

AUM AMRITESHVARYAI NAMAH

Talks by Swami Kaivalyananda on the Bhagavad Gita, Shankara Bhashya, Part 41

Remembering the Guru Parampara, we begin our discussion on the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, verse 69.

**Yā Niśā Sarvabhūtānām Tasyām Jāgarti Samyamī
Yasyām Jagrati Bhūtāni Sā Niśā paśyato muneh 2.69.**

We can look at the commentary. It says, ‘**Yā nishā rātriḥ sarvaparādhānām avivekakari tamah svabhāvatvāt savarbhūtānām sarveṣām bhūtānām.**’

‘**Yā nishā rātriḥ,**’ that which is night, ‘**sarva padārthānām avivekakari,**’ creates the ignorance of all external objects. The darkness of night doesn’t allow us to perceive objects. Why is this? It says, ‘**tamah svabhāvatvāt.**’ The night has a tamasic nature. Then, ‘**sarva bhūtānām sarveṣām bhūtānām.**’ This is what is experienced by living beings. People are unable to distinguish objects in the night, because the night destroys one’s external discrimination. This is because the night is full of darkness.

‘**Kim tat? Paramārthatattvaṁ** ’ ‘So what is it that is darkness for all living beings? ‘**Kim tat?**’ What is that?’ That is said to be the ‘**paramārtha tattvaṁ,**’ the supreme truth of the Self. Then the commentary explains, ‘**stitha prajñasya vishayam.**’ This is what is experienced by the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom. The Man-of-Steady-Wisdom experiences the supreme truth of the Self. Because this is not experienced by the other living beings, this Supreme Truth is darkness for them. This means that no other creature or person experiences the level of the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom except for the Stitha Prajnan himself. That is what is said.

This wisdom is accessible only to the Sthita Prajnan, the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom. It is not accessible to anyone else. That is what the shloka is saying. This is a very important subject. This shloka has been commentated in many different ways by other commentators of the Gita. That is why it is a very important subject. The wisdom of the Stitha Prajnan is not an object of anyone except for the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom himself. These two states, of the Ajnani and Sthita

Prajnan, are mutually opposing. Then what happens? The ideas and imaginations about the Stitha Prajnan by one without this Wisdom will always be imperfect. They will be incomplete.

When a person tries to know what the experience of the Man-of-Steady Wisdom is, or to guess his level, the results will be incomplete. That is what is explained in the bhashya. It says, **‘yathā naktancharānām ahareva sadanyeṣām niśā bhavati, tadvat naktanchara sthāniyānāmajñānām sarvabhūtanām niśeva niśā paramārthatattvaṁ.’**

‘Naktancharānām.’ The bhashya refers to creatures that travel in the nighttime. Due to their unique faculties of perception, they are able to distinguish objects in the darkness, by using the subtle rays of light in the nighttime. This is compared to the concept in the shloka. This means that certain creatures have this ability to travel in the night. These are called, **‘naktanchārān.’** They use the subtle light found in the darkness and are thus able to recognize and distinguish objects at nighttime as if were the day.

Like this, how are these creatures described? It says, **‘ahar asat.’** For them, the nighttime is the day. **‘Anyeṣām niśā bhavati.’** For others, it is the night. This gives an example of how one being’s day can be another’s night. What everyone else sees as night, these night creatures sees as the daytime. **‘Tadvat,’** in the same way, **‘naktancharasthāniyānām ajñānām sarva bhūtanām niśā eva. niśā paramārthatattvaṁ.’**

What is the experience of all creatures? They lack this Wisdom, called prajna. Then what happens? **‘Niśā iva.’** This means that the Supreme Truth is like the night, full of darkness, for living creatures. We said that the daytime of ordinary beings is like nighttime for these night creatures. What we experience as day is the night for them. Like this, this supreme Truth of the Self is like the night for an Ajnani.

Why is this? **‘Agocharatvāt atadbuddhitvāt buddhīnām.’** The knowledge of the Supreme Truth is called, **‘tatbuddhi.’** The word ‘tat’ refers to Brahman, so **‘tadbuddhī’** refers to the knowledge of Brahman. This is the Wisdom of the Stitha Prajnan. For others, this is **‘agocharam,’** beyond the range of perception. In the same way that the creatures that are active during night do not perceive the day, this Supreme Truth of the Self is unperceived by the living beings.

‘**Tasyām paramārthatattvalakṣhaṇāyām ajñānanidrāyaḥ prabuddho jāgarti samyamī samyamavān, jitendriyo yogītyarthaḥ.**’ This part commentates on the section of the shloka, ‘**Tasyām Jāgarti samyamī.**’ It says, for a self-controlled person, one whose senses are firmly in check, the night of the Ajnani is like the day. This is mentioned because the previous shlokas discussed the control of the senses. The most important factor that distinguishes the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom is this control of the senses. This is said as, ‘**jitendriyaḥ yogi,**’ a yogi, who has conquered the senses.

Here, it is not speaking about a Yogi of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras. Instead, it is speaking in reference to the Man-of-Steady Wisdom. This Yogi, what does he do? ‘**Tasyām Paramārtha Lakṣaṇāyām.**’ Within this Supreme Truth of the Self, ‘**prabuddho,**’ he is awake. Where is this Yogi asleep? ‘**Ajñāna Nidrāyaḥ.**’ He is unawake to the sleep of Ignorance. The Yogi, conqueror of the senses, has awoken from the sleep of Ignorance and remains awake in the Supreme Truth of the Self.

He has awoken from the Ignorance-Sleep of other beings, and remains constantly established in Steady Wisdom. ‘**Yasyām grāhyagrāhaka bhedalakṣaṇāyām avidyāniśāyām prasuptānyeva bhūtāni jāgrati iti.**’ This man of steady wisdom, in the level in which he is awake, others are not. Instead, ‘**grāhyagrāhaka bheda lakṣaṇāyām.**’ These beings are situated in the Ignorance-sleep of the distinction between the knower and known. In this Ignorance-darkness, the Yogi is not awake.

Thus, in the time when other beings are engaged in the worldly dealings, how do they experience this wakefulness? They feel, ‘I am the knower, I know objects.’ This means one is the grāhaka, that which knows, and the objects are what is grāhyam, that which is experienced. This is the knowledge, ‘I know this object. It is here in front of me.’ This is the awareness of separation.

This is called the Sleep of Ignorance. Thus, all living beings are asleep to the Supreme Truth of the Self, which the Yogi has awoken to. When we speak about our ordinary wakefulness, this is really sleep, according to the commentary. To the Truth-Knower, our waking state is the state of sleep.

Whatever is not known to the Ajnani is considered as sleep. Whatever is not known by the Jñāni is also considered to be sleep. That is what is said. The Jñāni doesn't know Ajnāna. The Jnani doesn't experience the difference between the knower and known. We cannot say that the Jnani experiences worldly objects like the ordinary Jivas. When the Ajnani knows objects, he thinks, 'I know this object. This is my knowledge, and this is an object of my knowledge.' This is the knowledge in the wakeful state of the Ajnani.

This kind of feeling doesn't exist for the Jnani. The Jnani doesn't know this. The Jnani doesn't know Ajnana. Because of this, we can say that the worldly experiences are the sleep of the Jnani. That is what is said to be the difference between the Jnani and Ajnani.

Then the bhashya says next, '**avidyāniśayām prasuptanyeva bhūtāni jāgrati iti uchyante.**' Thus, it says that what we consider to be the wakeful state is really sleep. That is why it says, '**jāgrati ityuchyante.**' Then the commentary says next, '**Yasyām niśayām prasuptā iva svapna dṛśaḥ sā niśavidyārūpatvāt.**' The waking state of the Ajnani is compared to a person who sees a dream while asleep. '**Sā Nishā avidyārūpatvāt paramārthatattvaṁ muneḥ.**' So, this wakeful state of the beings is really the state of sleep, in the Supreme Truth. However, we call this as wakefulness. So, what is this wakefulness? It is the nidrā, or sleep of the Yogi. '**Sā niśā avidyārūpatvāt.**' This kind of wakefulness is Avidya, Ignorance.

This Avidyā is not an object of experience to the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom. So, '**pashyato muneḥ,**' for a Yogi who has realized the Supreme Truth of the Self, this wakefulness of the living beings is like night. The summary of this is the there is no Ajnana, or Ignorance, in the Jnani. Also, there is no Knowledge in the Ajnani. That is the idea expressed through the shloka.

If Ignorance existed in the Jnani, then such a Jnani would have to experience objects as the knower and known, in the same way that living beings do in the waking state. However, the wakefulness of the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom is never the same as the waking state of the Jiva. We normally say that we are in the waking state, or that we have wakefulness. That is the wakefulness we speak of, normally. This refers to when we awaken from deep sleep.

Here, it says that when the Jiva wakes from sleep and grasps all of the objects with the awareness of the knower and the known, that is also sleep. Why is this? This is because even though he has awoken from the state of deep sleep, he hasn't awoken from the sleep of

Ignorance. He hasn't awoken from this Ajnana. It is within this Ignorance that he awakens from deep sleep. The sleep itself is also in Ignorance. Thus, these different states exist only for an Ajnani.

Then, we may ask, 'The Jnani also experiences sleep and waking, externally. The Jnani too performs actions. How do we explain that?' For this, it says that the sleep and waking state of the Jnani are not in Ignorance. That is the difference between the two. The sleeping and waking of the Jnani are not produced by Ignorance. We experience that even after the destruction of Ignorance, the Jnani appears to experience sleep and waking. Therefore, for the Man-of-steady-Wisdom, the Jnani, his sleep and wakefulness are without Ajnana, Ignorance.

Then what is sleep and wakefulness devoid of Ignorance? This is Prajna, the Wisdom of the Stitha Prajna. That is what is said. How can that be understood? It says here that it cannot be understood. An Ajnani can never understand it. That is a state that can be known only by the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom. This is to be awake and asleep without the influence of Ignorance. For the Jiva, whether he sleeps or is awake, he is in Ignorance. This is the difference between the two.

The true sleep experienced by the Jiva is not the sleep we think of. That is what is said here. We also go to sleep and wake from sleep. But the true sleep that we experience is not that kind of sleep. Instead, the true sleep is that we don't experience this state of Steady-Wisdom. That is what is called Ignorance. The normal sleep that we know of is not what is meant by the sleep of Ignorance. Why is this? It is because when we awake also, we are asleep. At this level, even the Jiva's wakefulness is considered as sleep.

So in truth, what is Ignorance? Ignorance is really the absence of the condition of this Steady-Wisdom. That is the Ignorance of the Jiva. The absence of this Steady Wisdom has no difference whether in deep sleep or the waking state. The Wisdom of the Stitha Prajna becomes inaccessible to the Jiva at all times. This Ignorance of the Jiva becomes clearly manifest in the waking state, so it is never possible for an Ajnani to understand the level of the Man-of-Steady Wisdom. That is not the level of the Ajnani. Instead, it is the exact opposite of the Jiva's condition. It isn't possible to understand this level if one doesn't experience it. It is only possible to understand the level of the Stitha Prajnan by experiencing that state.

It thus says that these are two completely different states. They are opposites. And what about the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom? Even if the different states and knower-known relationship exist, the Stitha Prajnan never comes to the level of the Jiva. All of these things will occur for a Jnani. However, the Jiva's deep sleep and waking state do not exist for the Stitha Prajnan. The Stitha Prajnan doesn't experience the sleep of the Ajnani, the waking state of the Ajnani, or the worldly experiences of the Ajnani. To understand this, what is said? It says that the Stitha Prajnan has no knowledge about these.

When it says, 'the stitha prajna has no knowledge,' it doesn't mean that he is ignorant. This means that the level of the Stitha Prajnan has no relation with these conditions of the Ajnani. Both of these are completely opposing, because it is never possible for the Ajnani to grasp the level of the Stitha Prajnan with his mind, which functions through the knower and known. No one can know the Stitha Prajnan. Only the Stitha Prajnan himself knows that level of experience.

The Stitha Prajnan knows his Self, and the Ajnani as well. And what about the Ajnani? The Ajnani neither knows his Self, nor the Stitha Prajnan. That is the difference between the two. Because of this, '**ataḥ karmāṇi avidyāvasthāyām eva chodyante, no vidyāvasthāyām.**'

Here, the commentator is relating these two conditions through karma. It says, '**karmāṇi avidyāvasthāyām eva chodyante.**' This means that karmas is enjoined on the Ajnani. They are not enjoined in the level of Vidyā; only for the level of Avidya, Ignorance. This means that no karma is ordained for the Jnani.

This is all said for the followers of the Purva Mīmamsa philosophy. They think, 'these Vedic karmas are eternal. By not performing them, we will incur sin.' This part is said, taking these people into consideration. In other words, it is said in consideration of Ajnanis. When we come to the social period of Sri Shankaracharya, we can see that if this concept isn't said so strongly, it would be impossible to remove this defect from the society, of overly relying on the Vedic karmas. Why is this? It is because at that time, the people believed the scriptural statement, '**yāvajjivan agnihotram juhuyād.**' This means, 'till death itself, one must perform the fire sacrifice.' Because of this, it wasn't possible for a person to become free from these karmas.

This is especially for those in the higher 3 classes, the brahmin, kshatriya, and vaishya. Thus, the society had to be made to accept this freedom from Vedic karma. It wasn't enough then for a person to simply perform Atma Nishta as a sadhana. The society would consider a person who contemplates the spiritual truths and follows this sadhana as someone who has fallen from society. Because of this, the commentator makes his argument against this very strong.

This is not needed for today's society. This is because our society is different from then. At that time, there was a different society. If a person renounced the tuft of hair and sacred thread, renouncing everything, the society would label him as 'one who has fallen.' This is because of the actions of the Buddhists during this time. They also practiced complete renunciation, becoming monks. Those who take sanyassa in this way would be considered 'fallen' in the same way, even though they had faith in the Sanatana Dharma. Because of this, what is said?

It says that a person who is established in Jnana Nishta is not enjoined for any karmas. '**Na vidyāvasthāyām.**' These karmas are not ordained for the state of Vidya, Self-knowledge. Because of this, these karmas are not necessary for such a sadhak. Because of this argument, followers of Advaita could then be accepted in the society. This refuting of the combination of karma and jnana was for a practical problem as well. It is not just a philosophical problem. It is also a problem of the existence of the Advaiti in society.

'**Vidyāyām hi satyām udite svitariśārvaramiva tamaḥ praṇāśn upagacchati avidyā.**' It says, '**Vidyāyām hi satyām.**' So, what happens if one attains the state of steady Wisdom? Then, '**udite savitari śārvaram iva tamaḥ praṇāśam upagacchati.**' In the same way that as when the sun rises, all darkness is destroyed, '**vidyāyām satyām, avidyā praṇāśyati,**' this Ignorance becomes destroyed of Itself. That is why it is said that the Ignorance of the Ajnani is the sleep to the Jnani. This doesn't refer to the sleep we see externally in the Jnani. In the level of the Jnani, there is not even a drop of the Ignorance of the Ajnani. If there is Ignorance in one's Prajna, then one is not a Jnani.

Therefore, the Jnani never falls from his level of Wisdom. That is what is said. We normally say, when the Jnani comes down to the level of society, he becomes like an Ajnani. We say this in reference to Avatars. We say, 'a person that must save a person in the ocean must jump in the ocean as well.' Therefore, we say that an Avatar comes down to the level of the ordinary man, and becomes like an ordinary human. We normally imagine this.

However, in the Supreme Truth, this is not true. It may be true for an Ajnani, because it is the imagination of the Ajnani. All of the imaginations of the Ajnani about the state of the Sthita Prajna are true for the Ajnani. Therefore, there is no point in debating. As long as one is in the condition of the Ajnani, these imaginings are true.

However, when we view this in the level of the Wisdom of the Sthita Prajnan, none of this is true. The Sthita Prajnan never falls down from his level of Wisdom. Why is this? It is because for the Sthita Prajnan, there is neither high nor low. That is why. Only if there is high and low, can one come down. The fact that the Sthita Prajna is seen acting in society, and serving the society, is due to the imagination of the Ajnani. For the Ajnani, this is true.

In the level of the Ajnani, some things are true while others are untrue. However, this is not so for the Sthita Prajna. For the Sthita Prajna, there is neither true nor untrue. There is only this Wisdom. Because of this, the Sthita Prajna never has to control and utilize his Prajna for the benefit of society. This kind of renunciation (tyaga) is not needed for the Sthita Prajnan. Some people say that the Sthita Prajna renounces the state of Supreme Bliss to save the Ajnanis. This is the imagination of the Ajnani.

This does not happen. Instead, what happens for the Sthita Prajnan? Such a one does not experience Ajnana. If the Sthita Prajna experiences Ajnana, how can he save those in Ajnana? Therefore, this tyaga is not needed. That is the Truth. However, it is true that this is not our experience. This experience of ours is also true. Why is this? Our experience is the creation of Ignorance. Because of our Ignorance, we superimpose these qualities on the Sthita Prajnan. In many ways, we superimpose Ajnana onto the Sthita Prajnan. Because this experience is the creation of Ajnana, it is true for the Ajnani.

The '**paramārtha tattvam**' that is mentioned here is not experienced by the Ajnani. Because of this, it is said that this Ignorance is the night, or sleep of the Sthita Prajnan. That is a sleep that doesn't affect the Sthita Prajnan. When the Ajnani sleeps, that sleep affects him or her. When we say 'the sleep of the Sthita Prajnan,' it is a sleep that doesn't affect the Sthita Prajnan.' The Sthita Prajnan experiences sleep that isn't influenced by Ignorance.

Why is that? It is because the Sthita Prajnan never experiences a gap in this Wisdom. This fluctuation happens to the Prajna of the Jiva. The awareness of the Jiva may become awake. Then what happens when the Jiva experiences sleep? This awareness is lost. This doesn't happen for the Sthita Prajna. The Jiva goes from the state of sleep to the waking state, and vice versa, but this change of states is not experienced by the Sthita Prajnan. That is why it says,

'Pranāsham upagacchati avidyā.' There, this Avidya, Ignorance, is completely destroyed. Then the bhashya says, **'Prāk vidyotpatteḥ avidyā pramāṇabuddhya gṛhyamāna kriyākārahaphalabhedarūpā satī sarvakarmahetutvaṁ pratipadyate.'**

Why does Shankara repeatedly say, 'Karma doesn't exist for the Jnani, Karma doesn't exist for the Jnani?' This is because in the state of Jnana, there is no Avidya. Then why does the Jiva doubt, 'why can't you combine Jnana and Karma?' It is because the Jiva experiences Avidya, Ignorance. The Ajnani witnesses all of the Sthita Prajnan's actions for the good of the world. This is because he superimposes the Ajnana that he himself experiences on the Jnani.

That is why Shankara said before, 'the karma of a Jnani cannot be considered as karma.' To say, 'the jnani is performing karma,' or 'the jnani isn't performing karma,' both of these are the imagination of the Jiva. Therefore, no one has the right to say that the Jnani is enjoined to perform the Vedic karmas. No one has the authority to say this. That is what is said in the bhashya.

It says, **'prāk vidyotpatteḥ,'** before the experience of Self-knowledge, **'avidyā pramāṇabuddhya gṛhyamānā,'** one accepts what is Ignorance as the Truth. He feels that this Avidya is real, and the Truth. Thus, it says, **'pramāṇa buddhya.'** This means that he feels that Avidya is 'prama,' or correct and true knowledge.

Such a person accepts the Vedas as the highest source of knowledge, or pramana. He thus thinks that he must perform whatever is instructed in the Vedas. He thinks that the knowledge gained from the Vedas is also prama, or true knowledge. Then it says,

'kriyākārahaphalabhedarūpā.' That Avidya, or Ignorance becomes manifested as the action (kriya), the performer (karaka), and the fruit of the karma (phala). This is the performer of the yajna, the fruit of the attainment of heaven, and the instruments for performing the sacrifice, all of this, **'sarkarmahetutvam pratipadyate.'**

This means that Avidya becomes the hetu, or cause for all karmas. Karma exists within Avidya. There is no karma in Prajna. Thus the bhashya says, **‘na apramānabuddhyā grhyamānāyāḥ karma hetutvopapattiḥ.’** For one who doesn’t consider Avidya as real, who doesn’t perceive Avidya, that Avidya doesn’t become a cause for Karma. This means that Avidya lacks the ability to make such a Jnani perform karma.

Then, the commentary says, **‘pramānabhūtena vedena mama choditam kartavyam karma’ iti hi karmani kartā pravartate.’** This Ajnani feels, **‘pramānabhūtena vedena,’** by the Vedas, which are the highest Pramana, **‘mama choditam kartavyam karma.’** He feels that ‘these karmas are enjoined for me, that are a duty to be performed.’ Then it says, **‘iti hi karmani kartā pravartate.’** From this, the person performs karma. Here we should remember that it says, **‘Vedena,’** the karmas ordained by the Vedas. That is the most important thing. We said before that the word ‘karma’ here means ‘karmas that are ordained by the Vedas.’ **‘Vedena choditāni karmāṇi.’** So don’t think this refers to the ordinary actions you perform. That is why it is said specifically, **‘vedena choditam,’** those karmas ordained by the Vedas. That is the subject of the discussion.

This doesn’t refer to actions such as eating and bathing. When ‘karma’ is discussed in the scriptures, it usually doesn’t refer to worldly karmas, but the karmas ordained by the scriptures. That is why this is said in particular. We should know what kind of karma we are discussing. It says, **‘vedena choditam kartavyam karma.’** This means the karmas that are ordained by the Vedas. The followers of Purva Mīmamsa think, ‘these must be performed as one’s duty.’ The Advaita says, ‘no, that is not correct.’

It says, **‘na, avidyāmātram idaṁ sarvaṁ nisheva’ iti na pravartate.’** A Jnani knows, ‘this is all Avidya, Ignorance, like darkness.’ Such a person, **‘na pravartate,’** is not ordained to perform such karmas. This means that after attaining this knowledge, there is no need to again perform such karmas. Then it says, **‘yasya punaḥ ‘nisheva avidyāmātram idaṁ sarvaṁ bhedajātam’ iti jñānam tasy ātmajñāsyā sarvakarmasamnyāse eva adhikāro na pravṛttau.’**

Now, it is speaking firmly about sanyassa. Why is this? One group of people say, ‘all people must perform these karmas.’ When these karmas are forced in this way, the answer given is that these don’t apply to the stage of sanyassa. In truth, there is neither the duty of karma nor

the renunciation of karma in that state of the Stitha Prajnan. Still, the state of sanyassa is given importance here. One group says, ‘all people have to perform Vedic karma. No matter how much Jnana is gained, one still has to perform the Vedic karmas.’ The answer given to them, is, ‘no. If you demand in this way, there is a suitable aspirant for the renunciation of such karmas.’ This is to show the relationship between karma and karma sanyassa, the renunciation of karma.

Then it says, **‘yasya punaḥ ‘nisheva avidyāmātram idaṁ sarvaṁ bhedajātam.’** What is this bheda, or division of duality that is experienced? It is mere Avidya, Ignorance. It is like night, nishā. **‘iti jñānaṁ,’** this is the Knowledge, **‘ātmajñasya,’** of the Atmajnani. **‘sarvakarmasanyāse eva adhikāro na pravṛttau.’** This means that such an Atmajnani has the right to the renunciation of all Vedic karmas, and not to their performance. Therefore, there is nothing that has the authority to force the Atmajnani to perform karma. That is the meaning.

This explanation is given on a philosophical level. The experience of karma does not belong to the Jnani. This doesn’t mean that the Jnani doesn’t perform actions. Instead, when we come to the philosophical explanation, we want to answer whether the Jnani must perform the Vedic karmas or not. The answer is ‘no, because the injunctions of the Vedas don’t affect the Jnani.’ There is no necessity of the Jnani obeying the Vedic injunctions. Only an Ajnani must obey these injunctions.

Here is where the difference between mere Karma and Karma Yoga comes in. The bhashya says, **‘Tathā cha darśayiṣhyati ‘tadbuddhayas tadātmānaḥ’ ityādinā jñānaniṣṭāyām eva tasya adhikāram.’** So what does this mean? It means that the Jnani has the right to simply be in Jnana Nishta. This means that he doesn’t have to perform karma. The Sthita Prajnan simply remains in this Jnana nistha, and not in karma.

What does it mean when we say a person is suitable for Jnana Nishta? It means that such a person never falls from this Jnana Nishta. Such a sadhak doesn’t fall back into karma due to the feeling of doership. **‘Tatrāpi pravartaka pramāṇābhāve pravṛtṭyanupapattiḥ iti chet.’** Here, we said that a person is established in Atma Nishta. A person who is in the level of practicing Atma Nishta is also situated in Atma Nishta. When this practice becomes spontaneous, the sadhak is likewise situated in Atma Nishta.

After having attained chitta shuddhi (purity of mind), one spontaneously experiences the arising of Knowledge. This chitta shuddhi isn't a thing that we can buy in the supermarket. For the ordinary sadhak, this purity of mind is gained gradually. Chitta shuddhi is a transformation that occurs every moment within the mind. It is not like turning on a light bulb. It is not immediate, but gradual. After gaining this chitta shuddhi, one is prepared for Jnana Nishta.

A person doesn't become a Jnani in a single day. Suppose a person sits down to meditate one day. He then startledly realizes, 'I am a Jnani.' Then he ends his meditation and stands up. He goes and writes about it in his diary. 'I became a Jnani on this hour of this day.' This doesn't happen. Some people will claim that this does happen, but it is not like that. In the same way that a person experiences chitta shuddhi, he experiences Jnana Nishta within.

For such a person who is established in Jnana Nishta, karmas spontaneously drop away from him, his inner instrument becomes clearer, and as he gains firmness in Jnana Nishta. For such a person, what is it that causes him to act in Jnana Nishta? This Jnana Nishta itself is an action. Even if the body is inactive, won't the mind still be active? So, after the Jnani has renounced all pramanas (means of perception), then what can cause him to act?

This part of the bhashya refers to a scriptural action. If a person must gain knowledge of scriptural actions, there is only one pramana, the Vedas. There is nothing else. A person's vasanas (mental tendencies) are enough to cause him to perform ordinary actions. These are actions that enable the body to be sustained, and so on. One doesn't need the injunctions of the Vedas to perform these actions. This is different. These are not worldly actions (laukika). These are alaukika karmas. This means that their source is not worldly, but the Vedas.

We are only able to understand the means and fruits of these actions through the Vedas. Even if they are said by the Acharyas, the pramana, or source of knowledge of these karmas, is the Vedas alone. Therefore, the most important pramana is the Vedas. It was said that the Vedas are not a pramana to the Jnani. If we say that the Vedas are not a pramana for a person in Jnana Nishta, then from what encouragement will he or she perform action? That is the question. It says, '**tatrāpi pravartakapramāṇābhāve.**'

So it says, 'for a person for whom even the Vedas are no longer a pramana, '**pravṛtṭyanupapattiḥ,**' how then, can there be action for such a one? What will be the basis of

that action? Believing in what will he act? Why does a normal person perform these Vedic karmas? First, he has faith in the Vedas, and that the performance of the particular karma will yield the desired fruit. Then, some doubts will come. Why does a person reject these karmas? It is for the attainment of Moksha. Then what surety is there of a person attaining moksha?

What if we renounce all of these karmas, and don't obtain Moksha? What if we waste our effort in vain for this moksha? What if Moksha is just a confused concept? Then all of these actions would be useless. So, to show that Moksha is true, a proof is needed. It is only possible to act if one has a reliable source of faith. A person with real discrimination isn't confused about the state of Moksha like we are. This is because a person with discrimination only acts if there is a reliable basis of why one performs that action. A person without this discrimination may perform actions without this, and even a sadhak may have this attitude towards moksha. Such a person also strives for Liberation. However, if he is asked, 'what is Liberation?' he won't be able to tell you.

He may say, 'if others could get moksha, then I can too.' This is an action that doesn't rely on a pramana, a reliable source of knowledge about the action. Here it says that if a discriminative person performs an action, it is only after gaining proper knowledge about the action through a reliable source. Then if this Jnana Nishta is also affected by pramana, how can a viveki perform action? That is the question of the Purva Paksha.

The Siddhanti says, 'na.' No, that's not correct. 'Svātmavishayatvāt ātmavijñānasya.' Here it says that the action that comes from the knowledge of the Self and the action that comes from the knowledge of external objects are two separate things. A person knows about heaven from the Vedas. When the person gains this knowledge, the object, heaven, is separate from the person. He knows an object that is different from him. Having accepted the Vedas as a pramana, this person acts accordingly.

This person's action is based on his faith in the Vedas. There are other things mentioned in the scriptures that we have no knowledge of, such as Devaloka, the world of the Gods, or Vaikuntha, or Kailas. The actions aimed at attaining these worlds are solely based in faith. One can also strive for Moksha in the same way.

However, this kind of faith doesn't require a pramana. Faith can come from pramana, but faith does not require a pramana. One can have faith in anything. Faith doesn't have to come from correct knowledge, prama. Faith doesn't have to be rooted in truth. Faith can be either way. This faith will normally be guided by Ignorance, because faith depends on Ignorance.

A person who knows has no need for faith. That is what is said here. So whatever action must be performed, a pramana must be accepted for that action. If not, it will be based merely in faith. However, it says here that the nature of Self-knowledge is not like that. When we speak about Atma Nishta, Self-abidance, we are not talking about the abidance in something different from us. This is the abidance in one's own true Self.

When does a person have to have faith in God? This is when God is separate. One has to have faith in a God that is separate from one. Why? It is because there is no God that is separate. One only has to have faith in something that doesn't exist. To think that something that isn't is, is faith. To know that something that is, is knowledge. That is the difference between knowledge and faith.

The basis of the Ajnani is to have faith and then act. First he has faith in things that aren't objects of his knowledge, he creates the awareness of this within, and then acts. Self-knowledge is not like that. The bhashya says, '**Svātmavishayatvāt ātmavijñānasya.**'

When we speak about Self-knowledge, or God-awareness, what is meant? '**Svātmavishayam.**' It is one's own svarūpam, one's true nature. That is what is said here. The object of experience is one's Self. The object of Atma Nishta is not a God that is separate from oneself. If there is such a God, we will have to have faith in Him. This is because such a God doesn't exist. Then you may ask, 'then isn't it wrong to have faith in the Lord?'

To that, we can say that some wrongs can be good. That can benefit a person. A person first has faith in God, and then tries to know God. Here what is said? It says that another pramana isn't needed to know one's true Self. In knowing the Lord, the knowledge of God itself is the pramana. No other pramana is needed. The pramana is '**Atma Vishaya,**' one's true Self. One's knowledge comes to rest in one's own Self. Therefore, any kind of pramana is unnecessary.

This abidance in Self-knowledge is not sustained by anything someone told us. When we sit for a satsang, it may be because someone is forcing us to. It may be because Amma told you to. Only if it is a strict rule will people come. In this, an external pressure is needed. A pramana is needed. Another person said that the satsang is good for you, so you come. In this, the other person's words are an encouragement. These can be Amma's words. This is called '**apta vakyam.**' Because other people say that it is good, we accept it.

After accepting this advice, what do we do? We sit and participate in the satsang, or we perform sadhana, etc. What do we do in this? We accept this **apta vakya** as a pramana. This is the same with the Vedas. The Vedas are considered as a pramana, and so individuals perform actions according to their injunctions.

However, there is a slight difference in reference to Atma Nishta, abidance in one's true Self. There is no need for another pramana in this Atma Nishta. What is it that makes a person abide in the Self? It is knowledge of the Self (Atma Bodha). This is what makes one abide in the Atman. It is one's own awareness which decides one's **nishta**, abidance.

So, when the satsang and Atma Nishta are combined, then there is no need for an external force. Then, one doesn't have to rely on a separate pramana. At present, the satsang is like a 'duty' for us. It is a duty, like working in the press or in the kitchen. In this, a pramana is needed for the action. If that action changes into Atma Nishta, it says, '**pramāṇappravartakābhāvāt.**' At that point, a pramana is not necessary for the action. This is also true for the Vedas and the Guru's upadesha. This is the ultimate state.

When the instruction (upadesha) of the Guru is considered separate from us, then a pramana is needed. That pramana becomes the external influence that pressures us to perform the action. Now, when the Upadesha becomes one's own, then an external pressure is not needed. Then there is no external force creating the action. If the action is performed from external force, it doesn't become one's own true Experience. When something becomes one's own experience, the external force is destroyed. The effect of an external force no longer exists.

That is the difference between acting oneself and acting after having been told something. That is the essence of this. So, that which leads one forward in Atma Nishta is one's own awareness. In the beginning, our listening to the words of the Guru depends on the Guru's

awareness. At this point, however, the sadhak doesn't depend on the Guru's awareness. He relies on his own awareness. The awareness of the Guru becomes one's own. That is what we have discussed before. That is the essence of what is said here.

Then, '**svātmavishayatvāt atmavijñānasya eva.**' The commentary reveals a big meaning in each word. The essence of the question is, 'if there is no force to perform action, how will one perform action?' What is the answer? It says that no external force to action is needed in Atma Vidya. This practice of Abidance in the Self is not performed out of an external encouragement. It is not performed because another person said so. There is no encouragement there. However, karma requires an external encouragement. Why? It is because there, the object is separate from us. Where the object is separate, an external encouragement is needed.

For however much you act, that much of this encouragement is needed. However, this is not necessary in the Atma Bodha. Why? '**Svātmavishayatvāt.**' This is because the object there is not separate. It is one's own Bodha, or pure awareness, which makes one abide in the Self. Then it says, '**na hyātmanah svātmani pravartakapramāṇapekṣatā.**' This is explained further. '**ātmanah svātmani,**' in the Self acting within itself, '**pravartakapramāṇapekṣatā na,**' the external encouragement of a pramana is not needed. The apta vakya isn't necessary, nor is the Shruti. Then there is no need of any external action. Why?

'**Atmavāt.**' This is because this object of this awareness is one's true nature. The awareness of one's true nature doesn't depend on anything else. That which makes the sadhak established in Self-knowledge (Atma Bodha) is this awareness itself. So, when the participation in satsang changes into this Atma Nishta, then an external pressure isn't needed. It becomes natural. When that happens, even the Guru is not needed. The scriptures aren't needed. Why? '**ātmavāt eva.**' This is because this awareness doesn't depend on anything else. That is the final progression.

This external encouragement is necessary in the beginning stages. Then it is needed. This is the same with the Vedas. The Vedas encourage man to act. But once the sadhak becomes free from limitations, the Vedas withdraw from him. That is what is said here. '**Apramanā bhavat.**' Then, the sadhak doesn't rely on the Vedas as a pramana. This happens for the sadhak. At that point of maturity, the sadhak's awareness of the Self doesn't rely on any external cause. That is the meaning.

We normally say that a sadhak reaches a state of emptiness, **shunyata**. In that state, there is no opposing pressure to perform action. When one is under the influence of the opposing pressures, this external ‘force’ is required to perform action. However, this isn’t necessary in the state of ‘emptiness.’ A person becomes spontaneous, **sahaja**. Like that, this is what happens here.

It says, ‘**na hyātmanaḥ svātmani pravartakpramāṇāpekṣā.**’ This is a matter that must be grasped by thinking very subtly. This is not something that can be understood by translating into English. Then it says, ‘**tad antatvāt cha sarvaprāmāṇānām pramāṇtvasya.**’ This means that in Atma Nishta, the sadhak becomes the pramana of all pramanas. In other words, no pramana exists for such a One. Thus, it says, ‘**tadantatvāccha.**’ So who is it that reaches the state of Atma Nishta? If we take anyone, they will set aside a schedule, ‘I must meditate for this much time, and do japa for this much time.’ That is all correct. All of that is important.

However, this isn’t necessary in Atma Nishta. It says, ‘**tadantatvāccha.**’ In that Nishta, everything is finished. ‘**Sarvaprāmāṇānām pramāṇatvasya.**’ In that state, one becomes the pramana of all pramanas. Then, ‘**na hi ātmasvarūpādhigame sati punaḥ pramāṇaprameya vyvahāraḥ sambhavati.**’

So, ‘**ātmasvarūpādhigame sati.**’ How is Atma Nishta attained? When the knowledge of the true nature of the Self happens continuously, that is Atma Nishta. The continuous experience of Atma Bodha, the awareness of the Self, is Atma Nishta. When that happens, ‘**na pramāṇaprameyavyavahāraḥ sambhavati.**’ Then, there is not the feeling, ‘I am doing this.’ ‘I must do this, or else this bad effect will come.’ ‘I must do this to gain that.’ In this Atma Nishta these pramanas, the things perceived (prameyas), and the external dealings of these do not take place.

Because the sadhak in this Atma Nishta is ‘**apeksha,**’ unlimited by objects, he is not limited even by time. So, it says, ‘**Pramāṇtvam hi atmanaḥ nivartayati antyam pramāṇam.**’ What is this ‘**antya pramana,**’ the ultimate source of knowledge? It is this awareness itself. This is speaking about the awareness which is gained through the practice of Atma Nishta. What does this awareness (bodha) do?

‘**Pramāṛṭvaṁ hi ātmanaḥ nivartayati.**’ In other words, the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom doesn’t have the attitude that he is ignorant. An Ajnani will know this of himself, ‘I am ignorant.’ ‘I know myself.’ The Man-of-Steady-Wisdom doesn’t have this. Is there a Self-awareness beyond the body-awareness for the Ajnani? No. This is how the Ajnani knows, ‘I know myself.’ Then, will there be the awareness in the Sthita Prajnan, ‘I am a Sthita Prajana,’ like the Ajnani imagines? Can there be the awareness, ‘I am a Jnani?’ Why is that can’t say that this is true? Why can we say that this awareness doesn’t exist?

That is what is said here. If there was such an awareness, it says there would be ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ.**’ That is what is called ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ.**’ How do others see the Jnani? They see him as a Jnani. How does the Jnani see himself? It is not as, ‘I am a Jnani.’ We say as if the Jnani has Knowledge as his possession. However, how should we understand this? The Jnani sees his Self as Jnana, Knowledge. If we say the word ‘**Jnani,**’ it implies two things; the Jnani and the Jnana. Instead, the Jnani doesn’t see himself as a Jnani, but as Jnana, Knowledge. However, those who see the Jnani call him a ‘**Jnani.**’ That is the difference.

That what is said here. ‘**Pramāṛṭvaṁ hi ātmanaḥ nivartayati antyaṁ pramaṇaṁ.**’ The quality of being a Jnani, this ‘**Pramāṛṭvaṁ,**’ is destroyed by the fact that the Jnani becomes the ‘**antya pramaṇa,**’ the ultimate source of knowledge. This is Knowledge itself. This Knowledge, which is the ultimate pramana, destroys this quality of being a Jnani. This means that the ‘**Pramāṛṭvaṁ,**’ or quality of being qualified, is destroyed. That is ‘**Pramāṛṭvaṁ.**’

This is not just for a ‘Jnani.’ An Ignorant person can also be a ‘Jnani.’ How is this? The Ajnani has knowledge in several ways. We say, ‘I have gained knowledge. I am knowledgeable.’ Whether it is in a material and spiritual subject, an Ajnani has knowledge in many ways. But what is a ‘Jnani,’ in the literal meaning? The word ‘jnani,’ means a person who possesses knowledge. This doesn’t just refer to a Man-of-Steady-Wisdom, but to everyone. In that case, such people accept the quality of ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ.**’ They accept knowledge of something that is other than them. This ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ,**’ means ‘a person with knowledge.’

This is the attitude of having knowledge. This is ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ.**’ This is not the ego we normally speak of, but when the Jiva obtains knowledge, he thinks, ‘I have knowledge.’ This can be the knowledge, ‘I am one practicing Atma Nishta.’ ‘I am knowledgeable.’ The awareness of correct knowledge is called ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ.**’ Then what is it that destroys this ‘**pramāṛṭvaṁ?**’ It

is Jnana, Self-Knowledge. Thus it says, '**Pramāṛṭvaṁ hi ātmanaḥ nivartayati antyaṁ pramāṇaṁ.**' This is the Knowledge that is the Ultimate Pramana.

This is what is called '**Prajna,**' 'Wisdom.' This is what destroys the **pramāṛṭvaṁ**. So, correct knowledge, **prama**, is obtained only by a **Pramātav**, the one who obtains the knowledge. The next question is, 'once this quality of **pramāṛṭvaṁ** is destroyed, what happens to the correct knowledge (**prama**)? In other words, after the Jnani obtains Knowledge, that Knowledge transforms the Jnani into Knowledge itself. Therefore, the attitude, 'I have Jnana, knowledge,' is destroyed. So this Jnana destroys the attitude, 'I am the one with Knowledge.' Once that awareness is destroyed, what will happen to the Knowledge? That is what is said next.

'**Nivartayadeva cha apramāṇibhavati, svapnakālapramāṇamiva prabodhe.**' Then, the Knowledge is destroyed as well. Why? Whatever is produced must be destroyed. This Knowledge was made firm within through the practice of Atma Nishta. When this Knowledge is gained, there is a particular aim for this. What is that? It is to destroy Ajnana, Ignorance. So this Knowledge is an instrument for destroying Ignorance. This Knowledge is a pramana.

Then this Knowledge achieves its aim. Once this is done, '**nivartayadeva.**' Once this Ajnana is destroyed, what happens? '**Cha apramāṇibhavati.**' This Knowledge no longer exists as a pramana. It doesn't continue to exist. There is a very famous illustration for this. There is a small seed called katakam. This is used to purify water. If you make this into a powder and place in water, it will make all of the dirt settle at the bottom. This is done for making the water pure. If the powder is again placed at the top, the water will again become impure. The first dust of the katakam made all of the other dust settle to the bottom. Then the water became clear.

Once this Prajna, or discrimination destroys the Ignorance, then there is no more purpose for that discrimination. Then there is nothing to obtain through Prajna. That is not all. Depending upon this Prajna are the mind, intellect, senses, body, etc. All of these depend of Prajna in one way or another. They are produced from this Prajna. So, once the Ignorance is destroyed, this Prajna naturally loses its existence. It cannot continue to exist. This is because its existence isn't necessary. That's why it is said that once the other shore is reached, one no longer needs a boat.

Knowledge is not like an ornament for the Jnani. Instead, what happens? ‘**Apramāṇībhavati.**’ Even that leaves. Along with the Ignorance, this Knowledge goes as well. What is this like? ‘**Svapnakālapramāṇam iva prabuddhe.**’ In a dream (svapna), there is the pramana, prameya, etc. When the person awakes from the sleep, all of these disappear. In a dream, we can feel, ‘I am a Jnani.’ We may feel in a dream, ‘I have obtained Jnana.’ However, when he awakes from the dream, he is again in Ignorance.

We can feel anything in a dream. ‘I am a Jnani.’ ‘I am a king.’ ‘I am a beggar.’ However, none of these things actually happen. This is also what happens with Jnana. Whatever happens to Ignorance also happens to Knowledge. For a Jnani, even this Knowledge becomes useless. That is why it is said, ‘**anubhavātītam brahma.**’ The Upanishads say this. ‘Brahman is beyond experience.’

This Knowledge is in the level of experience. When one goes beyond this, then there is nothing to say. It isn’t possible to think about or talk about something that is beyond experience. The intellect cannot enter into that Realm. That is the supreme state of the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom. The supreme state of the Sthita Prajnan is beyond Prajna. That is the meaning. Knowledge doesn’t exist in the supreme state of the Jnani. The Knowledge that we say a Jnani has doesn’t exist there. That is where the Jnani resides.

Therefore, Shankara asks, ‘in a state where even Knowledge doesn’t exist, how can there be karma?’ It says, ‘**Loke cha vastvadhigame pravṛtīhetutvādarshanāt pramāṇasya.**’ We can look at our worldly experiences. We know an object. Through the connection of the senses and the object, we know the object. Therefore, action is dependant on other causes. However, knowledge isn’t like that. Knowledge depends on itself alone to know. Thus, it says, ‘**loke cha vastvadhigame.**’ As when worldly objects are known, ‘**pravṛtīhetutvādarśamāt pramāṇāsyā,**’ there, in knowledge, one doesn’t act from the knowledge gained from the pramanas.

When we say we know an object, it just means that we gain knowledge of that object. It doesn’t mean that we have to act. There are other factors that encourage one to act. Then, ‘**tasmāt,**’ because of this, ‘**na ātmavidah karmanādhikāra iti siddham.**’ Here, Shankara finally concludes that karma cannot exist for a Jnani. No one has the authority to say the Jnani must keep the tuft of hair and sacred thread.

So, in the philosophical explanation, Shankara says, ‘where there does not even exist Knowledge, how can karma exist?’ That is what Shankara asks. We should understand on what level Shankara says, ‘karma doesn’t exist for the Jnani.’ Karma is refuted on the level where even Knowledge doesn’t exist. We must understand this in particular. That refuting of karma doesn’t just refute the activities of the body and mind. It refutes all action, all states of movement as not present in the Jnani.

If we are speaking about a Jiva, this refers to the refuting of all actions that bring about the production of offspring. This says that none of these happen in the state of sanyassa. This is not discussing whether a normal person should perform karma or not. This is not the meaning of ‘sarva karma samnyassa.’ ‘Tasmāt na ātmavidaḥ karmanyadhikāra.’ Therefore, the Jnani is not an adikari, or suitable practitioner of Karma. Now we can look at the shloka.

‘Sarva Bhūtanām,’ of all living beings, ‘Yā Nishā,’ that which is night, which is the condition of the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom, ‘Tasyām,’ in that Wisdom, ‘Samyami,’ one who is self-controlled, ‘Jāgarti,’ is awake.

‘Yasyām,’ in that condition of Avidya, ‘Bhūtanām,’ of other living beings, ‘Jāgrati,’ who are awake, ‘Sā,’ that condition of Ignorance, Avidya, ‘paśyato munḥ,’ the sage who sees, the Man-of-Steady-Wisdom, established in Atma Bodha, ‘Sā Niśā,’ that is night, something not known to the Stitha Prajnan.

Knowledge is not an object of the Ajnani, and Ignorance is not an object of the Jnani. That is the summary of the shloka.

**‘Yā Niśā Sarvabhūtanām Tasyām Jāgarti Samyami
Yasyām Jāgrati Bhūtāni Sā Niśā Paśyato Munḥ 2.69.**

AUM AMRITESHVARYAI NAMAḤ