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This is the thirty seventh part of the serial article, continuation from June 2024 newsletter.

अपाणिपादोऽहमचिन्त्यशक्तिः

पश्याम्यचक्षुः स शृणोम्यकर्णः ।

अहं विजानामि विविक्तरूपो

न चास्ति वेत्ता मम चित्सदाऽहम् ॥ २१ ॥

apāṇipādo'hamacintyaśaktiḥ

paśyāmyacakṣuḥ sa śṛṇomyakarnaḥ

aham vijānāmi viviktarūpo

na cāsti vettā mama citsadā'ham

अपाणिपादः - without hands and legs अहम् - I am अचिन्त्यशक्तिः - of incomprehensible power पश्यामि - I see अचक्षुः - without eyes सः - that शृणोमि - I hear अकर्णः - without ears अहम् विजानामि - I know विविक्तरूपः - of distinct nature, different from all न च अस्ति - there is no वेत्ता - knower मम - my चित् सदा - ever of the nature of knowledge अहम् - I am ;

I am without hands and legs, yet I am of incomprehensible power. I see without eyes, hear without ears. I am different from all. I know everything, but none knows me. Of the nature of pure knowledge I am. (21)

Apāṇipādaḥ aham; I am without hands and legs. *Acintyaśaktiḥ*, I am endowed with incomprehensible power. We know that our power is in our hands and legs, yet how many hands and legs should one have to be all powerful? That the self is all powerful even without any hands or legs means that its mere presence causes whatever is required to happen automatically. Since everything functions in accordance with the laws and in perfect harmony, we assign the agency of that functioning to somebody, and say that God does everything. Since the world seems to be created, we assign creatorship to God and call him the creator. The omniscience of *īśvara* is manifest as the whole universe. It is knowledge alone that manifests as this universe of names and forms. There is knowledge and intelligence or omniscience everywhere. Yet we are told that the self is of the nature of this omniscience

without a mind. *Paśyāmi acakṣuḥ*, I see everything without eyes. *Śṛṇomi akarṇaḥ*, I hear everything without ears.

The idea is that *īśvara* is omniscient and omnipotent in the primary sense, in the *upādhi* of *māyā*. Omniscience and omnipotence are the attributes of *māyā*, and with *māyā* as his *upādhi*, *īśvara* becomes creator, sustainer, omniscient, and so on. However, from the standpoint of the intrinsic nature of *īśvara*, he is *brahman*, the absolute reality, transcending all the attributes. In the *upādhi* of *māyā*, *īśvara* is immanent, whereas, as *brahman*, *īśvara* transcends all the attributes. The identity of the self is with the transcendent *īśvara*, one that transcends all attributes. Therefore, in this *mantra* and others, we see the negation of all attributes.

In the Kenopaniṣad, the aspirant asks of the teacher, 'Oh revered Sir, by whose command does the mind perform its functions? By whose command does the *prāṇa* or the vital air perform its various functions? Directed by whom or willed by whom do these people speak words? Who makes the eyes see? Who makes the ears hear?' The teacher replies, *śrotrasya śrotram manaso mano yadvāco ha vācam sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ*, he is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the vital air of the vital air. What does the reply mean? Does it mean that there is another ear inside this ear and another eye inside this eye and another mind inside this mind? No. The teacher's reply indicates or points to that because of which the mind thinks, that because of which the eyes see, that because of which the ears hear, and that because of which the vital airs sustain life.

Figuratively, we do say that the self breathes and sees and hears, but there is no agency of hearing or seeing in the self. It is in its presence that hearing, seeing, and everything else takes place. You could also say that the self sees through all the eyes, hears through all the ears, and walks through all the legs without itself having eyes, ears, or legs. In short, it is in the presence of the self that all the organs of perception function and all the organs of action act. It is in its presence that the mind thinks and in its presence that everything happens. All that is necessary is its mere presence. *Ahaṁ vijānāmi* means I indeed know everything. *Viviktarūpaḥ*, I am endowed with a distinct nature, different from all. Different

from all of what? The nature of the self is distinct from the mind, the organs of action, and the organs of perception; distinct from everything. *Vijānāmi*, I know everything because I illumine everything. *Na cāsti vettā mama*, nobody knows me. 'I know everything yet nobody knows me,' means that the self cannot become the object of knowledge or be objectified by anybody; it is not knowable in the conventional sense. A flower can become the object of our knowledge, but the self or consciousness cannot become the object of knowledge in that sense. It cannot be objectified with organs of perception or the mind, because it is that which illumines them. The self does not need to be illumined. It is self effulgent; *cit sadā aham*, I am consciousness, ever self-effulgent. What does it mean when you say nobody knows you? Do you mean there is no way of knowing the self? No, there is a means of knowing the self. The next *mantra* tells us of the means to attain the knowledge.

वेदैरनेकैरहमेव वेद्यो
वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ।
न पुण्यपापे मम नास्ति नाशो
न जन्म देहेन्द्रियबुद्धिरस्ति ॥ २२ ॥
vedairanekairahameva vedyo
vedāntakṛdvedavidēva cāham
na puṇyapāpe mama nāsti nāśo
na janma dehendriyabuddhirasti

वेदैः - by the Vedas अनेकैः - all अहम् एव - I alone वेद्यः - what is to be known वेदान्तकृत् - the author of Vedānta वेदवित् - knower of the Vedas एव - alone च अहम् - and I am न - not पुण्यपापे - results of good and bad actions मम - my न अस्ति - is not नाशः - destruction न जन्म - no birth देह-इन्द्रिय-बुद्धिः - body, senses, mind अस्ति - is

I alone am to be known through all the Vedas. I alone am the author of Vedānta, as well as the knower of the Vedas. I am not subject to the results of good and bad actions and I suffer no destruction. I have no birth, and no body, senses, or mind.

(22)

Vedaiḥ anekaiḥ aham eva vedyaḥ, I am the only subject matter of all the Vedas. The Vedas are dedicated to revealing just one entity, namely, *īśvara* or the self. *Aham eva* means 'I alone am that which is to be known through all the Vedas.' Therefore, the self or the 'I' is the subject matter of all the Vedas. The Vedas are the means of knowing the self, not in the manner of knowing a pot or clay or cloth, but as our own nature.

The collective reference to all the Vedas can either mean all the four Vedas or all the sections of the Veda. There are two main sections in the Vedas, the *karma-kāṇḍa* and the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. The *karma-kāṇḍa* contains descriptions of all the rituals; although indirectly, they also reveal the self, because they are meant for worshipping *īśvara*. The *jñāna-kāṇḍa* means the Upaniṣads, which reveal the nature of the self directly. So the Vedas present the self as either the object of worship or the object of knowledge. *Vedāntakṛt*, I am the very revealer or initiator of Vedānta; this indicates the Upaniṣads. *Vedavit eva ca aham* could mean, I am the revealer of the Vedas, as well as, I am also the knower of the Vedas.

When we are told, 'I am the one to be known through the Vedas,' someone might say, "Oh! Then the Vedas are greater than you. That you are to be known through Vedas means that without the Vedas you cannot be known!" Therefore, the *mantra* says, I am also the revealer of the Vedas, *vedavit*; the knower of the Vedas also I am. *Vedāntakṛt* can mean revealer of Vedānta and also the teacher of Vedānta. I am the subject matter of the Vedas, I am the revealer of the Vedas, I am the teacher of the Vedas, and I am also the knower of the Vedas. I am the student, I am the teacher, I am the text, and I am also that which should be known through the transaction between the teacher and the taught. *īśvara* claims the authorship of everything; nothing remains, for which anybody else may claim authorship.

Here the Veda or Vedānta is presented as the means of knowledge. The Vedas are in the form of words, and words generally provide indirect knowledge. But that rule applies to objects that are remote or unseen. Yet it is true that words can give rise to immediate knowledge, when the object of knowledge is being experienced but not recognized, as in case of the tenth man. Because *brahman* is our very self, it

exists and is self-effulgent, which means that it is always experienced; therefore, the words of Vedānta can generate *aparokṣa-jñāna* or immediate knowledge. That is done through the process of removing the false notions about the self.

It is not only the Vedas that have a single subject matter, which is the knowledge of the self or *brahman*, but also all the other scriptural texts and even the texts dealing with the material sciences, simply because the self is the only reality. Vedānta reveals the nature of truth directly, whereas, the other texts talk about it indirectly, by revealing its glories.

Further, this verse negates all the *viśeṣas* or attributes that may be associated with the self. *Na puṇya-pāpe mama asti*, no *puṇya* or *papa*, no virtue or vice, attaches to me. *Mama nāsti nāśaḥ*, I am not subject to *nāśa*, destruction or death. *Na janma*, there is no birth; I am never born. *Na dehendriyabuddhirasti*, I have no body, no sense organs, and no mind. The meaning is that all of these attributes belong to the *upādhi*. The self simply transcends the *upādhi*; it is that which illumines the very *upādhi*.

The verse says that I am *vedyaḥ*, to be known through the Vedas. This also means that the self is to be known or must be known. As the Kenopaniṣad says, if the self is known in this lifetime, there is truth or fulfillment. Otherwise there is only great destruction. The self must be known and can only be known through the Vedas. If *brahman* is the self of all, should all good and bad actions performed everywhere also be credited to *brahman*? The answer is no. The self transcends even virtue and vice. *Puṇya* and *pāpa* attach to the doer or one who has the notion of doer-ship. There is no doer-ship in the self, who is, therefore, ever free from virtue and vice.

न भूमिरापो न च वह्निरस्ति
न चानिलो मेऽस्ति न चाम्बरं च ।
एवं विदित्वा परमात्मरूपं
गुहाशयं निष्कलमद्वितीयम् ।
समस्तसाक्षिं सदसद्विहीनं
प्रयाति शुद्धं परमात्मरूपम् ॥ २३ ॥
na bhūmirāpo na ca vahnirasti
na cānilo me'sti na cāmbaram ca

*evam viditvā paramātmārūpaṁ
guhāśayaṁ niṣkalamadvitīyam
samastasākṣiṁ sadasadvihīnaṁ
prayāti śuddhaṁ paramātmārūpaṁ*

न भूमिः - not earth आपः - water न च वह्निः अस्ति - and there is no fire न च अनिलः - and not air मे (मम) - for me अस्ति - is न च अम्बरम् - and not space च - and एवम् - thus विदित्वा - knowing परमात्म-रूपम् - the exalted nature of the self गुहाशयम् - residing in the cave (of the heart) निष्कलम् - partless अद्वितीयम् - nondual समस्तसाक्षिम् - witness of all सद्-असद्-विहीनम् - devoid of cause and effect प्रयाति - attains शुद्धम् - pure परमात्म-रूपम् - the nature of the limitless self of all

For me there is neither earth nor water, or fire, and no air, or space. One attains the very limitless self knowing thus the exalted nature of the self, as the one that resides in the cavity of the heart, that is partless, nondual, the witness of all, devoid of cause and effect, and pure. (23)

Na bhūmirāpo na ca vahnirasti. The five elements I am not. Both the body and the universe are made of the five elements; that I am not. What this means is that, in spite of being the material cause and thus pervading everything, the self transcends everything.

Evam viditvā means upon knowing the self in this way. What is the way in which the self must be known? *Na puṇya-pāpe mama asti*, I have no *puṇya* or *pāpa*; it must be known that virtue and vice do not touch me. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Gita, *na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ*, “The Lord does not create agency or any actions for anyone.”¹ Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the self does not have *kartṛtva*, it does not take on the role of the doer or one who experiences, nor does it cause anything to be done or experienced. It is ever free from *kartṛtva*, doership, and *bhoktṛtva*, enjoyership.

Evam viditvā means upon knowing the self to be such that one is free from doership and therefore does not accrue *puṇya* and *pāpa*; knowing that one is free from enjoyership and is therefore not affected by them either; knowing that one is not the five elements; knowing that the body, which is made of the five elements, nei-

ther describes one nor belongs to one; knowing that the sense organs do not define one or belong to one; knowing that one is not even the mind, and knowing that birth and death do not attach to one.

As Ādi Śaṅkarācārya has said, *manobuddhyahaṅkāracittāni nāhaṁ na ca śrotrajihve na ca ghrāṇanetre, na ca vyomabhūmīrṇa tejo na vāyuscidānandarūpaḥ śivo'haṁ śivo'ham*, the mind, intellect, ego and memory I am not. The faculties of hearing, tasting, smelling, or sight I am not. The elements of space, earth, fire, and air I am not. I am of the nature of consciousness and fullness. I am *śiva*."

Evam viditvā means knowing the self in the manner in which it is unfolded in this Upaniṣad. We are told that one is the witness of all the three states, the illuminator of everything; that one is the material cause of everything, the self of all, and that one is nondual, ever changeless, and ever auspicious. *Evam viditvā*, knowing the self in this manner; we learn that one is of the nature of *paramātmā*, the limitless self, the supreme self.

Guhāsayam niṣkalam advitīyam indicates that which is partless and nondual and resides in the cavity of the heart. It is the body that has parts, and the the mind that has parts; the self is partless, nondual, and ever pure, shining in the cave of the heart as the I-thought, *ahaṁ*. Knowing the self in this manner, as *paramātmā*, as the *samastasākṣī* or witness of all, as being *sadasadvihīnam*, ever devoid of *sat* and *asat*, cause and effect, *prayāti śuddham paramātmārūpam*, one attains *paramātmārūpam*, the nature of the supreme self. Upon knowing the *paramātmā*, one becomes *paramātmā*.

In the very first *mantra* of this text, the student requests his teacher, Parameṣṭhī, for the knowledge. "Please teach me that *brahma-vidyā* by which the wise, destroying all the sins, attains the *puruṣa*, the *paramātmā* that is beyond *māyā*." The entire Upaniṣad is in reply to that request. The teacher concludes his teaching with the words, *prayāti śuddham paramātmārūpam*, "Oh Āśvalāyana, knowing the self in this manner, one indeed attains *paramātmā*, the supreme self."

To be continued...

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the thirty fifth part of the serial article, continuation from June 2024 newsletter.

नास्मि विप्रकृता देव केनचिन्नावमानिता । अभिप्रायस्तु मे कश्चित् तमिच्छामि त्वया कृतम् ॥ २-११-२

प्रतिज्ञां प्रतिजानीष्व यदि त्वं कर्तुमिच्छसि । अथ ते व्याहरिष्यामि यथाभिप्रार्थितं मया ॥ २-११-३

तामुवाच महाराजः कैकेयीमीषदुत्समयः । कामी हस्तेन संगृह्य मूर्धजेषु भुवि स्थिताम् ॥ २-११-४

nāsmi viprakṛtā deva kenacinnāvamānitā |

abhiprāyastu me kaścit tamicchāmi tvayā kṛtam || 2-11-2

pratijñāṁ pratijānīṣva yadi tvam kartumicchasi |

atha te vyāhariṣyāmi yathābhiprārthitaṁ mayā || 2-11-3

tāmuvāca mahārājaḥ kaikeyīmīṣadutsamayāḥ |

kāmī hastena saṅgrhya mūrdhajeṣu bhuvī sthitām || 2-11-4

Through contrived tears Kaikeyi sobbed, “O my lord, no, nobody has hurt me yet or made me feel bad. But there is one thing on my mind. It is something I want very much, and I very much want you to do it. You must promise me you will do it, then I will tell you what it is. I will tell you exactly what I want.”

With both his love and his tender masculinity Dasharatha reached down and helped her up off the floor, “I will definitely do what you want. You know I will.” Infatuation was the weakness of Dasharatha.

“Say it again, won’t you? Say you will give me what I ask,” .

यथा क्रमेण शपसे वरं मम ददासि च । तच्छृण्वन्तु त्रयस्त्रींशद् देवाः सेन्द्रपुरोगमाः ॥ २-११-१३

चन्द्रादित्यौ नभशैव ग्रहा रात्र्यहनी दिशः । जगच्च पृथिवी चेयं सगन्धर्वाः सराक्षसाः ॥ २-११-१४

निशाचराणि भूतानि गृहेषु गृहदेवताः । यानि चान्यानि भूतानि जानीयुर्भाषितं तव ॥ २-११-१५

yathā krameṇa śapase varaṁ mama dadāsi ca |

tacchṛṇvantu trayastrīṁśad devāḥ sendrapurogamāḥ || 2-11-13

candrādityau nabhaśaiva grahā rātryahanī diśaḥ |

jagacca pṛthivī ceyam sagandharvāḥ sarākṣasāḥ || 2-11-14

niśācarāṇi bhūtāni grheṣu grhadevatāḥ |

yāni cānyāni bhūtāni jānīyurbhāṣitaṁ tava || 2-11-15

He did say it again, and she made him say it once more. He said it three

times. With that, it could never be taken back. Then, pulling back her hair from her neck, Kaikeyi said, “May all the gods, all the *asuras*, all the *gandharvas*, all the *rākṣasas*, all the spirits of the night, all the deities of the light and dark, all the *devatās*, the sun god and moon god, Brhaspati and Agni, and all the *devas* here on earth hear. Let them hear this, that you have made the *pratijñā*.”

Immediately Dasharatha’s heart was in his mouth. The whole thing made him uncomfortable. He did not know what was to come. He had made such a broad guarantee, and now he knew he was in for something. But he never thought that he could not easily fulfill her wish. Innocent as he was, he never thought that Kaikeyi would ask to have Rama banished to the forest. He never thought anyone would ever ask to have Rama sent from their presence. Everyone was endeared to Rama and loved to be close to him. The thought never occurred to him. He never thought Bharata would contend for the throne. It was inconceivable. He never thought Kaikeyi, who seemed dear to Rama, as did Rama to Kaikeyi, could ever ask this. Dasharatha just thought she wanted some big thing, a vacation in Hawaii or something. Anything else he could give in a second. He knew there was going to be something because she had made such a big deal of it.

स्मर राजन् पुरा वृत्तं तस्मिन् दैवासुरे रणे । तत्र त्वां च्यावयच्छत्रुस्तव जीवितमन्तरा ॥ २-११-१८

smara rājan purā vṛttam tasmin daivāsura raṇe |

tatra tvām cyāvayacchatrustava jīvitamantarā || 2-11-18

“You told me, O *rāja*, when I helped you and Indra during the battle in the Dandaka forest, that you would give me two boons. You said I had saved your life. Do you remember that?” Kaikeyi said pointedly.

“Yes, of course I remember,” Dasharatha said a bit meekly.

तौ तावदहमद्यैव वक्ष्यामि शृणु मे वचः । अभिषेकसमारम्भो राघवस्योपकल्पितः ॥ २-११-२४

अनेनैवाभिषेकेण भरतो मेऽभिषिच्यताम् । यो द्वितीयो वरो देव दत्तः प्रीतेन मे त्वया ॥ २-११-२५

तदा देवासुरे युद्धे तस्य कालोऽयमागतः । नव पञ्च च वर्षाणि दण्डकारण्यमाश्रितः ॥ २-११-२६

चीराजिनधरो धीरो रामो भवतु तापसः । भरतो भजतामद्य यौवराज्यमकण्टकम् ॥ २-११-२७

एष मे परमः कामो दत्तमेव वरं वृणे । अद्य चैव हि पश्येयं प्रयान्तं राघवं वने ॥ २-११-२८

tau tāvadahamadyaiva vakṣyāmi śṛṇu me vacaḥ |
 abhiṣekasamārambho rāghavaśyopakalpitaḥ || 2-11-24
 anenaivābhiṣekeṇa bharato me'bhīṣicyatām |
 yo dvitīyo varo deva dattaḥ prītena me tvayā || 2-11-25
 tadā devāsure yuddhe tasya kālo'yamāgataḥ |
 nava pañca ca varṣāṇi daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ || 2-11-26
 cīrājinadharo dhīro rāmo bhavatu tāpasah |
 bharato bhajatāmadya yauvarājyamakanṭakam || 2-11-27
 eṣa me paramaḥ kāmo dattameva varaṁ vṛṇe |
 adya caiva hi paśyeyam prayāntam rāghavam vane || 2-11-28

“Of course you do,” she said. “Now I ask the first one. You have arranged for Rama to be installed as Prince Regent and heir to the throne. I want Bharata installed instead. I will send word to Bharata to come home. When he arrives, you install him in Rama’s place. That is the first boon I ask. The time has also come for the second boon which you granted me. Remember, you promised. I want Rama sent to the forest for a period of fourteen years. This should not be a problem for this brave and valorous boy. But he should not wear the raiments of a king, and no one should be allowed to think in any way that he is the king. Let him wear bark and deerskin and live a life of *tapas* only. This is my supreme desire. I want to see Rama head for the forest today, not tomorrow, sir. By doing this, living up to your words, may you become a real king of the Ikshvakus. Honoring the very boons you gave me, show what you are made of.”

ततः श्रुत्वा महाराजः कैकेय्या दारुणं वचः । चिन्तामभिसमापेदे मुहूर्तं प्रतताप च ॥ २-१२-१

किं नु मेऽयं दिवास्वप्नश्चित्तमोहोऽपि वा मम । अनुभूतोपसर्गो वा मनसो वाप्युपद्रवः ॥ २-१२-२

tataḥ śrutvā mahārājaḥ kaikeyyā dāruṇam vacaḥ |
 cintāmabhisamāpede muhūrtaṁ pratatāpa ca || 2-12-1
 kiṁ nu me'yaṁ divāsvapnaścittamoho'pi vā mama |
 anubhūtopasargo vā manaso vāpyupadravaḥ || 2-12-2

Dasharatha could not believe these words came from Kaikeyi. Hearing them, these most painful words, something snapped in his mind. For one *mu-hūrtam*, forty-five minutes, he stood stunned and speechless. He nearly went mad. “What is happening to me? Is it waking or dream, day or night?” He clutched his

head as a monsoon spun inside him. Dasharatha did not know where to turn. Then he came around and began to focus. He tried to plead with his youngest wife and to dissuade her. He begged her to ask for something more reasonable. But she held her stance. She insisted he keep his word, and she cited examples from the events of the kings in his dynasty, how they always lived up to their words, even at cost. She forced him to commit to his words. Having said what he had said, it was impossible for him to cross his words. At the same time, he could not banish Rama to the forest for no reason. He thought of Rama and of the people who were all waiting for Rama's installation. Kings and sages had all come to see this. How could he banish Rama and face all these people? No one would accept that Dasharatha sent Rama off because his third wife had asked for something. The people would all say that Rama was sent away for nothing. Dasharatha thought he would be ridiculed, and he knew he would lose face. Out of infatuation for his wife, the old king had neglected to do what was proper. But Dasharatha had granted the boon, and Kaikeyi, possessed by jealousy, was committed to her desire. She did not want to fall below Kausalya, and she did not want Bharata to never become king. She reasoned that Rama's sons, not Bharata would rule after Rama. She was not going to budge an inch.

The whole night was spent in turmoil, and Dasharatha spent much of it in a daze. As the dawn came the sun entered Cancer and the moon and sun met in the asterism Pushya. This is when the *rājābhiṣekha* of the prince is to take place. Vasishtha, along with all the other sages and priests, had prepared all the materials for the ritual. Water from all the sacred rivers, gold coins and all the rest had been gathered. The guests had all arrived and were standing outside the palace waiting for the king. Sumantra, Dasharatha's devoted minister and aid, born to a Brahman girl through a *kṣatriya*, a brilliant person, free to go to Dasharatha at any time, at the request of Vasishtha and others sought the king in the palace to make sure he was ready for the day. Sumantra went inside and, greeting the king with the proper words, saw his king's agitation and his red eyes. He thought perhaps Dasharatha was not well.

Kaikeyi spoke up, "Oh, no, no, the king is like that because he is jubilant about the whole thing. He could not sleep at all. What the king wants now is to see Rama." She knew that as soon as Rama came to know the boon his father had granted, the prince would execute his part of his father's order. She said, "Sumantra, bring Rama."

Dasharatha got himself up and echoed, "Bring Rama." Sumantra, cheered by his king's desire to see Rama, thought perhaps Dasharatha wanted to start the day by blessing his son.

Outside, as Sumantra passed, Vasishtha stopped him and reminded him of the time and told him to go and wake the king. The proceedings should begin. Sumantra went back into Kaikeyi's quarters. Dasharatha saw him coming back in and told him, "I told you to go and bring Rama."

Sumantra replied, "My lord, Vasishtha and the others instructed me to wake you up. They want to begin today's *rājābhiṣekha*."

प्रतिबुद्ध्य ततो राजा इदं वचनमब्रवीत् । राममानय सूतेति यदस्यभिहितो मया ॥ २-१५-२५

किमिदं कारणं येन ममाज्ञा प्रतिवाह्यते । न चैव सम्प्रसुप्तोऽहमानयेहाशु राघवम् ॥ २-१५-२६

pratibuddhya tato rājā idam vacanamabravīt |

rāmamānaya sūteti yadasyabihito mayā || 2-15-25

kimidam kāraṇam yena mamājñā prativāhyate |

na caiva samprasupto'hamānayehāśu rāghavam || 2-15-26

Dasharatha spoke crossly, "I am awake, why did you come back without Rama? You heard what I said." Sumantra was confused, but he went again and told Vasishtha that Dasharatha wanted to see Rama. Rama's marble palace was spectacular, hundreds of balconies, doors inlaid with gold, gardens with every variety of fruit trees, with many birds flying freely about. Sumantra went in, found Rama, and told him his father wanted to see him, now. Rama and Lakshmana jumped into the waiting chariot and headed for the king's palace. The people in the streets saw their favorite prince and waved and greeted him, proclaiming his virtues and their good fortune.

स ददर्शासने रामो निषण्णं पितरं शुभे । कैकेय्या सहितं दीनं मुखेन परिशुष्यता ॥ २-१८-१

स पितुश्चरणौ पूर्वमभिवाद्य विनीतवत् । ततो ववन्दे चरणौ कैकेय्याः सुसमाहितः ॥ २-१८-२
रामेत्युक्तवा तु वचनं बाष्पपर्याकुलेक्षणः । शशाक नृपतिर्दीनो नेक्षितुं नाभिभाषितुम् ॥ २-१८-३
तदपूर्वं नृपतेर्दृष्ट्वा रूपं भयावहम् । रामोऽपि भयमापन्नः पदा स्पृष्ट्वेव पन्नगम् ॥ २-१८-४
कच्चिन्मया नापराद्धमज्ञानाद् येन मे पिता । कुपितस्तन्ममाचक्ष्व त्वमेवैनं प्रसादय ॥ २-१८-११
अतोषयन् महाराजमकुर्वन् वा पितुर्वचः । मुहूर्तमपि नेच्छेयं जीवितुं कुपिते नृपे ॥ २-१८-१५

*sa dadarśāsane rāmo niṣaṅṅaṁ pitaraṁ śubhe ।
kaikeyyā sahitaṁ dīnaṁ mukhena pariśuṣyatā ॥ 2-18-1
sa pituścaraṇau pūrvamabhivādya vinītavaat ।
tato vavande caraṇau kaikeyyāḥ susamāhitaḥ ॥ 2-18-2
rāmetyuktvā tu vacanaṁ bāṣpaparyākulekṣaṇaḥ ।
śaśāka nṛpatirdīno nekṣitum nābhībhāṣitum ॥ 2-18-3
tadapūrvam nṛpaterdṛṣṭvā rūpaṁ bhayāvaham ।
rāmo'pi bhayamāpannaḥ padā sprṣṭveva pannagam ॥ 2-18-4
kaccinmayā nāparāddhamajñānād yena me pitā ।
kupitastanmamācakṣva tvamevainaṁ prasādaya ॥ 2-18-11
atoṣayan mahārājamakurvan vā pituroacaḥ ।
muhūrtamapi neccheyam jīvitum kupite nṛpe ॥ 2-18-15*

Rama entered the king's palace and saw there both his father and Kaikeyi looking disturbed and stressed. Neither looked his or her usual self. Rama did not understand what had happened. He offered his usual calm salutations to both. Dasharatha opened his eyes and broke into tears at the sight of his dear son. He could neither speak nor look into Rama's eyes. Dasharatha's demeanor had never been seen before, the tears, the anguish. Seeing his father, Rama felt a fear like a fear you have when you step on a snake. Rama wondered if he himself had committed some mistake. Kaikeyi, though not dressed for a coronation, was in better shape. Rama turned toward her and asked, "Why can my father not talk to me? What did I do? What mistake have I committed? I have never seen him like this. Please, Mother, tell me. I cannot live for even a minute without doing all I can to make my father and mother happy. He brought me to this world; I would do anything for him. I cannot stand to see him like this. Mother, tell me what I should do."

एवमुक्ता तु कैकेयी राघवेण महात्मना । उवाचेदं सुनिर्लज्जा धृष्टमात्महितं वचः ॥ २-१८-१९
 न राजा कुपितो राम व्यसनं नास्य किञ्चन । किञ्चिन्मनोगतं त्वस्य त्वद्भयान्नानुभाषते ॥ २-१८-२०
 प्रियं त्वामप्रियं वक्तुं वाणी नास्य प्रवर्तते । तदवश्यं त्वया कार्यं यदनेनाश्रुतं मम ॥ २-१८-२१
 एष मह्यं वरं दत्त्वा पुरा मामभिपूज्य च । स पश्चात् तप्यते राजा यथान्यः प्राकृतस्तथा ॥ २-१८-२२
 अतिसृज्य ददानीति वरं मम विशाम्पतिः । स निरर्थं गतजले सेतुं बन्धितुमिच्छति ॥ २-१८-२३
 धर्ममूलमिदं राम विदितं च सतामपि । तत् सत्यं न त्यजेद् राजा कुपितस्त्वत्कृते यथा ॥ २-१८-२४
 यदि तदœ वक्ष्यते राजा शुभं वा यदि वाशुभम् । करिष्यसि ततः सर्वमाख्यास्यामि पुनस्त्वहम् ॥ २-१८-२५
 यदि त्वभिहितं राज्ञा त्वयि तन्न विपत्स्यते । ततोऽहमभिधास्यामि नह्येष त्वयि वक्ष्यति ॥ २-१८-२६

evamuktā tu kaikeyī rāghaveṇa mahātmanā |
uvācedaṁ sunirlajjā dhṛṣṭamātmahitaṁ vacaḥ || 2-18-19
na rājā kupito rāma vyasanaṁ nāsya kiñcana |
kiñcinmanogataṁ tvasya tvadbhayānnānubhāṣate || 2-18-20
priyaṁ tvāmapriyaṁ vaktuṁ vāṇī nāsya pravartate |
tadavaśyaṁ tvayā kāryaṁ yadanenāśrutaṁ mama || 2-18-21
eṣa mahyaṁ varaṁ dattvā purā māmabhipūjya ca |
sa paścāt tapyate rājā yathānyaḥ prākṛtastathā || 2-18-22
atisrjya dadānīti vararāṁ mama viśāmpatiḥ |
sa nirarthaṁ gatajale setuṁ bandhitumicchati || 2-18-23
dharmamūlamidaṁ rāma viditaṁ ca satāmapi |
tat satyaṁ na tyajed rājā kupitastvatkṛte yathā || 2-18-24
yadi tad vakṣyate rājā śubhaṁ vā yadi vāśubham |
kariṣyasi tataḥ sarvamākhyāsyāmi punastvahaṁ || 2-18-25
yadi tvabhihitaṁ rājñā tvayi tanna vipatsyate |
tato'hamabhidhāsyāmi nahyeṣa tvayi vakṣyati || 2-18-26

This shameless woman, completely possessed by her emotions, measuring her words calculated to her own interests, said to Raghava, “Do not be afraid, Rama, your father is not really angry with you. Nor is he sad. There is something on his mind which he needs to tell you, but which he is afraid to tell you. He fears that he may hurt you. In fact I can tell you what is on his mind, because it is not easy for him to say to his dear son these words that are not exactly pleasing to you. Your father’s voice is caught by the weight of these words. On his behalf I will tell you what is up. You see, our *rājā*, your father, the king, granted me two

boons. Now, like an ordinary man, he does not want to fulfill the boons and tell you what they are. Having promised he would fulfill my request, now he wants to renege. This king wants to dam the water that has already flown downstream. You know this *dharma* - what is told must be maintained. No person, especially a king, should go back on his word. Now if you will say that you can do what it is your father wants you to do, I will tell you exactly what that is.”

एतात् तु वचनं श्रुत्वा कैकेय्या समुदाहृतम् । उवाच व्यथितो रामस्तां देवीं नृपसंनिधौ ॥ २-१८-२७

अहो धिङ् नार्हसे देवि वक्तुं मामीदृशं वचः । अहं हि वचनाद् राज्ञः पतेयमपि पावके ॥ २-१८-२८

भक्षयेयं विषं तीक्ष्णं पतेयमपि चाण्वि । नियुक्तो गुरुणा पित्रा नृपेण च हितेन च ॥ २-१८-२९

तद् ब्रूहि वचनं देवि राज्ञो यदभिकाङ्क्षितम् । करिष्ये प्रतिजाने च रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते ॥ २-१८-३०

etāt tu vacanaṁ śrutvā kaikeyyā samudāhṛtam ।

uvāca vyathito rāmastāṁ devīm nṛpasannidhau ॥ 2-18-27

aho dhiṅ nārhasē devi vaktuṁ māmīdṛśaṁ vacaḥ ।

ahaṁ hi vacanād rājñāḥ pateyamapi pāvake ॥ 2-18-28

bhakṣayeyam viṣaṁ tīkṣṇaṁ pateyamapi cārṇave ।

niryukto gurunā pitrā nṛpeṇa ca hitena ca ॥ 2-18-29

tad brūhi vacanaṁ devī rājño yadabhikāṅkṣitam ।

kariṣye pratijāne ca rāmo dvirnābhibhāṣate ॥ 2-18-30

Rama said, “I do not see how you can speak to me about *dharma* this way, how you can say these things about my father. I do not deserve such words from you. What doubt do you have about this. Do you doubt whether Rama would ever transgress a line drawn or cross a promise by his father? I would step into fire should he ask. I would fall into the ocean or drink lethal poison to fulfill the words of him who is my father, lord, *guru*, and king. There is nothing I would not do to fulfill his word. Tell me now, O queen, whatever it is that he wants of me. I promise that definitely I will do it.” Rama does not speak twice; once it is said it is said.

To be continued...

Mahābhārata
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the eleventh part of the serial article, continuation from June 2024 newsletter.

Karna replied, “You say that I had a first mother who just dropped me. I know you as my mother, and I do not want to lose you too. All that I have is just you. It may be true that my mother is in this dream, but I do not want that mother anymore. She abandoned me, and I do not want to go back to her. You are my mother and you will always be. I am your Radheya, son of Radha. It is nice to know that I am not a *sūta*, I have always felt different.” He did not feel strange, but he did feel different and he did not want to be a *sūta*. He did not belong to that group. But he did not feel odd. His feeling was validated, and he felt that it was something clean. He thought, “Okay, that is good enough for me. My disposition is okay.” But now he wanted fame. He wanted to be big. The problem complex was inside him in spite of his breakthrough. He wanted to become the best archer. He wanted to prove himself. That was the problem of Radheya, of Karna. To learn his craft he went and introduced himself as a *sūta* to *ācārya* Drona.

Drona told Karna that the princes in his school would not accept a *sūta* as a classmate. Even though Drona wanted to teach Karna he could not admit him. It was a class of princes. Karna was angry, because again he was denied as a *sūta-putra*. He did not want to call himself differently either. Thus he was denied instruction from Drona. Karna knew Drona had learned from Bhargava, Parashurama, and he went straight to Parashurama, the one who would not teach a *kṣatriya*. A *sūta* is both *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriya*, and Karna told Parashurama that he was a *brāhmaṇa*. He did not want to tell a lie, yet he wanted to take advantage of somebody who knew warfare. So he convinced himself he could tell an half lie as long as he used what he learned only for the purpose of *dharma*. His argument was that he would not use his skill against people. He went to Parashurama and declared himself a *brāhmaṇa*. He asked Parashurama not to reject him, for he was his only refuge. Parashurama saw a brilliant boy who would be a good student. He said that Karna’s desires for fame and wealth and power were legitimate. Few love ar-

chery just for the love of archery.

Over the years, Parashurama taught Karna everything. He taught him how to dispatch, withdraw and reclaim *astras*. He taught him all skills, and he was very happy with his disciple and all Karna's accomplishments. He told Karna that with all the missiles he had earned nobody could touch him. One day, Parashurama was resting under a tree outside his hut. He asked Karna to bring a deerskin roll to put under his head so that he could sleep. Karna said, "Put your head on my lap and sleep." Parashurama agreed and fell asleep in Karna's lap. As they rested, a huge insect began biting Karna on the thigh. With its snout and its teeth the insect bored a whole in Karna's thigh. It was very painful and it started to bleed, but Karna would not disturb his *guru's* sleep. The warmth of Karna's blood reached Parashurama's hand and he woke up. Karna explained what had happened, and he showed Parashurama the bug. Karna thought his teacher would appreciate his composure, but it turned out differently.

Parashurama killed the bug with his sight. The bug transformed into a demon and rose into the air and told Parashurama his story. Some time ago he, in his original form as a demon, had been cursed to be an insect, one who would be returned to its original form by Parashurama. After hearing the beetle's story Parashurama turned to Karna, "No Brahmana could stand the blood and pain you did when this bug bit you. You are no Brahmana. No way. You would have screamed at the sight of the blood. You would have woken up everyone with your screams of pain. You can only be a *kṣatriya*. Are you a *kṣatriya*?"

Radheya was frightened. He said, "I am neither a Brahmana nor a Kshatriya, I am a *sūta*. Perhaps I can be either, but I called myself a *brāhmaṇa* in order to get the *vidyā* from you, not for anything else. You have taught me, and you are like my father. I want only that you bless me. No doubt I told this lie, but it was only in the interest of knowing, of being taught."

All these people, I don't know why, once they get into anger they do not come down at all - until they verbalize that anger in the form of a curse.

Parashurama said, "You cheated me from day one, and I have been foolish

to assume that you were a Brahmana. I did not even suspect your words, and I taught you everything. That means you lied to me, and therefore you have to pay for it. Do you know what will happen? Whenever you are fighting with someone who is your arch enemy and you decide you have to use the *astras* that I have given you, you will forget the *mantra* that empowers those *astras*. At the crucial time you will forget the incantations. Your memory will not serve you. You told me a lie, and I cannot be sure what *adharma* you will do. You could use these weapons for anything; I don't know what. Therefore these weapons will not serve you.

Karna was stricken, and he fell at his *guru's* feet. He begged to be saved from this; all that he had learned was now useless. This was too big a curse. Parashurama had cooled down some, but he said he could not take the curse back. He gave some relief and release to Karna. He said, "You want fame. You will gain fame. People will always remember you and praise you as a great man and a great archer." Karna went away crestfallen, crushed. He rationalized that it was not all his weapons that would be denied him, and he would be famous. It was not all his enemies who could invoke the curse. There were some features of the curse that would save him. Parushrama had both blessed Radheya and cursed him. Famous as Radheya, his mother would be repaid, and Karna wanted that.

Later, Karna was coming back from the forest – you know, *karma* catches you up all the time. As Karna was coming he saw an animal, just walking in the forest. He thought it was a wild animal, and he was a natural archer. He picked up an arrow and shot. Then he went and looked and saw that he had shot a cow. It was the cow of a poor Brahmana who had been given the cow as *dakṣiṇā* somewhere. Now the cow was dead, and killing a cow is a *pāpa*. Killing a cow or a *brāhmaṇa* – you cannot even think of it. The poor Brahmana said, "You killed a cow which did not even know you were around. My cow was truly defenseless and innocent. Do you know what is going to happen? When you are helpless, because you killed a helpless animal, when you are fighting for your life, you will find that you have become helpless. Your chariot wheel will just stick to the ground. You will stand helpless. Another curse – *śāpa*."

Karna's eyes were dry; he could no more shed tears. He went back to Radheya, the only thing that made his heart full. He told of all the things that had happened, and he left out the curses and the bad things. He told all that he had learned, and his mother was very happy.

The scene now turns to Hastinapura where Duryodhana and his brothers and the Pandavas had studied the arts of warfare. Drona wanted to show to the court and all the people what he had taught his disciples. Therefore he organized a tournament and invited all the important dignitaries to the stadium. The people gathered, and one pavilion was filled with Dhritarashtra, Kunti, Kripa, Gandhari, Bhishma, Drona, who was all in white, Ashvatthama and the rest of the royals. All of Duryodhana's clan and all of the Pandavas came. They all came to show what they had learned. It was then that something happened that turned the course of the lives of the people.

A highlighting of the institution of guru, not the person guru, is placed in the Mahabharata before this public tournament organized by Drona. Drona had been approached by the son of Hiranyadhanu, the one who has a golden bow, the chieftain of the Nishada hunter community. His son was named Ekalavya, and Ekalavya asked Drona for instruction in the archery *vidyā*. Drona said, "Well, I would like to teach one as sincere and capable and lovable as you, but I cannot because I am already teaching these princes. I find that teaching the princes plus you, Ekalavya, would not work. You would stand out; you would in fact be out. These hearty people would not include you. I am sorry but I cannot teach you."

Ekalavya was disappointed, but he did not give up his pursuit. He had seen Drona with his own eyes. He made a likeness of Drona. Ekalavya created an altar for Drona with the image he had made, and daily he would practice *dhanuvidyā*, the discipline of archery, as though the *guru* were instructing him. That is the institution. The *guru* doesn't really have to teach a *vidyā* where practice and repetition are key elements. Ekalavya diligently did that practice required for *dhanuvidyā*, and he became an expert. That grace worked for him.

Once, the Pandavas and all Duryodhana's clan, went to the forest to hunt.

The Pandavas had taken along with them a hunting dog. The hunters were all dressed and fully equipped for their adventure. The dog was a princely dog and, running ahead of the men, the dog saw a stranger in the forest. The dog had sighted a man dressed in a deerskin. The dog, unfamiliar with what he saw, thought it was some kind of forest animal and began barking, barking, barking. From a distance, the guy dressed in deerskin raised his bow and stitched the mouth of the dog shut with five clean arrows, without hurting the dog much. It was just enough to close its mouth. The dog ran back to his masters the Pandavas. It was some kind of a poetry in archery, you know.

The hunters exclaimed that whoever had done this to the dog had done something extraordinary. Already Drona had declared that no other archer was equal to Arjuna. Arjuna became upset that there might be someone who could challenge his status. Gradually he became curious as to who this exceptional person was who dwarfed them all in archery. Arjuna led the hunters out to find out who was this special person. In fact the dog led them to this person. The princes approached and asked him, "Hey, did you shut the mouth of this dog?"

"Yes," said the fellow, "he was barking too much."

"Where did you learn this? What is your name?" inquired Arjuna.

"I am Ekalavya, a disciple of Drona" said the archer.

The Pandavas went to Drona and said he should see this boy who said he was Drona's disciple. Arjuna especially told him, and he told him that the sense of accomplishment he had gained from Drona's praise was tarnished by the presence of a better disciple. Arjuna asked Drona when he had taught this Ekalavya.

Drona said, "I never taught this Ekalavya."

"He says you are his teacher," says Arjuna.

Drona followed Arjuna to Ekalavya. When Ekalavya saw Drona he fell at his feet; he was so happy to see the *ācārya*. Every day he had been seeing him in that particular image on his altar, now he was seeing him in person. Ekalavya was delighted.

“It seems you said you are my disciple,” said Drona.

Ekalavya answered, “Yes, I am. Don’t you remember me? I came and asked you to teach me, but you said that I was not a prince. You said it could not be. But I did not give up. I was not upset. I came back and I created an altar and I created an image of you and I have been practicing and you have blessed me. Everything that I know, as much as it is, is all your blessing. You have taught me, Drona.”

Drona knew then that this fellow was greater than Arjuna and everybody else. Drona thought that perhaps he should ask for *dakṣiṇā*. He wanted *dakṣiṇā* from Ekalavya.

Ekalavya said, “I am willing to give whatever you want.”

“I want your right thumb. Give me your thumb,” said Drona seriously.

“Oh, this is nothing,” declared Ekalavya. He took an arrow, a crescent shaped arrow, and cut his thumb and placed the bleeding digit in front of Drona and said, “Here you are.”

Drona was pleased. The beauty of it was Ekalavya was equal to his teacher's request. Arjuna was upset when Drona asked Ekalavya for this *dakṣiṇā*. It was an acknowledgement of their connection. When Drona was pleased with Ekalavya’s response, in Arjuna’s eyes Drona became an ordinary man. To Arjuna's eyes, Drona had fallen. But in the eyes of Ekalavya, Drona was still a teacher. This is an amazing story told in-between the other stories perhaps to present what the institution of *guru* was. Otherwise this story of Ekalavya is an interlude, with no connection whatsoever except that he was great.

We return to the tournament. Arjuna’s devotion to Drona had been great. Bhishma was taking care of the kingdom on behalf of Dhrtarashtra, but Dhrtarashtra was the king. Drona went to King Dhrtarashtra, who was sitting with Bhishma and Kṛpa and all the other royal retinue at the public gathering, and said he wanted to present the talented and newly skilled princes to everyone.

“These people are now accomplished graduates,” said Drona. Drona referred to all the Kauravas - all of them are Kauravas really - Pandavas and Kurus.

“They all have gained *vidyā*; therefore I would like to present them to you,” said Drona.

Dhrtarashtra was very happy, and unhappy also. Unhappy because he could not see the display of marksmanship that was going to come and could not share fully in the family’s great day. A new stadium had been built, called "a place where you can see." It was used for a theatre, or for any show. A great arena was made. The invocation to the earth was done, and all the deities were invoked. A proper sight, a plain, was chosen, and one side of the new grandstand was enclosed for all the *rājās*. One section was reserved for women, and there were many galleries for the public. In the center was the stage which was designed to show off the participants and performers.

The people were all seated, and Drona came in with his disciples. Drona and his son Ashvatthama entered first, like the moon with the mouse nearby. You know, you can see the moon and mouse together. In a cloudless sky, how beautiful they are. That is the description in the Mahabharata. There was all-white Drona, it is true. His clothes, his hair, everything about him was all white. Even his *yajñopavīta*, the sacred thread he wore over his left shoulder and under his right arm was white. Generally the *yajñopavīta* is the casualty, because it sits right on the body. Every day you may not be using soap and water. The *yajñopavīta* becomes colored, especially when these fellows are doing *pūjās* in the big temples. If he were to see their *yajñopavītas*, Bhagavan would run away because the sacred thread can get so dirty. It is the one that takes everything. But Drona's was pure white.

Drona’s *yajñopavīta* was as clean as his beard. He also wore a white *mālā*. He was garlanded. With his son Ashvatthama, Drona entered. Mahabharata paints an image of the blue sky, completely free from clouds. The Moon appeared with Mars. Ashvatthama was not small; he was Arjuna’s age. Drona addressed the crowd, and then he invited the princes to come on stage. They demonstrated mock fighting, simple exercises to show the skills of the disciples. They had been taught how to wield the mace, for which Duryodhana was famous. Bhima was

equally famous for that. Then those two squared off against each other. Duryodhana of course wanted to destroy Bhima. He saw this as another chance for advantage, even though it was a demonstration bout. Duryodhana took it very seriously and began attacking Bhima. Certainly Bhima was not going to just take it. Bhima got wild, and it became more and more violent.

Drona saw the escalation and called his son Ashvatthama and clearly told him to go and stop these fellows. Drona wanted Bhima and Duryodhana separated. Ashvatthama went and told the two that the *ācārya* has ordered them to stop. Ashvatthama got between the two of them and stopped the fight. Duryodhana stepped back fuming, and Bhima was very much upset at Duryodhana's immoderate attack.

“This is purely a time to show your talents, how much you have learned. That is all that is intended here, not a real bout. You have to wait until later for that,” is what Ashvatthama said. The two rivals ended up sitting down, and Arjuna was asked to come and display his skills.

Arjuna, the effulgent son of Indra, like even Narayana, is portrayed by the author in a beautiful description of poise and command and attentiveness. Then with a huge noise, the roar you know when the hero enters the cricket match or any game, Arjuna was welcomed. Arjuna stepped up and showed off various moves he had mastered. He fired the *agnāstra* and showed all the power of the fire it produced. He used the *varuṇāstra* to demonstrate its ability to spread water over any threat. Another *astra* created a wall of clouds that could obscure an entire field. He fired another and disappeared; he just disappeared. One *astra* allowed him to look small, another to look big. He showed the great variety of tools he had for warfare. Arjuna appeared riding in the front of a chariot. You blinked your eyes and he was in the middle. Blink again and he was not in the chariot at all. Then he was back at the helm. All that he did was *māyā*. It was quick, and it was all part of the whole thing. It was not simply a casual athleticism on display.

To be continued...

ARSHA AVINASH FOUNDATION'S MANJAKUDI CAMP

Arsha Avinash Foundation conducted a one-week residential camp at Jnanapravaha, Manjakkudi (birth place of Pujya Swamiji) from July 4 to July 10, 2024. The campers also visited temples at Tiruvarur and Kumbakonam.

With deepest respect and appreciation to our Gurus **Smt. Lalitha Ramachandran** who taught us **Jeeva Yatra** and **Smt. Ponmani Avinashilingam** who taught us **Bhagavad Gita Chapter 17**, we express our sincere gratitude for the enlightening and inspiring lectures they both delivered. We express our appreciation and sincere gratitude to Swami Ram-esvarananda who is coordinating the Vedanta studies at the centre facilitating retreats, who welcomed us with love and compassion. We express our appreciation to all the staff at the centre.

Jeeva Yatra is a philosophical text, written by Swami Jnanananda Bharati in Sanskrit, explores the journey of life and the essence of human existence. It delves into the transient nature of life, the pursuit of knowledge, and the quest for spiritual fulfilment. Through its poetic verses and profound insights, "Jeeva Yatra" makes the saadhaka contemplate the purpose of life and the timeless wisdom embedded in our journey from birth to transcendence.

The 17th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, known as the "Sradhdhatraya Vibhaga Yoga" or the "Yoga of Threefold Guna" discusses the importance of guna and the qualities of individuals based on their predominant nature (guna). It classifies guna into three types: Sattvic (pure), Rajasic (passionate), and Tamasic (dull). Each type of guna influences one's actions, habits, and beliefs. The chapter emphasizes the significance of performing duties with the right attitude and shraddha, as well as the impact of food habits, austerity, and sharing on one's spiritual growth. This chapter cultivates appropriate sraddha to progress on the path of spiritual evolution as outlined in the Bhagavad Gita.

All the participants uniformly expressed their satisfaction with respect to the subject matter of the course and also for the food, staying facilities and visit to temple. They are eagerly looking forward for the next camp.

- Report by Prema RamMohan

Photo in the cover page #2

JNANA PRAVAHA, MANJAKUDI - JUNE 2024 RETREAT REPORT

Arshabodhini acarya, Lavanyaji conducted her 8th camp at Jnana Pravaha, Manjakkudi, this June 15 -22.

The camp was conducted for over 50 Vidhyārthis where Acarayaji taught *Mundakopnishad*. The Upanishad was covered in 33 classes over 6 days.

The camp started with a grand Dakshinamurthy pooja, followed by the traditional Shirovrata pooja. The vidhyārthis received the text books from their Guru and Swami Ram-esvarananda Ji, held it over their head reverentially, and came around the classroom before starting their classes.

At the inauguration function, Swamiji and Shri Srinivasan ji warmly welcomed all and encouraged them to come back often. It was remembered how it was Pujya Swamiji who placed Mundakopnishad as the first Upanishad to be learned, which will affirm the student's understanding as they move on to study other texts.

Another important event during the camp was on International Yoga Day, 21st June 2024, where the book *Samvada*, written by Shri Ramgopal Ji, was launched.

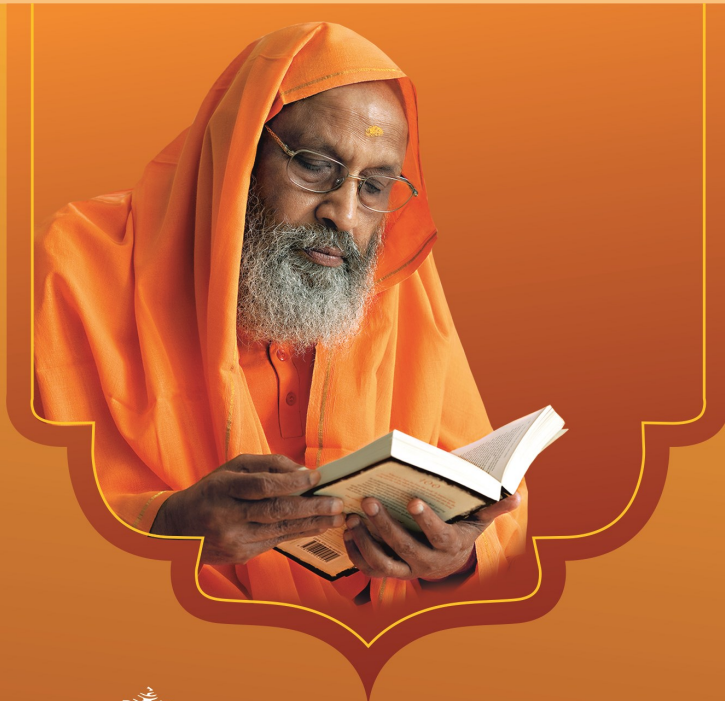
Shri Ramgopal ji studied in the Arsha vidya Sampradaya under Guru HH Swami Brahmayogananda Ji. He has always played a crucial role for the vidhyārthis of Arsha bodhini by having satsangs and question and answer sessions, not only during camps but regularly through whatsapp and google meet to compliment Guru Lavanyaji's teaching. His questions always induce the students to think from different perspectives, always pointing out the importance of traditional teaching. The book is a collection of such questions and answers, which can be very useful for a vedantic student.

Book was released by Swamiji, Acharya Rangaji, Acharya Suryapriyaji, Acharya Lavanyaji and Acharya Vasudevanji. Acharyas who studied along with Ramgopalji, under HH Swami Brahmayoganandaji spoke on the occasion.

The camp concluded with a Guru pooja and feedback session from vidhyārthis, where they expressed their gratitude to Guru Lavanyaji for her simple yet clear teaching. They also appreciated the facilities provided by the Jnanpravaha everytime there is a camp that allowed uninterrupted study of Vedanta. Those who wish to buy a copy of the book Samvada may call or message 7338882664 for copies.

- Report by Arshabodhini

Photo in the cover page #2



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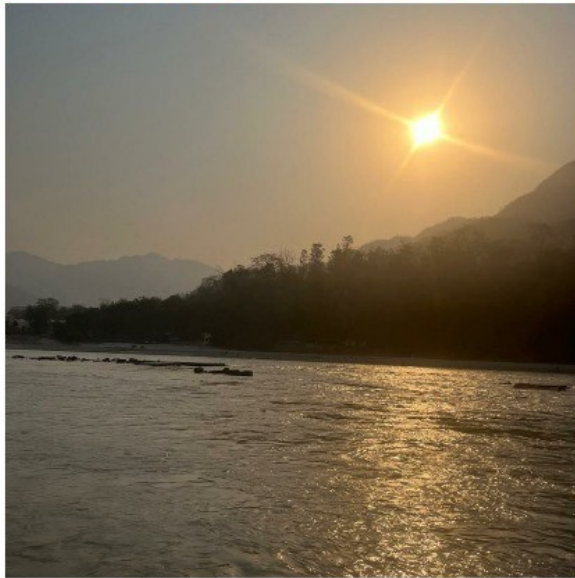
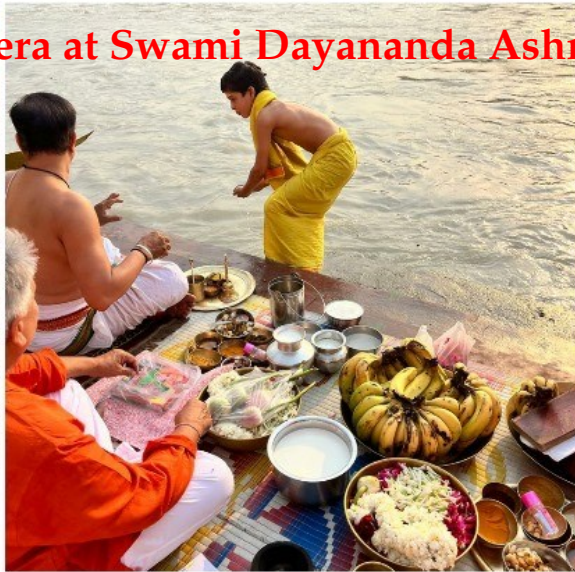
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