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Praveśa-śruti

"*Praveśa-śruti*" refers to passages in the *Upaniṣads* that describes how *Ātmā* (the Self) enters into the created world of names and forms. This kind of description is found in many *Upaniṣads* to reinforce the understanding that anything which is cognized and referred to with a name and form is unreal and is not what it appears to be. Instead, the only reality that makes the names and forms shine is *Ātmā* alone. One way to understand this is with a metaphor. If one were to conceive of a fancy gold ornament to be worn on the head, the first step would be to create drawings using computer programs and then refer to it with a name. A mold is then made to create the ornament envisaged in the mind. Until molten gold is poured into the mold there can be no ornament. The pouring of the gold to make an ornament which is otherwise just a name and form is akin to *Ātmā* in the story entering the creation of the cosmic person thereby becoming a *jīva* experiencing 'as though' limitation. *Jīva* is not soul but is rather the power by which the five sense organs, five organs of action and mind are held together in the body. This upholds the expression of life force and is therefore described as '*jīva prāṇadhāraṇe*'. This entry of *Ātmā* into the cosmic person by *vyākaraṇam* means that *Ātmā* is reflected in all life forms. *Ātmā* functions as a *jīva* in these life forms while its *swarupa* is the apparitional cause of all, namely *Brahman*.

In the prior section of *Bṛhatī-sahasra*, it was said, for the purposes of *upāsana* that *prāṇa-śakti* or life force entered the person through the toes. The life force relates to life of movement and action. *Ātmā*, being superior, entered from the head in the story, fully aware that *Ātmā* is not part of the body and mind of this cosmic person. *Ātmā* is then the *Sakshi*, an illuminating witnessing awareness. *Ātmā* is realized by understanding which is *jñānam* here. In the story understanding which is *jñānam* here is one step ahead of *upāsana*.

The moment that we look at this body and mind, we create a distance between the body-mind and the truth of who I am. This helps to see the unreal body-mind as false, while simultaneously externalizing any sufferings arising out of wrong identification with the body-mind.

Idandrah

On entering the body of the cosmic person, *Ātmā* looks at the body as *idam*, namely "this body," with the understanding that 'I am' not the body.

Idandraḥ = idaṃ paśyati iti idandraḥ. The noun "*idandra*" means "the one who sees this (body)." Swamiji briefly mentioned the etymology in his class. The step-by-step derivation, covered later in the *Sam̐skṛta* class, is shown below as an example of the depth to which many words in the *Upaniṣad* and *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya* were analyzed in this course.

The word *paśyati* is from *dhatu* (verbal root, often denoted by the symbol √) *dṛś* whose original form (*aupadeśika-swarūpa*) is *√dṛśīr* (= *prekṣaṇe*, to see/to know).

idaṃ paśyati iti idandraḥ [*upapada-tatpuruṣa-samāsa*]

idaṃ + (√dṛśīr + ḍram) [*√dṛśīr* is the *aṅga* and *ḍram* is the *pratyaya* (suffix) for the latter member of the compound]

idaṃ + dṛś-īr + ḍram [PS* 8.3.23 *mo'nuswāraḥ*. When followed by consonant, end-of-the-word *m* is replaced by *anusvāra ṃ*]

idaṃ + dṛś + (ḍ ra m) [*īr*, the *it* marker of the *dhātu*, drops. The *pratyaya* has its own *it* markers *ḍ* and *m*, shown separated here.]

idaṃ + d + (ḍ ra m) [PS 6.4.143 *ṭeḥ*. The *it* letter *ḍ* of the suffix causes *ṭi-lopa* (elision of *ṭi*) in the *aṅga*. PS 1.1.64 *acho'ntyādi ṭi* defines *ṭi* as all letters of the entity starting with the last vowel].

idaṃ + d + ra [Having done the job, the *it* markers of the *pratyaya* drop.]

idan + dra [PS 8.4.58 *anusvārasya yayi parasavarṇaḥ* (*anusvāra ṃ*, when followed by a consonant, is replaced by the nasal letter similar to it, which is *n* here)]

idandra The final form.

*PS = *Pāṇini-Sūtra*

Looking closely is not possible in the superficial conceptual idea of 'I am not this body'. Seeing closely is possible only when the mind has deep sensitivity at its core, resulting in an understanding that is deep within. With such an understanding, the *jīva* is none other than *Isvara* or *Ātmā*. This is within reach here and now for any human being. *Idandra* is shortened as *Indra*, described as *Īśvara* in the *Ṛg-Veda*. *Sākṣī-bhāva* is realizable here and now when there is uninvolved observation without an observer and in deep attention.

There is only one main purpose for this poetic story, and that is to tell the truth of who I am (*Ātmā*), which is none other than *Brahman*, which is cause for the appearance of this cosmos. This was elaborated in the course while delving into the *bhāṣya* in depth, addressing various nuances of the story and their real purport. So long as one is ignorant of this most basic truth of who I am, there is no way to avoid the sufferings of 'hunger and thirst', which lead to the ongoing insecurities of old age, decay, and disintegration of the body. It is possible to realize one's true nature by being *Idandraḥ* and seeing the imper-

sonal 'I am' as the essence of all beings.

“Who Am I?” – Śrī Śaṅkara describes the enquiry that was later popularized by Ramana Maharshi

In the *avatārikā* or introductory *bhāṣya* to chapter 2 of the *Upaniṣad*, Śrī Śaṅkara describes means of self-enquiry, one of which became well-known through the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Śrī Śaṅkara has raised this enquiry of 'who am I' in a verse in *Aparokṣānubūti* as well.

Seeing the body as 'this' raises the question of 'who am I', since by conditioning, the body is taken as 'I'. The truth of *Ātmā* cannot be described by words, and the mind cannot cognize the truth of 'I'. All definition words that follow 'I am' as a description of 'I' are false, and the method is to negate all those by enquiry. The question alone remains, and it is most potent like a seed which can sprout through concrete. The truth of 'I' is in the very longing to know the truth, hence the statement in Brahma Sutras is '*Athāto Brahma-jijñāsā*, not '*Athāto Brahma-jñānam*'.

The *bhāṣya* includes an imagined story of a deluded person who was told by people, "Fie upon you and your cruelty! You are not a human being." This person is confused and approaches a wise person to know who he is. The wise person, seeing the situation, asked him a series of questions to establish that this deluded person is not a tree or animal and whatnot. In the end, he was told, "You are not a non-human." The realization then has to be "I am that I am." Anything that anything that follows 'I' has to be negated, with the truth of who 'I' am becoming evident by being the truth in silence.

In the story, the deluded person must know he is a human being by being human. Similarly, 'who am I' is understood by being *Ātmā* while negating all that 'I am not'.

Was I really born?

Fundamental to all desires and insecurities is the feeling of limitedness due to identification with the body and mind. Birth and death are together; the cause of death is birth and vice versa. As *Ātmā*, which is my only true nature, I am not truly born, and hence there can be no death. What follows is a model of the birth of the food body, solely to create *vairāgya* towards the body and, more importantly, *vairāgya* towards ritualistic beliefs of wanting a son to carry the Vedic debts. The logic in the model is not important; the emphasis is on the spirit of the teachings of *vairāgya* behind the model.

The *Aitareya-Upaniṣad* presents this model about how a *jīva*, a deluded entity, experiences three stages of being in the womb. The first stage involves being in the male semen, which comes from rain and is consumed by a male. If the seed is consumed by a female or is otherwise unviable, it is excreted and returns to the water cycle, eventually becom-

ing part of the rain-bearing clouds again. The second pregnancy occurs when the semen enters the womb of a female and becomes part of her, where it is nourished until a typical birth occurs. In this model, the mother becomes the nourisher of the father as his seed is in her, and he nourishes her, thereby nourishing his own seed-self in her body. They protect each other. There is no need to bring in emotional love, which is egotistic and has the potential to turn into hatred.

This son, who is the father's own seed-self, now grown up, assumes the roles of the father, takes on all his *Vedic* debts, continues as the father's representative, and performs *shrāddha* for the departed father, who then takes the next birth after death. This is the third birth. This model reflects the thinking of ritualists and helps create *vairagya* towards ritual beliefs and processes.

There is no real birth in these descriptions because something unreal cannot become real, nor can the real be born as real. The mere appearance of a false entity in the semen, in the womb, and as a baby is called birth. In another sense, the birth of the ego alone can be called birth, and this happens every morning when one wakes up from deep sleep.

Given such a process involved in the appearance of any child, it is immature to call any child 'my child'. Contemplation can help neutralize the 'me-and-mine' syndrome.

The facts stated in the model were proclaimed by a realized Rishi named *Vamadeva*, who realized his nature in the womb itself before the mind and ego-thoughts were developed. He did not have traditional means of knowledge such as *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* etc and this underscores the importance that realization has nothing to do with any activities associated with all those means of knowledge. *Vāmādeva* contemplated in the heart as both *upāsana* and abiding as the Self leading to realization. Outer *gurus* and *śāstras* can only point one towards the truth. To realize, one must be a light unto oneself. Realization helps transcend mental sufferings associated with old age, decay, and the death of the body. It is therefore best to die to this body, this mind, and this world here and now and come alive to the truth of who I am as *Ātmā*, much like the crucifixion of ego before resurrection.

Prajñānaṁ Brahma

Rṣi Vāmādeva's spoken words are taken as *Śrutivākya* since he had risen beyond body identification and realized his *svarūpa* as *Ānanda-Ātmā*, with all possible desires as though fulfilled. This vision is heard as the realized truth and hence it is *Śruti*. It was true not only for *Rṣi Vāmādeva* but also for all of us here and now. This is not knowledge that gets accumulated in the brain cells. This truth has to be deeply felt and understood without relying on memory. It is like knowing at some point in life that fire burns; this knowledge is not accumulative, but rather understood so deeply that even in a dream

one will know that fire burns the body.

Bṛhatī-sahasra which preceded the *Upaniṣad* describes how *Prāṇa-Ātmā* entered the cosmic person and thereby all living beings via the space between the toes. The *Jñāna-Ātmā*, which is the very light of knowingness, is said to have entered via the head of the same *Puruṣa*. *Prāṇa* causes a lot of activities, and all sense organs and organs of action come alive with activities. Is that the real *Ātmā* or is it the matrix of knowingness?

There is a discussion as to which is superior, *Prāṇa-Ātmā* supported by *karma* and *upāsanā* or *Jñāna-Ātmā*, which is the light of knowingness. The two cannot mix as one. In observing distant stars which is superior: the instrument (telescope) or the eyesight? Is the faculty of sight or the mind that cognizes the form superior? Is the light of knowingness or the mind as an instrument superior?

Śrī Śaṅkara quotes *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad*, where the word *Prajñā* is introduced to mean *Prāṇa*. There is a story in *Praśna-Upaniṣad* that illustrates why *Prāṇa* is superior to all sense organs and organs of action. *Ātmā*, on the other hand, is the very knowing element or matrix of knowingness that enables knowledge of particulars for a knower, itself unaware of anything in particular. It is awareness absolute, devoid of pairs of opposites found in the known. This knowingness illuminates the 'outer world', sense organs and organs of action, as well as the 'inner world' in terms of all states of the mind which are enumerated in the *Upaniṣad*.

Human sufferings arise due to forgetfulness of the true nature being this very knowingness. One must, therefore, look inward as an uninvolved witnessing awareness. Among western philosophers, Immanuel Kant was the first to propose a reflexive analysis that can help reveal the truth behind the knower and intellect.

Cognition, which is only about a particular, aided by sense organs or not, can be seen as false. For example, one never really sees a thing outside the eyes. Only light reflected from an object falls on the retina, which creates some sensations leading to cognition in the mind that adds many entities such as space, time, name assigned from past cognition, likes, and dislikes based on imaginations, etc. Similarly, when we touch something, we never touch anything because the experience is only that of sensing the Van der Waals forces between the skin and whatever is 'out there'. Reflexive analysis shows space and time are not in the *Vastu*. They are added and synthesized by the mind, much like making a Gongura chutney involves adding many items to the Gongura leaves.

In the West, reflexive analysis is considered a Copernican revolution in thinking, though well known in *Upaniṣads*. In all, the light of knowingness alone is the truth. *Sākṣī* is not the subject but the very subjectivity not limited to any body or mind. It is *Prajñānam*. Its light alone reflects in an unreal *upādhi* called the mind, revealing the multitudinous and

variegated objects in the universe, all seemingly bounded by unreal space-time. All that appears and disappears is the light of awareness alone. It is absolute awareness since it is spaceless and timeless.

This can be understood by the analogy of a movie scene, for example, wherein an actor is walking towards his enemy on top of a hill. There is only projector light that, on contact with *upādhi* or adjunct called film, moves, introducing movie-space-time in the mind of the watcher. In the scene witnessed, the actor, his enemy, the hill, and even shadows are all nothing but light. If there is no projector light, there cannot be any movie scene.

In the story starting with *brahmāṇḍa-piṇḍa*, the creation of various demi-gods housed in the sense organs and the organs of action, and *Prāṇa-Ātmā*, which is *apara-brahman*, known as God in popular religions, entering through the toes, there is nothing but this absolute light of awareness with different conditioning, just like a movie actor in a scene is projector light conditioned as a person. *Ātmā*, in the story on entering the created names and forms of a cosmic person, became an 'as-though' limited entity of *jīva* and then looked closely only to realize that all this body and mind is unreal. He became *Idandra* and realized his nature as awareness absolute and understood that all that appears and disappears in the universe is the light of awareness alone. As *Prajñānam*, which is the awareness absolute or knowingness, there is the realization of being Brahman, the cause of this cosmos. This realization is possible for anyone pursuing the truth of life at all costs to realize that 'I am' that knowingness and hence the center of this appearance called cosmos.

I acknowledge all who voluntarily helped to review this article. This is a limited summary and suggest *jijñāsus* to get the audio or video recordings (from the link given below) to pursue their *sadhana* (<https://courses.avgbbooks.org/product/aitareya-upanishad-2/>)

In the seven weeks of the program, Swamiji due to his total commitment to Veda as a *Pra-*mana, due to his shraddha to the *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya*, and due to his universal love for all listeners to come out of this life of bondage, it was a joy for attendees to be able to commune with the heart of *Śāṅkara* while studying this *Aitareya-Upaniṣad* through the words of Swamiji.

Om Tat Sat

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