

Swami Paramarthananda's Yajna Talk

At Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore 30th April to 6th May 2017



The much awaited annual Vedanta talk by Swami Paramarthananda was jointly organized by Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore Kendra at BVB from 30th April till 6th May this year. After a prayer song and a brief welcome speech by the organizers, Swami began his talk on Uddhava Gita starting with a concise introduction of why he chose the topic owing to its similarity with Bhagavad Gita in many ways.

Uddhava Gita

Uddhava Gita is in the 11th skanta of Bhagavtam, in the form of a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Uddhava. It extols the Vedantic message of knowing the Atmatatvam to overcome the trivialities of samsara. Samsari to asamsari is the spiritual journey, essentially moving from eka-rupa Ishwara to aneka-rupa Ishwara to arupa Ishwara, the ultimate reality.

On being told by Uddhava that such a tedious journey is not easy for many seekers like him, Lord Krishna narrates the discussion between Avaduta Dattareya and King Yadhu, wherein the Avaduta explains how to accomplish the goal of the spiritual journey by observing the nature and following the lessons given out by 24 gurus. The verse 2.33 and 2.34 enumerates these 24 gurus. The universe becomes a teacher if only one is prepared to learn and assimilates the values, which simple yet profound. This part of the Uddhava Gita is also called Avaduta Gita.

Swamiji resumed his talk from verse 37, where the first guru, bhumi or earth, from which the value of titiksha or endurance can be cultivated. In spite of various oppressions by common man, earth continue to nourish the plant kingdom while at the same time goes about meticulously –as its own svadharma – around the Sun. Similarly one should accept adverse situations as the effect of one's own previous karma (punya and papa), endure and carryout one's svadharma.

In the next Verse 38, value of *paropakara* -- helping others -- was learned from mountain and trees which are part of earth itself. This way one continues the spiritual journey remaining as contributor to the society.

Thus between verses 37 to 51 seven gurus -- earth, water, air, fire, space, moon and sun -- and values learned from them were told. In summary it is:

S.No	Element	Value learned
1	Earth	Tolerance and <i>paropakara</i>
2	Water	(<i>Svaccha</i>) Purity or cleanliness, (<i>Snigdha</i>) genial nature (<i>Madhura</i>) giving out joyfully
3	Air	(<i>Dhriti</i>) not obstructed by obstacles (<i>Asanga</i>) not attached
4	Fire	1.By its intrinsic nature -- (<i>ekaha</i>) one, (<i>nirupadhikah</i>) not having it's own form and (<i>sarvagatah</i>) the all-pervading principle of heat. 2.By its experiencing nature -- (<i>anekaha</i>) and (<i>sopadhikah</i>) manifesting in various versions of inflammable materials and localized.
5	Space	1.By its intrinsic nature -- (<i>ekaha</i>) 2.By its experiencing nature -- -- (<i>anekaha</i>) and (<i>sopadhikah</i>) appearing as pot space, room space etc
6	Moon	1.By its nature -- (<i>nirvikaraha</i>) nonchanging 2.By its experiencing nature -- (<i>savikaraka</i>) undergoing waxing and waning.
7	Sun	1.By its nature -- (<i>ekaha</i>) 2.By its experiencing mature -- -- (<i>anekaha</i>) as reflected in various water bodies

The eighth guru illustrated was a pigeon -- symbolizing a typical *aviveka jiva* in search of *artha* and *kama* and getting attached to other persons and things and finally get caught in the web (*samsara*) of cruel hunter. One should exercise one's freewill to discern and strive for *moksha* and be free -- is the lesson learned.

Uddhava Gita being part of *Bhagavata purana*, has all ingredients -- *bhakti*, *upasana*, and *brahmajnana*, but in no specific order. The *slokas* have the potential to take the students on a roller-coaster ride and unless handled by a skilled teacher of Vedanta it's easy to get lost and miss the real purport. The verses that introduced space and fire were such examples. Swamiji gave the background from *Upanishads*, introducing the relevant *sruti pramanas*, drawing parallels from Gita all along and explained the context before entering such verses, thus making the beginners also grasp what is being said. Verse 42 on space suddenly introduced *brahma sabhda* and swamiji quoting from Chandogya Upanishad vakya वाचारम्भणं विकरो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम् , clearly explained using the clay-pot example to show how brahman is *jagat karanam satyam* and the *jagat* being non-separate from brahman is the *mitya karya*, borrowing its existence from *brahma satyam*, appearing as *vyakta nama-rupa anatma* being just names and forms during *srusti avasta* and as *avyakta nama-rupa anatma* during *pralaya*.

Swamiji gave a similar background before explaining fire in verses 45-48. Swamiji explained through the *Katopanishad mantra* अग््नियथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव how *atma* which is in all beings, as though assumes various forms, just as the all-pervading *agni* which exists in an unmanifest form, manifests itself by entering (as though --*anupravesha*) the various objects, assuming the size of each form.

Overall it was an exciting elucidation catering to *mumukshu* students at various levels.

Vedanta Dindima

The morning talks started off with verse 37 in Vedanta Dindima. These sessions were an intense analysis of Vedanta and swamiji employed various prakriyas to drive home the essence of the sastras that the verses pointed to.

Nondual Brahman alone is satyam, jagat being mitya was pointed out keeping in mind the famous oft-quoted Karika vaitatya-prakarana sloka 2.6 (adhau-ante yan- nasti vartamane api tattha ..) of Gaudapada acarya.

Verse 39 spoke about the purusharta and proclaimed that those committed to dharma-arthakama are only as good as an animal and one who strives for moksha is indeed a sreshtah among human beings. Verses 41 and 42 gave some tips for the adhikaritvam to eliminate the internal satrus. In his own unique style of pedagogy, breaking down profound concepts into simplistic form that can be easily assimilated, and interspersed with his distinct humor and also witty anecdotes and quotes by Pujya Swamiji, swamiji spoke about dhusta catustayam (DC) consisting of raga, dvesha, ahankara and mamakara and their dilution to eliminate the satrus.

By pancakosa nirakaranam and sakshi svarupa nishcayatvam Verses 43-50 clearly highlighted the reality that I alone am everything. Verses 49 and 50 were quite profound. After indicating that I am the sakshi in verse 48, verse 49 mentioned that I am not the sakshi. To reconcile this, Swamiji explained that one has to move from the triangular format of ajnanai-jiva, jagat, Ishwara to the binary format – satyam and mitya. Aham brahmasmi, and I lend existence to everything. This should be one's own claim.

Seemingly paradox statement of Verse 50 - I am the owner of all, I am all and I am not all - could only be understood through the Taittiriya vakya – tasmatva etasmat atmana akasha sambhuta. This may appear like dvaitam because of owner-owned relation, but again the Taittiriya vakya aham annam ... points out that karanam alone appears in the form of karya and therefore I am all. How am I not all? Like the dipa that lights up the ghata (pot), cannot be the pot.' I' the self-evident Brahman alone pervade all the objects of the world, making them shine.

Verses 51-53 are a series of verses that explain the mahavakyas through sat-cit-ananda at the panca kosa, vyeshti level (tvam pada lakshyartha) and in Verses 54-5 equating it with sat-cit-ananda at the panca bhutani, samasti level (tat pada lakshyartha), thereby establishing that Brahman indeed is atma. The talks concluded with verse 60 with mahavakya nirnaya.

The audience was a mixed lot from newcomers and beginners to advanced students. For the beginners, it was the essence of the Vedanta that came out clearly and the talks should serve as an inspiration to continue their studies, which as Swamiji emphasizes should be consistent and systematic under a competent and traditional acarya who himself is a srotria , brahma-nishta.

We got more acronyms to add to the repository of Swamiji's acronyms – DC, HAFD, NTUC, BAD, MBBS, FIR, FeDeReL, so the beginner student has lot of homework to decipher and internalize these until next year, while regularly consuming the 5 capsules of Vedanta. Swamiji's message was loud and clear – start young; don't postpone the spiritual pursuit. He mentioned Bhrtruhari's famous example – this person starts digging the well when the house is on fire. Similarly when the body could be inflicted with diseases and old age, there could be so many pratibandhah, obstacles to pursue this knowledge if one postpones it for later. Swamiji also gave an illustration from a tennis match, where the player who is on Advantage lost the point to go on to Deuce, Advantage opponent and finally lose the game. We have come this far to gain a human body,

durlabam manushya janma, and not utilizing it to gain brahma jnanam is to live the life of an animal.

Swamiji mentioned jnana is not complete if one is not able to gain emotional benefit. How does one gain that? By wearing an emotional helmet – through nidhidyasanam, remove viparita bhavana and internalize this knowledge and one will see DC dilution and FIR reduction taking place.

Swamiji presented the complete vision of Vedanta. Many of the common misconceptions such as atma experience, possibility of gaining moksha through bhakti or karma alone, and moksha can be gained only after death were dismissed. Swamiji clearly established that Vedanta alone is pramana in itself and it reveals truth that is beyond the reach of science. Ajnana is the bija, seed of all problems and it generates karta, bhokta and ahankara. Jnanam and jnanam (generated by sruti guru upadesam) alone is ajnana virodhi and that jnanam is available right now, right here.

Swamiji's talk was compiled by his disciple Sri Gopikrishnan.



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