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A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Vedanta Camp Highlights

By Rashmi Kaikini, Mumbai

A 2-day online Vedanta camp began on the eve of Ananta *Caturdaśī* (18th Sept). All of us being at different ages and stages of life and with pressing demands at home managed to make the most of the camp. The camp being slightly different this year had topics closely related to *adhikāritvam*. It helped us to be open to examine a lot of aspects about ourselves and see what is required for us to see the truth of ourselves. Swamini Brahma-prajnanandaji started by the chanting the Shanti mantra and welcomed everyone with a brief introduction. She lead us to a *Mānasa* puja to Lord Ganapati through a deep meditation which assured us that Ganapati was telling us “Don’t fear, I am with you. You can trust whatever is going to unfold”.

Swaminiji wonderfully unfolded the topic on “Strengthening *Kṛpā* - Grace and Trust in oneself, *Īśvara* and life”. Trust is, our belief on the ability of someone to be reliable. The way the person thinks, behaves, and engages with the world – all of this depends on the person’s *Śraddhā*. Quoting the verse 17.3 from the Bhagavad Gita, *Bhagavān* Krishna says, the person’s *śraddhā* will be in keeping with his/her mind. So this person is permeated by *śraddhā*. Whatever is the person’s *śraddhā*, he conforms to that *śraddhā*.

How can we be full of *śraddhā*? How does grace operate in one’s life? We examined our trust in 4 factors,

- 1) *Ātma kṛpā*, trust in oneself. I can engage, interact, deal with whatever situations are unfolding and I can have self mastery in all situations.
- 2) *Para kṛpā*, trust in the others. I can trust others and have healthy relationships
- 3) *Īśvara kṛpā*, trust in *Bhagavān*. I trust that *Bhagavān* is there for me and I trust in the process of life.
- 4) *Śāstra kṛpā*, blessings of the guru for a vision of life. Our trust in life has lot to do with my understanding of life.

Students got a chance to share via Zoom breakup rooms about - how *Ātma kṛpā* operates in one’s life and how trusting others and betrayal by another enriched us. We examined where we are and recognised that the only way we can be at peace with ourselves and others is to bring in more trust into our lives.

Sheela Surendran, Mumbai shares “*Having Ātma krpā is truly loving myself as I am. I am able to see myself as manifestation of Īśvara and it opens myself to accommodating all including myself.*”

Sheila Shewakramani, Mumbai says “*A lot of introspection has happened as I analyzed and traced my life and my achievements and actions. Realized that I’ve been blessed with a lot of Ātma krpā, never thought of it like that.*”

Our search for God comes from the recognition of our finitude or helplessness. When God reveals himself, irrespective of what is said, one’s understanding will be based on his/her psychological maturity. Swami Brahmavidanandaji brilliantly covered the different stages of understanding God. He said, the first stage of functioning is from a rebellious mind with survival issues and one’s idea of god is protector or savior. One moves from here to the second stage of obeying the laws of God. If one makes an attempt to move to the 3rd level, it is the start of a student with calm, trusting, willing to understand and a learning mind. Karma yoga becomes the lifestyle at this stage and there is more of Īśvara and less of God. As we progress through the 3rd stage one comes across different aspects such as developing intuition, understanding Īśvara as non-dual material and intelligent cause, relating to Īśvara with an open heart, being creative which can also bring in lot of siddhis. All of these aspects of Īśvara are *saguṇa*, at the manifest level. From here we move to understand the *svarūpa* of Īśvara which is not an experiential level and cannot be achieved through the 5 means of knowledge. We understand Īśvara as *Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahman*, free from the *guṇa*-s, attributes. This is possible only by a committed study of the *śāstra* unfolded by a guru who belongs to a *paramparā*, lineage.

Karthik Narayan, UK says, “*I appreciated how one’s understanding of God/Īśvara grows with one’s own maturity. Recognising Īśvara’s order in my life, and not limiting Īśvara to the intelligent cause but also Īśvara being the material cause was a key take-away. And of course at the very helm how Īśvara and I are non-different in our essential nature. The strengths and weaknesses at each of the seven stages were very explained, as also the pitfalls to watch out for that may obstruct one’s progress. Swamiji’s sense of humour and Swaminiji’s breakout sessions particularly kept the camp alive and interactive. It greatly helped bridge the 5 hour time and 5000 miles distance.*”

Jagdishan, Mumbai shares “*In the first 2 steps, Īśvara can be termed as God, following Rule, Law based, strict disciplinarian, one who is seen as the creator of this universe, not easily accessible. From stage 3, visualized as Īśvara with powerful māyā śaktī. Bhagavān As The Satyam, The Truth, The Brahman, Sat-Cit-Anantam! Satyam,- Independent Reality, Consciousness, Sat- Existence.*”

The camp ended with the *pāda* puja to Swamiji by Sunita and Suresh. As the murtis

of Ganapati were immersed in the waters, the manifest form returned to the unmanifest. We had the wonderful opportunity to immerse ourselves in the teachings of Vedanta and discover our reality. Our heartfelt gratitude to our Gurus and the Guru *Paramparā*.