

Vedanta Madhuryam

Salutations to all.

Generally we learn a lot in our lives whether it be in the field of science or mathematics or any other worldly field. But amidst all these learning we find that there is no humility gained. Everybody feel proud to talk about their own learning or achievements in life. The more a person learns, the more proud he and others around him feel. This bad state of affairs is found not just in worldly places but even in missions.

Few months ago, there was a program happening in one of the institutes of the Chinmaya Mission. There was a very big photo of Chinmaya kept behind the stage and a lot of speakers were talking about themselves and others; they were talking about their own and others achievements as if they have done something great in life. Unfortunately this being an educational institution, students were exposed to such egoistic behavior from the management and other folks.

And those who were making egoistic statements were considered as being humble by others around them. This is the perfect kali yuga that we find ourselves in. Though having learnt some scriptures, being a little bit religious and being part of a spiritual organization which was started by a great realized master and continued by another great master who is the embodiment of humility and simplicity we find egoistic people boasting about themselves and others.

Why is it that today we find people being egoistic about their achievements?

We can say that this is the way of the world today. There is no prize or gift for talent but only demonstration of talents – needless to say demonstration can always be faked by smart people. Thus from child education itself competition is encouraged – just by terming competition as constructive doesn't make it good for the society. We only find everybody comparing with each other and thereby evoking emotions of jealousy, pride etc.

As the saying goes, knowledge leads to humility. True knowledge alone will lead to humility. Thus today we find those who are over-qualified with respect to knowledge on paper but not having true knowledge and therefore totally being egoistic whereas those poor people who are not at all learned are humble to the peak.

Those who are running organizations are always sad about the less percentage of profit they are getting – they are always discontent with the way organization is running, in one or the other way. But others who are poor and living a day-to-day life are very happy and with a blissful face alone.

There is a road-side tea shop near our house – when we go there to have coffee, we find how the person smilingly provides us with coffee. Throughout the time he is working, he is always smiling and calm. Compare this with the great professionals of today who are anything but smiling and calm – always they are in a state of anger (or any other emotion than happiness) and ever tensed in one or the other way.

True knowledge and real humility is only found in a Brahmana. Brahmana is not a person born of the caste of Brahmins but a person who has realized Brahman (who knows Brahman). Such a Brahmana through seeing the entire world as Brahman will ever feel humble. The various other emotions of jealousy, pride etc. will not affect the person even a little.

Ever abiding in bliss, a brahmana will accept people in the way they are. Nobody is higher or lower – everybody is seen in their own perspectives. We generally think we are something or somebody great and hence we lack humility. As AMMA says when we look ourselves from the sky we will find as to how insignificant we are (we are just a tiny bit in the entire world). Moreover everything has its place in the world – nothing is more or less significant from another thing. The door mat is as important as the kitchen as the bedroom – each has their purpose but each is important and essential for life itself. When this is the case, then how can we say I am more significant than others?

It is through knowledge of Brahman that we truly become humble and see everything as itself. And knowledge of Brahman can only be gained through Vedanta as Vedanta is the only source of Brahman. Though we may think we know God from different works of acharyas and through other means, such knowledge isn't perfect or complete. True and complete knowledge of Brahman is only through learning of Vedanta in the systematic and right way.

The purpose of this magazine is to learn Vedanta in the systematic and right way. This is possible easily if we are able to develop passion and attraction towards Vedanta. That which

we like a lot, we will learn it more and more – and we will try to implement it more and more. Thus what is required for a sadhaka is to understand the beauty of Vedanta – the more this happens, the more the sadhaka will like and learn Vedanta.

We can ask as to what is the benefit of learning Vedanta and realizing Brahman?

The benefit for oneself is that we will be able to achieve the ultimate goal of life as complete cessation of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss. The benefit for others is that such a blissful person will be spreading bliss to the entire world; and such a person by being the most humble person in the entire world, will be spreading good virtues as well to the entire world. Thus such a person will eventually bring about change to the entire world.

The ultimate goal of life for each and every person in the world is ever rejoicing in bliss. This is possible only through Vedanta and only when we are realized will we be able to spread bliss to the entire world as well. Thus a sadhaka should always strive to learn and implement Vedanta.

Though many people consider Vedanta as very tough to implement, it is very easy indeed to implement Vedanta as implementation is as simple as just remembering that one entity of Brahman alone exists here. Irrespective of whether the world exists or appears as existing, Brahman as the cause-substratum of the entire world alone exists at all times. Remembrance of this truth at all times is implementation of Vedanta. In order to implement this one may have to go through multiple iterations of learning and understanding but once a person starts implementing (even if little bit) Vedanta then he will find it irresistible as it will slowly get rid of sorrow and make one rejoice in bliss. It is the nature of human beings to get attracted and attached to that which leads to happiness. If even worldly temporary happiness itself makes one run behind it continuously so what to say about the bliss of Brahman? Brahman's bliss will therefore attract sadhakas more and more.

If this is the case then why aren't there many ardent sadhakas?

That is the way of the life. Implementation of Vedanta though is simple, is not that very simple – since worldly happiness is very simple and we are always used to enjoying worldly happiness therefore it is more appealing than going behind implementation of Vedanta (and eternal bliss).

Fools who aren't able to go behind eternal bliss of Brahman will go around in circles in the cycle of birth and death experiencing nothing but sorrow and sorrow alone. Even temporary happiness is sorrowful alone – therefore wise people will start seeking Brahman through Vedanta; thereby they will strive to realize Brahman and ever rejoice in bliss here itself.

May we all strive to learn the system of Vedanta so that through implementation of Vedanta in day-to-day life 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 NAMA SHIVAYA

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Kaarana Siddhi

The world – an analysis

The world that we currently experience is to be analyzed thoroughly in order to gain total or complete knowledge of it. Unless we gain knowledge of the world, it is not possible to put an end to all desires. Hence we find in the Upanishads, the question raised by the disciple to the Guru is to teach about that by knowing which everything becomes known – that one entity which if known leads to knowledge of everything (the entire world). This knowledge of the entire world has been analyzed since time immemorial by the ancient rishis as well as scientists too.

While the rishis have been successful in their analysis of the world, the scientists have had only failures. Scientists even now are trying to analyze the world completely. Day by day analysis gets changed though this change is called refining of concepts. Such changing concepts only show that there is no clarity of knowledge about the world. The more and more science analyzes the world, there is more and more uncertainty. The more and more concepts are revealed, there are much more concepts that are veiled or unknown. Thus all in all, the only way science has ever defined the world is that it is constantly changing. This knowledge doesn't require much analysis at all as direct experience shows each and every person in the world that the world is constantly changing. We don't have to be told that the atoms of a body or any item is constantly changing as changes are perceived directly or indirectly in any item.

Vedantic seers, contrary to science, analyzed the world not from the perspective of the world but through analysis of its cause. As is the cause, so is the effect. Even as objects made of mud like pot, wall etc. have characteristics of mud, similarly if we are to analyze the world we have to find out its cause. Though science also has tried to find out the cause of the world, it has also been a failure alone. Initially the big bang theory was considered the creation theory of the world. Later it became the contraction theory and later expansion theory. Now it is back to the big bang theory.

Vedanta first defines the world as temporary and sorrowful. Without this simple analysis of the world, analysis of its cause will also be futile. That which is changeless doesn't require any substratum or even a cause.

The world would be a cause itself causing many objects and people if not for its changing nature. Anything that is constantly changing cannot exist without a changeless substratum. The changeless substratum of the changing world is the cause of the world.

Causation theories

Even as there are many theories related to the causation of the world from the perspective of science, similarly there are many causation theories accepted by different systems of philosophy (darshanas). But all such causation theories can be broadly split into two – one is called aarambha vaada (theory of new creation) and second is parinaama vaada (theory of modification).

Aarambha vaada says that the world is newly created and it didn't exist before creation. On the contrary, parinaama vaada says that the world which existed in causal state before creation got modified into the world that we perceive now. Thus the cause got modified into the effect – needless to say such modification is one-directional and the effect cannot be converted back into the cause.

Example of aarambha vaada is a pot newly created and of parinaama vaada is milk getting converted into curd.

Before we analyze both of these theories for logical feasibility, it is essential to understand the two types of causes, both of which are essential in order for an effect to come into existence.

Two causes – material and efficient

Any effect to come into existence requires a material cause and an efficient cause. Material cause is the material for the effect and it is insentient in nature. No insentient entity can be converted into another entity without the influence of a sentient entity (all actions are possible only due to a sentient entity). The sentient entity which helps in the material cause leading to the effect is the efficient cause.

Taking the simple example of pot created out of mud, mud is the material cause and the potter is the efficient cause. Mud and potter are both required in order to create a pot out of mud. The sentient potter through other equipments or instruments creates a pot out of the material cause of mud.

With respect to the world as well we need a material cause and an efficient cause. Aarambha vaada says that efficient cause of Ishwara creates the world out of the materials of atoms or anus which are different or distinct from himself. Parinaama vaada says that Ishwara himself gets transformed into the world.

Both these theories have logical faults. Aarambha vaada cannot be true as scriptures, logic and experience show clearly that before creation only Ishwara existed. Thus there existed nothing different or apart from Ishwara. Therefore Ishwara creating the world out of something different from himself cannot be true. Parinaama vaada cannot be true as Ishwara if changing would become unreal in nature – moreover once Ishwara changes into the world, Ishwara would cease to exist; if this is the case, then who controls the world? The scriptures that proclaim that Ishwara controls the world will also be untrue. Thus both aarambha and parinaama vaada cannot be true.

Now let's analyze the scriptural view of creation – scriptures say that before creation Ishwara alone existed, one without a second. And this entire creation is created out of Ishwara's desire or will. Ishwara himself became the entire world – as he pervades the entire world in and out.

Does this theory that Ishwara himself became the entire world stand logic and experience? Yes, it does as Ishwara is of the nature of Existence. The entire world exists at all times therefore Ishwara as existence pervades the entire world. We do experience one person becoming the entire world in the case of dream.

When we go to sleep, we see an entire dream world. In the dream world, there are objects and people. Activities happen like in the waking state. Everything appears very real as well. Differences or duality appears very real. But the moment we wake up from the dream, we realize that it was just a dream and nothing really existed. Though everything appears as existing in the dream state, after waking up the realization dawns that the entire dream world was nothing but the dreamer alone. One dreamer became the entire dream world. In the same way, one Ishwara appears as the entire waking world we experience now.

That Ishwara alone existed before creation is proven through the world being temporary and constantly changing in nature. That which constantly changes is just an illusion in its

changeless substratum even as a variable is just an illusion in the substratum of constant. Thus the world is just an illusion in Ishwara and before its creation, only Ishwara existed.

That Ishwara thus is the cause of the entire world. For Ishwara to be the cause of the world, Ishwara has to always exist and therefore is of the nature of Existence and Consciousness (as Consciousness is the light that makes everything existing in nature). That which exists at all times is unlimited and therefore blissful in nature. Thus Ishwara's nature is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Such an Ishwara is one without a second – nothing similar or different or internal to Ishwara exists. There cannot be two existences as then both will illumine each other and self-illuminating nature of existence will go for a toss. Thus there is nothing similar to Ishwara. There is nothing dissimilar to Ishwara as well because creation or duality is an illusion in Ishwara. There cannot be anything internal to Ishwara as well because Ishwara would be non-eternal if having parts (that which has parts is non-eternal as changing in nature and undergoing birth and death).

Ishwara – cause of the world

Through scriptures, logic and experience it is proven that Ishwara is the cause of the world that we currently experience. Now the question comes as to whether Ishwara is the material cause or the efficient cause or both?

Since Ishwara alone exists therefore Ishwara has to be both the material and the efficient cause. Being Consciousness in nature, Ishwara is the efficient cause. But not only this, Ishwara himself becomes the entire world thus Ishwara is also the material cause of the world (there is no material apart from Ishwara for the world to be created).

Thus Ishwara is the abhinna nimitta upaadaana kaarana of the world (indifferent efficient and material cause of the world). The examples that we have seen earlier of effects being created, the two causes of material and efficient were different from one another. But here we find both the causes being the same. Is this possible? The scriptures say that it is possible and we see example of the same in the word itself. The example is a spider weaving a web. The web is the effect created out of the cause of the spider. Spider is both the efficient and the material cause of the web. In the same way, Ishwara is both the material and the efficient cause of the world.

Now, if Ishwara is the cause of the world so what happens to Ishwara when the world is created? Does Ishwara himself change into the world, is it full change or partial change? If it is answered that Ishwara remains unaffected and yet one part of his gets converted into the world, even like the spider, then Ishwara would become non-eternal (like the spider) due to having parts.

It cannot be answered that Ishwara has two components of sentient and insentient as then both cannot co-exist. Apart from the fact that Ishwara would then be non-eternal due to having parts, these two components which are contrary to each other will negate or nullify each other. Thus there is nothing existing in Ishwara for the world to be created.

If it is argued, as the scriptures say, that Ishwara desired or willed or thought that let me multiply then such desires show that Ishwara is imperfect or incomplete. This would mean that Ishwara is not blissful in nature. This would also mean that Ishwara is non-eternal for that which is eternal will be blissful (unlimited).

If this is the case, Vedanta answers this by saying that there is no real world created at all. Ishwara's desire signifies the effect of his power of Maya that makes the world appear as if real. Such desire is definitely possible for Ishwara as he is all-knowing with respect to the world.

Before more arguments are raised, it is important to understand the two perspectives of empirical and ultimate (vyaavahaarika and paaramaarthika).

Empirical perspective is with respect to the external world that we currently perceive and ultimate perspective is from the perspective of Ishwara or Brahman (beyond the world). Since these two are different perspectives, they have validity in their own areas. Though ultimately one Ishwara or Brahman alone exists, the world can appear as existing in this Brahman. Ultimate perspective thus is that there is no world at all created as only Brahman exists at all times.

That world which exists after creation and before destruction is as good as not existing at all – its existence cannot really proven. Therefore ultimately only Brahman exists. But empirically the world when it is experience, does exist or appear as existing. It is in this

perspective that we have to analyze the creation of the world and explain the world in its entirety.

Taking the example of dream, the dream world ultimately doesn't exist at all but when we experience it, it does appear as existing and is just an illusion in the dreamer. In the same way, there is no world as only Brahman exists but when the world appears as existing then it is caused by Brahman and exists in Brahman.

The moment we accept the world's existence, that very moment the power of Maya of Ishwara comes into existence. It is this power of Maya that causes the world along with the sentience of Ishwara or Brahman. Maya uses the trinity of desha, kala and vishaya (space, time and causation) in order to make the dual world appear very real (and existing in nature).

But even though the world is caused out of Ishwara, it is not really created like in the aarambha vaada or parinaama vaada. But it just appears in Ishwara even as the dream world appears in the dreamer (the dreamer appears as the dream world). This appearance of the world in Ishwara is called vivarta vaada where one entity appears as non-existent entity (superimposition). The various examples used for vivarta vaada is snake appearing in rope, water in desert and the dream world in the dreamer.

Vivarta vaada means that in the substratum of Brahman or Ishwara, the world appears as real. Thus Ishwara is not a mere cause of the world but the cause-substratum of the world. Thus the statements of scriptures that Ishwara pervade the entire world in and out is valid (as any substratum pervades which appears in it). And Ishwara can desire or will or think and create the world as creation itself isn't real but just an appearance in Ishwara.

The statements of scriptures that Ishwara willed or desired and created the world is just for those sadhakas who perceive the world – empirical perspective alone. Such views are valid only as long as we see the world and require an answer for the world.

The moment we reach from the world to the cause-substratum of Ishwara, that very moment the world ceases to exist. Ishwara of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss cannot make appear the world of the nature of temporary and sorrowful in him as both are contrary in nature.

It cannot be argued that even as darkness which cannot be proven but experienced does exist, similarly the world also can exist. Such existence will be temporary or an illusion alone as once light dawns, darkness vanishes and the realization dawns that there never was any darkness at all. Similarly the darkness of ignorance (of the truth that one Ishwara or Brahman alone exists) vanishes the moment knowledge of Ishwara as found in the scriptures is gained.

It cannot be argued that scriptures only talk about the creation of the world and not that the world doesn't exist – for the scriptures clearly say that there is no duality at all here and whoever sees duality as if existing, will go from death to death (will experience only sorrow). A person who remembers the truth that one Ishwara alone exists doesn't see any duality at all as he sees the entire world as Ishwara – even as the entire dream world is one dreamer alone, similarly this entire world is one Ishwara or Brahman alone.

Vivarta and ajaati vaada

Empirically the world is a superimposition on its substratum of Ishwara and ultimately the world is not at all created. Superimposition theory is called vivarta vaada and world not at all created is called ajaati vaada. Vivarta is empirically valid (and only for initial sadhakas who want explanation about the world), ultimately ajaati vaada alone is valid as there is no world at all created.

Therefore it goes without saying that kaaranatva or being the cause (cause-hood) of Ishwara or Brahman is also just an illusion alone as there is no real effect created out of Ishwara.

The dreamer is considered as the cause of the dream world as long as we accept the dream world to be real. The moment we realize that there is no dream world at all created the dreamer ceases to be the cause of the dream world. This doesn't mean that the dreamer himself doesn't exist – the dreamer exists but his cause-hood is invalid or not present.

Similarly empirically Ishwara is the abhinna nimitta upaadaana kaarana of the world but ultimately Ishwara is not the cause of the world as the world itself doesn't exist.

Kaarana – pervades the kaarya

As has been mentioned earlier, any cause pervades its effect even as the dreamer pervades the entire dream world. Thus the cause of Ishwara pervades the entire effect of the world. Thus whatever we see is pervaded in and out by Ishwara – or in other or simpler words, the entire world is Ishwara alone.

Today we find scientists and even religious people trying to find out where Ishwara is. Their search has been in vain as whatever is present is Ishwara alone. Though Ishwara is present as the entire world he should be realized through getting rid of duality or dual notions and through meditation or contemplation in one's own heart. Ishwara is one's own very nature of Consciousness. Once we go deep into ourselves, then we will be able to see Ishwara as pervading the entire world. Removing all duality from the world, we will be able to perceive Ishwara as the essence or substratum of the entire world.

Ancient seers were able to see the entire world of Ishwara and hence everything, both sentient and insentient, was worshipped (as Ishwara) and seen equally with everything else. Today we are in a world where competition qualified as constructive (that which helps to grow) is encouraged right from school itself. This is harmful for everybody as in this process of differentiation we are forgetting and ignoring the non-dual essence of Ishwara. Then we will just be searching here and there for the cause of the world – that cause which is changeless and blissful in nature.

Rather than realizing blissful Ishwara here and now itself, we will experience only sorrow constantly. Giving up this life in sorrow, we will experience sorrow alone in the next births itself. Thus life becomes filled in and out with sorrow – all because of forgetting the non-dual essence of Ishwara as pervading the entire world.

Thus sadhakas should strive to see this entire world as non-dual Ishwara so that here and now itself they will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

May we all strive to remember that the entire world is nothing but Ishwara alone, as no real world is created, so that we will be able to through perceiving oneness (or non-duality) get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Chathussutra Prakaashah

Shareeraka Nyaaya Sangraha

Fourth Sutra

शास्त्रयोनित्वात् ।

śāstrayonitvāt

Because shastras are the source (of Brahman).

We saw a recap of the three sutras previously now let us get into the words of Prakashatman on the fourth sutra.

Though there is usage or utility for worldly words due to being in compliance with other pramaanas or means of knowledge, such purport is absent in the case of external objects for vedic statements or words; though objects of the world's validity with respect to other pramanas is there, still in the objects there is impossibility of praamaanya or validity with respect to discussion or pro-con debates; due to division of vidhi or injunction itself the objects of the world are established; due to words having capability to objectify those which are effects, therefore in Brahman which is devoid of effects there is no validity of Vedantas.

Vedanta – only proof and means of Brahman

The one and only proof for Brahman is Vedanta. Though Brahman is our very nature of Consciousness, still the only way to realize Brahman is through Vedanta. This is the traditional view of Vedanta which is being attacked here by the purvapakshin.

The entire Brahma Sutras are written in order to harmonize the entire Vedanta and to show that Vedanta is the only means to Brahman.

There are many so-called realized masters who proclaim various ways to realization of Brahman. Such views are also accepted widely by many people in the world as such means appear much easier than learning and implementing Vedanta. Firstly majority of people are unaware of the language of Sanskrit. Secondly even those who are aware of Sanskrit are unaware of fundamental concepts of Vedanta and hence though grammatically they can interpret Vedanta they cannot understand anything in Vedanta. Such people today run around the entire world in the name of propagation of Sanskrit and in particular spoken

Sanskrit. What can Sanskrit do other than give us a means to communicate? Is the language of Gods only meant to communicate with each other? There will always be better ways created for communication. Then what is the main purpose of Sanskrit? Sanskrit is the language in which Vedanta is written therefore a basic understanding of Sanskrit is essential in order to understand Vedanta. Vedanta or scriptures are inevitable for a sadhaka who wants eternal bliss here and now itself. Learning Sanskrit is very good but unless it is used to learn and implement Vedanta it is as futile as having an ATM card but not using it to withdraw money.

There are many others who go around propounding that just analyzing "Who am I" or just being still is the means to moksha and is moksha. Yes this might be the case but such people are far from the truth. These people also claim to be followers of the great Ramana Maharshi. Ramana Maharshi was a true Vedantin to the core and he didn't preach mere "Who am I" meditation or enquiry – instead his enquiry was to negate whatever is not I and then abide as the I that remains behind after negation. This is the technique of neti neti as found in the scriptures. Ramana Maharshi himself used to quote from the scriptures and wrote many works that are core Vedanta and learnt as Vedantic texts by various missions (that focus only on Vedantic texts). Thus Maharshi was a follower of Vedanta and emphasized on Vedanta as well. Those who claim to be followers of Maharshi and walk around saying that nothing is needed to be done are totally mistaken and they will not only be deluded themselves, they will delude others as well into state of total sorrow and misery.

There are others who think that merely doing action or worshipping Ishwara is enough for moksha. That karma will not lead to moksha has been clearly propounded in the scriptures including Gita. Bhakti when it is towards that Ishwara who pervades the entire world will eventually make us learn the scriptures and implement it in our lives. Hence Narada says that there is no lack of knowledge of Ishwara's glory in bhakti – knowledge of Ishwara's glory is knowledge of the scriptures as scriptures are the place where Ishwara's glories are being extolled.

Sadhakas who want to attain the goal of moksha should always remember that the one and only way to moksha is through Vedanta (learning, understanding and implementation of Vedanta).

Purvapakshin - Vedic statements – not proof for any objects

Worldly words are proofs for objects of the world as they are supported by other pramaanas like direct perception, inference etc. And such worldly words are valid from worldly perspective – therefore it has a purport with respect to people. But this isn't the case with vedic statements. Vedic statements aren't valid with respect to objects – any objects cannot be proven just by the Vedas. Such proof has to be corroborated by other pramaanas which means that Vedas aren't really the proof to them. Moreover ultimately Vedas negate the entire world, therefore what proof can they have with any objects? Therefore they are invalid means of knowledge for objects.

If it be argued that discussions as found in the Vedas can be proofs for validity of objects – this isn't the case. Any amount of discussion will not have any validity as it is just discussion – no conclusion can arise out of discussion and even if any accepted conclusion (accepted to parties discussion) is arrived at, it will not be valid means as it can be negated or contradicted at a later time when discussion happens again between same people or different people.

Taking a simple example – if the valid means of a chair is arrived through discussion or debate, it wouldn't be valid as the discussion might end with the conclusion that there is no chair present (but really chair is present). Any discussion or debate isn't the way to prove things. Hence Katha Upanishad says that the Self or Brahman is beyond all logic – logic given by one person can be contradicted or over-turned by another person who is more logical or has a sharper intellect than this person. Since ages we have found that scientists have been constantly disproving one another – first the world was flat, then it was round and now it is spherical (or maybe something else).

Thus using Vedas or considering Vedas as the proof for objects of the world isn't right. Such validity which is contradicted very soon isn't valid at all and therefore we can conclude that Vedanta or Vedas have apramaanya with respect to objects.

Purvapakshin - Brahman – object to be known

Since Brahman is to be known therefore it is an object. Since it has already been proven that Vedas are not proofs for objects, therefore it stands that Brahman isn't proven through Vedanta.

When there is no valid means of Brahman, it means that such an entity doesn't really exist. And even if the Vedas are all-knowing, still they aren't proofs for Brahman as Brahman as an object cannot be explained or objectified or proven through the Vedas.

Since Brahman isn't proven through scriptures, which are the only means for Brahman, therefore there is nothing called Brahman. Therefore enquiry into Brahman isn't possible. This means that the entire system of Vedanta falls apart.

Purvapakshin – through vidhi itself objects are proven

Objects are to be proven through the scriptures if there are no other means to know them. But objects are known through vidhi or injunctions as found in the scriptures. Thus objects which are proven, need not be proven through Vedanta.

The contention of Vedantins is that Vedanta is the only means to know the entire world and Brahman as the source-substratum of the world. But this contention falls apart since there are other means to know objects of the world. Thus knowledge of Brahman (or objects) through Vedas or Vedanta isn't valid or isn't required. Again we will come to the conclusion that the system of Vedanta will fall apart (as Vedanta says that Brahman is known only through Vedanta).

Purvapakshin – objects that are known through any means are effects

When we observe the entire world we find that there are two types of entities – one those which are kaaranas or causes and two those which are kaaryas or effects. There can be other categories too – that of an entity being both caused and causing other effects as well.

Taking a simple example, pot is created from mud. Pot is thus an effect of the cause of mud. Without the cause effect cannot be created (or produced). It is well known thus that cause pervades the effect and effect is just name-form in cause like pot is just name-form in mud (like other objects of mud of wall etc. are also name-form in mud).

Brahman is the cause of the effect of the world. The entire world is thus caused out of one Brahman which is one without a second and of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Brahman has already been proven as the cause-substratum of the world (as the world comes from Brahman, exists in Brahman and merges unto Brahman after its destruction).

Knowledge of objects is possible only if the objects are effects. Cause cannot be known but only inferred through effects. Thus knowledge through words is not possible for any cause. Thus Brahman cannot be known through words as Brahman is a cause (not an effect). Vedas or Vedanta also thus cannot give validity to Brahman as Brahman is a cause and therefore cannot be known through words.

Purvapakshin – Brahman cannot be known through Vedas or Vedanta

As has been proven through above logic Brahman cannot be known through Vedas or Vedanta. Vedantins say that Vedanta is the only means to know Brahman and knowledge of Brahman is that which will put an end to all sorrows and sufferings. But this is possible only if Vedanta is a valid means for knowing Brahman.

But since Brahman is not proven through Vedanta, therefore there is no entity of Brahman. Even if such an entity of Brahman might exist, it cannot be proven to be valid and therefore all efforts to know Brahman will only lead to delusion rather than leading to removal of sorrow and rejoicing in bliss.

Sadhakas are constantly striving to get rid of all sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss. Since this is not possible through knowledge of Brahman therefore sadhakas shouldn't follow the path of Vedanta (which will only lead to the opposite of sorrows and being devoid of happiness or eternal bliss).

Purvapakshin – conclusion

Brahman is not known through Vedas or Vedanta due to the below reasons:

1. Vedic statements are no proof for objects as there is no utility for them and there is confusion with pros-cons due to discussions.
2. Vedas aren't proof for objects as objects are already proven through injunctions.
3. Since Brahman is a cause, therefore Brahman cannot be proven through Vedas as Vedas or words are only proofs for effects (and Brahman isn't an effect).

Siddhantin – Brahman as proven through Vedanta

As explained earlier, Brahman is proven only through Vedanta – not through any other means. It can be easily proven (as we will see next month) that Vedanta proves Brahman

but for now, we can say that Brahman can be proven through not just Vedanta but through logic and one's own direct experience.

Anything and everything in the world can be negated but not one's direct experience. It cannot be argued that experience of the world is contradicted by Vedanta which says that the world is just an illusion in Brahman as this direct experience of Brahman is never contradicted. Though person might refuse to accept Vedanta or anything that one sees as an object, the person can never refuse his own very existence – that Consciousness which pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist is Brahman and this Brahman is never disproven and ever exists at all times. Irrespective of where one is or what one is doing, this I ever exists. It is this I that remains changeless amidst the changes of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. Though the entire world might be disproven, this I that is directly experienced (and never un-experienced) cannot be disproven. Thus Brahman is proven through sruthi, yukti and anubhava. Therefore Brahman is to be known in order to attain the ultimate goal of life as eternal bliss.

If Brahman is directly experienced, then why learn the scriptures?

Scriptures are that which tell us how we can experience our own very nature of Brahman that has been forgotten. Currently when we say "I" it isn't Brahman but the limited I that is associated with the body-mind-intellect-objects-people. This wrong I or ego poses as the right I and therefore it is only through the scriptures that we realize that I am not the ego but unlimited Brahman.

Though through hearing from somebody itself we can learn our very nature of Brahman, still it is required to learn the scriptures as the scriptures alone take us to realization of Brahman in a systematic way that suits each and every person in the world. Unlike an individual whose opinion might only suit certain sets of people, scriptures suit the entire world itself. Moreover scriptures have stood the test of time and have been verified by many masters in the past.

Though many think that the scriptures are tough to master, this isn't the case. Anything that is unknown is obviously tough to master but once we start learning the same, we will find that it is very easy indeed to master. Sadhakas should thus, remembering that anything and everything is tough to master, start learning the scriptures. This would slowly

and eventually take them to the state of eternal bliss in realization and abidance in Brahman at all times. Thereafter such a sadhaka will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

We will see siddhantins reply in the next magazine.

May we all strive to gain knowledge of Brahman through the scriptures so that we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and through realization of Brahman ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Upaadhi Dhyotanam

Recap

Madhva says in the very first sloka of Upaadhi Khandanam that he prostrates Vishnu with all good qualities and devoid of all bad qualities. Such a Vishnu is Brahman as propounded in the scriptures. Vishnu or Brahman isn't just without form and qualities, untainted or unaffected as such an Ishwara serves no purpose for a sadhak and moreover it also goes against the shaastras itself (which says that Ishwara is to be thought about, Ishwara performs the activities of sristi, sthith and laya etc.

We saw Upaadhi Dhyotanam starting with the author saying that whatever refutation Madhva has done through his own of Upaadhi Khandanam on the concepts of Upaadhi of Advaita Vedanta, that is being answered and only through the grace of Sankara. This means that whatever need be said about Advaita Vedanta has already been said by Sankara in his works. Nothing else need be mentioned.

If Sankara has said everything that needs to be said, then why arguments are raised by Madhva (and others)?

The author said in the second sloka that in that Brahman which is beyond all doubts and confusions, doubts and confusions are created as a result of ignorance. The moment a person fails to acknowledge the ever-present Conscious Brahman that pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist then that very moment ignorance creates delusions in the form of "I am the body, I am different from the world" etc. All arguments raised by later acharyas (as well as ancient acharyas too) are nothing but misunderstanding or improper understanding of the tenets of Advaita Vedanta.

When a person understands the concepts of Advaita Vedanta properly then there is no scope for doubts at all. Such a person will also be able to find that Advaita Vedanta is the only system that stands true to the scriptures (the diverse and contrary statements of the scriptures).

Any system starts with Ishwara or one who is responsible for the creation, protection and destruction of the world. Until this Ishwara is properly defined, all other theories will fall apart. Hence Madhva and others attack the non-dual quality-less Ishwara because the moment this Ishwara falls apart, the system itself falls apart (needless to say, as we will

see, even considering Ishwara as non-dual and quality-less as per Advaita Vedanta is a misunderstanding or improper understanding of Advaita).

Ishwara – as per Dvaita

We saw previously that Ishwara as per Dvaita Vedanta is filled with all good qualities and devoid of any bad qualities. Such an Ishwara is none other than Vishnu who abides in Vaikunta. It is this Vishnu alone who is propounded in the scriptures as Brahman. As we have seen earlier, moksha isn't realization of Brahman but realization of the truth that Vishnu alone is independent and therefore developing true devotion towards Vishnu (knowing we are dependent on Vishnu). This would make us rejoice in bliss – that bliss which is part of our nature. The bliss that one person experiences isn't the same as the bliss that another person experiences – each person experiences bliss based on his nature. Moksha or realization isn't realizing our very nature to be that of Brahman or Vishnu (as this is impossible – we are always different from Vishnu).

Dristi bheda – two perspectives of truth

As has been explained again and again previously, it is essential to understand the two different perspectives of truth or reality if we are to understand the diverse or contrary statements of the scriptures. There is no other way that the diverse statements of the scriptures can be harmonized. The two different perspectives are found in the scriptures, is logical and can be directly experienced in our day-to-day life.

Perspective changes everything. A person is walking on the road. He sees a ghost and immediately he gets scared. He runs away from the place and in this process falls into a ditch and dies. It may also happen that on the spot of seeing the ghost, he has an heart attack and dies. But a braver person would go near the ghost and then realize that it is just a post. The same post that doesn't scare a brave person but scares a normal person – what is the difference between these two people? Of course one is braver than the other. But what matters is the vision or perspective that both have. The brave person goes nearer and gets a different perspective than the other person who sees from far alone. When the perspective of the post changes, everything changes – even life and death depends on this perspective alone. This is something that we experience in our day-to-day life itself. There are many times we would get angry and shout at person without knowing the perspective clearly.

AMMA narrates a touching story to illustrate this. Once a person was driving in car and all of a sudden a big stone fell on his windshield which broke. He was raging in anger. Stopping the car, he stepped out to see as to who damaged the windshield. He found a young boy who started running when seen by him. He started running behind the boy, with a lot of rage. The boy kept on running and after a while, the boy stopped near a person who was lying on the ground (on the pavement). Stopping there and with tears in his eyes, the boy said to him that the person was his father, he had a heart attack and when he tried to stop any vehicles, none stopped. Therefore he threw the stone on the windshield to get his attention. Seeing the crying boy and his father unconscious on the ground, he immediately took them to the hospital. The doctors said to him that he had done a great deed indeed as a little delay would have killed the boy's father. Next he took care of the boy and ensured that the father returned back to normal health.

We find here that when the person didn't know the perspective of the boy, he was angry on the boy breaking his windshield but once he came to know the boy's perspective he not only forgot the windshield but helped the boy in all ways possible. Thus everything depends on the perspective.

A doctor who is in the operating theatre should have the perspective of the operation alone and not about problems at his house. Similarly an army general should have the perspective of family or love alone at home, not that of a general ruling his army. Wrong perspective leads to sorrow alone in one or the other way.

When worldly perspectives themselves lead to a lot of change in people (and the result for people), then what to talk about the two perspectives that are with respect to truth or reality?

Before understanding the two levels of reality, we can analyze this with the two levels of reality within the world itself. The world or waking world has lot of people and objects in it. Activities go on without any break (from one birth to another). But since all activities and experiences require energy, after a while we become tired. There needs to be relaxation which comes in the form of sleep. During sleep we experience the two states of dream and dreamless deep sleep. In dreamless deep sleep, everything is resting including the mind – thus experience of objects complete cease in this state. But in the dream state, we experience an entire dream world. The dream world appears very real while we experience

it. We even sleep inside the dream world – we perform all activities, earn money, live, beget children etc. But after a period of time, the dream ends and we wake up from it. After waking up, we realize that there never was any dream world and there never is any scope for dream world. Dream world was just an illusion in the dreamer.

Knowing that there is no dream world, we continue with activities in the waking world until again we are tired. We go to sleep and again we dream. Though we know that there is no dream world, we still dream again. But imagine that we are dreaming with the knowledge that there is no dream world – then we will not be affected by whatever happens in the dream world (while experiencing the dream world). If this knowledge that the dream world is just an illusion is not known in the dream world, then we will be affected by the dream world and activities in it.

Even though we may know that the dream world isn't real, still when we experience it it does exist (temporarily). It is only after waking up, that the dream world fully vanishes. Thus the reality level or perspective of dream is different from the waking world. Both cannot be linked with each other. What is valid in dream is invalid in waking but this doesn't mean that activities should be outright negated in dream. While in the dream state, everything is to be accepted (though as temporary) and after waking up alone we can say that there is no dream at all.

This perspective-analysis is with respect to dream and waking – while considering that waking is real. But when we compare dream and waking, we find that both are very similar. One vanishes in the other and other vanishes in the one. Both have everything changing in them. One moment things are there and the very next moment things vanish. And both of them are negated in the deep sleep state (where no world at all exists). Thus, though waking world appears as of a higher level of reality than dream, it is not ultimately real – for that which constantly changes cannot be real. That which constantly changes is subject to birth and death. The Lord says in Gita that real never ceases to exist. Since the waking world will cease to exist (due to being temporary and changing in nature) therefore it is not ultimately real.

But the waking world not being ultimately real doesn't mean that when we experience it, it isn't real. It is empirically real but ultimately unreal. Taking another example as that of a movie – in the movie, everything is real in its perspective and therefore have to be accepted

but once the movie is over or we look at it from a higher perspective, the entire movie is unreal. But saying that the movie is unreal, actors don't stop acting in the movie. In the same way, the waking world is real from its perspective but ultimately it isn't real – actions are performed and world is accepted to have temporary or empirical reality while ultimately being unreal.

It is these two levels of reality of empirical (where the world is accepted) and ultimate (where one Brahman alone exists and no world exists) that is propounded in the scriptures. The scriptures say that the world has come from Brahman, abides in Brahman and will merge into Brahman at the time of destruction. This itself means that the world is temporary and not ultimately real (as it is created and destroyed). And the empirical world appears in its substratum of Brahman even as the dream world appears in its substratum of dreamer. Dreamer is the cause of the dream world when dream world is accepted as existing and is the substratum when dream world is considered as an illusion. Similarly Brahman is the cause of the world when world is accepted and when world is known as an illusion, Brahman is the substratum of the world. Ultimately Brahman cannot even be the substratum of the world as there is no world existing.

That which appears to exist for a short period of time is as good as not existing at all. Though we can say that it is different to say that a ghost which is non-existent isn't the same as a human body which appears for a short period of time, still ultimately both are the same – both are non-existent; the difference is just that one never appears as existing and the other appears as existing for some period of time.

It can be argued that the world exists but such argument is without any logic as the world constantly changes – so how can we say that the world one second ago is the same as now? If it be argued that at least majority of the world is the same then again we are wrong. When the body made up of pancha bhutas undergoes changes every moment, the same applies to the world. Thus majority of the world is changing – and even though some part of the world might appear as not changing, what is meant is that changes aren't perceived or perceivable (maybe to the naked eye).

Thus the world which is constantly changing doesn't exist at all ultimately. This means that when it appears as existing, it is just an illusion in its substratum of Brahman. Though it might appear as existing a wise person will remember that it doesn't exist at all. But while

experiencing it, it should be given its due reality status. Else saying that the world doesn't exist if we hit a person, the person will hit us back. Thus a wise person will accept the world in its state but remember also that ultimately the world doesn't exist at all.

Proof of the two perspectives

The scriptures say that Brahman alone existed before creation and the created world will merge unto Brahman. This itself means that ultimately Brahman alone exists (one without a second – devoid of all differences). And since the world is accepted as being created therefore it is valid empirically but ultimately unreal. Thus the two levels of reality as ultimate and empirical are accepted in the scriptures.

Logic through the analysis of the world existing for a short period of time in its substratum of Brahman itself shows that the two levels of ultimate and empirical is valid.

Dream experience shows us clearly that multiple levels of reality is possible definitely. Moreover any sadhaka who is willing to follow the path propounded by the scriptures will be able to directly experience the truth that the external world is just an illusion and ultimately unreal in the non-dual reality of Brahman.

It can be argued that two levels of reality itself means duality and it goes against non-duality.

This argument is a foolish one alone. The two levels of reality is only considering the world. The moment we take the stand of the ultimate reality, then there the empirical reality is totally negated (or known to be unreal). Taking the example of dream, the two levels of reality of dream and waking is only valid when dream is experienced or considered to be existing. The moment we know and take the stand that there is no dream world at all, that very moment the two levels of reality vanish and only one remains behind.

In the same way, the moment we look at things from the ultimate perspective, the empirical reality is known to be unreal and therefore there is no duality at all.

If empirical reality is unreal, then why even talk about it?

Empirical reality is spoken about because we are at the empirical level. Therefore in order to take us to the ultimate level, empirical also has to be explained. Taking an example, though a person needs to just know his destination (as to where he has to go) it is still required to

know where he is currently so that he can be taken from there to the destination. After reaching the destination, nothing but the destination alone matters. But before reaching the destination it matters as to where he is currently in order to start from that place to the destination.

The above statements shouldn't be wrongly understood as there are many paths to moksha and one can choose whatever one wants. The age-old statement of "all roads lead to rome" isn't valid or correct. The one and only way to moksha is through knowledge of the non-dual reality of Brahman. Whether we term this knowledge or devotion towards non-dual Ishwara or yoga as vision of oneness, it is all knowing the ultimate reality of Brahman. No other paths can take us to moksha as moksha is ever present even now (as Brahman alone exists). We have forgotten our state of moksha and this ignorance has to be removed through knowledge of Brahman as found in the scriptures (the scriptures and all mahatmas proclaim again and again that there is no other way than knowledge to moksha).

Lack of knowledge of the two perspectives

It is lack of knowledge of the two perspectives that leads to all arguments, attacks and confusions. Hence these two levels of perspectives are explained again and again. If we are able to understand these two levels then all problems will instantly cease and we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

It cannot be argued that these two perspectives are known but are illogical and hence not accepted; Advaitins shouldn't argue again and again that opponents don't know these two levels of realities; because these two perspectives are proven through sruthi, yukti and anubhava. Further doubts or attacks on them are only as a result of not wanting to accept it – such people are those who have a closed mind and therefore cannot change their pre-conceived notion.

The bliss that Krishna and Rama and Vishnu experiences can be experienced by us here and now itself if we accept the two levels of reality or two perspectives. This happiness or bliss is unlimited. It is that bliss which is devoid of sorrow and which once experienced will ever be present as it isn't an experience – it is intuitively experienced as one's very nature. The bliss that one person experiences are definitely the same that another person experiences. It Direct experience shows that two people who follow the spiritual path will experience the same bliss of the Self (unlimited and eternal bliss).

It cannot be argued that Advaita doesn't give importance to experiences as Advaita gives importance but only at the plane of the empirical reality. Above the empirical reality, only Brahman exists and there all experiences are negated or nullified. It cannot be again argued that since no experiences are there in ultimate level and experiences aren't important at the empirical level, therefore no experience is valid – as experience of one's own very nature of Brahman or Consciousness in the waking state itself is accepted. This is similar to the experience of the dreamer in the dream state – this experience isn't experience of objects or of relation with objects or due to association of objects but as that of the dreamer alone. The experience of oneself as Brahman and not related with the entire world is the ultimate perspective.

Even as the dreamer is present in the dream world, similarly Brahman also is present in the empirical state and realization or moksha is to realized this Brahman as one's Consciousness and thereby remaining unaffected at all times.

Ishwara – saguna and nirguna

Now that we know the two perspectives of ultimate and empirical, we can now look at Ishwara or Brahman as per Advaita Vedanta. It is a wrong notion that Advaita doesn't give any emphasis to gunas or forms of deities. Many acharyas of the past have not only written works on various deities, as Brahman, but they have also been ardent devotees of Saguna Ishwara. Best example is that of Madhusudana Saraswathi who was a devotee of baala Krishna. Even today the various sankara mutts worship deities daily (as a continuing practice). This itself clearly shows that Advaita does provide a place for saguna ishvara.

Put in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's beautiful words, Ishwara is essentially nirguna (without any qualities) like water. But due to the devotion or chilling of the devotee's mind, Ishwara takes a form like water takes form of ice. Once the Sun of knowledge dawns, the ice or form vanishes and then the devotee realizes that Ishwara is essentially nirguna.

Why is Ishwara essentially nirguna?

Ishwara is essentially nirguna because gunas limit Ishwara who is limitless and blissful in nature. Moreover as the scriptures say there was and therefore is nothing apart from Ishwara here, neither internal differences nor similar nor dissimilar entities. When only one Ishwara exists, then what can qualify such an Ishwara? Qualities themselves don't exist as everything is just an illusion in Ishwara (ultimately non-existent in Ishwara).

The moment we attribute gunas unto Ishwara, then we have to take care of both bad and good gunas. Hence Dvaita says that Ishwara is full of good gunas and devoid of bad gunas. Advaita says that there is no guna that can taint Ishwara – Ishwara is unaffected by both good or bad gunas. Like a judge who is unaffected by good people and bad people who are arguing on the case, Ishwara is unaffected by both good and bad.

The Lord says in Gita that everybody is same for him and that everybody is his friend alone. Then how are devotees more closer to Ishwara? Devotees have surrendered unto Ishwara and hence they perceive the ever-present grace of Ishwara unlike others who aren't able to. As AMMA says, Ishwara's grace is ever-present like the rays of Sun. But if we close the doors and windows of our heart, then we will not be able to perceive the ever-present rays of the Sun of Ishwara. Opening our doors and windows of our heart is surrendering unto Ishwara and considering Ishwara as the goal and everything.

The author while prostrating Ishwara talks about Ishwara's nature as both saguna and nirguna (empirically saguna is valid but ultimately or essentially nirguna alone is valid) as a reply to Madhva's first sloka prostrating Vishnu; here the author prostrates the Supreme Self or Brahman.

गुणो यस्य स्वरोपो हि स्वतोऽपि निर्गुणो यश्च ।

मायाशक्तिश्च यस्यैव तन्नमामि परात्मानम् ॥३॥

guṇo yasya svaroopo hi svato'pi nirguṇo yaśca
māyāśaktiśca yasyaiva tannamāmi parātmānam ||3||

Guna or quality is whose nature though definitely who is by himself quality-less; and one who alone has the power of Maya, that Supreme Self I prostrate.

Brahman – nirguna by nature and having guna as nature too

As we have seen, there is nothing apart from Brahman to qualify it and hence Brahman is by nature nirguna or devoid of any qualities. This is only from the ultimate perspective. Empirically gunas or qualities are the very nature of Brahman. But are these qualities good or bad? Qualities are depending upon the individual who sees Ishwara in his mind.

As the age-old saying of “as is thought, so will be life”, a sadhaka can look at Ishwara with any number or type of gunas. Some thus worship Siva as a calm deity, others as a renunciate, yet others as one who destroys people. All these gunas – both good and bad – are in Siva through the way Siva is conceived by us in the mind. But ultimately and essentially, Siva is without any gunas no guna can taint Siva.

If gunas are not essentially or ultimately in Ishwara, then what is the use of gunas seen or perceived or conceived in Ishwara?

Such gunas help in gaining focus on Ishwara. Majority of the time our mind is focused on the dual world alone. Since the world has infinite possibilities therefore we are constantly focused on the world alone. Even when the world leads us to sorrow, we don't shift our focus away from the world – instead we shift focus from one part of the world to another. When one marriage fails, we don't think about renouncing the world; instead we think about next marriage. This goes on and on as the entire world is filled with infinite possibilities.

Even as a pot which is filled with water cannot be filled with milk, similarly that mind which is focused on the world will not be able to focus on Brahman or Ishwara. Unless focus shifts to Brahman or Ishwara, we will experience only sorrow. Therefore the first thing required for a sadhaka is to shift the focus from the external world unto the cause-substratum-ultimate reality of Brahman or Ishwara. Directly shifting focus from quality-filled-world to quality-less-Brahman is impossible therefore gunas are attributed to Ishwara. Gunas can be any gunas that appeal to our mind. For some it might be beauty; others it may be simplicity; yet others it may be ornaments. Thus depending on the mind of a sadhaka, there are deities that can be chosen for Ishwara. Such a deity which appeals to one's mind alone will be able to take us away from the external world unto Ishwara. Many people are so much focused on the world that they cannot even chose a proper deity or ista devataa – thus choosing one which doesn't appeal to their mind, they again get distracted into the world.

There are many others who claim that their kula devataa is a particular deity, they focus on that deity. But their mind is far away from the deity as the deity doesn't appeal to their mind. This is like a doctor saying that his son should become a doctor alone – many times this works out but many times this doesn't work out as well. A doctor should enquire with his son as to what he has to become and then let him choose his field of work. Else there will be not contentment at home or work for the Sun. Therefore sadhakas should choose the

deity of their choice appropriately – that deity which appeals to their mind and is able to easily take them away from the external world (in the mind) is the right deity. Though essentially such a deity also is nirguna Brahman alone, still the focus on gunas will intermediately take them away from the world.

Once a devotee focuses on a guna Ishwara slowly the mind will be pervaded by the deity. Slowly the entire world will be seen as the deity and the grace of the deity. Thus from one form, the devotee moves to formless as the Ishwar pervades the entire world. Therefore from the world to guna Ishwara to nirguna Brahman, the devotee progresses, eventually realizing his own very nature of nirguna Brahman.

Even as a photo of one's parents don't signify the parents but symbolize the parents, similarly a form deity symbolizes nirguna Brahman and therefore eventually will take a person to nirguna Brahman (while ever making him remain focused on the deity).

Maya – the power of illusion

If Ishwara is nirguna then who causes gunas in Ishwara?

Maya or the power of illusion or delusion is the cause of gunas in Ishwara. It is this same power of Ishwara that deludes people who are not devotees of Ishwara (into total sorrow) and at the same time takes devotees through gunas to nirguna Brahman. It is Maya that makes appear gunas in nirguna Brahman. Even as a magician controls his magical power, similarly Ishwara controls his power of Maya.

It cannot be argued that Maya and Ishwara would mean that two real entities are there as Maya isn't real but just an illusory (empirically) and unreal (ultimately) power of Ishwara. It cannot be argued that such a power doesn't even exist and therefore cannot be the cause of duality in the world, as the world is empirically illusory and ultimately unreal – therefore both Maya and world are at the same plane; therefore there is nothing wrong in accepting that Maya is the cause of the world.

Ultimately Brahman alone exists but when we perceive the world, it has to come from or out of somewhere – this somewhere is Maya which is the illusory power of Brahman. Maya has no existence apart from Brahman and is unreal in Brahman therefore it doesn't lead to an independent or real entity apart from Brahman (not leading to harm to non-duality); but

since it is existent with respect to the external world therefore it is accepted as that power which creates the entire world and is the cause of gunas too.

As long as person doesn't surrender unto Ishwara, the power of Maya will control the person even as the magician's power controls all those who don't surrender unto the magician. Once a person surrenders unto the magician, then the magician will remove the person from the spell of magic – similarly this power of Maya is very tough to conquer but those who take refuge in ishvara they will be able to overcome Maya through knowledge that there is no Maya at all and one Ishwara alone exists.

Who is Ishwara essentially?

Ishwara is Supreme Self. There is no Supreme and individual Self but empirically we accept that I am the individual Self who is limited whereas Ishwara is unlimited. Hence the author here says that I prostrate to the Supreme Self. Empirically Supreme Self is different from the individual Self (due to Maya alone) but ultimately only the Supreme Self exists and hence it is called Supreme. Supreme is that which is ultimate and there is nothing different or apart or inferior or superior to it.

This Self is that which pulsates inside us as at all times as I-exist, I-exist. This is nirguna Brahman, that which is to be realized and realizing which a person will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

The author's prostration to the Supreme Self or Brahman clearly negates the views and attacks of Madhva (as we have seen in depth) that Ishwara is Vishnu with good gunas and devoid of bad gunas. The Supreme Self alone ultimately exists even as the dreamer alone ultimately exists (from the perspective of the dream world).

Since the starting sloka indirectly prostrated to Sankara by saying that this work is written through Sankara's grace, therefore in the 3rd sloka the author directly prostrates Ishwara. Without mangalaacara or auspicious prostration at the beginning, a work will not be completed and hence the author undertakes the same. Instead of directly prostrating Ishwara, here Ishwara's nature is also beautifully explained – entire Advaita Vedanta is summarized and Madhva's views are also negated through this sloka.

Sadhakas should constantly remember that one Brahman alone exists here. The moment we forget this truth we fall into Maya and thereby we will experience nothing but sorrow alone. Since everybody wants to get rid of sorrow and ever rejoice in bliss, therefore we all should strive to achieve this ultimate goal of life as moksha (getting rid of sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss) through knowledge of Brahman as found in the scriptures. Thereby we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

May we all strive to gain knowledge of our very nature of Brahman who is empirically with gunas and ultimately without gunas 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.

Vedanta Shabda Vicharanam

Sakshi

The word Sakshi means witness and in this article we will analyze more about Sakshi and also the benefit knowing about Sakshi.

Scriptures say that the goals of human can be classified into four which are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Out of these 4 Moksha is considered as the Ultimate Goal of human. This is called Ultimate Goal because this goal of Moksha is permanent once attained. Moksha means liberation from all bondages and from the cycle of birth and death. Scriptures also say that there is only one way of attaining liberation, which is only through the knowledge of Brahman.

Kaivalya Upanishad says

Sa eva sarvam yad bhootham yaccha bhavyam sanaatanam

Jnaatva tam mrutyumatyeti naanyaH panthaa vimuktaye

He alone is all that was, and all that will be, the Eternal; knowing Him, one goes beyond the sting of death; there is no other way to reach complete freedom.

Purusha sooktam says

Tam eva vidvaan amrta iha bhavati| na anyah panthaa vidhyate ayanaaya

He who Knows (the Truth) will become immortal. There is no other way for moksha.

Q: *If I can get liberated only through knowledge of Brahman then there has to be some connection between Brahman and myself. What is the connection between Brahman and myself?*

A: Scriptures through various Mahavakyas answer this question "Tat Tvam Asi – That Brahman You are". Brahman is of the nature of Sat-Chit-Anandam (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). Through the Mahavakya, scriptures say that the nature of 'I' is same as the nature of Brahman. The 'I' which is termed Atman or Self is same as Brahman. Thus, the knowledge of Brahman means knowledge or realization that "I am Brahman". Once we realize this fact as explained in the scriptures, we are liberated.

Q: *If "I am Brahman" is a fact as mentioned in the scriptures, I should know myself to be ever existent, ever blissful. But I have a contrary experience that I am limited, sorrowful*

(sometimes happy) person. If it is a fact then why do I not know it as a fact and why do I have a contrary experience?

A: The fact is that we are essentially Brahman only and we have somehow forgotten this fact and are identified with the body and mind. This forgetfulness is termed as ignorance. Because of ignorance our real nature is not known and thereafter we are considering which is not real (body-mind complex) as ourselves. Because of considering body-mind complex as ourselves, we think ourselves to be limited and not ever existing and blissful.

Q: *Scriptures say that I am Brahman essentially but because of ignorance I am considering myself to be body-mind complex. Is there a relationship between body-mind complex and Self?*

A: Brahman is of the nature of Consciousness. The real 'I' which is Brahman is of the nature of Consciousness. Scriptures say that the body-mind complex functions only because of the Consciousness illumining them. Because Consciousness is illumining body and mind everything seem to function. When mind starts functioning, the internal world and external world are known. So, to summarize the external world is known through the functioning of mind and sense organs, the mind and the sense organs function illumination of the Consciousness. The real 'I' is of the nature of Consciousness which is not illumined by anything. It is not affected by anything else, yet it illumines everything. So, from the perspective of body and mind and the world, Self is just a sakshi or witness.

The first sloka in Drig Drishya viveka

"roopam drishyam lochanam drig tat drishyam drig tu maanasam

Drishya dheer vrttaya saakshi drigeva na tu dirshyate

The form is perceived and the eye is the perceiver, eye is perceived and mind is the perceiver, the mind with its modifications are perceived and Witness (Self) is the perceiver, Witness is never perceived. "

Swami Vidhyaranya says in Panchadasi

"ahamkaaram dhiyam saakshi vishayaanapi bhasayet

Ahamkaardhyabhaavepi svayam bhaatyeva poorvavat

The witness-consciousness lights up the ego, the intellect and the sense-objects. Even when ego etc., are absent, it remains self-luminous as ever.

Q: *If Sakshi is not affected, who is getting affected by the world?*

A: Sakshi, which is pure consciousness, is our real nature. But because of ignorance we are identifying ourselves with body-mind. Because of the ignorance of real 'I', a false 'I' is born which is called ahamkara or ego. Ego identifies itself with body-mind and thinks that 'I am limited', 'I am this body' etc and also has the notion of mine regarding the objects around itself. Since there is a notion of being limited and also because of the notion of I and Mine, only the false 'I' or the ego gets affected by the world and not the Self. The Self is never affected by anything that happens to the ego. Yet, everything is illumined by the Self. Whether it is the happy experience or sorrowful experience, everything is illumined by the Self and it is not affected.

Q: *How can we say that Self is not affected by the world?*

A: Scriptures point out that our real nature is Brahman only. And scriptures also say that Brahman alone exists and everything else that seem to exist is not real. Because of the ignorance about our own nature, ego is born and thereafter everything else is born and experienced. Ignorance or Ajnaanam is not a real entity that would ever exist. It only seem to exist as long as the Self is not known. Since ignorance is not real, the ego which is born out of ignorance is not real and everything else that comes up after are also not real. Thus, when ignorance vanishes by the knowledge of the Self, all dualities vanish and thus the person attains liberation. Even when there is ignorance, everything is illumined by the Self and hence it which is untouched by any experiences. Just like dreamer and the dream. The dreamer is never affected by the dream. The dream may be a happy dream, or a sad dream or a horror dream, but the person who is dreaming is not affected while dreaming yet the dreamer is illumining the dream. Thus, we can understand that Self is never affected by the experiences of the world but only a witness to everything.

Q: *Is witnesshood a real characteristic of Self?*

A: In order for a witness to exist, there has to be something to be witnessed. If there is nothing to be witnessed, there can be no witness. Self as Sakshi or witness can exist as long as the world exist. When the world is not there, then the witnesshood also goes away. Can the world vanish? The point is not about world vanishing, but the point is that the duality will not be seen when Self is realized. When the duality vanishes, everything will be seen as the Self.

In Advaita Makaranda Lakshmidhara Kavi says,
"chaityoparaaga roopa me saakshitaapi na tatviki"

Upalakshanameveyam nistaranga chitanudheh

Even my witness-hood is not absolute but is assumed with reference to the thoughts arising in the mind. This (witness-hood) is only an assumption in the waveless ocean-of-consciousness.

Q: *What is the benefit of knowing about Sakshi?*

A: Our real nature is Brahman which is of the nature of Anandam. The real 'I' is beyond every limitation and is the illuminator of everything else but it is never illumined. All the duality and their effects are created by the ego (the false 'I') which is created by the ignorance of our real nature. Forgetting our very nature of Anandam, and holding on to the ego we are suffering because of the dualities. So, a person who is suffering and trying to find a solution to end the suffering, the Guru will speak about his real nature as Ananda swaroopam, nityam etc. Knowing our real nature and realizing our nature is our birth right, and thus when we get to know more and more about ourselves we will be able to understand clearly what Moksha is and what is required to be done in order to attain Moksha.

Clarity about the goal is very important in order work towards the goal. This will lead us to remain more focused and thereafter lead us towards the goal of Moksha. That is the benefit we get when we know about Sakshi.

Maatr Navakam

ॐ मातृनवकम्

om māṭṛnavakam

लोकसाक्षिणीं विश्वसद्गुरुम् ।

मातृरूपिणीं सादरं भजे ॥१॥

lokasākṣiṇīm viśvasadgurum |
māṭṛrūpiṇīm sādaram bhaje ||1||

1. One who is the witness of the entire world, the sadguru of the world and of the nature of mother, I contemplate on the mother with humility.

तापहारिणीं नन्ददायिनीम् ।

ज्ञानरूपिणीं संततं भजे ॥२॥

tāpahāriṇīm nandadāyinīm |
jñānarūpiṇīm santataṁ bhaje ||2||

2. One who gets rid of sorrows, gives us bliss and is of the form of knowledge, such a mother I contemplate at all times.

शोकवारिणीं प्रेमरूपतः ।

मोहनाशिनीं मातरं भजे ॥३॥

śokavāriṇīm premarūpataḥ |
mohanāśinīm mātaram bhaje ||3||

3. One who gets rid of grief by being of the nature of love and one who gets rid of delusion, such a mother I contemplate.

रत्नसंयुता प्रेमसंज्ञक ।

मानवर्जितानन्ददायिका ॥४॥

ratnasamyutā premasañjñakā |
mānavarjitānandadāyikā ||4||

4. One who is endowed with the jewel of love, is devoid of any individuality and is of the nature of bliss.

राजपूजिता नम्ररूपक ।

धर्मरक्षिताधर्मध्वंसका ॥५॥

rājapūjitā namrarūpaka |
dharmarakṣitādharmadhvaṁsakā ||5||

5. One who is worshipped by the King (of Travancore) who is of the nature of humility, one who protects Dharma and destroys Adharma.

कर्मणैव सा साधितं सुखम् ।

नान्यथा सदा लोकपोषिणि ॥६॥

karmaṇaiva sā sādhitam sukham |
nānyathā sadā lokapoṣiṇi ||6||

6. Such a mother attains easily fulfillment of everything through actions and not through any other means (like merely talking) at all times and is nourisher of the world.

ज्ञानसंस्थितां भक्तिरूपिणीम् ।

भावयाम्यहं मोक्षदायिनीम् ॥७॥

jñānasamsthitām bhaktirūpiṇīm |
bhāvayāmyaham mokṣadāyinīm ||7||

7. One who is established in knowledge, of the nature of devotion and bestower of Moksha, such a Mother I contemplate.

यो भजेत्सदानन्दरूपिणीम् ।

तस्य स्वात्मनो ब्रह्मरूपकः ॥८॥

yo bhajetsadānandarūpiṇīm |
tasya svātmano brahmarūpakaḥ ||8||

8. One who contemplates always one who is blissful in nature, such a person's Self or individuality will be of Brahman alone (he will be realized).

नन्दीतिह वै पुत्ररूपकः ।

नन्दनन्दनो नन्दनन्दनः ॥९॥

nandatiha vai putrarūpakaḥ |
nandanandano nandanandanaḥ ||9||

9. He who is of the form of son (of the Mother), he definitely rejoices in bliss; he is ever blissful, he is ever blissful.

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. Maatr Navakam – nine slokas on the divine mother. 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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