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Goddess jñāneśvari at AVG Anaikatti Temple

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**Arsha Vidya
Newsletter**

***In fearless voice we
proclaim***

***The Rishi's message
from all our house
tops***

***And bring the men of
different claim***

***To a fold of love
where oneness lasts***

Ātmānam ced vijānīyāt

Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Sarawati's transcribed talk

This is the sixth issue of the serial article, continued from previous issue.

VIJĀNĪYĀT CET -- SUPPOSE HE KNOWS

The word 'cet, suppose' implies self-ignorance and self-confusion while the word 'vijānīyāt' tells us that *ātman* has to be known. The word 'cet' also indicates *ātma-vidyāyāḥ durlabhatvam*, the rarity of gaining self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is neither easy nor difficult. In fact, no knowledge is easy or difficult. Even the simple arithmetic of $1+1=2$, becomes difficult for a two-year-old child to understand because the child is not yet ready. You cannot do anything about it. You have to simply wait.

For self-knowledge there must be some preparation. If you want to learn calculus you must have some minimum knowledge of mathematics. If you do not have even arithmetic, there is no question of learning calculus. It is not that you are not qualified to learn anything, but you have to get prepared. You have to reach a point from where you can learn calculus.

Similarly, for self-knowledge you do require a qualification, which is not academic. It is maturity. Maturity implies the presence of *viveka*, discriminative understanding, and *vairāgya*, dispassion. *Viveka* and *vairāgya* are pointed out in a *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* mantra:¹ “*parīkṣya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇaḥ nirvedam āyāt nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena*, examining the experiences of life and ascertaining that freedom cannot be gained through action, a *vivekin* gets dispassion.”

Anything you experience here as a *karma-phala*, the result of your own action, is called *loka*. The type of *loka* is pointed out here by the word *karma-citān*, gathered by *karma*. *Parīkṣya* means analyzing the varieties of experiences that one undergoes in life. Having examined them, this *vivekin*, discerning person, accomplishes *nirveda* meaning *vairāgya*, dispassion. Dispassion is towards certain things and towards even the *lokas* here as well as *lokas* promised elsewhere.

¹ *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 1.2.12

Chāṇdogyopaniṣad says:² “*tad yathā iha karma-jito lokaḥ kṣīyate evameva amutra puṇya-jito lokaḥ kṣīyate*, just as any field of experience gained here as a result of action is found to be lost in time, so too are the fields of experiences gained in other worlds as a result of *puṇya*, good actions.”

Any action that you do here is limited in nature. You cannot do a limitless action because, any action that you do is always done at a given time and place with limited instruments in a given manner for the purpose of gaining a given result. If you take one step forward, you can go only one step forward and not two steps. A step taken forward is only forward, not backward or sideways. Any result of action done is what is illustrated here. Once there is an illustration, there is also logic.

The logic is: any *karma-phala* is finite because its cause, the *karma*, is finite. When the cause is finite, the effect, that is, *karma-phala*, cannot be infinite. The effect being finite, naturally the discerning person sees this limitation in *karma*. If you say, “Let it be finite”, then there is no problem. You do finite *karma* for finite results. You may be doing it for seemingly infinite time. But the question is: For whose sake do you want *karma-phala*? Is it for *karma-phala*’s sake or is it for *karma*’s sake, or is it for your sake? It is *ātmārtha*, for your sake. It is not for the *anātman*.

If I do *karma* for my sake, then what is it that I seek through the *karmas*? I am not seeking finite results. If I am satisfied with the finite results, then I will stop seeking, once I get the finite results. But it is not so. I continue to seek, which only reveals that I see myself as a finite being. As long as I see myself as a finite being, the non-acceptance of the self will continue to be there. I will be always struggling to become free from the sense of limitation. This is *viveka*.

Puṇya is also a result of *karma*, but is only an intermediary stage in *karma-phala*. The final *karma-phala* is what you get later when you encash your *puṇya*. It is like the money you get by doing some job. This is the *drṣṭa-phala*, the seen result. Money itself is not the *karma-phala*. You do not eat the money. What you buy with that money and enjoy is *karma-phala*. So too is *adrṣṭa-phala*, the unseen result. You perform certain good *karmas* and they

² *Chāṇdogyopaniṣad* 8.1.6

produce an intermediary *phala* called *punya*. It is called *adr̥ṣṭa* because it is not seen. Good *karma* results in *punya* and wrong *karma* results in *pāpa*. *Punya* will give you *sukha*, happiness, and *pāpa* will give you *duḥkha*, sorrow.

Punya takes you to *lokas*. Having gone to the *lokas* you enjoy. You have to pay for the enjoyment and you pay from the cash called *punya* that you have already gathered. You cannot accumulate new *punya* there. For every dance performance that you see in heaven, for every music concert that you hear there, you have to pay from the *punya* cash. When you keep on paying, it is not going to last. A time comes when, with reluctance, you have to pay the last cent. That particular set of *punya*, which takes you to heaven, gets expended; you are back again to square one.

A discerning person sees: What I am seeking in life is not really a finite thing, which is why I am always seeking. If I am seeking a limited thing, then for limitless time I have to seek. What I seek is really limitless. I cannot seek what is limitless through *karma*, because³ what is limitless cannot be an end product of *karma*. You cannot produce what is limitless. Either it is already there or it is non-existent. If it is already there, then you do not produce it. If you miss what is already there, you have to seek eternally. If you seek the limitless, then you do not require finite *karmas*. It does not mean finite *karmas* are useless, and therefore, you should stop eating, for instance. Finite *karmas* would produce finite results. If you are seeking *nitya*, that *nitya* cannot be the result of any action.

.....To be continued

³ *Nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena* (Muṇḍakopaniṣad 1.2.12):

nāsti - not; *akṛtaḥ* - *nityaḥ*, limitless; *kṛtena* - through *karma*.

“While traveling to a particular destination, people may enjoy a few things along the way, but they do not lose sight of their destination. Self-knowledge need not be any different. “

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Camp at AVG by Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati

From December 14 to 18, 2019

Value of Values Part 04 (Continued from May 2020)

The beginning of violence starts from the mind and when impulses like कामः (*kāmaḥ*), क्रोधः (*krodhaḥ*), लोभ (*lobha*) etc. take over, the action that follows will always be hurtful. When the discriminating person i.e. the one who enjoys free will doesn't come into play and goes into the background, the action becomes impulsive action. These impulses which started in the mind is expressed in the form of violent action. One needs to address it by प्रतिपक्षभावाना (*pratipakṣabhāvānā*); one needs to recognize what impulse arises in the mind and how to neutralize it. *Kāma* is aroused because of अविवेक (*avivēka*) – शोभनाऽध्यास (*śōbhanādhyaśa*), superimposing a value on something which doesn't have. Looking at something as a source of happiness which is not really is *śōbhanādhyaśa*, which is what creates liking for it. We need to be aware that the objects do not have happiness. If I do not watch my thought, then it becomes *kāma* - strong desire. *Kāma* is a built up of thoughts.

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

dhyāyatō viṣayānpuṁsaḥ saṅgastēṣūpajāyatē ।

saṅgātsañjāyatē kāmaḥ kāmātkrōdhō'bhijāyatē ॥

Meaning: In the person who dwells upon objects, an attachment is born with reference to them. From attachment is born desire and from desire, anger is born.

If I do not address that thought, it becomes desire. The desire develops into craving and goes out of my control. As long as desire is not intense, I have the freedom to neutralize it. *Vivēka* comes into play when I create that space for myself. It is the usefulness of the object which attracts me. Objects outside may be useful but it cannot be the source of my happiness. Whatever

created by *īśvara* has purpose to serve but nothing is the source of happiness. *Kāma* arises by seeing happiness, security and comfort which is not there in the objects. If I don't resolve it there, then unfulfilled desire brings anger. Anger is a result of frustration.

We generally want to control things. We want to have things our way. "My way of highway" as they say it in US, I must have my way. Then we make demand on things and beings. When not fulfilled, I get hurt and frustrated with my own self with a sense of helplessness. That frustration brings retaliation which is anger. Anger towards other persons started with frustration with oneself. Understand the mechanism of anger. If you do that, then there will be space to understand this - Why I cannot accept things as they are. Basically, we are demanding people. Anger is on account of unfulfilled demand. The first demand is made from myself and that translates into demand upon others. You are good to me if you oblige me. When you do not oblige me, I get angry. Give up demand and accept the thing as it is or the person as he or she is. That is accommodation (क्षमा/*kṣamā*) for neutralizing anger.

करुणा (*karuṇā*) - Compassion is a way to neutralize anger. Anger is being intolerant; compassion is better than anger. Greed is the feeling of wanting more because of strong dissatisfaction with what I have. I have to remind myself that contentment is the only antidote for greed. *Vivēka* for *kāma*, Compassion for *krōdha* and contentment for greed are the ways to overcome these three enemies. We need to constantly work on these. That is how we can neutralize those damaging tendencies. I am the first one who gets damaged in this violence. Before I affect someone else, I damage myself. It is like a match stick; it burns first before burning something else. All these damaging tendencies are the gates for *naraka*, meaning suffering. You must realize how they torture and devastate you. Therefore, you must consistently apply the *pratipakṣabhāvanā* to neutralize them. It is an ongoing thing for a Vedantic person. If that does not happen, then it will manifest in action resulting in violence. Desire, lust, anger or greed arise in the mind and the person

who can keep these impulses in check is a Yogi. He is a happy person who can keep these under check. To keep a check is the first step; neutralizing, the second step. If not done, then it results in violent action which can be at level of speech or action.

Let us look at how to control violence of speech.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।

स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥

anudvēgakaram vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat ।

svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva vāṅmayam tapa ucyatē ॥

Meaning: Speech which does not cause agitation, which is true, pleasing and beneficial, and daily repetition of one's own Veda are collectively called discipline of speech.

Lord Krishna gives basic criteria to observe before we utter a word. Your words should not perturb others. Before I utter, I should ask myself - whether my word would cause any hurt? All these *ahimsā* calls for respect for other person and their feelings, sensitivities and sentiments. Give them respect and freedom to have those feelings. Sensitivity in every action is a tall order. Unless I am sensitive to other people, it is difficult not hurting them. So, at the level of speech, I make sure they do not get hurt. If I choose to speak, I must ensure that I speak the truth. You have choice not to speak. Speaking truth is obligatory and it has to be *priyam* - has to be pleasant. Speaking truth has to be in a pleasant manner. Truth is not bitter; our mind is bitter and I make truth as an occasion to express my bitterness.

If we are accustomed to observing this austerity of speech, control of speech will also bring about control of mind. That makes the person an organized person, a person of self-control. Control of speech is very important for non-violence. One should be watchful of words used. Sometimes, in the name of humor, you make fun of people; you humiliate them. To get some cheap entertainment at the cost of someone else is violence. It hurts the other person. No one wants to be treated that way. Making fun in front of other people brings out someone's shortcomings. To embarrass somebody is also vio-

lence. They say that *mahābhārata* battle was because of the words of Draupadi, and *duryōdhana* decided to take revenge. There was another similar revenge story between *Drupada* and *Drōṇācārya*. When both were studying together in Gurukulam as children, Drupada promised to give Drona half of his kingdom when he becomes the king. When poor Drona could not afford to give milk to his son *Aśvatthāmā*, he went to Drupada and reminded the promise. But he was turned away in a humiliating way and the revenge story starts. The whole revenge lineage goes on.

Violence feeds violence. *Ahiṃsā* at the level of speech is very important, at least at the level of body. We can never practice non-violence at the physical level completely. *Pañcamahāyajña* (पञ्चमहायज्ञ) is an act of atonement to avoid five kinds of sins that we commit as householder. Pounding, grinding, fetching water, sweeping the floor and lighting the fire - all of these involve violence. During all these actions, some insects are killed. That is why *pañcamahāyajña* is prescribed for householders. We can minimize *hiṃsā* but cannot avoid it. Consumption itself is violence. When I consume, I deprive some other needy person. If I consume more than required, I damage myself also. It is unfortunate that modern economies are dependent on consumption. All based on waste. Most prosperous societies are most wasteful. We think that more we consume, happier we are. But the fact is more I hold, more I deprive the needy people. So even holding and consuming more than what we need is violence. Wasting food is violence; eating more chapatis than my need is violence. Food is a big debatable issue, being a vegetarian or non-vegetarian. When it is a choice, let us choose less evolved to consume like vegetarian diets. In ancient time, they used to consume meat because agriculture was not developed. One should not follow any law that is not compatible to the existing situation, says *manusmṛti*. No justification to follow now something which were practiced five thousand years. Meat consumption is absolutely unjustifiable even scientifically. Vegetarianism is less violence.

The basic violence is spiritual violence. Ignorance is the first violence. Ignorance creates in me the identification with body-mind-sense complex and I

take them as *ātmā*. Their cravings and requirements becomes my mine. This is how fascination for objects arises. *Ātmā* is of the nature of happiness and wellness but I am towards objects. That is an insult to *ātmā*. Everything lies within and you are begging outside. I seek happiness and security where it is not. Overlooking and ignoring, even insulting where it is. *Saccidānanda ātmā* is right there and we go out begging, which itself is a violence carried out due to ignorance. Only wise person can be really non-violent.

Value: 4 - क्षान्तिः (*kṣāntiḥ*)

Kṣamā - means Endurance, forbearance. Forbearance is not just restraining from retaliation. When I do not react outwardly but within my mind there is reaction, then I am hurting myself. I am hurt and angry. This cannot be called *Kṣamā*. So, अविकार्यम् (*avikāryam*) - having no *vikāra* - reactions in mind is called *Kṣamā*. Accommodating or accepting gracefully and cheerfully what I do not like - what I cannot change, is *Kṣamā*. It is a tall order. If a child abuses you, you smile. If you can extend the same advantage to an entity that is older in body but child in mind and emotionally immature, it is *Kṣamā*. Insult, jealousy, retaliation, greedy - these are due to emotional immaturity. All the retaliating ones are not matured ones and they behave like a child. We did that as a child and it was necessary at that time. But now after becoming an adult, if someone throws tantrum, it means that there is a mind of 5 years old in a body of 50 years old. This is not to brand others but for neutralizing my reaction to the person. I am not responding to 50 years old person but to 5 years old child in him. Therefore, respond to the person behind the behavior. Only a person in pain can cause pain to someone else. A happy person can never be angry. You are always generous when you are happy. It is pain and insecurity that makes you behave in a manner causing pain for others. Painful behavior is the result of pain within. Therefore, we need a two step response. Responding to behavior of the person is one step response whereas the responding to the person behind the behavior is a two step response. The person who is aggressive outside is very insecure inside and therefore, aggressiveness comes from inner fear. All aggressions are act of insecurity and therefore, the person is un-

happy. He is a happy person who has no accounts to settle.

Human beings are always unhappy, miserable and in pain. Therefore, responding to the person behind the behavior is a two step response. You may not have caused that pain; it could be anybody. But pain makes me behave in a hurtful manner. It is like vomiting. I cannot control my emotions and I vomit it out. When anybody behaves in a hurtful manner and you happen to be there, it is your *prārabdha-karma*. Having seen the person behind the behavior and responding to that, the next step is to understand that I have to face this because of my own karma. This would resolve all the possible reactions within us. This is called respecting and accepting the person. It is *kṣamā*, accommodation. *Kṣamā* means no hurt, no anger, no retaliation. In every relationship, something always happens. There cannot be any perfect relationship. We are not perfect. I have my own shortcomings. If we look at our own self, we appreciate other people.

What Vedanta teaches is much more than psychology. Psychology says your desire is real; Vedanta says they are not real. Therefore, not storing any hurt and cheerful accommodation of the shortcomings of others is what Vedanta teaches. What is your reaction to mosquito, barking dogs, and mad people on the street? Do you fight with them? No; in the same way, accommodate others. I should give benefit to all my fellow beings in the world. The one who is closely related to me is the one who causes me the most pain. Why? Because relationship means expectations. The more the expectations, the more the chance of not being fulfilled. That's why there are also talks about spouses and all the jokes about their behavior with each other. Accepting the person as he/she is not making demand on him/her. Behind all expectations, there is one demand that you should change for myself. World should change to make me comfortable. What is love to me is that when you do what I want you to do. This definition needs to change. It is so important. This is the most important value as far as the relationship is concerned. *Ahiṃsā* and *kṣānti* go together. I don't cause hurt to other. It is *ahiṃsā*. When someone causes me hurt, I accommodate them. It is *kṣānti*. Relationship required these two values. *Ahiṃsā* and *kṣānti* can make a per-

son to a saintly person. People are comfortable with non-violent person who is non-demanding. You become more accommodating when you are non-demanding. *Kṣamā* requires you to be a non-demanding person and graceful acceptance of what comes.

.....To be continued

Transcribed by Sri Manoj Kitta , Edited by Sharanji



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Gurupūrṇimā Pūjā

We Cordially invite you to attend the live stream of **Gurupūrṇimā Pūjā** to be held at the Gurukulam on Sunday, July 05, 2020 and receive Guru's Blessings.

The Programme for the day will be as follows:

Guru Puja	—	10-30 AM
Anugraha Bhashaṇam	—	11-30 AM
Maha Prasadam	—	12-30 PM

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Self-knowledge: The Only Antidote to Grief¹

by Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati



The phrase, *tarati śokam ātmavit*, the knower of the Self crosses (over) grief, occurs in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad in course of a dialogue between the student, sage Nārada, and the teacher, sage Sanatkumāra². Sage Nārada approaches the teacher asking to be taught, and Sanatkumāra asks him what he already knows so that he can tell him of what lies beyond. Sage Nārada tells him in all humility that he knows the four Vedas and has studied the Purāṇas, Itihāsa, the rules of grammar, the science of numbers, the principles of logic, etymology, astronomy, the fine arts, and various other secular subjects. He then says, “But, Sir, all this knowledge has not helped me to know the self. I have heard from spiritual teachers like you that he who knows the self goes beyond grief. I am lost in sorrow. Will you please help me cross over sorrow?” Sage Sanatkumāra accepts him as a student, saying that all worldly knowledge belongs in the realm of mere words or names and is of limited consequence, and one must seek to know that which lies beyond everything else.

Sage Nārada is asked to meditate upon various entities, such as speech, the

¹ This essay is based on Swamiji's 2020 Memorial Day Camp lectures on '*tarati śokam ātmavit*.' Transcribed and edited by students of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA.

² Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 7-1-3

mind, one's will, food, etc. as symbols of Brahman and later taught the knowledge of the self. Sage Sanatkumāra showed sage Nārada the other side of darkness, or helped transcend grief.

Grief stands for all mental afflictions

What is grief? Grief here stands for all mental afflictions, *saṁsāra* or suffering. It is a state of mind that reflects afflictions such as sorrow, unhappiness, distress, disappointment, anxiety, fear, hurt, guilt, etc. Grief arises in all of us, regardless of who we are or how accomplished we are.

In grief, we are overcome by a sense of helplessness and self-pity; we feel incapable of doing what we must do and avoid what must be done. We also feel limited, tired, fearful, and confined to this body-mind complex as doers and experiencers. This wrong perception is the result of self-ignorance, the fundamental human problem and reason for all grief and suffering.

How does grief arise? Grief, like anger, simply happens. One does not choose to grieve, just as one does not choose to get angry. Grief is the fundamental problem of the human being. In the vision of Vedānta, grief is the result of our ignorance of the true nature of the self and arises due to *aviveka* or non-discrimination between the self and the non-self. We are all born ignorant, and this ignorance persists throughout our lives. Unfortunately, we do not recognize it to be the source of our problems in life; we do not know what makes us grieve and conclude that the world is the cause of our sadness, frustration, etc.

The human being is endowed with the faculty of self-consciousness and sees himself as inadequate and wanting. Indeed, we constantly sense some lack in ourselves. That there is always someone else who is more competent than ourselves also leads us to feel inadequate. This perception of insufficiency gives rise to feelings, such as insecurity, fear, selfishness, or jealousy, which, in turn, result in attachments, aversions, disappointments, and frustrations. This is how grief arises. One's self-dissatisfaction can gradually also transform into self-rejection and self-condemnation. These are but varying degrees of the problem of sadness or grief. Unlike every other kind of problem, grief is centered on the self, and, therefore, the solution to grief also lies within. The solution to other problems, like hunger for instance, lies outside of the self, such as in acquiring and consuming food, but the problem of grief can be understood and addressed by self-knowledge alone.

The Bhagavad Gītā explains the anatomy of grief

In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, sage Nārada is a highly qualified student, so the anatomy of grief itself is not discussed very much. However, Arjuna's state of mind is described in great detail in the Bhagavad Gītā and the teachings helps us understand it and deal with it better. Arjuna asks, "Overcome by faint-heartedness, confused about my duty, I ask you: Please tell me which is truly better for me³". His situation equally applies to all of us.

In identifying with his body-mind complex, Arjuna takes himself to be a *kartā*, doer, and suffers the likely consequences of killing his relatives and teachers. Like all of us, he looks upon himself as an agent of action and an experiencer or victim of the result of his own or others' actions. His mind is completely overpowered by grief. His situation equally applies to all of us.

As human beings, we are uniquely conscious of our emotional issues and problems. To begin with, our misperception of ourselves creates various states of mind, such as fear, anxiety, and irritation, which then manifest in our interactions with people around us as intolerance, anger, etc. This creates conflict and confrontation and results in suffering and unhappiness. It is clear from this that the problem lies in ourselves, meaning that our wrong perception of ourselves, or *moha*, delusion, is the source of all *śoka*, grief. It is the cause of all mental friction. An afflicted mind may even become very damaged and need other kinds of solutions, such as therapy.

Our minds are overpowered by *kārpaṇyam*, faint-heartedness or miserliness. The word, *kṛpaṇaḥ* occurs in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad: By definition, one who departs from this body without knowing *akṣaram*, the true nature of self, is a *kṛpaṇaḥ*, miser⁴.

Self-ignorance is the cause of grief

The one who knows the self becomes free from all suffering and attains happiness. If the knower of the self becomes free from grief simply by knowing the self, then the self must itself be free from grief. Self-knowledge simply reveals what is; it does not create anything new. The essential nature

³ *kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ*, Bhagavad Gītā, 2-7

⁴ *yovā etad akṣaram gārgy aviditvāsmāl lokāt praiti sa kṛpaṇaḥ*, Br. Up. 3-8-10

of the self is revealed to be free from grief or suffering. It is of the nature of unsurpassable happiness. That the knowledge of the self makes one free from grief means that ignorance is the cause of grief.

What is ignorance? Ignorance is that which manifests as all our notions or judgments about ourselves. Ignorance has two aspects: *Āvaraṇam*, veiling, and *vikṣepa*, projection. In the famous example of the rope-snake, there is *āvaraṇam*, in that we are ignorant of its 'ropeness,' and there is *vikṣepa*, in our taking it to be a snake. Similarly, here, our true nature is veiled, and we mistakenly identify with the body, sense organs, mind, intellect, and ego.

Five categories of identification or notions are discussed in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad: *Annamaya-kośa*, notions arising from identification with the body; *prāṇamaya-kośa*, notions arising from identification with the vital airs or physiological functions (e.g., 'I am hungry', 'I am sick'), *manomaya-kośa*, notions arising from identification with the mind, *vijñānamaya-kośa*, notions arising from identification with the intellect, and, finally, *ānandamaya-kośa*, notions arising from identification with the personality that is of the nature of *ānanda*, happiness (e.g., 'I am happy'). We identify with one or the other of these five aspects of our personality and judge ourselves based on that. We take ourselves to be a man or a woman, tall or short, a speaker or a listener, a mother or a father, etc. due to our identification with the body-mind complex. In short, we entertain all kinds of notions primarily due to our ignorance of the true nature of the self. The knower of the self is one who is free from the ignorance of all these notions.

Every notion, complex, or judgment about ourselves is a potential source of unhappiness, and the nature of the suffering will vary depending on the kind of notion or identification we have. We see in the scriptures that even *devatās*, like Indra, are not free from grief as they do not know the true nature of *ātmā*. This is meant to show the importance of gaining self-knowledge.

If we understand the nature of ignorance, we will come to understand the nature of the self. The 'I' is a complex entity consisting of consciousness and the personality. They are essentially the self and the non-self, and we are born with the habit of lumping the two together. They appear to be one in the same way as an iron ball when heated in a furnace appears to be a ball of fire. Ignorance is the inability to discriminate between the two and taking them to be one as a result.

Self-knowledge is separating the self from the personality

How can one transcend grief? Becoming free from sorrow is a two-step process. In the first step we acquire the four-fold qualification⁴, which is the prerequisite to gaining self-knowledge, by performing our *karmas* as an act of worship to the lord⁶. Having acquired these qualifications, which is not easy, we deliberate on the nature of the self as described in the scriptures with the help of a teacher. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches that knowing the true nature of the self is the means to get rid of our sorrow and delusion. It delivers both *brahma-vidyā*, the knowledge of the self, and *yoga-sāstra*, the means to attain that knowledge. The premise of the Bhagavad Gītā is that the knower of the self transcends grief.

Self-knowledge alone can lead us out of this ‘ocean’ of grief and delusion. Gaining the knowledge of the self is not an event but a process that culminates in total abidance in the self. The tradition is to start with addressing the healthy mind. For those whose minds are healthy, *vicāra* or the path of contemplation upon the nature of the self is prescribed. In the Bhagavad Gītā, Lord Krishna begins his teaching with a discourse on self-knowledge. The mind must become available and receptive to the knowledge.

The suffering arising from mental afflictions, like grief or sadness, is due to *aviveka* or non-discrimination between the self and the non-self.

The body is a product of gross matter, while the mind, intellect, etc. are products of subtle matter. We mistake them to be conscious entities since consciousness pervades every aspect of the personality. We take the personality to be the self. The knowledge of the self is of the nature of separating the two. The body-mind complex is but a vehicle for the manifestation of consciousness; even as it manifests, it makes the personality appear as though also conscious.

Separating the self from the non-self, or the person from the personality, is the way to know the true nature of the self. The self ‘shines’ in our awareness as the subject, and everything other than the self ‘shines’ as the object

⁵ The four-fold qualification, *sādhana-catustaya-sampatti*, consists of *viveka* or discrimination; *vairāgya* or dispassion; *śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti* or the six-fold inner wealth beginning with *śama* (*śama* or mastery of the mind, *dama* or restraint of the sense organs, *uparati* or abidance of the mind, *titikṣā*, endurance, *samādhānam* or concentration of the mind, and *śraddhā* or trust and devotion), and *mumukṣutvam* or the keen desire for liberation.

⁶ *svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ*, Bhagavad Gītā, 18-46

in the presence of the self. They do not exist in the same locus. The self, in fact, is never touched by the non-self. Lord Krishna begins the Bhagavad Gītā by addressing a student whose intellect is prepared and objective enough to discern the self from the non-self.

There are two causes of grief in Arjuna: One is at the level of the ego, where he thinks he will be the killer of people, and the other is at the emotional level, where he worries about the loss of his teacher and kinsmen. Lord Krishna addresses both these problems. It is the problem of death at the emotional level and the problem of hurt and guilt at the level of the ego.

Lord Krishna first deals with the problem of death. The death of a loved one, or even the potential death of a loved one, is very serious matter. It creates a great sense of loss depending upon the type of relationship one has with that person. The death of a loved can cause a lot of emotional pain because we derive nourishment, emotional support, protection, acceptance, validation, companionship, service etc., from such relationships. Lord Krishna, therefore, explains the true meaning of death. The death of the body should not be equated to the death of *ātmā*, he says. Further, you are mourning for those who are not worthy of grief⁷. The wise, who know how to separate the self from the non-self, recognize that the body is the locus of the manifestation of the immortal. Grief does not arise in them.

Life continues from one embodiment to another, Lord Krishna teaches. It is neither created nor destroyed. We equate the presence of life with the existence of the body. The death of the body is taken to be the death of life, yet this body is but like a garment. We wear a garment only for a certain period of time, and the garment does not affect the person who is wearing it. The wise person knows this and discerns the self as being separate from the non-self. Death is certain for the one who is born, and birth is as certain for the one who dies. There is continuity of life; something dies but there is something that does not die.

Lord Krishna says that what dies is the gross body. All beings emerge from the unmanifest and become unmanifest again; in between, they manifest. There is an essential indweller of the body who does not change. This is the self which is conscious of the various stages of the body like childhood, youth, old age etc. There is grief because the death of the body is taken to be

⁷ *Aśocyān anvaśocastvam*, Bhagavad Gītā, 2-11

the death of the self. This is an unfortunate delusion because the self is free from decay, birth, death and ever-changeless.

The necessity for the separation of the self from the non-self is the first important teaching imparted to Arjuna. It is the nature of the body to change and perish, like a beautiful flower which withers away in a few days. When we recognize that the flower is perishable, we have a suitably appropriate relationship with it. Its perishability is accepted gracefully. Similarly, anything that we possess is subject to decay and going to perish. When we understand the nature of things and know them for what they are, we are also able to develop a level of comfort with them. We should learn to accept the nature of life and assimilate the realities of life. Living will then become easier. It is a tall order, but we have to develop a level of comfort with the realities of life.

The self is actionless

Conflicts arise when we do not know the realities of life or do not accept the realities of life gracefully. These conflicts result in grief or sadness. Lord Krishna teaches that birth and death are inescapable realities. Death is certain for the one who is born. The laws which govern this universe and our lives are inevitable and cannot be changed.

Lord Krishna goes on to teach Arjuna about the nature of the self. The self is indestructible and provides *sattā*, existence, and *sphūr̥ti*, intelligence, to everything. Everything that we observe and experience is also changing constantly and perishable. Lord Krishna points out that change cannot be sensed except against an unchanging frame of reference, which, here, is the one who is witness to the changes. He teaches us to recognize this knower or experiencer, the indweller of the body, the witnessing self that alone is changeless.

Afflictions and emotions, like grief etc. are the outcome of us focusing attention on the ever-changing body-mind and fleeting situations in our lives. It is in the midst of the perishable that the imperishable may be recognized. The self is not confined to this body-mind; it is the self of all. The immutable and infallible needs to be discovered as the one true self. If we focus our attention on the changeless amidst the inconsistent nature of situations, relationships, and experiences, we can enjoy their changeability. If we know that the perishable is not the only reality, there cannot be any grief.

After addressing Arjuna's erroneous notion of being mortal, Lord Krishna goes on to address his other erroneous perception of himself as a villain or victim. Any person is only as good as he is in his own perception. It does not matter who we are; what matters is how we perceive ourselves.

We are self-conscious and essentially conscientious beings. We are truthful, non-violent, and loving. In not knowing his true nature, however, one looks upon himself as *kartā*, a doer, or *bhoktā*, an experiencer. One may also take himself as a *bhoktā* in terms of being the object of someone else's action. Arjuna looks upon himself as a potential killer, the *kartā* or agent of the act of killing.

Ignorance makes us superimpose the attributes of the *upādhi* or body-mind complex upon the self. All actions are performed at the level of the body and mind alone, yet we are variously deluded due to the identification with the *upādhi*⁸. Even though we are pure by nature, we 'as though' become impure because of association with the non-self, which is impure. For instance, when lust, anger, greed, or jealousy controls us, we act in a manner that is quite contrary to our true nature. Very often, impulses such as attachment and anger do indeed take over when we are not alert and make us do things against our will. Then, we feel bad about ourselves, we dislike ourselves, we reject ourselves, and we condemn ourselves. The guilt we feel is due to our sense of doership.

When *kartṛtva* or the notion of doership is present, there is always a possibility that we may do something which we will regret later. It creates a sense of guilt. When *bhokṛtva* or enjoyership is present, we are the enjoyers or experiencers of the results of either our own or someone else's actions. Often, when we experience certain things, we feel like we are victims of others' actions. This induces a sense of hurt. When there is guilt, there will also be hurt.

One who thinks he is an agent of an action or a victim of an action does not know the self. Why? How do we know that we are ignorant of the true nature of the self? It is because the self neither kills nor is killed. The self is free from birth and death. All modifications belong at the level of the body. The self is also actionless. All actions are performed by modifications of the *upādhi*. In denying the modifications, *kartṛtva* and *bhokṛtva* are also denied.

⁸ An *upādhi* is that which imparts its own characteristics to something that is nearby.

The nature of the self as being actionless is revealed again when Lord Krishna speaks of one who recognizes his essential actionless even in action⁹. It is revealed yet again in the context of one who does not assume *kartṛtva*; I do not do anything whatsoever¹⁰. Then, who is it that sees, hears, talks etc.? These actions are the result of interactions between the sense organs and the respective sense objects¹¹.

What we understand here is that all actions take place in the presence of the actionless self. One who knows this does not suffer from the two major sources of grief– the death of a loved one and the affliction of hurt or guilt.

Self-ignorance manifests as our likes and dislikes

Our identification with the body-mind complex, *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta*¹², is responsible for our perception of ourselves as limited or insignificant. We are conscious of the self as well as the non-self, but we are aware of them differently. We are all aware of our body, mind, and intellect, and our organs of perception and action. The self 'shines' in the awareness as the subject, while the *kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta* shines as the object. On account of our innate identification with the body-mind-sense complex, we acquire a variety of complexes and notions, such as *kartṛtva*, *bhokṛtva*, etc.,. *Kartṛtva* and *bhokṛtva* are present at the level of the intellect. That we assume the non-self to be the self is the fundamental problem of every human being and primary cause for suffering. Since we cannot make ourselves happy, we depend on others to make us happy. We find that there are some who like us, who help and support us, and in their presence, we feel comfortable and happy. We surround ourselves with people or things from whom we can derive acceptance and happiness. Our comfort and well-being are thus dependent upon others. This relationship that we have with our source of comfort is called *rāga*, attachment.

Arjuna, who was ready to fight the Kauravas, becomes emotional when he perceives them as his relatives; due to his attachment, he wants to give up his *dharma*. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has commented that whenever one is overcome by *rāga-dveṣa*, he is ready to give up his *dharma*. What is the indication that we are overcome by attachment and aversion? Our willingness or desire to abandon our own duty to take up the *dharma* of another is a sure sign

⁹ karmanyakarma yaḥ paśyet, Bhagavad Gītā, 4-18

¹⁰ naiva kiñcit-karomi, Bhagavad Gītā, 5-8

¹¹ Indriyāṇḍriyārtheṣu vartanta, Bhagavad Gītā, 5-9

¹² Aggregation of *kārya*, signified by the gross body, and *karaṇa*, instruments, or the subtle body.

of this.

The emotional problem of *rāga-dveṣa* is the most evident expression of self-ignorance. What is ignorance? It is the inability to distinguish between the self and the non-self, *ātmā-anātmā-aviveka*. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna: Better is one's own imperfectly performed *dharma* than the well performed *dharma* of another. Death on account of one's own *dharma* is better. The *dharma* of another is fraught with fear¹³.

Doing something which is in harmony with our nature confers *punya*, whereas *pāpa* is incurred when we do something unbecoming of us, or something contrary to our nature. Why does a person incur *pāpa*? It is because there is something within us, which, spurred by our attachments and aversions, compels us to go against our nature. As a result, a person may keep violating his nature, or his mind may become progressively insensitive. At some point he may even begin to justify doing something that is wrong. This is a slippery slope. If you do not pay attention, you may slip into the deluding disposition of a *rākṣasa* or *asura*¹⁴. Those who are devoted to sense gratification or ego and emotional gratification are *asura* by disposition. This gratification leads to a further compromise of *dharma*. One may become a *rākṣasa*, destructive in nature. Such people take up violent actions to hurt or destroy the world. Such is the potential nature of ignorance. At every level, the degree of suffering grows in intensity.

The most evident causes of grief are *kāma*, attachment, and *krodha*, anger¹⁵. Later, Lord Krishna also adds *lobha*, greed, and cautions that one should renounce this destructive triad¹⁶. These three impulses also include jealousy, frustration etc. When we are overcome by them, we are poised to compromise our own *dharma*.

We normally consider emotional pain to be a punishment and treat it symptomatically, like we treat physical pain. Our emotional pain signifies that we are violating some universal order. Pain is a blessing only if we understand its purpose. Emotional pain or grief is a given to us as a gift. By understanding the pain properly, we can release ourselves from the pain completely; we can become liberated in this very lifetime.

¹³ śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt, sva-dharme nidhanaṁ śreyāḥ para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ, Bhagavad Gītā, 3-35

¹⁴ rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva prakṛtiṁ mohinīm śritāḥ, Bhagavad Gītā, 9-12

¹⁵ Bhagavad Gītā, 3-37

¹⁶ kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād-etad-trayaṁ tyajet, Bhagavad Gītā, 16-21

In summary, self-ignorance manifests as attachment and aversion, *rāga-dveṣa*. Attachment and aversion include all our other baser impulses, such as lust, anger, greed, etc,. Grief or sadness manifests as *rāga-dveṣas*. When we are impelled by these emotions, our actions result in further *rāga-dveṣas*, and the grief grows in intensity. Everyone has a sense of individuality and a sense of insecurity, besides being self-centered. We seek objects and relations that are helpful in fulfilling our self-centeredness; these are our attachments. We become slaves to our *rāga-dveṣas*. We are unable to exercise our free will because it is hijacked by our impulses.

Performing one's duty helps neutralize attachments and aversions

We should seek to understand the spirit behind *varṇa-āśrama dharma* or the duties that were prescribed in the olden days based on one's caste and stage of life. In a duty-bound society, one is happy to do whatever is required of him as his *karma* or duty which is in keeping with his mental disposition. Every individual contributes to the harmonious functioning of a non-competitive society in this manner. Following *dharma* becomes important, not the outcome of *karma*. Everybody becomes a contributor in a duty-bound society. If you enjoy what you are required to do, the outcome does not have any great consequence.

Ultimately, what we are seeking is the pleased self. Learn to enjoy what you are doing. Develop a love for *karma*; *karma-phala* is not of great consequence. If we do not enjoy what we are required to do, we need something else, such as *karma-phala*, to give us satisfaction. This is how attachment to *karma-phala* comes about. We have to function in this society where most people are motivated by the outcome of their actions. All we can do in this situation is change our own attitudes towards *karma* and *karma-phala*. Our intention should be to become a contributor and strive for inner purification of the mind. Your desire should be to discover inner satisfaction. When *artha* or material wealth and *kāma* or desire become more important, the values are compromised, and this ultimately results in grief.

There is potential for infinite satisfaction within you. Tap the happiness within you. Look upon your duty as an opportunity to contribute in whatever way you can contribute. The reward will take care of itself.

To be continued...

Satsaṅga¹ with Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Part I (Continued)

Question: Can you please expand further how to understand that all that is here is *Īśvara*?

Pujya Swamiji: I said that everything is given. The world is given; sun is given; the laws are given; my body also is given through parents. The parents don't have the knowledge of how the body is made, how the eyes are made, how the ears are made etc. They do not have the knowledge. But then, without knowledge there cannot be an intelligently put together creation, such as the human body. In fact, everything in the universe is intelligently put together. It is an intelligent creation. Therefore, knowledge must be somewhere. There is no other individual who can have *all* knowledge to create the universe. I say all knowledge. All ears hear; all eyes see; all human minds emote, think, know, get confused, and get clarity. It is all given. The giver is called *Īśvara*, and the given is not separate from the giver. In this country you cannot ask the question, 'where is *Bhagavān*?' Even the person in a village who has never gone to school, never studied the *śāstra* or the Vedas, will laugh at you for asking the question. He will smile and remark, "are you asking for the address of *Bhagavān*?" All that is here is *Bhagavān*. That means, the giver and the given are both one and the same. If you take the total, the physical order is *Bhagavān*. That I move, I get up, I sit – are all because of the physical order. The biological order is *Bhagavān*. The physiological order is *Bhagavān*. The psychological order is *Bhagavān*. The order because of which I know or get confused, is also *Bhagavān*. The various orders govern me. If I look at myself from the view of the total macroscopic orders, I am very much with *Bhagavān*. I can also then appreciate the fact that all that is here is *Īśvara*².

¹ Excerpted from the satsaṅga with Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati held in Oct 2014 at the Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh for a group of CEOs (Part 1 continuation).

² For further elucidation on the subject of *Īśvara*, the reader is referred to, "Bringing *Īśvara* into your life," in Talks & Essays - Vol 2, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 2019.

Question: During the morning meditation you were saying about *bāhyān sparśān bahir kṛtvā*, keeping the external objects external. Our children who are now in the 20's are away from us. They have independent views and have their own life styles. However, they do occupy our minds. There is a mix of genuine concern, and a sense of responsibility for them. It is definitely not a feeling of frustration. In the context of 'keeping the external objects external,' how do we deal with the above situation with the children?

Swamiji: There is no use in getting concerned or frustrated about the children. You have given them some values, and attitudes. So, they will be alright. You believe in them, trust them. They are your children. They will do better. You can pray for them. You need not feel helpless. For inner leisure prayer is a great thing to do.

Question: What is the difference between *Īśvara* and *Brahman* or are they the same?

Swamiji: They are one and the same. Brahman with *māyā* as its *upādhi* (adjunct) is presented in the *śāstra* as the cause of the world. That is, Brahman + *Maya* = *Īśvara*. The word *Īśvara* is often used as *jagat kāraṇam*, cause of the world³. Brahman also is the cause of the world. How Brahman, which is *nirguṇam*, free from any attribute, which is *satyam jñānam anantam*, can be the cause of the world? It is so because of the *māyā upādhi*.

Question: If *Īśvara* is the giver, and that all is given, including one's *karma phala*, doesn't it mean that we are all predestined. Where is the question of one's free will?

Swamiji: There is both *prārabdha* (destiny) and *puruṣārtha* (free will) in one's life. The fructification of the *karma phala* due to past *karma* done with free will is *prārabdha* which is called as destiny. If there is no free will there is no *karma*. Any *karma phala* is earned by performing a *karma* exercising one's free will either in this birth or in previous births. *Karma phala* is two-fold, *dṛṣṭa phala*, the immediately seen result, and *adṛṣṭa phala*, the unseen result which

³ यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति । तद्विजिज्ञासस्व । तद्ब्रूहेति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti | yatprayantyaḥsaviśanti | tadviijijñāsasva | tadbrahmeti |

‘That from which indeed all these beings are born, by which the beings which are born, live, and unto which (they) go and resolve, that is Brahman. May you desire to know that.’ (Taittirīyopaniṣad bhṛguvallī prathamo'nuvākaḥ)

Taittirīya upaniṣad, Vol.2, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 2016).

is in the form of *punya-pāpa*. A cow doesn't have *punya-pāpa*. Its actions are done impulsively because it is so programmed. It is only a *bhoktā* (enjoyer), and not a *kartā* (doer). Only a human being on this earth is both a *kartā* as well as a *bhoktā*. Therefore, when you perform *karma* with a sense of doership, it attracts both *punya*, and *pāpa* depending upon the *karma*. Because of the *punya-pāpa* earned by actions done in previous births with the sense of doership one is born now as a human being. Now, what is free will? In doing actions one has a choice of doing the action, not doing the action or doing the action differently; *kartum śakyam, akartum śakyam, anyathāvā kartum śakyam*. Exercising this choice is the free will. Only human beings alone on this earth have this choice. Therefore, there is free will, and there is destiny also. Because of destiny you have a body, a parentage, childhood, and other circumstances. You don't have a say about these. All through lifetime, to be at the right place at the right time, is not in your hands. Only *pāpa* gives rise to an animal body, and only *punya* makes one a denizen in heaven. A human being has a mixture of *punya*, and *pāpa*, giving rise to pleasant, and unpleasant situations, respectively. *Pāpa* does not mean sin. One can neutralize some of the *pāpa* by prayer, and by doing reaching out *karma*, that is, *pūrta karma* which I mentioned earlier. Of course, these actions are done with free will. As *prārabdha karma* unfolds pleasant, and unpleasant situations in one's life, how one handles them is by one's free will. Therefore, *prārabdha*, and *puruṣārtha* are like two sides of the coin, and both are present in our lives.

Question: In the *aśram* Temple⁴ there is a Śiva *liṅga*, and also the form of Gaṅgādharaśvara behind the *liṅga*. Could Swamiji explain the specialty of the form of Śrī Gaṅgādharaśvara?

Swamiji: Both are Gaṅgādharaśvara only. The Śiva *liṅga* also is Gaṅgādharaśvara. We gave the name Gaṅgādharaśvara as the temple is on the banks of Gaṅga. First, we got the *liṅga*, and there is a story behind it. There was only a hut here, and nothing else. There was a brahmacārī by name Chandramouli who picked a stone, kept it as a *liṅga*, and did *abhisheka* to it. I asked him not to do so as it would then require doing daily *pūjā*, and there was nobody to do that. He insisted that we should have a Śiva *liṅga* here. Then, I said that I will bring one. While going to Kailash *aśram* for my

⁴ Referring to the Dayananda Ashram at Rishikesh, India

class, I saw on my way a *liṅga* under the heavy root of a tree. Upon returning from the class I mentioned to Chandramouli about the *liṅga* that I saw, and asked him to bring that. Three or four persons went, and they could not pull the *liṅga* out. They came and told me that the root had to be cut in order to get the *liṅga* out. I told them not to cut the root as it is important for the tree. Therefore, I went and I tried, and the *liṅga* came out. This is how the Gaṅgādharaśvara came. The Andhra aśram was building a temple at that time, and there were *sthapatis* from the south. They used to come in the evenings after their work, and built the temple for Gaṅgādharaśvara. We added the *maṇḍapa*, and other structures later. Really speaking, Gaṅgādharaśvara built the temple Himself. This is an extraordinary temple.

Question: What happens after death?

Swamiji: Some people are relieved. Many people are unhappy. The departed soul is called the *preta śarīra*. Before leaving, the soul assumes a body, like the *śarīra* in the dream. In dream you assume a thought body. The entire dream is *manomaya*, made of thought. While dreaming *prāṇa* is there, and breathing continues. Therefore, you come back to the same gross body when you wake up. When the *prāṇa* also joins the dream body it is called death. The *preta śarīra* assumes the same form as the body which is left behind. That is why we do all rituals for the soul to get out of the *preta śarīra*. In all religions there is some kind of prayer for the departed soul. In our traditions we have the best form of prayers for the *preta śarīra*. Since we do not know the time frame that obtains for the departed soul, we do prayers for three generations of the ancestors. It might be hundred years for us but for the departed it may be just one day. So, giving the benefit of doubt to the departed, we keep praying for three generations. We do *śrāddha* for the three generations. If they have already taken birth, then our prayers will give us the blessings. We are invoking *Bhagavān* through the ancestors, and we get the blessings. As *Bhagavān* is everything, the ancestors also are *Bhagavān*, and hence *pitṛ rūpēṇa Bhagavān* will give the result.

Question: How to create a society of contributors?

Swamiji: It is a very important thing. You are an adult only when you contribute. If you only consume you're still a child. If you cannot contribute, it means that you still have to grow up. An adult is one who though con-

sumes also contributes. We have organizations to safeguard consumer rights. But no one thinks about contribution. “Be a contributor,” is a new *mantra* for the present times. Everybody should talk about it. We have to make a campaign telling people to be not only a consumer but also be a contributor. That is how, we will be able to create a society of contributors.

Question: How does one understand what is *svadharma* in the current times?

Swamiji: *Svadharma* is ‘*svasya dharma*,’ what is to be done by one, that is, one’s duty. At a given time, place and situation, what is to be done becomes evident. Then, doing it is *svadharma*. If it is not evident, then one can talk to people, and understand what is the proper action. Such a provision is given in the Veda itself ⁵.

athayaditekarmavicikitsāvāṇṛttavicikitsāvāsyāt |
ye tatrabrāhmaṇāḥsaṁmarśinaḥ | yuktāyuktāḥ |
alūkṣādharma-kāmāḥsyuh |
yathātetatravarṭeran |

This *mantra* says that suppose you have a doubt regarding a course of action or a doubt regarding the conduct in life, you can talk to the learned people in the society who can think and analyze the situations. You can seek their advice regarding your doubt as to what is right and wrong. Sometimes it may not simply be right and wrong. You can talk to them about what is the right conduct or improper conduct in the situation. You can observe how they would conduct themselves in a given situation and you may conduct yourself in the same manner. So, we have to understand that *svadharma* or *svakarma* is what is to be done in a given time, place and situation.

Om Tat Sat

⁵ अथ यदि ते कर्मविचिकित्सा वा वृत्तविचिकित्सा वा स्यात् ॥ 1.11.3 ;

ये तत्र ब्राह्मणाः संमर्शिनः । युक्ता आयुक्ताः । अलूक्षा धर्मकामाः स्युः । यथा ते तत्र वर्तेरन् । 1.11.4

(Taittirīyopaniṣad śikṣāvallī, 11th anuvākah). (For further reading, see also Taittirīya upaniṣad, Vol.1, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 2016).

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