

Tattva Bodha of Adi Sankaracharya – A Vedantic Primer : Part 1(contd) & Part 2

(Lecture Notes compiled by Venkat Ganesan from the series of
SVBF Lectures given by Dr. S. YEGNASUBRAMANIAN)

1. Introduction (continued)

In continuation of the Introduction section of Tattvabodha discussed in the previous issue of Paramaatha Tattvam, we will now enter into the text of Tattva Bodha. The text begins with a discussion of the four-fold qualifications for a student to be eligible to receive the knowledge of the Self.

साधनचतुष्टयसंपन्नाधिकारिणां

मोक्षसाधनभूतं

तत्त्वविवेकप्रकारं वक्ष्यामः ।

वक्ष्यामः We will explain (now); अधिकारिणां for those endowed with; साधन चतुष्टयसंपन्नः the fourfold qualifications; तत्त्वविवेकप्रकारं the mode of discrimination, मोक्षसाधनभूतं which is the means of liberation.

To realize the Truth, one should follow a process of discriminative inquiry since the Truth can be confused with false. This can lead to success only when the student is qualified and becomes eligible. The student is considered eligible only when he acquires the fourfold qualifications.

1.1 Fourfold qualifications (sAdhana catushtaya)

साधनचतुष्टयं किम् ? what are these fourfold qualifications?

They are : *viveka*, *vairAgya*, a group of six virtues starting with *Sama* and the desire for liberation. We will discuss them individually as given by the Author.

- नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः । The ability of discrimination between the eternal and ephemeral.
- इहामुत्रार्थफलभोगविरागः । Detachment from the fruits of action in this life and beyond.

- शमादिषट्कसंपत्तिः । The group of six sub qualifications starting with *Sama*,
- मुमुक्षुत्वं चेति । The craving desire to get liberated.

a.1 viveka (Discrimination)

नित्यानित्यवस्तु विवेकः कः ? What is meant by the discrimination between the permanent (eternal) and impermanent (ephemeral)?

a.2

नित्यवस्त्वेकं ब्रह्म

तद्व्यतिरिक्तं सर्वमनित्यम् ।

अयमेव नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः ।

Brahman alone is *nitya vastu*; does not change over time and is permanent; everything else - is *anitya* -, changes over time, and are impermanent. This understanding is the discrimination between the eternal and ephemeral.

Tattva Bodha does not tell or explain how to gain this qualification or ability since the topic dealt with here is Vedanta. The entire *Karma Yoga* practice teaches one how to develop *viveka*. Even though *viveka Sakti* is natural to all humans, it can only function when the mind is quiet; *Karma Yoga* (43 slokas of Bhagavad Gita) enables the mind to develop this calmness.

b.1 vairAgya (dispassion)

विरागः कः ? What is dispassion?

b.2 इहस्वर्गभोगेषु इच्छाराहित्यम् । It is the absence (*rAhityam*) of desire for enjoyment of the fruits of action in this world and in the world after.

By consistent discrimination of happiness resulting from material pleasures or "dependent" happiness, and realizing that it is not permanent, detachment is gained. Hence,

vairAgya is a natural result of *viveka* and so is also an outcome of *Karma Yoga* .

c.1 शमादिसाधनसंपत्तिः का ? What are the six accomplishments starting with *Sama* ?

c.2 शमो दम उपरमस्तितिक्षा श्रद्धा समाधानं च इति

These six virtues are - *Sama*, *dama*, *uparama*, *titikshA*, *SraddhA* and *samAdhAnam*. Then a definition of each of these, is given by the Author.

c.2.1 शमः कः ? What is *Sama* ?

c.2.2 मनो निग्रहः Control of mind.

Mind is one of the *anta:karana's* or *antarindriya's* (inner equipment), and is responsible for oscillations or wavering in the flow of thoughts. Control of mind is *Sama* and is developed by *Bhakti Yoga*, *upAsana*, *tapas* etc.

c.2.3 दमः कः ? What is *dama* ?

c.2.4 चक्षुरादिबाह्येन्द्रियनिग्रहः *Idama* or *Indriya Nigraha* is the control of external sense organs (*bahirindriyas*) which are responsible for perception and action. We do not want the senses to control us but we want us to control them.

c.2.5 उपरमः कः ? What is *uparama* ?

c.2.6 स्वधर्मानुष्ठानमेव । Compliance to one's own *dharma*. *Uparama* or *Uparati* is dutiful to follow one's own *dharma*. There are some universal duties (*sAmAnyA dharma*) which are common for every individual like compassion, *ahimsA*, *satyam*, *dayA* etc. And, there are special duties (*viSesha dharma*); one's own particular duties are called *sva dharma*, for every individual towards himself/herself, the parents, family, neighbors, society etc. These duties will vary between individuals and even between different points in time, for the same individual. *Bhagavad Gita* discusses this elaborately.

c.2.7 तितिक्षा का ? What is *titikshA* ?

c.2.8 शीतोष्णसुखदुःखादिसहिष्णुत्वम् । Endurance of hot and cold, happiness and sorrow etc.

Titiksha is acceptance of pairs of opposites - *dvandvA* - and dealing with them in life. Author gives an example of heat and cold, pleasure and pain which explain the concept of accepting pairs of opposites. It does not indicate passive acceptance or not to let emotions taking over the experience of pairs of opposites, but to understand and accept them as nature.

c.2.9 श्रद्धा कीदृशी ? What is *SraddhA* ?

c.2.10 गुरुवेदांतवाक्यादिषु विश्वासः श्रद्धा ।

Faith in the words of the Guru and scriptures is *SraddhA*.

It is the unconditional belief in Guru's words. Guru teaches the same truth as the scriptures say but will supplement or present it in a fashion which is suitable to the level of the student. An equipment (*pramANa*) is required to understand any fact or its nature (*vishaya:*). For example a scale (*paurusheya pramANa*) can be used to measure a *paurusheya* (man made) *vishaya:*. -for instance the length of a wire. Extrapolation of the same leads to the fact that an *apaurusheya pramANa* (non human instrument) is needed to understand an *apureshaya vishaya:*. Our scriptures are *apureshaya* (non human origin) and they are used to understand the Self. Vedas are *dharma pramAnas* and talk about the nature of Self. Guru alone by his vision and experience can make the student understand this knowledge about the Self and so the faith in Guru's words is represented as one of the required qualifications.

c.2.11 समाधानं किम्? What is *samAdhAnam*?

c.2.12 चित्तैकाग्रता । One-pointedness of the mind. *Samadhana* is the concentration or focus of mind on one task. This is the single-pointedness or absorption of mind in that task. Here the task is the enquiry into the Truth or the Knowledge of the Self. The entire *Yoga Shastra* deals with methods to develop concentration.

Thus, the group of six sub-qualifications of the 3rd qualification for one to become

eligible, have been discussed by the Author. The fourth qualification of *sAdhana catustaya* is *mumukshutvam* and is discussed now.

d. Mumukshutvam

मुमुक्षुत्वं किम् ? What is Mumukshutvam?

मोक्षो मे भूयात् इति इच्छा । The craving that I should attain Moksha (Liberation)

The intense desire for liberation is usually compared to the desire of a person trying to jump into a pond who's hair has caught fire. Mumukshu is one who has only this burning desire for liberation. This is the basic qualification and drives the acquisition of all other qualifications.

एतत् साधनचतुष्टयम् । (The Author concludes) These are the four-fold qualifications.

ततस्तत्त्वविवेकस्याधिकारिणो भवन्ति । Having obtained these four-fold qualifications, they become "adhikaris" (the eligible) for the enquiry into the Truth. This qualification alone matters for one to pursue a discriminative enquiry into the Truth ! Once a person becomes qualified, he/she does not need *bhakti yoga*, *ashtAnga yoga*, *karma yoga* etc., since they are only necessary to make a person qualified !

2. Tattva Viveka (Enquiry into the Truth)

So far, the Author has introduced the topic, the role of the teacher and student, and the set of qualifications required for the enquiry into the Truth. Now he comes to the subject matter and constructs the first question (from the student)

तत्त्वविवेकः कः ? What is Tattvaviveka ?

आत्मा सत्यं तदन्यत् सर्वं मिथ्येति । The Atman alone is Real and all others are Unreal.

The answer contains two parts 1. आत्मा The Self (is) सत्यं = Truth or Real and 2) तदन्यत् सर्वं = Everything other than That (is) मिथ्या = unreal; What are *Satyam* or Real and *Mithya* ? *Satyam* that which does not undergo any change over

time. The things which exist but undergo change or modification over time are *mithya*. E.g. the fundamental substance - gold can be made as a chain, bracelet, ring etc. Even though the fundamental substance is the same, each one of the derivatives will have a name-नाम (chain), form -रूप (shape) and an action -कर्म (function). Here, the substance, gold is *satyam* and all ornaments (with नाम रूप कर्म) are *mithya*. Otherwise, *mithya* (or अनात्मा, *anAtmA*) can change from one condition to another while, the substance, gold remains the same. Also, since *mithya* has no substance, it cannot exist independently of *satyam*. So also, the Self -Atman - is *satyam*, and the rest are *mithya*. In this knowledge alone, one understands that "I am independent, and free" and Moksha is to discover That.

This is the essence of Tattva Bodha, and also the essence of all our scriptures. The student does not know or understand what *Atman* is at this point in time. But, this answer enables the student to proceed further with a lot enquiries to further the topic. Thus, the author provides a platform or forum on which a set of connected enquiries and presents a set of negations in the course of understanding *Atman*.

PART 2

Analysis of the Individual (जीव विचारः)

Having given a precise answer about the Absolute Knowledge, the author presents further dialogue between the student and the teacher about the nature of Atman. Tattva Viveka gives the knowledge of identifying the Self. Due to misconception or ignorance, Self is identified with the body or the mind or the intellect which prevents from understanding the true nature. This is the reason for all problems. In this section, the author first identifies and explains what Atman is not through a series of negations. All those aspects are identified as '*anAtmA*' Finally, the nature of Atman is pointed out. This type of presentation enables one not to develop incorrect notions in understanding. This section can also be called आत्म - अनात्म विचारः *Atma-Anatma*

vicAara: Now we will continue with the discussion as the author presents it.

आत्मा कः ? What is AtmA?

स्थूलसूक्ष्मकारणशरीराद्व्यतिरिक्तः पञ्चकोशातीतः

सन् अवस्थात्रयसाक्षी सच्चिदानन्दस्वरूपः सन्

यस्तिष्ठति स आत्मा ।

The One that is different from the (three) bodies; (शरीराद्व्यतिरिक्तः) - the gross (स्थूल - sthUla), subtle (सूक्ष्म -sUkshma) and causal (कारण - kAraNa); that is beyond the five sheaths (पञ्चकोशातीतः); which is the witness (साक्षी) of the three states of awareness (अवस्थात्रयं) and which is of the nature of sat-cit-Ananda (सच्चिदानन्दस्वरूपः) is AtmA. This passage have fourteen unknown words which has to be explained by the author in subsequent development!

First, let us try to understand the approach of the author. In the view of the common individual, the term "I" generally refers to the "body"; Body is made of mere matter (just a matter bundle); the only difference from other matter like wood etc. is , a living body represents a conscious matter versus an inert body or dead matter. Hence, Consciousness is only a property of the body; in other words, what is a live body now will become a dead body later. So, according to the materialistic चार्वाकः - cArvAka - philosophy, matter is fundamental - body is matter - life is temporary phenomenon. If a study of life is made by human instruments, we will then end up only with a materialistic outlook, since in such a study, only symptoms in matter alone are studied with the premise that body is fundamental and Consciousness is an incidental property.

However, according to the scriptural view, Consciousness is neither matter nor a property of matter; it is only an expression of some other entity, a different entity altogether, and can be manifest in matter and not a property of the matter. For example, light (electricity) is not the property of the bulb, is different from the bulb and can manifest in the bulb. Hence, the Consciousness or *chit* (चित्) or *caitanyam* , is

different from JaDam (जडम्) or matter bundle. So, according the scriptures, "I" am *chit* , the Consciousness, different from matter, the body.

For the sake of convenience , the term "body" is viewed from two angles - as made up of 1) *SarIra trayam* (शरीर त्रयं , the three bodies), and 2) *koSa pancakam* (कोश पञ्चकं , the five sheaths); and declared that the AtmA is different from these, but manifests in these; The author will give subsequently, the definition of each of these bodies or koSas.

Then, the AtmA is stated as the witness of the three states of awareness - *avastha trayam* (अवस्था त्रयं), namely, the wakeful state (जाग्रत्), dream state (स्वप्न) and the deep sleep state (सुषुप्ति); again, the AtmA is different from each of these states (the term witness implies that it is different from what is witnessed) of experiences which are properties of the body and not of Consciousness.

Having given what is not AtmA, the author then defines what AtmA is, as *sat-cit-Ananda* or Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and enumerates the affirmation given earlier - AtmA satyam tadanyat sarvam mithyA.

The basic concept utilized in the analysis is that, the subject is different from the object. In other words, "I" , the knower is different from "this" , the known or "I" am always present and am different from my body - i.e the *AtmA-anAtmA viveka*: To summarize, based on materialism, matter is fundamental; any instrument of human perception can give only materialistic attributes. Based on spirituality, the spirit is fundamental and is understood through the vedic scriptures only, which give *apourusheya jnAnam*. Any of the *pratyaksha pramANa*, *anumAna pramANa* etc. can study only the expression of life and not life itself. The teacher proceeds to explain what each one of these *anAtmA* aspects means, its components and attributes, which will be discussed in subsequent articles of the series.

References / Source of Material

1. Tattvabodha of Sankaracharya, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay. 1995.
2. Tattvabodha - Lectures by Swami Paramarthananda, Madras.