

Saddarshanam, Class 21

Greetings All,

Shloka # 35:

“I am not myself” or “I know myself”... such expressions of man are a laughable matter. Is the Self two-fold, by the division of the Seer and the seen? In the knowledge of the oneness of one’s Self, indeed, there are no divisions.”

Continuing his teaching, Swami Paramarthananda said,

Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi has been talking about Atma Gyanam as a means of falsifying Ahamkara. Here he points out the many misconceptions about Atma Gyanam. He says this aspect needs to be clarified. Atma Gyanam is not an event where the unknown Atma becomes known. There is no question of knowing an unknown Atma. If so, it will mean objectifying Atma. An event in time means objectification. Before it was unknown and later became known. This is not possible with respect to Atma. Atma happens to be of the nature of consciousness. Consciousness is not objectifiable. Who will objectify it? Matter cannot objectify it. Matter is inert. Can a second consciousness objectify the first one? This is also not possible as there is only one consciousness. One part of Consciousness also cannot objectify another part of it because Consciousness does not have parts.

Therefore, matter, second consciousness or part of consciousness, none of them can objectify Consciousness. Therefore objectifying or knowing it as an event is not possible.

Experiencing also cannot be done. Knowing, experiencing etc., are all misconceptions. Such an event is not possible. Our Consolation is that one need not objectify it. Knowing is required only if there is ignorance regarding something. Nobody is ignorant of the Consciousness. Unlike an inert object, everyone knows “ I am a conscious being”. Therefore,

where is the question of knowing it? It is not required. Atma Gyanam is not a conventional process of knowing. So, people who say they know or don't know are all joking.

Expanding on the shloka Swamji said, the expressions " I don't know myself or I know myself" both are laughable statements, as they don't exist. They both objectify knowledge. Both knowledge and ignorance are not possible with respect to Self. Subject and Object cannot be the same. The eyes see but they cannot be the objects of seeing. Does Atma exist as the subject and Object? If it exists, as subject it cant be an object and if it exists as an object it cannot be the subject. It does not exist in a two fold manner. Atma gyanam is thus a logical contradiction. It cannot happen in time. Since Atma is only one, there is no subject object division possible. No Gyani can claim, " I know Atma". If this is the case then what is Self Knowledge? Who is an Atma Gyani? What is it?

First: There is no "knowing" of Atma. There is also no "ignorance of Atma" as well. I am a "conscious" being. Nobody needs to be taught this.

Then, what is the aim of Self Knowledge?

We have some notions regarding Atma. These notions are the objects of our knowledge. Atma itself is not the object of our knowledge.

Citing an example: I am a mortal; this is a concept of me. I am located here; this is yet another concept of the me. I am so and so many years old; yet another concept of me. Scriptures deal with these conclusions of "me". Vedanta asks us to question these conclusions. It questions these notions of our mind. Vedanta is not a study of Atma rather it is a study of attributes we have given to Atma. Atma Gyanam is about attributes I have attached to Atma. I concentrate on those attributes such as happy, angry, jealous, old, young

etc. We are focusing on mortality, happiness and other such attributes rather than Atma.

After studying I conclude these attributes do not belong to me. All emotional problems that I attach to myself do not belong to me. All attributes are Mithya. They do not belong to me. Since they are Mithya, they cannot affect me at any time. Attributes do not belong to me. They don't taint me. Thus, Atma Gyanam is the knowledge about attributes that I attach to myself. Why call it Atma Gyanam and not Attribute Gyanam?

This is so because attributes were once attached to Atma and now have been taken away, hence it is called Atma Gyanam. It is a figurative statement. The reality is that we are studying attributes to see if they belong to me or not. Shankaracharya says Atma Gyanam is negating all attributes. I know myself very well. Vedanta helps remove all our attributes.

Shloka # 36:

Not having gained abidance in one's true nature, in the self-evident abode of Truth by reaching one's heart, loud talks mainly as to whether the Self is real or unreal, with form or without form, many or one, is all the play of Maya.

The approach of Vedanta is to eliminate attributes from the Self evident "I". If a person does not do this, then Vedanta study becomes just an academic exercise. Vedanta says all struggles in life change our attributes. Thus, the struggle to earn money is to change attribute from poor "I" to rich "I". Similarly when one gets married it converts the bachelor "I" to a married "I". It the same with children to become the father "I". One who understands Vedanta will not try to change attributes. He will stop adding attributes. Otherwise Vedantic study becomes another part of Samsara. Even the struggle to change attributes is part of Samasara. So, do not convert Vedantic study to another form of attribute or Samsara.

One has to turn attention to mind(Hrut), which is the locus

of the Sat or Consciousness principle. **Consciousness is present in mind as presence or absence of thought.** I am conscious of both states. Blankness means, consciousness is aware of blankness. Consciousness is witness of this state. So, how do I turn to consciousness? Entertaining the thought that consciousness is Myself and turning attention to it. Witness consciousness is not an object but Myself. "I" am aware of presence or absence of thoughts. It is the entertainment of appropriate thoughts that all attributes:

- do not belong to me.
- do not taint me.
- are Mithya.

And I am that (the Self without attributes).

This thought is called Atma nishta.

Entertainment of this thought is called abidance. Abidance is a mental action. Entertaining appropriate thoughts one should come to this abidance.

Upalabhya in the shloka means abidance in one's real nature that is naturally evident. Vedanta tells us attributes are not me. It means it is to know that "I am" without attributes. This is known as abidance.

Anupalabhya means without getting this abidance. Scholarly discussions are a waste of time. Pravadaha means prattling. Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi criticizes academic exchanges. He calls it the success of Maya. Maya can convert Vedanta into a Vedanta trip. It will discuss Sat, Asat, Saguna and Nirguna, plurality and duality, Dvaita and Advaita etc. If these discussions do not lead to Nishta they are useless. Ask yourself, "Am I studying Vedanta to change myself? Have I changed my understanding of my self?" The same ideas were also discussed in shloka # 34.

Shloka # 37:

The knowledge of the established Truth itself is an accomplishment. Other accomplishments are indeed comparable to a dream. How can a dream be true to one who has woken up? One who abides in Truth does not enter Maya again.

Here Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi removes another big misconception about Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is associated with mysticism and wise people are known as mystics. Truth is that Self-knowledge is an understanding that takes place in the intellect through Guru Shatra Upadesham. Once you make “knowledge” to be a mystic, then people they think one has extraordinary Siddhi. These Siddhi belongs to the world of Anatma. We don't question the extraordinary powers. However, they don't have any connection to Atma Gyanam. Thus, we can see following kinds of people: No knowledge, no power; No knowledge with power; with knowledge and no power; with knowledge and with power. Knowledge means liberation with or without powers. Powers are Mithya.

Best Practices: Atma Gyanam is not study of Atma. Rather, Atma Gyanam is the knowledge about attributes that I attach to myself. Shankaracharya says Atma Gyanam is negating all attributes.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy