

WHO AM “I”?

By: Prof. Dr. U. Prasad

“AHAM BRAHMASHMI” or “I AM BRAHMAN” constitutes one of the four MAHA AVAKYAS, each taken from one Veda. In Shreemad Bhagwad Gita, Lord Shree Krishna tells Arjuna,

*“aham aatmaa Gudaakesha
sarvabhutaashayashthitah,
aham aadish ca madhyam ca
bhutaanaam anta eva ca”*

Ch X/Vs 20

Meaning:

O Gudaakesha (Arjun), I am the Self (Aatmaa), seated in the heart of all beings; so am I the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings.

From the above messages the meaning seems clear, “I am Brahman”. Then who is this person by the name of “Dr.U. Prasad”, who after successfully treating a patient with deaf ear once said to his wife, “I have performed an operation today on a patient with deaf ear and I was able to restore the hearing of that patient”. Was this person right is his statement? Should he have claimed the credit of hearing-gain in that patient? And for that matter was he the performer of surgery, the doer (KARTAA)? Answer to the former question is not very difficult; if one looks into the verses 13 & 14 of chapter XVIII,

*“pancai ‘taani mahaabaaho
kaarnaani nibodha me
saamkhye kritaante proktaani
siddhaye sarvakarmanaam*

*adhishtaanam tathaa kartaa
karanam ca prithakvidham
vividhaash ca prithakceshthaa
daivam vai vaa ‘tra panchamam”*

Meaning:

O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), know from Me the five causes as said in the Samkhya system for the accomplishment of all actions: the seat, the doer, various sense functions, diverse activities, and the fifth is providence.

It is fairly easy to understand that without the participation of all these agencies the surgeon would not have achieved success. But what about the later question? Did not Dr. Prasad perform the operation? Evidences are so very clear. Besides him, all in the operation theatre saw that the knife was held in his hand, which performed certain maneuvers and subsequently, when the hearing test was done, there was improvement in the hearing of that patient. Thus, the conclusion drawn by the surgeon (PRASAD) seems to be correct (REAL).

Yet, it is not so. According to Vedantic philosophy this is incorrect (UNREAL). In reality the DOERSHIP lies in PRAKRITI* and I am NOT PRAKRITI. I AM THE SELF OR ATMAN OR BRAHMAN. So who is the doer (KARTAA)? Lord Shree Krishna has very clearly mentioned that all the actions are done by Prakriti.

* *“prakriteh kriyamaanaani
gunaih karmaani sarvasah
ahamkaaravimudhaatmaa
kartaa ‘ham iti manyate”*

Ch III/vs 27

Meaning:

All kinds of actions are caused and done by the modes of nature. However, the ignorant, deluded, by egoism thinks, “I am the doer”.

He further clarifies the point and says; while all actions are done by Prakriti the Atman (SELF) is the non-doer through verse 29 of chapter XIII:

*Prakrityai 'va ca karmaani
kriyamaanaani sarvashah
yah pashyati tathaa 'tmaanam
akartaaram sa pashyati*

Meaning:

He who sees that all actions are done by Prakriti and likewise the self is the non-doer, he verily sees.

It is thus very obvious that the surgery was not performed by the self but by the non-self (body-components), which functioned having received power from the self. So why did Dr. Prasad claim that he did the operation? Answer to this question lies within the verse 27 of chapter III as given above, through which Lord Shree Krishna has not only stated that the doer-ship of each and every action lies with the nature (Prakriti), but He has also clearly mentioned that the reason for an individual claiming the doer-ship is his **IGNORANCE**, which causes delusion in him.

This is the state of affairs of all ordinary people, for whom it is extremely hard to comprehend and realize the inner TRUTH. To say, "**Aham Brahmarshmi**" is one thing and to really understand the philosophy and realize "I AM BRAHMAN" is a far distant thing, beyond the capacity of one's normal consciousness.

Brahman, it has been said, is **ABSOLUTE EXISTENCE** (SAT), **ABSOLUTE CONSCIOUSNESS** (CHITTA) AND **ABSOLUTE BLISS** (ANANDA). This can only be realized in TRANSCENDENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS, yet in our normal consciousness, once in a while

APPARENT EXISTENCE of Brahman can be perceived. We all know that we exist. Every one of us has an intuitive knowledge of the INNER SELF (Atman). Don't we at times talk to our own selves? There are occasions when we hear voices, which seem to come from within us, sometimes prohibiting us from carrying on certain action. That someone within us is none other than the Atman, that spark of divinity residing in our bodies, which sends signal to us and gives us advise if we so seek. Lord Krishna says,

*"upadrashtaanumantaa ca
bhartaa bhoktaa maheshwarah
paramaatme 'ti caa py ukto
dehe 'smin purusah parah"*

Ch XIII/vs 22

Meaning:

The Purusha (soul) in this body is said to be the Witness, the Guide, the Sustainer, the Experiencer, the Great Lord and the Supreme Self.

It is well known that the Atman is the SUPREME SUBJECT. When a sense-object (smell) is an object, sense-organ (nose) is the subject. When sense-organ is an object, the mind is the subject. Mind is object to intellect and intellect is an object to Ego, which is in fact an object to the life-principle, the Atman, the supreme subject. There is no subject beyond the Atman. As such the Atman is not the object of sense-perception. But we, in our ignorance, superimpose a name (Dr. U. Prasad), an idea of a private individuality, upon this life-principle, the awareness of existence. We are unable to understand that existence is Universal and Absolute, not a private property.

For an ordinary person, as a result of his ignorance, the Atman or Inner-self is presented as an object of EGO-IDEA (*aham-bhaava*), in the normal

consciousness. There is superimposition of EGO-IDEA (UNREAL) upon the Atman (REAL) in the same way as a snake (UNREAL) is superimposed on a rope (REAL) when the light is dim and once mind-intellect complex is clouded and unclear. The supreme subject (REALITY) is then taken as an object to EGO-IDEA, a NON-REALITY, a superimposition, which will vanish (like a snake in the rope) when the light of consciousness appears. The superimposition of ego-idea upon existence is considered the worst act of error that a human being commits. This makes an individual submerged in the world of I-ness and My-ness.

“I” is of two kinds: (a) **REAL** “I” and (b) **UNREAL** “I”. REAL “I” is “SAT (ABSOLUTE EXISTENCE) - CHIT (ASSOLUTE CONSCIOUSNESS) - ANAND (ABSOLUTE BLISS)”. It never changes, while the UNREAL “I” keeps changing. If someone is uneducated, he will say “I am uneducated” and upon receiving education the same person will say, “I am educated”. The existence of “I” i.e. “I am” did not change, even though there was change in his level of education. When one suffers from high fever one says, “I am having fever”. The fact is that his body has raised temperature and not that “He has” When one suffers from migraine, he says, “I am having headache”. In fact he is having ache in the head. When one suffers heavy loss in business, he says, “I am finished”. The fact is that his business is finished not “He”. It is because of association or *SANGA* or attachment or *ASHAKTI*, that one takes upon himself to consider happenings in the body to be HIS activities.

AHAMTAA (I-NESS) makes one assert, “I am educated” instead of thinking that it is the intelligence that has improved; he

says, “I am strong”, instead of saying that it is muscles which have gained strength.

MAMATAA (MY-NESS), on the other hand makes a person attached to whatever he thinks are his possessions: his wife, son, car, bungalow, bank balance etc.

One falsely (by mistake) takes one’s body as HIS BODY (takes **IDAM SHAREERAM** or THIS BODY- Ch XIII/vs 1, AS **AYAM SHAREERAM OR MY BODY**) due to **IGNORANCE** and remains deluded. Such a person forgets the existence of REAL “I” in him, who is responsible for providing all the power necessary for the functioning of the body. Yes, you see that you are able to move your hand and feet and thus can say these are my hands and feet and I have control over them, yet there are situations when one is not able to move his hands or feet, yet they are there. Why this change? If they are yours then why are you not able to move them? Then, within the body blood is circulating, nerve impulses are traveling, hormones are being produced. Do you have any control over these? They are parts of your body, yet you can clearly see that those activities are not within your control. Why not? Lord has said,

*“aham vaishvaanaro bhuutvaa
praaninaam dehamaashritah,
praanaapaanasmaayuktah
pachaamy annam chaturvidham”*
Ch XV/vs 14

Meaning:
Becoming the Vaisawaanara fire seated in the body of living beings and united with Praana and Apaana breaths, I (LORD) digest the fourfold food.

It is the Lord, who through His power (shakti) does this function, yet the deluded ones will say “My power of digestion is

very good, I can digest even the hardest of foods". Deluded ones consider UNREAL "I" to be REAL.

However, once he realizes the existence of REAL "I" in him, the veil covering the REAL "I" is removed and he realizes **SAT-CHIT-ANAND**. He then attains TRANSCENDENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS, and in that state even if he kills someone he is not the slayer. There is no **AHAM-KRIT BHAAVA***(doer-ship) in him.

*"yasya naa 'hamkrito bhaavo
budhhir yasya na lipyate*

*hatvaa 'pi sa imaaml lokaan
na hanti na nivadhyate"*

Ch XVIII/vs 17

Meaning:

He, whose mind is free from self-sense or egoism (AHAM-KRIT BHAAVA), and whose understanding is free from attachment, even though slaying all these people, slays not, nor is he bound.

He is able to realize and say with understanding;

"AHAM BRAHMASHMI"

HAR OM TAT SAT