

Sādhana-pañcakam
Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

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THE LIMITS OF ŚRADDHĀ

If I hold up a piece of paper and say, 'This is a sheet of paper,' there is nothing to believe. But suppose I point to the paper and say, 'Look at this flower, this lovely rose.' How can you believe that? There is one miserable sheet of paper here, and I say, 'Look at this volume of the Mahābhārata,⁴⁴ the great magnum opus written by Vyāsa. How heavy it is!' How can you believe this? And then I say, 'If you have *śraddhā*, you will believe my words.' Not even an idiot has that kind of *śraddhā*. That kind of *śraddhā* is impossible because the situation does not call for *śraddhā*.

Śraddhā is necessary only when something is not available for direct perception. Suppose I say that you will go to heaven. Heaven is not available for direct perception, therefore you can have *śraddhā*. But here you directly see a sheet of paper, and I say this is the magnum opus called Mahābhārata, which runs into thousands of pages. If I were to say that this is a brief version of the Mahābhārata, a shortened version, that would be okay. There are texts that present the entire Mahābhārata in five verses. But no, I say that this is Vyāsa's original work and with commentary. You cannot believe that. One sheet of paper is not the Mahābhārata. This could be a sheet from the Mahābhārata, perhaps, just one page.

IDENTITY OF JĪVA AND ĪŚVARA

Similarly, if you are told that you are a *jīva*, an individual, a part of Īśvara, like a page from the Mahābhārata, then you can believe that. This is why people accept such statements. Īśvara is *parokṣa*, not available to you perceptually. If there is a total Īśvara, then you must be only a part of it, which means that you can never be Īśvara. One *jīva* does not make Īśvara, just as one page does not make the Mahābhārata. And similarly, one poor little you does not make Īśvara.

⁴⁴ Mahābhārata is one of the great epics of ancient India, consisting of more than 100,000 verses.

Therefore, you can appreciate this idea, 'I am a part of Īśvara.' But you can never appreciate 'I am Īśvara,' and the *śāstra* says '*Tat tvam asi*.'⁴⁵ *Tat* is presented as *ja-gat-kāraṇam*, the cause of the entire world. When viewed as the cause of the world, Brahman is called Īśvara. Brahman which is the *sad-vastu*, is non-dual. Out of that Brahman, everything has come.⁴⁶ That is the *prakriyā*, the set-up. So if someone says, '*Tat tvam asi*, you are Brahman, you are that cause of the world,' you find that you are not the *kāraṇam*, the cause of anything. If you say that you are the cause, it is only from one standpoint. From another standpoint, you are also the *kārya*, the effect. In fact, on deeper analysis, you find you are only an effect all the time, and not the cause at all. Thus the physical body cannot be considered *kāraṇam*. Īśvara alone is *kāraṇam*, *jaḡatkāraṇam*. You say, 'I am not a *kāraṇam* at all, so how can I equate myself to Īśvara?'

UNDERSTANDING THE EQUATION

Any equation is a matter for understanding. The identity between the two sides of an equation is not immediately evident. If it is evident, then you do not require an equation. In our present discussion, what you see is only you. You are told that you are Īśvara. You already have a very clear vision about yourself. Now, you have to negate that and appreciate that you are Īśvara, but without the qualifications of Īśvara. This is not *pramā*, knowledge, it is *bhrama*, error. It is like telling a poor beggar, 'You are a *mahārāja*, an emperor.' He will ask, 'What is this? What are you talking about?'

'*Mahārāja* means you are the ruler of this country!'

'You're saying I'm the ruler of this country? Do you know me?'

'Yes, I know you. You are a *mahārāja*.'

'I'm sorry, you are mistaken. I am a beggar.'

'No, no, *tat tvam asi*, you are a *mahārāja*.'

⁴⁵ 'That thou art' (Chāndogyopaniṣad 6.8.7)

⁴⁶ सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् । तद्वैक आहुरसदेवेदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयं तस्मादसतः सजायत ॥ (Chāndogyopaniṣad 6.2.1)

Now suppose this person is convinced somehow and thinks, 'Yes, I am a *mahārāja*.' He feels like he is a *mahārāja*, even though he does not have money to change his costume. But inside, he feels he is *mahārāja*. This is the 'change within' that they talk about; 'Don't worry about the external paraphernalia. Real *mahārājas* are inside, they are not outside. Outside you may have everything but still you may feel a beggar after all. You are as good as you feel.' These are all the arguments.

So this person thinks he is a *mahārāja*. His stance changes, his gait changes, his whole demeanor changes, his way of talking changes, his language changes. He no longer says, 'I come.' He only says 'We come.' Everything changes. Then another beggar comes and asks him, 'Shall we go to the next village today to beg?' And the person answers, 'We don't beg. We are *mahārājas*.'

'What?'

'Don't you know I am *mahārāja*?'

'*Mahārāja*? What do you mean?'

'Don't you know I'm the ruler of this kingdom?'

'Which kingdom?'

'This whole kingdom.'

Then the other person understands. He calls another friend over to come and see the crazy guy. So you have to say he is just a crazy beggar, which is not a very kind statement.

Similarly, when someone says, 'I am *Īśvara*,' what does it mean? There is a contradiction. How can *jīva* be *Īśvara*? The Veda says very seriously that you are Brahman. It is not a passing reference, a leg-puller. Therefore, this statement has meaning. Like any equation, the meaning is not easily gained. It requires inquiry for understanding. Even a simple arithmetic equation, like five plus four is equal to ten minus one, has to be understood at its specific level with tremendous inquiry. For a child to understand this simple equation, a lot of thinking has to take place. Like a huge engine working, the whole mind has to churn its gears before the

child comes to know that this is true. No equation can be understood without understanding and inquiry. *Tat tvam asi* is such an equation, purely a matter for understanding. It is not an experience. 'I am Īśvara', is a clean understanding. Naturally, if this is the case, what should you do?

EXAMINING YOUR EXPERIENCES

The answer is given in the fourth part of the verse, *brahmaikākṣaramarthyatām śrutiśirovākyaṁ samākarṇyatām*, is similar to the *vākya* that we find in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad.⁴⁷ There it says that *parīkṣya lokān*, examining the experiences gained by doing actions and meditative practices, may the discriminative person discover *nirveda*, dispassion. *Mokṣa*, which is *nāsti akṛtaḥ*, not created, cannot be gained *kṛtena*, through action. Therefore, to gain the knowledge of Brahman, you must go with sacrificial twigs in hand to a teacher who is well-versed in scriptures and who has clear knowledge about Brahman.

In that verse, the *upaniṣad* says *parīkṣya lokān*. You should first do *parīkṣā*, examination, of the *lokas*, your experiences. That which is experienced by you is called *loka*.⁴⁸ Any experience is going to be wanting. Examination of your experiences, is followed by *viveka*, discriminating discernment. What do you really seek, and what do you go after? What you are really seeking need not necessarily be what you go after. Understanding this fact is called *viveka*. From that is born *vairāgya* or *nirveda*, a dispassion born of *viveka*. You understand that all of these things you are after are not really going to help you fundamentally. The Upaniṣad says *nasti akṛtaḥ kṛtena*, that which is not created cannot be gained through action. That *vākya* says exactly what the nature of the *viveka* is. *Akṛta* means that which is not created. That which exists but is not created is called *nitya*. *Nitya* has not arisen, it is always there, and therefore it does not need to be created. If it does not require to be created, then where is the necessity for any other pursuit?

What you are really seeking is *nitya*, the limitless. But if you do not know that,

⁴⁷ परीक्ष्यलोकान् कर्मचितान्ब्राह्मणःनिर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतःकृतेन । तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुम् एव अभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियंब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

(Muṇḍakopaniṣad 1.2.12)

⁴⁸ लोक्वते अनुभूयते इति लोकः

then you go for *anitya*, the limited. Once you know what you are seeking is *nitya*, there is a sense of renunciation with reference to *karma*. *Karma-yoga* is okay, but *kāmya-karma* is not going to help you here because that which cannot be achieved by *karma* is not a result of *karma*. It is already *nitya*. It is *akṛta*, uncreated, already existent. A thing that is *akṛta* is already established. The technical word for it is *siddha*. Something that is *siddha* does not become *sādhya*, something to be accomplished. An existent object need not be created, since it is already existent. If an existent thing is not known by you, and it happens to be yourself, then the only way you can miss it is by ignorance. Therefore, for knowing that which is *nitya*, may you go to a teacher.

One must find a teacher, then go to him. How? The Upaniṣad says to approach the teacher *samitpāṇi*, with sticks in hand, as one who is ready to serve the teacher. May one go to the teacher with the right attitude, with *śraddhā*. In this *mantra* from Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, the teacher's qualification is also told; *śrotriyaṁ brahmaniṣṭham*. *Śrotriya* means one who is very well informed of the *śāstra*. If you hardly have any knowledge of *śāstra*, how can you understand whether the teacher knows *śāstra* or not? Anybody can pass as *śāstrajña* but a *śrotriya* can at least be recognised by another *śrotriya*. But even then, how do you know whether he is a *brahma-niṣṭha*, one who is firmly established in the knowledge? There is no way of knowing. So a *brahma-niṣṭha* can be taken as one who has no pursuit other than this knowledge. Therefore, a *sannyāsī* can be a *brahma-niṣṭha*. Even a *gṛhastha*, a householder who does not have any interest other than this pursuit of knowledge can be a *brahma-niṣṭha*.

In this verse of Sādhana-pañcakam, it also says *brahmaikākṣaramarthyatām*,⁴⁹ you have to ask for the knowledge. Otherwise, it will not be given. Then when the teaching starts, may one listen well to the *śrutiśirovākya*s.

⁴⁹ May you request from him the knowledge of the imperishable, nondual Brahman.

To be continued...