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30th Anniversary Celebrations at AVG, Anaikatti on 21/11/2020



Swami Sadatmanandaji



Swami Jagatatmanandaji



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Ātmānam ced vijānīyāt
Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

This is the tenth part of the serial article, continuation from Nov 2020 newsletter.

Vedanta presents the whole creation, that is *mithyā*, in the form of five elements—space, air, fire, water and earth. We call it the five elemental model. It is purely a model because the *tātparya*, intention, is not to establish how many elements came from *sat*. The *tātparya* is only in establishing that the created *jagat* is *mithyā* and its cause is *sat*, the uncreated. That alone is *satya*.

The vision of the *śāstra* is to reveal the nature of the *ātman* as non-dual *satya*; there is nothing other than that. All that the *śāstra* has to do is to reveal that vision in which this *jagat* also has to be accounted for. Therefore, the world is presented in the form of five elements. In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, it is presented in the form of three *mūrta* elements, elements with form. They are fire, water and earth. The five elements are *sūkṣma*, subtle, and become grossified later. The subtle elements constitute the subtle body and the gross elements constitute the gross world that includes your physical body too. Creation consists of the physical world and the subtle world. The physical body is a part of the physical world and the subtle body is part of the subtle world. Both the subtle and the physical worlds are born of the five subtle and gross elements respectively. The five elements, subtle and gross, are born of *sat brahma*.

The gross elements, being born of the subtle elements, are nothing but the subtle elements. Similarly, the subtle elements, being born of Brahman, are nothing but Brahman. This is the model. Therefore, the whole is Brahman—The body is Brahman, senses are Brahman, *prāṇa* is Brahman, the mind is Brahman, *buddhi* is Brahman, *aham*, the *ātman*, which is consciousness, is Brahman. There are not many Brahman. All of these are one Brahman, for all that is here is Brahman¹. That Brahman is you. This is what is revealed by the *śāstra*.

¹ *Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma* (*Chāndogyopaniṣad* 3.14.1).

Śaṅkara has been accused of being a *māyāvādin*, one who holds the view that everything is *māyā*. He is not a *māyāvādin*. He is not a *vādin* at all. He only presents what the śāstra says. The śāstra says that everything is Brahman. “The one who sees here (in Brahman) seeming differences, goes from death to death².” He is a *samsārin*. The one who recognizes that all that is here is Brahman, which has not undergone any change, is a free person.

Our equation is, while ‘B’ is ‘A’, ‘A’ is not ‘B’. The *jagat* is Brahman, Brahman is not the *jagat*. I am that Brahman; this is what the *Upaniṣad* is teaching. The addition or negation of the *jagat* does not make any difference in Brahman which is *pūrṇa*.

The *śānti-mantra* ³ beautifully brings out this truth. *Pūrṇam adaḥ*, that was Brahman. ‘That’ means what existed before the creation. *Pūrṇam idam*, this is also Brahman. ‘This’ means what is perceived, this world. This world also is Brahman. Before the creation, Brahman was ‘that’. After the creation it has become ‘this’. From ‘that Brahman’ ‘this Brahman’ came. You remove ‘this Brahman’ ‘that Brahman’ remains. From the clay, pot came. You destroy the pot, what is there is clay. In fact, you need not destroy the pot. You just change your *drṣṭi*, vision, to clay.

An apt example would be golden ornaments. You give a golden chain to a person. His *drṣṭi* is not in the chain, but only in gold. He immediately thinks of how many sovereigns it weighs. It is called a change of vision. You need not destroy the chain to see it as gold. You only have to change your vision. Similarly, in every piece of knowledge, Brahman is manifest ⁴. You do not require to transcend anything. You have to understand, recognize that Brahman transcends everything. There is no transcending here in the *jagat*. In the golden ornaments the gold transcends all the ornaments, but the ornaments do not transcend gold. This is what we call *mithyā*.

² *Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati* (Kaṭhōpaniṣad 2.1.10).

³ *Pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate. Pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate* (Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad 5.1.1).

⁴ *Pratibodha-viditam matam* (Kenōpaniṣad 2.4).

Since everything has come from Brahman, which is *ātman*, we can now say space is *ātman*, time is *ātman*, stars are *ātman*, sun is *ātman*, moon is *ātman*, air is *ātman*, fire is *ātman*, water is *ātman*, all the planets are *ātman*, the earth is, therefore, *ātman*. The trees are *ātman*, the bud is *ātman*, the flower is *ātman*, the leaf is *ātman*, the chlorophyll is *ātman*. The physical body is *ātman*, the epidermis, dermis are all *ātman*. The bone is *ātman*, the calcium is *ātman*. In fact, there is no bone, there is only calcium. It is again particles. All the particles are *ātman*, all the cells are *ātman*, the DNA is *ātman*. The senses are *ātman*, thought is *ātman*, the *prāṇa* is *ātman*. You can go on and on. Everything is *ātman* while *ātman* is not any of them. Then what is *ātman*?

Ātman has its own *svarūpa*. It is *satya*, existence, *jñāna*, knowledge, *ananta*, limitless. In *saccidānanda*, *ānanda* is *ananta*, limitless, not bliss. Some people say that *saccidānanda* is existence-knowledge-bliss. If that is so, then you have to wait for bliss. I often hear people saying, “Swamiji, I know *ātman* is *saccidānanda*, but how do I experience it?” All experiences are nothing but *saccidānanda-ātman*. It is a matter for understanding.

If one knows thus, *viśānīyāt cet*, then what happens to him?

To be continued...

“Because all people seek fullness, happiness, they are on the Lord’s track alone, although they may not know it. A person who does not know exactly what he or she is seeking keeps on seeking.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

30th Anniversary Celebrations at AVG, Anaikatti on 21/11/2020

The celebrations started with Gurupaduka puja done by Swami Sadatmanandaji offering flowers to Pujya Swamiji's paduka with the chanting of guru stotram and guru-ashtotranamavalli by the students led by Br Sharanji. Invocatory prayer on Lord Ganapati was sung by Smt Bala- 2 yr course student.

Br Sharanji who was the master of ceremonies delivered the welcome address.

Annual Gurukulam report was read by Sri Vallabhesanji, GM AVG , Anaikatti.

Swami Jagadatmananda, Trustee, Sruti Seva Trust honoured Swami Sadatmanandaji and delivered Anugraha- bhashanam in Tamil. Annual report on SDJ Ayurvedalaya was read by Dr R. Parthasarati, Chief medical officer.

Chief guest Swami Veditatmanandaji delivered his talk through live streaming from Ahmedabad.

Swami Sadatmananda, chief acharya AVG, Anaikatti blessed the occasion with his Anugraha-bhashanam and the ceremony was concluded with the Vote of thanks by Sri Kathiravanji, Manager AVG, Anaikatti.

Pujya Swami Veditatmanandaji's Anugrahabhāṣaṇam:

Pujya Swami Veditatmanandaji expressed his reverence for the unbroken tradition of the teaching initiated by Pujya Swamiji, which has been continued in this institute. Swamiji shared how Pujya Swamiji had devoted his time and energy to found and built the institute until he departed, with the sole purpose of passing the traditional knowledge of Arsha-Vidya, Vedanta: the *Prasthānatrayī* including the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Upaniṣads* and *Prakaraṇagranthas*. Why Vedanta? Swamiji pointed out how grief is the fundamental problem of all human beings, and the grief is a result of *moha* or delusion or ignorance, which further gives rise to grief. And because this grief in every human's life is a result of ignorance about one's own self, so the knowledge of the self is the only way to remove this grief, which is what Vedanta teaches, and which is what Arsha Vidya Gurukulam is employed in: in teaching and creating teachers for realization of the true self.

Swamiji mentioned that PujyaSwamiji not only emphasized the teachings of the Upaniṣad which are amplified in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Brahmasutra* and

Prakaraṇagranthas, but also, believed Vedic chanting as very important as it makes the seeker strong. He pointed how this institute has been imparting not only the teaching, but also facilitates the students with all the means which supplements this teaching, including yoga, meditation and chanting. The whole and sole purpose of the teachings in this institute is to create teachers: a teacher creating another teacher! Swamiji shared how at the end of the course, Pujya Swamiji would tell the students, 'go and teach!' How Pujya Swamiji thought teaching to be the most important *sādhana* for a seeker of Vedanta to gain clarity and abide in it, and so emphasized on studying the scriptures and sharing what we know, and this is how Pujya Swamiji spent whole of his life making the most significant contribution to this country by providing an authentic teaching and creating authentic teachers.

Lastly addressing the students, Swamiji prayed for the Lord's blessings to inspire them and guide them in their pursuit of spiritual knowledge and liberation. Swamiji advised the students to make the best use of their time in the Gurukulam, by not only learning the *Upaniṣads* and *Gītā*, but also learning Sanskrit as well as possible, and pay attention to the Vedic chanting with memorizing as much as possible. That the important parts of the text such as some shlokas of *Bhagavad Gītā*, mantras of *Upaniṣad* be memorized, since that is what stays with the seeker. The talk was concluded with the final prayers for all students spiritual well-being, that they imbibe the knowledge, assimilate it and bless others.

Sw Sadatmanandaji's Anugrahabhāṣaṇam:

यस्य कृपाप्रयत्नाभ्यां स्थानम् एतत् सुनिर्मितम् ।

तमेव स्वामिनं पूज्यम् वन्देऽहं सादरम् मुधा ॥

yasya kṛpāprayatnābhyām sthānam etat sunirmitam |

tameva svāminam pūjyam vande:'ham sādaram mudhā | |

I am happy to be a part of this 30 th anniversary celebration of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam which was founded by Pujya Swamiji in October 1990. In one place, Pujya Swamiji describes the spirit of gurukulam. It cannot be said in a better manner than the way swamiji has done. He says that the study of vedanta is a serious study of oneself and it entails the personal care and attention of the teacher for the student and Arsha Vidya Gurukulam is an honest attempt of providing the students with such an environment where there is personal care and attention. Further he says that this gurukulam is a home away from home where you are taken care of,

so that you can be with the teaching. This is the spirit of Pujya Swamiji when he founded the gurukulam. We are trying here to maintain that spirit of this gurukulam. Various courses are conducted and now we are having a long-term course of two years. When there was conducive situation earlier, we had short term courses as well.

For this gurukulam to run well, the four pillars of gurukulam need to be very strong. Like they say, for democracy, there are 4 pillars - representation , equity, freedom and justice. For government they say, there are four pillars - legislative, executive, judiciary and press.

Similarly, for our gurukulam also there are 4 pillars in a figurative sense – first of all ,the teachers, then the students, third the management and staff which runs the gurukulam and the fourth is the donors and supporters. The gurukulam will run well if these four pillars are strong and supportive. Each one of them needs to have a proper attitude towards the gurukulam.

Today we will try to see what can be the attitude of each one of them. Gurukulam is there because there are students to study and the teachers to teach. So the teachers who are the first pillar have the attitude towards the gurukulam that it is an avenue to express our gratitude to the sampradaya (tradition) by which we have immensely benefitted. The gurukulam provides me an opportunity to give back, to express my gratitude to the parampara of acharyas. Also, an attitude that the gurukulam becomes a medium for me to be in touch with sastra. When teaching is there, study will be there. So teaching in the gurukuam provides me an opportunity to be in touch with sastra. That is the attitude. There is no other motive or agenda. Also the teachers are aware of the fact that not only the teaching will have impact on the students, but that their conduct, their behaviour and their expressions will also have an impact on the student. This is the approach of the teachers who form the first pillar of the gurukulam.

The second pillar is the students. Their attitude is one of gratitude to the gurukulam that because of the gurukulam we have this opportunity to study the sastra in depth. They feel blessed to be there.

Their gratitude is so much that there is always eagerness, readiness to express it in the form of seva or any form of contribution to the gurukulam. Also there is sincer-

ity to make use of the opportunity for learning given by the Lord in the form of this gurukulam. That is the attitude of the students.

The attitude of management and staff is that elsewhere they can do the job and earn money. But here they have the opportunity to earn their livelihood and also serve to a noble cause. That also makes them feel blessed to be a part of the gurukulam. That is the attitude of management and staff working at the Gurukulam.

The attitude of the supporters/donors is that as grhasthas, they are supposed to do 5 maha-yagnas – deva yajna, pitr yajna, brahma yajna, manushya yajna and bhUta yajna. Of these 5, this brahma yajna is - studying the sastra, teaching the sastra and by extension supporting the teaching activity of scriptures. Bhagavan has given us this opportunity to contribute to this gurukulam who is doing this jnana yajna . So the donor has this attitude -“ I have an opportunity to contribute to this cause, so that I am fulfilling my duty of doing brahma yajna”. Also, they can visit this place where teaching is generally going on. There are so many courses/retreats offered and definitely they can benefit from the gurukulam. They have this feeling of being blessed to be a part of this gurukulam by way of contribution.

If this is the attitude of all the 4 pillars, then Gurukulam can run very smoothly. Fortunately, the four pillars of our Gurukulam are strong and supportive by the grace of Lord Dakshinamurti and by the grace of our Pujya Swamiji. Pujya Swamiji has worked so much and people in general are so grateful to him, that they are ready to support this gurukulam, even when his physical presence is not there in this gurukulam.

So we express our gratitude to Pujya Swamiji, Lord Dakshinamurti and pray that let all these 4 pillars continue to support this Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, so that the spirit with which pujya Swamiji has founded this place will be maintained in the years to come.

Om tat sat

ARSHA VIDYA PITHAM, Rishikesh

Upcoming Camps

S. No	Duration	Subject	Language	Conducted By	Last Date of Registration
Camp 1	15/03/2021 (Monday) To 24/03/2021 (Wednesday)	Bhriuvalli of Taaittiriya Upanisad	English	Swami Sachidananda Saraswati	15/02/2021
Camp 2	28/03/2021 (Thursday) To 06/04/2021 (Tuesday)	What do I want in Life? -An analysis through Mundaka Upanisad	English	Swamini Vidyananda Saraswati	15/02/2021
Camp 3	10/04/2021 (Saturday) To 19/04/2021 (Monday)	Aparoksha Anubhuti	English	Swami Sakshatkrtan- anda Saraswati	15/02/2021

- Those who are interested in attending the camp are requested to apply on or before 15th Feb 2021.
- Kindly find the online application form at our website www.dayananda.org
- For further enquiries please send an email to dayanandacamps2014@gmail.com or call us at +91-135-2430769 & 2438769 between 08:30 to 12:00 & 15:00 -18:00 Hrs only.

Instructions to fill the online form:

- Go to www.dayananda.org
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- Fill all Mandatory fields
- Click on Submit and go to your mail and activate the registration
- (Note that the activation mail could be delivered at your spam folder)
- Go to www.dayananda.org and Click on the link Online Application 2021/Login
- Login and select the course as per your choice.
- Please register separately for each applicant
- Management reserves the right to cancel any registration at anytime during the camp period.

Look at Yourself

Swamini Srividyananda, AVG Saylorsburg

(Following is a brief summary of the vision in the first three meditation sessions conducted by Sri Swami Tattvavidananda during the Nine-week Vedanta Course on Kaṭhōpaniṣad at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg Oct -Nov. 2020)

Swamiji's guided meditation sessions, with the theme 'Look at yourself,' served as an optimistic beginning for the day and particularly powerful. Swamiji repeatedly guided us towards being deeply aware of ourselves and to abide in the peace all round. Swamiji walked with us, steering us patiently along the path to meditation pointing out the pot holes and pitfalls one could encounter along the way. The journey was indeed inspiring.

The first meditation session starts; Swamiji's voice comes on, "Look at yourself." And then? Silence, utter-silence. No, it is not Swamiji pausing. My mind is stunned to silence. I have heard of look at the mind, look at the body, etc. but look at yourself! No. So mind is baffled and doesn't know what to do with it; in which slot to deposit it. So it gropes and falls silent as if accepting defeat. For a moment it is as though the mind vanished. What is this 'look at yourself'? Eyes are closed but still I am looking at myself. How? No, Swamiji couldn't have cast a spell. Answer comes through the speaker, "*cakūṣa cakṣuḥ*, eye of the eye. I am aware of the inner eye by which I am looking at myself." End quote.

But, what is this looking at myself? What will I experience when I look at myself? Swamiji says, "As I look at myself, I experience myself as the pure being. That is how I sense myself, commune with myself as 'I am,' *aham asmi*. As I abide in myself, be a light unto myself there is no lacking so there is a sense of fullness, *pūrṇoham*; as I am with myself here and now there are no desires so there is a sense of desirelessness, *akāmoham*; there is no fear of anything so there is a sense of fearlessness, *abhayoham*." Unquote. How can I be all these three just by looking at myself? I will present the points one at a time.

How am I pūrṇaḥ, fullness? Swamiji continues, “When the mind is quiet in meditation, I am fully present. It is as though I regained myself. It simply means ‘I am,’ which symbolizes knowing being. So when I look at myself, I know myself; I know the being. How? Simply because, the being, *sat* shines as the knowing *cit*.” Unquote.

While unfolding Chāndogya Upaniṣad Swamiji shed more light on being knowing, *sat cit*. Quote, “Everything in the universe, known and unknown, is connected to my knowing as something known to me. Whatever that is connected to my knowing is connected to my being because being is not different from knowing. So, all that is here, all existence is connected to my being, my existence, means all existence is myself. *Ātmā vā idaṁ sarvaṁ*.” Unquote.

What a revelation this is! I am everything means I am not separate from my Source, which is the very nature of fullness, limitlessness. Therefore, when I look at myself, the inner essence of myself, it reveals who this ‘I am’ is and points to the oneness, *tat tvam asi*. Elsewhere, Swamiji gave an eloquent definition of *tat tvam asi*. Quote, “The statement *tat* is an emphatic acknowledgment of the reality that cannot be measured by words. It represents the mystery of the universe, which gives the flavor of the unlimited. The word ‘*tvam*’ is not an effort of using a word to measure your reality. It signals the non-verbal awareful being, which is your core, your inner being. The mystery of the universe and the mystery of the individual is one mystery – God. When I say mystery it is something the mind cannot fathom.” Unquote. With this clarity, when I look at myself, there is a sense of fullness, *pūrṇo-ham*.

Next, the topic on desires. When I look at myself how is there a sense of desirelessness, *akāmaḥ*? “Looking at myself creates a revolution in my mind,” Swamiji continued in this trend. Quote, “As I watch the continuous flow of the contents of the mind, if I identify with them as mine then the identification creates the ‘me and mine’ syndrome from which a sense of separation from everything else arises. It is the understanding of, this is how I am, this is what I am.” Unquote.

Here is a good place to bring in Swamiji's fiery exposition on the me and mine syndrome which was a magnum opus in the 2011 Course. Here are a few excerpts from it. Quote, "*Ātmā* gets crystallized as me and mine. This is the *khilya bhāva* which separates you from your true self and develops angularities. It is an illusion, a dream which is renewed from moment to moment. Ignorance prepares *khilya bhāva* palatably and you swallow it. *Khilya* gets lodged in the heart like a shrapnel causing suffering with every move you make. See the implication? What a predicament! Step out of the *khilya bhāva* created by the mind and step into the timeless *ātmā*. An explosion of *khilya bhāva* is the being. The *khilya* having originated from Awareness, when brought near its source resolves in it." Unquote.

Regrettably for me, being oblivious of the fact that I am under the spell of the 'me and mine' syndrome, there is no alternative but to prefer the life I am forced to accept as normal rather than my true life, my normal life. But then does it have to be this way?

"No," says Swamiji. Quote, "The understanding of 'this is how I am, this is what I am' can be turned towards self-knowledge. By shifting the focus away from the contents of the mind, which is name and form, I can lead it towards the silence behind the mind, Consciousness which lights up the mind. The flow of the mind will continue but I will not be tethered by it. The 'me and mine' will vanish." Unquote.

Over the years Swamiji continues to exhort us to give up me and mine, the name and form. In Advaita Makharanda Swamiji said that forms are content of the reality. The reality holds the entire universe within itself. Through all the changes in forms the reality remains pristine. So when I give up names and forms I am in the embrace of the reality. The 'me and mine' dissolve in that silence. Knowing this, I can say, "Where then are desires; where then is the need for anything?" So, now when I look at myself there is a sense of desirelessness, *akāmoham*.

The final topic is on fearlessness. When I look at myself how is there a sense of fearlessness, *abhayoham*? Swamiji dwelt on the topic of meditation extensively in Kaṭhōpaniṣad chapter 5.1 and brought in the topic of fearlessness.

Quote, “Thought cannot flower if it is tethered to formulations. Freedom in thought enables it to be peaceful and abide in meditation. When all expressions and images in thought cease, there is a welling of love, an inner silence that cannot be measured with words. It is the spaciousness the divisionless brahman.”

“*Sarva eṣaṇā vinirmuktaḥ*, all deep-rooted desires have to be given up to launch into this kind of meditation, in which I go beyond the frontiers of the known. To be at peace means to be empty of all desires. The mind is brought under sufficient self-control to render desires powerless. A desireless mind is a peaceful mind. There is no fear when there is no desire because I have nothing to lose. Putting aside the becoming, abiding in the being, when I contemplate on it, immerse myself in it, the unknown flows into the known and there is harmony. I gain fearlessness because there is no second thing to cause fear.” Unquote.

When explaining *hṛdā manīṣā manasā* in Kaṭhōpaniṣad 6.9, Swamiji looked at fearlessness from a different angle. Quote, “Freedom from fear comes when you are able to think freely. Freedom here means you understand the process of life; you discover the process of life. That discovery proves to you that there is nothing to lose and therefore nothing to fear.” Unquote.

In Advaita Makharanda, Swamiji pointed out that while in deep meditation, a link is established between the manifest and the unmanifest. In that connection, the Real and unreal become one and the one becomes all. Meaning, you will know that the world and its experiences are unreal and Consciousness alone is real. In that sense, the real and unreal become one – the Real holds the entire universe within itself. This is what is meant by the unknown flowing into the known. Like even the mighty ocean flows upstream and embraces the on coming river.

When I am in this sheltered lap of the limitless being, can there be a trace of fear. Now, with this awareness, when I look at myself as fearless I sense fearlessness. Therefore, *pūrṇaḥ aham; akāmaḥ aham; abhayaḥ aham*.

And thus, with utmost clarity, Swamiji unfolded how the flow of fullness into desires transforms it to desirelessness; furthermore the flow of desire-

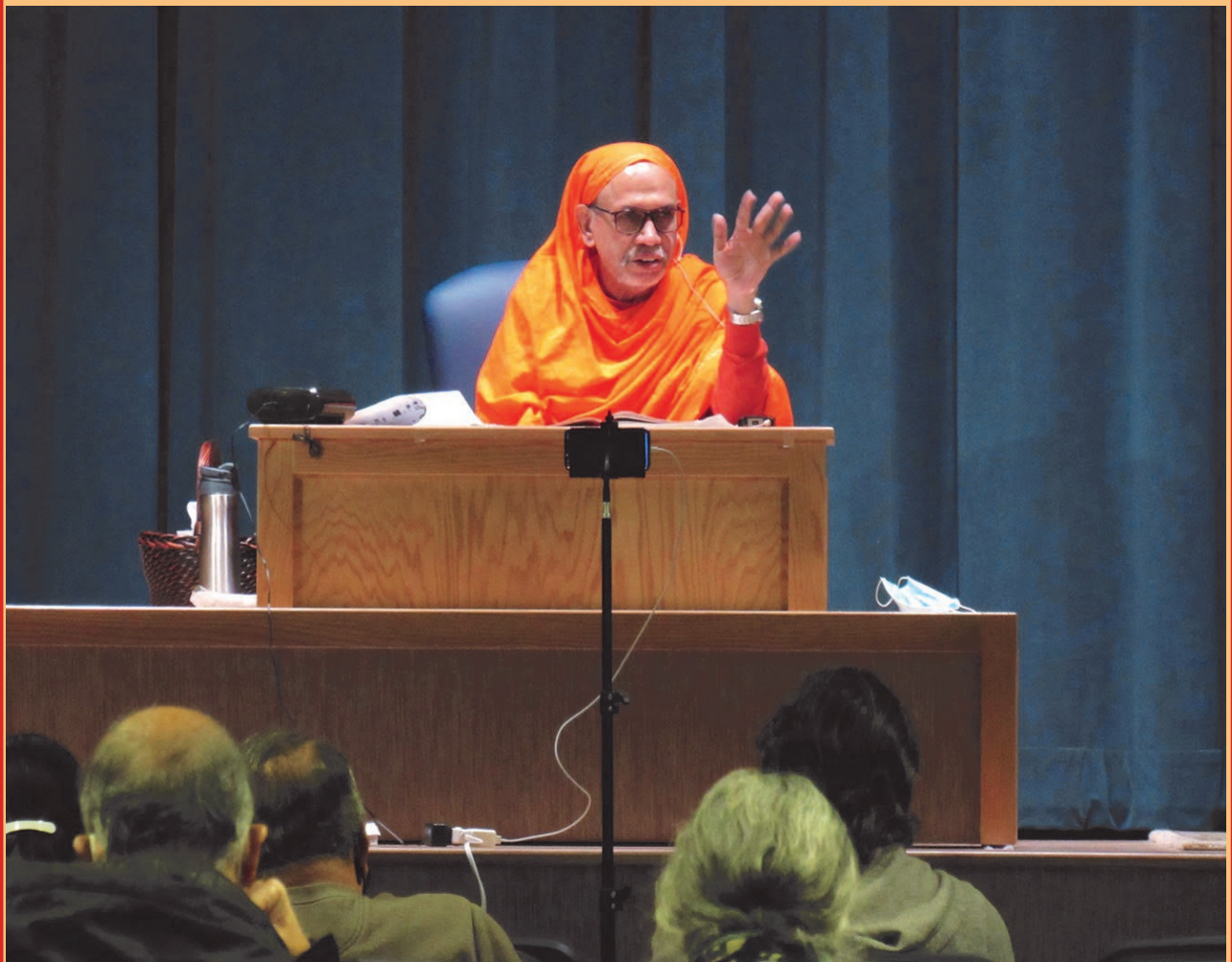
lessness into fear transforms it into fearlessness. The pinnacle of this inspiring vision is that when you make this knowledge your own, make it a reality, and then, when you give up the becoming you discover your being.

I conclude this presentation with a prayerful heart that as we immerse ourselves in this 'look at yourself meditation,' this flow of transformation, may we realize, that the glorious transformation itself is the embrace of the reality – the Source of our being – *Brahman*, which is *pūrṇam*, the nature of fullness. So, when we say *pūrṇoham* it indeed is *brahmoham* – *aham brahmāsmi*.

Om santih santih santih

Swamini Srividyananda

11-21-2020



Space I am
Swamini Srividyananda, AVG Saylorsburg

[Based on Sri Swami Tattvavidanandaji's 11-5-2020 guided meditation on Space]

An undeniable presence beckons from the firmament
what art thou; who art thou; muse I in amazement.
Space I am; proclaims the presence.
Eyes see naught; how then thy presence?
Ah! yes! perceptionless I am; above the vagaries of thought and such
boundaryless; deep and profound; vast and limitless
resist not I the howling wayward wind; torrents of midsummer rain
glowing tongues of fire; quakes that rock the earth
accommodating all, detached am I
yes; unattached; *asaṅgaḥ*; undividedly open
joy abides in mine openness; beauty besides
utterly still; eternally serene; silent I am
mine glories these; mine grandeur.
and what of you my child; queries space
whence did thou come; whither thy dwelling?
Ah! Sire; listen thou to mine tale
the crystallized life of yesteryears
desires and fears; suffering and strife; ignorance fathomless
so it was *saṁsāra* abound
and when with thine openness I connect
lo! behold! a miracle
freed from the fetters of enclosures and fences
words and images; pleasure and pain; me and mine
clutches of immediate; contents of manifest
above the roaring waves of memory rose I
boundaries swept away into its swirling depths
die I did to the known; knowledge unreal
moment to moment death renewed
embracing life with no resistance

free as a soaring falcon stand I
yes Sire; alone I am; open I am
in thine infinite openness beyond measure
with love in mine openness; peace in aloneness
sense I that wondrous light of silence within
light of limitless awareness; light of timeless being
that glorious *Brahman* I am; *Brahman aham asmi*;
aham Brahmasmi

Swamini Srividyananda,
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA
11-10-2020



Nine-week Vedanta Retreat at AVG, Saylorsburg, PA

With the raging Covid-19 pandemic in full swing the nine-week course on Kaṭhōpaniṣad, chapter 2 with Śāṅkara bhāṣyam was conducted and concluded successfully. Swami Tattvavidananda kept the 30 to 40 students attending in person and 150 or more students from many continents attending seamlessly online spell bound with over 100 hours of classes reinforced with daily meditation and satsaṅg sessions. While Kalpesh Jasapara's Samskr̥tam classes provided the much needed knowledge of the language to follow the bhāṣyam, Chitra Rajan's music and chanting classes guided the students inwards to tap the calmness essential for the study of Vedānta.

Retreat Highlights

The entire camp was a meditative experience for most of the participants. Nine weeks appeared to have gone by quickly with detailed exposition and threadbare analysis of a number of topics. The topics were directly relevant to cross the chasm often created by conceptual frameworks and ideations. Riding on the great minds of Mahātmās, quoting from the works of Masters, and employing insightful metaphors, Swamiji brought home the teachings to resonate in the heart beyond appealing to intellectual levels of understanding. He explained how the human mind creates a verbal and linguistic world and then gets bound by it. Just as a drop of water contains the entire ocean, so too, as Swamiji unfolded one topic the entire vision of the text came into the forefront. One was left in wonderment and awe while being in the presence of such ever fresh expressions of truth.

The Teaching

The powerful teachings of Kaṭhōpaniṣad are about the removal of the fear of death. Swamiji challenged the students to 'die to the world, body and mind here and now!' All knowledge is but cognition and every cognition is entirely re-cognition that is based only on past information. The past is indeed dead, and all imaginations of the future are based on projection of the mind

based on the past. Hence one is never in the present and therefore unable to realize the unknown and unknowable. 'Death' here is effectively dying to the mind. This has many implications.

- Body is an idea in the mind and hence one must die to the body.
 - The world we know appears and disappears with the mind like a pair of dipoles. Hence dying to the mind is akin to dying to the world.
 - Vedānta is positional in frozen traditional thinking. But Swamiji explained that Vedanta begins when knowledge based on memory ends. This means die to the past, die to memory, die to all knowledge which is based on past, and therefore die to death in order to come alive.
 - Die to the small self (ego) while living and breathing which means die to all forms of identifications. The real death is to *avidyā*, *kāma* and *karma* cycle. Die to all to realize the immortal Self.
1. Swamiji was throwing gems like the above and ever fresh expressions about meditation. He pointed out that meditation is not to be contaminated by the field of the known. It is not *yoga* but *viyoga* of the known. Meditation is the movement in the unknown and unknowable that the mind can never fathom.
 2. Thoughts create mental space, desire creates psychological time, and one is bound completely by the prison walls of time, space, and causality.
 3. *Mokṣa* which is timeless cannot be put into a process which is only about the past and known.
 4. Self-knowledge is not remote. Both ignorance and *mokṣa* are in the 'here and now'. Swamiji kept reiterating that self-knowledge is about knowing all that is not Self and that the negative understanding is the highest understanding.

Samples of Covered Topics - Creative thinking

Chapter 1.3.2 of the Upanishad says that *ātmā* needs to be discovered through creative intelligence because it is hidden (as though). Since our existing beliefs and notions cover our real nature, creative thinking and an open mind are needed for this discovery.

Outgoing nature of sense organs

The first verse says that *Īśvara* created the sense organs outward facing by design (as though). It really means outgoing is intrinsic to the sense organs and hence human beings generally have a resistance to go within. One has to stop searching outside for what can be found only within.

Need to go within

Those who have the courage and discrimination, to differentiate between self and non-self, to look within are called *dhīrāḥ*. There are plenty of opportunities to bring about inner transformation if one is willing to think creatively and go against the flow like a river flowing upward. The *dhīrāḥ* do not seek the *dhruva* in the *adhruva*. *Dhruva* is the North Pole star that represents the changeless whereas *adhruva* is the changing or the transient. Here the body, mind and sense organs are also included in the *adhruva* category.

On the other hand, the immature ones, who go after the desire for pleasures of the world, get caught in the net thrown by death. Death refers to the spiritual rather than physical death. Desires are powerful and along with body identification lead to karma, *saṁsāra* and rebirth. *Samśāra* is compared to a tree with spread out roots, branches and leaves that is difficult to fell. People still go after desires and pleasures due to nescience and greed.

Nature of inner light

After highlighting the need to discover the inner light, Lord Yama describes the nature of inner light in response Nachiketa's question in chapter 1, 'what is that which is other than *dharma* and *adharma*; cause and effect; past and future?'

The inner light illumines everything including the sense organs, only due to which the sense organs illumine the outer world of sense objects. Forms such as the body, table etc., do not cognize other forms, whereas all forms are known to the inner light of awareness.

Initially, Lord Yama arrived at the inner light through the sense organs. Now he says that this inner light is also immanent in all the three states - waking, dream and deep sleep and yet it transcends them i.e., the content of

the three states do not affect the inner light in which the states are experienced.

The Inner light

The inner light is *Brahman*. In addition, another astonishing revelation is that there is no difference between the inner self and the self in all. *Sarvātma bhāva* means to be connected to humanity, the entire 'life' and then the entire 'existence.'

Belief systems encourage fragmentation which leads to comparison and limits one to the shell of 'me and mine'. This shell is the cause for the sense of 'other' which in turn breeds fear. God is included in the 'other' due to conditioning of the mind from the childhood.

Nature of Brahman

Brahman is also the *aditi* (*śakthi*, power) which manifests as the world of names and forms. One who realizes the underlying unity is able to transcend the names and forms and abide in the inner light.

The *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣaḥ*, *Brahman* resides in the small thumb like space in our own hearts. Śaṅkarācārya compares it to the space inside a small section of a bamboo. The Upaniṣad says that *Brahman* is beyond time - the Master of past and future. When this is understood well, one is in the 'now', not bound by the past or future and therefore there is no fear of insecurity.

Brahman in the heart is likened to knowledge without smoke. Smoke is the negative emotions/*vāsanās* like jealousy, anger etc. For a *jīvan muktha* knowledge does not generate any such thoughts.

Divisive thinking – seeing differences or many

Even though there is no difference between the inner self and *Īśvara* differences are seen at two levels – between *jīvā* and *Īśvara* and between objects in the world. Due to conditioning of the mind and belief systems, differences are seen among Gods and among other devotees, such as, 'my God is superior to your God', etc.

When the mind is in the *rājasic* mode driven by desires or *tāmasic* mode driven by fears it can never see the oneness. It gets caught in the division between mind and matter. Mind in *rajas* and *tamas* eclipses the inner light

which empowers them like the moon eclipses the same sun from which it borrows the light. Only a *sāttvic* mind can realize oneness by understanding that the differences are only in the medium and not in the underlying light of awareness. Lord Yama says, “The one who is caught in such divisive thinking goes from death to death.” Death here is the spiritual death that is triggered by fears.

Several examples are given by the *Upaniṣad* to help the mind to understand the divisive thinking pattern. Rainwater falling on the mountain slope gets scattered, divided and perish. Divergent water fails to converge even though the source is one and the same. But, when pure water is added to a pot of pure water, there is no separation or division. Fire, the principle of *agni* is only one although it expresses in different forms like flame, conflagration, heat in hot water etc. Air, the principle of *vāyu* is also only one even though it expresses in different forms like the wind, breath, storm etc. In these above instances, it is the human mind that divides and particularizes thus leading to seeing one as many.

How to realize the vision of oneness

Lord Yama enumerates different methods of analysis and some *upāśanas* to help us realize the vision of oneness:

Contemplation helps one to understand the inner light that lends sentience to the insentient body. One should learn to focus on the inner awareness because the body is just scaffolding that disintegrates and once it becomes unusable the *jīvā* gets another body.

The prime mover is sitting as *vāmana* in the body, inhaling and exhaling. This *vāmana* is the power and intelligence operating the body/mind. The ego (me and mine) which prevents us from realizing the *vāmana* is only an observer and not the mover.

One attaches undue importance to the waking state and names/forms due to which the “I am” or the awareness that pervades all the states (waking, dream and deep sleep) is not recognized. For this we need to analyze the sleep state. When we close our eyes, we are able to see ourselves without the sunlight. This is the inner light that illumines all sources of light like the

Sun, Moon, Fire, Lightning etc. In fact, inner light is the original source that illumines Space, Time, and everything else.

Vedic upāsana

Generally, in Vedic *upāsanas*, two altars are used - the fire and sun. Here Lord Yama teaches *upāsanas* on fire and the rising and setting sun. They are not meant for fulfilling desires, but to sense the *viśvarūpa*. These *upāsanas* can be done with open eyes. They involve visualization of fire and sun as manifestation of the *Hiranyagarbha*. There is not much distinction between these *upāsanas* and *jñānam*. Only a small division is admitted and although technically called an *upāsana* they flower into *jñānam* very soon.

Comments by Students

At the conclusion of the program students had many comments regarding the Course. These comments truly reflect the impact the teaching has had in their lives.

“The first and foremost message that I heard over and over by Swamiji to all *jijñāsus* is, “Most of you are stuck in your spiritual journey – at the level of conceptual Vedānta.” Swamiji used two other terms for conceptual vedantins – con-market vedantins and country club vedantins. He has been telling us to go beyond or transcend conceptual Vedānta and asking us to wake up. This time he was more forceful – like a loud wake up alarm that never stops. It is out of his intense love that he is telling us to cross this final hurdle and be free. Get rid of superstitions, theological god, and binding desires then only you will realize that there is no otherness.”

“As regards gaining deeper understanding, Swamiji has provided extreme clarity on many of the key topics including death, *mokṣa*, *pramāda*, true *upāsana* or *bhakti yoga*, and vedantic meditation. The most striking was the realization that you are beyond *asti* and *nāsti*; beyond known and unknown. You are the “absolute presence.”

“As I kept on listening to Swamiji, I felt that *Upaniṣads* seem to follow an approach similar to the scientific approach – the difference being that

science follows an outward journey while Vedānta emphasizes an inward journey to discover the ultimate reality.”

“This week, after a class addressing *viyoga*, I went outside to the vast and vibrant *shānti* Trail. Midway through a few brisk laps, a point from class came to me. While thinking myself to be a limited person, I know only a small corner of life. Then came an enigmatic image from the class: ... I myself am free in the vastness, the expansiveness of Being.”

“It is a blessing that I am here. Swamiji made us understand the meaning of *aditi*, the *Hiraṇyagarbha upāsana*, what is not meditation, what is *vāmana*, how thoughts create space, what is birth-death, identification with things and thoughts, the “I am”, and so much more that I am unable to articulate here. The way you are unfolding, I have not heard before. Every class brought something fresh to the fore. The *Brahman* as the only reality, intimate, never away, *sulabham*, right now and here has started to look more real (if I may say so) and not far-fetched. Rāmana Maharshi's *hṛdaya guhara madhye* ... is made clearer to my understanding.”

“The meditations are new and fresh and are linked to the verses that you are explaining in the class. That is a tremendous help in gaining further clarity. My heart is full of gratitude, Swamiji.”

“We love you. You open our minds, our hearts, so the light can shine through. It's all Love. So incredibly grateful.”

“The teaching coming through Swamiji is transforming lives. We are awed at this opportunity and the fact that he braved the Covid pandemic to come. We would love to listen and learn everything that comes from Swamiji be it Upaniṣad or Gītā or Dhammapada or anything he wants to share. Wholehearted thank you for everything, as it has helped to dissolve some of the conditioning. Swamiji we can never thank you enough, perhaps the best way to thank you is to imbibe and live the teaching as clarity of understanding is the most precious gift”.

“Swamiji, the teaching made this life meaningful and blissful. My sincere gratitude to you for this wonderful teaching.”

“Heartfelt gratitude for sharing the nectar of the scriptures with us. The daily morning guided meditations have helped me immensely. I will not forget the cat/rat meditation (watching the mind), coal mine meditation highlighting the awareness, The Presence meditation guiding how to negate the names and forms and be in the pure Presence. Hoping to bring meditation practice into daily life. I can’t say how happy I am.”

“Namaste. In the lingering darkness of COVID-19, there has been a bright light over the past nine weeks and these are the lectures of Swamiji. Swamiji, thanks a lot for coming to the United States despite the pandemic. We feel blessed.”

Conclusion

The spirit of oneness that came through by hitting our heads was not conceptual but one that resonated in our hearts. Everyone who attended the classes in earnest now cannot but look at a blade of grass with awe and wonderment as the *vibūthi* of *Īśvara*. These not praises of a Mahātma who needs no praise as he is the embodiment of teaching itself and in the teaching role he seemed to many students as Ādi Śaṅkara himself.

Om Tat Sat

Written and compiled by TK Srinivas

11-21-2020

“Submit not out of mere faith, but out of wisdom to the Cosmic Will, infinitely mightier than yours. In this submission, you will shed your load and make yourself an instrument for the expression of the inscrutable ways of the Cosmic Will. And your life shall be lighter than what the word ‘light’ conveys.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

In the Name of Religious Freedom

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

The controversy and alarmist rhetoric surrounding the recently passed Freedom of Religion Act in Himachal Pradesh can be addressed, to a large extent, simply by reading the Act. As with all other so-called 'anti-conversion' Acts, there is no prohibition of professing and practicing one's religion anywhere in it. Yet such acts have been routinely cited as measures that infringe upon religious freedom. Even a cursory reading shows that, to the contrary, they ensure a measure of religious freedom. By prohibiting unlawful and unethical conversion practices, they protect the rights, particularly of the vulnerable and disenfranchised, from unscrupulous methods of conversion. Religious officials may find it a source of embarrassment that such practices have to be legislated against, but not only is that not the case, those who proselytize are protesting this legislation. More precisely, they are protesting their own misrepresentation of it. It is troubling that after so many controversies over so many such bills, no one has tried to make the protestors accountable for the fact that these bills are being consistently misrepresented. I think the media have to play an effective role in exposing the motives of the protestors.

By claiming a curtailment of religious freedom, those who object to such Acts are disingenuous, to say the least. Freedom of religion sought through the U. N. Declaration of Human Rights (Article 18) is only freedom to change one's religion, not to dissuade another from practicing his or her religion. The framers of the Indian Constitution took the highly edited precaution against this by making provisions for freedom of religion "subject to public order, morality and health" and entrusting the State to "regulat[e] or restrict any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice." The first State to assert this right was Madhya Pradesh, enacting a religious conversion bill in 1966 in response to the Niyogi Commission report which documented widespread fraud and abuse in conversion efforts. One of the primary concerns of the Commission

was the credible threat of secession of converted tribal people who were being instigated to take possession of their own land, Jharkhand. Bills subsequently promulgated by other states are almost identical, and now Himachal Pradesh has also found it necessary to take such precautionary measures.

From this, it is clear that religious freedom includes not just the right to choose, practice and propagate one's religion, but the very important right to have those freedoms protected from an unsolicited attempt, especially a coercive attempt, to supplant one's religion. And this may involve implementing protective measures. While the right of propagation applies equally to all religions, in India, where the historically non-aggressive, pluralistic tradition is confronted by an aggressive, proselytizing religion with a highly organized, well-funded (including foreign funding) network that is established in political and educational institutions as well as the media, the equality, Koenrad Elst, maintains, "is like giving wolves and sheep the 'equal' liberty to eat one another."

It is necessary, therefore, to examine our understanding of religious freedom, and include in it the freedom not to have one's religion targeted for destruction. And we need to examine, understand, and see the wisdom in the conversion bills. If there had been such bills in the Americas 400 years ago, today we would have a living Native American culture, instead of a broken people withering away on reservations, trying to piece together fragments of lost traditions. For Hindus in India today, the story of the Native Americans is a cautionary tale.

Om Tat Sat

Compiled by Swamini Agamananda. This is the third of nine articles based on Pujya Swamiji's talks on the said subject matter.

Enlightening Laughters Swami Dayananda Saraswati

LOSS IS GAIN!

Collection of Stories & Anecdotes From the Talks of
H.H. Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Sometimes loss is gain. I have a story to tell you. It is all invented stories. In Bombay someone's house was burgled. He had kept all unaccounted and not accountable money in biscuits. You know biscuits - gold biscuits. It is all gold bars. He kept them in a safe at home. He cannot keep them in lockers. In India Intelligence people have access even to lockers. It is all Statism. He has to keep them in his safe in the house. When his house was burgled he lost all his biscuits. He cannot go to police now. Why? Because if he goes to the police, and if the police recovers them, not only can he not get them back but he also has to explain how he got them.

There will be a fine for concealing them. He has to sell the flat to pay the fine. So the fellow is very sad because of the loss. He is not going to be happy with the loss of something of which there is no chance at all of getting back.

Just then four fellows walk in. One shows him his card. This guy says, "We are from the IT Dept. We have come to raid your house. All of you stand where you are. Do not move. We are going to check the whole house. It is a surprise check. Give us all your keys."

This fellow immediately throws all the keys and closes his eyes in joy. He praises the Lord in his mind. "Oh Lord! Now I know why you are called Hari. Hari means one who robs, takes away. It is wonderful! You always do what is good for us." Then he tells the IT squad, "Search wherever you want. Look for whatever you want." They search everywhere and find nothing. They return empty-handed concluding that their information was wrong.

This fellow is very happy. Why? His loss is a gain. Sometimes it is so. I will say every loss is a gain, including the hair on your head. You need not worry about buying shampoo for your hair. You need not worry about catching cold. You do not require a towel. One napkin is good enough. In a fight nobody can get you by your hair. You do not require to comb your hair. There is no possibility of dandruff, etc. If there is a shower, you will experience it totally. What a benefit it is!

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