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... Tattva Bodha ...

By Acharya Tadany

AI Summary – Class 37

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Question before class

Student's Question on Remaining Grounded

A student raised a question about struggling to remain centered during chaotic and turbulent times, despite having different tools to stay grounded. She expressed that she still finds herself affected by circumstances and that this energy rocks her quickly.

Acharya Tadany's Response on Emotional Reactions

Acharya Tadany provided a comprehensive response addressing the naturalness of emotional reactions:

- **Emotional Reactions Are Natural**

Being affected by circumstances shows that we are emotional beings with empathy and sympathy. There is nothing wrong with having reactions to atrocities, wrongdoings, or perceived violence—whether directed at others or oneself.

- **Avoiding Spiritual Perfectionism**

Spiritual seekers often have a romanticized, idealized view of enlightenment—imagining someone completely undisturbed and unmoved by circumstances. However, even enlightened persons have a sense of right and wrong (Dharma and Adharma) and will react to circumstances.

- **Don't Judge Your Reactions**



Reactions are involuntary (vāsanās)—no one chooses to be disturbed, mad, or sad. Spiritual practice doesn't mean becoming aloof or taking everything passively. You can empathize with situations and respond appropriately, even if someone is disrespectful to you.

- **The Wise Person's Perspective**

A wise person will have emotional reactions as strong as anyone else. However, they possess a solid sense of Viveka (discrimination), understanding that all experiences—pleasant or unpleasant—are temporary. They come, stay for a period, and go away. This leads to the "So what?" response—acknowledging what happened while accepting that it cannot be changed.

The Goal: Reducing Impact Over Time

The spiritual seeker's goal is not perfection but **improvement**—reducing the impact of external circumstances over time:

- **Measurable Progress**

Compare your reactions to the same situation 10-5-1-0.5 years ago versus today. If the intensity and duration are the same, there has been no emotional growth. If the impact is less, you are becoming emotionally stronger.

- **Emotional Fortification Through Karma Yoga**

Throughout the Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna emphasizes Karma Yoga for Citta śuddhi (purification of the mind). The goal is to deliberately strengthen oneself emotionally and psychologically to be less impacted by the "winds of external circumstances" that blow from all directions with varying intensities.

- **Dealing with Unpredictability**

The future is unpredictable. Acharya Tadany gave the example of people in the Middle East who felt like they were in heaven 2-3 weeks ago, but now are fleeing with nothing. Whatever comes, face it as objectively as possible—after the initial reaction of desolation, despair, or helplessness.

- **Self-Inquiry**

Eventually, one can start examining: "Why do I feel this way when these circumstances occur?" Everything has an origin or source, though some reactions may come from previous existences (past vāsanās) that we're not even aware of.



Summary

The Nature of ātmā

Introduction to ātmā Through Anātmā

The author introduces the most important, profound, and revealing teaching of Vedānta—the nature of ātmā—by first teaching about Anātmā (what ātmā is not). This approach starts from what we are familiar with and can immediately relate to.

The Three Bodies (Anātmā)

The author explained three levels of existence that are NOT ātmā:

1. **sthūla śarīra (Physical Body)** - The gross body
2. **sūkṣma śarīra (Subtle Body)** - The mind, intellect, memory, ego, and senses
3. **kāraṇa śarīra (Causal Body)** - The seed form of the other two bodies

All three are Anātmā because they are:

- Made up of matter (material things)
- jaḍam (inert) - lacking intrinsic consciousness
- Do not have sentience as their own true nature

The Fundamental Question

This leads to a crucial question: If the body-mind-sense complex doesn't have intrinsic consciousness, yet we experience it as conscious, **what is the source of this consciousness?**

The daily experience is clear:

- The body is conscious
- The mind is conscious
- The intellect is conscious
- Memory is conscious
- The sense of individuality (ego) is strongly conscious

Since matter cannot have consciousness of its own, it must have **borrowed** this consciousness from some other source.

The Moon-Sun Analogy

Acharya Tadany used the powerful analogy of the moon and sun to explain this concept:

The Moon's Borrowed Light



During a full moon, the moon appears bright and luminous. However, the moon does not have light as its own intrinsic nature. It appears bright because it has borrowed light from the sun. When the sun is gone, the moon's brightness disappears. The moon has **borrowed light**, and this borrowed light comes from a source (the sun) that has light as its own intrinsic nature.

Similarly:

- The **body-mind-sense complex** is like the moon—it appears conscious but doesn't have consciousness as its intrinsic nature
- **ātmā** is like the sun—it has consciousness as its own original, ever-present nature
- The body-mind-sense complex **borrowed consciousness** from ātmā
- ātmā is a **non-material spiritual principle** (since matter cannot be the source of consciousness)

Five Essential Features of ātmā

1. **ātmā is Not Part, Property, or Product of the Body**

Consciousness is not like the arms, head, or legs (parts of the body). It's not like height or weight (properties of the body). It's not like bile, enzymes, nails, or hair (products of the body).

2. **ātmā is an Independent Principle That Pervades and Enlivens the Body**

Like the sun lending light to the moon, ātmā is an independent principle that pervades the body and makes it sentient. In the presence of ātmā, the body becomes conscious. In the presence of the sun, the moon becomes bright.

3. **ātmā is Not Limited by the Boundaries of the Body**

Just as the sun is not limited by the boundaries of the moon (otherwise we wouldn't receive sunlight on Earth), ātmā is not confined to the physical boundaries of the body.

4. **ātmā Survives the Death of the Body**

Consciousness will survive even when the body disintegrates, perishes, or dies. The consciousness principle continues to exist beyond the body's death.

5. **Pure Consciousness Becomes Inaccessible After Death**

The surviving pure consciousness after the body's death is no longer accessible—not because it doesn't exist, but because the material medium through which it was perceivable is no



longer present. When the moon goes away, sunlight appears no longer perceptible—not because sunlight ceased to exist, but because the medium (moon) through which we perceived the lent light is no longer available.

The Profound Nature of These Teachings

Initial Difficulty in Comprehension

Acharya Tadany acknowledged that these concepts are:

- Very abstract initially
- Somewhat intangible
- Hard to accept or comprehend
- Difficult to "swallow"

These are **quintessential foundations of Vedānta**—profound, revealing concepts that are unique to the scriptures (śāstra).

The Importance of Reflection

The śāstra advises:

- Reflect on these ideas **over and over and over**
- Take your time to dwell upon them
- Think about them thoroughly from all possible angles
- Analyze them deeply

The śāstra's Approach

Even if you want to reject these teachings, the śāstra says: "We are okay with that—so long as you really think about it first." Don't dismiss these concepts just because they're initially hard to understand or grasp.

The śāstra understands that there are countless lives where we have strongly believed we are the body-mind-sense complex. That's why these teachings are worth your time to review and contemplate.

The Ultimate Vision: Your True Nature

The Revolutionary Teaching

The śāstra makes a revolutionary claim that contradicts our lifelong belief:

Unlike what I've believed so far (that I am the body-mind-sense complex, so intimately connected that I take the śārīra Trayam to be myself), the śāstra tells us:

This non-material consciousness principle IS my real nature. This non-material consciousness principle, or this spiritual principle ALONE, ONLY, is my nature.



The Goal of Spiritual Practice

What is the aim of any spiritual sādhanā (practice)?

The goal is transformation of identity:

- **From:** Claiming the material body (sthūla śarīra) and subtle body (mind, senses, intellect, memory) as myself
- **To:** Gradually training myself to claim: "I am the non-material spiritual consciousness principle"

The Spectacles Analogy

Acharya Tadanu used the example of spectacles to illustrate the relationship between consciousness and the body-mind-sense complex:

The Spectacles Example

When wearing spectacles:

- The spectacles are an object different from me—I have no doubt about this
- I use these spectacles as an instrument to interact with the world
- I **own** the spectacles, but I am **not** the spectacles
- If I remove them, I hope everyone is still there listening (humor about dependency on the instrument)

Similarly with the body-mind-sense complex:

- I **own** the body, but I am **not** the body
- I am **different** from the body because the body is an object of my experience
- I am the **experiencer** of the body (the subject)
- The body-mind-sense complex is the **object** of my experience
- I use the body-mind-sense complex as a **medium** to interact with and contact the external world

The Mirror Analogy

When standing in front of a mirror:

1. First, we see the mirror itself
2. Then, our own projection/reflection/form appears in the mirror

Similarly:

- I experience the body
- My consciousness is reflected upon this body
- The body is an object of my experience
- The body becomes alive because of the presence of the consciousness principle



Two Essential Natures of ātmā

1. caitanya svarūpam (Consciousness Nature)

Also called **jñāna svarūpam**

- ātmā is the non-material principle
- ātmā is the consciousness principle
- Consciousness is ātmā's own intrinsic true nature (svarūpam)

2. Sat/Satya svarūpam (Reality/Permanence Nature)

The author defines Satyam as:

Definition of Satyam (Reality)

That which exists in all periods of time—past, present, and future. Only this can be called Satyam (real). That which exists in all periods of time is **permanent**.

Everything else that does not exist in all periods of time is called **impermanent**, therefore called **Asat** (not real). (Acharya Tadanu)

Understanding Satyam vs. Asat

Satyam (Real/Permanent)	Asat (Not Real/Impermanent)
Exists in all three periods of time	Has a beginning, existence, and an end
Was, is, and will ever be	Was not there in the past, pops up, hangs around, then disappears
Permanent	Temporary—transforms/morphs into something else
ātmā is Satyam	Body-mind-sense complex is Asat
ātmā is caitanyam (has consciousness)	Body-mind-sense complex is Acaitanyam (lacks intrinsic consciousness)

The Metal Glass Example

Acharya Tadanu used the example of a glass made of metal to illustrate Satyam vs. Asat:

The Glass Made of Metal

Before: It was metal

During: We have a name and form with a function—we call it a "glass"

After: It goes back to metal

Analysis:

- "Glass" is just a name and form given to the metal
- The **nature** of it is metal—it was metal before, is still metal (with a name, form, and functionality), and will continue to be metal after the form disappears
- **What is the reality?** Metal is the reality of this glass



- There is no such thing as "glass" as the absolute reality—it's only a temporary name and form given to metal

The śāstra's Principle:

Whatever is temporary is not the absolute reality. The glass is useful, practical, has functionality—this is never questioned. But we clearly say it's not the absolute reality. Therefore, we cannot say it is categorically "real" because it is impermanent and temporary.

Only what is permanent is real. Only what is permanent can be called Satyam.

Extending the Principle

- **ātmā:** Satyam (permanent, real)
- **Body-mind-sense complex:** Asat (impermanent, not absolutely real)
- **The entire world:** Asat (impermanent, not absolutely real)

Meditation and Reflection Practice

What to Meditate Upon

For spiritual pursuit, growth, and awareness, practice these reflections:

1. **"I am ever the experiencer"**

I am always the subject, the consciousness principle

2. **"The body-mind-sense complex is an object of my experience"**

The body-mind-sense complex is the object, not the subject

3. **"I, the consciousness principle, pervade and enliven the body-mind-sense complex"**

This gives sentience and consciousness to the body-mind-sense complex

4. **"I use the body-mind-sense complex to interact with the world"**

It serves as a medium to contact and experience the external world

5. **"I am of the nature of non-material spiritual consciousness"**

My true nature is the consciousness principle, not the material body

Simple Self-Inquiry Questions

Ask yourself:



- "This consciousness is not a part of this body, not a property of this body—how do I feel about it?"
- "Can I accept that I own the body but am not the body?"
- "Can I see myself as the experiencer rather than the experienced?"

Closing Guidance

The śāstra's Invitation

These are very important principles worth:

- Thinking about
- Dwelling upon
- Meditating about

Acharya Tadany emphasized repeating these points in today's class because of their foundational importance.

Key Takeaway

The essence of this teaching is a radical shift in self-identification: from believing "I am this body-mind-sense complex" to understanding "I am the non-material spiritual consciousness principle that pervades, enlivens, and experiences the body-mind-sense complex." This consciousness is permanent (Satyam) and self-luminous (caitanyam), while the body and world are temporary (Asat) and borrow their apparent consciousness from ātmā. (Acharya Tadany)