

Sādhana-pañcakam
Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

This is the fifteenth part of the serial article, continuation from April 2022 newsletter.

UNDERSTAND THE VISION OF ŚRUTI

Śrutiśiraḥ pakṣaḥ samāśrīyatām: Śrutiśira means Vedānta. Pakṣa means the vision, the contention. Samāśrīyatām means samyak āśrīyatām, may one follow, pursue, conform to the vision of the śruti. In this vision, ātmā is aparicchinna, not bound by any form of limitation such as time, space and so on. All that is here is ātmā. Ātmā is the adhiṣṭhāna, the truth of everything and therefore it is the svarūpa of Īśvara.

This is the vision of Vedānta and may you have śraddhā in this particular vision. If you have śraddhā in that vision, then the inquiry into the meaning of the vākyaḥ will be proper. Otherwise, you will be saying tasya tvam asi, atat tvam asi, and so on. Such an understanding does not bless you. What is the use? Some will say that the goal is sāyujya, joining Īśvara, or sāmīpya, going near Īśvara, but the individual is still there. If you have to join with Īśvara and become one with Īśvara, then are you going to retain your individuality or are you going to lose it in Īśvara? If you lose your individuality, then individuality is not real. Because anything that is anitya, limited by time, is mithyā and therefore not true. So how can you lose it? And anything that is real is nitya, and therefore there is no bādha, negation, or nāśa, destruction, of what is real.

All this talk of sāyujya and sāmīpya is silly because there is no logic in it. When the śāstra says you are Brahman, why do you not go for that? Why say, 'I don't want to become sugar, I want to taste sugar'? We do not say you become sugar, we say you are sugar, whether you like it or not. There is no need to create a philosophy of your own, no need for a 'personal or private truth.' There is only truth, which is public and available for anyone to see. All the realities are public. This truth is not personal, belonging to somebody. Therefore do not try to create a private philosophy. Instead, try to discover exactly what Vedānta-śāstra says.

Suppose you say, 'Why do the other ācāryas, teachers, who have other qualifications, say other things?' This is the problem, which only confuses people. These teachers have other qualifications, such as grammar, śraddhā etc., and they look

upon *śāstra* as a *pramāṇa*. They are not mean people. They are all exalted people. They are great devotees, capable of communication, writing and so on. They have all the qualifications going for them. But at the same time, they say different things, and therefore you ask which *mata*, doctrine, to follow? Just look at what the *śruti* says, follow the *śruti-mata*; *śrutiśiraḥ-pakṣaḥ samāśrīyatām*. They are interpreting the *śruti*, after all.

TEACHING SHOULD BE METHODOICAL

What is more, you also have a mind. It is good to have *śraddhā* in the teacher. But when someone says something wrong, who says you have to follow that person or swallow what he or she says? A true teacher may ask you to follow what he is saying, but he will never ask you to just swallow without thinking. So go along with him, try to see what he is saying. That is what we call being 'in tune' with the teacher. As he teaches, he sees a possible obstruction, which he presents for you and you also are able to see it. Then he removes the obstruction and you see and gain clarity. This is called the *pūrvapakṣa-siddhānta* method.⁸⁵ First we create an objection, then we remove it. In doing so, you get clarity. This is the method of teaching.

If these great *ācāryas* talk about other things, let them, but you use your *buddhi*, intellect. This is the greatness of Śaṅkara; he will call Patañjali as Bhagavān, then completely dismiss the *sāṅkhya*⁸⁶ aspect of Patañjali's teaching. All of these great *mahātmās* are certainly respected, but their thinking is not accepted by everyone. If the thought is not acceptable, then you should dismiss it. That is why the approach is not charismatic. In a charismatic approach, you first accept the person as great, then accept whatever he says as right. That does not help anybody.

A student must not simply be cynical, however. Cynicism is not criticism. Cynicism is dismissal of what anybody says, calling it useless. This is what we call *samśayātmā*, believing neither in oneself nor in anyone else. Criticism, on the other hand, is objectively seeing the limitation or fallacy of an argument, so that the fal-

⁸⁵ *Pūrvapakṣa* = opponent's point of view; *Siddhānta* = response to the opponent's objection.

⁸⁶ *Sāṅkhya* = a dualist school of thought

lacy has to be dismissed. Therefore, if any teacher were to say *tasya tvam asi*, you belong to that, or *atat tvam asi*, you are not that, or any other thing, you must determine what *śruti* really intends to convey. You must examine whether it is going to give you an auspicious result or do something else. You must see what sort of *mokṣa* this could be. In this way, you see that there is no other meaning possible, and therefore *śrutiśiraḥ pakṣaḥ samāśrīyatām*, may you pursue the vision of the *śruti*.

The vision of Vedānta is already established, especially in the Brahma-sūtras, which are meant for analysing the subject matter of Vedānta, the meaning of all the *vākyas*. In the Brahma-sūtras, there is a *sūtra* that says *tattu samanvayāt*.⁸⁷ This *sūtra* presents *jīva-īśvara-aikya*, oneness between *jīva* and *Īśvara*, as *akhaṇḍātmaka*, an undivided whole. That is the fourth *sūtra*, and the entire book is for that one *sūtra*. The vision of the entire *śruti*, all of Vedānta, is oneness between *jīva* and *Īśvara*. That vision is unfolded by *śāstra*, analytically presented in *sūtras*.

There are two types of *sūtras*. One type presents a subject matter like *vyākaraṇa*, grammar. The other type analyses a subject matter. The Brahma-sūtras and Pūrva-mīmāṃsa-sūtras are analytical. They are *nyāya-granthis*, books that use reasoning and arguments to precisely establish the *tātparya* of Vedānta. There are many commentaries for each of the *sūtras*. First there is Śaṅkara's commentary. Then there is a sub commentary on that text, called *Bhāmatī* by Vācaspatiśra. This is then commented upon by Amalānanda in what we call the *Kalpatarū*, which in turn is commented upon by Appayya Dikṣitar in *Parimala*. Thus it branches out like an inverted tree or a pyramid, with the *sutra* at the top and the commentaries below, one after another. Studying one *sūtra* is the work of a lifetime. Each of these authors has dedicated his entire life to writing his commentary in order to establish the vision of the *śāstra*. So one cannot talk of personal philosophy here. There is no personal philosophy at all.

To be continued...

⁸⁷ 'All the *vākyas* having their purport in that Brahman alone' (Brahmasūtra 1.1.4)