

# Tattva Bodha of Adi Sankaracharya – A Vedantic Primer : Part 2 (contd.)

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

The discussion on creation (*srusTi-prakaraNam*) was concluded in the last article of this series (*ParamaArtha Tattvam Issues 4.3 & 4.4*). We will continue with the discussion of *Isvara* in this article.

## 4. Analysis of identity between *Isvara* and *Jiva* (*Jiva-Isvara Aikyam*)

This section is the central theme and conveys the knowledge of the Self. The author brings the definitions of *Isvara* and *Jiva* and lists the differences between them first.

स्थूलशरीराभिमानि जीवनामकं  
ब्रह्मप्रतिबिंबं भवति ।

*The reflection of caitanyam which identifies itself with the gross body is called Jiva.*

स एव जीवः प्रकृत्या स्वस्मात् ईश्वरं  
भिन्नत्वेन जानाति ।

*This Jiva, by its nature of avidyA (ignorance), assumes that the Isvara is different from him/herself.*

अविद्योपाधिः सन् आत्मा  
जीव इत्युच्यते ।

*The Consciousness (AtmA), conditioned by the upAdhi (medium) of avidyA is Jiva.*

मायोपाधिः सन् ईश्वर इत्युच्यते ।

*The Consciousness (AtmA) conditioned by mAyA is called Isvara.*

It has been explained already on *Srushti Prakaranam* that *Isvara* is a combination of *Brahma* or pure Consciousness and *mAyA*. *MAyA* is responsible for the creation of the total universe of all bodies and beings – the *sthUla* and *sUkshma Sareeras*. But, we have seen that the cause for these two *Sareeras* is *kArana Sareeram*, the causal body. Then the question arises, as to which is the actual cause, the causal body or *maayaa*? But we also know that *kArana*

*Sareeram* is part of *mAyA* only! So, that part of *mAyA* from which the *sthUla*, *sUkshma Sareeras* are formed, is known as causal body, which is given a technical name here, as *avidyA*, which is *anaadi*, as also *mAyA*. *Jiva* is an individual who identifies himself/herself with the gross body. This type of identification is also natural for the individual (as *mAyA* is *anaadi*). *MayA* is of three attributes – *trigunAtmikA*, in nature – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. This *sattva guNa* can be pure, meaning unsullied by *rajas* and *tamas*, or can be impure – *malina sattvam* which has some control by the *rajas* and *tamas* aspects. It is said that the *sattva guNa* used in creation is only *malinasattvam*, because, *sattva* stands for knowledge and all individuals have only limited, imperfect knowledge! In other words, *malina-sattva-pradhAna-mAyA* is responsible for the creation of the *jiva*. In the same way, the other aspect of *mAyA* is *Suddha-sattva-paradhAna*. Here also *rajas* and *tamas* aspects exist, but without any effect. But both the *mAyA*'s are inert only in nature. But, we as living entities have consciousness and where does that come from? Here only, the author brings the concept of *Brahma*, which is the all-pervading Consciousness, which gets manifested or reflected in the *jiva* – which is given in the sloka as ब्रह्मप्रतिबिंबं reflected in अविद्या. For the sake of our discussion we will use अविद्या as impure *mAyA* and माया as pure *mAyA*. Consciousness reflected in *avidyA*, is called *jiva*. So the *jiva* has the problem of ignorance – that is, the *jiva* does not know that he/she is *caitanyam* and identifies with the *Sareeras*, because, the *sattva guNa* is *malinasattvam*. However, *isvara*

has no such problem, because it is *Suddhasattva-pradhAna*. So, *Isvara* is *sarvajna:*, *sarvaSaktimAn* etc., while the *jiva* is *alpajna:*, *alpaSaktimAn* etc. However, the difference between *jiva* and *Isvara* is not original, because both are Consciousness, but it is only the reflecting medium - for example, the same object appears clear in a pure mirror, but appears dirty in a dirty mirror. The reflecting medium or *Upadhi*, essentially, is the cause for the difference. Author defines *Isvara* as the pure *Caitanyam* (*Sarvagata Caitanyam* or *Bimba Chaitanyam*), which is of *Sat-Cit-Ananda svarupa* and a reflecting medium. The reflecting medium or *Upadhi* here is the *mAyA* or the factor associated with *Isvara* - the *Suddha-sattva-pradhAna-mAyA*. The *jiva* is composed of the *pratibimba caitanyam* or the manifested form of *bimba caitanyam* and a reflecting medium, which is *avidyA*. To put it in a concise form,

*Isvara:* → Reflected Consciousness +  
*mAyA* medium

*Jiva:* → Reflected Consciousness +  
*avidyA* medium

Put, differently,

*Isvara* - *mAyA* → *Brahman*

*JivA* - *avidyA* → *Brahman*

So, without the medium - *upaadhi* - the *jiva* and *isvara* are identical and so is referred here as, *jiva-isvara-aikyam*.

We should bear in mind that the medium in the case of *Isvara* is *samashTi* (total) and is *vyashTi* for the individual or *Jiva*. The *samashTi upaadhi* is unsullied in nature and so *Isvara* has control over *mAyA*. The *vyashTi upaadhi* has *raajasic* and *taamasic* aspects on the *sattvam* (*malina sattvam*) and so *Jiva* has no control over *mAyA*. With the introduction of a reflecting medium, it is clear that the *pratibimba caitanyam* may not have all the qualities of the *bimba caitanyam* since the

impurities or ignorance of the medium can not reveal the true nature of *Brahman* or *sarvagata caitanyam*. With the above discussion in mind, if we look at the *slokas* given above,

स्थूलशरीराभिमानि जीवनामकं  
ब्रह्मप्रतिबिंबं भवति ।

That is, *jiva:* - who identifies with the *sthUlaSareeram* etc. is the *pratibimbam* or reflection.

If it is the reflection, what is the medium of reflection? It is *avidyA* and so we have to add, *अविद्यायां* to *ब्रह्मप्रतिबिंबं भवति* ।

स एव जीवः प्रकृत्या स्वस्मात् ईश्वरं  
भिन्नत्वेन जानाति ।

That very entity is *jiva*, which by nature, understands *Isvara* as different from itself.

But really speaking, what is *jiva:*?

अविद्योपाधिः सन् आत्मा  
जीव इत्युच्यते ।

It is *आत्मा एव* - *Atman* only, but reflected in the mirror of *avidyA* - *अविद्योपाधिः* ।

Similarly,

मायोपाधिः सन् ईश्वर इत्युच्यते ।

We have to add *मायोपाधिः सन् आत्मा ईश्वर इत्युच्यते*  
Because of the reflecting medium of *mAyA*, *Atman*, the pure *caitayam* is called *Isvara*.

So, the author reiterates that,

एवं उपाधिभेदात् जीवेश्वरभेददृष्टिः  
यावत्पर्यन्तं तिष्ठति  
तावत्पर्यन्तं जन्ममरणादिरूपसंसारो  
न निवर्तते ।

So long as the notion that the *jiva* and *isvara* are different- which is due to the difference in the medium - remains, until then, there is no relief from 'samsaara' which is of the form of repeated birth and deaths etc.

यावत्पर्यन्तं As long as,

जीवेश्वरभेददृष्टिः the vision of difference between *jiva* and *isvara*.

Caused by what?

एवं उपाधिभेदात् तिष्ठति remains, merely due to difference in reflecting medium.

तावत्पर्यन्तं so long,

संसारः न निवर्तते । Problems of *samsAra* will never go away.

What is the nature of *samsAra*?:

जन्ममरणादिरूपः births, deaths and all associated ills.

तस्मात्कारणान्न जीवेश्वरयो-  
र्भेदबुद्धिः स्वीकार्या ।

For that reason, the notion that *jiva* is different from *isvara* should not be accepted.

तस्मात्कारणात् for that reason

जीवेश्वरयोर्भेदबुद्धिः the notion of difference between *jiva* and *isvara*

न स्वीकार्या one should not accept.

### 5. That Thou Art : *tat-tvam-asi*

For convenience, author calls the *pratibimba caitanyam* and *upadhi* (the medium) together as *ahamkaara*, the ego. *ahamkaara* varies between individuals and also between *jiva* and *Isvara*. For *Jiva* (*vyashTi* plane) one thinks 'I am doing', 'I am the body', 'I am strong', 'I am great', 'I am small', 'I am limited' etc. *Isvara* (*samashTi* plane) thinks 'I am *sarva-kartA*', 'I am *sarva-vyApi*', '*sarva-Saktimaan*' etc. which represents the *samashti ahamkaara* or the ego of all creations put together.

ननु साहंकारस्य किञ्चिज्ज्ञस्य जीवस्य  
निरहंकारस्य सर्वज्ञस्य ईश्वरस्य  
तत्त्वमसीति महावाक्यात्  
कथमभेदबुद्धिः स्यादुभयोः  
विरुद्धधर्माक्रान्तत्वात् ।

But, the *jiva* is endowed with *ahamkAra* (ego) and his knowledge is limited. While, *Isvara* is without *ahamkAra* and is *sarvajna*: (omniscient); (then) how can there be the identity, as stated in the *mahAvAkya* "*tat-tvam-asi*" (that thou art), between these two, who are endowed with contradictory characteristics?

Ego or *ahamkAra* is a desired quality to transact the day to day affairs in the *vyAvahArika* plane. Mind and intellect are essential to establish contact with the outside world and successfully conduct a *vyAvahArika* life. But, depending on how one identifies oneself, either with the *bimba caitanyam* or with *ahamkAra*, makes a difference. In wakeful and dream states, one can realize the existence of *ahamkAra*. But, in deep sleep state, *ahamkAra* is resolved and just 'I am' remains. There is no contact established in deep sleep state to the outside world, and the *bimba caitanyam* exists as a witness. As long as the *Jiva* thinks that he/she is different from *Isvara*, there is no escape from *samsAra*.

Having given the differences between *Jiva* and *Isvara*, the author makes a statement of the *mahAvAkya* '*tat-tvam-asi*'. The term "*tat*" always refers to *Isvara*; "*tvam*" refers to *Jiva*; And, "*asi*" indicates the "*aikyam*" or identity between them. The author also indicates how it should be interpreted; otherwise it might look contradicting. Looking at the above sloka,

ननु But

विरुद्धधर्म आक्रान्तत्वात् उभयोः Because, both (*jiva* and *isvara*) are endowed with contradicting attributes; That is,

साहंकारस्य जीवस्य for the *jiva* who has *ahamkAra* (and)

किञ्चिज्ज्ञस्य has limited knowledge,

While, ईश्वरस्य for *isvara*, निरहंकारस्य सर्वज्ञस्य who has no *ahamkAra* and is Omniscient; and so,

कथं अभेदबुद्धिः स्यात् How there can be a notion of identity?

If such a question were to arise, the author proceeds to explain in the following manner.

इति चेन्न ।  
स्थूलसूक्ष्मशरीराभिमानी त्वंपदवाच्यार्थः ।  
उपाधिविनिर्मुक्तं समाधिदशासंपन्नं शुद्धं  
चैतन्यं त्वंपदलक्ष्यार्थः ।

*If so, ( if the question were to arise), it is not so. The literal meaning of the word "Thou" is that who identifies himself with the gross and subtle bodies (the jiva). The special or implied meaning of the word "thou" is pure Consciousness which is free from all such conditionings and endowed with the state of samAdhi.*

There can be a plain meaning (sAmAnyā or vacyArtha) and a special meaning (lakshArtha) to a sentence. If one identifies 'aham' with the ahamkAra component (vAcyArtha), then the limitations become his. If one identifies 'aham' or 'I' with the bimba caitanyam (lakshyArtha), then he realizes the true nature of Brahman or Atman which is of sat-cit-Ananda svarUpa:. If the samashTi upAdhi and the manifested pratibimba caitanyam are removed from Isvara and the vyashTi upAdhi and manifested pratibimba caitanyam are removed from jiva, then the jiva and Isvara become one and identical. The identity is nothing but Brahma or the bimba caitanyam or Suddha caitanyam. So, there is a difference between jiva and Isvara only in the ahamkAra plane. There is no difference in the Consciousness or knowledge plane. This section can also be called as mahAvAkyā vicAra:, since 'tat tvam asi' (You are That) is stated and its implied or special meaning is indicated which is the main objective of tattva viveka. The analyses, negations and assertions made in previous

sections are just to make this statement and to support it. Looking at the above sloka,

इति चेन्न If so, (if the question were to arise), no (it is not so)

त्वंपदवाच्यार्थः the literal meaning of the word "tvam" is

स्थूलसूक्ष्मशरीराभिमानी the one who identifies with the gross, subtle bodies

त्वंपदलक्ष्यार्थः the implied or special meaning of the word "tvam" is

उपाधिविनिर्मुक्तं समाधिदशासंपन्नं शुद्धं चैतन्यं  
pure Consciousness, Knowledge, free from all conditionings and endowed with the state of samAdhi.

एवं सर्वज्ञत्वादिविशिष्ट ईश्वरः  
तत्पदवाच्यार्थः ।

*Similarly, the literal meaning of the word "tat" is the Isvara with Omniscience etc, and*

उपाधिशून्यं शुद्धचैतन्यं तत्पदलक्ष्यार्थः

*The implied meaning of the word "tat" is the Pure Consciousness free from all conditionings.*

एवं च जीवेश्वरयोः चैतन्यरूपेणाऽभेदे  
बाधकाभावः ।

*Hence, there is no contradiction regarding the identity between jiva and isvara from the point of view of Consciousness.*

We will continue with discussion of the benefit of this knowledge from the next article.

Om, SAnTi: SAnTi: SAnTi: |

#### Source material:

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