

Satasloki

Slokas 56 to 60

तत्सत्यं यत्त्रिकालेष्वनुपहतमदः प्राणदिग्व्योममुख्यं
यस्मिन् विश्रान्तमास्ते तदिह निगदितं ब्रह्म सत्यस्य सत्यम् ।
नास्त्यन्यत्किञ्च यद्वत्परमधिकमतो नाम सत्यस्य सत्यं
सच्च त्यच्चेति मूर्ताद्युपहितमपरं सत्यमस्यापि सत्यम् ॥५६

56. In Vedanta, reality is defined as that which remains absolutely unchanged in all the three periods of time. Brahman, in which the Prana (vital air), the quarters, space and everything else merge (at the time of Pralaya) is described as the reality of the reality in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (by recognizing two levels of reality, namely, empirical and absolute, as will be explained below). There is nothing else equal to, superior to or bigger than this Brahman. This is why it is known as the reality of the reality. Brahman viewed as apparently limited by the universe made up of the elements with form, namely, fire, water and earth and those without form, namely, air and space, is known as empirical reality. The unconditioned pure Brahman, which is the absolute reality, is the reality of this empirical reality.

This verse is the gist of Br. Up. 2.3.1 to 6.

Advaita Vedanta recognizes three levels of reality. A person, seeing a rope in dim light, mistakes it for a snake. He is as much frightened as he would have been if there had been a real snake there. For him, at that time, the snake is real. However, when it is examined with the help of a light it is found that there is no snake at all, but only a rope. The snake cannot be said to totally unreal, like the horn of a rabbit, because it was actually experienced; nor can it be said to be real, because it is subsequently found to have had no existence even when it was experienced. The snake is therefore said to have illusory or *praatibhaasika* प्रातिभासिक reality. Similarly, this world is not absolutely unreal, because it is actually experienced by us. But on the dawn of Self-knowledge it is found to be nothing but Brahman. The world is therefore said to be superimposed on Brahman, just as the illusory snake is superimposed on the rope. The world is said to have empirical or *vyaavahaarika* व्यावहारिक reality, because it is real until the attainment of Self-realization. The absolute or *paaramaarthika* पारमार्थिक reality is Brahman alone, since it ever remains the same. In the present verse the world which has empirical reality is described as *satyam* and Brahman which is absolutely real is described as *satyasya satyam*.

The word 'sat' represents the three elements with form --fire, water and earth. The word 'tyat' stands for air and space, which are formless. These two words taken together form the word 'satyam' which here stands for Brahman considered as limited by the five elements and the whole universe made up of them. This is empirical reality. The word 'satyam' is given this special meaning here and also in the next verse. See also Taittiriya upanishad, 2.6.1.

यत्किञ्चिद् भात्यसत्यं व्यवहृतिविषये रौप्यसर्पाम्बुमुख्यं
तद्वै सत्याश्रयेणेत्ययमिह नियमः सावधिर्लोकसिद्धः ।
तद्वत् सत्यस्य सत्ये जगदखिलमिदं ब्रह्मणि प्राविरासीत्
मिथ्याभूतं प्रतीतं भवति खलु यतस्तच्च सत्यं वदन्ति ॥५७

57. We know from experience that things such as silver, snake and water which do not really exist sometimes appear as if real. It is also well known that such things appear only when there is a substratum such as nacre, rope or desert and that these appearances come to an end when the substratum is known. Just as these appear as real, this entire universe, which is also unreal, appears on the substratum, Brahman, which is described as the truth of the truth. Because the universe appears as if it is real, it is described as truth (satyam).

The three levels of reality have already been described. In this verse it is explained that the universe is described as *satyam* because it is looked upon by all as real until the dawn of Self-knowledge.

यत्राकाशावकाशः कलयति च कलामात्रतां यत्र कालो
यत्रैवाशावसानं बृहदिह हि विराट् पूर्वमर्वागिवास्ते ।
सूत्रं यत्राविरासीन्महदपि महदस्तद्धि पूर्णाच्च पूर्णं
सम्पूर्णादर्णावादेरपि भवति यथा पूर्णमेकार्णवाम्भः ॥५८

58. Space, which accommodates everything in this universe, is itself accommodated in its entirety in the infinite Brahman. All the quarters which extend indefinitely in all directions, are also within Brahman. Time, as reckoned by us, forms only a small fraction of Brahman, which existed before time came into existence and will exist even after time comes to an end. Brahman is therefore beyond the limitation of time. Thus Brahman is infinite both in space and in time. Before the creation of the universe Brahman alone existed. At the beginning of creation Brahman manifested itself as Hiranyagarbha, or all the subtle bodies and then as Virat or all the gross bodies. Hiranyagarbha, being more subtle than Virat, pervades Virat and is therefore described as bigger than Virat. Brahman, on which both Hiranyagarbha and Virat appear because of beginningless Avidya or nescience, pervades them, being infinite. Since Brahman pervades all the subtle and gross bodies (Hiranyagarbha and Virat), it follows that it is not limited by any objects, subtle or gross. Thus it is brought out in this verse by implication that Brahman is free from all the three limitations, namely, of space, time and objects. An illustration is given to explain this. The ocean is very big in size and full of water. But its size is nothing compared to the waters of the Pralaya which encompass the whole universe by the merger of all the seven seas.

It follows from this verse that it is Brahman alone that appears as all the subtle and gross bodies in the universe. Brahman does not undergo any change or limitation, even when appearing as the gross and subtle bodies. The universe is thus only a *vivarta* or apparent modification of Brahman, like a rope appearing as a snake without really undergoing any change and not an actual modification or *parinama* like milk becoming modified as curd.

It is said in this verse that Brahman alone existed before creation. This should not be understood as meaning that now there is something else also in addition to Brahman. Even now the only reality is Brahman. The universe is a mere appearance on Brahman and has therefore no separate existence apart from Brahman. This has been brought out by Sri Sankara in his Bhashya on Aitareya Upanishad, 1.1.1 with the illustration of foam and water. What was denoted by the term 'water' alone before the manifestation of foam as such is denoted by the term 'foam' after its manifestation, though really foam is nothing but water.

Brahman is free from all limitations

Panchadasi-3.35, 36, 37—Being all-pervasive, Brahman is not limited in space. Being eternal, it is not limited in time. Since all objects in the universe are merely superimposed on Brahman, Brahman is not limited by any object, just as a rope is not limited by the illusory snake superimposed on it .

This verse is based on Br. Up. 5.1.1:--

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

The meaning of this mantra is given thus in Sri Sankara's Bhashya:-

That unconditioned Brahman is infinite, all-pervading; this conditioned Brahman, manifesting as the universe of names and forms, is also infinite in its real nature as the supreme Self, not in its differentiated form circumscribed by the limiting adjuncts. This differentiated Brahman, the effect, emanates from the infinite, or Brahman as cause. Although it emanates as an effect, it does not give up its infinitude; it emanates as the infinite only. When Brahman as effect takes the infinitude of the infinite, i.e. attains identity with its own nature by the removal through knowledge of the notion of 'otherness' created by the limiting adjuncts, it remains as the unconditioned infinite Brahman alone, without interior or exterior, as homogeneous pure consciousness.

अन्तस्सर्वौषधीनां पृथगमितरसैर्गन्धवीर्यैर्विपाकैः

एकं पाथोदपाथः परिणमति यथा तद्वदेवान्तरात्मा ।

नानाभूतस्वभावैर्वहति वसुमती येन विश्वं पयोदो

वर्षत्युच्चैर्हुताशः पचति दहति वा येन सर्वान्तरोऽसौ ॥५९

59. Just as the same rainwater nourishes all plants and produces in them many different tastes, fragrances and potencies, so also the same Self which dwells in all beings takes on the different characteristics of those beings. It is in the mere presence of that indwelling Self that the earth supports everything on it, the clouds pour down abundant rain and fire cooks food and burns.

The second part of this verse is based on Br. Up. 3.7.3 onwards--"He who dwells in the earth but is within it, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth and who controls the earth from within, is the inner controller--your own self and

immortal". There are similar statements about water, fire, sky, air, etc, meaning that everything functions only because of the presence of the indwelling self.

भूतेष्वात्मानमात्मन्यनुगतमखिलं भूतजातं प्रपश्ये-
त्प्राज्ञः पातस्तरङ्गान्वयवदथ चिरं सर्वमात्मैव पश्येत् ।
एकं ब्रह्माद्वितीयं श्रुतिभिरभिहितं नेह नानास्ति किञ्चित्
मृत्योराप्नोति मृत्युं स इह जगदिदं यस्तु नानेव पश्येत् ॥६०

60. The wise man should attain the conviction that it is his own Atma that dwells in all living beings and should further see the entire creation as superimposed on his own Atma. He should realize that everything in this universe is non-different from his Atma, just as waves in the ocean are not different from the water. Brahman is one, without any second of the same species or of any other species. Brahman is homogeneous, without any internal differences. He who looks upon this universe of multifarious names and forms as having real existence in Brahman goes from death to death, the Srutis say. That is to say, he is born and dies again and again.

This verse is based on the following mantras of the Upanishads:--
Isavasyopanishad, 6- He who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings feels no revulsion towards any one.

Chandogya Upanishad, 6.2.1- In the beginning, dear boy, this was Existence alone, one only, without a second. (See explanation given below).

Kathopanishad, 2.1.11- This (Brahman) is to be attained by the (purified) mind alone; there is no diversity whatsoever in this. He who sees difference here goes from death to death.

Brahman is free from all the three types of differences

Panchadasi-2.20 and 21.—Differences are of three kinds. The difference of a tree from its leaves, flowers, fruits, etc, is the difference within an object. This is known as *svagata bheda* (स्वगतभेद). The difference of one tree from another tree is the difference between objects of the same species. This is known as *sajaatiya bheda* (सजातीयभेद). The difference of a tree from a rock is the difference between objects of different species. This is known as *vijaatiya bheda* (विजातीयभेद)

None of these differences exists with regard to Brahman, because there is nothing else of the same species or of a different species and there is no internal difference because Brahman is homogeneous. This is what is affirmed in the Chandogya Upanishad (6.2.1) by the words "*ekam eva advitiyam*"—one, only, without a second. The word "one" negates *sajaatiya bheda*, the word 'only' negates *svagata bheda* and the words 'without a second' negate *vijaatiya bheda*.

