

Satsang with Swami Dayananda Saraswati in Saylorsburg

October 1, 2008

Swamiji: Okay, now.

Radha: Swamiji? I was wondering if...if Swamiji could talk about *avidyā* [ignorance], the status of *avidyā* in Vedanta, and just all of the different aspects of *avidyā* that we need to cover.

Swamiji: There are two visions. One is the vision of the *śruti*, *Veda*, *Vedic* vision of who you are, and one's own vision. Either one's vision is right, the *Vedic* vision is a myth, or the *Vedic* vision is right, my vision is a myth, is false. So, if my vision is false, then this false vision, due to what?

There is...there is no other reason. Any error has no other reason, except the *vastu* [reality] is mistaken. That's all the error. The *vastu* is taken wrongly. Why it is taken wrongly? Because, it is not taken rightly. Why it is not taken rightly? Because, *vastu* is not known.

So, *vastu* is not known as it is. And therefore, as it is not known, is *ajñānam* [ignorance], *avidyā* [ignorance]. Wrongly known, that is also *avidyā*. Both the words, not known, wrongly known, these two, two things are covered by one word, *avidyā*. Shankara covers by one word. This is called *avidyā*.

If the *Vedic* vision is right...The *Vedic* vision is all that is here *eka nānāsti kiñcana* -
- There is no second thing at all. So this is...this is a blatant denial of what I see, what I know. So, everything is other than me, and therefore this is a denial of what is. Therefore, it should be wrong.

If it is wrong, my struggle to be different from what I am is endless struggle, it is a meaningless struggle. And therefore, for my own sake, may the vision of the *śruti* [the scriptures, the Vedas] be right. Correct? That should be my prayer for my own well-being. I want the *śruti* to be right. I don't want it to be wrong. So, that may be a wishful thinking. And therefore I should give a chance for the *śruti* to prove herself that she is right.

And therefore, I have no reason to say it is wrong, because I cannot accept myself as a limited being. I want freedom from limitation. That means there should be no second thing. The limitless doesn't allow second thing. So, I want to be free from being limited, means what does it mean? It means I need to be limitless. Limitless means nondual. Nondual means there is no second thing. The *śruti* says the same thing. The human urge is the same thing. Human urge is for the same thing.

Therefore, there is *avidyā* [ignorance]. Probably there is *avidyā*, okay? Probably there is *avidyā*. And then, the probability is further established that...that I do see myself in a better light when I am pleased, when I am happy, inspite of all these factual limitations, according to me. Therefore, notwithstanding the limitations I am subject to according to my pragmatic thinking, objective thinking. So, I am identified as the physical body / mind / sense complex, and then, every one...every one of them is limited. So, I am limited, and this is valid knowledge.

When there is such a valid knowledge, how will you establish a probability of my being wrong? If I am limited is wrong, then the right will be, I am limitless. You know? If I am limited is wrong, right will be, I am limitless. That's a...that goes without saying.

Then, then, I do experience myself as a whole person, in...in moments of happiness. Therefore, that establishes the probability. Then, we have a...we have an acceptance...(this is an important thing)...we have the acceptance of *avidyā* [ignorance]. Probably there is *avidyā*. That's a...that's the basis of inquiry.

So, *avidyā* removal is not possible without knowledge. And the knowledge is *vṛttijñānam* [mental-cognition; knowledge takes place in the mind by means of a thought modification]. Gained knowledge is *vṛttijñānam*. The *vṛttijñānam* means your *buddhi* [intellect] has to spirit away this mistake, as well as its cause, ignorance. In fact, knowledge doesn't remove mistake. Knowledge removes ignorance, the cause of mistake.

If knowledge is opposed to one mistake, then what about the other mistake? Knowledge is of the *vastu* [reality]. It is not knowledge is correcting a mistake. So, knowledge is of the *vastu*. Knowledge can remove only the opposite. And the opposite is *ajñānam* [ignorance]. And this is true with object knowledge also.

There is object ignorance, and there is object knowledge removal of object ignorance. And therefore, *vṛttijñānam* [cognitive knowledge] is opposed to *ajñānam* [ignorance]. *Vṛttijñānam* is opposed to *ajñānam*.

If I have got that *ajñānam*, pot ignorance, then pot knowledge will remove pot ignorance. If I have self-ignorance with reference to what the self is...There is no unknowness of the self, what the self is. That's why I said, the self is limited. I have already taken myself to be a limited person. From this it's clear I am either a limited person, or I am not. Look at...look at that conclusion. The conclusion is not anything else. All other things are ramifications, I'm a limited person, that I'm a *brāhmaṇa*. I'm a *kṣatriya*. I am an American. I am male. I am female. I am old. I am young. I'm an engineer. I'm a doctor. I am this. I am that. All these are ramifications of I am a limited person. So that is the reduction. The logical reduction, that I am a limited person.

If this is wrong, I am is evident, self-evident. And then, I am is self-evident. Limited is the conclusion. And if that conclusion is wrong, then I have no solution...I have no problem when I see it is wrong. And then, for that, knowledge is necessary. I require a *pramāṇa* [means of knowledge] for it, a means of knowledge. And the means of knowledge...So, what do I have? So, I am the knower. This self-*avidyā* doesn't deny me being a knower. So, I am made and it is given to me, a faculty to know, and I am a knower.

The faculty to know is there already. Means of knowing, I am given for my survival in this world, and a cow also is given. I am also given some means of knowing just for survival. And that is my eyes, ears, and all that. And I can infer. Cow also can infer. Sometimes animals infer better than human beings, like a dog does. That's why the policeman goes behind the dog, and the dog leads. He goes behind the dog.

And therefore, this ah...means of knowledge again you have to say that Veda tells. Nobody tells. Veda tells. If somebody says, "I read it in a paperback," it's all Vedic statement. Somehow it reaches people, and wherever there is a book, that is Veda. If anything says like this, "You are the whole, and you are nondual. All that is there is nondual reality, limitless," then that is called Vedanta. That is Vedanta. Let it be in any language in any place. That is Vedanta. Even in heaven the truth is the same.

Suppose somebody says, "I want God to reveal to me." Hey, what is revealed is only revealed by God. But suppose, "I want God directly to come and reveal to me." But directly means what? Directly means what? Suppose..."No, no. I worship God in this form, and he should come in that form and tell me that I am the whole."

All right, let him come in that form. Your prayer is answered. What will he tell? He will say, "All that is there one limitless reality, and that is you." That's all he will say. What else he can say? He can't say anything else. Therefore, so he has to say, "I am you. You are I am." That's all what...what he can say. He cannot say anything else. That is Vedanta. There is nothing more can be said.

Therefore, the *śāstra* becomes the *pramāṇa* [means of knowledge]. So, that part of *pramāṇa- vicāra* [analysis of the means of knowledge] I'm not doing here. So, *śāstra* becomes *pramāṇa*. *Vṛtti-jñānam* [cognitive knowledge] has to take place to get rid of *avidyā*, both. *Avidyā* means the *vastu agrahaṇa*, and *anyathā- agrahaṇam*. *Vastu agrahaṇam*, not recognizing the *vastu* as it is, and then, taking it wrongly. Because, not knowing itself is not a problem.

In sleep there is no problem for the sleeper, even though he is not disturbed by his own snoring. He's not disturbed. He snores away. But the neighborhood is disturbed. But he's not disturbed. Therefore, there is *agrahaṇam*, *vastu agrahaṇam*, but there is no *anyathā- agrahaṇam*. *Anyathā- agrahaṇam* means misperception. *Agrahaṇam* means non-perception, not...not knowing anything.

So, a lot of things we don't know. They don't really harm. But certain things you have to know. Here, this is the thing. So, not knowing myself who is limitless, the loss is limitless. Therefore...and I already am self-revealing. I have to...I cannot say that I...that I don't know that I exist. I cannot say that. I exist. I am.

Then, what I am has to be concluded. Then, I am given a body/mind/sense complex, and therefore I take this to be myself. Nothing more I can...I can say about myself. Therefore, I am limited. The general conclusion is I am limited.

And therefore, I cannot accept that also because it's against me. That is against the reality because I become small. I become insignificant. Then I want to get...get better, to be different. I want to be different. Becoming. This is called becoming life, always becoming. So, that is *sarīsāra*.

Therefore, there is a big discussion on this *avidyā*. Whether this *avidyā* is absence of knowledge, or it is opposed to knowledge. Let us say it is absence of knowledge. So, what...absence of what knowledge?

Is it...Absence of knowledge doesn't exist because, two things. Knowledge has got...any knowledge has got the truth, and the truth is consciousness. There is no absence of *jñānam*, *jñaptiḥ* [knowledge]. There is no absence of consciousness. Every absence is object of consciousness. If there is absence of *ajñānam* [ignorance], then you are aware of absence of *ajñānam*. That means absence of consciousness doesn't exist.

So if there is absence of consciousness you have to be conscious of the absence of consciousness, which reveals there is consciousness. And therefore, this absence and all that is silly. Absence of consciousness is not correct. Absence of knowledge, that doesn't exist either.

If there is all knowledge, because you see a *jagat* [world] here, this *jagat* you are seeing, the world you are seeing, it's all given. Presupposes knowledge. Your body is given. And this presupposes knowledge. Mother doesn't know. Mother doesn't know how to make a body. And much less father knows. So, both of them don't know. They find themselves as mother and father. That's why they feel good.

So without qualification, they become creators. No qualification, because when you create something, you know. But here there is a creation without any knowledge and any skill, nothing. It's given. The body itself is given. The possibility is given. Everything is given and therefore, there is a giver somewhere. And who must be all...giver of everything, all knowledge. That is also *śāstra* talks about.

Radha: Because that argument doesn't seem very strong to me, Swamiji.

Swamiji: Eh?

Radha: That argument doesn't seem very strong.

Swamiji: Why?

Radha: It just...just to say that because the creation is here, it presupposes knowledge.

Swamiji: Yeah

Radha: It doesn't seem like a strong argument.

Swamiji: Why? It is strong argument.

Radha: Why? What's strong about it?

Swamiji: Because it's all...all that is here is knowledge

Radha: Why...if you...that's a little different. But then you're saying that all that is here is knowledge, all that is here is manifest knowledge then you're...

Swamiji: Nay, nay, that is a second step. That is a second step, *sr̥ṣṭi* [creation]. This is important. This is also important. *Nimittakāraṇam* [the efficient cause] has to be established because it's all knowledge. Afterwards, *upādāna* [material], when we come to...we say there is no *upādānam* or *nimittam* [material or efficient], and all this go away. There is only one, one knowledge, manifest knowledge. That...that is further arrived at. The steps are like this.

So, first you establish *nimittakāraṇam* [efficient cause]. And then, the *nimittakāraṇam* of a theologian is different. 'He's sitting somewhere.' That's why nothing works. So for us, *nimittakāraṇam* is...that establish everything is intelligently put together. Like my eyes and ears, intelligently put together. Somewhere there should be knowledge. It should be either with my mother or with my father or with somebody. And where is that knowledge? That is how we arrive at. And that knowledge wherever it abides, not only this body, everything that is here.

And therefore, that knowledge afterwards we look into the material cause, and we find there is no...there is no second material cause. When there is no second cause other than the *nimitta* [efficient (cause)], therefore there is one cause.

One cause means, then the effect is not separate from the cause. One cause means material cause also is the same. And the material cause has got one reality. And the reality is the effect cannot be away from the material. That is the reality. So the effect cannot be away from the material is the reality.

And the material is not separate from the knowledge...knowledgeable person, that conscious being. And therefore, so *Īśvara* becomes all knowledge becomes the very creation. That's ah...that goes without ah...without big discussion. We can discuss that also. That's a different topic.

Radha: Okay

Swamiji: So this is ah...this is *Īśvara*. What my here, my contention here is, if there is all knowledge, there is no new knowledge. There is no absence of knowledge. There is no absence of knowledge. Here is knowledge. All knowledge is there, same consciousness, all knowledge. Where is the absence of knowledge?

Therefore, you are not creating, there is no absence of consciousness as knowledge. If you say, *jñānam* [knowledge] is consciousness, there is no absence of consciousness. If you say, all knowledge of *Īśvara*, there is no absence of all knowledge, also. Absence of knowledge doesn't exist because all knowledge is *Īśvara*, all knowledge is consciousness, and therefore, there is always all knowledge.

But then, why I am not? I am the same consciousness. How come I am not all knowledge? You asked it. See, that is the question. And that is because you are inhibited by *ajñānam* [ignorance]. This inhibition is called *āvaraṇa* [covering, veil]. In psychological *āvaraṇa* is there. This is ontological *āvaraṇa*. (Laughs) Psychological *āvaraṇa* is unconscious, or any mistake implies *āvaraṇa*.

Here, dream experience also is *āvaraṇa* and *vikṣepa*. *Vikṣepa* is projection. *Āvaraṇa* is veil. Therefore, here there is *āvaraṇa*. That is *ajñāna*, the inhibiting factor of all knowledge. So that means every individual is all knowledge, including a mosquito, all knowledge. But all knowledge is inhibited by *ajñānam*, *mūlājñānam* [knowledge of the root or source, thus of reality], and *tulājñānam*. So *tulājñānam* is object knowledge. And *mūlājñānam* is *vastu...vastu ajñānam* [ignorance of reality]. *Nāmarūpa-ajñānam* [ignorance of names and forms (that is, *tulā-ajñānam*)], and *vastu-ajñānam* [ignorance of reality].

Vastu-ajñānam is the...is the...is the cause for *saṁsāra*. *Nāmarūpa ajñānam*, if one...you don't know anything without iPod and all that, if you don't know what is iPod, nothing is lost. We lived without iPod. And we were as good as we are now without iPod. Without e-mail also we were okay. But ah...without *vastu jñānam* [knowledge of reality], *mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ--na ceddhi avedīt mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ* [the loss is infinite—if it is not known, the loss is infinite] the loss is infinite.

Therefore, *ajñānam*, or *avidyā*, you say, *ajñānam* is not *jñāna-abhāvam* [absence of knoweldge]. It is not absence of knowledge. Absence of knowledge cannot create anything. You are committing a mistake. *Vastu*[reality] is taken for something else.

So *vastu* is taken for something else because of a *hetu* [cause]. The *hetu* we remove by *jñānam* [knowledge]. If...without *hetu*, if we commit a mistake, we'll be committing a mistake always, because you don't require a *hetu*. You don't require a *hetu* because a causeless mistake, if you do, then after correcting the mistake, again you'll commit the mistake because it doesn't need a cause.

So mistake...suddenly you'll find yourself *saṁsārī* waking up. Yesterday I was a *jīvanmuktaḥ* [living liberated], today...(laughter) So. Yeah. We'll leave it. Now I've got something to do.

Radha: Okay, but there's still some more on this, Swamiji

(Laughter)

Swamiji: Until then.

Radha: Tomorrow?

Swamiji: Tomorrow

Radha: Okay