

Discussion Summary September 20, 2015

In today's class, Swamiji continued verses 11 to 15, of the third section of the second chapter of Kathopanishad. The subject of these verses are nature of paramatma, jivatma/paramtma aikyam and benefits of jivatma paramatma aikyam. Swamiji continued to mention the common features of surya prakasha (sun light) and chaithanyam or atma:

- They both are ekam, only one, without a second
- They both are all pervading
- They both are formless
- They both are indivisible
- They both are not tainted by any impurities; the impurities of sukshma sareeram do not affect atma because atma is higher than sukshma sareeram. This is very similar to the pictures projected on a movie theater screen; the screen is not affected by flood or fire that is projected onto the screen.
- They both illumine everything. Sun light illumines all objects; everything internal and external is known only because of atma or chaithanyam

Consciousness does not need matter for existence; consciousness need body/mind complex only for manifestation, but consciousness can exist without body/mind complex. Consciousness does not depend on matter, but matter needs consciousness. Consciousness remains one but seemingly appear to be many because it manifests into many objects, and as a result we mistakenly think that the consciousness in one person is not the same as the consciousness in another person.

Yama dharma raja says that all pervading consciousness resides in your own self, in the form of witness principle, I the experiencer. Only rare seekers recognize this fact.

Paramatma is neither inside you nor outside you; it is you. The seeker who recognizes this wisdom gets everlasting happiness and permanent fulfillment.

Explaining verse 13, Swamiji states that Paramatma is there in every sentient being in the form of consciousness. This consciousness with the power of Maya is Eeswara, and Eeswara fulfills all desires.

Brahmananda, the superlative, unexplainable, everlasting ananda, is never an object of experience because Brahman is not confined by time and space. Brahmananda is the nature of consciousness itself. One can get Brahmananda in the form of wisdom that Brahmananda is the very consciousness, I myself. Sunlight, moonlight, star lights, flashes of lightening or fire do not illumine consciousness. But all these are illumined and known because of consciousness. Swamiji says everything is known only because of self-evident consciousness.

Discussion Summary – September 13, 2015

Continuing his overview of Part 2, Cantos 2, Swamiji says Yama promised to discuss “after death” of an Agyani as well as Brahmaswarupam a little more in mantra # 6. In Mantra 7, Yama describes the endless process of birth and rebirth or Samsara an Agyani has to go through. He describes Samsara as meaning constantly moving, sometimes up and sometimes down. Living in Samsara is a helpless state, says Swamiji.

Mantra # 8: Describing Brahmaswarupam, Swamiji says, it is not a new identity. It is the Consciousness that illuminates the external world, internal world and the state of total blankness (sleep). It is also known as the "I", the Experiencer and Witnesser. Nothing exists beyond the Brahman.

Mantra # 9: Swamiji says all mantras starting with # 9 through # 15 are important because they describe Brahman.

Consciousness is aware of everything. It is in the formed body, but it itself is formless. Citing example of Light, Swamiji says, it illuminates the hall; it is everywhere although light itself is formless and thus not located in a particular place. Body is located, but formless light is not located. It is all pervading and non-localized. The evidence for us is the perceptibility of the body by light.

The light seems to have a shape because of the body. This "one" light seems to become plural by association with body. Yama says the same phenomenon happens to Consciousness. When Consciousness pervades the body, it seems it is located in the body. Thus, we have this feeling of one body and one consciousness. We also feel consciousness is only in our body and that another body has another consciousness. Each Atma also appears to be limited. That, after death, Atma travels, is another misconception, says Yama. He says, Atma is not limited; does not travel and does not separate.

Yama illustrates this phenomenon by providing the three examples of Fire, Air and Sunlight.

Fire or Heat does not have any form. It is everywhere. It is not located. However, it manifests itself in burning wood and this is associated with Agni. Because the burning wood is located in a place, we think Fire is also located in wood. In reality Fire is beyond location of wood. It only appears located because of the manifesting medium, the wood. This medium is also called Upadhi in Sanskrit.

Thus the **unwise** think Atma is in body, while **wise** understand that Atma is all pervading and it is only manifesting itself in a body. Swamiji also says, Consciousness beyond body is normally not experienced. He adds invisibility does not prove Consciousness does not exist.

Mantra #10: The mantra gives us the analogy of air in the same manner as used with fire. Air is manifest in different bodies and it is called Prana. It is in every living being. In between, it is without manifestation. So, here also we think it is plural.

Swamiji says, Scientists also think Consciousness is a limited faculty in an individual. They also believe, at death, it goes away.

Mantra # 11: Here describing Sunlight, Yama says, it is all pervading. It also cannot be polluted by anything. It also does not take the attribute of an object. The Sunlight does not distinguish between good and bad. The illumined one's properties do not affect the illuminator. Thus, the light that falls on water does not make it wet. So also, Chaitnaya spreads over the body and mind but it does not become contaminated.

Describing impurities, Swamiji says, some are inner (and invisible) and some are outer. Inner ones are things that should not be seen and are known as Adhyathmika dosha (psycological issues or sensory issues). Consciousness, however, illuminates all objects.

Take away from today's discussions:

My suggestion:

Our Atma cannot be polluted. Our inner self is always pure. Keep this thought always in mind in good times and bad.

With my good wishes,

Discussion Summary – September 6, 2015

Continuing his overview of Part 2, Cantos 2, Mantra # 5 again, Swamiji says, Atma alone blesses life. Sukshma Sharira allows this body to live. Prana is within Sukshma Sharira. As such, superficially, it appears as if Prana is the basis for life. Yama says, both Prana and Sukshma Sharira are Jadam (inanimate) as such they cannot give life. It is Atma alone that blesses the body with life.

Describing the mechanics of this: Jada Prana is able to borrow life from Atma and thus become sentient. This sentient Prana blesses the body with consciousness. Giving example of a mirror, it reflects sunlight to lighten a dark room. When mirror is removed, the room becomes dark again. The mirror is not the one illuminating, though.

The sun, while it illuminates, it cannot illuminate the room because of walls. The mirror borrows from sun and lightens the room.

Mantra 6: Hereon Yama discusses the very subtle topic of Brahman. He also describes what happens to an ignorant Jivatma after death. In a wise person, the Karana Sharira , Sthula Sharira and Jivatma, all dissolve in Ishwara. He is called a Videhimukta.

Mantra 7: This mantra is important because it discusses rebirth as well as what happens to an Agyani Jivatma after death. Swamiji says science has found no evidence of rebirth, to date. He says, as per Shastras, rebirth is an Aupurusheya

subject. Shastras only provide supporting evidence, not direct evidence. So, when an Agyani dies the Sthula Sharira mingles with Pancha Bhutam. His Jivatma also cannot travel. The subtle and invisible Sukshma Karana Sharira alone survives. It can travel. It travels to another body. The type of body it gets depends on its punya papa Karmaphalani. God does not determine our rebirth, says Swamiji. The body may get its rebirth as a Superior one, such as Devas; as an inferior one such as Plants or animals; or Medium one, such as a Human being. The Sukshma Karana Sharira gets an appropriate body to exhaust its karma phalas. Even to experience a body in the dream state, a physical body is required, says Swamiji. It is not possible to predict the time of another birth, as time cannot be measured and it is relative. As an example, Swamiji says, in a dream we can experience a whole lifetime.

Birth is not an accident. Laws of Karma determine it. We may not remember our previous birth, but God remembers everything, says Swamiji. Our rebirth depends on our Upasana. Upasana here means the topic we dwell on or think of most of the time. He reminded us that: Thought>Action> Habit>Character>Destiny (or destination). Everything begins with thought, says Swamiji.

Mantra 8:

What is Brahman is the topic of this mantra. It is the Consciousness that resides in every being that is also called Purushaha. Puru-Shaha or In-Dweller. Consciousness is always awake, even in our sleeping state. It is the one that illumines the blank mind in sleep state.

Essence of Brahman

“I did not know anything in sleep” is a declaration. Swamiji asks who is this “I” who did not know anything in sleep? “I” am the eternal illuminator of the waking and sleep state of

mind. “I” know, when the mind knows and “I” also know, when the mind does not know. “I” am also the creator, as I like, of my inner universe, through my Vasanas. I am also the creator of the external universe, during the waking state. “I” the illumining consciousness is ever pure. This consciousness is Brahman. This “I” is “in” the body as well as “outside” the body. Like space it is all pervading. It is immortal and does not die, when body dies. Swamiji now says, “All bodies” are in this consciousness. Thus, “in” our body is consciousness. Nothing exists beyond this consciousness. That Atma is you, declares Swamiji. The whole world is in me; it arises in me and dissolves in me. We constantly think of ourselves as “in” this world and are buried with our worries and problems. Swamiji asks us to change our perception to: “The World is in me”.

Take away from today’s discussions:

Suggested Practice:

1. Constantly be aware of the eternal “I” within us. This is the greatest Upasana we can perform.
2. Essence of Brahman described above, try to understand it and internalize it.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary – August 23, 2015

Mantras 1 and 2 Continued:

Continuing his overview of Part 2, Cantos 2, Swamiji says

Vedanta has four stages of evolution. The four stages of Vedanta are:

1. First stage is recognizing the separation of Body from Consciousness. This is also called Atma – Anatma Viveka. To be aware of this separation may take a long time even several births.
2. Second stage is to learn to shift the “I” from the body to consciousness, says Swamiji. Become aware that “ I am the consciousness that has incidentally got a body. I may lose this body at any time. I do not know when I will leave this body”.
3. Third stage is becoming aware that “I” the consciousness is not just present in this body alone but in all bodies. I am that space like consciousness present in all bodies. Aham Brahma Asmi. In this stage, I see myself in everything. Swamiji says, at this stage we still are in the Dvaita.
4. Fourth stage brings the question “what is my relationship with matter”? Swamiji says , at this stage you will become aware that “ I am not only operating in every body, but all bodies are my own manifestation. I am Brahman. I am Jagad Karanam. I am myself manifesting as a body as well. I create the body and I choose to transact through these bodies as well”. In this stage, I am conscious that I am in Sarva-atma Bhava.

Swamiji says questions do arise in a devotee’s mind if all above premises are valid. The best example or proof of this is in our ability to create a dream body, within a dream space and dreamtime. You create the dream body; you then see, through the dream body, the entire dream world. You accept the dream world as an independent reality.

Mantra # 3: Discussing this mantra Swamiji reiterates that it is the Atma as Chiddabasha that animates the physical body.
Atma (Blesses)> Reflected Consciousness > (blesses/animates)
Physical body.

As long as Reflected Consciousness (RC) is there, body lives and once it quits, the body dies. At death, Swamiji says, mind does not die; it just decides to quit the body. So, once reflecting medium (RM) does not reflect, the Chidabasha also goes or stops blessing the body.

So the definition of death is that when the Mind and Reflected consciousness (RC) separate from physical body, it is death. In a dead body the Original Consciousness is still there, however, it just cannot bless the body.

Describing the Atma, Swamiji says it is present in our heart. It is recognizable in our mind as the Experiencer. Atma is in the temple called body. The five sense organs are like Pujaris making regular offerings to the divine Atma.

Mantra's #4 & # 5:

Swamiji says, when atma is present, body is alive and when it quits the body is dead. At death, the Reflected Consciousness goes away. The Reflecting Medium (Sukshma sharira) also goes away. The most important part of subtle body, the Prana, also goes away. Swamiji says, it is finally the RC that is blessing this body with life and not the Prana.

Take away from today's discussions:

My suggestion:

Many of us are probably in stage one of the Vedantic stages. Our efforts should be directed towards recognizing the separation of Body from Consciousness. We should keep the following mantra in our mind at all times. "I am not this body, mind or thought. I just am."

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary – August 16, 2015

Starting Part 2, Cantos 2, Swamiji says Yama continues his discourse on Atmaswarupa. Atma is very subtle and understanding it is not easy. To further enhance Nachiketas' understanding of the subject Yama is continuing his commentary on the subject, however, from a somewhat different perspective.

In Mantra # 1, comparing our body to a city and Jivatma to be its King, Swamiji says, our body also has many attributes of a city. Thus, it has people; it has roads, drains, essential functions that work round the clock and an industry as well. This city has 11 gates and they are: the Eyes, Ears, Nostrils, Mouth, 2 openings for waste matter, one Nabhi (used only during pregnancy for feeding the child) and one at Crown of head. Swamiji says the opening at head only opens when an Upasaka dies and goes to Brahmaloaka.

Swamiji now says while the Body is changing the Jivatama does not change. He says our aim in life should be to claim: "I am the Puraswamy and not the Puram" or I am the Atma and not the body. Puram, the city is our body and Puraswamy, its king, is the Jivatma.

Swamiji strongly recommends we practice Sravanam, Mananam and Nididhyasanam on this subject. The focus of this exercise is to be aware at all times that the body-mind-thought complex is not the same as Atma. Once we realize this truth we will have no sorrow in life. You will become a Jivanamukta or liberated soul in this very life. You will also obtain the freedom from the cycle of rebirth.

In Mantra # 2, Swamiji says, the Jivatama that pervades my body also pervades everybody else's bodies as well. Jivatama is like space it pervades everything. Swamiji points out that while Bodies are referred to in plural, Jivatma is referred to in singular or as One Atma that pervades many bodies. Yama, describing Jivatma, says it is the all pervading one that also pervades the Sun, the Air, the Sacred Fire, the Devas and the Humans.

Further describing Jivatma, Swamiji says The Body-Mind Complex is inert. The Atma blesses the Sukshma Sharira with Chidabhasha, which in turn blesses the Sthula Sharira or our physical body. This is what energizes our body.

Atma>Sukshma Sharira> Sthula Sharira.

(My note: Chidabhasha is the term used to denote the reflected Universal Self in the Jiva, the Individual Self. Swamiji also calls it Reflected Consciousness.)

At death, since Sukshma Sharira quits the body, the blessing of Atma is not available anymore to the Sthula Sharira and hence our physical body dies. Swamiji says your breath is proof of Atma's blessing. It is this Atma that gives us life. How can you forget this Atma, asks Swamiji.

Note: In this mantra "Pranam" is breath going out and "Apanam" is breath coming in.

Take away from today's discussions:

1. Be aware at all times that the body-mind-thought complex is not the same as Atma. You are the Atma. This should be part of one's ongoing Sravanam, Mananam and NididhyAsanam.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary, August 9, 2015

In Part 2, Cantos 1, Shlokas 11 through 14 respectively, Swamiji continued the discussion of the Atman or Consciousness as Jivatma and Paramatma.

He says shlokas 5 through 10 taught us that the Atma is everything. Anatma, signifying name and form, in reality, does not exist. Giving analogy of jewelry, Swamiji says, from the one gold many jewels are made, with different names and forms, yet, the reality is, it is all made of gold. So also, all Anatma is also made of Atma or Consciousness.

In Mantra # 11, Swamiji now says, this knowledge of Atma is not optional. It is compulsory, as without this knowledge, we cannot obtain peace of mind, feel secure and feel fulfilled. This is the goal of every human being and is called Moksha Purnatvam.

In Shloka # 12, Swamiji now describes Jivatma. This Mantra is also called a Mahavakyam. Swamiji says, The Jivatma is located, seemingly, in the heart of the Sukshma Shariram. It is the Sakshi, witness, of the mind. He describes the heart as the size of a fist. The heart has space inside, the size of an individual's thumb. In this space is located the mind and in this mind is located the Consciousness. So, Consciousness is thought of as the size of a thumb because it is manifest in the mind. Although, in reality, it is the size of the limitless Paramatma.

Giving example of a pot with a limited space within it, Swamiji says, if you inquire into it, you realize that in reality space is also outside the pot. Furthermore, you will

also realize that the pot itself is in space and not the other way around. This space is the one Consciousness. Thus, there is only one Atma; Jivatma and Paramatma are one and same. Once you know this truth, you will not feel insecure anymore, says Swamiji.

Shloka 13, Swamiji says, is another Mahavakyam. Seemingly, Jivatma is confined to the body. So we think it is finite and limited. It is compared to a smokeless flame. It is the Consciousness that illuminates everything including our sense organs. This "Light" within us is both Jivatma and the Paramatma. Even when the brain is gone and when the body is dead, this Consciousness continues on. Yama says, it is eternal.

In Shoka 14, Yama says, Dvaita Darshanam leads to mortality. Swamiji now gives us some examples. Giving example of water flowing down a hill, after heavy rains, that becomes many streams and dissipates in the earth versus becoming one large stream that becomes a mighty river. Giving another example of the Wave feeling it is an individual Wave rather than feeling it is part of the Ocean. So also, the choice before us is, do we feel as an individual Wave or as a part of the Ocean, asks Swamiji. Advaita Darshanam leads to immortality. Citing yet another example, Swamiji says, Jivatma is like a glass of water and Paramatma is the Ocean. Both are water and pure. Once you pour one into another they become one and the same.

So also, through our Vedantic Bhavana, we are pouring Jivatma into Paramatma and the difference disappears. However, Swamiji says, to become one with Paramatma, the Jivatma needs to be pure. The merger of Jivatma and Paramatma is an intellectual event. By right understanding, we become aware that Jivartma and Paramatma are one and same.

Take away from today's discussions:

1. To reach Advaita (one without a second) many of us have

to go through Dvaita (plurality). That is the reason we worship so many different gods. However, as wisdom dawns, and we mature we will see everything is Advaita.

2. Bhakthi is one way to reach Advaita. That is why in Hinduism god is worshipped in many forms such as a child, lover, mother and so on. The devotee is totally immersed in God, in that mode of worship and this eventually leads to the realization of the One truth.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary August 2, 2015

In Part 2, Cantos 1, Shlokas 9, 10 and 11 respectively, Swamiji continued the discussion of the Atman or Consciousness. He says the one Atma or original consciousness (OC) is reflected in everything. This reflection or manifestation depends on the reflecting medium. Thus, some are bright and others are dull.

One who is absorbed in the media will only see plurality and mortality. However, if one knows, one is the eternal Atman functioning through one's body and mind, one will know I am immortal. One will also look at the world, as one do with one's Atman. As I am, so I look at others says Swamiji. This is Advaita Darshanam. Giving example of the wave he says, when it sees itself as a wave, it is mortal, however, when it sees itself as Water then it feels "I am the Immortal Water". Thus, Swamiji says, we need to bring a change in our perspective to

bring this change within us.

There is no plurality at all. Division belongs to name (Nama) and form (Rupa). However, behind all this is one Non-dual Consciousness.

So how do we remove our misconceptions? He says, we need to get knowledge. The way to get knowledge is:

1. To prepare the mind for Atmagyanam. Practicing Karma Yoga is the best way of preparing the mind.
2. To hear Guru Upadesha also called Vedanta Srvanam is the next step. It is also called Shabda Pramanam.

Swamiji declares, If you get this knowledge, your perspective will change.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary July 26, 2015

Discussing part 2 Cantos 1, Shlokas 6,7, 9 and 8, Swamiji continued the discussion of the Atman or Consciousness. The subtle universe was born out of Causal universe (the seed). The Causal universe was always there even before creation. He compares the Causal Universe to the state before the big bang.

Thus: Karana Sharira (Causal) > Sukshma Sharira (Subtle also called Ishwara) > Hiranyagarbha (first born). Ishwara through tapas creates Hiranyagarbha. Tapas is the mere wish of Ishwara.

Thus, the one Samanya Chaitanya, general consciousness, expresses itself in micro and macrocosm. It expresses itself in the three pairs:

1. The Physical body, we all can experience it.
2. The Subtle body, that only I can experience and not others.
3. The Causal Body, that remains dormant and can be experienced only when it manifests itself. This is the subtlest stage of inner material.

And correspondingly we have:

1. Waker consciousness
2. Subtle body consciousness
3. Causal body consciousness

The total deity is born as Hiranyagarbha. Hiranyagarbha consists of the 17 Tatvas or elements They are: 5 organs of perception (Ear, Eye, Tongue, Skin and Nose), 5 organs of action (Speech, Hand, Leg, Excretion and Genital), 5 Vital air's (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana and Samana), the Mind (manaha) and Intellect (budhi).

Swamiji says for each of the 17 Tatvas or elements there is a corresponding Devta. Prana Devta is most important, as without him we cannot survive. All Devtas are born, maintained and resolved in Hiranyagarbha, in its cycle of creation, maintenance and destruction.

Swamiji says Agni Devta represents Vishwavidat or Stula Prapancha. Virat- Agni is worshiped by a group of people by lighting the sacred fire. Rubbing two pieces of wood called Arani lights the sacred fire. Another form of Agni called Vaishwanar-agni (our internal digestive power) is also worshiped by some. All of them, says Swamiji, represent our one consciousness, the Atman.

The take away from this session was the idea of a Yagna is

making an offering to God. In the same spirit we should offer every action of ours as an offering to our Atman. Discussing Karma Yoga, Swamiji says “And when I perform the actions out of Ishvara Arpana Bhaṁana, and when I receive the processed Karma in form of Phalam, I don’t call it Karma Phalam, but I call it Iṣhvara Prasaḁaha.”

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary July 19, 2015

On July 19, 2015, the Vedantic Discussion Group of HTGC listened to 31st lecture of Katha Upanishad by Swami Paramarthananda. This lecture covered slokas 5 and 6 of the first carnto of second part of the Upanishads. Ram Ramaswamy of the group captured the lecture and the discussion followed. If any body else has a different take on our please share it with rest of the group.

Discussing part 2 Cantos 1, Shlokas 5 and 6, Swamiji continued the discussion on the Atman or Consciousness. He described Atman as the Witness or Experiencer of all three stages of existence of Waking, Sleeping and Dreaming states. Consciousness expresses itself through matter or manifests itself through matter. Describing the material universe, Swamiji, says it is divided into three pairs. Thus:

1. The Physical body, we all can experience it.
2. The Subtle body, that only I can experience and not others.

3. The Causal Body, that remains dormant and can be experienced only when it manifests itself. This is the subtlest stage of inner material.

Correspondingly we have:

1. Waker consciousness
2. Subtle body consciousness
3. Causal body consciousness

Describing the Atman, he says, it is also the Ishwara, the Creator, the lord of past, present and future. The Atman, he says, is also the Pragyaha, the Created, the Samsari and the Bhoktha of Karma Phala. Thus Creator and Created are both of the same universal principle.

The take away from this session, at least for me, was Swamiji's comment that the sense of insecurity goes away once you have the knowledge of Atman. Insecurity is our feeling of lacking or the need for more and more. The closer we get to Atman; there will be fewer and fewer wants and desires.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary July 12, 2015

On July 12, 2015, the group listened to Swami Paramarthananda's 30th class on Katha Upaishad. This class covered verses 3 and 4 of first section of second chapter.

The following was captured by Ram Ramaswamy in today's lecture. If any body else has a different take on our

discussion, we hope they will share it.

Discussing part 2 cantos 1 Shlokas 3 and 4 Swamiji today discussed the Atman or Consciousness. He described Consciousness as:

1. Independent of body and mind
2. Not limited by anything
3. All pervading
4. Eternal principle

The body is only a medium for its manifestation, similar to the bulb that manifests electricity. Death is the end of its manifestation. After death it continues in an un-manifest form. Swamiji says ownership of Consciousness is our goal. How to achieve this ownership? He lays out three methods. In a process that he calls Observer Observed Analysis, he recommends:

1. Keep negating the observed world of objects, the external world. The world of objects is experienced through: Touch, Color/Form, Taste, Smell and Interactions (mithuna). Interactions include all human interactions such as between man and woman, teacher and student etc.
2. Negating my body. Treat it as an object of experience
3. Observe the mind. Treat it as an object of experience. Negate the mind as well. Treat all properties of mind including the thoughtless state experienced in meditation as an object of experience, hence to be negated.

Thus, when all experienced objects are removed through negation what is left is the Subject or Experiencer. Swamiji reiterates that once you know this Experiencer (Consciousness, Atman), from that time on there is no scope for sorrow.

So the question was how do we become aware of the Atman? What Practices can be adopted? Some of the suggestions from group

were:

Pain is part of the human experience we have all been through sorrow of one kind or another but we can also use these painful episodes by a process of evaluation of ourselves, so we may grow spiritually, to determine where we are in this quest for enlightenment. The methodology is as follows:

We ask the questions: how deep is our sorrow? How long do these episodes last? How resilient is the human spirit in shaking off these situations so we come to the realization that our true identity is that we are inexorably bound to that Supreme Being who is always in a state of Satchidananda, and so by default as it were, we are also in that same state of mind.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy