

KASHI PANCHAKAM OF SRI SANKARACHARYA

With the commentary Tatva Prakāśikā

by

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Introduction:

There are three aspects to any dharma: karma or rituals, upāsana or mental worship, also called bhakti or devotion, and jñāna or philosophy. All these three aspects are beautifully integrated in Hindu Dharma. In the Western culture, however, we find that philosophy is distanced from religion, which is limited to rituals and devotion. Even great philosophers like Aristotle did not contribute to religion and, in fact, some of them like Bertrand Russell and Nietzsche have spoken against organized religion. We find a marvellous synthesis of philosophy and religion in Hindu Dharma. Here, religion is not opposed to philosophy, and philosophers are not against religion. For example, even though Śrī Śaṅkarā is dedicated to jñāna, yet, he accommodates karma with certain restrictions. Needless to say, no philosopher can accommodate niṣiddha karma or prohibited action. Śrī Śaṅkarā does not accommodate kāmya karma, ritual prompted by desire, either. Even in the Gita, kāmya karma is denigrated and rejected outright without any hesitation. The nitya karma, duty-based action, on the other hand, is beautifully integrated into yoga, the means of communion with God or the pursuit of knowledge.

One's life is a life of action and therefore, karma has to be in-

tegrated properly into Self-knowledge. Karma has the quality of perpetuating itself and rituals have grown very unwieldy over time. Philosophy cannot accommodate all of these karmas. For example, the Kaivalyopanishad (3) says, *na karmanā na prajayā dhanena tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānasuḥ*, it is through renunciation that a few have attained immortality, not through rituals, progeny, or wealth. If ritualism is divorced from the doctrine of philosophy, it becomes mechanical, repetitive, and dulls the mind. Karmas practised with the right attitude of duty and devotional offering are nicely integrated into philosophy as karma yoga, a means of purifying the mind. As Śrī Śaṅkarā repeatedly points out, karma yoga is a wonderful means to neutralize phalābhisandhi, the attachment towards the result of actions.

Normally, we have so much attachment to the result, which fructifies in the future, that we tend to justify any means to achieve it. Since the mind cannot be committed to two things at the same time, our commitment to the result impacts our commitment to the means. It is the means that shapes the end, and karma yoga is an attitude of action without an attachment to the result. This attitude is described in Gita, 6-1, as *anāśritaḥ karmaphalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ*, the one who performs action that is to be done, not driven by the result thereof. The striver has to perform *nitya* and *naimittika* karma, duties to be fulfilled daily and on occasion, without seeking the results thereof.

Bhakthi, devotion, which includes mythology, is also well integrated into Hindu philosophy. For instance, the Gita, 14-26 says, *mām ca yo vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate sa guṇān samatityaitān brahmabhūyāya kalpate*; whosoever worships Me with

unwavering yoga of devotion, he transcends these guṇās (satva, rajas and tamas) and becomes eligible to become Brahman. This is niṣkāma bhakti, motiveless devotion. It helps one gain Self-knowledge. Again, if devotion is not validated by doctrinal philosophy, it becomes superstitious and does not help elevate the devotee. It has to become Yoga.

When religion gets divorced from philosophy and the rituals and mythology dominate, it loses its transforming power. One may perform elaborate rituals, often ostentatiously, with lots of effort, yet he is not transformed. If religion does not inspire and transform the individual who is the pillar of the society, it is a failure. This is how some of the ancient religions have lost their transformative power – their rituals and mythology are divorced from philosophy. Even while relating to mythology, philosophy should be kept in mind. This is one of the main contribution of Śrī Śaṅkarā. He removes all the weeds out of karma khāṇḍa and makes karma into karma yoga, a means of attaining Self-realization. Also Śrī Śaṅkarā's encomiums bring the flavour of philosophy into devotional literature and make it a means to the realization of the Self. He transforms bhakti into bhakti yoga. Mechanical recitation of these encomiums should not be the goal of devotees. These encomiums help us take the life of karma and bhakti into jñāna.

Religion is mythological descriptions taken literally, whereas spirituality is rising above literality. If one does not take the spirit of the mythological descriptions, one falls into the trap of division. When a person takes the division between him and Īśvara to be true, other divisions such as the division between him and other

individuals become true as well, and the oneness or the undividedness of the Reality is completely lost. Therefore, students of Vedanta should overcome literalism.

The Hindu mythological literature is created based on the principle of symbolism. Parokṣa priya iva hi devāḥ (Aitareyopaniṣat, 1-3-14), 'the gods are verily fond of indirect names'. The seers love to shroud the truth in symbolic language. For instance, instead of saying that the sunlight can be split into seven colors, the puranas portray the sun as saptāśvarathamārūḍham, the one who travels by a chariot pulled by seven horses. The literal meaning sounds ridiculous, but the symbolism shows that the seers had a marvellous power of observation. Similarly, a serpent is supposed to swallow the sun or the moon during the eclipses. There is only a shadow which covers up a part of the light of sun, and that is presented as a serpent. As the spirit of the portrayal is understood, the literal poetic beauty could be better appreciated.

Kāśī is an ancient town bustling with pilgrims. Like any other ancient town, it is full of narrow lanes. And, taking bath in the Ganges in Kāśī could be an ordeal due to the sheer number of people that throng its ghats. Yet, we rise above personal considerations and take a dip in the Ganges. Our deep love for the Ganges and Kāśī can overcome all these inconveniences. It is believed that the ceremonial dip in the Ganges washes off all the sins and the person becomes eligible to enter the heaven after death. But, there is a deep spiritual significance to every aspect of Kāśī and its sacred river, Ganges. A study of the Kāśīpañcakam helps us understand this spirit and helps us rise above the literalism.

Verse 1

मनोनिवृत्तिः परमोपशान्तिस्सा तीर्थवर्या मणिकर्णिका च ।

ज्ञानप्रवाहा विमलाऽऽदिगङ्गा सा काशिकाऽहं निजबोधरूपा ॥ १ ॥

manonivṛttiḥ paramopaśāntissā tīrthavaryā maṇikarṇikā ca ।
jñānapravāhā vimalā’ digangā sā kāśikā’ham nijabodharūpā ॥ 1 ॥

मनोनिवृत्तिः manonivṛttiḥ – quietude of the mind, परमा paramā –
supreme, उपशान्तिः upaśāntiḥ – peace, सा śā – that, च ca – indeed,
तीर्थवर्या tīrthavaryā – the holiest of the holy, मणिकर्णिका maṇikarṇikā
– the ghat Maṇikarṇikā, ज्ञानप्रवाहा jñānapravāhā – the flow of
knowledge, विमला - vimalā’ – pure, आदिगङ्गा ādigangā – the
original Ganges, सा sā – that, काशिका kāśikā – Kāśi, अहम् Aham – I
am, निजबोधरूपा nijabodharūpā – having the form of one’s own
awareness.

- 1. I am that city of Kāśi in the form of my own pure awareness. The supreme peace that is the quietude of the mind is that Maṇikarṇikā ghat, the holiest of the holy. The flow of the waking consciousness is the divine Ganges.**

Kāśikā means Kāśi, one of the holiest pilgrimage centres of India. The suffix *ka* does not enhance the meaning, like the *bālaka* meaning *bāla*, boy, and *kanyakā* meaning *kanyā*, girl.

In the statement, *kāśikā’ham*, I am that Kāśi, the literal meaning is

already left behind. Kāśaḥ prakāśaḥ asyā asti iti Kāśi. Kāśi means Atman, the Awareness Absolute, in which everything shines. As Śrī Śaṅkarā says in Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotraṁ (1) viśvaṁ nijāntartagam, the universe is included in one’s Self.

‘I am’ is the crux of Vedanta. Who am I? ‘I am’ is the most fundamental experience, the common matrix of all living beings. In fact, ‘I am’ is already present before anything else in the waking consciousness. Everything – pleasure, pain, religion, God etc. – exists only because of ‘I am’. The entire content of the waking consciousness has its origin in ‘I am’. What is the essence of ‘I am’?

Vedāntins are upādānaikaśaraṇā meaning that the matrix is the most important for Vedāntins. If we take the world on its face value as a real collection of things and investigate its cause, we may end up concluding that Īśavara created this universe from some material or out of nothing. This extreme duality is against the tenets of Vedanta and science. We have to understand that consciousness is the matrix of the universe. The universe is the content of waking consciousness, an appearance in the consciousness.

‘I am’ is the starting point of the waking state. It is the primordial intelligence. We should discover the true nature of ‘I am’ instead of rejoicing over a few superimpositions like ‘I am a parent’, ‘I am a musician’, ‘I am rich’, ‘I am an American’, ‘I am a Brahmin’, etc. There is no truth in such notions. We should not attach anything to ‘I am’. ‘I am’ is the awareness of the being. That self-shining awareness is the Kāśi.

How do we know the existence of a pot? It does not declare its ex-

istence by itself. A conscious being has to validate its existence through the agency of the eyesight and the mind. Shining is of two kinds. One is shining of the outside light. But, there is knowledge of the pot only when the pot shines in the knowingness. Pot has to be loaded into one's consciousness to be recognized by him. There cannot be an existence that is altogether unknown to the conscious being. Thus, a pot is not svayamprakāśya, self-shining; it is paraprakāśya, shines by the light, by the eyesight and by the mind as the content of the waking consciousness. On the other hand, 'I am' shines in its own light.

'I am' is prior to perception and conception. 'I am' is not an idea; it is prior to the mind. Time and space are categories of the mind. There is time only when there is a thought and there is space only when we identify with the body. As we identify with the body, we are limited in space, and as we identify with the mind, we get caught in the flow of time. Therefore, 'I am' is prior to both the body and mind. It is Kāśi, the space-less time-less self-shining conscious presence.

Purāṇās tell us that Kāśi is the centre of the universe. The infinite has centre everywhere. God is the Infinite centred in every human heart. 'I am' or Kāśi is that centre. Physical body is a speck in the universe, not 'I am'. The entire universe springs up from the waking consciousness, is in the waking consciousness, is sustained in the waking consciousness, and resolves in the same.

Sā tīrthavaryā maṇikarṇikā ca. The Maṇikarṇikā ghat in Kāśi is the popular cremation ghat and yet the most sacred. Most dead bodies in and around Kāśi are brought there for cremation. The

pious take bath there and conduct their prayers. This ghat symbolizes the negation of identification with the body. One has to die to the body to become awake to the truth. As long as we take the body to be ourselves, the truth remains far off in spite of what we say or do. Intellectualization of the truth is not the truth. The truth will reveal itself only when we prepare ourselves for the revelation, and the preparation is the negation of the identification with the body.

The body identification is three-fold: *aham*, I am the body, *mama*, my body, and *mahyam*, body is for me. We practise *karma yoga*, selfless service, to neutralize *mahyam*. The body is put to rightful action without seeking results; the results are surrendered to Īśvara or the society at large. Just as the wind does not blow for its own sake, but for the sake of the entire manifestation, so also the faculties of the body and mind function not for our benefit alone, but for the welfare of the entire humanity. The *mama* identity is neutralized by *bhakti yoga*, motiveless devotion. In the context of devotion, *namaḥ*, prostration, is very important. It means *na me*, not mine. Everything of this creation, including the body, belongs to Īśvara. Then, the ignorance that I am the doer is negated by discernment of Self as distinct (not different) from the body, which is the non-self. This is *sāṅkhyā yoga*.

Upaśāntiḥ, the dousing of the fire, the fire of affliction. There are three kinds of *tāpa*, affliction: *ādhyātmika*, related to the physical body like ill-health, *ādhibhautika*, the suffering caused by raging street dogs, thieves etc., *ādhidaivika*, problems like famine caused by the gods. The heart is at peace when these three fires are doused.

Why the adjective parama, supreme or ultimate, to upaśānti? When we sleep, all the afflictions are gone and when we wake up, the three types of afflictions come back. It is as if they are waiting for us to wake up. Thus the śānti, that we experience during sleep is brittle, not parama. In the waking state too, there are many methods to reduce the agitation of the mind, e.g. taking tranquilizers. The agitation however comes back once the effect of the drug wears away. In fact, we often become more distressed after such temporarily acquired peace of mind. It is like lightning, which briefly lights up objects in the dark and disappears quickly. We want the real peace of mind, not the ephemeral one.

We seek permanent cessation of all suffering and pain and that is mokṣa, also called nirvāṇa. Vāṇa is suffering and nirvāṇa is freedom from suffering. Freedom is mostly described in negative terms. What it is cannot be described. It is not what is described in words. Therefore, what it is not alone is described. It is freedom from afflictions. It is conscious presence that transcends all divisions. We just abide in the self, 'I am', and discover that inner silence.

It is not the silence per Se that is important. The flow of thoughts is harmless if and only if the content of the mind is realized as unreal. As we take the content of the waking consciousness as real and as 'other', we psychologically depend upon that content for self-fulfilment and happiness. And then, we try to manipulate the content as we seek pleasure and avoid pain. This is nothing but deeply ingrained ignorance and bondage.

The flow of thoughts acts as a screen that covers up the truth. The

mind creates a world for us and presents it to us on a platter every morning, and we accept that as real and take ourselves to be a small part of that world. Unless we negate this projection of the mind, we cannot discover the truth. This subject-object division and plurality projected by the ignorant mind is mithyā, unreal. To know the truth, we have to step away from the mind and watch it; then, it automatically becomes calm and quiet.

As we identify with the mind, we give a reality to the object of its thoughts. While paying attention to and investing interest in the objects of the world, we cannot realize it as illusion. Withdraw your attention, withhold your interest and draw back from the mind. Watch the mind constantly. Be kind to it, but in an uninvolved way. This is yoga. Initially, the progress is slow in yoga, and therefore, perseveringly withdraw from the thoughts. Be a witness to the mind, and the mind becomes pure. De-automatize every action. For instance, we talk while taking food, and eating becomes mechanical. Stop talking and experience fully the taste of the dish. That is also yoga. Similarly, watch yourself while walking.

When the mind is agitated, I am agitated, for there is no discrimination between the 'I' and the mind. 'I am' and 'I think' are not the same; they are diametrically opposed to each other. 'I am' is the motionless being, while thinking is changeful. As we identify with the mind, we remain trapped in it. As we withdraw from the mind and start watching it, we realize that we are the knower of the mind. The mind is kṣetra, field, and all the objects of thought are part and parcel of this field.

In yoga, one should not contradict oneself. One should not increase the impurities of the mind or work at cross-purposes. As we purify the mind by *prāṇāyāma* or control of the mind through regulated breathing, meditation, listening to the scriptures etc., we should avoid impurities like hate, jealousy, greed etc. at all costs. Once the mind is pure, we will realize that we are not the mind, but a witness of the mind. Since the mind is filled with the six-fold enemy such as greed, anger, jealousy, etc., realizing oneself as the witness is not possible. We have to know deep within that we are not the mind, and thus transcend the mind. We will be able to transcend the mind if and only if the mind is pure.

An impure mind that is attached to the world holds us back. *Ant-aḥkaraṇa śuddhi* or purification of the mind, is the most crucial starting point. As the mind becomes pure, it becomes *sātvika* in nature, calm and quiet, loses its *rājasa* (hyperactivity) and *tāmasā* (dullness) burden. Then, one can easily see oneself that he is not the mind. One is the intelligence behind the intellect; one is prior to the mind. This inner space is a deep, unshakable peace. This inner silence is the conscious presence. It is not void, it is *Kāśī*.

In *Kāśī*, there is the river Ganges. It is *vimalā*, sanctifying. Water of the Ganges remains pure despite a lot of toxins and chemicals that are dumped into it. No other river has such power of self-purification. For example, it is relatively pure as the river enters the city of Kanpur, but the water becomes very dirty and toxic as the many tanneries of Kanpur dump their waste into the river; but within 10 miles of leaving Kanpur, the water again becomes almost pure. The sealed Ganges water remains pure for a very long time. The Ganges of *Kāśī* stands for the perennial manifestation of

Atman, the timeless Awareness, in the form of waking consciousness. The movement of the mind and the senses are the content of that consciousness.

Verse 2

यस्यामिदं कल्पितमिन्द्रजालं चराचरं भाति मनोविलासम् ।

सच्चित्सुखैका परमात्मरूपा सा काशिकाऽहं निजबोधरूपा ॥ २ ॥

yasyāmidam kalpitamindrajālam carācaram bhāti manovilāsam |
saccitsukaikā paramātmarūpā sā kāśikā.ham nijabodharūpā || 2 |

yasyām – In Which, idam – this, kalpitam – imagined, indrajālam – magic, manovilāsam – the playfulness of the mind, carācaram – moving and non-moving, bhāti – Shines, saccitsukaikā – Existence-Awareness-Bliss, ekā - One, paramātmarūpā – in the form of the innermost core of the individual, sā – that, kāśikā – Kasi; aham – I am, nijabodharūpā – having the form of one's own awareness.

- 2. I am the city of Kāsi in the form of my own pure awareness. In it shines this unreal magic called the world consisting of moving and non-moving life forms. This world is mere playfulness of the mind. That Reality is Existence-Awareness-Bliss, One, obtaining as the innermost core of the individual.**

This universe that exists and shines in that primordial intelligence called Ātman is created by the movement of the mind. For example, as the light of the movie projector shines brilliantly, a movie is projected on the screen due to the movement of the film.

The movie has all the elements of saṁsāra consisting of pleasure, pain, attachment, aversion etc., including the space and time. It has mountains, rivers, gardens, flowers, animals, birds and creatures. Everything exists and shines in the brilliance of the projector light. Our waking world is no different.

Where is the world when we are asleep? The moment we wake up, the primordial intelligence, 'I am', comes to light and then the body. The world also arises along with the body, and there is an instant identification with the body giving birth to the person. The body and the world arise and resolve together. Just as the film moving in the presence of the light makes a movie, so also the playfulness of the mind in the waking consciousness creates the world. The light is the brilliantly shining Awareness Absolute. It is the Kāsi and the film is manovilāsa, the playfulness of the mind. The entire world of moving and unmoving, living and non-living, comes to light.

Sometimes, the movie world appears more attractive, tangible, and real than the real world. A tennis match watched on high-definition TV could be more engaging than watching it in a stadium. Yet it is kalpita, projected, unreal, and dream-like. The world that we experience is entirely a projection of the mind, a magic show, a captivating and binding illusion. One has to gradually grow into this vision.

What is the reality? Saccitsukhaikā, the one Existence-Awareness-Bliss. We have to negate nānā rūpa buddhi, the commitment to names and forms, to understand the truth. We have to negate all projections – name, form, opposites like attachment and aversion

etc. There is a lot of confusion around 'I am'. 'I am' Is not connected to any of the content of waking consciousness in any way. It is undefined, undesignated, undifferentiated, primordial awareness of being. It is *saccit*.

What is it that we want in life? We assume that we want different things like money, power, family etc., but what we really want is happiness. We are seeking happiness alone through money, power etc. We have a right to seek the happiness, but the methods are all wrong. We should not seek happiness in the 'other' because the other is insentient and unreal, and hence, cannot give us happiness. Where do we get this feeling of goodness when we feel good watching a movie? Does it flow from the screen unto us or does it flow from us on to the screen? It flows from us to the screen. Happiness does not flow from the outside into our hearts. This is the truth that we refuse to realize. Those who know this truth conquer *samsāra*. How does one discover this truth? One has to abide in the awareness of the being in order to discover its fullness. As we discover *saccit*, the screen of thoughts created by the mind melts away and the inner reality flows into life making it spontaneously joyful.

Paramātmārūpā, the reality is the innermost Self, not the self identified with body-mind. We derive the sense of self from every possible non-self. For example, the rich man derives his sense of self from his riches. The parent or spouse derives the sense of the self from his relationships. One should not derive the sense of self from anything that one comes to know, because it is the other. Therefore, one has to drop all self-identification. There is nothing sacred in these identifications; they are indeed misleading. The

enlightened find it very hard to identify with anything, while the worldly people readily identify with everything. Be nobody, not a somebody. Only then will the real Self shine gloriously.

Verse 3

कोशेषु पञ्चस्वधिराजमाना बुद्धिर्भवानी प्रतिदेहगेहम् ।

सक्षी शिवस्सर्वगतोऽन्तरात्मा सा काशिकाऽहं निजबोधरूपा ॥

koṣeṣu pañcasvadhiraṅamānā buddhirbhavānī pratidehageham ।
saksī śivassarvagatho.antarātmā sā kāśikā.ham nijabodharūpā ॥3॥

प्रतिदेहगेहम् Pratidehageham – in every home of the body, पञ्चसु
pañcasu–five, कोशेषु koṣeṣu – in the sheaths, अधिराजमाना
adhirāṅamānā – shining as the presiding deity, बुद्धिः buddhiḥ –
intellect, भवानी bhavānī – consort of Śiva, सर्वगतः sarvagataḥ, - all-
pervading, अन्तरात्मा antarātmā – The inner ruler, सक्षी saksī – the
witness, शिवः śivaḥ, - Śivaḥ, सा sā – that, काशिका kāśikā – Kāśi, अहम्
Aham – I am, निजबोधरूपा nijabodharūpā – having the form of one-
s own awareness.

3. I am that city of Kāśi in the form of my own pure awareness. The all-pervading witness, who is the inner ruler, is Lord Śiva. The intellect shining as the presiding deity in the five sheaths in everybody is the consort of Śiva.

Sā aham, I am that. Sā is that reality. We cannot describe the real-

ity with any other words except saying That. The truth is so simple and so profound that language cannot reach it. Truth is existential, not linguistic. Yet, it has to be communicated only through words. Therefore, we use words which signal the truth. One such word is tat, that. Om tatsaditi nirdeśo brahmaṇāstrividhassmṛtaḥ (Gita, 17-23), Brahman is referred to in three ways, Om, tat, and sat. Sā is a form of that alone. Saḥ is masculine gender, sā feminine, and tat neuter, but the meaning is the same. The gender belongs to the language, not to the light of awareness.

I am that Kāśikā, the self-shining Awareness. The multiple experiences of the waking and dream states shine in It. Deep sleep, which is absence of all experiences, is also an experience, and it shines in that awareness. That Awareness is the substratum, the light of lights, in which all human experience shine. That is my essential nature.

Kāśikā is jñapti, knowingness, the Atman, the Infinite, which reflects in the finite body-mind as sakṣī, witness, witness of all cognitions and actions. It is the witness to the entire movement of the mind, which is broadly classified as waking consciousness, dream consciousness and the unmanifest consciousness of deep sleep. We become conscious of something only because of the contact of the infinite with the finite; that is the manifest consciousness. The Atman as it reflects is the sakṣī, witness, in all the three states.

Atman is sarvagata, pervading all. Generally, we think that 'all' is outside. Outside of what? It cannot be outside the waking consciousness. The pot is outside the body but not the knowingness. What kind of existence would it be that is outside the space-like

consciousness? Existence cannot be divorced from knowingness. When we say 'all', that 'all' is indeed the content of the consciousness. The light of knowingness pervades the entire content of the waking consciousness. The content can be broadly divided into two categories, known and unknown; knowingness pervades the known as well as the unknown. Or, if the content is divided as in and out, then the space-like knowingness pervades both in and out. That light in which the entire consciousness shines is free from all opposites. It is free from pleasure and pain, comfort and discomfort, friend and foe, honour and dishonour, self and non-self. Divisions and opposites bind. As long as we are perturbed by these opposites, we are in bondage.

The opposites bind us due to identification of different kinds. Sometimes, the identification can be very gross such as the body-identification. Sometimes, it is very subtle like intellectual arrogance. Every identification makes us victims of pairs of opposites. Be nirdvandva, free of opposites. Rise above the identifications and abide as the light of lights, the awareness of the being, sākṣi of all bodily and mental experiences.

Fortunately, the dream state is very short-lived and does not bind us much except in rare cases where the dreams become a nightmare. Though we abide as the witnessing awareness to the sleep state, it does not bind us. All bondage is centred on the waking consciousness. Therefore, we need to be unperturbed, uninvolved and disinterested witness to the content of waking consciousness, and thus, transcend it. We should not get caught in the web of opposites. Just as electricity of the powerhouse appears as a glow when it comes into contact with a filament, so also the infinite At-

man, Kāśi, comes into contact with the finite body-mind and reflects in the five sheaths.

In life, there is the fundamental mistake of identification at different levels, because of which they become kośās, sheaths, which bind. There is bondage only when we identify. The identification amounts to a sin. The Infinite is embedded in the finite, like a shining sword hidden by the scabbard. The sheaths are, anamaya, physical body, prāṇamaya, vital force, which causes all the movements of life, manomaya, mind, vijñānamaya, the sense of doership and ānandamaya, enjoyership or the ego. Body and mind are sheaths only when we identify with them. If we do not identify by remaining as the witnessing awareness, they are no more sheaths. Similarly, if one does not mistake himself as a doer, the intellect is no more a sheath, in spite of activity that originates in the intellect. Similarly, when we relinquish the enjoyership, the ego is not bondage any more.

There is bondage only because of the mistake of identification. This mistake is called māyā or āvidyā. The ignorance of the individual or āvidyā is part of the cosmic māyā, which is the cause of this entire universe. It is the creative power of Brahman. Symbolically, it is presented as Bhavāni, the consort of Śiva.

You are not the body, because you are aware of it. If one were the body, one will not know the body. As Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi says, deho na jānāti, the body does not know (Saddarśanam, 26). But one knows the body and therefore, one is not the body. The eyes do not see themselves. One knows when the eyes see and also when they do not. Therefore, one is not the eyes. A

thought is the means of cognizing an object such as a pot but it cannot cognize itself. One knows the thought and also its absence. Therefore, one is not the mind. One is the intelligence behind the thought, always aware of the thought. Therefore, identification with the mind or its thought is a mistake.

The same logic applies to doership. One is not a doer unless one identifies with the body and the organs of action. Similarly, there is no enjoyership in the absence of identification with the sense organs. Therefore, there is a very fundamental mistake in life of identifying with the five levels of the finite medium called upādhi. And we have to correct this mistake. Mistakes like investing in a wrong stock are not as harmful as this cognitive error. Another name for such a mistake is avidyā, ignorance, which has its origin in the cosmic principle of creation. Pratidehageham, this is a universal mistake. Bhavāni is the cosmic principle.

Śiva is the universal Being. It is our essential nature. We have to identify with the being. Don't identify with the five categories mentioned above. Śiva is puruṣa, the fullness of Being, and buddhi is prakṛti or Bhavāni, the medium in which the fullness of the Being reflects. As the Gita says (13 . 22) puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi buñkte prakṛtijān guṇān, puruṣa suffers the qualities of prakṛti due to identification with prakṛti. Bhavaṁ samsāriṇām karoti iti Bhavāni, Bhavāni or prakṛti makes Śiva a samsāri .

Once one knows oneself as sākāśi and desists from every identification, the sheaths are decimated and the apparent difference between the individual and Godhead ends. The body and vital forces continue to function normally and spontaneously by the

momentum of nature. On the other hand, as we identify, the bondage remains in place. Be a witness to the mind, to the ego, and to all enjoyments. As we witness the ego, it cannot survive; it simply resolves. A functional ego may arise, but it is harmless. Mind becomes pure even as you begin to watch it; such an ego won't bind you. I am sākṣi, I am Śiva.

Verse 4

काश्यां हि काशते काशी काशी सर्वप्रकाशिका ।

सा काशी विदिता येन तेन प्राप्ता हि काशिका ॥

kāśyām hi kāśate kāśī kāśī sarvaprakāśikā ।

sā kāśī viditā yena tena prāptā hi kāśikā ॥

काश्यां kāśyām – in Kāśī हि hi – indeed काशी kāśī – Kasi काशते kāśate – Shines, काशी kāśī - Kāśī, सर्वप्रकाशिका sarvaprakāśikā – illuminates all, सा sā – that, काशी – Kāśī, येन yena – by whomsoever, विदिता viditā – realized, तेन tena – by him, हि hi - indeed, काशिका kāśikā – Kāśī, प्राप्ता prāptā – gained.

- 4. The city of Kāśī is indeed shining in the Awareness that is Atman. That Kāśī illuminates all. Whosoever realizes that Kāśī indeed gains Kāśī.**

Kāśī is the light of lights, the Awareness that is Atman. In the waking state, the eyesight is light to shapes and colors and the ears are light to sounds. Mind is the light of all cognitions. But all these lights are illuminated by one light, the light of Awareness.

In the dream state too, the light of Awareness illuminates the mind and all of its projections. In the sleep state, all lights are gone . no sun, no moon, no eyesight, no ears, no mind and yet, the absence of all is lighted up by the light of Awareness. This light of Awareness is Śiva and the body-mind is the city of Kāśī.

The ājñācakra located at the centre of the eyebrows, where we apply Kumār, is the shrine of Lord Śiva. In modern anatomy, it is the locale of the pituitary gland. It is interesting to note that the ājñācakra is described as a lotus with two petals and the pituitary has two lobes. The power centre is represented as a lotus in the language of the scriptures. As one focuses the mind in the ājñācakra and merges in the awareness, one becomes Śiva. Śivo’ham, Śivo’ham, I am Śiva, I am Śiva.

The ājñācakra, the centre of awareness, is considered to be the third eye of Lord Śiva. The sight of the two eyes is transient and fickle, and is not there when the eyes are closed, the mind is pre-occupied, or in sleep. On the other hand, the third eye, the eye of awareness is nitya, timeless., It shines in all the three states. It is like the sun, which has no day or night. One who knows this Kāśī gains It. One has to meditate by focussing the mind in the centre of the eyebrows.

This verse is a meditation verse and we will look into this meditation in detail:

Meditation 1

Sit comfortably in a stable position. Keep the neck, the back and the head in a straight line. Close the eyes half way and sport a

smile on the lips. This inner smile symbolizes samatva, equanimity, towards the opposites of life. Squeeze the eyes once and watch the half closed eyes. Now, try to watch the mind that watches the eyes. Slowly, go behind the mind and watch it. If a thought arises, let it be; don't identify with it, don't judge or evaluate it. If it departs, let it go. Even as you attempt to watch the mind, it becomes quiet. Gradually, there is no mind to watch and you become the watchfulness itself. There is inner silence.

Meditation 2:

Then there is the śāmbhavamudra antarlakṣyam bahirdṛṣṭirnimeṣavarjitā sā mudrā sāmbhavi, focus is within while the eyes look out without blinking. Open the eyes and blink twice or thrice. Stop blinking and look ahead. Try not to see what is ahead. Focus the attention on the inner. Don't blink as long as you can. You reach a state of awareness, in which there is no seer-seen division. There is only the pure awareness of the being. This division-less watchfulness is Kāśī. This practice builds the inner awareness and silence. We have to discover the inner silence. If we let the mind chatter non-stop all day, it makes us go crazy. The inner silence is Śiva, the immortal happiness. That is our true nature and we have to discover it.

Meditation 3:

Sit erect keeping the hands in the lap. Close the eyes softly half way. Sport a smile on the lips. Make this smile intrinsic to you. Don't lose it at any time. Watch the eyes. The eyes are half closed. A little movement of the eyes is not uncommon, since the eyesight is known to be cala, unsteady. Keep the pupils in the centre. Focus

the sight of both the eyes in the centre of the eyebrows. As you watch the centre of the eyebrows with the closed eyes, gradually the division between the watcher and the watched resolves in watchfulness. It is the awareness, of nothing in particular. It is Awareness pure, undifferentiated, and focussed on itself. That is the Kāśī. You are not the ego, not the doer, not the mind, and not the body. You are that light of awareness, you are Kāśī. And you are Śiva.

Atman is the changel--ss, space-less and time-less Awareness. It is undivided and indivisible. It is not self-consciousness; It is impersonal. It is sat-cit, the awareness of the being. It is fullness in the sense that there is no sense of insufficiency in it. It illumines the mind and the sense organs and enlivens the body. Be bold and say, I am Śiva.. Cidānanda rūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham. I am of the nature of Awareness and I am Śiva, the auspicious..

At the end of meditation, sit at ease for a while keeping the eyes closed and then slowly open the eyes. Each of these meditations can be done for about 15 minutes and practised at least for 41 days. As the mind moves, it creates the content of the waking consciousness. The content is unreal, but appears real due to ignorance.

As long as we are interested and attached to the content, we will not be able to discover that it is unreal. Once we discover the inner silence through dispassion towards all contents of the waking consciousness, we need not do anything about that content. It will come and go. It is unreal and there is nothing to be done about it. It will go through its motions as per its own nature. Your home is

the inner awareness, not the unreal content, and this is Self-knowledge. And you will know that you are Śiva. This is the real pilgrimage of Kāśī

Verse 5

कशिक्षेत्रं शरीरं त्रभुवनजननी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगङ्गा

भक्तिः श्रद्धा गयेयं निजगुरुचरणध्यानयोगः प्रयागः ।

विश्वेशोऽयं तुरीयस्सकलाजनमनस्साक्षिभूतोऽन्तरात्मा

देहे सर्वं मदीये यदि वसति पुनस्तीर्थमन्यत्किमस्ति ॥

kaśikṣeṭrṁ śarīraṁ trbhuvanajanānī vyāpinī jñānagaṅgā

bhaktiḥ śraddhā gayeyaṁ nijagurucaraṇadhyanayogaḥ prayāgaḥ

|

viśveśo'yaṁ turīyassaskalājanamanassākṣibhūto'ntarātmā

dehe sarvaṁ mādiye yadi vasati punastīrthamanyatkimasti ॥

शरीरं śarīraṁ – body, कशिक्षेत्रं kaśikṣeṭrṁ – the pilgrimage centre of

Kaśī, त्रभुवनजननी trbhuvanajanānī - the mother of the three worlds,

व्यापिनी vyāpinī – all-pervading, ज्ञानगङ्गा jñānagaṅgā – the Ganges of

knowledge, भक्तिः bhaktiḥ – devotion, श्रद्धा śraddhā – faith, इयम्

Iyam – this, गया gayā – Gaya, निजगुरुचरणध्यानयोगः

nijagurucaraṇadhyanayogaḥ – the communion of meditation on

the feet of one's preceptor, प्रयागः prayāgaḥ – Prayāga, अयम् ayam –

this, विश्वेशः viśveśaḥ – Lord of the Universe, तुरीयः तुररुयाह – the

fourth, तुरीयस्सकलाजनमनस्साक्षिभूतः - saskalājanamanassākṣibhūtaḥ,

- obtaining as the witness of the mind in all living beings, अन्तरात्मा antarātmā – the inner ruler, yid yadi – if, मदीये madiye – belonging to me, देहे dehe – in the body, सर्व sarvam – everything, वसति vasati – abides, पुनः punaḥ – so, अन्यत् Anyat – other, तीर्थम् Tirtham – pilgrimage center, किम् kim – which one, अस्ति asti – is?

5. Body is the pilgrimage center of Kaśī. The all-pervading flos of knowledge is the Ganges, the mother of the three worlds. Devotion and faith are this city of Gaya. The communion of meditation on the feet of one's preceptor is the city of Prayaga.

Atman, the fourth, is this Lord of the universe. It obtains in all living beings as the witness to the mind and the inner ruler. As everything exists in my body, where is the need for any other pilgrimage centre?

This verse is in the metre called sragdhara. In Vedanta, there is a nyāya called nyāya nahi ninda nyāya, the logic of non-censure: nahi nindā nindyam ninditum api tu stutyam stotum; the intent of the censure is not to censure one, but to glorify the other. Superficially, the poet seems to censure something, but his intent is to highlight the glory of the thing under consideration. The intent is to glorify the higher, not to censure the lower. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was once asked if he would go on pilgrimage to Kāśī. He replied that he was not interested because he sees Śiva in his own heart. He urged his disciples to have motiveless devotion in the heart, rather than visiting places. He was highlighting what

is important rather than putting down pilgrimage.

Pilgrims usually visit Prayāga and Gayā in addition to visiting Kāśī. Śrī Śaṅkarā included all the three places in the symbolism. The sacred city of Kāśī is body. Just as the Ganges flows in Kāśī, so also the manifest consciousness flows in this body. According to mythology, Ganges is called triloka sarit, the river of three worlds, as it flows in heaven as well as the nether world also. It is called Mandākini as it flows in heaven. Atman, the Awareness Absolute, manifests in the body-mind as the witness of the three states of waking, dream and sleep.

Śraddhā, the love for knowledge is Gayā. In Gayā, people perform śraddhā, the ritual propitiating the manes. Śraddhayāa kṛtām śrārdham, the ritual is called śrāddha because it is performed with love and devotion. Generally people perform this ritual without fail, but there is a misconception that it is inauspicious, unlike temple worship. The origin of this misconception could be the general fear that people have for death. Anything connected with death is abhorred. But death is as real as life. Once a bereaving woman prayed to Lord Buddha to revive her son. He told her that he would indeed bring the dead body to life if she could get a fistful of rice from a home that had no experience of death. Śrāddha is as auspicious as any prayer. In it, we worship God in the form of manes.

Meditation is Prayāga. Prayāga is the confluence of the three sacred rivers Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī the unseen. Similarly, in meditation, as one contemplates upon Īśvara's feet, the body, mind and ego resolve in Śiva, the Awareness of Being. Īśvara

alone appears in the form of preceptor and then as Atman, the sadguru, the preceptor in the form of the inner Being. Ultimately, Īśvara and guru resolve in Atman. Meditation on the feet is symbolic of śiva śaraṇāgati, self-surrender.

The seeker surrenders to the awareness of being and abides in the inner silence. It is dhyāna yoga. It is yoga because it is the communion of the body-identified persona with the Reality that reflects in the body-mind. This communion is Prayāga.

Atman is turīya, the fourth. It lights up the entire content of the waking, dream and sleep, and yet transcends them. The content of the waking consciousness does not affect Atman. Atman is never ever attached to the content. These states happen; they do not happen to Atman. Nothing ever happens to Atman just as the day and night do not happen to the sun. That turiyā is Śiva. The moment you watch the mind, you become the witnessing awareness. Already, you are not the persona any more; you are the impersonal intelligence which is Śiva.

Śiva is Viśveśvara, the overlord of Viśva, the universe. Viśva is also the one who identifies with the content of the waking consciousness. Vividha pratyayagamyam viśvam. What we taste, touch, smell, see and hear is the Viśva. Who is the master of this Viśva? The Awareness Absolute is the master. That Kāśī, Śiva, is you. Śiva is obtaining in our hearts as antarātmā, the innermost reality.

How does one realize the antarātmā, the inner Reality? By realizing, “I am not the body, I am not the organs of action, I am not the sense organs, I am not the mind (emotions), I am not the intellect,

I am not the ego". Abide as pure 'I am'. That is the gateway to the truth. As we abide in the pure 'I am', we would resolve into the pure awareness of the being, which is the antarātmā. That antarātmā is the sākṣi of the entire movement of the mind, not only in one's heart but also in the hearts of every living being. It is the same Atman that reflects in the body- minds of all the living beings, like one sun reflecting in a billion dewdrops or one electrical energy shining in a million bulbs. Śiva, Bhavāni, Gaṅgā, Kāśī, Prayāga, Gayā – all are here in this body. What else is needed to purify it? Tirtham is that which sanctifies. There is no other place that is supposed to purify us. Atma tīrtham param tīrtham, says the Sūta saṁhita. People roam all around in search of a shrine or river that could purify them. But, they do not realize that the greatest shrine of all is Kāśī shining in the heart as Atman. Taking a tourist bus and visiting various pilgrimage centers with a group of people is not an end in itself. It is good for national integration, but not enough for Self-realization. The striver should discover silence, peace and happiness, in oneself by yoga or by assimilating the truths enunciated in this encomium. That is the real pilgrimage.

hari om tat sat śrikṛṣṇārpanamastu

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