

Ānanda

What is *ānanda*? *āsamantāt nandati iti ānandaḥ* - That in which one revels. In Vedanta it means *anantam!* , limitlessness. Freedom from limitations centered on time , space and a specific form. The words *ānandam* , *anantam* and *sukham* are used interchangeably in this meaning.

आनन्द derivation आह् + दुर्नदिँ (नन्द्) + क्त्ञ् ,
Common Meanings:

1. Happiness, joy, delight, pleasure
2. God, Supreme Spirit

The normally understood meaning of the word is happiness, rejoicing and it is taken to be centred on a situation or an object. But *ānanda* is centred on oneself, in fact it is the very *svarūpa* of oneself – *sukha-svarūpoham* - I am the meaning of the word *ānanda*. This is the meaning that may be gained only thru words of *śāstra* coming from a *guru*, like Pūjya Svāmiji.

Sat-cit-ānanda , same as *satyam-jñānam-anantam*, are three are *lakṣaṇās* – defining attributes of *brahman*. *ānandam* means *anantam* – limitless. When subject object merger happens, one experiences some degree of *ānanda*. But the *svarūpānanda*, which is the subject matter here, is not a matter for experience. Many translations use the word BLISS for *ānanda* – giving the reader orientation that it must be a special happiness, an extraordinary experience. But if *ānanda* is yet another experience it cannot be *nityam* as proclaimed by the *śruti*. In fact if it is an experience, knowledge cannot be the means to gain it. Knowledge can only remove ignorance. Svāmiji taught us, any experience is dumb, it is what we learn, and discern from any experience that makes a difference. Understanding *ānanda* is not another experience. Experience hunting is not the means to gain it. If *ānanda* is my nature, and I do not know this, knowledge alone can solve my problem. Any knowledge needs a means of knowledge. The five means of knowledge we have cannot give us the knowledge of the self evident self who wields these means of knowledge. We have to recognize *śruti* as a *pramāṇa* – and that's a very significant step. The pursuit becomes a pursuit of knowledge and *śruti* is the means of knowledge. The Guru walks in as it takes a guru to handle the *śabda-pramāṇa* and make one see the *tātparya* of the *pramāṇa*. The *jijñāsā* has to be maintained until one gains the knowledge of reality of oneself. This knowledge is the only knowledge after which one can say I am no longer ignorant. Thanks to the teacher one is able to see the one reality – the truth of the subject- object, the truth of the knower known and knowledge, as myself, which is *mokṣa*, freedom from all limitations.

People renounce everything for the pursuit of this freedom, *ānanda*. That is the reason why *sādhus* are generally given a name which includes the word *ānanda*. The Guru gives a new name to the *śiṣyā* who he initiates into *sannyāsa*. In the context of choosing names for *sannyāsīs*, Pūjya Svāmīji said deliberately chosen names are of two types. If a name is well thought out like the one Svāmīji gave to his *śiṣyās* either the name indicates what the person already is or what Svāmīji hopes the person to grow into. One can see. Thus, Svāmīji's thoughtfulness even in naming a *sādhu*, so deliberate and thoughtful this word *ānanda* in the name of a 'साधु', which stands for limitless – may be *siddha*, already accomplished, or *sādhya* – to be accomplished. In the case of Svāmī Dayānanda - it is no doubt a *siddhanāma* – he was *ānanda*, the limitless, and he knew he was *ānanda*. Being totally fulfilled just being himself, He had nothing to be gained and nothing to be done . *naiṅva tasya kṛtenārthaḥ nākṛteneha kaścana*.

What was true for *bhagavān kṛṣṇa* when he said *nānavāptam avāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi*, holds true for Svāmīji. *na anavāptam avāptavyam* there is nothing that is not gained which is yet to be gained (for self fulfilment). One who has accomplished what ever needs to be accomplished, there is no more a laundry list of things to be done. But yet he tirelessly engaged himself in service of humanity, *loka-saṅgrahārtham*, for universal good. This is a fitting description for Pūjya Svāmīji.

It is said in the *śāstra*, that the only one qualified to comment on Vedas is a *brahmaṇiṣṭha*, one who has total clarity about his being *brahman* - anyone else would only be presenting his own concept of the truth. The entire *vedas* have their commitment to reveal one truth – all that is here is *brahman – sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*. Such a person for whom this is absolutely real alone is qualified to comment on *vedas*. He is the person who can sing – *ahamannam ahamannādaḥ* – I am the food I am the eater of food, I alone am the subject the object, there is only me, I am the only reality. If there was one person who I was convinced could see this as the reality, who lived a life which was an expression of this reality, who could make us see this reality – that was Pūjya Svāmī Dayānanda – the very meaning of the word *ānanda*. He was in the form of a much needed reality check for *mumukṣus* to assimilate their understanding of a 'ज्ञानी' being *ānanda*, limitless whole, as presented by the *Śruti*.

Pūjya Svāmīji unfolded the vision 'All that is here is *īśvara*' . He saw what is as *īśvara* alone. This is how we can understand Pūjya Svāmīji. True, today he is not amidst us in his physical form we are familiar with. But please think can we miss Svāmīji when we understand that Svāmīji is nothing but *īśvara*? Being *īśvara* where is Svāmīji not? Even more so now - without a physical body to restrict him spacially. We have to be alive to the vision he unfolded to keep him in view. There is a story Svāmīji used to relate the story of a *gopī* who challenged *bhagavān* and said to *bhagavān* that you can walk away from me physically, but if you have real power, demonstrate it by going away from my mind! And *bhagavān* had to concede he could not! Because when all that is here, manifest and un-manifest, sentient and insentient is *īśvara* – where can *īśvara* hide? Every cognition, the cognizer and content of every cognition is *īśvara*. Now, without a physical body Pūjya Svāmīji is nothing but *īśvara*. So he is always available as *īśvara*, as a blessing. This is the way we can pay a tribute to our teacher, to clearly see what he really was and what he tried to make us see. His name is most meaningful, *anvartha-nāma*, his whole life and teachings were as though an unfoldment of the meaning of the name Pūjya Gurudev Svāmī Cinmayānandaji gave him – Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvati. *aho guruḥ aho guruḥ*.