Introduction

In 'Tat Tvam Asi - Part I', we had seen in considerable detail the padarthas (word meanings) of the 'tat-pada' (the word 'tat' or 'that') and 'tvam-pada' (the word 'tvam' or 'you'). The 'tat-pada' refers to īśvara and 'tvam-pada' refers to jīva. The 'asi-pada' or verbal form 'asi' is the aikya-pada (the word indicating oneness) which performs the function or action of equating both 'tat' and 'tvam'. Thus the statement 'tat tvam asi' (That thou art) literally amounts to īśvara = jīva. This is totally opposed to common sense, reason and experience and therefore insurmountable problems seem to have arisen in interpreting this mahāvākya. We also saw briefly the methodology employed by Viśiṣṭādvaita (Shri Ramanujacharya) and Dvaita (Shri Madhvacharya) schools of Vedānta in interpreting 'Tat tvam asi' and how the meaning arrived at by them is totally opposed to the non-dual import of the Vedas.

From this essay onwards we shall start discussing the methodology adopted by Advaita Vedānta in interpreting 'Tat tvam asi'. The advaitic methodology alone ably succeeds in arriving at the oneness of tat and tvam, true to the non-dual vision envisaged by the Vedas.

1 Please see the August 2004 issue of Tapovan Prasad. The mahāvākya 'tait tvam asi' means 'That thou art'.
2 For an elaboration of the term 'mahāvākya' refer to July 2004 issue of Tapovan Prasad.
The Three Steps

The advaitic import or oneness between tat and tvam is technically called 'akhandârtha' (khaṇḍa = divided or different; akhaṇḍa = undivided, non-different or one; ariha = import or meaning). To comprehend this 'akhandârtha' or the advaitic import a student has to take three sequential knowledge-steps:

1. सामाननाधिकरणय-समवन्ध-ज्ञानम् (sāmānādhikaranya-sambandha-jñānam): The knowledge (jñānam) of the relationship of words having the same locus (śāmānādhikaranya-sambandha).
2. विशेषण-विशेष्यता-समवन्ध-ज्ञानम् (viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyatā-sambandha-jñānam): The knowledge (jñānam) of the relation (sambandha) of the qualification (viśeṣaṇa) and the qualified (viśeṣya).
3. लक्ष्य-लक्षणता-समवन्ध-ज्ञानम् (lakṣya-lakṣaṇatā-sambandha-jñānam): The knowledge (jñānam) of the relation (sambandha) of the implication (lakṣya) and the implied (lakṣya).

By strength of the common term 'sambandha-jñānam' (knowledge of relationship) appearing in all the above terminologies, denoting the three knowledge-steps, it is evident that all the three without any exception are about the knowledge of certain specific relationships. The first one, sāmānādhikaranya-sambandha, is about the nature of the relationship that exists between the two padas (words), 'tat' and 'tvam'. The second one, viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyatā-sambandha, is with regards to the relationship between the padarthas (word-sense or the meaning signified by the word) of 'tat' and tvam' and the third and the last one, lakṣya-lakṣaṇatā-sambandha is between the padas (words) 'tat' and 'tvam' and their lakṣyārtha or implied meaning3.

The knowledge of these three sambandhas alone enables the student to discover the akhandârtha between tat and tvam. Hence Swami Sādananda in his Vedānta-sāra emphatically asserts –

3 Please come back to this paragraph after the study of all the three relationships. The nature of these relationships will become clear as and when they are elaborated in these essays.
‘idam tattvamasi-vākyam sambandha-trayena-akhaṇḍartha-bodhakam bhavati’, i.e. this sentence ‘Tat tvam asi’, through the three relationships, propounds the akhaṇḍartha. Sri Sureshvaracharya in his Mānasollāsa, the famous Vārttika (detailed exposition) on Daksināmūrti Stotra, makes explicit mention of these three knowledge-steps:

Here (in the mahāvākyya ‘Tat tvam asi’) the relationship between the paddas (words) is the one called sāmānādhikaranyah, between the padarthas (that which is referred to by the words) is viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya and in unison with lakṣyā-lakṣaṇa, the sentence propounds the identity (between tat and tvam).

These knowledge-steps will be elaborated sequentially and we will see in detail the fashion in which each one of them contributes to the akhaṇḍartha revealed by ‘Tat tvam asi’. This is quite an elaborate topic with ample philosophical and technical details. Careful and patient study with attention to details will pay rich dividends in terms of clear understanding.

The present essay shall be devoted to preparing the ground for understanding sāmānādhikaranyasya-sambandha-jñānam, the first knowledge-step. The actual analysis of this knowledge-step will be taken up in the next essay.

We need to equip ourselves with the understanding of the following terminologies – vākyā, pada, vākyārthā and padārthā and the most important of all, saṁsarga, to understand sāmānādhikaranyasya-sambandha-jñānam with ease. These terms shall also figure prominently in the description of the other two knowledge-steps – viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyātā-sambandha-jñānam and lakṣyā-lakṣaṇātā-sambandha-jñānam. Hence the absolute need to understand these basic terms.

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Vākya, Pada, Vākyārtha, Padārtha and Samsarga

A vākya (sentence) is made of padas (words). Each of these padas (words) through their respective inherent connotations (called pravṛtti-nimitta) denotes particular padārthas. The word padārtha (or word-sense) is the word-meaning that is signified by the padas or words. These padas (words) exist in the vākya in their particular grammatical forms. These specific grammatical forms of the padas help us to determine the nature of the padārthas they signify, whether the padārtha is the subject, object, predicate, verb and so on. This determination of the nature of the padārthas in turn enables us to establish specific relationships between the padārthas. This perception of the samsargas or relationships between the padārthas then helps us to make out the vākyārtha or the collective sentence-sense.

All these may seem very abstract and only partially be comprehensible at this stage. But they are actually very very simple. An example will make these grammatical jargons amply clear. A sentence is called a vākya. For the sake of illustration let us take the vākya, ‘bālāḥ pustakam paṭha’ti – The boy reads a book.

Step I: The three padas (words) in this vākya (sentence) are ‘bālāḥ’, ‘pustaka’ and ‘paṭha’.

Step II: Each of these padas (words) denotes distinct padārthas (word-sense) – ‘bālāḥ’ to an individual who has boy-ness, ‘pustaka’ to an object which has book-ness and the verb ‘paṭha’ to an action ‘to read’.

Disappointments can come only to those who make appointments with the future.

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Step III: Each of these padas exists in specific grammatical forms – as ‘bālah’ in the nominative or the first-case, as ‘pustakam’ in the accusative or the second case and as ‘paṭhati’, the verbal form of the root ‘paṭha’ having the structure of the present tense, third person, singular.

Step IV: Because of these specific grammatical forms in which the padas exist we are able to see the nature of the padarthas – ‘the individual who has boy-ness’ takes the shape of the subject, ‘the article which has book-ness’ is seen as the object and then along with the help of the verbal sense expressed by ‘paṭhati’, we take note of the action undertaken by the subject.

Step V: Once we have determined the nature of the padarthas, we start perceiving the relationships between the padarthas, how they are connected with each other – the subject padartha ‘the individual who has boy-ness’ connected to the object padartha ‘the article which has book-ness’ through the action of ‘to read’. These relationships between the padarthas are termed as samsargas.

Step VI: When the knowledge of the samsargas or relationships between the padarthas flashes in our mind we have no problem in immediately constructing the sentence-sense or vākyārtha as ‘The boy reads a book’ and not as ‘The book reads the boy’.

Samsarga

In Sanskrit grammar terminology, the relationship between the various padarthas referred to by the various padas (words) of a vākya (sentence) is termed ‘samsarga’ (literally ‘coming together’). It is the knowledge of these ‘samsargas’ that is the direct basis for determining the vākyārtha or the sentence-sense of a vākya (sentence). This explains why grammarians and logicians give enormous importance to the analysis of ‘samsarga’.
This ‘samsarga’ between the padarthas, is broadly divided into two categories:

a) bheda-rūpa-samsarga – the relationship (samsarga) between the padarthas being that of difference (bheda-rūpa)

b) abheda-rūpa-samsarga – the relationship (samsarga) between the padarthas being that of non-difference (abheda-rūpa).

An analysis of these two samsargas is a topic by itself. Once we complete the analysis of these two samsargas, the nature of sāmānādhikaranyasambandha between the tatt-pada and tvam-pada will be crystal clear.

Conclusion

In this essay the ground has been prepared for the analysis of all the three knowledge steps. A thorough grasp of these terms is absolutely essential to understand the three knowledge-steps – sāmānādhikaranyasambandha-jñānam, viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyatāsambandha-jñānam and lakṣyalakṣaṇatā-sambandha-jñānam. These kinds of discussions, though a little strenuous on the intellect, give a glimpse into the vibrant and rich intellectual heritage of the Indian past. Nothing was accepted just on its face value without a thorough enquiry. On the vast fathomless ocean bed of Vedānta are the ageless still waters of quiet śraddhā on which continues the eternal dance of the ceaseless and tumultuous waves of logic, bestowing the ocean an extraordinary vigour and mysterious beauty. O ocean-divers endowed with the power of śādhanacatuṣṭaya! We welcome you to dive into the very depths of this Vedāntic ocean and take home the priceless gems of Advaita!!

Grace is only to be found by effort, although it is here and now.

Swami Chinmayananda

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