

Notes on Aparokshâubhuti

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Aparokshâubhuti is an introductory text about the philosophy of Vedâta written by Adi Shankaracharya.

These notes are written while listening to Swami Sarvapriyananda's lectures on Aparokshanubhuti. In this series of talks, Swami Sarvapriyananda lucidly unfolds the path to direct "Self-Realization" presented by Adi Shankaracharya in Aparokshanubhuti. The text for this series is a translation of Adi Shankaracharya's Aparokshanubhuti by Swami Vimuktananda. Vidyaranya has written commentary to this text and Swami Sarvapriyananda uses his explanations and base his explanations off of his for some of the verses.

The Lectures can be found on VedantaNY's Soundcloud:

<https://soundcloud.com/vedantany/sets/aparokshanubhuti-swami-sarpapriyananda>

श्रीहरि परमानन्दमुपदेशरमीश्वरम् ।

व्यापकं सर्वलोकानां कारणं तं नमाम्यहम् ॥ १ ॥

अहं I परमानन्दं Supreme Bliss उपदेशरं the First Teacher ईश्वरं Iswara (the Supreme Ruler) व्यापकं All-pervading सर्वलोकानां of all Lokas (worlds) कारणं Cause तं Him श्रीहरि to Sri Hari नमामि bow down.

1. I¹ bow down to Him—to Sri Hari (the destroyer of ignorance), the Supreme Bliss, the First Teacher, Iswara, All-pervading One and the Cause² of all Lokas (the universe).

¹I — The ego, the Jiva in bondage, who identifies himself with the gross, subtle and causal bodies, undergoes various sufferings and strives for liberation.

²The Cause — The efficient as well as the material cause. Just as a spider weaves its net from the materials of its own body, so does Iswara create this universe out of Himself.

It's a tradition in the vedanta books to praise and bow down to God and seek his blessings. श्रीहरि is another name of Vishnu. The very nature of Lord is bliss (परमानन्द - Supreme Bliss). उपदेशरं means the first teacher. All the Gurus have a lineage and all of them point to God. It is with the grace of God that we learn about spirituality and it's nature. It starts with God

and he is the one who teaches us. They say that a good Karma leads to one's attainment of knowledge of Brahman. तं नमाम्यहम् - I bow down to you who is all-pervading (व्यापकं) and the Cause of all the worlds (सर्वलोकानां)

अपरोक्षानुभूतिर्वै प्रोच्यते मोक्षसिद्धये ।
सद्भिरेव प्रयत्नेन वीक्षणीया मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ २ ॥

मोक्षसिद्धये For the acquisition of final liberation (from the bondage of ignorance) वै (expletive) अपरोक्षानुभूतिः (the means of attaining to) Self-realization (अस्माभिः by us) प्रोच्यते is spoken of in detail सद्भिः by the pure in heart एव only (इयं this) प्रयत्नेन with all effort मुहुर्मुहुः again and again वीक्षणीया should be meditated upon.

2. Herein is expounded (the means of attaining to) Aparokshâubhuti ¹(Self-realization) for the acquisition of final liberation. Only the pure in heart should constantly and with all effort meditate upon the truth herein taught.

¹ *Aparokshâubhuti* — It is the direct cognition of the Âtman which is always present in all thought.

Everybody has some knowledge of this Âtman or Self, for, to deny the Self is to deny one's own existence. But at first its real nature is not known. Later on, when the mind becomes purer through Upâsanâ and Tapas, the veil of ignorance is gradually withdrawn and the Self begins to reveal its real nature. A higher knowledge follows at an advanced stage, when the knowledge of the 'Self as mere witness' is seen as absorbing all other thoughts.

But the end is not yet reached. The idea of duality, such as 'I am the witness' ('I and the 'witness'), is still persisting. It is only at the last stage when the knower and the known merge in the Self-effulgent Âtman, which alone ever *is*, and besides which nothing else exists, that the culmination is reached. This realization of the *non-dual* is the consummation of Aparokshâubhuti.

It is needless to say that Aparokshâubhuti may here mean also the work that deals with it.

For attaining self-realization, one must intently enquire about what is being taught here (The Aparokshâubhuti). There are three categories of experience (अनुभूतिः) - प्रत्यक्षः, परोक्षः, अपरोक्षः - प्रत्यक्षः means sense-perception. Everything we hear, everything we see, taste, etc through our sense organs is प्रत्यक्षः. अक्षः literally means the eyes but also means the sense organs. The knowledge and experience we gain through our sense organs is प्रत्यक्षः. There are five of these senses. We also get knowledge in another way, we think about the things we experience, we infer through observations we have. The whole of science is this. Observation and inference. Perceptions can

be made also using other tools that the humans have invented. So this knowledge we get based on what we see/hear after drawing conclusions is called **परोक्षः**. Like atoms for example. We don't see them but we have drawn a conclusion that everything is made up of atoms through experiments and different theories by many people. All of religion is also Paroksha. There it's the beliefs that are present in the religions that we develop on the basis of faith. Paroksha is something 'beyond senses'. But Vedānta is neither Paroksha or Pratyksha. **अपरोक्षः** is something beyond Pratyksha and Paroksha. It's the very pure consciousness itself. It's an attribute of Brahman. The basis of our senses is because of **अपरोक्षः**. And the self is pure consciousness and bliss which is **अपरोक्षः**. It's all here. This is Brahman but we need to realise it and that is what Aparokshānubhūti is. Teaching in Vedānta is all about pointing out. It points out what is already there - Brahman. Those who are pure in heart should constantly meditate with all effort again and again.

**स्ववर्णाश्रमधर्मेण तपसा हरितोषणात् ।
साधनं प्रभवेत् पुंसां वैराग्यादिचतुष्टयम् ॥ ३ ॥**

स्ववर्णाश्रमधर्मेण By the performance of duties pertaining to one's social order and stage in life **तपसा** by austerity **हरितोषणात्** by propitiating Hari (the Lord) **पुंसां** of men **वैराग्यादि** Vairāgya (dispassion) and the like **चतुष्टयं** the four-fold **साधनं** means (to knowledge) **प्रभवेत्** arises.

3. The four preliminary qualifications¹ (the means to the attainment of knowledge), such as Vairāgya (dispassion) and the like, are acquired by men by propitiating Hari (the Lord), through austerities and the performance of duties pertaining to their social order and stage in life.

¹*The four preliminary qualifications* — There are **वैराग्यं** dispassion, **विवेकः** discrimination, **शमादिषट्कम्पत्तिः** six treasures such as Sama (the control of the mind) and the like, and **मुमुक्षुत्वं** yearning for liberation (from the bondage of ignorance).

There are some duties and responsibilities of a person in their social life. One must not give up his life to pursue the quest of knowing oneself. There is a social obligation and it's good not to give them up. One must complete what one has started. There were stages in life where there were certain duties and responsibilities of a man. Shankaracharya says that the Vernacular system that was setup in ancient India was for the very purpose of realizing Brahman. And they do help in one or other way in realizing non-dualism. One must not disturb the external world and lead a disciplined life and cultivate realization at the same time.

There are four preliminary qualification required - वैराग्यं, विवेकः, शमादिषट्-
म्पत्तिः, मुमुक्षुत्वं
विवेकः - Differentiation between the eternal and temporary.
वैराग्यं - Dispassion for the temporary and a desire to know the eternal.
शमादिषट्म्पत्ति - The six treasures/disciplines.
मुमुक्षुत्वं - A strong desire for spirituality and liberation.

ब्रह्मादिस्थावरान्तेषु वैराग्यं विषयेष्वनु ।
यथैव काकविष्टायां वैराग्यं तद्वि निर्मलम् ॥ ४ ॥

4. The indifference with which one treats the excreta of a crow - such an indifference to all objects of enjoyment from the realm of Brahmâ to this world (in view of their perishable nature), is verily called pure Variâgya.

As we want to be happy, we see avenues of happiness in this world. We come to a realization that none of them provide permanent satisfaction. There are satisfactions in life but they are not the purpose in life. One who is spiritually inclined should not persue these pleasures in world. Also the concept of heaven should be dismissed as it too is temprary pleasure and spiritulaity is beyond that too.

नित्यमात्मस्वरूपं हि द्रश्यं तद्विपरितगम् ।
एवं यो निश्चयः सम्यग्विवेको वस्तुनः स वै ॥ ५ ॥

5. Âtman (the seer) in itself is alone permanent, the seen is opposed to it (i.e. transient) - such a settled conviction is truly known as discrimination (Viveka)

विवेकः means 'to separate'. Life serves both, the eternal and the termperal. The ability to discriminate in life between the two is विवेकः. There is a eternal truth and having the clarity is what is important. Feeling that there is something to this spiritual life is विवेकः.

सदैव वासनात्यागः शमोऽयमिति शब्दितः ।
निग्रहो बाह्यवृत्तीनां दम इत्यभिधीयते ॥ ६ ॥

6. Abandonment of desires at all times is called Sama and restraint of the external functions of the organs is called Dama.

Quieting of mind is what is Sama (or control of mind) and Dama is the control of the external body or the motor organs. Quieting of mind is not possible with the mind filled with various desires. 6 treasure: 1. Sama 2. Dama 3. Uparati 4. Titiksha 5. Sradha 6. Samadhana

विषयेभ्यः परावृत्तिः परमोपरतिर्हि सा ।
सहनं सर्वदुःखानां तितिक्षा सा शुभा मता ॥ ७ ॥

7. Turning away completely from all sense-objects is the height of Uparati, and patient endurance of all sorrow or pain is known as Titikshâ which is conducive to happiness.

Uparati is the opposite of *рати* - the enjoyment of worldly things through the five senses. Not seeking pleasures outside but within is Uparati. One must know to be to himself in solitude. Endurance is also important (Titikshâ) as the world will try to draw you away from spirituality.

निगमाचार्यवाक्येषु भक्तिः श्रद्धेति विश्रुता ।
चित्तैकाग्र्यं तु सल्लक्ष्ये समाधानमिति स्मृतम् ॥ ८ ॥

8. Implicit faith in the words of the Vedas and the teachers (who interpret them) is known as Sraddhâ, and concentration of the mind on the only object Sat (i.e. Brahman) is regarded as Samâdhâna.

संसारबंधनिर्मुक्तिः कथं मे स्यात् कदा विधे ।
इति या सुदृढा बुद्धिर्वक्तव्या सा मुमुक्षुता ॥ ९ ॥

9. When and how shall I, O Lord, be free from the bonds of this world (i.e. births and deaths) - such a burning desire is called Mumukshutâ.

उक्तसाधनयुक्तेन विचारः पुरुषेण हि ।
कर्तव्यो ज्ञानसिद्धयर्थमात्मनः शुभमिच्छता ॥ १० ॥

10. Only that person who is in possession of the said qualifications (as means to Knowledge) should constantly reflect¹ with a view to attaining Knowledge, desiring his own good².

¹ *Should constantly reflect* — After a person has attained the tranquillity of the mind through Sâdhanaâs, he should strive hard to maintain the same by constantly reflecting on the evanescent nature of this world and withal dwelling on the highest Truth till he becomes one with It.

² *Good* — The highest good, i.e liberation from the bondage of ignorance.

नोत्पद्यते विना ज्ञानं विचारेणान्यसाधनैः ।
यथा पदार्थभानं हि प्रकाशेन क्वचित् ॥ ११ ॥

11. Knowledge is not brought about by any other means¹ than Vichâra, just as an object is nowhere perceived (seen) without the help of light.

¹ *By any means* — By Karma, Upâsanâ and the like. It is ignorance or Avidyâ which has withheld the light of Knowledge from us. To get at Knowledge, therefore, we have to remove this Avidyâ. But so long as we are engaged when we make an enquiry into the real nature of this Avidyâ that it gradually withdraws and at last vanishes; then alone Knowledge shies.

Knowing yourself will lead you to happiness. We are sad because we don't know who we are (Avidyâ). Happiness is an internal state and someone can be happy even if he/she is suffering. And someone who has everything externally can also be quite sad. And there are examples of this in the world. Ignorance about the self leads to actions in the world as we are looking for happiness. Action leads to consequence and we are trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Ignorance > Desire > Action. Once there is action we are trapped in संसारा . Knowledge removes the ignorance, and you realize yourself as being complete and all the desires to attain happiness from the world are no longer needed.

कोऽहं कथमिदं जातं को वै कर्ताऽस्य विद्यते ।
उपादानं किमस्तीह विचारः सोऽयमीदृशः ॥ १२ ॥

12. Who am I?¹ How is this (world) created? Who is its creator? Of what material is this (world) made? This is the way of that Vichâra² (enquiry)

¹ *Who am I?* — We know that we are, but we do not know what our real *nature* is. In the waking state we think that we are the body, the physical being, and consequently feel ourselves strong or weak, young or old. At another time, in the dream state, regardless of the physical existence we remain only in a mental state, where we are merely thinking beings and feel only the misery or happiness that our thoughts create for us. Again, in deep sleep, we enter into a state where we cannot find the least trace of any such attribute whereby we can either assert or deny our existence.

We pass through these states almost daily and yet do not know which of them conforms to our real nature. So the question, 'Who am I?' is always with us an unsolved riddle. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate into it.

² *This is the way of that Vichâra* — It is said in the preceding Sloka that Knowledge is attainable by no other means but Vichâra or an enquiry into the Truth. Herein is inculcated in detail the method of such an enquiry

This Sloka sets forth the main theme of the text. There are enquiry of three entities:

1. जीवः - Who am I?
2. जगतः - What is this world?
3. ईश्वरं - Who is God/Brhman? What is his/its nature? This question is divided into two: 1. The material cause and 2. Efficient cause (the intelligence who made the universe)

Taking the example of the clay pot - Is the clay in the pot? Well no. The whole pot *is* the clay. The clay is in the *form* of the pot. And there exists no such thing as a pot apart from the clay. Just like that, we are the real nature (Brahman), we don't exist apart from it. It is our reality. Also, is there a pot in the clay? No. The clay is the only thing there is and it, as well, is made up of atoms and molecules. But we can't say the pot is in the clay. The clay has no knowledge of the pot. It exists without the pot, but the pot cannot exist without the clay. The same way - Is the universe in consciousness? or the consciousness in the universe? The pot is a name and form and is imagined in the clay. In the same way the fundamentals of the universe - time, space, causation are imagined in pure consciousness (Brahman). You'll know that there is no pot in the clay, there is only clay. We will see that all of this universe, including us is something that is imagined/superimposed/projected in consciousness. Consciousness alone is real.

From the next verse, the three enquiries are taken up and go on till the end of the text.

नाहं भूतगणो देहो नाहं चाक्षणस्तथा ।
एतद्विलक्षणः कश्चिद्विचार सोऽयमीदृशः ॥ १३ ॥

13. I am neither the body¹, a combination of the (five) elements (of matter), nore am I an aggregate of the senses; I am something different from these. This is the way of that Vichâra.

¹*I am neither the body* — This body has its origin in insentient matter and as such it is devoid of consciousness. If I be the body, I should be unconscious; but by no means am I so. Therefore I cannot be the body.

We think we are the body-mind system. Vedanta assures that we are mistaken by this. This body is not ours and when we claim that the body is ours there is suffering. The body is made of the five elements(atoms, subatomic particles according to today's science) which we did not make

and we don't own them thus the body is also not ours. We don't own the materials and so we can't claim the body to be ours or say that 'I am this body'.

[Swam Sarvapriyananda uses Vidyaranya's commentaries here] - The experiencer and the experienced are two different things and I being the experiencer, experience things in this world. I am the experiencer of my physical body and hence I cannot be experienced object i.e. The body. The materialists say 'If you are not the physical body, why don't we say that you are the mind and the sense organs as you use them to experience your body'. But the sense organs themselves are the objects of our experience. The mind can also be the object of our experiences just like any other object in the world. Therefore I am not even the sense organs and the mind. The mind is also an object, an instrument. As I am the experiencer and I experience something, I cannot be the experienced object. The mind and the sense organs are just instruments to experience the world and in fact themselves as well. I am something other than these objects (mind and sense organs). I am very different from all of this, the body and the mind. 'something' because pure consciousness cannot be expressed with the use of language.

अज्ञानप्रभवं सर्वं ज्ञानेन प्रविलीयते ।
संकल्पो विविधः कर्ता विचारः सोऽयमीदृशः ॥ १४ ॥

सर्वं Everything अज्ञानप्रभवं produced by ignorance (अस्ति is) ज्ञानेन through Knowledge (तत् that) प्रविलीयते completely disappears विविधः various संकल्पः thought कर्ता creator (भवति is) सोऽयं, etc.

14. Everything is produced by ignorance,¹ and dissolves in the wake of Knowledge. The various thoughts (modifications of Antahkarana) must be the creator.² Such is this Vichâra.

¹*Everything is produced by ignorance* — In reply to the question in Sloka 12 as to the cause of this world it is here said that ignorance is the cause of everything.

Sometimes seeing something coiled up on the road we mistake it for a snake and shrink back out of fear. But afterwards when we discover that it is nothing but a piece of rope, the question arises in the mind as to the cause of the appearance of the snake. On enquiry we find that the cause of it lies nowhere else than in our ignorance of the true nature of the rope. So also the cause of the phenomenal world that we see before us lies in the ignorance or Mâyâ that covers the reality.

²*The various thoughts ... the creator* — The only thing that we are directly aware of is our own thoughts. The world that we see before us is what our thoughts have created for us. This is clearly understood when we analyse our experiences in dreams. There the so-called material world is altogether absent, and yet the thoughts alone create a world which is as material as the world now before us. It is, therefore, held that the whole universe is, in the same way, but a creation of our thoughts.

This Sloka is answering the question ‘What is this world?’. The reason we experience this world is due to ignorance, just like we don’t know the reality of a rope lying and mistake it to be snake. Whatever we know through ignorance is false, just like how we see a mirage in the dessert or the snake in the rope. The sky seems blue but it’s due to scattering of the light and it appears to be blue. It not actually is blue. That which is falsed doesn’t mean it can’t be experience, it’s just that it doesn’t exist but still it appears. The water isn’t in the dessert but it appears, the snake isn’t there but it appears as the rope. Just like the world appears but doesn’t exist, although we experience it. Even if it’s false we still experience but we realize the truth. Just like that we realize Brahman but we still continue to experience the world. What we see as the world is in reality Brahman. Upon enlightenment we realize this.

Which Knowledge removes which Ignorance? Knowledge will remove ignorance only if the locus and object of the knowledge and ignorance is the same. For example - If I don’t know Physics I have Ignorance in my mind(locus) about Physics (object). So there must be a Knowledge in my mind(locus) about Physics (object) to remove the ignorance. When there is Knowledge, the ignorance disappears in a flash just like how we strike a match and darkness of a thousand years disappears in a flash.

एतयोर्यदुपादानमेकं सूक्ष्मं सदव्ययम् ।
यथैव मृद्धटादीनां विचारः सोऽयमीदृशः ॥ १५ ॥

यथैव Just as घटादीनां of the pot and the like (उपादानं material) मृत् earth (भवति is, तथैव so also) एतयोः of these two यत् which उपादानं material (तत् that) एकं one सूक्ष्मं subtle अव्ययं unchanging सत् Sat (Existence) (अस्ति is) सोऽयं, etc.

15. The material (cause) of these two (i.e ignorance and thought) is the one¹ (without a second), subtle (not apprehended by the senses) and unchanging Sat (Existence), just as the earth is the material (cause) of the pot and the like. This is they way of that Vichâra.

¹ One — Because it does not admit of a second of the same or of a different kind, or of any parts within itself. It is one homogeneous whole.

We have Karma and we need the world to experience and pay for the Karma because of Desires. Thinking (संकल्पः) leads to Desires (कामः) and Desires leads to Karma (कर्मः). God gives us this world in order to give us opportunities to experience the results of our Karma.

What is the material cause of this universe? It is Sat (Existence). We are in an ocean of Existence. And Existence in itself is Brahman. The

material cause of something is that which gives it existence. The clay is the material cause of the pot as it gives it existence. Just like that, the material cause of the entire universe is Sat (Existence) or Brahman. Also, both the material cause and efficient cause of the universe is Brahman. Brahman itself made the universe happen (Check footnote #2 of the first verse). Brahman alone is real, the universe is an appearance, and you, the individual, are Brahman.

अहमेकोऽपि सूक्ष्मश्च ज्ञाता साक्षी सदव्ययः ।
तदहं नात्र सन्देहो विचारः सोऽयमीदृशः ॥ १६ ॥

(यस्मात् Because) अहं I अपि also एकः one सूक्ष्मः the subtle च (expletive) ज्ञाता the Knower साक्षी the Witness सत् the Existent अव्ययः the Unchanging (अस्मि am, तस्मात् therefore) अहं I तत् “That” (अस्मी am) अत्र here सन्देहः doubt न not (अस्ति is) सोऽयं, etc.

16. As I am also the One, the Subtle, the Knower,¹ the Witness, the Ever-Existent and the Unchanging, so there is no doubt that I am “That”² (i.e. Brahman). Such is this enquiry.

¹ *The Knower* — The supreme Knower who is ever present in all our perceptions as consciousness, and who perceives even the ego.

When I say, “I know that I exist,” the “I” of the clause ‘that I exist’ forms a part of the predicate and as such it cannot be the same ‘I’ which is the subject. This predicative ‘I’ is the ego, the object. The subjective ‘I’ is the supreme Knower.

² *I am “That”* — I, the ego, when stripped of all its limiting adjuncts, such as the body and the like, becomes one with “That,” the supreme Ego, i.e. Brahman. In fact, it is always Brahman ; Its limitation being but the creation of ignorance.

In advaita vedanta there are three things to remember: 1. Don’t identify yourself with anything that is an object and that is limited. 2. Know yourself as Brahman. See the subject as the infinite Brahman. 3. Look upon the universe and recognize everything in the universe as you yourself, as everything is Brahman. The unchanging consciousness is the Witness, is also the real us. The Knower is also us but limited to the body. The knower uses the mind and the sense organs. The Witness on the other hand, doesn’t require these instruments of the body.

आत्मा विनिष्कलो ह्येको देहो बहुभिरावृतः ।
तयोरैक्यं प्रपश्यन्ति किमज्ञानमतः परम् ॥ १७ ॥

आत्मा Ātman हि verily एकः one विनिष्कलः without parts (अस्ति is) देहः the body बहुभिः by many (parts) आवृतः covered (भवति is, मूढाः the ignorant) तयोः of these

two ऐक्यं identity प्रपश्यन्ति see (confound) अतःपरम् else than this किम् what अज्ञानं ignorance (अस्ति is)

17. Âtman is verily one and without parts, whereas the body consists of many parts; and yet people see (confound) these two as one! What else can be called ignorance but this?¹

¹ *What else can be called ignorance but this?* — To give rise to confusion in knowledge is a unique characteristic of ignorance. It is through the influence of ignorance that one confounds a rope with a snake, a mother-of-pearl with a piece of silver and so on. But, after all, the power of ignorance is not completely manifest there; for one could easily find an excuse for such confusions when there exist some common characteristics between the real and the apparant. The nature of ignorance is, however, fully revealed when one confounds the subject (i.e. Âtman) with the object (i.e. the body), which have nothing in common between them, being opposed to each other in all respects.

In the first stage we are trying to find the true nature of 'I'. Our understanding of the self must be refined. From here on we are going to do just that - refine the meaning of 'I'. Subject and Object (I and this). Whatever we say is this is not I. The problem start with the this (pointing to body). We include the body in the meaning of 'I'. The body is an object of experience. You can feel it. You can hear it. You can smell it. Everything that has 'This'(object) has to be excluded from the understanding of 'I'.

Identification with the body is a problem. How to loose that identification? Swamiji gives three things to contemplate. We consider ourself as 'one' but we are composed of so many parts - the hand, the legs, the eyes, and all the other various organs, tissues, cells, etc - but we stil say or feel that 'I am one'. You need to contemplate this distinction, that even after consisting of so many things you feel that you are 'one'. Second, I always feel that I sensient and the body is the object of my experience. Third, I always feel that I am the same and the body is changing.

आत्मा नियामकश्चान्तर्देहो बाह्यो नियम्यकः ।
तयोरैक्यं प्रपश्यन्ति किमज्ञानमतः परम् ॥ १८ ॥

आत्मा Âtman नियामकः the ruler अन्तः internal च and (भवति is) देहः the body नियम्यकः the ruled बाह्यः external (भवति is) तयोरैक्यं, etc.

18. Âtman is the ruler of the body and internal, the body is the ruled and external; and yet, etc.

Shankaracharya is pointing out here with his arguments. The body is something that is controlled and we are the controller of that body. The atman 'lends' consciouness to the body and mind.

The body is something that is outside and I am something inside. The feeling of 'I' we have is also infact an object and therefore it is not us.

आत्मा ज्ञानमयः पुण्यो देहो मांसमयोऽशुचिः ।
तयोरैक्यं प्रपश्यन्ति किमज्ञानमतः परम् ॥ १९ ॥

आत्मा Âtman ज्ञानमयः all consciousness पुण्यः holy (भवति is) देहः the body मांसमयः all flesh अशुचिः impure (भवति is) तयोरैक्यं, etc.

19. Âtman is all consiousness and holy, the body is all flesh and impure; and yet, etc.

आत्मा प्रकाशकः स्वच्छो देहस्तामस उच्यते ।
तयोरैक्यं प्रपश्यन्ति किमज्ञानमतः परम् ॥ २० ॥

आत्मा Âtman प्रकाशकः the Illuminator स्वच्छः pure देहः the body तामसः of the nature of darkness उच्यते is said तयोरैक्यं, etc.

20. Âtman is the (supreme) Illuminator and purity itself; the body is said to be of the nature of darkness; and yet, etc.

Just like how the light that shines upon an object and is not affected by it, in the same way consiousness is not affected by what it illumines. It can reveal a bad thing or a good thing and is not affected by it. Consiousness is the lights of lights and because of it everything is revealed. Everything we know about is because of consiousness and therefore consiousness transcends all that we know. Consiousness is just the illuminer and is apart from all that illumines. Now saying that "this" body is "me" is the most ridiculous thing.

आत्मा नित्यो हि सद्रूपो देहोऽनित्यो ह्यसन्मयः ।
तयोरैक्यं प्रपश्यन्ति किमज्ञानमतः परम् ॥ २१ ॥

आत्मा Âtman नित्यः eternal हि since सद्रूपः Existence itself देहः the body अनित्यः transient हि because असन्मयः non-existence in essence तयोरैक्यं, etc

21.Âtman is eternal, since it is Existence itself: the body is transient, as it is non-existence in essence;¹ and yet, etc.

¹The body is ... non-existence in essence — The body is undergoing change at every moment, and as such, cannot be eternal. But granting that it is non-eternal, how can it be non-existent? – for, so long as it lasts we surely see it as existing.

At first sight the body appears to be existing, however temporary its existence may be. A relative existence (Vyavahârîka Sattâ) is, therefore ascribed to it. But when one

examines it and tries to find out its real nature, this so-called tangible body gradually becomes attenuated and at last disappears altogether. It is, therefore, said here that the body, as such, is always non-existent, even though it may appear as existing for a time to those who do not care to see it through.

Any change to be experienced, it should be caused to something that can be experienced by the experiencer. So to feel the change, the change must happen to the object of the experiencer and death is such a change. The experiencer hence is not affected by any change. Swamiji takes an example of a potato being boiled. When it gets hot, we say that it's a hot potato. It borrows heat from the boiling water and the water in turn borrows heat from the fire. But neither the potato nor the water claim heat as their intrinsic property. That heat solely belongs to the fire. The potato and the water just borrow the heat from the fire. In the same way, existence is borrowed and we are born with this body. Just like how the potato and the water will eventually lose their borrowed heat, in the same way this body will stop existing as it had borrowed its existence from Consciousness. Something that has existence as its intrinsic property will forever be immortal. Such a thing is called Sat.

आत्मनस्तत्प्रकाशत्वं यत्पदार्थावभासनम् ।
नाज्ञादिदीप्तिवद्दीप्तिर्भवत्यान्ध्यं यतो निशि ॥ २२ ॥

यत् Which पदार्थावभासनं manifestation of all objects तत् that आत्मनः of Âtman प्रकाशत्वं illumination न not अभयादिदीप्तिवत् like the light of fire and the rest (आत्मनः of Âtman) दीप्तिः light (भवति is) यतः for निशि at night आन्ध्यं darkness भवति exists.

22. The luminosity of Âtman consists in the manifestation of all objects. Its luminosity is not¹ like that of fire or any such thing, for (in spite of the presence of such lights) darkness prevails at night (at some place or other).

¹*Its luminosity is not, etc* — The light of Âtman is unlike any other light. Ordinary lights are opposed to darkness and are limited in their capacity to illumine things. It is a common experience that where there is darkness there is no light; and darkness always prevails at some place or other, thus limiting the power of illumination of such lights. Even the light of the sun is unable to dispel darkness at some places. But the light of Âtman is ever present at all places. It illumines everything and is opposed to nothing, not even to darkness; for it is in and through the light of Âtman, which is present in everybody as consciousness, that one comprehends darkness as well as light and all other things.

We are the light that illumines the objects around us and gives us experiences. All of the experiences we have all are illumined with the light

of consciousness. It is the same light that illumines our dreams and our waking state. It is the same light that also illumines our deep sleep. We experience the absence of everything - that experience is itself because of this light. It's not a material light like the light from fire, sun, etc. Any sort of material light, removes darkness. Consciousness light reveals the material light and also the darkness. You know it's dark even if there is no material light and that's because of the light of consciousness. By its light, everything is lit up. And who is that light? Its you!

देहोऽहमित्ययं मूढो धृत्वा तिष्ठत्यहो जनः ।
ममायमित्यपि ज्ञात्वा घटद्रष्टेव सर्वदा ॥ २३ ॥

अहो Alas मूढः ignorant जनः person घटद्रष्टेव like a person seeing a pot ममायमिति that this is mine सर्वदा ever ज्ञात्वा knowing अपि even अहं I अयं this देहः body इति that धृत्वा holding (the view) तिष्ठति rests (contented).

23. How strange is it that a person ignorantly rests contented with the idea that he is the body,¹ while he knows it as something belonging to him (and therefore apart from him) even as a person who sees a pot (knows it as apart from him)!

¹*The idea that he is the body* — This is the view of Laukâyatikas (Indian materialists) who maintain that man is no more than a fortuitous concourse of material elements. According to them the five elements of matter, through permutations and combinations, have given birth to this body as well as to life and consciousness, and with death everything will dissolve into matter again.

It's so absurd to say, "the body is mine and I am the body". If we think about it we don't use such language for any other thing - do we say, "This is my bottle and I am the bottle" or "This is my car and I am the car". See how absurd it sounds? Then why do we say this about our body? We sometimes say it's "my body" and sometimes we refer it with ourselves saying things like, "I weigh 60 Kgs". So how can something that belongs to me, be me? If we say that "I am this body" and my goal of life is to take care of this body and provide it pleasures then I will be miserable. Swamiji says it's a tyranny! You are not the body! You are something greater than that. We start serving our bodies and forget our true nature like ignorant fools - we start pleasing the body. The fool starts holding on to this body.

ब्रह्मैवाहं समः शान्तः सच्चिदानंदलक्षणः ।
नाहं देहो ह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते बुधैः ॥ २४ ॥

अहं I ब्रह्म Brahman एव verily (अस्मि am यतः because अहं I) समः equanimous शान्तः quiescent सच्चिदानंदलक्षणः by nature absolute Existence, Knowledge and Bliss (अस्मि am)

अहं I असद्रूपः non-existence itself देहः the body नहि never (अस्मि am) इति this बुधैः by the wise ज्ञानम् (true) Knowledge उच्यते is called.

24. I am verily Brahman,¹ being equanimous, quiescent and by nature absolute Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. I am not the body² which is non-existence itself. This is called true Knowledge by the wise.

¹*I am verily Brahman* — ‘I,’ the Self or Âtman, is Brahman, as there is not even a single characteristic differentiating the two. In other words, there are no two entities as Âtman and Brahman; it is the same entity Âtman that is sometimes called Brahman.

When a person makes an enquiry into the real nature of this external world he is led to one ultimate reality which he calls Brahman. But an enquiry into the nature of the enquirer himself reveals the fact that there is nothing but the Âtman, the Self, wherefrom the so-called external world has emanated. Thus he realizes that what he so long called Brahman, the substratum of the universe, is but his own Self, it is he himself. So it is said: ‘All this is verily Brahman, this Âtman is Brahman’ (*Mând. Up. 2*).

²*I am not the body* — I am neither the gross, subtle nor the causal body.

निर्विकारो निराकारो निरवद्योऽहमव्ययः ।
नाहं देहो ह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते बुधैः ॥ २५ ॥

अहं I निर्विकारः without any change निराकारः without any form निरवद्यः free from all blemishes अव्ययः undecaying (अस्मि am) अहम् , etc.

25. I am without any change, without any form, free from all blemish and decay. I am not, etc.

निरामयो निराभासो निर्विकल्पोऽहमाततः ।
नाहं देहो ह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते बुधैः ॥ २६ ॥

अहं I निरामयः not subject to any disease निराभासः beyond all comprehension निर्विकल्पः free from all alteration आततः all-pervading (स्मि am) अहम् ,etc.

26. I am not subject to any disease, I am beyond all comprehension,¹ free from all alternatives and all-pervading. I am not, etc.

¹*I am beyond all comprehension* — I am not comprehended by any thought, for in the supreme Âtman no thought, the thought of the subject and the object, the knower and the known, not even the thought of the Self and the not-Self, is possible, as all thought implies duality whereas the Âtman is non-dual.

निराभासः is an important and meaning-packed word. The mind has a special quality where it can reflect consciousness. Whatever we think of in the mind or whatever appears in the mind is illumined by the reflected consciousness. The analogy here is - the Pure Consciousness is like the sun and the mind is like a polished mirror and we can direct the sunlight using the mirror wherever we like. That's the quality of the mind. It can redirect the light of the consciousness

wherever it likes. The consciousness we all experience, the feeling of being aware is the reflected consciousness.

Whatever we hear, see, taste, etc creates waves in our minds called वृत्ति . To know something we need the reflected consciousness and वृत्ति . With the absence of either, we cannot have knowledge about anything. When we see a table, the image of a table is created in our minds, that is वृत्ति and we come to know about the table because of our reflected consciousness - now we have the knowledge of the table. Arising of the वृत्ति is called वृत्तिव्याप्ति . Illumination of the वृत्ति by the reflected consciousness is called फलव्याप्ति . Continuing with our analog of the mirror and the sun - we know that to know something we focus the beam of sunlight onto the object we would like to know about. Now what if we want to know the sun? Do we point the reflected beam onto the sun? That sounds so foolish. That's the problem with knowing Brahman as well. Brahman is the source of consciousness, tiny bit of which we reflect onto this world with our little minds. So what do we do to know 'the sun'? - we just look at it. Just like a little reflected beam pointed back at the sun in order to see the sun doesn't make any sense, in the same way our minds do not require focus upon Brahman in order to know Brahman. This just means that to know Brahman is no ordinary Knowledge. To sum up - we do need वृत्ति but not फलव्याप्ति to know Brahman. The mind has to think about god but we do not require that reflected consciousness. This is what is meant by निराभासः - without reflection. To have the वृत्ति of Brahman we need to focus on it - look within, using spiritual practices.

निर्गुणो निष्क्रियो नित्यो नित्यमुक्तोऽहमच्युतः ।
नाहं देहो ह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते बुधैः ॥ २७ ॥

अहं I निर्गुणः without any attribute निष्क्रियो without any activity नित्यः eternal नित्यमुक्तः ever free अच्युतः imperishable (अस्मि am) अहम् , etc.

27. I am without any attribute or activity, I am eternal, ever free and imperishable. I am not, etc.

We assign attributes to objects in the world, but pure consciousness doesn't have any attributes. The Real you has no attributes or properties - it's only the body that has attributes. So when you say, 'I am skinny', that isn't your attribute, it's your body's attributes. निष्क्रियो means that Consciousness has no activity. We get to know things or experience things when the light of Consciousness shines forth and illumines our awareness and that consciousness has no activity - it's just there. Swamiji often says this - **“We think of ourselves as human beings trying to have a spiritual experience but the truth is, we are spiritual beings having a human experience”**. Swamiji says that when enlightenment happens we realise that we are free and that we always will be free and also that we were always free - it's not that there has to be some spiritual experience in order for us to be free. In that sense we are always free (नित्यमुक्तः) अच्युतः - According to Swamiji it means unchanging. All change is in Maya and Brahman is free from all such changes.

निर्मलो निश्चलोऽनन्तः शुद्धोऽहमजरोऽमरः ।
नाहं देहो ह्यसद्रूपो ज्ञानमित्युच्यते बुधैः ॥ २८ ॥

अहं I निर्मलः free from all impurity निश्चलः immovable अनन्तः unlimited शुद्धः holy अजरः undecaying अमरः immortal अहम्, etc.

28. I am free from all impurity, I am immovable, unlimited, holy, undecaying and immortal. I am not, etc.

There are impurities in the body and the mind that have to be cleaned. Consciousness has no impurities. Just like how a place is dirty but the space is not affected by the dirt, the consciousness as well cannot be touched by impurity.

“Do not abuse the horse from which you cannot dismount”. This is referring to the body and means that we need to take care of it and not let it become impure by giving the excuse that one’s true nature is itself pure, so any impurity at the level of the body won’t matter - this leads to suffering.

अनन्तः is another word that packs a lot of meaning. It literally means ‘unlimited’. In vedanta there are three types of limits - देशः (Spatial) कालः (Temporal) and वस्तु (Object). Things are limited in space - even the big stars and galaxies. They have a start and an end. When you don’t have a spatial limitation, then you become omnipresent - you don’t begin anywhere and you don’t end anywhere; in that way you are present everywhere in space. Limitation of time - everything is created and is destroyed; we are born and we will die. There are limits in time when something or someone exists and beyond those limits, existence of that something or someone ceases. Again, even bigger objects, like our Sun and billions of other Stars have this temporal limitation - at one point they were created and at some point they will die and cease to exist. When something doesn’t have a temporal limitation, it becomes eternal - there never will be a time it will not be. There was never a time when it was born as it already existed and there never will be a time when it will die as it will always exist. Limitation of object means that an entity is what it is and nothing else. It is limited by its identity. If there’s a book, then it can’t be anything else except a book. It is a limitation as it doesn’t allow one to be anything else except himself. When something doesn’t have a limitation of being itself and different from everything else, then it means that it is not different from anything else in the entire universe - Nothing else is different from it and it becomes non-dual, as there is no second thing apart from it. All these put together is being referred by the single word, अनन्तः

स्वदेहे शोभनं सन्तं पुरुषाख्यं च संमतम् ।
किं मूर्खं शून्यमात्मानं देहातीतं करोषि भोः ॥ २९ ॥

भो मूर्खं O you ignorant one स्वदेहे (वस्थितं residing) in your own body देहातीतं beyond the body शोभनं blissful पुरुषाख्यं known as Purusha च (expletive) संमतम् established (by the Sruti as identical with Brahman) सन्तं ever-existent आत्मानं Ātman किं why शून्यं करोषि assert as absolutely non-existent?

29. O you ignorant one! Why do you assert the blissful, ever-existent Ātman, which resides in your own body and is (evidently) different from

it, which is known as Purusha and is established (by the Sruti as identical with Brahman), to be absolutely non-existent¹?

¹Why do you assert.....absolutely non-existent? — In the preceding stanzas when all the attributes that the human mind can conceive of have been denied of Âtman, one is naturally assailed by the doubt whether such an Âtman at all exists. To remove this doubt it is here said that Âtman is a fact of everybody's experience and as such, its existence cannot be challenged; therefore there is no reason to call it Sunya or absolute non-existence.

Vedanta tells us who we really are - Existence, Consciousness Bliss, but we don't realise this. It's like a wave not knowing that it is water. The wave is born and soon shall subside and die, but the whole time it has been water itself. When the wave knows itself as water it also gets connected to other waves and becomes one with the whole ocean. Now, how does the wave know itself as water? There is a method to it. First, the wave must know the difference between wave and water. It must know that wave is a name, shape and activity. To know ourself as Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, we must first learn to differentiate between our body and mind and the Infinite Consciousness. We need to know ourselves as a witness of our minds. The name and form must be realised and differentiate from the Infinite Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. Both of these must be separated and then realised as one - just like how a wave and water are the same thing.

स्वात्मानं शृणु मूर्ख त्वं श्रुत्या युक्त्या च पुरुषम् ।
देहातीतं सदाकारं सुदुर्दर्शं भवादृशैः ॥ ३० ॥

(भौः) मूर्ख O you ignorant one त्वं you स्वात्मानं your own Self श्रुत्या with the help of Sruti युक्त्या by reasoning च also पुरुषं Purusha देहातीतं beyond the body सदाकारं the very form of existence (न्तु but) भवादृशः by persons like you सुदुर्दर्शं very difficult to be seen शृणु (अवधारय) realize.

30. O you ignorant one! Try to know, with the help of Sruti¹ and reasoning, your own Self, Purusha, which is different from the body, (not a void but) the very form of existence, and very difficult for persons like you² to realize.

¹With the help of Sruti — With the help of such Sruti texts as, “Subtler than this Âtman (i.e. the body) which is full of flesh and blood, there is another Âtman” (Taitt. Up. ii.2). It is thus clearly stated that Âtman which is sometimes mistaken for the body is, in fact, quite different from it.

²Persons like you — Persons of your cast of mind who, on account of their great attachment to the body, overlook the vital differences which exist between the body and the Âtman and blindly assert their identity.

अहंशब्देन विख्यात एक एव स्थितः परः ।
स्थूलस्त्वनेकतां प्राप्तः कथं स्यातेहकः पुमान् ॥ ३१ ॥

परः Beyond the body (पुरुषः Purusha) अहंशब्देन by the word 'I' विख्यातः known एक एव as only one स्थितः existing (अस्ति is) स्थूलः the gross (body) तु on the other hand अनेकतां manifoldness प्राप्तः obtained (तदा so) देहकः the body कथं how पुमान् Purusha स्यात् can be?

31. The Supreme (Purusha) known as “I” (ego) is but one, whereas the gross bodies are many. So how can this body be Purusha?