ABSTRACT

Almost every thinker has tried to define the ultimate goal of human life. Some people hold that the most developed state of mental ability is the sign of realization. Yet according to the others if one inculcates the best of human behavior while living in a specific social set up, that is the realized state of human self. The thinkers with spiritual inclination are of the view that when the human self comes back to its original primordial form that is the real state of the self. This is called in other words: self-realization. Ramana Maharshi transmitted realization to his disciples through the philosophy of Self Knowledge, or Brahma-vidya. Unlike Ramakrishna’s devotional or Aurobindo’s intellectual expression, Ramana Maharshi spoke exclusively of the quintessential Self. If any seeker approached him for teachings, Ramana would ask him or her to inquire, “Who am I?” This was the method he had applied to his own mind until he attained the realization of the infinite, immortal “I”. The Upanishads repeats one of its famous themes: Knower of Brahman attains the highest. This is because One absolute Brahman is the only constant. But what does one get by knowing Brahman, and there by becoming the highest? The text says that when identifies oneself with the Highest, one rises high above the lower desires of the senses and the mind. But how can a man identify himself with Brahma? Is there anything common between the two, to facilitate such identification? ‘Yes, there is’ says the Upanishad. It is Self within. This Self Atman is the same as Brahman.

Keywords: Self, Self-realization, atman, Brahma/Brahman

INTRODUCTION

Someone asked a Mahatma, "WHO are you?"

"I am not," he replied.

"Are you God?"

“No. I am not.”

"Are you a saint or a sage?"

“No. I am not.”

"Are you an atheist?"

“No. I am not.”

"Then who are you?"

"I am what I Am. I am pure awareness."

“Sannyas or renunciation is the state of pure awareness”

Mata Amritanandamayi (2003, p. 64)
Spirituality is primarily about self-revelation. It is not meant for everybody because of differing levels of spiritual maturity. When and how and where and why (or through whom) a person is attracted to spirituality has no recognized logical patterns and it is futile to look for one. This is because such patterns do not exist. The lives of Realized Masters across the spiritual traditions of the world are an eloquent testimony to the fact that sensory knowledge is emphatically not to the road to self-realization. This is why rationality, scholarship and professional education howsoever profound have little or no role to play in this domain. Such knowledge can indeed constitute a serious hindrance to a genuine seeker.

**Concept of “I” and “Self”**

According to our sages, removing the "I" it is said is jnana or wisdom and removing "mine" is bhakti or devotion. In other words, The Self cannot be objectified because its Reality is not objective. It is entirely Subject. According to Sri Ramana, it is only subject. Thoughts are foreign to this state. It is therefore a thought free state, beyond the mind, body and intellect. It is - without putting too fine a point on it - beyond the grasp of human intelligence.

No Mahatma or Self Realized Master will never declare that He or She is God. This should not prevent us from viewing such a sage as the personification of God Himself. This perhaps accounts for the fact why God is often represented as the absence of ego, the telling actualization of humility, love and compassion. In Sanatana Dharma, we are specifically asked to control our desires because by controlling our desires, it becomes that much easier to control our minds, especially our lower mind. When the lower mind is brought under control, the higher mind is elevated. The lower mind moves towards the external world, while the higher mind moves towards the inner world of perfection. The process of elevating our spiritual practice lies in getting the mind to merge into its source which lies in the cavern of the heart. Getting free of agitating thoughts is an essential precondition to stilling the mind in the silence of the Self.

**Upanishadic Perspective**

The Upanisadic Gurus define ego, or ahamkara, as the illusory sense of an individual "I". The Atman is the Self. When however one fancies the ego, body, etc. which is not the Atman to be the Atman then this fancy is called bondage (bandha). The annihilation of this fancy is the liberation (moksa). What brings about this fancy is ignorance (avidya). That through which this fancy is annihilated is the knowledge (vidya).

The function of the ego is to identify the body and mind as the Self. In an unrealized person, the ego's identification is exclusive to the individual and all that which he or she identifies as "me and mine." The Upanisadic Gurus explain that the liberated state of consciousness emerges when the sense of "I" is identified with Brahman, which is free from ego, or nirahamkdra. The ego mechanism of realized being, or one established in Brahma, simply ensures that the individual body existence be recognized as separate and, thus, maintained. The realized one has none of the ordinary attributes of a person trapped in identification with an ego devoid of the awareness of Oneness: the sense of inferiority and superiority, pride, belief that the mind's every thought is correct, and the wide array of features that mark an ego imbued with the sense of otherness.

Conviction in the truth of the individual "I-sense" is the basis of a human being's beliefs, emotions, and identifications, the first of which is the sense of separateness; upon this false sense, false worlds are built with false emotions. To explain this point, the Guru Yajnavalkya, in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, introduces the concept of the four states (avastha) of consciousness: the waking state (jagrat-avastha), the dream state (svapna-avastha), the deep sleep state (susupti-avastha), and the dimension out of which these three states arise, the fourth state of consciousness, or turrya-avastha. Yajnavalkya elucidates that the emotions experienced in the waking state carry over into the dream state; and as illusory as the dream state is to the waking state, so is the waking state to the supreme state of Brahma. The dissolution of this illusory sense whereby one considers oneself as separate
from the whole-results in the egoless state, turiya. And with the dissolution of the ahamkara, all the other qualities based on the existence of the ego are also dispelled.

The same Self veiled by maya attains a body and performs all work. In the waking state he attains satisfaction by the varied enjoyments of women, food and drink. In the state of dream the Self experiences happiness or sorrow in the worlds created by his own maya. In the state of dreamless sleep in which all things disappear, overcome by darkness, he experiences happiness. Again, he (the individual jiva) on account of his connection with the deeds of his past life wakes up and sleeps. He revels in the three states of consciousness (waking, dream, and dreamless [deep] sleep) and from him all this varied world is born. In him who is the support, who is the bliss, who- is indivisible wisdom are merged the three states of consciousness. He is the supreme Brahman, the Self of all, the chief foundation of this world, subtler than the subtle, eternal. That thou art; Thou art That. The world which shines in the states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep, knowing that it is Brahma who I am, one is freed from all fetters."

According to the above description knowing oneself to be a human being, one lives in the world, works, eats, drinks, sleeps, walks, loves, talks, strives for satisfaction, and experiences joy and sorrow. The Upanishads explain that the one who is free from the dualistic functioning of the ego has ascertained the fullness of existence because his consciousness is one with the source of existence, the fourth state, Brahma. The impediments caused by the individual ego-consciousness no longer exist for the realized one. The purpose of his life has been fulfilled: he has realized the Self, though appearing to others to be a human being, is only the Self; his every action is that of the Self alone. This state is egolessness. But if the ahamkara, or ego, has been dissolved, then how is the enlightened being able to act at all, since the individual ego is the motivating agent of the human being? This is answered in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, "If a person knows the self as ‘I am this,’ then wishing what, and for desire of what should he suffering the body?” The Upanisads explain that the individual identity has ceased to be the motivating force for the enlightened one, because the universal identity, or Self-identity alone, has replaced it.

CONCLUSION

"You can feel yourself," said Sri Ramana Maharishi, "one with the One that exists. The whole body becomes a mere power, a force current. Your life becomes a needle drawn to a huge mass of magnet and as you go deeper and deeper, you become a mere center and then not even that, for you become a mere Consciousness; there are no thoughts or cares any longer - they were shattered at the threshold it is an inundation. It is this perfection that we describe as God or the Cosmic Intelligence or the Supreme Self. As the Upanishads declare: "He is one but He is known by many names.” It is now an accepted fact in most religious and spiritual traditions that the challenge confronting human beings lies in discovering the divinity present inside them. As Lord Jesus expressed it: "The kingdom of God lies within you.” God is therefore within and without. He is Creator and Creation. Inside and Outside. It follows that the quest for the Absolute begins only when the seeker is ready to commence upon such a journey. The mind has to mature by arriving at a state where it acknowledges its own limitations and is ready to receive anew. As C. Rajagopalachari succinctly expressed it in his marvelous introduction to the rendering of the celebrated Bhaja Govindam by the late M.S. Subbalakshmi: “The way of devotion is not different from the way of knowledge called jnana. When intelligence matures and lodges securely in the mind, it becomes wisdom. When wisdom is integrated with life and issues out of action, it become bhakti; knowledge, when it becomes fully mature is bhakti. If it does not get transformed into bhakti, such knowledge is useless tinsel. To believe that jnana and bhakti or devotion and knowledge are different from each other is ignorance.” The purpose of the spiritual journey is salvation or deliverance. In simple language, the idea lies in transcending death permanently. The seat of Supreme Consciousness is located in the heart: “In the heart there dwells the Reality which is Pure Consciousness, the Real Self. To be in the heart, with the mind quiescent, is the Knowledge (Awareness) of Him and also the State of Deliverance.” This is what is known as Self-Realization or salvation or getting out of the recurring "cycle of birth and death."
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