

## "Tattva-agrahanam"



"*Tattva-agrahanam, nidra*, that means that everyone is in *nidra*, even when one is awake." It was with this statement that Pujya Swamiji began a recent class teaching Mandukya Upanishad to over 100 students in Anaikatti, which included the three-year residential students and many visitors.

Pujya Swamiji continued, "This *tattva-agrahanam*, non-recognition of what is truth, what is truth is non-dual, non-recognition of the non-dual, is *nidra*. Wrong-recognition,

that there is duality, that there is subject-object, that is what we call *svapnam*. Waking also is *svapnam* - that is called *anyathagrahanam*."

The constraints of discussing *advaita* using language, which by default is based in *dvaita*, are circumvented, seemingly without effort, by the *Sastra* and the *guru*. How this is achieved is a wonder in itself. It should be stated and in fact cannot be overstated that the ability of *Sastra* to achieve this is

dependent upon the *guru* to pass the teaching onto the *sisya*. For without the teacher, the *Sastra* can only be understood through the lens of the reader; and it is that reader, that knower, as he or she takes himself or herself to be, that is the very one that has to be negated, leaving the truth, the self-effulgent *atma*.

Mandukya Upanishad begins by saying that *Om* is all this, “*om ityeta sarvaam idam*”. In the very next *mantra*, it is stated that *Brahman* is all this. *Sruti*'s vision is *advaita*, therefore the possibility of having two of “all this” is untenable. *Bhashyakara* explains that *om* is necessarily a name for *Brahman*. Therefore, whether *om* or *Brahman* is used, the meaning is the same. The Upanishad then gives the equation between *atma* and *Brahman*, paving the way for the *vichara* that will lead to the knowledge that there is nothing but *atma*, *Brahman* – that is *advaita*.

Using the *avastha-traya-prakriya* to unfold the equation, Mandukya Upanishad divides the *atma* into four quarters. The waking, dream, and sleep states each comprise one quarter. They are sustained by the fourth quarter, *turiya*. The experiencer in each of the three states are referred to as, *Visva*, *Taijasa* and *Prajna* respectively with their objects of experience being *sthula*, *sukshma* and *ananda*. It is important to note that the Upanishad includes in its discussion of each state from both the individual standpoint and the total standpoint – that is the connection between *jiva* and *Iswara* is made in each state. One cannot discuss the individual without discussing the total –

indeed, there is no individual without the total.

To be one of Pujya Swamiji's students with reference to this particular connection, the connection between *jiva* and *Iswara*, is the difference between glossing over something that is generally not understood – the order that is *Iswara* - and having the vision of Vedanta be taught in a way that one cannot fail to understand. Pujya Swamiji explains that *Iswara*, being all knowledge, manifests as one grand order. Within that one order many smaller orders are found. They can be grouped into three main categories. Those that are centred on the body, *adhyatmika*, include the sense organs; for instance eyes see, ears hear, etc. At the level of *srishti*, *adhibhautika*, are colour, forms, sounds, etc. Thirdly, orders which connect *adhyatmika* and *adhibhautika*, called *adhidaivika*. It includes *karma* and the resulting *punya/papa*.

It is because of the order that is *Iswara* that scientists are able to draw conclusions in various fields of study. For instance, measurement of gravity is dependent amongst other things upon the density of a given planet, the speed at which the planet moves and the altitude at which the measurement takes place. It is not that before Isaac Newton started to ask questions about why the apple “fell down” and landed on his head instead of “falling up”, that there was no gravity! In fact it was also grace, *Iswara*'s order, that gave Newton a mind capable of questioning why things fall down and not up.

Without understanding that cause and effect is nothing more than the order of Iswara, one cannot arrive at *advaita*. For instance, if the behaviour of any given person is taken to be initiated by the “individual”, without taking into account the given background of that person, there is *dvaita*. Why? Because that person is being looked upon as separate from the whole.

How, then is it said that even in waking, one is asleep? Having completed the *vichara* to establish that the waker is the only complete person – that is the only one who recognizes that he or she is the same as the dreamer and the sleeper that are experienced – the *Sruti* and accompanying *kârikâs* negate what the waker takes himself or herself to be, that is limited by the body and mind. It is in this context that Pujya Swamiji started the class with the statement, “*tattva-agrahana-nidra*, that means that everyone is in *nidra*, even when one is awake. This *tattva-agrahana*, non-recognition of what is truth, what is truth is non-dual, non-recognition of the non-dual, is *nidra*. Wrong recognition, that there is duality, that there is subject object, that is what we call *svapna*. Waking also is *svapna* - that is called *anyatha-grahaṇa*”

Merely not knowing the world for what it is, *tattva-agrahanam*, is *nidra*. In sleep, one is unaware of the truth of oneself. The mind being inactive, there is no question of mistaking what is for anything else. However, the ignorance of oneself, which gives rise to the possibility of erroneously superimposing something else onto *atma*, is present. It is this ignorance about oneself

that is the cause of the subjective superimpositions made upon oneself in the waking and dream state. Thus everyone is living in *nidra* who is not awake to the truth of him or herself.

In the waking state there is *karyakarana-bandha*, meaning that the waking state is bound by having both the status of result and cause. That is, there is an *adhiçmāhāna*, the *atma*, which not being understood or known for what it is, which is erroneously taken for other than itself. One is aware of one’s own existence, but because there is *avidyā* regarding the truth of that self-effulgence, it is taken to be limited by the body and mind. In dream also *karyakarana-bandha* is there. The difference being that what is experienced is not initiated by the sense organs, as is generally the case in the waking state. The dream experience is based solely on *vrittis* arising from memories of the waking state and *vasanas*. During dream, not being aware that one is dreaming, the projected world based on memories and *vasanas* that is experienced is taken to be real. So too, the waker taking the waking world to be real, as *anyatha-grahanam*, is living in *svapna*.

The value of the Sanskrit classes that take place alongside the Vedanta classes has really come to the fore in the study of Mandukya Upanishad. Having an understanding of some of the subtleties of *kârakas* brought in by the use of various *vibhaktis*, brings a greater depth to one’s understanding of the discussions of *Bhashyakara*. Further, as one becomes more familiar with the vocabulary, with Pujya

Swamiji's guidance, one is able to discern the difference in writing styles of various authors.

In Pujya Swamiji's afternoon Bhagavad Gita class, we have just made the shift from *tvam-pada vichara* to *tat-pada vichara* by entering the Seventh Chapter. Chapter Six which marked the end of *tvam-pada vichara*, gave timeless instructions to help one gain a certain mastery over the mind. The instructions, Pujya Swamiji pointed out, are equally pertinent for meditation upon *saguGā Brahman* or contemplation on *nirguGā Brahman*.

Bhagavan K[ishna's emphasis on the importance of *vairagya* and *abhyasa*, was complemented by Pujya Swamiji's discussion on the importance of intention with regard to distraction of the mind. One may go about one's life moving from one thing to the next without recognizing that the driving-force behind the actions is *raga-dweshas*. On the other hand, one may spend the day moving from one thing to the next with the intention to spend time focused on each successive occupation that one is involved with. Pujya Swamiji gave the analogy of the desire to cultivate a piece of land. If the *tatparya* is to grow a lawn, what is not grass is to be weeded out. On

the other hand, if the *tatparya* is to cultivate the very plant that was weeded out from the lawn, it is the grass that needs to be weeded out. One must have a clear intention in order to recognize what is distraction. This is where *japa* is so useful. By repetition of a particular mantra, each one a complete thought in itself, one is able to recognize when the mind moves away. In time one comes to recognize certain patterns, or ways in which the mind gets distracted, and even as it starts to move away it can be brought it back. Eventually one is able to sit for a period of time with the mind absorbed in the task it has been given.

In evening satsangs Pujya Swamiji is taking Vivekacudamani – not just selected verses, but in its entirety. Pujya Swamiji has pointed out that in Vivekacudamani there is a lot of repetition of various themes in verses. While one may notice this in one's own reading of the verses, to listen to Pujya Swamiji unfold the verses one discovers that each verse brings subtle shades that increase one's own *vichara* in this most blessed of all pursuits, with the most exalted of teachers.

*Report by Julie Carpenter*

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