

Sādhana-pañcakam
Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

This is the sixth part of the serial article, continuation from July 2021 newsletter.

FINDING A TEACHER

Sadvidvān upasṛpyatām; previously *satsaṅga* was talked about but too many people are there. They are good people, but that is a different thing altogether. Here, however, he says *upasṛpyatām*, may the *sadvidvān* be approached properly. Who is the person to be approached? He should be a *sadvidvān*, a person who is a *satpuruṣa*, one who is dedicated to truth and a *vidvān*, one who knows the truth. He must also be a *śrotriya*.³⁶ Unless he is a *śrotriya*, he is not going to teach. He will do some *satsaṅga*, but that has already been done, *saṅgaḥ satsu vidhīyatām*. Mere *satsaṅga* is not going to help now. What you require at this point is a good teacher, a clean teacher. That teacher must be a well-informed person, therefore *sadvidvān*. Instead of saying *sadguru*, he says *sadvidvān*. Naturally, *guru* is implied here. At the same time, the *guru* is defined by saying he should be a *śrotriya*. So you should approach the *sadvidvān* properly.

Even if you approach him properly, why should that *vidvān* teach you? Is it because you are going to give him *guru-dakṣiṇā*?³⁷ If he is going to teach you for *guru-dakṣiṇā*, then what will he teach? The teaching will be as good as the *dakṣiṇā*. So to get the knowledge of Brahman, you should give Brahman *guru-dakṣiṇā*, nothing less. In order to get the infinite, you must give the infinite. But how can you give the infinite? Can the infinite really be given as infinite? No, there is no such thing. So you cannot really give anything to a *sadvidvān* to make him teach you. Then what can you do? You cannot also go to him and cry like a beggar pleading, 'Please teach me, teach me, teach me Brahman,' constantly bugging the person. He will just refer you to a mental hospital.

³⁶ One who has studied the *śāstra* properly.

³⁷ Gift traditionally given to a *guru* by a student.

He is not going to be easily tempted by your offers. He may be a *kṛpā-sāgara*, an ocean of compassion, but why should he teach you? Where is the necessity for him? In his vision, you are okay as you are. He does not want you to change. However, you should make the person teach. What should you do?

SERVING THE TEACHER

*Pratidinam tatpādukā sevyatām;*³⁸ *pratidinam*, daily, may the *pādukā*, sandals, of the teacher *sevyatām*, be worshipped. *Pādukā* can also mean *pāda*, feet. Why should the feet be worshipped of all places? Why should not the head be worshipped? But here, the *pāda* are worshipped because the *pāda-aravinda*, lotus-feet, of the guru are the lowest part. That means you have to bend down. Bending is required. It is emotional bending, in the sense that you submit yourself to the teaching and the teacher's will for the time being. If the teacher himself does not have personal axes to grind or personal ambitions, then it is a very safe place to surrender, to submit one's will.

Submitting your will is very dangerous. You have to be careful, because you can be exploited or manipulated. Your will is the only thing you have for surviving in this world. Your own choices are very important. You must not lose your self-dignity or self-respect. Retaining them is crucial so others do not exploit you in any manner. At the same time, if the teacher is a *sadvidvān*, then one can safely submit one's will to such a person. There is a freedom in this submission. Bhagavān is very difficult to see, but the person who has no will is as good as Bhagavān. Therefore, having approached the teacher, *tatpādukā sevyatāmanudinam, pratidinam*, may his feet be worshipped daily. Let your mind enjoy that kind of *śraddhā*, wherein the words of the teacher are valued. Whether one understands the words or not, they are valued so they can be understood later. Once the guru has been chosen, there should be no problem.

³⁸ तस्य पादुका सेव्यताम् खर तस्य पादुके सेव्यताम्

That worship of the *pādukās* is called *śuśrūṣā*.³⁹ *Śuśrūṣā* means a desire to listen, but by implication it has come to mean service to the teacher. This becomes a very important thing because in those days the students used to do the daily chores at the *gurukula*. This service is talked about in the *upaniṣads*. The students had to sit there for many years and the teachers did not even talk about the knowledge. They said, 'Just go on doing *sevā*, service. We will see later.' Thirty years would go in such a way. Students had to wait so many years for the guru to teach. The reason for this is that after doing *sevā* for so many years, the teacher's words become valuable. Then when he teaches, naturally it will go straight in because you have earned it. If you wait a long time for this *jñānam*, you will find it works wonders when it is given to you. You have been maintaining that desire for so long, without getting sidetracked. It is an excellent thing. So now the *sadvidvān* is there, and you begin doing *sevā*. Then one day, when the time comes, ask him. What should you ask him?

ASK FOR SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Brahmaikākṣaram arthyatām; arthyatām means *prārthyatām*, may you pray for, ask for *ekākṣaram brahma*,⁴⁰ Brahman, that which is *ekam*, one, non-dual. It is also *akṣaram*,⁴¹ not subject to any kind of decline or death, and it is the subject matter of *parāvidyā*, higher knowledge.⁴² Previously he had *aparāvidyā*, worldly knowledge, now he is seeking *parāvidyā*, knowledge of Brahman. '*Adīhi bhagavo brahmeti*,⁴³ please teach me that one thing by knowing which, everything is as well known.' May this Brahman be asked for, prayed for. After you ask, when the person teaches you, you should listen properly.

³⁹ श्रोतुम् इच्छा इति शुश्रूषा⁴

⁰ एकं च अक्षरं च इति एकाक्षरम्

⁴¹ न क्षरति इति अक्षरम्

⁴² अथ परा यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते (Muṇḍakopaniṣad 1.1.5)

⁴³ 'Please teach me Brahman.' (Taittirīyopaniṣad 3.1.1)

Śrutiśirovākyaṃ samākarṇyatām; may you listen well to the words of Vedānta. *Śrutiśiras* means *śruteḥ śiras*, the head of the *śruti*. *Śruti* means Veda. If the Veda has a body, then the head of the Veda will be Vedānta. That is the *upari-sthāna*, the top-most part. Therefore *śruteḥ-śirasah vākya* means the *vākyas*, statements, of Vedānta. All of the teachings, the upaniṣads, are called Vedānta. *Samākarṇyatām* means *śrūyatām*, may you listen to those words properly, with *vicāra*, inquiry. So when the Vedānta *vākyas* are heard by you, you come to hear, 'I am Brahman.' This is what is said by the *śruti*, its *tātparya*, vision. The *śruti* tells you that you are Īśvara, *tat tvam asi*, 'That thou art'. 'That' refers to Brahman, the *jagatkāraṇam*, the cause of the world. The cause of this entire world is you. That means the Lord is you.

This is too much to swallow. 'How can I be Īśvara?' This is a problem. 'Īśvara is omniscient, it is said. I can't even spell the word. I can't be the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-pervasive Īśvara. My knowledge, power and pervasiveness are all limited. How can I accept that I am Īśvara?' *Śraddhā*, faith, can help you believe in the existence of a heaven. It can make you believe in the usefulness of going to heaven. *Śraddhā* can make you believe you will reach heaven. But no *śraddhā* is good enough to make you accept that you are Īśvara. Since heaven is another place where you are not now, you can accept that and may even reach it. That promise is held out, and you can believe that if you have enough faith in the words. But here, there is no room for belief because there is nothing to believe. You are told, 'You are Īśvara.' This is not a matter for belief.

To be continued...

“THE whole world (*kṣetra*), including my physical body, mind, and senses becomes evident to me, the knower (*kṣetrajña*). The *kṣetrajña*, *ātmā*, is self-revealing and therefore self-evident, while everything else becomes evident to the self. Any evidence is in terms of knowledge. Any knowledge implies the presence of consciousness or awareness. The invariable factor in all forms of knowledge is but this awareness.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati