

Discussion Summary, November 1, 2015

Swamiji as part of his closing remarks on Katho Upanishad reminded us of the essence of second chapter.

Valli 1, Mantras 1 to 3:

Yama discussed disciplines, one of them being control of senses. Sense organs are outward looking. It is not acquired. It is instinctive. So, we are fighting our own nature. It needs a lot discrimination and will power. Some rare people master sense organs. Suppression of our senses is a control from outside. Mastery is from the inner knowledge. If one does not have sense control we will be lost in the ephemeral world of Kama or mortality including going through the cycle of birth and re-birth. So understand and master the sense organs, says Swamiji.

Valli 1, Mantras 3 to 13 :

Here Yama answers questions about Atma Swarupam. Atma is Consciousness or Chaitanya. Consciousness is not part of the body.

- . It is an independent entity that pervades and enlivens the body.
- . It extends beyond the body and is all pervading.
- . Consciousness continues to exist even after fall of body. It is eternal. It is not bound by time.
- . The Consciousness principle is the reason we are conscious of everything

Even though it is all pervading and one, it manifests in matter media in different ways. Why so? This is because of the quality of the medium. Thus electricity manifests itself in a fan as a mechanical motion while in a bulb as light.

The manifestation of consciousness occurs at three levels:

At the gross level:

1. Samashti Karana Prapancha or Total Causal Universe or Seed Form.
2. Samashti Sukshma Prapancha or the Subtle Consciousness or Hiranyagarbha and
3. Sthula Prapancha or total gross universe or Virat Chaitanya.

At the micro level:

1. Karana Shariram- Pragma Chaitanya
2. Sukshma Shariram – Saigasa Chaitanya
3. Sthula or Vishwa Chaitanya.

All six are different manifestations of Chaitanya in matter. It should be noted that micro and macro are only in matter. No such thing exists in Consciousness.

Consciousness is one but there is plurality in matter. Why?

Yama says there is no plurality in matter as well. It is same consciousness in matter as well. Consciousness with Nama and Rupa is matter.

Valli 1, Mantras 14 & 15:

Benefits of this vision:

One who sees Dvaita is born again and again. Where as one who sees Advaita becomes immortal.

Giving examples Swamiji says rainwater flowing down a mountain separately eventually gets absorbed in earth. While streams that flow down, if they merge, eventually flow down and merge into ocean. Similarly, when a wave sees itself as a wave it is mortal. The same wave when it sees itself as water becomes immortal.

Valli 2, Mantras 1-7:

These seven mantras are dedicated to Atma Swarupa Varnanam.

Jivatma is at micro level.

Paramatma is at macro level

Atma is at individual's own level.

Atma alone makes every material being alive. Atma lends consciousness to Prana. Prana thus becomes sentient. Prana then lends Consciousness to physical body. Thus body borrows from Atma through Prana. If there were no consciousness the body would be dead. Every activity in every organ is an expression of Chaitanya.

Valli 2, Mantras 8-16:

In these mantras Atma is looked at from a micro angle. The Atma is not located in the body. Rather all bodies are located in Consciousness.

Giving an example: Space is within the hall. Space is outside the hall as well. Reality is that space is all pervading.

Being Sarva Aadharam, Atma is all pervading. Example: The fire principle pervades entire earth, as does the air principle. When fire permeates metals, it seems shaped like the metal. Reality is, fire is in all metals, and in between them as well, in a furnace. Fire is formless but has form when in contact with a medium or so it seems. It

is the same with Consciousness. Even though Consciousness is all pervading it is not affected by anything. Sunlight pervades everything but it is not touched by water, color, smell etc. So also Consciousness is not tainted in any way.

Since Consciousness is all pervading it is the only One, there is not another. Other philosophies like Samkhya say there are many Atma's. They say, each body has an Atma. In Advaita, this One Atma appears as many. It manifests in a pluralistic world or as Jagat Karanam.

This Atma is Nityaha. Everything else is Anithyam. Clay is there before, during and after creation of the pot. It is the Pot that is subject to birth and death.

Atma is the cause or Karanam

Valli 3, Mantras 1-4: In these mantras Yama summarizes Atma Swarupa. Atma is alone the cause, the maker and material of the universe. Just like the spider is the intelligent cause of the web, Atma is the intelligent and material cause of the universe.

Valli 3, Mantras 5-13:

In these mantras the preparatory disciplines or the four Sadhanas are described:

1. Remembering the great human birth. Do not take it for granted. In this human birth alone gyana is possible. In Brahma loka also it is possible but it is a difficult place to get into.

2. Atma/ AnAtma Viveka. The "I" is a mixture of body, mind complex as well as Consciousness. "You" are the body and Consciousness. I is Tvampada.

3. Yoga Abhyasa or meditation to discipline the mind. The goal is to withdraw the mind or focus it in a field. This absorption is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. It is also called Sadhana.

4. Shradha in the words of Guru and Scriptures. Give them the benefit of doubt. Listen with Shradha.

Valli 3, Mantras 14-18

In these mantras Gyana Phalam is discussed. They occur in three forms.

1. Sarva Granthi nashaha. All knots are removed. All

ignorance and misconceptions are destroyed.

2. Sarwa Kama Nashaha. All desires, all binding desires, expecting fulfillment, are gone. Non-binding desires do not affect us any way. Thus we obtain Kama Moksha.

3. Brahma Praptihi. Oneness with Brahman is obtained. Dropping the notion of division between Atma and me. Yama says the result of these benefits is available here and now.

4. The phalam of Nachiketas ritual with Virat-upasana was discussed. This will result in Krama mukti. In Brahma Loka one is liberated.

Lastly, Upanishads say, who ever gained this knowledge will also get the benefit same as Nachiketas.

Thus Katho Upanishad was concluded.

Suggested Practice:

Consider going back through these notes or listen to Swamiji's talks, periodically, to reinforce the learning from this great Upanishad.

With my good wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Discussion Summary, October 25, 2015

Greetings All,

Continuing his recap from last week of Mantra 13 in Part 2,

Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us that in this last and final section Yama is summarizing Brahma Vidya and enumerating some qualifications required for it, as well as, the benefits of this knowledge. With Verse # 13 the first two requirements of what is Brahma Vidya and qualifications required for it have been completed. Faith in Brahman is required. Brahman is not available for objectification by the mind, senses or words. It is totally without attributes. Even Philosophers do not accept Nirguna Brahman. So Sraddha is very important until we absorb the teachings. This open mindedness is very important and is called Shradha. Now we are entering the description of the Phalam of obtaining Brahma Vidya.

Mantra # 14:

Phalam is freedom here and now. Freedom from what, asks Swamiji? It is not freedom from the physical body. It is the inner freedom from fear, anger, insecurity etc. all symptoms of Samsara. Above all it is freedom from Kama. Due to ignorance we identify with the body mind complex. Due to Ahamkara, ignorance expresses itself in life as something wanting. Since, I cannot withstand limitation, there is always a struggle to remove this limitation. Thus, we experiment and have long struggles to obtain Purnatwam. Kama freedom is freedom from this struggle. I do not do anything for this completion. I do everything out of this completion. Samsara is the binding desire while non-binding desire is with completion. The binding desire goes away with Brahma Vidya.

All desires are located in the mind including desire for moksha or desire for desire less-ness. Even this goes away. Gyana recognizes I am That. Such a person is immortal, free from the cycle of births. Our next birth is decided in this life, at time of death, by our strongest desire. So he is beyond the cycle of life and deaths. It is the "I" who thought he is mortal, now thinks he is immortal. It is an intellectual

journey, not a physical one. The notion of mortality is lost. He becomes one with Brahman, here and now. Moksha is even while we are alive. This is known as Jivan mukta.

Other philosophies believe moksha is obtained only after death or dropping this body.

Mantra # 15:

Here a different aspect of Phalam is presented. With Brahma Vidya the Hridaya Grantha (knots) are destroyed. Shankara says ignorance is the knot. Like a knot it becomes firm and hence difficult to remove.

A knot is that which joins two things. I, the Atma, am associated with body mind complex due to Abhimana. Thus a knot is formed. I think of myself as the body. Ahamkara is the cause of the knot. Deha Abhimana is dropped due to this knowledge. So this mortal Jeeva notion now becomes immortal. Body is mortal but I am not mortal. The Abhimana in us is the Samsara. When somebody dies we do not feel anything. However, when it happens to somebody near, Abhimana comes in, including for my own body. The idea I am mortal is dropped. Yama now concludes and says, this much is my teaching.

Mantra # 16:

In previous two mantras Yama taught the phalam of Brahma vidya. Now he talks about the second boon of Nachiketas called Nachiketa ritual (Karma with Upasana) that is conducted on Nachiketa Agni. Karma Upasana Samuchaya (combination); giving us an example of this, Swamiji says, when a mantra is chanted with a clear picture of it in mind, rather than blind chanting, it gives higher results. So, chanting the mantra is Karma. Chanting it with focus is Upasana. If one obtains Karma Moksha Mukthi, at death, he will go Brahma Loka via Sushumna Nadi. There, he will obtain Brahma Vidya. If one does Karma without Upasana, at death, he will be emerge from other Nadis and will be born again. Nadis are passages in our

body. There are 101 Nadis and only one emerges at top of crown.

Mantra #17:

Yama once again discusses Jeevan Mukthi or Brahma Vidya Phalam.

Antar Atma is as though the size of a thumb. It is also called Purusha (pure vasathi) it dwells in and beyond the body. It is also the Atma. It is present in heart and mind of every one as Consciousness, as the witness of all thoughts and absence of all thoughts. It is within the Anatma Shariram. Brahma Vidya separates the Consciousness from the

body mind complex. This must be clearly understood. Atma Anatma Viveka must dawn within us. It is an intellectual process of understanding. This requires a very subtle intellect. You cannot physically separate from body, only intellectually. Swamiji gives example of the Munja grass from which, very carefully, its tender shoot is separated.

Viveka is required for this separation. Twam pada Viveka or Aikyam is required. One should know this consciousness as Brahman described in scriptures. Separate yourself from body and thus identify with Brahman. This is Vedanta. This will give us Jivan Mukti. This concludes Yama Nachiketas Samvada.

Mantra 18:

Nachiketas obtained this knowledge from Yama. Yama also taught him Yoga Abhyasa. Having obtained wisdom he became one with Brahman. He became free from all impurities and free from mortality. Not only Nachiketas obtained Moksha, anyone who receives this wisdom in same manner also is freed and gets Moksha. Papam and Punyam both are impurities, per Vedas. Since there is no Karma there is no result as well.

Mantra # 19

This mantra concludes the Upanishad This mantra is a prayer to establish the teaching within us.

Suggested Practice:

When chanting mantras try to visualize the deity and focus. This will be a very powerful Sadhana.

With my good wishes,

Discussion Summary, October 18, 2015

Continuing his recap from last week of Mantra 9 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us of the prerequisites for realization.

First, we need a human body and then we need to use it wisely towards the goal of realization.

Second, the real meaning of I must be clear to us. In the statement You are That the You does not mean body or mind but it should remind us of the formless Consciousness. Whenever Upanishad says You, it must instantly remind me of the Consciousness. I should always be in this state. Twampada Vichara is essential.

Third, The importance of a sharp, subtle, focused, undistracted and total intellect is essential. Such an intellect is qualified to receive this teaching. Brahman can be known only through intellect. It is the instrument. In some other context Upanishads say intellect is not the instrument to know Brahman. Clarifying this, Swamiji says the Upanishads are referring to an unprepared mind.

Shankaracharya says, a mind that can listen deeply and absorb the teaching for a length of time is required. Only a proper

understanding from a Guru following the Sampradya illumines the Brahman. The example of a mirror was cited. The mirror must be clean as also the your eyes. So also the qualified intellect combined with knowledge of Shastras will help us "own up to" our own immortality.

Mantra 10:

Swamiji says, in mantras 10 and 11, Yama discusses Yoga Abhyasa or the mental discipline called meditation. This yogic discipline developed by Patanjali, as per Astanga yoga, helps in preparing the mind in its focusing capacity. The culmination of meditation results in Samadhi or Nirvikapla Samadhi or absorption in a chosen field. The object of meditation in this yoga is on Chakras. Swamiji says, Vedanta Shastras do not advocate Chakra meditation. He says meditation is also considered Upana. Thus, here we choose any Devata as object of meditation to develop our Chitta Samadhanam, the focusing faculty.

Swamiji says meditation is not prescribed for Self Knowledge. It cannot provide self-knowledge. It provides Sadhana Chatushtaya Sampathi. Gyana alone can provides knowledge. Mystic experiences also do not have anything to do with knowledge, but it can be accepted. A person can be liberated only by purity, focus and Shastric knowledge.

Swamiji says, Samadhi Yoga is not for liberation; it is for developing deep listening skills. Yoga meditation can help us become absorbed in the Deity of meditation. It helps us focus. It helps us with Drishtaand Adrishta Phalam. In meditation, the five sense organs and mind remain without distraction. The intellect also does not think of anything other than the object of meditation. It maintains focus. It can be Savikalpa Samadhi (meditation with support of an object) or Nirvikalpa Samadhi (meditation without an object, which leads to knowledge of purusha or consciousness, the subtlest element.) In Nirvikalpa Samadhi, will recedes. It is the highest goal of

Yoga.

Mantra 11:

This state of absorption and destination is also called Yoga (the means and the end). The absorption is the end. In this state of Samadhi all sense organs are undistracted, rested and silent for a length of time. Initially focus will be difficult. One should focus his or her attention to avoid distraction. Swamiji says, with increasing sophistication we have lost this faculty. We are now trying to get it back. Meditation (or focus) is subject of arrival and departure. One has to train the mind, and then it will be ready for Vedanta Sraavanam.

Swamiji says, often our listening skill is superficial and not very powerful. As such, our knowledge will also be just academic. After Vedanta Sraavanam, remembering the teaching during meditation is also Nidhidhyasanam. Nidhidhyasana means to fully internalize and assimilate the teaching . This will make mind deep and with fullest impact of the teaching.

Mantra 12:

Now, Swamiji highlights another important preparation. He says we need to value Sraddha in Nirguna Brahman. Since Brahman cannot be seen, felt, or even logically understood, some think of it as Shunya. Shankara compared it to a man born to a barren woman. Even Philosophers do not accept Nirguna Brahman. Swamiji says, we have to go through the teachings of Shastras, and then we will understand. One cannot objectify Nirguna Brahman, because it is the very Subject. Describing the Nirguna Brahman, Swamiji says, words cannot convey it, Eyes cannot see it, and mind cannot grasp it. It cannot be grasped, as it is the Grasper. Only by understanding that "I am That", can a believer understand it. So, Sradhda is very important.

Mantra 13:

When one believes, one accepts Brahman is there. As he progresses, he will realize from Brahman "Is" to "I am Brahman". Converting from Is to I AM is the journey.

Thus: Brahman Nasti>Brahman Asti>Brahman Asmi is the journey. Thus, from this journey Satya Bhava Aikyam occurs. So, Sraddha is important.

Suggested Practice:

Consider performing meditation for some time every day. Reflect on the Nirguna Brahman.

Discussion Summary, October 11, 2015

Continuing his recap from last week of Mantra 6 in Part 2, Cantos 3, Swamiji reminded us that we have to know Brahman as Aham Brahma Asmi. He reminded us that the human being present in Manusha loka provides the best opportunity for us to gain this knowledge. Animals, he says, have only a Bhoga Shariram and do everything by instinct. We are lucky to have this human birth and he recommends we make the best use of this birth to obtain this great knowledge. Discussing Atma /Anatma , unless we understand that the "I" is the witness principle or Sakshi Chaitanya, we are still in Samsara and as such finite.

Tat Tvam Asi is only possible when one separates himself from this body mind complex. Swamiji reminds us that the body and mind are subject to arrival and departure while the "I" is constant and unchanging.

Mantra # 7:

Swamiji now presented another method of Atma / Anatma discrimination. He calls it the essence of Vedanta.

Refreshing our memory on the Pancha Koshas, Swamiji says we have to withdraw from each one of them. The Pancha Koshas are:

- 1) Annamaya kosha, "foodstuff" sheath (Anna),
- 2) Pranamaya kosha, "energy" sheath, (Prana /apana);
- 3) Manomaya kosha "mind-stuff" sheath (Manas),
- 4) Vijnanamaya kosha, "wisdom" sheath (*Vijnana*) and lastly
- 5) Anandamaya kosha, "bliss" sheath (*Ananda*)

This method sensitizes our mind, as it withdraws from gross to the subtle. Describing this process, Swamiji says, sense organs are controlled by the mind, which is subtler, stronger and more powerful. Superior to mind is the intellect, or Buddhi. Mind is the doubting faculty, while Buddhi is rationalizing capacity that removes doubts. Mind is given to emotion, Buddhi is not, and hence it is stronger. Thus, Buddhi is the Vijnanamaya Kosha. Describing adjectives we give ourselves such as: I am Tamilian> I am Indian> I am Asian> I am human> I am a Living Being (all beings)> and finally I am a "Being". Swamiji says we need to drop all adjectives. He says they all belong to Anatma. We have to realize I am a "Being". This is called Samashti Buddhi. Individual does not exist separate from Total. Micro does not exist separate from Macro.

Taking us to a different plane, Swamiji now says, "I am" Hiranyagarbha. Superior to Hiranyagarbha is the Avyakatam, the Total Karana Shariram. Karana Shariram is the state of blankness. In this blank state everything thing is in its potential state. He says blankness is not "nothing" rather it is in the Potential state or a state of Singularity. Learn to

identify with Avyaktam. I am Turiyaha, the final state, state of Samashti Karana Sharira.

How to reach this state is now described.

Mantra # 8:

When all sensory operations are suspended we experience blankness. This state is called Avyaktam. Subtler than this blankness is Atma or Consciousness. So, where do we find Atma? Swamiji says Atma cannot be objectified. The One who is aware, the awareness, of the blankness, the Experiencer, is the Atma. There is nothing other than "my" self declares Swamiji. The unobjectifiable "I" is the Atma while the Blankness is the Anandamaya Kosha.

He says Purusha is also the Atma.

So, what type of consciousness is this? He says, it "all pervading" consciousness. So, like the wave we have a choice to identify with the small wave or the eternal water. Once we identify with the all pervading Atma, we will be removed from all suffering.

I am Nirguna Chaitanyam without any Linga attributes. As long as I identify with body, I am mortal. This small I needs to know the immortal I. Once I know it, I will be relieved of all "notion of mortality", as I do not identify with this body anymore. I can own up to my "natural" immortality. That is why, says Swamiji, Samsara is an intellectual problem.

Mantra # 9:

We have to use our human birth, our viveka shakthi. Atma / Anatma viveka should dawn on us.

Swamiji says for Viveka, a deep and complete mind is to be available for this teaching. A tremendous listening skill is required. A special mind, deep and total is required. We normally do not listen totally. If we can do this, the

mahavakya sravanam can penetrate this state. Do we have a mind that is absorbed in the teaching? In such a person, knowledge dawns. It is called sukshma buddhi. This buddhi is required as the subject matter is very subtle.

Physical organs cannot perceive Brahman. Eyes cannot see him. So, how is he to be known?

He can only be known through Guru's teachings of Shastra. This is the Shastra mirror. I should also have the proper eyes to see in the mirror. The inner eye, Buddhi, should be qualified for this teaching. The nature of this Buddhi is a prepared intellect, subtle, deep and total. Only such an intellect can know the Brahman. The intellect is in our heart says Swamiji. The right understanding, provided by a qualified Teacher, received by a qualified man, results in knowledge.

Suggested Practice

To obtain the full benefit of the teaching of a great teacher we all need to come to Vedanta class with a very focused mind. Do not let Samsara get in the way of this great knowledge.

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 a 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.

Our Meeting With Swamiji

Swami Paramarthananda: September 17, 2015 @ 6pm

Chennai, India

Narayanan took an appointment to meet Swamiji at his residence in Abhiramapuram. It was about 20 minutes visit. Being

Ganesh/Pilayar Chaturthi day took some fruits, modak/kozakatai made in the morning and some from abhisekam done at Ganapathi agraharam on August 27.

After offering our namaskaramas, we had few minutes of casual talk introducing ourselves as his students from Chicago. Thanked him for his lectures. He took interest hearing about our classes and students, he said that he met few of us and blessed us to continue with spiritual studies in whatever format. We mentioned about 15-20 of us attending now, started by Dr. Janakiraman in June 2007. Some of us are continuing and many have joined and some had to leave due to changing situations. Swamiji showed interest knowing about our class format. We told him about our classes on Sundays in the morning at the time the temple opens. His comment was that it is good as other activities take over during the day. He liked the 10 min or so discussion part of our class and notes of lecture summary being prepared and shared among us.

We asked him how his classes are exactly 1-hour duration, how he prepares for it. He said he has been doing it for 30 years now and in the beginning it was not so, when he went longer, he could see that people lose interest and want to get away due to their commitments. So over the years this 1-hour class has come to stay. The first 15 min recap is mainly because the 1 week gap between the classes puts people back into worldly daily chores and it is needed to bring all back to the topic/theme for continuity.

Then we asked what advice he has for us as we continue with the studies and with our personal life phase change. Very quickly within few seconds, his expression was like it is sincere purposeful forward-looking thoughts for us, he started his response: You all are in this spiritual path due to purva punyam, to continue with it follow/practice this: Swamiji referred to Gita Chapter 13, the 20 virtues. Review these constantly and try to practice it in daily activities. Then he referred to Gita Chapter 16 the asuri and daivika sampatti.

Asuri does not mean demonic that we think of. These two are materialistic and spiritual paths that bring out these natures in us. Practice slowly getting away from the materialistic things of life. It may not be possible to be 100% non-materialistic, but getting away from it moves us more to the spiritual side. Then Swamiji mentioned about Gita Chapter 17 (he halted for a second to ask us how far we have read Gita and once we said we went through it at the start of these classes in June 2007, he continued) the 3 gunas discussed Sattvik, Rajas and Tamas for each aspect – worship, tapas, dAnam and food intake. Swamiji asked us to review these consistently and practice the qualities on a daily basis; it helps us to become more spiritual and move away from the materialistic. Swamiji said that this is a kavacham that protects us. Swamiji then said to share with the class; the message/advice is for all of us in our class.

Discussion Summary, September 27, 2015

An Excellent summary by Ram Ramaswamy.

Moving on to Part 2, Cantos 3, Mantra Swamiji says this third and final section of Katho Upanishad deals with Atmavidya, Brahavidya Sadhanani and preparation for Brahavidya.

Mantra #1: This is an important mantra. It deals with nature of Brahman. Yama now compares Creation to the Ashwatha Vriksha or Pipal Tree. Shankara in his commentary says there are many things common between the two. Describing them, he says:

1. Both are vast in size.
2. Both do not have a beginning or end. Thus, the tree was

from the seed of another tree and so on and on until we do not know when it started. So also with Creation. It came into being due to Karma. Karma came into being because of creation. This endless paradox has been going on and knows one knows what started it all. The same is true of Creation itself. One creation after another keeps coming in an endless parade.

3. It is inexplicable. We cannot say which is the cause and which is the effect. Is the tree the cause or the seed? Same with free will and fate, they are all mutually dependent.
4. There is an invisible root underneath the tree that nourishes it. It is also the cause of the tree. It is same for Creation. There is one invisible root called Ishwara.
5. Both have branches spreading widely. Some are upper, some middle and some lower. So also with Creation; you have Bhu-loka, Patal-loka etc.
6. Both bear fruit, called Phalatwam. Every tree bears fruit. Some are sweet, some sour and some a combination. So also with Creation, we have Sukha, Dukha and Mishraphalam.
7. Because of the fruits, many birds nest on the branches that support them. It is a very noisy tree. Thus also with Creation that provides Jivatma (birds in the body) to nest in the Bhu-Loka branch. Sometimes the nest changes to another higher or lower branch or Lokas. The world is a very noisy place says, Shankara, full of music, laughter and wailing.
8. Even this large and powerful tree is moved by powerful winds. So also Samsara is moved by Prarabhda Karmas. Swamiji clarified that Prarabhda Karma includes my karma as well as karma of my surroundings.)
9. Swamiji says, even this large endless tree can be uprooted. Cut off the branch, trunk and root and it permanently destroy the tree. So also the sword of Knowledge can destroy this Samsara. The aadhara of

Samsara is the Atman, says Swamiji. Just as one holds on to the chain link when taking a dip in the fast moving river, so also hold on to Brahman even as you dip into this fast moving Life, says Swamiji. There is nothing that can exist outside the Brahman.

Elaborating further, even the biggest dream is in the Waker. Nachiketas asks Yama why are you talking about Brahman when I wanted to know about Atman. Yama tells him: You are everything. You are Brahman.

Mantra # 2:

Providing further clarification Swamiji says, Brahman is the intelligent cause of life. Just as dream world emerges from the Waker, everything emerges and functions in presence of Brahman. He is the creator and maintainer of everything.

Swamiji says Brahman also polices this Creation ensuring the Universe functions in an orderly manner. This policing intelligence is also called Ishwara. Those who know this achieve immortality. Swamiji adds every suffering we undergo is a punishment for some violation. Every violation of Dharma results in sorrow.

Suggested Practice:

Mr. and Mrs. Narayan recently visited Swamiji during their trip to Chennai. They informed him of our group's activities. Swamiji was very happy. He suggested that the Vedanta group read and practice the teachings of Chapter 17 of the Geeta. This chapter deals with the Gunas or our qualities.

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