

**Seeking Resolution:
The Resolution of Seeking
An Introduction to Advaita Vedanta**

A talk by

Swami Advayatmananda Saraswati

(Presented as Brahmacārī Dakṣha Chaitanya prior to his Saṁnyāsa-Dīkṣā)

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ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तः शान्तिः ।

ॐ श्रीसद्गुरुभ्यो नमः ।
ॐ श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ।

***Om Saha nāvavatu | Saha nau bhunaktu | Saha vīryaṃ karavāvahai |
Tejasvi nāvadhītamastu | Mā vidviṣāvahai ||
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||***

***Om Śrī Sadgurubhyo namaḥ |
Om Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ |***

Namaḥ Sarvebhyaḥ - Salutations to all.

People are curious creatures, curious in both senses of the word. The word curious means, on one hand, a curiosity. Certainly a man from California in a dhoti speaking to you at this beautiful temple about Vedānta is a curiosity. Each of us is a special curiosity worth inquiring into. But we are also curious in the sense that we are *jijñāsu*-s (those who want to know). We have a natural *jijñāsā*, desire to know.

Sanskrit is an amazing language, as some of you well know. I am humbled in the presence of the scholarship and experience here in this room. Sanskrit words are all derived from *dhātu*-s, from verbal roots, for example the *dhātu* 'kṛ' - *ḍukṛñ karaṇe* - in the sense of doing. And from the root *kṛ* we get all sorts of nouns such as *kartā* - an agent, *karma* - an action, *karaṇam* - an instrument, *kāraṇam* - a cause, *kartavyam*, *karaṇīyam*, *kṛtyam*, *kāryam*, all meaning actions to be done.

So too from the *dhātu 'jñā'*, which means to know, we get words such as *jñānam* - knowledge, *jñeyam* - something to be known, *jñātā* - the knower. And we also get this very interesting word *jijñāsā*. To the verbal root *jñā* you add the *san* affix and you get *jñātum icchā*, 'the desire to know'.

This desire to know manifests in our day-to-day experience. We love knowing. We cannot brook ignorance. We're curious about everything. That's why Google is so popular. We want instant information. There is Wikipedia - if you go on the web you can find instant information. And in fact we love to gossip because we're curious. We want to know – "Oh did you hear what Devadatta did?" "Did you hear what Parvati did?"

One of the most excruciating things you can do to someone is to say "I have a secret but I can't tell you what it is." Because that will just drive someone crazy. We just want to know. We have this natural *jijñāsā*. The word *jijñāsā* is used in a very specific sense in Vedānta which we will explore a little later on.

This natural curiosity we have expresses itself in all these different ways, including the love of solving problems, for example sudoku puzzles, or crossword puzzles. A crossword puzzle is something that begs to be solved. In the New York Times in the United States every day a crossword puzzle appears in the newspaper. Monday is easy. Tuesday is a little harder. Wednesday is even harder, until Sunday, which is the hardest crossword puzzle there is. And it begs to be resolved, to be completed.

Why do we set up these artificial puzzles for ourselves? We create these problems because we love to solve problems. I would like to say that the reason we love solving problems is because we love the release of the tension that is inherent in any problem.

There is a natural tension in any problem that needs resolution. For example the equation $5 \times 5 = 100 \div 4$. For us it might be quite obvious, but for a seven-year-old it might be quite a challenge. To get the answer you need to resolve both sides of the equation. You need to understand $5 \times 5 = 25$ on one hand, and $100 \div 4 = 25$ on the other, and the equation resolves. And for a seven-year-old there is a sense of success there, a sense of accomplishment.

In fact we love that resolution of any problem, even those as simple as a sudoku or a crossword puzzle. We also love checking things off our to do list to gain that sense of resolution, that sense that we have completed a task. You know you have accomplished something during the day if you have checked off a number of things on your to do list.

We love checking things off our list of things to do. This has to do with the fact that love to become what is called in Sanskrit a *kṛta-kṛtyaḥ*. *Kṛtya* means something to be done. *Kṛta* means done. So a *kṛta-kṛtyaḥ* is one who has accomplished what is to be accomplished. Within the limited domain, within the scope of a crossword puzzle, once we finish that puzzle we are a *kṛta-kṛtyaḥ*. We have accomplished what needs to be done, at least within the scope of that particular puzzle. If we have a book of puzzles, and we finish one puzzle, we get the sense of relief, a sense of joy, a sense of resolution. But there is always another to be done on the next page.

So too with music. Here in Chennai you have the wonderful opportunity to attend a number of musical performances during the December season. In my basic understanding of Carnatic music, a joy of music has to do with the relationship and tension that develops between the structure of the *tālam* and *rāgam*, and the rhythmic or melodic improvisation that is created in the context of that structure. We love the resolution inherent there.

For example in a mridangam solo performed in *Ādi tālam*, there is the *eḍuppu*, the rhythmic starting point of the composition, which can come anywhere within the rhythmic cycle. The percussionist is playing, improvising, toying with you, teasing you, until he finally approaches and hits that mark. He will do this again and again. At the end of a percussion solo there are long mathematically complex rhythmic phrases that the mridangam player performs, creating a rhythmic tension that finally resolves at the climax when he hits that one beat, that final *eḍuppu*. Everyone in the audience loves this.

So too in the *ālāpana* - the introductory non-rhythmic exploration of a *rāgam*. We have the the ascending and descending scales - *Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa*, *Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa* which are explored,

improvisationally, using all the *gamaka*-s (musical ornamentations). The vocalist will improvise around *Sa*, the tonic with *Ni, Ri, Ni, Ri* and finally resolve that melody into *Sa*. After all of this improvisation, it all resolves into *Sa*, the tonic, the *śruti*. And we love that *śruti*, that resolution. We feel at home. It feels good. There is resolution there.

And so we love this problem-solving, and we love this resolution because there is a sense of at-home-ness, a sense of completing what it is that needs to be completed. So what does this have to do with Vedānta? Why are we talking about music, and sudoku puzzles?

We solve problems in our life. Life is solving problems. In fact I used to be a software development manager in Silicon Valley in California and I would have college students coming up to me asking "How do I get a job? What skills should I learn in school? Should I learn C Sharp, data structures, systems analysis? What skills should I learn to get a job in your high-tech firm?". And I would tell them that the one skill you need to have is the ability to solve problems. Your job as an employee is to solve your boss's problems. Your job is to make your boss problem-free, to help solve his problems, regardless of what the problem is, because your boss inherits problems from his boss.

In fact, in the business world they don't call them problems. They call them 'challenges'. And the latest term for problems is 'opportunities'. You don't have problems, you have 'opportunities for success.' And your boss is trying to please his own boss by trying to solve his problems. For example he needs to 'Increase revenue by 4% in the next quarter.' Or 'Increase the company website's capacity by 50%' in a certain amount of time. And that is his problem that he is looking to you to help solve.

If you learn problem solving, regardless of the domain, you will be a successful, valued employee. And even if you don't know the domain, even if you don't understand the details of the problem, you need to at least know how to discover and ask the right questions. If an employee is not curious, if he or she does not have that natural *jijñāsā*, curiosity, then he or she doesn't know how to think about, explore, and solve problems. If you don't know how to solve the problem, you need to know which questions to ask, or at least how to discover what the right questions are.

So life is problem solving, and throughout our lives we are trying to solve a fundamental problem. What is the problem we are trying to solve? To discover this we need to look at where we put our attention. You can tell what problems we are trying to solve by where we place our attention. Our attention is sacred. Our time is sacred. Our time is limited. And the moments of life go by quickly - tick tick tick tick, and the next thing you know you are 30 years old, 40, 50, 60, 70, and if you are lucky, 80, and even 90. Every moment is valuable, and what you put your attention on should be meaningful. Because, as they say, life is not a dress rehearsal. Therefore we need to make sure that we are trying to solve the right problem through our actions and attention.

With a little thought, we find we have the situation set up such that the problem in life we are trying to solve is this equation: "I" (me) + x = happiness. Now solve for x . What is the value of x , as in an algebraic equation? I plus what equals happiness?

This x is a variable. It can be anything. For example, it can be a new pair of shoes. I might say that if I just had a new pair of shoes I would be happy. Really? When you get the new pair shoes you begin to think "These shoes enable me to walk to work, but if I had a bicycle I could get to work faster, and I would be that much happier." And after getting the bicycle you think "Oh, if I had a motorized two-wheeler", then "No, if I had a powerful motorcycle", and "No, if I had a car", and finally "No if I could work from home, then I wouldn't even need a vehicle."

And so we look for new experiences, we look for objects of enjoyment, and we look for new relationships to solve the problem of x . "I" (me) + x = happiness. And we can fill that variable x with anything - a new car, a laḍḍu, a new experience, a vacation, a trip to *Kāśī* (Varanasi). With whatever value of x use, we are trying to find a solution to create the resolution to the problem of this equation.

We also find we are trying to solve a related equation: "I" (me) + x = security. We are all looking for security. We want power. We want money. We want security. And the question that comes to mind is 'How much security is enough? How much money is enough?' Money, Lakṣmī (the

goddess of prosperity), is sacred. There is nothing wrong with earning money. It is a power in this world which can grant us some opportunities and some comforts. But look at how people address money – how much is enough? One rupee? 10? 100? 1000? 10,000? Is a lakh of rupees enough? A million rupees? A crore? 10 Crore?

Why does a millionaire want to become a multimillionaire? Why does a multimillionaire want to become a billionaire? How much money is enough? Why do we need to keep accumulating, putting in more values for x ? “I” plus what equals security? What do I need to add to make me feel secure? A house? A bigger house? It seems to be endless. We seem to be trying to fill the hole in our souls with new experiences, new pleasures, new possessions - things that we think will make us happy or secure.

This is what is called *saṃsāra*, a life filled with fruitless struggle to ‘become’ happy or secure. *Saṃsāra* is often thought of as (in the verse from Bhaja Govindam) *Punarapi jananaṃ, punarapi maraṇaṃ, punarapi jananījaṭhare śayanam* - ‘Yet again birth, yet again death, yet again lying in the mother's womb...’. But really when you look at it, we don't know much about our past lives. The *śāstra* (scriptures), the *śruti* (revealed texts) tells us that we have past lives and that we will have future births.

But really my concern right now is this life, and my struggles in this life. *Saṃsāra* really means a life of becoming - A life of trying to become something more than I am right now by adding things, by trying to solve for x . By adding more comforts, by adding more security I try to become happy, I try to become secure. And it never works.

Please note that we never completely drown in the “ocean of *saṃsāra*”, as is the common image. Rather, we are continually in the process of drowning. If you drown you are fine, you are gone, you no longer have a problem. The problem is the continual drowning. You come up for air, you grab a breath, and you are pulled back down, up again and down again. And so we live our lives. Thoreau said 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.' This is because we work and hope for these fleeting moments of happiness. We'll work fifty weeks of the year so we can take two weeks vacation to get away. We then come back and once again live our lives, continuing to need to prop ourselves up with innumerable external things,

looking for external sources of happiness and security.

And it's never enough because anything we get in time is time-bound. And everything we get is a compromise. For example, let's look at a seven-year-old boy who wants laḍḍu (a sweet), and he does not have the money to buy it. He could get it by stealing it, but he is a good Indian boy so he's not going to steal it. He understands *dharma*, the value of *ahiṃsā* (non-injury) and *asteya* (non-stealing). He could ask somebody for the laḍḍu, but he decides instead to earn a few rupees to buy it. In that pursuit, he experiences several different phases of joy, namely, *priya*, *moda*, and *pramoda*. *Priya* is the pleasure caused by the expectation of an enjoyable experience. *Moda* is when the boy buys the laḍḍu. He possesses the object of desire, but has not yet tasted it. *Pramoda* is when he actually takes a bite of the laḍḍu.

But when he does take that first bite he begins to become nervous, because he realizes that he took such a big bite, and half of his delicious laḍḍu is already gone! He thinks "I'm eating it too fast! It will be gone in a second if I don't slow down." So he takes half a bite, and then another half bite, and another half bite. And at each moment he is regretting each bite. In the midst of the joy of tasting the laḍḍu, he regrets the fact that it is disappearing before his eyes. So too, every acquisition is a compromise. There is no value of x that satisfies that equation " I " + x = happiness or security because everything gained in time is time-bound, and will go in time.

Also, nothing ever really lives up to our expectations. There always seems to be a bit of buyer's remorse with every acquisition. There is the phenomenon of what is called *śobhanādhyāsa*. *Adhyāsa* means a superimposition. *Śobhana-adhyāsa* means superimposing a value on something which it doesn't deserve. We have this *śobhanādhyāsa* towards money. We think that the acquisition of money will bring us happiness. But this is purely a superimposition. Money can buy some comfort and opportunities, but it's not going to solve this fundamental problem. Otherwise all rich people would be happy, which is not true. Even multimillionaires commit suicide.

There is nothing inherent in money that produces happiness. Some of the

happiest people I've ever met are *sadhu*-s (renunciates). All they have is a couple *dhoti*-s (bottom cloth) and *aṅgavastra*-s (upper cloth), and they are the happiest people in the world. If there were a one-to-one correlation between happiness and money, then all rich people would be happy in all poor people would be sad. But this is not true.

Looking more closely at where we put our attention, we find there are four natural pursuits that every person undertakes. These are called *puruṣārtha*-s. *Puruṣa-artha* means *sarvaiḥ puruṣaiḥ arthyate iti puruṣārthaḥ* - That which is *arthyate*, pursued, *sarvaiḥ puruṣaiḥ*, by all people. These pursuits are natural. People want *kāma* - desirable objects, pleasures and comforts, *artha* - wealth, security and power, and *dharma*, which in this context can mean *puṇya*, meritorious actions which lead to heaven.

But the *śāstra* which tells us about *svarga* (heaven) says that it is temporary. You earn *puṇya*, you do *yajña* (rituals), *tapas* (spiritual disciplines), you give *dāna* (charity) - all these good works, and the visit to heaven which you earned in time and you spend your *puṇya* on, is like a vacation. You go on vacation to *svargaloka* (heaven!), and you always come back. It's temporary. Even *svarga* is temporary.

You look at the nature and effectiveness of the pursuit and acquisition of *kāma*, and *artha* to solve the problem of "I" + x, and it doesn't work. And you look at even going to heaven, and that is not going to solve the problem either.

We do however experience moments of happiness. Life is not all that miserable. We do come up for air, and we do get some relief. What happens at that time? When we have a pleasurable experience, when we get an object of desire, what happens is that the duality, the *dvaita* between the desirer and the desired disappears. In the acquisition of that laḍḍu, that desirous little boy and object of desire unite, and resolve. It is a type of resolution. And for a minute I forget the conclusion about myself that I am a wanting, limited, insecure person, and I discover the pleased self.

I have the conclusion about myself that I need *kāma*, that I need things to make me happy because I'm not inherently happy. I need *artha*, things to

make me secure, because I am inherently insecure. This is the premise of the formula "I" +x = happiness, "I" +x = security. We want to fill in values for x because the premise is that I am insecure, I am incomplete, I am wanting, I need something to make me happy. This is *saṃsāra*, the constant grasping for something to make me complete.

But when I have a moment of joy, I forget that wanting person. I forget that I'm this little person who needs all these things. This resolution occurs the moment there is the resolution of a desire, or when the singer comes back to Sa, the tonic at the end of the *ālāpana*. This resolution is, in a sense, a key to understanding our true nature.

Look at this. Let's say I have 100 desires. If I fulfill one of those hundred desires, for example I go to *Kāśī* (Varanasi), you would think I would be only 1% happy, because I still have 99 other desires that are pending. How can I be happy when I have all these outstanding desires? But when I go to *Kāśī* and take a dip in the *Gaṅgā* (Ganges river) I am as happy as can be, even though I have not been to Paris, and I still want that masala dosa, and want everything else on my bucket list, as we say.

I find myself happy in spite of having all these unfulfilled desires. So what really is the relationship between the fulfillment of a desire and happiness? It's questionable at best. I can have all these outstanding desires and still have a moment of happiness.

And I can have a moment of happiness without the fulfillment of any desire. For example, if I knew a good joke I could tell you the joke and you would laugh. In a moment of laughter what desire is fulfilled? When you look into a child's eyes and you become happy, or when you see a sunset, when you have *darśan* (viewing) of *Marundeeswarar* (the temple deity) here, what desire is being fulfilled? There is no real desire being fulfilled. You are not gaining *artha* or *kāma*. I can be happy in spite of having all these unfulfilled desires, and I can be happy even without any desires being fulfilled.

In all of these moments of happiness, the notion that I am an incomplete, wanting being is dropped. This fact makes us question the very premise of the equation we're trying to solve: "I" +what = happiness? Perhaps the solution lies in a different equation.

This is where the *śāstra*, where Vedānta comes in. You know what Vedānta is - literally it means the section at the end of the Vedas. There are four Vedas, and each Veda has four sections - *Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad*. The first sections form the *karma-kāṇḍa* (section focussed on action) which deals with action, ritual, *preyas*, the means for developing a comfortable and enjoyable life. At the very end of the Vedas, *vedānām antaḥ*, there are the Upaniṣads. They are literally the texts at the end of the Vedas. They are also called the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (section focussed on knowledge) because it is this section that deals with knowledge, *śreyas*, *mokṣa* (freedom). This is Vedānta.

The statement, the equation that the Upaniṣads or Vedānta gives us is not “‘I’ plus what = happiness’. It says you are what it is you are seeking, right now - *tat tvam asi*. This is the equation of Vedānta. *Asi* means ‘You are’. It's like the equal sign ‘=’. In Sanskrit the verb ‘to be’ is *Asmi*, *asi*, *asti* - I am, you are, he is. It functions like an equals sign. And on one side of that equals sign is *tvam*, you, meaning me. And on the other side of that equation is *tat*, *Īśvara*, the Lord, the cause of this creation. So the Upaniṣads tell us ‘You are that’, meaning ‘I am *Īśvara*’.

That’s crazy, right? How can I be *Īśvara*? I am just this little *alpa-jñāḥ* - I am a person who knows just very, very little. I am an *alpa-śaktimān* - I have extremely limited capacity. I can't even make rice without burning it.

Whereas *Īśvara* is *sarva-jñāḥ*, all-knowing. *Īśvara* is all knowledge manifesting as this creation. He is *sarva-śaktimān*, all-powerful. He's *sarva-vyāpī*, all pervasive. Whereas I am this little tiny *jīva*, individual. I am this wanting *saṃsārī* (one who struggles to become complete.) I am this person with very little capacity to create or to know. But this is the equation that is presented to us in the Upaniṣads - *tat tvam asi*.

Tat tvam asi is one of a number of statements in the Upaniṣads called *mahāvākya*-s, great sayings. There are four that are well known - *prajñānam brahma*, *ayamātmā brahma*, *tat tvam asi*, and *ahaṃ brahmāsmi*, but there are actually many. And they are all the same equation. How would you solve this equation that the Upaniṣads are giving us?

The first part of the Vedas say if you are interested in *kāma*, *artha*, *dharma*, do these particular actions, rituals, etc, but the Upaniṣads tell us if you are interested in solving the fundamental problem, the problem being that I take myself to be this limited, small, wanting being, then you need to put those other pursuits in perspective. You need to look at *kāma*, *artha*, and *dharma* and realize that those values of *x* are not going to solve the fundamental, universal, human problem, which is the conclusion that I am lacking, I am wanting.

The one pursuit in life which will solve the fundamental problem is the pursuit of *mokṣa*, the fourth *puruṣārtha*. I want to be free. I don't want to keep bobbing up and down in this *saṃsāra-sāgara*, in this ocean of 'becoming'. I want to solve the fundamental problem. I've tried solving for *x*, and it doesn't work. I've tried filling in all sorts of values for *x*, and it just doesn't work.

All human pursuits, when they are analyzed, resolve into the desire for *mokṣa*. You become a *mumukṣu* - one who has *moktum icchā*, the desire to be free. And how do you become free? You understand what the Upaniṣads are saying in the statement *tat tvam asi*.

On one side of this equation you have the *jīva*, the individual, and on the other side you have *Īśvara*, the Lord, and in the middle you have an equals sign. How do you resolve this equation? It's like resolving the equation $5 \times 5 = 100 \div 4$. To resolve the equation you need to understand, to resolve each side of the equation so you can understand what that identity indicated by the equation means. When $5 \times 5 = 25$, and $100 \div 4 = 25$, the equality is clear. But in the *mahāvākya* *tat tvam asi* we need to resolve one side of the equation, namely, that I am a limited being, and on the other side of the equation, that *Parameśvara* (Lord) is unlimited, in order to solve the equation. How do we do this? How do we solve this equation?

It's one thing to believe in something. But but the *mahāvākya*-s in the Upaniṣads are not saying that you need to believe that you are the source of your happiness. They are making the assertion that you are it. But if you are it, what keeps you from being it? If you are the source of happiness, what keeps you from being happy? It is ignorance. It's a lack of

knowledge about the truth of yourself. And so how do you gain knowledge? You go to a guru, a teacher. The *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* says:

परीक्षय लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो निर्वेदमायात् सास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्

*Parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyāt nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena ।
Tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ
brahmaniṣṭham ॥*

This is a beautiful *mantra* (scriptural verse). “*karmacitān lokān parīkṣya*” - *Īkṣ* means to see. *Parīkṣya* means seeing from all sides, examining closely. Examining what? Examining *lokān* which are *karmacitān*, which are created by action. What does *loka* mean? The *mantra* says ‘Clearly examining the *loka*-s which are born of action.’ Literally in Sanskrit *loka* is *lokyate iti lokaḥ*. *Loka* is that which is experienced. So it means - when we examine our experiences related to our pursuits of *kāma*, *artha*, and *dharma*, as we just did very briefly, we realize that they come up short. They don't solve the fundamental universal human problem.

So, having examined his experiences, may a “*brāhmaṇa*”, an intelligent person, “*nirvedam āyāt*” - may he gain *nirveda*, *vairāgya*. May he again dispassion, objectivity. The word *vairāgya* is often misunderstood. Usually translated as dispassion, it is often thought of it as disdain for the world - "Oh the world is horrible. I need to give up the world." Why? Because it causes pain?

This is not *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya* is an objectivity towards the capacity of experiences, people, objects, and pursuits to bring us happiness. It is pure objectivity. If I have *vairāgya* towards money, it doesn't mean I don't recognize the buying power, the *vyāvahārika-śakti* of money. It just means that I don't look to money for my solution to what I'm seeking in life. That's *vairāgya*.

It means you have a balanced perspective. In fact you have something of a disinterest in most of these things. If you see the true problem as being a misunderstanding of my very nature, because as the *śāstra* says, that I am

even now what it is I seek to become, then other pursuits are just not that interesting. My interest is in *mokṣa*, freedom, the answer to the fundamental problem. I am a *mumukṣu*, one who desires freedom, because only *mokṣa* is going to directly solve my problem.

So, may a *brāhmaṇa*, an intelligent person gain *vairāgya*, objectivity towards other pursuits, which comes as a result of understanding “*nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena*”, “*na asti akṛtaḥ kṛtena*”. *Kṛtena*, *karmaṇā*, by action, *akṛtaḥ na asti*, there is nothing that is eternal, uncreated, lasting, permanent. There is no *mokṣa*, there is no freedom created by action. In other words, there is no value of *x* that I can put in the equation “I + *x* = what I seek’ that is going to solve the problem. There is nothing that is permanent that is created through impermanent means. Anything that you gain in time you will lose in time. *Akṛtaḥ* means that which is uncreated. It means *mokṣa*. And it is very interesting to say that *mokṣa* is uncreated. What does it mean to say liberation is uncreated? We will see shortly.

Tadvijñānārtham”, “*tad-vijñāna-artham*” - for the sake of the clear knowledge of that. The clear knowledge of what? The clear knowledge of the solution to my problem as a struggling human being. But I want to be free of this struggle, and now I am being told that I need to know something. I gain some objectivity towards this world, and now the Upaniṣad is saying I need to know something. This indicates that there is necessarily a shift. The state of being one who desires *mokṣa* needs to be transformed, refined into a state of being one who desires knowledge. This is because when Vedānta says *tat tvam asi*, “You are that”, it does not say *tat tvam bhaviṣyasi*. It does not say you will *become* that which you are seeking. It says you *already are* that.

So if this inherent freedom is already *siddha*, an established fact, then it must be that I just lack the knowledge of that fact. In my experience I find that I am constantly concluding about myself “I am small. I am little. I am wanting.” and so may ask “How can I already be that truth?” The answer is - It is because of self-ignorance. I don't know in truth who I am.

Avidyā, ignorance has two powers. It has *āvaraṇa-śakti*, the power to conceal, and *vikṣepa-śakti*, the power to project something that is not there. For example, I walk down the road and I see a snake when really all that is

there is a rope. Seeing the snake I think "Oh my goodness! I am in danger! I am frightened!" It is the *āvaraṇa-śakti*, the veiling power of ignorance that allows the rope that is there to be concealed, and it is the *vikṣepa-śakti*, the power to project that allows me to see a snake there. There is no snake, there is only a rope.

That is exactly what is happening here in regard to myself. I do not know the truth of myself. My true nature is covered by ignorance, and so I am able to project identities upon myself which are not true, the identities of being a small, wanting person.

So, for the sake of knowing the solution to the problem we are trying to solve, "*sa gurum eva abhigacchet.*" May this intelligent person indeed approach a *guru*, a teacher. This problem is not going to solve itself because we have no *pramāṇa*, no means of knowledge to figure this out - not by *pratyakṣa*, perception, not by *anumāna*, inference, nor by any other available means of knowledge. We don't have the answer and we don't know how to find it on our own. We don't even know the right questions to ask.

So we approach a *guru*, a teacher, "*samitpāṇih*", in a traditional manner. *Samit* means wood for the fire. So with offerings in hand, with *śraddhā*, trust in the *guru* and in the *śāstra*, and with willingness to serve the *guru*.

And it is made very clear that this *guru* needs to be two things - he needs to be a "*śrotriya*" and a "*brahmaṇiṣṭha*". A *śrotriya* is someone who knows the *śāstra*. He knows the Veda. He knows the Upaniṣads. He knows what he is talking about. But he can't just be an academician. He can't just take the study of the *śāstra* as an academic pursuit. He has to be someone who knows the *prakriyā*-s, the traditional teaching methodology of unfolding this vision. He needs to know, for example, the *avasthā-traya-sākṣi-prakriyā* (discernment of the self as the witness of the three states of experience), the *kārya-kāraṇa-prakriyā* (analysis of cause and effect), the *pañca-kośa-prakriyā* (the inquiry into the five common points of misidentification), etc. He needs to know how to unfold this vision of the truth of yourself to make it clear, to make it living and real.

And this *guru* needs to also be a *brahma-niṣṭha* - *brahmaṇi niṣṭhā yasya*

sah brahmaniṣṭhaḥ - one whose *niṣṭhā* is in *Brahman* (the truth of oneself and the creation). *Niṣṭhā* can mean two things. It can mean commitment - one whose commitment is to *Brahman*, to the pursuit of the truth. Or it can mean one whose very self-identity rests in *Brahman* - one who has the vision that he himself is free, a *mukta-puruṣaḥ*.

So your *guru* needs to know that he himself is free. And he needs to know the sourcebooks, the Upaniṣads etc, and handle them as a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge, being able to communicate this vision clearly and directly.

We have the most amazing *sampradāya* (teaching tradition). The Upaniṣads have the vision of who you are as revealed in the statement *tat tvam asi* - that you even now are what it is you are seeking in all these different things, in all values of *x*. You are even now that completeness. And that *drṣṭi*, that vision of the Upaniṣads becomes the *drṣṭi*, the vision of your *guru* when he knows, because he learned from his *guru*, and he learned from his *guru*, and he learned from his *guru*.

He sees himself as free. He is a *brahma-niṣṭha*. He sees that he himself is free, and when he looks at you, he sees that you as well are free. He doesn't see that you have a problem. He just sees that you think there is a snake there when really there is just a rope. You don't have a problem. You think you have a problem because you don't know the truth of the rope.

And if he has the methodology to unfold the true meaning of the *śāstra-s* (scriptures), then your *guru's* vision becomes your vision as well. His knowledge becomes your knowledge. And it is not an abstract, theoretical knowledge. It is not like there is some *paramātmā* (limitless self) out there somewhere far away. It is you. When you say 'I', you are pointing to the same 'I' that is referenced in *tat tvam asi*. When you say 'I', that is the same *ātmā* (self) that is free right now.

You are not going to become free. You are not going to gain something and *become* free from all this *saṃsāra* (fruitless striving). You *are* free right now, but don't see it. We take ourselves to be this body, this mind, this *kārya-karaṇa-saṃghāta* (body-mind-sense-complex). We have this mistaken notion that I am limited to this physical thing, the body. I am not

this physical thing. I'm not this mental thing. I'm not these thoughts. I'm not this body. I am free from that, and I am much more.

So very briefly, what the *guru* will resolve is the equation *tat tvam asi*. How can this limited individual be *Īśvara*, the Lord? How can the *alpa-jñāḥ* (one with limited knowledge) be non-different from the *sarva-jñāḥ* (all knowing one)? How can this *alpa-śaktimān* (one with limited capacity) be the *sarva-śaktimān* (all powerful)?

It is like the wave and the ocean. This little wave is saying "I'm just this little wave! I don't know much. I am subject to death. I see the shore approaching and I'm going to hit it and I'm going to die. I'm just this little wave." And the ocean says "I Am The Entire Ocean." This is the huge limitless Ocean so you can imagine him speaking with a big deep voice! He says "I Am Everything! I Am The Ocean!"

And you could see, from one perspective, the wave is entirely different than the ocean. But you can easily understand that that is not true. Because from another perspective the wave is part of the ocean. The ocean includes the wave. The wave is not separate from the ocean. It is a little piece of the ocean. So in one vision you can resolve the *vyaṣṭi* into the *samaṣṭi* - resolve the individual into the total, resolve the wave into the ocean as being a part of the ocean.

But even that is not the true vision of Vedānta. That is not the meaning of *tat tvam asi*. *The aikyam, advitīyam* - the oneness and the non-duality which the Upaniṣads talk about is one of radical identity. Radical identity. So when the wave says "I am a wave", and the ocean says "I am the ocean" what are they really pointing to with the personal pronoun 'I'? They are pointing only to water. The truth of the wave is water. The truth of the ocean is water. The truth of the individual is *Brahman* (the one non-dual reality). The truth of *Īśvara* is *Brahman*.

With knowledge, the wave resolves into nothing but water. With knowledge the ocean resolves into nothing but water. When you reach out and touch a wave, you touch water only. You don't really touch a wave, you touch water which is the same as the entirety of the ocean. With knowledge, you see the truth of yourself as not being limited by the form of the wave, not

being limited by the form of this particular individual who is walking down the road, but instead see the truth of yourself as water, as *Brahman*. And this same water is the ocean, that is *Īśvara*. That is the vision of Vedānta - *tat tvam asi*.

So to fully resolve this, we need to thoroughly do what is called *tvam-pada-vicāra* (inquiry into the meaning of the word 'you') and *tat-pada-vicāra* (inquiry into the meaning of the word 'that', or the Lord). There is a lot more to be said about this. We need to understand the true nature of *tvam*, the *jīva*, the individual, and the true nature of *tat*, the Lord, the cause of this entire creation. Because in truth, right now, there is no difference. You are identical, just as the wave is identical with the ocean. Because if the wave says 'I' and means water, and the ocean says 'I' and means water, then what is the difference between the two? There is no difference.

And yet there is this manifestation in which there appears to be a separate individual on one hand, and the Lord on the other. And that is the joy of living. I as an individual can express devotion towards *Īśvara*, because as the wave, I am not the entire ocean. But as water, *Brahman*, there is no difference between me and the truth of this entire creation.

And in truth, knowledge of that identity is what I am seeking in all my pursuits. *Ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati* - everything is held dear, appears to be desirable, is precious, for the sake of the self. In every search I am just seeking this self-knowledge. And no value of x, nothing I can add to myself will enhance me or diminish me, because I already am what I seek to become. I just don't know it.

Thank you for inviting me to say a few words here in this beautiful temple. It is such a pleasure, such a joy. I'm very honored to be speaking here. And thank you for taking the time to listen to this funny fellow from California speaking to you on Vedānta.

