

# Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

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(Continued from the previous issue)

सत्यं भावं न वित्तिर्व्यपनुदति यतः कर्मनाशयो घटादि  
मिथ्याभूतं च कर्म क्षपयति न तथा वित्तिघात्यं यतस्तत् ।  
इत्थं सिद्धे विभागे श्रुतिशिखरगिरा वित्तिघात्यः प्रतीतो-  
बन्धो मिथ्येति सिद्धे न तदपहतये कर्मजातं समर्थम्

॥ ६ ॥

The [non-superimposed] positive entity is not destroyed by valid knowledge as pot and other objects are destroyed by actions. Similarly, actions do not destroy the superimposed and so, that [superimposition] is destroyed by valid knowledge. The difference in the nature [of the superimposed and the non-superimposed] being established, [the superimposed] is destructible by the knowledge obtained from the mountain of Shrutis. The falsity having been established with certainty, [meritorious] actions are incapable of destroying it.

**V**ERSES 6–11 ARE in the *sragdharā* metre. It is common knowledge that objects like pots are destroyed by actions like hitting them with a hammer and the like. The non-superimposed positive entity is not destroyed by the valid knowledge of Reality.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, false perception like that of silver in nacre is destroyed only by the true knowledge of Reality. Thus, by inference, the difference in the nature of

the non-superimposed and the superimposed is established just like the difference between water and fire. The Shrutis, or Vedas, are like mountains according to the *Taittiriya Brahmana*<sup>8</sup>, glorious in their content and power. The study of these texts, which are in a continuum like a garland of sentences, leads to the firm understanding of the ignorance and duality of the falsity of superimposition. This falsity of superimposition is established by *anupalabdhi*, non-apprehension, and *arthāpatti*, presumption.

If a person known to be alive is not found at home, and his whereabouts outside the house are not clear, then it is presumed that he is outside the house. The Vedic rituals, transitory in nature, are means to the enjoyment of heaven, attaining something in between, or the creation of *apūrva*, potency. It is known that knowledge arising out of the Shrutis removes bondage. Since the reality of bondage is not possible, its falsity is presumed. Superimposition cannot be destroyed by external actions and the actions performed by the mind, both worldly and Vedic, like the Agnihotra sacrifice and other rituals. The impermanence of the fruits of actions have been proclaimed by scriptural texts like: ‘Since these eighteen constituents

of a sacrifice, on whom the inferior karma has been said to rest, are perishable because of their fragility, therefore those ignorant people who get elated with the idea “this is [the cause of] bliss”, undergo old age and death over and again.”<sup>9</sup>

Further, the destruction of the pot and the like by a hammer in a dream leads one to doubt the existence of multiple realities—in sleep, or dream, or the waking state. This is being clarified. Though the pot is destroyed in a dream, upon waking one sees the pot and an impression is created in the mind. Since the incidence of striking the pot with a hammer in the dream is different from the incidence of the undamaged pot in the waking state, and because both similar and contrary instances cannot be present at the same time, the apprehension of the pot in the waking state is valid due to its continuity. That is why when something is lost in a dream, it is apprehended again in the waking state. When a person whose son has been killed in a dream wakes up, he sees his son alive and the perception in the dream is countered by the statement: ‘My son has not been killed.’

In reality, even in the waking state, objects like the pot are false. The characteristic of destruction is dependent on the destruction of ignorance, which is an effect of knowledge. Even by the striking of the hammer and the like only the form of objects like the pot disappears, but they are not entirely destroyed. The pot is destroyed but not its pot-ness. Otherwise there will be no knowledge of the destroyed objects like the pot, since there will be no relation between the existence and the non-existence of the object.

Good and evil actions cause various births. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* says:

Among them those who were performers of meritorious deeds here will indeed attain good births in a quick manner—birth as a brahmana, or birth as a kshatriya, or birth as a vaishya. On the other hand, those who were performers of

bad deeds here will indeed attain bad births in a quick manner—birth as a dog, or birth as a pig, or birth as a chandala. On the other hand, through neither of these two paths are born those small creatures that transmigrate again and again. This third state is indicated by the words, ‘be born and die.’<sup>10</sup>

However, a being who is transmigrating thus is instantly liberated upon the exhaustion of the fruits of all actions, karmas. The *Bhagavadgita* says: ‘The fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes,’<sup>11</sup> and the *Taittiriya Upanishad* proclaims: ‘Him [the enlightened man] indeed, this remorse does not afflict: “Why did I not perform good deeds, and why did I perform bad deeds?”’<sup>12</sup> The scriptures thus establish that knowledge destroys all karmas and is a means to liberation.

Objection: Even if it is proved that knowledge is the means to liberation, since only the bondage caused out of ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, it is yet to be proved that the cause of bondage is ignorance. The followers of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika schools of Kanada and Gautama hold that bondage is caused due to the impression of false knowledge. The adherents of Sankhya-Yoga of Kapila and Patanjali hold that bondage is caused due to non-knowledge of Purusha and Prakriti. The followers of the Mimamsa school of Bhatta and Prabhakara hold the cause of bondage to be actions alone. The adherents of other schools like the Buddhists and the Jains also cite different causes for bondage. Then, how is it that ignorance can be held as the cause of bondage?

This objection is being answered and the student is initiated by the teacher into the means of knowledge.

आविद्यो ह्येषबन्धो विरमति न विना वेदनं कर्मजालै-  
र्मालोद्भूताऽहिरस्तं व्रजति किमु नमस्कारमन्त्रौषधाद्यैः ।  
एवं निश्चित्य नागस्त्वचमिव विधिना कर्मबन्धं विधूय-  
ज्ञानोपाये गुरुश्रीचरणमभिगतः सेवमानो यतेत ॥ ७ ॥

This bondage is surely caused by ignorance and will not be destroyed without knowledge [of Reality]. Does the snake superimposed on a garland go away by salutations, chanting of mantras, or medicines? Know for certain [this does not happen], and renounce the bondage of actions just as a snake sheds its old skin, and serve the guru's lotus feet and strive to attain knowledge.

The body and senses bind us like a chain and cause suffering. This bondage further constrained by space, time, and causation arises out of ignorance. Valid knowledge is obtained through six methods of knowledge: perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, presumption, and non-apprehension.<sup>13</sup> The word *hi* refers to these methods of knowledge. Without the realization of the essence of the substratum, Brahman, the net of actions or fruit of actions does not go away. Actions do not bring liberation, rather they create bondage. In darkness or dim light one imagines a snake in a garland that does not go away even on repeating mantras or using medicines, which are some common methods used to drive away snakes. These methods do not work in this case, though they have been found effective in other cases. Why? Because the very snake that is to be driven away is illusory! Similarly, the net of actions will not be eradicated by further actions; ignorance will not be destroyed by actions because of the falsity of ignorance.

We have to understand that actions are useless in obtaining liberation. Having understood this with certainty, the aspirant qualified with traits like dispassion strives to attain knowledge. The traits required of an aspirant are discernment [between the real and unreal], dispassion [for all results of action here and hereafter], restraint of the mind, restraint of the sense organs, withdrawing of the self, forbearance, self-settledness, faith, and the desire for liberation.<sup>14</sup> Just as a

snake sheds its old skin, the aspirant having all these qualities should give up all actions—the *nitya*, regular, and the *naimittika*, special—as these cause bondage. The renunciation should be spontaneous and would be so if true dispassion arises as in this parable of Sri Ramakrishna:

A man was going to bathe; he had his towel on his shoulder. His wife said to him: 'You are worthless. You are getting old and still you cannot give up some of your habits. You cannot live a single day without me. But look at that man! What a renouncer he is!' Husband: 'Why? What has he done?' Wife: 'He has sixteen wives and he is renouncing them one by one. You will never be able to renounce.' Husband: 'Renouncing his wives one by one! You are crazy. He won't be able to renounce. If a man wants to renounce, does he do it little by little?' Wife (smiling): 'Still he is better than you.' Husband: 'You are silly; you don't understand. He cannot renounce. But I can. See! Here I go!' ... That is called intense renunciation. No sooner did the man discriminate than he renounced. He went away with the towel on his shoulder. He didn't turn back to settle his worldly affairs. He didn't even look back at his home. He who wants to renounce needs great strength of mind.<sup>15</sup>

(To be continued)

### Notes and References

7. A positive entity is posited here to do away with the destruction of the *pratiyogī*, counter-positive, of the *prag-dhvaṁsābhāva*, previous non-existence, of valid knowledge.
8. *Taittiriya Brahmana*, 3.10.11.4.
9. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.2.7.
10. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 5.10.7–8.
11. *Bhagavadgita*, 4.37.
12. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.9.1.
13. They are respectively: *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna*, *śabda*, *arthāpatti*, and *anupalabdhī*.
14. See *Vedānta-sāra*, 15.
15. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 750.