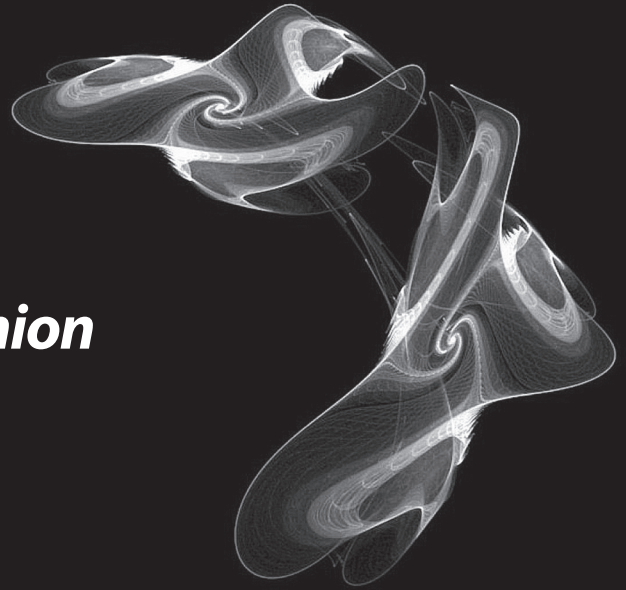


# Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

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(Continued from the previous issue)



**O**BJECTION: Cannot it be presumed that persons like Janaka had taken sannyasa in their previous births and underwent sadhana like listening, cogitating, and meditating [on Upanishadic truths] but could not attain knowledge due to some obstructions, and that in this birth they were freed from all impediments and attained knowledge immediately on listening to the scriptures? It is also said in the Bhagavadgita: ‘By that previous practice alone, he is carried forward, even in spite of himself’;<sup>22</sup> and ‘gradually gaining perfection through many births, [the yogi] thereby reaches the highest goal’ (6.45).

Reply: By these [shlokas] sannyasa alone is clearly referred to. *Vividiṣā sannyāsa*, sannyasa by the seeker, is mentioned in the scriptures: ‘Brahma Hiranyagarbha considers that sannyasa is the means of liberation. Hiranyagarbha is indeed the Supreme. The Supreme alone is Hiranyagarbha. Certainly [all] these [preceding] austerities set forth above are inferior. Sannyasa alone surpassed all.’<sup>23</sup> And also: ‘Having attained immortality, consisting of identity with the Supreme, all those aspirants who strive for self-control, who have rigorously arrived at

the conclusion taught by the Vedanta through direct knowledge, and who have attained purity of mind through the practice of the discipline of yoga and steadfastness in the knowledge of Brahman preceded by renunciation, get themselves released into the region of Brahman at the dissolution of their final body’ (12.15). *Vidvat sannyāsa*, sannyasa by the knower of Brahman, is also spoken of in the scriptures: ‘Knowing this very Self the brahmanas renounce the desire for sons, for wealth, and for the worlds, and lead a mendicant’s life.’<sup>24</sup> Some scriptural passages also talk of *krama sannyāsa*, sannyasa by order, that is sannyasa after completing the other three stages of life—Brahmacharya, Grihastha, and Vanaprastha: ‘After completing the period of Brahmacharya, one may become a householder, after being a householder one may become a Vanaprastha, and after completing the period of Vanaprastha, one may renounce.’<sup>25</sup> Some other passages speak of sannyasa not following the stages sequentially or sannyasa arising out of tremendous dispassion: ‘Verily one who has realised the (true) import of the Vedas may give up those things (previously enumerated) after the investiture with the holy thread,

or he may do so even before that ceremony— (give up) his father, son, his sacrificial fires, and the holy thread, his works, his wife, and all else that he may possess.<sup>26</sup>

After the discussion of many passages from the Shrutis and Smritis, it is established that the only way to liberation is knowledge [of the Atman] and that sannyasa is the means of such knowledge. However, those who are not fortunate to have a teacher following in the tradition of seers, have different ideas of liberation due to their wrong reading of the Shrutis and Smritis. This is similar to the parable of the elephant and the four blind men so beautifully narrated by Sri Ramakrishna: ‘Once some blind men chanced to come near an animal that someone told them was an elephant. They were asked what the elephant was like. The blind men began to feel its body. One of them said the elephant was like a pillar; he had touched only its leg. Another said it was like a winnowing-fan; he had touched only its ear. In this way the others, having touched its tail or belly, gave their different versions of the elephant. Just so, a man who has seen only one aspect of God limits God to that alone. It is his conviction that God cannot be anything else.’<sup>27</sup> Thus, different people have different understanding of the scriptures and take to wrong paths for liberation. On account of their intense attachment to worldly relations, like wife and children, they are unable to take sannyasa. The succeeding three verses denounce such people who consider actions to be the means of liberation and establish that knowledge alone is the means of liberation.

केचित्कर्मैव काम्योज्झितमुदितपद्राप्राप्त्युपायं प्रतीता  
स्तच्चोपास्ति च मुक्तौ मिलितमथ  
परे साधनं संगिरन्ते ।  
अन्येतु ज्ञानकर्मोभयमिति मतिभिः स्वाभिरुत्प्रेक्षमाणाः  
ज्ञानादेवेति वाक्याद्वयमिह सहसा  
नाऽनुमन्यामहे तान् ॥ ८ ॥

Some [a group of followers of Kumarila Bhatta and followers Prabhakara] are convinced that performing actions [*nitya* and *naimittika*] without desires is the means of liberation. Others [followers of Bhartriprapancha and Bhaskara] say that the performance of both actions and worship [of *prana* and so on] are means of liberation. Some others [another group of followers of Kumarila Bhatta] believe that both actions and knowledge are means of liberation. They hold on to their own opinions [giving up the meaning of the Vedas and the path shown by teachers who have the mystic knowledge of the Self]. [Because of the presence of Shruti passages like] ‘Through knowledge alone [liberation is attained], we will not readily accept their opinions [regarding the means of liberation].

Now, let us see the opinion of a group of the followers of Kumarila Bhatta and the followers of Prabhakara, who are the first group spoken of in this verse. The first sutra of the *Mimamsa Sutra* is: ‘*Athāto dharma jijñāsa*; next therefore (comes) the enquiry into dharma.’<sup>28</sup> Jaimini proceeds with the enquiry of the duty enjoined in the Vedas and their results. In the next sutra he says: ‘*Chodanālakṣaṇo’rtho dharmah*; dharma is that which is indicated by (known by means of) the Veda as conducive to the highest good’ (1.1.2). Here the primacy of Vedic injunction is established by the definition of dharma. Later Jaimini says: ‘*Tadbhūtānām kriyārthena sāmānāyō’rthasya tannimittatvāt*; (in the sentence) there is only a predication (or mention) of words with definite denotations along with a word denoting an action, as the meaning (of the sentence) is based upon that (the meaning of the words)’ (1.1.25). In the second chapter Jaimini puts forth the view of the *pūrvapakṣa*, opponent: ‘*Āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād-ānarthakyaṃ tadarthānām tasmād-anityamucyate*; (objection) the purpose of the Veda lying in the enjoining of actions,

those parts of the Veda which do not serve that purpose (like passages of praise) are useless, in these therefore the Veda is declared to be non-eternal (unreliable)' (1.2.1). This objection is quashed later: '*Vidhinātv-ekavākyatvāt-stutyarthena vidhīnam syuh*'; being construed along with injunction they (Vedic passages of praise) would serve the purpose of commending those injunctions' (1.2.7). Thus, the texts that eulogise and are called *arthavāda* have been considered to be parts of the injunctive texts, because both kinds of texts have the same intention of impelling one to action. In this manner, the authority of the entire Vedas in stipulating injunctions and prohibitions for actions to be done and actions to be avoided is established.

Vedic passages dealing with the Atman distinguished by a sense of doer-ship, and the like, and inducing a person to do actions and giving a picture of the fruits to be enjoyed from performing such actions by a qualified person; or passages that talk of the Atman associated with the performance of actions like a yajna are considered authoritative according to a group of Kumarila Bhatta's followers and Prabhakara's followers. Since Vedic passages known as Vedanta speak of the unattached, unaffected Atman and do not induce one to perform actions, how can they be held to be authoritative? Further, such meaning of the Vedic passages cannot be upheld because it is in conflict with the meaning of the passages in the earlier portions of the Vedas. When an adult listens to the sentence 'bring a pot', the person brings a pot. Seeing this, a child is convinced that this sentence is the cause of the action of bringing the pot and that the inducement to perform such action is brought about only by hearing this sentence and by nothing else. Thus, the child understands the relation between the sentence and the inducement to perform a particular action. Therefore, when the

child later listens to the sentence 'take away the pot, bring a cow', it understands the meaning by the method of insertion of words, *āvāpa*, and removal of words, *udvāpa*. This has been explained clearly in the argument of Prabhakara's followers presented by Gangesha in his Nyaya treatise *Tattvachintamani*:

The child, hearing A say 'Bring the pot' to B, sees that B brings a pot. Thus, he begins by observing B's specific activity. The child next seeks the cause of B's activity and concludes that the cause of that activity is B's understanding that a pot is to be brought (not knowledge in general, which is irrelevant). But he cannot distinguish the different meanings of the specific words used by A. These he learns by a process of assimilation (*āvāpa*) and discrimination (*udvāpa*). First he observes bringing, and a pot, and assumes there are words for these in what was said. Then he may hear another speech 'bring the book', and finds someone bringing a book. Likewise he hears 'remove the book' and observes a different activity. In this way he learns to distinguish the different meanings of the constituent parts of the speech acts.<sup>29</sup>

The Mimamsa point of view of the process of learning the meaning of words has been lucidly explained by a recent scholar:

Language learning (*vyutpatti*) occurs in two stages: one for children, to whom language is introduced for the first time, and the other for adults. Children learn words and their meanings when adults, without using complete sentences, communicate to them through non-verbal means, such as by frequently pointing to objects in the external world. Physical surroundings or contexts provide learning situations for children. ... It is called the ostensive method. But it is to be noted that at this stage, although children are provided only physical contexts, on interpretation we find that the sentential contexts, too, are present in inexplicit form.

Of course, by means of ostension a word can be used in isolation. But when we utter the word 'cow' in the presence of a child and point to an object 'cow' sensibly present there, the child's understanding is in the form 'this is a cow'. It is true that the child is not able to express understanding in a syntactically correct and complete sentence. Mimamsa, in general, will never accept that a child learns the meaning of a word by the ostensive method, for when we simultaneously utter a word and point to an object in the child's presence, it is never clear what we want to convey. Instead of understanding a sound-sequence, say 'cow', to stand for an object 'cow', the child may understand it to mean anything seen in the physical context there, for example, the child's understanding may be in any of the following forms: 'this object is red', 'this object is hard', 'this object is static', and so on. There is every likelihood that the child will understand by this method any one of the properties of the object, rather than the object as a whole, that is, including its substance, attributes, and relations. Therefore, the only possible and correct way of learning the meaning of a word, says Mimamsa, is in the context of a sentence followed by a physical act.<sup>30</sup>

The different stages of the understanding of the meaning have been explained:

Prabhakarans give the account of the language-learning situation as follows. A child learns the meanings of words by the method of inclusion (avapa, anvaya, pratisthapana) and elimination (udvapa, vyatireka, visthapana), through hearing the linguistic usage of one person followed by the physical behavior of another. The child's learning becomes easier when sentences are in the imperative mood, because this usage proves to be the most effective means for accomplishing this purpose. From the utterance of an imperative sentence, such as 'bring a cow', and the subsequent fulfillment of obedience-conditions (pravr̥tti), and again, the utterance of another imperative

sentence 'bring a horse' and the subsequent fulfillment of obedience-conditions, a child learns the meanings of the words, 'cow', 'horse', and 'bring' by eliminating the word 'cow' from the first sentence and including another word 'horse', in the second sentence.

In other words, when a child (who is neutral, *tatastha*) watches an elder (*prayojakavr̥ddha*, *uttamavr̥ddha*, one who gives a command) giving a command to another elder (*prayojavr̥ddha*, *madhyamavr̥ddha*, one who obeys the command), as in the example above, and when the same process is repeated again and again in the case of other similar commands, the child learns the meanings of the words that occur in the uttered sentences through a method of elimination and inclusion of the words involved. This process of learning is unconscious and natural.

Prabhakara would say that we can talk in general of word meanings in isolation where the sentential context is inexplicit, but a word gets its specific and actual meaning, and is infused with designative power, only in the context of the sentence in which it occurs.

For Mimamsa, the empirical world is the foundation of truth conditions on the basis of which the construction of sentences is done. In other words, the structure of language in general coincides with the structure of the world. Empirical sentences (of course, meaningful) in any mood contain object-words that have their corresponding counterparts, for which they stand. In the ultimate analysis, each word in its atomic form refers to a fact, a state of affairs. That is how our understanding of a sentence, irrespective of its mood, is possible (*ibid.*).

Thus, the true meaning of words is understood and the proper action is performed, and the power of the words to induce one to perform actions is also established. The authority of the words of the Vedas is established only because they induce the performance of actions. Actions alone lead to liberation. A contrary view will go

**I**n the universe, Brahma or Hiranyagarbha or the cosmic Mahat first manifested himself as name, and then as form, i.e. as this universe. All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible Sphota, the manifester as *Logos* or Word. This eternal Sphota, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names is the power through which the Lord creates the universe, nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the Sphota, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This Sphota has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the ॐ (Om). And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea this Om and the eternal Sphota are inseparable; and therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal Om, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 3:57

against Shruti and Smriti texts, which is insignificant. Since the Vedanta passages do not induce performance of actions, they are like a desert in the Vedas. This is the opinion of the first group.

Now, we see the opinion of the second group, the followers of Bhartriprapancho and Bhaskara. They believe that the purport of the Vedas is the performance of actions alone. In the beginning of the Vedas physical actions are spoken of, and in the Upanishads mental actions in the form of worship are spoken of. Further, here and there, the Vedas clearly give injunctions for the worship of Prana and the like. Numerous Vedic statements like, ‘The Self alone is to be meditated upon’,<sup>31</sup> ‘One should meditate only upon the world of the Self’ (1.4.15), ‘There are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired’,<sup>32</sup> and ‘Know it to be established in the intellect (of

the enlightened ones)’<sup>33</sup> give injunctions to attain Self-knowledge. Therefore, wherever Vedic passages are not explicit about Self-knowledge, like ‘thou art That’ or ‘I am Brahman’, the words ‘is to be meditated upon’ have to be introduced and the meaning of meditation or worship leading to knowledge has to be understood as the injunction of the Vedas. Vedic passages like ‘He who knows it thus and he who does not know, both perform actions with it. For knowledge and ignorance are different (in their results). Whatever is performed with knowledge, faith, and meditation becomes more effective’<sup>34</sup> establish the conjunction, the *samuccaya* of worship and actions. The Vedic statement ‘He who meditates only upon the world called the Self never has his work exhausted’<sup>35</sup> contradicts the loss of results for actions done coupled with knowledge, and so the conjunction of actions and worship, *upāsana-karma samuccaya*, is the means of liberation. This is the opinion of the second group.

(To be continued)

## References

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26. *Aruneyi Upanishad*, 5.
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32. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.1.4.
33. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.1.14.
34. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 1.1.10.
35. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1.4.15.