

**Ātmānam ced vijānīyāt**  
**Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk**

*This is the ninth part of the serial article, continuation from Oct 2020 newsletter.*

The sixth chapter of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* unfolds what is that one thing, knowing which everything is as well known, by pointing out *satya* and *mithyā*. While the effect, *mithyā*, is the very material cause of which it is made, the cause, *satya*, is not the effect.

A creation, a product, is never separate from its material. If a pot is made of clay, the pot is not independent of clay. You cannot even think of a pot without some substance. Suppose, I ask you to think of a shirt without a fabric, you cannot even imagine a shirt without thinking of some fabric. You have got to think of a fabric when you think of a shirt. Can you think of an effect without its material cause? The shirt is a product. It has no independent existence apart from the fabric. You may say, “I can think of a shirt made of paper.” That is also a substance serving as a material. Therefore, you cannot think of a shirt without some material; you cannot even imagine it.

When you recognize a clay pot, at the same time and place you recognize clay. There are not two things, a pot and clay. There is only one thing. Will you call this ‘one thing’ clay or pot? Suppose you call it a pot and I call it clay. If both of us are right, then are we equally right? If we are equally right, then pot and clay will become synonyms, like water and aqua, *jala* and *udaka* (in Sanskrit), *thanneer* and *neer* (in Tamil)—all these are synonyms. You do not say, “Bring me a glass of water and add some aqua.” It does not mean anything.

If both are equally right, the words must be synonyms. Are the words ‘pot’ and ‘clay’ synonyms? Are ‘shirt’ and ‘fabric’ synonyms? Not at all. If they are, then wherever there is fabric, there should be a shirt, wherever there is clay there should be a pot. But, that is not true and therefore they are not synonyms. When I say there is clay and you say there is pot, well, both of us are right. But we are not equally right. One is more right than the other.

They are unequally right.

Who is more right? The one who says 'clay' is more right than the other. Clay is more correct. Before the pot was born, the clay was; when the pot is, clay is; when the pot is gone, clay continues to exist. This is what we call *an-vaya-vyatireka*—inherence and exclusion. When the one is, the other is; when the one is not, still the other is. If this is the situation, then the 'other' becomes *satya*. Pot is, clay is; pot is not, still the clay is. Clay becomes *satya*. We use the word '*satya*' only for clay here.

If clay is *satya*, what is pot? You cannot say it is non-existent. You have to say that it is existent because it is available for use. What the pot does, the clay cannot do. Therefore, you cannot dismiss the pot totally as non-existent nor can you take it as independently existent, that is, independent of any material. We have the word '*mithyā*' to denote products like the pot.

*Mithyā* does not mean illusion or delusion. Pot is not an illusion or delusion. There is no equivalent word for *mithyā* in English. One person asked me, "Swamiji, what is this *mithyā*? I do not understand two words in Vedanta. One is *satya* and the other is this *mithyā*. I have understood everything else." In fact, only *satya* and *mithyā* need to be understood in Vedanta. There is nothing else in Vedanta.

*Mithyā* is that which is existent and at the same time does not enjoy any independent status. *Satya* means what is real. That which is, is *satya*. That which is, in this example, is clay. Therefore, clay becomes *satya* with reference to the pot. Pot is *nāmadheya*<sup>1</sup>, only a name. By name we mean a word, and that word contains certain knowledge. Before the creation of the pot, the maker of the pot must have the word 'pot' along with the knowledge of the object 'pot'.

Any creation presupposes knowledge. The word 'pot' must be there before the creation of the pot. Therefore, that word indicates knowledge also. Mere word does not serve any purpose. You cannot utter the word 'pot' and pour water into it. Definitely, there should be a *vikāra*, form. This name and form is the creation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam mṛttiketyeva satyam* (Chāndogyopaniṣad 6.1.4).

If clay, the cause, is *satya* with reference to pot, the effect, it is the same with reference to anything else. Every object is a product, and no object is independent of its cause. Every cause, in turn, has its own cause. Take the case of a shirt. Cloth is the cause of shirt and shirt is dependent upon the cloth. Therefore, the cloth becomes *satya*, the shirt becomes *mithyā*. The cloth itself becomes *mithyā* with reference to its cause, yarn. Otherwise cloth will become *satya*. If cloth is *satya*, all you need to know is cloth. We know, however, that if you know what cloth means, you do not become the knower of *satya*. Cloth is *satya* only with reference to the shirt. Cloth itself is *mithyā*; the yarn is *satya*. The yarn is *mithyā*, the fibres are *satya*. The fibres are *mithyā*, the molecules are *satya*. The molecules are *mithyā*, the atoms are *satya*. The atoms are *mithyā*, the particles are *satya*. Once you go to the level of a particle, you cannot distinguish it from the concept. The particle concept is *mithyā*, and that which sustains the *mithyā* is *satya*.

Every concept is nothing but *nāma-rūpa*, name and form. Like even a pot which is a name and form of clay, similarly, a concept is nothing but name and form of consciousness, *jñāna*. That *jñāna* is *satya*. You cannot think of any object independent of this *satyam jñānam*. *Satya* is self-existent which is nothing but *jñāna*. Thus, the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* unfolds that there is something, knowing which everything is as well known. Not that everything is actually known. Everything is 'as good as' known.

Now you know what counts. You know what you have to reckon with. If there are one thousand pieces of earthenware, and if you know clay, you know what counts. If you count clay, clay is only one. The pots etc., do not have an independent existence apart from clay, which is *satya*. Similarly, this entire *jagat* depends on *satyam jñānam*, which is independently existent. That is 'sat'. That 'sat' alone was there before the names and forms came into existence.<sup>2</sup> *Satya* is, therefore, the cause of all names and forms. It is *ekam advitīyam* sat, one no dual *vastu* that is Brahman. This is the revelation in the sixth chapter of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*. Here, the unfoldment of the truth is through *kāraṇa-kārya prakriyā*, cause-effect method.

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<sup>2</sup> *Sadeva saumya idam agre āsīt ekam evādvitīyam. (Chāndogyopaniṣad 6.2.1).*

When we say 'sat' is one non-dual Brahman, the word 'non-dual' is very important. It is one, not followed by two. If we merely say 'one,' it becomes a thing to be decided. 'One' has no *vyavasthā*, definiteness. It has no finality. It does not reveal anything definite because 'one' is always a member of a set. The number one gains certain meaning only when the set is mentioned.

For instance, if you consider galaxy, galaxy is a set, of which ours is one galaxy. Number 'one' is determined now to be a galaxy. It is just one of the many galaxies. One galaxy has many systems. One system will constitute of a sun and many planets. Therefore, any given 'one' contains many. What is this one? It has no *vyavasthā*. The *śāstra* says, *satya* is one that is not subject to divisions. This negates all differences in *satya*. It is not monism or any other 'ism'. When we are talking about truth, there is no such thing as dualism, non-dualism and so on. There can be 'ism-s,' but we are talking about the non-dual, which includes all 'ism-s'. We cannot place it along with other things. What is, is non-dual, that which does not permit any of the three types of differences<sup>3</sup> - within species, between species and within a member of a species. That is all the differences there are.

Non-dual sat does not allow another thing to exist other than itself. It means there is no *vijāti*, no different species other than *sat*. A tree belongs to one species under Botany, an animal belongs to another species under Zoology. So between Botany and Zoology there is a *vijātīya-bheda*, a species-wise difference. Here, on the other hand, there is no second *vastu* other than *sat* to create a *vijātīya-bheda*. We have already pointed out that there is nothing else other than *sat*, because everything depends upon *sat*.

There is also no other *vastu* belonging to the same species as *sat*. There is no *sajātīya-bheda* for *sat*. *Sajāti* means a thing belonging to same species. If the species is tree, there are many trees, all come under Botany, but one tree is limited by the other. Here, another *sat* is not there to cause any difference. There is only one *sat*.

Maybe within itself *sat* has differences—like one tree has many branches,

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<sup>3</sup> *Sajātīya-vijātīya-svagata-bheda-rahitam*.

one man has many limbs, and so on. This is called *svagata-bheda*, differences obtaining within itself. *Sat* has no *avayavas*, parts. The absence of these three types of differences is called *advitīyatva*, non-dual. *Sat* is that which is not subject to duality.

The *upaniṣad* further says, “*sad eva agre āsīt*, *sat* alone was before the creation.” The use of the past tense here is only with reference to *sṛṣṭi*, creation, to point out that *sat* alone existed without the names and forms. That *sat* visualized the creation and all the names and forms manifested. All the names and forms that came from *sat* are nothing but *sat* alone, the names and forms being *mithyā*. *Mithyā* is a word, revealing a reality. It is an ontological term. There is no such object as *mithyā*. It is only in your understanding. The status of reality that an object enjoys is called *mithyā*. Anything that is an effect is *mithyā*, like a pot which is an effect of clay.<sup>4</sup> The whole *jagat*, being an effect, is *mithyā*. What is there is only one *satya*.

Here, in the pot example we have a problem. In the creation of a pot the clay undergoes some change. Previously, the clay was brittle. Now, it has become hard, having gone through the process of heating and so on. Similarly, one may think that the cause of the *jagat* was originally *sat* and it has undergone some change to become the *jagat* as it obtains now. In this view, you are a part of that *sat*, so you are not that *sat* which existed before creation. To eliminate this thinking, the *śāstra* gave another example, that of golden ornaments. A golden chain is not independent of gold but the gold has not undergone any change. Though the gold remains changeless, the chain is only ornamental. This example also has a limitation in that it does not cover those products which have more usefulness. So, a third example, which of a nail cutter was given. It stands for all products that are useful. Out of iron, you make this nail cutter. Therefore, when we talk of name and form, it includes function, usefulness also. So what is useful is *mithyā*. In fact, *mithyā* alone is useful. It is not some useless illusion or delusion.

*To be continued...*

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<sup>4</sup> *Yad yat kāryaṁ tat tad mithyā, kāryatvāt, ghaṭavat.*