

Satsang with Sri Swami Viditatmananda

PRATAH SMARANAM

continued from November 2016 issue...

The Self is ānanda

The world is because I am, but I am because I am. 'I am' is cit, and ever shining, and the nature of I is ānanda, Happiness, Limitlessness, Wholeness, or Completeness. This is where there can be lot of problems in our understanding. We have no difficulty in understanding 'I am', sat. It is all clear that I am, I shine, and I am self-effulgent, ever shining, cit. But how am I sukham or ānanda, Wholeness, Limitlessness, and Happiness?

Here, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that the truth of my Self is sat cit sukham. At dawn, he asks us to meditate upon the fact that I am sat cit ānanda. However, when I believe that I am not any of these how can I meditate upon what I am not? Vedanta wants us always to be in the real world, never in the imaginary world. We are always in the imaginary world and Vedanta wants us to drop all these projections and be in the real world as it is.

How can you say that the 'I' is happiness or limitlessness? My experience is that this 'I' is anything but happiness! Look at how much sadness there is in the world! Though Vedāntins repeatedly say that you are happiness, it does not register in our minds at all. To illustrate this, another story is told. A person who has been listening to Vedanta continuously for a month meets his teacher and says, "Yesterday, I had an argument with my wife. She said that I am a fool! How could she call me a fool? I could not sleep at all last night!" The teacher says, "Look, for a month I have been saying to you that you are brahman day and night, and that has had no effect on you. Now, your wife says once that you are a fool and it has had so much effect on you!" Thus, when someone calls us stupid, that seems to ring a bell, but when the teacher tells us that we are brahman, that does not seem to register at all!!

Ānando'ham, I am of the nature of Happiness. Let us briefly examine this proposition. When am I happy? I am happy with that which I love. For some, their pet is their best friend and makes them happy. Why? It is because the pet is their source of happiness. Where is happiness? Where there is love, there is happiness. Everyone loves happiness, is not that so? Nobody wants to be unhappy. If I have my way, I would not like to be unhappy even for a moment. There is a natural love for happiness. Nobody need teach me that I should be happy because I am born with love for happiness. Pujya Swami Dayanandaji used to tell us to offer the best flowers, clothes, food etc. when performing mānasa pūj. or mental pūj.. Similarly, here, why not imagine that absolute happiness is my true nature!

Whatever is an object of my happiness also becomes an object of my love. I love other people and things conditionally: as long as they give happiness, so long do they remain the object of my love. The moment they stop giving me happiness, they are no longer an object of my love.

I love happiness. Naturally, therefore, I love that which is the source of happiness or cause of happiness. That which I look upon as a source or cause of happiness becomes an object of happiness. We love many things in this world because we look upon them as a source of happiness. When my mind decides that something is no more a source of happiness, my love for it also disappears. My love for everything in the world is thus dependent upon how long the person, situation, or object gives me happiness; otherwise, it ceases to be an object of love. We are totally selfish.

My love for my dearest object is also conditional. As long as that object remains favorable or conducive to me, so long do I love it. For example, my love changes when the child that I initially love starts talking back to me. Thus, my love for anyone and anything is conditional. We all are calculating people. We always look after our own well-being.

Yet, our love for one thing is unconditional. It is the love for our selves. I love myself under all conditions. My love for everybody else is conditional in that I love them as long as they help me in loving myself. My love affair with the world goes on as long as the world helps me to love myself. The moment it doesn't help me, I don't want it anywhere near me. I want distance, space from the world. Thus, my love for myself is unconditional and my love for everything else is conditional. Swami Dayanandaji points out that we all like to look at ourselves all the time because of our unconditional love for ourselves. We even like to look at the distorted reflection of ourselves on any reflecting surface, e.g., the surface of a car. We don't miss the opportunity to look at ourselves. When we all love our bodies so much, what to talk of our selves? We all know that the body is not the Self, yet, we look upon it as the Self and therefore, it becomes an object of unconditional love. Then, what about the Self, the true Self? I am the object of unconditional love. Love and happiness always go together. That which is an object of happiness is an object of love. I love myself unconditionally and therefore, I am of the nature of unconditional happiness, sat cit sukham. My mind needs to be made introverted to appreciate ānanda

Ātmā, the Self, is of the nature of happiness because it is an object of unconditional love. If the Self is of the nature of happiness, how is it that I don't experience it all the time? The Self is sat cit ānanda; therefore, I am, I shine, and I am complete. That I am, sat, is always experienced by me and that I am cit, always shining, is also experienced by me. If ānanda is my nature, why is it not experienced by me?

In order to experience the sat and cit aspects of my nature, no particular qualification or effort is needed, but to appreciate ānanda, a specific effort is needed; my mind should be directed to where the Self is shining. As long as my mind is scattered or preoccupied with the objects of the world, I do not experience ānanda even though I am of the nature of Happiness. Therefore, my mind needs to be made free from all its occupations and become introverted and Self-centered, centered upon the Self.

The extroverted nature of the mind is due to likes and dislikes

Why is it that my mind is running away? Why is it extroverted and agitated? It is on account of the likes and dislikes in my mind. My likes and dislikes or attachments and aversions are the cause of the distraction of my mind.

In fact, they pull my mind away from my Self and cause it to be drawn to the objects of the world. When I like something, my mind thinks of that object. Again, when I dislike something, my mind thinks of that object as well. It would be nice if my mind could at least be free of the thoughts of what I dislike; but my mind unfortunately keeps going back to the object of my dislike. Thus, my mind is occupied with that which I like because I enjoy thinking about it and with that which I don't like because it doesn't want to think about it. My mind wants to get rid of it. This is how my likes and dislikes pull my mind away from the Self and turn it towards the objects of the world. To contemplate on my Self, it is necessary to make my mind free from likes and dislikes and attachments and aversions through karma-yoga and upāsana.

Our deep sleep state shows the Self to be the source of all happiness

That the Self is of the nature of happiness can also be understood from some other experiences. In the deep sleep state, I experience the freedom of the happiness that is my own Self, I am totally free. Is it not that I am free from all my complexes at that time? Is it not that I am free from all my constant demands and expectations? Is it not that I am free from my self-consciousness at that time? While awake, I am very conscious of myself and I want to be presentable, e.g., my hair must be parted in the right manner, my glasses should be put on in the right way etc.! It is such a huge burden. That is why the beauticians make a lot of money! This is a burden I carry all the time in my waking state. This burden continues in the dream state. I am free from this burden of self-consciousness only in deep sleep.

When I am sleeping I don't know where I am, how I look etc. You can take as many photographs of me as you want; I'll not resist, I'll not object! In the waking state I will sit properly, smile, and pose for a picture. Whereas, when I am sleeping, it doesn't matter; my hands and legs could be in any direction, my hair could be messed up!! That means I am free from self-consciousness, all complexes, the burden of being presentable, or the burden of proving myself. In the deep sleep state, I experience total freedom! In fact, we feel total happiness in the deep sleep state and that is why we all love to sleep. This love is the source of happiness. Our natural love for sleep shows that happiness has to be there. Nobody complains about sleep because it is the most pleasurable thing. Everybody looks forward to it. We all make meticulous preparation to go to sleep: the bed has to be right, the sheets and the comforter have to be very proper, etc. And we are very reluctant to finish this experience. When the alarm goes off in the morning, we dislike it intensely. No one wants to give up the experience of sleep. All this shows that we experience happiness in deep sleep. What makes me happy in deep sleep? There is no object of happiness in deep sleep that otherwise brings me happiness in the waking state. There is only my Self; yet, I am happy. This shows that I am the source of that happiness. The deep sleep experience also shows that freedom is my nature. Pujya Swami Dayanandaji always points out that the moment of deep sleep is the moment of happiness. This happiness does not arise from an object, but from your own Self. Any object of happiness in the other two states is only an instrument; it merely becomes a cause that directs me to my own Self and enables me to experience that Self.

Whenever I am happy, it is the experience of my own Self. It is the only source of happiness. There is no other source of happiness, even though I believe that the different people and objects of the world make me happy. **The world only creates a condition in which I can experience my Self. , it becomes very clear that happiness is the nature of the Self.**

One can meditate upon the happiness of one's Self by recalling joyful experiences

In the morning, therefore, I meditate upon myself; the happiness that I am. How do you do that? Well, while meditating, you recall an experience of happiness, e.g., getting an unexpected promotion in your job or visiting the Grand Canyon. Recall such a moment where you were completely lost and meditate on that moment. Remind yourself that it was not the promotion or the Grand Canyon which brought you the happiness; it was yourself. You were experiencing your Self at that time. The promotion or the Grand Canyon just became an occasion to bring out your own Self. Whenever you are happy, the object of happiness is merely an occasion or instrument, something incidental that serves to bring you your own Self. Thus, one can meditate upon the happiness of one's own Self by recalling joyful experiences. Someday you see the beauty of a rising sun or a full moon and all your anxieties and unhappiness go away. Or it could be a moment when you are lost in a poem, song etc. Remind yourself that such moments bring out the true nature of your Self. The worrying, anxious, sad, or unhappy self is not you.

The Self is the ultimate goal of those who can separate the Self from the non-Self

Paramahamsagatim. Gatim, the ultimate goal of the paramahansa, the seeker or sannyāsi. If I am sat cit ānanda, how is it that I don't experience it? Is that experienced only by paramahansas? **One who has the ability to separate the Self from the non-Self is called a paramahansa.** Hansa is a mythological swan, which is said to separate milk from water. This swan is supposed to eat pearls at Mānasarovar. It is a very beautiful kalpana that it separates milk from water. Nobody can do this because milk and water are so intrinsically mixed; even though they are two, they appear to be one. It is like the mixing of ātmā and anātmā. For example, the iron ball that is placed in a furnace becomes so hot that the fire totally pervades the iron. The iron then seems to acquire the quality of the fire; it becomes red and hot. The fire also seems to acquire the quality of the iron when it appears round. This is called mutual superimposition. The iron and fire become so identified with each other that each seems to take on the attribute of the other. Where there are two, there appears to be one. What one needs to do is to separate the iron from the fire. The red color and the heat belong to the fire, while the round shape belongs to the iron. This kind of separation is called viveka, discernment or discrimination, and it should take place in our minds. Ātmā, the Self or Consciousness, and anātmā, the non-Self or the body-mind-intellect complex, are so intimately identified with each other that you cannot separate the two. That is why where there are two things, there is a bhrama, an illusion, of there being only one. Thus, what I call 'I', the ego, is, in fact, made of two: the Self and the non-Self, the puruṣa and prakṛiti, Consciousness and matter. This delusion of seeing one where there are two is the cause of all our complexes and problems. The hansa or swan is believed to be able to separate milk from water. Similarly, a paramahansa is one whose mind is subtle and can discriminate between the Self and the non-Self, *ḍṛṣyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūk.may. sūk.madar.ibhi.* [Kāthopaniṣad, 1-3-12], 'however, he is seen by the people of subtle vision with a sharp, subtle intellect'.

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