

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 (असंतुष्टि)
3. Dependence or Attachment (अविद्या)

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