

*Yogarāja's introduction to verse 32*

Thus he binds himself through false self-experiences arising from his ignorance about his true nature, as stated in the following verse:

### Verse 32

देहप्राणविमर्शन-  
 धीज्ञाननभःप्रपञ्चयोगेन ।  
 आत्मानं वेष्टयते  
 चित्रं जालेन जालकार इव ॥ ३२ ॥

*deha-prāṇa-vimarśana*  
*-dhījñāna-nabhaḥ-prapañca-yogena |*  
*ātmānaṃ veṣṭayate*  
*citraṃ jālena jāla-kāra iva || 32 ||*

Just as a spider [ensnares himself] in his web, so he [the embodied man in the world] binds himself by experiencing worldly objects like the physical body, the vital breath, intellectual knowledge, and the expanse of sky.

*Yogarāja's commentary on verse 32*

All subjects who experience pure consciousness veiled by ignorance bind themselves by the bonds of a self-generated conceptual knowledge [of the Self in the not-self]. In what way?

The reply is: With the help of the physical body. One creates the conceptual knowledge of the Self in the not-self with the help of the experience of the Self identified with the physical body, or identified with the vital breath, or with intellectual knowledge, or with the expanse of sky, etc. Just as

ignorant women or ill-educated farmers consider their physical bodies as the Self and as a consequence have the experience "I am lean," "I am fat," "I am beautiful," or "I am a scholar," and so on, so persons with limited vision wrongly consider all such experiences as the experience of their Self.

The physical body is dissolved here in this world [after death]; how then can it be regarded as the real Self? In the same way, those who regard the vital air to be their real Self on the basis of experiencing that they are hungry, thirsty, etc. [are also mistaken], though they consider themselves wiser than the former. Since the physical body and the vital airs are also material in nature like a lump of earth, how can these be regarded as the Self? Likewise, there are those who experience pleasure or pain articulated by them in expressions such as "I am happy" or "I am unhappy," and who consider embodied consciousness to be their Self. Such persons, for example the Mīmāṃsakas, consider themselves wiser than those who regard the vital air to be the Self. But since the experiences of pleasure or pain are the characteristics or the traits of the intellect (*buddhi*) [comprised of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*], how can the intellect, possessing such characteristics, be regarded as the Self?

Therefore, the Śūnyavādins hold the Self to be that in which there is a total absence of any such conceptual knowledge as the experience of the Self identified with the physical body, vital airs, intellect, etc. They therefore argue that whatever thing is experienced as "this" cannot be regarded as the Self. The Self is unknowable and as such is indescribable [*śūnya* or void]. In other words, it intrinsically has the nature of negation. This [void] is what is indicated in the verse by the word "sky."

During the state of trance, the spiritual adept cognises negation or the void as the object of his knowledge. [But since the cognisor's Self cannot be an object of knowledge] the spiritual adept [on reflection] has the experience "I am not even this negation or void." In this way, another kind of void has to be admitted as the Self. Therefore [the Brahmvādins] regard the void as the Self only after giving up any particular kind of void in their descriptions of the real Self, using such expressions as "not this, not this." The author has tried to convey this in the verse by using the phrase "expanse of the sky."

Yogins, not being able to grasp the real Self's nature as pure consciousness, remain immersed, as it were, in the cave of dreamless sleep, regarding the Self's nature to be the void. They thereby bind their Self, whose nature is pure consciousness, by a web of insensibility, deluded by the identification of the Self with something dumb.

[One would think such delusion should be the cause] for surprise or distress, which no individual could possibly wish to cause to himself. Citing an example from everyday experience, the author says that just as a spider binds its omnipresent Self in the form of a body with the cobwebs made by itself out of its guts and subsequently perishes therein, so the individual being, regarding his body to be his Self, binds himself by imaginary concepts (*vikalpa*) in the form of "I" and "mine."<sup>1</sup>

This has been beautifully expressed by the Buddhists thus:

*When one looks upon himself as the Self, he regards himself as a unique being due to the distinction between the Self and another being [i.e. the not-self]; this causes bondage and hostility [between the Self and the not-self]. All evils ensue from the assumption of such bondage.*

*Yogarāja's introduction to verse 33*

How can this great delusion arising from the experience of the Self in the not-self, such as the physical body, which is difficult to eradicate, be destroyed? [Abhinavagupta's reply] is that only the divine freedom of the supreme Lord is capable of eradicating all such delusion, as he states:

### Verse 33

स्वज्ञानविभवभासन-  
योगेनोद्वेष्टयेन्निजात्मानम् ।  
इति बन्धमोक्षचित्रां  
क्रीडां प्रतनोति परमशिवः ॥ ३३ ॥

*sva-jñāna-vibhava-bhāsana*  
*-yogenodveṣṭayen nijātmanam |*  
*iti bandha-mokṣa-citrāṃ*  
*krīḍāṃ pratanoti paramaśivaḥ || 33 ||*

Lord Paramaśiva liberates himself from bondage by loosening its grip through the glory of knowledge of the Self. Thus bondage and liberation are his divine play.