

Freedom

Camp by Swami Sadatmanandaji at Anaikatti ashram , March 2018

Series of five talks on the topic of freedom continued from July 2018 issue

We already saw earlier that the fundamental bondage in the form of sense of limitation expressed in various ways is due to a mistake of taking myself to be what I am not. Since sense of notion is a mistake born of ignorance, therefore self-knowledge is the solution.

Self - knowledge is got by appropriate means of knowledge in the form of Vedanta, handled by a competent teacher. The vision of Vedanta is - *you are consciousness not limited by this body-mind complex*. The same consciousness seen as the basis of this world is called Isvara. So the truth behind this world is existence-consciousness and the truth behind you the individual is the consciousness which is existence. We are using the word - '*truth behind you*', that does not mean you and the truth are different. But since the way you know yourself now is a mistaken identity, therefore we use the word 'truth'. Really speaking you alone are the consciousness which is the truth of every individual and also the total.

This truth is revealed by the statement - *tat tvam asi*. The essence of entire Vedanta can be put in this one sentence. The whole vedanta is an elaboration of this sentence. Therefore, this sentence is called mahavakya - great sentence. It is great not in terms of size, but in terms of content and message- '***You are limitless brahman, the truth behind everything. Nothing is different from you.***' When I get this vision and make it free from doubt and habitual error, I discover myself to be ever-free. I don't become free, but I see this fact that I was never bound. Taking myself to be bound was a notion. This I appreciate very well and then I remain in this understanding spontaneously. Remaining in this understanding when this body is alive is called *Jeevan muktih*. *Muktih* means freedom and *jeevan* means while living. When I am alive and I am owning up this freedom, then that freedom is termed as *jeevan muktih*. Since I have discovered that I am free from all *punya* , all *papa* and I don't have any desires to be fulfilled, so there is no basis for the next *janma*. What makes a person come back is desire and *punya/papa*.

Like we go to the shopping mall because you have desire and money. If you have one of them and not the other, you will not go. Similarly when these two - *punya and papa*- are not there, there is no rebirth for that particular individuality which was there because of ignorance. Cessation of cycle of rebirth for that particular individuality is called *videha muktih* - freedom characterised by the absence of body. So the vision of Vedanta gives *jeevan muktih* and *videha muktih*.

Of course from the standpoint of a wise person, there is no such division. For him there is only *nitya muktih*. But from the standpoint of the onlooker who has seen the body alive and who have seen the expression of his freedom, we call it *jeevan muktih* . And no more birth for that individual, therefore we call that freedom *videha muktih*. Thus *jeevan muktih* and *videha muktih* are the benefits of the vision of *atma* being limitless. This is absolute freedom. Having gained it, no other freedom is sought after.

But this absolute freedom is possible only when I have relative freedom. This relative freedom, we were seeing in the last class, is at 4 levels - physical, mental, psychological and spiritual level.

1) **First freedom is at the level of physical body.** Keeping the physical body fit for the pursuit is called physical freedom. The body should be available for the pursuit.
How to keep the physical body fit for yoga?

yuktAhAra vihArasya yuktaceshtasya karmasu |

yuktasvapnAvabodhasya yogo bhavati dukhahA | BG ch 6sl 17

For this, four means are described by sastra. *yuktAhAra* = discipline in food, *yukta vihAra* = moderate movement i.e, enough movement to keep the body healthy, but not so much that it makes the body tired that you sleep most of the time. Nowadays people do night-shift, then day-shift in rotation. For such people their biological clock will definitely be disturbed. That body will definitely be affected. For few days it is okay, but if you do it all your life, then it will affect your spiritual pursuit. It may give you more money, but it takes away your physical health. As someone said- first you lose your health to gain wealth and then you lose your wealth to regain health. In the process you lose both. Therefore, that is not a healthy activity. Some people are workaholics. Their body is definitely affected. Our *ceshta* (physical activity) should be moderate and healthy.

yuktasvapnAvabodha = moderation in sleep. If you don't sleep well at night, then sleep debt is there and so you will sleep in class. Like you owe money to somebody and so you try to escape from the creditor all the time. But somewhere he will catch up with you, to get his money back. Similarly sleep will catch up with you. In meditation class when you are relaxed, you will get sleep. Therefore, have sufficient sleep. What is sufficient may vary from person to person depending on their system. It could be 5 hrs, 6 hrs or even 8 hrs. So get sufficient sleep which your body requires. But there are some people who are all the time sleepy. The moment they sit down, they sleep. So moderation in sleep – not too much and not insufficient- is necessary.

If these four things are followed, then there will be less problems at physical level and the body is available for spiritual pursuit. This is physical level freedom. And also you should have time and leisure to study. If you are all the time busy with this or that, then you are tied-up with so many things, then also you don't have physical level freedom. So at physical level you as a person with your body should be available.

1) **The second freedom is at mental level.** This has got 2 aspects- freedom from problem of *mala* (likes and dislikes) and freedom from *vikshepa* (restlessness of mind).

Mala means impurity in the form of disturbing, overwhelming likes and dislikes. So mental freedom is becoming free from overwhelming likes and dislikes. As a human being you will have likes and dislikes. You need not feel guilty about having likes and dislikes. For example, you like potato sabji, but you don't like brinjal. So likes and dislikes per say are not a problem. But when likes and dislikes are overwhelming you and make you compromise with your value system, take you away from your duties to be done, create reactions in you, create worries and anxieties in you, then they are a problem. Like you don't like brinjal, but if somebody makes and brings brinjal to you for lunch and you get angry, then your dislike for brinjal is a problem. Or the potato sabji you like is served to somebody else and very little for you, then you get angry with the person. Then that raga for potato sabji is a problem. This is true in every situation. When likes and dislikes make me hostage, bound, make me reactive, then those types of likes and dislikes are a problem. Becoming free from those types of likes and dislikes is called freedom from this impurity. Means I learn to manage my likes and dislikes, not allowing them to control me. I manage them, they don't manage me.

Like we see this thin lady taking a large dog for a walk. You are not sure whether dog is taking the lady for a walk or the lady is taking the dog because she will be dragged from one side to the other. That type of situation happens. The likes and dislikes control me by causing reactions, you don't control them. So managing my raga and dvesha and not allowing them to control me is called reduction of mala.

In Bhagavad Gita, the Lord Krishna says-

indriyasya indriyasyArthe raga dveshauvyavasthitau, tayorna vashamAgacchet tau hyasya paripanthinau | BG-ch 3, sl 34.

Lord says that raga-dveshas are there with regard to sense organs backed by the mind with regard to objects, but don't come under their spell. In fact raga-dveshas are the cause for the variety in creation. Imagine there is only potato sabji and nothing else. But there is activity for making brinjal curry also, so there is variety which is good. Because punya of jivas has to be exhausted and only one object may not be able to exhaust the punya. So variety is needed to exhaust various punyas. Thus likes and dislikes are not a problem. But they control us, that is the problem. The ability to manage my likes and dislikes, that is called emotional maturity. That gives mental freedom.

How to manage my likes and dislikes?

By leading a life of dharma with proper attitude is the means to manage likes and dislikes, so that kAma and krodha will not overpower me.

shaknotihaiva yah soDum prakshariravimokshanAt |

kamakrodhotbhavam vegam sa yuktah sa sukhi narah || BG- ch 5, sl 23.

Lord Krishna says – One who is able to manage this fervour of raga-dveshas in this life before casting off this body, that person alone is a yogi and deserves to be called a human being.

That is possible by leading a life of dharma with proper attitude. That proper attitude is called karma yoga. Life of dharma means doing what is to be done. In every situation, there is some response expected of me. I just follow my script. Right now you are playing the role of a student. So play it well. And I have been given the role of a teacher, so I prepare for the class and teach well. We respect our audience and don't take them for granted. This should be the attitude of a teacher. So whatever role you have to play, do it well. As a brother, as a son or in a given situation whatever is my duty, I do it. Follow the script, do your duty. While following dharma, I have proper attitude. With this duty, I am worshipping the Lord. Just as doing archana to the Lord with a flower is worship to the Lord. Similarly, I make every action a worship to the Lord. Whatever activity I am doing, I do it as an offering to the Lord. Background attitude is this - That the Lord is available in the form of this world, Lord alone is available as the order of karma revealing my duty and I honour that order of karma and dharma by doing what is to be done. With this attitude I do my duty. Every action I do, offering it to the Lord. This is called - *isvararpana buddhya karmAnustanam* – performing my duty with an attitude of offering to the Lord.

How does this attitude help ?

It is an action directed to the lord and it earns me the grace of Isvara which is punyam which will remove the obstacle in my pursuit of knowledge and which will remove any emotional disturbance. The mechanism behind this attitude of working on reduction of raga-dvesha is while doing my duty my raga-dveshas are kept under check. I don't brand any action as pleasant or unpleasant action. It is an action and I am worshipping the Lord while doing this action. So there is no arrogance about doing some action and there is no feeling of inferiority while doing some other action. Otherwise I will have preferences – I prefer offering flowers, but I do not prefer to broom the floor. When karma yoga attitude is there, whatever duty is given to me, I do it with sincerity and devotion. Whether I offer the flowers or sweep the floor, I do it with the same attitude. So my likes and dislikes which are governing my response to my action will be diluted. So those raga-dveshas are neutralised.

Second aspect of karma yoga is receiving the result with the attitude of prasada. What we offer to the Lord is called naivedyam. What we receive from the Lord is called prasada. There is no exact English translation for the word prasada. We can say that the grace of the Lord is prasada. I receive the grace of the Lord with devotion. That attitude we have to the prasadam coming from the Lord, we extend it to every result of action.

When I do an action, 4 possibilities are there-

- Result can be equal to my expectation,
- Result can be more than my expectation,
- Result can be less than my expectation,
- Or Result can be opposite to my expectation.

Like I start a business and I make 10 % profit as expected or I make 15 % or it can be only 3 % or I lose my capital. All the results are governed by the law of Karma which is non-separate from Isvara. Therefore, I see every result as coming from the Lord and therefore every result is prasada. If we analyse further, every result I am getting is because of my karma only. Every situation, every result, every person coming in your life is because of your karma alone. Like if you have a wonderful son or daughter, it is prasada. Not so wonderful also, it is prasada. Some appreciation I got, it is prasada. Some criticism I got, it is prasada. Thus with reference to the result of action, there is the attitude of prasada. That is another aspect of karma yoga. When I have prasada buddhi with regard to the result of karma, I do not let raga-dveshas control my action. Raga-dvesha's job was to control my behaviour and now they are not allowed to do that. So they become redundant and slowly drop off. That is how raga-dveshas are managed by a life of karma yoga. Of course there is devotion to the Lord and the prayers and prayerful attitude also help me to reduce my raga-dveshas. Thus this relative freedom at mental level in the form of chitta shuddhi is obtained by a life of dharma with karma yoga attitude.

The second thing is freedom from vikshepa- restlessness of the mind is reduced by upaasana. Definition of upaasana- *saguna brahma visayaka manasa vyAparah* - mental activity centered on Isvara, the lord is called upaasana. That can be in the form of manasa japa. We do 'om nama shivaya' mentally. Mind has the habit of going away. We bring it back again and again to focus on the japa. Mind will go. Bring it back. That is meditation.

upaasana can also be in the form of *ishta devata dhyanam*. You visualise the particular form of the Lord from the feet to the top. You see the form several times and then close your eyes and visualise the form. It is another form of meditation.

Or you do *visva rupa dhyanam*. You see all the aspects of the world - mountains, rivers, oceans, etc. - as the various limbs of the Lord. The Lord is in the form of this universe. So various forms of meditations are available and with their help I reduce my restlessness. Thus mala nivritti is by karma yoga and vikshepa nivritti is by upaasana. By this karma yoga and upaasana, I get relative freedom from controlling raga-dveshas and restlessness of the mind.

The third freedom is intellectual freedom. My intellect should be healthy enough to pursue jnana yoga. What are the factors which inhibit intellectual freedom -

1) **Intellectual lethargy.** Some people don't like all these discussions on purvapakshi and siddhanti. Just tell me the simple message straight. No need for all details. They all make me sleepy. One limitation of intellect is that it is not ready to think.

2) Another obstacle which comes in the way is **prejudice.** Our intellect is convinced that the truth should be like this and no other way. Brahman should be saguna only, I am not ready to accept nirguna brahman. So allow the sastra and the teacher a chance to unfold the teaching. You have the right to ask questions, but first listen with an open mind without prejudice.

3) Inability to trust-**ashraddha.** There is no readiness to give benefit of doubt. There is an inability to trust teacher or scriptures. Pujya Swamiji says that such people have authority problem. In childhood they must have been shouted at. So they avoid any authoritative figure and cannot listen to guru. Ashraddha is another obstacle to intellectual freedom.

4) **Impatience of the intellect.** Impatient to move on with the text and complete it. No patience to understand it properly. Let the teacher handle the subject matter the way he or she wants to handle. So intellectual patience is also required.

5) **Lack of subtlety** of intellect. Some people can handle gross things. But when it comes to subtle arguments they cannot handle it. It means buddhi is not able to go to the depth. That is also a limitation of intellect. When these factors of the intellect are taken care of, there is intellectual freedom.

How do we take care of them?

One way is prayer to the lord- *prajnyAm medhAm prayacca.* Or pray to surya devata chanting Gayatri mantra. Or say a general prayer to any devata for *buddhi shuddhyata.*

4) **Another type of freedom is spiritual freedom.** It is with respect to my attitude towards myself. There also some yogya is required. There should be relative freedom from inferiority complex based on comparison that -“I am not like that or like this”. That type of strong inferiority complex will not let you assimilate the vision that I am limitless.

Like somebody wants to play the role of a king, he should first of all look like a king. Here the vision is you are limitless brahman, but you have this complex that I am no good. The strong normal inferiority complex that I am small is the lakshana of every jiva. But in some people this complex is strong. The feeling that I cannot get moksha in this janma - This type of lack of confidence in oneself becomes a big stumbling block in your pursuit. The attitude should be - ‘Why should I decide, let Bhagavan decide . I will definitely try and I definitely consider myself to be fit enough for moksha’. The person should have relatively good self-esteem.

To own up the wholeness, there should be relative contentedness. Whatever I need for the pursuit of moksha I have, and what I don't have perhaps I don't need. Like I don't know Sanskrit. No doubt sanskrit grammar is useful, but it is not an inevitable condition for moksha. Like you don't require ideal weight of the body for moksha. Similarly certain things are less, it does not matter. Some feel -‘Swamiji I cannot remember’. That does not matter. What is critical, you should have. That is shraddha in sastra and acarya. If you don't have it, pray for it.

Thus, relatively good self-esteem is the relative freedom at spiritual level. It is spiritual because it is centered on I - on my understanding, my attitude towards myself and by feeling I am relative free from diffidence, inferiority complex and feel I am blessed to be whatever I am.

By saying that I don't have this or that, I am disrespecting Bhagavan. Bhagavan has given me whatever I require, and right now if I don't have it, when I need it will be there. So only if relatively I feel confident and blessed, then only I can own up this wisdom that I am full. Otherwise there will be mental rejection. *'Swamiji , you may be brahman since you are so great, but I am not brahman. It is too much to handle. My wife says I cannot handle anything and you say I am brahman. That is not possible.'* So one needs to be relatively free from these complexes and feel blessed to be what I am and being capable of pursuing moksha. This is called spiritual freedom. Then my attitude towards myself is healthy.

Sometimes if some guilt or hurt is controlling the self-esteem, then we should take care of them. Sometimes the unconscious in the form of suppressed emotions are controlling us.

So although we are receiving the teaching and you are understanding, but you will reject the understanding because of your unconscious- *'I cannot be like this'*. So we have to take care of the unconscious. How? by prayers and prayerful attitude. Prayer is an act of praying verbally, mentally or orally by remembering, chanting the names of the Lord. Prayerful attitude means appreciating the presence of the lord in every situation. Appreciating that all that is there is Isvara. Even the unconscious is a manifestation of Isvara. Without it the child cannot survive. It is a mechanism given by the Lord. Really I look upon the unconscious as given by the Lord or it is Bhagavan himself. I don't hate the unconscious. I welcome the emotions generated by the unconscious objectively, prayerfully and thus have relatively healthy self-esteem.

When I am relatively free at these 4 levels - physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels – then I have taken care of the inhibiting factors. Then I am fit for effective jnana yajna. One should continue one's sravanam, mananam and nidhidyasanam, but jnana yoga will deliver its goods only when I have relatively taken care of all these four. With this fitness when I do sravanam, etc. I have this vision with abundance - *that I am consciousness which is ever free.*

To sum up - The take home from this freedom camp is :

By life of dharma, values and karma yoga I prepare my mind. Also I use upaasana to prepare my mind. By prayers, I make my intellect fit for the pursuit. By prayers and prayerful attitude I have relatively healthy self-esteem. With this I am fit for effective jnana yoga.

When this jnana yoga consisting of sravanam, mananam and nidhidyasanam is pursued, I get the vision of Vedanta with abundance. That vision is - *I am consciousness free from all limitations . Nothing is away from me.* In this vision, I discover freedom. Ultimate freedom is by the vision of myself being limitless and this vision is attained by jnana yoga and for jnana yoga I need to be fit. The fitness is by life of karma yoga and upaasana. This is the vision of Vedanta regarding freedom. Wherever we are, we prayerfully continue to pursue this pursuit of moksha.

.....**Concluded**