

Vedanta Madhuryam

Salutations to all.

We have slowly started in the New Year and as days pass by, all the resolutions that have been taken up will fade away. Even those resolutions which are still kept in mind will not be followed with full strength. Thereby mahatmas always emphasize on not having resolutions but taking decisions and following them promptly without any fail. As Kabir says, whatever has to be done tomorrow has to be done today and whatever has to be done today should be done now itself; as later something else will come up and we will not be able to do what was planned to be done.

As ardent sadhakas seeking the ultimate goal of life of moksha, we shouldn't even let one second go waste. As Sankara says, we are always closing towards death therefore seeking moksha or Brahman is very essential. Though generally the passion for anything stays only in the beginning; as time passes by, passion also weakens therefore it is essential to remain passionate about the goal of moksha.

Since the science that deals with moksha is Vedanta therefore passion towards Vedanta should be maintained at all times. Though this might seem to be very tough indeed to implement, it is very easily implemented if we remember the goal of moksha as eternal bliss to be achieved through following of Vedanta. And Vedanta is that science which once tasted will make us addicted to it – though it is very tough to taste Vedanta still if we are able to taste Vedanta then we will find that passion for Vedanta never vanishes and only keeps on increasing (until we are ever dwelling or living in Vedanta).

The purpose of this magazine which is released every fortnight is to kindle the passion of Vedanta through bringing out the beauty in or of Vedanta. Vedanta is wrongly considered by many as dull or dry – in essence Vedanta is the most beautiful and passionate science we can find in the entire world. It is this science that brings to life the entire world of sentient and insentient beings. Thus each and every minute when we are remembering Vedanta, we will be remembering the essence of the entire world (the beauty of the entire world). What more can be beautiful than this?

The proof for beauty of Vedanta lies in the simple fact that great masters of the past have constantly written on Vedanta. Though before Sankara's time itself Vedanta was mentioned almost clearly still Sankara wrote commentaries in order to bring the right meaning to everybody. Later many acharyas have written on Vedanta and even now we find great masters writing on Vedanta. This is only because of the beauty which is the very essence of Vedanta.

Other than writing on Vedanta great masters also take up the same subject over and over again. With respect to Bhagavatham we can find that both the preacher and the listener are always attracted to a saptaaham irrespective of whether it is the first or the hundredth one. Similar is the case with Vedanta itself (really speaking Vedanta is the very essence of Bhagavatham). The more and more one learns about Vedanta, its beauty will become more and more clear. And as Vedanta becomes clearer we will find our life itself becoming filled with bliss. It is this bliss that is the ultimate goal of life and it can be achieved through only Vedanta (and no other means). Therefore we should all strive to constantly remain immersed in drinking of the beauty of Vedanta. Since the literature on Vedanta is huge indeed, therefore it is very easily possible if we have desire for moksha. Desire for moksha will automatically take us to dwelling our mind constantly in Vedanta. Thereby through Vedanta we will be able to realize our very nature of Brahman and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. If even one person is able to achieve this goal of moksha, then the purpose of this magazine is served.

Prayers to the almighty so that we all will be able to achieve this goal of moksha soon itself through Vedanta whose beauty is being explained in this magazine. May we all strive to drink the beauty of Vedanta so that eventually we will be able to through constantly contemplating on Brahman attain the ultimate goal of life as moksha and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

AUM NAMA SHIVAYA

Jan 17th

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Satyatva Siddhi

Truth – the search for it

The power of truth is very strong even for those who do not follow it (and follow untruth). Life is a continuous journey in search of truth. Truth can be said to be the ultimate goal of life itself. But whether this goal is achieved or not depends upon an individual's perspective vision. Very rarely people knowingly search for truth. Until this knowingly searching starts, chances of finding truth will be very less. In other words, the probability of finding truth without searching for it is very less and negligible. Vidyananya says that rarely person unknowingly finds the truth; the example provided by Vidyananya is that of a person glancing out of his window and seeing some light. Searching for the light source the person is lead to a dump of garbage. Separating or looking through the garbage the person finds a rare diamond. Finding of diamond for this person was accidental alone. Such accidental leaving to fate is only encouraged by fools whereas wise people will plan well for the future in order to avoid any surprises as well as failures.

Trying to leave the search of diamond unto the hands of fate is like learning just one chapter of an entire subject for an exam. We might get lucky with the exam but for how long? Therefore wise people always will plan everything properly.

This planning properly with respect to search for truth is very essential because truth reveals itself only to those who ardently seek it. Mundaka Upanishad says that truth isn't realized through listening of discourses, giving discourses or one's intellect; instead truth reveals itself to those who seek it ardently.

Thus the first thing sadhakas have to develop is the earnestness to search for truth. Now the big question of why search truth comes into picture. This question is very easily answered once we understand the nature of the world.

World – constantly changing and hence sorrowful

The lord very beautifully qualifies the world in just two words as anityam and asukham – that which is temporary and sorrowful. That the world is constantly changing need not be explained (though for weak-intellect people, it is essential to explain this as well). Each and every moment we experience the transient nature of the world. Thus Sankara says that the world is so transient like the water on a lotus leaf. One moment water is there on top of the

lotus leaf and the very next moment water is not there (it falls off). Similarly the entire world is constantly changing. One day we find that a person is very hale and hearty but the very next day we find the person dead. This is the case with the entire world – not just few people or objects of the world.

That which is temporary or constantly changing is sorrowful as it will lead to sorrow alone (law of inertia can be remembered here). Thus such a world cannot give us eternal bliss.

Truth is that which never changes and hence will take us to eternal bliss. Since the entire world is sorrowful therefore the search for truth has to be undertaken by those who want eternal bliss. It is very tough indeed to even understand that the ultimate goal of life is search for truth – that truth which will remove all sorrows and lead us to eternal bliss.

Truth - Brahman

Scriptures through the various seers to whom they were revealed say that the world which is constantly changing requires a changeless substratum. This substratum is the cause of the world – that from which the world has come, that in which the world resides and that unto which the world merges at the time of its destruction. If we are able to go from the effect of the world to the cause, then we will find truth. This truth is termed in Vedanta as Brahman (brihatvaat brahma – that which is big or huge is called Brahman). Bhagavatham beautifully says that this one entity is variously termed as Brahman, Atman, Ishwara, Paramaatman, Bhagavaan etc. Names differ but the entity is the same even as water is called variously in different places (but everywhere the entity of water is the same).

This entity of Brahman is eternal as the world is changing (the changing world requires a changeless substratum which is Brahman, thus making Brahman changeless). That which undergoes changes is temporary and that which is changeless is eternal. That which is eternal will lead to eternal bliss as it is ever-present.

Here we can doubt as to how something which is eternal can lead to eternal bliss?

That which is eternal need not lead to eternal bliss but that which is eternal should be unlimited or infinite. That which is limited or finite will only cause sorrow as it will vanish. Thus that which is unlimited or infinite will lead to eternal bliss.

How can there be eternal bliss when there is duality?

There cannot be any bliss when there is duality. But duality cannot exist as such due to being relative in nature. Duality is based on difference and difference is based on two entities. For example, duality means A & B are there. For duality to exist, A should be different from B. Difference is relative as it depends on A & B. The more we analyze differences we will find that differences are illogical. Does difference exist in A or in B or in something other than A & B? Difference cannot exist in A for then when we perceive just A, we should also perceive difference between A & unperceived B. For the same reason, difference cannot be in B as well. Now if difference is in something other than A & B, then we would be positing a third entity which can be real or unreal. Even if this third entity itself is the entity of difference, still we will have to then explain whether this third entity is different from A & B put together and the entity itself. The same mode of logic with respect to A & B will now be applied to A-B and D as difference. This will again lead to another entity of D1 which is difference of A-B and D. Thus we will have A-B-D and D1. This will go on in infinite regression (never ending). The only conclusion we can derive is that difference cannot be proved – this doesn't mean that difference cannot be proved in this way but might be proven later in a different way; it means that difference cannot be proven and therefore is just an illusion. If difference itself is an illusion, then duality which bases itself on difference is also an illusion.

Thus duality doesn't exist at all and therefore there is one truth which is non-dual and (therefore) blissful in nature. Realization of this truth will make a person get rid of all sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss. Since we are all knowingly or unknowingly seeking this one truth, therefore all efforts should be towards realization of this truth. Worldly benefits, worldly desires, worldly pursuits and everything with respect to the world can be set aside or given lower priority as until this truth is realized a person will experience nothing but sorrow alone (and nobody wants to experience sorrow).

Truth – of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss

Truth as we have seen always exist and therefore is of the nature of Existence, This is unlike worldly existences which aren't of the nature of existence but just appear as existing temporarily. Existence is not possible unless there is some light falling upon it – the light that illumines all existence is the light of Consciousness. Consciousness is mentioned in the scriptures as the light of all lights. And it is direct experience that without the light of Consciousness, nothing will exist.

Now, what is Consciousness?

Consciousness is that which pulsates constantly as I-exist, I-exist. Consciousness is pure I – that which is unaffected and untainted by the body, mind, intellect and everything in the world. Irrespective of whether the entire world exists or not, Consciousness still exists. This we all experience in the state of dreamless deep sleep (where the entire world doesn't exist but Consciousness or I still exists). Though majority of people don't realize that I am Consciousness, still it is self-proven thereby not requiring any proof at all, self-existing thereby not requiring anything else to exist and is always independent thereby non-dual and absolute.

In order for truth to be existing at all times it has to be of the nature of Consciousness as the light of Consciousness needs to fall upon it at all times. Thus truth is of the nature of Existence and Consciousness.

Truth since it is non-dual and existing at all times is unlimited in nature. That which is limited gives limited happiness (which is sorrow alone in the long run). And that which is unlimited gives eternal bliss – this eternal bliss is the very nature of the unlimited entity. Thus truth is of the nature of eternal bliss as well.

Therefore truth is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. We have already proved that duality cannot really exist but is just an illusion in non-dual Truth. But from the nature of truth we can easily prove that there cannot be duality. Existence can be one alone as it is absolute (duality leads to relativity and relativity leads to change which in turn leads to temporary existence as a result of death). Consciousness is that which illumines everything but itself isn't illumined. Therefore there can be only one Consciousness, for if two are there then each would illumine each other (thereby leading to contradiction to the very definition or nature of Consciousness). Bliss also can be one alone as it is as a result of unlimitedness. Duality means limitedness and non-duality or absolute alone means unlimitedness. Therefore it is easily proven that truth is one alone – there is nothing different from it or similar to it or internal to it.

Truth – two perspectives

When we look at our individual lives we find that everything is based on perspectives. Each and every person has his own perspective. The same person also has different perspective based on external and internal conditions. For example, a mother's perspective towards the

child is that of love whereas her perspective with respect to sub-ordinates is that of strictness and discipline. Perspective of love of a woman itself is different with respect to her parents, her husband and her child. Thus in the world itself we find as to how important it is to understand the concept of perspectives. If we are able to find out the right perspective towards anything and everything, then all problems would be solved. For example, most of the sorrow we experience in the world is as a result of conflict between our mind and the external world of objects and people. If we are able to understand the perspective of the world, then the mind will be able to easily relate to the world and therefore problems will end. Problems are problems only when we don't understand them. A mathematical equation is a big problem for a student who doesn't know how to solve it. But the same equation is not at all a problem but a source of happiness to a student who knows how to solve it.

AMMA gives many stories to illustrate as to how perspective changes everything. Here's a very short story narrated by AMMA. Once a person was driving in his car. Suddenly a big stone hit the front windshield of the car which was instantly broken. He stopped the car and looked around angrily as to who caused the windshield to break. He found a boy and getting out of the car, he approached the boy angrily shouting. The boy ran away from him. The person being very angry followed the boy. The boy led the person to a place nearby where another man was lying down unconscious. Looking at the man, the person (car owner) suddenly lost all his anger and became compassionate. The boy said crying that the man was his father, he had a heart attack and all efforts to stop any passer-by was futile; hence he threw the stone on the person's car. The person instantly felt very sad for getting angry but immediately he took the man to the hospital. And the man was saved; if the man was taken a few minutes later he would have died. The person stayed until the man's relatives arrived and then left from the place consoling the boy. He also later checked up on the man to see that he was back to normal thereby creating a good bond with the man and his family.

Though the above is a very simple story, still it shows as to how perspective difference can make everything different. It, in a way, will make us understand everything aptly or properly. Such proper understanding is the means to eternal bliss (which is the ultimate goal of life). It is essential in order to attain truth – truth is realized only when we approach it from different perspectives and grasp it wholly.

Vedanta says that there are two perspectives with respect to truth or for truth itself. First is the empirical perspective or temporary perspective and second is the ultimate perspective. In order to understand these two perspectives we have to take up an analogy. Though many analogies like water in desert, snake in rope etc. are taken up, none is apt to understand than that of dream.

We all constantly work in the world as a result of which we become tired physically. In order to revive our energy or vitalize ourselves, we daily sleep. Sleep is that time when the external body along with the sense organs and vital forces relaxes thereby energizing itself. Sleep itself has two parts – first is the dream state where the mind is active and second is the dreamless deep sleep state where the mind also rests thereby only truth existing.

In the dream state, all desires that are present in the mind are fructified by the mind itself. Hence great masters always say that the mind is the great power-source we have. Mind is the fastest equipment in the entire world. Its capabilities are literally unlimited except that very few people are able to tap into its full capabilities. The mind in the dream state creates an entire world of its own and itself enjoys the entire world. Of course the mind cannot enjoy itself without "I" or Consciousness existing. This "I" or Consciousness is mistaken to be the ego or "I" along with various associations with the world or worldly equipments (instruments that help in experience of the world). The dreamer is the "I" who dreams in the dream state. The dreamer himself becomes the entire world as there is nothing apart from the dreamer. Here we find that there are two perspectives – first is the perspective of the dream state itself. In this perspective the entire dream world exists and is experienced by the dreamer. It is very real at that time and has all utility and purpose. But this perspective is a relative or temporary one as it is valid only in the state of dream. The second is the higher perspective which is of the person who wakes up from the dream (after waking up from the dream). Once a person wakes up from the dream he realizes that there never was any dream and there never can be any dream also. Thus in this higher perspective the entire dream world is negated. This negation isn't saying that the dream world is shunya or void but it is just an illusion in the dreamer – thus the dream world as such doesn't exist at all but it exists as the substratum of dreamer in whom the dream world was perceived. The entire world thus was nothing but the dreamer alone.

Relative perspective leads to fear and sorrow in the dream state whereas the higher perspective makes a person unaffected by the dream. Once a person realizes these two

perspectives then even if or when the person dreams, the person will not be affected by the dream as he knows that dream world doesn't exist at all (and is just an illusion in the dreamer).

These two perspectives have to be understood with respect to the external waking world as well. The waking world is very similar to the dream world. It is constantly changing like the dream world. It is a constant source of sorrow like the dream world. It appears very real when we experience, like the dream world. But ultimately, as has been proven, there is no duality at all but one truth alone exists. Thus the first perspective with respect to the external world is called empirical perspective where the world is accepted as existing, having some purpose etc. Though world is accepted from this perspective and thereby anything and everything can happen in the world, still the higher or ultimate perspective is that the experienced world doesn't exist at all. Whatever exists at all times is one waking person who sees the entire world. This one person is the very basis of the world – substratum of the world in which the entire world is seen. This one person is the ultimate truth. The world exists as duality but its existence is temporary like the dream world. Ultimately at all times one truth alone exists as the substratum of the entire world.

Knowing this ultimate perspective makes a person experience the world, be in the world and enjoy the world knowing that it doesn't really exist but appears as existing.

Truth – always present

It might be asked as to why understanding the two perspectives and knowing that the ultimate perspective alone is real is required – the answer is that truth alone always exists even as the world. If we are able to understand and remember that the entire world we currently perceive is nothing but one truth alone, then search for truth will instantly end.

Thus when Uddhava asks Krishna to show the truth, Krishna says that whatever you are seeing is truth alone. The entire world is nothing but truth alone. This is because truth alone exists at all times. Due to empirical perspective, we think that the world is real but once we gain the ultimate perspective that one truth alone exists as the substratum of the world then we will not be affected at all by the world or activities in the world.

Not knowing the ultimate perspective (or the two perspectives) makes people run behind truth for years and even births. Thus there are many who try to find out a guru as they

want moksha (as to what is moksha they have either no clue or they are not willing to understand as to what is moksha). Those who somehow find a guru aren't convinced about knowledge imparted by the guru (as it goes against their direct perception of duality, of the world appearing very real). Those who don't have any desire to search for truth run hither and thither in the name of sorrow (and to get rid of sorrow). Somehow they get rid of sorrow temporarily only for it to return back more stronger at a later time – as Chinmaya beautifully puts it, majority of people only try to mitigate the problems of life (rather than really solving it).

And those who are learned in the shastras get into doubts, confusions and arguments without understanding these two perspectives. Thereby we have various systems of Vedanta all trying to explain the apparent duality – explanation is done in just a few words once we realize that duality is just an illusion in one truth (and duality as being valid is easily explained or understood by the two different perspectives). And in the course of trying to explain duality, any system that focuses on non-duality becomes the target of high-end logical attacks. Thus we have madhva, ramanuja and many other acharyas attacking the tenet of non-duality. All these arguments against non-duality is very easily answered if we understood the two perspectives or levels of reality.

If there are two perspectives, then that itself means that there is duality?

No. The lower perspective is what appears as if real but not at all real. Without the ultimate or higher perspective, the lower perspective of duality appears very real. Once ultimate perspective is gained then the lower perspective is known to be just an illusion – that which appears temporarily but doesn't harm the ultimate perspective in any way. This is similar to the dreamer not getting affected by the dream world in anyway. Thus dream world existing or non-existing doesn't matter at all for the dreamer who has known that dream world is just an illusion and I alone exist at all times.

The ultimate perspective of truth alone exists but if this is not known then the empirical or lower perspective will be considered as real; thereby all sorrows will be caused even though sorrows don't exist, duality doesn't exist and only blissful truth exists.

Truth – our own very nature of Consciousness

Even as the entire dream world is the dreamer alone, similarly this entire world that we currently perceive is nothing but our very nature of Consciousness. This Consciousness is

the ultimate truth that we have been constantly seeking. Only realization of this truth will make us get rid of all sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss. And realization of this truth is only possible through knowledge – knowledge of the scriptures which explain the two perspectives and ultimately say that truth alone exists. The scriptures term this truth as Brahman (that which is big or huge is called Brahman). Brahman alone exists as our very nature of Consciousness – this is because Consciousness never ceases to exist. Easily we will find that Consciousness or “I” is of the nature of Existence and Bliss. Since there cannot be two truth of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss therefore “I” am the truth of Brahman.

Realization of this truth isn’t something that is newly attained as truth alone always exists. But due to ignorance of this truth we think we are the limited Ego and thereby sorrow is experienced. Knowledge that this one truth which is my very nature of Consciousness alone exists will make us ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

What about the world and its experiences?

Many people wonder as to what will happen to the world and experiences after realization of the non-dual truth. After waking up from dream, dream world ends – so will waking world also end? All such questions are futile as the world doesn’t even really exist now for it to vanish. Even after knowing that there is no dream world, we still dream. Even after knowing that there is no water in desert, still we perceive water but knowledge will make us unaffected to the illusions. Similarly once we realize that truth of Brahman alone exists, then the world will not affect us at all. That which doesn’t really exist cannot affect us – it doesn’t matter whether it exists or appears as existing. Put in Ramana Maharshi’s beautiful words, after knowledge the mind or the world is like the moon when sun is shining. Even as moon is ineffective similarly the world is also ineffective once the sun of truth dawns in a person.

A person who realizes that truth alone exists might thus perform activities in the world but will not be affected by the world even as an actor is unaffected by the actions in the movie (for which he is donning a role). The ultimate goal of life is to search truth and realizing truth, ever rejoicing in bliss.

May we all strive to realize the truth as that which alone exists here so that we will be able to get rid of all sorrows, put an end to all search and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here

and now itself with knowledge that truth alone exists here as our very nature of Consciousness.

Anumaanas used

जगन्मिथ्या,स्वाधिष्ठानब्रह्मणि असत्यत्वात्,मरीचिवत् ।१।

jaganmithyā,svādhiṣṭhānabrahmaṇi asatyatvāt,marīcivat|1|

1. The world is an illusion, because of being unreal in its substratum of Brahman, like water in desert.

मनुष्यस्य परमलक्ष्यः सत्यनिरीक्षणमेव,दृष्टत्वात् परमत्वात् सत्यत्वाच्च ।२।

manuṣyasya paramalakṣyaḥ satyanirīkṣaṇameva,dṛṣṭatvāt paramatvāt satyatvācca|2|

2. The ultimate goal of life for human is search for truth, because of being seen (in people), being ultimate (supreme) and being real (leading to real).

ब्रह्मैव सत्यं,शास्त्रोक्तत्वात् सच्चिदानन्दरूपत्वाच्च,ब्रह्मवत् ।३।

brahmaiva satyaṁ,śāstroktatvāt saccidānandarūpatvācca,brahmavat|3|

3. Brahman alone is real, due to being proclaimed by the shastras and being of the nature of Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, like Brahman.

सत्ताः दृष्टिभेदेन द्विविधाः,श्रुत्युक्तत्वात् स्वर्गवत् ।४।

sattāḥ dṛṣṭibhedena dvividhāḥ,śrutyuktatvāt,svargavat|4|

4. Reality is two due to difference in vision (perspective difference), due to being proclaimed by the scriptures, like heaven.

पारमार्थिकसत्ता एव नित्यं,नित्यत्वात् ब्रह्मवत् ।५।

pāramārthikasattā eva nityaṁ,nityatvāt,brahmavat|5|

5. The ultimate reality alone is real, due to being real, like Brahman.

ब्रह्म स्वस्वरूपचैतन्यमेव, चैतन्यत्वात् सच्चिदानन्दरूपत्वाच्च, ब्रह्मवत् । ६ ।

brahma svasvarūpacaitanyameva, caitanyatvāt saccidānandarūpatvācca, brahmavat | 6 |

6. Brahman is one's own very nature of Consciousness, due to being Consciousness and being of the nature of Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, like Brahman.

Summarizing Sloka

सर्वदा सत्यवीक्षणं कुर्यात् हि मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ।

ब्रह्मस्वरूपचिन्मयं नमाम्यहंसदा मुदा ॥

sarvadā satyavīkṣaṇam kuryāt hi mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ |
brahmasvarūpacinmayam namāmyahaṁsadā mudā ||

Always enquiry into truth has to be undertaken by desires of moksha. I prostrate always happily Consciousness filled (myself) of the nature of Brahman.

Chathussutra Prakaashah

Shareeraka Nyaaya Sangraha

Third Sutra

शास्त्रयोनित्वात् ।

śāstrayonitvāt

Because shastras are the source (of Brahman).

Literal Translation of the work

Since we can attain things through other pramaanas (means of knowledge) therefore there being the fault of words-created Vedas (consisting of words) having an author, "due to being effect of temporary raga or attachment as a result from temporary knowledge" with the subject of vidhi or injunction with characteristic of attachment (as a result of that attachment), the words (of Vedas) in the world becomes invalid (it attains apramaanya or not valid means of knowledge) due to having an author;

Perception – of two types

Though we have seen this previously, let us again see in brief about pramaanas to ensure that we are able to understand Prakaashaatman's words properly.

We constantly perceive entities in the world – these entities are either objects or people (insentient or sentient). It is foolish to accept all perceptions to be real as some perceptions are later contradicted. For example, we are walking on the road and see a snake; this perception of snake isn't real as upon closer analysis we find that it is just a rope (not a snake). Thus it is important to assert perceptions to be real. In this aspect, perceptions are split into two – pramaa and bramaa. Pramaa is valid knowledge – that knowledge or perception which isn't later contradicted. Bramaa is invalid knowledge or delusion – this perception is contradicted later (sometimes later is soon, sometimes later is after a long period of time).

Pramaa alone will lead to happiness as that alone is real whereas bramaa will lead to sorrow as it isn't real (real is that which is never contradicted but ever remains the same).

Knowledge cannot be gained automatically as there is an object or entity to be known. This entity has to be known through some means. Means of knowledge is called pramaana – more clearly, means to valid knowledge is pramaana. Any entity to be proven to be valid has to be proven through pramaanas (or valid means of knowledge).

Pramaanas are differently numbered by different darshanas or systems of philosophy – each accepting more than one pramaana into another pramaana through their own definition of the pramaana. Vedanta accepts six pramaanas. These six are pratyaksha, anumana, upamaana, aagama, arthaapatti and anupalabdhi.

Pratyaksha pramaana is the means of valid knowledge through direct perception. Direct perception is sense organs coming into contact with the object to be known.

That which cannot be proven through direct perception can be proven through anumana or inference. Inference is when something is inferred based on something else which is directly perceived. For eg: smoke is perceived in the mountain and fire is inferred as a result of smoke being perceived. Fire is inferred (as it cannot be directly perceived).

Upamaana is when knowledge is gained through comparison with something else (that is already known). For eg: upon seeing an animal which is like a cow, we gain knowledge that this animal is similar to a cow (maybe a bull).

Arthaapatti is presumption – that knowledge which is required in order to make another statement intelligible. For eg: we see Ram very fat though we don't see him eating at all during the day. Thus in order to make the perception of Ram valid we have to add the presumption that Ram eats during the night.

Anupalabdhi is knowledge gained through non-cognition of something. For eg: we gain knowledge that there is no pot in the room as pot is not cognized in the room.

The last is aagama or verbal testimony – this is knowledge attained through words. Words aren't mere words but words which have meaning (as accepted by ancient people). Other than words of elders or words with validity, there is also the Vedas – Vedas are eternal, without any author and therefore have ultimate validity.

Brahman – not known through any pramaana except Vedas

Brahman is not known through any pramaanas as Brahman is not an object and is beyond words and thoughts (beyond sense organs). There is nothing similar or equal to Brahman as Brahman is the non-dual attribute-less reality behind the world. Such a Brahman has only one proof which is the scriptures. Scriptures don't objectify Brahman but scriptures are the mirror in which one can perceive one's very nature of Brahman. Scriptures also by being without any authorship are valid (have ultimate validity).

Thus scriptures have to be taken resort to in order to gain knowledge of Brahman. It is very important to keep this point in mind as there are many masters who claim to be guiding people towards realization but don't ever preach anything from the shastras or preach to learn the shastras. The words of great masters like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and AMMA can be easily traced back to the scriptures and these masters did tell others to learn the shastras.

Coming to Ramana Maharshi, learning the two main works of Maharshi which are Upadesa Saram and Saddarshana, we will find that Maharshi's words are resonances from the scriptures. Maharshi's "Who am I" vichaara or enquiry path isn't something newly conceived as we find the same mentioned in Yoga Vasishta, used by Sankara in Vivekachoodamani and mentioned by Vidyananda in Panchadashi. If we even read the lives or interactions of Maharshi we will find that Maharshi quotes from the scriptures and Maharshi's words are clearly from the scriptures alone. The Who Am I path itself is what the shastras use in order to get away from everything other than Brahman and progressing towards Brahman. That Chinmaya Mission and other Missions teach Maharshi's works as works of Vedanta to Vedantic students itself is enough to prove that Maharshi didn't stray away from the scriptures.

But there are other masters who just tell us to remain as our own Self and that scriptures aren't needed. These people also call themselves disciples of Maharshi. Such people might be realized masters (it is not our duty to criticize them) but we should always remember that Brahman is known only through the scriptures. Therefore scriptures are the only way to realization of Brahman – there is absolutely no other way to eternal bliss or moksha than knowledge of Brahman as found in the scriptures.

Keeping this in mind, let us enter into the purvapaksha viewpoints.

Purvapakshin – Vedas aren't authoritative

If it be proven that Vedas aren't authoritative or valid then Advaitin's stand that Vedas are the only means to Brahman will become invalid. If this becomes invalid, then Advaitin's system itself will collapse. The purvapakshin tries to prove the same through three reasons here.

1. Things known through other pramaanas

Why do we need the scriptures as ultimate pramaana when there are other pramaanas? Everything under the Sun can be known through other pramaanas than the scriptures. Even words of elders can be used as valid pramaanas. It cannot be argued that scriptures are required with respect to worldly knowledge as we find great stalwarts and learned people in each walk of life having attained knowledge without any knowledge of scriptures. These people don't even know the ABC of scriptures but they know the world or the part of the world in which they specialize like nobody else knows. We have had Einstein, Newton and many others mastering science. With respect to any field let it be nuclear physics or astronomy or biology we have had stalwarts who have no or limited knowledge of the scriptures. This clearly shows that the entire world can be known through other pramaanas and there is no essentiality or necessity of scriptures (or scriptural knowledge).

This being the case, we can also extend it to Brahman - that Brahman who is all-knowing and all-pervasive can definitely be known through other pramaanas thereby nullifying the need for shastras.

2. Shastras are paurusheya due to being word-created

Shastras or scriptures are filled with words. These words aren't automatically coming into existence but they are created by rishis or seers. Therefore shastras have an author. It cannot be argued that seers just saw the mantras and didn't create the mantras for such seeing of mantras itself means mantras or words were newly created - thereby the shastras having an author still stands. If it is argued again that words aren't newly created but they were revealed (always existing but revealed only to seers) then even such words will be faulty because of the fault in the receiver or revealer's mind. It cannot be said that the revealed is a realized master for then there would be nothing apart from Brahman (no words can even exist). Thus in all ways, shastras will become faulty as a result of having an author.

That which comes out of an individual's mind is faulty alone as the mind is limited – such a limited mind has limited perspective or vision which means it is faulty. That which is unlimited alone is without any fault.

3. Words are due to raga (attachment or affliction)

Words are uttered as a result of some perception of like or dislike. That which is tainted by likes or raga obviously is faulty. Therefore such words cannot be accepted as ultimate or without any fault. Moreover that word which comes out due to attachment (or dual vision) is created and has an author. As mentioned earlier that which has an author is obviously faulty.

Purvapakshin – Shaastras are faulty and unacceptable

Since shaastras are faulty therefore they are unacceptable. If it be argued that still shaastras can be accepted as they are the only means to Brahman, then this is wrong as there are other means to knowing the entire world therefore there are definitely other means to knowing Brahman as well – when there are other valid means of knowledge, there is no need to accept faulty and illogical shaastras.

Siddhantin's answer

There are still portions of purvapakshin's arguments (as part of Prakaashaatman's work) which we will see in the next edition but let us briefly try to answer few of the objections of the purvapakshin here.

Though there are many means of knowledge in the world still those means cannot objectify Brahman for Brahman is the subject of all objects. Means of knowledge make objects known but they cannot objectify the Subject or Knower (who is using the means of knowledge). It is like saying that the car which carries me cannot be carried by me. The subject of Brahman can only be directed through words – Brahman can be hinted or indirectly pointed at. This is exactly what the shaastras do. Shaastras alone can point out to Brahman because they are eternal.

Shaastras though are words aren't with authorship as they always exist and are just revealed to the Seers during times of intense meditation or contemplation. Though these seers are realized masters who perceive only Brahman, this perception of Brahman is in the mind and it in no way affects external world or perception of the external world. Even as a

person who knows that there is no water in desert still perceives water in desert similarly these realized masters perceive the world though they know internally that ultimately Brahman alone exists. It cannot be argued that the world will affect such masters as it is perceived because the world is just an illusion and such illusion cannot affect a person provided the world to be an illusion is remembered in the mind. Thus these realized masters though perceive the world aren't affected by the world. Thereby they can write down or tell out words which are revealed to them during times of intense meditation.

Even as equipment like washing machine is sold along with its manual similarly when the world is created, the manual to overcome the world is also provided in the form of scriptures. Scriptures are the very breath of Brahmaa (creator) and they always exist though are revealed only at a particular time.

Words of these realized masters aren't tainted at all as they are realized and their words are eternal words. Such eternal words have been tested time and again by various people – even today we can test out their words and we will find that they are without any taint. The validity of scriptures is a matter of direct experience for any sadhaka who is willing to spend some time in learning of the scriptures and treading the path put forth by the scriptures.

Those who say that they cannot follow the scriptural path because it isn't valid or tested out are fools as scriptures have tested time and again by great masters of the path. The scriptures are more tested and valid than anything we can find in the world. If it is argued that scriptures take a lot of time to implement and therefore other simpler ways have to be taken up, then such argument is also invalid because many times we wait years and years in order to achieve worldly fruits. For eg., a mother waits 10 months to get a child; parents wait for almost 2 decades in order to see their child grow up and give birth to their grand children; these are just few cases we can find in the world. If it is possible to wait patiently in all these cases, then definitely it is possible to wait patiently treading the path of scriptures. Unlike these goals, scriptures will definitely lead us to the goal (as they have never been proven wrong). Moreover scriptures alone take us to the ultimate goal of life and therefore they are that which has to be followed at all costs by sadhakas. Since everybody is seeking the ultimate goal of life as complete cessation of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss therefore everybody should follow the path of the scriptures (which alone will in turn eventually lead them to the ultimate goal of life).

Since until the ultimate goal of life is fulfilled we will be going around in the vicious circle of births and deaths therefore we all ought to learn the scriptures and implement the scriptures (through treading the path put forth by the scriptures); through this we will be able to gain knowledge about Brahman and through following the path towards realization of Brahman we will be able to realize Brahman and ever rejoice in bliss. Only when we ever rejoice in bliss here itself in constant contemplation of our own very nature of non-dual Brahman will our life be fulfilled.

We will continue with the words of Prakaashaatman in the next magazine.

May we all strive to learn the scriptures and implement the path put forth by the scriptures so that we will be able to through realization of Brahman put an end to 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.

Nivritti

The purvapakshin said that removal of avidyaa is impossible. This is because either avidyaa exists or it doesn't exist. If avidyaa exists then it can never be removed. If avidyaa doesn't exist then also its removal is not possible as it doesn't even exist to be removed. Neither through knowledge nor through any other means avidyaa, which is accepted to be existent in nature, cannot be removed.

Siddhantin replied by saying that avidyaa is not existent nor non-existent as it is just an illusion in Brahman. When experienced directly, avidyaa appears as if existing and therefore its removal is possible through knowledge. Knowledge removes avidyaa even as light removes darkness; even as knowledge of water in desert as desert removes water, similarly knowledge of Brahman as the substratum of avidyaa removes avidyaa.

Purvapakshin said that bliss is experienced through devotion and offering of actions. Siddhantin replied beautifully saying that bliss is only experienced when duality vanishes and duality vanishes when a person realizes the substratum of non-duality – it is knowledge thus that leads to removal of sorrow and rejoicing in bliss, not any other means.

We have come to the end part of avidyaa prakaashah. Let's see the last two concluding slokas of this work (which concludes analysis of avidyaa).

ज्ञानवर्जितो नैव सर्वदा ।

सर्वव्याप्तब्रह्मैव सर्वदा ॥२९॥

jñānavarjito naiva sarvadā |
sarvavyāptabrahmaiva sarvadā ||29||

29. Avidyaa never exists at all times definitely, for all-pervasive Brahman alone exists at all times.

विद्ययासुखं ब्रह्मनिर्गुणं ।

आप्नुयात्पुमान् अत्रहिसुखं ॥३०॥

vidyayāsukham brahmanirguṇam |
āpnuyātpumān atrahisukham ||30||

30. Person attains attribute-less Brahman and bliss through knowledge (that destroys ignorance – the knowledge that ignorance doesn't exist and one Brahman alone exists) here itself definitely and effortlessly (easily).

Slokas

These two are concluding slokas of this work which refutes the seven illogicalities of avidyaa as put forth by Ramanujacharya in his Sri Bhashya.

Avidyaa – never really exist

We have seen again and again in the answering of objections raised by the purvapakshin that avidyaa doesn't really exist. This is clearly proven through the fact that avidyaa cannot be proven at all. Anything that exists should be proven through any means of knowledge. All means of knowledge prove clearly beyond that avidyaa cannot be proven. Trying to prove avidyaa is like trying to prove darkness. The moment we try to prove darkness with light, we will find darkness vanishing. Thus darkness is without any proof. But this doesn't mean that darkness doesn't exist for a person perceiving it. Darkness exists when a person perceives it (as it is matter of direct experience for such a person). But when the person tries to enquire into what is darkness, the person will realize that darkness doesn't exist at all. Similarly avidyaa is a matter of direct experience for an ignorant person. But once knowledge dawns, then avidyaa is known to be non-existent.

It cannot be argued that avidyaa isn't a matter of direct experience as it is experienced directly in the form of "I am ignorant". If this kind of experience isn't accepted then definitely avidyaa is directly experienced through its effects of sorrow. Sorrow is something that is constantly experienced by one and all except those who are ever rejoicing in bliss in knowledge of the one non-dual reality of Brahman.

That which temporarily appears as existing but ultimately doesn't exist is termed as mithyaa or an illusion. Example of an illusion is water seen in desert. We cannot say that water

doesn't exist as water is directly experienced (perceived). But we cannot also say that water is real as this direct experience is sublated through knowledge or enquiry into where water is. Thus ultimately water doesn't exist but empirically water appears as existing. Similarly avidyaa doesn't ultimate exist but empirically it appears as existing. Such illusions appearing to exist temporarily doesn't harm its substratum in any way – even as water appearing in desert doesn't harm the desert by making it wet, similarly avidyaa appearing in Brahman doesn't harm Brahman in anyway. Brahman ever remains the same – non-dual and blissful.

Many acharyas have termed avidyaa as bhaava rupa or existing in nature. This bhaava rupa as have been clarified by the acharyas themselves is in order to avoid terming avidyaa as abhaava or non-existence. Non-existence can never have any existence as it is very contrary to the definition itself. Thus avidyaa is termed as existent – this existence isn't ultimate existence but temporary existence. Lack of understanding of the two levels of reality as empirical and ultimate causes people to doubt and raise objections against Advaita Vedanta. Even as the dream world exists in itself but from waking standpoint doesn't exist at all, similarly the external world appears as existing in itself (or from its level) but ultimately it doesn't exist and Brahman alone exists. Such ultimate non-duality in no way harms the empirical existence of duality.

It only matters as to whether a person remembers the ultimate reality and therefore isn't affected by empirical reality. Such a person has knowledge about the ultimate reality (and illusory nature of empirical reality) and therefore isn't affected by avidyaa or sorrows. Others those who don't have this knowledge are in avidyaa and therefore they get affected by avidyaa. For such people alone shastras are valid and helpful in removing non-existent avidyaa through knowledge about the substratum of the world/avidyaa as non-dual reality of Brahman.

Brahman alone exists

Avidyaa never really exists as the one non-dual reality of Brahman alone exists. At any point of time we will have to agree that Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss alone exists – as nothing else apart from Brahman can really exist. Really existing means existing beyond all limitations; existing beyond cessation of existence. The world of duality that we currently perceive doesn't really exist but it will cease to exist after a period of time. It cannot be argued that the world will never cease to exist as we don't experience

its cessation because we do experience its temporary cessation daily in the deep sleep state. When are sleeping and aren't dreaming, the entire world just vanishes (or ceases to exist). Even though such cessation of existence is also short-lived still it proves that cessation of the world is possible. If the world can cease to exist for a period of time, then it will definitely cease to exist completely at some point or the other. Scriptures also clearly say that the world will cease to exist when it is destroyed. It cannot be argued that the world is again recreated so it is as good as existing always – because this is so foolish like saying that I have no money in bank today but I will have after few days so I am rich today (yes the concept of loans are there but exclude loans and we will find how foolish the statement is). That which ceases to exist at some point or the other isn't real (as real is that which never ceases to exist). Therefore the world that we experience doesn't exist at all.

If the world doesn't really exist, then what really exists?

What really exists at all times is the non-dual reality of Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Duality is just an illusion of names and forms in Brahman. Scriptures, logic and our own direct experience proves that Consciousness always exists (never ceases to exist). Consciousness is the I that pulsates constantly inside us as I-exist, I-exist. That this Consciousness never ceases to exist is a direct experience. That this Consciousness isn't the body or limited individual is also clearly proven through our own experience in the dream and deep sleep state where the external body, inner equipments including ego are not present (or come and go).

It thus isn't wrong to say that Brahman alone exists, beyond limitations of time, space and causation. Hence Upanishad says that whatever is past, present and future is Brahman (denoted by AUM) and whatever is there beyond the three times (if there is anything like that), that is also Brahman alone.

Knowledge – means to Brahman

There are many ways or paths that we find in the world for achieving anything in the world. The famous four paths laid down by Swami Vivekananda also are there. But all these paths are merely paths alone therefore they don't and will not lead us to Brahman. Brahman can be known through the one and only means of knowledge. Knowledge isn't mere knowledge found as in the world but knowledge is from the scriptures. Scriptures are the ultimate source of Brahman. Scriptural knowledge isn't merely to be mugged up but it is to be directly experienced through treading the path put forth by the scriptures (supported by

logic as well). Knowledge is split into three in the scriptures as sravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana. Sravana is listening of the scriptures with focus on the non-dual reality of Brahman. Manana is reflecting in the mind about whatever has been listened through the proper means of logic, as put forth by the scriptures. Nidhidhyaasana is constantly contemplating on the non-dual reality of Brahman (as pervading the entire world of names and forms). When these three are implemented then knowledge is implemented. And knowledge will directly take us to realization of Brahman.

As Prof. Balakrishnan Nair beautifully puts it, there are many paths but they are paths – the final step to moksha or liberation is knowledge. Knowledge is the final step because the cause of all sorrows is ignorance. Ignorance is not knowing our very nature of Brahman. Ignorance is not knowing that I am the all-pervasive Brahman which alone exists here at all times. Since sorrows are caused due to ignorance therefore they can be removed only through knowledge of our very nature of Brahman. The various paths that we have in the world all emphasize on duality and are based on ignorance therefore they cannot get rid of ignorance. Ignorance can be removed through knowledge and only knowledge alone even as darkness can be removed only through light.

Though many people consider the scriptures are very tough to apprehend, they are very easy to apprehend (if we do have the strong desire for moksha). And as the Lord mentions in Gita, scriptures are easier to implement (susukham kartum) as what is required is just remembering that Brahman alone exists here – the external world and activities of the world remain exactly the same, while the mind alone remembers Brahman as non-dual reality behind the world. Those who say that scriptures are tough to apprehend and implement are really those who don't want moksha and are content with temporary happiness as experienced from the illusory world. They are people in ignorance and therefore will always experience sorrow alone. Not just this but they are also fools because they are not accepting their own very nature of Brahman while constantly thinking themselves to be part of the illusory world (that which they are not).

Since the ultimate goal of life is getting rid of sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss therefore all sadhakas should put effort in order to realize Brahman through gaining and implementation of knowledge. This is very simple indeed to learn and implement; therefore no time should be wasted towards realization of that bliss which is our very nature even now.

Avidyaa – very logical

All the objections raised by the purvapakshin has been answered sufficiently through just the one statement that avidyaa is logical because it is a matter of direct experience. Of course ultimately it isn't logical because it doesn't even exist but since it exists and is logically feasible when experiencing therefore effort to get rid of avidyaa as the fruit of Advaita Vedanta is valid alone.

All objections about avidyaa stem from the one fact that the two levels of reality as empirical reality (avidyaa and the world temporarily existing) and ultimate reality (of non-dual Brahman alone existing) aren't accepted. Sadhakas should constantly try to learn through thorough analysis these two levels of realities. Once these two levels are clearly understood, then all objections just vanish showing that avidyaa is totally logical from empirical viewpoint and ultimately non-existent. Therefore there is no fault in working towards removal of avidyaa from empirical viewpoint thereby uncovering the ever present non-dual reality of Brahman (ultimate viewpoint).

Avidyaa – seven aspects

The purvapakshin raised illogicalities of seven types with respect to avidyaa. Though they have been answered in previous editions, we will see in brief the seven aspects of avidyaa in order to show that avidyaa is logical alone from empirical viewpoint.

Locus – locus or support of avidyaa is Brahman alone as Brahman alone ultimately exists. Brahman being the support of avidyaa doesn't affect itself because Brahman is the support as substratum – even as desert being the support of water isn't affected by water, similarly is the case here too.

Veiling – avidyaa doesn't really veil Brahman but appears to veil Brahman from empirical viewpoint when it is considered to be existing. This is similar to darkness appearing to veil light. Once light comes in, darkness instantly vanishes. Similarly once knowledge of Brahman dawns, then avidyaa instantly vanishes. We cannot delve deep into how avidyaa veiled Brahman etc. because ultimately no veiling is happening (Brahman alone exists) and therefore empirically accepting of veiling doesn't harm ultimate Brahman in any way at all. All statements about avidyaa is in order to take us to vidyaa through which we will be able to know avidyaa to be unreal and Brahman alone to be existing at all times.

Nature – avidyaa empirically exists but ultimately doesn't exist. Such existent but non-existent is possible as in the case of illusions. Any illusion like water in desert appears as existing temporary in its substratum but ultimately it doesn't exist at all in its own substratum. Avidyaa appears as existing for a person directly experiencing it and ultimately it doesn't even exist.

Indescribable – avidyaa is said to be indescribable in that all analysis will fail. This doesn't mean that avidyaa doesn't exist; for an ignorant person it is a matter of direct experience. But once analysis is performed, it cannot be proven. Instead wise sadhakas should strive to gain knowledge and therefore will realize that avidyaa doesn't exist at all. It is futile to run behind avidyaa's nature and thorough analysis – it is similar to running behind water; instead sadhakas should strive to gain knowledge upon which avidyaa will be known to be non-existent at all times.

Proof – avidyaa is proven directly through experience for an ignorant person. It is also proven through inference as well as scriptures. But all such proof will lead us nowhere as such proofs are empirically alone valid (and therefore will be contradicted at a later time). Therefore sadhakas should only focus on avidyaa existing for them and thereby striving to get rid of it. When we get a disease we don't try to understand where it came from (as sometimes such analysis will not be sufficiently answered even by experts); instead we will try to get rid of the disease.

Remover – avidyaa is removed by knowledge and such removal is empirical and doesn't affect non-dual Brahman. Such removal is also of the nature that "there is no avidyaa but Brahman alone exists" therefore it doesn't affect non-dual Brahman in any way at all.

Removal – avidyaa is possible to be removed because it doesn't exist ultimately but temporarily appears as existing. Even as any illusion is removed through knowledge of its substratum (and that it doesn't exist at all in its substratum) similarly avidyaa is also removed through knowledge of Brahman as non-dual substratum of avidyaa.

The above clearly proves that avidyaa is logical alone from empirical viewpoint. Though ultimately avidyaa cannot be logically proven – it's very characteristics of not standing logic itself proves that it doesn't ultimately exist and is just an illusion.

Avidyaa – focus on removing

Sadhakas should always remember that avidyaa appears to be there for me and therefore effort should be put in order to remove avidyaa. This effort isn't through removal of avidyaa but through gaining of knowledge as found in the scriptures. Any means of removing darkness will be futile – the only way to remove darkness is to bring in light. Similarly any means of knowing or removing avidyaa is impossible. The only thing logic of/about avidyaa can do to help sadhakas is to make them know that they are in avidyaa and therefore have to come out through knowledge. Knowledge of Brahman as found in the scriptures will eventually remove avidyaa completely. This removal of avidyaa is just knowing that avidyaa doesn't exist – that which doesn't really exist cannot be removed, its removal is just the knowledge that it doesn't exist.

Through ever focusing on removing of avidyaa, sadhakas will be able to eventually get rid of sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. As to whether the world exists after avidyaa is removed or not is foolish enough to analyze as the world which is the effect of avidyaa doesn't really exist (to be removed or not). If the world appears as existing then let it appear as existing – it cannot do any harm to one who knows that it doesn't exist and Brahman alone exists. Therefore its presence or absence doesn't affect the person in any way at all.

It is important to remember that avidyaa only appears as existing and therefore knowledge just makes us realize that avidyaa doesn't exist and one Brahman alone exists. Therefore whatever changes is only our mental perspective – the external world may or may not exist. Even as a person who knows that there is no water in desert but still perceives water, similarly a jnaani might perceive the world. But even like the former person who isn't affected through even running behind water (as he knows that there is no water) similarly a jnaani isn't affected by the world as he knows that the world doesn't exist and one Brahman alone exists at all times.

Though is indeed very tough to grasp the concepts of avidyaa (even merely knowing that avidyaa exists for me) let alone the objections of Ramanujacharya as well as the answering of these objections through avidyaa prakaashah, still ardent sadhakas should put effort to understand these through understanding of the two levels of reality. If the two levels of reality are understood, then entire Vedanta is instantly understood. Once sadhakas are able to understand avidyaa in a better way then they will be able to put more effort towards

knowledge and moksha. Then alone they will be able to easily progress towards the goal of moksha. Thereby they will be able to fulfill this precious human birth rather than letting it go waste by doing some worldly activities and continuing to the next birth. Ultimate goal of life is realization of our very nature of non-dual reality of blissful Brahman. Until this goal is realized, we will be ever suffering in sorrow though our very nature is that of bliss. This is similar to a person not able to enjoy his money in the bank due to fear of being taxed. Life is indeed pitiful unless we at least strive to achieve this ultimate goal of life. If desire is strong to achieve this goal then we will definitely be able to achieve this goal here and now itself.

With this we have come to the end of this series on avidyaa. May we all strive to gain knowledge of Brahman as found in the scriptures so that through implementation of knowledge we will be able to realize that avidyaa doesn't exist and through constant contemplation of non-dual reality of Brahman 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 by siddhantin

अविद्या मिथ्या, परमार्थतो ब्रह्मणि असत्यत्वात् स्वप्नवत् ।

avidyā mithyā, paramārthato brahmaṇi asatyatvāt, svapnavat |

Ignorance is an illusion, because ultimately it is unreal in Brahman, like dream.

अविद्या अज्ञस्य अनुभवः, अनुभूतित्वात् घटवत् ।

avidyā ajñasya anubhavaḥ, anubhūtitvāt, ghaṭavat |

Ignorance is the experience of ignorance person, as it is directly experienced, like pot.

अविद्या युक्तियुक्तमेव व्यवहारे, अनुभूतित्वात् घटवत् ।

avidyā yuktivyuktameva vyavahāre, anubhūtitvāt, ghaṭavat |

Ignorance is logical in empirical viewpoint, as it is experience, like pot.

अविद्या वस्तुततो नास्ति, मिथ्यात्वात् स्वप्नवत् ।

avidyā vastutatato nāsti, mithyātvāt, svapnavat |

Ignorance ultimately doesn't exist, as it is an illusion, like dream.

अविद्यया अस्तित्व दृष्टिभेदेन एव संभवः, व्यवहारे अस्ति परमार्थतो नास्त्यतः, स्वप्नवत् ।

avidyayā astitva dr̥ṣṭibhedena eva sambhavaḥ, vyavahāre asti paramārthato
nāstyataḥ, svapnavat |

Existence of ignorance is possible through difference in vision itself, due to existing empirically and ultimately not existing, like dream.

Vedanta Shabda Vicharanam

Ishwara

The word Ishwara comes from the root 'Ish' which means "to rule". Ishvara means "The Lord", which means the ruler or the controller of the world. In this article we will analyze the word Ishwara.

Scriptures point out that Brahman alone is the Ultimate Reality, which is of the nature of Sat-Chit-Anandam. The Ultimate Reality is that there is nothing at all present apart from Brahman.

Katha Upanishad says that

Na iha nana astikinchana

There is no duality here, not even a bit.

Mandukya Upanishad starts with the following mantras

AUM

*itietataksharamidamsarvamtasyaupavykayaanambhoothambhavatbhavishyatitisarvamAUMk
aaraeva.Yachaanyattrikaalaateetamtatapyamkaaraeva*

Aum is all this. A clear explanation of it is: All that is Past, present and future is AUM only.

That which is beyond these three times is also AUM.

From the standpoint of the world, Brahman alone was there before the creation of the world, Brahman alone is present as the substratum of the world and Brahman alone will exist after the world gets destroyed.

Chandogya Upanishad says that

Sadevasowmyaidamagreaseetekamevaadviteeyam

Existence alone was present before the creation of the world one without a second.

Isavasya Upanishad starts with the following Mantra

Isavasyamidamsarvamyatkinchitjagatyaamjagat

All this – whatsoever moves on the earth – is pervaded by the Lord

Shankaracharya explains the word Isa in the above Mantra as the in-dwelling Self in everything in the world.

While speaking about this non-dual Brahman as the Ultimate Truth, scriptures also explain how the world is created. There was a beginningless, inexplicable primordial substance called Prakrti. That Prakrti had 3 gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattvaguna is of two types pure and impure. Prakrti with pure sattvaguna is called Maya and Prakrti with impure sattvaguna is called avidya. That non-dual Brahman reflected in Maya is called Ishwara. This Ishwara is the controller of Maya.

Svetasvatara Upanishad says that

Maayamtupraktimviddinmaayinatumaheshvaramsamaayisrujathi

Know Maya as Prakrti and Brahman associated with Maya as the great Ishwara. It is He who creates the world.

Vidyaranya Swami in Panchadasi 1st chapter

cidanandamaya brahma pratibimbamanvitaa

TamorajassattvagunaaprakrtiHdividhaacasaa

Brahman which is of the nature of Consciousness and Anandam, is reflected in Prakrti which is composed of Sattvam, Rajas and Tamas. This Prakrti is of two kinds

Sattvashuddhyavishuddhibhyaammaayaavidhyecate mate

MaayaabimbovasheekrtyataamsyaatsarvajnaIshwarah

When the element of Sattva is pure, Prakrti is called Maya, when impure it is called avidya.

Brahman reflected in Maya is known as the omniscient Ishwara, who controls Maya.

Shankaracharya in Tattvabodha says that

mayopaadhi san Ishwaraitiuchyate

Brahman conditioned by Maya is called Ishwara

From the above quotations, we can understand that Ishwara is the creator and controller of the world through the power of Maya. The world that is created by the Lord is not different from the Lord. When we speak about creation, there are two things, intelligent cause and material cause. In the case of a pot, there is a potter is the intelligent cause who makes the pot, and clay is the material cause which is used to make the pot. But there is no such distinction between Ishwara and the creation. Mundaka Upanishad explains about how this Ishwara is created this world

YathorNanaabhiHsrujategrhnateca

YataaprtivyaamoshadhayaHsambhavanti

*Yathaasatahpurushaatkeshalomaani
 taThaaksharaatsambhavateehavishwam
 As a spider spreads out and withdraws
 As on the earth grows the herbs (and trees),
 And as from a living man issues out hair,
 So out of the Imperishable does the Universe emerge here.*

Therefore, the creation is not different from the creator. Thus, we can say that Ishwara is all pervading in the world. He is the indweller in each an everything in this world. Ishwara is the essence of everything in this world. The only difference is the name and form, but essentially everything in this world is pervaded by one Ishwara. There could many pots of different sizes, shapes and color but essentially all pots are made of clay. Since he is present everywhere, he is all-knowing as well. There is nothing in the world that He cannot know, everything in this world.

Lord Krishna in 7th chapter says that he is the essence of everything and also gives some specifics as well.

He says *Matahparataramnaanyatkinchitastidhananjaya
 Mayisarvamidamprotamsutremaniganaaiva*

O Dhananjaya! There is nothing else other than Me. All this is strung on Me like Pearls on a string

After that he says

*RasohamapsukaunteyaprabhaasmishashisooryayoH
 praNavaHsarvavedeShushabdaHKhepaurushaMNRShu*

O Kaunteya! I am the taste in the water, I am the effulgence of the moon and sun; AUM in all the vedas, the sound in space, and manhood in man.

He goes on to give a big list of every important and tells that He is the essence of everything.

NarayanaSooktham says that

*Yacchakinchitjagatsarvamdrshyateshrooyateapiva.Antarbahih tat sarvamnarayanastitaH
 Everything in this world, whether is heard or seen, inside or outside, everything is pervaded in and out by Narayana.*

Thus, Ishwara is Brahman only but conditioned by Maya and thus became the creator, protector and destroyer of the world. Ishwara is all-pervading and all-knowing of everything in this world.

Jiva, because of his own ignorance about his own nature of Self, sees the division of I (the individual), the world and Ishwara. Because of ignorance, he sees the world and hence in order to manage the sorrows and struggles the Jiva seeks the grace of Ishwara, knowing that Ishwara is the controller of the world and help during testing situations. Therefore, from the perspective of Jiva, Ishwara can be called SagunaIshwara, Ishwara with various qualities. Scriptures speak about 33 crores devatas each devata with a specific guna predominant. Jiva based on their mindset chooses one of the devata as their ishtadeivam. From Jiva's perspective, Ishwara is the most powerful to take refuge unto and he needs help from Ishwara to live in this world happily.

Question: There are 33 crore devatas mentioned in scriptures. Are there so many Ishwaras?

Answer: Essentially Ishwara is Brahman alone and there is only one Ishwara. But from the perspective of Jiva based on the mindset of the Jiva, Ishwara appear in the form Jiva worships. Each devata has one guna predominant that attracts the mind of the individual. Even though there are many devatas, yet essentially all devatas are Brahman alone. They stand for Brahman.

Lord Krishna says in 7th chapter

Yoyo yam yamtanumbhaktahshraddhayaarchitumicchati

Tasyatasyaachalaamshradaamtaamevavidadhaamyaham

Whichever form (of a deity) any devotee wants to worship with faith, that very firm of his I strength

Satayaashraddayaayuktahtasyaaraadhanameehate

Labhatecatatahkaamaanmayaivavihitaan hi taan

Being imbued with that faith, that person engaging in worshipping that form, and he gets those very desired results therefrom as they are dispensed by Me alone.

Question: what is the purpose of SagunaIshwara if NirgunaIshwara or Brahman is the Ultimate Reality?

Answer: Scriptures very clearly mention that Brahman which is of the nature of Sat Chit Anandam is the ultimate reality. But this Truth is not easy for everyone to conceive and digest. Therefore, in order to be able to conceive the ultimate truth of Brahman devotion towards SagunaIshwara will prepare the mind. When devotion towards SagunaIshwara grows, the mind expands to see that Ishwara everywhere and also becomes subtle and quite. When mind gets focused on the Ishwara, with the study of scriptures, the real nature of Ishwara will be understood which is the Ultimate Truth of Brahman.

Lord Krishna in 12th chapter says

Ye tusarvaanikarmaanimayisanyasyamatparaaH

Ananyenaivayogenamaamdhyaanataupaasate

As for those who, having dedicated all actions to Me and accepted Me as the supreme, meditate by thinking of Me with single-minded concentration

Teshaamahamsamudharthaamrtyusamsaarsaagaraat

Bhavaaminaciraatpaartamayyaaveshitacetasaam

O son of Partha, for them who have their minds absorbed in Me, I become, without delay, the bridge from the ocean of samsara which is fraught with death.

Thus, we can conclude that Ishwara means Brahman essentially, creator, controller and protector of the world. But for a Jiva who is under the control of Maya because of ignorance, Ishwara is the only refuge to overcome Maya and realize the Ultimate truth of Brahman.

Yoga Nirupanam

ॐ योगनिरूपणं

om yoganirūpaṇam

द्वैतभावनं शोककारणम् ।

योगभावनं मोक्षदायकम् ॥१॥

dvaitabhāvanam śokakāraṇam |
yogabhāvanam mokṣadāyakam ||1||

1. Notion of duality (considering duality as real) will lead to sorrow; and notion of yoga or equanimity will lead to liberation.

चित्तवृत्तयो बन्धदायकाः ।

सत्यवर्जिताः नास्ति सर्वदा ॥२॥

cittavṛttayo bandhadāyakāḥ |
satyavarjitāḥ nāsti sarvadā ||2||

2. The thoughts of the mind lead to bondage because they are devoid of reality and never really exist.

चित्तमत्भुतं नास्ति वै सदा ।

सत्यवद्विभात्येव निश्चयम् ॥३॥

cittamatbhutaṁ nāsti vai sadā |
satyavadvibhātyeva niścayam ||3||

3. The mind is definitely amazing indeed as it doesn't exist always but appears as really existing.

विश्वव्याप्तचित् ब्रह्मभावनम् ।

योगसाधनं योगलक्षणं ॥४॥

viśvavyāptacit brahmabhāvanam |
yogasāadhanam yogalakṣaṇam ||4||

4. Notion of Brahman as Consciousness which pervades the entire world is sadhana of yoga and characteristics of yoga (it is both sadhana as well as the final goal – sadhana means with effort and goal means effortless or natural).

ज्ञानसंयुत मानसस्स्थिति ।

योगशेखरः चित्तवर्जितः ॥५॥

jñānasamyuta mānasassthiti |
yogaśekharaḥ cittavarjitaḥ ||5||

5. The state of the mind filled with knowledge is the peak of yoga as it is devoid of any thoughts (or devoid of mind itself).

योगभूमिषु यः प्रवर्तते ।

तस्य शान्तिभावः स्वभावजम् ॥६॥

yogabhūmiṣu yaḥ pravartate |
tasya śāntibhāvaḥ svabhāvajam ||6||

6. One who acts in the land of Yoga, his state of peace will be natural (naturally he will be peaceful and blissful).

वस्तुमात्ररूपेणसंस्थितिः ।

लक्ष्यमेव सा ब्रह्मणो यदा ॥७॥

vastumāṭṛrūpeṇasamsthitiḥ |
lakṣyameva sā brahmaṇo yadā ||7||

7. Abiding as vastu or real entity alone is the goal when the vastu is the ultimate reality of Brahman (Yoga is meditation on Brahman as one's own very nature).

अन्यथा तु दुःखस्य कारणम् ।

शोकसंयुत जन्मनोऽपि हि ॥८॥

anyathā tu duḥkhasya kāraṇam |
śokasāmyuta janmano'pi hi ||8||

8. Else such abidance or meditation or anything else will lead to sorrow; and it will lead to sorrow-filled many births as well

यः पुमान् सदा योगसंयुतः ।

नन्दनन्दनो नन्दनन्दनः ॥९॥

yaḥ pumān sadā yogasāmyutaḥ |
nandanandano nandanandanah ||9||

9. He who always is filled with Yoga, he will be blissful and blissful.

Anukramaanika Nirdesham

1. Editorial – a general message
2. Satyatva Siddhi - an analysis of satyatva or reality-status 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. Yoga Nirupanam - explanation of yoga (from a Vedantic perspective). 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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