

## Pujya Swamiji's Ten-days Camp at AVG, Anaikatti On Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram



Pujya Swamiji conducted a 10-days camp on “Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram” of Sri Ādi Śankarācārya, at Anaikatti from April 21 to April 30, 2008.

Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram is a set of 10 profound verses where Śankarācārya brings out the essence of Vedānta.

The gist of the teaching in the camp is as follows:

Any knowledge is about what already exists; only ignorance is removed. Īśvara is all-knowledge. Knowledge in our culture includes both the relative and the absolute, and both are sacred in our culture. We can invoke any knowledge from the deity which represents that branch of knowledge. Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the deity representing all spiritual knowledge.

Dakṣiṇa means south and mūrti means idol. So Dakṣiṇāmūrti means the idol facing south. When the idol is facing south, devotees naturally have to face north. This is so because the direction south symbolizes

‘death’ and north symbolizes ‘mokṣa’ – freedom from bondage. So the devotees are always on the path to mokṣa when facing the deity. Another meaning of the word Dakṣiṇāmūrti is dakṣa – meaning one who is capable (of creation, sustenance & destruction) and He is also the one who is amūrti – formless. The idol symbolizes eight components viz. the five elements space, air, fire, water and earth, the sun and moon and finally the devotee himself. Space is represented by the ḍamaru, air by the bandana on the forehead (worn to prevent the ‘air’ from blowing the hair away), fire by the torch, water by Gangā on the head and earth the material with which the idol is made.

The common refrain of verses in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti stotram is – ‘I salute this idol of Guru which is nothing but Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti. In the first verse, the experience in the waking world is equated with dream experience. In a dream we conjure up all kinds of objects and enjoy

the resultant experiences. As long as we are in the dream, it is absolutely real for us. He is like a person who has just had a six-course meal and gone to sleep and who can dream of being stranded and starving in some place with no one around. As long as he is in the dream, he is desperately looking for food but once he wakes up he finds that his stomach is still heavy with the food eaten before going to sleep! After waking up we realize that all the dream objects and experiences have been created by me alone and there is nothing else other than me. In the same way, on gaining this knowledge one understands that all that is in the so-called 'outside' world exist in ME alone. The other analogy given is that, just like we see the reflection of a city (or part thereof) on a mirror we see all the objects in the world as though being 'outside' of (what we consider as) ourselves while in reality they all exist in ME alone. Here 'I' am like a mirror reflecting all that is outside.

For assimilating this truth we have to analyze the world before us because it appears so real. When we analyze the world, we find that every object is a collection of names. The object is just many sub-components (represented by names) meaningfully put together. And each name stands for a particular meaning. The 'meaning' is nothing but knowledge. Ultimately the whole world of names and meanings is just knowledge. Before manifestation also each object exists in the form of pure knowledge. This is what is said in the second verse as 'Just as a sprout exists in a seed, the world also existed in an unmanifest form before manifesting in the form available to us'.

How then is the world available in this form before us? Just like a magician creates objects magically or a great yogi (like Sage Viśwāmītra who created a separate heaven for Triśaṅku) creates things, the Lord by his own power of saṅkalpa (thought) brings forth this world. What really is this world?

It is the association, as though, of space and time (which are relative). Still it is the glory of Īśvara that even though everything in the world has only a relative reality, it is still fascinating and wondrous to behold. But when subjected to analysis everything reduces to knowledge alone.

How do we obtain this knowledge (of oneness)? When we analyze the methods in which we usually gather knowledge about the external world, we find that all knowledge is obtained through the sense organs. But knowledge of the 'Self' is not objectifiable by any of the sense organs. Even then there are some similarities between knowledge gathered by the sense organs and knowledge from the śāstra which can be illustrated with an example. After a person, who is blind, undergoes an operation to get rid of his blindness, however much the doctor convinces him that his eyes are fine, he must finally open his eyes and 'see' it for himself. In the same way, to understand that the śāstra works, we should first look at ourselves through the words of the śāstra and assimilate the knowledge when we 'know' for sure the truth is expounded there. This is what we call śraddhā (faith) which later gets converted in to direct knowledge. How does śraddhā get translated to knowledge? Swamiji illustrated this by holding up a 'rose' and calling it as an 'apple'! However much we would like to believe Swamiji, it is not possible accept the rose as an apple because we cannot go against what is perceived clearly by the eyes. This is so because what are perceived by the eyes are 'knowledge' and not mere 'faith'. We surrender completely to the eyes and other sense organs in their respective fields of action. Such should be our approach to the śāstra and only then does a person see 'truth' as it is.

This knowledge can be obtained only from a teacher who has in turn obtained this knowledge from his teacher and so on. The

primary source of this knowledge is the Lord himself. When the teacher handles the sentences of the Upaniṣads like 'Tat tvam asi' etc., committed students appreciate the reality directly in the form of existence. And once the truth is understood in this manner, there is no return to the ocean of samsāra.

How is the knowledge manifest in the world? Just as the light from a lamp inside a pot with many holes comes out (through the holes) the Self shines forth through the various sense organs like eyes, ears etc. in the form of knowledge. This is seen when we cognize the whole external world as 'I know' in the form of perceiving form, taste, smell, touch and sound. That cognizer is the 'real I'. When that is the truth who are the people who see the Self differently? They can be classified broadly into those who commit a mistake due to ignorance, those who do not accept the śāstra as a 'means of knowledge' but commit mistake and those who accept the śāstra as a 'means of knowledge' but still commit a mistake. People place the Self in the body, the prāṇas, the senses, flickers of consciousness and as a void. The Vedāntin, to establish the nature of the true self, does not have to directly negate all these people because in the same order the later one negates the earlier like the one who considers the prāṇas as the ultimate dismisses those for whom body the ultimate, those who consider the prāṇas to be the ultimate dismisses those who consider prāṇas as the Self and so on. All these people are childish, dull witted, deluded and are wasting their time by blabbering.

How actually is the ignorance covered? Just as the Sun is covered by Rāhu, the shadow planet, māyā veils the intellect of the ignorant.

How does this knowledge get revealed? As a person waking up from deep sleep where

all the sense organs and organs of action are resolved, cognizes as 'I slept earlier' (once a person gets the knowledge he realizes that all that he has undergone is just māyā). And the Guru communicates the nature of the ultimate truth with the help of the auspicious cinmudrā (the sign where the tip of the thumb is joined to the tip of the index finger with the other three fingers remaining separate). The truth is – Just as, passing through the various stages of life like childhood, youth, old age etc and the various states of experience like waking, dream and deep sleep, the cognition that "I am" is constant through all the stages and states. Others being variable, this 'I' alone is free of all attributes.

How does the ignorant one perceive the world? Due to ignorance, one sees the world as one of relationship between cause and effect, me and mine, teacher and student, father and son etc. This is so in both the waking and dream states.

How is the world available to us as? The whole world, even though does not have an independent reality, is a manifestation of Lord Dakshinamurti's eight-fold form viz. space, air, fire, water and earth, Sun (representing all stars) and the moon (representing all satellites). We offer our salutations to that Dakṣiṇāmūrti again and again through these verses.

This briefly is what is said in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram. Chanting, listening, analyzing the meaning and contemplating on this stotram, makes clear the all-pervasiveness of ātmā and one understands the underlying unity of the universe.

Pujya Swamiji also talked on the meaning of satyam, jñānam, Anantam and the three orders of reality viz. the absolute, relative and one's own subjective projections.

*Report by Br. Sivatma Chaitanya*