

The Nature of Happiness

“Ānanda Svarūpa”

by

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Gurupurnima or *Vyasa Purnima* is a day dedicated to the worship of the entire guru tradition beginning from Dakshinamurthy, Vyasacharya, and Adi Sankara. Besides worshipping these great masters we also dwell on spiritual study on this occasion. *Brahmavidyā* or *Atmavidyā* [Knowledge of Brahman or Atman] is the study of the spiritual truth or essence of the whole creation. It is defined as *sat* [pure existence] - *chit* [pure consciousness] - *ānanda* [pure happiness]. Today the topic of this talk is “*Ānanda*” *swarūpa*.

Lesson - one: The first lesson of Vedānta is that “*Ānanda*” is not one of the objects in creation. There is no object in this world as “*Ānanda*”; that happiness is not an object is a huge insight for any spiritual aspirant. Happiness is also not an ingredient of any object. Happiness is a feeling that we experience now and then in the mind. When it comes and goes we do not know. How long will it last, we don't know. The next sms can snatch my peace of mind away!

Happiness is a feeling in your mind. I cannot experience it in other's minds. Our general conclusion is that “*Ānanda*” belongs to the mind. Since we experience it in the mind, it makes sense to associate it with the mind. But the *Sāstras* [scriptures] inform us that happiness is a feeling that is “available” in the mind but it does not belong to the mind. Vedānta lists five features of *Ānanda* or happiness:

- a) Happiness is not a part or a product or a property of the mind.
- b) Happiness is an independent entity which pervades the mind and makes the mind happy now and then.
- c) Happiness is not limited by the boundaries of the mind. It is an independent entity which is boundless, hence all-pervading.
- d) This boundless happiness continues to exist even after the destruction and disintegration of the mind. It is all-pervading and eternal. Limitless spatially, and all-pervading time-wise.
- e) This eternal all-pervading happiness which survives the disintegration of the mind is not available for feeling or any transaction, not because it is not there, but because there is no longer any medium for it to manifest.

Happiness seems like a feeling in the mind but it does not belong to it. Take the moonlight of a “*purnami*” [full moon] day. There is no such thing as moonlight for it is only in reality a reflection of sunlight. Similarly, mental happiness is not mental happiness but Ātman/Brahman appearing in the mind.

Where can I find this Ātman or Brahman that every person or animal or even plants seek instinctively? I want to be happy at all times. One does not say that I want happi-

ness only for one day a week or couple of hours a day. One wishes to be happy at all times and at all places. That leads to the second lesson:

Lesson - two: There might be a desire to acquire “*Brahmānanda / Ātmānanda*”. Where can you find it? Every person seeks “*Ānanda*” instinctively though their way of seeking it may differ. One person finds happiness in a flat while another would insist on a bungalow. Happiness is universally sought even by animals and plants. For how many days do you want to be happy? Say 3 days a week and 2 hours a day. The fact is everyone wants to be happy at all times and at all places. This leads to the second lesson that Vedānta offers.

You can never find “*Brahmānanda / Ātmānanda*” in creation. Because it is not an object outside nor is it inside the mind. Vedānta says that “*Ānanda*” is never available as an OBJECT. Then I might wrongly conclude that “*Ānanda*” does not exist. The *Sāstras* affirm to a mind-boggling premise: If “*Ānanda*” does exist and is not an object, this is possible ONLY on one condition – that It is the subject “I”, which is the “observer” that experiences the objects outside and inside. OBSERVER is one that never becomes an object. Why? It is unobjectifiable. Vedānta says that *Ānanda* is infinite happiness and it is YOU, YOURSELF. It is never experienced or experientiable as an object of perception. You can never EXPERIENCE happiness because you are *ĀNANDA* yourself. It is similar to that the eye can see everything except itself. The seer can’t be seen. “*Ānanda*” has to be claimed as myself through *Jñānam* .

“*Brahmānanda / Ātmānanda*” can never be got as an object. If it comes and goes then it is not “*Ānanda*”. It is something you don’t find outside you, instead you claim it as you, yourself. Therefore “*Brahmānanda / Ātmānanda*” is also called “*Vidyānanda*” [Happness of Knowledge] – it can be attained and claimed through *vidyā* [knowledge]. Once I claim myself as “*Ānanda*” what will happen?

Lesson - 3: The first lesson was the five features of “*Ānanda*” and second was “I am *Ānanda* myself” for a recap. Once I know I am “*Brahmānanda*” all my struggle to get “*Brahmānanda / Ātmānanda*” from outside – objects, people, relations – will end. The struggle is called “*Kāmah*” or “desire”. Desire is the mental struggle to get “happiness” by buying objects or pampering a certain relation. A bachelor gets married to find “*Ānanda*” through his wife. Then the married couple “struggle” for children....every action of a human being is born out of a *kāma* [desire]. I tell myself everytime: “Once I get that object I will be comfortable.” What do I discover? I find that the object does not give me happiness for even a limited time. It seemingly gives *Ānanda* for some time. Then I get worried about preserving it. Every relation/object is a strain and so I go to the next object (*Kāma* is always an English comma!!!). But once I discover that I am the ONLY source of happiness then I will no longer entertain any dependence outside. The struggle to get *Ānanda* from outside will end. The struggle to “hold on” to an object also ends. For instance getting a cook or a driver is so difficult; in fact it is a lot easier. When they come late you have to hold your tongue. Arjuna in the battle cannot even imagine a state without Bhishma and Drona.

Earlier there was one relation we took for granted – marriage. Now even that has become difficult to retain. There was an article I read in “Readers Digest” titled “How to retain your spouse?” and that talks how to dress differently and how to exercise etc. What is *samsāra*? Every moment is a struggle to attain or retain. It is a cycle of Attain-

ment [*yoga*] and Retention [*kshema*]. The moment I claim “*Brahmānanda*” then there is no struggle either for *yoga* or *kshema*. The mind is RELAXED. The definition of *moksha* is the end of *yoga/kshema* struggle. For survival and livelihood, it is okay to struggle.

Samsāra is a struggle to attain happiness. A mind free from *Kāma* [desire] and *Rāga* [strong likes] is a relaxed mind. In a relaxed mind my own “*Ānanda*” gets reflected (relaxed because I am not worried about *yoga* and *kshema*). The reflected *Ānanda* is called “*Vairāg-ānanda*” [Happiness of renunciation] in which there is no worry about acquiring or anxiety about losing.

If *Jñānam* [Knowledge] and *Vairāgyam* [renunciation] are absent then – due to *Moha* [delusion] – I will wrongly conclude that *Ānanda* is an object outside. I will conclude even as a baby does: “This toy gives me *ānanda* and not that toy.” Today we have malls for toys and teddybears costing over 5k. In this consumerist society we are constantly bombarded: “Without this object you are not complete”. Advertisements always show a happy family, swimming pool, sea-view, and very seductive images to sell. The moment I conclude that I can’t live without it, the mind becomes a demanding mind.

The struggle to purchase makes a relaxed mind into a demanding one. After 25 years of struggle, I buy a house for 75 lacs. I am so excited that I conclude that the new house gives me joy. Vedānta says that the house never gives anyone joy. Then what has happened? The desire to acquire it was so great that it built a mental pressure. Once I achieved that desire, the house serves as a needle. The pressure is relieved by the needle. The mind is calm once again; then my own *Ānanda* is reflected (*Ānanda* gets reflected only in a calm mind). I build up the pressure, buy the flat, then release the pressure and get my own reflected happiness. It is like Nasruddin Mullah’s argument!! He purchases shoes which are very tight. He struggles with them at the office for 8 hours. When he comes home, he removes those shoes and finds “*Ānanda*”. We are all like that!! Every happiness stems from our illusion; we build the pressure and then we release it!!! A dog goes chasing for the bone. It bites it and sees blood. It concludes that the blood is from the bone while the reality is that it is its own blood. Reality: the bone is bone-dry.

We are like that dog running after “*Vishayānanda*” [happiness of objects and relations] out of ignorance. These contain no pleasure whatsoever. There is a lot of struggle: pain => dissatisfaction => further desires => retention. Running after objects is *SAMSARA* [while *Vairāgānanda* is *moksha*. [(inner) freedom].

After attaining “*Ātmānanda*” if you go after “*Vishayānanda*” then it becomes a non-binding desire.

Claiming “*Vidyā*” and “*Vairāgyam*” [knowledge and renunciation] is *moksha* [inner freedom, liberation] and running after “*Vishayānanda*” [happiness of objects] is *samsāra* [bondage to the world cycle].



Posted by A.Sathyanarayanan at 11:16 PM by A. Satyanarayan Wednesday, August 17, 2011 Location: Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India



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