

GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME...

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Next Saturday is Seva Saturday for January.** We REALLY needed your help next week — there is still a LOT to get done to prepare the Center for Winter. Those of you who hear our request this morning, and do not manage to come next Saturday — consider this:

You rightfully expect a great deal from this Center. Please give some serious thought to how much you contribute to its success. We truly DO need your service!

- **We will celebrate Sw. Vivekananda's birthday** on the last Sunday of this month — January 27th. Usual schedule for pujas: 11am-12:30pm in the Chapel, etc.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

Adi Shankaracharya's Jnana Yoga

January is a month for study of Jnana Yoga (Advaita Vedanta). As a jnana yogi, you

practice discrimination, reason, detachment, and *satyagraha* (insistence on Truth). Your goal is freedom from limitation (*mukti*). Our teachers say that all miseries in life are caused by seeing inaccurately. An earnest and persistent jnani may break through this misapprehension (*maya*) and see only the Divine Presence everywhere, in everything and everyone.

Some definition of terms:

- Brahman, the source of Being, beyond time, space and causation (TS&C); and therefore, beyond thought and speech (*nirguna Brahman*).
- God/Goddess, Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Universe, ruler of TS&C; the power and being of Brahman, made manifest (*saguna Brahman*).
- Maya, the relative reality we experience, made of TS&C; it is this hypnotic dream of life that ever distracts us from the

Knowledge of our True Original Nature,
which is Brahman. (*Aham Brahmasmi!*)

Who is Shankara?

Adi Shankaracharya (Shankara) was a great sage of 8th and 9th Century India (788-820 CE). Though only 32 at his death, he wrote highly revered interpretations of many traditional Hindu scriptures, including the Upanishads and other Vedantic texts. Shankara also left us books of instruction such as *Vivekachudamani* (Crest Jewel of Discrimination).

His efforts, including an ability to defeat leaders of other philosophical schools in debate, helped change the spiritual thought current of medieval India.

During the 9th Century in India, time-honored customs of religious life had been fragmented or discarded.

Materialism, mercenary priestcraft, superstition, and bigotry were prevalent.

Shankara and his disciples helped restore non-dual (*Advaita*) Vedanta and the Vedic scriptures to their former prominence in Hinduism's Perennial Philosophy (*Sanatana Dharma*).

This morning we will define and discuss two practices that are central to Shankara's teachings: **viveka** (discrimination between the unreal and the real), and **vairagya** (release of worldly desires and attachments).

Shankara says that — **with sustained attention** — discrimination and release will certainly lead an aspirant forward in spiritual life. And so, at last, to realization, and life as a *jivanmukta* — one who is liberated while still embodied.

Study of jnana yoga (advaita) = *Shravana, manana and nididhyasana*.

Two components of the jnana yogi's sustained attention:

Viveka: discrimination between relative reality and the highest truth (the Absolute)

The Absolute is:

Infinite, unchanging, undivided —
Existence Knowledge Bliss Absolute

Within the Relative are:

Vidya and avidya

- Time space and causation (*Maya*) = Finite, constantly changing, and “divided:” *Soham*, identified as a “separate I” yields I — me — mine
- *Ishwara & Ishwari* — rulers of maya, from time to time they take human form as Divine Incarnations

Vairagya — release of worldly desires and attachments — detachment from rajasic and tamasic activities of the mind

Attributes of a qualified student of advaita:

Reading from *Spiritual Heritage of India* p296-7, and discussion

LAST WORD: SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

“Many people want to practise non-dualistic meditation, very often after reading a few books on Advaita. So many people talk about the Absolute. But what do they attain on the practical side? Most of them give up after a short while. They find they are getting nowhere. In the case of a few others, it may take them several months or even years of futile effort to understand that non-dualism is beyond their grasp.

People forget that non-dualism is a state of actual experience. It is not what appeals to you intellectually that is important, but what actually you can do. We should not attempt anything simply by reading books.

A dualist with a real spiritual experience is infinitely better than a monist without experience. So long as we meditate, so long as there is meditation and the object of meditation even in the subtlest form, it is dualism.

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS

Regular Closing prayer