

Vedanta Madhuryam

Salutations to all.

We have finished yet another year and have already started the New Year. It is essential to remember the ultimate goal of life as realization of the non-dual reality of Brahman and thereby getting rid of all sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss. Until this goal of moksha is kept in mind, we will not strive for achieving this goal in life. The desire for moksha is called mumukshutva and is one of the four main qualities required in order to gain knowledge (and make knowledge fruitful or lead to eternal bliss). Many people have desire for moksha but their desire for moksha is weak in the form of "I will gain moksha but first I need to get a job, then I need to marry etc." Such kind of weak mumukshutva will not give us moksha in this birth.

Human birth is very rare indeed and is got after many virtues in many previous births. And in such a birth it is very tough indeed to come in contact with mahatmas and gain some knowledge about the ultimate reality of Brahman or moksha. Such a precious birth and precious situation shouldn't be merely wasted for worldly pleasures alone. Moksha isn't contrary to worldly pleasures but what moksha requires is just internal focus on Brahman. External activities will happen the same way as it happens now even if we follow the path of moksha.

The path of moksha is only through Vedanta or the knowledge portion of the Vedas (knowledge found in the Upanishads as well as other granthas or works). The more and more we learn Vedanta we will be swept away by the beauty in Vedanta. And each moment we learn and implement Vedanta we will be able to experience the bliss of Brahman. Thus Vedanta is not only beautiful in theory but it is also beautiful while implementing. There is nothing more sweeter in the entire world than Vedanta as it alone will lead to eternal bliss here and now itself.

This magazine is an attempt to bring out the intricacies of Vedanta thereby making sadhakas understand the beauty of Vedanta. Those who are able to appreciate the beauty of Vedanta will never stop learning and implementing Vedanta. Though they may still perform worldly activities like a normal worldly person still their mind will be constantly dwelling on Vedanta. Vedanta's main subject-matter is the non-dual reality of Brahman.

Thus through constantly abiding in Brahman, such people will be able to quickly progress towards the goal of moksha.

Many lives have gone in the past in waste. We, being the wise set of beings amongst all species, shouldn't let yet another birth go waste. Therefore we should strive to understand the beauty of Vedanta thereby learning and implementing Vedanta we should strive to achieve the goal of moksha here and now itself. Death is constantly waiting to pounce upon us and therefore not even a moment should be wasted without striving for realization.

Prayers to the almighty that this magazine serves the purpose to make sadhakas enjoy the sweetness of Vedanta thereby making them learn and implement Vedanta soon itself.

May we all through remembering of Brahman as the non-dual reality behind the entire illusory world be able to get rid of all sorrows and be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

AUM NAMA SHIVAYA

Jan 4th

Aukramaanika

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Naishkarmya Siddhi

Jagat – the world of experience

Each and every moment we experience the external world of objects and people. Mere perception alone doesn't happen with the external world but actions are performed constantly either at the physical plane or the mental plane. Perceptions and actions together make up the experience of the external world. Helping in these both are the sense organs of perception and action. Without sense organ it is impossible to experience the sense objects (the entire world).

Since experience of the world is constantly happening, there is always an effort to make experiences perfect. Perfection isn't with respect to holding on to everything but with respect to experiences leading to eternal bliss. Nobody wants to experience sorrow as the ultimate goal of life is getting rid of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss alone. It doesn't matter whether a person is learned or not, rich or not – irrespective of all distinctions the ultimate goal of life is to get rid of sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss. Until this goal is achieved a person will strive to achieve this goal through all the various means that are available. The only means available where we have a say (or so we think) is the external world. Hence we find that people constantly try to control objects and people of the world thinking that it will lead to eternal bliss. This is a wrong notion and foolishness alone as instead of controlling themselves, such people try to control the entire world.

AMMA gives a story to illustrate the foolishness to trying to control the entire world. Once a King went outside his palace and he got pricked by a thorn, since there was no custom to wear footwear. As a result of this he came back to the palace and ordered his minister to carpet the entire kingdom so that his feet wouldn't be pricked again. The minister was dumbfounded as he knew that such an activity can never be completed. It is impossible to carpet the entire kingdom. AMMA says that the minister mentioned the foolishness in the King's thinking and gave a real working solution for the problem. The minister told the King to wear a slipper. After this the King's feet wasn't pricked ever though there were thorns all throughout the kingdom.

Often we try to control the entire world but forget to control ourselves. We also forget the truth that the external world cannot be controlled but through control of ourselves we will be able to attain the ultimate goal of eternal bliss here and now itself.

Jagat – land of karma

The world is the land of karma (karma bhoomi). As the Lord mentions in Gita, not even for a moment a person can remain without doing action in the world. Thus we find even mad people, children and mahatmas performing actions though none of them are keen on performing actions and don't gain much from actions as well.

There are rules controlling different countries. Sometimes rules of one country aren't the same with the rules of another country. For example, in US driving is on the right side of the road whereas in India driving is on the left side of the road. Nonetheless, rules have to be performed by one and all at all times. There is no exception to this even if it is the president of one country or even the creator Brahmaa.

The rule of the world is karma or action. This rule cannot be avoided by any person. Whether one is ignorant or realized, one will have to perform actions in the world. Thus the world is called karma bhoomi or land of karma.

Karma – cause of birth and death

The simple rule of karma is that action performed will lead to appropriate result which has to be enjoyed. Enjoyment will not end as enjoyment will lead to performance of more actions. More actions will lead to more enjoyment. Thus continues the chain. Vidyaranya beautifully thus says *kurvate karma bhogaaya, karma kartum ca bhunjate* or "a person does action for enjoyment and enjoys to perform action".

Actions and enjoyments require the gross body. Actions when in subtle form are called thoughts or desires. Desires cannot remain as such and have to be converted into external gross actions. Since action requires the equipment of gross body therefore once this body grows old, then a person will have to take up another gross body in order to be able to perform actions and enjoy fruits of actions. Thus a person undergoes birth and death of the body (it is due to ignorance that body is considered as oneself and therefore one fears death when death is just of the body and not of the individual). The Lord beautifully says that the jeeva gives up one body and takes up another body like a person throws away old dress and wears new dress.

Nobody can avoid this never-ending chain of birth and death as it is based on karma and karma phala. Karma thus is the cause of infinite births and deaths. Will these ever end?

They will end only when karma ends and since karma cannot really end with respect to the external world therefore births and deaths will not end. This also means that sorrow which is the only experience from births and deaths will also not end. Thereby there is no scope for eternal bliss from actions.

A sadhaka should first assert himself or herself that there is no mocha or eternal bliss possible through karma. Can karma never lead to eternal bliss?

Karma – just an illusion

We have seen as to how karma leads to only sorrow as a result of births and deaths. But this truth that karma can never lead to eternal bliss but only to sorrow is proven through analysis of karma itself.

Karma leads to phala or fruit which in turn makes a person perform more karma. In this chain of karma and phala, which came first? Is it karma? Then how is a person doing action out of nothing? There has to be some experience of past which makes a person perform action, like a child sucking the mother's nipples involuntarily. If it isn't karma, is it phala? Phala cannot come out of itself, without a karma – saying that phala is possible without karma is like saying that I get paid without doing anything. Thus we cannot find which came first – karma or phala.

With respect to this, the age-old unanswerable questions of which came first can be remembered. Examples are "whether Hen came first or egg came first?", "whether coconut came first or coconut-tree came first?" etc.

That which thus leads to infinite regression (continuing without any end at all) is an illusion alone. Thus we can conclude that karma is just an illusion. That which is an illusion will never lead to bliss but will constantly lead to sorrow alone. The water seen in desert is just an illusion in the desert. Such an illusion constantly leads us to sorrow when we run towards the water expecting it to quench our thirst. But instead of quenching our thirst, it only adds up to sorrow (leading to only sorrow) when we don't find water. The more and more we run towards water, the more and more sad we will become. Thus all illusions will only lead to sorrows.

Karma being an illusion will thus only lead to sorrow. Hence ardent sadhakas should strive to get rid of this illusion in order to get rid of sorrow. Illusions stop leading us to sorrow when we get rid of them. Thus karma has to be got rid of in order to get rid of sorrow.

Contrariness – karma cannot be avoided and yet has to be removed for bliss

Now we come to contrariness – on one side karma cannot be avoided as each and every person is forced to person actions every moment in the world (forced by vasanas or latent tendencies). On the other side, karma leads to sorrow alone and therefore we have to get rid of karma in order to get rid of sorrows (and rejoice in bliss). This contrariness only means that there is no solution whatsoever for getting rid of sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss.

Definitely there is no solution unless we are able to go beyond karma. Going beyond karma means karma will still remain but it will not taint or affect us as we will beyond it. In order to go beyond karma, people tend to cling unto the various known means like performing of yajnas, praising of deities etc. But all these means will not take us beyond karma. Yajnas will lead us to higher pleasure which will decay after a period of time and then again we will have to perform yajnas to gain higher pleasure. That pleasure which isn't eternal but just attained and decayed by experiencing is not eternal bliss but only sorrowful. Deities themselves are bound by actions – hence we find all deities including the trimurtis performing one or the other action in one or the other form (avatars) at all times. We find in puranas that these deities are busier than us with respect to actions. Indra and Devas are constantly taunted and attacked by asuras and therefore they are busy throughout the year. The trinities themselves are constantly busy taking care of their devotees. And often it happens that Devas are ousted by asuras and therefore trinities have to help devas who approach them for help. Thus we find that even devas are constantly indulging in activities.

What about various sanyaasis?

Sanyaasis are also forced to do actions constantly. They may go into Samadhi for a while but for the rest of the time, they perform activities. The only difference between their activities and our activities is that they perform activities for the welfare of the world and we perform activities for our own benefit. All sanyaasis and mahatmas thus also perform actions constantly though the type of action depends from person to person.

Thus actions cannot really be removed but still we have to remove in order to get rid of sorrow. The solution lies in proper understanding of the types of actions and the nature of action itself. Through these both we will be able to perform actions and at the same time get rid of sorrow arising out of actions. It is like a person running behind water in desert while not getting affected by the sorrow caused by water in desert (in this case it is knowledge of the water in desert being unreal that removes sorrow instantly – sorrow, often, is just unexpected or contrary results happening; the moment something is expected there is neither happiness nor sorrow but mere witnesshood).

Karma – caused by avidyaa

Before learning the various types of actions, it is essential to understand as to how karma comes into existence. Actions are constantly performed in order to attain perfection. Synonyms of perfection are infinite state, unlimited, bliss, peace, satisfaction, contentment and complete cessation of sorrow. All actions are directly or indirectly in order to attain eternal bliss. For example, a person studies in college. He is studying for marks but marks are in order to get a job. A job is in order to lead a peaceful or blissful life. Thus bliss is the indirect goal of the person.

It cannot be argued that majority of people are following a pattern in the world (like earning then enjoying etc.) and therefore I should also do the same. Just because majority of people are lying doesn't mean that we also have to lie and it would be foolish to lie as it will only lead to sorrow. Rather than analyzing as to how many people are doing something, we have to analyze as to whether something is really good (means will lead to eternal bliss). That which leads to eternal bliss is worth following even if we are the only people following it. We should also remember that just because only few are doing something, they are progressing towards moksha (as the scriptures say that very few people seek moksha) – this would lead to the conclusion that serial killers are progressing towards moksha as they are very few people alone.

We have been gifted with the intellect that can discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad, real and unreal – it has to be used properly before performing any action or deciding to perform any action.

Karma, as we have seen, is caused by desire for perfection (ultimately though initially we find other desires leading to action). Desire for perfection itself is as a result of ignorance.

Ignorance makes a person desire for perfection. This is because we all are perfect here and now itself. The "I" that pulsates inside us at all times and is devoid of any association with the illusory world is blissful Brahman. That we are all Brahman alone is clearly experienced in the state of dreamless deep sleep where we are able to rejoice in bliss while no world exists at all. And any sadhaka who follows that path put forth by the scriptures will be able to experience his own very nature of Brahman here and now itself.

Ignorance of one's nature of all-pervasive non-dual blissful Brahman leads to desire for perfection (not knowing that I am already perfect). Desire for perfection leads to different types of actions. Understanding and keeping this in mind will help us quickly overcome actions.

Ok, is knowledge that I am Brahman enough to get me beyond karma?

Theoretically yes but practically it is very tough as currently we are constantly immersed in the ocean of samsara or the karma bhoomi of world. Therefore slowly we have to come out of karma (go beyond karma). An alcohol addict if suddenly stops alcohol will be lead to mental damage and even might die. Therefore such an addict should be slowly taken out of addiction. Though theoretically getting rid of addiction is possible in just a moment, still a person should slowly come out of addiction rather than suddenly. Similarly a sadhaka should slowly and gradually come out of addiction of karma rather than suddenly coming out.

Two Types of karma

In order to come out of the bondage of karma a person should understand that there are broadly two types of actions. This classification is based on the desire in the mind while performing minds. That action which is performed while desiring a fruit (which isn't moksha but other fruits) is called sakaama karma. That action which is performed without desiring any fruit is called nishkaama karma (kaama or desire isn't there).

Sakaama karma has expectation of fruit which then leads to enjoyment of fruit and thereby to further actions. Thus such action will bind us and lead to sorrow alone constantly. On the other hand, Nishkaama karma has no desires for fruit and therefore there is no sorrow at all. Just by performing nishkaama karma a person will not attain moksha as karma itself is an illusion and moksha being realization of one's own very nature of Brahman is knowledge (which is opposing ignorance – since ignorance is the grandfather of karma therefore

ignorance cannot be removed by karma but only by knowledge). But nishkaama karma purifies the mind of desires. A person who has desires also has likes and dislikes which are what leads to desires. Likes and dislikes constantly lead to sorrow as they are based on the illusory world – through considering the illusory world to be real. What else can be the result of considering an illusion real other than sorrow?

Thus those who want to get rid of sorrow should first attain purity of mind through performing actions without any desires – nishkaama karma. Though it will take a while to purify the mind as performing all actions as nishkaama is easier said than done, still a sadhaka should slowly strive to convert all actions into nishkaama.

Actions can be converted into nishkaama in two ways – one is through offering actions unto all-pervasive Ishwara; second is through knowing one's own very nature of witness Self (whereas actions are performed by the sense organs and guided by the Ego or reflected consciousness, reflection of Consciousness in intellect). The latter way is very tough to implement as requires knowledge therefore initial sadhakas should strive to implement the former.

The former of offering all actions unto Ishwara is easily possible if we are able to develop love and devotion unto Ishwara. It is easily seen in the world that we are able to perform even the toughest or impossible action if there is love or devotion behind the action. For example: though a mother would be afraid to go alone at night, she will still go out without any second thought if her child is ill and has to be urgently taken to the doctor. Even the self-proclaimed busy people of the world are able to spend hours in a hospital for their own health or the health of their near and dear ones. All of these are possible due to devotion or love towards near and dear ones or towards oneself (one's own body).

It cannot also be argued that love or devotion for Ishwara cannot be easily developed as we all develop love and devotion towards objects and people very easily. Would be-s of the world don't know each other but in a matter of few months itself they become close with each other and develop love & devotion (though in today's world we cannot say that such love and devotion is long-lasting). A mother gets very attached to her newly born baby though it is just few minutes after the baby's birth – even if it is argued that nine months the mother was attached to the baby, still nine months was enough to develop strong love and devotion.

Then what stands as obstacle to developing love and devotion for Ishwara?

Lack of desire for moksha. No other reason can be given to explain as to why love and devotion for Ishwara isn't developed.

If it be argued that Ishwara cannot be seen and hence love and devotion is tough towards Ishwara, it is also invalid as many times we develop love and devotion towards totally unknown people (in today's world we get attracted to people just through chatting itself). It is also wrong to say that Ishwara isn't seen as the entire world is but a manifestation of Ishwara. The entire changing illusory world is nothing but its substratum of Ishwara alone. Ishwara alone has become the entire world – names and forms of the world make it appear as if Ishwara is different from the world.

It becomes very easy indeed to develop love and devotion towards Ishwara if we remember Ishwara to be all-knowing, all-powerful and all-pervasive. If we also remember that the goal of such remembrance is moksha or eternal bliss then we will be able to easily remember Ishwara in our mind. Constant remembrance of Ishwara in our mind alone is love and devotion towards Ishwara as then all actions will be directed towards Ishwara. Thereby actions or fruits of actions don't affect us.

Jnaana – leading to naishkarmya

The more a person performs actions without desiring any fruit in return but as an offering unto Ishwara, the mind will be purified of desires and likes-dislikes. Such a pure mind when blessed with knowledge will instantly get rid of karma itself.

Knowledge is that one Ishwara alone exists here. This Ishwara is the non-dual reality behind the entire world. Since the world is controlled by karma therefore we can say that Ishwara is the very basis of karma itself. Karma as an illusion in Ishwara causes sorrow only when Ishwara is forgotten (not known) and dependency is upon karma. The moment a person overcomes desires, karma stops giving its fruit. And when such a person remembers that Ishwara alone exists (as the very substratum of karma) such a person thereby ever rejoice in bliss (sorrow instantly vanishes).

The state where karma has no validity is called naishkarmya. Through nishkaama karma, a person sets his mind to gain knowledge. Through knowledge of Ishwara as all-pervasive Consciousness (the same Consciousness which constantly pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist),

the person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. For such a person, karma doesn't cause any effect or ripples in the mind.

As long as karma exists a person will experience sorrow but once the person has attained the state of naishkarmya or karmalessness, then there is no sorrow but ever rejoicing in bliss alone.

Two levels of reality

It may be questioned as to whether karma or the world exists after realization of one's own nature of Brahman or not. The answer is as simple as that karma or the world doesn't exist even now for it to vanish after realization. At all times whatever exists is Ishwara or Brahman alone. When knowledge of Brahman isn't there then we will get deluded by karma and thereby will experience only sorrow. Once knowledge of Brahman is gained then karma will not affect us even as snake seen in rope after knowing that there is no snake will not cause any fear at all. Sankara thus beautifully says that a jnaani is one who is unaffected by the entire world – he is like a person who runs behind water in desert but isn't affected even the least as he knows that there is no water at all.

This entire world is like a long dream or a drama. Everything appears very real but whatever exists is one Brahman or Ishwara alone. As long as we are able to remember this, we will be unaffected while performing our role in this drama to perfection. Thus jnaanis as well perform actions in the world but they are unaffected by actions whereas ajnaanis are affected by actions.

Jnaanis ever abide as the witness-Brahman which is the substratum of actions and the world. Thus they are able to ever rejoice in bliss unlike normal people who get affected by actions thinking themselves to be both the doer and enjoyer of actions and fruits of actions.

May we all strive to go beyond karma through nishkaama karma and through jnaana realize our very nature of blissful non-dual Brahman so that we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Anumaanas used

कर्म न सत्यं,सापेक्षत्वात्, कुक्कुटान्डवत् ।१।

karma na satyaṁ,sāpekṣatvāt, kukkuṭāṇḍavat|1|

1. Karma is not real, as it is relative, like hen and egg (hen and egg are relative and therefore just illusions in a substratum).

कर्म न त्याज्यं,कर्मलोके स्थितत्वात् वासनावशाच्च,मत्तवत् ।२।

karma na tyājyaṁ,karmaloke sthitatvāt vāsanāvaśācca,mattavat|2|

2. Karma cannot be renounced, as one is in the karma loka and due to vasanas, like a drunkard (who cannot get rid of drinking due to being addicted, similar being in the karma loka and addicted to karma, karma cannot be renounced).

कर्मणः फलं शोकमेव,सापेक्षत्वात् अनित्यत्वाच्च,मरीचिवत् ।३।

karmaṇaḥ phalaṁ śokameva,sāpekṣatvāt anityatvācca,marīcivat|3|

3. Fruit of action is sorrow alone, due to be relative and temporary in nature, like water seen in desert (like water seen in desert is relative or illusory and temporary and therefore leads to only sorrow, similarly karma also leads to only sorrow).

निष्कामकर्मणा लभते चित्तशुद्धिः,निस्पृहत्वात्,साक्षिवत् ।४।

niṣkāmakarmaṇā labhate cittaśuddhiḥ,nispr̥hatvāt,sākṣivat|4|

4. One attains purity of mind through nishkaama karma (karma without desires for its fruits), because of being untainted or unaffected, like a witness (a witness is not affected by likes and dislikes, similarly a person performing actions without getting affected by it will get rid of impurity of mind which is likes and dislikes).

चित्तशुद्धिपश्चात् ज्ञाते परतत्त्वे शोकनिवृत्तिः आनन्दप्राप्तिश्च,परतत्त्वस्य नित्यत्वात्,ब्रह्मवत् ।५।

cittaśuddhipaścāt jñāte paratattve śokanivṛttiḥ ānandaprāptiśca,paratattvasya nityatvāt,brahmavat|5|

5. After attaining purity of mind and through knowing the supreme truth a person attains removal of sorrow and attainment of bliss, because the supreme truth is eternal, like Brahman (that which is eternal will lead to eternal bliss).

नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिः ज्ञानादेव, कर्माधिष्ठानरूपत्वात् मरीचिवत् ।६।

naiṣkarmyasiddhiḥ jñānādeva, karmādhiṣṭānarūpatvāt, marīcivat ।6।

6. Naishkarmya Siddhi is only through knowledge, by being of the nature of substratum of karma, like water in desert (even as water in desert is possible only through knowing substratum of desert similarly naishkarmya siddhi or state of karma-lessness is possible only through knowing substratum of karma which is knowledge of Brahman).

Summarizing Sloka

निष्कामकर्मणाशुद्धिः ज्ञानादेव तु नैष्कर्म्यम् ।

ब्रह्मैव सर्वमित्येतत् कर्माधिष्ठानरूपञ्च ॥

niṣkāmakarmanāśuddhiḥ jñānādeva tu naiṣkarmyam ।

brahmaiva sarvamityetat karmādhiṣṭānarūpañca ॥

One attains purity of mind through nishkaama karma; but through knowledge alone one attains naishkarmya. Knowledge is that Brahman alone exists and is of the form of substratum of karma.

Chathussutra Prakaashah

Shareeraka Nyaaya Sangraha

First Sutra

The first sutra says that enquiry into Brahman has to be undertaken as Brahman is not known clearly (there is doubt with respect to I which is essentially Brahman alone).

Second Sutra

The second sutra provides nature of Brahman. Brahman is the cause-substratum of the world (that from which the world has come, that in which the world exists and that unto which the world merges at the time of its destruction). This characteristic of Brahman is upalakshana (secondary characteristic with respect to the illusory world) whereas svaroopā of Brahman is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss (that which pulsates inside constantly is Brahman devoid of all differences and associations both of which are mere relative illusions in Brahman).

Third Sutra – Introduction

Before we start with the words of Prakashatman on the third sutra, we will learn the third sutra in brief.

Proof - essential

In order to gain conviction for oneself as well as to convince others it is essential to prove things. Proof is inevitable whether it be in normal worldly life or in spirituality. We find proofs being very important even in courts where someone is being judged with respect to committing of crime (whether committed or not). Many times we also find that trust between people is broken due to lack of proof with respect to incidents or situations. Marriages lead to divorces when there is lack of proof of husband or wife being chaste.

With respect to Brahman as well there needs to be proof. Saying that Brahman is beyond words and thoughts, therefore no proof is available will not help sadhakas to develop trust in the spiritual path towards moksha. When there are proofs for anything and everything in the world, therefore definitely enough proof needs to be there in order for sadhaka to develop trust and progress in the spiritual path towards moksha.

Vedanta – most logical system

Any person who learns Vedanta will be able to know that Vedanta is the most logical system we can ever find. Such a logical system therefore will definitely have a place for proofs and proofs will be fool-proof (without any doubt or confusion).

That Vedanta explains not only the ultimate reality of Brahman but also the empirical world in such depth that even a child will be able to easily understand shows clearly that it is the most logical system.

Knowledge of two types

Proofs are called pramaanas in scriptural or technical term. Pramaana is that which leads to maana or valid knowledge. Knowledge is of two types – one is pramaa or valid knowledge and second is bhramaa or delusion (delusory knowledge). Water is perceived in desert during a sunny day and when a person is walking (and very thirsty as well). The perception of water in desert isn't valid knowledge as the knowledge is contradicted after a while. After going near to the water, the person realizes that there is no water at all but only desert exists. That knowledge which is contradicted is bhramaa or delusion (illusion). Bhramaa will lead to sorrow alone as the entity whose knowledge is attained will vanish (as it doesn't really exist). Water seen in desert will only lead to sorrow as when we walk towards the water thinking that it will quench our thirst we will be disappointed to find no water at all. If we didn't find water there will be sorrow but the sorrow is lesser than when we think water is there and we don't get water. Thus illusions or bhramaa leads to huge sorrow alone. Therefore it is essential to find out whether knowledge of an entity is bhramaa or not.

Unlike bhramaa, pramaa or valid knowledge is that which isn't contradicted. This is like perception of a pot in a room. The pot isn't invalidated (the pot doesn't vanish when we go near it). Therefore knowledge of pot is pramaa or valid. Such valid knowledge will lead to happiness. We look for a pot in order to drink water from it. We find the pot and our quench is removed by drinking water from the pot. Thereby we become happy. Therefore it is always essential to assert something to be pramaa.

Asserting something to be pramaa or bhramaa requires analysis of the thing. This analysis should be thorough to ensure that the analysis isn't later contradicted. After asserting something to be pramaa or bhramaa, we will be able to choose pramaa and be happy; at the same time through avoiding bhramaa we will be able to get rid of sorrow as well.

Since the ultimate goal of life is getting rid of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss, therefore sadhakas should constantly strive to figure out whether something (knowledge of something) is pramaa or bhramaa. Such an analysis needs to be performed with respect to Brahman as well – that Brahman which is to be enquired and that Brahman which is the cause-substratum of the illusory world.

Before getting into the proofs with respect to Brahman we also have to learn as to what are the different means of valid knowledge (means or proofs with respect to an object).

Pramaana – valid means of knowledge

Pramaana or valid means of knowledge is numbered variously by various systems of philosophy (the shad darshanas). Vedanta accepts six pramaanas or valid means of knowledge. In order to prove anything, it has to be tested against these six pramaanas. Vedanta Paribhasha is a work which deals with these six pramaanas in depth while also proving the illusory nature of the world with these pramaanas. We will see in very brief these six pramaanas.

1. Pratyaksha pramaana or means of perceptual knowledge

Knowledge of the objects of the world through the sense organs is called pratyaksha pramaa or perceptual knowledge. Here the sense organ gets in contact with sense objects. Sense organs (of knowledge or perception) are five in number – organ of sound (ears), organ of touch (skin), organ of sight (eyes), organ of taste (tongue) and organ of smell (nose). It is through these organs that a person gains perceptual knowledge of objects of the world. Such knowledge is pramaa only as it isn't contradicted (within the empirical perspective though ultimately only Brahman exists). That means of knowledge which leads to pratyaksha pramaa is called pratyaksha pramaana or means of perceptual knowledge. All the other pramaanas directly or indirectly are dependent upon pratyaksha (or pratyaksha pramaana).

Example of pratyaksha pramaana is knowledge of pot in the room, knowledge of Sun, knowledge of a palace in front of us etc.

2. Anumaana pramaana or means of inferential knowledge

That which cannot be perceived directly is subject to inference or inferential knowledge. In order to infer something, we need to perceive something else. For example, in order to infer fire on a hill we have to perceive smoke in the hill. Since wherever fire is present, smoke is also present there therefore this leads to the inferential knowledge that the hill has fire or hill is on fire. Fire isn't directly perceived but inferred through perception of smoke. That means of knowledge which leads to inferential knowledge is anumaana pramaana or means of inferential knowledge.

3. Shabda pramaana or means of verbal testimony

Sometimes we will not perceive anything at all but we gain proof through words which are beyond doubt. The means of such knowledge which is dependent upon words is called shabda pramaana. This is split into two – aapta vachanam and shaastras. Aapta vachanam is words of elderly people or people who are experts in the particular area whereas shaastras are the very breath of Brahmaa (and that which has been tested again and again by various people).

4. Upamaana pramaana or means of knowledge through similarity

When we perceive A and since A is similar to B, we gain knowledge about A which is similar to B then such knowledge is called upamaa. And that means of knowledge which leads to upamaa is called upamaana pramaana or upamaana. For example a person sees a bull which is similar to cow and therefore he gains knowledge that this animal seen in front is like a cow.

5. Arthaapatti pramaana or means of presumptive knowledge

When we perceive something which cannot be valid unless there is something else assumed, then it is called arthaapatti pramaana. For example we don't see Rama as eating but still Rama has put on weight. Rama putting up weight is invalid unless we assume that Rama eats during night. This knowledge of presumption that Rama is eating at night is called arthaapatti (which is essential to make perception of Rama becoming as fat valid).

6. Anupalabdhi pramaana or means of knowledge of non-existence

Anupalabdhi is when something isn't perceived. Lack of perception or cognition of something leads to anupalabdhi pramaana. For example, we don't see a pot in front of us – therefore knowledge of pot not existing is anupalabdhi.

Two perspectives

Vedanta talks about two perspectives – one is ultimate and other is empirical. It is essential to understand these two perspectives before getting into the proofs with respect to Brahman. Empirically the world exists and everything in the world exists (is accepted as real). But ultimately Brahman alone exists – that Brahman alone exists is proven through sruthi, yukti and anubhava (scriptures talk about Brahman alone existing and no duality existing whatsoever, logic also proves that relativity is just an illusion in absolute Brahman and experience shows that in deep sleep state and state of moksha, only Brahman exists). Empirical perspective is called vyaavahaarika dristi and ultimate perspective is called paaramaarthika dristi.

With respect to empirical perspective, the six pramaanas are valid. This is because empirical perspective takes into account duality or differences of subject and object. Subject is the knower and object is the known. But ultimately Brahman alone exists without any duality and therefore there is neither subject nor object. Thus ultimately pramaanas are not valid at all.

Taking a simple analysis, we will find that Brahman cannot be proven through the six pramaanas. Brahman isn't perceived as Brahman is the subject of everything (that subject which isn't objectified – all objects are temporary and will vanish whereas Brahman is eternal). Since Brahman isn't perceived therefore Brahman is not known through pratyaksha. Brahman being eternal, non-dual and absolute in nature doesn't have any relationship with any other thing which can be perceived. Therefore Brahman cannot be inferred (as nothing other than Brahman exists which can be perceived and Brahman inferred from its perception). Since nothing apart from Brahman exists therefore Brahman cannot be perceived through upamaana (nothing similar to Brahman exists). Brahman cannot be expressed in words as Brahman is beyond words and thoughts (the subject of all objects) – therefore Brahman isn't known through shabda. Nothing can be perceived with respect to Brahman and therefore Brahman isn't known through arthaapatti and anupalabdhi.

To sum it up, Brahman is not proven or known through any of the six pramaanas.

Is Brahman without any proof?

Since Brahman is not proven or known through any of the six pramaanas, therefore does this mean that Brahman has no proof at all which would mean that there is no way of knowing Brahman which would also mean that a system based itself on knowing Brahman will also become invalid? That this isn't the case, Veda Vyasa gave the third sutra which says that there is proof for Brahman and the proof is the scriptures.

Scriptures – proof for Brahman

Though Brahman cannot be objectified by any means, still scriptures are the mirrors in which we can see our own very nature of Brahman. Even as normal mirror helps in looking at our own face, similarly scriptures are the mirrors that points to the ultimate reality of Brahman. Since Brahma's breath was the scriptures therefore scriptures are the source of Brahman. Also since scriptures are the revelations to various sages (realized masters) during times of intense meditation (or absorption) therefore scriptures are the source of Brahman.

Thus the proof for Brahman is scriptures and scriptures alone. Hence Sankara in many of his commentaries emphasizes on depending upon the scriptures as the scriptures have the ultimate authority in the world. If we say that a Guru is an authority on Brahman like the scriptures then it should be remembered that a Guru is one well versed in the scriptures and scriptures are tested and verified again and again by various realized masters (various Gurus). Therefore scriptures are the ultimate authority on Brahman. Hence it is essential for all sadhakas to learn the scriptures in order to learn about Brahman and thereby they will be able to progress towards realization of Brahman. Only then will they be able to fulfill their lives through ever rejoicing in bliss after realization of their very nature of Brahman.

We will see in the next magazine the meaning of this sutra through analysis of the words of Prakashatman.

May we all strive to learn the scriptures which is the ultimate authority on Brahman so that through knowing Brahman we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Avidyaa Prakaashah

We have seen in the previous couple of magazines illogicality of avidya with respect to its support (asraya), its veiling of Brahman (tirodhana), its nature (svarupa) and its indeterminability (anirvachaniyatva).

Asraya

The purvapakshin says that avidyaa cannot be supported by Brahman because Brahman is self-luminous in nature and will lead to duality (as avidyaa becomes another entity). Avidyaa also cannot be supported by jeeva who himself isn't real and dependent on avidyaa itself for his very existence. Thus, the purvapakshin concluded that avidyaa is illogical and so is the system of Advaita Vedanta which bases itself on avidyaa.

The siddhantin replied saying that the support for avidyaa is Brahman alone as there isn't any real entity apart from Brahman. And since avidyaa isn't real therefore duality isn't affected at all. Avidyaa since it is just a matter of experience for an ignorant person and really not real therefore it doesn't cause any harm to self-luminous nature of Brahman (and also doesn't lead to duality or another real entity like Brahman).

Tirodhana

The purvapakshin said that veiling of Self or Brahman is not possible as Brahman is self-luminous in nature. That which ever shines and is Consciousness in nature can never be veiled. Thus avidyaa can never veil Brahman and therefore avidyaa itself is purposeless (avidyaa is that which veils the Self, so says Advaitin).

The siddhantin replied saying that avidyaa is only for person who is ignorant. Really speaking avidyaa doesn't exist and it cannot ever veil Brahman. And it doesn't ever veil Brahman. But for an ignorant person, the Self appears as veiled by ignorance. This is from an empirical view point. After realization of Brahman through knowledge (which removes ignorance), a person realizes the ultimate view point that Brahman alone exists. Even as light is seemingly veiled by darkness and Sun is veiled seemingly by clouds, similarly the Self is veiled by ignorance (from an empirical view point). Until knowledge of the shastras (that Brahman alone exists) dawns a person experiences ignorance (which is proven through direct experience for an ajnaani) and since ultimately Brahman alone exists, therefore there is no illogicality whatsoever.

Svarupa

The purvapakshin said that avidyaa's nature cannot be neither bhaava (existence) nor abhaava (non-existence). It cannot be bhaava because then it can never vanish (or be nullified or negated) and it cannot be abhaava because it isn't something merely non-existent (or lack of something) by being experienced (by ignorant people). It goes without saying that an entity cannot be both bhaava and abhaava. Thus avidyaa's nature cannot be determined and therefore the system which bases itself on avidyaa is illogical.

The siddhantin answered by saying that we say that avidyaa isn't abhaava and hence term it bhaava. It is neither bhaava nor abhaava but it appears as existing for an ignorant person (ultimately for a knower it doesn't exist at all). Terming avidyaa as existing (or bhaava rupa) is just for teaching purposes alone. Ultimately avidyaa has no reality at all and it just appears as existing in my Consciousness (Consciousness is changeless whereas avidyaa is changing - this itself means that avidyaa is just an illusion in Consciousness, temporarily appearing but ultimately not existing).

Anirvachaniyatva

The purvapakshin said that avidyaa which is said to be anirvachaniya by advaitin is illogical. This is because an entity has to either sat or asat. There cannot be postulation of a third type of entity and proving that such an entity is also not possible. And that which cannot be explained is illogical and therefore it is destroyed (by itself). When avidyaa gets destroyed then the system of Vedanta itself becomes illogical.

The siddhantin answered by saying that there are two levels of reality – one is ultimate perspective or paaramaarthika and second is empirical or vyaavahaarika. From ultimate perspective avidyaa doesn't exist as one Brahman alone exists; from an empirical viewpoint, avidyaa appears as existing. But since empirically as well avidyaa appears as existing, it cannot be asat (as asat has no existence whatsoever). Avidyaa also cannot be sat as it will vanish after knowledge dawns. Thus it is that which appears as existing while experienced but doesn't really exist. Such an entity is termed as indeterminable or indescribable. And such an avidyaa is postulated only for an ajnaani (who alone directly experiences avidyaa). Ultimately avidyaa doesn't exist at all (this is realized through knowledge which destroys non-existent avidyaa in the form of "there is no avidyaa at all existing" and therefore there is neither illogicality nor destruction of either avidyaa or Advaita Vedanta.

Pramaana

The purvapakshin argued that avidyaa isn't proven through any pramaana – it doesn't stand pratyaksha or anumana. It doesn't stand scriptural support as well because scriptures talk about the world as real. The world which is the effect of avidyaa and is illusory or unreal isn't supported in the scriptures. Thus having no valid means of knowledge, avidyaa is invalid or is delusion alone. Thus the system of advaita Vedanta also falls apart.

Siddhantin answered the objections by saying that avidyaa is a matter of direct experience for ignorant people. That which is a matter of direct experience is already proven and therefore it doesn't require any other proof for its existence but if required, avidyaa can be proven through other pramaanas as well. Sruthi also supports avidyaa and says the world is temporary which itself means that the world isn't real. Though ultimately avidyaa is unreal still it is valid and proven for an ignorant person. The system of advaita Vedanta itself is in order for ignorant people to realize Brahman. Just because avidyaa is unreal ultimately doesn't mean that it doesn't exist or the system is invalid. Even as after knowing that there is no water in desert, still water is seen, similarly after knowing that avidyaa doesn't exist even if avidyaa's effect of the world is seen there is no fault at all as it just appears as existing. The knowledge that it doesn't exist but Brahman alone exists will make a person ever rejoice in bliss (doesn't really matter if non-existent avidyaa appears as existing or not).

Nivartaka

The purvakshin said that knowledge as remover of ignorance is not possible. This is because of knowledge of nirguna Brahman being impossible. Moreover Advaitin accepts Brahman as one's own very nature – therefore knowledge of such a Brahman (oneness) is impossible. Since knowledge is impossible therefore there is no remover of ignorance. Since ignorance cannot be removed therefore the system of Advaita Vedanta itself falls apart.

Siddhantin answered this by saying that avidyaa doesn't exist at all like darkness. But when it appears as existing, it is removed through knowledge or light. Knowledge of Brahman as all-pervasive Consciousness is possible as it is in the mind alone – such knowledge isn't for the Self but for the mind which is deluded by avidyaa. When knowledge removes avidyaa in the mind, then what remains behind is one's own very nature of Brahman. When Brahman alone exists then a person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. Avidyaa through veiling this bliss is the cause of sorrow and it is removed through knowledge of Brahman as one's own

very nature (all pervasive Consciousness). Therefore system of Advaita Vedanta is valid – as empirically avidyaa is accepted for an ignorant person whereas ultimately it never exists.

Let's now see the next illogicality with respect to avidyaa.

7. nivrittyAnupapattiH- Illogicality with respect to the removal of avidyaa

भावरूपकाज्ञाननाशनम् ।

नास्ति सर्वदा ज्ञानतो न्यथा ॥२५॥

bhāvarūpakājñānanāśanam |
nāsti sarvadā jñānatonyathā ||25||

25. That avidyaa which is of the nature of existence is never possible, due to knowledge or any other means.

कर्मणार्पणं भक्तिभावितम् ।

यस्य मानसं तस्य नन्दनम् ॥२६॥

karmaṇārpaṇam bhaktibhāvitam |
yasya mānasam tasya nandanam ||26||

26. Offering through actions and filled with devotion whose mind is, he alone will rejoice (there is no removal of avidyaa as per knowledge that will lead to rejoicing in bliss).

ज्ञानवर्जितो नास्ति सर्वदा ।

तस्यवारणं ज्ञानतः सदा ॥२७॥

jñānavarjito nāsti sarvadā |
tasyavāraṇam jñānataḥ sadā ||27||

27. That which is devoid of knowledge, avidyaa, never exists. Therefore (since it appears as existing or is an illusion) its removal is through knowledge alone always.

ज्ञानभावितं लोकव्यापकम् ।

यस्य मानसं तस्य नन्दनम् ॥२८ ॥

jñānabhāvitam lokavyāpakam |
yasya mānasam tasya nandanam ||28||

28. Whose mind is filled with knowledge and all-pervasive (all-pervasive Brahman), he (alone) rejoices in bliss.

Slokas

The first two slokas explain the illogicality with respect to anirvachaniyatva of avidyaa. The first two slokas (25th and 26th) thus are purvapaksha statements whereas the last two (27th and 28th) slokas answer the objections and the siddhantha or advaitic view-point.

Avidyaa – can be removed

Advaita Vedanta says that sorrow is as a result of ignorance which is not-knowing one's own very nature of Brahman. Brahman is that which alone exists at all times. When one's own nature of Brahman is not known, then duality which is just an illusion or appearance in Brahman is considered to be real. As a result of duality a person experiences sorrow while going from birth to death. The instant way to put an end to sorrows is removal of ignorance and this is possible through realization of Brahman as Brahman is the very substratum of the entire illusory world (of ignorance as well).

Purvapakshin – avidyaa is bhaavarupa

It has been already proven before that avidyaa is bhaava rupa or existing in nature. If avidyaa is mere non-existent entity then it will not have any appearance at all; also it will not be the cause of the world that we currently perceive. Thus avidyaa is existence in nature. Such an existing avidyaa alone is logical – a non-existent avidyaa isn't proven through any means whatsoever. If it is argued that non-existence of knowledge leads to avidyaa even as non-existence of light leads to darkness, it isn't possible as avidyaa is not proven through any means as that which is merely non-existent in nature. Moreover saying that knowledge or Brahman can be non-existent is going against the statement that Brahman is real (that Brahman which ceases to exist even for a moment isn't real and thereby the entire system of Advaita Vedanta will fall apart).

Before doubt Advaitins like Chitsukhacharya clearly define avidyaa as something which is existent (not as that which is mere non-existence or which is different from both existent and non-existent). If it be argued that avidyaa is neither existent nor non-existent, that also has been refuted previously (anirvachaniya is that which is neither existent nor non-existent).

Purvapakshin – avidyaa cannot be removed

It has been proven that avidyaa is existent in nature. Such an existent entity cannot be removed. Removal is only of that which is not existent. Removal of that which appears as existing is possible as it is just a delusion in its substratum. But if avidyaa is a delusion then there is no need to remove it at all – therefore system of Advaita Vedanta will fall apart. Thus avidyaa has to be accepted as existence in nature. Such an existing avidyaa cannot be removed as existence is that which isn't subject to non-existence (the Lord says there is no existence for asat and sat never ceases to exist).

Removal is only for that which ceases to exist. Since avidyaa never ceases to exist therefore there is no removal of avidyaa at all.

Purvapakshin – avidyaa cannot be removed through knowledge or any other means

Since avidyaa is existence in nature therefore it cannot be removed. It has already been proven before that removal of avidyaa through knowledge isn't possible – this is because such knowledge has to be ever-present in order for removal of avidyaa by it to become eternal. If such knowledge is ever-present then why doesn't it already remove avidyaa? Since it doesn't remove avidyaa already therefore it will never remove avidyaa. If it be argued that avidyaa is removed by new knowledge then such removal is temporary as that which is newly created or attained will be lost as well. If it be argued that illusory avidyaa is removed by illusory knowledge, then again the above questions have to be repeated for illusory knowledge – if illusory knowledge is newly created, then it will not remove illusory avidyaa eternally and if illusory knowledge is ever-present then since it didn't remove illusory avidyaa by now, it will never remove illusory avidyaa. Thus avidyaa cannot be removed through knowledge whether knowledge be real or illusory.

Now can't there be other means to remove avidyaa?

No, the advaitin doesn't accept any other means to remove avidyaa. Vidyaa alone removes avidyaa even as light alone removes darkness. Even if there are other means to removing avidyaa, the Advaitin's avidyaa can only be removed by knowledge.

Since it has already been proved that knowledge cannot remove avidyaa therefore it stands that avidyaa can never be removed.

Purvapakshin – avidyaa ever present along with sorrow

Since avidyaa can never be removed therefore sorrow which is caused by avidyaa also can never be removed. Thus sorrows always exist for sadhakas who follow Advaita Vedanta. In other words, the system of Advaita Vedanta is without any phala or prayojana (which is moksha or removal of avidyaa). Therefore the system of Advaita Vedanta falls apart.

Sadhakas who believe and follow illogical Advaita Vedanta thereby will ever experience sorrow alone and will never attain the ultimate goal of life as moksha.

Purvapakshin – Actions offered unto Ishwara and devotion to Ishwara alone the way to eternal bliss

Any system is incomplete with just pointing out faults in other systems. It becomes complete when it provides an alternative and valid solution while avoiding all the faults pointed out in other systems. Here we find the author mentioning the views of Ramanujacharya (Vishishta advaita system).

The ultimate goal of life is getting rid of all sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss. Such a state is not possible through removal of avidyaa as avidyaa itself is illogical (and thereby non-existent). Instead this ultimate goal is achieved when a person offers all actions unto Ishwara and has devotion towards Ishwara. Devotion along with offering of action alone is the way to eternal bliss.

Ishwara isn't nirguna Brahman as mentioned by Advaitin but Ishwara encompasses the entire world of chit and achit (sentient beings and insentient objects). That Ishwara alone is the ultimate refuge is essential in order to get rid of sorrows. The attitude of complete surrender unto Ishwara has been pointed out by the Lord in many places of Gita. Complete surrender is termed as prapatti. One who has prapatti will overcome all sorrows and will be

able to ever rejoice in bliss in remembrance of Ishwara as one who encompasses the entire world. The world never vanishes as the Advaitin claims. And claiming the world to be an illusion is also not true as its cessation is never experienced. While living in the world, a person should surrender unto the Lord completely – this alone is the way to bliss.

The purvapakshin says that avidyaa's removal is not possible and hence the system of Advaita Vedanta itself is invalid. Ardent sadhakas who want bliss should surrender unto Ishwara – that Ishwara who encompasses the entire world of sentient and insentient. This surrender alone will lead to removal of sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss.

Siddhantin – avidyaa never exists

As the purvapakshin claims, avidyaa if existent can never be removed. Advaita Vedanta never says that avidyaa exists. Instead we always say that avidyaa doesn't exist at all. It never exists. Even as snake seen in rope never exists, similarly avidyaa never exists. But if it appears as existing, then it has to be removed. Such appearing as existing isn't bhaava rupa or existent. Existent is that which never ceases to exist and we never claim that avidyaa is existing in nature.

Chitsukhacharya in his own self-commentary to Chitsukhi says that when we term avidyaa as bhaava rupa we just mean to negate both bhaava and abhaava. That's the only reason why it is termed as bhaava rupa. Avidyaa is neither existent nor non-existent. Such anirvachaniya entity isn't an illusion, as has already been proved earlier (in anirvachaniya anupapatti).

Siddhantin – avidyaa matter of experience for ignorant person

When it is said that avidyaa is neither existent nor non-existent, it only means that it doesn't ultimately exist but empirically it appears as existing for an ignorant person. Avidyaa is a matter of direct experience for an ignorant person and there need be no more proof than direct experience for anything.

Though an ignorant person experiences avidyaa, avidyaa ultimately doesn't exist even as snake never exists in a rope though a person might see snake as existing in the rope.

Siddhantin – avidyaa removed through knowledge

If avidyaa is perceived directly, then it is removed through knowledge even as darkness is removed through light. That avidyaa which appears as existing for an ignorant person definitely can be removed (as it doesn't really exist). This removal doesn't mean that it will come into existence again as this removal is knowledge that it doesn't exist at all. Any illusion is removed through knowledge of its substratum and afterwards it never comes back to existence as it doesn't really exist in the first place.

When snake is seen in the rope, snake has to be removed through knowledge of rope. This knowledge of rope removes snake forever because it removes notion of snake-existing. Snake never ever exists and hence when notion of snake-existing is removed then snake is eternally removed and will never ever exist in the rope.

Though like water seen in desert might appear again as existing in desert, even after a person knows that there is no water, still the water seen again will not lead to sorrow as the person knows that there is no water at all in the desert. Similarly once a person realizes that there is no avidyaa and Brahman alone exists, then even though the world or avidyaa might appear as existing it doesn't pose any problem at all (it is baadhitham or sublated).

Siddhantin – knowledge of all-pervasive Brahman leads to eternal bliss

The purvapakshin says that surrendering unto Ishwara who encompasses all sentient and insentient alone will lead to bliss. But this is wrong as Ishwara cannot encompass sentient and insentient. That would mean that Ishwara is affected by insentient entities; moreover insentient entities cannot be considered as eternal as they have no Consciousness or light falling upon them. Without attacking the opponent's system, the Advaitin just says that eternal bliss is only possible knowledge. Knowledge isn't knowledge of Ishwara filled with gunas but Ishwara as pervading the entire world.

Duality caused by avidyaa (not knowing that only Brahman exists) is the cause of all sorrows. And therefore it can only be removed through non-duality. Non-duality isn't perception of Ishwara as one entity (while sentient and insentient entities are part of Ishwara). Non-duality is where there is absolutely no duality but one alone exists. The scriptures clearly negate duality of all sorts and only when duality completely vanishes, there will be eternal bliss (bliss that is ever lasting). Such bliss is only possible therefore in nirguna Brahman. This Brahman is that which pervades the entire world – the entire world

is nothing but essentially Brahman alone. Knowledge of this non-dual reality of Brahman leads to complete cessation of sorrow and thereby such a person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss at all times.

There is no other way to eternal bliss than knowledge of Brahman – the scriptures mention this very clearly (beyond any doubt). Accepting any other means of eternal bliss is not only contradicting the scriptures but also contradicting one's own direct experience (as in the state of deep sleep that bliss is when duality vanishes and non-duality alone remains behind). It has thus been proven beyond doubt that knowledge of Brahman alone leads to eternal bliss (there is absolutely no other way to eternal bliss).

Conclusion

The arguments of the purvapakshin that removal of avidyaa is not possible has been refuted easily because avidyaa doesn't really exist. That which really exists cannot be removed but avidyaa only exists for the ignorant person. Such an ignorant person through knowledge will be able to get rid of avidyaa. When avidyaa is removed, the illusory veil over the blissful Atman-Brahman is lifted and as a result the person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss (the ultimate goal of life as moksha will be attained). Since this removal of avidyaa isn't real therefore avidyaa will not appear again – this removal is similar to knowledge of the rope in which snake is seen. Knowledge is of Brahman – that Brahman which alone exists here. This knowledge of Brahman as pervading the entire world of names and forms alone will lead to eternal bliss. There is no other means to eternal bliss than this knowledge because nothing apart from Brahman exists (neither karma nor bhakthi nor yoga will lead to eternal bliss but knowledge of the one non-dual reality of Brahman alone will lead to eternal bliss).

This knowledge in itself isn't real but it removes illusory avidyaa. Through remembering that Brahman alone exists, avidyaa vanishes and what remains behind is ever-present Conscious Self. This Self cannot know anything as there is nothing apart from it. Thus even vidyaa is at the plane of avidyaa and once it removes avidyaa, it itself vanishes even as alum vanishes after purifying water. Thus ultimately non-dual blissful Brahman alone will remain behind (this doesn't mean that the world might not appear but just that the world will be known to be an illusion, if perceived and therefore it will not pose any obstacle or lead to any sorrow).

Thus it has been proven that the system of Advaita Vedanta is valid and the illogicality with respect to removal of avidyaa also has been negated. With this we have also come to the end of the seven illogicalities of avidyaa. We will see a summary of this entire work of avidyaa prakaashah in the next magazine.

May we all strive to remember at all times that Brahman alone exists so that through this knowledge we will be able to get rid of illusory ignorance and thereby will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Anumaana used by purvapakshin and siddhantin

Purvapakshin

अविद्यायाः निवृत्त्यानुपपत्तिः सत्यं, भावरूपत्वात् घटपटादिवत् ।

Avidyaa's illogicality with respect to removal is valid, as it is of the nature of existence, like pot, cloth etc. (pot, cloth etc. are existing and therefore will never vanish or their removal isn't possible)

Siddhantapakshin

अविद्यायाः निवृत्त्योपपत्तिः सत्यमेव, परमार्थतोऽसत्यत्वात् अज्ञस्यैव अनुभवविषयत्वात्, मरीचिवत् ।

Avidyaa logicality with respect to removal is valid, as ultimately it is unreal and an experience only for ignorant person, like water in desert.

Purvapakshin

अविद्यानिवृत्त्या आनन्दप्राप्तिः मिथ्यैव, भक्त्या प्रपत्त्या एव आनन्दप्राप्तेः सम्भवाच्च ।

Through removal of avidyaa, attaining of bliss is illusion or delusion alone, as attainment of bliss is possible only through devotion or prapatti (surrender).

Siddhantapakshin

अविद्यानिवृत्त्या एव आनन्दप्राप्तेः सम्भवः, श्रुत्यादिप्रमाणबलात् स्वानुभूतिबलाच्च ।

Through removal of avidyaa alone attainment of bliss is possible, due to the strength of sruthi and other pramaanas and due to one's own direct experience (as in the state of deep sleep and after realization).

Vedanta Shabda Vicharanam

The end part of the Vedas, called Vedanta, speaks about Brahman as the Ultimate Reality. It also speaks about Atma as being Brahman alone. In this article, we will see the analysis of Atma. The meaning of the word Atma, which comes from the root Atman, is individual Self. The individual Self here does not mean the self that is embodied but the Self which is beyond all limitations.

Scriptures point out that Brahman alone exists. This is the Ultimate Truth and the ultimate knowledge to realized. This is the goal or the Ultimate Knowledge to be attained, but now from the perspective of the world, scriptures point out that Brahman was there before the creation of the world, Brahman alone is and Brahman alone will be.

"Sat evasowmyaidamagreaseetekamevaadviteeyam"

"Existence alone existed before the creation, one without a second".

"Isvasyamidamsarvamyatkinchitjagatyaamjagat"

"Whatever exists in the world movable or immovable are pervaded in and out by Lord"

When we understand that Brahman alone exists everywhere at all times, this is liberation or moksha. Such knowledge will give Anandam that will never perish. Absence of that knowledge or ignorance of that knowledge is termed as bondage or samsara. When there is ignorance about this Truth, division is perceived as I (the individual), the world and Iswara. This division caused by ignorance of the underlying reality is the cause of sorrow.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says that

"Dviteeyaatvaibhayambhavati"

"Through duality comes fear"

In order to get rid of sorrow caused by this ignorance, enquiry into Individual or world or Iswara will lead to the same Ultimate knowledge of Brahman. In this article, analysis of Atma or Individual Self is done and how it leads to the knowledge of Brahman.

Shankaracharya defines Atma in Tattvabodha as

Sthoolasookshmakaaranashareeraatvyatiriktahpanchakoshaateetah san

Avasthaatrayasaakshisatchitaanandaswaroopah yah tishtathi san sahatma

"Which is different from Gross, Subtle and Causal body – Which is beyond the five sheaths – Which is the witness of three states of experience – Which is of the nature of Existence – Consciousness – Bliss Absolute – that is Atma"

When we say Individual, what are we exactly calling as individual? As of now, we are convinced that the body, mind or intellect is us but the scriptures say that everything is Brahman including the Individual Self.

Madukya Upanishad

"Sarvam hi yetat brahma ayamatma brahma"

"Everything is Brahman, this individual Self is Brahman"

We can see that there is a conflict between what we are convinced about ourselves and what Scriptures say about ourselves. The words of the Upanishads are considered as the highest authority and hence are always true. Therefore, what we have convinced about ourselves is wrong. As we have seen initially, this wrong understanding about ourselves is because of the ignorance of our real nature of Brahman. If we enquire about ourselves as per the way shown by the scriptures, we will understand about our real nature.

Coming back to the definition above, Atma is different from Gross, subtle and causal body. How is it different from Gross, Subtle and Causal? All of these are subjected to change but the I, the individual Self, is the same. We clearly know that our body is changing, if we are the body then we will not know the change. Therefore, we definitely have to be different from the body.

LakshmidharaKavi in AdvaitaMakaranda says that

"ShatvikaravathamvettanirvikarohamAnyathaa

Thadvikaaraanusandhaanamsarvathaanaavakalpate"

"Being the knower of the those that have the six modifications would in no way be possible to imagine"

Atma is different from Gross, Subtle and Causal body alright, but where is it exactly located? Atma is beyond all the sheaths. Physical body is gross, when we go subtler there is vital force, still subtler there is mind and sense organs, still subtler there is the intellect, still subtler there is the layer of ignorance which is the causal body. We have the impression

these sheaths are 'I' and we identify with one of these sheaths most of the time. But the scripture says the real 'I' is beyond all this. To go one step further, scriptures point that all of these sheaths function only because of Atma.

Now there could be another question. We understand that Atma is different from 3 bodies and it is beyond the five sheaths. Also, all sheaths function only because of Atma. Now, we experience many things at the physical level and mental level and I get affected by these experiences. Is the Atman affected by the experiences? No. Scriptures point out that Atma is the witness of all the experiences. We can categorize all experiences into one of the three states of experiences namely, waking state, dream state and deep sleep state. During waking state, all the 3 bodies are active (physical, subtle and causal). We see an object in the outside world and we say "I see this". We identify ourselves with body, mind and the sense organs and therefore we say that "I see this". The object perceived through the sense organs form thought in the mind, Atma being the illuminator of the mind and the sense organs identifies itself with the mind and therefore the expression "I see this". All experiences like happiness, sorrow, hunger etc are thoughts in the mind and because of identification of Atman with the mind we say that "I am happy", "I am sad" etc. We have seen above that Atma is different from mind and therefore we can say that Atma is different from experiences as well. Therefore, we can say that Atma is not affected by any experiences in the waking state, yet it is the illuminator of all the experiences. This is possible only if Atma is just a witness of the waking state.

In dream state, gross body and sense are not active but the mind is active. The dream world is pure mental projection and the mind is illumined by Atma. Thus, Atma being different from the mind is just a witness of the dream state. In deep sleep state, there is gross body and subtle body are inactive. There are no experiences at all, and after we wake up we say "I slept happily". This shows that even when there are no experiences, Atma was there witnessing it and therefore we were able to say "I slept happily" after we wake up.

Thus, we conclude based on Sruti, yukti (logic) and anubhava (experience) that Atma is not anything we think we are, but is the illuminator and witness of everything. But, what then is the nature of Atma? Scriptures say it is Sat (Existence), Chit (Consciousness) and Anandam, which is same as the nature of Brahman.

Sat or Existence means that Atma exists always and everywhere. How can we prove that the individual Self exists always and everywhere? In one day, we have the experience of waking state, dream state and the deep sleep state. We concluded that Self is the witness of all these 3 states and thus, Self exists as the witness of these 3 states on that day. If we extend that to the next day, we will come to the same conclusion and thus we can extend it to weeks, months, years, yugas and kalpas. Thus, we come to the conclusion that self exists all the time.

Consciousness is that which illumines everything. We never have any doubt whether we exist or not, we know it without any doubt that we exist and this is because we are the Consciousness. The real 'I' without any limitation is our real nature. Because of ignorance of this real nature we consider this body or mind or intellect as 'I' but the truth is that the existence of body and mind are known only because of the illumination of the Consciousness.

Anandam is that absolute Anandam which doesn't go away. Anandam is our nature all the time, but as we perceive duality due to the ignorance of the non-dual Self, the Anandam is not known. As we have seen before with the quotation from Katha Upanishad, duality will always lead to sorrow. It cannot give absolute Anandam. As we saw above, during the state of deep-sleep state body and mind are inactive. There is no duality experienced in deep-sleep state. When we wake up, we say we slept happily. Likewise, when the ignorance about the non-dual Self is removed by the knowledge of the Self, there will be only vision of oneness and there-by there will be Absolute Anandam.

Objection: There are so many living beings in this world. Scriptures say that there are 14 worlds and there are people living in all 14 worlds. Are there so many Atma?

Answer: No, Atma is only one. Let us take two clay pots for example, one big pot and another small one. Though there are two pots of different sizes the space is not different. It is the same space that is in big pot is there in small pot also. The boundaries of pot cannot limit the space and therefore we cannot say that the two pot spaces are different. Likewise, Atman is one but the medium of body-mind complex are many like the different sized pots.

The important point we have to keep in mind is that the pot space is not different from the space outside the pot and likewise the Atma which seems to be limited by the body-mind complex is same as Brahman. All 14 worlds mentioned in the scriptures are in the realm of

ignorance. When we realize our own nature of Self, this question will not arise as there will be no duality.

Objection: It was said above that Atma does not change. Lord Krishna in 6th chapter says that

*"uddarethatmanaatmanamnaatmaanamavasaadhayet
Aatmaiva hi atmanobandhuhatmaivaripuraatmanah"*

"One should uplift oneself by oneself and not lower oneself. For oneself is verily ones own friend oneself is verily ones' own enemy"

In this sloka Lord Krishna says uplift oneself by oneself etc. Is this a different Atma?

Answer: Scriptures are very clear about the nature of Atma as one without any changes. Atma in the sloka mentioned above is not the Supreme Self, it is the Jiva or the false I or ego who is trying to realize his own Real I.

In scriptures, Atma is used to point Jiva at various places and it is important to take the contextual meaning of the word Atma. That is why it is important to learn scriptures under the guidance of a Guru to avoid all these confusions.

Objection: What is false I? How is it different from Real I?

Answer: Reality is that we are the Self which alone exists. That is the Real I. But because of ignorance of our own nature we identify ourselves with body-mind complex and we say "I am so-and-so", "I am a son", "I am a father" etc. When Real I is known, the false I vanishes ones and for all. All sorrows are only for false I as it clings on to the body and mind but when the Real I is known, all false I will vanish and all sorrows also will vanish ones and for all.

Thus is the analysis of Atma as per the scriptures, logic and through the works of Acharyas.

Karma Nirupanam

ॐ कर्मनिरूपणं

om karmanirupaṇam

सर्वकर्मणां आश्रयस्तु किम् ।

ज्ञायते तु यो मुच्यतेऽधुना ॥१॥

sarvakarmaṇām āśrayastu kim |
jñāyate tu yo mucyate'dhunā ||1||

1. What is the support or basis of all actions? This when a person knows, he will be liberated now itself.

कर्मणस्तु ज्ञानं हि दुर्लभम् ।

आत्मसंस्थितेः नैवलौकिकैः ॥२॥

karmaṇastu jñānam hi durlabham |
ātmasamsthiteḥ naivalaukikaiḥ ||2||

2. Knowledge of karma is very tough indeed to get; only those who are established in the Self (know karma) and definitely not worldly people.

कर्तृवर्जितं कामवर्जितम् ।

कर्मयत्ततः शुद्धिमाप्नुयात् ॥३॥

karṭrvarjitam kāmavarjitam |
karmayattataḥ śuddhimāpnuyāt ||3||

3. That karma which is devoid of doer and devoid of desires (for results of actions) leads to purity.

शुद्धमानसस्यात्मभावनम् ।

ज्ञानमेवतत् नन्ददायकम् ॥४ ॥

śuddhamānasasyātmabhāvanam |
jñānamevatat nandadāyakam ||4||

4. Pure mind's focus on the Self is knowledge and leads to bliss.

ज्ञानसंयुत भक्तिभावनम् ।

यस्यमानसं कर्मतारकम् ॥५ ॥

jñānasamyuta bhaktibhāvanam |
yasyamānasam karmatārakam ||5||

5. Filled with knowledge, the notion of devotion, in whose mind it is there, such a mind crosses over karma.

सर्वमेवचित् व्याप्यकारणात् ।

ज्ञानमेतत्तु कर्मनाशकम् ॥६ ॥

sarvamevacit vyāpyakāraṇāt |
jñānametattu karmanāśakam ||6||

6. Everything is Consciousness alone due to pervading the entire world – this is knowledge and destroys action.

ईशभावनं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।

भक्तिरेवतत् द्वन्द्वनाशकः ॥७ ॥

īśabhāvanam jñānacakṣuṣā |
bhaktirevatat dvandvanāśakaḥ ||7||

7. Notion of Ishwara through the eyes of knowledge (that Ishwara is all-pervasive Brahman) is bhakti definitely and destroys duality.

कर्मबन्धनात् मुच्यते यदा ।

आप्नुयात्तदा नन्दमत्भुतम् ॥८॥

karmabandhanāt mucyate yadā |
āpnuyāttadā nandamatbhutam ||8||

8. When a person gets liberated from bondage of karma, then he attains wonderful bliss.

कर्मतारको ज्ञाननिष्ठितः ।

नन्दनन्दनो नन्दनन्दनः ॥९॥

karmatārako jñānaniṣṭhitah |
nandanandano nandanandanaḥ ||9||

9. He who crosses over karma and is ever established in knowledge, he is ever blissful, he is ever blissful.

Anukramaanika Nirdesham

1. Editorial – a general message
2. Praamaanya Siddhi - an analysis of praamaanya or validity of Brahman.
3. Chathussutra Prakaashah - a multi-part series on illumination of the first four sutras of Brahma Sutra through learning of the work of Shaareeraka nyaaya sangraha of Prakashatman.
4. Avidyaa Prakaashah - a multi-part series with written slokas explaining the illogicality of avidyaa as per Sri Bhashya and the answering of the same.
5. Vedanta Shabda Vicharanam – thorough analysis of one word of Vedanta.
6. Karma Nirupanam - explanation of karma (and way to overcome bondage of karma). This section is dedicated to original work written but not explained in depth in order to help sadhakas in reflection of the concepts themselves.

1. Comments
2. Suggestions
3. Corrections (word, sloka, content etc.)
4. Would like to see specific content
5. Would like to contribute (through research from websites, don't need to write up the content yourself)

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