

453. Thinking it to be a tiger if an arrow is shot at an object, it does not then stop because it turns out to be a cow. It still pierces it with full force.

A hunter thinking that there was a tiger, aimed an arrow at it and shot it. As the arrow whizzed towards the target the hunter recognised it to be a cow. Now what could he do? By his revised knowledge the arrow does not stop in its flight. Certainly, it strikes its target with full force. The knowledge that it is a cow does not change or modify the direction of the arrow.

In the past, thinking that you are the body, you let loose many arrows of thoughts and desires. In the midst of this suffering you realise the Truth. Still you are the son of your father, the father of your children and the husband of your wife or perhaps the wife of your husband. Once the thoughts have been wished and willed in a particular direction, they have to take their course and come to manifestation in the given body. The body has to go through the convulsions of enjoyments and sufferings. No one can stop this.

The āgāmī and the sañcita can be eliminated, but not the prārabdha, that is, the prārabdha of the body, not of the Realised individual, for, he who lives in it has no more identification with his body.

From verse 454 onwards, Śaṅkara discusses prārabdha and how it works for the Man of Realisation –



प्रारब्धं बलवत्तरं खलु विदां भोगेन तस्य क्षयः
सम्यग्ज्ञानहुताशनेन विलयः प्राक्सञ्चितागामिनाम् ।
ब्रह्मात्मैक्यमवेक्ष्य तन्मयतया ये सर्वदा संस्थिताः
तेषां तत्त्रितयं नहि क्वचिदपि ब्रह्मैव ते निर्गुणम् ॥ ४५४ ॥

*prārabdham balavattaram khalu vidām bhogena tasya kṣayaḥ
samyagjñānahutāśanena vilayaḥ prākṣaṅcitāgāminām,
brahmātmaikyamavekṣya tanmayatayā ye sarvadā samsthitāḥ
teṣāṁ tattritayam nahi kvacidapi brahmaiva te nirguṇam. (454)*

454. *Prārabdha is very powerful even for the Realised man and becomes nought only through the exhaustion of its fruits; while the sañcita and āgāmī are destroyed in the fire of perfect Knowledge. But none of these three affects them who have realised Brahman and always live identified with It. They are, truly the transcendental Brahman.*

Prārabdha karma is very strong even for those who have known Reality. The āgāmī and the sañcita can end by the experience of the Higher, but prārabdha will end only when it has been lived through. Then whether a person is a jñānī or an ajñānī, he has to live through it. There is no escape. A jñānī may have a luxurious smile on his face, since he knows that he is not the equipments. An ajñānī, unfortunately, will make a long face for he will not have the strength to grin and bear his lot.

The fire of Knowledge kindled by the experience of Reality burns the vāsanās that have been stored from the past and the vāsanās that are yet to manifest in future births.

That for the jñānīs, prārabdha is still powerful has to be carefully understood, for the statement has subtle points which should not be missed in a hasty reading.

When Brahman and Ātman are understood to be one and the same, the individual remains in that experience only. When I realise that the Self in me is the Self present everywhere, I remain absorbed in it, (tanmayatayā). No more do I identify with the BMI but I remain 'There' and 'There' alone. Those who have lifted themselves from their identification with the BMI and are identified with the Reality and remain there, then in those moments, to such individuals there is no prārabdha also.

Naturally, when I am not conscious of the body, mind and intellect, whatever the equipments might do in the world outside, whatever they may perceive or get as reactions, they do not affect me. Because I am my own Self and fully engaged in It. My attention is totally turned towards the Infinite.