

Swami Vidadatmanandaji's message on the occasion of Independence Day camp at USA

Uplifting Oneself

By Melkote Ramaswamy*

Vedanta says our true nature is complete, limitless, happiness and peace, and that we are immortal. However, contrary to this, we find ourselves feeling unhappy, limited, incomplete, not acceptable to ourselves and others and seeking and getting fleeting happiness from external objects. We seem to be entangled in a sea of struggles and sorrows—called *samsara*, This is all due to ignorance. Vedantic solution is simple and straight forward: remove ignorance through knowledge.

At Arsha Vidya's 2015 Independence Day Camp (July 2-5), Swami Vidadatmanandaji elaborated on the theme *Uddhareth Atmana Atmaanam* (Bhagvad Gita Chapter 6, verse 5) that addresses these and related issues.

Mind is a powerful thing. It can be our best friend or our worst enemy (Gita Ch. 6- 5). We humans have free will—a faculty that distinguishes us from animals. We can exercise free will to make mind favorable to us (make the mind *satwic*). *Raga* and *Dweshha* (Likes and Dislikes/Attachment and Aversion) are really intruders that pull the mind away (outward) instead of

inward. *Raga/Dweshha* create brandings and expectations. When expectations are not fulfilled, we are disappointed. This in turn leads to anger and frustration and eventually destroys our life (Gita Chapter 2-62, 63). Ignorance or *avidya* is the root cause of *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha* and *moha*. It is also responsible for *ahankara* (ego) that makes one identify the individual I with the body. We need to distinguish the individual (the self) from the actor who plays myriad roles with different costumes.

Swamiji described how to align the mind with Intellect through a process of *unwiring* the mind which consists of refusing to respond to button presses.

Spiritual growth comes through doing one's duty. Duty entails sacrifices, no expectations and graceful acceptance of results of actions —*karmaphala*== through an attitude of *prasadbuddhi* (Gita Ch. 2-47), remembering that value comes from not what it is but where it comes from (namely Bhagwan), developing and observing values for kindness, compassion, generosity, forgiveness and service.

As citizens of the cosmic world, we have a duty to become eco-friendly and become a contributor instead of consumer.

By accepting the world for what it is and making no demands, we make it easy to bring Ishwara into our lives. This act of bringing Ishwara replaces one's inferiority complex, intolerance, inadequacy, insecurity with one's inherent qualities of happiness, peace and contentment.

Immortality refers to Atma or consciousness not to the body. A person of wisdom who recognizes this and is not concerned with *janma* (birth), *mrithyu* (death), *jaraa* (old age), *vyaadhi* (disease) transcends birth and death

and is a *Jeevanmukta* or *Sthithaprajna* or *Gunaateeta*

Swamiji's satsangs in the evening were packed with interesting questions and responses and helped to expand and clarify the contents of the lectures. Bhajan at the end of *satsang* added a melodious touch.

Pandit Mukesh Desai's bhajans were delightful as always and Suddhatmaji's vedic chanting session was powerful, lucid, refreshing and highly informative.

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Gurupeyarchi celebration at Saylosburg, USA

On Sunday, July 5, Gurupeyarchi or Planet Guru transit day was observed. Sankalpa and rituals were done at the Yagna sala. This was



followed by Abhiseka to Lord Dakshinamurti in the temple hall. Suddhatmaji spoke a few words on the significance of the puja. Swami Viditmanandaji discussed the importance of Guru in our lives. 'Gu' is darkness or ignorance and prevents us from seeing what is. 'Ru' is removal of darkness or ignorance. Guru teaches us who we really are. Guru makes us aware of the problems in life due to ignorance. It is not enough to just listen; we must open our hearts to the Guru.

