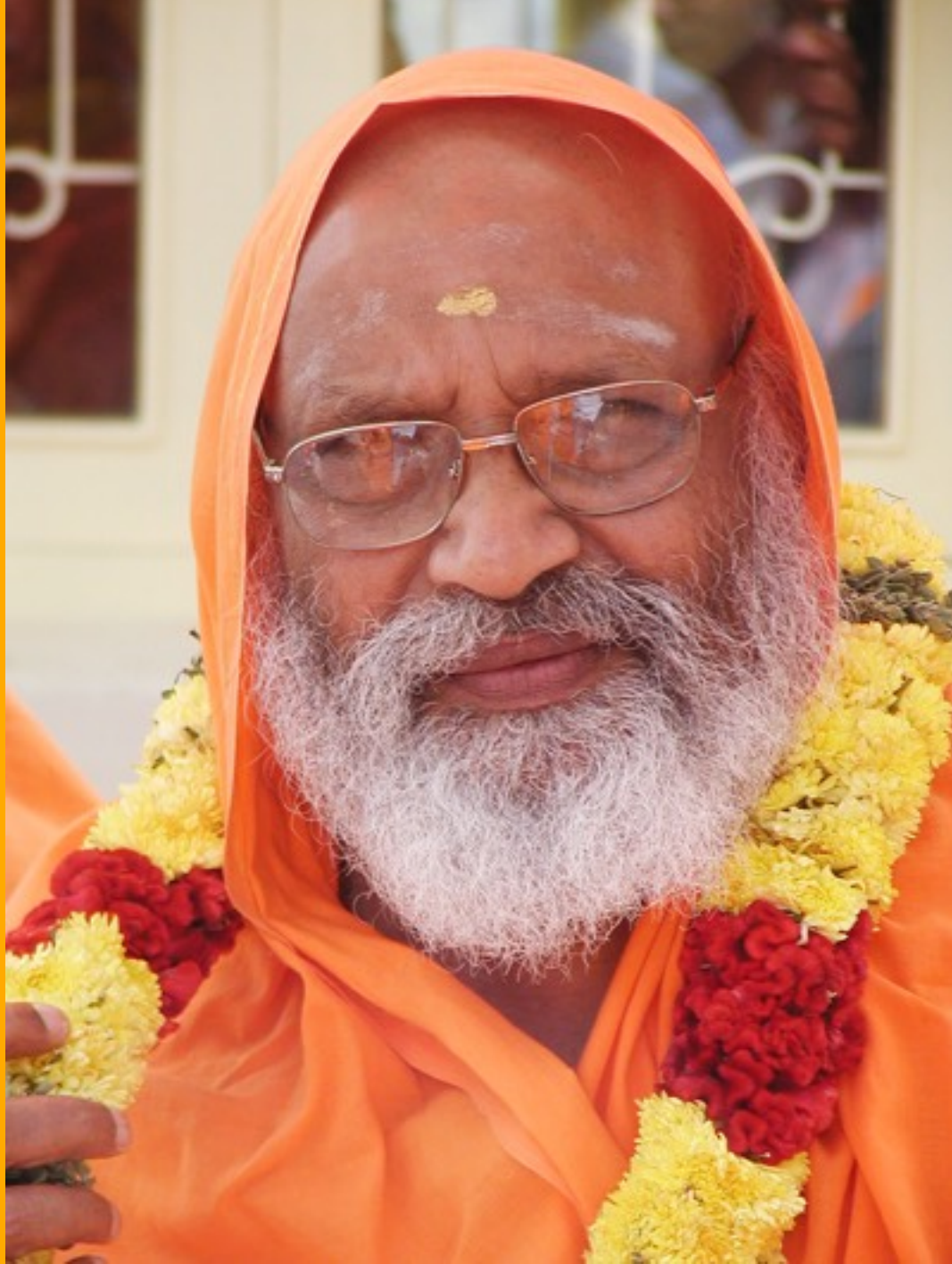




Arsha Vidya Newsletter

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108 days course guru-vandanam function

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śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogād avaihi

Eleventh and concluding part of the serial article continued from November 2019 issue.

Dhyana topic continues..

We have to train ourselves. We can give the mind some time for free thinking, but we cannot be fantasising all the time. So deliberate thinking, conscious thinking is important. For this purpose *dhyāna* is always advised, especially *japa-dhyāna*. In *japa*, a thought is repeated. More often, it is a *mantra* that is repeated like *om namaḥ śivāya* or *om namo nārāyaṇāya*².

Suppose you chant *om namaḥ śivāya*. Then the next chant also is *om namaḥ śivāya*. There is no connection between the two chants. Generally we have connected thinking. One thing is connected to something else, and it goes on. Here, we break that connected thinking. In order to achieve certain say over the ways of the mind, we break this connection.

Japa-dhyāna is not mechanical. If somebody says so, he or she has not understood it at all. It is not mechanical. It is deliberate. It is not repetitive either because it is clinched, in that, each occupation is a complete occupation. Completion is achieved after a given chant, *om namaḥ śivāya*, is over. In this, *saguṇa-brahma* is there, *mānasa-vyāpāra*, mental activity, is there and hence it fulfils the definition of *dhyāna*. At the same time, one chant is not connected to another chant. Every chant is complete by itself. It is unlike the Vedic chant: *om namaste astu bhagavan viśveśvarāya mahādevāya trayambakāya*... Here it is all connected. The Veda presents it in that form and it is how we learn it. It is different. But here, you have a chant, *om namaḥ śivāya*, and the chant is complete when you utter it once; again it is the same chant. One occupation, that is, one chant, is followed by another occupation; the second occupation is unconnected to the first occupation because it is the same, and it is complete. This is very important. The chain thinking is broken. You give myself an occupation wherein there is no chain thinking, no connected thinking.

The absence of any connection is asserted by the interval between the two chants. The interval also is important. The interval between two successive chants gives me an occasion to be conscious of the interval too, where there is no chant. There is nothing else either; there is just myself, with an awareness of Īśvara, myself without occupation. Without any particular occupation it is just myself, with occupation also, it is myself.

1 Unto the Lord whom I invoke by the word 'Śiva' my salutation.

2 Unto the Lord whom I invoke by the word 'Nārāyaṇa' my salutation.

What is the logic here in *dhyāna*? The logic is that I am quite aware of what is happening in the mind. I train myself to have an occupation, I give myself an occupation which helps me to learn how to be deliberate, how to think deliberately. Suppose, after chanting for a while, I give up the chanting. I can see for myself that I command certain fullness, certain *śānti*, composure. In *dhyāna* I am able to command this without waiting for it to happen by chance. I gain a certain inner space to be aware of the ways of my mind. It is what we call *citta-naiścalya* or *samādhāna*. Being just myself, I recognise the fact that I can be comfortable just being myself. This is one type of *dhyāna*, in keeping with the classical definition of the word. All other things are steps in order to do this *dhyāna*.

The steps include sitting posture, the seat on which you sit, the place where you sit, and so on. You sit with your body, head and neck in one line. No particular limb is burdened with the weight of the other part of the body. If one can sit erect, one should do so. If one can cross one's legs, one should sit cross-legged.

Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions in the *Gītā*⁴ that one should have an *āsana* also. *Āsana* is the place where you sit. There are two types of meaning for the word '*āsana*'. One is the posture and the other is the seat itself. The seat prescribed in the *Gītā* is a grass mat with a skin on top of it and then afterwards a piece of cloth⁵.

This is to protect you from dampness so that you do not develop arthritis. Why a piece of cloth on top? Skin has fur, and it will itch. It is simple logic, nothing big. These are non-essentials. You do not need all that. You just need to understand these things. You require an *āsana* to avoid dampness. Then, you do not sit on an elevated place like the tall stools seen in the bars. Generally, in *dhyāna* the body gets relaxed and sleep invariably happens. Then one may fall down. That is why someone said, "Whenever you get sleep in *dhyāna*, please go to sleep. Sleep comes because you need sleep." It is not right. You may need sleep, all right. But what happens is: whenever you sit for *dhyāna* sleep invariably will come. Afterwards, a time comes when, unless you do *dhyāna* you cannot sleep. When you decide to do *dhyāna*, you should do *dhyāna*. If sleep comes, you should just stop the sleep. What can you do for that? You can breathe deeply or get up and sit for some time, or put the head under cold water and then come and do *dhyāna*. Once or twice if you do it, sleep will never come again, because you have to face the cold water. This is how it is done.

³ *Samam kāya-śiro-grīvaṁ dhārayan acalaṁ sthiraḥ...* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.13).

⁴ *...sthiraṁ āsanam ātmanaḥ* - having arranged one's seat in a clean firm place (Bhagavad Gītā 6.11).

⁵ *Cailājina-kuśottaram* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.11): *caila* - cloth, *ajina* - skin (of a deer or a tiger, which had a natural death), and *kuśa* - grass; *uttaram* - one above the other (in the reverse order).

In the sitting posture, you do not look to this side or that side, nor do you look up or down. Your eyes are closed softly, with the upper eyelids touching the lower ones gently. Then, you do not think of external objects. Lord Kṛṣṇa beautifully says, “All the things that are outside, keeping them outside...”⁶The people whom you are connected to and for whom you have affection, they are all outside. You keep all of them wherever they are. Who am I to keep them outside? They are already outside. Even though they are physically outside, they are also inside you. You want to change some of them; you do not like them—they are inside. Some of them you like; they are also inside. They all sit permanently inside. Just unload all of them, keep them outside the mind. You can have love and affection for people. It does not mean that they should sit inside your mind and irritate you.

This is a very good habit. Whether you do meditation or not, you can unload people from your mind. The people you want to change cannot change. This is how they are, in your perception. They become sources of frustration, and therefore, pray for them. Keep them outside. You freely relate to them, you care for them; our caring will not cause you any problem. Let them be outside. You do what is to be done. Pray for them; this is all you can do. Then the external world is kept external. Thereby, you can be with Īśvara in *dhyāna*.

In the beginning, you can visualise an altar and do a small *pūjā*. At least, place a flower, say a prayer and then afterwards do *japa*. This is *dhyāna*. In this, you take care of the problem of the mind getting strayed.

We have some advice given by Gauḍapāda regarding *dhyāna*: “Wake up the mind when sleep comes. When the awakened mind wanders, once again, bring it back. When the mind is under the grip of some unmanifest desires, know them to be from the unconscious. One should not disturb the mind that has gained tranquility after the said obstacles have been tackled. Do not enjoy the *ānanda*, joy, in that tranquil state. Be dispassionate to this *ānanda* by proper understanding.”⁷ *Laye sambodhayet cittam*: Laya is sleep. When sleep comes, then wake up the mind. How should I do that? When sleep comes, I am not there to wake up. When sleep comes, it does not tell me that it is coming. How should I wake up? Before sleep comes, the stupor, the feeling of slumber comes—you know that sleep is coming. Sleep will never come without sending a pilot. Yawning will come, and you know sleep is going to come. Then do some *prāṇāyāma*, deep breathing, trying to blow out more air than usual. In the process you wake up.

6 *Sparśān kṛtvā bahiḥ bāhyān ... (Bhagavad Gītā 5.27).*

7 *Laye sambodhayet cittam, vikṣiptam śamayet punaḥ. Sa kaṣāyam vijānīyāt, samaḥ prāptam na cālayet. Nāsvādayet sukham tatra, nissanṅaḥ prajñāyā bhavet (Māṇḍūkya Kārikā 3.44 and 3.45)*

Vikṣiptaṁ śamayet punaḥ: When the mind moves away, bring it back. Make a *saṅkalpa*, “Whenever the mind moves away, I will bring it back.” Then, when the mind moves away, you will be reminded because of the *saṅkalpa*, and you can bring it back. *Sa kaṣāyaṁ vijānīyāt*: When the mind is quiet after doing some *japa* or *dhyāna*, all kinds of thoughts may arise in the mind. Understand them to be from the unconscious. These are from the unconscious. Welcome them.

Samah prāptam na cālayet: Do not disturb the mind when it has gained tranquility. Welcome anything that occurs in the mind. *Nāsvādayet sukham tatra*: Do not begin to enjoy that state. Understand, ‘This is myself’. *Nissaṅgaḥ prajñayā bhavet*: With the understanding, ‘this *ānanda* is myself alone,’ remain free.

Śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yogād avaihi. So *śraddhā* takes you to the teacher, it takes you to Vedanta classes. Then your daily prayers—*kāyika*, *vācika*, *mānasa karmas*—prepare you, make you an *adhikārin* for this knowledge. When you keep listening to the *śāstra*, the vision of the *śāstra* becomes clear in time.

Oṃ tat sat

Book of Enlightening Laughters

Collection of Stories & Anecdotes From the Talks of Swami Dayananda Saraswati.
(Sri Swami Dayanandaji's lectures)

(006) A MOVIE WITHOUT KICKS!

You cannot avoid playing roles. Because you are already a son or daughter or father or mother and so on. At the same time every role has got problems. There is not a role in real life or even a movie without its challenges, plots and problems.

Imagine a movie coming from Bollywood. The movie begins with the introduction of the hero and the heroine. A child is born to them in the very first scene. The boy grows up without even a headache. He goes to school and stands always first in every subject. He always comes first in any sports event. Every game he plays so well. At home he is an ideal child. He obeys every command. "Go to sleep" -- he goes to sleep. "Eat this" -- he eats. He does exactly what is expected, whatever he is told.

He grows up like this. He enters teenage. Teenage is a big problem. That is why there is no teen after nineteen. It is twenty. But this boy has no problem. He does his Master's. He then goes abroad. There he gains a Ph.D. in Nuclear Science. He is a Harvardian and so he is a big guy. Everybody wants him. He is a highly rewarded, awarded, recognised person. He wants to marry now. Who is that girl?

The girl also has grown without a headache. She has come first in every subject. She is good in music. She is a musicologist. She is a woman of literature. She also has done her Master's. She also is a Ph.D. She has got it in Humanities. It is a good combination. He gets married to this girl.

They have a child now. It is a boy. He also grows without a headache. He also scores well in study and sports. He becomes another Ph.D. He gets married to another girl who is exactly like his mother in all respects.

They have a son. The grandfather is retired now. They are living quietly in a beautiful house on a lake-side. He holds his grandson and sees him. He says, "He is beautiful. He is brilliant. He is just like me." The curtain falls. There ends the movie. This kind of thing never happens in life. This is the movie.

Who will see this movie? Even the wife of the film director will not oblige him. He has to bribe her to see it. There is no *maal-masala* in it. There is no such real life in the world. Nose means 'be ready for common cold'. Heart means 'be ready for attack'. Kidney means 'be ready for stones'. There must be a girl. There must be a hero who wants to marry her. There must be a villain standing in between. There must be a buffoon who also wants to marry her. He provides all comedy. All these must be there.

There must be trees and the girl and the hero should go round and round the trees singing. Not only two. Suddenly you will find another 26 of them appearing. How? Only Bollywood knows. Otherwise there is no movie.

Our whole life is full of plots. There are always turns in life. Each turn is a problem. Sometimes it may be for good. But most of the times it is not. Every role has problems. You cannot avoid those problems. They provide the challenge. Life has kick only when such challenges are there. But for them to be pleasant experiences, you have to know, "I am an individual, a simple conscious being, who plays all these roles and the roles are different from me." And the problems belong to the role. Unfortunately all roles are rolled into one 'me'. All the problems of every role become the problems of the person.

108-Days Vedanta Course

at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti

Inaguration September 2, 2019

On September 2, 2019, our 108-day course at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (AVG), Anaikkati commenced under the guidance, grace and tireless commitment of Acarya Swami Sadatmanandaji. The morning was filled with prayers to invoke blessings as we started with a Ganesh Homa just before dawn, followed by Dakshinamurthy arti and culminated at the Gurutirtha, where we offered homage to Pujya Sri Swami Dayanandaji.



Soon after we gathered at the lecture hall, eager to hear the insights and wisdom imparted by the inaugural addresses of Swami Tattvavidanandaji, Swami Satchidanandaji and Swami Shankaranandaji. Then Acaryaji introduced the importance of taranavidya, referring to the knowledge of the limitless self, required to cross the ocean of bondage. Acaryaji further elucidated that the essential teachings of the Tattvabodhah and Bhagavad Gita were Atma Vidya and Brahma Vidya, thus planting the seeds of the course.

Regular Classes

Over the duration of 164 classes, Acaryaji unfolded and illuminated the wisdom of the Tattvabodhah, generously elaborating with detailed explanations and relevant corollaries to help us establish a sturdy foundation and clear framework of the essential concepts of Vedantah. This grew apparent as we saw the teachings of Tattvabodhah emerge in our Bhagavad Gita discourses and could draw connections between the two texts. Throughout the course Acaryaji seamlessly interwove the larger vision of *atmajnanam* with the daily practices and values required for *cittasuddhih* and preparation for self-discovery, giving us practical and implementable insights on how to progress in our spiritual pursuit as well as lead a happy and peaceful life.

Furthermore, Acaryaji often integrated Sanskrit grammar and etymology to help us apply what we were learning in Sanskrit class. Meanwhile the lectures were seasoned with an endearing sense of humour and simple examples, such as the beloved clay pot, to illustrate complex and abstract ideas.

Acaryaji covered, with meticulous detail, the five main topics of Tattvabodhah: *sadhanacatustayam sampattih*, *atma vicara*, *tat padarth vicara*, *aikya vicara* and *jnanaphalam*. In parallel, he laid out a lucid vision of the entire Bhagavad Gita, uncovering the meaning of each of the 700 shlokas and explicating the knowledge of *jiva-svarupa*, *Isvara-svarupa* and *jiva-Isvara aikyam* as well as unequivocally depicting the path to moksha.

Chanting Classes

With loving patience and compassion, Swamini Vedarthanandaji and Swamini Sardanandaji, led our chanting classes, guiding us in improving the nuances of our listening skills, while teaching us to harmonise with the group, properly pronounce *swaras* and maintain the appropriate tone and melody of each mantra. The power of Vedic chanting and its inward nourishment was often palpable during class and temple puja. Moreover, Swami Jagadatmanandaji acquainted us with Vedic Astrology and the meaning of the *panchangam*, which we chanted daily in appreciation of Ishvara's glory as the principles of time and space.

Sanskrit Classes

Our study of Sanskrit was another remarkable journey. We were divided among three levels based on our Sanskrit skills. I attended level one, where many of us were starting from scratch. In three months, our teacher, Br. Sharanji taught us to read, write, analyse and translate basic sentences. This progress was only possible because of his generosity in time and skills and his heartfelt dedication to help us learn and reach our potential. The same can be said of Swami Vishwatmanandaji (Level 3 Sanskrit) and Ramachandranji (Level 2 Sanskrit), as well as the tutors— Swami Jagadatmanandaji, Br. Kumaara Chaitanya and Padma Ramaswami, who were ever-ready to support our progress.

Satsang

The enthusiasm and curiosity of students came alive in evening satsangs, when Acaryaji clarified various queries and also expounded on the meaning of several *stotras*, such as Sri Dakshinamurtiastottarasatanamavalih, Sri Kamalajadayitastakam, and Gangastotram, giving us deeper context and connect to the profundity of these sacred verses. Once a week in satsang, we also had an optional Q&A revision session for students to engage in wholesome fun.

Daily Seva

Our daily schedule included guided meditation, daily service and weekly maunam to encourage the transformation of knowledge into practice. Acaryaji guided morning meditation to coach us in contemplation and assimilating abstract concepts such as the order of Isvarah and oneness with the cosmos (*Vishwarupa darshana*).

To foster the spirit of karma yoga, we partook in daily seva duties, which included gardening, temple seva, kitchen duties, cleaning, library support and the tuk shop (thoughtfully set up for us to purchase our basic requirements and avoid the hassle of going to Coimbatore). Meanwhile weekly mauna provided us the platform to nurture inner quietude and self-discipline. Throughout the course, Acharyaji continuously motivated us to be accountable to ourselves and to our inner growth by reminding us of the importance of self-discipline, mindfulness, integrity and doing what is to be done. We also availed Pujya Swamiji's blessings by listening to his video discourses and his Gita chanting, while learning more about his teachings and his contribution to Indian culture through anecdotes and tributes from others.

During the course we observed several auspicious occasions such as Pujya Swami's Punya Tithi and Samaradhna Day, Saraswati Puja, Diwali, Guru Peyarchi Puja and AVG's 29th Annual Function Day (on which the Oduvars of Tirumarai Seva Mayam rendered a Tirumurai recital), Bhagavad Gita Jayanti (when we chanted the entire Gita) and Karthikeya Deepam (when we lit up the whole campus).



Visit to Temples

AVG also organised field trips to Perur Temple and Avinashi Adheenam, of which fellow classmate Hema Chaurasia shared: "On December 13th, we visited the famous 12th century Perur Temple, known for its stunning Dravidian architecture. Acharyaji led us to each of the mandalas to offer our prayers and archana and seek blessings. Subsequently, we sat in the central enclave to follow Acharyaji in a brief session of bhajans and dhun—everyone was moved by the oneness felt with the Supreme God.

Subsequently, on December 20th, in response to the enthusiastic invitation from Avinashi Adheenam, another trip to the Vageesar Mandalayam in Avinashi was organized. After a warm welcome, and a traditional meal on banana leaves, we enjoyed insightful talks by both, Acharyaji and the Kamatchidasa Swamigal. On our way back, we visited the famous Lalitha Ambika Temple and neighbouring Sri-Anuvavi Anjaneya Nandavanam Temple, which has an impressive 45-foot tall statue of the Lord."

We are concluding this enriching course with the enlightened presence of Swami Veditatmanandaji who is offering a four day retreat on the 20 values of a seeker, as described in the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna.

Course Participants

Our class consists of 85 sadhakas of all ages from across India and around the world, representing 34 countries including Korea, Japan, China, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Turkey, Chile, Brazil, New Zealand and Australia. Despite the cultural diversity and varying levels of exposure to Vedantah, everyone's genuine commitment to self-knowledge and support of one other's journeys united us. It was a blessing for us to stay and learn in the serene forested refuge of AVG. The quality of accommodation, sattvik food, facilities and care were well beyond expectation. On behalf of all my classmates, I express our heartfelt gratitude to Acaryaji, all of the Swamijis, Swaminijis, Brahmacharis, staff, sevaks, and other visible and invisible forces that made this 108-day course possible. Om.

-Anjali Desai

Student Reflections

"AVG is the best possible place for study of Vedanta in its most pristine form. Acharya Sadatmanandaji teaches in a highlight systematic way. He has the great ability of unfolding the subject matter step-by-step, one concept at a time, while keeping in view the entire vision of Vedanata. The Sanskrit acharyas do a remarkable job of making the study of Sanskrit very joyful and simple. The ashram itself, located among forests and mountains provides the ideal setting for receiving and assimilating the ancient wisdom of the rishis."

-Brahmachari Rajesh, (Kerala, India)

"I arrived at AVG with only basic knowledge of Vedanta. However after these 108 days, I am leaving with the complete vision of Vedanata. The highlight is without a doubt the teaching of Sawmi Sadatmanandaji...with his deep knowledge of sastra, he is able to expand on the texts and utilise plenty of real-life examples to help how Vedanta can be used in the 'real world'. Another plus is the daily Sanskrit lessons. I am able to now read and chant Sanskrit verses easily and the vocabulary is developing too. This far exceeds where I expected to be after just 3 months. For one who is willing to put in the work, follow the rules and is earnest in their pursuit of knowledge, AVG is the place to be."

-Robbie and Allison Young (Australia and Sweden)

"The course comprehensively covered Tattvabodhah and Bhagavad Gita texts, basic level Sanskrit and chanting. The teaching methodology was simple and easy to understand with focus on imbibing the values in daily life. It has been a wonderful experience and I am grateful for all the learning I have had here in a short span of time."

-Rachna Gupta, (Dehradun, India)

"A very stimulating and challenging programme to understand the basics of Vedanta and obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita. This programme was nicely interwoven with Sanskrit grammar studies, chanting classes, and devotional activities in the Medha Dakshinamurthi temple complex. The infrastructural support with loving care provided to the sadhakas was extraordinary."

-Lakshmi Prabha and SR Balakrishnan (Coimbatore, India)

"The 108 day course was Ishwara's grace for me...There were numerous obstacles, but each time, either in class or in satsang, Acaryaji's teachings or answers to questions addressed those issues and helped guide me to what I needed to do. All obstacles soon turned out to be learning experiences in disguise. I thank Acaryaji, Swaminiammas, Sharanji, Kumaarji, for this opportunity and support and thank my fellow classmates for their understanding and letting me be myself."

-Krishnan Chandrashekar (Australia)

"If I had not attended personally, I would have difficulty accepting that such a rich environment for learning the Shastra exists in this current day and age. Acharyaji's teaching style is to simplify complex concepts and clarify misconceptions, doubts and questions every step of the way. He cared for each student in a fatherly manner, maximising their spiritual growth from the level where each person began. Also, every member of the management and staff reinforced the Gurukul atmosphere and worked diligently to enhance our experience and ease our stay here."

-Hema Chaurasia, (USA)

"I am indeed fortunate in having been a part of the 108-days Vedanta course. The emphasis was on a spiritual way of life. The teaching of the Tattvabodhah and Bhagavad Gita was done in alignment with the values of life. That was sweetened by learning shlokas and hymns and strengthened by learning fundamentals of Sanskrit language. It was an incredible journey. My humble pranam to the Swamijis, Swaminijis and other teachers. My thanks to all the staff for their excellent support and help."

-Geetha Ramani, (Bangalore, India)

Vedic Wisdom festival in Mumbai 2019

In the second year of the Vedic Wisdom Festival eleven spiritual masters over two full days unlocked the transformative power of Vedic wisdom for about 300 people. Organised by the Aarsha Vidya Foundation, Mumbai, what was unique about the festival was that it coincided with the Gita Jayanti and had something for everyone from the Bhagavad Gita. There were both monks as well as householder Vedanta teachers who were disciples of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. The tradition of annual talks in Mumbai by Pujya Swamiji was carried forward by his direct disciples coming together to share their rich and glorious legacy inherited.

The chief guest Mr. Manoharan Chairman of Canara Bank inaugurated the festival and spoke about the value of sharing what you have with others. Br Vignesh Ghanapaathi, trustee of Vedadhara spoke on the 'The power of a havan', various types of chanting in ghanapaatha interspersed with powerful chants and the five types of yajna.



Swami Brahmanidananda, the founder of the festival and Aarsha Vidya Foundation spoke on 'What is real in your life?'. Stunning everyone he said that, 'Nobody lives in the world that is there. We all live in the world that we think is there. Our perceptions define our reality. What our emotional state depends upon how we interpret, what we see.' He explained the nature of reality – the reality we experience as either praatibhasikam or

vyaavahaarikam and the abadhita as paaramaarthikam as oneself. Whetting everyone's appetite to know more, he concluded "You are the only thing that is non-negatable. So the whole attempt in Vedanta is to know yourself."

Dr. Uma Ladiwala, scientific researcher in the field of Neuroimmunology, spoke about 'Meditation and the workings of the brain'. Contrary to popular understanding she clarified that our brain is not a fixed structure and it has an ability to change called neuro plasticity. What we do with the mind influences structure and function of the brain. Explaining the functions of sympathetic nervous system (for fight or flight mode) and parasympathetic nervous system which is activated during meditation, she shared that some of the important brain areas involved during meditation is the pre-frontal area linked to all higher functions like planning of goal and thinking, body awareness, emotional regulation, empathy.

She shared data from studies at Harvard by neuroscientists where which revealed that 8 weeks of meditating 30 minutes a day had a very beneficial effect on psychology, depression, anxiety, aggression and certain diseases like psoriasis. The study also observed that it brings in both internal changes like breaking or changing a habit and external changes like improved physical and immune function, lowered cortisol(stress hormone), improved psychological and emotional regulation. The purpose of the talk was to benefit those participants who are not exposed to Vedanta and were keen to see the scientific basis for some of the sadhanas.

A 10 minute video clip by Pujya Swamiji on prasada buddhi touched everyone to the core. Herga Ravindra Bhat an Astrologer and Vedanta Vidvana, educated the audience about Astrology as being a study of one's karmic patterns and explained ganit jyotish and phalit jyotish. In an interactive session Hergaji took questions from the audience. He showed how astrology can forewarn you about the manifestation of your karma in terms of negative experiences and how some of them can be minimized or neutralized through appropriate parihaarams. This would make life more manageable, freeing up time and energy for meaningful life pursuits like Vedanta.

Falguni Harkisandas a Vedanta teacher and former Yoga teacher spoke on 'Sadhana in Yoga and Vedanta'. Through various analytical and meditative exercises based on the Yoga sutras with reference to Vedanta she helped the participants see the Atman as independent of the panch-koshas.

Dr. Uma Shankar, Principal and Head of Department of Philosophy, SIES College of Arts, Science and commerce spoke on 'How to survive and thrive as a parent'. Peppered with stories she demonstrated that good intentions are not enough if the methods of parenting are problematic. Appreciation, undivided attention, sacrifices, openness, honesty are some qualities which are absolutely needed in bring up a child. Allowing the child to do things on their own, preparing them to handle unpredictability and pitfalls, being open to conversations/ideas, giving them space to do mistakes and standing by them like strong pillars goes a long way in gaining their trust. We are preparing them for the huge game of life.



Swami Shuddabodhananda, Vedanta teacher spoke on 'A thousand desires and a few priorities in the light of karma yoga'. He stumped the audience by asking whether a desire is desirable? Quoting elaborately from the Gita he showed how desires in harmony with dharma are acceptable, not the adharmic ones.

He further explained how the real aim is to be free from desires and how karma yoga can help one be free from the hold of desires and get a mind necessary for understanding Vedanta. Day two began with the whole auditorium reverberating with the chanting of select Bhagavad Gita verses by the students.



Swamini Brahmaprajnananda, the founder of the festival and a Vedanta teacher elaborated on 'How does meditation change my life?'. She clearly emphasized that shravanam was the main sadhana in Vedanta and meditation can be considered as secondary sadhana clarifying many myths related to meditation. Defining meditation as mental activity centered on Saguna Brahman, she said that was no secular meditation in Hinduism. Our relationship with our mind goes through 3 stages.

The first stage being –My mind is a problem, I want peace of mind. Second stage – My mind is an instrument, I use it as and when required. Stage three – I illumine my mind and do not judge myself on the basis of the conditions of my mind. This is the journey an individual makes. The audience thoroughly basked in the different types of meditations beginning with relaxation to value based meditation to focused meditation to sakshi bhava meditation and a mention of vishvarupa dhyaanam as well as nididhyaasana.

Uday Acharya, a Vedanta teacher spoke on the 'Mahabharata – Shades of Grey'. He explained the compromises made by various heroes in the Mahabharata on the basis of their understanding of ethics. The reasons for compromise were conflicts, past decisions, weakness, greed, fear, habit or anger. No one policy works all the time. People adopt different types of ethics from text book ethics, convenient ethics, personalized ethics and enlightened ethics.

Sifu (Master) Christopher Fernandes spoke on 'Vedic wisdom and Taoist Yoga'. Taoist Yoga and Qi Gong is a discipline that includes elements of yoga, kalaripayattu, Shiva Aagama and a bit of Vedanta, interacting with sadhanas practiced by the monks in Tibet and China. One problem noticed among many monks was their health being ignored in the pursuit of moksha. Taoist Yoga explained by Sifu not only helps one to take care of the body and mind but also prepares one for the understanding of Vedanta. He made the audience do some deep breathing coupled with visualizing different colors, concentrating on different organs of the body and healing sounds based on Qi Gong.

Two Students of Vedanta, Swarnalatha Raghavan and Sagar Ambashankar spoke on 'Work - life balance : Myth or reality'. Both of them highlighted the fact that priority based living (vyavasaayatmika buddhi) helps to achieve what one wants in life. When one understands that roles cannot give us lasting fulfillment, then one is able to have certain objectivity towards people situations in life which eventually bring one to the study of Vedanta.



Swami Brahmabhutananda, a Vedanta teacher spoke on 'Bhagavad Gita in our daily life'. Highlighting Bhagavad Gita as a way of life, he emphasized that work and life were not two separate things. Life is a journey and work is a part of it, whether the work is for one's personal upkeep or it is a means to a dedicated life to a higher goal that is mukti. He encouraged everyone to think deeply of the purpose of every action. He spoke about the

importance of dharma and ahimsa to all forms of life and prasaadabuddhi in the pursuit of moksha as the ultimate goal of life.

The festival drew to a close with an exciting session on 'Hinduism matters – Difficult questions, simple answers' where the panelists were Swami Brahmanidananda and Swamini Brahmaprajnananda. Handling innumerable questions from the audience, rape cases in India to status of women, and the apologetic Hindu both of them traced the source of the problem to be the disconnect of the modern English educated Hindus to their heritage and culture. Rape and the objectification of women is not a problem of our culture but more about the pornography available which normalizes sexual violence. With the westernization of education and the dismissal of our heritage as backward, in the name of secularism we are almost ashamed about our religion. The leftist propaganda is bordering on Hinduphobia. The teachers highlighted the need for Hindus to discover their own legacy. Responding to an article that Hindus bribe their Gods, they said. " We don't bribe Ishvara. We offer whatever we can. We offer ourselves to Ishvara. "



The programme ended with a vote of thanks to the enthusiastic and involved participants, dedicated organizers and volunteers and the sponsors – Canara Bank, Indic Academy, VRL logistics, LIC, Union Bank and Free press. Videos of the talks will be uploaded soon on the youtube channel – Vedic Wisdom festival. Watch out for the third edition next year. Om tat sat.

Week long Vedanta retreat in Manjakkudi

A group of 47 students from Surat, Gujarat attended a Vedanta programme from 8th December 2019 to 15th December 2019 at the *Jnana Pravaha* in Pujya Swamiji's *Janmabhoomi*—Manjakkudi.

The focus was on inculcating a routine for the study group whereby they can live a meaningful life - *ishvaraarpanabuddhi-prasadabuddhi-karmayoga*; temple visits and *pooja* exemplified these aspects and Vedanta study - *shravanam, mananam, dhyanam, satsang*; classes elaborated these aspects of study.



Course content, pedagogy and schedule

The course was conducted by Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji, a direct disciple of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati in the Arsha Vidya tradition. The medium of instruction was Gujarati with the main texts being *Kaivalya Upanisad* with *Shankara Bhashyam*. Swamini Vibhavananda took classes on *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter 14) while Bramachari Suryanarayana took classes on *Aparokshanubhuti* text in Hindi.

The day began with meditation by the Vedanta group at Pujya Swamiji's shrine at the *Jnana Pravaha*. This was followed by *Pancaayatana Pooja* conducted by priests from the Swami Dayananda Vedapatashala, Kodavasa, Tamil Nadu.

After breakfast, the Vedanta classes went on till lunch.

The retreat members and acaryas were also briefed about the structure of *Jnana Pravaha*, the availability of a reading room facility where AVR & PT (Arsha Vidya Research & Publication Trust) books are made available for study anytime of the day and access to Pujya Swamiji's talks on Vedanta texts spread over six 3-year courses at Gurukulams and also public talks and satsangs - over 7000 hours of talks are available for repeated *shravanam* and *mananam*. Some of the members made use of the facilities.



Manjakkudi tour

The participants witnessed first-hand how a tiny hamlet in the Kaveri delta transformed into a model village in the last decade and half. They took a tour of our Goshala and organic rice fields and spent time with our Chatralayam students and came to know their dreams and aspirations.



Satsangs and temple tours

In the evenings, the study group embarked on temple tours. The participants were amazed to see how local life revolved around temple routines and how our tradition continues to be maintained and followed in these religious structures. Satsangs were conducted after dinner.



Address by the Chairperson and Managing Trustee

In her heartfelt address (10th December 2019) to the acaryas and other members assembled at the Jnana Pravaha, Smt. Sheela Balaji, Chairperson and Managing Trustee of the Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET) said she was inspired by Swamiji's vision and joined his movement of Seva. The result was transformative — both at a personal level as well as from the community standpoint — the way Manjakkudi evolved itself from a sleepy hamlet to a knowledge hub in the last 15 years.

Concluding note

On the penultimate day, Sri. Sambamurthy and Smt. Sambamurthy, ardent devotees of Pujya Swamiji from Tiruvalayaru, Tamil Nadu sang a few abhangs — Marathi devotional songs. The audience also joined in and participated in the group singing.

At the end of the retreat, the acaryas and some of the retreat members shared their experiences and had a word of appreciation for the excellent facilities provided in terms of accommodation, food and other arrangements.

On their part, representatives from the Swami Dayananda Educational Trust (SDET) welcomed the participants and acaryas to visit the village again to keep the tradition of teaching and Seva flourish at Pujya Swamiji's birth place. The acaryas also addressed SDET teachers and blessed them in a separate function.

Relationships - based on emotion or understanding?

Relationships can make or destroy a person's happiness. Life is a continuous stream of managing relationships beginning from one's own mother, father, siblings, relatives, friends and so on. And continued on to girlfriend/boyfriend, wife, husband, employer, employee, boss, neighbor etc etc. Relationships are of 2 types - one those that are thrust upon us and the others that we choose to get into. Until a certain point, probably around the age of 12 or so, relationships are thrust upon us. Primarily because one does not have much of choice and also because one is not fully capable of making intelligent decisions. Once a person becomes old enough to make independent choices then we choose to get into relationships and our happiness is directly proportional to how we manage relationships whether it is personal or professional. The issue unfortunately here is, **there is no universal guideline as to how a relationship has to be managed**. There cannot be one too, because the number of relationships is numerous and each one is infinitely dynamic and complicated.

Fortunately for us there are some pointer and clear directions available in the Upanishads which we can make use of and benefit from. There is one section in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad where this topic is elaborately dealt with even though the context is one that we do not normally encounter. But the topic of relationships is universally relevant and hence applicable to every human being irrespective of his/her background.

This section in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad is in the form of a dialogue between Yajnavalkya (husband) and universally renowned for his wisdom) and Maitreyi (his wife). Yajnavalkya gives all his wealth to his wife and seeks her permission to quit family life and live a life purely dedicated to contemplation on the truth of Oneself. Maitreyi refuses to give permission immediately but questions him whether she will get the same ananda from the wealth Yajnavalkya is relinquishing to her, or only by pursuing a life of contemplation!

Yajnavalkya truthfully replies that it is not possible by explaining that a person craves for anything in the world in the first place only for oneself (pleased self) and not for the sake of object itself. This seems obvious at first but Yajnavalkya continues by including all relationships on being based on this premise. A husband is dear to a wife not for the sake of the husband but only for herself. And vice-versa. Similarly a son is dear to one only for oneself and not for the sake of the Son. Likewise for wealth, a learned person, a warrior, various other planes of existence like svarga (heaven), Gods, other living beings etc.

The consequences of this knowledge, are tremendous. It means that every living being is by design 'self'-ish' and what this Self is needs to be understood. In relationships this "selfishness" translates to meaning **every relationship is need based**. Need for me that I should not keep holding on to but try to grow out of. If this fact is clear then it has the capacity to be life-changer! The need can be emotional, physical, psychological etc. When there is clarity and acceptance about the nature of this need there is the possibility of growing out of this requirement. Otherwise one gets caught up and sucked into it without knowing how to overcome it.

When one does not clearly understand that this need is primarily for myself, then we assume that we are doing things for someone else and start having expectations from that person. Expectations in the form of particular behaviour, attitude, actions. **Expectations turn into demands. Demands give rise to the desire to control. When control is never possible anger results. Where there is anger one loses control over oneself and utters damaging words. Eventually relationship sours. This whole sequence (described clearly in the Bhagavad Gita - Verses 2.62, 63) happens inevitably whenever any relationship is based on a personal need.** And unfortunately all relationships are! And this fact needs to be carefully contemplated and meditated upon.

Also **when I understand that the relationship is primarily my own need then my demands reduce and I learn to accept whatever I get out of it because primarily it is my need rather than the other person's.** Whatever the other party does is his/her choice. There is no reason to be disappointed, dissatisfied or unhappy. The other party completely goes out of the equation here! If I have grown out of the need, then I can choose to break the relationship. If not I continue it for my own needs. This also junks the popular idea that one does anything for the sake of someone else. Anything anyone does is only for oneself fundamentally. Never for anyone else! Even if it is some kind of seemingly "selfless" service. It is done only in return for the happiness (pleased self) one gets.

No relationship lasts forever. This may seem obvious but a lot of problems arise because of the tendency to cling on to relationships. Again this is a result of one's own personal need because of the sub conscious assumption that I will suffer if the relationship does not last. It happens very obviously in a parent-child, husband-wife, sibling relationships etc. Vedanta says that when there is a clear understanding of the fundamental premise of relationships, no relationship is binding and at the same time all relationships are beautiful so that they can be cherished and enjoyed as long as they last.

The converse (breaking relationships at whim) is not true either!

In India there is this widespread tendency to not consciously "break" relationships. This is because of the cultural link to spirituality which clearly says that relationships are meant to last as long as their purpose (of growing out of the need) is not satisfied. This is why divorce is still not very socially acceptable because marriages are supposed to be made in heaven! The same logic applies to the joint family system which had been followed for centuries and is still valued in traditional homes. **Relationships need to last as long as they serve the purpose and drop off automatically either voluntarily or involuntarily.** If one does not utilise the golden opportunity to grow out of the relationship then one needs to wait until karma provides an opportunity again. It may be in this lifetime or in some later lifetime.

Relationships have to be understood and not just looked at emotionally.

Love is the driving force behind any relationship and it is primarily just an attraction based on emotion. That is why in the section of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad Yajnavalkya is asking for permission to leave Maitreyi because he understands the basis of love. An emotional relationship based only on love without understanding the basis, is not sustainable and is a clear recipe for disaster. If for instance we take the relationship of marriage, it is most significant because it is supposed to be for the longest term. Most marriages run into trouble because the expectations from one side seem to be unsatisfied. If the need is purely physical (emotional) then one is going to be dissatisfied very soon because beauty decreases with age. If it is very emotional then it leads to possessiveness and eventually choking the other person.

So when one keeps holding onto the needs then one never focuses on the fundamental problem of Self dissatisfaction. And when one's requirements are too many then naturally one tends to become too selfish and forget what the other person's needs/requirements are. The only way out of this impasse is to reduce expectation and completely get rid of them in time. Then the question arise as to why one should get rid of expectation? The Upanishads say that any expectation/demand arises primarily because one is dissatisfied with oneself. Usually overcoming this dissatisfaction is attempted by increasing demands from the outside world but this never works. One needs to overcome this dissatisfaction only by knowing that satisfaction (pleased self) is always comes from within. This seems to be a tall order but when there is clarity with regard to this, then every relationship becomes a means for both parties to gain emotional maturity and the relationship itself becomes enjoyable and worthwhile. It is a win-win situation.

Eventually demands reduce only when the sense of **I** i.e. individuality reduces and there is a fusion/one-ness with the external world. This fusion is what the Upanishads say is the ultimate purpose of human life and there in exists absolute peace and harmony. In other words, pleased self is one's own intrinsic nature.

This is the reason Yajnavalkya wants to quit family life (grow out of his need) and also all his wealth without allowing his need to consume and destroy him. This is the reason Sannyasa (renunciation) is glorified in the Hindu tradition because it means that the person has grown out of all his needs and is at peace with whatever is available. **Understanding that a relationship is based on one's own need makes it mutually beneficial, makes us more responsible and accountable too.** If I understand this fact I will try to grow out of it. If not I will get sucked into it. Choice is ours!

Article is by Swami Sarvananda Saraswati

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti, Coimbatore Sponsorship Invited

for the students of Two Year Residential Course on Vedanta and Sanskrit

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam is happy to announce that it will be starting Two Year Residential Course on Vedanta and Sanskrit beginning 15th January 2020 and ending on 31st December 2021. We have selected about 37 students for the course. The suggested donations towards lodging and boarding per student would be Rs. 10000/- per month. Generous donors are invited to sponsor the student who will not be able to make contribution towards the expenses.

Donors can choose any of the following options –

- For 6 students, for the entire course, Rs. 14,40,000
- For 1 student, for the entire course, Rs. 2,40,000
- For 1 student, for one year, Rs. 1,20,000
- For 1 student, for one month, Rs. 10,000

Donations can be made by cheque or DD in favour of “Sruti Seva Trust” or by bank transfer.

The following are the bank details –

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Bank Name: Indian Overseas Bank, Chinna Thadagam Branch.

Account Number 064301000007129 for the credit of **SRUTI SEVA TRUST**

For all foreign transfer, please contact AVG office at office@arshavidya.in

General Manager,

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,

(Sruti Seva Trust)

Anaikatti, Coimbatore – 641 108

Valedictory Function of Vedanta Course 2016-2019.

The three year course in Vedanta and allied subjects which commenced on Aug 15, 2016 under the tutelage of Swami Santatmananda came to a successful completion on 15th Dec 2019. A puja was performed in the Adhithanam in the morning for Pujya Swamiji.

Though the course went through ups and downs, it was a blessing in disguise for the students to have got exposure to many teachers. One would have ascertained that teachers may vary but the teaching is the same and that proves the tatparya of the sastra in oneness of individual and Isvara. Swami Brahmanidyananda took classes for more than one and a half years and unfortunately the course missed him in 2018 when Swamiji attained mahasamadhi on Sivaratri Day.



Swami Sakshatkrtananda completed the course taking the Catussutri and Gita 18th Chapter. Prior to that, the students could listen to Swamini Vidyananada on Bhagavad Gita bhashya from 8th chapter to 17th chapter and Taittiriya Upanishad bhashya. Swami Tattvavidyananda taught them Mandukya and few other texts. Some of the other teachers who taught included Swamini Brahmalinananda and Swamini Sadvidyananda.

Sri Swami Suddhanandaji gave away the certificates to the students.

Surya, a student, who spoke on the occasion mentioned that he had travelled widely around the globe and he had not come across another ashram like Dayananda Ashram where this teaching is available in purest form and taught freely without any expectation and with love.

Swami Satsvarupananda was also present on the occasion. Swamini Vidyananda addressed them and said that the students should continue to be in touch with the ashram and get guidance whenever they need. Swami Sakshatkrtananda blessed the students and concluded the function with prayer. Vag Devi, one of the students, gave a bhandara to sadhus.



Due to the innumerable requests from various quarters for a new course, it has been decided to begin the next course on Oct 26, 2020 preceded by a one month course from 5th Aug to 3rd Sep. Detailed announcement will appear in the website of Swami Dayananda Ashram as well as in Jan 20 newsletter.

Compassion and the Human End, *puruṣārtha*¹

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

It looks as though there is a choice in commanding a degree of compassion. I say this because if someone is compassionate we praise the person as being a saint, which means that the person is very special. This is not acceptable in the Vedic culture. In its vision, everyone has to grow into a saint because *dharma* is, in itself, a *puruṣārtha*, a human end. This is not fully understood. Therefore, let us look into this in greater detail.

The four human ends

Dharma, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* are the four *puruṣārthas*, the *caturvidha-puruṣārthāḥ*. By definition, that which is desired by all people is a *puruṣārtha*, *sarvaiḥ puruṣaiḥ arthyate iti puruṣārthaḥ*. It is something that is desired by all people and prayed for, *prāthyate*. *Puruṣa* means a 'person', implying both male and female.

***Mokṣa* is the most important human end and it is achieved in this birth**

Among the four *puruṣārthas*, the most important, *mukhya*, is *mokṣa*. Why is that so? Let us suppose that you say *mokṣa* means not having *punarjanma*, re-birth. A lot of people would then say that they are not interested in that because they want to be reborn. When I say that *mokṣa* is right now, why should I talk of re-birth? If there is a re-birth, we will work on that too. I am very much here and would like to see that I am free enough to have a limited body, a limited mind, limited knowledge, and of course, limited money. If these constitute limitation, there is no *mokṣa* from limitations because these limitations constitute my being.

The body is limited, the mind is limited, knowledge is limited, money is limited, power is limited, and even influence is limited. Even if you become the President of the United States of America you are still subject to certain limitations. Nobody on this earth, no matter what he or she has, is really a happy person. There is always the problem of how one is going to overcome these limitations and enjoy freedom. Death may be a form of freedom, but then people say you will be reborn, so death is not freedom. You are a traveler and you will be back. Therefore, there is no such thing as *mokṣa* after death.

There are religions, which promote heaven as their ultimate goal. They are heaven-bound and they say that all of us should go to heaven. This promotion of going to heaven, is it a kind of tourism or what? Am I going there as an individual, a *jīva*? That the individual soul survives the death of the body and goes to heaven is a belief one can have. But will this soul have a body or not? If you have a body of your own, you will continue to have the same problem limitations of the body-mind-sense complex. Even if you have a heavenly body, some other heavenly body will be different from your body and there is bound to be comparison. A sense of limitation is inevitable. Further, in heaven, there would be a ruler, and you would be the ruled. Therefore, heaven is not a solution. If there is something called *mokṣa*, either I am free already or I can never be free. If I am free right now and here, it is only a question of knowing how. This freedom, *mokṣa*, is the *parama-puruṣārtha*, the ultimate end.

¹ Excerpts from the book, *Living versus Getting On* by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati edited by Jayshree Ramakrishnan, Chaya Rajaram, and Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey.

Dharma is usually presented as a means which subserves the pursuits of artha and kāma

As a *puruṣārtha*, *artha* means power, security, name and fame, etc., because they give you a sense of security. You can encash your name and fame in society, so when you consider *artha* you should also include this aspect of influence and power. Some of these things can also be viewed as *kāma* because they give you a sense of ego gratification, which is *kāma*. So *artha* becomes *kāma*. Music, food, relationships, family—all these, because they provide some satisfaction, are *kāma*. Any ego gratification, name, fame, etc., also provides this sense of satisfaction.

The *puruṣārthas* are to be understood as the means to achieve various ends. There are a number of means, *sādhana*s, for achieving these various ends. For instance, getting an education and equipping yourself professionally are the means for the pursuit of *artha-kāma*. Among the ‘means and ends’, the *sādhana-sādhya* in the various *artha-kāma* pursuits, one of the means, they say, is *dharma*. They say that you should continue your pursuit of *artha* and *kāma*, but be mindful of *dharma*. In doing so, which is the *puruṣārtha*? Is *dharma* the *puruṣārtha*? No, it is not. *Artha* is the *puruṣārtha* and *kāma* is the *puruṣārtha*. You are told to ‘follow’ *dharma* when you pursue *artha* and *kāma*. Therefore, in this approach, *dharma* becomes a subserving *sādhana* for the pursuits of *artha* and *kāma*. To say that you have to follow *dharma* in order to accomplish *artha* and *kāma* is paying lip service to *dharma*. As I listen to people of different religious persuasions, I find that nobody thinks of *dharma* as a *puruṣārtha*, as an end to be accomplished. Even many Indian spiritual leaders do not seem to understand this. They always say *dharma* has to be followed in order to achieve *artha* and *kāma* and that is why *dharma* is at the beginning of the list. This is not correct.

Dharma is as much a puruṣārtha as artha and kāma

Dharma has as much of a place among the *puruṣārthas* as *artha* and *kāma*, the common ends that human beings want to accomplish. *Dharma* is also an end to be accomplished. That is the reason why we do not look upon saintliness as something that a special person chooses to have or is endowed with. We do not accept that concept.

Ahiṃsā and Compassion

In following *dharma*, a number of values and attitudes are listed in our *śāstrā* as necessary for a human being. *Ahiṃsā* is mentioned in the list given in the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā [13-8], *amānitvam adambitvam ahiṃsā kṣāntiḥ ārjavam*, absence of conceit, absence of hypocrisy, harmlessness, accommodation, straightforwardness, but *dayā* is not mentioned there. It is mentioned, however, in another verse, *adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇā eva ca*, ‘the one who has no hatred or ill-will to any being, the one who has the disposition of a friend, who is compassionate’ [Bhagavad Gītā, 12-13]. When you look into these three words, *maitraḥ*, *karuṇā*, and *adveṣṭā*, you see their expression in *bhūta-dayā*, compassion for all beings. If you stretch *ahiṃsā*, not hurting, it becomes *bhūta-dayā*.

We have always maintained that among the values of *dharma*, *ahiṃsā* is the most exalted, *ahiṃsā paramo dharmah*. When you stay with *ahiṃsā* and do not gloss over it, it becomes *dayā*. When you follow *ahiṃsā*, compassion, *dayā*, is inevitable because you cannot follow *ahiṃsā* without being compassionate. If you say *na hiṃse*, “I do not hurt,” it means that you have to have compassion. You can use your will to curb the tendency to hurt. Compassion follows. That is why both Mahāvīra and the Buddha highlighted *ahiṃsā*. Therefore, *ahiṃsā* is a *dharma* that occupies the first place.

Compassion and speaking the truth

We often hear it said that *satyam*, speaking the truth, is very important. Nevertheless, you can speak the truth and make everybody suffer because the truth you speak may be unpleasant. You are honest, but when you begin talking everybody runs away from you because you are so brutally honest. Speaking the truth also implies that you need to be pleasant. *Satyam brūyāt na brūyāt satyam apriyam* [Manu Smṛti, 4-138], speak the truth, speak what is pleasant, do not speak a truth that is unpleasant. Therefore, do not deceive in order to please, but at the same time, do not tell the truth if it can displease people. Just keep quiet in those instances. This is why we have been given a choice to speak or not to speak.

It is important to learn when not to speak. Knowing when to speak is different. Knowing when not to speak is more important than knowing when to speak because often, when we speak, what we say does not matter at all. When speaking does not matter, not speaking is very important. People think that *satyam* is just speaking the truth, but sometimes this can make everybody suffer, including you. It is an indication that you cannot be kind to yourself. Therefore, it is really compassion that makes you a person who speaks the truth. It is not that non-compassionate people tell lies, but a compassionate person does not need to tell a lie, and does not need to prove himself or herself as a person. You will find that if you pursue any one value, everything else will follow. These values are like noodles; they always come as a bunch. So by following *ahimsā*, you follow all the values there are, because you cannot follow one without following all the others.

No other *puruṣārtha* is to be pursued at the cost of *dharma*

Dharma is something you have to follow, sometimes, even at the cost of *artha* or at the cost of *kāma*. *Dharma*, therefore, becomes an independent end to be achieved. It does not subserve the other ends—it is an independent *puruṣārtha*. I have heard people saying that if you follow *dharma*, everything else, including *mokṣa*, will take care of itself. It will not take care of itself, but at least you become ready for self-knowledge, which is *mokṣa*, if you follow *dharma*.

Compassion has to be discovered to pursue *dharma*

In the matrix of values, compassion, which characterizes saintliness, has got to be acquired. To grow from being a mere survivor, into a contributor necessarily involves becoming a person of compassion. How does that happen? You need to discover compassion by acting it out. An act of compassion can evoke compassion that may be inhibited. An act is always deliberate; it is different from an instinctual or impulsive response, which is more of a reaction. In a deliberate act of compassion, one acts deliberately, as though one has compassion, because one has a value for compassion. Performing an act of compassion will make you compassionate. People would say that an act of compassion is helping somebody who needs help. I think this is a simple human action with a degree of compassion. A true act of compassion is deliberate, such as when you perceive that somebody has done something wrong to you, and yet pray for that person's welfare. If somebody does you a disservice and yet, you reach out, you cross all the borders of anger and hatred and get into a new territory that you are not used to, that is called an act of compassion. There is value for being compassionate in an act of compassion, and if you keep doing it consistently, compassion will be with you.

Compassion, the dynamic form of *ānanda*, is our very own nature

Compassion, the dynamic form of *ānanda*, is your very nature. Whether you know it completely or not, you can understand this much—that *ānanda* cannot be anything other than you. There is no object called *ānanda* and there is no place called *ānanda*. There is no person whom you can recognize as *ānanda*. It is not a given time, and it is not an attribute of an object.

There is no place, a magic place, where you go to become happy. You can be happy and you can be unhappy anywhere. Still, you do have moments of happiness and, therefore, you can understand that happiness is not anywhere else except centered on you.

We are happy when we are ourselves, when we do not see ourselves as wanting persons

Some say that happiness is inside you. What does that mean? Is happiness in the mind? If the mind makes you happy, does it mean that when you are sad, there is no mind? Even in having its desires fulfilled, the mind is happy only temporarily. However, whenever you are happy, more often than not, you have not fulfilled any desire. Also, more often than not, you need not fulfill a desire to be happy. So what does this happiness depend upon? It depends upon you. It is not even the condition of the mind. When you do not see yourself as a wanting person, if a situation does not evoke a wanting person, you are happy. It is as simple as that. That is your nature. In fact, you are happy when you are yourself, not when you are what you think you are. That is why self-forgetting becomes so important. When what you think about yourself makes you unhappy, then, self-forgetting makes you happy.

Compassion brings us closer to our true nature

Since you do not make a complaint that you are happy, but you cannot stand yourself when you are unhappy, we can say that the happy person, the person you love to be is yourself. This logic, born of experience, is called *anubhava-yukti*. Your own experience, *anubhava*, gives you a certain *yukti*, a certain line of reasoning, which helps you understand that you are *ānanda*. Compassion is a dynamic form of *ānanda*, and that is the reason why, when there is compassion, you are 'close' to yourself. That is why it seems to be the most important thing.

Compassion is the most important value to be cultivated deliberately

When I look into the system of human values, what stands out for me as a thing to be cultivated deliberately and consciously is compassion. It evokes the bigness in you, the wholeness in you, the love, the giving, and the understanding in you. It is this relatively whole person who can discover that he is the whole. In this discovery there is complete release, *mokṣa*, from the human struggle against a sense of limitation and, therefore, it is the ultimate human end.

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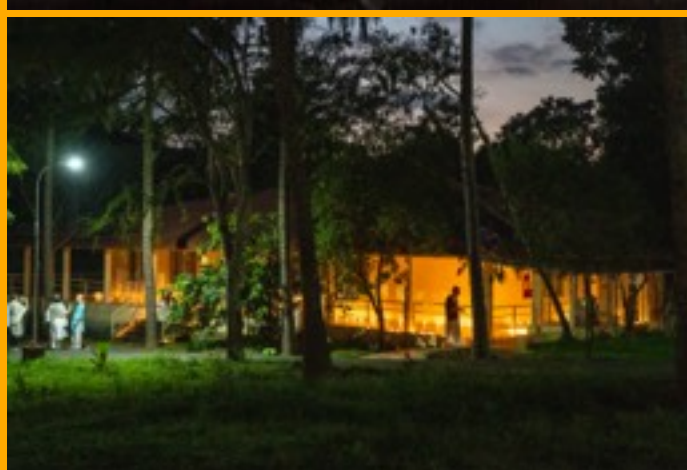
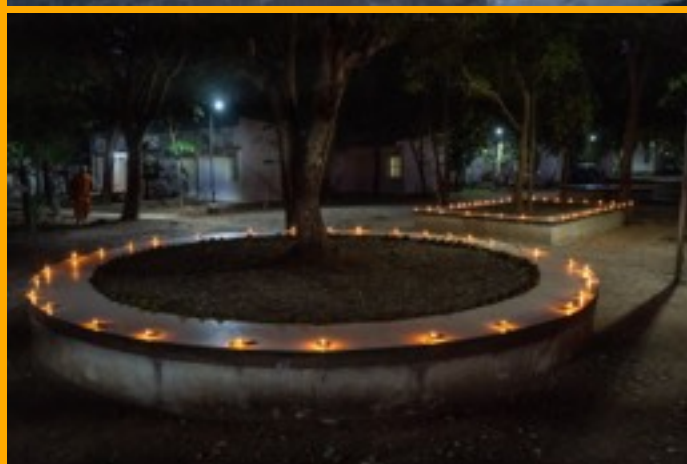
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