

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati

PRATAḤ SMARAṆAM

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In these three verses, the nature of the Self is revealed very beautifully by Ādi Śaṅkara.

प्रातस्स्मरामि हृदि संस्फुरदात्मतत्त्वं सच्चित्सुखं परमहंसगतिं तुरीयम् ।

यत्स्वप्नजागरसुषुप्तमवैति नित्यं तद्ब्रह्म निष्कलमहं न च भूतसङ्घः ॥

prātassmarāmi hṛdi saṁsphuradātmataṭvāṁ saccitsukhaṁ paramahaṁsagatiṁ turīyam, yatsvapnajāgarasusuptamavaiti nityaṁ tadbrahma niṣkalamahaṁ na ca bhūtasāṅghaḥ.

Early in the morning, I remember the shining truth of the Self in the heart, that which is ever present, the limitless Awareness, the supreme goal of *sannyāsīs*, known as the 'fourth', which always witnesses dream, waking, and deep sleep. I am that undivided *brahman* and not an aggregate of elements.

Prātaḥ, early morning. *Smarāmi*, I remember. *Hṛdi*, in the heart, by which we mean the mind. *Saṁsphurat*, shining. *Ātmatatvam*, the truth of the Self.

I can recognize the Self, which is the truth, in my heart or mind only when I withdraw my attention from everything else

In the early morning, at dawn, I remember. Remembrance is possible only when you already know something. Remembrance and memory presuppose experience. You can only remember what you have already experienced. When a teacher says that he remembers, he already knows. So what is it that I remember? I remember the truth of the Self. What is the nature of this Self? Its nature is to shine. Where is it shining? It is shining in my heart. The truth of the Self is that it is shining in my heart. In fact, we should not say the truth of the Self because the Self is the truth. We can say the truth that is the Self, or the truth of the Self to mean the truth of what I consider myself to be; the Self implies the 'I'.

The Self is all-pervasive, and therefore, it shines everywhere. However, it shines most wonderfully in the mind. Even though most surfaces reflect the rays of light off our faces, the mirror reflects the face most clearly. Similarly, even though the Self is everywhere, the heart or mind is the place where the Self

shines most gloriously in its own light. It is here that the Self or *ātmā* is recognized in its true nature.

When can I remember the Self that shines in my heart? It is when my attention is focused only upon my heart, which means that my attention is withdrawn from everything else. My attention should be on whatever I want to see. For example, if I want to see something through a pair of binoculars, I must first look in the direction of the object and then focus on the object; it is a means of seeing and should be focused properly on the object. Just as we need to focus the binoculars, so also do we need to direct our minds toward the Self in order to see it clearly. My attention should be focused on the subtlest aspect of my Self. For that, my mind should be free from the preoccupation with everything else. It should be directed to the core of my being. By core, we do not mean any particular place. By heart we do not mean any particular place either, even though the heart is conventionally the focus of attention during meditation. In the Yoga-Śāstra, the heart is recommended as a place of concentration in order to meditate and, therefore, it is customary to use the word heart, but by the use of the word heart we mean the core of one's being, the core of one's mind, that from which the idea of 'I' originates. Thus, I concentrate my attention on the 'I'. The Self shines in the core of my being, the core of my heart, my mind.

What I take myself to be determines how I think or act

What do I think I am right now? Right now, I take myself to be a man or woman, a speaker or listener, a doer, an enjoyer, a limited being, an ego etc. For example, right now, I am a speaker and you are a listener. Later, it is possible that I may become a listener and you may become a speaker. At lunch, I become a *bhoktā*, an enjoyer. After lunch, you may become a walker and I may become a sleeper. How can it be possible that I can be a speaker or listener or doer or an enjoyer? How is it possible that I can be so many different things?

An example of this is the nature of crystal. What is the true color of crystal? If you put a yellow flower in front of a crystal, it appears to be yellow; if you place a blue flower, the crystal appears to be blue, and so on. The crystal seems to be changing its colors all the time. In reality a crystal is transparent. It does not have a color of its own. If it looks into a mirror to determine its color, it will see that it is yellow sometimes, blue at some other times, and so on. Similarly, I look in the mirror of my mind and declare myself different every time. When I am talking I say I am a speaker, I call myself a listener when the ears are listening, and I say I am a thinker when the mind is thinking. In fact,

listening takes place at the level of ear, but on account of my identifying with the ears, I say that I am a listener. Talking takes place at the level of speech, but on account of my identifying with my speech, I say I am the speaker and, similarly, thinking takes place at the level of the mind, but on account of my identifying with the mind, I say I am a thinker.

We are what we take ourselves to be. It doesn't matter what we really are; what matters is what we take ourselves to be. In the same way, it doesn't matter what an object is, what matters is what we take it to be. For example, in the twilight, I mistake a rope lying in front of me to be a snake. Even though it is really a rope, my reaction is based upon what I take it to be. I see it and I jump, but someone else who sees it for what it is, may wonder why I am jumping. He sees a rope, but I see a snake. I am not jumping at the rope; I am jumping at the sight of the snake. Thus, I respond to a situation based upon how I see it. What is important in our lives is what we understand and how we interpret it. We generally live in the world of our own interpretations. How we interpret something may be quite different from how it is in reality. We rarely live in the objective world, the world as it is.

Whenever I meet you, it is not to you that I respond; instead, I respond to the person you are in my interpretation. If my interpretation is that you are my friend, my behavior is of one kind. Otherwise, my response to you is different. If I interpret that you don't like me, my response is of one kind; if I interpret that you like me, my response is of another kind. It doesn't matter what you are! We don't understand why someone acts in a certain manner or talks in a particular way, but, he has a perfect justification for his actions. From your stand point you are an angel, but he does not think so. More often than not, there is no compatibility between what the realities are and what we take them to be. Therefore, there are all kinds of conflicts and misunderstandings. It is not what I take myself to be, but what I am that is important.

Every false notion of the Self is the cause of sorrow

Right now I take myself to be a speaker, listener, thinker, talker, man, woman, father, or mother, or to be successful, unsuccessful, handsome, not beautiful etc. There are infinite such complexes. Every complex is a source of sorrow, sadness, and pain. Even if I take myself to be good-looking, it is a cause for sorrow. If I take myself not to be good-looking, it is, of course, a cause for sorrow. Similarly, taking my self to be successful can also be as much of a cause for sorrow, as is taking myself to be unsuccessful. The former is a cause for

sorrow that is yet to come, while the latter is a cause for immediate sorrow. Every false notion about my self is a cause of my sorrow and unhappiness. Vedanta explains to us there is no basis for our sorrow and unhappiness, other than our own misconceptions or misapprehensions about the Self. This misapprehension of the Self also causes a misapprehension about the world. Thus, my projections upon my Self extend to the people around me and then to the world around me.

Tatvam is the truth, and *anāropita tatvam* is that which is free from *adhyāropa*, superimposition. *Ātmatatvam* is the truth free from superimposition or the reality of the truth about my Self. Right now I have a notion about myself. We meditate upon ourselves all the time and that meditation determines our whole life. At any moment, I am as good as I take myself to be. All my thoughts, desires, actions, and responses are determined by what I take myself to be. For example, when I am sitting on the dais, I have a notion that I am a teacher and you have the notion that you are listeners or students. Sometimes, the notions are confused, leading to lots of problems. What I do is determined by what I take myself to be. What I take myself to be determines the way I think, desire, and respond. It is not determined by what I really am, but what I take myself to be.

Ātmatatvam smarami, I meditate upon the true nature of myself and that is possible only when I let go of all the roles. I recognize that I take myself to be the speaker because of my identification with the organ of speech. Therefore, I let go of all identification: I am not a speaker, hearer, thinker, walker, enjoyer, father, or a mother; all these are just roles I play. I meditate early in the morning upon the true nature of myself that is devoid of all the roles. Then who am I without these roles? Who am I meditating upon? The second line says *sat cit sukham*. *Sat* is Existence, *cit* is Awareness, and *sukham* is *ānanda*, Happiness. *Sat* is that which is, it is always present and can never cease to be.

The Self is *cit*

Cit is ever-shining, self-effulgent, shining on its own. Only one thing in this creation is self-effulgent; everything else shines after it. For example, the sun shines and the moon also shines. The difference is that the sun is shining in its own light whereas the moon is shining in the reflected light of the sun. The sun is self-effulgent; that is, it does not need any other source of light but its own. The moon is not self-effulgent. The part of the moon which shines is illumined by the sun; the other part which is not illumined by the sun does not shine. That

is why there are variations in the moon, but no variations in the sun. There is no crescent sun. The sun is eclipsed occasionally, but there is no other change because the sun is self-shining unlike the moon. Similarly, the electricity shines and the bulb shines after it. The bulb is not self-effulgent; it can only shine when it has the grace of electricity.

Nothing in the entire universe is self-shining, although we say that the sun is self-shining for illustrative purposes. From a Vedantic standpoint, the sun is also not self-shining. Does the sun always shine? For whom does the sun shine? It shines for the sighted person. Is it not so? Does the sun shine for the blind person? Does it shine for the sleeping person? The sun does not enter into my dream world, or sleep world, or exist when I close my eyes. By definition, that something is self-shining implies that it shines in all conditions and in all situations without being dependent upon anything else. In fact, the sun shines because my eyes illumine the sun. The sun does not shine for me when I close my eyes in the waking state or in my dream or when I am sleeping; you can say my eyes illumine the sun. The eyes are also not self-effulgent. It is the mind that illumines the eyes. When the mind is not behind the eyes, the eyes cannot perform their function. Often, even though something is present right in front of me, I don't see it. I don't see what I am looking at when my mind does not direct my eyes to see it. I am not attentive then. Our eyes cannot perform the action of seeing if they are not backed by the mind. We can say that the eyes shine because the mind shines. However, the mind is also not self-effulgent. The mind can shine only when it is illumined by Awareness, when it is illumined by the Self. The mind shines in the light of Consciousness, Awareness, or the Self.

In the example of the sun and the moon, the world shines at night because the moon shines; the moon shines because the sun shines; the sun shines because it is self-effulgent. In truth, the sun shines because my eyes shine; the eyes shine because the mind shines; the mind shines because the Self or the Consciousness shines. What causes the Self to shine? The Self shines because it is its nature to shine, the Self cannot but shine. It shines effortlessly. It is *cit*, self-shining.

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṁ tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti

Everything shines after him who alone shines. By his light all this shines variously.

The 'I' is ever shining; it is self-effulgent. When it is pitch dark and I ask you, "Are you there?" You say, "Yes I am here." How do you say you are there? Do

you see yourself? In order for you to determine your presence, you do not need a flashlight. You do not need to think whether you are there or not. You don't need to think, touch, or see. You don't need to do anything to know your own presence. Is that not so?

The Self is *sat*

How do you know that you are? Is it because the sun is shining? Is it because your mind is thinking? What is it because of which you know that 'you are'? You do not need anything to know that. That 'I am' is a self-revealing fact. Therefore, the sense of 'I am' is *cit*, self-shining, and it is always there, *sat*. It cannot be that the 'I' is not there at any point of time. During the waking state, I am always saying, 'I am', 'I am'. The 'I am' is always there behind all my knowledge and cognition. Is it not so?

When I say I am a father, son, woman, tall, short, happy, unhappy, speaker, or singer, the 'I am' is constant. This 'I am' informs all the roles just as the actor informs all the roles, whether of a beggar, king, or minister. Even there, 'I am' informs all the roles. Can there be any time in the waking state when the sense of 'I am' ceases to be? Is it possible for me to ever experience that 'I am not'? Sometimes I may get lost and not be present in a particular place and then I am not there. However, I am there at some place. Whether lost or not lost, happy or unhappy, the reality of 'I am' can never be denied. Even for me to be lost, the fact is I have to be there to begin with. For me to meditate upon 'I am not', I have to be there to begin with. Is it not so? The meditator must be there to meditate upon anything; therefore, can you meditate upon 'I am not'? The experiencer can never be denied. The sense that 'I am' is constantly flowing as the substratum of all of my thoughts and cognitions.

A similar experience exists even in a dream; I may have a different body, I may be in a different world, and I may have a different experience, but that 'I am' is an undeniable fact! How about the deep sleep state?

Can you say that you do not know anything in deep sleep and that maybe you are not present in that state? If you are not present or did not exist in deep sleep, who is it that wakes up in the morning? When you wake up in the morning do you say that 'I', the one who was not there, have woken up? You would say that 'I', who was there, have woken up! When you wake up in the morning, do you think you have come from nowhere? Or do you know that the 'I' who went to sleep is the 'I' who has woken up? We all have the cognition upon waking up that the 'I' who went to sleep is the same 'I' who has woken up!

Sometimes we do wish that a whole new 'I' wakes up and this *samsāra* vanishes. We all wish to start all over again! But no such luck; we are stuck with this 'I'! The one who wakes up is the one who went to sleep. I know this very well. When I wake up in the morning, it is not that a previously non-existent 'I' comes into existence. I do know that the 'I', who has always been, was sleeping and is now awake. That shows that even in deep sleep, the 'I' remains present. It is a continuous existence.

For example, the one who was here yesterday is sitting here again today. Isn't our recollection or recognition that the one who was sitting on the chair yesterday is the one who is here again today? The 'I am' is always there; it is never that 'I am' is not. Whether I am bad or good keeps on changing, and where I am changes and what I am changes, but that I *am* never changes. 'I am' is ever present in all the three states of existence: waking, dream, and deep sleep. *Sat* means that it is ever existent.

Why does the 'I' exist? The pot is because the clay is; when the clay is not, the pot is not. The clay is because of its molecules; when the molecules are not, the clay is not. The molecule is because of its atoms; when the atoms are not, the molecule is not. The atom is because of its atomic particles. Similarly, every effect exists because of its cause. This chain of cause and effect should end somewhere. Where does it end? It ends in the Self. The Self is and therefore, everything else is. There is no cause beyond the Self. This asking of why has to come to end at some point; I am because I am.

The Self is *ānanda*

The world is because I am, but I am because I am. 'I am' is *cit*, and ever shining, and the nature of I is *ānanda*, Happiness, Limitlessness, Wholeness, or Completeness. This is where there can be lot of problems in our understanding. We have no difficulty in understanding 'I am', *sat*. It is all clear that I am, I shine, and I am self-effulgent, ever shining, *cit*. But how am I *sukham* or *ānanda*, Wholeness, Limitlessness, and Happiness?

Here, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that the truth of my Self is *sat cit sukham*. At dawn, he asks us to meditate upon the fact that I am *sat cit ānanda*. However, when I believe that I am not any of these how can I meditate upon what I am not? Vedanta wants us always to be in the real world, never in the imaginary world. We are always in the imaginary world and Vedanta wants us to drop all these projections and be in the real world as it is.

How can you say that the 'I' is happiness or limitlessness? My experience is that this 'I' is anything but happiness! Look at how much sadness there is in the world! Though Vedāntins repeatedly say that you are happiness, it does not register in our minds at all. To illustrate this, another story is told. A person who has been listening to Vedanta continuously for a month meets his teacher and says, "Yesterday, I had an argument with my wife. She said that I am a fool! How could she call me a fool? I could not sleep at all last night!" The teacher says, "Look, for a month I have been saying to you that you are *brahman* day and night, and that has had no effect on you. Now, your wife says once that you are a fool and it has had so much effect on you!" Thus, when someone calls us stupid, that seems to ring a bell, but when the teacher tells us that we are *brahman*, that does not seem to register at all!!

Ānando'ham, I am of the nature of Happiness. Let us briefly examine this proposition. When am I happy? I am happy with that which I love. For some, their pet is their best friend and makes them happy. Why? It is because the pet is their source of happiness. Where is happiness? Where there is love, there is happiness. Everyone loves happiness, is not that so? Nobody wants to be unhappy. If I have my way, I would not like to be unhappy even for a moment. There is a natural love for happiness. Nobody need teach me that I should be happy because I am born with love for happiness. Pujya Swami Dayanandaji used to tell us to offer the best flowers, clothes, food etc. when performing *mānasa pūjā* or mental *pūjā*. Similarly, here, why not imagine that absolute happiness is my true nature!

Whatever is an object of my happiness also becomes an object of my love. I love other people and things conditionally: as long as they give happiness, so long do they remain the object of my love. The moment they stop giving me happiness, they are no longer an object of my love.

I love happiness. Naturally, therefore, I love that which is the source of happiness or cause of happiness. That which I look upon as a source or cause of happiness becomes an object of happiness. We love many things in this world because we look upon them as a source of happiness. When my mind decides that something is no more a source of happiness, my love for it also disappears. My love for everything in the world is thus dependent upon how long the person, situation, or object gives me happiness; otherwise, it ceases to be an object of love. We are totally selfish.

My love for my dearest object is also conditional. As long as that object remains favorable or conducive to me, so long do I love it. For example, my love changes when the child that I initially love starts talking back to me. Thus, my love for anyone and anything is conditional. We all are calculating people. We always look after our own well-being.

Yet, our love for one thing is unconditional. It is the love for our selves. I love myself under all conditions. My love for everybody else is conditional in that I love them as long as they help me in loving myself. My love affair with the world goes on as long as the world helps me to love myself. The moment it doesn't help me, I don't want it anywhere near me. I want distance, space from the world. Thus, my love for myself is unconditional and my love for everything else is conditional. Swami Dayanandaji points out that we all like to look at ourselves all the time because of our unconditional love for ourselves. We even like to look at the distorted reflection of ourselves on any reflecting surface, e.g., the surface of a car. We don't miss the opportunity to look at ourselves. When we all love our bodies so much, what to talk of our selves? We all know that the body is not the Self, yet, we look upon it as the Self and therefore, it becomes an object of unconditional love. Then, what about the Self, the true Self? I am the object of unconditional love. Love and happiness always go together. That which is an object of happiness is an object of love. I love myself unconditionally and therefore, I am of the nature of unconditional happiness, *sat cit sukham*.

My mind needs to be made introverted to appreciate *ānanda*

Ātmā, the Self, is of the nature of happiness because it is an object of unconditional love. If the Self is of the nature of happiness, how is it that I don't experience it all the time? The Self is *sat cit ānanda*; therefore, I am, I shine, and I am complete. That I am, *sat*, is always experienced by me and that I am *cit*, always shining, is also experienced by me. If *ānanda* is my nature, why is it not experienced by me?

In order to experience the *sat* and *cit* aspects of my nature, no particular qualification or effort is needed, but to appreciate *ānanda*, a specific effort is needed; my mind should be directed to where the Self is shining. As long as my mind is scattered or preoccupied with the objects of the world, I do not experience *ānanda* even though I am of the nature of Happiness. Therefore, my mind needs to be made free from all its occupations and become introverted and Self-centered, centered upon the Self.

The extroverted nature of the mind is due to likes and dislikes

Why is it that my mind is running away? Why is it extroverted and agitated? It is on account of the likes and dislikes in my mind. My likes and dislikes or attachments and aversions are the cause of the distraction of my mind. In fact, they pull my mind away from my Self and cause it to be drawn to the objects of the world. When I like something, my mind thinks of that object. Again, when I dislike something, my mind thinks of that object as well. It would be nice if my mind could at least be free of the thoughts of what I dislike; but my mind unfortunately keeps going back to the object of my dislike. Thus, my mind is occupied with that which I like because I enjoy thinking about it and with that which I don't like because it doesn't want to think about it. My mind wants to get rid of it. This is how my likes and dislikes pull my mind away from the Self and turn it towards the objects of the world. To contemplate on my Self, it is necessary to make my mind free from likes and dislikes and attachments and aversions through *karma-yoga* and *upāsana*.

Our deep sleep state shows the Self to be the source of all happiness

That the Self is of the nature of happiness can also be understood from some other experiences. In the deep sleep state, I experience the freedom of the happiness that is my own Self, I am totally free. Is it not that I am free from all my complexes at that time? Is it not that I am free from all my constant demands and expectations? Is it not that I am free from my self-consciousness at that time? While awake, I am very conscious of myself and I want to be presentable, e.g., my hair must be parted in the right manner, my glasses should be put on in the right way etc.! It is such a huge burden. That is why the beauticians make a lot of money! This is a burden I carry all the time in my waking state. This burden continues in the dream state. I am free from this burden of self-consciousness only in deep sleep.

When I am sleeping I don't know where I am, how I look etc. You can take as many photographs of me as you want; I'll not resist, I'll not object! In the waking state I will sit properly, smile, and pose for a picture. Whereas, when I am sleeping, it doesn't matter; my hands and legs could be in any direction, my hair could be messed up!! That means I am free from self-consciousness, all complexes, the burden of being presentable, or the burden of proving myself. In the deep sleep state, I experience total freedom! In fact, we feel total happiness in the deep sleep state and that is why we all love to sleep. This love is the source of happiness. Our natural love for sleep shows that happiness has to be there.

Nobody complains about sleep because it is the most pleasurable thing. Everybody looks forward to it. We all make meticulous preparation to go to sleep: the bed has to be right, the sheets and the comforter have to be very proper, etc. And we are very reluctant to finish this experience. When the alarm goes off in the morning, we dislike it intensely. No one wants to give up the experience of sleep. All this shows that we experience happiness in deep sleep.

What makes me happy in deep sleep? There is no object of happiness in deep sleep that otherwise brings me happiness in the waking state. There is only my Self; yet, I am happy. This shows that I am the source of that happiness. The deep sleep experience also shows that freedom is my nature. Pujya Swami Dayanandaji always points out that the moment of deep sleep is the moment of happiness. This happiness does not arise from an object, but from your own Self. Any object of happiness in the other two states is only an instrument; it merely becomes a cause that directs me to my own Self and enables me to experience that Self.

Whenever I am happy, it is the experience of my own Self. It is the *only* source of happiness. There is no other source of happiness, even though I believe that the different people and objects of the world make me happy. The world only creates a condition in which I can experience my Self. It is when something conducive or desirable happens that my mind becomes Self-centered, and then, I experience my Self. Thus, when we analyze our experiences, it becomes very clear that happiness is the nature of the Self.

One can meditate upon the happiness of one's Self by recalling joyful experiences

In the morning, therefore, I meditate upon myself; the happiness that I am. How do you do that? Well, while meditating, you recall an experience of happiness, e.g., getting an unexpected promotion in your job or visiting the Grand Canyon. Recall such a moment where you were completely lost and meditate on that moment. Remind yourself that it was not the promotion or the Grand Canyon which brought you the happiness; it was yourself. You were experiencing your Self at that time. The promotion or the Grand Canyon just became an occasion to bring out your own Self. Whenever you are happy, the object of happiness is merely an occasion or instrument, something incidental that serves to bring you your own Self. Thus, one can meditate upon the happiness of one's own Self by recalling joyful experiences. Someday you see the beauty of a rising sun or a full moon and all your anxieties and unhappiness

go away. Or it could be a moment when you are lost in a poem, song etc. Remind yourself that such moments bring out the true nature of your Self. The worrying, anxious, sad, or unhappy self is not you.

The Self is the ultimate goal of those who can separate the Self from the non-Self

Paramahansa *gatim*. *Gatim*, the ultimate goal of the *paramahansa*, the seeker or *sannyāsi*. If I am *sat cit ānanda*, how is it that I don't experience it? Is that experienced only by *paramahansas*? One who has the ability to separate the Self from the non-Self is called a *paramahansa*. *Hansa* is a mythological swan, which is said to separate milk from water. This swan is supposed to eat pearls at Mānasarovar. It is a very beautiful *kalpana* that it separates milk from water. Nobody can do this because milk and water are so intrinsically mixed; even though they are two, they appear to be one. It is like the mixing of *ātmā* and *anātmā*. For example, the iron ball that is placed in a furnace becomes so hot that the fire totally pervades the iron. The iron then seems to acquire the quality of the fire; it becomes red and hot. The fire also seems to acquire the quality of the iron when it appears round. This is called mutual superimposition. The iron and fire become so identified with each other that each seems to take on the attribute of the other. Where there are two, there appears to be one. What one needs to do is to separate the iron from the fire. The red color and the heat belong to the fire, while the round shape belongs to the iron. This kind of separation is called *viveka*, discernment or discrimination, and it should take place in our minds. *Ātmā*, the Self or Consciousness, and *anātmā*, the non-Self or the body-mind-intellect complex, are so intimately identified with each other that you cannot separate the two. That is why where there are two things, there is a *bhrama*, an illusion, of there being only one. Thus, what I call 'I', the ego, is, in fact, made of two: the Self and the non-Self, the *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*, Consciousness and matter. This delusion of seeing one where there are two is the cause of all our complexes and problems. The *hansa* or swan is believed to be able to separate milk from water. Similarly, a *paramahansa* is one whose mind is subtle and can discriminate between the Self and the non-Self, *dr̥śyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ* [Kāṭhōpaniṣad, 1-3-12], 'however, he is seen by the people of subtle vision with a sharp, subtle intellect'.

The Self merely witnesses the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep

Turīyam is the fourth state. It is the fourth with reference to the three other states that are witnessed: *jāgarat* or the waking state, *svapna* or the dream state,

and *suṣupta* or the deep sleep state. *Yatsvapnajāgarasuṣuptamavaiti nityam*, that which always witnesses the dream, waking, and deep sleep stages. *Yat nityam avaiti*, it is that which always witnesses.

We go through these three states everyday. Who is it that goes through these experiences? It is the one who experiences the waking, dream, and deep sleep states. Is the one who experiences the waking state the same person who experiences the dream state? In other words, when you dream, do you remember the waking state? You may be a physician or an attorney in the waking state, but you may potentially be an entirely different person in your dream. You may have had a delicious dinner just before going to sleep; yet, you could be hungry in your dream! Thus, the stomach of the waker may be full, but the dreamer may experience hunger. Therefore, is it not that the waker is a totally different person from the dreamer?

The dream appears to be very real during the experience of the dream. While dreaming, nobody says that the dream is a projection of his or her mind. If someone hurts you or praises you, you do experience unhappiness or happiness. Only when you wake up are you wise, not when you are dreaming! Thus, when the dreamer comes, the waker goes away. You do not remember any part of the waker at all in your dream. This is akin to the complete disappearance of the beggar-actor when the actor plays the role of a king. When the same actor performs the roles of a beggar, king, and minister, each of these three roles excludes the other. When the king appears, the beggar is gone; when the minister appears, the king and the beggar are gone, and when the beggar appears, the king and the minister are gone. Similarly, when I go into the deep sleep state, there is neither the dreamer nor the waker. When I wake up there is no dreamer or sleeper either. Now, I know myself as the waker, dreamer, and sleeper.

Turīyam ātmatatvam. While the roles of king, beggar, and minister exclude one another, is there someone who is not excluded or displaced? Is it not the actor? To illustrate with a different example, a bangle is different from an earring or a chain. When I think of the bangle, I don't think of the earring or the chain; when I think of the chain, I don't think of the other two. Thus, each one excludes the other two. All these cannot exclude one thing however: the gold. The bangle can declare it is not the earring or the chain, but it cannot say that it is not gold. The bangle cannot be without gold. That which cannot be excluded in all these mutually exclusive and changing roles or states is the gold. In Vedantic

terms, the bangle or earring is superimposed upon the gold. Is the bangle an entity different from the gold? Is it independent of the gold? No; if you remove the gold, nothing remains. Whereas the gold can be without the bangle, the bangle cannot be without the gold. That is why the bangle can be replaced by other names and forms such as an earring or necklace. Each name and form displaces other names and forms, but its content cannot be displaced. Gold is the content of the bangle, earrings, necklace, etc. It can be called the *adhistāna* or substratum upon which all the names and forms are superimposed.

The separation of the substratum or *satyam* from the superimposition or *mithyā* has to take place in the mind

The substratum cannot be displaced; only the superimposition can be displaced. In Vedantic terms, gold is called *satyam* and the bangle is *mithyā*. *Mithyā* is incidental; it comes and goes. When a bangle is melted down, it can take another form, e.g., an earring, chain or necklace. Names and forms are subject to being displaced or changed; they are limited because they are incidental. Therefore, what is inherent in the ornament? The gold is inherent. For example, a crystal is inherently colorless and transparent, whereas the colors it acquires, red or yellow, are incidental. You should know the difference between the inherent and the incidental. The inherent is called *satyam* and the incidental is called *mithyā*. The inherent is called the substratum and the incidental is called the superimposition. Similarly, the actor is the substratum and his roles are but incidental.

We find the combination of *satyam* and *mithyā* everywhere and that is the cause of confusion. *Satyam* never appears by itself; it always puts on the costume of *mithyā*. Without *mithyā*, we can't see *satyam*. For example, gold always comes with a name and form, just as the actor typically appears in a role. That is why *viveka* is required. When you look at the beggar on the stage, the separation takes place in your mind. The beggar is only a costume. The separation of the substratum from the superimposition has to take place in our minds.

The waker, dreamer, and sleeper are like the roles of beggar, king, and minister. Are they three? Suppose you have to order a cup of tea, would you order a separate cup each for the beggar, king, and minister? Even though they appear to be three entities, there is only one. The actor is called the fourth! However, there are not four people, but only one person. As long as we think that they are independent entities, the teacher points out the actor as the fourth one; the one who is in and through all the three roles. There is only one; the

other three are only appearances. Is the fourth one affected by the other three? No. The virtues and vices of the roles do not touch him. The fourth is unaffected by the three roles. While supporting the three, he remains independent of them. Those three cannot exist without him, but he can exist without the three roles. The dependence of the roles upon the actor is *mithyā* and the independence of the actor from the roles is *satyam*.

Thus, there is really one, not three. There is someone who acts as a waker by identifying with the gross body; he acts as a dreamer when he identifies with the subtle body, and acts as a sleeper when he identifies with the causal body. Is he free of these three bodies and states? He is independent of them. He supports all of them. He is the substratum of each and is not limited by them at all! He is one who witnesses and illumines all the three states. Why do we call him a witness? A witness is always different from that which is witnessed. The seer is always different from what he sees. A knower is different from what he knows. The Self is the seer, knower, witness, and illuminator of the waker, dreamer, and sleeper. That is, he is different from all of them, independent of all of them, and unaffected by all of them. He is like the actor who goes through different costumes without being affected by them.

Witnessing is not an act and the Self, in simply being, illumines the three states

Nityam avaiti, he always witnesses. To illumine or shine is his nature. Witnessing is not an act. We commonly say the sun shines, illumines the whole world, etc. Illumine is a verb, and a verb always denotes an action. In Sanskrit, it is called a *kriya-pada*; *kriya* is action and *pada* is verb. When I say I am eating the food, it means I am performing the action of eating. Similarly, when we say that the sun illumines the world, it means that the sun performs the act of illuminating the world. But does the sun have to 'do' something to illumine the world? All the sun has to do is shine; illumination takes place. Although we use the word illumination, no action is actually involved. The sun, simply in being the sun, illumines the whole world. Similarly, the Self, in simply being, witnesses or illumines the waking, dream, and deep sleep states. Therefore, *avaiti*, he witnesses. Even in using the word witness, we are assigning some kind of an action to the Self, some kind of a role. However, he is not a witness. All that is said is that the waking, dream and deep sleep states shine in his light.

I am neither the gross nor the subtle body

Tadbrahma niṣkalamaham. Tadbrahma aham, that limitlessness, I am. *brahman* means limitless in the sense of bigness, growth. I am that *brahman*, which is unqualified or limitless. If I am limitless, what am I not? I am nothing else but limitless. What am I not then? *Na ca bhūtasāṅghaḥ*. *Bhūta* is elements, *sāṅghaḥ* is an aggregate. I am not an aggregate of elements, e.g., space, air, fire, water, and earth that make up this body. The gross and subtle states are made up of the five elements. Our subtle body is an aggregate of the subtle components of the five elements, while our gross body is an aggregate of the gross components of the five elements. When it is said here that I am not the aggregate of the five elements, it means that I am neither the gross nor the subtle body. I am not *anātmā*. I am the one who is the witness or illuminator, the one who imparts this existence. I am that *brahman*.

Niṣkalam. *Kala* means part and therefore, *niṣkalam* is part-less, undivided, or whole. I am not a part of *brahman*. I am not a part of God. Who am I? I am the whole, undivided aspect of God.

This is what Śrī Śaṅkarācārya asks us to meditate upon at dawn. The first verse, thus, declares that I am *sat cit ānanda*. I am the *sat cit sukham*, Existence, Awareness, and Happiness. I am not this not this gross body, the physical body; neither am I the subtle body, the mind. I am the witness, the illuminator of the gross and subtle bodies¹.

¹ Transcribed by Richa Choudhry and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.