

AWARENESS OF THE SELF IN MANIKKAVASAKAR'S TIRUVACHAKAM

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Awareness means knowing something or having knowledge of something. Its roots are Germanic and come from old English 'ware'. It means 'very cautious'. Awareness is being conscious of something. Awareness is slightly different from knowing. Being aware of something means we know that it exists. But knowing something means the information is already in the mind. The wholistic activity of consciousness is being aware. It includes memory also. That helps us to know and remember something. Memory is the part of consciousness. It is used by self.

Self means a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others. One's particular nature or personality makes one as unique. Self is sometimes understood as a unified being essentially connected to consciousness. Thus self is a reference by a subject to the same object. There is a directedness outward from the subject. The self appears different to the subject. The first person perspective is directed self-hood from personal identity. Whereas "identity" is sameness and self-hood implies a first-person perspective.

The psychology of self is the study of either the cognitive or affective representation of one's identity. Current views of the self in psychological position are as an integral part in human motivation and social identity. The psychologist can attempt to ground experience of self in a neural process with cognitive consequences. It will give us insight into the elements of which the complex multiply situated selves of modern identity are composed. Self has many facets that help to make up integral part of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-knowledge, and self-perception. All parts of the self-enable people to alter, change, add and modify aspects of themselves in order to gain social acceptance in society.

Awareness of self is exposed in Tamil poem 'Tiruvachakam'. It is the collection of poems praising Lord Shiva by the great saint Manikkavasagar. He was one of the greatest poets, saints and sages in India. It is difficult to disentangle his history from the multitude of legends. From his poems, something of his character, history and teaching may be gathered. When they are carefully studied, one can see the real man and poet of divine utterance. When he was the chief minister of the Pandiya king, he was converted by a Guru. It is believed that the Guru is Shiva and he at once became self renouncing, ascetic, Saiva mendicant and constant in devotion through the many years of his afterlife. He set out on his royal mission with elaborate preparations.

The Guru dispelled his doubts and called him 'Manikkavasaka', "he whose utterances are gems" so that the world groaning in travail may listen to his ageless gems on the meeting of the human and the Divine Self and the communications of the love of man in the love of God. Manikkavasakar's "Thiruvachakam" contains fifty three poems. It is the unique autobiography of a great soul who saw God face to face and attained spiritual perfection. The hymns of "Thiruvachakam" are a record of sage's spiritual struggles against the ways of the world. The young saint finds no relief in ceremonial acts or learned expositions. By the purifying process of detachment, selflessness and love, he derives strength and sustenance. After his consecration at the feet of his Master, Manikkavasakar detached himself from worldly duties. The poems are filled with dripping emotional words lead to poetic beauty. In Tamil language the word 'Tiru' signifies divine sanctity and a word of magnetic charm. Tiruvachakam is considered as holy book and treasure of

'Saivam' which contains one of the doctrines of 'Saiva Siddhantham'.

Saivam is the way of life that worships Lord Shiva and it is the old religion of South India existing from Pre-Aryan times deals with awareness of self. Saiva Siddhantham is the most elaborate, influential, most intrinsically doctrine of saivam and it deals with great attempt to regulate the problem of soul, body, humanity, sufferings, nature, evil and the unseen world. 'Tiruvachakam' is one of popular poems of Saiva Tirumurai' or 'Saiva Siddhantham'. Anyone can find many bags of golden Siddha concepts in utterances of Tiruvachakam. These poems are daily sung throughout the whole country with tears of rapture and committed to memory in every Lord Siva temple by the people, amongst whom it is a traditional saying that 'he whose heart is not melted by the Tiruvachakam must have a stone for a heart' The birth of all living beings is explained in 5th part of 'Shivapuranam' in 'Tiruvachakam' and it is explained as I [human being] was an insignificant being, worth nothing, attaching myself from birth to birth, to the grass, worm, tree, to bird, beast, demon, man, asura and deva within these immobile and mobile forms of life, in every species born. These points in G.U.Pope's translation of 'Tiruvachakam' follows:

"Grass was I, shrub was I, worm tree,
Full many a kind of beast, bird, snake,
Stone, man, and demon. 'Midst Thy hosts I served.
The forms of mighty Asuras, ascetic, gods I bore.
With in these immobile and mobile forms of life,
In every species born, weary I 've grown, great Lord!" [TR.1-26-31]

A man is free from three fold sins [Mummalam]. Then only he can realize his self-hood. The three sins make the soul to a position unable to recognize the Supreme Soul or God, who is their light and life. According to the Rig-Veda the three fold sins [Mummalam] are Anavam, kanmam and Mayai. Anavam is a single entity but has many powers and functions. It has no beginning, clouds knowledge and action. The individual soul is intrinsically capable of. It projects an illusion of autonomy like verdigris on a copper vessel. It is a stain on the soul. Kanmam is the part catching up with the present. The past maybe recent or one or many births in the past. kanma mala brings the soul and body together in a being. Karma is thought, word and deed that brings punyam or papam and meritorious or painful consequences. Good and bad karma cannot cancel each other. They have to be enjoyed and suffered. Spiritual practices and love of god can erase kanma mala. Third mala is Mayai. It is the material cause of the universe. Asuddha Tattvas {impure principles} make up our body and give use the combined effect of soul-body experience and limited spiritual knowledge in this world. Spiritual practices, Sariyaikal [doing spiritual activities by physical body}, love and worship of God will remove Maya Mala. These points suggested by Manikkavaskar's 'Tiruvachakam' at 'The sacred song of Civan's Renowned Acts' as follows,

The splendour He whose flame pure light emits,
who cuts away the primal three fold Bond;
Loving one ,the louts Garland blue
In fragrant loveliness He were: [TR.1-111-114]

In the fifth part of Sivapuranam in Tiruvachakam, Manikkavasakar explained that lord shiva is present not only in five bootha [earth ,water air , fire, sky] but he is also present in beyond all other material things of the world. The Almighty is free from three gunas .They are Sathvam, Rasatham and Thamam.

Sathavam has eight characters like grace , penance , truth, self-control of sensory organs, knowledge, wisdom, patience and mounam. Rasatham has the characters like education, wisdom, bravery, effort, virtue, generous help, knowledge observe through observation hearing and penance. Thamam has the characters like anger, laziness, long sleep, large meals, love, telling lies, injustice and forgetfulness.

According to Manikkavasakar people having thamo guna as prominent and usually waste their time. The universe is explained as mere Mayai [illusion]. God's presence embraces every part of the visible and invisible universe. He pervades the tiniest speck and atom. The Supreme in His greatness embraces all and pervades the minutest things in His universe. The planetary spheres constitute the elemental universe. Atom and Universe has the same structure. Atom is small and Universe is big. God is present everywhere in Atom or Universe. God is present in all forms and He is not affected by the creation and destruction of the universe. He transcends in all forms that pass and come renewed. God operates the time cycle and He knows when people reach His feet. There is link between Shivan [God] and Jeevan [soul]. The sins committed by the human beings from the last birth and present birth, is destroyed by the Almighty. These pontes quoted in Tiruvachakam as follows,

Thou know'st no increase, measure, end! All worlds
 Thou dost create, protect, destroy, enrich with grace,
 Release. Thou causest me to enter ' mind thy servant band. [TR:1- 41-43]
 " Thou dost distils, like honey, in the thought of glorious devotees
 And cuttest off the continuity of births - our mighty one! [TR1 -47-48]

With His grace on human beings, He helps the man to relieve from their worldly acts and deeds and finally reach the way to bliss. Lord Shiva devotees are influenced by the Grace of God and they are separated from the worldly attachments. A person gets the knowledge from someone else who is called as teacher or guru. Similarly Lord Shiva gives awareness to the soul as guru. A soul has to be instructed in its nature only by the Supreme Shiva. A soul requires Shiva's help not only for knowing its innate nature but also for acquiring all knowledge and consciousness. It requires such help whether in respect of limited or unlimited consciousness. The help by the senses is not in itself sufficient even for obtaining limited consciousness. The help of Lord Shiva is also indispensable. A soul is helped for general consciousness not merely by the senses but also by the Lord. The help by the senses is visible, whereas the help by the Lord is in invisible. The senses are visibly present and render the help. But Shiva renders His help invisibly and impersonally. In other words, Shiva has to render a visible and personal help. But Shiva in his own nature is invisible and impersonal. He has to render this special help by presenting Himself through a visible and personal instructor. It is this instructor that is known as guru and his help is known as the special instructor. According to Manikkavasagar, Shiva presents Himself through a guru and imparts instruction to the soul as regards in its innate nature. Thereby the soul gets the special consciousness. Once the soul gets the special consciousness, the special instruction through a guru will not be necessarily any longer. The general help of Shiva will be sufficient thereafter. Hence Shiva has to present himself through a guru for instructing the soul in the special consciousness. These points quoted in Manikkavasagar's Tiruvachakam such as,

To me who lay mere slave,- meaner than any dog,-
 Essential grace more precious than a mother's love! [TR1-57-58]
 The One Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show
 Thy mighty feet most precious I infinite to earth came down;
 Nor did I greatness of the Sage supreme contemn. [TR4-75-77]
 Like mother, Thou hast brought me up, I praise!
 God, strong to cancel deedsof ours,
 Who didst become in truth a Sage, I praise! [TR4-86-88]

The above points expressed in V.P.Kanthimathinatha Pillai's "The Cult of Siva" as " Only a Guru will be able to transcend his limited consciousness at the time of his initiating the disciple's soul. But even such a Guru need not always remain immersed in the spiritual consciousness. It is enough if the Guru is able to adjust itself for the purpose whenever necessary. We thus see that Siva imparts instruction to the soul as regards its

own nature through a Guru"[p-136]. Dr.S.Radhakrishnan said that God is the infinite spirit, who is both in us and out of us. Our highest knowledge of God is partial. There always remains something which is unknown and unspoken. Above points quoted in 'Tiruvachakam' as "Its immeasurable nature, and abundant phenomena" [TR3-3]. In 'Indian Religious Thought' Dr.S.Radhakrishnan has mentioned about Oneself of God as "Hinduism is the symbol of India' spiritual vision. It is based on the intuition of the oneness and wholeness of the Supreme Spirit. On the belief that human life everywhere and always is part and parcel of the divine being, it has cultivated a sort of religious hospitality." [I.R.T.p-81]. Manikkavasagar evokes in 'Tiruvachakam' about oneself of God as "Hail, foot of Him, the One, the Not One, and the King!"[TR1-5]. "See Him, that One, Whose title is 'the only One!'" [TR3-43] "Ascetic saints in contemplation dwell;- in their souls Thou fitly hid'st Thyself! Seeming one thing, then not, eluding knowledge, ThoudosthideThyself!" [TR3-139-139].

Thus "Tiruvachakam" is an authoritative utterance of spiritual awareness of self. It embodies the deepest experiences of a Jeevan-Muktha [perfect Being]. The blooms of realisation have been gathered together with the cord of love. It is the gospel of attainment to the universal 'every man'. It gives awareness of the social pattern of lordship and helps to determine the image of God. The range of his vision takes him to other forms too and sets in its simplicity at the point of growing ecstasy. In these several ways, the emotional significance of poetic images comes to inhere in the words used by the poet for the rhythms of his inner experiences.

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