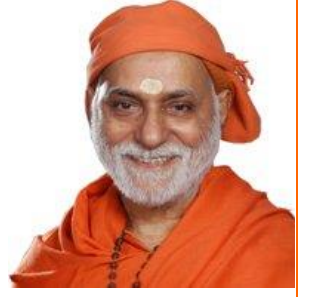


The Inferior and Superior Knowledge

prabhāta-raśmiḥ

6 October 2011



Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

Today is a day when the children in Kerala are initiated into literacy, in a very ceremonial, sublime, devotional manner. It is also the day, when all students, particularly, after having stopped reading and writing, yesterday and day before yesterday, having given their books for puja, they take the books from the puja, today after doing the puja, and then start reading something from the book. And they also write the whole aksharamala, in whichever language they have learned. In our young days we used to write in Malayalam, then English, and also Sanskrit, the three languages we used to be familiar with.

So, this marks the commencement or re-commencement of the knowledge that one has learned. This is a very good devotional and spiritual and sublimating interception to the entire learning process. Even now we have the trouble of not being able to pronounce our alphabet properly. I think, even in the kindergarten classes and the primary class, class one; we do not have many able teachers, who themselves pronounce the letters well, and who are able to teach good pronunciation. As a result of which you will find basic defects continue to linger throughout life.

If you want to be literate, it is not a simple job. You have to be always careful and think about how you pronounce words, how you correlate ideas, how the intelligence is employed in the matter of enquiring, reasoning, and rationalizing matters.

Such an important day, I thought of mentioning to you one important subject of knowledge. The subject of knowledge is the subject itself as different from the objects. We have a very good Upanishad called the Mundakopanishad. Mundakopanishad says that "Brahma, God born first. He was the protector and the preserver of the universe, and from him all the succeeding generations were born." And finally they say, "there is something called brahmavidya," vidya relating to Brahman. This brahmavidya was instructed by Brahma to his son. That son instructed the brahmavidya to his son and it has come down to us through generations.

Then the Upanishad goes on to say that

śaunako ha vai mahāśālo'ṅgirasam vidhivadupasannah papraccha |

A great householder, Shaunaka by name, approached Angiras, a hermit living in his hermitage. In a beautiful manner he approached him, prostrated before him, and what did he do, you know? *papraccha* - he asked, he enquired.

So the ultimate stage of human life is one where you try to enquire and know the truth. And what did he enquire?

kasminnu bhagavo vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātam bhavatīti |

By knowing which, Oh Lord, will I be able to know everything in this universe. In other words, by knowing any substance in particular, can I know everything in general and full? It is something like taking one or two cc of blood from your system, in order to know what is the entire blood structure of the world and also, maybe, all human beings, not only you as an individual.

Angiras heard and he was very happy! Then he went on to say...

dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti |

There are two kinds or sectors of knowledge to be known – *parā caivāparā ca*. It is *parā* the higher or superior, and *āparā* the inferior or the lower.

In my pre-sannyasa days, Mundakopanishad was the first Upanishad I happened to read. When I started reading these statements....

dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti | parā caivāparā ca |

What! Knowledge itself is divided into two? The higher and the lower. And the lower consists of:

ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo'tharvavedaḥ |

All the four vedas come under the inferior knowledge, along with 6 shastras – *śikṣā, vyākaraṇam, niruktaṁ, chandas, jyotiṣam*, etc.

In ancient times, 4 vedas and 6 shastras completed the entire gamut of knowledge. There is nothing more to be known. And all these our Angiras listed in the inferior category. I was stunned! What is this? The sacred vedas also come under inferior knowledge and the shastras. Then what is superior?

parā tu yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate |

parā, the superior or higher is that by virtue of which you understand the Imperishable! Bah! I sighed a relief! I had a sigh of relief.

tadaksaramadhigamyate - by which you know the Imperishable. Now the question arises, what is the Imperishable? The entire world, including your body, mind, intelligence, and ego is perishable. Everything is changeful, perishable, fleeting, evanescent, transitory! Then what is there which is not transitory? Anything that changes can survive only with a changeless substratum. So that substratum must be imperishable. Where is that? What is that?

*yattadadreśyamagrāhyamagotramavarṇa-
macakṣuḥśrotram tadapāṇipādam |
nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmam
tadavyayam yadbhūtayonim paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ | |*

This is what he said. I had another sigh of relief, but more than relief it was stunningly enlightening. A number of adjectives are put.

tadbhūtayonim paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ |

That is imperishable, from which the entire perishable creation has emerged and knowing that is *parā* vidya or brahmavidya. In another words, what is that? You can divide the entire existence and knowledge into two categories. One is called the knowledge relating to the objects, as the senses perceive. Not only that, the knowledge that I have a mind, I have an intelligence, I have an ego, these are my thoughts, these are my emotions, this is the knowledge I have, this is how I forget, this is my ego, I cannot accept anything else ... now, when you are referring to all these items, though they are not sensorily perceptible, they are perceptible to your own understanding. When a thought arises, you know it, you feel it. When there is a doubt, you feel it.

So, either thought objects are external, in front of the senses, or objects are subtle and internal, like the mind, intelligence, and the ego, and their products. All these are objects. And the object can be an object only in front of a subject. Even if you are pursuing God and devotion, that God whom you perceive, to begin with, is an object. You the pursuer are the subject, if at all.

While the objects are many, plural, infinite, endless, the subject is only one. My eye, my ears, my tongue, and all the objects which I perceive through these, all are objects. Similarly, my mind, my intelligence, they are also objects.

So in our personality, whatever we know and in the world whatever we see, hear, or otherwise perceive, all come under object. And they all relate to one subject, namely one Self, which we denote by the term 'I'. So, the 'I' alone is the subject indicator and all the others are objects.

When I read it ... Arrey! What is this? All knowledge, including the vedas, shastras, and other things, it comes under inferior knowledge? And *parāvidyā* is only that which enables you to know the very source of the entire creation, including yourself.

When we say the source of creation, we are amazed. But the source of everything is the very subject and this subject is within your body, which you denote by the term 'I'. So it is close to you. It is not away from you. Closer than the body, mind, intelligence, and ego. So, there is a chance of knowing it, there is a compulsion to do it. There is a possibility to know it, the potential to know it. The entire brahmavidya is the vidya relating to the Subject. That which that little girl was enquiring. "My dear mother, tell me who am I?" That is that enquiry.

So, on Vijayadashami day, I thought I would tell you, "My dear children, you are all having knowledge and experience everyday. In the whole knowledge and experience, you only know the object. The subject is the one, with relation to which, all these are objects are known, are dealt with. As long as you don't know the Subject, your knowledge will be incomplete. It will only be knowledge and support of the perishables. If you want to have to have your anchor in the Imperishable, the Subject has to be known. And where is that? Within your body. As what? Denoted by the term 'I'.

This is called brahmavidya, the knowledge of the Subject. So on Vijayadashmi day, I am providing this discrimination for you, by virtue of which you will necessarily have an inspiration, a compulsion to know what is this Subject, Brahman. Our shastras say

brahmavidāpnoti param |

This is the motto Narayanashram Tapovanam has selected for itself.

The one who knows Brahman attains the Supreme.

So, the Supreme is attained by knowledge, and that knowledge is the Subject knowledge and not the object one - Self knowledge and not the world knowledge.

So distinguish between the two sectors of knowledge, understand what is greater, and this greater knowledge is the only one which is going to enable you to attain the Supreme in your life.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

* * *



Narayanashrama Tapovanam

Venginissery, P.O. Ammadam, Trichur, Kerala - 680563, India

Email: ashram1@gmail.com; Website: <http://www.swamibhoomanandatirtha.org>