CONCEPT OF ĀTMAN IN THE 'ARIVU '

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Arivu is the work written by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru on philosophical theme. It was written during the period of 1887-1897. Arivu is a small treatise which contains 15 verses concerned with knowledge in the context of Ātman. It is one among the best philosophical works of Guru's thought on Advaita. The intuitive clarity of this work leads us to something unprecedented in the history of thought. It conveys the Advaitic truth to humanity revealed through the Upaniṣads. Guru accepting the authority of Vedānta, acknowledges yogic experience to establish the non-dual reality, the Consciousness, as the basis of the inert world. He realizes that Brahman (Ātman) alone is the pure consciousness. Guru analyses the status of the world and establishes that everything is in the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, and, that there is no duality in Brahman. For this, the Guru proclaims the theory of 'One God, one religion and one caste' to the whole of humanity and strives to apply it for solving the problems of life.

Guru explains the science of Arivu which naturally turns out to be the science of Ātman. The two functional aspects of knowledge are sense perception and the state of awareness in which knowledge knows itself, where subject and object become interchangeable. The term Arivu is used synonymous to Ātman by Guru. Arivu is the only truth. It is the universe. Arivu stands independently and complete and also is all- pervading. The original form of Arivu is knowledge that which is self - luminous.

According to Guru, there is nothing anywhere apart from Arivu. It is the only truth, so Arivu is the world. To know, there should be knowledge. Even to know that there is nothing to know, there should be knowledge. If knowledge is denied, then there is nothing to know of knowing or not-knowing. The basis of dream is emerging from the Arivu and also. It merge with Arivu. Our knowledge is not static what is in oblivion is non-knowledge. Hence, nobody can say that there is no non-knowledge.

As there is an alternation in the emphasis on 'I am knowing' and 'this is known' the fact that one is the knowing knowledge is not automatically recognized. In perceptual knowledge, knowledge is a process of identification in which the light of consciousness is becoming light unto the feature of the illumination that is happening in the act of knowing. Even when the logical ascertainments are possible, before that becomes known to one's own mind the modulating consciousness of the knowing process and the knowledge ushered in from non-knowledge merge into one. The merger of active consciousness with that which is prospectively and retrospectively envisioned can be cited always only as an already integrated factor.

Guru says: prior to knowledge, nothing else is found here. It is also to be located within the overall knowledge within which both the individual and the history of one's collective existence resides. Such knowledge is here termed Arivu. That knowledge within the all- embracing knowledge that discloses the mere recognition that there are things to be known does not create within such knowledge as specific knowledge. That is a matter of common experience. There is no separation between the knower, the known and the knowledge or existence and knowledge of existence.

If that knowledge does not admit of another habitation for the known, how can it be reconciled with the mounting plurality of objects. Knowledge alone is capable of revealing itself. The fact is that only the self is luminous, whereas the non-self remains hidden before becoming revealed. The knowledge that animates the mind is only a modulated knowledge. What is primary to modulated knowledge is pure knowledge. Pure knowledge is the self. Therefore, whatever is seen here is only a specific modification of the self.

By eliminating the duality between the known and the knowledge, self- identity becomes un-pragmatic to include the knower as the core and the known as its continuing radiance or illumination.

In this verse the distinction between the inner world and the outer world is further minimized or even dismissed. Despite the central unity of knowledge and the known, there is a continuous distinction between self-conscious knowledge and the unconscious one.

Guru holds that the jīvajñāna splits into five types of sensory knowledge indriyacaitanya or indriyajñāna. Thus the one without a second changes into the knowing mind fed by its five channels of perception. Knowledge could be analyzed from the standpoint of subjective consciousness and also from that of the objective consciousness from the side of subjective consciousness, knowledge could be understood as having eight elements or aspects- knowledge, the knower and the six kinds of knowledge based on the objects - five sense knowledges which rely on the object - knowable and the one object - unknowable as mentioned in the 13th and 14th verses.

Realization is not a theoretical possibility for after death 'immorality'. The actualization and realization of the self should have a one-to-one

correspondence in the here and now of life. Consciousness, to begin with, is of the ego which is the recipient of all the information. This individuated consciousness knows the five kinds of objects and is also aware of the unknowable 'object'. These are all objectively known and there remains the knower or witness of all these which makes the number of manifested principles eight. As the individual has no existence apart from the absolute, these eight conditioned aspects exist only as dependant factors of unconditioned knowledge.

Guru gives more importance to Arivu and explains its origin, structure, methods and validity. The knowing universe is filled in the Arivu. According to Naṭarāja Guru this work is 'A master piece of contemplating workmanship and reviled in literature anywhere'.

Knowledge is the revelation of the objective world to a subject. It is a subjective phenomenon representing the world of reality. It is the basis of all our practical activities in relation to objects. Out activities are not blind reactions to objects. A successful activity presupposes a correct knowledge of object. We proceed to act in a particular way with reference to an object on the belief that our knowledge correctly reveals its nature. But at times we do not find a thing where and how we expect it to be, and as we are shocked to learn that knowledge is not always a correct representation of reality and that it frequently misguides us and leads to painful results. Thus we come to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Concept of Ātman in the Arivu

According to Guru, Ātman is not the object of consciousness. Guru says Ātman is the only absolute reality and it is identical with Brahman, the cause of the worlds of name and form in diverse kinds. Āt

man can be known though not in its purest form, in some measure at least, as it is present in the notion. 'I' Brahman, on the other hand cannot be known, as it never figures as the object of any act of cognition.

According to Guru, Arivu is Ātman. It is the only truth. He says: there is the fantastic performance of a magic creating the manifold expressions of the worldly objects in their immeasurable varieties. Actually, the world of ours as we dream real in the waking stage is remaining in darkness in the sense that we are all in sleeping condition. This world is His magic show created for His worship. In this mysterious show our body, mind and intellect have also their respective role to play.

Ātman is absolutely non-different from Brahman. The relation between the two is often spoken of as the relation of pure identity. But we should be careful to note that the identity implies the 'two' which are identical, but there is no place for 'two' in the philosophy of Śaṅkara. So, the relation between Ātman and Brahman is termed as non-difference, non-duality etc. Śaṅkara explains the relation on the analogy of the space outside a jar and the space inside the jar, both are the same, it is only due to the adjunct of the jar that it appears to be different. Similarly, Ātman and Brahman are the same and continuous in their spread, but it is only due to the limiting adjuncts of body, mind etc. that it appears to be different. The word Ātman originally meant 'breath', but it was employed derivatively in the sense of 'vital force' 'body' and later became a word meaning 'one's self. As a philosophical concept it was taken as technical term meaning one's ego, one's self and further 'soul'.

From the view point of Guru the ultimate goal of human being is to seek, find and to realize the reality behind the whole world. Such a knowledge gives him power to lead a peaceful life. According to Guru though derived from the perceptions of enlightened seers scriptural evidence too belongs to the field of conditional knowledge. Guru here tries to show the fact that the three factors ' know'-knowledge and known are the separably related aspects of consciousness.

The life and teachings of Guru can certainly serve as a powerful guide to generations after generations. His philosophy is definitely inherently man-oriented in its nature. The vital point in his teaching can be depicted as Ātman-Darśanam. Guru exemplified this view of self- sameness and contributed much to the creation of a new man, a new society and a new world. Arivu is the original contribution of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru to the Vedāntic literature. It restores the originality of Vedāntic speculation. Arivu is not to be read at one stretch. Each stanza demands intense contemplation to make one's clarity of vision.

All philosophers seek to know the ultimate reality that underlies the ever-changing world-appearance, oneself included, and how it unfolds itself as all these. Guru, following the line of thought of the Upaniṣadic Ṛṣis, concludes that one reality is Ātman or Brahman, Pure Consciousness or Cit in essential content. The phenomenal appearance of the world and of oneself happens in that one reality owing to the creative urge called Māyā inherent in it. This drama goes on unhindered as a sort of divine sport.