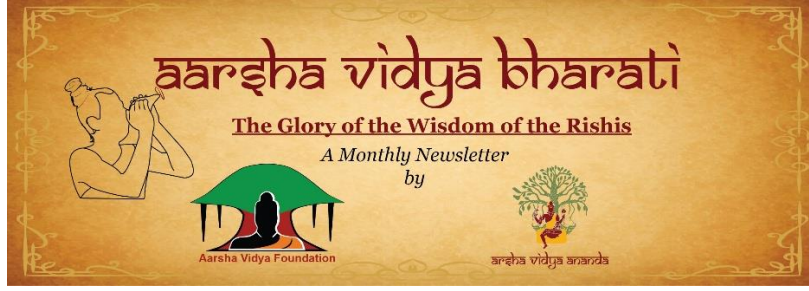

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A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Joining the Dots

How Vedanta touched my life

By Neelakantan, Mumbai

I took my baby steps into Vedanta a couple of years ago. This fortuitous journey started when I came across a banner announcing the start of *Bhagavad Gītā Bhāṣyam* lectures by Swamiji Brahmanandananda at Sankara Math, Matunga. I am a child of technology and it has held sway for a long time. I came into the industry in the late 60s when the government was inimical towards industrial houses, policies were unsupportive and the banks were indifferent. This made the working space very challenging resulting in the collection of much unwanted baggage. My entry into Vedanta through *Bhagavad Gītā* was with this baggage.



There were no remarkable or immediate changes in my life coinciding with my journey into Vedanta. This could be due to my upbringing which included exposure to *Bhagavad Gītā* through my father. Though it didn't result in shaping my attitudes and responses, it was always there in the background though muted.

I started attending lectures on *Bhagavad Gītā* by Swaminiji Brahmaprajnanada also. This augmented the teachings of Swamiji and helped in the teachings to sink in. The changes in me came unannounced as I kept listening to the teachings. I recount some of these below: These may not have a linear connection but the overall effect was very positive. It was like the joining of dots from which emerges an unexpected image.

The baggage I carried included expecting appreciation from others for the good done to them, expecting perfection, expecting others to conform to my understanding of Dharma etc, etc. All these really had me tied up and far away from feeling free. The *Bhāṣyam* started from the second chapter. Early enough *Bhagavān* tells Arjuna to have *titikṣā*. Somehow this had an effect on my outlook and suddenly I could feel the bonds loosening and the start of a feeling of freedom.

The next was the explanation of Karmayoga Buddhi from Second chapter verse 47. This helped in clearing a lot of baggage and brought peace as it helped in bringing a sea change in work attitude. My father moved to Mumbai from Kerala in the early 1940s in the form of an internal economic refugee. Constant migration of families made our house like a transit camp and temporary quarters for them. This meant severe stress on my parents to manage us and the

constant flow of people. But I never saw desperation or stress on my parents, due to their surrender to *Bhagavān*. I never did understand this fully till I heard the explanations for this verse. As a flash appreciation flooded me for my parents' attitude and brought a significant and visible change in my own life's attitude and to reduce stress in my daily life. This was literally a gift.

In our country everyone is bombarded with lectures and pontificating on the atrocities by the so called "upper caste". This automatically imposed an invisible burden and a guilt feeling. This totally lifted after hearing and understanding by the elaborate discussion on the Sloka 13 of 4th chapter which tells about *Varṇa*, *Guṇa* and Karma and the interplay of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas which shapes a person. This cleared a lot of cobwebs in the mind bringing understanding of who I am.



Our *Rāga-Dveṣa*-s hold a great sway and play an important role in our life. Our gurus have taken great effort in explaining this and comparing it to waves rising in the ocean and dissolving in it. Recently we had been to Pondicherry where we spent an entire evening on the sea shore where the waves are high which come crashing onto the shore. I was standing on the shore and watching. Suddenly the mental image shifted and I could see the waves as the *Rāga* and *Dveṣa* which rise in our mind causing disturbances. Also, the deeper regions of the ocean which showed tranquility. I could almost hear the Guru's teachings on the requirement of mastery over these disturbances to reach tranquility of the deeper ocean. This experience was of great significance in the unfolding of understanding of this teaching. This was an unexpected bonus.

Thus, my short Vedantic journey has brought many welcome and lasting changes. This has impelled me to continue this magnificent journey in the understanding of "I" with help from my gurus with "*Ānanda*" as my goal.

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