

Satsang with Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Assimilating Vedanta

Question

Your presence is unequivocally divine. No matter what track my mind is on, as soon as you come, the movement slows down and the mind prepares for a major realignment. You bring a cheerful contentment reminiscent of the moments of secure contentment I felt in my childhood. It automatically clears whatever was there in the mind and opens my heart for growth.

Please share your vision of how we can make the most of our remaining time here to bring about a combined effect on the world similar to the effect of your divine presence on us.

Answer

Insulin secretion, which maintains the sugar level in the body, is produced and regulated by the pancreas. In one form of diabetes the pancreas doesn't produce insulin properly, and then one has to take the insulin from outside. In a second type of diabetes, there is nothing wrong with the pancreas; the insulin is produced, but the cells are not able to make use of the insulin. This is where the Ayurvedic medicines can help. Thus, you need not take insulin, but you try to process the insulin. Insulin is there but the assimilation doesn't take place. This second type of diabetes is similar to the position of a Vedanta student. Vedanta is there, but the assimilation doesn't take place. What is required to assimilate Vedanta? This is something that I have a lot of experience in understanding. As a seeker, I had experience and as a teacher I have experience, which is more rewarding.

What is it that inhibits the assimilation of Vedanta? My students have enlightened me on how to make it work. I work with the students; I watch them; I help them out; I listen to them; no matter what mistakes they commit, I remain non-judgmental. I know that Vedanta works. It works in a two-fold manner: I can let in only that much as I can let out and the love for *ātmā* must be there.

In the Upanishads you have stories, *ākhyāyikās*, where the father talks to the son or the husband talks to his wife etc. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.5.6), the teacher, Yājñavalkya, says "*ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati*" to his wife, Maitreyī, whom he loves. He talks responsibly and gives the best for the beloved. What he teaches Maitreyī is *hitam* (what is good for her) even though he is leaving. This *kāmaḥ* is a very beautiful word. *Kāmaḥ* can be the object of desire, or you can take it as a desire. The object is desired because of some fascination. It is the meaning of words like 'priya', 'iṣṭa', 'rāga'. Their common meaning is 'something that is pleasing'. *Ātmā* is the most loveable; therefore, *ātmā* is *ānanda svarūpa*, essential nature of Happiness or Fullness. *Ānanda svarūpa* is *ātmā*; therefore, *ātmā* is the most loveable. It is said in both ways.

This is given in the *sampradāya*, tradition. It's okay, but my argument is this: whatever evokes the pleased self, I love. With the *sampradāya*'s argument, one can raise objections like some people are willing to give up their lives for another. Then, they have to say that giving up something for the sake of the other is what pleases the person. Thus, they go all around to get back to *ātmā* being the most loveable.

Vedanta doesn't work unless you love yourself. And unless you clear the *kaṣāya*, the unconscious inhibitions, which denies self love so you loathe yourself, you can't love yourself. Therefore, you start with self care. Self care begins with what one considers their self to be. One woman asked me for products for the skin containing natural ingredients. For her, self care starts with skin care. Then, you go to health care, then yoga, then mental health care through therapy etc., then "*ātmā vā are dṛṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsitaavyaḥ maitreyī.*" The self, my dear Maitreyī, should indeed be known – should be heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. I work with the most beloved, the self, *ātmā*!

First care for yourself, and then you will understand yourself. Self care is equal to self love. Self love is as good as you have love for others. Running away from the world will not work. The more you run away from the world, the more you run away from yourself. Swami Chinmayanandaji once told me, "The more you want to run away, the more you need to be here." He said this thinking of what was good for me, not because he wanted me to do some work. He didn't put his self interest in advising others. Never. It took years for me to understand that and I worked and worked. I never stopped.

Now, nothing works in my body anymore. My left eye doesn't work. My throat is gone. I cannot lift anything. Nothing works, but nothing stops. I cause despair to all the doctors! They should marvel, but instead of marveling, they despair. Now every day is a grace. As long as my head works, I can continue to work.

In these few months you have to learn how to work in the society. Make use of how to exhaust yourself until you give everything. The more you give, the more you love. The more you love yourself, the more you understand what is going on. This is the intake of medicine to energize the system. Then, your clarity increases.

The work involves both sharing this knowledge and doing things that will open up the heart. Seva and care involves whatever you can do to your own people. Those who are from other countries should go back and share these attitudes, if not these forms. Attitudes can be shared; forms need not be. Here there is an attitude towards money; money is Lakṣmi *devī*. You can share that attitude. Make them recognize that *Īśvara* is everything.

There is a story that after completing the *Brahmasūtras*, Sage Vyāsa felt sad. Nārada came and told him to write the *Bhāgavatam*. Vyāsa felt sad after writing the *Brahmasūtras* and after writing the *Bhāgavatam* he was okay! This is not true. The *Bhāgavatam* was written by a pundit, not by Vyāsa, but that's what they say. Similarly, first I taught Vedanta and then I started the AIM for Seva! So we have a volunteer movement. It is a great avenue to work for. In the process we grow and understand, and make people benefit. It all has to do with love for the *ātmā*.

A yogi by *aṣṭāṅga yoga* gets *ānanda-anubhava* and reaches a state of *laya*, absorption. A musician can also reach such a state, and can transfer it to those listeners who know music. Therefore, music is superior to yoga. Thus, a musician can cause a thousand people to reach a state of *laya*. Similarly, *seva* has the capacity to bring *laya*. If you can make a person feel happy, you can make the person grow spiritually. You have to make the person feel cared, not scared. One who does *seva* is happy.

You can learn in this period (of six months), by seeing how the infrastructure is set up, how to go about the *seva* work. You can do *seva* on your own, but we have a movement already in place in which you can learn

and make use of the structure. *Śāstra* is important. It is a blessing¹.

¹ Pujya Swamiji's satsang with students in the final phase of a three-year Vedanta course at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Coimbatore, 21 December 2004. Reproduced from the notes of Brni. Lasa, supplemented with Swamini Karunananda's notes.

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