



दार्शनिक चिन्तना गुरुकुल Sūktā

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Compassion and the Human End, *Puruṣārtha*¹

by *Swami Dayananda Saraswati*

It looks as though there is a choice in commanding a degree of compassion. I say this because if someone is compassionate we praise the person as being a saint, which means that the person is very special. This is not acceptable in the Vedic culture. In its vision, everyone has to grow into a saint because dharma is, in itself, a *puruṣārtha*, a human end. This is not fully understood. Therefore, let us look into this in greater detail.

Dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa are the four *puruṣārthas*, the *caturvidha-puruṣārthāḥ*. By definition, that which

is desired by all people is a *puruṣārtha*. *Puruṣa* means a 'person', implying both male and female.

Among the four *puruṣārthas*, the most important is *mokṣa*. Why is that so? Let us suppose that you say *mokṣa* means not having re-birth. A lot of people would then say that they are not interested in that because they want to be reborn. When I say that *mokṣa* is right now, why should I talk of re-birth? If there is a re-birth, we will work on that too. I am very much here and would like to see that I am free

enough to have a limited body, a limited mind, limited knowledge, and of course, limited money. If these constitute limitation, there is no *mokṣa* from limitations because these limitations constitute my being. The body is limited, the mind is limited, knowledge is limited, money is limited, power is limited, and even influence is limited. Even if you become the President of the United States of America you are still subject to certain limitations. Nobody on this earth, no matter what he or she has, is really a happy person. There is always the problem of how one is going to overcome these limitations and enjoy freedom. Death may be a form of freedom, but then people say you will be reborn, so death is not freedom. You are a traveler and you will be back. Therefore, there is no such thing as *mokṣa* after death.

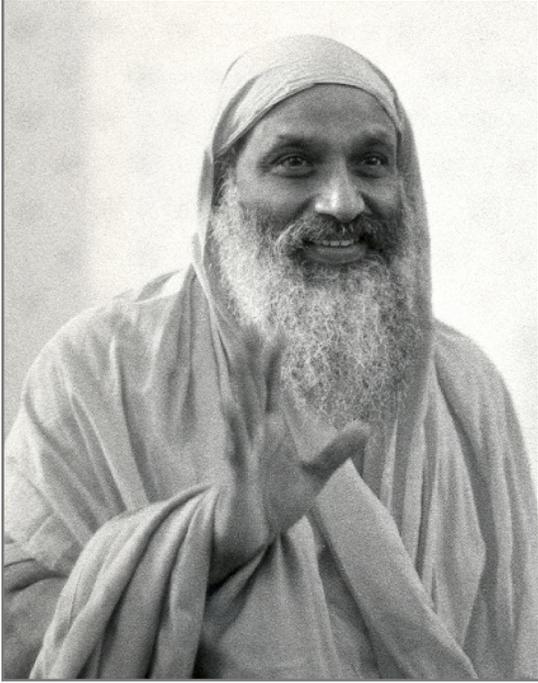
There are religions, which promote heaven as their ultimate goal. They are heaven-bound and they say that all of us should go to heaven. This promotion of going to heaven, is it a kind of tourism or what? Am I going there as an individual, a *jīva*? That the individual soul survives the death of the body and goes to heaven is a belief one can have. But will this soul have a body or not? If you have a body of your own, you will continue to have the same problem limitations of the body-mind-sense complex. Even if you have a heavenly body, some other heavenly body will be different from your body and there is bound to be comparison. A sense of limitation is inevitable. Further, in heaven, there would be a ruler, and you would be the ruled. Therefore, heaven is not a solution.

If there is something called *mokṣa*, either I am free already or I can never be free. If I am free right now and here, it is only a question of knowing how. This freedom, *mokṣa*, is the *parama-puruṣārtha*, the ultimate end.

As a *puruṣārtha*, *artha* means power, security, name and fame, etc., because they give you a sense of security. You can encash your name and fame in society, so when you consider *artha* you should also include this aspect of influence and power. Some of these things can also be viewed as *kāma* because they give you a sense of ego gratification, which is *kāma*. So *artha* becomes *kāma*. Music, food, relationships, family—all these, because they provide some satisfaction, are *kāma*. Any ego gratification, name, fame, etc., also provides this sense of satisfaction.

The *puruṣārthas* are to be understood as the means to achieve various ends. There are a number of means, *sādhana*s, for achieving these various ends. For instance, getting an education and equipping yourself professionally are the means for the pursuit of *artha-kāma*. Among the ‘means and ends’, the *sādhana-sādhya*, in the various *artha-kāma* pursuits, one of the means, they say, is dharma. They say that you





should continue your pursuit of *artha* and *kāma*, but be mindful of dharma. In doing so, which is the *puruṣārtha*? Is dharma the *puruṣārtha*? No, it is not. *Artha* is the *puruṣārtha* and *kāma* is the *puruṣārtha*. You are told to ‘follow’ dharma when you pursue *artha* and *kāma*. Therefore, in this approach, dharma becomes a subserving *sādhana* for the pursuits of *artha* and *kāma*. To say

that you have to follow

dharma in order to accomplish *artha* and *kāma* is paying lip service to dharma.

As I listen to people of different religious persuasions, I find that nobody thinks of dharma as a *puruṣārtha*, as an end to be accomplished. Even many Indian spiritual leaders do not seem to understand this. They always say dharma has to be followed in order to achieve *artha* and *kāma* and that is why dharma is at the beginning of the list. This is not correct.

Dharma has as much of a place among the *puruṣārthas* as *artha* and *kāma*, the common ends that human beings want to accomplish. Dharma is also an end to be accomplished. That is the reason why we do not look upon saintliness as something that a special person chooses to have or is endowed with. We do not accept that concept.

In following dharma, a number of values and attitudes are listed in our *śāstra* as necessary for a human being. *Ahimsā*, harmlessness, is mentioned in the list given in the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita [13-8], *amānitvam adambhitvam ahimsā kṣāntir ārjavam*, absence of conceit, absence of hypocrisy, harmlessness, accommodation, straightforwardness, respectively, but *dayā*, compassion, is not mentioned there. It is mentioned, however, in another verse, *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca*, ‘the one who has no hatred or ill-will to any being, the one who has the disposition of a friend, who is compassionate’ [Bhagavad Gita, 12-13]. When you look into these three words, *maitraḥ*, *karuṇa*, and *adveṣṭā*, you see their expression in compassion for all beings. If you stretch *ahimsā*, not hurting, it becomes *bhūta-dayā*.

We have always maintained that among the values of dharma, *ahimsā* is the most exalted. When you stay with *ahimsā* and do not gloss over it, it becomes *dayā*. When you follow *ahimsā*, compassion, *dayā*, is inevitable because you cannot follow *ahimsā* without being compassionate. If you say “I do not hurt,” it means that you have to have compassion. You can use your will to curb the tendency to hurt. Compassion follows. That is why both Mahāvīra and the Buddha highlighted *ahimsā*. Therefore, *ahimsā* is a dharma that occupies the first place.

We often hear it said that *satyam*, speaking the truth, is very important. Nevertheless, you can speak the truth and make everybody suffer because the truth you speak may be unpleasant. You are honest, but when you begin talking everybody runs away from you because you are so brutally honest. Speaking the truth also implies that you need to be pleasant. *Satyam brūyāt priyam brūyāt na brūyāt satyam apriyam* [Manu Smṛti, 4-138], speak the truth, speak what is pleasant, do not

Speak a truth that is unpleasant. Therefore, do not deceive in order to please, but at the same time, do not tell the truth if it can displease people. Just keep quiet in those instances. This is why we have been given a choice to speak or not to speak.

It is important to learn when not to speak. Knowing when to speak is different. Knowing when not to speak is more important than knowing when to speak because often, when we speak, what we say does not matter at all. When speaking does not matter, not speaking is very important. People think that *satyam* is just speaking the truth, but sometimes this can make everybody suffer, including you. It is an indication that you cannot be kind to yourself. Therefore, it is really compassion that makes you a person who speaks the truth. It is not that non-compassionate people tell lies, but a compassionate person does not need to tell a lie, and does not need to prove himself or herself as a person.

You will find that if you pursue any one value, everything else will follow. These values are like noodles; they always come as a bunch. So by following *ahimsā*, you follow all the values there are, because you cannot follow one without following all the others.



Dharma is something you have to follow, sometimes, even at the cost of *artha* or at the cost of *kāma*. Dharma, therefore, becomes an independent end to be

achieved. It does not subserve the other ends—it is an independent *puruṣārtha*.

I have heard people saying that if you follow dharma, everything else, including *mokṣa*, will take care of itself. It will not take care of itself, but at least you become ready for self-knowledge, which is *mokṣa*, if you follow dharma.

In the matrix of values, compassion, which characterizes saintliness, has got to be acquired. To grow

from being a mere survivor, into a contributor necessarily involves becoming a person of compassion. How does that happen? You need to discover compassion by acting it out. An act of compassion can evoke compassion that may be inhibited. An act is always deliberate; it is different from an instinctual or impulsive response, which is more of a reaction. In a deliberate act of compassion, one acts deliberately, as though one has compassion, because one has a value for compassion. Performing an act of compassion will make you compassionate. People would say that an act of compassion is helping somebody who needs help. I think this is a simple human action with a degree of compassion. A true act of compassion is deliberate, such as when you perceive that



somebody has done something wrong to you, and yet pray for that person's welfare. If somebody does you a disservice and yet, you reach out, you cross all the borders of anger and hatred and get into a new territory that you are not used to, that is called an act of compassion. There is value for being compassionate in an act of compassion, and if you keep doing it consistently, compassion will be with you.

Compassion, the dynamic form of *ānanda*, is your very nature. Whether you know it completely or not, you can understand this much—that *ānanda* cannot be anything other than you. There is no object called *ānanda* and there is no place called *ānanda*. There is no person whom you can recognize as *ānanda*. It is not a given time, and it is not an attribute of an object. There is no place, a magic place, where you go to become happy. You can be happy and you can be unhappy anywhere. Still, you do have moments of happiness and, therefore, you can understand that happiness is not anywhere else except centered on you.

Some say that happiness is inside you. What does that mean? Is happiness in the mind? If the mind makes you happy, does it mean that when you are sad, there is no mind? Even in having its desires fulfilled, the mind is happy only temporarily. However, whenever you are happy, more often than not, you have not fulfilled any desire. Also, more often than not, you need not fulfill a desire to be happy. So what does this happiness depend upon? It depends upon you. It is not even the condition of the mind. When you do not see yourself as a wanting person, if a situation does not evoke a wanting person, you are happy. It is as simple as that. That is your nature. In fact, you are happy when you are yourself, not when you are what you think you are. That is why

self-forgetting becomes so important. When what you think about yourself makes you unhappy, then, self-forgetting makes you happy.

Since you do not make a complaint that you are happy, but you cannot stand yourself when you are unhappy, we can say that the happy person, the person you love to be is yourself. This logic, born of experience, is called *anubhava-yukti*. Your own experience, *anubhava*, gives you a certain *yukti*, a certain line of reasoning, which helps you understand that you are *ānanda*. Compassion is a dynamic form of *ānanda*, and that is the reason why, when there is compassion, you are 'close' to yourself. That is why it seems to be the most important thing.

When I look into the system of human values, what stands out for me as a thing to be cultivated deliberately and consciously is compassion. It evokes the bigness in you, the wholeness in you, the love, the giving, and the understanding in you. It is this relatively whole person who can discover that he is the whole. In this discovery there is complete release, *mokṣa*, from the human struggle against a sense of limitation and, therefore, it is the ultimate human end.



1. Excerpts from the book, *Living versus Getting On* by Pujya Swami Dayananda Sarasawati edited by Jayshree Ramakrishnan, Chaya Rajaram, and Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey, 2005.

Editorial

Blessings are always pouring from Īśvara and yet we too often fail to recognize them. Habitual thought patterns see us alternating between shouldering blame or giving self-accolades for events that transpire, without so much as an “*om namah Śivāya*” in recognition of Īśvara’s *prasād*. Of course, when one is in the presence of the guru it is somehow easier to see everything as a blessing of Īśvara, after all, where else is one in the manifest company of Bhagavān?

Living the vision daily without the teacher being present is the norm for most of us, however, and so the question becomes, how do I keep the vision I have in the teacher’s presence alive when the teacher is not physically there? External prompts that may bring one back to the teaching, such as small wayside shrines, stores named after *devatas*, or temple towers are not readily found outside of India, not to mention the number of distractions in family and friends, let alone media and shopping malls, etc. Fortunately, as Swaminiji so skillfully demonstrates, the teaching tradition is neither locale nor relationship specific. No matter where one is, cultural norms, personal quirks and habits, landscape, and of course relationships, are all made into sign-posts by the teacher, that lead one back to one’s own self, Īśvara.



Swaminiji does this by connecting the teachings with the world in which we find ourselves. From health advocates who Swaminiji envisions grazing on alfalfa lawns in the front for breakfast and moving to the back yard for dinner, to airlines that become “Don’t Ever Leave The Airport”, longhand for Delta, or “Untied” for United, external and internal reminders that bring us back to the teaching are given; there is no joke or story, that can be taken at face value alone in the teaching. While it cannot be argued that spending time with the teacher is the greatest of blessings, the more *śravaṇam* one does, even when it is via recordings, the more one sees Īśvara in daily life.

The newsletter is another way to connect back to the teachings. This too is a gift of Swaminiji to her students and one more blessing from Īśvara. The newsletter brings Swaminiji right to our “inbox” and connects all of us through the reports and pictorials. Those of you who contribute regularly express your gratitude for the excuse to review notes and recordings in order to share what you found to be the highlights of a class or retreat. For those of you who regularly attend Swaminiji’s classes and retreats and would like to contribute please write to Janani at janani_chaitanya@yahoo.com for the guidelines. And, just in case you are unaware, there is a wonderful library of

Swaminiji’s recorded classes at livestream.com/Swaminiji which can be watched at any time and in any place there is an internet connection.

We offer our *pranāms* and gratitude to Swaminiji for giving us the teachings in so many different formats including this forum. We also give a warm and hearty thank you to all our contributors.

FIRST VISIT TO AVG SAYLORSBURG

by Sheila Guilder



I went to Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg because I wanted to be near my Guru, Swaminiji. Swaminiji had been out of Eugene for many months and I felt the need to be close. I had heard so much about the Saylorsburg ashram that I thought this retreat would be just perfect – listen to Swaminiji everyday, and get to see this Ashram that I have heard so much about .

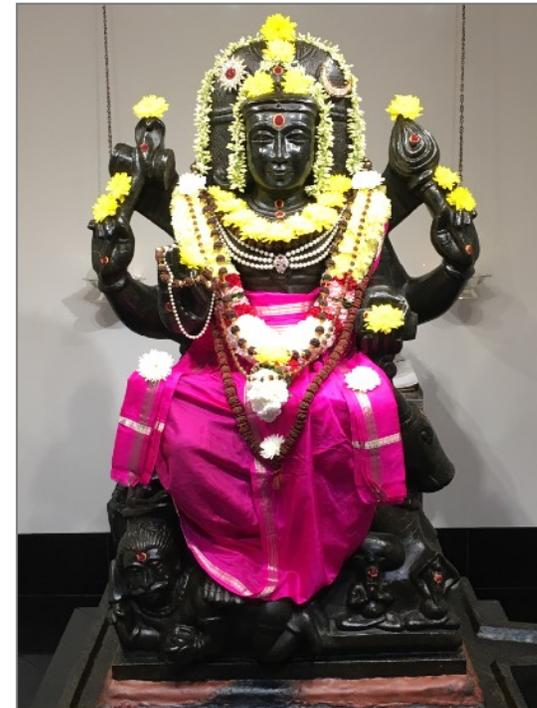
When I got there and had a chance to look around, a sense of panic set in. None of my usual pastimes were available – tv; hanging out with friends; restaurants; shopping, and no car to just take off when I wanted to. I was surrounded by quiet and a feeling of being locked in settled on me.

But this was just what I needed. I was a plant that had been deprived of water. Hearing Swaminiji’s words was nourishment. I got into the

routine of the Ashram - from the morning meditation, followed by prayers, to classes, yoga, the camaraderie of working in the kitchen with the other devotees and exploring the trails around the Ashram. I even grew to anticipate the excellent cuisine, showing much restraint in my helpings of the food. No need for restaurants here; there was a 5 star one on the premises!

The outside world was just across the street from the Ashram in the form of a bazaar. But after only a few days of Ashram life, it was too noisy and chaotic for me.

All too soon it was time for me to go. I remember standing in the airport, feeling bereft and rather lost. The prospect of leaving Swaminiji and the Ashram and returning to the “real” world filled me with sadness. Perhaps the sadness was because I was actually leaving reality and returning to assumed roles that sometimes bind.



Freedom From Scarcity Retreat: DC

by Kavita Meegama



Swaminiji started this retreat with a wonderful example of King Viśvāmitra wanting Kamadhenu, the wish-fulfilling cow, from sage Vaśiṣṭha. Being told that Kāmadhenu would take commands only from a one who did not desire anything, Viśvāmitra underwent *tapas*, austerities, to outshine Vaśiṣṭha in sage-hood! A celestial nymph was sent by the *devatas* to earth to successfully distract Viśvāmitra from his goal and it was only after living for years as a householder, that he finally got to the same place as sage Vaśiṣṭha, but now his

motive was not to outsmart but to know himself. He was now a *ṛṣi*, a spiritually and emotionally developed objective person who does not lack anything.

Kāmadhenu in the above example represents all the desires one wants to fulfill to feel a sense of self-worth. Even those with an over-flowing bank account suffer from this sense of lack. Not knowing that all the desires are making us more and more into a 'wanting lacking person'. All desires, Swaminiji said, rest on security. When security is not found in the world, I have to look elsewhere.

Śāstra helps show us that a crutch free life is possible. We have to move away from misery, greed and delusion and go to a guru for systematic Vedānta study! A guru shows us who we really are, our completeness, someone in touch with their wholeness who will therefore not feel any sense of scarcity. This desire for wholeness is an auspicious desire unlike worldly desire which keeps us wanting infinitely. One who has pursued this wholeness to its logical end is an *āptakāma*, a person who has no desire left to be fulfilled. Therefore make the right decisions, and choose *śreyas*, the whole, over *preyas* which is fulfilling worldly desires. We must realize that everything we

pursue is *śreyas* with a mask of *preyas*. Swaminiji used the analogy of Halloween masks, and a child who comes to your door wearing different masks for more candy, even though the mask is different the child is the same.

There are a few practical tips starting with being non-demanding, non-complaining, non-wanting versions of ourselves. Demanding, complaining, wanting, stem from a place of lack, so we must not give them any room to play. This is not an easy path and for the one who dares to follow this road, all auspiciousness follows; As Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa promises in the Bhagavad Gītā - leave your *yoga-kṣema* i.e: what you don't have and want to acquire, what you have and want to protect, leave that to me says Kṛṣṇa, I will carry the load of all your human endeavors once you choose me, *śreyas*.

Swaminiji also suggested looking at all that comes to us with a sense of gratitude - *prasāda buddhi*. Even accepting one's non-acceptance, seeing everything as having been loaned for care-taking, and letting go of longing, and developing a sense of belonging with everything and everyone, we can start our 'journey' towards *śreyas*. We do this by cultivating a refined mind, rather than our natural mind that is full of anger, greed, jealousy and so on. We make room for plentitude, for Lakṣmi, knowing that she is a visitor and will leave soon, we say 'Thank you for visiting', and bid goodbye. We become prosperous by giving away, by letting go, by sharing. Give till it pinches, so that you are out of your comfort zone, allow Bhagavān to carry you henceforth!





**Washington DC
Labor Day Weekend 2018**

Freedom from Scarcity Retreat: DC

by Chris Almond



Swaminiji's DC retreat saw an enthusiastic group on hand for her handling the topic of Freedom from Scarcity. The series of talks began with the famous story of Viśvāmitra Raj's visit to

Vaśiṣṭha's hermitage. In brief, Viśvāmitra gets excited about something Vaśiṣṭha has that he wants-Kāmadhenu, the cow which represents self-knowledge, but who Viśvāmitra initially thought represented desire fulfillment. Long story short, Viśvāmitra "hulks out" and uses the experience to transform himself into a *jijñāsu*, desirer of knowledge, eventually reaching his goal.

In this story, Viśvāmitra represents our own journey to the self. It was his desire to fully command *śri*, wealth, in the form of Kāmadhenu that led him to pursue self-knowledge. Like Viśvāmitra, we seekers of happiness struggle with thinking we are lacking something. Vedānta tells us the problem is non-recognition of our own *pūrṇatvam*, fullness, that we are already which causes a sense of scarcity. Security is the antidote to scarcity, but the security must be centered on the self not on objects, because the sense of insecurity is centered on wrong ideas about the self. Because we identify with our biography, we are addicted to it believing it when it says repeatedly, "I don't have

enough." This represents a huge disconnect between our own sense of self and what *śāstra* teaches.

Returning to the story, Vaśiṣṭha represents our own guru whose task is to take away our addiction to the unexamined autobiography and replace it with the truth as presented in the Upaniṣads. Swaminiji's role as guru is to be the *mahāvākya upadeśa karta*, the one who unfolds the non-separateness of *jīva* and *Īśvara*, for her students. Throughout the teaching, as we recommit again and again, Swaminiji advises us of the practicality of choosing *śreyas* over *preyas*, self-knowledge over *samsara*. *Preyas*, can only give a sense of scarcity, taking one away from one's nature which is happiness, to pursue happiness as if it existed outside of oneself. Swaminiji compares *preyas* to a dog chewing a bone, its mouth bleeding from the effort and it thinking the bone is the source of the blood. Like this, we think the source of happiness is outside when it is really ourselves alone. In contrast, the pursuit of *śreyas*, one gains the highest while automatically receiving the benefits of *preyas* along the way in the form of naturally unfolding *karma phala*.

Swaminiji went on to offer some immediate practical advice on removing a relative sense of scarcity. In her words: 1) See that all we experience in life is given, 2) See the given as non-separate from the giver. 3) For everything that is given which I don't like, I should either accept it, or accept the non-acceptance of it. 4) See everything as being on loan from Bhagavān. It is only when we put the label of 'mine' on something that a sense of scarcity can occur. This is because it causes a sense of separation or alienation from everything I identify as non mine, making it seem like we must have it to be full. Seeing it all on loan helps to deal with this problem.

Finally, Swaminiji went on to talk about Lakṣmi, and in the vein of pursuing *śreyas* over *preyas* said the way to welcome Lakṣmi was to say goodbye to her in the *preyas* sense and start seeing oneself as an already contented, and appreciative being. We are thankful to Swaminiji for her brilliant linking of beautiful Lakṣmi to our pursuit of freedom from scarcity. May Goddess Lakṣmi win our hearts and guide our intellects away from fear.



**Brahmacari Diksha
Vipascit Chaitanya**



TAT TVAM ASI by Sujatha Garimalla

Tat-tvam-asi is a *mahāvākya*, a condensed gist of the *upaniṣads*, conveying the unchanging and undeniable *jīveśvarya-aikyam*, the oneness, of *jīva* and *Īśvara*. *Tat*, that, refers to *Īśvara*, while *tvam*, you, refers to *jīva*, one that takes her or himself to be an individual with many limitations. *Asi*, are, completes the equation which says that the limited *jīva* is somehow shown to be non-separate from *Īśvara* which, rather than being limited in anyway, has the six *bhagas*, qualities, in full measure: all knowledge, overlordship, all power, all wealth, all fame and fully objective.

The *mahāvākya*, *tattvamasi*, is found in the *Chāndogya upaniṣad*, specifically in the teaching given by Uddālaka to his son Śvetaketu. This dialogical teaching style between a guru and *śiṣya*, student, is frequently found in the *upaniṣads*, and can only be understood with the guidance of a guru. Additionally, in order to fully grasp and assimilate the teaching the student must make her or himself an *adhikāri*, developing *viveka*, the ability to discriminate between the infinite and finite, *vairāgya*, an objectivity towards all that is finite, *śamādiṣṭkasampattiḥ*, emotional maturity traits, and *mumukṣutvam*, the desire for freedom.

Being ignorant of her or his true nature as one with *Īśvara*, the *jīva* is constantly unhappy, seeking happiness in the external world which can never give her or him the completeness that is sought. The wanting, caused by the belief that one is inadequate, will only go when one gains self-knowledge. The person with self-

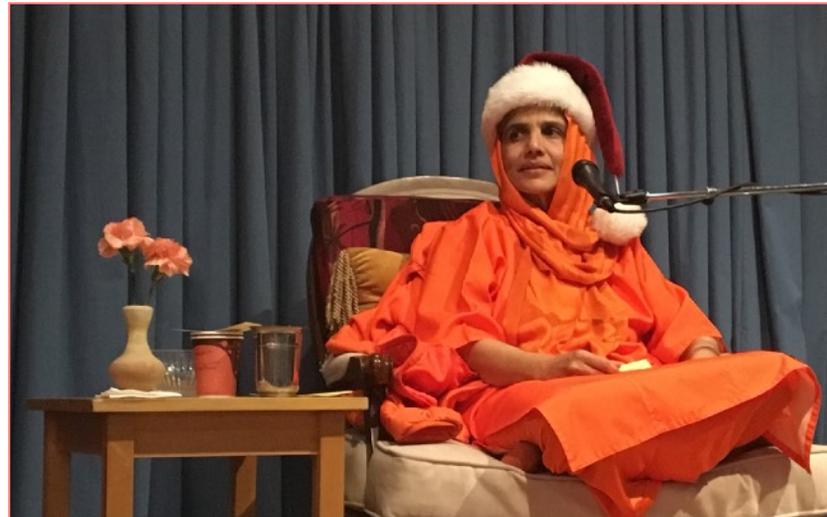
knowledge, knowing her or himself to be whole, does not project *rāgas* and *dveṣas*, likes and dislikes, onto the benign world and is thus freed from striving to change either her or himself or the world.

The *upaniṣad*'s sole purpose is to teach the *jīva* of her or his true nature and the *mahāvākyas* are shorthand for the self-knowledge. With the guidance of a guru the student comes to see that her or his quest for happiness is not something to be gained like other objects; self-knowledge reveals that one is already what one seeks to be - whole and complete, a non-wanting being. In other words, the job of the *upaniṣads* is to make you take a U-turn back towards yourself.

Swaminiji also spoke of the importance of dharma, an inborn desire for doing the right thing, when one is a seeker. Dharma is not a mandate of *Īśvara*, it is a manifestation of *Īśvara*, thus acting in keeping with dharma is accepting *Īśvara* in oneself. For this reason it is very important for a *mumukṣu* to keep dharma and *karma-yoga*,

dedicating all actions to *Īśvara*, always in the forefront.

Finally, we heard how the *cinmudra* of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti beautifully expresses *tattvamasi*. Swaminiji told us how the thumb signifies *Īśvara*, and the pointer finger represents the *jīva*. Just as the pointer must bend to touch the thumb, the *jīva* must bend, or bow, to know itself as *Īśvara*. The other three fingers indicate the body, mind, and senses which are associated with the *jīva*, the pointer finger, and as though separate from *Īśvara*, the thumb. *Tattvamasi*.



AVG Saylorsburg, Tat Tvam Asi





Bahamas, January 2019



Tale of Two Birds: Bahamas Retreat by Kavita Meegama



Swaminiji's talks on the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad titled, 'Tale of Two Birds', were very well received by the attendees at the Sivananda Ashram in Paradise Island, Bahamas. Many long term yoga practitioners, and resident karma yogis were primed to understand and appreciate the subtle teachings of Vedānta in the six sessions between Jan 2nd and Jan 5th 2019. Despite a rigorous schedule to which both the Swamis and the regulars adhere, everyone was very receptive to Swaminiji's humour and her adept unfolding of the complex principles that would normally deter any *sādhaka*.

The first class we learned the meaning of Atharvaveda's *śānti mantra*, '*bhadram karṇebhiḥ,*' Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad being from this *veda*. We also learnt about the main functions of *karma-kāṇḍa*, the ritual section, and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, self-knowledge section, in the Vedas and saw how the former portion helps us to prepare for the latter.

With the above in place, the second class was about the *mumukṣu*, s/he who is desirous of freedom from fear and insecurity in the here and now.

We studied in depth about the student in search of *brahma-jñānam*, why is this search there in the first place and how s/he must approach a guru. The qualifications in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad say that the guru must be from a sound lineage, must have been taught by her/ his guru, and the guru must be also someone who primarily does this for a living, whose whole existence is dedicated to being in this Brahman and conveying the same to people who are seeking. In the third class we learned that a *mumukṣu* should go to a guru when s/he has converted this *mumukṣutvam* into *jijñāsutvam*, being desirous of knowing oneself. Then the guru will teach, including the Tale of the Two Birds found in Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.1.1.

Two winged birds cling to one tree; one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other simply watches. This *mantra* is a wonderful simile for our own sense of individuality, *jīvatvam*, vs what upholds the individual, *ātma*.

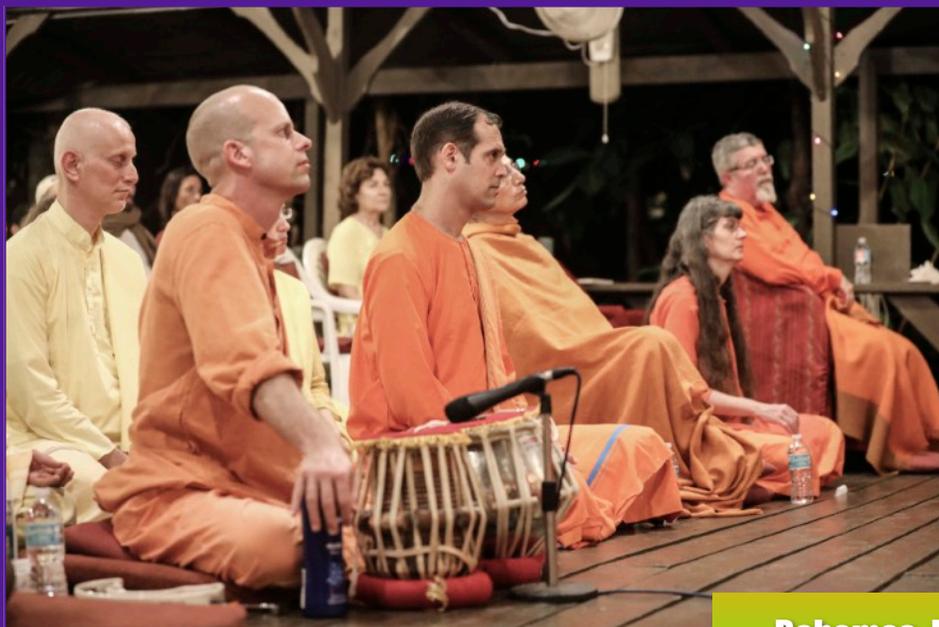
In the fourth class we looked at the tree that the birds were sitting on, a bit more closely and identified it as the tree of *saṁsara*; the *rāga-dveṣa-s*, likes and dislikes, are the branches and the *puṇya-pāpa phala-s*, comfortable and uncomfortable results of action, are the flowers and fruits that we consume. We saw that how our own assumption of being small and separate from something called 'God' is nothing but ignorance of our real nature, which is nothing but the same as that of Bhagavān.

The last day we had two classes on internalizing this teaching, imbibe it in such a way that we live Vedānta 24/7, apply it in our day-to-day lives so to speak. By Īśvara-izing everything I do daily - by looking at my guru, my parents, everyone I meet as an embodiment of Bhagavān, by doing all that I do as an offering to Bhagavān and accepting all the results as *prasāda*, from that same Bhagavān, by not confusing the role that I play with the person who I really am, by identifying always with that *sākṣi*, that witness, who looks at everything and everyone from a distance, by being a *bhakta*, where there is more space for Bhagavān and less of me, by doing *seva*, by surrendering our limited selves at the altar of the limitless we can lead a life that reflects our true being.



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Vedānta Diṇḍima, Milpitas, Ca

by Chaula Joshi

Respected Swaminiji, Śri Vijayji and all fellow students, my name is Chaula Joshi and I have been a student of Vedānta from the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam parampara, learning Vedānta for a number of years, and participating in the regular classes with Śri Vijay Kapoorji.

I am extremely blessed to be sitting in front of You, Swaminiji, listening to these two days of very short but precise messages on Vedānta-Diṇḍima. Your simplicity of examples, from explaining why we should learn Vedānta, to the importance of attaining the goal of *mokṣa* has been marvelous. Your explanation of what

Vedānta is and how, to become *adhikārin*, we have to cultivate *śraddha* in the *sāstra* and guru was so useful. A student qualifies her or himself by asking who am I? Wrong notions, such as, I am unhappy I am *bhogi*, experiencer, have to be dropped. The student must cultivate total *śraddha* in the teachings and the teacher. She or he must get clarity and understanding through doing *śravaṇam*, listening to the teaching, and *mananam*, removing of doubts. Your explanations on the above topics as well as information about the author of these powerful 94 verses, a Shankara from the Shringeri math, and the importance of the verses helps us prepare to study them.



Thank you for bringing examples of relationship in the morning meditations and how to see Īśvara in everything. At first I was not clear but by today I understood that by reducing my expectations of others, it will automatically be easier to see Īśvara in everything. If I am not expecting something from another person, it allows me to create a space and see oneness with Ishwara. By removing doubts and seeing Īśvara in everything, I increase my awareness.

Your sense of humor and making students engage in classes by asking questions makes the delivery of the knowledge and message very interesting. Your explanation of self-ignorance as the ignorance of the nature of the self-existent “I” is very

clear. Even though I know the non-negatable “I,” exists, I do not know the nature of the “I.” “I” is unlike objects and situations in the *jagat*, the manifest universe, which being negatable cannot be said to be existent; nor can objects and situations be said to be non-existent as they are available for transaction. This in-between reality is a dependent reality, *mithyā*, drawing its reality from the non-negatable “I,” the true nature of myself. It is the nature of this “I” that I seek to know.

I seek my blessings from you Swaminiji and all of my Gurus to continue with my spiritual growth.

Adhyāsa Bhāṣya, Milpitas, Ca by Zarina Kaji



Swamini, your teaching is succinct and easily understandable with some examples we have heard before and many others which were new. You shed light on principles of *satyam*, absolute reality, and *mithyā*, dependent reality, by examples such as oneself and one's shadow. You kept us engaged with your humor and rhymes always getting back to the point you were making with finesse and skill, like our dear Pujya Swamiji Dayananda.

With the study of Adi Shankara's *adhyāsa bhāṣya* from the Brahma-sūtras, we learnt to break the associated, patterned thinking that plagues our mind and instead cultivate clear thinking by staying in the present moment. We understand the need to create space between ourself, *ātman*, and the mind, *anātman*, and not permit it to take us for a ride.

Your explanation of the *pūrvapakṣin* as being our own unconscious duality lurking in our minds, was an "ah ha" moment for myself. I used to think that the *pūrvapakṣins* were other people who only wanted to stir up conflicts and create misunderstanding!

Your apt descriptions of the *puruṣarthas* of Dharma, *artha* and *kāma* which all ultimately resolve into the *puruṣartha* for *mokṣa* is reassuring to us on this path, as is understanding that *mokṣa* "is" already, requiring only correct understanding.

You clarified for us the nature of *sat* being at once immanent as the all pervading presence of *Īśvara* in the *jagat*, the manifest universe, and *satyam*, the transcendental Brahman, remaining untouched, *asaṅga*. You explained that the *jagat* is dependent upon *satyam*, it is *mithyā*, and thus a different order of reality from *satyam*.

You taught us not to take ourselves so seriously, knowing all "this" is our insidious *adhyāsa*, mistaken attribution, and not the truth of ourselves. We learned that *Māyā*, the as though two-fold power of *Īśvara*, is responsible for both the appearance of the *jagat* and our own self-ignorance. You pointed out how *āvaraṇa*, *Māyā*'s veiling power, needs to be removed at the collective level so we can know our true nature as non separate from *Īśvara*, whereas *vikṣepa*, *Māyā*'s projecting power, must be removed at the individual level where it manifests as *adhyāsa* so we stop projecting what is not I, *anātma*, onto the "I," *ātma*. You showed us the power of this *adhyāsa* with the rope/snake example wherein there is *āropa*, superimposition, of snake on rope due to ignorance. *Āvaraṇa* at the individual level need not be removed, being the subconscious mind and storehouse of childhood hurts and pains. Nor does *vikṣepa* at the collective level need to be removed as it is *Īśvara*'s manifestation of the *jagat*. Once this truth is known, *adhyāsa* disappears and, even though to others it appears as if the one who knows continues to function in the transactional reality, the *jñāni* sees neither doership nor experiencership.

In meditation we contemplated, the glory of *Īśvara*'s manifestation in the various orders seen in the *jagat*. May we surrender to that order which is infallible, that is *Īśvara*. May the knot in our hearts dissolve as we see more of *Īśvara* in everything. May we with your *guru-kṛpa* know that *mokṣa* is our *svarūpa* and *pūrṇatvam* the truth of myself. As our guru, you have shone the light of knowledge upon *adhyāsa* to help us dispel the darkness of self ignorance.

We are indeed blessed and humbly bow down to your lotus feet with reverence and love as we continue our *śravaṇam*, listening, *mananam*, removing doubts, and *nididhyāsanam*, seeing *Īśvara* in everything, to sharpen and clarify our understanding of the *shāstra*.

Swaminiji's Travel and Teaching Schedule

Residential Retreats

Feb 15-18 Retreat at AVG in Saylorsburg, PA on Madhu-Kāṇḍa of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

Contact: Sri Suddhamata suddhata@gmail.com

April 3-7 Retreat in Atlanta, GA “Sri Rudram”

Contact: Sri Ramakrishnan natarajan.ram@gmail.com

June 14-16 Retreat at Sivananda Ashram, Grass Valley, CA

Contact: Swami Dharmananda
yogafarmkarmayoga@gmail.com

June 18 - 28 Eugene, OR Talks in Eugene, Or

Contact: Janani Chaitanya janani_chaitanya@yahoo.com

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. All the recordings for each class will be found in the one file. A list of links can be found at the second link.

<https://livestream.com/Swaminiji>

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

To ensure that you have the most up to date schedule, please visit the ashram website at:

www.arshavm.org.

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