

Discussion Summary, October 4, 2015

Continuing his recap from last week of mantras 1 and 2 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us that this third and final section of Katho Upanishad deals with Atmavidya, Brahavidya Sadhanani and preparation for Brahavidya.

Describing the role of Brahman as the Creator, Swamiji says, Brahman is the keeper of law and order. Behind Brahman is Maya the female principle. Swamiji says Brahman and Ishwara are interchangeable. He also clarified that Brahman + Maya=Ishwara. He says we have to accept Brahman as the law. With law we need an enforcement agency. This enforcement principle is called Ishwara. Ishwara is like Vajra or the fear and threat principle. Human beings and Beings in general, have poor self-discipline. Fear enforces discipline, hence the use of word God fearing person. One who knows this truth will attain liberation.

Shloka # 3:

Here Yama explains why Brahman is feared. He says all Devatas of natural forces function as per law of the Earth, Prithvi Devta. Similarly for Sun, there is Surya Devata. Yama says Devatas are frightened of Ishwara. Fire, Sun, Vayu, Indira (rain), are all afraid of him, the invisible intelligence. Mrutyu (Yama) also runs to perform his work fearing this law. Swamiji says only Ishwara Aikyam can help us. Markandeya's embrace of Shiva lingam is an example. Here Markandeya was not embracing just the lingam, he was embracing the Shiva Aikyam.

Shloka # 4:

Now Yama explains the conditions required for Brahma Gyanam. First condition is, we should be human beings. The Shastra's say there are 85 lacs (8.5 million) of species, so chances of

being human are fairly small. Swamiji says we should use our human birth properly. It is a boat for crossing over to God. It is a costly boat. It needs a lot of Punyam. We should remember that this boat will disappear. If one squanders this opportunity, he or she will be fit only for another birth, in another body and not necessarily in a human body. The birth may also be in any one of the 14 lokas created by the Lord.

Shloka #5:

Yama now discusses if the knowledge of Atman can be acquired in any other loka? He accepts it can be obtained in other lokas, however, he feels the human birth is the best of all. Describing different lokas he says:

1. In a human intellect one can gain knowledge like seeing one's face in a clear mirror.
2. In Pitra Loka also knowledge can be obtained. However, here, it will not be very clear. It will be more like a dream, as it moves very fast.
3. In Gandharva Loka, a world of music, dance, art and enjoyment, knowledge appears like the reflection of your face in water. Here also one can gain knowledge.
4. In Brahma Loka knowledge is very clear, like darkness and light. Here also knowledge can be obtained.

Swamiji says. Of the four, two are vague, while Brahma Loka is very difficult to obtain. To obtain Brahma Loka, one has to perform a lot of Upasana, including at the time of death.

Swamiji says getting human birth is difficult. And since we are already here, let us not postpone obtaining this knowledge.

Shloka # 6:

Giving us the method of reaching this knowledge, Swamiji says, Atma/AnAtma Viveka must be discriminated. The knowledge Aham Brahmasmi should dawn in us. While Aham refers to Sthula

Sharira, Karna Sharira, Sukshma Sharira and Chaitanya, the Aham referred to here is only Chaitanya. Any other reference of Aham does not identify with Atman. Withdraw from Anatma to Atma , says Swamiji.

Swamiji says we should disown instruments of interaction. Sense organs are only temporary instruments, only for my use. Even without them, I continue to exist. Giving an example, Swamiji says we sometimes forget that spectacle is not part of us. Thus every instrument is an intimate object to subjects and often considered a part of subject. During waking state all sense organs , including mind, “come out” and during sleep state, they all get resolved. However, through all this, “I” continue as witness. Whatever is incidental, such as sense organs, are subject to departure. Incidental stuff is not my Nature. They are separate from me. They are separately born and gone. Even when eyes are gone, “I” continue to exist as awareness and consciousness. Once this is understood, we can understand “ Aham Brahma Asmi”. I am the limitless one.

Such a person of fine intellect, a Viveki, gets the advantage of having no grief in life, says Swamiji. Grief comes with identification with body. This causes us to think we are mortals. The thought “ I am mortal” is however not comfortable to me. This is against my nature. When anything unnatural happens “I” reject it, naturally. It will go away when I do not identify with my mortal body. Body is mortal. “I” am immortal. This way, old age, separation etc. become more acceptable.

Suggested Practice:

In context of Shloka # 6 following thoughts of Anusuyaji comes to mind: Eliminate the small “I” in all aspects of life. Don’t think in terms of my wife, my son, and my house etc., where the “I” identification comes in. The eternal “ I” will automatically arise.