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Sadhu Sanga

INITIATION INTO TRANSCENDENTAL SCIENCE

by

Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaja



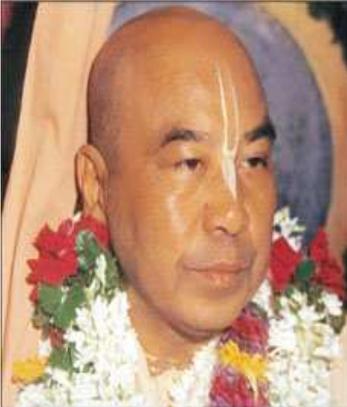
Devotee: Can you explain the real meaning of *diksa*, initiation?

Srila Sridhar Maharaja: Srila Jiva Goswami has explained this in his *Bhakti Sandarbha* :

*divyam jnanam yato dadyam kuryat papasya sanksayam
tasmad dikseti sa prokta desikais tattva-kovidah*

Experienced scholars have explained the meaning of *diksa*, or spiritual initiation, in this way: *diksa* is the process through which transcendental knowledge is imparted by the preceptor to the disciple. As a result, all the disciple's previous bad tendencies are crushed. Through *diksa*, all previous commitments are cleared and one gets the light of new life in relationship with the transcendental Lord. *Diksa*, or initiation, is a process by which we are given a noble connection with the absolute center and, at the same time, our previous commitments are all finished. It is an inner awakening of life that brings divine knowledge. That wealth is there within us, but it is suppressed. *Diksa* means discovering one's inner wealth, and getting relief from all outward obligations.

With inner awakening the outward commitments vanish, just as when you reach home all other arrangements you may have contracted for your comforts are all cut off, for at home you find full comfort. When we are in a foreign land we may seek the comforts which are supplied in hotels, but when we reach home, the hotel comforts are discarded; we find no more use for them. Sometimes a minor is kidnapped from home. Later, while visiting his native place he may stay in a hotel, but if he suddenly finds his father's house, and returns home, his parents will recognize him and say, "O, my son! You were stolen from us when you were young. We recognize your face. I am your mother, this is your father, here is your sister." Then the hotel is no longer needed. In a similar way, with the inner awakening of the soul, when we return back home, back to Godhead, we will find our comfortable home with Krishna. So, to make a connection with our real home and dispense with our outward links is known as *diksa*.



Basic features 5, 6 & 7

The two viewpoints of the basic features 5, 6 & 7 in the Table in our previous issue (October, 2011) are opposed to each other. One of the basic ideals of modern science has been to find unity in nature. Since the absolute truth has been viewed as a system of mathematical laws, this conception has been expressed by the requirement

that the basic equations have the greatest possible mathematical explanation. Einstein was one of the strongest proponents of this goal, and it is epitomized by his search for a “unified field theory” which would derive all the laws of physics from one basic mathematical rule.

... We propose that an unlimited reservoir of fundamental laws lies behind nature, and that they determine all the features of nature, including living organisms.

However, this unity has not been attained. The basic laws are simply a list of apparently unrelated formulas and conditions (as much by the arbitrary way in which they are discovered, as by the way they are contingently related due to the role of chance in quantum mechanics). The existence of many variables would seem to suggest that in the scientific world view the absolute truth has an even greater disunity and is analogous to a gigantic cosmic laundry list.

In our alternative view, however, this unity is provided by a higher principle extending beyond the realm of laws that are capable of mathematical formulation. The Vedantic paradigm’s worldview is based on the holistic and unified theory of the universe. This is the concept of unity in diversity in this paradigm. This is the principle of consciousness. As we have indicated, consciousness has eluded scientific explanation, and we propose that it cannot, even in principle, be reduced to a mathematical formulation.

Why should we expect that reality can be encompassed by the patterns of finite symbol manipulation that we can invent and contemplate with our limited minds? It is perfectly possible for an entity to exist that cannot be described by equations, even though it may exhibit many features that can be so described.

We should stress here that the postulate that nature is mathematically describable in all essential features is also a drastic and highly restrictive a priori assumption. Why should we expect that reality could be encompassed by the patterns of finite symbol manipulation that we can invent and contemplate with our limited minds? It is perfectly possible for an entity to exist that cannot be described by equations, even though it may exhibit many features that can be so described.

In our alternative view, consciousness is taken as a fundamental feature of the absolute truth, and all the basic laws and principles of nature are seen to be integrated into a harmonious whole within the awareness of absolute consciousness. This means that the absolute truth exists as one unified, sentient being. Such a statement may appear to lie outside the realm of experimental observation. We introduce it both for the sake of philosophical completeness and for its implication that we should expect to conceive higher order laws of nature that are of a psychological character. Such laws make sense in the context of the absolute truth as a primordial conscious being, but they do not fit sensibly into the mathematical framework of modern science. The absence of such ‘higher order’ laws beyond mathematical description makes the world appear like a puppet show, with an elaborate script but neither an audience nor an author.

Basic Feature 8

This point is quite significant. The modern scientific view tries to depict nature in terms of a reduction to simple entities: atoms, molecules, and so on. This implies that the absolute truth is severely limited. This arbitrary a priori constraint on the nature of the absolute truth is one of the primary reasons why modern science cannot explain life. According to the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the essence of ancient Vedic literatures, the alternative viewpoint or *Bhagavata* paradigm says that *pradhan* (unmanifested primordial matter) is the sum total of all material elements. At the time of manifestation of the cosmic universe, *mahat-tattva* is generated from *pradhan* and from *mahat-tattva*, the subtle energies called – *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (ignorance) are generated. From these subtle material manifestations, gross material manifestations such as quarks, electrons, atoms, molecules, the whole set of Mendeleev’s periodic table of chemical elements, etc., became manifest. Thus physics and chemistry deal only with the science of matter; they cannot deal with the science of life or *atma*.

Atmanology is the study of the science of life, and spiriton is the fundamental spiritual particle of life. The true science of life is beyond the realm of material science. Biology deals with the interaction of spiriton and matter. However, modern science believes that spiriton is an emergent product of the evolution of matter. According to the Vedantic paradigm this concept is not correct. Thus a wholistic study of matter and life will shed enough light to understand the quality and origin of life.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FORM OF SENSE CERTAINTY *

by

Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D.



Immediacy — the start/ beginning

The object of study is consciousness. The activity of consciousness is called knowing. The study of a subject may only begin with immediacy, because a beginning implies that there is no prior mediation, i.e. no explicit differences or

determinations. Such a beginning is mere being — what immediately is. Being as such is pure generality.

Since consciousness is not a physical object that appears before the eyes like a tree, it has to be treated as an object of thought or, as it is said, “before the mind’s eye.” When consciousness apprehends itself as an object, then the objective consciousness must be in the form of something immediate. Thus apprehension is in a purely receptive mode without intervention of explicit thinking or comprehension. So the first passive observation of immediate consciousness as an object reveals a consciousness that simply is.

The knowing activity of this immediate consciousness is also immediate so that what it knows is immediate knowledge. Because of this immediacy (non-differentiation) there is no distinction made between consciousness and what it knows. A consciousness thus absorbed in the wealth of the world, i.e. in what it sees, hears, smells, touches and tastes, is sensuous consciousness or sense-certainty. The word ‘certainty’ implies immediate knowledge that something is. Thus sensuous certainty of something means *that* it is, and no further thought determination interrupts that immediate knowledge. “*That*” refers only to indeterminate being, whereas “*what*” refers to the determination of that being — these are two distinct indexicals. So here in sense-certainty only *that* is implied.

Yet, despite its essential paucity, sense-certainty *appears* to be endowed with two prominent characteristics:

- 1) It is the richest knowledge — which stems from its concreteness, since it is filled with variety or differentiation.
- 2) It is the truest knowledge — because of its completeness it seems to leave out nothing of the object but to take it in its

entirety.

However, all that sense-certainty actually reveals about what it knows is just that it *is*, for this is the only content of immediate knowledge or certainty — *it is*. It is important to avoid reading into the consciousness of sense-certainty anything more than this without introducing thought determinations that will disrupt the immediacy of this form of consciousness.

The senses *apprehend* things as they are in their individuality. The senses do not possess the ability to relate things to one another — which involves mediation or thought. The input from the sensors of a robot, for instance, have to be fed into a computer for processing before any comparison or other determinations can be made in order to respond or provide proper feedback. All that the senses detect are merely ‘this’, ‘this’, ‘this’. They do not determine the difference between ‘this’ and ‘that’. That kind of differentiation is not part of sense-certainty. Because of being immediate there is no room for differences, so all it can apprehend is ‘this.’ The higher conscious functions of memory, judgment or reason are needed to process the input from the senses in order to make comparisons or other qualitative determinations.

Consciousness itself is just another immediate ‘this’ opposed to all the other immediate individual ‘thises’ that are encountered by the senses. This immediate consciousness is called “I.” Certainty is the *connection* between “I” and its object, but this connection or mediation is transparent (invisible) to or not known by sense-certainty in its immediacy.

Mediation — Difference

Sense-certainty as immediate knowledge cannot ascertain differences, as mentioned above. However, since there is a difference between ‘this’ and ‘that’ any actual sense-certainty is not merely a pure immediacy but an *instance* of it. Furthermore, certainty itself as the connection between “I” and its object involves two ‘thises’ and thus differentiation is implied. This is not known by the immediate consciousness under observation (sense-certainty), but the “I” has its certainty through something else, viz. the object, as much as the object is determined as being through something else, viz. the “I”. In this way one is mediated by the other.

This last point is a very important one because it says that there

is an inviolable connection between the being of “I” and the being of an object. One may fail to make this connection and consider the object as something independent of the subject or “I,” yet here we are saying that the being of the object is mediated through the “I” as much as the being of “I” is mediated through the object. This point will be further clarified in what follows.

Mediation (in itself) — the implicit presupposition of sense-certainty

The differences that were noted in sense-certainty are also found within immediate sense-certainty itself, although they are implicit there as a presupposition. Certainty, the immediate connection of I and object, considers one of its terms to be the essential immediate being, viz. the object, while it holds the other, the I, as unessential. In other words, sense-certainty is prejudiced toward the object — the object *is* and therefore the I can know it. The presumption is, if the I is not present the object remains as it is, even if it is not known, whereas there is no knowledge if the object is not there. This is the implicit assumption of sense-certainty so that there is a difference implied even though it was not at first explicitly recognized.

Is this presupposition justified? How can this question be answered? In order to determine if sense-certainty’s presumption about the object is justified it is only necessary to allow the way in which this assumption is present in sense-certainty to work itself out conceptually.

What does the consciousness of sense-certainty mean by ‘this’? For sense-certainty ‘this’ is an indexical referring or pointing to something. Pointing is always to a ‘place.’ In turn ‘place’ means the unity of ‘here’ and ‘now’. Then if the consciousness of sense-certainty is asked, “What is Now?” The consciousness answers, “Now is night.” Then ask the same question the next day and consciousness answers, “Now is day.” By comparing the two answers the truth of the first reply has become outdated.

Tracing out the truth of sense-certainty.

Both answers are equally true for sense-certainty, but it is found by comparison that they are also equally not true. The Now preserves itself in both cases by **not** being any of the instances it refers to. This general *negative* relation to its instances is what is called a universal. The universal preserves itself *through* the negation of its instances and thus is a mediated truth. Thus the only truth that sense-certainty preserves is the Now which is a universal rather than the singularity of its individual instances.

“This” is similarly a universal since it is negatively maintained with respect to every instance that it refers to. ‘This’ *means* an individual, but in fact what is uttered is a universal because every individual is a this. In other words one doesn’t say what is meant. The fact is that what what is said is truer than what what is meant since the ‘Now’ or ‘This’ or any indexical is a universal negatively related to any instance of it. Thus language is the more truthful and refutes what is merely meant or intended. Universality is the real truth of sense-certainty and language expresses this truth, while it is not even possible to express what the individual sensual existence means.

If one says, “Here is a tree”, then turns around and says “Here is a house,” the ‘Here’ is maintained but the instances it refers to are different. Therefore ‘This’ as the unity of here and now is a mediated unity (i.e., a unity arrived at through negation of its instances) or simple universality.

Pure Being as the essence of sense-certainty.

These results are derived from their implicit being in sense-certainty itself. It is only from questioning sense-certainty that these results are made explicit. The only content of the immediate knowledge of sense-certainty is that something **is**. But everything **is** for sense-certainty, thus ‘Being’ is a universal. However, by ‘Being’ sense-certainty *means* the individual being of its object, nonetheless the truth of what it merely means is actually the universal or abstract being — what is called ‘Pure Being’ considered on its own or in itself, distinct from any instances of it.

Instead of the individual being of the object that sense-certainty intended as the content of its knowledge, it now finds that it rather has the universal as the content. The individual object thus becomes the unessential element in its certainty and the knowing which was the unessential element, that could be there or not, now becomes the essential. The situation is thus reversed from what was originally assumed. The certainty as universal now belongs to the “knowing I” and this possession is called “mine.” The truth is now what “I mean” and in this sense it is “my object.” Sense-certainty has therefore been withdrawn from the object and claimed by the “I”. It is therefore necessary to examine what is real for the “I.”

The ‘I’ sees a tree here, it also sees here is a house; it sees now is day, and later now is night. All these are truths that are preserved in the “I” and therefore have the certainty of the “I” for their authentication. In this way the “I” is the unchanging universal in all these changing or vanishing truths. Yet not only is “I” a

universal for the changing contents of its certainty, but also in itself every particular “I” is itself an “I” and therefore “I” is in itself a universal.

Thus it is neither the particular “I” nor the particular object of sense-certainty that can claim to be true since the “I”, “This”, “Here”, “Now” have all shown themselves to be universals. It may thus be claimed that the true being of sense-certainty is the whole of itself as an immediacy rather than residing in any of its particular moments. As immediacy this pure universality has no



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concern with otherness or distinction — of what is essential or unessential, or the difference between “I” and the object. It is whatever it is immediately at any moment and without referring to any other moment. Thus it sticks firmly to one immediate relation, e.g. Now is day. Fixed in one single immediacy, this consciousness cannot be directed to another moment that is, for example, not day. It

is then necessary to take the position of this consciousness and examine what it sees.

Pointing to the Now that it refers to, the Now has already ceased to be since what was there before it was pointed out was the original immediacy. The immediacy that consciousness intended to identify with itself proves to be evasive — it is unable to capture it or refer to it as being without it vanishing. That which ceases to be as soon it is is what characterizes movement or change. Thus the necessity to grasp sense-certainty as change or movement has become the truth.

Change or movement as the truth of sense-certainty.

- (1) The Now is pointed out as being the truth of sense-certainty.
- (2) But in the act of pointing, the Now is negated thus becoming

‘not being’ in the present, i.e. it becomes past being (historical being). This is the new truth or second truth. (3) However, this new truth certainly *is*. The ‘not being’ of the original truth arose from the negation of that truth, thus the being of this new truth is the negation of the negation of the original truth (being). Of course, this is not the same as the original unmediated being. This new being contains within it the original being, its negation and the negation of that negation, and thus it is fully mediated being. It is not simple being any more but contains these various moments within it as well as the *movement* that connects them. A “This” is posited, but in referring to it an *other* is posited, i.e., the original “This” is superseded. This *other* as what is not the first is now taken in its positive significance as what is and this requires negating its truth as “not This” in order to become the new “This”. In summary: (1) “This”, the original truth, in pointing it out becomes (2) not This, or the negation of “This.” (3) Establishing this new truth as being “This” requires the negation of this negation of “This”.

The “This” that is established is no longer a simple “This” or “Now” but a passage or movement through many “Thises” (or many “Nows”), which nonetheless remains what it is in all its various “otherings”, i.e. it always comes back to being the same thing — “This” (or “Now”). The many “Nows” contained within the “Now” may also be understood in this way. When we say “Now” we may mean this day that contains many hours or “Nows”, or we may mean this hour, which likewise contains many minutes or “Nows”. Each minute contains many seconds, and each second contains many microseconds, nanoseconds, etc. We can never refer to an absolute “Now” or an absolute “Here” because whatever time or space measurement we use can always inherently represent many “Heres” or “Nows”. A plurality when taken together like this as a unity (or unit) is simultaneously (and contradictorily) a universal as much as a singular.

— *to be continued*

* This article follows the exposition given in Hegel, G.W.F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*. §’s 90-108.