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This is the twenty third part of the serial article, continuation from April 2023 newsletter.

Knowledge is the only means

In the next verse, the Upaniṣad makes it clear that the knowledge of the self as *brahman* is the only means to liberation.

स एव सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यं सनातनम् ।

ज्ञात्वा तं मृत्युमत्येति नान्यः पन्था विमुक्तये ॥ ९ ॥

sa eva sarvaṁ yadbhūtaṁ yacca bhavyaṁ sanātanam

jñātvā taṁ mṛtyumatyeti nānyaḥ panthā vimuktaye

सः - he एव - is in fact सर्वम् - everything यद् भूतम् - whatever is in the past
यत् च भव्यम् - whatever is in the future सनातनम् - timeless ज्ञात्वा - having
known (in knowing) तम् - him मृत्युम् - death अत्येति - crosses over न
अन्यः - no other पन्थाः - way विमुक्तये - for gaining freedom

He is, in fact, all that was and all that will ever be; the timeless one.
Knowing him, one crosses over death. There is no other way to gain
freedom. (9)

He alone is everything. *Yad bhūtam*, whatever was in the past, and *yat ca bhavyam*, whatever will be in the future; this also includes whatever is in the present. Thus, he alone is whatever was in the past, whatever is in the present, and whatever will be in the future. So *īśvara*, *brahman* or the self is that which exists through the past, the present, and the future, because it is the one substratum upon which all the various superimpositions are made. Just as the 'single entity' of water manifests variously as all the different movements in water, such as the surf, ripples, and waves, so also, the one self alone manifests as whatever exists in this universe.

It will be said later that the self or the 'I' is both the material and efficient cause of everything. As the material cause, the 'I' is all-pervasive, the self of all, and is, therefore, whatever was the past. It's not that the self 'existed' at some point in the

past, but simply that the self of each one of us has always existed. The self is whatever is in the present, as also whatever will be in the future. We do not change the “I am” to “I was” or “I will be.” There cannot be a “was” or a “will be” associated with the ‘I.’ There is no notion of time in the ‘I.’ Time exists at the level of the mind. Change and everything else happens at the level of the mind. The ‘I,’ the consciousness, illumines the mind and thus time, because time is a concept of the mind. Therefore, there is no past or future in the ‘I’ that is consciousness; there is only the present.

The truth about time

What is meant by the present? What is the duration of the present? Does the present mean one year? Six months? One month? One day? One hour? Each hour also has a beginning and end, so what is the present? “One minute?” “No, that also has a dimension.” “One second?” “No, that also has a dimension.” “One millisecond, then? Or one nanosecond?”

Any unit of time, even a miniscule, infinitesimally small length of time, has a beginning and an end. So what is the present? The present is where the very concept of time disappears. When you keep dividing time into smaller and smaller fractions, what does it resolve into? It resolves into dimensionless time; that is the present.

The present cannot have a dimension. Each moment has a dimension, there is beginning and there is end. No matter how infinitesimal the dimension, it is bound to have a beginning and an end. The past and the future represent change; they are but concepts in time. The present is that which transcends the very concept of change. The past is a projection and the future is as much of a projection; there is only the present. What you call the past was the present moment at some time. What you call the future will be the present at another time. What there truly is, therefore, is nothing but the present. The present or the presence is all there is. Therefore the self or the ‘I’ alone is everything, the past, future or present, meaning that it is the substratum upon which the superimposition of the past, present,

and future takes place. The 'I' is the substratum upon which the creator, the sustainer, and the dissolver are superimposed. Just as upon the rope, different plays of snake, garland etc., take place without affecting the rope in any way, so also, the entire drama of creation, sustenance, and dissolution or past, present, and future takes place with the 'I' being its very substratum, yet without it being affected in any way. Whatever was in the past, whatever will be in the future, and whatever is in the present, is the 'I,' the self alone. Indeed, the 'I' alone imparts *sattā* or existence and *sphūrṭi*, intelligence and awareness, to everything. One is of the nature of that principle of existence and intelligence and awareness.

Jñātvā tam, knowing him as one's own self, *mṛtyum atyeti*, one crosses death. Knowing the self in this manner, one transcends death or transcends time, because the present or the presence is nothing but consciousness, which is existence, and existence or consciousness has no dimension. Just as the present has no dimension, existence also has no dimension or attribute. Consciousness has no qualification; it is unqualified. That unqualified present, unqualified existence, unqualified consciousness is the nature of each one of us. Knowing oneself in this manner, one goes beyond time, beyond death, because death belongs to the body, death belongs to the mind, and death belongs to the *upādhi* or personality; it does not attach to the 'I.'

The meaning of immortality

What happens upon crossing over death? One becomes immortal upon crossing over death. 'Becoming' immortal means that one recognizes the self as immortal. Again, being immortal doesn't mean existing for some great length of time. However great the length of time may be, it will still be limited. As Naciketā says, *api sarvaṃ jīvitam alpam eva*. "However long the duration of life, it still is limited with reference to the infinite¹." Therefore, *mṛtyum atyeti* means that one becomes free from the very concept of time, and, therefore, free from birth, death or change.

¹ Ka. Up. 1.1.26

We saw in verse three that some seers attained immortality through renunciation; that is what this verse refers to here. Having known him or the self of all as one's own self, *jñātvā tam*, one becomes immortal.

We must understand that by gaining the knowledge one does not become anything. Knowledge simply reveals what is. For instance, in knowing the people sitting in front of me, I do not become something. No change takes place either in me or in those people. Then what does the knowledge do? Knowledge only dispels ignorance, as well as all the notions created by ignorance. For example, where here is an error or projection of a snake on rope, in knowing that it is only rope, the fear of the snake also goes away along with the snake. Knowledge itself doesn't remove the fear. What knowledge does is merely remove the notion of the snake. It is the notion of the snake that has created fear, and, therefore, upon gaining the knowledge of the object being rope, the fear that is the product of ignorance also goes away.

When we are told that upon gaining the knowledge of the self one becomes immortal, the implication is that mortality is itself a product of ignorance, because knowledge dispels ignorance. Think of it like this: When it is totally dark, we do not see anything, but as soon as the light is switched on, we are able to see various objects. Yet the light only dispels darkness, it doesn't do anything else. The light has not created the objects. It has only made the existence of the objects evident. So also, knowledge only makes evident what is. If upon knowing the self one becomes immortal, it means one has always been immortal. It is entirely on account of ignorance that one has been taking oneself to be mortal, to be changing, and to be subject to time, and subject to birth and death. In the wake of the knowledge, however, one recognizes that mortality was but a notion born of ignorance, and so that notion also drops off. Therefore, it is not that one crosses death; one simply recognizes that one has always been beyond death.

Nānyaḥ panthāḥ vimuktaye, to gain liberation, there is no means other than knowledge. The Upaniṣad says very clearly that there is no path or means other

than knowledge to gain liberation, to gain immortality, to gain freedom and happiness, and gain whatever may be one's goal in life. What does knowledge do? Knowledge brings to light what is, and, therefore, there being no other means to liberation than knowledge, it means is that one is always liberated. Only when we are already liberated but take ourselves to be bound can knowledge bring about liberation at all. Knowledge doesn't remove bondage; knowledge removes the notion of bondage. It doesn't remove mortality; it removes the notion of mortality. It doesn't remove sorrow; it removes the notion of sorrow.

Bondage is but a notion

If bondage were real, there would have to be a real means to remove the bondage. But bondage is a notion that is purely a product of ignorance. Therefore, all that is needed is that we become free from the notion that we are bound. "Swamiji, still, why is there ignorance and why is there bondage?" Who says there is bondage? "But I feel I am bound." That is the wrong feeling. It is not the truth about you. Truly, therefore, it is not that you have to 'become' liberated; instead, you have only to become free from the notion that you are bound.

There is a story that illustrates the notion of bondage. A hunter once shot down a pregnant lioness. While she lay dying, she delivered a baby lion. The cub was lying unattended in the forest. A shepherd, who happened to pass by, saw the little lion cub lying there. Taking pity on the helpless creature, he took it home with him. He raised the lion cub in the company of his lambs. It soon took itself to be a lamb and would do everything that the lambs did, including making the sounds that they made. One time, it so happened that a lion approached the flock of sheep as they grazed. As soon as the lambs smelled the lion, they started running away.

The lion cub was also among the flock and it also started running away. The lion saw this lion cub running away with the lambs and wondered why it was trying to escape. He let all the lambs go, but caught hold of the cub. The lion cub was shivering with fear. He pleaded with the lion not to kill him because he was just a poor lamb. The lion said "Why do you run away with the lambs? You are not a

lamb. You are a lion. Come with me.” He led the lion cub to a pond and said, “Look at your reflection in the water. Look at me. Now look at your reflection again. Are you not like me, a lion? Now roar. Hear me roaring and roar. Are you not a lion?” The young lion looked at his reflection in the water. He roared and realized that he was indeed a lion. That very instant, he stopped taking himself to be a lamb. It was because of identification with lambs that the lion cub had thought he was a lamb and suffered from the sense of being a lamb. Such is the nature of bondage.

What is the bondage in this example? The bondage of the lion is his notion that he is a lamb. A notion is very powerful. It creates the same effect as reality does. If what is lying here is a rope and I have a notion that it is a snake, the notion creates in me the fear of the snake. It has the same effect on me as would a real snake; all that it takes is for me to conclude that there is a snake. Similarly, the conclusion on my part that I am but a *jīva*, a helpless and hapless creature, has the same effect as my really being a helpless and hapless creature. That is why the teaching is that one is *brahman*. This Upaniṣad will say later, *tat tvam eva tvam eva tat*, “that is you and you are that”².

Ahaṁ brahmāsmi. I am *brahman*. Here *brahman* is the lion and the *jīva* is the lion cub-lamb. In the story, this ‘lamb’ is asked to look at its own reflection in a clear pool of water. The *śruti* asks us to look to see how we reflect in a mind that is tranquil and clear. In such a mind, look at your reflection. “How do you appear?” “I appear as happiness, *ānanda*.” “Who are you?” “I am *ānanda*. I am not sadness.” This is why it is necessary to practice *viveka*, discrimination.

There is identification with this body-mind equipment and only upon becoming free from identification or seeing one’s true nature can one become free from all the complexes born of the identification. Just as the lion became free instantly from all the complexes of being a lamb and all that goes along with that complex,

² Kai. Up. 16

the wise man becomes free from all complexes. He burns all his bondage. How can the bondage burn if it were real? If the lion cub were a real lamb, even if he kept on roaring “I am a lion,” he would not become a lion. He is even able to roar only because he is indeed a lion. Bondage is a projection of the mind and that notion goes away in the wake of the knowledge of the self; the ‘I’ is ever free.

A wise person does not say “I am liberated.” What he says is, “I have always been liberated.” If one is liberated now, the implication is that earlier one was bound. Yet that which is truly bound can never get liberated, for the simple reason that a thing can never change its nature. A thing cannot become different from what it is;

its true nature cannot change ³. This is a fundamental rule. If bondage were one’s true nature, there is no way that a person can ever become liberated, because that which is intrinsic cannot change. There is also a second rule that a thing is always comfortable with its true nature. Therefore, it stands to reason that if bondage were our true nature, we would be comfortable being bound. If limitation were our nature, we would be comfortable being limited. If sorrow were our nature, we would be comfortable being sorrowful. But we are not comfortable being bound or being limited or sorrowful, because it is contrary to our true nature. Therefore, the wise person’s knowledge is not that he is liberated, but that he was never bound; it is a true recognition that all bondage is a notion.

³ न भवत्यमृतं मर्त्यं न मर्त्यममृतं तथा ।

प्रकृतेरन्यथाभावो न कथंचिद्विष्यति ॥

*na bhavatyamṛtaṁ martyaṁ na martyamamṛtaṁ tathā
prakṛteranyathābhāvo na kathañcidbhaṁsiṣyati*

The immortal cannot become mortal, nor can the mortal ever become immortal.
For, it is never possible for a thing to change its nature. (Mā. K. 3.21)

To be continued...

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the twenty first part of the serial article, continuation from April 2023 newsletter.

सर्वापूर्वमियं येषामासीत् कृत्स्ना वसुंधरा । प्रजापतिमुपादाय नृपाणं जयशालिनाम् ॥१-५-१

येषाम् स सगरो नाम सागरो येन खानितः । षष्टिपुत्रसहस्राणि यं यान्तं पर्यवारयन् ॥१-५-२

इक्ष्वाकूणामिदं तेषां राज्ञां वंशे महात्मनाम् । महदुत्पन्नमाख्यानं रामायणमिति श्रुतम् ॥ १-५-३

तदिदं वर्तयिष्यावः सर्वं निखिलमादितः । धर्मकामार्थसहितं श्रोतव्यमनसूयता ॥ १-५-४

कोसलो नाम मुदितः स्फीतो जनपदो महान् । निविष्टः सरयूतीरे प्रभूतधनधान्यवान् ॥ १-५-५

अयोध्या नाम नगरी तत्रासील्लोकविश्रुता । मनुना मानवेन्द्रेण या पुरी निर्मिता स्वयम् ॥ १-५-६

आयता दश च द्वे च योजनानि महापुरी । श्रीमती त्रीणि विस्तीर्णा सुविभक्तमहापथा ॥ १-५-७

राजमार्गेण महता सुविभक्तेन शोभिता । मुक्तपुष्पावकीर्णेन जलसिक्तेन नित्यशः ॥ १-५-८

ताम् तु राजा दशरथो महाराष्ट्रविवर्धनः । पुरीमावासयामास दिवि देवपतिर्यथा ॥ १-५-९

कपाटतोरणवर्ती सुविभक्तान्तरापणाम् । सर्वयन्त्रायुधवतीमुषितां सर्वशिल्पिभिः ॥ १-५-१०

सूतमागधसम्बाधां श्रीमतीमतुलप्रभाम् । उच्चाट्टालध्वजवतीं शतघ्नीशतसंकुलाम् ॥ १-५-११

वधूनाटकसंघैश्च संयुक्तां सर्वतः पुरीम् । उद्यानाम्रवणोपेतां महतीं सालमेखलाम् ॥ १-५-१२

sarvāpūrvamiyaṁ yeṣāmāsīt kṛtsnā vasundharā ।

prajāpatimupādāya nṛpāṇaṁ jayaśālinām ॥1-5-1

yeṣām sa sagaro nāma sāgaro yena khānitaḥ ।

ṣaṣṭiputrasahasrāṇi yaṁ yāntaṁ paryavārayan ॥1-5-2

ikṣvākūṇāmidam teṣāṁ rājñāṁ vaṁśe mahātmanām ।

mahadutpannamākhyānaṁ rāmāyaṇamiti śrutam ॥ 1-5-3

tadidaṁ vartayiṣyāvaḥ sarvaṁ nikhilamāditaḥ ।

dharmakāmārthasahitaṁ śrotavyamanasūyatā ॥ 1-5-4

kosalo nāma muditaḥ sphīto janapado mahān |
niviṣṭaḥ sarayūtīre prabhūtaḥ prabhūtaḥ prabhūtaḥ | 1-5-5
ayodhyā nāma nagarī tatrāsillokaviśrutā |
manunā mānavendreṇa yā purī nirmītā svayam || 1-5-6
āyatā daśa ca dve ca yojanāni mahāpurī |
śrīmatī trīṇi vīstīrṇā suvibhaktamahāpathā || 1-5-7
rājamārgena mahatā suvibhaktena śobhitā |
muktapuspāvākīrṇena jalasikṭena nityaśaḥ || 1-5-8
tām tu rājā daśaratho mahārāṣṭravivardhanaḥ |
purīmāvāsayāmāsa divi devapatiriyathā || 1-5-9
kapāṭatorāṇavartī suvibhaktāntarāpaṇām |
sarvayantrāyudhavadatīmuṣītām sarvaśilpibhiḥ || 1-5-10
sūtamāgadhasambādhām śrīmatīmatulaprabhām |
uccāṭṭāladhvajavatīm śataghnīsatasankulām || 1-5-11
vadhūnāṭakasaṅghaiśca saṁyuktām sarvataḥ purīm |
udyānāmraṇopetām mahatīm sālamekhalām || 1-5-12

The story begins with a description of Ayodhya, the royal city of the Kosala kingdom. On this earth, since the first ruler in the royal *vaṁśa*, the great King Manu, the kingdom of Kusala thrived on the banks of the Sarayu river. This was an area abounding with wealth and produce. Ikshvaku, a ruler in the line of Rama, established the city named Ayodhya. The great city grew and grew and was well known in the world. It was twelve *yojanas*, ninety-six miles, around. The downtown itself was three *yojanas*. The roads were wide, allowing the movement of armies and elephants and the crowds attending festivals. At the hub of the well-planned roads was the palace. The city sparkled with the carpet of color from the fallen leaves released from the thousands of trees that lined the streets. The streets were cleaned daily with fresh water. As the sun rules the day, in time King Dasharatha came to rule this kingdom. Just as Indra, lord of the *devas*, rules the divine

order, so too Dasharatha ruled the Kusala empire. Secure walls surrounded the city, each with an arched main gate and a variety of weapons to protect the people. In the city itself there were well-organized, enclosed markets. Those who worked in and for the palace were provided with quarters nearby. The work of skilled architects and sculptors was seen everywhere. Overall it could be seen as a place where Lakshmi, goddess of riches and prosperity, ruled.

Large, multi-storied buildings ornamented with lush vines and creepers rose on both sides of the streets. There were theatres for dance and music, and parks with forests of mango trees. A deep moat surrounded the outer walls and protected the great fort within that was impenetrable by any invader. Horses and elephants were countless. There were many kinds of elephant - *mantra* and *bhadra* and *mrga* - and there were hybrids as well, each one like a mountain. Horses from the banks of the river Sindhu, horses from Arabia and from countries beyond the Himalayas were there in great number. Cows and camels and donkeys and mules roamed and grazed and carried burdens. There were elegant mansions maintained by those who paid tribute to King Dasharatha.

The city was made more colorful by the mix of people arriving from other kingdoms and from far away lands. They came for commerce, for import and export, for spices and cloth, for metals and alloys, for jewels and vessels. The city was rich with goods famous throughout the world and colorful with the different nationalities of the people on the streets. Just like a swami walking in the streets of San Francisco makes San Francisco colorful. Every building in Ayodhya was well-made and well-kept, beyond those we hear of in the books that tell of Indra's heavenly capital, Amaravati. The city was well-planned; it reminds one of a chess board. There were no random blocks and no slums. A city is made beautiful because of women, and a city house is made beautiful by the woman who keeps it. Ayodhya was filled with such women of beauty and character, and they made the city more beautiful. Their houses resembled chariots, lined up next to each other, clean and well-designed and fully maintained. In the markets there were varieties

of rice including the red *śālitaṇḍula*. The water they drank was sweet like even sugar-cane juice. As one walked along the street they could hear people receiving instruction in the drums and vina. One could hear the bells on the ankles of the girls learning dance. There were military bands and processions and festivals.

If you separate a *mṛdaṅga* into two, you have the *tabla*. The *panava* is the *mathalam*, another kind of drum. As one moved through the city he would hear all these sounds because the people were learning music. Art can be developed only in a society where there is plenty and leisure and *śānti*. That quality indicates a society that has enjoyed a long period of peace and freedom from military demands and injuries. A culture's art forms reveal the nature of its background over the course of time. On the earth there was no place comparable to Ayodhya. All things that were ideal and valuable were there. The whole place had the appointments and design of a *vimāna*, a classic vehicle of the celestials. It hummed with activity and accomplishment.

The citizens of Ayodhya were brilliant, well-educated, skilled in marksmanship and weaponry yet peaceful and non-combative. They were kind to orphans and wrong-doers, not inclined to deride or punish. The wild animals that roamed freely in the nearby forests, lion and tigers and elephants, were not hunted; they were cared for by those who lived in those parks. If a beast did get out of hand and threaten, he was dealt with by skilled rangers, chariot masters who could also manage against countless warriors or invaders. Still, the *dhārmika* soldiers would not threaten an unarmed or an isolated warrior. Those who regularly performed Vedic rituals, those learned folk of *guṇa* and *dharma*, those who were versed in the six *vaidikāṅgas* – phonetics, grammar, prosody, etymology, astronomy and ritual - those who gave generously at the time of need for a common cause, those who were committed to speaking truth, those people of great heart and mind, those people of original revelations and uncommon vision, the *mahārṣis* equal to the revered seers of the past, the twice-born *brāhmaṇas* initiated into Gayatri, could be found on every street corner and in every temple. Ayodhya was filled with such

people and ruled by King Dasharatha.-

The clear-thinking and well-informed Dasharatha maintained control by example and by his just administration. He was able to foresee problems and to prepare the appropriate response. He was loved by his subjects, who were never obsequious or spiteful. In the family of Ikshvaku, Dasharatha stood out as one who loved to live a life of *dharma* by nature. He was a master of himself and an equal to the great sages, rightly called king and *ṛṣi*. His name was known throughout the three worlds. As *balavān* he captained the cavalry, elephantry, charioteers, and infantry. It was he who disciplined all the enemies properly. His friends and supporters were many. If you are weak you stand alone, but Dasharatha was strong and attracted followers and compatriots. If you strike a matchstick, a slight breeze will snuff it out, but a larger flame will find a friend in the wind. Strength, inner strength, is what draws people to you. Weakness will attract only those who are inimical to you. King Dasharatha had the treasures that are beyond gold. He had self-control and wisdom. His treasury was like that of Indra and of Kubera, lords of wealth.

Manu was considered to be the greatest ruler. Man, mankind, *mānuṣya*, is so-called because that Manu is at the top. It was Manu who protected the world by ruling properly. No less was this Raja Dasharatha. In his exalted city you would see happy, *dhārmika*, learned people, industrious yet never jealous or envious. They were never miserly, rather they were confident of their abilities and resources. They spoke the truth fearlessly. There was no man without savings, no man without cows and grain. There was no man who, when he started something, could not achieve his goal. None were burdened with debt or with an over-extended family. None were lustful or driven by sheer desire. None were of small heart. None were of long face, in whose presence you would feel only that something was wrong. You know, bad vibes. There were none who were not lettered and none who did not believe in *sāstra* and *guru*. All men and women were willing followers of *dharma* and elegantly restrained. Because of their unequivocal

commitment and righteousness, free from *rāgadveṣa* and from any impurities, the ordinary citizens were themselves indeed *mahārṣis*.

There were none who did not wear the tasteful ornaments of the time. In fact, I used to wear one. We were given them as children. They were considered *maṅgalam*, something auspicious. Even men would have at least this earring. A man without such a *kuṇḍala*, or without a cap, or without a flower he had received as *prasāda* from the temple, you would never see in Ayodhya. There were none in want of food, none who had unclean food, and none who were unbathed. Everyone wore *candana* somewhere – having received it from the temple. There were none with bad breath or bad teeth. That is all said there. There were none who would not give if you asked. Each one wore a ring and proper ornaments around the neck. These were not pleasure seekers, these were *ātmavāns*, those who were composed and righteous.

There are rituals that *brāhmaṇas* are to perform every day. Every *brāhmaṇa* in Ayodhya did the *nityāgnihotra*. Everyone, at one time or other, had performed a *yāga*, a sacrifice for the sake of the Lord. A lowly fellow, a thief, one who goes outside family traditions, could not be found. There were none who created confusion in the society.

तस्यामात्या गुणैरासन्निष्वाकोः सुमहात्मनः । मन्त्रज्ञाश्चेङ्गितज्ञाश्च नित्यं प्रियहिते रताः ॥ १-७-१

अष्टौ बभूवुर्वीरस्य तस्यामात्या यशस्विनः । शुचयश्चानुरक्ताश्च राजकृत्येषु नित्यशः ॥ १-७-२

धृष्टिर्जयन्तो विजयः सुराष्ट्रो राष्ट्रवर्धनः । अकोपो धर्मपालश्च सुमन्त्रश्चाष्टमोऽर्थवित् ॥ १-७-३

ऋत्विजौ द्वभिमतौ तस्यास्तामृषिसत्तमौ । वशिष्ठो वामदेवश्च मन्त्रिणश्च तथापरे ॥ १-७-४

tasyāmātyā guṇairāsannikṣvākoḥ sumahātmanah |

mantrajñāśceṅgitajñāśca nityaṁ priyahite ratāḥ || 1-7-1

aṣṭau babhūvurvīrasya tasyāmātyā yaśasvīnaḥ |

śucayaścānuraktāśca rājakṛtyeṣu nityaśaḥ || 1-7-2

dhr̥ṣṭirjayanto vijayaḥ surāṣṭro rāṣṭravardhanaḥ |

akopo dharmapālaśca sumantraścāṣṭamo'rthavit || 1-7-3

ṛtviṣṭau dvavabhimatau tasyāstāmṛṣisattamau |

vaśiṣṭho vāmadevaśca mantriṇaśca tathāpare || 1-7-4

There were proper ministers, *āmātyah*, for the great King Dasharatha. It is the ministers who in fact administer the kingdom. A good king will have a panel of good ministers. Eight dedicated fellows served Dasharatha, and each one was the right one. Each was capable of giving good political advice. Each could discern the thing that is to be done without being told by the king. One sees a situation and knows what is expected and either does or does not do it. It requires a sense of proportion and an inner reliability. The Sanskrit word is *ingitajñah*, and I have found such a word or its equivalent only in Sanskrit. Dasharatha's ministers had this ability to ascertain and set into action exactly what Dasharatha wanted to have done. They knew what he would decide before the king voiced his decision. All eight of them did this. They shared the king's commitment to the welfare of the people.

They had all the other virtues necessary for a minister. They were clean inside and outside. In their royal activities, their eyes and ears, their entire selves, they always kept focused on their purpose. Of the eight, Sumantra was always close to Dasharatha, acting as a personal attendant. To aid the ministers there were two other advisors, royal *guru's* as such. In Dasharatha's retinue these two were the venerable Vasishtha and Vamadeva. Generally, they would not enter into day-to-day politics and considerations. They were consulted when an issue could not be decided. These two peerless *jñānīs* were there in the palace, a true treasure for any king. Their word was always accepted as the last word. Even though the eight ministers were dispassionate, ministers were involved in the royal court's deliberations. Whereas Vashistha and Vamadeva were both dispassionate and uninvolved, neither had anything to gain or lose. Their sense of justice was never colored by any personal subjectivity, by an emotional response to a situation. At that time every king had a *guru* who might interpret *dharma* and some-

times contribute to decisions concerning justice. The *rājaguru*'s were the last words, the supreme court. *Mahārṣis* Vamadeva and Vashistha were the king's righteous crown.

एतैर्ब्रह्मर्षिभिर्नित्यमृत्वजस्तस्य पौर्वकाः । विद्याविनीता ह्रीमन्तः कुशला नियतेन्द्रियाः ॥ १-७-६

श्रीमन्तश्च महात्मानः शास्त्रज्ञा दृढविक्रमाः । कीर्तिमन्तः प्रणिहिता यथावचनकारिणः ॥ १-७-७

तेजःक्षमायशःप्राप्ताः स्मितपूर्वाभिभाषिणः । क्रोधात् कामार्थहितोर्वा न ब्रूयुरनृतं वचः ॥ १-७-८

तेषामविदितं किञ्चित् स्वेषु नास्ति परेषु वा । क्रियमाणम् कृतं वापि चारेणापि चिकीर्षितम् ॥ १-७-९

कुशला व्यवहारेषु सौहृदेषु परीक्षिताः । प्राप्तकालं यथा दण्डं धारयेयुः सुतेष्वपि ॥ १-७-१०

कोशसंग्रहणे युक्ता बलस्य च परिग्रहे । अहितं चापि पुरुषं न हिंस्युरविदूषकम् ॥ १-७-११

वीराश्च नियतोत्साहा राजशास्त्रमनुष्ठिताः । शुचीनां रक्षितारश्च नित्यं विषयवासिनाम् ॥ १-७-१२

ब्रह्मक्षत्रमहिंसन्तस्ते कोशं समपूरयन् । सुतीक्ष्णदण्डाः सम्प्रेक्ष्य पुरुषस्य बलाबलम् ॥ १-७-१३

etairbrahmarṣibhirnityamṛtviastasya paurvakāḥ |

vidyāvinītā hrīmantāḥ kuśalā niyatendriyāḥ || 1-7-6

śrīmantasca mahātmānaḥ śāstrajñā dṛḍhavigramāḥ |

kīrtimantāḥ praṇihitā yathāvachanakāriṇaḥ || 1-7-7

tejahkṣamāyaśahprāptāḥ smitapūroābhibhāṣiṇaḥ |

krodhāt kāmārthahetorvā na brūyuranṛtaṁ vacaḥ || 1-7-8

teṣāmaviditaṁ kiñcit sveṣu nāsti pareṣu vā |

kriyamāṇam kṛtaṁ vāpi cāreṇāpi cikīrṣitaṁ || 1-7-9

kuśalā vyavahāreṣu sauhṛdeṣu parīkṣitāḥ |

prāptakālaṁ yathā daṇḍaṁ dhārayeyuḥ suteṣvapi || 1-7-10

kośasaṅgrahaṇe yuktā balasya ca parigrahe |

ahitaṁ cāpi puruṣaṁ na hiṁsyuravidūṣakam || 1-7-11

vīrāśca niyatotsāhā rājaśāstramanuṣṭhitāḥ |

śucīnām rakṣitāraśca nityam viṣayavāsinām || 1-7-12

brahmakṣatramahimsantaste kośam samapūrayan |

sutikṣṇadaṇḍāḥ samprekṣya puruṣasya balābalam || 1-7-13

The ministers had knowledge along with humility, *vidyāvinītā*. They knew they could always learn more. They never put a period in their minds saying there was nothing more to learn. Each of them was capable of shying away when necessary. Even though shyness itself can indicate a problem, sometimes it is a very good thing. In certain situations shying away is the best thing. Humility has something to do with that. Not being able to shy away is also weakness. Ministers wield considerable power, and a minister is easily corrupted. But these eight had the necessary discipline. They were properly paid and were not tempted by bribery.

The royal ministers knew thoroughly all the *sāstra*, including *sāstra* covering politics and logistics. Each one of them had reached his status by dint of his own effort and accomplishments, not just because he needed help or because he knew somebody or their wife. Each had earned his place at the feet of their king. They had grown into these positions and were already known for their skill and responsibility. They did exactly as they said they would do.

Not long ago there was one Tamil Nadu minister who, whatever was asked, would say, “Alright, we will see. We will let you know.” His “We will see” meant no seeing at all. You know when you go for an interview they always say, “We will let you know.” Of course they do not let you know at all. If they do let you know, you know what the answer is. Dasharatha’s ministers would do what they said they would do. They were brilliant, patient, forgiving. Rightly, as people of responsibility, they were more forgiving. Each had a heart big enough to accept the petitions of those who came with the potential to be hurt by the decision. Each minister would give the petitioner a chance to correct himself if he had made a mistake. To do this takes a commodious heart, *kṣamāḥ* must be there. These ministers were famed for their just ways.

The ministers were always cheerful and smiling. They were not irritable due to the amount of work required. They were not subject to the ever-present pressure. None was influenced either by anger or by his own desire. Each knew fully all the concerns and issues of the regions from which he came. There was no underworld in this kingdom, because the ministers and the royal palace had access to information from even remote corners of the country. We are in such a remote corner here; nobody knows what is going on here. We have to tell them what is going on. Dasharatha and his ministers gained regular information from the other kingdoms; they had their eyes and ears everywhere. What had been done, what was intended, all this they knew. Messengers carried the news throughout the realm. The ministers knew what was going on, and they were known to be trustworthy. The ministers' own sons were not exceptions to rule, as they are in India today. Should a family member of the minister deserve punishment, he received appropriate punishment.

Without over-taxing the people the ministers brought wealth to the royal treasury by their adept dealings and decisions. Personal enmity did not enter into the administration of the kingdom. Even though enemies were there, they were dealt with justly and without excessive expressions of power. The ministers knew it was not their place to exercise power as a way of teaching someone a lesson. When necessary, the ministers would not just order the army captains to head for the battlefield, they themselves would mount their horses and go. Their example gave courage and strength to the people. They worked in the palace, but when the time came they were on the field of battle or on the field of service to the citizens. They were never bored, always enthusiastic about the operation of the realm. A doctor in a hospital cannot complain: "Everyday I get patients, my God. Everyone has a problem. Nobody just comes and tells me what a good doctor I am." Yes, every day they will come, and an administrator can become bored or frustrated. But that is administration, I tell you. You should be able to find relaxation in doing the administration. For the challenge and the problems, one should have enthusiasm.

Remember that fellow who spent all his fortune building a stadium. He did it as a donation. The first match was a soccer match with national teams, and the builder of the stadium was a great soccer devotee. He put on the match for free, and thousands of people showed up. The builder invited his friend from the village, his brother-in-law. This happened in India, let us say. The villager, who had never attended such an event, came with the generous fellow. The match began and the crowd cheered the action. The brother-in-law noticed the villager had become sad. He inquired, "What is wrong? Why are you sad? You do not like the game? Is there something you do not understand about it that I can explain?"

The villager replied, "What is there to enjoy? I know what is happening in the game. But something really bothers me? You have spent all this money to build a big stadium and to stage this sport. You have told me how many *lakhs* you have invested. But then, at the last minute, you become penny-wise, miserly. You did all this, and you brought twenty-two fellows there, and you bought them uniforms and equipment, and then you gave them only one ball. Why not twenty-one more balls? They are all fighting over this one ball when you could have allowed them all to play. This I do not understand."

A soccer player will not complain, "The ball keeps coming to me all the time," and a minister should be prepared to deal enthusiastically with the constant change and concern involved with dealing with the kingdom and its people.

Dasharatha's ministers followed the *rājaśāstra*. Those in the kingdom who were disposed to a studious and contemplative life were protected. They were considered the spiritual brain trust of the kingdom, like our scientists who are engaged in research. These *sādhus* committed their lives to the pursuit of God *et cetera*, and they were always protected. The ministers did not restrict the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*; they did not overstep the rules of the state. They created an atmosphere where the people would live a dharmic life. In their judgments, the ministers took into account the resources of the plaintiffs and defendants, seeing whether or not they could afford taxes, fines, and punishment. There was no blan-

ket rule, the individual situation was always considered and there were exemptions and variances. It was by just and compassionate means that the ministers filled the royal treasury. As a result, people had confidence that they would not be put under duress and they were willing to pay their taxes and fees. Nobody need hide their income or write double accounts, or triple accounts: one for their partners, one for themselves, one for the state.

शुचीनामेकबुद्धीनां सर्वेषाम् सम्प्रजानताम् । नासीत् पुरे वा राष्ट्रे वा मृषावादी नरः क्वचित् ॥ १-७-१४

क्वचिन्न दुष्टस्तत्रासीत् परदाररतिर्नरः । प्रशान्तं सर्वमेवासीदœ राष्ट्र पुरवरं च तत् ॥ १-७-१५

सुवाससः सुवेषाश्च ते च सर्वे शुचिव्रताः । हितार्थश्च नरेन्द्रस्य जाग्रतो नयचक्षुषा ॥ १-७-१६

गुरोगुणगृहीताश्च प्रख्याताश्च पराक्रमे । विदेशेष्वपि विज्ञाताः सर्वतो बुद्धिनिश्चयाः ॥ १-७-१७

अभितो गुणवन्तश्च न चासन् गुणवर्जिताः । संधिविग्रहतत्वज्ञाः प्रकृत्या सम्पदान्विताः । १-७-१८

मन्त्रसंवरणे शक्ताः शक्ताः सूक्ष्मासु बुद्धिषु । नीतिशास्त्रविशेषज्ञाः सततं प्रियवादिनः ॥ १-७-१९

ईदृशैस्तैरमात्यैश्च राजा दशरथोऽनघः । उपपन्नो गुणोपेतैरन्वशासदœ वसुंधराम् ॥ १-७-२०

śucīnāmekabuddhīnāṃ sarveṣāṃ samprajānatām ।

nāsīt pure vā rāṣṭre vā mṛṣāvādī naraḥ kvacit ॥ 1-7-14

kvacinna duṣṭastatrāsīt parādāraratirnaraḥ ।

praśāntaṃ sarvamevāsīd rāṣṭra puravaraṃ ca tat ॥ 1-7-15

suvāsasaḥ suveṣāśca te ca sarve śucivratāḥ ।

hitārthaśca narendrasya jāgrato nayacakṣuṣā ॥ 1-7-16

gurorguṇagr̥hītāśca prakhyātāśca parākrame ।

videśeṣvapi vijñātāḥ sarvato buddhiniścayāḥ ॥ 1-7-17

abhito guṇavantaśca na cāsan guṇavarjitāḥ ।

sandhivigrahataṭvajñāḥ prakṛtyā sampadānvitāḥ । 1-7-18

mantrasaṃvarane śaktāḥ śaktāḥ sūkṣmāsu buddhiṣu ।

nītiśāstraviśeṣajñāḥ satataṃ priyavādināḥ ॥ 1-7-19

īdṛśaistairamātyaiśca rājā daśaratho'naghaḥ |

upapanno guṇopetairanvaśāsad vasundharām || 1-7-20

Eight ministers, nine decisions – it was not like that. The ministers worked together by rule and by *dharma*. One fellow helped another to see the truth in a given situation. All eight fellows become one *buddhi*. There was no emotional or ideological leaning. It is ideology that makes you completely miss what is the actual situation. A commitment to an ideology overwhelms the original intent of an ideology that is to serve the people. Such a commitment demands fulfillment and insists that others follow the lines set by the one with the commitment. The commitment is inflexible and heartless. This becomes a destruction to a society. Rulers and ministers must be absolutely matter-of-fact, dispassionate, because the world is not going to fit into an ideology. The resources and the limitations that are there are not going to fit any ideology, any system. A solution to a problem must evolve immediately in the midst of the problem. The leaning to an ideology or to a party or to a person should not be there.

In the city there were none who lied, for the king and the ministers set the example and the tone of *dhārmika* life. In that kingdom there were no rogues, none who broke rules for the sake of pleasure, none who would invade the sanctity of another's marriage. Ayodhya and the other cities of the kingdom were peaceful. Being ministers of Ayodhya, these fellows dressed and carried themselves appropriately, reflecting their stature. They were looked up to and not taken for granted. The ministers maintained a certain formality of dress along with their benign conduct. They always acted with the eyes of justice in service to their king. They acknowledged the virtues and consequence of the *gurus*. They were respected for their wise decisions even in distant courts and kingdoms. They were people of insight and never proud because of their virtues. It is pride that is the beginning of the end. They knew when to fight and when to negotiate. There is always a right time to wage war, and one must know when to withdraw – all in order to be victorious in the end.

To be continued...

AVG Saylorsburg - Classes & Outreach Programs

Swami Sachidananda made a positive impact through Vedanta classes at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg and through a number of outreach programs across the United States. The weekend Vedanta sessions at AVG, Saylorsburg were well attended and well received. Additionally, Swami Sachidananda, engaged in numerous outreach programs, taking the teachings of Vedanta to seekers at cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Boston, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut within a short period of time. (Feb 16th - April 26th 2023)

Vedanta Workshop in Brooklyn, New York:

Recognizing the importance of catering to the unique needs of Westerners and young adults, Swami Sachidananda organized a special spiritual session in Brooklyn, New York. This session, which was pre-registered and attended by approximately 50 participants, provided a platform for young individuals to explore Vedanta, gain clarity, and establish a strong foundation for their spiritual journey. Swami Sachidananda's guidance inspired seekers to deepen their understanding of Atma Vidya. Notably, the session attracted participants from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions. Due to the session's attendance and positive feedback, a full-day Vedanta program has been planned during Swami Sachidananda's next visit to the US.

Swami Sachidananda's mission is to empower seekers in navigating life's journey with enthusiasm, resilience, compassion, and a broad perspective based on the grand vision of Advaita Vedanta. His dynamism, easy accessibility, contemporary thinking & Smile have fostered love, and interest in Advaita Vedanta among many new students.

Swami Sachidananda's next visit is scheduled in the First week of August.

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Photos in cover page #31

Vedanta Retreat by Acarya Vanitaji April 29-01 May at Jnana Pravaha, Manjakudi.

Hariḥ Om. Śri Gurubhyo Namaḥ.

With the blessings of Lord Lakshmi Narayana and Pujya Swami Śri Dayananda Saraswati, Śāstra Vahini Ācārya Vanithaji conducted Jñāna Vijñāna Shibhir for a group of 40 students at Manjakkudi. The camp was held for three days from April 29 – May 1, 2023. Jñāna Vijñāna Yoga, the Seventh chapter of Bhagavad Gītā was taught during the three-day shibhir. The students were able to relate the words of Pujya Swamiji - ALL THAT IS HERE IS ĪŚVARA to the entire Seventh chapter especially 7.19 – VASUDEVA SARVAMITHI.

Camp site is a boon to sincere Vedanta sādhakas. Students were awe-inspired with the ambience, divine village atmosphere, humble and dedicated set of employees at the ashram, ever welcoming villagers, technology driven classroom, excellent food and stay arrangements. Thanks to each and every one of them who strive towards excellence every single day.

The Jñāna Vijñāna Shibhir was inaugurated by Swami Ramesvarananda Saraswati emphasizing the core message of Seventh Chapter by Pujya Sri Dayananda Saraswati – ĪŚVARA MATTAḤ ANYAḤ NA. Mr. M.G.Srinivasanji briefed the students on the developmental projects held at Manjakkudi. The samarop function was a great blessing for the students with the august presence of Sri Swamini Brahmaprakashananda Saraswati, Chief Ācārya of Arsha Vijnana Gurkulam, Nagpur along with her disciple Swami Tattvamayananda, and Swami Ramesvarananda Saraswati also blessed the students. It was a great spiritual experience to all of us and I am sure it will help sādhakas go further in the pursuit of Śreyas.

Om Tat Sat.

Photos in cover page #2

Annual jñānayajñanā, which is going on for more than 38 years, under the auspicious of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore, was held this year between 30th April to 6th May 2023. Swamiji took Mandukya Upanishad in the morning session and Uddhava Gita Chapter 6 in the evening. Brief report of the same follows:

Māṇḍūkya upaniṣad

Mantra 1 and 2 of māṇḍūkya upaniṣad summarizes the whole Vedanta message –

ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदम् सर्वम् *omityetadakṣaramidam sarvam* Omkara is all this jagat

सर्वम् हि एतत् ब्रह्म *sarvam hi etat brahma* All this jagat is indeed brahma

अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म *ayam ātma brahma* This ātma/jiva is brahma.

This *sutra-bhūta* sentences are being explained in the following:

Mantras 3 to 7 as four pāda (four quarters) of individual ātma/jiva and from mantra 8 to 12 as four mātṛā (four aspects) of omkara.

The individual self (jiva) undergoes three different stages of experiences as-

In waking stage as *viśvaḥ* experiences the external gross jagat, (1st pāda)

In dreaming stage as *taijasaḥ* experiences the internal svapna jagat, (2nd pāda)

In deep-sleep stage as *prājñaḥ* experiences one single mass of ānanda (3rd pāda).

These experiencers in three pāda is verily caitanyam which is essentially (*sarvajñaḥ*), omniscient *iśvaraḥ*, indweller and controller (*antaryāmi*), who is the very cause (*yonih*) and dissolution of all beings (*prapañcopaśamam*) and also considered as *turīyam* or 4th pāda. Upaniṣad brings in the totality by way of including waker's gross jagat, dreamer's subtle jagat, sleeper's causal jagat as *virāt*, *hiranyagarbha*, *antaryāmi* respectively.

This so called 4th pāda, described in mantra 7 as the very *adhiṣṭānam* for the varying three pādas (waking, sleeping and deepsleep including the totality) in to which the whole jagat is resolved, it is one without second (advaitam), it is most auspicious (*śivam*) and is to be cognized as one's own very ātma.

Mantra 8 to 12 analysis of omkāra.

In mantra 8 , the said ātma is identified with omkāra as single syllable, which is again very caitanyam brahma, conveying – *jīva-brahma-aikyam*. Omkara (ओम्) itself consists of 4 mātrā (अ उ ऋ) a u m and (*amātrā*) silence/ *turīyam*.

Mantra 9 to 11, upaniṣad initiate *upāsana* on individual (अ उ ऋ) a u m as preparation for unprepared students, simultaneously giving the sakāphlam for the respective *upāsana*.

Culminating mantra 12 says the one who knows the *turīya*, the content of silence which is again one without second (advaitam) , it is most auspicious (śivam) merges as it is.

Uddhavagītā sixth chapter

The sixth chapter is answer to Uddhava's three questions in the fifth chapter, namely

What is the cause for human bondage?

What is the means of liberation?

How a *jñānī* will lead a life compared to normal human?

In short the respective answers are

Ignorance (*avidyā, tamas*) of one's own nature is the cause and its origin is the *māyā-śakti* of Krishna, the īṣvaraḥ.

Knowledge (*vidyā, satvā*), through *śāstrā* and guru is means for *jñānam*/liberation.

Having overcome attachment, living a life of *karma-yogā*, and having cognitively understood his real *svarūpā* as *pūrṇam- brahma*, *jñānī* leads a life of fulfillment.

Krishna, up to sloka 22 contrasts lifestyle of *jñānī* vis-à-vis *ajñānī*. For the *ajñānī* vair-agyam, satsang with *jñānī* are prescribed for spiritual progress. Sloka 23 to 25, it is said that such a *jñānī* with total devotion will “attain” me, Krishna, the īṣvara.

To Uddhava's question in slokas 26 to 28, Krishna enumerates from slokas 29 to 33 the 30 *lakṣanā*/virtues of such a *jñānī*. Slokas 34 to 41 describes bhakti as *sāadhanā*. Sloka 42 to 49 talk about *karma-yogā* and service to the entire jagat in eleven locus – five elements, human beings in general, *brāhmanā*, *vaiṣṇavā* , all animals, cow and *sūryaḥ*. Thus *karma-yogā* plus satsang plus bhakti will lead to *jñāna-yogā* which in turn will result in liberation/ *mokṣā*.

Om Tat Sat

Photos in cover page #32

Talk Series of Swami Paramarthananda ji at Bangalore

Swami Paramarthananda Ji's talk series, organized by Arsha Vidya Sevashrama Trust and Essae Foundation in Bangalore, is a highly anticipated annual event by the Vedanta students in the city of Bangalore. This year it was from 7th May to 14th May.

It is a well known fact that Lakhs of students across the globe systematically study Vedanta through Sri Swami Paramarthananda Ji's classes and audio recordings.

Swami Paramarthananda ji's morning talks were on the Kaivalya Upanishad, drawing an attendance of over 450 students who approached the sessions with sincerity and devotion. The chosen venue for the morning talks was M.E.S. Kishora Kendra in Malleshwaram, Bangalore, and it would consistently be filled to capacity even before Swamiji's arrival at 7:00 AM.

Similarly, the evening class on the 18th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita attracted nearly 800 sincere seekers at the R.V. Teacher's College auditorium in Jayanagar.

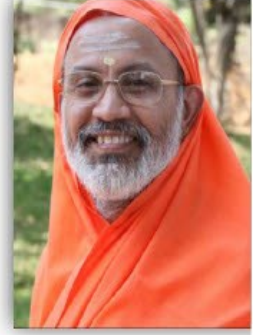
Swami Paramarthananda ji highlighted the students to recognize and focus on the Atma - the unchanging component of oneself, which is non-material, spiritual, that which is neither matter nor energy - the very basis of everything through Shravana, manana, nididhyasana. Swamiji's teachings brought further clarity in all the listeners,

Brahmaleena Swami Chidatmananda ji has been single-handedly arranging the talks for years, and his presence was missed by everyone who knew him.

Swami Chitprakashananda ji guided the volunteers, and a very successful Jnana Yajna happened in Bangalore.

Swami Paramarthananda ji's unique teaching is a guiding light for Vedanta acharyas, students, seekers.

Om Tat Sat



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Secondary grants (second priority, depending on availability of funds) are given for expenses related to travel and teaching and ashram/residence improvements.

Any disciple in our parampara who is in need of support is invited to visit www.dayanandafund.org or email - dayanandafund@arshabodha.org

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