sanskrit we have three words qualifying knowledge: *pratyakṣa*, direct knowledge; *parokṣa*, indirect knowledge and *aparokṣa*, neither direct nor indirect knowledge, that is, immediate knowledge.

Pratyakṣa-jñāna is perceptual knowledge. *Akṣa* means *indriyas*, senses. *Pratyakṣa-jñāna* is knowledge born of direct perception through the senses. It is again divided into two types—*indriya-pratyakṣa* and *sākṣi-pratyakṣa*. What is perceived by a sense organ like the eyes, ears and so on, is *indriya-pratyakṣa*. Therefore, a sensory perception is *indriya-pratyakṣa*.

Now, suppose I ask you, "What did you eat yesterday for your dinner?" You recall it. You see whatever comes in your mental screen, exactly like a monitor screen. This is called recollection. It is nothing but the thoughts occurring in your mind in certain succession, which you see. Suppose I ask you, "What are you thinking now?" You are able to see what thinking is going on in your mind. You say, "My mind is restless." How do you know? There is somebody seeing the mind. Who is that somebody? It is 'you'. That 'you' is *sākṣin*, the witness, of what happens in your mind. What is evident to you without the mediation of senses is *sākṣi-pratyakṣa*, a witness perception.

Any recollection takes place because of witness perception. Suppose you recollect your childhood experiences. From one such recollection you make a conclusion that your hydrophobia, fear of water, is due to your mother. She, in her concern and anxiety, told you, "Do not go near water, do not go near water." That became a fixation and you developed hydrophobia. Your recollection is witness perception. But then, out of that, when you arrive at the cause for your hydrophobia, it is inference.

When you see the smoke on a distant hill, you conclude there is fire, even though you do not see the fire. This knowledge of fire is inference. When you see the smoke, it is direct knowledge. When you infer 'there is fire' it is indirect knowledge. Any inferential knowledge is *parokṣa*, indirect.

Knowledge born of *śabda*, words, can also give indirect knowledge, but not always. Suppose, I give you a description of a place called Neelkant Mahadev that I have seen in the Himalayas: "It is near Rishikesh. It is a small valley surrounded by mountains. There is a beautiful temple for Lord Śiva." Now, you have knowledge of that place born of description. It is indirect knowledge.

We have another type of knowledge that is peculiar, which is neither direct nor indirect. When I say that knowledge is not direct, it becomes, naturally, indirect. Suppose, I say it is also not indirect; in the negation of indirect knowledge, I negate both. So, it is neither *pratyakṣa* nor *parokṣa*. It becomes *aparokṣa-jñāna*, immediate knowledge, knowledge that does not require either direct or indirect means of knowledge.

.....to be continued

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Editor.