



The Vision of Life - According to Shri-Vidyaranya

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Abstract

In the ancient tradition, great personalities such as Geetacharya Shri Krishna, Acharya Chanakya, and Shri Vidyaranya Yati adorned distinguished positions. The commonality among these three is the combination of spiritual power and military prowess. They were considered great beings with the ability to conduct worldly affairs as efficiently as managing kingdoms, as expressed in the wise saying, "Knowledgeable individuals are capable of governing worldly matters such as kingdoms." (ज्ञानिना चरितुं शक्यं सम्यग् राज्यादि लौकिकम् -

पञ्चदशी-ध्यानदीप प्रकरण). Shri Vidyaranya Yati, honored as the establishment gurus of the Karnataka Simhasana, adorned the Sharada Peetha of Sringeri, striving to establish harmony among all sects and achieving national unity. They were renowned for their efforts in propagating and establishing religious institutions, earning them the title of "Jagadguru" for the Sharada Peetha of Sringeri. They authored profound texts such as Panchadashi, Jivanmukti Viveka, Vivarana Prameya Sangraha, and Drig Drishya Viveka, enriching the spiritual wealth of the country and were acclaimed as the reincarnations of Sri Adi Shankaracharya. They played a significant role in preserving and nurturing the eternal Hindu religion and culture amidst the threats posed by various unrighteous activities and cruel mockery, thus contributing significantly to its preservation and growth.

Key-Words : Consciousness, Vaasanaa, Jivanmukti, Antahkarana, Manonaasha,

Introduction :

In the ancient tradition, great personalities such as Geetacharya Shri Krishna, Acharya Chanakya, and Shri Vidyananya Yatis adorned distinguished positions. The commonality among these three is the combination of spiritual power and military prowess. They were considered great beings with the ability to conduct worldly affairs as efficiently as managing kingdoms, as expressed in the wise saying -

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(पञ्चदशी - ध्यानदीपप्रकरणम् - श्लो - ११४)

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In the fourteenth century, the entire southern part of India was devastated by the invasion of the Yavanas (foreigners). Amidst a populace that had lost its self-confidence and unity, Sri Vidyananya revived feelings of pride, religious fervor, and patriotism through his ascetic strength and organizational abilities. He played a significant role in establishing the Vijayanagara Empire, renowned throughout the world. The contribution he made to the world's intellectual wealth through his invaluable works stands witness to his extraordinary talent amidst ordinary abilities of his time. The contemporary rulers of the Sangama dynasty and their contemporaries revered him as an incarnation of Lord Shiva himself, as revealed by various inscriptions and literary works of that period.

Vidyaranya's work "Jivanmukti Viveka" is considered one of the finest spiritual texts in the world. Although the subject of yoga discussed in this work is ancient, the path it describes is novel. In many places, they have analyzed the internal world from the perspective of mental discipline. They describe 'Jivanmukti' as the liberation from the cycle of birth and death while living. To achieve this liberation, they prescribe three practices: **तत्त्वज्ञानम्** (knowledge of reality), **वासनाक्षयः** (eradication of impressions), and **मनोनाशः** (destruction of the mind).

वासनाक्षयविज्ञान मनोनाशा महामते ।

समकालं चिरभ्यस्ता भवन्ति फलदायिनः ॥

जीवन्मुक्तिविवेकः-वासनाक्षयप्रकरणम् -११६

Knowledge of reality refers to true knowledge. Eradication of impressions means the cessation of mental tendencies. Mental destruction, arising from the cessation of mental tendencies, is the ultimate achievement. Complete control of the mind through these means is the ultimate goal. These three, practiced within the framework of yoga, lead to the supreme attainment.

In all worldly pursuits, the body serves as the means. The body comprises the physical form, senses, and mind. Hatha Yoga primarily aims to control the body, senses, and mind, making it a tool for both worldly and spiritual pursuits alike. In the spiritual world, the ultimate goal is the assimilation of consciousness's, and this body, considered the temple of that consciousness, is called the **देह** (corporeal existence).

While physical discipline is a part of Hatha Yoga, it encompasses more than just that. It concerns itself with the complete existence of a human being. Human life is sustained not only by physical actions but also by mental and spiritual activities. These three levels of existence integrate to sustain human life. This trinity is not separate compartments of human life; rather, each depends on the other and has a penetrating influence. When these three function seamlessly, human life becomes invaluable.

Sri Vidyaranya explains the concept of Jivanmukti (liberation while living) as follows: Liberation from the bondage of worldly existence occurs while one is still alive. The characteristic of bondage is the identification with agency and enjoyment, happiness, and sorrow. This identification is the cause of suffering. Liberation, or Jivanmukti, is the determination of this identification.

जीवतः पुरुषस्य-भोक्तृत्वं सुख-दुःखादि लक्षणश्चित्तधर्मः, क्लेशरूपत्वात् बन्धो भवति तस्य निवारणं जीवन्मुक्तिः -

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Attributes like action and enjoyment are inherent qualities of the mind. One might argue that it is impossible to separate the liquidity in water or the heat in fire. Sri Vidyanaraya's response to this is that even if the inherent nature cannot be completely eliminated, it can be rendered ineffective. Just as the liquidity in water disappears when mixed with clay, or the heat in gems and mantras is neutralized, similarly, through the practice of yoga, all mental attributes related to bondage can be rendered ineffective.

यथा जलगतं द्रवत्वं मृत्तिका मेलनेनाभिभूयते वद्वेरीष्यं मणिमन्त्रादिना तथा सर्वाश्चित्तवृत्तयो

योगाभ्यासेनाभिभवितुं शक्यन्ते ॥ जीवन्मुक्तिस्वरूप - पृ -२९

However, this does not nullify the effects of past actions (Prarabdha karma). Since Jivanmukti is the culmination of supreme happiness, it is attained through the fruition of past actions. If the effects of past actions are unavoidable, does human effort hold any value? To this, Sri Vidyanaraya emphasizes the importance of human effort in agriculture, trade, and other fields, as well as on the path to liberation. They mention the words of Vasishtha, stating that there is no alternative to human effort in this regard.

अत एव हि हे राम श्रेयः प्राप्नोषि शाश्वतम् ।

स्वप्नप्रतीतिवत्तेन पौरुषेणैव नान्यथा ॥ जीवन्मुक्तिविवेक -५ (जीवन्मुक्तिस्वरूप)

Such liberation as Jivanmukti is in fact the non-dual nature of the individual self (jiva) and the supreme self (paramatma). The Upanishadic verse -

अनेन जीवेनात्मना अनुप्रविश्य नामरूपे व्याकरोवाणि (छांदोग्य-६-३-२)

-indicates that the individual self itself becomes Brahman. Therefore, it is questioned why a suffering, ignorant, or weak individual does not become the Supreme Self. The answer lies in the concept of avidya or ignorance, which veils the consciousness aspect of the Supreme Self and projects the individual self. It covers the consciousness aspect of the Supreme Self and manifests as the individual self, which then perceives its own world. Through the practice of yoga, the mind or Antahkarana can be purified, allowing its inherent

¹ Jivanmukti-Viveka- by SubrahmanyaShastri, Adyar Library-1978, P-10

Sattvika nature to prevail. Continuing the practice of yoga further leads to the attainment of Samadhi, wherein ignorance is destroyed. This is described using the terms "manonasha" and "vasanakshaya".

Sri Vidyanaraya yati provides various citations from श्रुति and स्मृति to establish the validity of Jivanmukti. For instance, they elucidate the explanation of the verse " विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते -(कठ- ५-१) This phrase expresses the idea that a person who is spiritually liberated while still alive will also be fully liberated upon physical death (the stage known as Videhamukti).

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि स्थिताः ।

अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति अत्र ब्रह्म समाश्रुते ॥ बृहदारण्यक-४-४-७

When all the desires that reside in the heart are released, then the mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman here itself.

Thus, Sri Vidyanaraya emphasizes that there are no contradictory statements regarding the attainment of Jivanmukti through the royal path of yoga. This concept is elaborated in the Yoga Vasishtha, Mundaka Upanishad, and in the descriptions of Jivanmukti by Shankaracharya.²

In this manner, Vidyanaraya presents a lucid explanation, delineating the subtle aspects of a Jivanmukta, and places it before us. The description of a Jivanmukta presented by them doesn't significantly differ from the depiction of a sthita-prajna (person of steady wisdom) in the Bhagavad Gita. Indeed, according to Vidyanaraya, terms like sthita-prajna, devotee of the Lord, one beyond qualities, Brahmana, and one who transcends all castes and stages of life are all synonymous with a Jivanmukta. Therefore, they cite the descriptions of a sthita-prajna in the Bhagavad Gita, the depiction of a Brahmana and an ativarNashrami in the Mahabharata's Shanti Parva, to underscore that all these terms are synonymous with Jivanmukti.

Yoga is considered a profound means to achieve both worldly and transcendental goals. This is why modern thinkers describe it as the means to achieve dual objectives, Samsaanic and spiritual (A Sword with two edges). Attaining Vasanakshaya (destruction of desires) requires overcoming the adverse power of fate

² नृणां ज्ञानैकनिष्ठानामात्मज्ञान विचारिणाम् । सा जीवन्मुक्तदेति विदेहोन्मुक्ततेव या ॥ योगवासिष्ठ - □□

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः। क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥ मुण्डक - २-२-८

शान्तसंसारकलनः कलवानपि निष्कलः। यः सचित्तोऽपि निष्चितः सजीवन्मुक्त इष्यते ॥ विवेकचूडामणि - ४३१

by acquiring the benevolent power of righteousness. This can only be achieved through karma and yoga. Overcoming the adverse power of fate is the means to liberation. Achieving bodily health through yoga postures alone leads to worldly success. However, progressing further through mental control via hearing, contemplation, and meditation leads to the state of Samadhi, the ultimate step towards liberation. This is emphasized by Sri Vidyanaraya, who asserts that liberation is achievable only through yoga.

Taking into consideration the doctrines of any Indian philosophy, it is evident that yoga is considered the primary path to liberation everywhere. Therefore, Vidyanaraya, by elucidating the various aspects of a yogic life, has become renowned in the field of Vedanta. Additionally, Sri Vidyanaraya has demonstrated, with ample evidence, that the foundational aspect of yoga in life is universally acknowledged, establishing their global reputation.

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