

# **VEDANTA CENTER OF ATLANTA**

Br. Shankara

May 26, 2019

**Sage Vasistha, Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi**

## **GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A Memorial Day Retreat** is planned for tomorrow — **Monday, May 27**. Sw. Sarvadevanandaji has asked us to join in a tradition of reading from Swami Vivekananda's CW on that day. Reading material will be provided — we'll start at 10:30am. When we're finished reading there will be a short worship, followed by a potluck lunch.

**Please mark your calendar for a weekend Retreat** on the 20th and 21st of July. **Swami Chandrashekharanandaji**, Head of the Portland, OR Vedanta Society, will visit with us on that Saturday and Sunday to offer his wisdom on Karma Yoga.

**Bookshop note: Cash will be accepted** for purchases only on Sundays, and on Tues. and Wed. evenings. At other times, please bring a check to buy books.

**Please note that your Center will be closed in August — no activities except Arati.** This will be our routine, each summer.

May has been a month for study of Jnana Yoga (*advaita vedanta*). During June, we will focus on Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion.

As a **jnana yogi**, you practice discrimination, reason, detachment, and *satyagraha* (insistence on Truth). The 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.

When we learn to see *accurately*, what will we see?

Swami Vivekananda said: “Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter. ...

“Each (one of you) is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind. ...”

**Regarding this week’s talk:**

The great Sage Vasistha lived thousands of years ago. He was spiritual counselor to the court of King Dasaratha, the father of Lord Rama. While still a young prince, Rama made a a tour of Ayodhya, the kingdom he will inherit. When Rama returns home depressed and disillusioned, his father worries that the prince is about to renounce the world.

Vasistha is called to the court, to console and counsel the young prince. He tells Lord Rama: *“O my dear child! How strange is this world-bewitching maya! Being deluded by this maya, one cannot know the Self; though the Self has pervaded all through the limbs of the body ... As (a magic show) or as the mirage water in the desert, are not true, in the similar manner this observable universe is not true.”*

To explain what he means by “not true,” Vasistha says:

*“This creation, which is merely of the form of a vibration of consciousness alone, is dissolved by accurate knowledge and arises again with false knowledge — just as the false knowledge of the snake arises on the rope.”*

According to Vasistha, this vibration of consciousness IS maya, which he describes as illogical, dreamlike, illusory, and deliberately delusory or deceptive, like a magic show.

This morning we will explore the meaning of those verses, and what three other master teachers of *advaita vedanta* — Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, and Ramana Maharshi — taught us about how to experience maya’s “magic show” and still realize the all-pervading, non-dual Self, your true original nature.

First, let’s take a look at what Vasistha told Rama — that *“This creation ... is merely of the form of a vibration of consciousness alone ...”*

**Scientists have determined — proven by the scientific method — that vibration is indeed the essential nature of your physical reality. Here’s an explanation by Don Lincoln, PhD:**

Dr. Lincoln has over thirty years of experience studying the most fundamental laws of nature. As a senior scientist at Fermilab, America's preeminent particle physics laboratory, he participated in some of the key discoveries of the last few decades, including the discovery of the top quark and the Higgs boson.

He splits his research time between Fermilab and the CERN laboratory, in Switzerland. He has coauthored more than 1,000 scientific papers on subjects from microscopic black holes and extra dimensions to the Higgs boson.

Here's a little of what Don Lincoln knows about what Vasishta calls our "magic show:"

*"Quantum mechanics tells us that an electron is both a particle and a wave and you can never be certain what it will do. Relativity tells us that clocks aren't absolute, distances depend on the observer, and that energy can be converted into matter and back again. These ideas are ... correct, but they're just the tip of the iceberg.*

*Physicists now use a class of theories called quantum field theories, or QFTs (to describe physical reality) ... let's think only about electrons. Everywhere in the universe there is a field called the electron field. A physical electron isn't the field, but rather a localized vibration in the field. In fact, every electron in the universe is a similar localized vibration of that single field.*

*Electrons aren't the only particles to consist of localized vibrations of a field; all particles do ... indeed there is a field for every known particle. And, for all of them, the thing that we visualize as a particle is just a localized vibration of that field.*

*Even the ... Higgs boson is like this. The Higgs field interacts with particles and gives them their mass, but it is hard to observe this field directly.*

*Instead, we supply energy to the field in particle collisions and cause it to vibrate. When we say “we’ve discovered the Higgs boson,” you should think “we’ve caused the Higgs field to vibrate and observed the vibrations.” ...*

*Quantum fields are really a mind-bending way of thinking. Everything—and I mean everything—is just a consequence of many infinitely-large fields vibrating. The entire universe is made of fields playing a vast, subatomic symphony. Physicists are trying to understand the melody.”*

**YET, HOW DO YOU GET FROM “QUANTUM FIELDS” TO PERCEPTION OF A UNIVERSE?**

**Here’s a science-based explanation of how your body-mind complex performs this outstanding feat of cooperation with “the Great Magician:”**

Einstein’s equation  $E=Mc^2$  means energy and matter are the same, manifested in different forms. Quantum physics says energy and therefore matter are vibration only, manifest as Quantum Fields. An ordinary human being’s sensory apparatus (*antahkarana*) receives and translates these fields of vibration in a very narrow range (*sound, sight, touch, taste, smell*).

Matter is “condensed” energy — energy vibrating slowly enough for you to perceive it. You **construct**, or project your universe from the forms you have learned to see, hear, feel, taste and smell — and the names you have memorized for those forms.

Einstein again: “*Time is an illusion*” (Chandi: in order to bring about change in things), and “(Your) Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.”

### **Adi Shankaracharya**

Shankara tells us how to break this — what Einstein calls an illusion (Maya, the magic show). Two practices are central to his teachings: ***viveka*** (an ability to discriminate between lesser truths and the highest Truth), and ***vairagya*** (a willingness to release attachment to all aspects and attributes of lesser truth).

Shankara says that — **with sustained attention, and devotion to the ideal** — 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.

## **Swami Vivekananda**

*The mind has to be gradually and systematically brought under control. The will has to be strengthened by slow, continuous, and persevering drill. This is no child's play, no fad to be tried one day and discarded the next. It is a life's work; and the end to be attained is well worth all that it can cost us to reach it; being nothing less than the realisation of our absolute oneness with the Divine. Surely, with this end in view, and with the knowledge that we can certainly succeed, no price can be too great to pay. —*  
CW Vol 5: Notes from Lectures and Discourses/The Aim of Raja-Yoga

## **Ramana Maharshi**

*Once the current of awareness of the self is set afoot, it becomes everlasting and continuous by intensification.*

*There is no greater mystery than this, that we keep seeking reality though in fact we are reality. We think that there is something hiding reality and that this must be destroyed before reality is gained. How ridiculous! A day will dawn when you will laugh at all your past efforts. That, which will be the day you laugh, is also here and now.*

## **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.*

**Questions, comments and conversation**  
**Regular Closing prayer**