

Swāmī Paramārthānandājī's New year [2019] talk

om sadāsiva samārambhām śaṅkarācārya madhyamām asmad ācārya paryantām vande guru paramparām om

First of all, I wish all of you a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous new year, 2019!

And today, I propose to talk on the topic of the *vedic approach to happiness*. And, this is based on a well-known portion, named **ānanda mīmāṃsa**, which occurs in **taittirīya** and **brhadāraṇyaka upaniṣads**. **ānanda mīmāṃsa** meaning, *an analysis into the nature and means of ānanda*. **ānanda** meaning, *happiness*.

The **veda** divides happiness into three categories, *based on the means by which the happiness is acquired* by a person. Even though happiness itself is one, based on the means, it is divided into 3 types. The concepts are there in the **veda**; but, I am only giving them three different names; these three different names do *not* occur in the **veda**. But the concepts are there. Those three types of happiness, are **kāma ānandaḥ**, **dharma ānandaḥ** and **mokṣa ānandaḥ**.



The word **kāmaḥ** in this context means, *all the sense objects in the world which are capable of giving us sense pleasures* when we contact them through our sense organs. Here, the word **kāmaḥ** means, *not* desire; but, the desired or desirable *objects*. **kāmyate iti kāmaḥ**. [**karma vyutpatti**]. And the sense objects can give us **ānanda** - **śabda sparśa rūpa rasa gandha** - sound touch form taste smell. Varieties of music, varieties of eatables, varieties of colours - they all can give us happiness. That happiness is called **kāmānandaḥ**. In simple English, *all forms of sense pleasures* will come under **kāmānanda**, which is presently going on at maximum level during New Year revelry and parties. They even discuss *how to handle the hangover*. Big topic in the newspapers.

This **kāmānanda**, sense pleasures, are *not entirely condemned* by the **veda**; but, are advised in moderation. All legitimate, **dhārmic**, sensory enjoyments are accepted by the **veda**. **veda** itself talks about them. **veda** even prescribes **pūjās** to get those pleasures. There is a **homa**, called **āvahanti homa**.

"āvahantī vitanvānā | kurvāṇācīram ātmanaḥ | vāsāgṃsi mama gāvaśca | annapāne ca sarvadā | ..." [taittirīya upaniṣad - śīkṣāvallī - anuvāka 4]

'I should have wonderful food, clothing'. All of them are asked for. They all come under **kāma ānanda** only. I don't have to talk much about this; because, **kāmānanda** is the most popular **ānanda**, all over the world. In fact, when we talk about happiness, the *world understands only kāmānandaḥ!* That there are two other types of **ānanda** is introduced by the **veda** only. And therefore, we can try to understand more about **dharma ānandaḥ** and **mokṣa ānandaḥ**.

kāmānanda is well known; materialistic, sense pleasures. **dharmānandaḥ** means, the happiness that a person can enjoy by following a **dhārmic** way of life. The very **dhārmic** way of life, can generate immense joy in a human being. And by **dhārmic** life what we mean is, a life style that is prescribed by the **veda**. "**codanā lakṣaṇaḥ arthaḥ dharmah**" is the definition of **dharma**. Means, *the instructions or the teachings given by the veda*. **codanā** means, **vedic** instructions. **lakṣaṇam** means, **pramāṇam**. **codanā veda vidhi niṣedaḥ eva lakṣaṇam pramāṇam yasya dharmasya** [bahuvrīhi]. Therefore, **dharmah** means, **vedic** instructions or **vedic** teachings. And, **dhārmic** life means, **a life style governed by dharma**.

Now, the question is, *what is dharma?* Instructions of the **veda**. I generally present the **vaidika dharma** in 3 categories. **sadbhāvanāḥ**, **sadguṇāḥ**, **satkarmāṇi**. Healthy attitudes, healthy values and healthy or noble actions or activities. All put-together is called **dharma**. All the three limbs are equally important and complimentary.

Of them, the first one is **sadbhāvanāḥ** - healthy attitudes. And while talking about healthy attitudes **veda** repeatedly mentions, that we should have a healthy attitude towards the very world in which we are living. Because, unfortunately, since the world is already available for us and we are born into that, we take the world and the things and beings in it for granted. And when we take it for granted, we don't understand its value, its glory etc; and therefore, we don't have a proper attitude. Because of that alone, there is destruction, abuse, exploitation; and the world becomes unfit for our very living itself. Therefore, **veda** says - in fact **veda prescribes** - varieties of **upāsanās** / meditations in which we are asked to dwell upon the wonderful universe and the wonderful earth and the wonderful environment - consisting of animals, plants, human-beings and nature - rivers, mountains etc. All of them you don't take for granted; may you meditate on them regularly, appreciating their glory, their designs. A beautiful **upāsanā** in **taittirīya upaniṣad** [anuvāka 1.7.1] says -

pṛthivyantarikṣam dyaurdiśo'vāntaradiśaḥ | agnirvāyurādityaścandramā nakṣatrāṇi | āpa oṣadhayo vanaspataya ākāśa ātmā | ityadhibhūtam | athādhyātmam | prāṇo vyāno'pāna udānaḥ samānaḥ | cakṣuḥ śrotraṃ mano vāk tvak | carma māgṃsagṃ snāvāsthi majjā | etad adhidhāya ṛṣiravocat | pāṅktaṃ vā idagṃ sarvam | pāṅktenaiva pāṅktagṃ sprṇotīti |

Even the very chanting is enjoyable! It talks about bringing to awareness the stars, the sun, the moon, the plants, the rivers, the oceans, the animals. All of them are gift given to us; a fantastic and marvelous, well-designed universe! We cannot create even a blade of grass! But, all of them are provided to us; the best resources are available. And the whole earth is a specially designed house where life can be sustained. They are struggling to find life elsewhere.

But, the conditions are not favorable. The Earth has got all ideal conditions to sustain life! And not only all basic resources are there, everything is provided even for the fulfillment of all human aspirations - **dharmā artha kāma mokṣa!** And, we have an *extraordinary* brain by which we can discover more and more and we can create more and more and enjoy more and more. Only, we have to learn to appreciate this universe.

And this appreciation should change to admiration. And the admiration should change to reverence. "**namo brahmaṇe namaste vāyo**". In fact, we have to do **namaskāraṃ** to **vāyu**; because, in some of the cities **vāyu** is so polluted that even living is becoming difficult! Chennai is also progressing towards that. So, **vāyu** we take for granted. **veda** says, revere the **vāyu**. "**namaste vāyo; tvam eva pratyakṣaṃ brahmāsī**". Thus, *appreciate the universe; admire the universe; revere the universe*. The entire universe should be seen as **viśvarūpa īśvaraḥ**. And therefore, our attitude towards the universe must be one of **bhaktiḥ**. So, the first component of **dharmā** is a *healthy attitude*. And **viśvarūpa bhakti** is a part of **dhārmic** life. **dhārmic** life includes **bhakti** & reverence. Reverence is not only for the idol in the temple. The reverence that **veda** talks about is, *reverence towards the entire universe of things and beings*, as an expression of **īśvara**, a manifestation of **īśvara**, a gift from **īśvara**! You name it anything; but, there must be a reverential attitude. This is, healthy attitude. And all others will then follow.

Then the next two are **sadguṇāḥ** and **satkarmāṇi**. *Healthy values and healthy or noble actions*. Healthy values and noble actions prescribed by the **veda** are based on one *fundamental principle*. All the healthy values and noble actions are derived from one fundamental principle. You know that fundamental principle! It is beautifully given in a **ślokā** -

sukham me sarvadā bhūyāt ; duḥkhaṃ mābhūt kadācana | iticche sarva sāmānye te jñānād eva siddhyataḥ ||

- all the living beings, including human beings, have got *two instinctive desires*. Being instinctive, they are universal. There are so many desires which vary from individual to individual. They are subjective, acquired and variable desires. But, this **ślokā** talks about two *universal, instinctive desires* of all living beings. And you know what are those two? **sukham me sarvadā bhūyāt** - let me be happy. When? **sarvadā** - always. Let me be happy, always! This is the desire, whether a person is an Indian or foreigner; or, a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian; or, a male or a female; or, even an animal or plant! Therefore, **sukham** is one desire for all.

The other instinctive, universal desire is, **duḥkhaṃ mābhūt kadācana** - I should never have sorrow. Do you want sorrow at any particular day of the week, or at a particular hour of the week!? No. **sukha bhāvaḥ** and **duḥkha abhāvaḥ** are universal desires. And therefore **veda** says, **dhārmic** life is a life which is led by taking into account these two universal desires. So, when my life is based on these two basic desires of every living being, and I don't violate or contradict that, my life is in harmony with the universal craving.

And therefore, *what is the most important value?* **veda** says, since nobody wants unhappiness, let your aim be :: **never give pain to others**. Always be alert. And, always try your best not to give **duḥkhaṃ** or pain to others, even by thoughts or words or deeds. *Never give sorrow*. And even if pain is to be given during extraordinary circumstances, try to make it as minimum as possible, to get the things done appropriately. **manu smṛti** says,

advena ca bhūtānāṃ alpa droheṇa vā punaḥ yā vṛttiḥ tāṃ samāstāya vipro jīved anāpadi |

viprah - a **vedic** follower - should have a philosophy of life that '*I will never give sorrow to others*'. Even if he has to, that should be as minimum as possible, like a doctor giving minimum pain during treatment. *This is considered the most important value; a healthy value.* It is said - **ahiṃsā paramo dharmah**. And, **Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī** says, '*all other values are nothing but an extension or derivative of ahiṃsā only*'. When it is said, "**satyaṃ vada**", what is the message? By telling lies, by giving wrong information, we are hurting others; therefore, 'don't tell lies' means, **ahiṃsā**. 'Don't cheat others' means, **ahiṃsā**. Thus, all values are based on one fundamental seed value, which is **ahiṃsā**. Therefore, **dharma** consists of **bhakti**, which is *healthy attitude*. **dharma** consists of **ahiṃsā**, which is the *fundamental value*. So, healthy attitudes, healthy values. [I am just mentioning one. All others are only derivations of that].

What is the *third one*? **satkarmāṇi**. What do you mean by noble **karma**? Noble **karma** we can easily understand! It is that which fulfills the basic desires of all living beings. [Do you understand what I am trying to arrive at?!] Nobody wants sorrow. Therefore, what can be the noblest **karma**? Whatever I do to alleviate or remove the pain of others. Like, a few nice words. Eventhough we cannot spend money, a few nice words or whatever help I can give to alleviate the pain of others - **duḥkha abhāvārtham**. Or, the other one. What is that? Everybody wants happiness. Whatever help I can do to give or improve the comfort and joy of others. Whatever I do for **para duḥkha nivṛtti** or **para sukha prāpti**. All these actions - which are done directly or indirectly - they are all **satkarmāṇi**. A beautiful verse says -

aṣṭādaśa purāṇeṣu vyāsasya vacanadvayam | paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāpāya parapīdanam ||

There are 18 **purāṇās**. Each **purāṇā** running into thousands of verses. **skanda purāṇam** is 80000 and odd verses, **bhāgavatam** 18000 verses and so on. So many **purāṇās** have been written! Many people will wonder, *where do we have time to study?* [We have time for SMS only! Even there, you don't write 'you are', but only U R! Such a fast life, timeless life we lead! So, where is the leisure for studying? So, this **ślokā** says, if you don't have time to study the **purāṇās**, the entire essence of all the **purāṇās** I am going to tell you in *one ślokā*. In that, the first line of the **ślokā** is introduction. **aṣṭādaśa purāṇeṣu vyāsasya vacanam dvayam** - **vyāsa** condenses their essence, in just 2 statements :: **paropakāra puṇyāya, pāpāya para pīdanam. para upakāraḥ** - do whatever help you can do. No doubt we all have so many commitments and responsibilities; we have to earn money, we have to raise the family, we have to settle children, we have to buy house for children - [in fact we have to one house each for every child!]. Thus, we have got so many desires centered on me and my family. May you fulfill those desires. But, may you also give some time for **paropakāra puṇyāya, pāpāya para pīdanam**. May you alleviate the **pīda** - the sufferings - of others; may you give any help you can. Allot some time for any voluntary work you can. [We find many volunteers are doing voluntary work during week-ends; just going to some temple and cleaning; or, going to some temple and collecting **prasāda** and visiting hospitals and giving to patients there].

So many methods of **paropakāra** and **parapīda varjanam** are there. Do whatever help you can, whatever be the scale. **veda** doesn't prescribe the scale. **veda** says, *you decide that; but, do something or the other*. If you want elaboration we have **pañca mahā yajñāḥ** that I have talked about last year. Here I don't want to go into the details. **satkarmāṇi** means, **sukha dānam, duḥkha nivartanam** of others. This is called **satkarmāṇi**.

Thus, **dharma** consist of three principles. **sadbhāvanā = viśvarūpa bhakti. satguṇaḥ = ahiṃsā. satkarmāṇi = para upakāraḥ**. If these three we follow to the extent possible, it is called a **dhārmic** way of life.

veda says, this **dhārmic** way of life itself will give immense joy; *a joy derived by giving joy!* Because, in **paropakāra**, *we give joy and increase our joy*. A win-win situation in which both benefit. The other day, I read in an auto-rickshaw - "மகிழ்வித்து மகிழ்". மகிழ்வித்து மகிழ் means, *give joy and discover joy!* The whole humanity will enjoy! And, when everybody enjoys, it becomes **என்-joy** also! This **ānanda** is called **dharmānandaḥ**.

And **veda** says, **dharmānanda** is *quantitatively and qualitatively much superior* to **kāmānandaḥ**. And you know *how much* superior? **taittirīya upaniṣad** says - **te ye śataṃ**, hundred times superior is the **dharmānanda** that we can enjoy. And once we start enjoying **dharmānanda**, **kāmānanda** will appear sour or bitter! [We are also *celebrating* the New Year. I hope you are enjoying; I am enjoying. We are also *spiritual*. They are also *spiritual!!* They have hangover; we don't have. We are enjoying. We don't miss any one of the happiness. We are happy & happier. We are not denying ourselves any joy by coming to **dharmānanda**.

dharmo viśvasya jagataḥ pratiṣṭhā loke dharmiṣṭha prajā upasarpanti dharmeṇa pāpam apanudati dharme sarvaṃ pratiṣṭhitaṃ tasmād dharmaṃ paramaṃ vadanti || [mahanarayana upa 79-7]

That is the **vedic** teaching. Materialistic society promotes **kāmānanda**. **vedic** society promotes **dharmānandaḥ**. **veda** doesn't condemn or criticise **kāmānanda**. It only says, *may you gradually promote yourself from kāmānanda to dharmānanda*, which will preserve the earth also. In **kāmānanda** unchecked exploitation of worldly resources is taking place. It will make the Earth unlivable. But, **dharmānanda** will make the Earth livable for us & for the coming generations also! This is, **dharmānandaḥ**.

Now, what is the third one? **mokṣānandaḥ**. This is also the teaching of the **veda**. **mokṣānandaḥ** is the **ānanda** derived through **mokṣa**. In **kāmānanda**, **kāma** is the means of **ānanda**. In **dharm-ānanda**, **dharma** is the means of **ānanda**. In **mokṣānanda**, **mokṣa** is the means of **ānanda**. **mokṣa** means, liberation or freedom or release. Freedom from what? Release of what? **veda** says **mokṣa** is, *dropping of ignorance and misconception*. Ignorance - misconception **tyāgaḥ eva mokṣa**. [**mokṣ dhātu**, not **muc dhātu**. **mokṣaṇe mokṣati**. **mokṣayati** - *to release*; or, *drop*].

What should I drop? Ignorance and misconception. Ignorance and misconception with regard to what? **veda** says, *self ignorance and self misconception that we have*. We think we know ourselves well; but, in the vision of the **veda**, *we do not know ourselves*.

And, if it is only pure ignorance it is bliss; but, it is ignorance followed by misconception also! And there are several misconceptions. But, **veda** talks about *one fundamental ignorance and misconception*, which is unbelievable. And what does **veda** say? We think that, to be happy we have to get happiness from the external world; to be happy we have to depend on the external sources; [in modern language, *we have to outsource happiness!*] And this is based on our conclusion - a thoughtless, unenquired, unquestioned or unchallenged conclusion - '*I have to get happiness from outside; I don't have happiness*'.

According to **veda**, that is *the worst misconception*. And, **veda** makes a diagonally opposite statement. A mind-blowing, un-swallowable, unacceptable, almost laughable statement. **veda** says, **I am the only source of happiness**. It first says, I am the source of happiness. You will then challenge that, 'looking at my face **Swāmījī**, do you say that?' How you can say, 'I am the source of happiness?!' But, **veda** says 'yes, you are'. **veda** says, 'not only you are the source of happiness. You are *the only source* of happiness; there is no happiness coming from outside'. **ātmā ānanda svarūpaḥ. anātmā duḥkha svarūpaḥ.**

Naturally, we will be questioning it. 'How come? I *am* deriving happiness from the external world. When I enjoy music [music season] or when I enjoy nice food or when I meet people, I am deriving happiness'. **veda** says, when you say, 'I am deriving happiness from the external things and beings', *really speaking they are not giving you happiness*. They are only **bringing out** the happiness which is *already in you; which is hidden in you as your core nature*.

So, those happiness-giving-objects are nothing but a mirror to show your own happiness. They are only mirroring your happiness! When you bring a mirror in front of you, you see a very beautiful face. [சொல்லிவெக்கறேன்!] You say, the mirror is **giving** you a very attractive, beautiful, charming face. And, you are so happy! **veda** says, mirror *doesn't give* you that charming face. Mirror is only mirroring the face that you already have. Similarly, both **kāma ānanda** and **dharma ānanda** are the **ānanda brought-out** by the external objects from within our own inner core. They are just brought to our mental plane. *The inner happiness surfaces and appears in our mental plane!*

This is the truth; but, we may not accept that. **veda** says, if you are willing I have got a beautiful teaching and training program by which you can discover this fact for yourself. You can get convinced of the fact. So, **veda** has got a teaching and training program by which we can discover that **ānanda** which is our own, which puts an end to all our struggles; because, I need not go out in search of happiness with a begging bowl, pleading 'you give me joy', 'you give me joy'. Nothing need give me joy; because, I have got my own!

yastvātmaratireva syādātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ | ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭastasya kāryaṃ na vidyate || [bhagavad gītā 3.17]

After **mokṣānanda** all the struggle for **ānanda** ends. That is called liberation; freedom from ignorance; freedom from misconception; freedom from struggles to get happiness from outside. This is called **mokṣa ānanda**. **kāmānanda** is great. **dharmānanda** is greater. But, **mokṣānanda** is the *greatest*. And **veda** says, 'on the happy New year day may you resolve to gradually promote yourself from **kāmānanda** to **dharmānanda** to **mokṣānanda**!'

This is the **vedic** message which I wanted to share on this New Year day, happily!

Swamiji's talks Transcribed by M/s A.Venkatesan & P.Bālasubrahmaṇyam