

Vedanta Retrat at Arsha Vidya Gurukualam, Anaikatti

A Vedanta retreat was held at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti from May 19, 2024 to May 26, 2024. Swami Sakshatkrtananda taught Ashtavakra Gita. Swami Sadatmananda taught Advaita Pancaratnam. 120 students participated. Swami Sadatmananda conducted Guided Meditation sessions. Both the Swamijis clarified the doubts of the students during Satsanga. One evening during satsanga, there was a Bharata-natyam performance by Smt. Revati Ramachandran.

ASHTAVAKRA GITA

This is a prakarana grantha. It contains 20 chapters and 298 verses. It is a nididhyasana text.

CHAPTER 1

Janaka asked: "How to gain vairagyam? How to gain jnanam? How to gain moksa?"

Astavakra replied: If you are desirous of moksa, give up the binding sense objects as poison. Look upon virtues like forbearance, straightforwardness, compassion, contentment, and truthfulness as nectar.

You are not the modification of the five elements. For gaining moksa, you have to understand that you are Saksi and you are cidrupam. To be ever free, understand that you are different from the body.

If you understand yourself as Saksi, you will be free from sorrow. You are free from varna and asrama. You are formless like space. You are pure existence, pure consciousness and pure Ananda.

You are independent of dharma, adharma, suka, duka, karta and bhokta. You are indeed free always. Saksi illumines the world through the mind. We are bitten by the dark cobra called doership. The antidote is knowing that I am not the doer. Jnanam fire burns down the forest of ajnanam.

The world is superimposed on Saksi, like the snake super imposed on the rope.

One who identifies with mukta atma becomes mukta. We have to reorient our thought pattern. Atma is saksi chaitanyam, all pervasive, that resolves everything into itself and is free from action.

Contemplate on atma as saski chaitanyam. From the stand point of atma, there is no external and internal. You are bound by the rope of identification with the body. It should be cut with the sword of knowledge.

You are free from relations and actions; you are self-effulgent and you are always free.

Like thread in the fabric give existence to the fabric, you lend existence to the world as sat chit ananda atma. All small mindedness disappears on this knowledge.

You are free from dependence and change. You should have deep knowledge like the deep sea. You should remain unshaken due to your clear knowledge.

Once you understand that you are the formless atma, there is no more rebirth. In the reflection in the mirror, there is no inside and outside. Similarly, inside and outside the body, there is only one Paramesvara. One space is there inside and outside the container. Similarly, one consciousness alone is there inside and outside all beings.

CHAPTER 2

Janaka said: Atma is such a great wonder. All this time, I have wasted without knowing this, due to delusion. Totally giving up body identification, Paramatma is to be known.

Waves, foams and bubbles come from water and are not separate from water. Similarly, the world comes from atma and the world is not separate from atma. The world is nothing but atma with names and forms. Names and forms do not have independent existence apart from its adistanam i.e. atma.

Sweetness has dependent existence on the tongue. Similarly, the world has dependent existence on me, the atma chaitanyam.

People take the snake as real, due to ignorance of the rope. Similarly, people take the world as real, due to ignorance of me, the svayam jyoti atma.

Svaparakasam is my true nature. Due to upadi of ajnanam, the illumination is sometimes less.

Pot resolves into its material cause, the clay. Armlet resolves into its material cause, the gold. Similarly, the world resolves into me, Brahman its material cause.

As Brahman, I am the srusti, sthithi and laya karanam of this world.

What a wonder! When the whole jagat, from Brahma upto an insect, is resolved, I, atma remain. Even though embodied, I am one. I appear to go and come, but in reality, I do not go to or come from anywhere. In this whole world, there is no expert like me. I hold the world, without sarira. Although I do not have anything, all that is here is mine. I cannot be grasped by speech and mind.

Knower, known and knowledge are mithya. I am the adistana chaitanyam. Giving reality to the duality is the reason for sorrow. The only cure for this is the knowledge, that the entire dualistic world is mithya. I am satyam.

Upadhis are projected by me. I abide in nirvikalpa sthiti. I have no bondage or liberation. All glories appear to belong to me. But in reality, no glory belongs to me. From my angle

of pure consciousness, the world is not real and it is just a projection.

Svarga, naraka, bondage and liberation are imagination. Only I, the pure consciousness is there. I do not see duality as real, in the midst of people. So it is as good as a forest devoid of people.

I am not the body. I am not the jiva. I am chit svarupam. Earlier, I had longing, which was the bondage.

CHAPTER 3

Astavakra asked: If you are the knower of atma, how come you have fascination to accumulate wealth? Due to ignorance, mistaking for silver, people go after shell. When you are the source of happiness, why do you go after worldly objects?

When you are the ocean of consciousness, why you are running like a helpless person? You have heard that you are pure consciousness. After this why are you dirtying yourself by running after sense pleasures?

You see Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. Then why do you have the sense of ownership? You have commitment in moksa and abidance in Advaita. Then why are you still under the influence of sense pleasures? Why are you still attached to worldly objects?

When you have discrimination and detachment, why are you afraid of moksa? A jnani when fed well does not feel elated or when beaten does not become angry.

A jnani has no identification with his body. He is not elated by praise or depressed by abuse. He sees the world as maya. He has no fear. He has no desire to live or die. With whom can you compare a jnani, who has no desire even for moksa and who is content with self-knowledge? For a jnani, there is nothing to be acquired or nothing to be given up. Jnani is beyond the pairs of opposite, he is equal in praise and abuse, and accepts all situations as per prarabdha.

CHAPTER 4

Janaka said: We cannot compare a jnani with a deluded person. Activities are a play for a jnani. Although outside he plays roles, he is free inside. There is no elation for a jnani, who has gained self-knowledge, which even devatas desire. There is no connection with space and smoke. Similarly, for a jnani there is no connection with punya and papa.

Who can give injunction to a jnani who knows that the entire world is the self? Among all living beings, only jnani has no likes and dislikes. A jnani does, what he feels is good for the world without fear. Whatever is Jnani's sankalpa is Isvara's sankalpa.

CHAPTER 5

Astavakrta said: Janaka! You are free from sanga. There is nothing to renounce. Although you are a householder, you are still a jnani.

ADVAITA PANCARATNAM

It is a nididhyasana text. It has 5 gem like verses on Advaita. This text also has another name Advaita Pancakam.

I am not the body, sense organs, 5 pranas, mind, intellect or the inner most ahankara. I am very different from wife, children, land, wealth, etc as they are connected only to the body. I as Saksi, illumine the mind and through the mind, illumine everything. I am Saksi, timeless, inner self and pure happiness. I am sat chit ananda. I am Siva.

By statement of a reliable person, there is negation of super imposed snake and the snake is recognised as a rope. Similarly, by Guru upadesam, I negate jiva bhavam and I recognise that I am Siva.

I am not born, do not grow or die. They belong to the body. I am not the doer, experiencer or the knower. They belong to the ego. I am of the nature of pure consciousness. I am Siva.

Maya makes asatyam appear as satyam. This waking world is similar to the dream world. The waking world appears due to maya sakthi of Brahman. I am pure, purna, nitya and eka atma. I am Siva.

I am the adistanam of the world, which is mithya. The external world is projected by maya. It appears to be satyam. It is similar to the reflection of the city, which appears in the mirror. I alone appear as this world. I am Siva.

Report by N. Avinashilingam

My natural longing to be free from unhappiness is the further proof of the validity of the vision that I, the self, is free and happy. There is a natural longing to be free from being unhappy. I love what is natural and I want to get rid of what is unnatural. If unhappiness, littleness, were natural to me, if they were the essential characteristics of *ātmā*, the self, I could never give them up. But in deep sleep and in moments of happiness, I do give up all the notions that make me feel small, limited. I find myself happy when those notions are absent. - Swami Dayananda Saraswati