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Cutting the Ignorance and Coming to Well-being (I-reflection): Self-Consciousness and Unity of Mind in the light of Non-dualism.

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Abstract

Reality is in fact the non-dual Being which is of the nature of self-consciousness (I-reflection). Man experiences a world of plurality, of which she/he is part. The problem is that how from the one reality the manifold world has come into being. Theories have been put forth which relate the pluralistic world to the being or the oneself in terms of whole and part, artificer and artifact, cause and effect, etc. But an analysis of those views will show that they have not succeeded in resolving the problem. Advaita considers the world to be a superimposition (I-thought, ego) on the I-reflection. In other words it is an appearance of the Real. Even while there are the appearances the non-dual Reality has not ceased to be what it is. In our relative experience we have frequent instances of illusory appreciations. With the help of these illustrations we can appreciate the importance of the concept of superimposition or nescience on what makes the One Reality appear as if many. The concept of superimposition provides the key to understand *Advaita*. In this paper an attempt has been made to explain how nescience can be

removed; and how the removal is to be understood.

Keywords: Non-dual being, Nescience, Advita, Self-conscious, Ego, Well being, *karma*, I- reflection, Pure-consciousness, Individual self

Removing the ignorance is set up when one realizes that I-reflection is not ego and enjoying and agency is the nature of man in empirical life and experiences it in dualism (empirical life). “Self-conscious or removing the nescience is in fact a postulate which its utility lies in effecting freedom” according to the doctrine of nescience as explained by Sankara in the Adhyasa-bhasya put in *Superimposition in Advaita Vedanta* by Mahadevan (p.8). The individual self is ego-projection as limited by the complex of body, sense-organ, mind and intellect. The individual soul has the conceits of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ in mind, sense-organ and body. All the empirical usage is born of these conceits which are due to superimposition or nescience. So the individual self is ignorant of its true nature as the self-being, and identified itself with the modes of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. The problem can be illustrated with taking an example of the story of lady involving with her dress-thought. This example refers to the Advaitin contention that what one is concerned with in the process of ordinary living is not the real ‘I’ but the ‘I-thought, ego’, just as what the lady was concerned with in exploring her romantic situation with the dress-thought and not the dress, even though she may find it difficult to draw his distinction at all. Although the dress as dress-thought was the object of so much activity, the dress as such just lay passively on the table.

This theoretical approach is argued as one moves from waking state to dreaming and deep sleep in terms of ordinary experience, consciousness becomes increasingly subjectified

in the empirical subject. Indeed, in the waking, objects are external to the active subject (I-conscious), who is distinct from them, and in dreams the objects become a product of the person's interior consciousness. They are within the subject. But in the deep sleep, the difference between the object and the subject dissolves—even the internal division within a dream between the experienced object and the experiencing subject disappears. And what is all left is nothing but the sleeping person. Indeed, what must here be realized is the active subject (I-conscious) who witnesses the unconsciousness of sleep. This pure consciousness (real I) by its realization put in fact an end to all unhappiness. Such is the Advaitin claim, “that except for one who experientially comes to “know” this active subject (I-conscious) which is known solely by means of itself.” (p. 30) quoted in William M. by Ramana.

On account of its self-consciousness, “every man from king to peasant has a certain amount of sorrow. Even in cases where it seems absent it is only a time factor that makes you think so—sooner or later it comes.” (Ibid) Quoted in Brunton by Ramana. Thus the individual self is governed by ignorance (I-thought, ego), the Purva-mimamsaka contends that “agency etc., are natural to the *Jiva* (individual self, ego) as otherwise the ritual texts of the Veda would be any purport.” (Ibid., 9) In texts like “the self is to seen, heard, reflected on, and contemplated’ quoted in (Ibid) the agency is not natural to the self then it can be relived of it. It is the same in Advaitin contention that it was not the dress but the dress-thought which control the lady's life, it is not the “I-reflection” as a active subject—but the ‘I-thought’ which runs our lives, divorced from the real “I” but deriving its existence from it, just as the dress- thought is divorced from the dress and yet derives its existence from it. “ this ‘I-thought’ is also called

the ego and it is said that those alone who have out the real nature of the ego have seen reality. They will have no more doubts or anxiety.” (p.32) quoted in Compiler by Ramana. Analogically, this point can even be clarified in this manner that just as once one has discovered the nature of the dress-thought—which one constantly confused with the dress itself—one would also discover the real nature of the dress as such, unclouded by the dress- thought. In Advaita, the realization of the true nature entails realizing how the ‘I-thought’ rise from the real ‘I’. “to say ‘I am this’ or ‘I am that’ there must be the ‘I’. This ‘I’ is only the ego or the ‘I-thought’’. After the rising up of this ‘I-thought’ all other thoughts as a ego-projection arise. The ‘I-thought’ is therefore the root-thoughts. Find out it its source. Then all these [other thoughts] will vanish and the ‘I-reflection’ as the real subject will remain over.” (p. 32) Quoted in Brunton by Ramana. Similarly, it is said that the ego proceeds from the self as a spark from fire. “the spark is called the ego. In the case of the ignorant man it identified itself with an object simultaneously with its rise. It cannot remain independent of such association with objects. If its objectivity tendency is killed it remains pure and also merges in to the source.” (p.33) quoted in Godman by Ramana.

This point is also pertinent in analogy of the dress and the dress-thought. When one describes the dress qua dress without dress-thoughts one can describe the process as either tracing dress-thoughts back to their source, the dress, or making dress-thoughts merge into the dress. “just as one needed to distinguish between the dress and the dress-thought, one needs to distinguish between the ‘I’ and the ‘I-thought’’. You must distinguish between the ‘I’, pure in itself, and the ‘I-thought.’” (Ibid) “if you say as the ‘I’, your being alone, without thought, the ‘I-thought’ will disappear and the

delusion will vanish forever.” (Ibid) in replying to this question that are there two ‘I’s, or in the parallel question in terms of the analogy would be— are these two dresses? One would say there is only one dress. Similarly, there is only one ‘I’. But just as the dress give rise to the dress-thought the ‘I’ thought emerges from the ‘I’. Or it can be said that once the dress-thought has arisen, several dress-thoughts in various phases arise which are based on the original dress-thought. This can be clarified by the following: “the ‘I’ of the dream has vanished. Another ‘I’ speaks of the dream. This ‘I’ was not in the dream. Both continues all along, giving rise to so many scenes. With every thought arises ‘I’, and with its disappearance that ‘I’ disappears too. So the ‘I’s are born, and die every moment.” Quoted in Compiler by Ramana (p.34) like dress-thoughts emerging from moment to moment. The vicissitudes of the dress-thoughts ceases to be a cause for concern as soon as one knows that the dress is lying safely in the table.

To illuminate the analogy of the dress and dress-thought one may consider Advaita “that which makes the enquiry is the ego. The ‘I’ about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As a result of enquiry the ego ceases to exist.” (p. 34) quoted in Compiler by Ramana. This is the exact point that refers to the existential core of “being the ‘I’, that is; realization is not possible so long as one is aware of an ‘I’, it is only possible upon “being the ‘I’. Thus analogically as long as one has thoughts of the dress, s/he is in a sense in a state of alienation from the dress and still in the realm of dress-thoughts. But when all dress-thoughts disappear- that is, when dress becomes the dress, then it is in its primal and natural state. One can say that the Self can not be attained by any means, for whatever is brought out, attained is non- eternal. In Scripture the self is taught as what is pure, eternal and

ever released, the purpose is only to turn the attention of the seeker to the true self (I-reflection).

The Scriptural teaching about the Self, which is eternally released, would become meaningless if agency were natural to it. Therefore agency for the self is due to super- imposition of the characteristics of limitation; it cannot be natural. The Scripture says thus: “If thinks as it were, it oscillates as it were.”(Ibid., 10) So the I-reflection cannot be enjoyer because it is not joined with sense-organs and the mind to be prone to the limiting adjuncts such as enjoyer ship, etc. to indicate the nature of I-reflection as the pure subject maharshi ‘s sayings quoted by Arinda in *The Experintial Dimension of Advita Vedanta* “ the sleep state is free from thoughts and their impression on the individual.” (p. 29) that he refers to the fact that a deep sleep is closer to the state of the pure consciousness. And “one should not therefore desire to be always in sleep for the incentive to realize the self can arise only in the waking state and efforts (I-reflection) can be made when one is awake.” (Ibid) And verily, the individual soul is not different from the I-thought as the pure subject and the mind to be prone to the agent, enjoyer, etc. and declared by Shankara in *Brahman Sutra* “ then one realizes the self rises from the conceit in the body, and becomes the I-self which the immutable eternal seer.’ (I, iii, 19) As the Scriptural text says” other than this there is no seer (I-reflection).’ (10) In replying to the objector who claims that “let the absolute ‘self I-reflection’ itself be the agent and transmigrating Soul” Advaitin may be said the soul is non-different from the absolute Self. It cannot be identified with the mind-body complex which is inert, it is only the intelligent being that can be agent and enjoyer. The soul is the intelligent being. If it is non- different from the absolute Self, then agency etc., will naturally be the characteristic of that Self.

The fact is that agency and enjoyer and enjoyer ship are set up by ignorance (nescience). Scripture says that there can be no empirical usage where there is no quality, and that such usage is possible only where there is no quality, and that such usage is possible only where there is apparent duality: “where there is duality as it were there one sees another”. (Ibid., 10) Thus, after showing that agency and enjoyership those very agency and enjoyership in the state of knowledge. “Where indeed, of this one, all has become the Self, there be what and whom would one see?” (Ibid) From these texts one can learn that the Self-consciousness is not the conditioned soul to which enjoyership, activity, etc., being relevant. So the consciousness can be acquired by the seer who reflects. Reflection is acquisition of the knowledge through which consciousness increases when the mind reflects, the individual soul come out of the darkness of ignorance and enter to the lightness of knowledge or consciousness in the sense of trans-substantial motion. Here the individual self come to the high gradation of being according to the principiality of existence. Thus in an in-depth reflective procedure the focus should be put on the subject’s knowing rather than the object known. In this way one sees that the world and whatever inside is coming to becoming each every moment in life. But what is most importance of being discussed here is that the seeker as the reflector if ignores reflecting, that is; refusing the knowledge gradually his/her mind will come to be identified with the mind-body complex which is inert an in this manner, his mind goes gradually into the state of rigor mortis, this is, spiritual death. It means although bodily alive, he is mentally dead.

The one who realizes the self-consciousness, s/he will realize everything in the empirical world—living alive in the empirical life. And the one whose mind is deprived of

reflecting will never come to the becoming life. The one (I) who “I am therefore I am thinking” before coming to realize himself, she/he first knows that “I am”. When s/he comes to know itself, he will know the others; that is, I first know who I am therefore I am thinking. Some believe that the story of life is summarized in possessing enjoyment and agency as the qualities of principiality of happiness. And in this way they refuse “for what” to not reflect. But this quest that man for what reason she/he should enjoy in her/his life is subject. And this “for what’ is the foundation of the philosophy of life. Since the purpose of life is coming to becoming, the seer as the reflector should come out of his sensational level of mind and comes to reflect in his reasonable mind; that is, coming out of the darkness of ignorance and entering to the lightness of knowledge as consciousness in the principiality of existence for the seers seeking his own essence “That thou art”. It is only when through knowledge is ignorance is destroyed, and at the same time, the consciousness increases, that the soul realizes it’s true nature as being the ‘I’. That is the soul is the nature of pure consciousness. This is taught as ‘That Thou Art’. So it means when the soul which is of the nature of eternal and the immutable seer is realized, the man comes to know her/his nature as consciousness.

The non-dual self is the witness endowed with the mind and subserves the object, so even in the state of dream there is no absolute quiescence of the sense-organs for the Self. “for along with the intellect entering the state of dream, it (the self) transcends this world” put by Mahadevan. (p. 12) So the soul as the witness transcends to being the ‘I’ through the consciousness increased by seer’s reflecting. And this consciousness as the soul’s essence is along with even in the state of dream where the mind is not quiescent, that is; soul is in relation with the intellect thus, and the state of dream, if

soul transcends this world. The conscious self as simultaneously transcend the mind, it transcends itself also. So according to such 'That Thou Are' you are the self that is true, of the nature of pure consciousness. "then one realizes the self rises from the conceit in the body, and becomes the self which is the immutable eternal Seer." Maintains by Sankara in Brahman Sutra Bhasya (I, iii, 19)

Even so, in the stage of dispelling the darkness of ignorance by the lightness of knowledge, the self itself comes to the high gradation of being as non-dual Self. and the agency, enjoying are just conventionally ascribed to the Self in its empirical state and it does not mean that the Scripture aims is to teach that the Self is by its nature an agent etc, otherwise the scripture declaration that the Self is Brahman would become meaningless. So consequently the qualities, injunctions, prohibition becomes functional only by admitting the agency and enjoying as the qualities of empirical life which has roots in ignorance.

To come out form dualism and coming to non-dualism the seer can realize that *karma* (spiritual deeds) is not self-realization, for there is no any reflection behind it. So through the process of self-discipline, soul is not released in the sense of well being. The self as the 'seer' is the witness of objects or their absence for example in the state of deep sleep. "the seer (self) in all beings, shines as if different because of the objects, even as the sun with his wealth of rays shines as many" (Ibid.,ii,47) "just as for the sun there is complete appropriation by the water-vessels, for the self, because of the intellects, there is attainment of their activity, shape and space.' (Ibid., ii, 49) in analyzing the problem of sorrow and tracing it to ignorance (nescience) or superimposition Suresvara in his prelude to Sankara's commentary in the

Brahma Sutra states “sorrow is not usually to be realized as universal. One experiences moments of pleasure as well as moments of pain, but s/he rarely are rooted in sorrow.” (P.21) as all beings desire to get rid of sorrow, they should find the way out of sorrow, for ‘I’ notion is the root of ‘mine’-ness, of all duality which is different from Self-reflection. Sorrow comes out of duality having roots in ignorance. To realize the nature of ignorance the analogy of rope-snake in darkness is the best example by which s/he perceives when the snake-cognition is sublated the real nature of the rope is realized. Similarly when the ‘I’ notion is sublated on the rise of true knowledge the self is realized as the non-dual reality that is manifest as the I- consciousness. The notion ‘I’ in fact has a semblance of the self and when through discrimination its pseudo-nature is detected then all duality along with it will be released as illusory. The self which is I-reflect has no rising and setting. It is indeed self-established, no empirical pramanas are required to prove it. The empirical pramanas along with the self as knowledge or consciousness are needed for knowing the objects of pluralistic world; that is, with knowledge the objects are not, but even with them knowledge is. Thus what is considered here is that there can be no object seen without the seer (I-conscious) and that even in the absence of all objects the seer sees. So in replying to this problem that why the knowledge is needed to remove the ignorance as nescience is that the self (I-consciousness) is seer as long as it is the witness of objects or their absence as for instance in deep sleep.

But in the absence of the seen (object) or the witnessed even the terms ‘seer’ and ‘witness’ lose their meaning. This is not to separate the ego (I-thought) from the self- conscious (I-reflection) for the self and the not-self are not opposed to each other like light and darkness, because there is no not-

self apart from the self. Hence it must be noted that the I-thought is the same as the self-reflection. It means when the 'I' reflects it comes to the high level of consciousness different from the internal-organs. So it is cleared that the seen (object) is not apart from the seer (subject) as it is only a manifestation of self. The mind through the manifestation of self achieves the higher level of consciousness as its being the 'I'. It is called the union of mind with self. Thus the division of the self and the non-self which is the basis of empirical *pramanas* like perception etc., is caused by nescience. It does not touch the pure self. It is the pure self is known as soon as ignorance is destroyed. And mind comes to becoming along with high perception. Ignorance is the cause of bondage and it cannot be removed by the action (*karma*) but via knowledge. For *karma* as spiritual deeds is the product of the nescience. This is shown by Sankara in his commentary on the Brahman-Sutra (I,I,4). The Advaita teaching is in fact about the ultimate Reality which is identical with the Self is the supreme purport of the Upanisads which constitute the knowledge-section of the Veda. The entire Veda just put the focus on the *karma-kanda* (ritual section) which is famous of its purport injunctions which prompt a man to do something or not to do something descriptive or assertive statements are to be construed by some injunctive text. Knowledge of the well being cannot be gained through the action. Knowledge is different from the various types of meditation which are mental acts. These different meditation such as 'the mind is infinite', 'the mind is pure consciousness' and etc., are nothing but manifestation of the self-conscious.

Mahadevan maintains "*karma* is the effect of nescience; and with the destruction of the effects the cause is not destroyed. What can destroy nescience is knowledge alone, and works." (p. 54) "and the knowledge is also not attainable

through a combination of world and knowledge as some Vedantins believe in.” (Ibid) In the Viveka-Cudamani Sankara observes “*karma* is for the purification of the mind and not for the perceptions of mind; that is, I- thought. The gaining of knowledge is through inquiry and not through crores of *karmas*. It may be arised some problem whether the realized person is bound by the Veda, Ramamurty quoted in Sankara “he is not bound by the Veda as it emanates from him, and no one is bound by his own wisdom which is his nature.” (p.242)The unity of mind with self-knowledge is the theme of this paper that can pave the way for understanding the I-thought. I-reflection (I-self) serves as doorway for the man to realize the truth of non-duality as self-being.

So one of the key conclusions of this paper may be noted that empirical life would follow from the account of perceptual experience. In the Advaita theory of perception, object is reduced to internal organ which in its turn cannot stand but as evidenced by consciousness. So the object is not taken in its ‘transcendence’ (in the sense of being real beyond the stream of consciousness) but is sought to be reduced to consciousness by way of *uttri* (internal- organ) - meditation. In this manner the reality of what is experienced represents the reality of duality. Therefore, one who perceives the multiplicity come to know the unity of mind and comprehends duality as the gradation of the non-duality— to move from a lower level existence to a higher level of existential stations. And duality is just a manifestation of non-duality and advaita’s purpose is to reconcile between duality and non-duality in order to show that duality is more intelligible to man’s rational understanding and is backed up by all the means of logical knowledge, whereas non-duality as it cannot be supported by the diverse means of knowledge and human reason, it must be known in the light of advaita.

Duality is the manifestation of non-duality through which the individual being comes out from the lower level of the world sensation (empirical world) to the high level of reflection.

Hence as this world presented by the three states which conceals the pure subject as the pure witness, one must in the second state, lose sight of the world to experience the being of 'I' as the pure subject. Thus the realized man not only realizes the three stages as the unrealized man does, but he realizes these stages as unreal. But for the ordinary person as the waking world is as the standard of reality he is not able to comprehend this. As quoted in Mahadevan by Ramana "When will the realization of the self be gained" when the world which is what-is-seen has been removed, there will be the realization of the self which is the seer. Will not be the realization of the self even while the world is there (taken as real)? There will no be." (p. 35) Once the I-self is realized the third world is again seen but now as part of the self and not apart from it as was the case in the beginning. When the realized person sees the world s/he sees the self as the substratum of all that is seen. Taking the analogical approach one begins with her mind full of dress-thoughts. In stage two she experience the actual dream to be worn. She is unable to see it unless the dress-thoughts depart from the mind so that she can see and experience the actual dress is a distraction from it. Consequently, emerging from the absorption in the dress she can again lose herself in dress-thoughts going down the aisle- but she is aware of the relation of these dress-thoughts to the real dress, which was not the case the first time. The question may be posed here is how can then one move from the ego or the 'I'-thought in which s/he lives and moves and has her/his being to the realization of the being the 'I' as the real subject? The method is concisely and compactly presented by Ramana quoted by Sharma:

Arranging thoughts in order of value, the 'I-thought' is the all-important thought. Personality-idea or thought is also the root or the stem of all other thoughts, since each idea or thought arises only as someone's thought and is not known to exist independently of the ego. The ego therefore exhibits thought-activity. The second and the third persons [I]. Therefore they arise only after the first person appears so all the three persons seem to rise and sink together. Trace, then the ultimate cause of 'I' or personality. And this 'I' arise from within, it then vanishes. This is the pursuit of wisdom. When the mind unceasingly investigates its own nature, it transpires that there is no such thing as mind. This is direct path for all. This mind is merely thoughts. Of all thoughts the thought 'I' is the root. Therefore the mind is only the thought 'I'. (p.35)

“the birth of the 'I'-thought is one's own birth, it's death is the person's death. After the 'I'-thought has arisen, the wrong identity with the body arises. Get rid of the 'I'-thought. So long as 'I' is alive there is grief. When 'I' ceases to exist there is no grief. (p.36) quoted in Godman by Ramana. This, however, is to be followed up with another step “you must distinguish between the 'I', pure in itself, and the 'I'-thought. The latter, being merely a thought, sees subject and object, sleeps, wakes up, ... thinks ... but the pure 'I' is the pure being, eternal existence, free from ignorance and thought-illusion. If you stay as the 'I, your being alone, without, the 'I'-thought will disappear and the delusion will vanish for ever. (Ibid., 36)

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