

PROFOUND Q & A ON VEDANTA

By Swami Paramarthananda

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NOTE:

1. Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks. The transcriptions have been done with Swamiji's blessings by his disciple.
2. We will add one Question and Answer every week in this book.
3. The new Question and Answer added will also appear every week in the Face Book Group- Swami Dayananda Followers



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BY SWAMI PARAMARTHANANDA

Question No:1 What is the role of *Ishvara* in *Advaita*?

A: *Advaita* means 'One without a second' – '*ekameva advitiam*'. It is the declaration of the Ultimate Truth that Brahman exists at all times as the Existence/ Consciousness principle in all living beings. *Mahavakya vichara* helps a *sadhaka* to grasp this Truth and claim his Brahman status. This is the knowledge which liberates a *samsari* from his wrong notion of *samsaritva*.

Who reveals this spiritual knowledge? Brahman being totally actionless cannot reveal this knowledge. It is the *Sastras* which reveal this truth. All the *Sastras* have come out of the mouth of *Ishvara* himself and hence considered very sacred and valid at all times.

Brahman associated with the creative power called *Maya* is called *Ishvara*. He is the *srishti-sthiti-laya-karta*. All *Sastras* and Vedas are the words of *Ishvara* himself. All that is seen, observed and experienced are nothing but *Ishvara*. It is He who is bestowing the '*karma-phala*' to all the *jivas* and fulfilling the wishes of His devotees who worship with sincerity and devotion. It is He who controls and keeps the creation in proper harmony and order.

This being the glory of *Ishvara*, we all should be '*Ishvara-pradhana*' oriented and not '*Brahma-pradhana* oriented', since Brahman is actionless and cannot solve any of our worldly problems.

Worship of *Ishvara* with various forms is certainly very useful in enabling the worshipper to get *chitta-suddhi*. But, it cannot directly lead a person to '*moksha*'. *Moksha* is possible only when the wrong notion of the individual that he is a suffering *samsari* is removed through vedantic knowledge acquired through the study of *Sastras* and doing *Mahavakya-vichara*.

According to our *Sastras*, Brahman alone can be the one and only *Satya*. This means everything else other than Brahman has to be *mithya*. On this basis, *Ishvara* also has to be *mithya*, even though he is endowed with

the powers of Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence. *Isvara-anugraha* is very much required for a seeker even to resort to vedantic studies and doing vedantic *sravana, manana*, etc. Even as a seeker takes up Vedanta *vichara* for attaining his final goal of *nityananda*, he should simultaneously continue to worship *Isvara* also so that he succeeds in his attempts.

A *jnani* also recognizes the importance of *Isvara* and he continues to worship Him even after getting *jnana*. He knows that *Isvara* cannot be ignored at any stage. He considers his body/mind to be the very temple of *Isvara* – Refer Gita Chapter 18, verse 61 (*Isvara sarva bhutanam, hrid-dese Arjuna tisthati*). It is for the same reason that in the last *sloka* of Mandukya *karika*, Gaudapadachaya offers salute to the Supreme Reality.

Question No.2 Can I get uninterrupted *ananda* from sense objects?

A: Not at all. Sense objects being *anatma* do not have an iota of *ananda* in them. Where is the question of getting any *ananda* from them?

Upanisads declare that the only source of total *ananda* is one's *Atma svarupa*. Taittiriya Upanisad declares that nature of Atma is *purna ananda*. It is called *Atmananda*. It is called *purna* because it is complete in itself. *Purnatva* is a state where one is totally relaxed, there is no longer any distress or dissatisfaction, and there is a sense of total fulfillment within oneself. In other words, one is satisfied with himself as he is, since he has achieved *krita-kriyata*. His attitude towards the world is one of *upeksha* – a state where there is no *raga* or *dvesha*, no expectations from the world. On the other hand, he can help the world. This is what *purna* means.

'I', the Atma represent wholeness, the limitlessness that stands undivided between the object and oneself. *Atmananda* refers to this undivided wholeness, oneness. There can be nothing but *purna ananda* in what is whole and undivided.

Chandogya Upanisad defines what completeness is. It is called '*bhuma*'. The Upanisad says: "*yo vai bhuma tat sukham*". The words 'Absolute, Whole' can be used only when one sees nothing, hears

nothing, understands nothing except one's own Self. The moment something outside oneself is seen or heard, etc. incompleteness sets in.

All of us are in this state of *purna ananda* when we are in deep sleep. In this state, the entire *anatma* body/mind and the world get completely resolved and the sleeper rests in his own Atma *svarupa*. But, he is not aware of this state because of his basic ignorance called *mulavidya*.

When a *jnani* claims his Atma *svarupa*, his *purna ananda svarupa* also is automatically claimed. Being totally free from the effects of the *anatma* body/mind and the world, he always remains in the state of *purna ananda*, a state where remains ever self-fulfilled. That is why he says: "*Chidananda rupam, shivoham, shivoham*". It is this which is also termed as Pure Love, which is unconditional and is the inherent nature of a *jnani*. It is this universal love which a *jnani* spreads all around and looks upon every living being and every thing in creation with pure compassion and benevolence.

What is experienced by all of us is only *vishaya ananda* arising out of satisfaction of our desires through the sense objects in the world. It is totally subjective. When something pleasant is experienced, the mind becomes relatively peaceful and a reflection of a small fraction of original *ananda* takes place. It is this *ananda* that the individual experiences. *Vishaya* being *anatma* cannot have even a bit of *ananda*. It can only prompt the rise of happiness in the mind when it is liked by the mind. It can never be its source. Being something experienced from time to time, *vishaya ananda* has to be temporary. It just appears to be there for some time in the mind and then it disappears. Had his mind stayed calm and unperturbed throughout, he would have enjoyed a continuous flow of *ananda* in his mind.

All these problems will get resolved in one stroke, by recognizing the presence of Atma within oneself and claiming that to be his real nature. There is no other way.

Question No.3: Can improvement to *anatma* help one to attain the state of total happiness?

A: *Anatma* being limited in every aspect can never be improved 100%. Improvement to *anatma* mind is really not the goal of a

sadhaka. All that is required is to give up one's identity with the *anatma* body/mind and the world and claim his *nija svarupa* which is the *sakshi chaitanya* which is shining all the time within him. This is what a *jnani* does. He simply gives up all *dveshas* of *anatma* by the understanding that he is not the mind or the body; that he is always the *Chit svarupa*. For him, no duality exists. He sees himself as Atma existing in whatever he sees and experiences. Once he claims his Atma *svarupa*, even if the mind has any of the *doshas*, they cannot affect him, since in his vision, they do not exist at all. A *jnani* understands this and thus always abides in his higher self.

Question No:4: Upanishad talks of '*anupravesha*' of Brahman into the creation. Is there any such real *anupravesha* or is it only symbolic?

A: There can be no such 'entry' of Brahman into the world, as any entry would indicate some physical movement. In Brahman, there is no action whatever. It is totally *akarta*. The Upanishad uses the word '*anupravesha*' only to symbolically indicate that it pervades the body-mind complex, enlivens it and gets 'seemingly enclosed' within. The Consciousness principle being all-pervading pervades everywhere including the body and mind. In addition, it gets reflected in the body-mind complex and makes it sentient. Such a sentient body-mind complex is called *jivatma*. As many such enclosures are there, so many *jivatmas* are there, each experiences the world as the experiencer '*bhokta*'. Though *jivatma* experiences the world, the indwelling consciousness, called *pratyagatma* remains totally free from all that the *jivatma* does, since it is '*nirvikara*' in nature. There can be no action in an entity which is complete in all respects without any parts or divisions and which is all-pervading. This *pratyagatma* is the very same all-pervading Consciousness. It is this *pratyagatma* which is 'equated' to *Paratmatma* through *Mahavakyas*. It is just like understanding that the space within a created pot is the very same as the all-pervading space and the pot is merely a container. Similarly, the body/mind is merely a medium through which *Paramatma* appears as *jivatma*.

The consciousness pervading the entire body/mind complex is called *samanya chaitanya* and that which is recognized at a particular part of the body (like the sensation one gets when he is touched by another) is called *visesha chaitanya*.

Question No.5: Is the creation real?

According to the Upanisads, Brahman alone is *Satya* and everything else is *mithya*. The Upanishad reveals: *Brahma satyam, jagan mithya*. *Advaita* cannot admit any duality in any manner. According to Upanisads, the world is an appearance only. During *Adhyaropa* it appears to be real, but in the ultimate analysis, it is proved to be unreal. This view is supported by a *vakya* in Brihadaranyaka Upanisad V.2.5.19 which says: 'Ishvara by His magical power appears as this manifold universe.'

Ishvara with his *maya shakti* manifests the world, which is inappropriately termed as creation. Everything remains in *Ishvara* in its potential form and gets manifested as the world by the law of Karma. Though the world is seen to exist for our experience and use, its existence is only seeming, in the sense that its existence is lent to it by Brahman. It is just like a pot can have no existence of its own. It is clay that appears as pot. Similarly, it is Brahman which appears as the world in various names and forms. Thus, the world cannot have real existence, even though it is experienced all the time and also has utility value. Experience of an object can never prove its existence. We experience dream world in dreams, and it appears very much real in the dream state; but we very well know it totally disappears when we wake up.

It should be remembered that world is never created. Creation implies a beginning and an end. World is '*anadi*' and existed in its potential *avyakta* form before its manifestation as the *vyakta* world. At the time of *pralaya*, it again merges into *samashti Ishvara*. This cycle goes on and on. Matter can never be created. World is only an apparent 'transformation' called *vivarta* of Brahman.

Adi Shankaracharya explains: The so-called world is *mithya* because of the reason it is experienced; the knower/ experiencer 'I' alone is *Satya*.

‘I’ as *Atma* is everything within time and beyond time. ‘I’ lend ‘existence’ to everything and ‘I’ exist even when the external world is not known. Like the world, the body and Mind too is an observed object and something experienced and hence *mithya*.

Acharya Gaudapada expresses ‘ajata vada’. He completely negates the very world itself, its creation or existence. This theory is called ‘*ajata vada*’ which says that the perceived world is never born, i.e., never created. This theory completely rejects all causality of the world. He says Brahman which is unlimited and what is Immortal cannot become something limited or mortal at any time. This means that in reality, nothing is born and nothing dies. Nothing exists except Brahman, the One and only Reality. This Reality exists as the existing principle in all the objects outside and as the enlivening consciousness principle within the *jivatma*. It is only to the ignorant people that the world appears to be real.

In the other Upanishads except Mandukya Upanishad, ‘mithya vada’ Prakriya is emphasised. *Karana* is declared as *Satya* and *karya* as *mithya*. This is because *karya* has a name and form, whereas *karana* has none. Brahman with its *maya* power is the *karana* and *Satya* and the world is a *karya*, hence *mithya*. ‘I’ as the indwelling Consciousness is non-different from Brahman. ‘I’ as the indwelling Consciousness is the witness of all that happens outside including the three states of existence of the body/mind – *jagrat*, *svapna*, *sushupti* every day. ‘I’ remain as ‘I’ am without any change whatever as the witness Consciousness even though ‘I’ exist within the body/mind in all the three states.

Question No.6: In Ch. 4 *mantra* 9 of Svetasvara Upanisad it is stated that *Ishvara* is the creator, whereas Taittiriya Upanishad says everything came out of Brahman. Is there not an anomaly?

A: Vidyanarany Muni clarifies this doubt. He says *maya-sahita chaitanya* created the world. Brahman being totally actionless cannot create. It is

only *Ishvara* with the power of *maya* which manifests the creation, and *Ishvara* himself keeps *maya* under his control. Thus, he remains unaffected by *maya* at all times. Similarly, even he pervades the body/mind complex very intimately as the *sakshi chaitanya*, he remains totally unaffected by what happens to the body/mind complex.

Question No. 7: When *satya* can be only one which is Brahman/Atman, how is it we talk of *Vyavaharika* and *pratibhasika satyas*?

A: It is true there can be only one *Satya* which is Brahman. It is called *Paramarthika Satya*, the Absolute Reality which is unchanging at all times. It cannot be contradicted either by *vyavaharika satya* (empirical existence like that of the world which appears to be real) or *pratibhasika satya* (like seeing a snake on a rope, where the snake was never there at any point of time). On the other hand, both get contradicted by *paramarthika satya*. Both are lower orders of reality.

The body/mind complex and the world is only a manifestation of Brahman and is called *vyavaharika satya*, because world is available for our *vyavaharas* and is also useful to us. But, it has only this transactional reality. *Pratibhasika satya* is something which exists only in its appearance. For example, a person sees a rope in dim light and mistakes it for a snake. Here, a snake which appears to be there is the creation of the person seeing the rope and the person reacts to it in the form of fear of snake in his mind. While the rope belongs to *vyavaharika reality*, the mistaken snake is of *pratibhasika reality*.

Both *vyavaharika* and *pratibhasika satya* are only relative concepts and get falsified through *Brahma-jnana*. It is only a falsification and not destruction. For example, when a person sees a snake in a rope, the 'is-ness' of the snake is only a projection of the snake in the mind of the seer of the rope. Snake was never there at any time on the rope. It was only a false knowledge that was superimposed on the mind. This wrong knowledge gets 'sublated' or falsified by the right knowledge. The right knowledge is that the 'is-ness' of all objects belong only to Brahman and not to the individual objects. Thus, *jnana* sublates both *vyavaharika* and *pratibhasika satya* both of which are *mithya*.

That is why we say that the waker, his waking state and the world in which he is have no reality of their own and hence will have to be classified as *mithya*, just as the dream is *mithya* from the point of view of the waker.

Question No. 8: Why is the understanding of the *mithyatva* of the world necessary for vedantic knowledge?

A: An average person tends to consider the world as real since it is seen and experienced outside him, it does not depend on him for its existence and it has its effect on the individual transacting with it. But, the truth is that world being an *anatmakarya* is *mithya* and hence unreal, it entirely depends on consciousness for its existence and it can never affect consciousness in any way. Even from our mundane experience, we know how unreliable the world is. It is never stable, ever changing and ever unpredictable. No wise person would depend upon the world for continued peace and security. All the duality *dvaita* is the product of *moolavidya* or *maya*. *Dvaita* will get negated only when *moolavidya* gets negated. It should be understood that the plurality of the world is necessary only from the angle of *karmakanda* of the Vedas.

Knowing and understanding the *mithyatva* of the world is very important from the vedantic angle. The main Vedantic teaching itself is *Brahma satya, jagan mithya, jivo brahmaiva naaparah*. Negation of the reality of the world is a must for the seeker to move away from world dependence and then God dependence to Self dependence. *Jagan mithyatva* has to be understood first. The seeker of vedantic knowledge should understand that world being *anatma, mithya* and a *karya* of *Isvara* is merely names and forms without any substance, is *anitya, a-rasa* and *asatya*.

World by itself is not the problem. It is the dependence on the world that creates all the problems. It is something like a person depending on a chair made of cardboard to sit on. The entire *samsaritva* of the individual arises on account of the wrong beliefs that his body/mind is real and the world also is real and can be depended upon for his comforts. All these wrong beliefs arise due to ignorance of one's real inner nature. Only when this ignorance is eliminated by the right

knowledge, will the person be free from *samsara*.

Though it is not possible to give up these attachments in one stroke, *shastras* have provided various *sadhanas*, *prakriyas* to be followed by the seeker. Through the exercise of his *viveka* and *vairagya*, the seeker should gradually move away from the grip of the body/mind and world attachment. Then alone, any vedantic *sravana* and *manana* which he does will have the desired impact.

It should be understood that a body/mind, the world, the *sastras*, the Guru, his teachings, though all these are *mithya* only, they are very much required for getting *Atma-jnana*.

Q9: In Taittiriya Upanisad *karana Brahma* is termed *asat*, whereas in all other places, it is referred to as *Sat*. As per general rule, *karana* alone is *sat*. Is there not a contradiction?

A: It is true that the Upanishad refers to Brahman as *asat*. What the Upanishad wants to convey is that the world remained in Brahman in its potential form only and not available for transaction just as butter remains in potential form in the milk and is available for use only when it is extracted. So, till it is extracted, it is as good as *asat*. We can say the butter 'is' only when it gets manifested as such when it is extracted from milk through a process. In the same way, we can say the world 'is' only when it is available for transaction after its manifestation. *Asat* in the *Rig Mantra* means world is in *avyakta* in *karana-rupa* Brahman. In the beginning, before the manifestation of the world, everything was in a state of 'non-existence'. This kind of 'non-existence' is referred to as *asat*.

Question No. 10: A person in *sushupti-avastha* resolves into his own *svarupa*. Does he become *asat* in that state?

A: The right understanding should be that one resolves into *karana Brahman* which is *Isvara* that manifests the world. One indeed remains *sat*, and does not become *asat*, during *sushupti-avastha*, due to recollection on waking up thus: "I slept happily" or "I did not know

anything". Such re-collection is possible only when there is a collection of that experience by an existent entity during *sushupti-avastha*.

Question No.11: What is *Sakshi-chaitanyam*?

A: The indwelling Consciousness principle pervading the body/mind is called *Sakshi-chaitanyam* or Atma. This alone is responsible for the *chit-pratibimba* in the mind by its mere presence. It is there within the mind as the witness of all that happens in the mind and remains unaffected by what happens in the mind. Whilst the mind knows every object sequentially one after another, *Sakshi -chaitanyam* reveals everything together without requiring a sequential process. It is just like the sunlight illumining all objects on which the light falls together and not one by one.

Mantra 6.11 of Svetasvatara Upanishad says that this *Chaitanyam*, the Atma is hidden in all beings, in the sense that it is not available for perception, but due to whose presence, perception itself is made possible. *Chaitanyam* presides over all actions and blesses all activities.

Though *Sakshi-chaitanyam* appears in each body as a separate entity, it does not mean there are that many *chaitanyams*. *Chaitanyam* is only one and it merely appears enclosed in individual bodies.

Question No.12: How does one separate consciousness from the body/mind?

A: This calls for a clear understanding of '*atma-anatma-viveka*'. *Anatma* consists of the entire world with its contents and the body/mind. As can be seen from the name itself, its characteristics are totally opposed to those of Atma. The *anatma* has five features which are *drisyatvam*, *bodhyatvam*, *sagunathvam*, *sa-vikaratvam* and *agamapayitvam*. *Anatma* is a product of *panchabhutas* and so can be seen and experienced, have physical features and attributes, of changing nature and subject to arrival and departure.

The seeker of vedantic truth has to understand these limitations of

anatma and learn that they can never be a source of permanent happiness which is his goal. He should therefore move away intellectually from the attachment to all forms of *anatma*. He should contemplate on the truth: "I am not the physical body/mind and even if the body disappears, I will continue to exist. I should understand that consciousness does not belong to the mind, but only manifests in the mind." Such an intellectual thought process of distancing oneself from the *anatma* is called *atma-anatma-viveka*. This *viveka* should be contemplated upon deeply in the mind and should get ingrained in it. I should learn that the recognition of the consciousness, the *Sakshi-chaitanyam* is only a new understanding of the already existing consciousness in the mind.

This consciousness, the Atma is there behind my very existence, all my thoughts and actions and in all the three periods of my existence. It continues to exist even after the body disappears.

The importance of the mind cannot be ignored. It is through the *mithya* mind alone that the vedantic wisdom has to be acquired and assimilated. Though for an *ajnani* mind creates bondage, for a *jnani* it helps to acquire the Self knowledge.

Q13: The *Sakshi chaitanyam* (Witness consciousness) being very close to the body/mind, will it not get affected by the *doshas* (defects) of the mind?

A: No. *Sakshi chaitanyam* is *niravayava*, *nirvikara*, *nirguna* (partless, changeless and devoid of qualities). These are the very characteristics of *Sakshi chaitanyam*. It always remains unaffected by any of the impurities of the mind, and remains ever pure. Mere pervasion cannot affect its status of purity, just as sunlight does not get affected by the impurities in the objects which it illumines. The thoughts that arise in the mind may be pure or impure, but they do not affect *Sakshi chaitanyam*.

Question No.14: Will the knowledge of *Sakshi chaitanyam* (Witness consciousness) release the seeker from *samsara* and enable him to

attain *moksha*?

A: The seeker should not only know the presence of *Sakshi chaitanyam* within his body/mind, but also he should go a step further and proclaim that 'He' himself is that *Sakshi chaitanyam*. This is the most important step which every seeker has to take. Merely knowing that there is *chaitanyam* within him will not help. In fact, he already knows this fact and the proof is that he is sentient.

For making this claim, he needs to give up his belief that he exists as the body/mind. This belief is deeply imbedded in his mind and had become reinforced through his own sense of *ahankara* (I) and *mamakara* (mine). The seeker should know that his real status is not his body/mind, but the indwelling consciousness. Simultaneously, he should know the world is *mithya*, is *aneka*, *anitya*, *asatya* and *a-sara* and hence should dismiss it as well. He should have the firm understanding that the problems of his body/mind belong to the body/mind alone and do not affect him, the Atma.

This knowledge can be attained by him only through *Mahavakya vichara* in the form of *tvam-pada-vichara* and *tat-pada-vichara*. *Tvam-pada-vichara* is based on *anubhava pramana* (one's experience in this world) and the *tat-pada-vichara* is based on *Sastra pramana*. When the seeker says 'I am aware of the mind', he should understand that the 'I' he is referring to is the 'knower I', the Atma 'I' and not the physical I. This 'subject I' is Atma. In this Atma 'I', there is no *ahankara* or *mamakara*. Thus, there is a complete detachment from the *anatma* body/mind and the *anatma* I. Such a contemplation requires constant *niddhidyasanam* on these truths.

Question No.15: Please explain what the 'I' thought is?

Answer: The presence of *sakshi chaitanyam* (consciousness) and its reflection in the mind as *pratibimba chaitanyam* (reflected consciousness) makes the 'I' thought to arise in one's mind. This is called '*aham-vritti*' (I thought). An insentient entity can never say 'I am'. This *vritti* (thought) is always there when the mind is available in *jagrat* (waking) and *svapna* (dream) *avasthas* (states). No special

effort is required to say 'I am' except that one has to be in a conscious state. Though the entire process is enabled by the *sakshi chaitanyam*, the thought itself belongs to the mind and not to the *sakshi*. '*Aham-vritti*' is required by me to claim and declare '*aham Brahmasmi*'.

Whenever we experience anything, a 3-fold experience takes place. i.e. seeing the object, knowledge of the object and the knower me. This means that I know something and also I know that I know. For both of these, the *sakshi chaitanyam* is the observer. It is none other than the real 'I', that is me the Atma.

The observed world itself arises in the mind in the form of a thought only. This is called '*idam-vritti*' (this-thought). It is clear that the '*idam-vritti*' is the object for the observer 'I'.

Sakshi alone will be left out when both *aham-vritti* and *idam-vritti* are gone. There will be no 'observer I' or 'experiencer I' called the ego 'I'. Pure 'I' alone remains since I am neither a *drasta* (subject) or *dravyam* (object). Pure *Chaitanyam* (consciousness) cannot be an observer by itself.

It is due to ignorance that I attribute the property of the mind to *Sakshi chaitanyam* making me to feel I am located somewhere doing something. When the mind is disturbed, I think I am disturbed. To overcome this problem, one has to disassociate himself from the ego 'I'. My intrinsic nature is *sakshi chaitanyam* and I am a mere witness of what happens around me. I am ever-present in all the three states of existence.

Question No.16: Can it be said *jivatma* is a part of *Paramatma* and we are all limbs of *Paramatma*?

Answer: No. This goes against the very teaching of the Upanishads. The intrinsic nature of both *jivatma* and *Paramatma* is the same, which is Brahman. This can be understood from the 'pot' example. Space within a pot called pot-space cannot be different from total space. Space has no parts at all, it is total in nature and so is indivisible. Merely seeing space in a container does not make it as a separate pot-space different from the total space. The total space undergoes no

change whatever though space is seen within the pot also. The same analogy applies to *jivatma* and *Paramatma*. Once the adjuncts of both are ignored, it will be seen that both are identical in all respects. This is so even though the all-pervading Consciousness appears to be enclosed in individual bodies. *Jivatma* and *Paramatma* are just two different names on different stand points.

Question No.17: How can we recognise Consciousness?

A: It is our Consciousness that becomes varieties of experience when associated with different thoughts. We have to understand how a thought arise in the mind. When we look at an object, our sense organs come in contact with it and the mind registers the presence of the object. This is called *vishayakara-vritti* (object-thought). In essence, it is nothing but the consciousness + object which results in the object experience. When one says 'I am conscious of an object', it means that his consciousness has enveloped the object and makes it known to the mind. The consciousness is the sentient principle which makes the inert object to be known. The objects observed and experienced may go on changing, but the consciousness itself which illumines the object in the mind does not change at all. Even if all objects disappear and nothing is left, yet consciousness will continue to be, as it is eternal, all-pervading and self-revealing. It is like a permanent light which illumines everything all around. Even if nothing is there to be illumined, the light will continue to shine.

In between two changing thoughts, one can recognize his own consciousness, which is nothing but his own real inner nature.

Question No.18: Are Brahman and *Ishvara* identical?

A: Both words are used rather loosely in different contexts. They have to be understood depending upon the context. Very often, Brahman is referred to as *Ishvara*. They are different from each other. Brahman is always understood as the Ultimate Reality, the only *Satyam*. Nothing exists other than Brahman. So, it is *advitiam* (non-dual). It is also *nirguna* (not having a particular disposition), though the 'is-ness' of the

objects is attributed to it as *Sat* principle.

Brahman associated with *Maya* is called *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* borrows existence from Brahman and hence falls under *mithya* category. *Ishvara* is the mix of macro reflected-consciousness and macro reflecting-medium. It has also the three *gunas* (dispositions), its *sattva guna* being very predominant. It does have a shade of *rajas* and *tamas*. Brahman and *Ishvara* are non-separable. They always exist together. While Brahman is *akarta*, totally actionless, entire *karya* of *srishti* (manifestation), *sthiti* (sustenance) and *laya* (unmanifestation) is done by *Ishvara*. When Upanisads refer to Brahman as the *srishti karta*, it refers to *Ishvara*, who is also known as *Saguna Brahman*.

Though *Ishvara* is associated with *Maya*, *Maya* can never exercise control over *Ishvara*. It is *Ishvara* which keeps *mayasakti* under his control. Understanding *Ishvara* is important for understanding Brahman. As the controller of the entire creation, he keeps everything in proper synchronization and order. That is why he is called *Paramatma*. If the appendage *param* is dropped from this name, He will be none other than *nirguna* Brahman.

Question No.19 : Please explain the methodology of *adhyaropa* and *apavada*.

A: *Adyaropa* means superimposition and *apavada* means negation of that superimposition. This methodology is employed in Vedanta to establish a particular truth. Both are complementary in nature; one is incomplete without the other. This methodology may appear to be a contradiction and so has to be properly understood.

This is applied particularly with reference to creation. In the beginning, Upanishads say creation came out of Brahman; later on this idea is dismissed and the conclusion drawn is that the world is not created at all and it is just as 'real' as a world seen in a dream.

Similarly, while talking about *moksha*, initially the student is told he should seek the grace of *Ishvara* for his freedom from worldly problems. Later on, this entire idea is dismissed and the student is told that the world by itself is not a cause of his sorrow; it is his attitude towards the

world in terms of his bondage with it that is the real cause. Through *apavada*, he is advised to change his attitude and understand that the world itself is *mithya* and he himself is the *adhishtanam* of the world in view of his Brahman status.

For initial understanding of this methodology, example of rope/snake is given. When a person sees a rope in a dim light, he mistakes it for a snake. The perception of so-called snake is a superimposition *adhyaropa* on the rope. When he sees the same rope in bright light, the snake is no longer there. So, the snake-knowledge gets negated by the right knowledge of rope. This negation of *adhyaropa* is called *apavada*. Similarly, due to ignorance, all the afflictions of the body/mind are foisted on *Sakshi chaitanyam*, the Atma. This is also a case of *adhyaropa* on Atma. By vedantic knowledge, this wrong knowledge gets negated. This negation is *apavada*.

Question No. 20 : In Verse 5 of Chapter 6 of Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says the world exists in Him and He exists in the world. Is there not a contradiction here?

Answer: The idea conveyed is that Brahman alone is really existent as *ekam* (oneness) and everything else is there on borrowed existence. Thus, the distinction between the *srishti karta* (cause of creation) and *srishti* (creation) is eliminated. Even though observed *jivas* and the world are there, everything is Brahman alone appearing in different names and forms.

Question No.21 : Does establishing *jagat-mithyatvam* precede *Brahma satyam*?

Answer: Yes. It is crucial to establish the *mithyatva* of the *jagat* first. Self knowledge can be effective only when this is established firmly in the mind. Simultaneously, the *mithyatvam* of *prarabdha* also has to be understood. Avoidance of the world or running away from it will not establish *jagat -mithyatva*. Internally, the mind should be fully convinced that entire *jagat* is *a-sara* and deserves to be negated. The Upanishads declare that the world is nothing but a bundle of names and

forms. The proof of the negation of the world will be when the seeker says: "Let anything happen to me or in the world concerning me, I am not affected in the least."

Question No.22 : Where is ignorance (*avidya*) located?

Answer: Ignorance cannot exist independently, it should have a locus. The locus is *Atma*, the *sakshi chaitanyam*. The three *avastas* – *jagrat*, *svapna* and *sushupti* rest on *avidya*. This *avidya* is also called *moolavidya* or *maya* which creates the fundamental ignorance of one's real inner-nature through its veiling power called *avarana sakti*. It is not ignorance of the objects of the material world, it is the spiritual ignorance which one suffers right from his birth. *Atma* and *moolavidya/Maya* exist together. *Moolavidya* has no *sat*, *chit* or *ananda* of its own. It is due to this power that entire *srishti* which is there in potential form in Brahman gets manifested. So, Brahman is the *ashraya* (locus).

Question No.23 : What is the nature of *moolavidya*?

A: *Moolavidya* or *maya* is the manifestor of the entire universe. The entire world of *anatma* is a product of this alone. It wields its power of *avarana* by which it conceals the truth about Brahman and makes the *jiva* to believe that the world is real through its *vikshepa-sakti*. The real problem is not *vikshepa-sakti* but *avarana-sakti*. It is the *avarana-sakti* which creates *Atma-ajnanam* for the individual. It is the cause of *mithya-jnanam* which makes the individual to believe that *anatma* really exists and is experienced. This *mithya-jnanam* alone leads to *prapancha-darsanam* and the consequent *samsara*. Shankaracharya calls even *karma* as *ajnanam* as it binds the *karta*.

Note that *maya* cannot really cover the reality, Brahman, like a cloud can never cover the sun. It only covers our knowing ability to know Brahman and thus acts as an obstruction to Brahman-Knowledge. As long as this ignorance lasts, the world will appear to be real to us and we will be feeling the *samsaritva* all the time. It is through vedantic study and *Mahavakya-vichara* that one can transcend *moolavidya*.

In all the three states of existence, this ignorance is located in the consciousness in the mind. When one says 'I am ignorant' it means the Atma 'I' in him is the locus of his ignorance. *Anatma* mind itself cannot be its locus since it itself is a product of ignorance. *Jagrat prapancha* is created by *moolavidya* located in Me, the *Sakshi*. In other words, 'I' am the creator of *jagrat prapancha* and *swapna prapancha* through *moolavidya*. Neither of them have an existence of their own, as both are *mithya*.

When the seeker gets '*aham Brahmasmi*' wisdom, this ignorance gets automatically wiped out. Even though Atma and the mind with ignorance are very close to each other, Atma being actionless cannot remove the ignorance. It has to be removed only through *Sastra-vichara* and obtaining *Brahma-jnanam*.

Question No.24 : What is the status of *mulavidya*? Does it come under 'existing category' or 'non-existing' category?

Answer: According to Vedanta, it is *bhava-abhava-vilakshanam* – does not fall under existing category or non-existing category. It is there till it is removed by *jnanam*.

Question No.25 : Is *jiva* created by Brahman?

Answer: No. Brahman does not and cannot create anything. All that is seen as creation is a manifestation of *maya-sahita Ishvara*. He also creates only the body/mind of the *jiva*. *Jiva* is *anadi*. If one says: 'I am born', it means only his body/mind is born. Due to ignorance, the creation of the body/mind is superimposed on *jiva*. At the time of death, body perishes, not the *jiva*.

Question No.26: Does *Ishvara* (Lord) create this world?

Answer: *Ishvara* (Lord) by himself cannot create. He is only a *samanya karanam* (general cause) for the creation, The *visesha karanam* (special cause) is a set of *karmas* (good deeds and bad deeds) of the

jiva (embodied self). A world is required for the *jivas* (embodied self) to exist and go through their *karmas* (fructification of good deeds and bad deeds). Thus, *jiva* (embodied self) also supports *Isvara* (Lord) for the evolution of the creation. Both *jiva* (embodied self) and *Isvara* (Lord) are *anadi* (timeless). There is no birth for *jiva* (embodied self). Only the bodies of *jiva* (embodied self) are born.

Question No.27: How is it that the *Sastras* (Scriptures) treat *jagrat* (waking world) and *svapna prapanchas* (dream world) on the same footing, when the *jagrat prapancha* (waking world) is continuously experienced and the *svapna prapancha* (dream world) is experienced only in dream?

Answer: In the view of the *Sastras* (Scriptures), both are very similar in nature. Just as everything appears real in *jagrat* (waking) state, the *svapna* (dream) world and the things experienced in that state are equally real, but only in dream state. On waking up, everything disappears. The same logic applies to *jagrat* (waking) world also. *Jagrat* (waking) also is just like a long dream since it is also the projection in the mind. In *sushupti* (deep sleep), it is kept in a potential form. *Jagrat* (waking world) is *Isvara's* (Lord's) projection in the mind and *svapna* (dream world) is *jiva's* (embodied self's) projection.

Question No. 28: Does *jiva* (embodied self) have a free-will or is he fully subject to *Isvara's* (Lord's) will?

Answer: Yes. All of us are endowed with complete free will to think and act and earn *punya* (fruits of proper action) or *papa* (fruits of improper action) as the case may be. Beyond that, our free-will does not extend. Once actions are performed, we get bound by their results. *Isvara* (Lord) is the *karma-phala-data* (Giver of fruits of action) and the results of action are given out by him without any kind of partiality.

Question No.29: Atma is *chaitanya svarupa* (whose nature is consciousness). How can it be *asraya* (locus) for ignorance?

Answer: Yes, they can. *Paramarthika satya* (absolute reality) is the *asraya* (locus) for the *jagat* (world). It is just like co-existence of an imaginary snake on a rope or mirage water on a hot desert. Such co-

existence is the cause of ignorance.

Question No.30: *Sastras* say *nityananda* cannot be experienced; it is something to be understood and claimed. Please explain.

Answer: *Sastras* talk of two types of *ananda* in the Upanishads. One is the experiential *ananda*, known as *vishayananda* which is experienced in the mind. Taittiriya Upanishad talks of this *ananda* which is graded starting from *manushya ananda* right upto *brahmananda*. These do not come under the *nityananda* category. *Nityananda* is that *purna ananda* which is the very *svarupa* of Brahman/Atma. It is the very source from which all experiential *ananda* flows out. The body/mind is pervaded by the all-pervading Consciousness which is of nature of this *purna ananda*. When a person's mind is relatively calm and peaceful, it is this *ananda* reflected in the mind which is recognized as the sense of happiness which the person enjoys. Its duration will be limited to the extent that the mind is calm and peaceful and will disappear when the mind returns to its usual state of turmoil.

We have to understand that the *purnatva*, being the Whole at all times is referred to as *nityananda*. When we claim the status of being the very *atma svarupa*, our being the Whole, the *purna vastu* is also claimed.

Question No.31: You say as Brahman, I am *ananda svarupa* (nature of fullness, happiness). But, in reality this does not seem to be so. Can you please clarify?

Answer: There can be no doubt whatever that the *nija svarupa* (true nature) of each of us is Brahman and that is pure *ananda* (fullness, happiness). Veda is the *pramana* (source of knowledge) for this and so cannot be disputed.

It is true as '*jivas*' (embodied self) we experience sorrow. This means sorrow is an object of our experience. As per the general rule, object has always to be different from the subject. So, I have to be different from sorrow which means I have to be happy. This is what exactly *Sruti* (Scripture) reveals. It says even while experiencing sorrow, my intrinsic nature of pure *ananda* (fullness, happiness) does not change at all. This *ananda* (happiness) is not like *vishaya ananda* (happiness born of sense

objects) which can be experienced and understood. *Nija ananda* (fullness, happiness which is one's true nature) is beyond the realm of experience, it is the very nature itself like one see in a state of deep sleep where there is no trace of any sorrow. This truth has to be cognitively understood through *mahavakya vichara* (study of Great equation mentioned in the Upanisads) and doing *nididhyasanam* (contemplation). This knowledge can get reinforced if the seeker practices to distance himself from his *deha-atma-buddhi* (considering body as I).

Question No.32: Does a *jnani* (wise person) *have vishaya-iccha* (desire for objects) at all? Does he also get *vishaya-ananda* (happiness from sense objects)?

Answer: In Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12, Lord Krishna describes *jnani-lakshana* (characteristics of a wise person). Though a *jnani* (wise person) rests in his *atmananda* (fullness which is his original nature) all the time, yet he may be active in this transactional world for the sake of *loka sangraha* (benefit of the society). So, he has may be involved in *loka-vyavahara* (transactions in the world). He still has his *prarabha* (result of virtuous and vicious action done in earlier births to be exhausted in this birth) to be exhausted and therefore has to continue in the society. He will no doubt get *vishaya-ananda* (happiness from sense objects) also like any of us; but he knows its limitations and just goes through the same without attaching any importance to it. He does not depend upon the relationship between the physical body, the sense organs or sense objects for his well-being. He knows he is self-existent and does not depend upon anything external for his *ananda* (happiness) since he has realized (understood) that he himself is *purnananda svarupa* (nature of fullness and happiness). There may be some *janis* (wise persons) who isolate themselves completely from the society and prefer to be left alone. Such cases are rare.

Question No.33: Does *maya* exist?

Answer: The literal meaning of the word is 'magic' or trick. In vedantic parlance, it means *avidya* or ignorance. *Maya* is a veil which covers the *Atma svarupa* (one's true nature) leading to *ajnanam* (ignorance) in the mind of the *jiva* (embodied self). It acts like a veil simply shutting out the *Atma-svarupa* (one's true nature) within and

makes the *jiva* (embodied self) an *ajnani* (ignorant person). It is something like a piece of cloth hung between you and me and you cannot see me anymore, though I am there right in front of you. Likewise, *Atma* (consciousness) is very close to the *jiva* in his body/mind, closer than anything else, yet hidden from the *jiva*. Really speaking, *maya* cannot really cover the *Atma* since *Atma* is all-pervading *chaitanyam* (consciousness). But, it does create *moolavidya* (fundamental ignorance) in the mind which prevents the mind from knowing *Atma*.

Maya is so powerful that it can delude even the *jnanis* (wise persons). It is that which creates *ahankara* (I sense) in the mind of the *jiva*. *Karma* (*punya-papa*) also is an integral part of *maya* and is *anadi* (beginning less) like *maya* and *jiva*.

The entire creation is a projection of *maya*. Being *Isvara's upadhi*, it derives the power to project. It is so powerful that it makes one to believe that the world really exists. But, it can be transcended and won over by *Atma jnanam*.

Maya is *anadi*, it has no beginning, but does have an end with the rise of vedantic wisdom. It is just like disappearance of the dream world when the dreamer wakes up. We cannot say whether *maya* exists or does not. It is not separate or non-separate from Brahman. It is a great wonder and cannot be categorically explained. It is neither *sat* or *a-sat*, which means it is *mithya* and *jada* (insensient) . That is why it is *anirvachaniya* (cannot be clearly explained). But, for all practical purposes, we have to admit that it does exist, since we all experience this world which is a product of *maya*. But, with Brahman knowledge, it ceases to exist. Though it exists along with Brahman, it cannot be counted as 'existing', since it is a *karya* (effect) of Brahman. It is this which gives Brahman its *karanam* (causal) status.

Ajnanam gets eliminated by *jnana*, but *maya* does not go away. *Maya* being *mithya* cannot be made non-existent. Our aim also is not the elimination of *maya*, but understanding it to be *mithya*. This is called *bhada* and is accomplished through *Atma jnanam*.

Maya is *trigunatmika*. It has the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. As products of *maya*, the *jivas* also have these three qualities. All names and forms which are ever changing are *maya*.

It is *mohatmaka* causing delusion and confusion in the mind. It makes one to believe that world and its contents all exist, when they do not 'exist' from the vedantic vision.

Isvara as a 'person' with name and attributes also falls under *maya* category; but the *nirguna Isvara*, the *chaitanyam* is *Satyam*.

Question No.34: Does *maya* originate from Brahman?

Answer: No. Brahman being *akarta* (action-less) cannot produce anything. *Maya* is also not super-imposed on Brahman. *Maya* is *anadi* (beginning-less) and is there in Brahman all the time. But, it is not a part or property or attribute of Brahman, since Brahman is attribute-less and without any parts.

Question No.35: How does *maya* appear in the three states of existence?

Answer: In waking state, it is there as the person's ignorance of Brahman. In dream state, it is the material cause of the entire dream world and its objects; in the deep sleep, it appears as the *smriti* (memory), which enables a person to say that he slept well.

Question No.36: Is it possible for us to know *maya*?

A: For the act of knowing, the knower and the object known have to be separate. So, if we want to know *maya*, it has to be separate from us. But, we, as ignorant *jivas*, are identical with *maya*. So, we cannot know *maya*. But, it can be negated by us through vedantic knowledge.

Question No.37: Is there any such thing as creation?

A: Nothing can ever be created. Matter cannot be created. But, the Upanishads say that *srishti* (creation) came out of Brahman. Being *akarta* (non-doer), Brahman cannot create and world cannot come out by itself. But, a world is seen and experienced. How is this explained? The explanation is the very 'existence' of world is the existence of Brahman alone. That is what Lord Krishna says in Gita '*aham visrjami*' –

'I' manifest as the creation. Brahman is both the *upadana* (material cause) and *nimitta karanam* (intelligent-cause). Everything exists in Him and everything came out of Him. He is there in various *nama rupas* (names and forms). Logically, if a pot is analyzed, clay alone is there in the shape of a pot. So, the existence of pot gets dismissed. Similarly, clay itself is various molecules put together. So, clay also gets dismissed. In this manner, everything in the world gets dismissed and ultimately what is left is the creator Brahman. So, the creation in essence is Brahman only.

It always exists either in unmanifest or manifest form as the world. Whatever is seen and observed is only a manifestation. *Maya* and *mayakarya* (effect of Maya) both belong to *vyavaharika satta* (empirical reality) and hold good only at the *vyavaharika* (empirical) level. They do not have absolute reality. That is why we say everything seen and experienced including our body/mind are nothing but Brahman only with different names and forms. Therefore, in the view of an *uttama adhikari* (highly qualified person), there is no creation at all.

Question No.38: What is the locus of *ajnana* (self-ignorance) ?

A: 'I' the *Atma* is its locus. 'I' alone project all the three *prapanchas* (waking world, dream world and deep sleep world) and enter into them. All the worlds exist in Me, the *Atma*.

Question No.39: Is the Consciousness associated with the three states of existence or dissociated?

Answer: Consciousness by its intrinsic nature is Absolute. When it pervades the three states of existence (waking, dream and deep sleep), it is not as if it physically separates itself and joins them. Being all-pervading, it exists in them also. Without its presence, the states cannot exist at all.

In order to understand what the all-pervading Consciousness is, the three states of existence have to be mentally dismissed as *mithya*. What is left out will be *Turiyam*, the *Atma I*, the Consciousness. This is

an intellectual exercise one has to undertake to understand it. This has to take place in waking state only. In the statement 'I am a waker', when we negate the waker as being *mithya*, what is left is the Consciousness.

Question No.40: What type of ignorance is there in the three states of existence?

Answer: In *jagrat* (waking state), it is in the form of *ahankara* (I notion); in dream, it is in the form of identification with the dream body and dream world and in deep sleep, it is in the form of just ignorance. We can call it spiritual ignorance. No misconceptions are possible in deep sleep. That is why the person who slept well says he was happy in sleep.

Question No.41: How can I say I am *advaitam* (non-dual) when there is an 'observer' in me and there is a world other than me?

Answer: Between the Observer and the observed, Observer alone is *Satyam* (real). Since the world does not have an independent existence, it cannot be counted. After getting to know the real 'I', no world can exist for me. The experienced world is as good as the dream world. Even the *Sastras* (Scriptures) which talk of creation of a world initially, finally dismiss it as *mithya* (not real) and hence the world has no relevance from the *paramarthika* (absolute reality) angle. It will continue to be as before, but will be understood and dealt with as *mithya* (non real) only. This logic is called *adhyaropa* (super imposition) and *apavada* (negation). In *adhyaropa* (super imposition), the world is said to be created, but later on dismissed as *apavada* (negation). Hence, I as the observer of the world alone is *Satyam* (real).

Question No.42: Can Consciousness know itself?

Answer: No. It takes the role of knower only when it joins the mind. Consciousness by itself can never claim 'I am Consciousness'. It can do

so only with the help of the mind and through the mind. Pure Consciousness exists by itself and does not require anything else like the mind for its existence.

Question No.43: What is *turiyam* (fourth)?

Answer: It is the name given to Atma or I, the Consciousness associated with all the three states of existence (waking state, dream state and deep sleep state). It is not an object available in any of the three states, it is unseen by the sense-organs, not available for inference (inference is possible only through some clues and *turiyam* has no such clues). It cannot be experienced by the mind, cannot be described in words. There is no second thing to it, hence it is *Advaitam* (non-dual). It is ever undisturbed, is of *mangala svarupa* (auspicious nature), being free from *duhkha* (sorrow). This *turiyam* alone is the real I which remains non-variable at all times.

Question No.44: Can *mithya shariram* (body) affect *Satyam Atma*?

Answer: *Mithya* can never affect *Satyam*, even though *Satyam* is the locus of *mithya shariram* (body) including the mind and *Sakshi-chaitanyam* (witness consciousness). They are there together within the body/mind complex. It is just like a movie fire cannot burn the screen. Consciousness has no real *sambandha* (connection) with any of the three *sharirams* (physical body, subtle body and causal body). It is always *asanga-turiyam* (not associated fourth) even though the three roles of waker, dreamer and deep-sleeper are being played every day.

Question No.45: What is the importance of *jagat-mithyatvam* (empirical reality of the world)?

Answer: Self-knowledge can be effective only when complimented by *jagat mithyatvam* (empirical reality of the world) This means I have the clear understanding that I am *nitya-mukta* (always free) and the world and its contents can never affect Me at any time. There is no need to get out of the world somehow; all that is required is the understanding that *jagat* (world) should not be relied upon for permanent peace and security, even though it has utility value.

Jagat-mithyatvam can be more clearly grasped by meditating on the *svapna-avastha* (dream state) one goes through. In dream, the dream

world, the dream people, the dream objects and the dreamer all appear as very real. It also produces after-effects in many cases. But, on waking up, as the waker, he realizes that the dream was only a mental projection and nothing really created or existed. The entire dream rested on the waker. Without the waker, the dreamer or dream cannot exist. But waker can exist without the dream.

In the same manner, the waking state also is a dream, a long dream. No part of the universe can exist outside Me, as the inner Consciousness. Everything rests in Me and I exist irrespective of the existence of the universe outside. So, 'I' the Atma is *Satyam* (absolute reality) and the world has to be *mithya* (empirical reality). It is due to *maya* that the world, which is really within me, appears to exist outside.

This knowledge comes to the waker when he realizes that he as the Atma is the witness to the waking state and all the happenings belong only to the *vyavaharika* (empirical truth) category and are *mithya* only. As Atma, he was and is just a witness to all the happenings, not only in the waking state but in the dream and deep sleep states as well. He will no longer consider them to be real in any manner.

Question No.46: How can I have knowledge of the *mithyatvam* (empirical reality) of the mind? *Sastra* (Scriptures) does not say mind is a product of *mithya* (empirical reality) and does not speak of its creation.

A: Mind is a *karyam* (effect) and hence has to be *mithya* (empirically real). Both Chandogya and Mundaka Upanishads talk of its creation – refer mantra 6.5.4 and mantra 2.1.3 respectively. Kaivalya Upanishad specifically says: *etasmad jayate pranah, manas etc.* So, the *utpatti* (birth) of mind is mentioned. Chandogya Upanishad says mind is a product of *annam* (food). It is a *bhutakaryam* (born of five elements) and hence *mithya* (empirically real). *Mithyatvam* (empirical reality) should not be understood as *sunyam* (absolute non existence). It is not total void. World and objects do appear to exist, but their existence is not *satyam* (absolute reality). The projection of *samashti* (total) mind is *Isvara* (the Lord) located in Me, the Atma.

Question No.47: Does *nididhyasanam* (contemplation) lead to *moksha* (freedom) directly?

Answer: *Moksha* (freedom) is *svatas-siddha* (already accomplished) and *nididhyasanam* (contemplation) helps the seeker to ward off his *dehatma-buddhi* (body identification) called *viparita-bhavana* (wrong thinking). *Moksha* (freedom) is not something to be attained at a future date, it is there at all times as my inner nature. It is not that the seeker gets knowledge first and then *moksha* (freedom). The knowledge only helps the seeker to claim his Atma status.

Question No.48: How does a *Jnani* (wise person) look at the mind?

Answer: For a *Jnani* (wise person), it is just an *upadhi* (adjunct), whereas *ajnani* treats mind as a part of *sakshi* (witness) and gives it a *viseshanam* (attribute) status. That is why when a person experiences joy or sorrow, he says 'he' experienced them, whereas the truth is that the mind which is an *upadhi* (adjunct) alone had the experiences. *Sakshi* (witness) is *asanga* (unattached) at all times and nothing can be tagged on to it. The mind thus becomes both the experiencer and the experienced.

Question No.49: How should *nididhyasanam* (contemplation) be practiced?

Answer: The biggest obstacle to '*aham Brahmasmi*' (I am Brahman) knowledge is the basic ignorance of the *jiva* (individual soul) identifying himself with his body/mind. Even after understanding what the *Srutis* (Scriptures) teach, the orientation that he is the body/mind still remains. Just because he has a body/mind because of his past *karmas* (action), his real identity of being Atma (Self) never changes. It is his ignorance that he takes himself to be a *karta* (doer) and *bhokta* (experiencer). This *kartritva bhoktritva buddhi* (doer enjoyer identification) has to be given up. This thought of association with the body/mind is very deep and is a *vasana* (impression) carried on from birth to birth. This wrong identification needs to be given up. The fact that the seeker of the vedantic knowledge is himself

Atma (Self) has to displace this wrong identification. *Nididhyasanam* (contemtion) which is a Vedantic meditation helps to uproot this wrong idea from the mind of the seeker. It is not a means for getting knowledge. It only helps to remove the *viparita-bhavana* (wrong identification) entrenched in the mind. The knowledge has to come only from the study of scriptures and undergoing *sravanam* (study) etc.

The seeker should understand that if he were to be the body/mind, he can never be *purna* (whole) since body/mind is *anatma* (non-Self) and is full of deficiencies. He should meditate on the fact that he is not the body/mind, but the witness consciousness within him. That is his real *svarupa* (nature). This meditation is not an *upasana* or prayer which can lead to *moksha* (freedom). It is only a step, a very important step for removal of the *dehatma-buddhi* (body identification) from the mind of the seeker. When he looks at his body/mind and experiences it, he should focus his attention only on the *pratyagatma* (inner Self), the *Sakshi chaitanyam* (witness consciousness) behind his actions.

Mandukya Upanishad advises the seeker to understand the *mithyatvam* (apparent reality) of the three *shariras* (bodies), the three states of existence and claim his *turiya* (real) status. He should understand that both the *vyashti* (individual) and *samashti-sharira-trayam* (total), which is *Ishvara* (the Lord) with his *Maya* (creative power) and *Prakriti* (available for creation) are within 'Him' and He himself is in the form of *Virat* (creation), *Hiranyagarbha* (total subtle body) and *Antaryami* (Indweller). Mere negation of the world or the body/mind is not enough. He should say that He alone is there in all of them. He should say: Let them all of them be where they are, I always remain unaffected by them and I alone exist knowing fully well that all these are nothing but *mithya* (apparent existence). He remains unaffected just like a screen remains unaffected by a fire projected on the screen.

Acharyas advise all the seekers to practice this meditation every morning as soon as they wake up, when their mind is fresh. This will make the *nididhyasanam* (contemtion) more effective.

Question No.50: What is videha mukti (liberation after death) and how is it different from sadyomukti (liberation before death) ?

Answer: When a seeker grasps the truth that his nija-svarupa (real nature) is Atma, he is not a jiva anymore and he is left only with his prarabda karmas (result of operating past actions) to be exhausted. He goes through it without any qualms; as such karmas (actions) can have no effect on him. After the exhaustion of the prarabda karmas (result of operating past actions), his life comes to an end. His gross body becomes a part of the gross manifestation (Virat), the subtle body merges into Hiranyagarbha (total subtle body) and the causal body into Antaryamin (total causal body). Thus, the individual anatma (other than Self) merges with the total anatma (other than self). So, no causal body is available for a new body to manifest and therefore, there is no rebirth for him. This is called videha-mukti (liberation after death). Sadyo mukti (liberation before death) is a state where the jnani (wise person) fully knows that he is not the body/mind complex. Consequently, there can be no question of exhaustion of any karmas (result of past actions) at all, since he is totally disassociated with his body/mind. Therefore, once he gets aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) knowledge, he becomes a sadyo mukta (liberated before death). The goal should be sadyo mukti (liberation before death) and not videha mukti (liberation after death) since a jnani (wise person) has no connection with his sukshma sariram (subtle body) or prarabda karma (result of operating past actions) at the intellectual level.

Question No.51: What is negation of the world?

Answer: It is the understanding that it is *anatma* (other than Self) and hence no substantiality in it. It derives its existence from Brahman. Hence, it is *asatyam* (apparent existence) and *mithya* (empirical reality). The negation of world means understanding this truth that the world is *mithya* (empirical reality) and should not be counted for any purpose.

Question No.52: Can *jnanam* (self-knowledge) wipe out the worldly effects that one endures?

Answer: No, it cannot. Every *jiva* (individual soul) will have to go through his *karma-phala* (fruits of action) in his lifetime. It is inescapable. Joys and sorrows of *samsara* (the cycle of becoming) will be there. *Moksha* (liberation) cannot wipe out the *duhkha* (sorrow) of the seeker. It can do only *bhranti-nivritti* (removal of confusion)/ *ajnana-nivritti* (removal of ignorance) and not *duhkha-nivritti* (removal of sorrow). The seeker should develop sufficient *titiksha* (endurance) to put up with them with the understanding that all these belong only to the body/mind and not 'him' as the Atma. For him, there is no *duhkha* (sorrow) at all in all the three periods of time.

Question No.53: Is refinement of mind required for *jnanam* (self-knowledge)?

A: Refinement of mind is very much required as a qualification to get *jnana* (self-knowledge). This is in the form of *karma* (action), *upasana* (meditation), *yoga*, and *sadhana-chatustaya-sampatti* (four-fold qualification). They help to refine the mind considerably. Mind cannot be completely refined nor is it necessary. Mind is *anatma* (non-Self) and is dismissed as *mithya* (empirical existence). Even if lacks some refinement, it cannot affect the *moksha* (freedom) status of the *jnani* (Wise-person) since it is a *siddha-vastu* (existing thing) for him. *Moksha* (freedom) is not a destination for him, it is his own *svarupa* (real-nature).

Question No.54: Is a pure mind a condition for getting *moksha* (liberation)?

A: It is not possible to purify the mind 100%, though it is easier for a *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) to grasp and absorb this truth if the mind is considerably clean. For claiming *moksha* (liberation), the *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) should say firmly he is not the body or the mind. This is exactly the exercise done by him in *nididhyasana* (contemplation). Mind can always be kept as clean as possible and one can continue to refine the mind as much as he can. But, there has to be a clear understanding that the *sadhaka's* (spiritual seeker's) real nature is *nitya-mukta* (always liberated), which is not connected to the status of the mind.

Question No.55: If moksha is already *siddham* (accomplished), why does Sastra prescribe varieties of sadhanas such as *karma* (action), *upasana yoga* (meditation), *sadhana-chatustaya-sampatti* (four-fold-qualification) etc?

A: *Moksha* is no doubt *siddham* (accomplished) since it is the very *svarupa* (nature) of a *jnani* (wise person). But, to reach this level of knowledge, the seeker should have become a *jijnayasu* (desirer of knowledge), thirsting for vedantic wisdom. That can come only through the study of *Sastras* under a competent Guru and the *jijnayasu* (desirer of knowledge) resorts to *sravana* (listening to the teaching of Vedanta), *manana* (clarifying doubts) and *nididhyasana* (contemplation). Keeping this in mind, the various preparatory disciplines have been prescribed, keeping *moksha* (freedom) as a *sadhyam* (goal to be accomplished). When the *jijnayasu* (desires of knowledge) gets a firm and clear understanding of his own *svarupa* (nature) as Atma, he automatically understands that the so-called *bandha* (bondage) in the form of *samsara* (life of becoming) is only his imagination. The *jnanam* (knowledge) he gets eliminates the *bandhatva-adhyasa* (super imposition of bondage). With the removal of this *adhyasa* (super imposition) , the *sadhyatvam* (goal to be accomplished) also gets removed and he claims his own status of *siddha-moksha* (ever free). The procedure adopted here is *adhyaropa* (super imposition) of the idea of *sadhyam* (goal to be accomplished) and this idea is discarded through *apavada* (negation).

Question No.56: Can logic be depended upon for gaining Vedantic knowledge?

A: Logic is used in Vedantic studies, but it is not given any prime importance, since logic itself cannot lead one to knowledge. At the same time, logic is also not totally ignored. Ignoring logic would render one to have blind faith in what *Sastras* say. This is not what *Sastras* want. At every stage, where providing a reasoning will help to clarify a point further, logic is used. The Vedantic teachings are always interpreted in such a way that what it teaches does not

contradict fundamental logic. Using logic certainly makes the understanding sharper and deeper.

Question No.57: What is the role of *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nidhidhyasanam*?

Answer: *Sravanam* removes seeming internal contradictions in the Vedas which a student may confront while undertaking vedantic studies. The Vedas are interpreted in different ways by different *dvaita*, *vishistadvaita* and *advaita acharyas* from their own standpoints. While understanding the various points of view expressed, the intellect of the listener has to grasp what he really wants to know and understand. Such an understanding should be free of all contradictions. While a student of *Advaita Vedanta* may like to understand the contents of the *Sastras* from the *advaitic* angle, it is always preferable to hear out the views expressed by various *Acharyas* on the same vedic text, in order that he can know where exactly the *Advaita Sastra* is different from the rest. Such an approach will help to remove any possible contradictions which may arise in his mind. The process of *sravanam* helps to remove such internal contradictions.

Mananam is intended to remove external contradictions of *dvaita* and *advaita*. *Sastras* teach *advaita* as the only true reality; but, the student who receives this message is all the time immersed in *dvaita*. *Dvaita* is there even in the teacher/taught/teaching relationship. Besides, experience that a student really undergoes is 100% *dvaita*. A basic doubt is therefore bound to arise in his mind: which is right and acceptable- *dvaita* or *advaita*? Such fundamental doubts are removed through *mananam*.

In *nididhyasanam*, all subjective contradictions that arise in the mind of the student with reference to his internal experience are removed. Even after listening to vedantic teachings for a number of years, there is always a lurking doubt in the student mind that he is still a *samsari* and this will go away only after a very prolonged process of *sravanam* and *mananam*. He also carries the hope in his mind that one day he will get *moksha*. These are very serious misgivings. This

gap between what he has learnt through vedantic studies and his own internal conviction can get removed only if the student resorts to continuous *nididhyasanam*. *Nididhyasanam* helps to remove these serious misgivings.

Question No.58: How does *samsara* (life of becoming) begin and how can it be removed?

Answer: *Moolavidya* (fundamental ignorance) is the primary cause for all such misconceptions about oneself. *Moolavidya* (fundamental ignorance) itself is something foisted on the *jiva* (individual soul) by *maya-sakti* (creative power) right from his birth. Every *jiva* (individual soul) is born with this self-ignorance – ignorant of his real inner nature. It is this which makes him to commit the blunder of identifying himself with his body/mind which is really a temporary showcase for his *chetana-svarupa* (sensitive nature). Thus, an infinite entity is misunderstood to be finite due to this wrong identification.

It is only the body/mind which is subjected to the joys and sorrows of life. The *Atma-chaitanyam* (conscious Self) which remains very close to the body/mind, being *asanga* (unattached) always remain undisturbed by all these. Yet, the *jiva* (individual Soul) whose real inner-nature is this *chaitanyam* (consciousness) transposes all the effects felt by the body/mind to his higher self. It is this wrong transference called *adhyasa* (super imposition) which makes him say that he is a *samsari* (one subject to a life of becoming) suffering from all types of sorrow and misgivings. This *adhyasa* (super imposition) gets removed once the *jiva* (individual Soul) recognizes his true inner nature. This *samsara-bhranti* (confusion that one is subject to life of becoming) needs to be given up. This is the only solution.

Question No.59: Does one have to work for *moksha* (freedom) ?

Answer: Desire for *moksha* (freedom) itself is a delusion born out of misconception that it is something to be achieved at a future date. *Moksha* (freedom) is *svatah-siddha* (already accomplished) and inherently, every human-being is a *mukta* (free person) only. There is no question of working for *moksha* (freedom). The thought that one has to work for it is valid only for beginners in vedantic study

who are yet to get *aham brahmasmi* (I am Brahman) knowledge. Once the student achieves sufficient knowledge of *Advaita* (non-dual) *Vedanta*, this idea of looking for *moksha* (freedom) will get automatically dropped.

What is required is *jnanam* (knowledge) received through *Mahavakya upadesa* (teaching) from a competent Guru.

Another wrong line of thinking is the conclusion that *duhkha-nivritti* (getting rid of sorrow) is *moksha* (freedom). This statement can hold good only if *Atma* has any *duhkha* (sorrow). As *Atma*, he is ever pure and can never have any *duhkha* (sorrow). It is the mind which undergoes such experiences and he is different from the mind. *Moksha* (freedom) is therefore the removal of the wrong notion that one has *duhkha* (sorrow). He has none of it since his real nature is one of total *ananda* (fullness).

The 'ego sense', the *ahankara* (ego) in the mind is another component which needs to be dropped. It is not easy since everything is based on *ahankara* (ego). But, it has to be given up so that *moksha* (freedom) can become *svarupa mukti/ nitya mukti* (one's nature / at all times).

Question No.60: Many offer varieties of prayers to the Lord for relief from *samsara* (life of becoming). Is this right or wrong?

Answer: There is nothing wrong in offering prayers to the Lord. In fact, it is one of our *nithya anushtanams* (daily religious practice). But these prayers are to be offered not for the benefit of the self alone, but for *loka-kshema* (welfare of all beings). The prayer should be: '*Sarve janah sukhino bhavantu, samasta sanmangalani santu*' (Let all beings be happy. Let all beings be comfortable). This is the universal prayer that should be offered every day. This prayer makes one more *saatvik* (virtuous) and helps to tone down *ahankara/ mamakara* (ego/ possessiveness), but cannot give *moksha* (freedom). The Lord has no power to eliminate sorrow of the *jiva* (individual Soul). All that is experienced by the mind is the result of one's own *karmas* (fruits of action) and will get extinguished only by going through their results.

Question No.61: What are the two stages in learning of Vedanta?

Answer: The two stages are: *atma/anatma viveka* (discrimination between self and non-self) through *anumana pramana* (inference) and *atma-advitiyatva* (oneness of self) through *mahavakya pramana* (profound sentence revealing oneness of self).

The second stage is generally missed by many and so they apply their partial knowledge for overcoming the problem of *samsara* (life of becoming). There is an attempt to escape *anatma* (non-self) by rejecting it blindly through the statements like 'I am not the body/mind' etc. Instead of just rejecting them, *atma/anatma viveka prakriya* (methodology of analysis of self and not-self) should be used to reject them. Step by step, part by part, each of the components of *anatma* (non-self) should be understood to be a mere *nama/rupa* (name/ form), temporary, subject to change all the time and such other limitations. Their rejection should take place only after the mind is fully satisfied about their *mithyatvam* (apparent reality). Merely standing away from them will not help; the seeker has also to claim his '*aham brahmasmi*' (I am Brahman) status. The fact is I cannot go away from the world; and the world also cannot go away from me. There should be a very clear understanding that 'I' as Brahman alone appear as all these *anatma* (non-self) with their variety of names and forms. So, nothing needs to be totally rejected, since everything is My *nama/rupa* (name/ form) only. Entire *drisya* (witnessed) world is a mere *nama/rupa* (name/form) and are there because of Me, the Brahman. There is no need to escape from *samsara* (life of becoming), since it is *mithya* (apparently existing) and I am the only *Satya* (really existing truth).

Question No.62: Why do we have to use the mind in learning the teachings and not anything else in the creation which is also considered as Brahman?

Answer: *Atma* (Self) cannot be directly revealed. Nor can it declare itself: I am *Atma* (the Self). It has to be revealed only through *Sruti pramana* (Scriptures which are the source of knowledge) which has to be taught and heard as a teaching. So, *Atma* (Self) has to be known only through the medium of the mind as a thought in it arising out of such an *upadesa* (teaching). Though mind is *mithya*

(apparently real) and inert by nature, it becomes a powerful instrument with the pervasion of Consciousness in it. (This is referred to as 'reflected consciousness'. The term 'reflection' should not be understood in its literal sense. There is no such thing as a physical reflection as one sees an image reflected in a mirror. Consciousness is an all-pervading entity, it pervades the mind also.) That is why the *Sastras* say: *mana eva karanam manushyanam banda mokshayo* (Mind is the cause for bondage and liberation of a human being).

It is in the mind that all knowledge takes place. Mind is very much required for it to recognize the real I. It is the manifestation of the Consciousness in the mind that enables a seeker to get this knowledge. Such a mind, of course, has to be cleansed of the four *dushta-chatushtayam* (group of four dis-qualifications) which are: *ahankara, mamakara, raga and dvesha* (me, mine, likes and dislikes). The co-existence of the inner Consciousness and the body/mind should therefore be considered a blessing from the Lord, as it helps the seeker to brush aside the body/mind aspect and claim the Consciousness as his real self.

Question No. 63: Is not '*sarvam Brahma*' (everything is Brahman) better knowledge than '*aham Brahmasmi*' (I am Brahman) since *sarvam* (everything) must include *aham* (I) also; by declaring oneself as '*aham Brahma*' (I am Brahman) isn't there a possibility of *ahankara* (ego) raising its head?

Answer: The word *aham* (I) does not refer to the jiva (individual) with a body/mind, but the *chaitanyam* (consciousness) within it. Knowing this Consciousness within oneself alone will give *aparoksha jnanam* (direct knowledge). Knowing that everything is Brahman is no doubt the right knowledge, but it is *paroksha jnanam* (indirect knowledge) only. The *chit* (consciousness) and *ananda* (happiness/fullness) aspect of Brahman can be recognized directly in *aham* (I). So, Brahman is revealed through the *mithya adhishtanam* (relative substratum) mind alone. In the world outside, the same Brahman can be recognized as the *Sat*, the Existence principle. This also means that the experience of the *mithya* (relatively existing) world is the very experience of *satyam adhishtanam* (absolute substratum)

Brahman. It is just like you really experience sunlight when you experience moonlight.

It should be understood that the two other inherent features of Brahman – the *chit* (consciousness) and *ananda* (happiness/ fullness) are not evidenced in the *mithya jagat* (relatively existing world) because of the absence of a reflecting medium (like the mind) in it. This also means that with the help of any object in the world, the *Sat* (existence) in Brahman can be understood. It is from this angle that the entire *jagat* (world) is considered as a representation of the Lord Himself. A *jnani bhaktha* (wise devotee) sees divinity in everything in the world. He understands that it is due to grace of the Lord that he could resort to vedantic studies. This is how *bhakti* (devotion) and *jnanam* (knowledge) can join together and go hand in hand.

Question No.64: Will *Brahma satyam* (Brahman is absolutely true), *jagan mithya* (world is relatively true) knowledge alone liberate a person?

Answer: No, since this part of the knowledge is *paroksha jnanam* (indirect knowledge) only. It is only *aparoksha jnanam* (direct knowledge), the knowledge that 'I' am non-different from Brahman that liberates. *Paroksha jnanam* (indirect knowledge) becomes *purna jnanam* (complete knowledge) only when it is followed by the knowledge *jivo brahmaiva naparah*. The knowledge that 'I am Brahman' alone is *purna jnanam* (complete knowledge).

Question No.65: Can *mithya* (relatively real) *pramana vakyas* (sentences which are means of knowledge) reveal *Satyam* (absolutely real) Brahman?

Answer: Yes. Brahman and *mithya* (relatively real) world have a *vivarttha karya/ karana sambandha* (apparent cause/ effect relationship). This *sambandha* (relationship) itself reveals the existence of Brahman. When an effect is seen and observed, the existence of its cause is automatically established. The *jnanam* (knowledge) produced by this *mithya sambandha* (apparently real relationship) as well as *moksha* (freedom), the result, all relate to the *vyavaharika* (empirical reality) status only.

Question No.66: How can *mithya* (relatively real) *moksha* (freedom) remove *samsara* (bondage) ?

Answer: Yes, it can do so since *samsara* (bondage) also is *mithya* (relatively real). To remove dream diseases, one requires dream medicine only. The point to be understood in all these is that the 'eliminator' and the 'eliminated' should have the same order of reality. All communications will work when the two sides have the same order of reality. But, *mithya* (relatively real) *jnanam* (knowledge) does reveal *Satyam* (absolutely real) *Brahman*. We should remember the rope/ snake example. Rope which is 'real' is revealed with the help of an 'unreal' snake, since real rope is the *adhishtanam* (basis) for the *mithya* (appearing) snake. Similarly, *mithya* (relatively real) dream is the *pramanam* (means of knowledge) for the *satyam* (real) waker.

Question No.67: Words of *Sastras* (Scriptures) which reveal *Brahman* give only indirect knowledge. How can it be equal to the direct knowledge one gets about other things?

Answer: The knowledge revealed by the words of the *Sastras* (Scriptures) relate to an entity which is already being experienced in the form of self awareness. *Brahman* is being experienced by all the *jivas* (individual soul) in the form of self awareness. The knowledge arising out of the words of *Sastras* (Scriptures) reveals this awareness and not anything or object in the outside world. As far as the individual *jiva* (soul) is concerned, he gets the knowledge about himself, which is also direct knowledge of himself only. He has *Brahma anubhava* (immediate recognition) in the form of his *chaitanya anubhava* (consciousness recognition) but he does not know this fact. In fact, a *vyvaharika pramanam* (empirical source of knowledge) need not actually reveal a *paramarthika vastu* (absolute reality). It is the consciousness principle which is already revealed. All that *vyvaharika pramanam* (empirical source of knowledge) does is to remove the *vyvaharika* (empirical) ignorance in the form of concealment of the true self. Once the veil of ignorance goes away, self-awareness becomes explicit. Consciousness is all the time evident in the form of 'I'. It is just like removing the cover which was hiding the light. The light is always there shining and so need

not be revealed. It is the cover which needs to be removed. Once this is done, the presence of light automatically becomes evident.

Brahma-jnanam (Brahman knowledge) is only *Brahma-ajnana-nivritti* (removal of ignorance of Brahman). There is no such thing as *Brahma-jnana-prapti* (attainment of Brahman knowledge). One need not make effort to know *Brahma-jnana* (Brahman). One has only to remove the ignorance about it.

Question No.68: How can Consciousness and self-ignorance co-exist?

Answer: There is no question of their co-existence. Self-ignorance is *mithya* (having dependent existence) whereas Consciousness is *Satyam* (always existing). Things of different orders of reality cannot come under the same category. Self-ignorance 'seems' to exist and is a false projection on the real self. *Veda-pramanam* (Veda as source of knowledge) removes this false projection. Ignorance is universally experienced. All that is done is to remove this *vyavaharika avidya* (empirical ignorance). There is no real existence for this *avidya* (ignorance).

Question No.69: Can *Atma* (Self) be understood through the process of reasoning?

Answer: No reasoning is required to know the fact of one's self-existence. The fact that one says he exists itself is the proof for the existence of *Atma* (Self). What is required is to understand the *mithyatvam* (dependent existence) of the world, of the three types of *karmas* (actions) and dismiss them as irrelevant. Once everything else other than the self is negated, the negator which is *Atma* (Self) alone remains. It is self-evident all the time and does not require to be revealed.

It is like the elimination of rope-snake. Rope has always been there and the wrong knowledge of it being a snake is removed. *Sastras* (Scriptures) call it *badha* (bondage). It is different from *nasa* (destruction) which indicates total elimination. *Anatma* need not be destroyed. It will always be there. Only its effects need to be eliminated through knowledge. *Badha* (bondage) is possible only for

a *mithya-vastu* (a thing having dependent existence) and not something real. *Mithayatvam* (dependent existence) of *anatma* (non-Self) has to be firmly established in the mind. Only then, one can claim his status of being *Sakshi* (Witness).

Question No.70: Can other *purusharthas* (goals of human life)/ *tapas* (austerities) /*samadhi* (deep meditation) give *moksha* (freedom) ?

Answer: No. They can only prepare you and make you an *uttama-adhikari* (qualified student) for getting *moksha* (freedom). *Mahavakya-jnanam* (Tat Tvam Asi sentence which reveals self knowledge) is the only way.

Question No.71: According to *Sastras* (Scriptures), Atma (Self) is *svayam-prakasa* (self-revealing). So, I should know it automatically without any effort.

Answer: It is agreed that Atma (Self) is *svayam-prakasa* (self-revealing), but it cannot be recognized like one does with respect to various objects in the outside world. All these objects are recognized through the medium of sense organs and the mind. Here, it should be understood that Atma (Self), the real 'I' is the 'seer' himself, the recognizer of various things. How can he be recognized by the sense organs when they themselves are the recognized ones? The recognition can come only through the words of the *Sastras* (Scriptures). What is sought to be understood is the person himself. This understanding can come only through Sastric studies.

Question No.72: If *pramanam* (means of knowledge) can objectify anything and everything in the world, why cannot it objectify the Consciousness also and reveal it to the mind?

Answer: A *pramanam* (means of knowledge) and *prameyam* (the revealed object) should belong to the same category. For example, the eyes which reveal and the object revealed by the eye both belong to same category – called *samana-jatitvam*. *Atma* (Self) and any of the *pramanams* (means of knowledge) are not in the same category. That is why they cannot reveal *Atma* (Self) at all.

Sastram (Scripture) also is *bhautikam* since it is *sabda*-based. In the normal course, it cannot reveal *abhautika* Brahman. *Sastra* does not teach anything new. What it does is to enable the *jiva* (individual Soul) to negate all the *anatma* stuff superimposed on Brahman through its teachings. It removes all limitations of the *anatma* body/mind/world transposed on the *chit* (consciousness) within. Presently, everyone knows he exists as 'I' with various appendages like his name, profession and all that follows the 'I'. *Sastra* strives to remove all such appendages. What will be finally left will be 'I am'. These two letters represent the *Sat* and *Chit* of *Atma*, the Brahman.

Once a person drops all that follows the statement 'I am' after obtaining the *Sastric* wisdom, he is left with his own *Atma-svarupa*. He will no longer say he is a *samsari*. He understands that in reality, he is the *Chit* available in and through the *chidabhasa* (reflected consciousness) and the body mind and transacts with the world. He knows *Chit* continues to exist even after his body disappears. This is the *jnanam* he gets and by which he knows himself as *purna vastu*, which is *moksha*.

Aham Brahmasmi does not objectify Brahman, but helps the seeker to claim and declare: I am Brahman. *Moksha* therefore is not going to another state, but dropping of all the superimposed limitations. Brahman exists only in the form of I and not in any other form. If it were to exist in any form other than Me, then it becomes an object. *Mahavakya* is the only *pramanam* which reveals this truth.

Question no. 73: What is *Sakshi chaitanyam* and what is its role?

Answer: The all-pervading Consciousness is called *Chaitanyam*. *Chaitanyam* pervading the mind and the body is called *Sakshi chaitanyam*. It is evident that this is just another name to indicate the pervasion of the Consciousness principle in the body/mind. It witnesses all that happens in the body/mind and in the entire world. Though it appears to be confined to the body/mind, it is all-pervading. It is eternal and is always there, even when there is no body/mind. *Brahma-jnanam* is not a knowing process, but a claiming process.

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