

## Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda PRATAḤ SMARAṆAM

*...continued from previous issue*

This is a stotra or hymn consisting of three verses to be meditated upon at dawn. These verses are an excellent means of meditation if one can remember them along with their meaning. They are useful for meditating upon the truth of one's own Self and to remind ourselves of who we truly are.

It is a good idea to set aside sometime everyday, to step out of all our roles and duties. All our costumes are given up during this period of meditation. An actor can perform his role properly only when he is aware of his true nature. Even when he is acting as a beggar, there is an awareness of who he truly is in his mind. He doesn't get lost in his role; if he were to get lost in his role, he would not be able to act properly. That is the real skill of an actor. Only when he remembers his true identity in his own mind, can he create a distance between himself and his role. Only then can he perform his role effectively. Therefore, we reflect upon these verses in the morning and remind ourselves of our essential nature.

We get into a rut; we get sucked into this *vyavahāra* of likes and dislikes, and soon, we are entangled in them. However, we need to be clear of this *vyavahāra* even while remaining in it. Like the actor who really does not beg even while begging, we should be able to perform our duties without really getting affected by them. What happens when the distance between the actor and the role is not maintained is that the problems of the roles become the problems of the actor. Therefore, it is necessary to create a distance between the actor and the role.

These verses help us create a distance between ourselves as actors, and the roles that we are required to play. When I create the distance, I accept all the various roles, whether of a daughter, or mother, wife, mother-in-law, or grandmother. I see that I am separate from all of these roles, free from all their attributes, and untouched by them. Just as an actor remains untouched by all the problems pertaining to the roles he plays, so also can I remain untouched by the problems of my roles, if I create that distance. This is the creation of a distance in understanding, not a physical distance. It is not a distance where I see myself standing in a corner, apart from myself. This distance lies in distinguishing between the person and the personality; it lies in knowing that the person is working through the personality or the body-mind complex, which is the costume given to me to perform various functions. If this distinction between the person and the personality, the actor and the role, or the Self and the non-Self is known and maintained, life becomes a play. If we do not maintain the distance, it becomes *saṁsāra*. The only difference between a liberated soul and a *saṁsārī* is that one maintains the distance while the other doesn't. Instead, he lumps the Self or the person and the non-Self or the personality together. Where there are two, there is a delusion of there being only one. That is why all the problems and limitations of the personality become the problems and limitations of the person.

This *stotra* helps you create a distance. The verses help you in a time of crisis. When you are crying, you can examine who is crying; when you are hurt, you can ask who is hurt, and when you are insulted, ask who is insulted. It is the body and the mind that is insulted. It is alright; you are none of that. You should create a distance because it is true that you are not that.

You are none of the roles that you play. If you remained a mother or father or a husband or wife, you would always be that. Instead, when one is the father, he is not the son. When he is the son, he is not the father, and so on. Therefore, all roles are relative and incidental; the essential you is different from each of them. Do create a distance between the essential and the incidental. This is the solution to all our sorrow. Solving all the *vyavahārik* problems is a different matter; it is not the concern of the Vedāntin. There is nothing to be sad about. When we create the distance, we have better composure of mind, and can solve our problems more easily.

The last verse says that even the two categories of the Self and the non-Self do not really exist. What you call as the non-Self, the creation, is nothing but the Self shining as this universe. In the ultimate analysis, there are not two categories. Even though we are asked to create a distance between the Self and the non-Self, it is better to recognize that there is only the Self, only one, only *brahman*, the Limitless. What does it matter what one wave does to the other wave because you are not the wave at all; you are the water.

In the last verse, the difference between the Self the non-Self is ultimately negated. The *anātmā* or the *jagat* is not separate from *brahman*. *Brahman* is separate from the *jagat*, but the *jagat* is not separate from *brahman*. The actor is separate from the beggar, but the beggar is not separate from the actor. The Self is separate from the non-Self, but the non-Self is not separate from the Self. This is the most profound teaching of Vedanta<sup>1</sup>.

**Concluded**

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed by Richa Choudhry and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.