

Discourses/Articles

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ADHYATMA VIDYA

[Swamiji leads the audience in chanting]

The Upanishads are well known as what is known as *adhyatma vidya*, meaning thereby, an insight into the Self, the wisdom of the Self, knowledge of the Self—an experience which cannot, in any manner whatsoever, alienate itself into other than what it is. Our experience in this world today, normally speaking, is involved in what can be designated as *anatman*, the non-Self as it is called, because it is our daily experience—an experience of what we are not. We see the world; we see people; we see human relations. And, all that we can consider as ‘life’, in today’s parlance, is far removed from the true Self.

The characteristic of a Self is what usually eludes the grasp of the sense organs in their search for the Self, of a true satisfaction of themselves. In this world of *anatman*, or non-Self, we are actually searching for the Self—very mysteriously, maybe very unfortunately. Though inasmuch as the world appears as an object of our sense organs, it has to be considered as an *anatman*, or a not-Self. The intention behind our pursuit of the *anatman* is actually the pursuit of the *Atman*. Unknowingly, groping in the dark as it were, we are searching for our own selves, and search for the *Atman* in a locality where it is not.

The characteristic of the world has to be distinguished from the characteristic of selfhood. This peculiar distinction between the two principles is what becomes difficult for the mind and the senses to grasp. And it is precisely this difficulty that compels the senses, together with the mind, to run in a direction totally opposite to the Self—though for the purpose of the grasp of the Self only. In the commentary on the Brahma Sutra, Acharya Shankara, perhaps while expounding the meaning of the fourth *sutra*, he makes a reference to three kinds of ‘selves’, to which we have made some reference earlier in our sessions.

That is to say, there is a self which we pursue through the sense organs, which is the object-self—the *vishaya*, the *anatmantatva*, the *gaunatman* as it is usually called, the secondary self. An object of affection is also an object of such attraction and self-identification, in an empirical way, that it mostly passes for the Self. The object of love, which is called the *gaunatman*—is apparently a kind of self for that state of affairs where the concerned object is erroneously attempted to be identified with the true Self—erroneously because of the fact that what is outside the Self cannot be identified with the Self.

The outsideness of the object is the difficulty involved in the actual possession, identification, and the expected enjoyment thereof. All objects which are beloved to the

sense organs are incapable of that identification which they are actually expecting in their adventure or pursuits. The sense organs externalise the consciousness: *parcaci khani vytranat svayambhus tasmāt paran pasyati nantaratman*. The force of the movement of the senses is so very powerfully extrovert that the consciousness, which otherwise cannot be so extroverted, is charged with this velocity of movement in an externalised fashion; and the Self also moves—as it were, though not really—in the direction of an outside object; envelops it, as it were, in terms of the activity of the mind, and is supposed to feel itself in that object in a totally inverted fashion—topsy-turvy fashion. The king, acting as a fool, as it were, in a drama—the *Atman* becomes the fool, to some extent we may say, in a metaphorical style, when it begins to behold itself in what is it not. The whole of our life in this world is this picture of dramatic activity of the sense organs—a tomfoolery, we may say. This is the whole of life. It is the pursuit of a twofold non-*Atman*. On one side it is known as the *gaunatman*, to which I made reference just now—the object of attraction, love, affection, attachment; then this body, which is called the *mithyatman*.

This is the whole of life in the world. All our projects and plans of work in the world, throughout the day and the night, concern themselves with values that are related to the physical body, which is the *mithyatman*, and related to all things connected to the body, namely, the *gaunatman*. The protection of this body, the ego-individuality, and the protection simultaneously of everything that is connected with this bodily individuality—we may say family circumstances, for instance, and every other related object and condition conducive to the satisfaction of the ego-individuality—is the picture of empirical life.

In one sense, we may say this world is a dream. It is a dream because it is a drama played by consciousness in the same manner as it plays it or enacts it in the well-known dream world. An otherwise impossible phenomenon takes place, namely, the projection of a Self in the location of the non-Self. It is well known that the Self cannot become the non-Self. The very meaning attached to the word 'Self' is such that it cannot become what it is not; and non-externality is the characteristic of the Self. Consciousness cannot become unconsciousness. It cannot see itself as a distant object, separated by space and time. That is, beholding consciousness as an object of itself, as it were, is an impossibility, logically speaking; according to common sense also it is contrary. But such a thing happens in dream. The perceiver of the dream becomes the perceived object also—a well-known phenomenon, into which region we need not traverse now.

A similar structural involvement takes place in the waking world. The structure of dream is the same as the structure of waking. That is, the pattern of the operation of consciousness in dream is similar to the pattern in waking. There has to be a location which perceives; and that perceiver has to be a centre of awareness. There has to be another thing that is outside, which is the object thereof. And there must be a medium of perception: *pranamana*, a *pryatakshana* for the time being. The same is the structure of waking awareness. There is an object that is known in the world with all its contents; and there is a subject: yourself, myself, everyone from one's own point of view is the perceiver of the world. But, the perceiver is neither the *gaunatman* nor the *mithyatman*.

The body is constituted of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether—*prithvi, jal, tejo, vayu, akash*. The object that is perceived also is constituted of the very same elements. It is as if a material embodiment collides with another material embodiment. In the language of the Bhagavad Gita: *gunah guneshu vartante*. The three *gunas* of *prakriti*, which constitute all bodies, subjectivity as well as objectivity, are unconscious in their nature. *Prakriti* is non-conscious. And all the bodies constituted of the *prakriti*—the physical body of ours, and the embodied form of all objects—are equally constituted of the *gunatraya: sattva, rajas, tamas*. By an analysis of our experience, we will know that neither the body nor the mental operations are actually the conscious principle. A consciousness that is responsible for the vision of life is not that body, not even the mind. The *avasthatraya vishesana* will tell us that, though in the waking condition we appear to be physically conscious, we are not so conscious in dream; there is only a mental operation taking place. But in the deep sleep state, even the mind subsides, but we exist still. We *exist*—just that much only and nothing more can be said about ourself in that state: *asti tevo bala dhavya*. That particular essentiality of our being, which is the true self of ours, can be designated only as *asti—It is*.

What were we in the state of deep sleep? We were! But what were we? What were we at that time? The definition of that particular state is impossible because there is no quality or adjunct which can be associated with that condition, which was just *be-ness*. But, it was a state of *be-ness* associated with *awareness*. We are generally unconscious in the state of sleep. But, the usual well-known analysis and comparison of the waking state with the sleeping condition brings out the fact that the memory that we have of our having slept the previous day is accountable only on the acceptance of the fact of there being something like consciousness even in the state of deep sleep. Because, no memory is possible unless there was a preceding experience, and experience is always associated with consciousness. Unconscious experience is unthought of.

So there is a mysterious stifled consciousness, as it were, in the state of deep sleep; that is our essential nature. It is because of the fact of our having sunk into that essential nature of ours in sleep, we feel refreshed and vigorous when we wake up from sleep—strong in ourselves, more strong than we would feel even with a good lunch given to us, because the nearer we go to ourselves, the happier we are, and the more comfort it is that we feel in ourselves.

What is the illustration amounting to? The point that is made out here in the analysis of the three states is that we are neither the body, nor the mind; we are pure Awareness. But, what are the characteristics of this awareness? It has only one characteristic, if at all we can call it one—namely, indivisibility. It cannot be divided into parts. There cannot be a fraction of consciousness; it is a whole by itself. The imagination, even a supposition of there being such a thing as a fraction or a division in consciousness, implies the presence of consciousness—even in that gap that is so imagined. The finitude of consciousness is unthinkable because a consciousness of finitude implies the acceptance of the exceeding of that consciousness beyond the fact of finitude. The awareness of finitude is the acceptance of Infinitude.

This analysis is the proof of the fact of our essentially being infinite in our nature. Our true being is *astitva*—pure being, which is one with consciousness. It is *sat* and *chit*—not 'and', but *sat-chit*—as an indivisible compound. And that *being-consciousness*, which we

are, which is the true Self of ours, which is *not* the *gaunatman* and which is not the *mithyatman*, is not merely beness-consciousness, *sat-chit*, it is also indivisible in nature. That is to say, it is non-finite. It is not located somewhere. It is not true that it is inside our body. It is ubiquitous—all-pervading—because the notion of its being in one place is impossible unless it exceeds itself from the very notion of that finitude. Because of this fact, it is unthinkable how consciousness can become an object and can become a *gaunatman*, which is actually what is happening in daily life. This is the reason why we say the world is like a dream. Because, in dream, the actuality of selfhood becomes an apparent externality of objecthood; the apparent nature of the object-perception in dream makes it a dream. Otherwise we would not call it a dream at all; it is a reality by itself. The dream character of what we call ‘dream’ arises because of it being impossible for a perceiving consciousness to become other than what it is. Because consciousness is infinite, it cannot become an object of itself. Infinitude cannot have an object before it.

Thus, on this foundation of an analysis of the indivisibility of consciousness, the infinity of consciousness, it will follow—the infinitude of the perceiver of anything in the world. Thus, the world cannot stand as an object in front of consciousness. But, it has stood as an object; we see it before us. But, if it can be conceived as a really existing thing there, in front of our perceiving consciousness, as an object thereof, certainly we should describe this world as a dream object, because having known that our true perceiving awareness is infinite in its nature, the world cannot stand before it as an outside something. So the outsideness of the world is dreamy in its nature but it has a reality of its own from another point of view—namely, the *astitva*, which is the character of the infinitude of consciousness, is at the back of even the so-called appearance of the world. Appearance cannot be there unless there is a reality behind it. The so-called analogy of the snake in the rope points out that the appearance of the snake is possible only if there is the reality of the rope. So, there is something real even behind the appearance of the world. That is the thing that summons consciousness in the direction of sense-perception—*raga-dvesha*. It is the Infinite actually that is summoning the Infinite in all forms of perception, even love and hatred. This is a psychological blunder actually taking place in usual perceptions, which are afflicted with sorrow from beginning to end, due to which reason this world-perception is characterised by Maharishi Patanjali as a *kleshta vritti*. It is a painful operation of the psyche, painful because of the fact it is wrongly beholding things—not as they are, but as they are not.

Apart from these two mentioned: the false *Atman*—namely, the *gaunatman*, and the *mithyatman*—the bodily individuality on the one side that is the *mithyatman* and the external object which is the *gaunatman*, there is a third one which is the true Self, called *mukhyatman*. This is the true Self into which we apparently sink in the state of deep sleep. The unity with this Self is the work of yoga. When we say “we have to practice yoga” and “we want Self-realisation”, we are aiming at the realisation of God. When we make statements like this, we are actually, knowingly or unknowingly, referring to this Universal Self which is within us and without us. It is within us as our knowing consciousness; it is without us as the basis for the appearance of all the forms: *nama-rupa prapancha*.

Asti, *bhati*, *priya*, *nama* and *rupa* are supposed to be the fivefold features of everything in the world. *Asti* means ‘be-ness’—‘be’—everything ‘is’; *bhati*—everything is known; *priya*—everything can be a desirable thing. It has a name because it is *nama*. It has a

form, and it is *rupa*. But the *nama* and the *rupa*—name-form complex—is not the real character of anything.

The particular configuration of personality is due to a peculiar permutation and combination of the three *gunas* of *prakriti*. And the combination factor changes from one time to another time, from one birth to another birth, from one cycle to another cycle, so that no individuality can be said to be encased in a particular formation only. Hence, *nama-rupa prapancha* is not a final reality, it is a fluxation; it is a transitory movement; it changes from moment to moment—not merely from day to day; it is a continuous flow—like a flame of a lamp or the movement of a river, as they usually say. The world, which is visualised as a medley of names and forms, is not the true nature of it. But the *astitva* and the *bhatitva* and the *priyatva*—the *satchidananda rupa*, as we call it, the true universality that is behind the diversity of forms, is the true Self. So even when we look at things, we are actually looking at the universal Self—wrongly, because we behold it through the sense organs.

When consciousness, when spirit, is beheld through the sense organs, it may look like material objects. But, it has to be beheld through itself. The soul has to behold itself through itself, by itself, and cannot be visualised through any external instrumentality, because thereby it ceases to be what it is. When the Self is attempted to be beheld through sense organs, it becomes *anatman*—it is an object—and you are an object for me, and am I an object for you in ordinary sense perception. But, basically, we are ripples and waves, as it were, of a vast sea of awareness which is commonly present everywhere, that is—*asti, bhati, priya, satchitananda svarupa*. The unity with it is yoga. Various systems of practice have been advocated for the purpose of this communion of the apparent form of ours with the true form of ours.

The apparent form is infested with various components which are the building bricks of the individuality of a person: the body, which is made up of the five elements; the *pranas*; the sense organs; the mind, with its different functions; the *buddhi*, the intellect; and there is a causal sheath inside called *anandamaya kosha*. The consciousness is hidden inside, as it were, covered with a bushel, by a smoke, completely smothered by the activity of this accretion so-called, which is the well-known *pancha kosha: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya*. The extrication of our true Self from involvement of these accretions is the work of yoga. The schools of yoga differ in the manner of the handling this particular matter.

One thing is common among all the yogas—namely, it is necessary for every student of yoga to realise the error committed by consciousness in its involvement objectively, through names and forms. So, freedom from *raga-dvesha* is supposed to be the first step in the practice of yoga. Love and hatred is a psychological error, because there is no point in our loving anything individually exclusively, or hating also anything exclusively, because of the well-known fact that all forms which we love or hate are configurations of same *triguna* of *prakriti: rajas, sattva, tamas*.

This segregation of forms into the desirable and the undesirable is the work of the peculiar operation of *karmic* potencies in our body, in our mind, in our *pancha-koshas*, namely—*prarabdha karma*. A particular potential called *prarabdha* is said to be responsible for the manufacture of this body, this body-mind complex. It is so

manufactured, so constituted and so formed, as to be fitted into the structure of certain objective relations only and not to all formations in the world. This is the reason why certain persons have certain likes and certain other persons have certain other likes. So there is no universal like or universal dislike known anywhere. It is totally a relative apprehension of the psyche of people.

Knowing this fact, it is essential for the yoga student to gradually learn the art of what is known as *pratyahara*, or the withdrawal of the powers of the sense organs, together with the mind, in order to centre it in the Self. The difficulty in the practice of this art of self-withdrawal is well known because the senses are vehement in their nature: *indriyani pramathini haranti prasabham manah*. Wind-like, gale-like, tempest-like, tornado-like—the senses force the consciousness to go out of itself and behold itself in something other than itself in the form of objects. The power of the action of the sense-organs is such that it is impossible ordinarily for anyone to be free from this impulse. So when we wake up in the morning, we open our eyes and we look *outward*. No one beholds anything *inward*. The eyes, which are instruments of visual perception, are made as the means of the surge of this consciousness outwardly due to the desire to see, desire to hear, desire to smell, desire to touch, and desire to taste.

The whole of our life is a bundle of this fivefold desire. We work hard for the fulfilment of these various forms, the fivefold desire, until the body mechanism gets worn out, it gets rusted, and the psyche, which is the manufacturer of the *prarabdha karma*, feels that this instrument is of no utility anymore; it is shed. This is what we call death. But the desire is not over. It does not mean that on the death of the body the desire also dies. It is not taking place like that. The desire potential will again erupt, like a tendril of a plant, in another form altogether, and another set of *karmas*, a new group of *prarabdhas*, will be taken out from the original *sanchita*—the abode of *karma*, the reservoir of *karmas*—and new birth takes place.

Hence, it is impossible to get rid of this torture of moving in this cycle of birth and death merely by getting on with the world as we generally do. A Herculean effort is called for here—day in and day out—with great deliberation of reason, application of the higher reason by analysis, by power of will, by sequestration, isolation, contemplation, even fasting where it is necessary when the senses are very turbulent, and vigilance, day in and day out. ‘Vigilance’ is the most important, is the watchword of the yoga student—vigilance in the sense that he does not become unwary of the movement of the senses, subtly in the direction of their own particular objects, in spite of the great effort of withdrawal, concentration.

By philosophical self-analysis in the manner we have conducted now, the mind can be taught the lesson that it is futile on its part to pursue pleasure in the world—which is not going to fulfil its promises. The world can promise many things, but it can fulfil not a single promise. That is the nature of this world. So is the delusion of life. It is running after these promises which are expected to be fulfilled. Never will any object of desire extinguish the desire thereof: *na jado kamah kamana upabhogye nishamyati*—the desire cannot be extinguished by a fulfilment of desire. It increases, like flaming fire on which you pour molten butter. The yogi, therefore, is vigilant in the observation of the movement of the senses in the direction of their objects.

Because of the detection of the evil in the attachment to things, the evil of there being no such pleasure as expected in the objects, the evil of there being no possibility of the Self being another object outside itself, and the evil of there being no chance of the indivisible Self being divisible as the subject and the object—detecting this threefold evil, at least, the person becomes vigilant. The yoga of concentration commences with this analysis of the situation of Selfhood—the true Selfhood independent on the *gaunatva* and the *mithyatva* thereof; and when yoga commences, there is concentration automatically, spontaneously arising, on the true nature of the Self, the all-pervading nature of the Self.

This is the *bhakti yoga* method of pouring out love on that which is everywhere—God all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. It becomes *bhakti*, or devotion, or love, when the devout student pours out the whole of the personality on that deity which is beheld everywhere as one's own God. The devotee's God is the only God, because of the fact that there cannot be another God outside that God. Hence, it is an all-consuming object. The divine object of meditation is all-consuming, but the object of sense is not all-consuming. It is a subtle subterfuge adopted by the sense organs to deceive the Self, to defeat its purpose, and to give it nothing in the end, like a dacoit's operation. But, the true Self which is ubiquitous God Almighty, who is the all-*Paramatman*, all-including *Paramatman*, is the consuming Self. So the love of the devotee is poured upon an all-consuming, all-inclusive, all-blessing—*paramatmatattva*, wherein is the analytic method, the Self, or the meditator itself is beheld in the Self that is all-pervading.

The all-pervading nature of the Self precludes a separate existence of the meditating principle. The will comes in as an active force of operation to assist the reason in the meditational practice. So reason, will and emotion or feeling come together as an insight. An intense longing arises in the whole personality at the time of the concentration of consciousness on that great ideal of yoga.

Intense longing is usually not a common feature in our daily life. We long for things, no doubt, but we do not so intensely long for one thing independently of other things. We always exclude certain other things. There is a parochial attachment even in our so-called longing for the worthwhile things of life. But, this longing is not parochial, it is not one-sided, it is not exclusive. Here is an inclusive awakening of the whole of oneself in the totality of one's being. All the *koshas* rise up in their cooperative activity with the surge of the Self in the direction of what it actually seeks. It is the *Atman* seeking *Brahman*, we may say in one sentence.

The yoga student, in a seated posture, collects the energies which are physical, neural, muscular, sensory, psychic and rational, as well as emotional, together into a menstroom, as it were, converting them into a liquid of operation, and he stands there as a 'total person'—strong in will, strong in understanding, strong in feeling and strong in aspiration. The practice has to be continued. How long is it to be continued?—is a question that is raised in some place in the Brahma Sutras. Humorous is the answer: you continue it till death, or continue it until you attain your goal, whichever is earlier. Anyway, this is to say that *sadhana* is to be continued forever and ever.

In most cases, the realisation does not come in one birth. Maybe it is possible in one birth—if the ardour is so very genuine, burning is the longing, and insatiable is the desire for God, no other thing distracts the mind, you want nothing else, flaming is the aspiration. If that is the case—so genuine is the longing—the realisation of God, the Self, can occur in this very life. But mostly, the difficulties being manifold: *manushyanam sahasreshu kaschidyatati siddhaye*—very few in this world will actually feel the need for God, and even among those who feel the need, some one will really succeed in this great attainment; this is a well-known caution exercised to us in the words of the Bhagavad Gita. But *tasya ham sulabaha* also it is said in one place: “I am easy of approach.” But, to whom is He *sulabha*? Who is *nityayukta*, who is perpetually united with that ideal, to that perpetually united spirit, this attainment is easy, simple, and possible in this very life. Because it is our own Self, it has to be not a very difficult affair. It is our Self, it is *me* that I am pursuing finally. It is not somebody that I am pursuing and I am asking for. How is it difficult for me to know my Self? But, that is exactly the difficulty of it.

The nearer an object is, the more difficult it becomes to understand; and, the most difficult object is myself. I can investigate scientifically the structure and pattern of everything in the world, but I cannot know myself—because there is no means of knowing myself. There are instruments of perception and observation and experiment in scientific fields. Where is the instrument for observation and experimentation of my Self? The higher Self has to act here as the means, if at all you call it a means, to withdraw this lower self into Itself: *uddhared atman atmanam*. The absence of any external medium or instrument in the operation here becomes the actual difficulty. The Self is the knower, the Self is the seeker, and it is also the sought; here is the difficulty. Most difficult indeed, because the subject and the object are identical here—the one who seeks is also the one that is sought. But it should be easy also, because it is so near. It is an *ascharaya*, great wonder: *ascharyavat pasyati kaschid enam ascharyavad vadati tathaiva canyah*. *Ascharya*—a wonder, this is a great wonder indeed; very difficult because it is very near, it is me only, but very easy because it is me only.

This is the intriguing situation of the true selfhood of a person. Yet, the glory that is ahead of us, the magnificence of it, and the necessity for it, and it being the only Truth of existence, should preclude the possibility of any hindrance on the path, and should enable us to gird up our loins for this purpose. Yoga is ‘all-life’ in one sense. Every form of life is capable of transmutation into the true yoga of the Self. God is pervading everywhere—in every particle of sand, in every nucleus of an atom. That being the case, it should be possible to visualise God in anything and convert any form into the true substance thereof, and transmute our perceptions into an insight of the Self.

Thus is the glory thereof, the difficulty mentioned, and also the quickness of the achievement made practicable because of its imperative necessity in one’s life. Glorious is yoga, and that is perhaps going to be, and it ought to be, the principle occupation of every person in life. Yoga is all-life.

Hari Om Tat Sat

*Om purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudacyate
purnasya purnamadaya purnameva ’vasishyate*

Om santih santih santih.