

VEDANTA CENTER OF ATLANTA

Metaphors Be With Us!

Br. Shankara

March 24, 2019

GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Mark your calendar for a weekend Retreat** at the end of April. **Swami Nirakaranandaji** of the St. Louis center will be here from Friday evening Apr 26th till Sunday morning on the 28th, offering us his wisdom about Raja Yoga.
- **Seva Saturday for April** will fall on the 14th. Please note that date — it's the 2nd Saturday of the month, as usual — please join us sometime between 10am and 2pm. This is a fine way to show your dedication to the Center and its success.
- **Next Sunday's talk** demonstrates the great saying, "Truth is One, sages call It by many Names." We will discuss the **Principles of the Bal Shem Tov**, am 18th Century Jewish saint.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

March is a month for study of Karma Yoga, a spiritual path leading to the abandonment of selfishness. As a karma yogi, you practice offering your actions and their results, as well as your perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to the Divine Presence.

Even before fully knowing this Presence, you hold firmly to the belief that the Presence *is* within each person or other living being that you interact with or serve. Working and abiding in this spirit, you are increasingly able to release attachment to your activities and their results. This yields the freedom and contentment promised by Karma Yoga.

“Even a little practice of this yoga will save you from the terrible wheel of rebirth and death ...” — Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 2

Metaphors Be With Us

Last Sunday many of us celebrated St. Patrick’s Day. Ireland’s patron saint inspired observances, from silly to the sublime, wherever we looked.

Saint Patrick used the shamrock, Ireland’s national symbol, as a potent metaphor for the Christian Holy Trinity. Even if your heritage is not Irish, you may have felt a wee tug at your heart when you saw that three-leaf clover offered in ceremonial joy.

It seems natural, then, to explore the idea of metaphor and how it affects the ways we think and act.

As we know, our great spiritual teachers have often introduced us to life-transforming truths by telling what appear to be simple, allegorical stories and parables.

In today's talk we will explore and discuss metaphorical instruction left to us by five teachers who are at the heart of our spiritual tradition: the Sage Vasistha, Sri Krishna, Jesus Christ, Patanjali, and Sri Ramakrishna.

Def. of METAPHOR (*from the website “Literary Devices – Definition and Examples of Literary Terms”*):

“...(W)hen you portray a person, place, thing, or an action as being something else, even though it is not actually that “something else,” you are speaking metaphorically. “He is the black sheep of the family” is a metaphor because he is not a sheep and is not even black. However, we can use this comparison to describe an association of a black sheep with that person. A black sheep is an unusual animal and typically stays away from the herd, and the person you are describing shares similar characteristics.”

Sage Vasistha

Illusion:

Nectar of Supreme Knowlwdge, Sloka 23 —

Vasistha said to Rama: “In reality, nothing ever originates anywhere or is destroyed. Brahman alone eternally exists in the form of the world-illusion ...”

Sri Krishna

From Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 9 —

“The Yoga of Mysticism”

Note: Maya is a Sanskrit word for the world-illusion.

“Maya makes all things: what moves, what is unmoving ... that is why the world spins, turning its wheel through birth and through destruction. Fools pass blindly by the place of my dwelling here in the human form, and of my majesty they know nothing at all, who am the Lord, the soul.

Vain is their hope, and vain their labor, their knowledge: All their understanding is but bewilderment; their nature has fallen into the madness of the fiends and monsters ...

(Yet): Though a man be soiled with the sins of a lifetime, let him but love me, rightly resolved, in utter devotion: I see no sinner, that man is holy. Holiness soon shall refashion his nature to peace eternal; O son of Kunti, of this be certain: The man that loves me, he shall not perish.”

Jesus Christ

From Luke, Ch. 15

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

11 And (Jesus) said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to [a] one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, (yet) no one gave him anything.

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’

18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”

20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

25 “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’

28 (The older brother) was angry and refused to (join the celebration). His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me (even) a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

31 And (his father) said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’

Patanjali

Seeds & Burnt Seeds:

How to Know God (P’s Yoga Sutras), Ch. 1, Sutra 18
“The other kind of concentration is that in which consciousness contains no object — only subconscious impressions, which are like burnt seeds.

It is attained by constantly checking the thought waves through the practice of non-attachment.”

Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna said, "Whatever is done here (meaning himself), is done for you all. Ah! if I do all the sixteen parts (the whole), you may possibly do one. [The metaphor of sixteen parts is from the sixteen annas that make a rupee, the Indian coin.] — from *The Great Master* by Swami Saradananda

Now we come full circle, back to the idea of the “world-illusion” —

From GOSPEL — Chapter 36, THE MASTER'S BIRTHDAY, Sunday, February 22, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna said:

“Water is water whether it is still or in waves.”

... "Let me tell you something else. Go beyond knowledge and ignorance... Vasishtha was a great Jnāni, but even he was stricken with grief on account of the death of his sons.

At this Lakshmana said to Rāma: 'This is amazing, Rāma. Even Vasishtha is so grief-stricken!' Rāma said: 'Brother, he who has knowledge has ignorance as well. He who is aware of light is also aware of darkness.'

He who knows good also knows bad. He who knows happiness also know misery.

Brother, go beyond duality, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond knowledge and ignorance.”

Q&A & Commentary — CLOSING CHANT