

Vedanta Madhuryam

Salutations to all.

The world that we constantly experience is constantly changing and therefore sorrowful in nature. Such an ever-changing world is definitely just an illusion like the dream world. It appears to be very real when we experience it but is known to be an illusion once we wake up from the dream. Therefore Sankara says that the world is so volatile like the water on a lotus leaf – it is there one moment and the very next moment it is not there. It is not required to renounce such a world as those who try to renounce the world externally will never be successful. External renunciation though might help in true renunciation, still true renunciation is internal renunciation alone. Contrary to what many people think, true renunciation is just knowing the nature of the world to be temporary, illusory and unreal. Thus it is renunciation of the notion that the world is real.

Today many of us think about this world to be real and therefore in this wrong notion of ours, we experience only sorrow constantly. One moment we depend on somebody or something and the very next moment this dependency goes for a toss and as a result we experience sorrow. This happens over and over again. A dog which again and again makes a mistake is excused for it is a dog but human beings are supposed to be those who learn from their own mistakes and never repeat mistakes again. But we find that constantly we commit the same mistake over and over again. This mistake is considering the world to be real. Though every minute we experience only sorrow from the world, still we think that it might give happiness and therefore run behind it – thus we all are to be called fools or animals alone.

Sankara beautifully says that we are like a cow (without knowledge). A cow wags its tail and approaches a person who is holding grass in his hands. If the person is holding a stick, the cow will soon run away from the person. In the same way, when we experience temporary happiness from the world we run behind the same thinking that it might be eternal but the moment we experience sorrow we run away from the particular object or entity. This goes on again and again until the end of one life. If we think that one life puts an end to our foolishness, ignorance and sorrow, it is wrong as this continues for many births.

Whatever happened in this birth continues in the next birth as well. Whatever happens in the next birth also continues in the next birth. Thus many cycles of birth and death go on without any end. And what is achieved through these various births and deaths is sorrow and sorrow alone.

Sankara thus says that births and deaths go on without any end as this maya or illusion is very tough indeed to conquer. The only way to conquer this is through surrender unto Ishwara. Ishwara isn't just a person with a particular name and form; instead Ishwara is the non-dual reality of Brahman. Ishwara is he who alone exists at all times. Whether we accept this truth that Ishwara alone exists or not, Ishwara or Brahman alone exists. The sooner we accept this truth, the sooner our sorrows will end and sooner we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

Today we are also in a world where everybody is changing every minute. We find cases of rapes increasing; cases of thieves fooling even various institutions of spiritual organizations; in such a transient world, the only thing we can do in order to avoid all sorrow is to seek Ishwara. Ishwara can be sought through the system of Vedanta alone, as the Brahma Sutras say that scriptures are the only source of Brahman.

System of Vedanta contrary to what many people think is very simple indeed; also it is a very beautiful system indeed to learn. Compared to the various interesting sciences in the world today, this science is the most logical and this means that it is faultless. Any science that we find in the world is filled with one or the other faults which are covered through assumptions. But still we get attracted by it – but we are averse to the system of Vedanta where there are no assumptions and there is perfect logic supported by direct experience.

Many people are averse to Vedanta as they think that Vedanta will lead to sanyaasa and people will thereby run away from their homes. This is wrong. Vedanta only talks about how our mind and mental state can be changed, not the external state. Though external sanyaasa might help few people attain moksha sooner still Vedanta doesn't preach any external sanyaasa. True sanyaasa through knowledge is what is being preached by Vedanta.

Vedanta will make us understand the nature of the world and thereby will make our life very blissful to live. We will be able to, through Vedanta, lead a blissful life while performing all activities in the world like any worldly person. The entire world remains exactly the same

(though it is ultimately unreal alone) but we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss at all times, irrespective of whatever happens in the world.

It is this state devoid of all sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss that we all are knowingly or unknowingly seeking. And it can be achieved only through the system of Vedanta. Once we start learning Vedanta we will find that it is very beautiful and therefore we will not be able to take our attention away from Vedanta. It is the purpose of this magazine to evoke the beauty of Vedanta and through this inspire all sadhakas to learn and implement Vedanta. Through this, all sadhakas will be able to achieve the ultimate goal of life as moksha and thereby ever rejoice in bliss.

May we all strive to learn and implement the system of Vedanta through remembering that one Brahman alone exists here 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.

AUM NAMAH SHIVAYA

Mar 18th

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Vichaara Siddhi

Ultimate goal of life - bliss

As we have seen in many previous editions, it is important to understand as to what is the ultimate goal of life. There are many people who roam around the entire world without any goal at all. A person who has no worldly goal will not achieve anything at all in life. It is ok to even dream high with respect to worldly goals but what is required is to have goals in life. A person who has no goal is like a person who is going on a picnic all around the world for the time-period of his entire life. Such people therefore will waste their entire life.

But what about those who have goals in life? Is there life with a purpose?

Definitely No, as all worldly goals are not permanent or eternal. Any goals that we achieve in life will only live for a short period of time. For example, we might become the president or prime minister of a country but this goal only lives for 5 to 10 years depending on the country. After the time-period or time-frame or tenure, we will have to give up the particular post and thereby the goal is lost. If we take any other examples like getting a job or being promoted or becoming a dad or mom etc. all of these are also short-lived. This is because the entire world is constantly changing. That which is changing cannot give eternal result. If our goal is based on the world then it will not be eternal.

What is the problem of having different goals which are not eternal?

Such non-eternal goals will only lead to sorrow. We will have to go through a lot of effort in order to achieve the goal; when we possess the goal we will always have the fear of the goal getting lost someday or the other; finally when the goal is lost we will be sad thinking about the times when we possessed the goal. Thus before achieving the goal, during possession of the goal and after the goal is lost we experience only sorrow. This is because anything that is changing or non-eternal will only lead to sorrow in the long run (though it might appear to lead to happiness in the short run). Hence the scriptures repeat again and again that wise people will not take resort to worldly pleasures (or worldly goals itself) as it will only lead to sorrow.

Then what can we really seek in life?

The goal that will never vanish or change is the ultimate goal of life – it is attaining bliss. It is for this bliss that the husband loves the wife, the wife loves the husband and the entire world is loved in whole or partially by all people. As long as happiness is achieved from

something, there will be association with the thing; the moment it ceases to give happiness, we will renounce it.

Worldly love is also like this only – it is nourished only till it gives us happiness. The moment our lover goes against us or leads us to sorrow, we will renounce the love and seek happiness in something else. Thus going from one object to another, we experience only sorrow until we find that eternal entity which will give us eternal bliss (bliss that is always present and never decays or vanishes).

Everybody in the world should first realize that the ultimate goal of life is ever rejoicing in bliss. It is seeking this goal that all activities are performed; it is seeking this goal that life itself goes on; the moment a person feels that there is no happiness in life, he will commit suicide (thinking that sorrow will end and happiness will be achieved that way – which is a wrong notion as eternal bliss is only possible from an eternal entity).

Analyzing the ultimate goal of life and enquiring into that which is eternal can be defined as Vichaara or enquiry. This enquiry first takes us to that entity which is eternal.

What is eternal?

When we look at the entire world (our experience spectrum) we find that nothing is eternal – everything is constantly changing only. If we think that only external world will lead to sorrow, even the inner world or mental world created by oneself will also only lead to sorrow. It is this sorrow of one's mental creation that one experiences daily in sleep. Now if one thinks that just by sleeping (deep sleep) or somehow getting into that state where duality or world just ceases to exist, there will be eternal bliss, then that also is wrong – as such a state is temporary in nature. It will appear to lead to happiness when experiencing but afterwards it will only lead to more sorrow. For example, when a person takes drugs it appears to give happiness but the happiness is short-lived and once happiness vanishes, then sorrow is experienced as a result of taking drugs. Similar is the case with any happiness that is achieved through temporary vanishing of the world.

Eternal bliss is only possible from the entity which is eternal. Is there any such eternal entity?

Eternal entity - Brahman

It can be thought or argued that there is no eternal entity and everything is just temporary or transient (as the kshanika vijnaanavaadins say). But this is not the case due to many reasons. Our very experience says that there should be some changeless entity behind any change. When we see the earth rotating around the sun, we have to assume that the sun is changeless. Without assumption of a changeless sun, the earth's rotation cannot happen (or be apprehended). A changing variable is impossible without the changeless constant. If it be argued that in the case of earth and sun, both are changing and there is relative changing or the rule of relativity applies – everything is relative. That everything is relative is a fact but this fact leads a wise person to the conclusion that there is an absolute which is the basis of the relativity. This absolute entity is termed in the scriptures as Brahman.

What is Brahman?

In order to find out Brahman, we have to enquire from the changing world to its changeless source or cause. Anything that changes is an effect and such an effect requires a cause. Though it can be argued that the cause of the world itself can be changing, then we will get into an infinite regression (its cause has to be changeless – else its cause's cause has to be changeless – somewhere we have to end up a changeless cause, so due to simplicity it is fine to accept the cause of the world itself as changeless). Therefore it is logical to accept that the world has a changeless cause. The cause is eternal as it is changeless. Thus it is ever-present and for it to be ever-present it has to be ever-shining or of the nature of consciousness. And therefore it is infinite or unlimited and blissful. Thus Brahman is the cause of the world and of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Is this Brahman one or many?

Though the effect of world is many and relativity is there, still Brahman is one and absolute. This is because there is no other entity possible than Brahman. If there is an entity other than Brahman, then it has to be answered whether this entity is same as Brahman or different from Brahman. It cannot be same as Brahman as then only Brahman will exist; it cannot be different from Brahman for then it will lead to infinite regression as we will have to then assume a difference between Brahman and the entity and same question put forth for difference and Brahman-entity relationship. Now if it is argued that this entity is part of Brahman, then Brahman due to having parts will undergo changes, death and therefore will become non-eternal. Thus it is proven beyond doubt that Brahman is one without a second.

Thus scriptures say that before creation, Existence alone existed, one without a second. If this be the case, then how creation came into existence and what is creation?

Since Brahman alone exists, creation has to be out of Brahman itself. If this be the case, Brahman has to change in order to become the world. This is not possible as then Brahman will become non-eternal due to changes. It cannot be said that one part of Brahman is changeless and another part is changing as then Brahman will be non-eternal due to having parts and undergoing changes. If it be said that Brahman creates world out of nothing, then it is impossible as out of nothing we cannot get a world – if this be the case, then anything and everything can be created out of thin air (which is not the case).

The only way creation can be explained is that Brahman appears as the world. This is best understood through the analogy of mud and pot. The cause of mud appears as the effect of pot. Pot is nothing but name and form in mud. Even when pot exists, it is nothing but mud alone. Reality in the pot is mud and mud alone. In the same way, the entire world that we currently perceive is just names and forms in Brahman. The world doesn't have any reality at all and Brahman alone is the essence behind the world.

Creation thus is just an appearance or vivarta. Such appearance is just an illusion and therefore ultimately it means that there is no world really created. Hence scriptures compare this world with the dream world. Even as the dream world appears out of the dreamer and is the dreamer alone, similarly this entire world appears out of Brahman and is Brahman alone – this is from empirical perspective where the world is perceived and temporarily accepted as existing. From the ultimate perspective there is no dream world at all present and possible as well as only the dreamer exists at all times; in the same way, there is no world at all present and possible as well as only Brahman exists at all times. Creation is empirically an illusion and ultimately non-existent. When it appears as existing, then all rules within itself are valid (like rules are valid in dream) but once realization dawns that it doesn't really exist, then Brahman and only Brahman exists.

If Brahman alone exists, then who am I? Am I the changing world as I experience the world and therefore have a relation with the world? If I am the changing world then I am an illusion and therefore there is no reality to myself. If I am Brahman then I should experience myself as blissful in nature which I don't experience. It should be said that I am neither the changing world nor Brahman – but there is nothing apart from these two (one being an illusion in the reality which is the other). So who am I?

Vichaara – Self-enquiry or enquiry into “I”

When it is enquired into “I”, we will find a lot of wrong answers first coming up. This includes the body, vital forces, senses, mind, intellect, ego, ignorance etc. Sometimes “I” am also considered as associated or identified with the objects and people of the world. All such answers are wrong answers as “I” am the Subject of everything. Subject is that which is never objectified – subject is realized when we reach the state where all objects have been removed and nothing more remains to be removed. This is similar to finding out a diamond kept inside a suitcase. It is kept underneath all other items therefore it can only be found when we remove all other items from the suitcase.

Similarly there are the five sheaths or coverings of body, vital forces, mind, intellect and ignorance. It is only when we remove all of these that we will find the real “I” – that which cannot be objectified. The process of removing everything that is an object is called process of negation or “neti, neti” (not this, not this). Ramana Maharshi beautifully gives an analogy to illustrate this – it is dark in the house and a person wants to find out his watch. There are many things kept around him; therefore he touches one item after the other. Each item he takes he negates as “not watch” and finally when he finds the watch, it is asserted as the watch.

But then we can argue that in this example watch is an object and objectified through this is the watch. For this Maharshi gives another analogy – Sita was put to a test of fidelity. There were many Ramas placed before her, one alone being real and others being unreal. When Sita came before each false Rama, she nodded her head saying “not this”. And finally when the real Rama came before her, she just bowed her head in silence (as a chaste wife shouldn’t call her husband by name). Similarly when everything is negated what remains behind is the Self or “I” which cannot be negated and which cannot be pointed out (there will be only silence). The reason why the Self cannot be pointed out is that it is the Subject itself – Subject for one doesn’t need to be pointed out (as it is oneself) and second there is nothing that can objectify or point out the Subject (as it is the subject of all objectification).

Now what is the nature of this Self?

Everything that is an object and is negated is constantly changing but the Self alone is changeless. This is because all changes are only possible in a changeless substratum. Unless there is a changeless substratum, changes cannot be perceived and changes cannot even happen. Though we may argue that relativity can help us with everything changing, it

is simple common-sense that there needs to be a changeless substratum that is absolute behind the relativity (that is constantly changing). This changeless substratum is "I" or the Self.

What is the nature of the Self?

For one, the Self is changeless in nature. In order to find out this changeless nature of the Self we just have to analyze the three states we experience in a day. Each and every person experiences the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep in a day. These three states are constantly changing – everything in the states are constantly changing. But as explained earlier, any changes are only possible if there is a changeless substratum. Thus we find that "I" who experiences the three states is the common factor behind the three changing states.

But now the question comes as to whether this I is changing or changeless?

The answer is that there is a changing I and a changeless I. These two "I"s are mixed and therefore confusion is caused (no confusion really speaking but just sorrow).

Adhyaasa – superimposition of false I on real I

When the real changeless I is not known, then the changing I of Ego is superimposed on the changeless I. Since both are I-s therefore as long as we are identified with one, we will not be able to identify with the other. Thus those who know the real I have no association or identification with the false I of Ego (ego might be there performing actions but they will not be affected by the ego at all as they are identified with the real I). And those who think they are the ego I will not have any association with the real I.

Since ego I constantly changes, therefore it will only lead to sorrow. And the real I is changeless therefore it will lead to eternal bliss. Though it appears that the ego I which experiences the three states is constant, it is constantly changing as it is associated with the states. When states change, the I associated with the states also has to change. But still we are able to relate the three states with one another – this is only possible if there is a changeless I and sometimes we identify ourselves with this changeless I.

Ramana Maharshi beautifully says that the false I is a thief who steals away the identity of "I". The real I of the Self is changeless and a mere witness to everything – therefore it doesn't crib or cry for false I stealing (really speaking stealing itself is an illusion only). The

moment we focus on the thief of Ego, analyzing it, we will find that it is as changing as the states or the world. Therefore it is not real. Knowing that it is not real, the thief I will vanish and therefore we will be able to identify ourselves with the real I. The moment we identify ourselves with the real I all sorrows will end.

But will we experience bliss by identifying with the real I?

Definitely as real I is eternal in nature – that which is eternal is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss in nature. This nature is experienced directly - I exist at all times, am always shining and am blissful in nature (for am never hated for anything at all). Thus once we identify with the real I, sorrows caused due to the false I will vanish and we will rejoice in bliss.

Is this real I the same as Brahman or not?

Now coming back to our questions about whether Brahman and the Self are the same. Since both Brahman and the Self are of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, therefore both are of the same nature only. This means that both are same – there are no two entities but the Self is Brahman alone.

If there is only Brahman existing, then what about the false I, the world etc.?

They are all just illusions in the non-dual reality of Brahman or Self. When the Self is not known, everything else appears as existing (duality). All duality forces itself upon the Self or Brahman (is a superimposition). It appears very real, like dream, but when we analyze we will clearly find that it is constantly changing and therefore is just an illusion in Brahman.

As long as a person abides as Brahman, though the world might appear as existing still he will not be affected by the world. This is similar to an actor portraying a role in a movie. Since the actor knows that his role in the movie isn't real therefore he will not be affected by whatever happens in the movie. Similarly once we realize our very nature of Brahman then we will not be affected by whatever happens in the world. The entire world will be considered as a dream or a movie. Activities will be performed in the same way that worldly ignorant people perform it but without any association with them, therefore results of good or bad will not taint.

True enquiry is that in which we are able to negate the entire world (along with the various sheaths) as just illusions (changing) and find out our true nature of Brahman or Self of the

nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. The knowledge that only Brahman exists and everything is Brahman alone (as the substratum) is the result of enquiry. Real self-enquiry thus will lead a person to abiding in his own Self and maintaining in the mind that the entire world is also the Self or Brahman alone.

The moment a person differentiates oneself from the world or the dual world to be real, that very moment self-enquiry has been lost – this is because only one Self which is real and the substratum of the entire changing world is true self-enquiry.

As Ramana Maharshi always says, one has to constantly do self-enquiry so that everything apart from the non-dual Self is negated and one is able to abide constantly as the Self. Even as a ripe fruit automatically falls from the tree, similarly when the time is ripe effortful abidance in the Self will automatically fall down from the mind. Until that time, one has to constantly practice self-enquiry to ensure that the mind doesn't run away from the Self.

As Arjuna says in Gita, it is very tough indeed to conquer the mind but it can be conquered through practice and dispassion. Dispassion is knowledge of the entire world to be an illusion and Brahman-Self alone to be real-blissful. With constant practice and dispassion we will be able to conquer the mind and thereby do self-enquiry at all times. As Sankara says realization of a real entity is possible only through self-enquiry and not through any other means. Therefore it is essential for all sadhakas to constantly do self-enquiry and thereby contemplate on oneself as Brahman-Self at all times. Thereafter a person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss in one's own very nature of Self – thus the ultimate goal of life will be fulfilled here itself.

May we all strive to do self-enquiry through knowledge that I am Brahman-Self which is the changeless substratum of the changing illusory world 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

देहो नाहं, दृक्स्वरूपत्वात् तस्य विषयत्वाच्च, नाटकदीपवत् ।१।

deho nāham, dṛkṣvarūpatvāt tasya viṣayatvācca, nāṭakadīpavat|1|

1. I am not the body, due to being of the nature of Seer and it being a vishaya or object, like lamp in a theatre (is a mere witness and subject).

पञ्चकोशाः नाहं, तस्य विषयत्वात् जडत्वाच्च मम चैतन्यस्वरूपत्वाच्च, ब्रह्मवत् ।२।

pañcakōśāḥ nāhaṁ, tasya viṣayatvāt jaḍatvācca mama caitanyasvarūpatvācca, brahmavat|2|

2. I am not the pancha koshas, due to they being objects and insentient and my nature being that of Consciousness (or sentience), like Brahman.

अहमात्मा इत्येव विचारः, वस्तुत्वात् ब्रह्मवत् ।३।

ahamātmā ityeva vicāraḥ, vastutvāt, brahmavat|3|

3. Vichara or self-enquiry is “I am the Self”, due to being vastu or real, like Brahman (that which is real alone is to be enquired or can be enquired into).

Summarizing Sloka

विषयाः नेति मार्गेण त्यजेत्सदा विचारेण ।

अहं ब्रह्मेति भावाच्च आप्नूयात्मानवो मोक्षम् ॥

viṣayāḥ neti mārgēṇa tyajetsadā vicāreṇa|

ahaṁ brahmeti bhāvācca āpnuyātmānavo mokṣam||

Through the path of neti neti or not-this, not-this; that is, through vicaara or self-enquiry, a person should renounce all objects (their status as being real); also through the notion that I am Brahman a person should attain the goal of moksha.

Chathussutra Prakaashah

Shareeraka Nyaaya Sangraha

Third Sutra

शास्त्रयोनित्वात् ।

śāstrayonitvāt

Because shastras are the source (of Brahman).

We saw previously the siddhantin's initial answering of purvapakshin's arguments; the siddhantin said that even as a lamp's illuminating capability is given to its cause of fire, similarly capability of the scriptures to illumine everything is given or available to Brahman as well. To sum it up, whatever capabilities the cause possesses, the effect also will possess the same – thus since the effect of shastras are all-knowing therefore Brahman is also all-knowing in nature.

Literal Translation of the work

And even as an entity with light is capable of illumining everything around itself (near itself) without the support of any other entity, similarly Brahman is also capable of illumining the entire world (by being the material cause of the world) due to being of the nature of knowledge that illumines everything as proven in the previous sutra (Brahman's upalakshana being cause of the world and svaroopalakshana being of the nature of Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Infinite etc.) – therefore Brahman is always able to illumine everything by pervading everything (or being present everywhere), through this anumaana or inference, the substratum or cause of the all-illumining scriptures, Brahman's all-knowing nature is supported (proven). Therefore it has been said "it's own knowledge/illumining power is superimposed or found in the scriptures".

Siddhantin – Brahman is all-knowing due to being the substratum of scriptures

Previously we first saw the analogy of lamp being able to illumine everything. The illumining capability of the lamp shows us that fire which is the basis or cause of lamp also has illumining capability. In the same way, Brahman being the cause of the world also has capability of all-knowing.

The scriptures are all-knowing as everything under the Sun can be found in it. If it is argued that current sciences like computers and all aren't found in the scriptures then it is wrong as the basis of computers can be found in calculations and calculation or mathematics can be found in the scriptures (which has been present long before even today's mathematics has developed).

All sciences of today are nothing but additions to existing sciences which all have been explained beyond any doubt in the scriptures. Great masters who have mastered these scriptures have been those who have been pioneers in writing works in different walks of life. We find that even Einstein found that he waste a life-time trying to prove relativity theory when he could have got his hands on to Sankara's Adhyaasa bhashya (which talks about relativity and the underlying absolute state). Today when science is trying to find out about dream and what happens with the mind & it's states, scriptures and various acharyas have long back itself explained dream and the mind to perfection. That these works of acharyas aren't famous or well known today isn't the fault of the scriptures but the fault of individuals like us who haven't paid much attention to ancient scriptures and are always focused on the vast objective science of today.

As Chinmaya beautifully points out, there is no point of learning objective science unless we master the subjective science or knowledge of our very nature. Until the subjective science is conquered, the entire objective science will only ultimately lead to sorrow. If we are able to master the subjective science or Vedanta, then we will find that irrespective of objective sciences and the world, we will be able to rejoice in bliss at all times (that bliss which is being sought out by everybody in the world).

Since the scriptures are all-knowing therefore their source or cause of Brahman also must be all-knowing. This is proven easily through the example of lamp and fire (fire being the material cause of the lamp). We can say that the inference used here is – Brahman is all-knowing, because of being the material cause of scriptures, like fire and lamp.

Though the above inference is enough it can be argued that Brahman doesn't have capability to illumine everything – in order to know everything, illumining everything is required (as illumination is knowledge). This is being answered by Prakashatman now.

Siddhantin – lamp illumines everything around it

Imagine that a lamp is kept in a room; then we will find that everything in the room is illumined by the lamp. Any lamp has limitation with respect to distance – it cannot illumine everything under the Sun but it can only illumine things around itself. This illumination of objects around the lamp is without any other entity. A lamp doesn't need another lamp for illumining everything around it. It itself is sufficient – thus without any other help, a lamp illumines everything around itself.

Siddhantin – Brahman of the nature of knowledge

It has already been proven in the previous sutra that Brahman is of the nature of knowledge or Consciousness. Consciousness is that which illumines everything automatically or naturally. It is that light which is the source of all lights, yet it doesn't require any other light to illumine itself (as it is self-illuminating or self-existing in nature).

Why is Brahman of the nature of Consciousness?

Brahman is eternal or existing at all times. If this isn't the case, then changing Brahman would require another changeless substratum based on which it changes. This changeless substratum would have to be eternal, for if not we have to assume another changeless substratum for this changing substratum of Brahman. This extension would go on and on without any end unless we reach a changeless substratum. Thus it would lead an infinite regression unless we find a changeless substratum which is eternal. Simplicity or laghava can be used to accept Brahman itself as eternal (the first step itself we will find a changeless substratum rather than going to the second or third or fourth or infinite level). Scriptures which are the ultimate authority also says that Brahman is the source of this world – the cause which is uncaused. Logic also supports this view of Brahman being the cause of the world – changeless substratum in which the world exists (appears as existing).

Since Brahman is changeless and eternal therefore there has to be a light falling on Brahman at all times. If this isn't the case, then Brahman will not be eternal. This light that has to fall always on Brahman has to be part of Brahman itself (Brahman's very nature) for only then will it always illumine the existence of Brahman. Thus Brahman is of the nature of light – that light which experiences itself; this is the light of Consciousness. Therefore it is proven that Brahman is of the nature of Consciousness as well.

Siddhantin – Brahman illumining everything

Brahman by being the substratum of the entire world as well as of the nature of Consciousness illumines everything. The scriptures thus say that without the light of Consciousness, nothing can shine. Everything gets its shining capability from Brahman alone (as Brahman is the only entity in the entire world which is Conscious in nature). Even the Sun, Moon and all other sources of light derive its light from Brahman alone. If Brahman ceases to exist, then absolutely nothing can shine. This is easily known through the nature of Brahman as Consciousness, the Consciousness which constantly pulsates inside us as I-exist, I-exist. If this I ceases to exist, then nothing can shine – no light source can shine. This I shining, everything else shines (or gets the power to throw light into the world).

If worldly lights have the power to illumine entities, then what would be the power of Brahman which is the ultimate light of Consciousness? Brahman illumines everything in the world. This can be understood in two ways – one is that since Brahman is the cause-substratum of the world, therefore Brahman illumines the entire world (makes the entire world existing); second is that since Brahman is of the nature of Consciousness therefore Brahman illumines the entire world. We can also combine the two reasons and say that Brahman is the all-pervasive Conscious substratum of the world – hence Brahman illumines the entire world.

Siddhantin – Brahman is all-knowing

That which illumines the entire world obviously is all-knowing in nature. Therefore Brahman is all-knowing in nature. It cannot be argued that a lamp only illumines objects and doesn't know objects, therefore Brahman also need not be all-knowing in nature just because everything is illumined by Brahman. Brahman's illumining of the entire world is through pervading the entire world and as a result of being of the nature of Consciousness – thus Brahman like a witness illumining everything happening in an accident knows the entire world (even as the witness knows everything happening in the accident as he witnessed it, similar is the case with Brahman).

A lamp though has power of showering light on the world doesn't have any sentience (or Consciousness) and as a result doesn't have knowledge of the objects it illumines. But Brahman being sentient in nature knows the entire world through illumining the entire world.

Siddhantin – it is proven that Brahman is all-knowing

Thus it has been proven that Brahman is all-knowing in nature due to being the source of the scriptures, substratum of the entire world and illumining the entire world as Consciousness.

Siddhantin – conclusion

We can conclude the third sutra by saying that Brahman is all-knowing in nature. Realization or knowledge of such a Brahman will make us know everything (not everything as such but everything essentially). The scriptures start with the disciple asking the Guru to teach about that by knowing which everything becomes known. Thus through knowledge of Brahman, we will gain knowledge of everything (we will know everything). When knowledge culminates, it will lead to the state of moksha or realization wherein a person doesn't have any desires and is ever blissful at all times.

May we all strive to learn the scriptures so that we will be able to gain knowledge of Brahman thereby through knowing everything we will be able to put an end to all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

ब्रह्मणः सर्वज्ञत्वं सिद्धं,शास्त्रयोनित्वात्, प्रदीपान्निवत् ।१ ।

brahmaṇaḥ sarvajñatvaṁ siddhaṁ,śāstrayonitvāt, pradīpāgnivat|1|

1. Brahman's all-knowing-ness is established, due to being the cause of the scriptures, like lamp and fire (fire is the cause of lamp and hence possesses the capability of illumining like the lamp demonstrates).

ब्रह्मणः सर्वज्ञत्वं सिद्धं,शास्त्रोपादानत्वात्, प्रदीपान्निवत् ।२ ।

brahmaṇaḥ sarvajñatvaṁ siddhaṁ,śāstropādānatvāt, pradīpāgnivat|2|

2. Brahman's all-knowing-ness is established, by being the material cause/substratum of the scriptures, like lamp and fire.

ब्रह्म सर्वज्ञः, शास्त्रकारणत्वात् शास्त्राधिष्ठानरूपत्वाच्च, प्रदीपवत् ।३ ।

brahma sarvajñah, śāstrakāraṇatvāt śāstrādhiṣṭhānarūpatvācca, pradīpavat|3|

3. Brahman is all-knowing, due to being the cause and substratum of the scriptures, like lamp.

ब्रह्म सर्वज्ञः, सर्वप्रकाशरूपत्वात्, प्रदीपवत् ।४ ।

brahma sarvajñah, sarvaprakāśarūpatvāt, pradīpavat|4|

4. Brahman is all-knowing, due to illumining everything, like lamp (illumines everything around it).

Upaadhi Dhyotanam

Upaadhi Khandanam

As we have seen earlier, Upaadhi Khandanam is poem-based work of Madhvacharya where the subject-matter is attack on the particular tenet of Upaadhi or adjuncts of Advaita. This work consists of 19 slokas in total and has been commented upon by Padmanabha Teertha briefly and in depth by Jaya Teertha. Let's first see the work and the answering of the work by Advaitin.

Dvaita darshanam

Dvaita Darshanam gets its name due to acceptance of duality completely (contrary to Advaita which is one of the systems established much before Madhva's philosophy itself – though it should be said that Advaita isn't a philosophy established by somebody, rather it is the philosophy found in the scriptures or the philosophy of the scriptures itself).

Analysis of the entire world brings us to two entities of Drik and Drishya or Subject and Object. Subject is sentient in nature whereas object is insentient. In experience we find many sentient beings and many insentient objects. There is a person who controls these both and he is called Ishwara. Thus there are three entities explanation of which is detailed description of the system of Vedanta itself. The three entities are jagat, jeeva and Ishwara. Each system of Vedanta postulates different definitions and relationships between these three entities. Advaita says that there is only entity of Brahman really here – jagat is insentient and therefore has no real existence; jeeva is just an appearance in Brahman and therefore essentially is one with Brahman. Ishwara is Brahman with the power of Maya that creates the world of names and forms even as a magician or a yogi creates an entire magical or illusory world.

Advaita thus says that jagat is mithyaa or not there and jeeva and Ishwara are Brahman – thus ultimately only one exists though empirically there might exist the three entities. Even as in dream duality appears as existing but after waking up there is no duality at all (dream duality); even as various objects made of mud appear as duality or different from mud; similarly this entire world just appears as existing but is mere names and forms in Brahman or is Brahman alone. Knowing that the world is essentially Brahman alone is liberation and ever rejoicing in bliss; considering the world to be real is bondage. Whether a person is bonded or liberated, ultimately Brahman alone exists as one's very nature of Consciousness.

Thus really speaking there is neither bondage nor liberation – for one thinking to be in dream, the dream world has to end but ultimately there is no dream world existing to end; similarly there is nothing apart from Brahman but one who thinks that duality exists has to learn from the scriptures that one Brahman alone exists and through sravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana such a person should realize and abide in his very nature of Brahman at all times.

Dvaita in contrast to Advaita accepts the three entities of jagat, jeeva and Ishwara to be real. Each one of them are real. Jagat and jeeva are many whereas Ishwara is one alone. Jagat is insentient and jeeva has the quality of knowledge but Ishwara alone is all-powerful. Ishwara, in contrast to Advaita which says that Brahman is one alone and therefore without qualities, is Vishnu with qualities. Dvaita also accepts that there is difference between the three entities. Since two entities are many and one is just one alone, therefore there are five types of differences as below:

1. Difference between jadas (objects of the world).
2. Difference between jeevas (one jeeva with another).
3. Difference between jada and jeeva.
4. Difference between jada and Ishwara.
5. Difference between jeeva and Ishwara.

The system of Dvaita has been summarized into nine concepts (and one sloka) by Vyaasa Teertha. The nine concepts together are called tattva vaada (philosophy of tattvas or various tenets or truths). The nine concepts are as below:

1. Hari alone is supreme.
2. The world is real.
3. Differences are real (the five differences).
4. Jeeva depends on Hari alone.
5. Jeevas have differentiation as higher, middle, lower.
6. Liberation is experience of one's own bliss.
7. Pure devotion to Hari is the means to liberation.
8. Pramaanas or valid means of knowledge are the three of pratyaksha (direct perception), anumana or inference and shabdha or verbal testimony.
9. Hari is the one to be known through all scriptures.

Hari – the independent entity

In dvaita philosophy, Hari is the independent entity upon which everything else depends. Unlike Advaita which says that independent entity alone is real and dependent entities are just illusions in the independent entity, Dvaita says that both independent and dependent are real. The independent entity is Hari who isn't the quality-less attribute-less Brahman. Hari is Vishnu with all good qualities. All other deities are inferior to Hari or in other words they also are dependent upon Hari for their very existence.

Vishnu has two qualification as per Dvaita philosophy. This is what Madhvacharya explains in the very first sloka of Upadhikhandanam.

ॐ उपाधिखण्डनम्

om upādhikhaṇḍanam

नारायणोऽगण्यगुणनित्यैकनिलयाकृतिः ।

अशेषदोषरहितः प्रीयतां कमलालयः ॥१॥

nārāyaṇo'gaṇyaguṇanityaikaṇilayākṛtiḥ |
aśeṣadoṣarahitaḥ priyatāṁ kamalālayaḥ ||1||

1. Narayana is filled with lot of positive or good gunas and one ever-depended-upon-entity; he is also devoid of all bad qualities, he resides in the lotus (lotus heart of Lakshmi or with Lakshmi) and he is dear to us.

Two qualifications of Vishnu

As we find in the above sloka, Vishnu is qualified in two ways – one is that he possesses all good qualities and second is that he is devoid of all bad qualities. Thus we can say he is the perfect person to protect us or to help us.

There are many qualities mentioned in the scriptures as that which have to be taken resort to in order for a sadhaka to improve in the spiritual path and progress towards liberation. Now there can be doubt as to whether all these qualities do exist in the world or not. Vishnu as the very embodiment of all these good qualities shows us that these qualities are possible and they are all present in the one entity of Vishnu. Moreover through this we also come to know that we have to depend upon Vishnu in order to attain these qualities and

progress towards moksha. Therefore the tenet of dvaita philosophy that those who don't worship Vishnu will not attain moksha (and thereby ignorantly verbal attacks are made on Saivites as they depend upon Siva).

Some of the good qualities include compassion, all-knowing, animaadi siddhis etc. These may be present in sadhakas or some realized people but they are present in complete only in Vishnu. If it is said that some of these qualities are present in full in realized people, then uniqueness on Vishnu as well as total dependency on Vishnu will be hindered. Therefore it goes without saying that Vishnu alone possesses all the good qualities in whole or complete. Therefore also all beings have to be depend upon Vishnu and Vishnu alone for liberation.

If Vishnu possesses gunas or qualities then there is a possibility that Vishnu will also possess durgunas or bad qualities. Thus it is essential to mention that Vishnu is devoid of all bad qualities. These bad qualities include kaama, krodha etc. A person who possesses these qualities cannot be complete or perfect and such a person cannot be the dependency for all people in the world. Therefore it is essential to mention that Vishnu is devoid of all gunas.

Vishnu by being composed of all good qualities and devoid of being all bad qualities is therefore the perfect person for all to depend upon. Hence Madhvacharya says that he is the one to be depended upon by all people (irrespective of all distinctions).

Mukti or liberation

So now there can be doubt as to what would be the state of liberation when one attains it through the grace of Vishnu (by depending upon Vishnu). The answer is that liberation is enjoyment of one's inner bliss. This inner bliss itself is depended upon each jeeva. Unlike Advaita Vedanta where liberation is rejoicing in the bliss of one's own Self or Brahman (that Brahman which is the ultimate reality behind the entire world), here liberation is experiencing the bliss inside oneself. Since jeevas are categorized as uccha, madhyama and neecha therefore the liberation of each jeeva is different from one another. If I realize, I will experience bliss inside myself; if you realize, you will experience bliss inside yourself; both of us will not experience the bliss of Vishnu as that is unreachable to us.

The closest person to the bliss of Vishnu is Lakshmi, due to being the consort of Vishnu. All other jeevas only experience lesser amount of bliss. And there are also those who will never

experience any bliss due to going against Vishnu and depending upon other devatas (they will be cursed by Vishnu for this wrong deed of theirs).

Thus anybody seeking liberation should surrender unto Vishnu – that Vishnu who possesses all good qualities and is devoid of bad qualities.

If Advaita says that qualities aren't really part of Vishnu, then how do they apply to Vishnu? Are they unreal? Then they wouldn't even exist or appear as existing, like the son of a barren woman. Are they real? If they are real, then they will always be present in Vishnu. It cannot be said that they are illusions as illusions are not proven (that which is neither real nor unreal). If it be answered that due to adjuncts or upaadhis, Vishnu appears as having qualities even as space appears to have qualities or attributes when seemingly limited by a pot or room then this statement is wrong as upaadhi itself cannot be proven.

Upaadhi Dhyotanam

This is a work written in order to answer the objections raised by Madhvacharya against the concept of Upaadhi which shows that even as one space is unlimited but appears as limited, similarly Brahman also is unlimited at all times but appears as limited due to the adjuncts of body, mind etc. thereby becoming a mere witness to all activities of the illusory body, mind etc.

Let us look at the first three slokas of this work where Madhvacharya's definition of Vishnu has been corrected and put forth from Advaita's perspective.

ॐ उपाधिद्योतनम्

om upādhidyotanam

मध्वेनकृतं खण्डनं उपाधेः ब्रह्मणः पुरा ।

क्रियते द्योतनं स्फुटं शंकरस्य कृपावशात् ॥१॥

madhvenakṛtaṁ khaṇḍanam upādheḥ brahmaṇaḥ purā |
kriyate dyotanam sphuṭam śaṅkarasya kṛpāvaśāt ||1||

Brahman's Upaadhi

Upaadhi that is being refuted by Madhvacharya is of Brahman – not anybody or anything else. It has to be remembered that there is nothing apart from Brahman really for evening becoming an adjunct. Adjunct itself is in order to explain the duality or differences in individuals in the world. This is where one has to remember the two levels of realities accepted in Advaita (not just advaita but Vedanta itself talks about these two levels).

First is the ultimate level or ultimate reality which is Brahman and Brahman alone, one without a second. Scriptures say that before creation Brahman alone existed. This means that after creation as well Brahman alone will exist. This means that the world of duality wasn't therefore before creation and will not be there after destruction. That which appears as existing in between and not present in the beginning and end is as good as not existing in the middle. Its existence is just a mere appearance – even as the dream world appears as existing when we experience it but is known to be non-existent after waking up, similar is the case with this world as well (it appears as existing but ultimately doesn't exist at all). Thus from the ultimate perspective Brahman alone exists – there is nothing other than Brahman to even speak about.

Second is the empirical level where duality is accepted as existing though ultimately unreal. From this level, everything part of the world is valid. Though the world is valid, it doesn't mean that world is ultimately valid – world is only valid at this level. When we raise our level to the ultimate level, then there is no world at all. Thus world is like the dream world appearing as if real now and is accepted but remembered or known to be ultimately unreal. If this knowledge is there, then a person will not get affected by activities in the world as the world is unreal. Even as an actor performs his role to perfection while remembering the movie or drama to be unreal, similarly a jnaani will perform actions in the world remembering that Brahman alone exists ultimately. What is required for this state of the jnaani is knowledge supported by renunciation of the world. Renunciation isn't mere external renunciation but renunciation of the reality status of the world (the notion that the world is real has to be renounced).

It cannot be argued that these two levels of reality itself cannot be proven as they are found in the scriptures and logic also supports it (as we have seen with respect to the world's reality status). Experience also shows that such different levels of reality are possible through the daily experience of dream. Though it should constantly be remembered that

these different levels are only for the world – for Brahman, it alone exists whether we look at it from ultimate or empirical perspective. It is when the world is considered that we have to take into account the two levels.

It is also considering the ignorant people of the world that even the scriptures have validity. Else a person who has knowledge doesn't see anything apart from Brahman – for him, one Brahman alone exists at all times. For an ignorant person also only Brahman exists but he doesn't know this and sometimes fails to accept this truth. Until this truth that one Brahman alone exists is apprehended, there will be no bliss.

Moksha or liberation is experiencing one's own bliss but since nothing real apart from Brahman exists and due to being of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, I am Brahman – therefore moksha is rejoicing in bliss of one's very nature of Brahman. This bliss is seemingly limited due to the various adjuncts even as space seemingly appears as limited to the adjuncts of pot, room etc. Once a person realizes his very nature of being unlimited, infinite Brahman, that very moment the person ever rejoices in bliss.

That Madhva's attacks on Upadhi are answered very easily will be seen later but it definitely can be said that all the arguments of various systems are only due to misunderstanding or lack of understanding of Advaita.

Grace of Sankara

That this work of Upadhi dhyotanam is being written in order to answer the objections raised by Madhva in Upadhi Khandanam is only due to the grace of the one great master of Adi Sankara. If not for Adi Sankara's bhashyas we would not have any proper interpretation of the scriptures. Contrary to what other systems claim, Sankara's interpretation isn't just a false or wrong interpretation of the scriptures; instead it is the interpretation of the scriptures. That scriptures talk about one non-dual reality of Brahman is very clearly proven through yukti and anubhava. Only that which is proven through the three means of sruthi, yukti and anubhava is really proven. The only system that stands the test of sruthi, yukti and anubhava is the system of Advaita.

Though other systems also might stand the test of sruthi and yukti, they definitely cannot stand the test of anubhava as Advaita is the only system that gives utmost importance to

oneself and since everything else depends on oneself, therefore only that system which emphasizes oneself is the ultimate system (that stands the test of anubhava).

All other systems through putting dependency on something other than oneself make oneself dependent which is contrary to our own experience. Through effort or with practice any person will be able to remain independent at all times – there is no need of anything and anybody at all. It cannot be argued that Advaita also says that one has to depend on shastras, guru etc. as Advaita says this only for those who seem to be under the impression of avidyaa. Ultimately Advaita emphasizes only one Brahman as one's own very nature of Consciousness. If not for Consciousness, nothing at all will exist. Therefore it is apt to say and accept that Advaita is the only true system supported by sruthi, yukti and anubhava.

Moksha – attained only through Advaita

As explained earlier, through the grace of Sankara and his words as found in his works, one will attain the ultimate state of moksha which is ever rejoicing in bliss at all times. True rejoicing in bliss is only possible in Advaita as only here duality completely merges or ends. Wherever duality exists there is scope of fear; wherever there is scope of fear, there is also scope of sorrow. Wherever sorrow is there, there is no eternal bliss at all. Therefore it goes without saying that only Advaita takes us to the state of fearlessness, sorrowlessness and ultimate eternal bliss.

A true sadhaka craves for eternal bliss which isn't bliss limited by oneself or ordained by some Ishwara but bliss that is ever present naturally in oneself. Such bliss since only is possible through Advaita, therefore a true sadhaka should learn and implement the system of Advaita Vedanta so that the ultimate goal of life as ever rejoicing in bliss will be attained by the sadhaka.

Advaita – the system of Vedanta

Though many people will disagree with this statement that Advaita is the system of Vedanta and that there is no other real system of Vedanta (all other systems are just newly created ones posing to be the true interpretation of the scriptures), still it is apt to say that Advaita is the system of Vedanta.

Sacchidanandendra Saraswati of Holenarsipur beautifully proves through Sankara's Brahma Sutra Bhashya itself that during Sankara's times there will only advaitins. Though these advaitins differed in the means to advaita or realization, they all accepted Advaita as the ultimate goal to be achieved.

If they all were advaitins then why the difference in means?

Difference in means as they thought that the way to realization is different – such difference is not right or apt as the scriptures talk about the means to Advaita as jnaana alone. And jnaana is sravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana. Sravana is constantly listening to the scriptures with focus on non-dual Brahman. Manana is reflecting on whatever has been listened earlier using the logic accepted in the scriptures (logic being subservient to the scriptures rather than being the primary source for proving something). Nidhidhyaasana is constantly contemplating on Brahman, without forgetting Brahman. Through these three means of sravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana a person will be able to attain the ultimate goal of life as moksha. All other means directly or indirectly help in jnaana and only jnaana will lead to moksha. This view of the scriptures wasn't fully imbibed by many acharyas during or before Sankara's time and therefore their views were refuted by Sankara in his bhashya. This doesn't mean that they were non-advaitins.

There are many quotations of Sankara's bhashyas that Sacchidanandendra Saraswathi gives to prove beyond doubt that during or before Sankara's time there were only advaitins.

Many other systems accept their system to be traditional (or continued from ages) through using one or the other acharyas as mentioned by Baadaraayana in the Brahma Sutras. Sacchidanandendra Saraswathi proves through the bhashyas of Sankara that such acharyas were also advaitins (contrary to what the other systems of Vedanta claim).

Thus by being the only traditional system and due to clearly being proven through Sankara's works itself that Advaita alone was present during his time, therefore it is clear that Advaita is the system of Vedanta – all other systems are new systems created by one or the other person. There may be purposes for these other systems but for a true sadhaka, what is required is just the system of Advaita wherein one remembers at all times that Brahman alone exists as one's very nature of Consciousness.

Prostrations to Ishta devataa

It is amangala or inauspicious to start a work without prostrating one's Guru or favorite deity. A work which is started inauspiciously will not be finished (however one may try to finish it). Hence in order to finish this work of Upaadhi Dhyotanam auspiciously, the author calls unto the God of Sankara. Sankara can be considered as both Adi Sankara and Siva as one's favorite deity.

Though ultimately the favorite deity of any advaitin is Brahman alone, still other devatas can be praised or prostrated for various reasons while remembering them to one with the non-dual reality of Brahman.

Since it is only due to the grace of the god of Siva that anything is possible in the entire world, therefore grace of Siva is being explained as the reason for writing this work (which is a logical work that refutes the high-end logic of Madhvacharya's work).

Brahman – Nirguna and Saguna

Through mentioning the grace of Ishwara as Siva, the author also is hinting at the tenet of Advaita that Brahman is both Nirguna and Saguna.

It may be asked as to how one entity can be both with and without qualities. The answer lies in the two levels of reality (as explained earlier). Ultimately Brahman is Nirguna or without qualities due to being one without a second (nothing apart from Brahman exists). But at the empirical plane, Brahman appears as if with gunas. Such saguna Brahman is useful for sadhakas to contemplate or focus on. Unless a person shifts focus from the world to Brahman, attachment towards the world will not end. And unless attachment towards the world ends, attachment to Brahman will be gained. Unless attachment to Brahman is gained, there will not be any jnaana or moksha. Therefore it is essential to focus on Brahman. This focus on Brahman is achieved through various names and forms for Brahman.

Depending on a sadhaka's mind (mind's attachments and aversions or likings) a particular name and form of Brahman can be chosen. A person who likes dresses and ornaments will choose Krishna or Vishnu as favorite deity (representing Brahman). A person who likes renunciation will normally prefer Siva as Siva is the embodiment of renunciation. Thus based on one's likes or desires, the favorite deity who is name and form in Brahman is

chosen – the purpose is that the mind is constantly focused on the particular deity (concentration or focus is only attained when there is some liking – the liking is developed if the deity has things or attributes that we like).

Through gaining focus on the deity, the deity is pervaded to the entire world or the entire world is seen as the deity. When one form pervades the entire world, it becomes formless (as it is unlimited by space). Thus from guna one goes to nirguna Brahman. Gunas are just illusions in the empirical level and used to take us from the illusory world unto the ultimate non-dual reality of Brahman. More analysis on gunas will be explained in the next magazine. Until then we all can strive to ever contemplate on the non-dual reality of Brahman as our very nature of blissful Consciousness.

May we all strive to remember the non-dual reality of Brahman as the only entity existing and as our very nature of Consciousness so that we will be able to put an end to all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Vedanta Shabda Vicharanam

Ajnaanam

The word meaning of Ajnaanam is Ignorance. In this article we will analyze what is ajnaanam, what are the effects of ajnaanam what are the ways to remove ajnaanam and what are the benefit of removing ajnaanam.

In order to understand what is ajnaanam or ignorance, we have to first understand what is jnaanam or knowledge. The central theme of the scriptures is that *Brahman alone is real, everything else is unreal, Jiva is nothing but Brahman alone*. Understanding this central theme with conviction is Jnaanam or Knowledge. It is also called Vijnaanam because it is not just knowing the central theme of the scriptures, but knowing with conviction. And as we saw in the previous article, when a person gets this knowledge backed by the firm conviction, such a person has no sorrow, no bondage and ever experiences the Anandam of Brahman. Such a Mahatma sees Self in everything and everything in Self, thus there will not be any likes or dislikes and hence there is no sorrow at all.

In Isavasya Upanishad

"yastusarvaanibhoothaaniatmanyevanupashyati

Sarvabhooteshu cha atmaanamtatnavijugupsate

He who sees all beings in the Self itself, and the Self in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of realization."

"Yasmin sarvaanibhoothaaniatmaivabhootvijaanatah

Tatramohahkahshokhahekatvamanupashyatah

When to the man of realization all beings become the very Self, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness?"

Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita chapter 5 says that

Vidhyavinayasampannebrahmanegavihastini

ShunichaivasvapaakecapanditaaHsamadarshinaH

The learned ones look with equanimity on a Brahmana endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, and even a dog as well as an eater of dog's meat.

Thus, we understand that Jnaanam is the Ultimate Knowledge Brahman alone exists.

What is Ajnaanam?

We saw what Jnaanam is, the Ultimate Knowledge of Brahman. Not having firm conviction of this Jnaanam is Ajnaanam or ignorance. Not knowing clearly the ultimate truth that "Isavasyamidamsarvam– Everything is pervaded by Lord" is ajnaanam. Not having the firm conviction of the fact "AhamBrahmaasmi – I am Brahman" is ajnaanam.

Our very nature is Brahman. Brahman's nature is Sat-Chit-Anandam and scriptures say that our nature is same as the nature of Brahman. But if we cannot accept this fact and rather see ourselves to be limited by body and mind, that is Ajnaanam. If we are seeing many things separate from us and if we are associating ourselves to various things because of likes and dislikes, that is Ajnaanam. So, in short, whatever was explained as the vision of Mahatma is not present in us, that is Ajnaanam or ignorance.

What are the effects of ignorance?

The main effect of ignorance is the experience of sorrow. This ignorance will make one to have likes and dislikes and thereafter creating desires which gets converted into action. Because of Ajnaanam, this chain continues not only in the current birth but births thereafter. This birth and death cycle would continue as long as the person has Ajnaanam. We will see how ajnaanam leads to sorrow.

Ajnaanam has two powers, one is avaranam (veiling power) and other is vikshepam (projecting power). Because of the avarana Shakti or the veiling power, the Self is veiled and thereafter other things are revealed which is the vikshepa Shakti or projecting power. The projections are made very well that it makes everyone believe that these projects are real. Because of Ajnaanam, the body and mind are considered as the self. Since everything is seen as real, likes and dislikes are developed which then transforms into desires. These desires then get transformed into action to accomplish the desire. And the results thereof create more desires and more actions. This cycle continues on and on but all these are because of not knowing the Self which is the avarana Shakti of Ajnaana.

Sureshwaracharya in his Naishkarmya siddhi, starts of the work in analyzing what is the root cause of sorrows and suffering, finally says that ajnaanam or ignorance is the root cause of the sorrow. If the root is removed then everything gets removed.

*"aikaatmyaapratipattiryaasvaatmaanubhavasamshrayaa
Saavidhyasamsrterbeejamtannaashomuktiraatmanah*

Not knowing the Self is the cause of not experiencing the Self. That ignorance is the seed for the Samsara, removal of ignorance is liberation.

What are the ways to remove Ajnaanam?

As we saw above, Ajnaanam is not knowing the truth that we are the Self. The only way to remove Ajnaanam is through Jnaanam. When ajnaanam is removed through jnaanam, all sorrows will end and that is liberation (as we saw above through the sloka from Naishkarmya Siddhi). So the only requirement is to get rid of the ignorance and the person will be liberated. But being in ignorance how to get rid of ignorance? Suppose we are reading an English book and we come across a word we don't know and we want to know meaning of the word. At that point we are ignorant of the word and if we desire to know the meaning of the word we have to look for the source of knowledge that has the meaning of the word, which could be English dictionary or to someone who knows the meaning of the word. Once we know the meaning of the word we no longer are ignorant of the word, we become knowledgeable of the word. So in order to get rid of ignorance we have to seek a source of knowledge until the knowledge dawns in us.

If we review the process in knowing the meaning of the word, the first and foremost in the process is to know that there is ignorance of the word. If we think we have a little idea about the meaning of the word, we may not even seek to go to the source of knowledge if we think our idea is correct. In that case there is still ignorance even if the idea is indeed correct, because the idea is only vague and there is no conviction. So, ideally a person who knows that he is ignorant of the word, with the desires to know the meaning of the word, would seek the source of knowledge to get the knowledge of the word. Once he gets to know the meaning of the word from one of the sources of knowledge (English Dictionary or a person who knows it), he becomes knowledgeable of the word and the ignorance would go away. At that point, the knowledge is still not complete unless he knows how and when to use the word and really uses the word and gets it verified. Thus, the person who was ignorant of an English word gets to know the meaning of the word and usage of the word from a teacher or English dictionary, then puts that in use whenever possible, gets it verified from the expert to make sure the usage is right and that is when the knowledge of the word is complete. He would then be the source of knowledge for someone else for that word.

Likewise, we have to understand that we are in ignorance, the ignorance about our real nature of Self and all sorrows and sufferings are because of the ignorance that "I am that Self". When we understand the benefit that knowledge could offer, we would naturally develop a desire to gain the knowledge. When the desire to gain the knowledge comes in our mind, we would naturally look for the source of knowledge. There are not many ways to gain this Ultimate Knowledge of Self. This knowledge can be gained only through Scriptures or through the words of Mahatmas. The level of seeking would depend upon the intensity of desire to get the knowledge. If the intensity of desire to gain the knowledge is high, the level of seeking would also be high and vice versa. When we seek the Mahatma to gain the knowledge, without any preconceived notion, with the faith on the words of the Mahatma, we would be able to gain the Knowledge of Self through scriptures. It will not be just enough to gain the Knowledge from the scriptures, we have to own up the knowledge.

Here, in the case of Self-Knowledge, the usage and verification are subjective. The only way to know whether we are utilizing the knowledge correctly or not is to assess how happy we are and how much we are getting affected by the world. Even though Mahatmas can check the students, ultimately it depends on the student to know how peaceful and happy he feels before the knowledge and after gaining the knowledge. In the word meaning analogy we saw, the word is an object to be known, that object has a specific way to be used and hence can be verified with the dictionary or expert. But in the case of Self-Knowledge, it is knowledge about the subject, about the Self. So a person who had gained the knowledge, would know what is liberation and bondage and hence would be able to know for himself whether he is able to experience the benefit of the knowledge or not. He would seek no certificate or acknowledgement from anyone whether he is Jnani or not.

Q: *Everyone know themselves. How can it be said there is ignorance of oneself?*

A: It is true that everyone knows themselves. Everyone know clearly that they exist and everyone thinks they know who they are. But unfortunately, the knowledge about who they are is wrong. The jiva thinks himself to be limited by body-mind complex and that he is destined to experience happiness and sorrow. This is the wrong conclusion that Jiva makes about himself, which is contrary to what scriptures speak about the Jiva. Scriptures are the Ultimate Source of Knowledge which came from the Lord and hence the words in the scriptures are authoritative. This wrong conclusion that Jiva makes about himself is because of the ignorance of the fact which scriptures speak. The ignorance of oneself means ignorance of ones' real Self.

Q:*If something have to be known, that entity should be considered as object to be known. Are we objectifying the Self, which is subject itself?*

A: From the stand point of the Jiva who is desiring to gain the Knowledge of the Self, the real Self is an unknown. The experience in the realm of ignorance is that "I am not Brahman". So, from the standpoint of ignorance, Self is introduced as the object to be known. But when the Jiva realizes his own nature of Self through the study of scriptures, he would realize that what he was considered as himself is not real Self and realizes his real Self. Therefore, when there is ignorance Self can be considered as the object until realization dawns. Ultimately Brahman alone exists, but until this is realized Brahman is the goal and hence can be consider as the object to be known.

What are the benefits of getting rid of ignorance?

As mentioned before, when ignorance is gone, it means that the person has realized his own nature of Self. When the ignorance is gone, when the person realizes his own nature of Self all sorrows go away and ever enjoys the Joy of Self. Although we say that the person after realization will be ever happy, realization more importantly puts an end to all sorrows and suffering.

Mundaka Upanishad says

Sayo ha vaiatparamam brahma vedaBrahmaivabhavatinaasyaabrahmavitkulebhavati|

Taratishokamtaratipaapmaanamguhaagranthibhyovimuktoamrtobhavati||

Anyone who knows that Supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed. In his line is not born anyone who does not know Brahman. He overcomes grief, and rises above aberrations; and becoming freed from the knots of the heart, he attains immortality.

Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita,

Yadgatvananivartantetadaamparamam mama

That is My supreme Abode, reaching which they do not return.

Thus the end of the analysis of Ajnaanam.

Vichaara Nirupanam

ॐ विचार निरूपणं

om vicāra nirūpaṇam

स्वात्मभावना दृश्यवर्जिता ।

सा विचारणा मोक्षदायिका ॥१॥

svātmabhāvanā drśyavarjitā
sā vicāraṇā mokṣadāyikā||1||

1. Notion of oneself as devoid of any duality, that is enquiry and bestower of moksha (liberation).

नाहमेव लोकस्य मायिकम् ।

दृक्स्वरूपतो चित्स्वरूपतः ॥२॥

nāhameva lokasya māyikam
dṛkṣvarūpato citsvarūpataḥ||2||

2. I am not of the world for it is illusory in nature; and I am of the nature of Subject or Drik and Consciousness or Chit.

देहप्राणधी जीवसंज्ञकाः ।

नाहमात्मरूपो हि चिन्मयः ॥३॥

dehaprāṇadhī jīvasaññakāḥ
nāhamātmārūpo hi cinmayāḥ||3||

3. The various entities of body, praana, intellect, jeeva etc. are not me as I am full of Consciousness and of the nature of Self.

चित्स्वरूपकः सत्स्वरूपकः ।

नन्दरूपकोऽहन्तु निर्गुणः ॥४ ॥

citsvarūpakah satsvarūpakah |
nandarūpako'hantu nirguṇah ||4||

4. (But) I am of the nature Consciousness, Existence and Bliss due to being quality-less or attributeless.

ब्रह्मनामको लोकपालकः ।

रूपतो भिदा नास्ति मे सदा ॥५ ॥

brahmanāmakō lokapālakah |
rūpato bhidā nāsti me sadā ||5||

5. That controller of the entire world and named as Brahman is not different from me in nature at all times (I am Brahman at all times).

यस्यभावना भेदवर्जिता ।

तस्यदुःखभावस्तु नास्ति वै ॥६ ॥

yasyabhāvanā bhedavarjitā |
tasyaduḥkhabhāvastu nāsti vai ||6||

6. One whose notion or mind is devoid of any duality, his notion of sorrow (experience of sorrow) is never there definitely (as sorrow arises out of duality alone).

चिन्तनं यदा निष्ठितं तदा ।

मुक्तपुरुषः नन्दत्येव हि ॥७ ॥

cintanaṁ yadā niṣṭhitaṁ tadā |
muktapūruṣaḥ nandatyeva hi ||7||

7. When thinking is ever focused (on non-duality), then such a person is realized and ever rejoices definitely.

ब्रह्मणास्थितिः यस्यचेतसा ।

नन्दनन्दनो नन्दनन्दनः ॥८॥

brahmaṇāsthitiḥ yasyacetasā |
nandanandano nandanandanaḥ ||8||

8. One whose mind is ever abiding as Brahman, such a person is ever blissful; such a person is ever blissful.

Hastamalaka Panchakam

१८-९-२०१२ - ॐ शंकरपञ्चकम्

18-9-2012 - om śaṅkarapañcakam

यस्मान्निखिलविश्वं च सततं भाति सत्यं हि ।

तस्मै नमो ममात्मानं शंकरं ज्ञानसंपूर्णम् ॥१॥

yasmānīkhilaviśvaṁ ca satataṁ bhāti satyaṁ hi |
tasmai namo mamātmānaṁ śaṅkaraṁ jñānasampūrṇam ||1||

1. Due to whom the entire world constantly shines as if true, unto him prostrations who is my own Self, Sankara and full in knowledge.

वेदान्तभाष्यकारन्तं वेदवाक्यनद्यां भूयो यः ।

सृष्ट्वानुग्रहवर्षान्च ददाति यो नमस्कुर्याम् ॥२॥

vedāntabhāṣyakāraṅtaṁ vedavākyaṇadyāṁ bhūyo yaḥ |
sṛṣṭvānugrahavarṣāṅca dadāti yo namaskuryām ||2||

2. Prostrations to one who writes bhashyas on Vedanta, who again created the river of sentences of Vedas and blessed us through showering (to that Sankara).

अज्ञानध्वान्तदीपानां तेजोरूपकसूर्यन्तम् ।

भूयो भूयो नमस्कारः विश्वान्धकारज्ञानं च ॥३॥

ajñānadhvāntadīpānāṁ tejorūpakasūryantaṁ |
bhūyo bhūyo namaskāraḥ viśvāndhakārajñānaṁ ca ||3||

3. Among the lamps which destroy or remove ignorance, one who is like the glorious Sun, unto that knowledge which removes ignorance of the world my prostrations again and again.

विरुद्धानेकशास्त्राणां एकब्रह्मैवभावनच ।

द्वितीयस्यनिराकारं येनकृतं शंकरस्स्वात्मा ॥४ ॥

viruddhānekaśāstrāṇām ekabrahmaivabhāvanca |
dvitīyasyanirākāraṁ yenaḥkṛtaṁ śaṅkarassvātmā ||4||

4. One who gave the notion of one Brahman alone existing in the different scriptures that are opposing each other and negated any duality, that is Sankara, my own Self.

वन्देहं शिरसा हृद्या प्रियो मानवदेवानाम् ।

यो मामक प्रियोत्तुंगः शंकर स तु ब्रह्मैव ॥५ ॥

vandehaṁ śirasā hr̥dyā priyo mānavadevānām |
yo māmaka priyottuṅgaḥ śaṅkara sa tu brahmaiva ||5||

5. I prostrate through head and heart that Sankara who is dear to humans and gods; who is the peak of all dear people to me, that Sankara is definitely Brahman alone.

Anukramaanika Nirdesham

1. Editorial – a general message
2. Vichaara Siddhi – an analysis of vichaara or self-enquiry.
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. Upaadhi Dhyotanam – a multi-part series with slokas explaining madhvacharya's upaadhi khandanam and answering of the same.
5. Vedanta Shabda Vicharanam – thorough analysis of one word of Vedanta.
6. Vichaara Nirupanam - explanation of the vichaara or self-enquiry. This section is dedicated to original work written but not explained in depth in order to help sadhakas in reflection of the concepts themselves.
7. Sankara Panchakam – five slokas as an offering unto Sankara. This section is dedication to small offering to great acharyas of the past.

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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