



॥ विवेकचूडामणि ॥
... Vivekacūdāmaṇi ...

AI Summary – Class 111

For Vivekacūdāmaṇi, by Acharya Tadany Cargnin dos Santos
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Summary

Spiritual Teaching: Rajō guṇa and Unhealthy Traits

Context and Introduction

The class focused on verse 112 of Vivekacūdāmaṇi, where Śankarācārya elaborates on the "et cetera" (and so forth) mentioned in the previous verse about Rajō guṇa traits.

The Unhealthy Traits of Rajō guṇa

Śankarācārya lists the following unconstructive traits:

1. kāmahaḥ (Desire)
2. Krodhaḥ (Anger)
3. Lobhaḥ (Greed)
4. Dambhaḥ (Pretentiousness/Showing off)
5. asūyā (Finding fault in others/Wrong criticism)
6. ahaṅkāraḥ (Egoism/Selfishness)
7. īrṣyā (Unhealthy competition)

Detailed Explanation of Dambhaḥ (Pretentiousness)

Definition

Dambhaḥ means showing off or declaring (through words, actions, or appearances) that "I am a great person, I am an exalted human being, therefore everybody should respect me."

Śankarācārya 's Metaphor

Defined as "dharma dvajatvam" - like raising a flag. Just as a flag on Mount Everest declares "I am here," Dambhaḥ is keeping oneself high and tall, going around sharing and talking about all the great things one has done.

Examples of Dambhaḥ

- Building a school or making a donation, then taking pictures and posting everywhere about it
- Giving donations with big photo opportunities and selfies



- Hanging awards and recognitions all over the walls
- Constantly declaring one's noble actions

śāstra's Teaching on Noble Actions

The scriptures teach that:

- Whatever charitable or noble things we do should never be declared
- The moment you share or declare your noble actions, the puṇya (positive karma) that could come from those actions may be neutralized
- Even if someone else praises your actions, you should brush it aside saying "It's not a big thing, I just did it"
- Noble actions should be covered up, not advertised

Connection to Bhagavad Gītā

These traits are also discussed in the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, verse 8 onwards, where many values and their opposites are explored.

Detailed Explanation of asūyā (Finding Fault in Others)

Common Mistranslation

asūyā is normally translated as "jealousy," but Śankarācārya 's intended meaning is actually "wrong criticism" or "fault-finding" - the proofreading personality.

Proper Definition

asūyā means criticizing the good character, good deeds, and good things that other people do. It involves not interpreting positive actions positively, but rather interpreting them negatively.

Examples of asūyā

Donation Example

When someone gives a donation, instead of praising or congratulating them, saying: "This person is giving that donation just for namesake, for recognition's sake."

Teaching Example

When someone teaches Vedānta, saying: "Do you know why he teaches Vedānta? It's just to get more śiṣyāh (students), so he'll get more people doing namaskāra (prostration), guru pada puja, just to get more numbers."

Why asūyā is Wrong

The fundamental problem with asūyā:

- The intention and attitude behind someone's actions are invisible
- We cannot know another person's true motivation
- Therefore, we have no right to criticize someone's noble, constructive, or charitable actions
- Unless proven otherwise, we should not criticize

The Proofreading Personality

pūjya Swamiji called this the "proofreading personality":



- A proofreader is paid to find mistakes in writing - that's their job
- But normal people shouldn't have this proofreading personality
- Looking only for flaws, lack of qualities, defects, and faults in whatever good others are doing
- In Sanskrit: "guṇēṣu doṣaḥ aviṣkaraṇam" - pointing out flaws in everything, finding defects in good qualities, virtues, and merits

Vulnerable Professions

ācāryā Tadany noted that certain roles are particularly vulnerable to criticism:

Spiritual Teachers (ācāryā)

"If you say you're a spiritual teacher, you are opening your face for slaps." People predominantly criticize spiritual teachers, always looking for flaws and inconsistencies.

Politicians

Politicians may enter politics for two possible reasons:

- To serve the country and do good for their community
- Other motivations (which don't need to be stated)

But we don't have the right to criticize their motivations unless proven otherwise, because we don't know their true attitude.

asūyā as Obstacle to Self-Growth

In the Bhagavad Gītā, Krishna identifies asūyā (finding faults in others) as one of the greatest obstacles for self-development and spiritual growth.

Anasūyā - The Ideal Quality

At the end of the Gītā, Krishna states that one of the great qualities of a śiṣyah (student) is

Anasūyā - the absence of asūyā, the absence of finding fault in others and their actions.

asūyā in Studying the śāstra

The Problem of Fault-Finding in Scripture Study

This attitude of finding faults extends to how people study scriptures:

- Some people's main goal when studying Vedānta is to find defects, flaws, and issues
- When they discover you're an ācāryā or guru, they always bring up controversial parts of the scriptures
- They focus on controversial points and reject entire texts based on single issues

Examples of Controversial Rejections

Ramayana

"I do not accept Rama killing Vali. Therefore, I don't read Ramayana. I'll never read it."

Mahabharata

People find one controversial idea in the Mahabharata (which is filled with controversial ideas) and reject the entire text.



The Consequence of This Attitude

When someone only looks for controversies, faults, mistakes, and defects:

- They go through the entire text looking only for defects or controversial parts
- They miss the profound and revealing teachings
- **Who becomes the loser? They themselves become the loser.**

The śāstra's Warning

The scriptures state that if you study with such a fault-finding attitude, you will have a very difficult time gaining the benefit from the śāstra. The person will only focus on controversial points and miss the profound understanding.

The Proper Methodology for Understanding śāstra

The Progressive Understanding Approach

According to the proper methodology of revealing this body of knowledge:

- Study one portion, then another portion, then another portion
- Gradually understand the entire spectrum of the teaching
- Eventually, the so-called controversial aspects start making sense
- This is called **śāstra Anugraha** - approaching the teaching with a healthy attitude

Dealing with Difficult or Controversial Portions

The recommended approach:

- Acknowledge that there will be some difficult and controversial portions
- You don't have to say they're wrong
- You don't have to dwell upon them all the time
- You don't need to resolve controversial parts in the beginning
- You can keep them aside: "For now, it's not clear to me"
- There is a methodology and process for understanding

The Six-Fold Methodology for Determining tātparya (True Intent)

There is a systematic methodology for determining the true intent of any text, specifically the śāstra:

Upakrama-Upasamhara (Beginning and Conclusion Harmony)

There is harmony between what is said in the introduction and what is said in the conclusion.

The śāstra doesn't say one thing at the beginning, something else in the middle, and something completely different at the end.

Abhyasa (Repetition)

The repetition of the main idea throughout the entire teaching. For example, "Atma Itiya" (You are the Self) - everything throughout the entire teaching is connected to this truth.

Apurvata (Novelty)

The unique teaching that cannot be known through other means of knowledge.



Phala (Result)

The stated result or benefit of the teaching.

Arthavada (Eulogy)

Praise and glorification that supports the main teaching.

Upapatti (Logical Reasoning)

Use of logical reasoning and proof to establish the teaching. At the end: Upasanhara - Atma Itiya (concluding with "You are the Self").

Understanding Stories in śāstra

pūjya Swamiji always highlighted that certain stories should not be taken literally:

- Some stories should be looked at symbolically
- Some are fictitious stories (not factual)
- The main point of any teaching is to draw the mind to that part of the teaching

The Cartoon Analogy

Like a cartoon character with a nose that's 100 meters long - this doesn't mean the nose is literally that long. It's a symbolic exaggeration to make you think about the character having a bigger, larger, longer nose. It's symbolic exaggeration that makes you contemplate the meaning.

Mahabharata's Profound Teaching on Dharma

The Central Teaching: Dharma is Relative

One of the most important teachings of the Mahabharata is to make us understand that **Dharma is relative**:

- There is nothing which is called absolutely right
- Nothing can be called absolutely wrong
- Nothing is absolutely dharmic
- Nothing is absolutely adharmic

Evidence from Characters

Karna

Has wonderful traits and attitudes - demonstrating that even those on the "wrong" side have admirable qualities.

Dharmaputra (Yudhishtira)

Has highly questionable or terrible traits - showing that even the "embodiment of Dharma" is not absolutely good.

This shows that nobody has one absolute aspect of Dharma or Adharma.

The Progression of Understanding

Initial Teaching (For Beginners)

In the beginning, there is exaggeration:



- Dharmaputra is absolutely good
- Duryodhana is absolutely bad
- This gives an absolute idea as initial orientation

Mature Understanding

As we grow and mature, we gain clarity and discernment:

- Nothing is absolutely good, nothing is absolutely bad
- No one is absolutely dharmic, no one is absolutely adharmic
- Only Bhagavan (God) has that absolute quality

Psychological Importance of This Teaching

The Danger of Idealism

If we develop idealism ("I'm absolutely good, he/she is absolutely bad"):

- It's a terrible thing
- It's a destructive thing
- It's a very hurtful thing
- It doesn't work because nobody can be totally good or absolutely bad

Consequences of Idealistic Thinking

When we believe in absolute goodness:

- We look at others as "absolutely good"
- Then we look at our own thoughts, actions, and behaviors
- We realize "I'm not absolutely good"
- We develop inferiority complex
- We develop a sense of guilt

Common Student Problem

Student's Complaint

"Guruji, I've been studying Vedānta for so many years now, but still some kind of these thoughts come to my mind which are not good."

The person becomes extremely self-judgmental and upset because of certain thoughts.

The Teacher's Response

We have to educate the person:

- Nobody can absolutely avoid Ragha (attachment), Dwesha (aversion), kāmaḥ (desire), Krodha (anger)
- An idealistic lifestyle is not conducive to growth
- We need to educate people about the problems of idealism

The Healthy Alternative Approach

Focus on Growth and Maturity

Instead of idealism, we should:



- Try to grow out of negative patterns
- Try to mature
- Enjoy the growth and change

Celebrating Progress

Example of Healthy Progress

"Last year, I used to have these outbursts of krodha (anger) every month. Nowadays, I have them every second month."

Response: "That's an improvement! It's an improvement, so you tap yourself on the back, well done. Keep on working. Keep on growing. Keep on making efforts towards that."

Using śāstra to Educate

To educate people about avoiding idealism, we use the teachings of the śāstra by showing:

- Even Dharmaputra, who is the embodiment of Dharma, is not absolutely good
- This helps people understand they shouldn't expect absolute perfection from themselves

The Two-Stage Teaching

1. **Initial Stage:** "You should always become better, you should always become good, you should always follow Dharma"
2. **Mature Stage:** "Keep on growing, keep on working towards this goal. Enjoy maturing. Enjoy growing. Enjoy undergoing change. Avoid idealism, otherwise you'll only feel guilty and develop inferiority complex."

Psychological Recognition of Mahabharata

Many psychologists, especially foreigners who come to India and read the Mahabharata, praise it highly. Why?

- It shows that Rama, Krishna, and any human being has dichotomies
- There are controversial things done by all characters
- When you read about Krishna or Rama's actions, you question: "Is it correct?"
- This demonstrates that our Rishis had profound vision and understanding of human nature

The Purpose of Controversial Stories

All these controversial elements are there to teach us:

- In the entire creation, there is no such thing as ideally good
- Idealism and always looking for perfection is problematic
- Human nature is complex and contains contradictions

The Eternal Debate: Vibhishana vs. Kumbhakarna

Context

This is presented as an eternal debate in Ramayana studies - so significant that "you can have a PhD degree on that." It examines the definition of duty and dharma through two opposing views and paths.



Vibhishana's Choice

The Situation

When Ravana did something adharmic (kidnapping Sita), Vibhishana abandoned his brother and king to join Rama's side.

What This Symbolizes:

- Rama represents truth in this case
- Vibhishana chose the good, chose truth, chose the right path
- He prioritized dharma over family relations and family connections
- This represents choosing universal truth over personal loyalty

Kumbhakarna's Choice

The Situation

Kumbhakarna chose "Kula Dharma" (family duty). He knew what Ravana did was wrong and even told Ravana it was wrong.

His Reasoning:

- He believed that abandoning his brother in his darkest or most threatening hours was a greater adharma
- Fighting alongside the other side would be worse than supporting his brother
- He chose to die for a lost cause
- This represents pure loyalty to family

The Philosophical Significance

What Makes This Debate Valuable:

- Two people can look at this from literary, social, historical, or dharmic perspectives
- They can use logic to defend either argument
- It requires very sharp thinking

What It Reveals:

- Human decisions are filled with complexities that have philosophical significance
- Complex questions arise: Is it betrayal to leave your family for the sake of truth?
- Kumbhakarna's dilemma: Is it noble to support a tyrant just because he's your brother?

The Conclusion

There is no easy answer because both are right within their own framework. This is the eternal human struggle - we can argue either way, and throughout the śāstra, we see these arguments presented.

The Kaikeyi Controversy

The Traditional View

Kaikeyi is typically seen as the villain who sent Rama to the forest.



The Alternative Interpretation

Some people argue that Kaikeyi was actually an excellent person because:

- According to some interpretations, if you rule the country for 14 years at that particular time, it was considered "bad time" or "papa" (sin/inauspicious)
- She wanted to save Rama from that papa
- Her thinking: "Let my son suffer, doesn't matter, but Rama should not suffer"
- This would make her sacrifice noble rather than selfish

The Point

Again, arguments! You can always argue against or argue for any position. This demonstrates the complexity of dharmic decisions.

The Gray Areas in śāstra

Purpose of Gray Areas

The śāstra intentionally contains gray areas to help us understand that **Dharma is not absolute**.

Application to Real Life

Family Situations

Especially in family discussions, at any particular stage, you can never say definitively:

- "This is right" or "He's right" or "She is right"
- "He's wrong" or "She is wrong"

Family situations are inherently complex with multiple valid perspectives.

What Should We Do Then?

The Recommended Approach:

1. Learn all the lessons from the śāstra
2. Study all these situations and teachings
3. Whenever you have to make a decision, try to be as unselfish as possible
4. Then make your decision

The Driving School Analogy

Swami Dayananda's Example

pūjya Swamiji gives the example of driving lessons to explain how śāstra works:

The Limitation of Driving Schools

No driving school can prepare you for all situations that may take place in traffic. Nobody can prepare for that. If they were to teach all possible traffic situations, we would be eternally in the driving school - especially in India!



Indian Traffic Reality

ācāryā Tadany humorously notes: "Situations in India - we would have to rewrite the entire book!" because of the unique and unpredictable nature of Indian traffic.

What Driving Schools Actually Teach

Instead of covering every possible scenario, they teach:

- Some basic norms
- Some basic guidelines
- Some basic examples
- Then you have to use your own discretion and go around driving

Real-World Driving Challenges

Examples of unexpected situations you encounter:

- Suddenly there's a buffalo in the middle of the road
- There's a vegetable market on the highway
- A whole vegetable garden appears (like when going to Rishikesh)
- Potholes everywhere

The Learning Process

What you must do:

- Receive the guidelines and basic norms
- Then learn and adapt
- Keep on studying and improving yourself

Application to śāstra

Similarly, the śāstra:

- Does not teach what is absolutely right or absolutely wrong
- Gives broad norms with certain examples
- Keeps repeating, reiterating, and re-emphasizing certain very important points

After receiving this education:

- You receive the information, norms, and guidelines
- You are educated upon these principles
- Then you have to use your own discretion in real-life situations

The Proper Attitude When Studying śāstra

The Three Essential Qualities

When we study the śāstra, we should have an attitude of:

1. **Openness** - Being receptive to the teachings without prejudgment
2. **Learning** - Actively seeking to understand and absorb the knowledge
3. **Improving** - Applying the teachings for personal growth and development



The Sugar Cane Example

ācāryā Tadany's analogy: "You chew the juice, you enjoy the juice. The rest [you spit out]." Take what is beneficial and nourishing, leave aside what is not useful for you at this stage.

What Happens Without This Attitude?

If we don't approach study with openness, learning, and improvement, we end up:

- Constantly sitting in judgment
- Criticizing every character and situation
- Finding controversial parts in everything

Examples of Judgmental Thinking

The fault-finding mind says:

- "I don't think Dharmaputra is correct"
- "Dronācāryā is supposed to be a great archer, but he didn't want to teach Ekalavya - so is he supposed to be worshipped? That's a big adharmā!"
- "Bhishma did not protect Draupadi when the disrobing happened - and Bhishma is supposed to be worshipped?"

The Pattern of Fault-Finding

We tend to sit in judgment of any character we look at:

- There will always be some flaws
- Some controversial parts
- If we go around criticizing, judging, finding faults, defects, flaws, issues, and problems
- **That personality will not take us anywhere - we'll get nowhere with that attitude**

The Solution: Anasūyā

The absence of fault-finding, the absence of criticism, the absence of looking for defects in the teachings and characters of the śāstra.