

Swami Vivekananda's Experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi

*Source: Swami Yatiswarananda's
READINGS ON THE VEDANTASARA
– Wiesbaden 1934*

Quote from:

*LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, by his Eastern & Western
Disciples, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. 4th Edition 1949:]*

(pp.64-65)

...But the Master knew that Narendra's was the path of Jñana; for this reason he made it a point to continue to talk of the Advaita philosophy to him. One day he tried to bring home to him the identity of the individual soul with Brahman, but without success. Narendra left the room and going to Pratap Chandra Hazra said, "How can this be? This jug is God, this cup is God and we too are God: Nothing can be more preposterous!" Sri Ramakrishna, who was in the room in a state of semi-consciousness, hearing Narendra's laughter came out with his cloth under his arm like a child. Hallo! What are you talking about? He said smiling, touched Narendra and plunged into samadhi. The effect of the touch⁴, Naren described:—

"The magic touch of the Master, that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was stupefied to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! I saw it quite clearly but kept silent, to see if the idea would last. But the impression did not abate in the course of the day. I returned home, but there too, everything I saw appeared to be Brahman. I sat down to take my meal, but

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found that everything,—the food, the plate, the person who served, and even myself—was nothing but THAT. I ate a morsel or two and sat still. I was startled by my mother's words, 'Why do you sit still? Finish your meal!'—and began to eat again. But all the while, whether eating or lying down, or going to college, I had the same experience and felt myself always in a sort of comatose state. While in the streets, I noticed cabs plying, but I did not feel inclined to move out of the way. I felt that the cabs and myself were of one stuff. There was no sensation in my limbs, which I thought were getting paralysed. I did not relish eating and felt as if somebody else were eating. Sometimes I lay down during the meal and after a few minutes got up and again began to eat. The result would be that on some days I would take too much, but it did no harm. My mother became alarmed and said that there must be something wrong with me. She was afraid that I might not live long. When the above state altered a little, the world began to appear to me as a dream. While walking in Cornwallis Square, I would strike my head against the iron railings to see if they were real or only a dream. This state of things continued for some days. When I became normal again, I realized that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy."

(pp.144-145)

Now we come to the greatest moment of Naren's sadhana, the very crest and glory of his spiritual realizations. Ever since the Master had initiated him into the intellectual and spiritual awareness of the Advaita

Vedanta, he was pining for a vision of the Absolute. He prayed to feel Divinity; to have the whole of Nature erased from the tablets of perception. To lose the 'I' in order to plunge into the Region of True Being which is even beyond thought—such was Naren's prayer to Sri Ramakrishna. Naren wanted to realize the very spirit of the Upanishads and be able to say from experience that which is the last utterance of the human soul and the first note of Divine Consciousness—***Aham Brahmasmi—I am Brahman!***

Naren had teased the Master for this realization but to no avail. One evening however it came unexpectedly. He was meditating, when suddenly when he felt a light at the back of his head, as if a torchlight had been placed there. It became more and more brilliant, larger and larger and finally seemed to burst. His mind became merged in it. What transpired then in his consciousness was beyond words, for that Absolute State is beyond description. Afterwards he wrote some verses—*The Hymn of Samadhi* [see V21.05 above] —which best illustrate that exalted condition. It was all still and quiet in the room where Naren and Gopal Senior were meditating. Suddenly Gopal heard Naren cry out, Gopalda, Gopalda, where is my body? In partially descending from that state, Naren had consciousness only of his head; His body seemed lost. Why, Naren, it is there, it is there, answered Gopal, startled beyond description as he looked at Naren's rigid body. He then hastened for help to Sri Ramakrishna and found him in a state of intense calm, his countenance deeply serious as

though he knew what was happening in the next room. In reply to Gopal's demand for aid for Naren he said, Let him stay in that state for a while. He has teased me long enough for it.

About nine o'clock at night Naren began to show faint signs of returning consciousness. When he regained full consciousness of the physical world, he found himself surrounded by his anxious brother-disciples. Memory came back. He felt as though he were bathed in ineffable peace. His heart was full to overflowing with ecstasy. He realized that the Absolute of Vedanta alone could reconcile all philosophies. When he presented himself to the Master, the latter said, looking deep into his eyes, Now then, Mother has shown you everything. Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realization you have just had be locked up and the key shall remain with me. You have work to do. When you will have finished my work, the treasure-box will be unlocked again; and you will know everything then as you do now. He warned him to be careful of his body for some time. And to exercise the utmost discretion in his choice of food and companions, accepting only the purest.

[End of quote from the Life of Swami Vivekananda]

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(From READINGS on the Vedanta Sara by Swami Yatiswarananda)
Stages of spiritual experience

V21.04 First comes the loss of all physical consciousness, then you cease to identify yourselves with the mind, but a shade of

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ego is left; then this also disappears.

V21.05 Swamiji gives a beautiful description of his own experience in his *Hymn of Samadhi*:

THE HYMN OF SAMADHI

[Rendered from a Bengali song composed by Swami Vivekananda]

*Lo! The sun is not, nor the comely moon,
All light extinct; in the great void of space
Floats shadow-like the image-universe.
In the void of mind involute, there floats
The fleeting universe, rises and floats,
Sinks again, ceaseless, in the current I.
Slowly, slowly, the shadow-multitude
Entered the primal womb, and flowed ceaseless,
The only current, the I am, I am.
Lo! 'Tis stopped, ev'n that current flows no more,
Void merged into void—beyond speech and mind!
Whose heart understands, he verily does.*

V21.06 This Hymn describes the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi which cannot be expressed, but must be experienced. Here Swamiji has only tried to give a glimpse of his own experience.



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