

The Miracle of Self Realization: A View from “I” Perspective

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Abstract: *This contribution is rooted in Indian spirituality, more specifically in the tradition of Ādvaita Vedānta or the philosophy of non-dualism. In this paper, an attempt is made to outline the biggest miracle of all, namely, the miracle of self-realization, “I”. In this paper, an attempt is made to demonstrate the limited nature of scholarship and worldly knowledge in the spiritual journey. By intellect is meant the pursuit of worldly knowledge (Loka vicāra). We will seek to show that – (a) spirituality is primarily about self-realization. (b) that the pursuit of scholarship is of little use in this search for self-realization; (indeed, it is a positive obstacle), and that (c) self-enquiry (Ātmā Vicāra) or surrender are the best means to achieve the goal. In this paper, we take it for granted that the words of a self Realized Master represent the supreme Truth as they emanate from his or her inner self. It is for this reason that so much importance is attached to them in Indian spiritual traditions. Sri Ramana, the great Indian saint uniquely voiced that, “The ‘I’ casts off the illusion of ‘I’ and yet remains as ‘I’. such is the paradox of Self-Realization.” “If you give up ‘I’ and ‘Mine’, all are given up at one stroke. The very seed of possession is nipped in the bud or crushed in the germ itself.” The self cannot be objectified because its Reality is not objective. It is entirely subject, it is the only subject. It is not through the mind, but by conquering the mind that the state of Self-Realization is achieved. The central challenge in all management is realizing the nature of oneself. The advancement of humankind is best served when a human being connects with his or her own dignity. In Indian spirituality, the world is best served when self understanding proceeds helping others. The world is changed for the better when we change ourselves. The key to a better world is self realization.*

Keywords: Indian Spirituality, Lok Vicāra, Ātmā Vicāra.

1. Introduction

This contribution is rooted in Indian spirituality, more specifically in the tradition of Ādvaita Vedānta or the philosophy of non-dualism. In this paper, an attempt is made to outline the biggest miracle of all, namely, the miracle of self-realization, “I”.

According to Ādvaita Vedaānta, the science of Self-Realization (Which we call Self-Inquiry), requires involved in discovering the complexities of the universe. Both approaches are similar in one way in that our consciousness with focused attention and awareness is used as an instrument of perception to gain knowledge.

1.1 Worldly Knowledge in the Spiritual Journey

In this paper, an attempt is made to demonstrate the limited nature of scholarship and worldly knowledge in the spiritual journey. By intellect is meant the pursuit of Worldly Knowledge (Lok Vicāra). We will seek to show that – (a) spirituality is primarily about self-realization. (b) that the pursuit of scholarship is of little use in this search for self-realization; (indeed, it is a positive obstacle), and that (c) self-enquiry (Ātmā Vicāra) or surrender are the best means to achieve the goal. We shall seek to demonstrate that there is in point of fact, simply no other way. In this paper, we take it for granted that the words of a Self-Realized master represent the supreme truth as they emanate from his or her inner self. It is for this reason that so much importance is attached to them in Indian spiritual traditions.

It is important to clarify these statements. There are two types of education and two types of knowledge. Professional education is anchored on (This includes management education) helping individuals make a living; this may therefore be described as education for a living. This is

called Loka Vicāra (Worldly enquiry). The second type of education is spiritual education; this may be described as education for life. This is called atma vicara (Self enquiry). Among the two, the former is positive impediment in developing the later. Similarly bookish or textual knowledge. (including spiritual knowledge) cannot help to bring about self-realization. It can at best act as an aid but there is no substituted for actual experience.

The question naturally arises: if science, reasoning and logic have no role to play in the road of self-revelation, what is it that is needed in this journey that can help the seeker in his search ? The answer is of course faith, devotion and surrender. Faith is often seen as “unscientific” and “irrational” but if the matter is considered closely, faith is the logical culmination of reason. The role of reasoning in spirituality is “to give up all reasoning is the place of reasoning in spirituality.” This means that unless the seeker has experienced the complete futility of world wisdom in advancing one’s spiritual search and abandons reasoning by embracing faith as his vehicle, there is little hope of the aspirant making any significant progress in the journey. Faith cannot develop without the seeker understanding the limitations of reason.

1.2 ‘Self-knowledge’- The recognition by self-awareness

For the one abiding spontaneously and inherently in the Self- Truth of Reality, question of methods, techniques and practices, and the path become moot. When clarity of self arises, any technique may be practiced and any path may be walked or one may give up all techniques and paths. For such a person, the Self-attention itself absorbs attention regardless of where it is focused outwardly. The essential element in this understanding is the recognition by

awareness of its innate wake fullness. Awareness is always self-aware by its very nature.

When awareness remains pure and spontaneously Self-focused (Perpetually in communion with itself), the subtle duality between awareness / attention (as pure I am) and its sources is seen to be illusory.

Then even the witness disappears, there being nothing to witness. The "I am" disappears having nothing to point to. Spontaneously with the I am awareness / Śakti merging in its source, the self recognized. The Self Recognizes itself by itself and through itself as its own self. Sri Ramana, great Indian saint uniquely voiced that, "The 'I' casts off the illusion of 'I' and yet remains as 'I'. Such is the paradox of Self-Realization." "If you give up 'I' and 'alene, all are given up at one stroke. The very seed of possession is nipped in the bud or crushed in the germ itself." It sees and recognizes that it has always been the source. That it is the eternal source, the causeless cause. This is the supreme beauty of the heart. It absorbs the Śakti, and along with it the mind, thus swallowing time and space. How can one speak of this silence? The silence that transcends all understanding and knowledge can only be indicated indirectly. Sri Ramana Maharshi never tire of pointing out that – "That which is real and absolute always exists and is not absent even now. How can reality, whether one calls it God, Consciousness, Absolute, Nirvana, Mokṣa, Kingdom of heaven, or by some other name be present at one time and time and absent at another? Perfection, by its nature, cannot be more perfect sometimes but not other. The approach and method of Advaita is based on this implicit axiom.

1.3 'Self-enquiry' - the quest "who am I".

"The quest 'Who am I?' is the axe with which to cut off the ego." And "cease to be the knower, then there is perfection." (Talk no. 146 and 147).

Enquiry is to ask oneself with attention and enquire, "Who am I?" This is done in order to introvert the mind and drive it deeper into its source. In this method, consciousness is not focused anywhere or on anything other than itself. Although there is no perfect language, but these are many ways to say this. Attention focused on attention itself is Self-enquiry. Consciousness becoming Self-focused in is Self-enquiry. Mind turning inwards to its source is self-enquiry. Awareness aware of itself is Self-enquiry. All of These are variations of the same process and basically refer to the same thing. These statements indicate that one should quietly abide in one's own sense of identity and being with full awareness. Consumption of experience in some form or another is natural to all living beings. Self-enquiry shifts our attention from perception to the perceiver.

The practice of meditation and yoga leads the mind to temporarily withdraw the senses from object of perception. However, internal perceptions in meditative states or Samadhi will most likely still exist. These internal perceptions may manifest in a number of ways. Various spiritual and religious symbols often appear spontaneously in the mental eye of the aspirant during meditation or contemplative prayer and there may also be experiences of

lucid dreaming states. So even in higher meditation states, the distinction between the subject and the object of perception continues as we engage in and consume one experience after another.

Self-enquiry, on the other hand, is found to enjoy no special experience other than being their own self.

When attention / awareness becomes self-focused, that is called Self-enquiry. When attention lights up attention, awareness lights up awareness, consciousness lights up consciousness, self is realized as Sat-Cit-Ananda, the ultimate subject, the very core of being. Sri Ramana called it simply the heart, whose nature is that of silence which is beyond all understanding.

1.4 'Self-Realization' – the feeling of "I"

Self-realization is self mastery, and the awakening to higher states of consciousness. Maharishi Ramana quoted that "your own Self-realization is the greatest service you can render the world." Realization is not acquisition of anything new nor is it a new faculty. It is only removal of all camouflage. There is no greater mystery than this, that we keep seeking reality though in fact we are reality. We think that there is something hiding reality and that this must be destroyed before reality is gained. Relative knowledge pertains to the mind and not to the self. It is therefore illusory and not permanent. One should go beyond relative knowledge and abide in the self. Real knowledge is such experience, and not apprehension by the mind. All that is required to realize the self is to "Be still" Remain still, with the conviction that the self shines as everything yet nothing, within, without and everywhere. One can only stop the flow of thoughts by refusing to have any interest in it.

According to Ramana "There is nothing like 'within' or 'without'. Both mean either the same thing or nothing." If you hold the feeling of 'I' long enough and strongly enough, the false 'I' will vanish leaving only the unbroken awareness of the real, immanent 'I', consciousness itself." In the state of self-realization a being become conscious of being conscious. Say or thing "I am", and add nothing to it. Be aware of the stillness that follows the "I am". "You are awareness. Awareness is another name for you. Since you are awareness there is no need to attain or cultivate it." The only useful purpose of our present birth is to turn within and realize the self, and constant meditation is the only way to gain the strength. Controlling speech and breath, and diving deep within oneself – like one who, to find a thing that has fallen into water, dives deep down – one must seek out the source whence the aspiring ego springs. Self-realization is the path of mokṣa because one who gains it, will gain release. The enquiry "who am I" ? is the principal means to the removal of all misery and the attainment of the supreme bliss.

That which is worth taking up is the self-enquiry that reveals jñāna; that which is worth enjoying is the grandeur of the self; that which is worth renouncing is the ego-mind; that in which it is worth taking refuge to eliminate sorrow completely, is one's own source, the Heart. Because the reply comes as a current of awareness in the Heart, fitful at first and only achieved by intense effort, but gradually

increasing in power and constancy, becoming more spontaneous, acting as a check on thoughts and actions, undermining the ego, until finally the ego disappears and the certitude of pure consciousness remains. In self-realization a person realizes that He is awareness. Awareness is another name of him. Since He is awareness there is no need to attain or cultivate it. One has to find the 'I' first and he may speak of other matters. Give up the notion of 'I am so and so' and that is required to realize the self. 'I exist' is the only permanent self-evident experience of everyone. Nothing else is so self-evident as 'I am'. So to do self-enquiry and be that 'I am' is the only thing to do. 'I am' is reality. I am this or that is unreal. 'I am' is truth, another name for self.

Thus self-realization is the feeling of 'I'. If one holds this feeling of 'I' long enough and strongly enough, the false 'I' will vanish leaving only the unbroken awareness of the real, immanent 'I', consciousness itself. Permanent happiness is the goal of human life and is experienced continuously upon attaining self-realization. By discovering the real eternal nature of "Who am I", true permanent happiness is attained.

When someone is asked about his identity, She/he will answer that 'I am Koyel', but this name is only a little given to identify his or her body. In reality, person is the owner of his/her name and not the name itself. Before self-realization it is natural to identify with your name and with the countless temporary qualities that are believed to be "You" but who you really are is beyond all of these temporary identifications, for "You" are eternal, and permanent happiness itself. Self-realization is to experience the nature of your very own self, from that vantage point, to understand the non-self known as "Koyel".

2. Conclusion – The Negative Aspect of "I"

The paper may be summed up that consciousness is created through the separation of the mind into the perceiver and the perceived. Perception is the awareness of the self as being different from the observed. Consciousness is not just perception. For perception to happen, there must also be attachment or the fixation of the attention or concentration on the observed to the objects that are perceived. So consciousness has two parts—perception and attachment. This attachment keeps the mind focussed on the objects that are perceived. This attachment is born out of desire for the objects of perception. The desire is the result of the mind focussed on the objects of perception. The desire is the result of the mind experiencing sensations of pleasure from the objects, or a sense of belonging or a relationship.

Attachment is the force that enables concentration or focus of consciousness on the object of attention. This focus is driven purely by the sense of pleasure (either physical or emotional) that is experienced by the consciousness when it focussed attention on the object of desire.

The seeking of pleasure coupled with the ability to separate other people as being different from one's own self, leads to the development of the Ego. The Ego or the identity is the process by which the mind separates the known from the knower.

Attachment is the cause of the negative aspect of the separator, the "I". It is this aspect of attachment of consciousness to the observed phenomena that is known as the Ego. It is the attachment to objects and people that makes the "I", to transform into a desire seeking instrument that seeks pleasure through the senses and relationships.

The artificial identity "I" or Ego (Ahamkāra) which was created by the mind only for the purpose of differentiating the self from the observed events, assumes the role of the seeker. It assumes (or deludes itself) into taking ownership of all objects, people and events that it can observe / experience through the senses.

To keep deriving pleasure from worldly objects, it must be experienced in ever increasing volumes. After a certain level of involvement in this world, the mind can only experience pleasure from what is within its grasp. It can only experience pleasure if it acquires what others are apparently seeking but are not able to possess. So it is no longer acceptable to have enough to satisfy one's needs. We should have something that others need or something that belongs to others. This is the dominance of the Rajasic Guna within us. This is the next level of attachment that entraps consciousness in the material world.

Under the influence of the Rajasic Guna, consciousness / mind is completely under the control of the "I" which was supposed to be for the purpose of differentiation only. This is why "I" should be dropped completely from the mind, in order that the consciousness or more appropriately the ātmān is freed from a conflicted existence with attachments to the objects of this world. If the individual is not been initiated in "I" or self-realization their lives would be trapped in an endless loop of pleasure and pain with no chance of escape or evolution to a higher level, a key to change the world with betterment.