

## Satsang with Sri Swami Viditatmananda PRATAH SMARANAM

*continued from November 2016 issue...*

प्रातर्भजामि मनसा वचसामगम्यं वाचो विभान्ति निखिला यदनुग्रहेण ।  
यं नेति नेति वचनिर्निगमा अवोचुः तं देवदेवमजमच्युतमाहुरग्रयम् ॥

prātarbhajāmi manasā vacasāmagamyam vāco vibhānti nikhilā yadanugraheṇa,  
yam neti neti vacanirnigamā avocuh tam devadevamajamacyutamāhuragryam.

Early morning, I worship him in the mind who cannot be conceived by speech, by whose blessing all the words are manifest and whom the Vedas described by the words 'not this, not this'. That one, they say, is the foremost, the Lord of the deities, the unborn and changeless.

The first verse begins with the word prātassmarāmi, at dawn I remember, whereas the second verse begins with prātarbhajāmi, at dawn I worship. What does worship mean here? This is a different kind of worship. This is not the conventional worship involving the separation or duality between the worshipper and the worshipped. Normally, when I say I worship the Lord, there is a separation between the Lord, the worshipped, and me, the worshipper. When Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says prātarbhajāmi, it does not mean I worship the Self as someone who stands apart from the Self. I worship the Self as my own Self. Here, worship means identification.

### **Ultimately, we become what we worship**

Worship always involves identification. When you worship someone or something, there is identification. You dwell upon the object of worship. For example, when you worship your teacher, you always think of him very fondly, with reverence, respect, and love. If the worship is very intense, we find that in course of time, the worshipper slowly starts identifying and imbibing the qualities of that which is worshipped. For instance, there are many worshippers of Lord Hanumān who imbibe his qualities. We also observe that when a child adores a parent, he or she starts talking and acting in the same manner as the parent. This happens due to identification. This is the whole idea of upāsana; you ultimately become what you are worshipping.

What is the culmination of worship? Lord Krishna says, "Those who worship a devatā become that devatā, and those who worship Me become Me."

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान्पितृन्यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।

भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम् ॥

yānti devavratā devānpitṛnyānti pitṛvratāḥ,  
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām.

Those who are committed to the gods reach the world of the gods.  
Those who are committed to the manes reach the plane of the manes.  
Those who worship spirits go to the realm of the spirits.  
Whereas those who worship Me, reach Me [Bhagavad Gita, 9-25].

We become what we worship. What we are today is the result of what we worshipped in the past. We cannot change that. But we can change what we want to be in the future. What shall we be in the future? We shall become what we worship today.

Lord Krishna says,

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।  
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥ ८-६ ॥

yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaranbhāvaṁ tyajatyante kalevaram,  
taṁ tamevaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ.

And also, at the time of death, giving up the body, whatever he remembers,  
that alone he reaches, O son of Kunti, being always in the same state [Bhagavad Gita, 8-6].

With whatever thought the jīva departs at the time of death, that is what he becomes. Thus, we become what we are thinking. It is a very serious matter.

### **Meditation or worship implies deliberately planting a certain desirable flow of thought**

We cannot get away by simply entertaining a thought and thinking that no one else in the world knows about it. Every thought that occurs has an impact. If you repeatedly entertain a particular thought, your mind gets influenced by it totally. It assumes that form and slowly becomes that! That is the nature of the mind. It can be molded into any form like wax. That is the idea behind upāsana, meditation. If I think of flying all the time, I might become a bird. If I keep entertaining business thoughts, I become a business person.

Meditation is deliberately planting a certain desirable thought flow in my mind. I decide what I want to think; I do not let my mind decide that. I control my mind by chanting 'Rāma, Rāma'. I want to think about nothing else. That is the principle of worshipping. It is a becoming.

### **The Self is beyond the reach of words, the sense organs, and the mind**

**In what way do I worship the Self? Here, worship is owning up to what I am.** Normally, what I worship is something that I visualize in my mind. Can I visualize the Self in my mind? Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, manasā vacasāmagamyam. Agamyam is that which cannot be reached or that which is out of reach. Manasā vacasāmagamyam is that which is not within the reach of the mind and speech or word

This powerful idea is contained in many of the scriptures. For example, the Self is described elsewhere as yato vāco nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha [Taittirīyopaniṣad, 2-4], that from which speech returns along with the mind without reaching. The Self is beyond the reach of the word; you cannot describe it in words, nor can you visualize it in your mind. In the Kenopaniṣad [1-3], the Self is described as na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no manaḥ, that where the eyes do not objectify that (brahman); the organ of speech does not objectify (that brahman); the mind does not (objectify that brahman).

The Self is beyond the reach of the eyes, words, speech, or the mind. The eye stands for all the organs of perception, therefore, the Self cannot be perceived by any of the organs of the perception. Thus, all the conventional means of understanding an object have been denied. Usually, we can understand a thing by either of two means: when somebody describes it to us, or when we can perceive it through our organs of perception. If we can then visualize it in our mind, we can say we know it. Thus, to feel that I know something, I should be able to visualize it in my mind or perceive it through my sense organs or describe it in words. However, the Self that I am worshipping at dawn cannot be described in words, visualized, or perceived through the sense organs. It is beyond the reach of words, the sense organs, and the mind.

Manasā vacasāmagamyam. Here, speech stands for all the organs of action and all the organs of perception. The Self is beyond the reach of the organs of perception, the organs of action, and the mind. That is, the Self cannot be objectified by the organs of perception. Our organs of perception are equipped to perceive only the objects of the world, the non-Self. The Self is the illuminator of the organs of perception. This question is asked in the Kenopaniṣad [1-1]:

केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः ।

केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति चक्षुः श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति ॥ १ ॥

keneṣitaṁ patati preṣitaṁ manaḥ kena prāṇaḥ prathamahaḥ praiti yuktaḥ,  
keneṣitāṁ vācamimāṁ vadanti cakṣuḥ śrotraṁ ka u devo yunakti.

Willed by whom does the mind fall (on objects as though) it is forced? Directed by whom does the main Prāṇa function? Willed by whom do (the people) speak these words? Which effulgent principle, indeed, directs the eyes and ears?

In this kārya-kāraṇa-saṅghāta or the body-mind complex, we find that the organs of perception and action, and the mind go about doing their respective jobs. We do know that the organs of perception, the organs of action, and the mind are nothing but products of matter. They are all inert; yet, they seem to function as though they are conscious entities. There must be a conscious principle, which imparts consciousness to them. For example, when we see a rotating fan, the question may arise as to what makes it rotate? The question arises because we don't see anything that is moving the fan; we do know that the fan cannot move by itself. There is something, which makes a fan rotate or a bulb glow. It is electricity. Similarly, what is that principle, which makes our organs of perception and action, and the mind function? The teacher says, śrotrasya śrotraṁ manaso mano yad vāco ha vācam [Kenopaniṣad, 1-2], it is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, and the speech of speech. This statement does not mean that there is an ear in the ear, but that there is something because of which the ears are able to perceive sound. What is it that imparts to the ear, the capacity to perceive sound? What is it that imparts to the eyes, their capacity to see form and color? They would not have the capacity by themselves. They are inert and yet, they perform their actions as though they are conscious entities. Therefore, the teacher says that it is the Consciousness, the Self, because of which the eyes see, the ears hear, the mind thinks, and Prāṇa or the vital airs also perform their actions. The idea is that the organs of perception are able to function, and perceive objects only because of the Self and therefore, cannot objectify the Self.

For example, a bulb illumines the various objects such as pots and furniture in a room. The furniture, which itself is being illumined by the bulb, cannot illumine the bulb.

The objects of the world, which are illumined by the sun, cannot illumine the sun. That which is illumined is inert; that which illumines is conscious. Therefore, the inert cannot illumine the conscious.

The eyes have the capacity to illumine the objects of the world, but have no capacity to illumine the Self. We are able to illumine objects because of the Self. Therefore, it is said that ātmā, the Consciousness, is beyond the reach of the organs of perception. The organs of perception can only illumine the inert objects of the world. The Consciousness is self-effulgent and self-shining and therefore, does not require the organs of perception to be illumined. It does not require to be grasped by the organs of action and does not require to be visualized by the mind.

When we meditate on something, we typically try to visualize it in our minds. Thus, when we attempt to meditate upon the Self, the tendency is to visualize it in the mind. Here, it is said that we cannot visualize it in our minds, describe in words, or perceive it through our sense organs. This is told to either frustrate us or calm us down. We are told, 'It cannot be described by words; don't attempt to do so, calm down. It cannot be objectified by the sense organs; let them stay where they are and stop objectifying. It cannot be visualized by the mind; let the mind stop trying to visualize it.' The sense organs, mind, and words can only function in the realm of the non-Self. What can my eyes see? With my eyes, I can only see that which is other than me! For example, what can my eyes see through a telescope? Only something that is other than me! Can I see my eyes through a telescope? Can my eyes see themselves through the telescope, which is itself the means of seeing? Similarly, through a small hole in a door, I can see whoever is on the other side. It is, however, not possible for me to see my own eyes through that hole. Can it be possible that the seer can see himself through the means of seeing? No. You cannot simultaneously be the seer and the seen. I simply cannot visualize myself. I am the one who visualizes; the seer.

In this meditation, I am trying to visualize ātmā. What am I trying to do? I am trying to create a split in my own Self: on the one hand, I am the one who visualizes, and on the other hand, I am trying to visualize myself. But I cannot do so. I have to stop the activity of describing through words, and objectifying with the sense organs, or with the mind. Let all these activities stop. Relax. Calm down. Just be. You don't need to experience yourself. You are of the nature of the very experience. You are self-shining; you don't have to become something. I am worshipping that which is beyond the reach of the mind, the faculty of speech, and perception. I am worshipping my own Self.

**-to be continued**