

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 Pramatta 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 Vishwavirat 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 Experienter. Swamiji reiterates that once you know this Experienter (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

Discussion Summary July 5, 2015

Thanks to Ram Ramaswamy for this excellent summary of today's class and discussion.

Swamiji started chapter two canto 1 today. In the first three shlokas

swamiji says to realize Atman the mind has to be inward focused rather

than outwards towards the external/material world. He described the

three defects of external world. The defects are:

1. Pain or sorrow (दुःख)

2. Lack of satisfaction (ஐயம்நிறைவு)

3. Dependence or Attachment (ஐயம்)

Swamiji further describe Anathma (contrary to Atman). The three Anathmas are:

1. The external world
2. The human body
3. Our mind

Body and mind are also required to realize Atman.

So the question was how do we make the mind inward focused?
What
practices can be adopted? Some of the suggestions from group
were:

1. Pujas and rituals are important in that they create the mood and
set the tone for further forays into the world of enlightenment
2. When you have meditated for some time, and have listened to the
spiritual masters- you catch a glimpse of the divine or whatever else
you may call it- you thirst for more.
3. Markandeya embracing the lingam, becoming one with the supreme
consciousness, thus defying Yama was powerful imagery -
suggesting that
when man becomes so one with the Divine, that he can
even keep Death
at bay. With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary, June 28, 2015

Thanks to Ram Ramaswamy for this summary:

During our discussion today, Swamiji summarized the three cantos (also called Valli's). In the first Valli (canto) Swamiji reminded us that Nachiketas felt his first duty was to society, then to family and lastly to himself as the individual self. The group discussed this particular subject and the actions/practice(s) we can take away for our daily lives.

In general, there appears to be a consensus that Hindus for some reason do not seem to come together to benefit or serve society. Rather, we seem to be more focused on our own self-improvement leading to self-knowledge. While our religion does teach service to society we seem to practice it at an individual level rather than as a collective.

What can we, the Vedanta group, do about it? How can we act on this teaching was the question?

Some ideas that came up:

1) Vedanta group should be a support group to all its members in times of their need such as death, disease or some other source of grief.

2) If any member is in need of help he or she should contact Ravi.

Ravi will let the rest of group know.

3) We should compile the Vedanta group members name, address, and phone and email details and publish it. Of course, if privacy is requested it should be honored. Some felt we do not know each other very well within the group, yet.

4) Another thought was each member should join some group of his or her choosing and perform their service to society.

There may be more ideas that were not brought up.

These are only food for thought for group to discuss and decide upon a course of action. We can also choose to do nothing. We can also decide to leave it in a parking lot for consideration in future.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary June 21, 2015

During our discussion today we discussed Karma yoga. For those who

feel they are not prepared for Gyana yoga for them Swamiji recommends

practice of Karma yoga. In this context the question was raised as to

what are some practical applications of Karma yoga one can take away.

Interesting ideas were brought out. I share some of them:

1. Speak Good, Hear good, See good and Think/Do good. This was a

take from the three wise monkeys. Practice this.

2. Look at the unity in diversity.

3. Eliminate the "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. I was informed that this practice is very powerful.

4. Swamiji's lectures on Geeta are an excellent source to go to.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy