

THY OWN SELF

By: Madhava K Turumella

"tatpadaM darSitaM yEna tasmaiSree guravEnamaH"

[Note: My teacher Swamini Saradapriyananda-ji used to write "Thy own self" before signing off the any letter. You want to find that signature please search for her name in Advaitin archives. As you may remember, before she attained Mahasamadhi on April 17th she participated in this list for a short period of time. During the years 1986-87 when I approached her for the first time in my life, I asked her once about the meaning behind writing "Thy own self". Later I went to live in the ashram to learn what it means at her lotus feet. Consider the above subjected article is a humble attempt to understand the great reality behind the signature of the omnipotent "Thy own self". Please do not hesitate to comment or correct.]

kOhamititu najAnAmi mOhEna baMdhitOhamiha
mOhamAyA chEdanArthaM SaradAM praNamAmyahaM ||

I know not who I am, but I know that I am bound here with a terrible force called "irresistible desire". I seek refuge at the lotus feet of my teacher Swamini Saradapryiananda, seeking her divine grace, so that I can destroy this desire.

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Every human is a king of his own inner kingdom! The thing that we call as human is an abstract being. When we deal with any human, we are subtly dealing with the individual self --- the Ego! In sanskrit this is called as Ahamkara, also called as JeevabhAva.

I wonder whether you ever peeled an onion! When you start peeling an onion, taking off every sheath, one after the other, finally nothing remains in your hand, because all the onion consists is an array of sheaths. Same way, human also consists of sheaths visible/invisible! That is the reason why I said human is an abstract being. The Physical body which consists five sense organs and five organs of work; The mental body and the casual body all these are sheaths of human.

A person may look dark at his physical body level due to his skin complexion. If anybody, who deals with this dark skinned fellow, discriminates him saying he got dark complexion then that person could be identified as dealing with the Physical sheath of human! A person may be a

great writer, he may have written wonderful stories, which are quite enchanting. Imagine any fan of him, they are all in adoration towards the storywriter's mental body. A writer is another abstract being, called human, who is imagining things at his mental body level and writing. Same way a scientist might get name and fame due to his intellectual prowess, still when somebody deals with him, is really dealing with his mental body. This is how we involve ourselves with the world.

I question, "Do you know me"? If your answer is "Yes of course! You are Madhava" then you are wrong! If you answer is "Yes you are so and so, born so and so, working as so and so, husband of so and so, father of so and so." then also you are wrong. Perhaps, my question could never be answered, "Do you know me?". Then I wonder "Do I know you?", if I presume that you are all so and so, then I am wrong. Perhaps, this question cannot be answered now... "Who are you?". Neither I know myself, nor I know you. Neither you know me, nor you know about yourself. We all identify each other with the help of the sheaths. The funny thing is that I identify myself with my sheaths and act in the world. If I don't identify then I can't act. I identify myself as a computer professional and I work. I identify myself as a husband, as a father, as a son, as a brother and I act accordingly. But then "who am I" who is putting on such wonderful act! I should be an actor then, yes I am, and the world!

is my stage, all fellow humans are my co-artists. Everybody has his or her role to play, and I have my own!

During the times of deep meditations we get rid of all other sheaths, or forms of identifications, and reach to a state where we confront our own Ego. We don't know how to transcend it, we stop there and get amazed with the play that the Ego is putting on with the world. We stop to marvel at the power of the Ego, which is the commander-in-chief, the Ego the king. We fall in trap with the Ego and fall back. This is exactly where we come out of meditation. Did you ever wonder what forces you out of meditation? Imagine you sat for meditation, after some time the alarm goes off, you get up and attend your ablutions. Is that the alarm, which has forced you out of meditation? NO! It is the Ego, which forced you out of meditation. It says "Hey! You can't sit in meditation for long because you got to do so and so work, you got to go for a walk, you got to fetch the milk." The "I" keeps certain tasks at hand in order to go into meditation and gets out of the meditation recalling all those tasks. Imagine if you have nothing to do and then you went to meditation, then you can stay there comfortably for some more time, yet you will come out of it because then your Ego forces you out in order to perform the bodily functions, hunger, thirst etc.

Did you ever wonder about the color of the Ego? Yes, there is a color to the Ego, it is Gold, pure Gold. It is an attractive Yellow color, reaching which you are forced back from meditations. It is rare that one can encounter ones own ego in meditations, but it is possible. But the moment you reach that state you start crying, you go in to ecstasy. You are like a tennis ball and It is like reaching a wall, hitting which you bounce back. Each meditation is a game, removing all obstacles you reach the edge... and you bounce back... It is like a water pond, you are a ripple trying to reach your source, and you hit the source you bounce back...

All our great seers have cried to transcend this Ego. They begged for the help of their most dearly deity so that they could get out of it. For example in our Esopanishad the Seer requests the SunGod to remove the veil, which is in golden color, which is veiling the truth. (pushan tvam apAvRuNu satya dharmArtha drushTayE)

Let us see how the I is playing all this wonderful drama..

The jeevabhava the Royal "I" in every human is deeply involved in a pastime. This is a pastime of life and death. Every birth is a new game and every death is a goal. Game played again and again, leads the life to the perfection --- the life, which is perfectly divine! Each life is an event between birth and death. The moment you open your eyes it is birth, and the moment you close your eyes it is death.

Life is a bridging gap between birth and death... Each life teaches a great lesson. The "I" creates the life and he learns from it... Strange... isn't it? The creator himself is learning from the created. Man creates the events in his life, he learns from the experience. Just like a spider creates all the ropes from it's own belly, in order to design the web where it can live, the royal "I" creates all events where it can perfectly dwell in. It creates an event called friendship where it invites friends in to its fold. It creates an event called marriage where it invites certain individual to live next to it for the life. Each event in turn leads into another event, which in turn makes the "I" busy... "I" becomes so busy that it does not even realize that it is creating all this... Instead, it starts playing along with the events, haplessly getting dragged by them --- it cries for help.... Help, which is nowhere to be seen. Who can help a spider, if it gets caught in its own web! He who has designed it only knows how to withdraw from it. Unfortunately, we never understand that every "I" the king, is the creator of all these events, he can very well unlock the mystery if he wanted to...

Imagine you are looking in to the mirror, who can make your mirror image real to you? The simple answer is you. As long as you stand in front of the mirror, the mirror shows your image. The world that you perceive is the mirror reality of the witnessing "I". As long the "I" wishes to remain in front of the world, it witnesses all the events... Now you may question, why can't "I" witness the "I" in the world, if the world is nothing but the mirror image? The answer is that "I" is again nothing but the events hence you see the events and you can't see "I" which is hopelessly lost in it's own events...

When you stand in front of the mirror fully dressed, you can't expect the mirror to show the naked "You". It can't because it is not designed such a way. Here is the folly: The "I", having created a life full of events and got hopelessly entangled in to it, thinks that the world is looking plural! Get rid of those events, like getting rid of clothes, you can see the real you... "I" can witness "I" as the world, only when "I" is devoid of events. When you listen to the great Seers who proclaim that "You are that", you naturally tend to get excited, in that excitement you go home. Next day morning you start meditating but you can not find anything... You may question, is that real? Is the Nondual state real? How do I know? Your question is genuine but the answer you can't expect, because simply the question you are putting is also an event... The "I" has to be intelligently dichotomized from the events it has created.

I learned from my teacher that the "I" the king rules his kingdom establishing 4 circles.

<http://www.egroups.com/files/advaitin/ichart.jpg>

Carefully view the chart. The "I" who is in the center is having his family in the first circle. In circle 2 he got friends. And in circle 3 he got his enemies. The 4th Circle is very big. It encompasses the whole world! Let me give you an analogy... Please keep looking at the chart and imagine...

Imagine that "I" have a Son. He is very dear to me, "I" am too possessive that "I" would never allow anybody to touch him. "I" am feeling very happy that he is growing up very good. "I" felt happy that he is the sports champion in the college. "I" felt very happy the day his photo appeared in the paper saying that he is the best Athlete in the county... "I" am proud that "I" am his father... "I" felt very happy He finished his graduation. Life is going on and "I" am very

much comfortable with the life. "I" am happy that "I" have achieved a lot of wealth. "I" am happy about my family, about my fame, about my job, about my surroundings. One day a disaster struck... My son called up from his work place and said "Daddy! I would like to speak to you, can I have some private time in the evening". "I" was happy that he wanted to meet me and talk to me. "I" agreed to meet him, unknowing what kind of terrible thing is in store for me...

In the evening "I" was sitting in the lawn. My son came and sat. He started telling that he loved a girl and he wanted to marry her. "I" felt shocked. Because, "I" wanted my son to marry someone else! I wanted him to marry my childhood friend's daughter. "I" gave my word to my friend (he is in the 2nd circle in the chart). Anyway, "I" wanted to know this girl's whereabouts! I enquired. But "I" was horrified to know that she is the daughter of that wretched fellow, whom I hate so much that "I" never wanted to face him in my life. He was my classmate while I was doing my graduation. We were friends then.. (he was in the 2nd circle!), but he insulted me saying that I am born in a low-class family. That time onwards "I" started hating him. Oh God! I hated him so much but never expected that my son will fall in love with that miserable dirt! "I" decided and told my son that "I" can't allow him to marry her... (Obviously, you know that she is in the 3rd circle along with her blessed father)

My son was very upset to know that "I" am against his decision. He replied thus: "father, "I" don't care whether you like her father or not, "I" am in love with her and "I" shall marry her. If you wish you could come and bless us. Or else... GOODBYE Dad!"

That very moment, "I" started hating my son too... After all these years, "I" spent my days and nights to bring him up. "I" spent my own leisure time, in order to work extra hours, in order to cover his medical expenses, his athlete gear... Finally is this what "I" get as a result of my affection. I HATED MY SON and "I" vowed that "I" should never see him again. (He is instantly transferred from my 1st circle, where my family stays, in to the 3rd circle where my enemies are...)

That done. Days, weeks, years passed by.... Time has taken its toll on me. "I" have become too old. One day my family doctor finally gave the notice to me. He said that my days are numbered. "I" may die any time... "I" felt quite sad... quite miserable. "I" started remembering GOD... I started reading Bhagawad Gita... I started thinking of all the good days I spent in my life... I wanted to see all my children. OH GOD! "I" started missing my dear son, who left me

for that wretched... wait a minute... why should "I" hate her? After all, she is not responsible for her father's mistake. "I" realized what a fool "I" am. Actually, why did "I" hate even her father? I started wondering...

I asked my wife to give a call to them. But even before the call is initiated, I could see that my son has arrived knowing my situation. He came to know that I am not going to live for long... I saw my grand children, I saw my daughter-in-law, I saw her father --- who is my enemy. And "I" embarrassed them all... I whole-heartedly accepted them all in to my inner circle. (Immediately, all the people so far living in my 3rd circle have been transferred in to my 1st circle)

AND "I" DIED, ONE DAY FEELING VERY HAPPY THAT I AM SURROUNDED BY ALL MY KITH AND KIN, THE PEOPLE WHOM I LOVE AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE ME...

Look at the chart <http://www.egroups.com/files/advaitin/ichart.jpg> again! There is an "I" attached to all characters in this story. Imagine the "I" in everybody. You can clearly see the relationship that the "I" maintains with the world.

My teacher told me "God is a circle which has got center everywhere but circumference nowhere!" Then who is this GOD! As a child, my parents tell me that GOD is very powerful! He can do anything. He will punish if you do bad, and he rewards if you do good. Then I wondered, "What is power? How do you define the power, which GOD has possessed? How do you define the Good and the Bad? How do you know which is Sin and which is not?" Not that I came to know the answers now, but I am satisfied... I am satisfied knowing that the "I" --- which has lived in every human --- who walked in this presumed universe since time immemorial, has set up the rules, has defined what is power, has defined what is called as the original sin, has defined what is good and has defined what is bad. The "I" which has lived long back is also living now, and will live forever. The "I" in my great-great-grand-father kindled the "I" in my great grand father. The "I" in my great-grand-father has kindled the "I" in my grand father, and my grand-father to my father and my father to me, myself to my siblings... It is the life, which is kindled. The life that lives forever... Then where is the beginning of this "I"? Upanishads answer: "He wanted to become many"... (tadaikshata bahusyAM prajAyEyEti)...

The science of vedanta is always considered as the Royal Science (Raja vidya), as aptly named in Bhagawad Gita. Because it talks about the The King, the "I" the first person singular, the most powerful in his own kingdom! Though everybody knows about the existence of this "I" in him or her, nobody talks about it, because nobody would like to face the harsh reality of existence. Though everybody is blessed with a philosophical intuition, nobody talks about it and keep it as a great secret! Something is considered as secret as long as it remains in the heart of its creator, the moment it goes out of the creator's lips, it is no more a secret but a gossip.

In deed, I know about my own weaknesses, better than anybody else does! But do I dare talking to everybody about my weaknesses? I am afraid what will happen to *my* image after I reveal about my weaknesses! I read somewhere "Do not tell people how bad you are, they may presume that you are too bad and revealing only a little bad about yourself! AND do not tell good about yourself because people may mistake that you are boasting..." Any attempt that you make to reveal about yourself will get a repercussion, which is why nobody would dare talk. Neither I, nor anybody would dare talk... That is a royal secret (Raja guhyam), as aptly named in Bhagawad Gita.

Everybody maintains their royal secrets, most of the people keep secrets, which they carry to their graves, they dare not tell even to their own wives... Why is this situation? It is because of the image, which the "I" creates and maintains! Sometimes this image turns out to be absolute pretense. I know people who pretended that they are very rich and committed suicide when they knew that their reality is going to be busted! I would call them masked humans; it is an iron mask clamped by the order of the royal "I".

There was a mad man who lived in a small village. He went in to the village and told to all the children that a rich merchant, who is living in that village, is distributing sweets. All children ran in anticipation of eating sweets. The madman also ran along with them. The children finally reached the merchants place to find that there are no sweets being distributed. It was an absolute lie. Then they asked the madman "why did you come with us though you know that it is a lie!". For that the madman replied, "after listening to your excitement I also felt that sweets are really being distributed". Everyone like this madman creates a desire, and run along thinking that it is going to be satisfied. Did you ever wonder what is desire and how it gets satisfied! Anyway, the harsh reality is that a human cannot live with out an image. How ever false it may be, there should be an image.

The "I" having covered itself in the image, falsely thinks like the madman... It never realizes that it has created the image! I have seen people who claim themselves posing some powers; in reality they are not, they know at least some people living in this world would know the truth. But these some people are quite rare and these rare people don't care what that pretending person is doing... Hence, the sham of that fellow continues. Actually, we have to look at the "I" behind the pretending human. It is an "I" hiding in the false image of a guru posing powers. Here I am trying to point out that everybody will maintain the image. The sad thing is by creating a devil called image, they get caught and they live in it for quite long, till they get bored with that image.

Once upon a time a poor man was living in a village. One day he saw a very rich man going on an elephant. This poor man desired that kind of power. He wanted to become rich and he wanted to earn money. He tells the guru that he wanted to become a very rich man. Guru blesses him and this fellow becomes a rich man... Look behind this story. What this tells us? There is an "I" which has looked at its own image and compared itself with the image of an "I" which is considered rich! The "I" in the poor man *desired* that he should get the rich image that "I". Both the rich man and the poor man never recognizes their own self, but they recognize their outside image. They never look inside... They never look at the "I" who is surrounded by the image; rather they look at the image only.

Very few people realize this pretense. They try to go beyond the image, which is nothing but the outbound vision of the "I". Instead, they try to look behind the image; they turn their vision entirely inwards. "AvRUtta chakshuH, amRUtatatva miccan" --- desiring liberation they turn their vision inwards. They find the root; they find that it is "I". The moment they realize that "I" --- which is hidden behind an image, they also realize that the very same "I" is hidden in every being in this world. That is called "samadRUsti" and that is the real yoga.

sarva bhootasthamAtmAnaM sarva bhootAni cAtmani
eekshatE yOga yuktAtmA sarvatra samadaRSanaH || Gita 6-29 ||

With the mind harmonised by YOGA he sees the Self-abiding in all beings, and all beings in the Self; he sees the same everywhere.

Such a realized person alone will enjoy the fruits of yoga. He alone can enjoy the bliss, which can be bestowed only by such a wonderful state of equilibrium! Indeed, it is the duty of every human to know his or her own self