

Sri Adi Shankaracharya Direct Self Realization

Aparokshanubhuti (Or) Direct Self-Realization (English Translation of 144 Shloks)

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- 1) I bow down to Him - to Sri Hari (the destroyer of ignorance), the Supreme Bliss, the First Teacher, Ishwara, the All-pervading One and the Cause of all Lokas (the universe).
- 2) Herein is expounded (the means of attaining to) Aparokshanubhuti (Self-Realization) for the acquisition of final liberation. Only the pure in heart should constantly and with all effort meditate upon the truth herein taught.
- 3) The four preliminary qualifications (the means to the attainment of knowledge), such as Vairagya (dispassion) and the like, are acquired by men by propitiating Hari (the Lord), through austerities and the performance of duties pertaining to their social order and stage in life.
- 4) The indifference with which one treats the excreta of a crow - such an indifference to all objects of enjoyment from the realm of Brahma to this world (in view of their perishable nature), is verily called pure Vairagya.
- 5) Atman (the seer) in itself is alone permanent, the seen is opposed to it (i.e., transient) - such a settled conviction is truly known as discrimination.
- 6) Abandonment of desires at all times is called Shama and the restraint of the external functions of the organs is called Dhama.
- 7) Turning away completely from all sense-objects is the height of Uparati, and patient endurance of all sorrow or pain is known as Titiksha, which is conducive to happiness.
- 8) Implicit faith in the words of the Vedas and the teachers (who interpret them) is known as Shraddha, and concentration of the mind on the only object Sat (i.e., Brahman) is regarded as Samadhana.
- 9) When and how shall I, O Lord, be free from the bonds of this world (i.e., births and deaths) - such a burning desire is called Mumukshutha.
- 10) Only that person, who is in possession of the said qualification (as means to Knowledge) should constantly reflect with a view to attaining Knowledge, desiring his own good.
- 11) Knowledge is not brought about by any other means than Vichara, just as an object is nowhere perceived (seen) without the help of light.
- 12) Who am I ? How is this (world) created ? Who is its creator ? Of what material is this (world) made? This is the way of that Vichara (enquiry).
- 13) I am neither the body, a combination of the (five) elements (of matter), nor am I an aggregate of the senses; I am something different from these. This is the way of that Vichara.
- 14) Everything is produced by ignorance, and dissolves in the wake of Knowledge. The various thoughts (modifications of Anthahkaranam) must be the creator. Such is this Vichara.
- 15) The material (cause) of these two (i.e., ignorance and thought) is the One (without a second), subtle (not apprehended by the senses) and unchanging Sat (Existence), just as the earth is the material (cause) of the pot and the like. This is the way of that Vichara.
- 16) As I am also the One, the Subtle, the Knower, the Witness, the Ever-Existent, and the Unchanging, so there is no doubt that I am "That" (i.e., Brahman). Such is this enquiry.

17) Atman is verily one and without parts, whereas the body consists of many parts; and yet the people see (confound, mistake, confuse) these two as one ! What else can be called ignorance but this?

18) Atman is the ruler of the body and is internal, the body is the ruled and is external; and yet, the people see (confound) these two as one! What else can be called ignorance but this?

19) Atman is all consciousness and holy, the body is all flesh and impure; and yet, the people see (mistake) these two as one! What else can be called ignorance but this?

20) Atman is the (supreme) Illuminator and purity itself; the body is said to be of the nature of darkness; and yet, the people see (mistake) these two as one! What else can be called ignorance but this?

21) Atman is eternal, since it is Existence itself; the body is transient, as it is non-existence in essence; and yet the people see (mistake) these two as one ! What else can be called ignorance but this?

22) The luminosity of Atman consists in the manifestation of all objects. Its luminosity is not like that of fire or any such thing, for (in spite of the presence of such lights), darkness prevails at night (at some place or other).

23) How strange is it that a person ignorantly rests contented with the idea that he is the body, while he knows it as something belonging to him (and therefore, apart/separate from him), even as a person who sees a pot (knows it as apart from him)!

24) I am verily Brahman, being equanimous, quiescent, and by nature absolute Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss. I am not the body, which is non-existence itself. This is called true Knowledge by the wise.

25) I am without any change, without any form, free from all blemish and decay. I am not the body, which is nonexistence itself. This is called true Knowledge by the wise.

26) I am not subjected to any disease, I am beyond all comprehension, free from all alternatives and all-pervading. I am not the body, which is non-existence itself. This is called true Knowledge by the wise.

27) I am without any attribute or activity, I am eternal, ever free, and imperishable. I am not the body, which is nonexistence itself. This is called true Knowledge by the wise.

28) I am free from all impurity, I am immovable, unlimited, holy, undecaying, and immortal. I am not the body, which is non-existence itself. This is called true Knowledge by the wise.

29) O you ignorant one! Why do you assert the blissful, ever-existent Atman, which resides in your own body and is (evidently) different from it, which is known as Purusha and is established (by the Shruti as identical with Brahman), to be absolutely non-existent?

30) O you ignorant one! Try to know, with the help of Shruti and reasoning, your own Self, Purusha, which is different from the body, (not a void but) the very form of existence, and very difficult for persons like you to realize.

31) The Supreme (Purusha) known as "I" (ego) is but one, whereas the gross bodies are many. So how can this body be Purusha ?

32) "I" (ego) is well established as the subject of perception, whereas the body is the object. This is learnt from the fact that, when we speak of the body, we say: "This is mine." So, how can this body be Purusha?

33) It is a fact of direct experience that the "I" (Atman) is without any change, whereas the body is always undergoing changes. So how can this body be Purusha?

34) Wise men have ascertained the (real) nature of Purusha from that Shruti text, "(There is nothing) higher than He (Purusha)," etc. So how can this body be Purusha ?

- 35) Again, the Shruti has declared in the Purusha Sukta that "All this is verily the Purusha". So how can this body be Purusha?
- 36) So also, it is said in Brihadaranyaka: "The Purusha is completely unattached." How can this body, wherein inhere innumerable impurities be the Purusha?
- 37) There again it is clearly stated that "the Purusha is self-illuminated." So, how can the body which is inert (insentient) and illuminated by an external agent be the Purusha?
- 38) Moreover, the Karma-kanda also declares that the Atman is different from the body and permanent, as it endures even after the fall of the body and reaps the fruits of actions (done in this life).
- 39) Even the subtle body consists of many parts and is unstable. It is also an object of perception, is changeable, limited and non-existent by nature. So, how can this be the Purusha?
- 40) The immutable Atman, the substratum of the ego, is thus different from these two bodies, and is the Purusha, the Ishwara (the Lord of all), the Self of all; It is present in every form and yet, transcends them all.
- 41) Thus, the enunciation of the difference between the Atman and the body has (indirectly) asserted, indeed, after the manner of the Tarkashastra, the reality of the phenomenal world. But, what end of human life is served thereby?
- 42) Thus, the view that the body is the Atman has been denounced, by the enunciation of the difference between the Atman and the body. Now, is clearly stated the unreality of the difference between the two.
- 43) No division in Consciousness is admissible, at any time, as it is always one and the same. Even the individuality of the Jiva must be known as false, like the delusion of a snake in a rope.
- 44) As through the ignorance of the real nature of the rope, the very rope appears, in an instant, as a snake, so also, does pure Consciousness appear in the form of the phenomenal universe, without undergoing any change.
- 45) There exists no other material cause of this phenomenal universe, except Brahman. Hence, this whole universe is but Brahman and nothing else.
- 46) From such declaration (of the Shruti), as "All this is Atman," it follows that the idea of the pervaded and the pervading is illusory. This supreme truth being realized, where is the room for any distinction between the cause and the effect?
- 47) Certainly, the Shruti has directly denied manifoldness in Brahman. The Non-dual Cause being an established fact, how could the Phenomenal Universe be different from It?
- 48) Moreover, the Shruti has condemned (the belief in variety) in the words: "The person who," being deceived by Maya, "sees variety in this (Brahman), goes from death to death."
- 49) Inasmuch as all beings are born of Brahman, the Supreme Atman, they must be understood to be verily Brahman.
- 50) The Shruti has clearly declared that Brahman alone is the substratum of all varieties of names, forms and actions.
- 51) Just as a thing made of gold ever has the nature of gold, so also a being born of Brahman has always the nature of Brahman.
- 52) Fear is attributed to the ignorant one who rests after making even the slightest distinction between the Jivatman and the Paramatman.
- 53) When duality appears through ignorance, one sees another; but when everything becomes identified with the Atman, one does not perceive another even in the least.
- 54) In that state, when one realizes all as identified with the Atman, there arises neither delusion nor sorrow, in consequence of the absence of duality.

- 55) The Shruti in the form of the Brihadaranyaka has declared that this Atman, which is the Self of all, is verily Brahman.
- 56) This world, though an object of our daily experience and serving all practical purposes, is, like the dream world, of the nature of non-existence, inasmuch as it is contradicted the next moment.
- 57) The dream (experience) is unreal, in waking, whereas the waking (experience) is absent in dream. Both, however, are non-existent in deep sleep which, again, is not experienced in either.
- 58) Thus, all the three states are unreal inasmuch as they are the creation of the three Gunas; but their witness (the reality behind them) is, beyond all Gunas, eternal, one, and is Consciousness itself.
- 59) Just as (after the illusion has gone) one is no more deluded to see a jar in earth or silver in the nacre, so does one no more see Jiva in Brahman when the latter is realized (as one's own self).
- 60) Just as earth is described as a jar, gold as an ear-ring, and a nacre as silver, so is Brahman described as Jiva.
- 61) Just as blueness in the sky, water in the mirage, and a human figure in a post (are but illusory), so is the universe in Atman.
- 62) Just as the appearance of a ghost in an empty place, of a castle in the air, and of a second moon in the sky (is illusory), so is the appearance of the universe in Brahman.
- 63) Just as it is water that appears as ripples and waves, or again, it is copper, that appears in the form of vessel, so, it is Atman that appears as the whole universe.
- 64) Just as it is earth that appears under the name of a jar, or it is threads that appear under the name of a cloth, so, it is Atman that appears under the name of the universe. This Atman is to be known by negating the names.
- 65) People perform all their actions in and through Brahman, (but, on account of ignorance, they are not aware of that), just as, through ignorance, persons do not know that jars and other earthenware's are nothing, but earth.
- 66) Just as there ever exist the relation of cause and effect between earth and a jar, so, does the same relation exist between Brahman and the phenomenal world; this has been established here, on the strength of scriptural texts and reasoning.
- 67) Just as (the consciousness of) earth forces itself upon our mind, while thinking of a jar, so also, does (the idea of) ever-shining Brahman flash on us, while contemplating on the phenomenal world.
- 68) Atman, though ever pure (to a wise man), always appears to be impure (to an ignorant one), just as a rope always appears in two different ways to a knowing person and an ignorant one.
- 69) Just as a jar is all earth, so also, is the body all Consciousness. The division, therefore, into the Self and non-Self is made by the ignorant to no purpose.
- 70) Just as a rope is imagined to be a snake and a nacre to be a piece of silver, so is the Atman determined to be the body by an ignorant person.
- 71) Just as earth is thought of as a jar (made of it) and threads, as a cloth, so, is Atman, determined to be the body, by an ignorant person.
- 72) Just as gold is thought of as an ear-ring and water as waves, so, is the Atman, determined to be the body, by an ignorant person.
- 73) Just as the stump of a tree is mistaken for a human figure and a mirage for water, so, is the Atman determined to be the body, by an ignorant person.
- 74) Just as a mass of wood work is thought of as a house and iron as a sword, so, is the Atman determined to be the body, by an ignorant person.

75) Just as one sees the illusion of a tree on account of water, so does, a person on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

76) Just as to a person going in a boat everything appears to be in motion, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

77) Just as to a person suffering from a defect (jaundice) white things appear as yellow, so does one on account of ignorance, see Atman as the body.

78) Just as to a person with defective eyes everything appears to be defective, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

79) Just as a firebrand, through mere rotation, appears circular like the sun, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

80) Just as all things that are really large appear to be very small owing to great distance, so does, one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

81) Just as all objects that are very small, appear to be large, when viewed through lenses, so does, one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman, as the body.

82) Just as a surface of glass is mistaken for water, or vice versa, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

83) Just as a person imagines a jewel in fire or vice versa, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

84) Just as when clouds move, the moon appears to be in motion, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

85) Just as a person through confusion loses all distinction between the different points of the compass, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

86) Just as the moon (when reflected) in water appears to one as unsteady, so does one, on account of ignorance, see the Atman as the body.

87) Thus, through ignorance arises in Atman, the delusion of the body, which, again, through Self-realization, disappears in the supreme Atman.(Superimposition)

88) When the whole universe, movable and immovable, is known to be Atman, and thus the existence of everything else is negated, where is then any room to say that the body is Atman?

89) O enlightened one, pass your time always contemplating on Atman, while you are experiencing all the results of Prarabdha; for, it ill becomes you to feel distressed.

90) The theory one hears of from the scripture, that Prarabdha does not lose its hold upon one even after the origination of the knowledge of Atman, is now being refuted.

91) After the origination of the knowledge of Reality, Prarabdha verily ceases to exist, inasmuch as the body and the like become non-existent; just as a dream does not exist on waking.

92) That Karma, which is done in a previous life, is known as Prarabdha (which produces the present life). But such Karma cannot take the place of Prarabdha (for a man of knowledge), as he has no other birth (being free from ego).

93) Just as the body in a dream is superimposed (and therefore illusory), so is also this body. How could there be any birth of the superimposed (body), and in the absence of birth (of the body) where is the room for that (i.e., Prarabdha) at all?

94) The Vedanta texts declare ignorance to be verily the material (cause) of the phenomenal world just as earth is of a jar. That (ignorance) being destroyed, where can the universe subsist?

95) Just as a person, out of confusion, perceives only the snake leaving aside the rope, so does, an ignorant person see only the phenomenal world, without knowing the reality. (confusion)

96) The real nature of the rope being known, the appearance of the snake no longer persists; so the substratum being known, the phenomenal world disappears completely.

97) The body also being within the phenomenal world (and therefore unreal), how could Prarabdha exist? It is, therefore, for the understanding of the ignorant alone that the Shruti speaks of Prarabdha.

98) "And all the actions of a man perish, when he realizes that (Atman) which is both the higher and the lower." Here, the clear use of the plural by the Shruti is intended to negate Prarabdha as well.

99) If the ignorant still arbitrarily maintain this, they will not only involve themselves in two absurdities, but will also run the risk of foregoing the Vedantic conclusion. So, one should accept those Shrutis alone, from which proceeds true knowledge.

100) "Now, for the attainment of the aforesaid (knowledge), I shall expound the fifteen steps by the help of which one should practice profound meditation at all times."

101) The Atman that is absolute existence and knowledge cannot be realized without constant practice. So, one seeking after knowledge, should long meditate upon Brahman for the attainment of the desired goal.

102-103) The steps, in order, are described as follows: the control of the senses, the control of the mind, renunciation, silence, space, time, posture, the restraining root (Mulabandha), the equipoise of the body, the firmness of vision, the control of the vital forces, the withdrawal of the mind, concentration, self-contemplation and complete absorption.

- 1) control of the senses
- 2) control of the mind
- 3) renunciation
- 4) silence
- 5) space
- 6) time
- 7) posture
- 8) restraining root
- 9) equipoise of the body
- 10) equipoise of the body
- 11) control of the vital forces
- 12) withdrawal of the mind
- 13) concentration
- 14) self-contemplation
- 15) complete absorption

104) The restraint of all the senses by means of such knowledge as "All this is Brahman" is rightly called Yama, which should be practiced again and again.

105) The continuous flow of only one kind of thought to the exclusion of all other thoughts, is called Niyama, which is verily the supreme bliss and is regularly practiced by the wise.

106) The abandonment of the illusory universe by realizing it as the all-conscious Atman is the real renunciation honored by the great, since it is of the nature of immediate liberation.

107) The wise should always be one with that silence wherefrom words together with the mind turn back without reaching it, but which is attainable by the Yogins.

108-109) Who can describe That (i.e., Brahman) whence words turn away ? (So silence is inevitable while describing Brahman). Or if the phenomenal world were to be described, even that is beyond words. This, to give an alternate definition, may also be termed silence known among the sages as congenital. The observance of silence by restraining speech, on the other hand, is ordained by the teachers of Brahman for the ignorant.

110) That solitude is known as space, wherein the universe does not exist in the beginning, end or middle, but whereby it is pervaded at all times.

111) The non-dual (Brahman) that is bliss indivisible is denoted by the word 'time', since it brings into existence, in the twinkling of an eye all beings from Brahman downwards.

112) One should know that as real posture in which the meditation on Brahman flows spontaneously and unceasingly, and not any other that destroys one's happiness.

113) That, which is well known as the origin of all beings

and the support of the whole universe, which is immutable and, in which the enlightened are completely merged, that alone is known as Siddhasana (eternal Brahman).

114) That (Brahman) which is the root of all existence and on which the restraint of the mind is based is called the restraining root (Mulabandha) which should always be adopted since it is fit for Raja-yogins.

115) Absorption in the uniform Brahman should be known as the equipoise of the limbs (Dehasamya). Otherwise, mere straightening of the body like that of a dried-up tree is no equipoise.

116) Converting the ordinary vision into one of knowledge one should view the world as Brahman itself. That is the noblest vision, and not that which is directed to the tip of the nose.

117) Or, one should direct one's vision to That alone, where all distinction of the seer, sight, and the seen ceases and not to the tip of the nose.

118) The restraint of all modifications of the mind by regarding all mental states like the Chitta as Brahman alone, is called Pranayama.

119-120) The negation of the phenomenal world is known as Rechaka (breathing out), the thought, "I am verily Brahman", is called Puraka (breathing in), and the steadiness of that thought thereafter is called Kumbhaka (restraining the breath). This is the real course of Pranayama for the enlightened, whereas the ignorant only torture the nose.

121) The absorption of the mind in the Supreme Consciousness by realizing Atman in all objects is known as Pratyahara (withdrawal of the mind) which should be practiced by the seekers after liberation.

122) The steadiness of the mind through realization of Brahman wherever the mind goes, is known as the supreme Dharana (concentration).

123) Remaining independent of everything as a result of the unassailable thought, "I am verily Brahman," is well known by the word Dhyana (meditation), and is productive of supreme bliss.

124) The complete forgetfulness of all thought by first making it changeless and then identifying it with Brahman is called Samadhi known also as knowledge.

125) The aspirant should carefully practice this (meditation) that reveals his natural bliss until, being under his full control, it arises spontaneously, in an instant when called into action.

126) Then he, the best among Yogis having attained to perfection, becomes free from all practices. The real nature of such a man never becomes an object of the mind or speech.

127-128) While practicing Samadhi, there appear unavoidably many obstacles, such as lack of inquiry, idleness, desire for sense-pleasure, sleep, dullness, distraction, tasting of joy, and the sense of blankness. One desiring the knowledge of Brahman should slowly get rid of such innumerable obstacles."

129) While thinking of an object the mind verily identifies itself with that, and while thinking of a void it really becomes blank, whereas by the thought of Brahman it attains to perfection. So one should constantly think of (Brahman to attain) perfection."

130) Those, who give up this supremely purifying thought of Brahman, live in vain and are on the same level with beasts.

131) Blessed indeed are those virtuous persons who at first have this consciousness of Brahman and then develop it more and more. They are respected everywhere.

132) Only those in whom this consciousness (of Brahman) being ever present grows into maturity, attain to the state of ever-existent Brahman; and not others who merely deal with words.

133). Also those persons who are only clever in discussing about Brahman but have no realization, and are very much attached to worldly pleasures, are born and die again and again in consequence of their ignorance.

134) The aspirants after Brahman should not remain a single moment without the thought of Brahman, just like Brahma, Sanaka, Suka and others.

135) The nature of the cause inheres in the effect and not vice versa; so through reasoning it is found that in the absence of the effect, the cause, as such also disappears.

136) Then, that pure reality (Brahman) which is beyond speech alone remains. This should be understood again and again verily through the illustration of earth and the pot."

137. In this way alone, there arises in the pure-minded, a state of awareness (of Brahman), which is, afterwards merged into Brahman."

138) One should first look for the cause by the negative method and then find it by the positive method, as ever inherent in the effect.

139) One should verily see the cause in the effect, and then dismiss the effect altogether. What then remains, the sage himself becomes.

140) A person who meditates upon a thing with great assiduity and firm conviction, becomes that very thing. This may be understood from the illustration of the wasp and the worm.

141) The wise should always think with great care of the invisible, the visible, and everything else, as his own Self which is consciousness itself.

142) Having reduced the visible to the invisible, the wise should think of the universe as one with Brahman. Thus alone will he abide in eternal felicity with mind full of consciousness and bliss.

143) Thus has been described Raja-Yoga consisting of these steps (mentioned above). With this is to be combined Hatha-Yoga for (the benefit of) those whose worldly desires are partially attenuated.

144) For those whose mind is completely purified this (Raja-Yoga) alone is productive of perfection. Purity of the mind, again, is speedily accessible to those who are devoted to the teacher and the Deity.