
Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Nov 2023

Kartika - Agrahayana 2080

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Vedanta Camp, August 2023 - A Report

By Jahnvi Mukundan Mumbai

During this edition of our bi-annual Vedanta Camp, held at the Keshav Srusti campus from August 28th to September 3rd - we were blessed to have the presence of our gurus, Swami Brahavidananda Saraswati Ji and Swamini Brahmaprajnananda Ji.

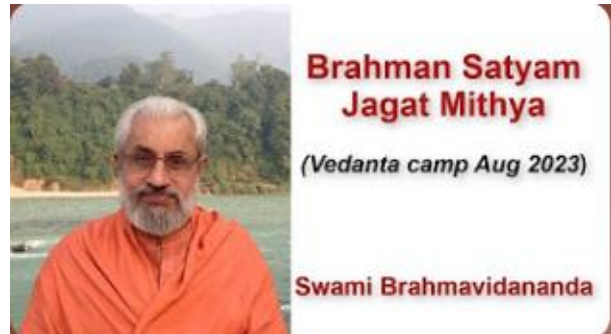
The camp atmosphere is always buzzing with excitement and a sense of calm. It's the only place I've ever realized that a routine of prayer and meditation can make all the difference, sometimes!

Over the course of the camp, Swamiji spoke about 'satyam' and 'mithyā' through the shloka-

“श्लोकार्धेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं ग्रन्थकोटिभिः ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः”

"ślokārdhena pravakṣyāmi yaduktaṁ granthakoṭibhiḥ brahma satyaṁ jaganmithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ"

Loosely translating, this verse says, "In half a verse, I will tell you what is said in crores of grantha-s: Brahman is real and the world is mithyā." To someone who understands Sanskrit or Hindi, this may seem like easy few words to grasp - "Oh, I get it. Brahman is real and the world is illusory. Great! Camp over! I now know that I am limitless consciousness."



But hold on a minute!

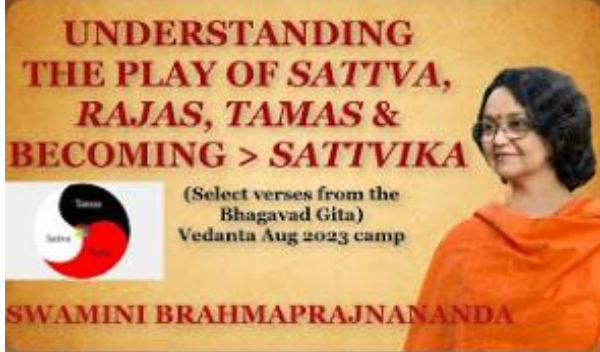
I've been studying Vedanta with Swamiji and Swaminiji for over a year now, and believe me, this explanation of 'ardha śloka' went on for four and a half days, and I'm still understanding the truth! So, what is Brahman? *Brahma Sūtra* defines Brahman as that which is the cause for the creation (manifestation), sustenance and the resolution of this creation. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, which states that the one who knows Brahman attains the freedom from the sense of finitude goes on to define Brahman comprehensively as Satyam, Jñānam and Anantam. The one who knows Brahman recognizes Brahman in his core of Buddhi or heart as the sense of 'I'.

Satyam is defined as that which cannot be negated at all three periods of time. Any object in this world can be resolved into formless existence which cannot be negated at any point of time. What is there is only Pure existence, *Satyam. Brahman*, the cause for this entire universe, is *Satyam*. Swamiji showed the need to deploy ‘implied meaning’ to understand *Brahman* since adjectival relationships and direct meaning will not work. He showed us how, what is called as ‘*Bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇa*’ helps us in understanding *Brahman*. This does not mean that *Brahman* is some kind of a nebulous inert matter, akin to something which science is trying to reduce the whole universe into.

Jñānam - Knowledge always involves a conscious entity, which thinks, feels and responds. Each one of us is a conscious entity. In this camp, Swamiji used ‘*Anantam*’ (infinite) and the definition of *mithyā* (that which is only an appearance, does not abide in all three periods of time, is subject to change and is non-separate from the cause) to negate what we erroneously take ourselves to be. We are not the roles we play, the body, the energy system sustaining the body, the mind and the transactional knowledge or ignorance. What remains is the self-evident ‘I’, the Pure Consciousness.

This Pure Consciousness is Infinite (*Anantam*), unconditioned by time or space which are only concepts of the mind that itself is *mithyā*. *Satyam*, as well as, *Jñānam* is *Anantam* which is the truth of *Brahman*.

Swamiji emphasized that *Satyam* is always present wherever *Mithyā* is (the whole world cannot exist by itself without *Satyam*). He used the famous Rope-Snake example and taught “Where the snake is, there the rope is”. That ensures that the *Mithyā* nature of all day-to-day things is understood clearly along with *Satyam*, which would help us to live Vedanta 24X7.



The next part of the camp was where Swamiji facilitated the understanding of ‘*Sattva*’ ‘*Rajas*’ and ‘*Tamas*’ through various verses in the *Bhagavad Gītā*! The key highlights of this topic was covered in the previous newsletter.

Vedanta to me, is a lifelong journey of learning and growth. As we continue to study and practice the teachings of Vedanta, we deepen our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Through Vedanta we also develop the strength and courage to live our lives.

(With inputs from Sundara Raghavan, Mumbai)