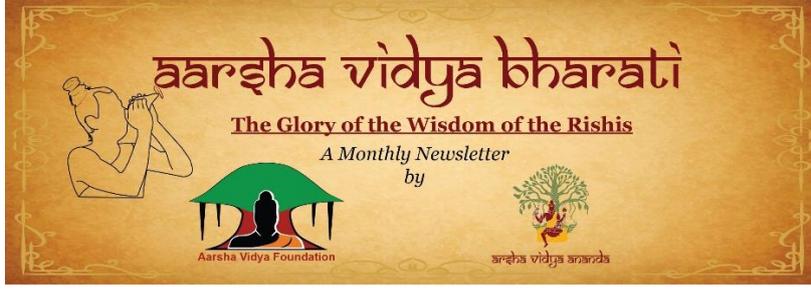

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Value of Values

Viviktadeśasevitvam Aratirjanasamsadi 17-18/20

By Eric Oddleifson, USA

To prepare the mind for self-knowledge, *Bhagavān* Krishna enumerates 20 values in Chapter 13 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The following discussion pulls from Pujya Swamiji's book, 'The Value of Values', and Swamini Brahmajnananda's webinar series 'Jñānam- 20 Values from the *Bhagavad Gītā*' to discuss विविक्तदेशसेवित्वम् *Viviktadeśasevitvam* and अरतिर्जनसंसदि *Aratirjanasamsadi*, values 17 and 18.

Viviktadeśasevitvam: *Vivikta* (separate or solitary) *deśa* (place) *sevitva* (to inhabit or resort to) means resorting to a solitary place; seclusion. This value and the following could be taken to imply that avoiding people leads to purity of the *antaḥkaraṇa*. This is not correct. Quiet places and spaces force us to be with ourselves and discover what that means. In the modern world, our whole way of living is geared to devising and implementing ways to escape from myself. We are always trying to distract ourselves. For example, constantly looking at our phone hoping something pops up to which I can give my attention, watching tv mindlessly, having wander lust, etc. These activities in and of themselves are not problematic. But, if I feel lost without these distractions or when I have nothing to do I become very restless, that means I am trying to escape from myself. Why? We are unconsciously trying to escape from the sense of incompleteness, unhappiness with who we think we are. Escape from our deep sense of overall inadequacy. We try to keep the mind and body busy so there is no time, no place, no quiet space where we can be ourselves. But in the quiet, all issues we have not dealt with in our life will come up. Anything we avoid will come to the surface. Anything you resist will persist. This need to escape is a universal phenomenon of the human mind. Facing ourselves in the quiet of our mind requires acceptance and love of ourselves as we are and surrender to *Īśvara*. If we desire *mokṣa*, this is a very important quality so that we can come to terms with ourselves and functional reality with the result being, as Swamiji says, "Clear knowledge of the self is now possible."



Aratirjanasamsadi: *Arati* (not inclined to be with), *samsadi* (group) of *jana* (people). Like the previous value, there is nothing wrong with spending time with people. A problem arises when this becomes a *rāga* – we need to spend time with others to avoid being by ourselves

because we don't feel OK being alone and think a companion will eliminate that sense of emptiness and incompleteness. Said differently, I am looking for an external object to solve my sense of inadequacy. I am using karma to bring me *mokṣa*. It can never work. Valuing *mokṣa*, we do not look to people to complete us because we have *karma yoga buddhi* and are learning to see all our relationships in light of *kauśalam* and *samatvam* in order to know ourselves as we already are. We will do what needs to be done while engaging with others but are not dependent on others for fullness. Whether we are with people, or not with people is OK. Vedanta is a study of reality, but we first need to handle functional reality, so we don't have *rāga dveṣa* towards people. As Swamiji says, "With these values, I will never need to seek escape from being with myself, nor will I be disturbed either by the presence or absence of people."

