

# **Vedantic Thoughts in a Nutshell**

## **Introduction**

There is a profound mysticism behind every life. Many of the events that take place in life are predefined, predestined. Every individual has a role to play in the world, for which they have come, in order to fulfill a mission and perform the role. There is also a role of the environment in which he/she is brought in, which shapes the character of the individual. The different exchange interactions, with other individuals and with the environment are dictated by the laws of causation, i.e. the deeply mysterious laws of Karma.

## **Types of People**

There are two types of people in this world. One type is called jnani or the wise; the other type is called ajnani or the ignorant. The ajnani is the materialistic type without any knowledge or willingness to know the mystery behind existence. They want to enjoy the life and the world from a purely materialistic standpoint, i.e. the objects of senses, they claim to be practical and realistic and consider the world of senses as the last frontier beyond which there is nothing. The other type is the philosophical type, who tries to understand the existence beyond the mundane, ordinary. They try to go beyond the senses and explore what is behind the perceived material world. They try to unravel the mysteries associated with life, our relationship with each other and with the environment and the cause of everything.

## **Maya**

There are two types of Maya – Vidya and Avidya. The unwise or ignorant is under Avidya Maya. Avidya Maya binds one to the world. Avidya is concerned with ego, delusion (Moha), passion, ignorance, Vidya is knowledge, compassion. Under Vidya Maya one performs work without selfish desire or attachment, treating every work as Seva, a service to the

humanity. One tends to think about human relationship while performing work, i.e. always for the betterment of fellow human beings, always thinking about how to make their life better. One who grows spiritually is more compassionate to fellow creatures. Compassion is a sign of evolving spiritually. Lack of compassion is Avidya.

Lust and greed are products of Avidya. Lust and greed are related to excess sensory enjoyments. Result of excessive lust and greed are asurik tendencies as illustrated in Gita, 16<sup>th</sup> chapter.

### **Spiritual Life and its traits**

Seed of ego enters into the unwise who are unaware of the pitfalls of the ego and desire. Wise person however understands the necessity - what is needed and what is not needed or in excess. Wise person converts his desire to aspiration for spiritual upliftment through power of discrimination. An unwise person under the influence of Avidya Maya has no sense of discrimination. Driven by ego and under the impulse of desire, an unwise and ignorant person develops more and more problems in life, just like the kite (in Srimad Bhagavat) that was chased by many crows as it was flying with the fish. The problems chase the unwise and make his life full of suffering. A wise person who is under Vidya Maya, who is compassionate and kind, who has faith, has enough spiritual strength to face problems in life. A person, who grows spiritually and has no material desires, will also grow in terms of material wealth. One who leads a spiritual life (dharma) normally has less suffering than who does not. A spiritual life is difficult in the beginning but results in peace. A materialistic life is easy and full of enjoyments in the beginning, but brings suffering and misery in its wake.

One should always be aware of death. Death shows one the target of life. One who is aware that death is the end point will not be able to indulge only in sense pleasures. There is a life beyond death and everyone should strive to secure means for that life. This means that there should be

metaphysical meanings attached to life. A metaphysical existence needs sacrifice of desires and selfish tendencies. A householder should be able to realize the metaphysical truths through dedicated and unselfish service to fellow human beings, through mutual responsibilities, i.e. responsibility towards family, community and society, and should not lead a life solely dependent on sensory pleasures and enjoyments. Thus the society and the ideal life are based on sacrifice which leads to a good life both here and hereafter.

A purified intelligence is the need of the householder. Intelligence can be purified through spiritual practice. With purified intelligence one is able to discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong better. Thus spiritual practice ensures a good life.

Even good Karma is a chain, but a golden chain. Vidya Maya results in golden chain, but through it iron chain of bad Karma is broken and man takes a step towards liberation.

*(Sri Ramakrishna said that with the help of thorn of wisdom one should pick up the thorn of Avidya or ignorance, and then get rid of both thorns)*

### **Predispositions, Karma and their impact**

Nature forces one to take birth in a surrounding or environment based on one's Karma and Sanskaras or predispositions. There are three types of Karma, Prarabdha, Sanchita and Kriyamana Karma. Sanchita is the accumulated Karma for all lives to which new Karma gets added. Of the Sanchita, the Karma that is beginning to yield fruit in this life is called Prarabdha Karma. The Kriyamana is the all the actions that we are doing now and in future, in this life and in future, which will bear fruit and get added to the Sanchita Karma. The scriptures say that we'll have to exhaust Prarabdha Karma before getting liberated. There is no escape from Prarabdha Karma. When one gets liberated in the very life the Sanchita and Kriyamana gets burned up but Prarabdha remains. As long as one has Prarabdha one has to continue to live till it gets exhausted. For the one who

is not liberated however all the Karmas remain. Karmas are the result of Sanskaras or the impressions of past life. The Sanskaras which would come in contact with the given environment and bear fruit are called Prakashonmukh Sanskaras.

However Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi said that even effects of Prarabdha can be reduced through God's name. Therefore Holy Mother has more power over scriptures; she is the authority over scriptures. God can supersede scriptures with special power.

### **Rituals for Purification - Nitya Karma**

In terms of rituals to purify one there are 16 different types of purification process or Sanskaras. It is said that everybody is born as Sudra, only through the Sanskaras one becomes Brahman. - *Jayate shudrat, sanskaraya dvijah uchryate*. Marriage, Upanayan, etc. are all different forms of Sanskaras.

### **The Bodies - Coverings of the Soul**

There are three different types of bodies or covering of the Atman - Gross Body, Subtle Body and the Causal Body which is the Atman itself. In another opinion the causal body or Karan Sharir is also a very thin covering on Atman, but these are all matters of realization. The gross body is the thickest covering, which we call the body. It is the outermost. It has a relationship with "I" and hence called Yushmat, not Ashmat. "I" or ego sense has a relationship with the body as we say that it is "our body", or "my body is not feeling well" in traditional Indian languages. However in English we identify gross body with "I" sense and hence say, "I am not well", but never "My body is not well." That is a big difference between Eastern and Western thinking. In Western thought and practice, body is "I" while in Eastern religious ideas body bears a relationship with "I". This body is a house where "I" resides. Sense organs and mind are identified together. Even when we see with the eye we may not actually perceive unless the nerve centre in the brain interprets that image. The external

sense organs are therefore not true senses. The nerve centre, which is part of the mind, is therefore the true sense organ. It is the mind that sees, or hears or tastes with the help of the sense organs (nerve centres). When one is sleeping, even when the nostrils are open, one will not perceive any fragrance as mind is detached from the senses. Same happens with all sense organs. There are five types of jnanendriyas or sense organs of perception - ears, eyes, nose, skin and tongue. There are also five karmendriyas or the sense organs of actions - hand, feet, Payu or the excretory organ, the upastha or the reproductive organ and the Vak or the speech organ. Together with the five gross elements (Pancha Mahabhuta) and the five subtle elements (Tanmatras) and together with mind, intelligence, Chitta and ego sense, they constitute the 24 principles of Sankhya philosophy. These comprise the subtle body. There are differences in sex in the subtle body as well.

Purest form is the causal body or the actual "I". This is the seat of the Atman. Causal body is one; it rests in a grand unity. There is no difference among creatures in their causal body. Peace, power and divinity are greatest in the causal body. In gross body the body feeling is the greatest.

### **Gunas and their effect**

There are three different types of Gunas which determine the nature of the creatures. They are Sattva guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. In Sattvik the body feeling is lowest; therefore a pure Sattvik is causal body. A Sattvik lives at the source, i.e. lives a simple life with the highest value, viz. God realization. Sattvik is devoid of attachment and possessiveness, i.e. all "I" and "Mine". A Rajasik is all about passions and pairs of opposites like attachment and aversion, pleasure and pain. A Tamasik is dull and lazy and live in the senses. Different permutations and combinations of these three fundamental qualities of nature determine the basic nature of a person. One guna dominates over the other at various points of time, but all three are present in all creatures. A pure Sattvik will have rajas and Tamas completely subdued.

## **Life Forces - Prana**

There are nine outlets for the life force to get out – the two eyes, the two ears, the nostrils, the Payu and upastha and the Brahma randhra or the uppermost point on the head. For the Yogis the life force gets out through Brahma randhra. For ordinary people any of the other outlets are used depending on the spiritual development of the soul. Life force gets irregular through irregular habits; therefore it is very necessary to have a balanced life. The vital force of the Prana Shakti is formed through food. Life force is like a projectile, it cannot go up if the life is irregular, as it will not have the necessary vitality. When one is engaged in any activity the life force is engaged, for instance when one is engaged in eating, life force is engaged in digestion. That is why for the Yogis light eating is necessary at night as otherwise the life force which should have been spent in Japam and meditation at night would be used up in digesting food. People who have lived lifelong in sense organs, like eating, the life force does not get enough vitality to come out of the upper organs and hence go out through Payu or upastha, through excreta etc. When the life force comes out of the upper outlets like the nostrils the organ of that outlet gets deformed, like the eyes get dilated or the nose gets bigger and deformed. The life force comes out together with the subtle body, it dissociates with the gross body. It assumes the gross body again during birth. In animal body life force gets connected with the senses. In ordinary creatures life force at the point of death tries very hard to come out of the body but because of excessive attachment with the gross body for people living in senses it cannot come out and hence the creature perceives great pain. For those in whom the attachment towards gross body is less, i.e. there is less identification with the gross body, the life force goes out quickly, taking the subtle body. The greatest tendency of the life force decides the final outlet, as happens with the chopping of potato.

The Udaan Vayu propels the life force upwards. For the Sattvik persons, the excitement of life force is less and hence life force conserves energy to move upwards.

Final liberation happens when at one stage the subtle body wants to liberate from the gross material world.

End state may be bad owing to what is called Karma Durvipak, i.e. bad effects of the Karma.

### **The Life Beyond**

There are seven lokas above earth and there are seven below earth. The seven above are called Bhur, Bhuva, Swah, Jana, Tapah, Mahat & Satya or Brahma. The below are the Patals or the hells. Depending on the individual's Karma the life force either projects upwards towards one of these higher Lokas or below to the hell.

There are two principal paths - Devyana or the path of liberation and Pitriyana or the path of return.

### **Vahiranga Sadhana - The preparatory Stage**

To get a good end state is part of Vahiranga Sadhana (external) - Yama, Niyama, Asana, and Pranayama. Yama and Niyama are leading a good life, a balanced life, not living in senses, controlling the sense organs and the external senses, leading a pure life, like truth, continence, non stealing, non violence, worship of God, leading a Sattvik life. Higher the Vahiranga sadhana, the greater is the chance of obtaining a higher realm after death. Pratyahara or complete dissociation from external objects and senses is practiced by the Buddhists.

### **Antaranga Sadhana - Going Beyond Nature**

So far man did not know that nature has greater power to nurture the creatures. **Relationship with nature is the secret of spirituality**. One can control nature through occult powers but that is not good as nature soon

takes over. Only one who has overcome all temptations of nature become perfected and realizes God. Nature then becomes totally his subservient. It cannot control a perfect man. A perfect man will never display occult powers for selfish reasons like name, fame, fortune etc.

Going beyond the nature is possible through what is called Antaranga Sadhana or Internal practices. They are Dharana, dhyana, Samadhi. It is Dharana and dhyana that helps one in getting perfected through Samadhi. Unless Vahiranga Sadhana is perfected, Antaranga sadhana cannot happen.

In Antaranga sadhana man develops the special power to go beyond the nature. So far nature posed obstacles in his path, but now nature aids in spiritual progress if used effectively. Here we are able to decode the message of the nature which is very subtle.

### **Importance of Thoughts - As you think, you become**

Thought waves play a very vital role. What you think, you accomplish. Through good thoughts good deeds are done. Sri Ramakrishna told us the parable of the washer man's clothes. The clothes assume the color of the dye in which they are soaked. Similarly human beings cultivating good thoughts and holy association will themselves become good and pure. Good deeds remain in seed form in good thoughts. At some other point the deeds come out of the seeds and do good for the world. That is how Yogis work for the benefit of mankind. Good thoughts are product of Vidya Maya. Wisdom, dispassion, honesty, truth, unselfishness and non violence (in body, mind and spirit) are the products of Vidya Maya which aid in Antaranga Sadhana. At this point one is free from the clutches of Avidya Maya. Dispassion or Vairagya is developed through compassion for all, not merely by one's revulsion for the world. If one able to develop compassion for all and has welfare of all in his heart one has Vairagya, i.e. one is dissociated from the world and it's Avidya Maya.



Dharana is needed before dhyana. Dharana is continuous Vidya Maya – tailadharavat avicchannati – i.e. like the continuous flow of oil. If one is able to live in Vidya Maya continuously through continuous thoughts of Iswara or God, take God's name continuously, engages in spiritual practices, study of scriptures and welfare of humanity (Lokakalyana/Lokasamgraham), one develops Dharana, Dharana ripens into dhyana and Samadhi is the culmination of dhyana or meditation where the ego is complete dissolved. Nobody can say what happens in Samadhi.

When one reaches the state of Dharana or continuous contemplation and meditation, holding on to one subject of contemplation, it becomes a transcendental experience, the life changes its course, material gross world with all its evil tendencies can no longer enter into the life of such a person.

### **Ego**

Ego is basically just like glue. Ego is sheath on the pure intelligence. Intelligence attach with the help of something to the Self. The ego is thus not its own, it is another substance to hold intelligence to Self. A purified intelligence is one devoid of ego, the Self revealed. Ego leads to possessiveness – “I” and “Mine”. We start interpolating attributes on us which are not actually our attributes. Ego acts on the brain. It is like a shadow soul/self. Ego is the ignorance that prevents us from knowing the actual self. As a result of Prarabdha we may have a cosmic flash that dispels ego and reveals the pure intelligence, which is Atman.

Ripe ego and unripe ego – ripe ego is pure self consciousness, while unripe ego is selfishness, thinking a lot about oneself, egotism.