



ब्रह्मज्ञाना गुरुकुलम् Sūktā

सूक्ता

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Courage¹

by Swami Dayananda
Saraswatiji

One requires courage to face problems and deal with the mind because there is pain. We usually deny the problems themselves and undergo the pain. We don't want to face the problems because to do so is very unpleasant. As children also, we denied our problems. This denial is kind of escape from something that is unpleasant and is the route we generally take to manage the problems. That is why diversions become so important to us.



In the West diversions are not only very important, they are many and varied. Entertainment and sports are nothing but diversions. If you analyze the commitment of a normal person, it is not really a commitment to work with what is happening right now, but is a commitment to entertainment and recreation. And, in order to have entertainment and recreation, of course, you have to earn money.

Therefore, earning money becomes a secondary priority, which of course it should be, but work also becomes secondary, recreation and entertainment becoming the main objective. This is because recreation and entertainment are used as primary escape routes—and this has always been so.



Recreation can be either classical or non-classical. Classical recreation means that you have to stay with yourself and, if you can learn how to do this, perhaps then you can enjoy children, family, friendship, books, thinking, meditation, and so on. There are variety of things to entertain

yourself—and usefully, also.

To enjoy these various forms of recreation you need to be able to be with yourself to an extent. You need to be able to enjoy yourself. Otherwise, you require something unfamiliar, different, exciting, or bizarre to absorb yourself. This is the reason music becomes louder and louder—to drown out the mind because there is so much noise inside.

It takes a certain culture and depth to be with yourself. When this is not possible, recreation becomes very important. Holiday recreation is a case in point. If we just look at the psychology of

people, it becomes very obvious how people commit themselves to various forms of recreation.

If you have a house on the waterfront, a boat, and perhaps a mobile home, then you made it! Then there is fishing, hunting, skiing, motor racing, football, baseball; sports also being a kind of recreation. There is a whole economy built around such activities. There is also lot of money involved in music—so many centers of entertainment, theaters, cinemas, discos, and so on. It is a huge industry. These numerous forms of recreation, along with holiday traveling may consume more than half of the entire economy—all because of a commitment.

Recreation is not an ordinary thing; it is a commitment. You work the whole week and then, on the weekend, you do not want to stay at home. You want to go out because to be at home means that you have to be with yourself. Therefore, you have to go out. Any classical form of recreation such as literature or music can thrive in a culture where people can be at home. Only then does one have the inner leisure to listen to classical music and read. This absence of inner leisure is prevalent all over the world.



Not to escape is to face ourselves, which we are not used to doing. Facing ourselves means that we have to have the patience, however painful at times, to look into ourselves

and see what is happening and what has happened. More often than not, what we see is very unpleasant.

Therefore, it takes courage in the sense of a certain commitment and a readiness to face this unpleasantness, which is not a big problem once I am willing to change. The willingness to change is what requires the courage.

1. Published in Arsha Vidya Gurukulam 3rd anniversary souvenir, 1989.



Action and Knowledge

by Swamini Svatmavidyanandaji



In the third chapter of Bhagavad Gītā, verse 22, there is a discussion about action and its role in self-knowledge. Action and knowledge are allergic to one another. They are like oil and water; they never mix. Even in a salad dressing if you mix oil and water, and shake it up nicely, they will still separate very quickly. This is because action is based on choices —one can choose to do something, one can

refrain from acting, or act differently. When it comes to knowledge, we do not have these options, for knowledge is dependent entirely on the object of knowledge, and not the agent, the knower. For instance, if I hold up a pot in my hand and insist that it is a mango, it will make no difference whatsoever. The pot will not turn into a mango, just because I, the knower, wished to know the object differently.

In action, there is freedom to either do, or not do. There are also methods of doing. In India you have a dish called “paneer butter masala.” It is a very popular recipe from Northern India. Then again, if we go to Tamil Nadu, we find that this paneer butter masala is becoming very popular there also. In southern India, they make this dish with a southern touch after adding a generous dash of sambar powder! Sambar is a staple south Indian dish. Sambar masala and paneer butter masala have nothing to do with one another, but the south Indian, who is totally committed to sambar, puts a little of sambar masala in everything except, perhaps, in dessert. Therefore, you can have north Indian dishes with a south Indian flair, all because as far as action is concerned there are options —there are many ways to go about it.

What options do we have in knowledge? Recently there was a NASA report that the Earth has picked up one more satellite, in the form of an orbiting asteroid, as seen by the Hubble telescope. Although this was a recent discovery, this little asteroid has apparently been following the Earth since the 15th century. Is there any option in knowing this? No! Because you cannot ‘un-know’ this even if the

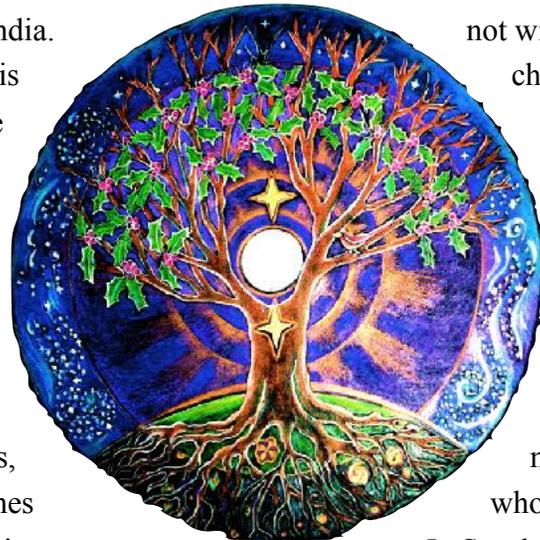
asteroid ‘un-follows’ the Earth. Neither can you say, “I don’t like this asteroid so I’m going to say that it is not following the Earth.” There is no option in knowing and there is no option in not knowing. You cannot say “I’m going to will this asteroid to be bigger than Jupiter,” that would simply be a pretense. Where knowledge is concerned there are no options. Where action is concerned there are options because action is dependent upon the free will of the doer.

Knowledge, on the other hand, is independent of the will; it is not will-based. You cannot say, “I think I’m going to choose to not know.” There is zero will involved in knowledge. Willing not to know is just a form of denial. When you deny knowledge it does not cease to exist; it is there, but you are not looking at it. A person in denial is a person wedded to subjectivity.

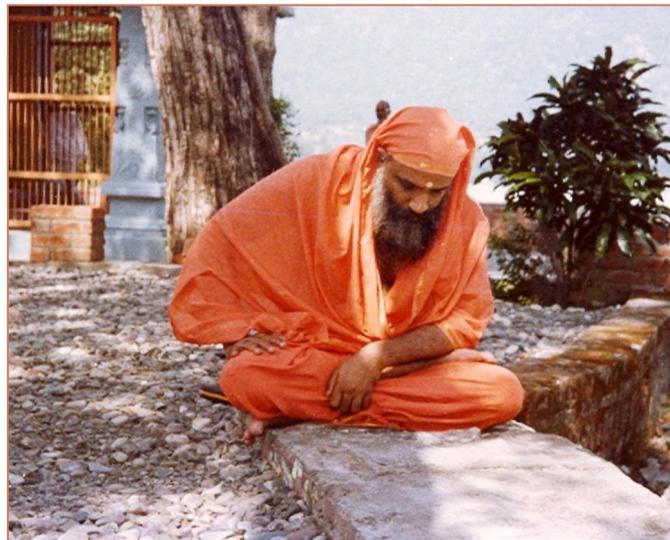
The fundamental problem of the human being being subject to fear and sorrow is self-ignorance — not knowing the truth of oneself as Īśvara, as the whole. For this the antidote is obviously self-knowledge.

In Sanskrit we call it *ātmavidyā*, or *ātmajñānam*. *Ātmavidyā* dispels *samsāra*, and its brood in the form of fears, tears, insecurity centered on the self, seeking approval, feelings of unworthiness, etc. If the fundamental problem is due to one’s own ignorance, it implies that knowledge of oneself as the whole is the solution.

The question then arises: What should we do with action? If knowledge is what I want, should I stop engaging in action? A person new to the study of Vedānta might say, “I am above everyone else and



as I am into knowledge, why should I act? The people who are engaged in action, do not know any better, but I do. I'm into Vedānta, they are not. Better luck to them in the next life.” This is where the demeanor of the budding Vedāntin can be fraught with problems. That is why in the Bhagavad Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa reminds Arjuna that action has a salient role in terms of preparing a person for self-knowledge. If before one is ready, one gives up actions altogether, one runs the risk of doing things that ought not to be done. An idle mind is an *asura*-workshop.



Without preparing the mind, without freeing it from the hold of *rāga* and *dveṣa* there is no hope of gaining self-knowledge. The preparation that action gives is unsurpassed. All the actions that are ordained in the scriptures have a place in reducing strong preferences and prejudices known as *rāga* and *dveṣa*, respectively. In fact, it is only in a heart that is free of *rāga* and *dveṣa*, that the knowledge can shine. If one is not able to understand or assimilate own's own glory, it is often because of deep-seated opinions and habits which are difficult to overcome. Therefore, the mind is disciplined by the actions that one is supposed to do, actions that one is prescribed, those one does in reproducing the daily life, by following what is righteous. These types of action are nothing but sources of blessings preparing one for the knowledge.

One is also a role model when acting. What if one were to say, “I already know I am one with the whole, and if I am one with everything

there is no reason to get out of bed.”? Lord Kṛṣṇa says this is a dangerous predicament. Action is important either way. If you do not know, it becomes a stepping-stone to prepare you for the knowledge. If you know, then in other ways you have a certain responsibility to others around you. If you look disdainfully upon action, you are setting a very wrong example. There is such a concept as a simply sitting swami; a swami, who has the option to simply sit. But the simply sitting swami is one who has already understood that his or her *prārabdha*

karma is to simply sit. Simply sitting is also an action but, for the most part even for the simply sitting swami, if he or she is called to action for the sake of helping the universe, he or she will not hesitate to respond. However, this response will be from a place without pressure to accomplish something or another.

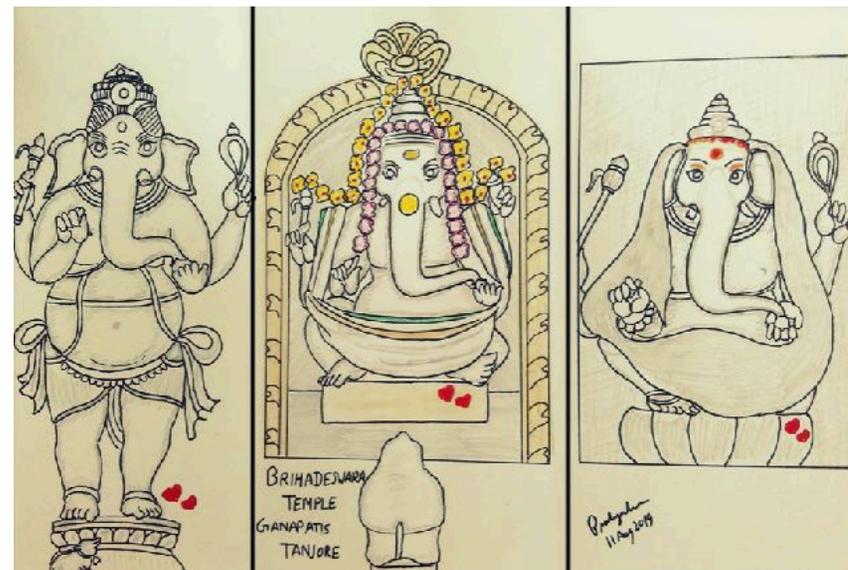
A lot of people do not attend Vedānta classes, because they are afraid that after they go home from the retreats, they will have to resign from their jobs or not have any goals in life. This is a big loss, as subjective notions that are in play keep the person away from both preparation and knowledge. If one were to think that action and knowledge are completely incompatible, and they are, it would not be wrong. What one has to understand is that while action is not the solution for one's problems, it is a valuable preparation for knowing that the self is free of all problems. If one fails to understand this, there is perpetual confusion.

Editorial

A teacher is only a teacher when invoked by the student. When the teacher sees nothing but *advaita*, non-duality, she or he is not going to see ‘a student’ or, for that matter, herself or himself as a teacher. This is why in the Upaniṣads it is always the student who approaches the teacher and indeed in the Muṇḍakopaniṣad it is clearly stated that in order to gain the knowledge one should approach the teacher with a burning desire to know the truth of oneself and be ready to serve.

Even in Chanḍogyopaniṣad when the teacher, Uddālaka, initially asks his son Śvetuketu, if when he was at the gurukulam he asked for the knowledge by which the unknown becomes known, Uddālaka does not offer to teach Śvetuketu. Instead, as a father he is seeking to help his son lose the arrogant attitude he has adopted upon completing his studies and becoming a “learned” young man. What better way than that to point out a deficiency in the same area that Śvetuketu is so proud of, his education. Worried that his gurukulam teachers may not have known this knowledge, and fearful that his father could send him back, Śvetuketu responds saying his teachers would surely have taught him if they had known and, with great respect, asks Uddālaka to teach him. It is only upon this request that Uddālaka becomes his teacher.

While we are undoubtedly devoted and grateful to our teachers, we are also grateful to everyone who asks those teachers to teach. Without you there would be no newsletter, no words from our teachers to share, no reports, no reflections, photo pages or even a teaching schedule. Therefore, the Sukta newsletter team is starting the New Year and new decade thanking all of you for making the newsletter possible.



Gaṇeśas by Pratyasha



Pratyasha Nithin studies with Swaminiji. More of her artwork can be found at: <https://pratyashanithin.wordpress.com>

Br̥hadāranyaka Upaniṣad: A Dialogue by Janani Chaitanya



In late July/early August, 2019, on the banks of the Kauvari river, sometimes written as Cauvery following the English occupation, but still pronounced Kauvari, a group of eight students sat listening to Swaminiji's *pravacana* on Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī's dialogue on *prīya*, love. It was not until the penultimate day when Swaminiji raised the idea of spiritual romanticism that I gave a second thought to the location. This is not to say that the idyllic surroundings, as well as the ants - the tiny ones that run in dizzying circles - and the monkeys being chased off by workers at the Cauvery Kanya Gurukulam, had gone unnoticed. Rather, it was the recognition that *śravaṇam* is *śravaṇam*

whenever one is sitting in front of the teacher. No matter where the location, one's focus is on what is being said and yes, once in a while, a biting ant makes its presence known.

In all his transactions in the Br̥hadāranyaka Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya is portrayed as exhibiting an air of confidence. We see this as he tells, rather than asks, Maitreyī that he has made arrangements to divide his wealth between her and Katyayanī, his second wife, and is now planning on "pushing off" as Swaminiji put it, from home for a life of contemplation and study. What follows is the famous teaching in which Yājñavalkya explains that "love" is for the sake of oneself and not "another" person. It is the contented being that one loves and in the knowledge of oneself as non-separate from that consciousness, all thought of becoming "something" in order to be acceptable is banished, for good.

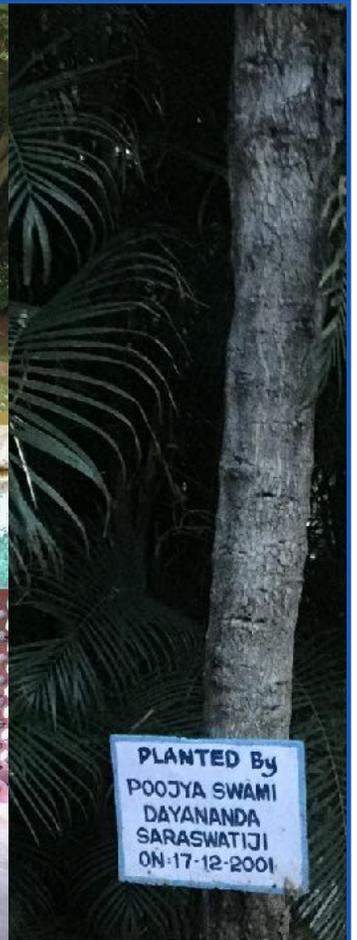
Contemplating the teachings in between classes, the heady fragrances emanating from blossoming plants, the papaya trees laden with sun ripened fruit, and the constant melody of the river's flow, juxtaposed, as they were, with the biting and stinging insects, blended together like white noise. Notions of spiritual romanticism related to place for most have more to do with being somewhere that daily routines are disrupted than the location. Even if lulled into temporary states of experiential happiness the undesirable will raise its head and quickly surface ignorance-based identification with the the body, mind, and senses. The warm ripe papaya freshly picked from the tree and the mosquitoes to which one donates a drop of blood in exchange for the itching venom left under the skin are nothing but Īśvara, and the order of *punya* and *pāpa* unfolding without error. Only when one knows "I" to be whole do *pāpa* and *punya* lose their grip.

Touching on Sureśvara’s lyrical *varthika*, Swaminiji deepened our understanding of the teaching. We saw how the great respect Maitreyī had for Yājñavalkya contributed to her understanding that the *amrtatva* he sought was of greater value than wealth. And also, how Maitreyī’s desire for *mokṣa* indicated in Yājñavalkya’s view, a greater love for the truth than even that of Haimavatī for Śiva; Haimavatī only wanted to be one-half of Śiva, Sureśvara explained, while Maitreyī wanted the whole of Yājñavalkya. This beautiful expression of *jijñāsa* came fully to life through the words of the teacher sitting with us now, Swaminiji. As color faded from the surrounding forest and in the gentle light of the outdoor classroom the mosquitos feasted wherever they could, I hung onto the words of the teacher, not wanting a single one escape. *Śravanam* is *śravanam* no matter where one might be.

Bangalore Center Inauguration by Janani Chaitanya

On August 7, 2019, a special pūja was performed by Swamini Vedarthananda and Swamini Saradananda with Swamini Svratmavidyananda to inaugurate a teaching center in Bangalore. Before an altar graced with pictures of Gaṇeśa, Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Pujya Swamiji, the pūja began shortly after 9:30 a.m. Attendees included some of Swaminiji’s students from both the U.S. and India, including some who had just met Swaminiji at the Cauvery Kanya Gurukulam retreat the previous week. After naivedyam and ārati had been offered a sumptuous meal was provided for the attendees. We pray that all who come to the feet of Swaminiji are blessed with self-knowledge.





**Cauvery Kanya Gurukulam
July/August 2019**



Growing Self-Knowledge

by Saroj Chenkin

Last spring, sprouted from last year's seeds, I planted 25 *tithonia*, commonly called Mexican sunflowers. Their first small blooms began in May, the plants grew 6 feet tall and branched out to 4 feet wide.

My front yard was full of their blossoms; butterflies, bumblebees, hummingbirds were a constant presence all summer.

In my being, there sprouted something like them, called knowledge. Water, in the form of silence and solitude, sunlight in the form of the teachings of my Guru, delivered by my android device, have created some kind of weird plant, an invisible vine within.

My Guru sent me a link to this interesting growth enhancer, available on-line, a Mahafertilizer called Dakshinamurti Stotram. When applied intelligently, consistently, big flowers grow in unexpected places, the advertisement stated, especially if some śraddha is there.

The vine is growing and buds are developing. I wonder what the flowers will look like?



Sthita-Prajña Lakṣaṇa: DC Retreat

by Chris Almond

Hosted once again by the lovely Sai devotee group in Maryland, we were privileged to hear Swaminiji give a talk on *sthita-prajña lakṣaṇa*, the characteristics of a person with firm self-knowledge.

The question that kicked off the talk was, “What does the end of spiritual quest look like?” In this quest, there is a general doubt about the nature of “I.” After everything else has been tried, we finally arrive at wanting to know how one can live comfortably with this “I.” With proper guidance we find we have been seeking in all the wrong places and must reorient our entire pursuit.

Śāstra tells us, your nature is to be happy without any reason. We are told that the knower of Brahman gains the ultimate, “*Brahmavid-āpnoti param,*” and that in knowing Brahman all desires are fulfilled, meaning that all the desires are resolved without having to rely on the object of desire because you know the truth of “I” as the non-dual Brahman.

People can study for years in this pursuit and still have *samsāra* attacks because they feel like they don't know. Thus, there is great curiosity about what a wise person is like, including by Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gītā. When he asked Lord Kṛṣṇa to tell him how the wise person behaves, he was looking for some external characteristics. There were two ways to answer this question. One was directly, which would have been very difficult because being a *jñāni* is an inside job, thus external markers such as walking,



talking, etc. do not definitively identify the *jñāni*. The second way, which is how Lord Kṛṣṇa answers, is indirectly by addressing the spirit of the question by telling Arjuna, “*prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān.*” The person gives up all desires as they arise in the mind. (Bhagavad Gītā, 2.55)

Swaminiji says that this is crucial because if we do not cut off desires at this stage,

they can “metastasize” overwhelming the whole person. A good practice, *sādhana*, for the person desiring to know the truth of the “I,” the *jijñāsu*, is to learn to resolve desires as they come into the mind.

The second *lakṣaṇa* Lord Kṛṣṇa gives is, “*ātmani-evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ,*” contented in oneself by oneself without needing any other entertainment.

The *jñāni* is not dependent on anything to be happy because they know that happiness is centered on the self. If you think happiness is centered on the object, and don’t recognize that the pleased self has been projected onto an object, you will always be

striving to gain or avoid things in life. The *jñāni*, on the other hand, enjoys whatever comes along. There is no disturbance, the *jñāni*’s happiness is undiminished, unaffected by events.

In summary, both of these *lakṣaṇas* form the basis for three *sādhana*s, means for accomplishment, for the *jijñāsu*, the one desiring to know the truth of oneself. First, one can practice giving up desires as they arise in the mind. Second, develop *śraddhā* in the vision of oneness, otherwise one continues to look elsewhere for happiness. Lastly, one can practice delayed gratification by learning not to be dependent on getting an object right away. This will give space to not be dependent on objects. The Indian culture itself is based on this. We call it a *thali* culture wherein one accepts gracefully what is given. These three *sādhana*s will take one a long way towards understanding the truth of oneself as whole.



Thanksgiving Retreat, Eugene

by Shin Shin Tang



Over Thanksgiving week, we had many reasons to give deep thanks. Sri Swamini Svataavidyanandaji blessed students in Eugene and online with teachings from no fewer than three Vedānta texts: Adi Shankara's *Śataślokī*, Chapter 14 of the *Bodhasāra* by sage Narahari, and a well-known excerpt from Chapter 3 of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* – *Jyotir-Brāhmaṇa*.

Verse 9 of the *Śataślokī* as unfolded by Swaminiji had a beautiful teaching of how to look upon the *ātmān*. The verse explained how there is nothing dearer to oneself than the *ātmān*.

Swaminiji, with infinite graciousness even encouraged us to view ourselves as the wise one, *vidvān*, who cherishes the *ātmān* in this way.

In the *Bodhasāra*, which we have been studying for several years, Narahari describes seven steps of gaining *mokṣa*. The first step is to approach a teacher and have a willingness to be taught. “Until the ignorance is not protected, the knowledge will not take place,” Swaminiji explained. The second step described a form of

contemplation accompanied by a deep introspection. This practice results in a growing clarity and leads to step three, which is best described as an intense desire for the knowledge. In this step one recognizes the contrast between the external changing world and the changeless ‘I’, but still feels sorrowful about both because one is not able to abide in the changeless *ātmān*. Swaminiji describes this as a funny state in which the *ātmān* says, “I don’t know my own nature.” However, there is hope! Through studying Vedānta, one gains a growing clarity in which *ajñānam*, ignorance, is removed, and sorrow and fear subside. One can then see the world with objectivity rather than through subjective *rāgadveṣas*, likes and dislikes.

Finally, we wandered into the great forest of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* with Swaminiji as guide to light the way. In fact, the topic was none other than *jyotiṣām jyotiḥ* – the light of all lights. This phrase speaks directly of the heart of Vedānta to remind us of the light that shines as each of our hearts. Over the course of six classes in two days, Swaminiji meticulously unfolded the meaning of the dialogue between Sage Yājñavalkya and King Janaka that is recorded in this section of the Upaniṣad.

King Janaka implores Sage Yājñavalkya to teach him the



meaning of that light by which a person conducts activities. At first, the sage plays coy, telling the king the sun and moon provide the light. Not satisfied, the king asks the sage the same question,

to which Yājñavalkya again gives superficial answers, saying that fire and sound also provide light by which to navigate. Only with King Janaka's tenacious persistence does Yājñavalkya begin to teach the knowledge of Vedānta. Swaminiji commented that this interaction between the king and Yājñavalkya models the student demonstrating a strong desire to learn and suggests that one should firm up their own being as a student.

Sage Yājñavalkya then names the *ātmān* as the self-effulgent light through which a person conducts all activities. Through examining the three states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping he shows how the *ātmān* powers all three states. In the dream state, one crosses from the empirical world into one in which one identifies as the creator of a world based upon our own *rāgadveṣas*, likes and dislikes, like a mini-*Īśvara*. And then one moves into a sleep state in which these *rāgadveṣas* are withdrawn. Swaminiji beautifully described sleep as a form of homecoming where we sense no separation between the experiencer and the experienced. Thus, sleep shows how, when we recognize the truth of non-duality, we are really that *ānanda* which is the truth of oneself, that whole light of all lights. With deepest gratitude and *praṇāms* to our great guru, Om.

On Leaving Eugene and Lord Dakṣiṇāmurti By Rama Giri Rondeau

Namaste todas y todos

At this time of comings and goings, this tirtha of change and transition, I rejoice with you that the teaching has been received and the Lord no longer need sit, silently waiting

Raise a joyous noise in the neighborhood, clang the cymbals and bang the drums

My humble *praṇāms* to the feet of those at the feet of the Lord's Truth
Dunda praṇāms to Guruji who showed me God

Praṇāms and gratitude to the south-facing Lord, for moving closer to me

My deep appreciation and thanks to Coconut, Gordon and Harinder, Lydia and Sat Narayan

They opened their home to the Lord and that is no small thing, like a weekend guest

My thanks to all the *sevaks* for so sweetly keeping the Lord happy

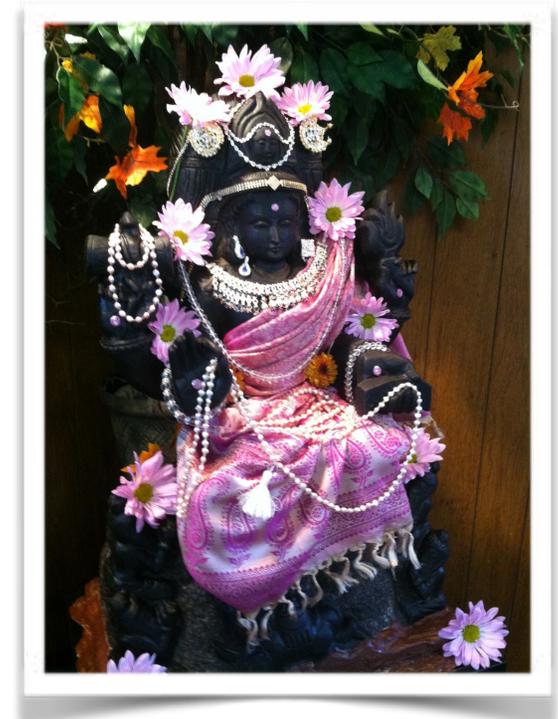
Your devoted attentions atoned for my mistakes before the Lord

My gratitude to the Lord for *darśans* and dresses and posing for pictures

Within the *upādhis* of color and flower and fabric and folds, jewels, bangles and beads,

the Lord manifested many moods in my mind's "I"

Gracias and gratitude to you all, Guru, God and gopis, for giving the gift of graciousness (and good grub)



SIX-PACK SERIES: PRAMĀNAS

by Chris Almond

There are six *pramānas*, means of knowledge, which can be broken down into two categories: those that are operated by the *pramāta*, the knower, and the one which is operated by the words of the *śāstra*, the Vedas, through the guru. The five *pramānas* that fall in the first category operated by the *pramāta* are:

1. *Pratyakṣa*- direct perception by the senses or perceptions, such as the eyes, ears, etc., and not from the sense organs such as, hunger, the emotions, the flow of time, spacial awareness, etc. Said to be the primary means of knowledge they are also called *mūla pramānas*, the ones on which all the *pramānas* depend.
2. *Anumāna*- one step inference.
3. *Arthāpatti*- presumption, inference requiring at least two steps. A classic example is a man who is observed as gaining weight but is not observed eating during the day. Knowing both that he is gaining weight and that one must eat to gain weight, we infer that the man must be eating at night.
4. *Upamāna*: comparison such as using the description of a donkey painted with stripes to demonstrate the appearance of a zebra.
5. *Anupalabdhi*- cognition of absence, which occurs when one is asked to “see” an object that is absent.

Of course, none of these can operate as a *pramāna* for the knowledge of the “I”, because the “I” being the subject cannot be objectified. Instead, we must rely upon *śabda pramāna*, the words of the *śāstra* handled by a

qualified teacher. Swaminiji made it clear that the *śāstra* is not revealing the “I”, which is self-evident, but rather it is revealing the nature of the “I”, the oneness between “I” and Īśvara. If “I” could be objectified, there would be no oneness, there being subject and object. Further, the subject would be limited by the presence of an object, and in the vision of *śāstra*, the “I” is limitless. In order for the *pramāna* to work so we can understand this, Swaminiji tells us that our *śraddha*, trust pending understanding, in *śabda pramāna* must be equal to the trust that we have in our eyes and other *pratyakṣa pramānas*.



Difficulties arise with *śabda pramāna*, because unlike the first five *pramānas* which are operated by the *pramāta*, the knower, *śabda pramāna* is operated by the teacher as it has to “knock off” the notion of knower. As such it is no wonder that so many obstacles related to maturity come in the way of this knowledge. However, if we understand the characteristics of a *pramāna*, *śraddha* becomes easier. A *pramāna* must be *anādhigata*, have a unique scope of knowledge and here

we see that the oneness between “I” and Īśvara cannot be known any other way. A means of knowledge must also be meaningful, useful, *arthavat*, and as knowing the “I” removes the cause of sorrow we can say that *śabda pramāna* is meaningful. Thirdly, it should be *phalavat*, capable of delivering what it promises, which we see in the lives of our teachers such as Pujya Swamiji and Swaminiji. Finally it must be *abādhitam*, non-negatable by any other means of knowledge. Swaminiji says that understanding these characteristics not only helps, but can be the make or break between you and the knowledge.

Glossary

By Kate Herse

Anādi - अनादि

The word *anādi* has such a simple translation – it simply means ‘without beginning’. Yet, it is such a difficult concept to grasp! In our everyday lives, everything we deal with has a beginning. We may not have seen the beginning of the *jagat*, the universe, but science tells us that even the universe had a beginning, in the form of a ‘Big Bang’. We see that every life form on this Earth has a beginning. So does every thought, every word, every deed. How can we conceive of something that has no beginning? In Vedānta we learn that what we are seeking is something that had no beginning, but in our limited minds we can barely form a thought of what that might look like. A circle? A life-cycle of seed to tree to seed to tree? It is very difficult to grasp something that is not bound by

time. A beginning is a point in time. If something has no beginning it must be outside of time. But that is precisely what we are seeking, something that is outside of time. It is not perceived by any of our five senses, nor by the thoughts that travel through our minds, because this beginning-less thing is not an object – it is the subject, it is the ‘I’.



Swaminiji's Travel and Teaching Schedule

Residential Retreats:

Jan 15-17, Fort Myers, FL. Contact Leelaji for details: nck@att.net

Jan 18-23, Atlanta, GA. Morning discourses on Śrī Rudram, Evening discourses Doṣaparihārāṣṭakam. Contact Sri Ramakrishnan for details: natarajan.ram@gmail.com

Jan 25-28, Retreat at Sivananda Ashram in the Bahamas on A Tale of Two Seekers, click **HERE** for registration and info.

Feb 7-9, Talks in Sivananda LA Center. Contact Sw. Sivasankariananda for details: swamisivasankariananda@sivananda.org.

Feb 9, in Eugene, OR. 9:30-10:30 a.m. PST Bodhasāra, 11 a.m.-12 noon Ṣataśloki. Click **HERE** for Livestream classroom.

Feb 14-17, Retreat at AVG in Saylorsburg, PA on Bhūma-Vidyā: A Dialogue from the Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad. Contact Sri Suddhatma suddhatma@gmail.com for registering and information.

Mar, 11-16, Retreat at Sivananda Ashram in Vietnam on Hindu Vision and Way of Life. Click **HERE** for registration and info.

Mar 20-22, Retreat at Sivananda Yoga Ranch, NY on Vedanta in Daily Life. Contact <https://Sivanandayogaranch.org/contact-us/> for details.

Accessing Swaminiji's Teachings On Line

Classes are streamed via adobe connect, accessible via the link below. Once the page opens, select “Enter as a Guest” and type your name in the box that appears. When you click enter you will be taken to the Adobe classroom.

<https://avmtemple.adobeconnect.com/a725965367/gita/>

Past classes are archived at the link below. You can scroll through the topics and select the series that you wish to watch. In most cases all the recordings for each class will be found in one file.

<https://livestream.com/Swaminiji>

A list of links can also be found at the link below:

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/qp97ljr1m7jz27e/ArchivedClass Updated Links.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/qp97ljr1m7jz27e/ArchivedClass%20Updated%20Links.pdf?dl=0)

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www.arshavm.org

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