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Mundaka

Mantra 3.1.1

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया
समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्ति
अनश्नन्नन्योऽभिचाकशीति ॥

*dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte
tayoranyaḥ pippalam svādvatti
anaśnannanyo 'bhicākaśīti. (3.1.1)*

dvā -- two; *suparṇā* -- shining birds;
sayujā -- which are always together;
sakhāyā-- both having the same origin;
samānam -- same; *vṛkṣam* -- tree;
pariśasvajāte -- are perched;
tayoḥ -- of these two; *anyaḥ* -- one;
pippalam -- fruits; *svādu* -- of many tastes;
atti -- eats; *anyaḥ* -- the other one;
anaśnan-- without eating; *abhicākaśīti* -- watches

Two shining birds that are always together and have the same origin are perched on the same tree. One of them eats fruits of different tastes while the other watches.

Dvā suparṇā: two birds with beautiful wings. The wings are beautiful because they are shining like gold. The shining nature is pointed out to show the birds are conscious in nature. Both are of the same nature. *Dvā suparṇā* is Vedic usage, which in classical Sanskrit is *dvā suparṇau*. They are *sayujā*, that is, *sayujau* always united. They are always together. When one is there, the other is always there. That is the idea here. Their union is very natural. They are *skhāyā*, that is, *sakhāyau*—both of them are great friends. Let us say one is female and the other is male; the male is absolutely non-interfering. They enjoy similar qualities in the sense that both of them are conscious. It is the friendship here.

Samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte: both of them are sitting on the same tree. Here, the tree is to be understood as this physical body. The physical body is compared to a tree because it can be felled like a tree.¹²⁵ In this body, which is similar to the tree of *aśvatta*, the two birds are abiding.

Śaṅkara further describes this tree of *saṁsāra* in his commentary.¹²⁶ The root of the tree is above, meaning, beyond time and space. It is Brahman which is the cause of everything. Just as the root is not available for direct perception, so too, Brahman is not available for objectification.

All the branches of this tree are down below, meaning, the *yare* within time and space. This tree is called *aśvatta*, a peepul tree, its botanical name being *ficus religiosa*. *Religiosa* means it is a tree connected to religion. 'Religiosa' comes only from India because nowhere else is this tree connected to religion except in India. Women wishing to have children go worship this tree by going around it.

It is called *aśvatta* because it may not be there tomorrow.¹²⁷ The idea is, it is not eternal. It has come from a cause that is un-manifest, like the tree has come from a seed in which the tree is un-manifest. Before creation, *saṁsāra* was not manifest and now it has come to manifest. It is also called *kṣetra*, a field, where one experiences the results of action. It is the locus for doing karma and also for enjoying *karma-phala*. These two birds are perched upon the tree of *saṁsāra* namely, this body that includes subtle body also.

Who are these two birds? One is *Īśvara*, consciousness conditioned by *māyā*, who is the cause of everything. The other is *jīva*, consciousness conditioned by a given mind, *prāṇa* and senses, together called subtle body. *Tayoh anyah*: of these two, *jīva* and *Īśvara* one of them. The word '*anyah*' generally means the other. Here *anyah* means one of them. What does it do?

Pippalam svādu atti: one bird avidly experiences the fruits of varied tastes. *Pippalam* means the fruit of The peepul tree. The *jīva* bird is sitting on the tree of *saṁsāra* in order to enjoy the *karma-phala*. The fruit is characterized by happiness and sorrow.¹²⁸ It is *svādu* because it has many and varied tastes. Some fruits are very sweet, some are sour and some are very bitter.

One does undergo the whole variety of experiences, pleasant and painful, in day-to-day life. The *jīva* bird undergoes the experiences with a degree of longing and appetite. Suddenly, it loses the appetite because it ate something unpleasant, like a bad peanut. While eating something delicious, the experience may be pleasant, but after eating, there is pain. All fried things are very delicious to eat. But after eating, the experience is not a very happy one, especially when one stands on the weighing scale! The *jīva* bird undergoes experiences sometimes perching upon the tree and sometimes flying out and coming back to the tree. Śaṅkara uses one more word there, that is, '*avivekatayā*' due to non-discrimination, not knowing that 'I am not the experiencer in reality.' What does the other bird do?

Anaśnan anyo' bhicākaśīti: the other bird witness without eating. Here the word *anyah*, the other, means the one who is distinct from the *jīva*, who does not have doer-ship and enjoyer-ship.¹²⁹ He is the truth of the *jīva* and remains as *sākṣī*, witness of the *jīva*.¹³⁰ He sits in every body without partaking in any experience. *Abhicākaśīti*¹³¹ means the one who just lights up. He is the effulgent witness. He is not subject to any *karma-phala*. He is always free, enjoying himself without doing anything.

If he is not eating, then why should he sit there and watch the other person eating? He sits there because without him the other cannot eat. A few examples are given here to unfold this clearly. Like a king who does not perform any action, but in whose presence the whole kingdom is active, or like a magnet which performs no action, but makes all the iron filings active. So too, *ātman* itself does not perform any action or enjoys, but by its mere presence it becomes the cause for the *jīva* to perform various actions and enjoy the results.¹³²

It is like the sun that lights up everything without any action on its part. One sees the objects lighted up by the sun; therefore one says the sun lights them up. But the sun itself does not perform an action of lighting up. The ātman illumines everything, including the sun, because the nature of the ātman is to illumine. It lends its existence and consciousness making it possible for this *jīva* to enjoy. It is not an action really. The use of the verb is only figurative.

The *jīva* himself is conscious because of the consciousness of the ātman alone. The 'I' thought in the one who things, 'I enjoy' is centered on ātman which is pure consciousness. Wherever there is a body, consciousness manifests in it as a doer and enjoyer. What is manifested is a shadow or reflection, and the one that manifests is the reality. This reflected consciousness in the mind, called the *jīva* is *mithyā*. The consciousness of the conscious *jīva* is, *satya*, and with reference to *māyā-upādhi* it is called *Īśvara*. Without the presence of *satya*, the *mithyā jīva* cannot exist and enjoy, which is why it is said *sayujau*, they are together.

The enjoyer-ship on the part of the *jīva* is *mithyā*. Even when the enjoyer-ship is understood as *mithyā*, it continues as such. If the enjoyer-ship goes away, then what remains is only one *ātma* and there is no need to mention 'two birds'. The mention of 'two birds' is there in the śruti because *mithyā* is not like the rope-snake. It is like the clay-pot. In the rope-snake, the snake goes away when one understands the snake to be a rope. But in the clay-pot, the pot continues to be there even when it is understood as *mithyā*. There is an 'as though' pot now. Similarly, even after the knowledge that ātman is free of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship, there is a transactional *ahankāra* that continues to be there with the reality of the doer-ship and enjoyer-ship sublated. It is important that the śruti mentions '*dvau*, two'. It is how the reality is. The doer and the enjoyer are ātman but the ātman is not the doer and enjoyer. That solves one's problem of *saṁsāra*.

The imagery of the two birds has given rise to a new philosophy - 'God is sitting in heaven and watching everyone. His eyes are all over, and there is no way of our doing anything without his knowing. Of course he loves all. Out of love alone he watches.' The *śāstra* has clearly said that all that is here is Brahman. In spite of such clear revelation, some people make out a philosophy of difference out of this imagery. One has to analyze and ascertain the meaning of the *śāstra* to get clarity in one's understanding of the vision.

The śruti explains this imagery further in the next mantra.

125 वृक्षं वृक्षमिव यच्छेदन-सामान्यात् शरीरं वृक्षम् ज (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

126 अयं हि वृक्षः ऊर्ध्वम्यलोऽवाक्शाखः अश्वत्थोऽव्यक्त-मूल-प्रभवह् क्षेत्र-संणअकः सर्वप्राणि-कर्म-फलाश्रयः ज (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

127 श्वे न तिष्ठति इति अश्वत्थः ।

128 कर्म-निष्पन्नं सुख-दुःख-लक्षणं फलम् । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

129 इतरः ईश्वरः नित्य-शुद्ध-बुद्ध-मुक्त-स्वभावः सर्वज्ञः सर्वोपाधिः । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

130 प्रेरयिता ह्यसौ उभयोः भोज्य-भोक्तोः नित्य-साक्षित्व-सत्तामात्रेण । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

131 चकासृ-धातोः यङ्लुगन्त-रूपम् । अभितः पश्यतीत्यर्थः ।

132 पश्यत्येव केवलम् । दर्शन-मात्रं हि तस्य प्रेरयितृत्वम् । (मुण्डक भाष्यम्)

to be continued....

The concept of yajña in the Bhagavad Gītā¹

Continuation from last issue...

The concept of yajña

The Bhagavad Gītā prescribes a life of yajña for the removal of śoka and moha and the consequent discovery of one's true happy self. Traditionally, a Vedic fire ritual offered to propitiate various devatās for gaining certain desired results is termed a yajña. It was a cooperative effort that needed the help of the whole community. One person offers the bricks needed for the yajñaśālā, a mason constructs it, etc. Also, in this ritual what is offered is very important. In this sense, yajña is defined as देवतोद्देशेन द्रव्यत्यागः. Here, offering is the important aspect. In the Bhagavad Gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa employs the word yajña in a much broader sense to teach us some important principles. In Gītā, importance is given to the spirit of offering. The word yajña is used for the very first time in Gītā in

verse 9 of chapter 3.

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचरः ॥

yajñārthātkarmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ |

tadārthaṁ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara || Gītā 3.9

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary on this verse quotes a reference from the śruti for the word yajña which defines it as Lord Viṣṇu, यज्ञो वै विष्णुः (yajño vai Viṣṇuḥ). Lord Kṛṣṇa states that an action performed with an attitude of offering to Īśvara is yajña.

Note that the action is not mentioned. Only the attitude with which it should be performed is prescribed. We find ourselves doing many roles. And different situations demand how we should play these roles. Lord Kṛṣṇa recommends that we do the actions with a sense of offering, that is, yajna. Then, one may ask, how about computer work, daily chores, etc. Should they also be done with a sense of offering to Īśvara? “Yes,” says Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Who is Īśvara?

In fact, Īśvara and how He should be propitiated are well defined in Bhagavad Gītā in 18.46:

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānāṁ yena sarvamidaṁ tatam |

svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ ||

(Through one's duty, worshipping Him from whom is the creation of the beings, by whom all this is pervaded, a human being gains success.).

We need to understand that all activities like shining of the sun, flow of the water movement of the air, etc. are all impelled by Īśvara. In fact, whoever/whatever is in front of you is the Īśvara. Whomever you interact with is नारायणः(Nārāyaṇaḥ), वासुदेवः (Vāsudevaḥ). Vāsudevaḥ is derived from the meaning of the root वस् “to dwell,” the one who dwells in all the hearts. Cultivate the virtue of kindness to break the cycle of resentment and sadness. If Īśvara is in the hearts of all, would that mean that one’s difficult boss, annoying neighbor, etc. are also Vāsudeva? Does one interact with them with a sense of offering? Yes. One may protest that it is very difficult to show kindness to them. One may even ask, “Will I not become the “doormat” for everyone by being kind to everyone?” No. Wishing well for all is kindness. How to do it? One has to cultivate it. One has to subdue the impulse of anger. It is important to know that when one reacts with anger, one starts a cycle of misery and resentment. We all know the popular story of the cycle of resentment between King Drupada and Ācārya Drona and its consequences from Mahābhārata. In the story, the resentment cycle was finally broken by Draupadi when she pardoned Aśvatthāmā, the son of Drona.

Soft Skill

Yajna is the attitude of offering oneself to the wellbeing of others. Its expression is kindness, wishing everyone well. It is not a sign of weakness. Usually, rāga and dveṣa, likes and dislikes, determine our interaction with others. They are expressed as partiality, cruelty, etc. If we continue in this manner, then anger, greed, etc. will continue to grow. The more one resents, the more it grows and ultimately leads to one’s unhappiness. The cause of one’s unhappiness is one’s own resentful, regretful mind. Such a mind is the bondage(मन एव मनुष्यानां बन्धमोक्षयोः कारणम्) Every situation or interaction is an opportunity to be a sādḥaka (striver). External factors do the job of just pushing the “buttons” on us and we react. The only way to be happy is to subdue the tendencies of resentment, anger, greed etc. and cultivate the opposite tendencies. Initially, one has to cultivate them deliberately. If one fails to do so, the resentment cycle continues. We should remind ourselves to be kind and not hurting others. It should become our habit. Evil thoughts may occur, but one deliberately cultivates the opposite tendencies. Every moment or situation is an opportunity to bring out the kindness. That is happiness, born of one’s inherent goodness, kindness and not born of an outside source. Happiness born of the attitude of offering is not binding. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that happiness comes from the pleased mind is sātṣvik and is everlasting. This is yajña, an offering of oneself.

Offering one’s goodness, kindness is karma yoga. This attitude of contributing to other people's happiness by being a kind, generous person is karma yoga. One need not try to win an argument. Trying to win an argument is binding. One’s rāga and dveṣa drive oneself to win the argument and not to lose. May one subdue them by letting the other win the argument. This attitude of kindness is worship of Īśvara. So, every interaction is an opportunity for us to invoke this attitude and hence, Īśvara. Lord Kṛṣṇa invokes this spiritual law of happiness in verse 3.9 तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय - perform action for the sake of yajna. It is a soft skill that we should develop. With the attitude of offering, that is, yajña, any occasion can be converted to a situation of happiness. We can start with the easy cases first and take up the difficult ones as we make progress.

to be continued....

¹ This article is excerpted from the talks on the subject given by Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati in New Jersey, July 6-8, 2017. It is prepared by Mani Natarajan, Piscataway, New Jersey.

Understanding the Unconscious¹

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Continuation from previous issue.....

Gradual erosion of the child's total trust

A mother is trustworthy until her mobile rings. Once upon a time the door was knocked upon. Once upon a time the telephone rang. That was all 'once upon a time'. Now the mobile rings and you are away from the child. The child feels deprived because there is inconsistency. You are not around all the time. I want you to understand this thoroughly. We cannot afford to be ignorant of a few things. We need to know.

Inconsistency causes disturbance to the child. In its awareness, the mother has to be around. As the baby grows, it also recognises the other familiar voice of a different frequency that was heard while it was pre-natal, sometimes in the morning and evening. Sometimes it is heard after ten days. Even that is a soothing experience and gives a sense of security. Well, this consistency on the part of a mother makes the child feel secure. She may not be a working mother. This 'working mother' is a new expression, as though the other mothers do not work. They work in the kitchen, go to the market; they work at home. As long as the mother is not away in the child's awareness, the child feels secure. As long as the mother does not fall ill, the child is secure. As long as the mother does not share the attention with another baby, the child is secure. As long as the mother does not raise her voice, the child is secure. As long as the mother does not argue with the other frequency-voiced person, the child is secure.

You can understand now that as the child grows, the insecurity also grows. It begins to see the fallibility, the inconsistency. Where is the total trust? The total trust gets violated, gets eroded all the time. In a joint family the child always had a lap, an empty lap. It sat on the empty lap of a grandmother or of an aunt. Now there are no empty laps; even if a lap is empty, there is a laptop on it. Where is there an empty lap? There is no empty lap available, so the child grows insecure, and remains insecure, constantly seeking the same safety, the same security that it had experienced before it was born.

This particular experience of the child, which remains throughout its life, is what is called the unconscious. Every adult has the responsibility to process this insecurity with which one cannot live. To live intelligently, to live objectively, one has to understand this unconscious very thoroughly. The unconscious interprets everything. It vitiates every experience. It distorts everything. Nothing is seen as it is. We need to become conscious of this unconscious. We will.

We have an equivalent word 'kaṣāya' in Sanskrit for the term unconscious. Kaṣāya controls one's life; one has no control over it. The nature of kaṣāya, the unconscious, is such that you cannot have any say over it, in as much as it is something that you are not conscious of. Really speaking, our mechanical behavior comes

from this unconscious. Scriptures, such as the Bhagavad Gétā and the Upaniṣads, also address the problems caused by the unconscious. The word ‘ātmavān’ of the scriptures, means the one who has ātmā. Everybody has an ātmā. Ātmā here is the whole kārya-karaṇa-sanghāta, our body- mind-sense complex. Ātmavān is the one who has a say over the ways of one’s mind. It reveals our ĠNstra’s recognition that one needs to address one’s kañāya. In fact the whole Hindu saàskāti culture recognises this as an issue to be addressed.

Let us understand this kañāya, the unconscious. The human child, the survivor, wants to have its gods always on its side. Obviously it does not want to lose them or their grace. The child expects the parents to be totally free from any form of limitation. Where is the possibility? Knowledge-wise, power-wise, health-wise, longevity-wise, consistency- wise, the mother has to be free from limitation, but the fact is that the mother has limitations. As for the father, he has many more, not fewer. Therefore, as the child grows, the total trust that the child enjoyed gets violated. The helplessness of the child continues. The two-year-old is helpless. It has discovered its own ego, but begins to discover more and more limitations in the parents without verbalizing them. The non- verbal recognition of the limitations that violate trust is deadly. This is the pain that forms the unconscious. The child cannot afford to have this pain. It will die of pain. Therefore, in nature, let us call it ‘nature’ for the time being, there is a provision for the child to put this pain under the carpet, the carpet of the conscious mind. It is the flip side of the ego, the shadow part of oneself, which we call the unconscious.

Impact of nursery school on the child

In these days of competition, we send the children to school even before they are two years old. I saw in a nursery school, in Bhavnagar (Gujarat), a child of just eighteen months old. I asked for its mother but the mother was not there. The person who runs this school, and who happened to be my host, was very happy, joyous, that in her school there was a child of one and one half years. She said, “You know, Swamiji, this child is only eighteen months old.” It was a complete and deadly violation of the child’s trust. It was blatant. Already, there are some violations that a parent cannot avoid. The mother has to go here and there; in between there are some quarrels, there is some headache, there is some shouting and so on. This is a mortal’s lot, which itself causes enough problems for the child. These are the normal problems of people. If a one and a half year old, a two-year old or a three-year old is sent to a school, separating it from the mother, it is the cause for neurosis.

In the awareness of the child there is no presence of the mother. In fact, the child feels banished when it is sent to the school; the mother has vanished from its awareness. The child feels that the all-knowing, almighty mother, the trusted one, cannot commit a mistake. So, it concludes, “Something is wrong with me; that is why I am being sent away.” People say that this neurosis is a contribution of the society. The sociologists talk about this. It is all ignorance, nothing but sheer ignorance. This contribution is only made by the parents. They have banished the child to the school.

The parents question, “How will they learn social etiquette, social skills?” What social skills? Do we not have social skills? Everybody has social skills. You can teach all about social skills in just two days; it does not take time. What we need are stable people. The parents also argue, “How will my child later compete in this competitive world if it does not go to nursery school?”

Further, these elementary schools will not give admission unless I have a nursery school certificate.” That is another problem. We need to change this.

These nursery schools destroy the stability, the sanity of the future generation. The current generation itself comes out of that. Later on, we push these children to score ninety-seven percent, ninety-eight percent, ninety-nine percent and so on. The father scored just seventy percent; the mother scored seventy two percent. If we go by the genetic average, this child should score only seventy one percent. How will he or she score that ninety-nine? Genetically it is illogical. Therefore you constantly push the children until they have a break down. If they do not have a break down, you will not know what they will do later on.

Do not send the children to nursery school. You send the children to school from class one when the child is five year old. That is the correct thing to do.

A need for a re-look at nursery schools

If one sends the child to a nursery school, then someone must accompany the child from home. Therefore, I say, let us have nursery schools where the mother also comes to the school.

“Swamiji, every mother cannot come.”

“Then, why should she become a mother?”

“What Swamiji, she wants to be a mother.”

“But then let her be a mother.”

“No, she is a mother in the morning, a mother in the evening.” “What is she in between?”

“She is a working woman.”

Even at the work place the feeling of a mother is always there. You cannot be a mother in the morning, a mother in the evening, and smother the mother in between. It is impossible. You are a mother always, even without the child. However, if the child is without the mother, it is not right.

We have started two schools now in Chennai where mothers accompany the children. In fact, we should start such a school in every locality. Ask the children to come with their mothers and start one school. Do away with all the nursery schools once and for all or make them do what they ought to do. It is important that they do this because nobody has the right to destroy a life. All evidence says that it is not good for the child, for the whole society, for our culture, for our country. When someone goes against the evidence, then that person has not really understood.

I appeal now to the sanity of the people. We need to be very gentle to our children, sensitive to their needs and never be responsible for separating a child from its mother, from its gods. Never come in between a child and its gods in the name of schooling. In our culture, you cannot come between a husband and his wife. You cannot even walk in between them when they are talking to each other. You cannot walk in between a mother and a child. You cannot walk in between a teacher and his student. You should never come in between the child and its gods. This is very important.

Vedic system of education

In ancient times, we did not have this kind of a situation. When we read the Chāndogya Upaniṣad we find that Uddālaka, the father of Śvetaketu, sent Śvetaketu to a gurukulam when he was twelve years old. We have to learn from the Veda; a child is sent to a gurukulam only after it is twelve years old. Until then the child has to learn at home. It means that the teenage years are spent in the gurukulam. It is a wonderful arrangement for the parents because they are free from the children's teenage problems. The teachers at the gurukulam will deal with the teenage problems. Until he or she is twelve years old, the child has to remain with the parents and study. It is a very sane arrangement.

After all, Madam Montessori's system came within the last few years. We can change it again within a few years. Ms. Montessori was a good woman. She thought she was contributing something to the growth of the child. She never knew that she was causing neurosis. This neurosis makes the child feel, "I am no good, that is why my mother sent me away." The worst thing is the mother telling me, "Swamiji, my child is different; she loves school. She comes back and tells me all about school and how she enjoyed it." The more the child loves school, the more is the pain underneath. The child seems to be happy because she wants to win her mother back. The more the child expresses its great admiration for the parents, the greater is the pain underneath. The unconscious gets loaded day after day. By the age of four and a half the unconscious build-up is over, and then there is a conscious build-up. The conscious build-up confirms the unconscious anyway. So, during one's entire life there is this feeling that 'nobody likes me, nobody wants me' and a sense of loneliness. In this crowded jagat, there is loneliness. Think this over. When you look up, there are stars. When you look around, there are people and

people. If there are no people, you have enough bugs at least. You do not lack company at any time. How can anybody be lonely? It is only a sense.

Besides this, the child also has an intrinsic sense of its own worth, its own goodness. So the child also feels that it is not understood. It thinks "I have not done anything wrong. Why should I be sent away? Why should I be banished, punished like this? It is not my mistake. And yet, because the parents are gods, "Maybe there is a mistake because I am banished. My parents cannot be wrong, but at the same time, I have not done anything wrong." Thus, the innocent child is really confused. The confusion remains during the entire lifetime of the person; it makes his or her reaction to every situation subjective instead of objective.

One projects things that are not there. Simple things are converted into problems. For instance, somebody, who is very dear to you was trying to sneeze, and that was exactly the time you asked the person, "Do you still like me?" The person was trying to sneeze and was making such contortions that his face looked as though he was frowning. Since his face was 'frowning', it was taken to be an answer, a negative answer. Even body language becomes a very big problem.

Need for communication at home

When there is no communication at home, people walk on eggshells. Parents tell me, "*Swamiji*, we never quarrel in the presence of our children." Do they really believe that the children do not know that they quarrel? Well, the children always sense that something has happened. Later, when the parents return laughing, the child

sees something wrong in that extra laughter and walks on eggshells in the house. In the West, such a home is called dysfunctional. You can understand what a dysfunctional home is. Between the parents there is no understanding, no amity and there is no joy; so the child is always in a panic. This is before the child is four and a half years old and even after that the panic continues.

Structured society was a blessing

Long ago, the Indian mind was considered to be solid and secure because people lived in a highly structured and predictable society. If the father were a priest, the son also would be a priest. Therefore, there were no worries about what one would do in life. The son would be a priest. He may be a better priest, more informed, highly educated and a scholar. Thus, in the very profession itself excellence was accomplished. Because it was secure and structured, there was some sanity in the society. I do not want that kind of a social system to come back. I do not care for that, but I care for sanity and we cannot barter it away for anything. Why are we sacrificing emotional stability?

Happiness is accepting oneself totally as a person

A part of Indian society is the person who is happy just sitting under a tree. He does not have anything. This is something to tell the whole world. A person with a mere loincloth is blessed when he is happy and contented, *kaupīnavantaḥ khalu bhāgyavantaḥ*. It is not that all loin-clothed people are blessed, but there are people who are happy being what they are, even if they do not have anything. After all, what is it that one wants to accomplish? You need to accept yourself as a person totally. If you have total acceptance inside and outside, you have made it. Until then, you seek the approval of others, approval of the society. You want to prove yourself to be somebody. It is a constant struggle.

Stability in a structured society and home

We say this is a progressive society. Honestly speaking, India had a sanity that everyone admired. Even today, there is a reality that we better recognize. I do not say it as a credit to us. What is that reality? Every one of the post-war independent countries, countries that became independent from the colonizing countries, has had coups. Even in our neighboring country, which was a part of this country, a country carved out of our country, there have been coups, one after another. Then, how come there has not been a single coup in India? Is there something wrong with us? Did not India have situations where there should have been a revolution? Were there no occasions for a coup? There were occasions, but then, a coup never took place. It is our culture; there is sanity and there is stability. I do not want to think that it is a left over of our past culture. It has not completely disappeared; it is still alive.

In a structured society there is stability. In a structured home there is stability. When the home is not structured, when what happens today and what will happen tomorrow are not very clear, the home becomes dysfunctional. The children are always in a panic.

The unconscious controls one's life

Everyone has an unconscious. That is why a lot of things happen to us, like *krodha*, anger. It is not that we are consciously getting angry. Anger is considered to be a *mahāpāpmā*, the greatest enemy, sitting inside us. Anger is born of the unconscious.

With reference to desire, there is a certain choice involved. With anger, the choice is surrendered. That is the reason why one cannot decide to be angry. You cannot consciously be angry even if I plead to you. I can ask you to clap, "Please clap." You can either clap, or you need not clap, because freedom is literally in your hands. When I said, "Clap, come on, clap", some of you clapped, some of you did not clap and perhaps thought, like typical Indians, "Others will clap, why should I clap?" In this clapping, there is complete freedom. It is centered on your will. You can either do it or you need not do it. Yet, when I tell you, "Be angry for half a minute", it is different. Not being angry is one thing, but being incapable of being angry is quite another. Not doing *adharma* is one thing, but being incapable of doing *adharma* is quite another. It is entirely a different level of one's growth. Are you incapable of being angry just for half a minute? Well, one does get angry but not consciously, which amounts to saying that one gets angry unconsciously.

"Swamiji, it is not that unconsciously I get angry. There is always somebody that makes me angry." No, it is the unconscious. If somebody can make you angry, it is due to the unconscious. Nobody is capable of making you angry. You have given yourself to somebody for him or her to make you angry; this is the unconscious. It means that you live in a world of your own projection. There is no person or anything in the world that can make you angry. Anger is a symptom. It is an outcome and an expression of the pain that is there in the unconscious. Therefore, the unconscious is a child frozen in time.

Everyone has a child in himself or herself. The child has something beautiful; it has innocence, it has freshness. It gives you those curious looks, asks curious questions, the what, why, how and so on. They always have the same freshness whether they come from the child outside, the child within or from the adult.

If the adult ego and the child are one and the same, integrated, then one always looks at things afresh, always questions, always wants to know. We need that child, its freshness. Even now you have that. Yet, when anger takes over, jealousy takes over, hatred takes over, one feels possessed.

Processing the unconscious

Arjuna asked the question, "Why does one do things even when one does not want to?" It is an old question, nothing new. I have told you that the reason for this is the unconscious, the inner child. One's life is controlled by the unconscious, so it has to be ventilated, to be brought out, to be expressed. In life it is expressing itself anyway, without your knowledge. If you do not have an insight into this, it will continue to express throughout your life. If you have knowledge, you can process the whole matter. You can welcome your fears; you can welcome your anxieties. Since you have the knowledge of what is going on, you can understand; you have the space provided by that knowledge. Knowledge is the only saving grace.

To be continued....

¹ Edited excerpt from *Intelligent Living*, Arsha Vidya Research and Publications, Chennai, 2006

2017 Bhāṣya Retreat at AVG, Saylorsburg¹

Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati taught the Śāṅkara bhāṣya of the Ajātaśatru Brāhmaṇa of Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (Chapter II, section 1) during a weeklong retreat from July 9-15, 2017 at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA. Swamiji unfolded the intricate aspects of this Brāhmaṇa with lucidity and brilliance, two prominent hallmarks of his teaching style. The grandeur of Śāṅkara's commentary was brought out with an admirable felicity that additionally highlighted Swamiji's deep reverence for Śāṅkara and the teaching tradition. The Ajātaśatru Brāhmaṇa is essentially a delineation of the correct and incorrect understanding of the absolute reality, Brahman, which is in fact, oneself. This *ātma-anātma viveka* is presented in the form of a story, *ākhyāyikā*. This is so because of the *durvijñeyatvam*, the difficulty of understanding the truth due to its abstruseness. The *ākhyāyikā* also served other purposes such as highlighting the traits of the teacher, that of the student and *śraddhā*, the trust, one should have in the teaching. The background of the *ākhyāyikā* is a dialog between Gārgya and Ajātaśatru. Gārgya, a *brāhmaṇa* belonging to the Garga family was the son of Balāki. He was proud because of his ignorance of the real Brahman (असम्यग्ब्रह्मवित्त्वात्). Ajātaśatru, a *kṣatriya*, was the king of Benares and like King Janaka, was benevolent and liked to hear about Brahman. In the beginning Gārgya had the role of the teacher and Ajātaśatru was the student. The roles reversed as the dialog progressed. A transformative change occurred in Gārgya - he became a *jijñāsu*, abandoning his wrong notions and sincerely wanting to know the real Brahman. Ajātaśatru was an exemplar of humility (सम्यग्ब्रह्मवित्त्वात्) not only when he had the role of a student but also even after his role was switched to that of a teacher.

Following the *sambandha* bhāṣya at the beginning of Chapter 2, Swamiji summarized with succinctness and clarity the topics covered in Chapter 1, particularly the *avidyā sūtra* (the subject matter of ignorance) and *vidyā sūtra* (the subject matter of knowledge), and introduced the subject of the Ajātaśatru Brāhmaṇa. The subject matter of ignorance was explained as of two kinds - the internal vital force and the external covering of it. These two are likened to the internal hidden pillars of a house and the external ingredients of the house such as straw, grass and mud etc. that covered the internal support structure. The vital force has various manifestations according to the different external media. Gārgya took the internal vital force, conditioned by the media, as his self and came to the court of Ajātaśatru with the intention to teach the latter about this conditioned Brahman. Although the king knew the unconditioned Brahman, nevertheless was desirous of listening to Gārgya who then went on to describe the various manifestations of the conditioned Brahman. Gārgya started with sun as

Brahman, “That being who is in the sun, I meditate upon as Brahman.” (य एवासावादित्ये पुरुष एतमेवाहं ब्रह्मोपास इति) *Ajātaśatru* stopped *Gārgya* from proceeding further and told him that he knew of this meditation and also of the results of such a meditation. *Gārgya* perhaps was not prepared for such a response from *Ajātaśatru* and therefore proceeded to describe the moon as Brahman, “That being who is in the moon, I meditate upon as Brahman.” (य एवासौ चन्द्रे पुरुष एतमेवाहं ब्रह्मोपास इति) Again, *Ajātaśatru* protested and told *Gārgya* that he knew of the meditation of the moon as Brahman and also of its results. In this manner the dialog continued with *Gārgya* narrating 12 things to meditate as Brahman and they included the sun, moon, lightening, space, air, agni, waters, looking glass, sound, quarters, shadow and *Hiranyagarbha*. *Ajātaśatru* rejected every one of these contentions of *Gārgya* as Brahman. *Gārgya* became silent as he did not know to continue any further. *Gārgya* was a *saguṇa* *Brahma upāsaka* and naturally did not know the *nirguṇa* Brahman. When his notions were challenged a transformative change occurred in *Gārgya*. He wanted to know the real Brahman and asked *Ajātaśatru* to teach him ignoring even the propriety of the custom that a *kṣatriya* cannot teach a *brāhmaṇa*. *Ajātaśatru*, without necessarily assuming the role of a teacher, proceeded to share with *Gārgya* the knowledge of Brahman. However, first he has to refute *Gārgya*’s wrong understanding. Here, the Upaniṣad employs the *anvaya-vyatireka* method of demonstrating that the vital force, *prāṇa*, is not the *mukhya ātmā* as thought by *Gārgya*. The *ākhyāyikā* describes an experiment that *Ajātaśatru* performed which subsequently is unfolded through a *pūrvapakṣa - siddhānta* technique to prove that *prāṇa* is *anātmā*.

The king, taking *Gārgya* by hand, approached a sleeping man and tried to wake him up by addressing him with the names of *prāṇa* as *brhan*, *pāṇḍaravāsaḥ*, *soma*, and *rājan*. When the sleeping man did not wake up, the king shook him up till he got up. From this simple demonstration the king conveyed to *Gārgya* that *prāṇa* was not the agent or *bhoktā* in the body. At this point in the Upaniṣad the bhāṣya reveals the inimitable style of Śaṅkara who walks us through the *pūrvapakṣa - siddhānta* reasoning process to arrive at the inevitable conclusion that *prāṇa*, is not the *mukhya ātmā*. The following facts are established by Śaṅkara: 1) If *prāṇa* were to be the agent or *bhoktā*, it would have heard its names. But it did not and hence not the *bhoktā* like a stone etc. 2) The argument that sense organs such as hearing are quietened in sleep and hence the sleeping man did not hear when he was called by several names is not tenable. If *prāṇa* would have had the *pradhānatā* in sleep, the sense organs would be active just as when the master was awake, his servants would also be awake. Thus, the sleeping man would have heard his names when called. However, this was not the case. 3) The names of the moon deity were used to address the sleeping man. His non-response showed the *abhokṛtvam* of the *candra devatā* and by extension that of all other *devatās*. 4) If *prāṇa* were to be the *bhoktā*, by its very nature, it should have perceived objects whenever it came in contact with them. A thing cannot change that which is ascertained to be its nature - *na hi yasya yaḥ svabhāvo niścitaḥ sa taṁ vyabhicarati kadācidapi*

(न हि यस्य यः स्वभावो निश्चितः स तं व्यभिचरति कदाचिदपि).

While *prāṇa* is shown to be not the agent or *bhoktā* by the experiment with the sleeping man, a question arose as to why this could not have been proven in the waking state. Bhāṣyakāra responds by saying that in the waking state the seer or subject (specifically, the *viññānamaya ātmā*) and the seen or the object (*prāṇa*) are mixed up while in sleep the *viññānamaya ātmā* is asleep and yet the *prāṇa* is present. Therefore, the discrimination between the seer and seen is possible in sleep.²

The retreat concluded with the 15th *kaṇḍikā* and Swami Veditatmanandaji will continue with the remaining five *kaṇḍikās* of the Brāhmaṇa in the 2018 retreat. Swamiji's consistent eloquence and methodical treatment of the text and the *bhāṣya* were astounding, to say the least. He was an exemplar of the characteristics of an *ācārya* that were portrayed through Ajātaśatru in the *ākhyāyikā*. The following famous verse describes the qualities of an *ācārya*:

आचिनोति च शास्त्रार्थान् आचारे स्थापयत्यपि। स्वयं आचरते यस्मात् तस्मादाचार्य उच्यते॥

ācinoti ca śāstrārthān ācāre sthāpayatyapi | svayaṃ ācarate yasmāt tasmādācārya ucyate ||

An *ācārya* is one who teaches the meanings of the *śāstras*, adopts them in his own practice, and establishes others in those *ācāras*. All these are splendidly apt descriptions of Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati.

In a retreat like this the attendees have varied backgrounds and hence the teacher has the difficult job of communicating the subject matter at a level that appeals equally to all students. For this, a teacher has to have not only great felicity but also enormous compassion. Swamiji shines in both these respects. Swamiji looked at the twelve *upāsanās* highlighted by Gārgya as nothing but ways to see the *vibhūti*s of the Lord. These meditations can in fact bring sensitivity to one's life in appreciating the whole cosmos as nothing but the manifestation of *Īśvara*. This is sensitive living to effortlessly bring *Īśvara* into one's life as Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati taught.³ A sensitive *bhakta* seeing *Īśvara* in everything in the creation soon discovers that one's reality is essentially no different from that of *Īśvara*.

¹ This article is penned by Dr. V. Swaminathan of New Jersey, an attendee at the camp. It is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject matter. Any error in the summary is that of the author only.

² *anubhūtiprakāśaḥ, bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad vivaraṇam, ajātaśatru vidyā prakāśam: 14.7-8*

³ *Īśvara in One's Life, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, ISBN: 9789380049731, Arsha Vidya Research and Publication*

BRAHMA SUTRA CLASS COMMENCED

Brahma Sutra is the culminating text in the traditional Vedantic learning. Having grasped the Bhagavat Gita and major Upanishads (along with Adi Shankaracarya's bhashyam) under the guidance of Guru, study of Brahma Sutra is normally taken up.

Tradition has it that the antevasis (shishyas in any gurukulam) pay their obeisance to their revered guru in a befitting manner whenever the Brahma Sutram study is initiated. At Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti on August 3, 2017 Brahma Sutra Classes commenced for the present batch of students.

Benign blessing of Pujya Swamiji was invoked with the presence of his paduka kept as altar along with the Brahma Sutra books. After the completion of Saraswati puja at Dakshinamurthy temple, Swami Sadatmananda distributed Brahma Sutra books to the students at Guru Thirtha. Led by Acharya students went in a procession from Guru Thirtha to the lecture hall carrying Brahma Sutra book on their head.



Altar



SaraswatiPuja

At lecture hall Swami Sadatmananda was welcomed with purna kumbha amidst chanting of traditional vedic mantras. In keeping with tradition the class was commenced with the recitation of all ten Santi mantras followed by offering of namaskarams for every stanza of dakshinamurthy stotram.

Swami Sadatmananda explained the importance of prasthanatraya study in the tradition. Study of Bhagavad Gita (Smriti), Upanishads (Sruti) and Brahma Sutra (Nyaya) makes the Vedanta study complete. Brahma Sutra, like a thread, strings all the flowers of Vedanta statements. In keeping up with the tradition established by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati, students will study Brahma Sutra with Ratna Prabha tikka.

Swamiji commenced the teaching with Adhyasa Bhasyam. This great day will ever be remembered in the life of long term course students of 2014-17 batch at Anaikatti Gurukulam.

Salutation to the whole guru parampara.

-Report by N. Avinashilingam

87th BIRTHDAY OF PUJYA SWAMIJI

87th birthday of Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati was celebrated on August 15th with immense gusto and veneration at AVG, Anaikatti.

SAMASTI SAHASRA NAMA ARCANA: *Sahasra-nama-archana* of Dakshinamurthi and chanting of *bija* mantra was performed at the Dakshinamurti temple. Puja was participated by Swamis, Swaminis, students and guests.

ACHARYA'S ANUGRAHA BHASANAM: *Avataranam iti avatarah* .Coming down as it were is *avataranam*. Lord who is omnipotent, omniscient, omniform –that Lord, as if coming down in a particular form for a particular purpose and for a particular situation is called *avataranam*. *Yada yada he dharmasya ...* is the famous quote from Bhagavat Gita, as we all knew. Whenever there is weakening of *dharm*a and consequently *adharma* becomes more predominant, Lord takes *avatara* to protect sadhus/right people and annihilate *adharma* forces.

Similar is the case with the mahatmas. *Mahapurushas* birth also serves the same purpose of the *avatara* of Lord, in keeping with situation and time. The *mahapurushas* strengthen *dharmic* people by properly guiding them (*paritraya-sadhunam*) and prevent *adharmic* forces by advising them right path (*vinashayadhushkritam*), which is also like the *avatara* purpose. The enemies can be destroyed by converting them in to friends!!.

Yesterday –14th August 2017 –we celebrated Krishna *jayanti* , the *avatara* purusha during Mahabharata time. Today we are celebrating Pujya Swamiji's birthday who is also a contemporary *avatara purusha*, who not only continued the *Vedantic* teaching *sampradaya* but also established Dharmarakshana Samihiti, Acarya Sabha etc., for the propagation of *dharm*a.

On this day we pray to Lord and Pujya Swamiji to bless us in our pursuit of *dharm*a and *adhyatma vicara*.

PUJYA SWAMIJI'S VIDEO: A recorded video talk of Pujya Swamiji was played in the lecture hall. In the talk, Pujya Swamiji explained that mental growth and not physical growth can be considered as real growth. This mental growth, one can get only when he contributes more to the society and consumes less in a spirit of *karma-yoga*. We should all be thankful for being born in this Bharat, which is a *punya bhumi* where such an environment is available. We should make the best use of this opportunity.

Maha prasadam was offered to all those present.



'Acarya's anugrahana Bhaghanam'



'Acarya's anugrahana Bhaghanam'

' Sahasranama Arcana for Lord Medha Dakshinamurti on the occasion of Pujya Swamiji's birthday'



-Report by N. Avinashilingam

Events at AVG August 2017

BRAHMA SUTRA CLASSES COMMENCED: On August 3, 2017 Swami Sadatmananda started teaching Brahma Sutra.

Krishna Jayanti Celebration: On August 14 th Janmashtami was celebrated with full devotion at AVG lecture hall.

PUJYA SWAMIJI'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION: On August 15, 2017, Samasti Saharasranama Arcana was done.

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION: On August 15, 2017, led by Swami Sadatmananda, the students chanted National Anthem on the Independence Day.

VISITORS FROM JAPAN: On August 18, 2017, Mukti and a group of visitors from Japan visited the Gurukulam. They stayed here for a week.



Krishna Jayanti Puja

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

September 2, 2017 GURU PEYARCHI PUJA:

September 28, 2017 VALEDICTORY FUNCTION OF LONG TERM COURSE:

October 1, 2017 PUJYA SWAMIJI'S ARADHANA DAY (BY TITHI):

Oct 2 to Oct 8, 2017 VEDANTA CAMP: The Essence of the Upanisads by Swami Sadatmanandaji

Nov18 to24, 2017 JNANA YAJNA AT COIMBATORE by Swami Omkarananda at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, RS Puram, Coimbatore

Nov 26, 2017 27TH ANNIVERSARY OF GURUKULAM

Nov 27, 2017 PREPARATION FOR BALALAYAM

Nov 30, 2017 Commencement of Thiruppani towards Mahakumbhabhishekam

June 17, 2018 MAHAKUMBHABHISHEKAM OF TEMPLES



Mukti and her Japanese visitors

-Report by N. Avinashilingam

PUJYA SWAMIJI'S BIOGRAPHY IN TAMIL RELEASED

A book titled '**Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati- Valkai kuripu (A brief biography)**' written by N. Avinashilingam was released on August 15, 2017 on the occasion of Pujya Swamiji's birthday at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti.

Swami Prasantananda, a senior disciple of Pujya Swamiji released the book. Swamini Brahmaleenananda, who has translated Pujya Swamiji's Gita Home Study Course in Tamil received the first copy. Sri N. Subramanian who translated Pujya Swamiji's biography from English to Tamil received the second copy. Copies were also given to Swami Sudeerananda, Swamini Mahatmananda, Sri Ramanji, Sri S. Srinivasan, Brni. Chandramma, Sri S. N. Ramachandran and Sri AL. S. T. Manickam.

Swami Prasantananda told that Swami Sadatmananda, requested him to release the book and deliver the talk in Tamil for the benefit of majority of people assembled on the occasion of Pujya Swamiji's birth day. Swami Prasantananda explained the great contribution by Pujya Swamiji to our tradition and culture.



In the foreword to the book, Swami Paramarthananda mentioned, "Pujya Swamiji had an eventful life and his contributions spread over several areas. Hence any biography on him will be voluminous and readers may find it difficult to go through a huge book. This brief biography on Swamiji will be a boon for such people. I congratulate Sri Avinashilingam for bringing out this brief biography covering all the important aspects of Swamiji's life. May the book inspire the readers to follow his teachings which embody all the aspects of traditional wisdom."

Swami Omkarananda, in his foreword to the book mentioned, "Pujya Swamiji's contribution to Vedanta teaching is praise worthy and he was a great protector of Sanatana dharma. I am happy to learn that Sri Avinashilingam has compiled Swamiji's biography in Tamil. My blessings to the author, his family and all readers of this book, for atma-jnanam, and prosperity."

More than **6,100 readers have read the soft copy** of Pujya Swamiji's brief biography in English, Tamil, Hindi, Japanese and Portuguese, which is available for free download from www.arshaavinash.in. **4,000 copies of Pujya Swamiji's brief biography in English have been printed and distributed** free to the disciples of Pujya Swamiji. Now 1,500 copies of Pujya Swamiji's brief biography in Tamil have been printed for free distribution.

-Report by N. Avinashilingam



MahaKumbabishekam of Sri MedhaDakshinamurthy Temple

at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti will be celebrated on June 17, 2018.

In this connection

**ARSHA VIDYA GURUKULAM, ANAIKATTI &
BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, COIMBATORE KENDRA**

Are Organising a Jnana Yajna by

Pujoyasri Swami Omkarananda

18.11.2017 to 24.11.2017

ARIVE, ANBE, ARAME INBAM
(அறிவே, அன்பே, அறமே இன்பம்)
Evening (6.30p.m. to 8.00 p.m.)

19.11.2017 to 24.11.2017

SRI DAKSHINAMURTHY TATVAM
Morning (7.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.)

Talks will be in Tamil

Venue: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, RS Puram, Coimbatore

All are welcome!

Get Isvara's grace!

"A floral offering at the ADHISHTANAM of Pujya Swamiji in Rishikesh"

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श्रीदयानन्ददशकम्

परमाद्वैततत्त्वज्ञं ज्ञानानन्दप्रकाशनम् । गीतोपनिषदासारं दयानन्दं नमाम्यहम् ॥	१
लघुप्रवाहतत्त्वार्थं श्रोत्रानन्दश्रुतिस्रवम् । घनस्वनप्रसत्तिं च वन्देहं तं दयार्णवम् ॥	२
स्पष्टवागर्थसद्बोधं वागर्थयुक्तजीवनम् । सत्त्वगुण्यप्रकाशं तं भजेहं भक्तिपूरणम् ॥	३
श्लोकसङ्गीतसामोदं श्लोकितापारसद्गुणम् । शोकापोहनसुज्ञानं वन्देहं गीतकारकम् ॥	४
योगसारोपदेशं च ज्ञानयोगोपदेशकम् । रागद्वेषविवर्जं तं वन्देहं तत्त्वबोधकम् ॥	५
अद्वैततत्त्ववाक्यार्थं अद्वितीयसुबोधनम् । अद्वितीयैकसानन्दं तं वन्दे सत्यदर्शनम् ॥	६
ब्रह्मज्ञानप्रकाशं च ब्रह्मैक्यतत्त्वबोधनम् । ब्रह्मानन्दप्रसादं तं वन्देहं सत्त्वभाषिणम् ॥	७
तर्कशास्त्रप्रवीणं च तत्त्वव्याख्यातृतल्लजम् । दयानन्दगुरुं वन्दे दयानन्दसुरूपकम् ॥	८
दशमस्कन्दनाथोपदेशप्रमाणजीवनम् । दशश्लोकनुतिप्रीतं तं वन्दे श्लोकसन्निधिम् ॥	९
गङ्गाक्षेत्रसमाधिं तं गङ्गादर्शनविग्रहम् । गङ्गालयमहापुण्यं दयानन्दं नमाम्यहम् ॥	१०
त्यागब्रह्मगुरुस्वामिशिष्यापुष्पाकृतार्पणम् । दयानन्दगुरुस्तोत्रं परमार्थं शुभप्रदम् ॥	

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शुभमस्तु

-Smt Pushpa Srivatsan

“Yo madbhaktah sa me priyah”

Lord Krishna says Yo madbhaktah, this bhakta, my devotee who is like this, sa me priyah, is dear to me. We will talk about the bhakta, the devotee of the Lord. The discussion, which occurs in as many as six chapters of Bhagavad Gita from Ch 7 to Ch 12, will also involve the Lord (Bhagavan) to whom the bhakta is devoted, and the bhakti, devotion. They are all connected.

Basically what Lord Krishna reveals is that “I am your own self”. He is not away from us, not other than us. He is our own self. Not the self that we think we are, that is not Bhagavan, not Isvara the Lord, but the way we truly are. Vedanta gives us the example of the rope-snake. What is in front of me is a piece of rope and I think it’s a snake. The object is not what I take it to be. That example applies also to our own self. We are different from what we take ourselves to be.

If Lord Krishna says “I am closer than the closest” as our own self, then why do we not know Him? Naham prakasa yas ya yoga maya samavrttah - very well veiled, hidden, by my yoga maya, I am not evident to anybody. I am not recognized as I am by anybody, with some exceptions, very well veiled by my yoga maya. I am so close and yet people do not recognize me because their sights are always elsewhere. In this universe there is nothing other than myself; nothing is superior or inferior to myself. Whatever is, is myself. Not only ourselves, but everything that we encounter is the Lord. Subject, object, whatever is, is Isvara. Then why do we not recognize him?

Lord Krishna says that because I am veiled, covered by my Maya, I manifest myself in certain costumes. In this universe, sattva, rajas and tamas qualities make for three types of entities or names and forms. Sattva is something very dear that we like, something pleasant, tranquil, peaceful which makes us feel happy and satisfied. Rajas is dominant when we find that our mind is agitated, restless, active, desiring, wanting, lacking, or ambitious. Storms, floods and all kinds of disturbances can occur. Tamas is dominant when there is inertia. I find myself dull, inactive, not motivated, not inspired, not wanting to do anything, not interested in anything so that nothing motivates me.

So sometimes we find ourselves with sattvic qualities, sometimes rajasic qualities, sometimes tamasic qualities. Thus, Vedanta says that this universe is made up of these three gunas: sattva rajas and tamas. This applies to our personalities also. We have this gross body primarily made of tamas quality. We are also active people and powering these actions we have prana, the vital air, in our personality. Then we have the organs of perception backed by the mind made up of sattva with which we gain knowledge of the world. Lord Krishna says, “Understand that all of them are from Me. It is I alone who is manifest in the universe with these three-fold costumes of sattva, rajas, and tamas. My personalities are made up of sattva, rajas and tamas. You also. Nature also.”

So who am I? Lord Krishna says that what you experience is superficial, like costumes to an actor. We see only the costumes. Sometimes we feel frustrated, that there should be an answer as to why all this? Whenever we think we have found the answer like the God particle etc., then some more questions will arise. It's a very beautiful thing. Either you can feel frustrated because you don't have the answer or you can enjoy that there need not be an answer. Lord Krishna says "I have this costume of Maya, because of which I appear to be different from what I truly am". In all the costumes you are there. There are many names, but you are one.

The *bhakti* is one whose whole life centers on Bhagavan. Why is devotion important? Why is God important? Because truly recognizing Him is the agenda with which we have been born. We have been sent here with a certain task, a certain problem to solve. Therefore recognizing what is becomes very important. "The wise person recognizes me", says Lord Krishna. What is the Lord. So this is our goal. This is our task. It is like a test that is given to us. You have to clear this test. "Swami, I am not interested." But unfortunately there is no choice. We have to clear this test because we are born with certain desires. We have lots of ambitions, desires, within ourselves. We want to be happy in our lives. We want to be successful in our lives. Nobody can say, Swamiji I don't mind not being happy. I need not be happy. I need not be successful. I don't mind being sad. I don't mind being sorrowful. If somebody can say that, it would be nice, then he is free. But nobody can accept it.

So we are born with an attachment to our desire for happiness. We cannot accept ourselves to be unhappy. Then we have to learn how to be happy. "I know how to be happy, Swamiji. I have surrounded myself with all kinds of things. I go to my Facebook. I get bored with that then I go to WhatsApp. Then I go to Twitter. Then I go to a movie. Then I go to a restaurant. Then I go for a game. So many distractions are there, Swamiji. I know how to make myself happy. I don't need anything else to become happy." All of these can make us happy, no doubt about it, for some time. Our mind being what it is, we ask what next? We want something else. iPhone 1 is exciting. Phone 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, each one comes with new features and people are eagerly waiting. "I just bought iPhone 7 a year ago and now I want a new one." Manufacturers know this. They know how to make people spend money and they earn it at our cost. Our attempts to become happy seem to create hunger for more happiness, hunger for variety, and does not seem to lead us anywhere. Otherwise why should you come here? If the answer for our search for happiness were elsewhere, which most people believe, you would not be here.

Lord Krishna says one among thousands gets an idea that probably what we are doing is not the way to do. Most people spend their life and finish it off. They go from one desire to the other, thinking that if that did not work out something else will work. Life after life can go like that because that is how we are born. Lord Krishna says that all the beings and particularly human beings are born with *iccha* and *dvesha*, *iccha* meaning "this is what I want", *dvesha* meaning "this is what I don't want". In this way they exhaust their lives.

To help us get the insight that maybe what we are doing is not the way to permanent happiness, the scriptures show us the path. We are born with this impulse of *iccha* and *dvesha*, I like this and I do not like this, I want this and I do not want that. Usually those impulses dictate what I do and don't do. I think that by satisfying those impulses, I will be happy. When there is a desire and I satisfy the desire, I feel happy. When I don't like someone and I see that person unhappy, I feel happy.

There are two ways of becoming happy, one is *iccha* and the other is *dvesha*. When we are rooting for a team and we see that the other team is losing, we feel happy. That is called *dvesha*. When we feel happy because others are doing well, that is called *iccha*. Both give us happiness. Right from birth people have *iccha* and *dvesha*. Most people live their lives merely satisfying these impulses of desire and aversion, fulfilling their desires for what they want and avoiding and hating and hurting and retaliating to that which they hate. As more desires are fulfilled, more desires arise. The more I hate others, more hatred arises. It doesn't go. The hatred also keeps on increasing. Most of the people simply spend away their lives as dictated by their *iccha* and *dvesha*.

So, Lord Krishna says that nobody even bothers about Him, nobody wants to know Him. When he has displayed himself and nobody looks at him, can he not feel bad? People look at his costume and don't look at Him. But *jnananam*, *punya karma nam*, if because of our *samskara*, our upbringing, or for whatever reason, we have a value for *punya karma* or virtuous deeds, like a value for being hardworking or honest or truthful or sincere and dedicated, that is called *punya karma*. If we perform an act of virtue, an act of dharma, then dharma comes in our life, *punya karma* comes in our life. A virtue comes in our life that has the effect of neutralizing the influence of *iccha* and *dvesha*. We are born with these impulses, but if because of our *samskaras*, because of upbringing, the family and environment in which we were born, the way we were raised, the kind of values we were given, which were demonstrated by the way our parents lived, then we also adopted these values in our lives, even though living some of those values caused some hardships. Lord Krishna says that when there is *punya karma*, when there is dharma in the life and when there is virtue in the life, slowly there will be a neutralizing of the impulses of *iccha* and *dvesha*. So there is a way out. Even if we are born with *iccha* and *dvesha*, the path of dharma, righteousness, *punya*, also is there.

Bhakti begins with living a life of virtue. Virtue is following the order of the law which obtains in the universe, which is called the moral law. There is the law of the land, which should be followed, but there is also the moral law. Sometimes the law of the land is not sufficient because of many loopholes. Then it is possible for us to violate the law of the land and get away with it. Not everyone stops at a stop sign. You look and go, but don't stop usually. This is the human law and it is possible not to be caught sometimes. But you cannot get away from the moral law. Someone is watching, not only from outside, there is also someone inside who is watching every thought of mine, every intension of mine. The world outside only watches what I do and accordingly I may be treated, but there is someone who watches the intension with which I do it. Even though I can be smiling and appear different from what I really am, that is called *Maya*, and it can delude you.

What I am saying is that after all there is a limitation to what the human law can do to us. We are often smarter than the law and we can find loopholes and get away without being punished. But where the moral law is concerned, we cannot get away because there is someone inside who is watching. Not only my actions are watched, but intensions also are watched. That is where the change has to happen. There is *punya karma* where there is a God fearing person, someone who is not afraid of God but who takes God into account. We behave differently in the presence of different people. With our friends we behave in one way.

With children we behave in a different way, with our parents also in a different way and so on. When there is an important person, a respectable person, a reverential person, then automatically we take that into account and behave in a certain way. Similarly when we recognize that there is God everywhere and watching, we should take Him into account. That is called God-fearing, not afraid of God, but someone who takes God into account, knowing that he is there, and behaves accordingly, reverently. That is how the punya karma comes in our life.

The iccha and dvesha are attenuated. Then the bhakti arises in the heart of the person. That is how Lord Krishna in the seventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita describes his own self and how the bhakti can arise when there is purification in the mind. He describes how impurity can deny us the very bhakti or devotion and how the purity of mind is required to discover the devotion.

This concludes the summary report of the first of eight classes on Verse 16 of Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12. An MP3 digital recording of all eight classes is available for purchase from Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, www.arshavidya.org. The Title is Yo Madbhaktah sa me Priyah, Swami Veditatmananda, Independence Day Weekend, 1-4 July, 2017



Arsha Vidya Newsletter

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Editor

How I fashion my daily life

When it comes to looking at what we mean when we talk about daily living we have a very important epistemological (order pertaining to knowledge, what it means) order. It is closely related to ontological (order of realities) order. The vision of *sastra* is - there are three orders of reality, subjective, objective and oneness. Epistemology is our knowledge of these three realities and together they constitute understanding of life. The moment we see that as understanding, the pursuit towards this understanding becomes choice less, means it is no more available for option. The pursuit becomes imperative, inevitable as less understanding we can't live with.

Subjective reality is 'the world as we see it,' from our own prism of limited understanding, bias and prejudice, a set of values we have imbibed. As we make efforts to improve our level of understanding, reduce bias and prejudice we move to an objective world, 'the world as it is.' It is a never-ending process. The moment we see it as never-ending, again we can't live with it, we look around and see how to end this. It is intelligent living, hard work, therefore there must be a solution. Veda offers the solution. The third level of reality "oneness" is the solution. In fact once understood oneness is seen as the only reality. That can wait. The study of "oneness" promises fulfillment, completeness, a life in harmony with the total.

Our life now gets added meaning. The process is set. Keep moving from the world as we see it to the world as it is. Live our daily life in such a way by doing what it takes to progress in this. Simultaneously pursue study of knowledge of "oneness." In fact Veda says our daily life lived in this fashion makes us more and more qualified and facilitates the study of the knowledge of "oneness."

Our life in this world was seen as an absolute end in itself initially. Now our daily life becomes a means towards the vision of oneness and loses its status as being of ultimate importance. This clear understanding of oneness as our end, as well as an appreciation of its value is the context and the only context for the study of Vedanta. According to Pujya Swamiji without this, nothing will work and the benefits of this study will not be available to us.

With this primary understanding as to our ultimate end and its value we now have before us the task of using our everyday life as a means to transform the quality of our minds so that our minds become a suitable "place" in which the oneness vision can arise so that we have an ascertained knowledge which is clear and doubt free. Without a change in the way we see ourselves, fellow beings, the world and *Ishvara* and a subsequent change in the way we live (what we do and don't do), we will never be able to understand the veda's vision. How we see things and what we do on a daily basis, has a profound effect on the quality of our minds. Our cardinal prayer of *Gāyatrī* mantra epitomizes this: '*dhiyoyonah pracodayat.*' In fact the quality of our minds is the natural consequence of how we see the important existential factors in our lives and how we respond to them. Veda unfolds an objective vision as well as a total vision of oneness.

The objective vision is encapsulated in the words 'everything is Ishvara .' This is a way of seeing not a philosophical proposition. It is a discovery that is possible for us. Without this discovery we can't be relatively freed from our subjectivity. As we will see the Veda's vision of Ishvara which is objectivity itself is what relatively resolves our existential issues (guilt, hurt, envy, anger, delusion fear, depression, etc) and transforms the quality of our minds. This step can't be bypassed.

In fact the daily life gives us an opportunity to make the shift, lift ourselves from the subjective world to objective world. That is a reward in itself in the sense that it gives us a pleasant disposition. It becomes easy to claim the *upanisad's* vision of the pleased person is me, the oneness which is essentially the truth of the total, from which all beings are born, sustained by and resolve into. We all deal with the good, bad and ugly things in life. When we progress in this study from subjectivity to objectivity to oneness, the bad and the ugly lose their sting and come back to me as good as 'good.' **Om tat sat.**

-Article by Ramanathan

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