

ADVAITA AND MYSTICISM

Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda

Transcribed by Sri VLN Prasad

NOTE: Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks. The transcriptions have been done with Swamiji's blessings by his disciple.



Published by :



Arsha Avinash Foundation
104 Third Street, Tatabad, Coimbatore 641012, India
Phone: +91 9487373635
E mail: arshaavinash@gmail.com
www.arshaavinash.in

ADVAITA AND MISTICISAM

- Swami Pramathanada

*sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām/
asmad āchārya paryantām vande guru paramparām||*

Among the advaitins, those who follow “*advaita darshanam*”, there are two major groups.

Generally we don’t talk about the internal divisions existing within advaitins themselves. A general and casual student of Vedanta or advaita need not know the internal decisions and differences, which are technical and subtle in nature.

Even as serious student in the beginning need not know the internal divisions existing with the advaitan’s within them. But if a serious student has exposed to the vedantic teaching for a length of time then it is better that the student is aware of the existence of these internal divisions or differences, because for an advanced student these differences are significant.

Even though for a beginner it can be ignored like a musician when he adjusts his tambura. We feel that sruti is all right, but for his advanced hear the minute differences are very significant.

Similarly, for a serious vedantic student who has exposed to the teaching for some time I feel these differences will make a difference. And many students here I consider are serious students and many of you have even exposed to the teaching for a length of time. Therefore I thought I will talk about the differences between the two major groups within the advaitam itself.

For the sake of communication I will give name for them. **It is my naming.** First group is “*mystic advaitin*” and the second group is “*non-mystic advaitin*”. In brief MA and NMA.

Even though we do have such division you should remember both of them are advaitins. And therefore there is no difference of opinions regarding the basic teaching and the destination.

Both of them agree that karma yoga is only for '*chitta suddhi*'. No difference. Both of them agree that upasana is ment for '*chitta ekagrata*' concentration. And both of them agree '*gnanat yeva kaivalyam*'. Through knowledge alone liberation is possible. Mystic advaitins as well as non-mystic advaitins both of them agree.

They are very clear what type of knowledge liberates. '*Advaita jnaat eva mokshaha*'. There is no difference. So both of them eaqually agree that '*advaita jnaanam alone gives libaretion*'.

What is advaita jnaanam? The very word *advaitam means 'the truth which is free from dvaitam'*. '*Navidyate dvaitam Yasmin tat*' advaitam – *Saptami nan bahuvrihihi*.

Then what do you mean by dvaitam? Dvaitam means '*subject object duality*'. Subject –“I” the experiencer or otherwise called as *druk or drashta* and object means the entire creation inclusive of everything or otherwise called as *drusyam*.

So advaitam means '*the truth which is free from subject object duality*'. It is this advaita jnaanam that libarets. Both of them agree this. No difference at all.

What type of advaita jnaanam it must be? It should be "*aparoksha advaita jnaanam*". Aparoksha means direct advaita jnaanam as opposed to, as different from paroksha jnaanam. It should be aparoksha advaita jnaanam.

What do you mean by paroksha jnaanam? Paroksha jnaanam means knowledge of something which is away from you or which is not directly accessible to you; which is remote. That knowledge is called paroksha jnaanam.

Aparoksha jnaanam means the knowledge of something which is not away from you or which is not remote. So, knowledge of remote thing is paroksha jnaanam. Knowledge of non-remote thing is aparoksha jnaanam.

When we say knowledge of something which is away or remote the distance can be caused by either space or time also. An object can be away from me either in terms of space or time.

For example, suppose I gain the knowledge of Gangotri remaining in Madras reading number of books on Gangotri and talking to those people who have visited Gangotri, I get the knowledge of Gangotri.

Now, the knowledge of Gangotri that I get when I am in Madras it should be paroksha jnaanam or indirect knowledge. Imagine one day I go to Gangotri. When I am in Gangotri the knowledge of Gangotri that I have, that I enjoy will no more be paroksham or indirect it will be direct aparoksham.

In the month of May when I visited Gangotri, I met one swami and while talking, that swami said I live in my kutiya around the year. And it was surprising news to me, because normally no body stays in Gangotri during winter season, because it is extreamly cold and several feet of snow come. Therefore generally people come down. Even the shrines are closed even poojaris also come down. But this swami said I live there.

Naturally I was curious and asked ‘please describe Gangotri winter?’ And he described to me Gangotri winter, when I was in summer season. Now he gave me a brilliant description of winter, how he cannot go out of kutiya at all. Even as he opens the door 8ft snow will be there in front, he cannot travel out at all and then he showed a window through which when I looked down Ganga is right down. He says that part of Ganga does not

freeze. Therefore from the kutiya itself, I directly take water and survive.

Now, I have got Gangoyri winter knowledge. Is this knowledge direct knowledge or indirect knowledge? It is indirect knowledge only, because Gangotri winter is far away not in terms of space but, in terms of time it is away.

So, what I want to communicate to you is knowledge of something which is far away in terms of space or time, that knowledge is indirect paroksha jnaanam. And *knowledge of something which is not away is aparoksha and direct jnaanam.*

And our mystic advaitin as well as non-mystic advaitin both of them declare '*aparoksha advaita gyanat yeva muktihi*'. Up to this they travel together.

Now we have to find out where exactly do they differ? For that we will analyze the thinking pattern of the mystic advaitin first.

The mystic advaitin says that you have to get aparoksha advaita jnaanam, for that you have to follow karmayoga - chitta suddhi, follow upasana - chitta ekagrata and thereafter you have to go to a guru '*tadviddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya*', '*tatvijnanartham sa gurumeva abhigatchet*'.

Therefore, you have to go to a guru and listen to Shastra upadesam. And the mystic advaitam says by the guru Shastra upadesa shravanam you will get advaita gyanam.

Then the mystic advaitin points out no doubt you get the advaita jnaanam but, when you are receiving advaita jnaanam in what state you are? You are in a state of dvaitam or advaitam? The mystic advaitin argues when you are receiving knowledge you are in a state of duality.

Why? You are there and then off course guru is in front, the Shastra is very much in front and the sahapatis other bramhacharis are there, off course classroom is there this is there, that is there. That is at the time of study you are very much in a state of dvaitam. You are in Dvaita avasta.

And, what knowledge you are gathering? Advaita jnaanam. So he points out '*advaita jnaanam gained during dvaita avasta. Advaita jnaanam gained during dvaita avasta is like Gangotri winter gyanam gained during summer season*'.

In the same way you have gained advaita jnaanam during vadanta study alright but, the jnaanam received in dvaita avasta and therefore, the advaita jnaanam according to whom is paroksha jnaanam.

Because you are in dvaita avasta and therefore advaita avasta is away from you and therefore your knowledge is incomplete. And since your knowledge is only incomplete or paroksham, after the study you has to work separately to convert the paroksha jnaanam in to aparoksha jnaanam.

And, how do you convert? Advaita jnaanam in dvaita avasta is paroksha jnaanam. Advaita jnaanam in advaita avasta will be aparoksha jnaanam. Exactly like Gangotri winter knowledge in gangotri winter season will be aparoksham. You have to work to enter in to advaita avasta.

And when you enter in to advaita avasta your advaita gyanam will co-exist with advaita avasta, then that gyanam will be aparokaha jnaanam. Therefore, mystic advaitin advices a student to enter in to advaita avasta.

Naturally, the question will come how do I enter advaitic state? Mystic advaitin answers, now you are in dvaitic state because there is subject object duality is there. It is presence of the object,

presence of the second entity, the presence of the drusyam which is causing the duality.

And therefore, what should you do to enter advaita avasta. The mystic advaitin says by negating by eliminating the objective universe '*drushya prapancha nishedena*'. '*Drushya prapancha nivrutya*'. And when you eliminate the objective universe and abide in yourself, what type of yourself? Objectless subject when you abide in yourself, the Objectless subject '*drusya rahita drasta*' mystic advaitin says then you are in advaitic state.

And, your advaita jnaanam co-existing with advaita avasta will convert paroksha jnaanam in to aparoksha jnaanam. And therefore what is your aim drusya nishedaha, drusya nivruttihi, elimination of the objective world.

When he suggests such an exercise, for me to enter in to advaitic state for converting paroksha jnaanam in to aparoksha jnaanam, for eliminating the drusya prapancha the objective world, I naturally will get a doubt.

Is it possible for a person to negate drusya prapancha, the objective universe? A crucial question because, I have to do that for entering in to advaitic state. And I have to enter in to advaitic state for what purpose? Conversion of paroksham into aparoksham.

Therefore, it is significant and crucial question on my part can I eliminate this objective universe. When I go by my personal experience and also my reasoning; I feel that the objective universe can never be eliminated. Because my experience shows the world in front of me is always there. I have never been able to eliminate even an object, where is the question of eliminating the drusya prapancha?

No doubt, when I go to sleep I don't experience the world but, I know that even though in sleep I don't experience the world I very well know the world is there. In fact that guaranty alone I comfortably go to sleep. My wife or children will be there, my house will be there, bank balance will be there.

And I have done lot of work half way through, and I hope to complete that work tomorrow. Which means I know very well the world and every object continues to exist even though I may not perceive the world?

So, '*non-perception of the world is not elimination of the world*'. The non-perceived world continues. That means weather I am in jagrat avasta, swapna avasta or susupti avasta the world is not eliminated.

And when I go by reasoning also, reasoning tells me that nothing in the creation can be eliminated. By the law of conservation of matter and energy the world, the drusya prapancha can never be negated by me. Even if I destroy something that something is not eliminated it only exists in a different form.

Destruction of pot means what? Pot exists in a different form. Nothing is lost when a candle burns. Similarly '*even if a whole world is destroyed, the whole world will not be eliminated it will remain in a different, un-manifest, potential form*'.

'Avyaktadene bhutani vyakta madhyani bharata avyakta nidhananyva tatraka paridevana'.

'Avyaktad vyakta yet sarvah prabhavanti haragame chatyagame praleeyante tatrai vavyakta samyake'

So, my reasoning tells, world cannot be eliminated it may be in a non-perceivable form. Even in pralayam it will be in non-perceivable form that is not elimination. And therefore, I ask the

mystic advaitin, how can I eliminate the world and enter the state of advaitam.

Then the mystic advaitin points out, yes what you are saying is true in the normal experience and through normal reasoning I agree that the world cannot be eliminated but, I am talking of a mystic state which is different from the regular states that we are talking about.

And he claims that mystic state can be accomplished by a person by a careful practice of meditation. By a careful practice of meditation a person will be able to enter in to an extraordinary state, a mystic state.

And mystic advaitin says, in that mystic state the world is eliminated and he remains in the pure object less non dual subject. And in that advaitic state the paroksha jnaanam will get converted in to aparoksha jnaanam in the mystic advaitic state. Who says this? The mystic advaitin.

Then I ask a next question, how do you say that in the mystic state the world is eliminated? Because when I logically analyze even in the mystic state what is the possibility?

The meditator has very carefully withdrawn the sense organs and withdrawn the mind also. And therefore even in that mystic state what should have happened is, he doesn't perceive the world but, the world continues to exist in what form? Non-perceived form.

And non-perception of the world cannot be equated to elimination of the world. So, how do you say in the mystic state the world is eliminated? Or for that matter even if we argue that in the mystic state because of the power of the meditation the whole world is resolved. Let us assume.

Then also, *even if the 'world is resolved', remember dissolution of the world cannot be called 'elimination of the world'*, because the world will continue to exist in a dissolved form, non-perceivable form as if in pralaya.

Therefore, my analysis proves that even in a mystic state either a non-perceived world is there or non-perceivable world is there adrusta prapancha is there or avyakta prapancha is there but, what is important? Prapancha is there.

Therefore, I ask the mystic advaitin, how you say that the mystic state is advaitic state? Because even in the mystic state, there is a drasta and the drusyam. The very fact that when the mystic comes out of the state he continues to see the floor where he was sitting, the body in which he was meditating and the room in which he was sitting they all continue to exist which means even in the mystic state there is no prapancha nivrutti.

So, I ask him how do you say a mystic state is a advaitin state. And if it is not an advaitic state, how can you talk about conversion of paroksha jnaanam into aparoksha jnaanam.

For that the mystic advaitin answers, I say that advaitic state is a mystic state. And what is the meaning of the word mystic? Mystic means transcendental. What do you mean by transcendental? The mystic advaitin answers, transcendental means that which is beyond words, which is beyond debates, which is beyond arguments, which is beyond discussion.

Therefore, the mystic state of advaita is not to be talked about, is not a matter for discussion; he says it is a state to be experienced. There is a mystic state and it is an advaitic state but, it is not a matter to be talked about or argued. It is a state to be entered in to and experienced.

And that mystic state of advaita the paroksha jnaanam will get converted in to aparoksha jnaanam. Therefore stop your arguments and questioning start your sadhana of meditation.

In fact, if your intellect is putting too many questions keep the intellect aside. Keep the intellect aside, drop all your questions, practice meditation you will reach a mystic state, and that mystic state is advaitam, don't ask how and in that mystic advaitin state your paroksha jnaana will be converted in to apaaroksha jnaanam.

Now, I will ask the final question, ok I am willing to practice the meditation and go to that mystic state of advaita but, tell me what the proof that such a state exist is. Because I am going to put my heart and soul, my time and energy, my entire life I am dedicating as a serious student, and even I am going to sacrifice my precious intellect. Tell me what the proof for the existence of such a state.

Then the mystic advaitin says, the proof is the experience of all the mystics of the world is the proof for existence of such a state. Mystic will not mislead the humanity and therefore have faith in the mystic, have faith in the mystic state, have faith in god, and have faith in you and plunge in to the sadhana.

What is the sadhana? Meditation.

What are you going to reach? Mystic advaitic state.

Will that advaitic state do for you?

It will convert paroksha jnaanam in to aparoksha jnaanam.

What will aparoksha jnaanam do?

It will give you liberation.

What will liberation do? Anandamo anandam anandam.

This approach is the approach of mystic advaitin. Therefore karma yoga, upasana guru Shastra upadesa gives paroksha jnaanam, then one has to go to the mystic state of advaita, and in

that advaita avasta advaita jnaanam will get converted into aparoksha jnaanam which will lead to liberation.

Now, we have to go to second group of advaitin they are called non-mystic advaitins. And he also travels a long distance along with mystic advaitin. And he also accepts the fact that without negation of the drusya prapancha, there cannot be advaitam.

Because, as long as drusya prapancha is there you cannot gain advaita jnaanam. *'Advaita jnaanam pre-supposes drusya prapancha nisheda'*. Therefore the negation or the elimination of the world is required. Up to this both of them travel together.

Mystic advaitin also talks about drusya nisheda, non-mystic advaitin also talks about drushya nisheda. Drushya means objective universe. Nisheda means elimination.

But, non-mystic advaitin changes the direction from here after. He says that the negation of the objective world can never be attained by going to any other state of experience. Because any state of experience you go in to whether it is mystic or non-mystic in any other state also the drusya, the world will continue either in a non-perceived form or in a non-perceivable form.

Therefore, *'non-mystic advaitin claims drushya nisheda is not by entering in to any other state. Drushya nisheda, the negation of the objective universe has to take place only with the help of sruti pramanam the vedic statements, the scriptural teaching alone can negate this world'*.

So, the non-mystic advaiti says the scriptural teaching or a statement alone has to do that. And the scriptural statements accomplish that in different methods. Several methods are adopted by the scriptures. The most direct method being *'nisheda vakya pramanam'*. They are called nisheda vakyams, statements negating the drusya prapancha.

'Nehannanasti kinchana nabhumiraponachavanhiratti tayesha neeti neetinyatma'. These sruti statements including the direct nisheda vakya pramanam they alone negate the drusya prapancha says non-mystic advaitin.

Naturally a question will come, how can the statements of the scriptures eliminate this world? Will the world go away? The vedic statements do not have the power and capacity to negate the world.

And my experience itself prove that because, I have studied the Upanishads several times. I have been reading the nisheda vakyam. And the sruti statements have never eliminated the world. How do you say sruti negates drusya prapancha?

This is the question to non-mystic advaitin. *'Then the non-mystic advaitin says, when I talk about negation or elimination of the world, you should understand it is not the negation of the experience of the world but, it is the negation of the satyatvam, the reality which my intellect has imposed because of ignorance and error'*.

The attribution of the reality to drusya prapancha is an intellectual confusion problem, and this attributed satyetvam the scriptures negate. So, drusya nisheda is not *'drusya prateeti nisheda'* but, it is *'drusya satyetva nisheda'*.

'Sruti does not negate the experience of the world but it negates the satyetvam that is my intellectual conclusion'. The non-mystic advaitin says if by appropriate study of the Upanishads and especially the nisheda vakyams under the guidance of a proper guru, the very teaching will eliminate the satyetvam that I have attributed. That means I will learn to look at the universe as *'mithya prapanchaha'*.

I won't knock off the experience but, I will knock off my false intellectual conclusion. And therefore there is a change in my perspective. '*Sastya prapancha*' is now understood as '*mithya prapancha*'. I should not say satya prapamcha is now. '*What was thought of satya prapancha is now known of as mithya prapancha*'. Which is a job accomplished by sruti pramanam the non-mystic advaitin says.

So, now I recognized the drusya prapancha as mithya, the consequence is when I count the mithya drusya prapancha cannot be counted along with the satya drastah.

Anything that is mithya cannot be counted. *Just as I do not count my mirror image as the second person, even though I continue to see it.* And therefore non-mystic advaitin says the moment the world is understood clearly as mithya, *counting the world as a second thing is gone.*

Since I do not count the world as no. 2 how many things are there? There is only advaitam. The world is experienced by me but, it is now seen as mithya, and it cannot be counted.

Therefore, when I am in advaitam all the time, mithya prapancha may exist in a perceived form, mithya prapancha may exist in a non-perceived form or non-perceivable form I know I am in advaitic state when all the time.

Therefore, advaita jnaanam that I receive is in what state? According to non-mystic advaitin even '*when I am receving advaita jnaanam I am not in dvaita avasta but, I am in advita avasta only, inspite of the perception of the universe*'. And therefore the advaita jnaanam is paroksham or aparoksham?

According to non-mystic advaitin the very teaching at the time of listening itself, if it is properly tought and properly received, the very knowledge itself is advaita jnaanam in advaita avasta all the

time. And therefore it is aparoksha jnaanam. Therefore according to non-mystic advaitin *a separate mystic advaita avasta one cannot enter into.*

And if at all he has to do some meditation the meditation is not for going in to mystic advaita avasta. *The meditation is to internalize the fact that I am always in advaitam.* And therefore what is the chart passed by the non-mystic advaitin?

Karmayoga chittasuddhi, upasanayoga chitta yekagrata gurushastra upadesa gives aparoksha gyanam. And then meditation is for the internalization of the aparoksha jnaanam, not for the conversion in to aparoksha jnaanam.

Both are advaitins only but, the focus and the stress will vary.

So mystic advaitin also talk about guru, Shastra and dhyanam, non-mystic advaitin also will talk about guru, Shastra and dhyanam but, the importance given will differ.

How will it differ can you guess now? For a mystic advaitin, what will occupy the top position among these three guru, shastram, dhyanam? Dhyanam occupy the top position, mystic state occupy the top position. Because that alone gives aparoksha jnaanam that alone gives liberation.

Whereas, guru and Shastra are important but, they are two notches lower. Therefore the emphasis and focus will be more on mystic state and meditation, guru and Shastra are referred to but, not too much because they can give only paroksha jnaanam.

Whereas for a non-mystic advaitin guru and Shastra occupy the top position because they alone give the liberating aparoksha jnaanam. Off course he will respect the meditation, meditation is not for aparoksha jnaanam but, meditation is for internal realization.

For both of them respect guru, for both of them gurupoornima is important but, for the non-mystic advaitin gurupoornima occupies a very primary role. And incidentally I belong to the second category.

Therefore on this auspicious occasion I will invoke the grace of the entire guru parampara who directly gives aparoksha jnaanam and conclude my talk.

*Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaath Poornamudachyathe/
Poornasya Poornamaadaaya Poornameva Vasishyathe||*

Om shanti shanti shantihi

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Arsha Avinash Foundation

104 Third Street, Tatabad, Coimbatore 641012, INDIA

Phone: + 91 9487373635

E mail: arshaavinash@gmail.com

www.arshaavinash.in