

How Mantras Reveal God ?

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The phenomenal objects of the world which, in Vedānta, go under the name of *Vihāra* are in *Śruti* described as 'vāgāmbana'—dependent on specific names which we apply to them. The question is whether all these are independent of one another, or there is some relation among them. In the commentary of Śankara on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* an important discussion is given from which we find that there always exists a relation between the Universal (*Sāmānya*) and the particulars (*Viśeṣas*) under it. Śankara cites the instance of *Śabda-Sāmānya* and the specific words—*Viśeṣa-Nāmas*—

‘एकसात् शब्दसामान्यात् सर्वाणि विशेषनामानि देवदत्तो यज्ञदत्त इत्येवमादिप्रविभागानि उत्पद्यन्ते प्रविभज्यन्ते ।’

It is the Universal *Śabda* or *Nāma-Sāmānya* which differentiates itself into its specific particular names. It is this universal *Nāma-Sāmānya* which exists and works in each of its particular names, you cannot separate or isolate these particular names (*Viśeṣas*) from this Universal (*Sāmānya*)—

‘न तत एव निर्भिद्य ग्रहीतुं शक्यन्ते ।’

Plurality and independence are not the final word. The Universal contains within it all the particulars as its elements.

Śankara thus observes:—

‘अनेके हि विलक्षणा.....सामान्यविशेषा:.....
तेषां पारम्पर्यगत्या एकस्मिन् महासामान्ये अन्तर्भावः प्रज्ञानवन्ते ।’
(*Bhāṣya on Br. Up. II. iv. 9*)

There is a plurality of distinguishable universals which, (with their particulars which they include) in their *progressive order*, are included within

the ultimate supreme universal Intelligence. All these particular elements are unified or synthesized (एकत्वं गताः) in and through an all-comprehending entity, one which relates, co-ordinates, unifies them all. All these are centred in or *referred* to one single universal self or centre, *i. e.*, all these are organically interrelated.* Nothing is outside it. It contains within itself all these particulars. The universal is, therefore, the only reality in all these particulars—which are merely its own *saṁsthānas* or phases. The Universal finds its expression in these particulars, and the latter are therefore not something different from the former, but its expressions; not something other (अन्य) than it.

The Primal Sound or *Śabda-sāmānya* is, therefore, the source of uttered sounds or words and constitutes the essence and the substratum of these manifested words. It is not different in different languages but is the same in all. This is the relation between the Universal and its particulars, as shown by Śankara. There are different grades of universals successively higher, which are all ultimately included and comprehended within one Supreme Divine Universal lying behind them as their ultimate essence.

The above discussion shows that, according to Śankara, there is a series of *progressively graded* universals with their respective particulars. These *Sāmānyas* or Universals may be looked

* यत् परस्परौपकार्योपकारकं.....तत् एकसामान्यात्मकं वृष्टम् ।

(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*)

upon as secondary causes (अवान्तरप्रकृतिः) and *Brahma* is the Prime Cause including them.

‘एवं क्रमेण सूक्ष्मं सूक्ष्मतरं अनन्तरमनन्तरं कारणमपीत्य सर्वकार्यजातं परमकारणं परमसूक्ष्मं च ब्रह्माप्येति । न हि स्वकारण-व्यतिरेकेण कारणकारणे कार्याप्ययो न्यत्यः ।’

That is to say, the phenomenal objects cannot *at once directly* merge in the *final* cause—*Brahma*. They must merge successively in their own preceding causes, in a reverse order. In their ascending series in the reverse orders, the earlier is less subtle than the latter, into which each successively disappears until at last the most subtle, the most inward *final* cause—*Brahma*—is reached. Even these universal forms have no real existence *apart* from *sat*, *i. e.*, they are included in ‘महासामान्ये प्रज्ञानवने’—the Universal Thought or the Divine Purpose. That is to say, the Supreme Self *includes within itself* all the intelligent universal purposes (*Sāmānyas*) which are behind the phenomena. Being Divine Purposes, they are included in the Divine Thought. They are the constitutive elements of one Supreme Being.

We find, therefore, that the universals are the sustaining principles which contain the particulars—

‘सामान्ये आत्मस्वरूपप्रदानेन विशेषान् विभर्ति..... विशेषाः सामान्ये उप्ताः, न तत एव निर्भिद्य ग्रहातुं शक्यन्ते ।’

The particulars are interwoven into the Universals and they cannot be severed from them. Yet they are arbitrarily separated. Kant separated Thing-in-itself (*Sāmānya*) from the phenomena (*Viśeṣas*). Rāmānuja says, we have no knowledge of the *Nirviśeṣa*.

The *Chhândogya Upaniṣad* says: ‘वाचरम्भगं विकारो नामधेयम्’—the changing objects of the world, which are entirely dependent on (*ārambhāṇa* means *ālambana*, according

to Śankara) specific words,—to which we apply specific names or words to indicate them,—are in reality *nāmadheya*, *i. e.*, *nāma-mātra*, *i. e.*, *nāma-sāmānya*, of which those specific words are expressions or manifestations. Then we come to this conclusion that the manifested words are not mere words, but they have behind them their Universal (*Sāmānya*) Word or *Nāda* which finds expression in them. This Universal *Nāda* is, again, the manifestation or expression of the *Chit* behind it. In this way, it is the *Chit* (consciousness) which exists in the specific words, which finds expression in them, and which is their only reality. Thus, the words or *nāmas* reveal consciousness or *Chit* which exists and works through them. The Names of God, therefore, when constantly recited and repeated awaken consciousness (*Chit* or *Chaitanya*) which is identical with them,—*identical* because the names or the words have no independent being of their own apart from the consciousness (*Chit*) of which they are the expressions, which exists and works in them and which gives them their reality (स्वरूप)—

‘यत् स्वरूपव्यतिरेकेण अग्रहणं यस्य, तस्य तदात्मकत्वं दृष्टम् ।’

(*Bhashya on Brihadaranyakopanishad*)

This is Śankara’s view about the relation subsisting between the Universal (*Sāmānya*) and its particular (*Viśeṣas*). Acting on this explanation, we may conclude that all the specific names are the expressions of one Universal Name or *Śabda*; and separated from this Universal which exists in each of the specific names, they become unreal,—their only reality lies in the one supreme *Śabda-Sāmānya*. This Supreme *Śabda-Sāmānya* is the same in all manifested words and is the substratum of all. It is designated in the *Tantra-Śāstra* as *Para Śabda*—the dynamic source of the universe. It is undifferentiated and unmanifested (अव्यक्त)—the ultimate

source of all manifested sounds—and it is also *conscious*. Śankara calls it, therefore, as ‘एकस्मिन् महासामान्ये प्रज्ञानवने’. Consciousness or *Chaitanya* is latent in the word and thus the word is ultimately to be looked upon as conscious energy. The *Nāma* and the *Nāmi* are identical. This important fact has been represented by the Mimāṃsakas as the eternal connection existing between *Śabda* and *Artha*. Thus the truth comes out that when words or mantras or vibrations are uttered, they awaken the latent *Chaitanya*—consciousness—embodied in them.

In the *Tantra*, the sounds are described as fourfold in different planes. *Parā* and *Paśyanti* represent *Iswara-Śakti* or the potential (*Kāraṇa*) state of the sound which Śankara has, in his *Vedānta-Bhāṣya* described as *Avyakta* or undifferentiated. The *Madhyamā* sound represents the subtle state (*Hiraṇyagarbha*), whereas the *Vaikhari* state consists of the manifested or the *sthūla* expression of the sound through differentiations. Thus the *Parā* sound is not different in different languages like the *Vaikhari*, but it is the unchanging primal substratum of them all—the source of the universe. The modern science of Philology deals only with the manifested uttered words (*Vaikhari*) and fails to see any connection between them and their primal source (*Parā*) and far less between this latter and the consciousness (*Chit*) which is behind the primal source of the sound, which exists and works in that source and isolated from which this latter loses its significance and becomes unreal. It is the great discovery of Hindu Philosophy that manifested words are not to be looked

upon as mere words. These specific words have behind them the Universal Word (*Nāma-Sāmānya*) which gives them their reality and which expresses its own nature through them—

‘सामान्यमात्मस्वरूपप्रदानेन विशेषान् विभर्ति ।’

Now, again, this *Nāma-Sāmānya* has behind it the one Universal Conscious Reality (*Prajñāna Ghana*) of which it is the expression, and isolated from which the *Nāma-Sāmānya* cannot stand, cannot have any reality of its own. And it is the connecting or sustaining ground of these manifested words. The philosophy of *Tantra* lays down methods of controlling the former by means of the latter. The *Chit* can be easily realized through mantras, the *Chit* which, by itself, eludes the grasp of the most adept even. In this way mantras can awaken and lead to the *Chit* (*Prajñāna-Ghana*) without fail.

There is a particular sect among the Yogis in India who practises *Nāma-Sādhanā*. A particular *mantra* has to be recited, but a peculiar method is observed in this recitation. During the time occupied by our outgoing and incoming breath, all the words comprising the *mantra* are to be repeated once mentally. No breath is to be allowed to *pass in* and *pass out*, without the inward recitation of the *mantra*. And this is to be practised constantly and it is said that such recitation of the particular *mantra*, with deep and constant attention to the breathing prescribed, will lead to the awakening of *Chaitanya* without fail. There is reason why we refrain here from elaborating this peculiar process of *Sādhanā*.

