

Long Term Course at AVG During March - April 2015

A summary of the Vedanta classes held during March- April 2015 is presented below:

CLASSES ON GENERAL TOPICS BY PUJYA SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati gave insightful talks on various topics requested by the students:

ON DODGING EMPIRICAL PROBLEMS BY SWITCHING THE ARGUMENT TO ABSOLUTE LEVEL: At the empirical level, problems can never be fully solved. When one problem is solved, another problem crops up. They have a chain reality. Empirical problems are to be solved only at empirical level. If one brings absolute level while dealing with empirical problems then there is dissociation. **It is important not to switch from empirical level to absolute level and vice versa. However, Vedanta students can use them to contemplate.**

VAIRAGYA & ABHYASA: Mind does not stay in a given subject. It seems to be shifting always. This is because of binding desires and excessive craving for insecure objects. What is required is dispassion. **Dispassion is seeing the absence of connection between what one needs and what one does.** The mind of a person with dispassion will stay. **Practice is required to keep the mind focused in one thing.** Repetition of *Ishvara's* name and Meditation are helpful.

ISHVARA: In Hindu dharma, *Ishvara* is all pervasive. All our dance, music and *bhajans* convey this message. In Maharashtra, Lord Ganesa is invoked in an areca nut. In Tamil Nadu, Lord Ganesa is invoked in a lump of turmeric. Lord can be invoked in a stone or a piece of wood. In the vision of the Veda, all that is here is *Ishvara*. Based on this vision, **Ishvara can be invoked in anything and can be worshipped in any form.**

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF VALUES VS. HAVING IDEALS: We imbibe values from parents, teachers and the society. Having no money is impractical. We should earn money through *dharmic* means. One becomes whatever his predominant beliefs, commitments and convictions are. *Ahimsa* is a universally applicable value which is ingrained in a human being through the *dharmic* order of *Ishvara*. No one needs to be taught that anyone doesn't wish to get hurt. **When one understands what one loses when a value is compromised, the person understands the value of the value.** When one lies, it creates a split in the personality of the person. The value of being 'a together' person versus a split is the choice one needs to make. Ideals on the other hand, are usually not fully understood and are always away from the actual.

CLASSES ON GITA BHASYAM BY SWAMI SADATMANANDA

Swamiji has taught this text in full detail in the classes. A brief summary of the classes is presented below.

CHAPTER 2: The one who thinks that the self is the killer or the one who thinks that the self is killed, both of them do not know the true nature of the self. The self does not kill nor is it killed, because the self is changeless. (BG 2-19).

The self is never born, nor dies. The self having been existent, does not become non-existent. Unlike the body, the self is ever new, birth-less, decay-less and deathless. Even when the body is destroyed, the self is not destroyed. (BG 2-20).

The above two verses are based on Kathopanisad mantras.

The one who knows the self to be indestructible, not transformable, unborn and decay less, how and whom does that person kill or instigate to kill? (BG 2-21)

This verse is not in interrogative sense but in the sense to convey the idea of negation of all actions by a knower of the self. Negation of killing is mentioned for the purpose of illustration.

Objection: Due to what specific reason actions are ruled out by the knower of the self ?

Reply: Changelessness of the self is the reason for impossibility of action by the knower of the self.

Objection: We cannot say that action is not possible by the one who knows the post to be changeless.

Reply: The knower of the post is not the post. But the knower of the self is the self. Action is prescribed in the Sastra only for an ignorant person.

Objection: Knowledge is also prescribed for an ignorant person. Knowledge is useless for a wise person like grinding of

corn that is already ground. Hence action is prescribed only for an ignorant person is not reasonable.

Reply: An ignorant person thinks that he should perform actions like fire rituals. He is eligible for doing action. A wise person and a seeker of freedom are eligible for renunciation of all actions. Two distinctive life styles, one committed to jnana yoga and another to karma yoga are prescribed by Gita 3.3 and Mahabharata 241.6. The Lord shows these two different life styles again in the Gita verses 3.27, 3.28 and 5.13.

Objection: Self being inaccessible to the sense organs, self-knowledge is not possible

Reply: Brhadaranyaka Upanisad 4.4.19 declares that the self is to be appreciated through the mind alone. The mind which is purified by the teachings of teacher and scriptures and by discipline of mind and sense organs, is fit for self-knowledge. The Lord will say in Gita 5.13 that a wise person renouncing actions in the mind sits in this body.

Objection: Only mental actions should be renounced. Not physical and oral actions.

Reply: No renunciation of all actions prescribed

Objection: Only all actions of the mind prescribed

Reply: Physical and oral actions have to be preceded by mental action

Objection: Renunciation of all actions prescribed for a dying person

Reply: Self is said to comfortably sit in the body of nine gates which is not possible for a dead person.

Therefore according to Gita sastra, the one having self knowledge has fitness for

renunciation alone and not for action. This idea we will show in all such relevant places later on in the context/ topic of self-knowledge.

Just as a person remaining changeless, discards old clothes and puts on new clothes, the embodied self remaining changeless discards old bodies and takes up new bodies. (BG 2-22)

Self is partless. Weapons do not cut this self. Fire does not burn it. Water does not wet it. And wind does not dry it. (BG 2-23)

The Self cannot be cut, burnt, drowned or dried. Self is changeless, all-pervasive, stable, motionless and everlasting. (BG 2-24).

The Self is said to be un-manifest, inconceivable and unchangeable. Knowing this one need not grieve. (BG 2-25).

Even if one takes the atma to have constant birth and death, even then one need not grieve. (BG 2-26)

For that which is born, death is certain. For that which is dead, birth is certain. Therefore one should not grieve for what is inevitable. (BG 2-27)

All beings are unmanifest in the beginning, manifest in the middle and again unmanifest at the end. Hence there is no reason for grief. (BG 2-28)

One sees the self as a wonder. Another speaks of it as a wonder. Another hears it as a wonder. Still another even after hearing about it, does not understand it. (BG 2-29)

The embodied self present in all bodies is ever indestructible. One ought not to grieve regarding all living beings. (BG 2-30)

Lord Krishna explains why there is no reason for sorrow for Arjuna from the absolute level.

CLASSES ON KATHOPANISAD
BHASYAM BY SWAMI
SADATMANANDA

CHAPTER I VALLI I

Vajasravas while performing Visavajit *yagna*, inadvertently uttered that he would offer his son Naciketas to Lord Yama. Naciketas contemplated on his father's words: "Among many students and sons his conduct was the best and medium sometimes but never inferior. Lord Yama does not require his service." His father should have uttered these words due to anger. Even then he was determined that his father's words should not go false.

Naciketas advised his father that the word uttered in the *yagna sala* should be kept and he should be sent to Lord Yama. Their forefathers and contemporary noble people kept up their word. Human beings like the crop grains die and later emerge again. Vajasravas reluctantly sent his son Naciketas to Lord Yama.

When Naciketas went to Lord Yama's palace, Lord Yama had gone out. Hence he waited outside for three nights without food. When Lord Yama returned, his ministers and wives reminded him about honouring Naciketas because a Brahmin guest was like Fire entering the house. It can either bless or burn the house down. Noble people propitiate the guest by offering water and honouring him. Otherwise the householder would incur *pratyavaya dosha*.

If a Brahmin guest is not duly respected and provided food by the host, the *papa* incurred from this *dosha* can destroy the person's hopes, expectations, *punya* gained through *satsangh*, noble speech, vedic rituals and

social service, progeny and cattle. This is to be understood as *artha vada* to **emphasise proper treatment of the guest.**

Lord Yama offered for his well being salutations to Naciketas and **granted him three boons as compensation for three nights he stayed in his house without food.**

Naciketas told Lord Yama, that when he is sent back to his father, his father should be free from anxiety, have a calm mind, free from anger, recognize him and talk to him. **His choice of first boon was for his father's benefit.** Lord Yama granted the boon completely, without any reservation.

Naciketas told that in *svarga* there is no fear of death, no old age, no hunger or thirst, no grief and one can rejoice. He asked Lord Yama to teach him the **fire ritual, the performance of which leads one to svarga** and attain relative immortality. **His choice of second boon was for the society's benefit.** Lord Yama taught in detail the fire ritual along with all its accessories. Naciketas understood the teaching and repeated in detail as taught. Lord Yama was pleased. He announced that the fire ritual will be known in Naciketas's name. He also offered a *snrkam* which means a necklace made of precious gems. Alternate meaning for *srnkam* is a vedic ritual for material prosperity. **Naciketas did not accept the srnkam.**

Lord Yama said that the one who invokes **Naciketa fire thrice** and the one who has received proper instructions from mother, father and teacher **attains svarga.** If he also does *upasana on Virat* **attains brahmaloka.**

Through the first boon Naciketas asked for *ihaloka phala* for his father. Through the second boon he asked for *paraloka phala* for the society. Both fall in *anatma prapanca.* **Through the third boon he asked for**

knowledge of atma. He asked Lord Yama, "There is a doubt about a person who is dead. Some say that the surviving self is there. Others say that there is no surviving self. Instructed by you I want to understand about this self. This is the third boon."

Lord Yama wanted to test whether Naciketas was qualified to receive self knowledge. He told that self is subtle. It cannot be easily understood. Even *Devas* had doubt about that in the past. He told Naciketas to choose another boon. Naciketas told that **as even Devas had doubt about that in the past and he cannot find a better teacher than Lord Yama, he wanted only self knowledge** as his third boon.

Lord Yama tried to tempt Naciketas with material wealth. He offered instead of self knowledge, sons, grandsons with hundred years of life, many animals, elephants, gold, horses, vast kingdom and as many years life as he wished. Lord Yama further told that **Naciketas can choose in addition to that any other material wealth he desired, be emperor of this great earth and enjoyer of all the pleasures. He further offered pleasures not available to human beings.** He offered celestial women with chariots and musical instruments who will serve him.

Naciketas did not yield to the temptation. Naciketas reasoned that the enjoyments are temporary; They only weaken the sense organs; Every form of life is short. **Let all the vehicles, dance and music stay with Lord Yama himself.** Man cannot be satisfied with wealth. As he had already seen Lord Yama he will anyhow get wealth and long life. **He knew the limitations of preyas and he desired only sreayas. He declared that Naciketas cannot choose anything else other than self knowledge as the third boon.**

Report by N. Avinashilingam