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... Tattva Bodha ...

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Summary

Understanding the Three Bodies in Vedānta

The Three Bodies (śarīra trayam)

In Vedantic philosophy, the individual (jīva) is understood as a mixture of two components: the material component (anātmā) and the spiritual component (ātmā). The material component is further divided into three bodies:

- sthūla śarīram (Physical/Gross Body) - The visible, perceptible body
- sūkṣma śarīram (Subtle Body) - Composed of 17 instruments for interaction with the world
- kāraṇa śarīram (Causal Body) - The most abstract concept, existing in seed form

Detailed Analysis of kāraṇa śarīram (Causal Body)

Acharya Tadany describes the kāraṇa śarīram as "the most abstract topic in Vedānta." It has four key features:

1. śarīradvayasya kāraṇa Matram

The causal body exists as the seed form or potential form of both the physical and subtle bodies. Before the universe's manifestation (before "sṛṣṭi" or the "Big Bang"), both the physical and subtle bodies existed in seed form within the kāraṇa śarīram. Just as a tree cannot originate without a seed, the physical and subtle bodies cannot manifest without their causal form.

"Every jīva (individual) is endowed with a kāraṇa śarīram that existed before the universe came into manifestation. So if you ever feel like an old person, think about your kāraṇa śarīram. it's going to completely change your perspective." (Acharya Tadany)



2. Nirvikalpam

The causal body exists without visible or perceptible differences. While differences exist, they cannot be distinguished or differentiated in the causal state. This follows the principle that "kāryam is Savikalpam, kāraṇam is Nirvikalpam" - the effect has visible differences, while the cause has no visible differences.

This is comparable to deep sleep, where all people appear the same. During deep sleep, individual character, behavior, and personality differences are dormant and only become apparent upon waking.

"During deep sleep, all people are the same. Their character, their behavior, their nature, during deep sleep, all are the same. You only know the difference by the moment they wake up."
(Acharya Tadany)

3. Satsvarūpa ajñānam

The causal body is equated with spiritual ignorance - ignorance of one's true nature (Satsvarūpa). As long as an individual remains ignorant of their true spiritual nature (ātmā), the kāraṇa śarīram continues to exist.

This continuity of the kāraṇa śarīram is indicated by repeated cycles of birth and death. Even when the physical body dies, as long as the kāraṇa śarīram exists, another physical body will manifest.

"kāraṇa śarīram is the root of every living being. That living being may die, but again, a rebirth will take place. Even when Pralayam (dissolution of the universe) occurs, as long as self-ignorance persists, the kāraṇa śarīram continues to exist." (Acharya Tadany)

4. anirvācya anādi avidyā rūpam

This fourth feature was mentioned but not elaborated upon in the meeting, as Acharya Tadany indicated it would be explained in the next class.

The End of kāraṇa śarīram

The kāraṇa śarīram will only end when self-ignorance ends. This occurs when a living being becomes spiritually enlightened (jīvan mukti) - when one knows irrevocably that their true nature is ātmān. With the end of self-ignorance and consequently the kāraṇa śarīram, the cycle of birth and death is terminated.



"When a living being becomes spiritually enlightened, achieving jīvan mukti, self-ignorance ends. This removes any doubt, vagueness, or misconception about one's true nature, resulting in the dissolution of the kāraṇa śarīram and the end of the cycle of rebirth." (Acharya Tadany)

Deep Sleep as a Model for Understanding

Vedānta provides deep sleep as a model for understanding the kāraṇa śarīram. During deep sleep, our personality, knowledge, ignorance, worries, and dreams exist in a dormant, potential form, similar to how the causal body exists before universe manifestation.

In deep sleep, we cannot experience our individuality, yet our subtle and physical bodies remain intact (as evidenced by waking up with the same knowledge, worries, and personality). This state offers the nearest glimpse of how the kāraṇa śarīram functions.