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... Tattva Bodha ...

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Summary

pañca sthūla-bhūtāni - The Five Gross Elements

Formation of the Physical Body

Acharya Tadany explained that through the process of pañcikaraṇam (grossification), the five gross elements (pañca sthūla-bhūtāni) are produced. From these gross elements, the physical body (sthūla śarīram) is created. All physical bodies - whether human, animal, insect, or even celestial beings - are composed entirely of these five gross elements.

The Five Elements in the Body

1. Earth Element (Prithvi Tattvam)

The solid parts of the physical body are made from the earth element. This element comes from the plant kingdom through food consumption. When we eat, the earth principle from food maintains and grows the physical structure of the body.

2. Water Element (Jala Tattvam)

The body contains a sophisticated self-regulating water management system:

- During winter or in colder climates, the body naturally eliminates more liquids as less water is needed
- During summer, the body loses water through perspiration and naturally demands more liquids
- The body automatically maintains optimal hydration levels without conscious management
- When water volume exceeds what's necessary, the body naturally evacuates it
- Water maintains the shape and structure of the body - dehydration leads to disintegration after death



3. Fire Element (Agni Tattvam)

The fire principle maintains consistent body temperature regardless of external conditions:

- Body temperature remains constant whether in the Sahara Desert or Antarctica
- This is a built-in protective mechanism
- When foreign substances enter the body, temperature increases (fever) as a self-defense mechanism to eliminate unfamiliar elements

4. Air Element (Vayu Tattvam)

The air element is necessary for the processes of inhalation and exhalation, allowing clean air to enter and waste products to be expelled from the body.

5. Space Element (ākāśa Tattvam)

Space manifests in two ways:

- The body itself occupies space
- Internal spaces exist within the body (such as the stomach cavity)
- When the stomach is empty after digestion, it signals the need for more nourishment

Connection to Ayurveda

Acharya Tadany explained how these elements correspond to Ayurvedic principles:

- **Vata** = Air element (Vayu Tattvam)
- **Pitta** = Fire element (Agni Tattvam)
- **Kapha** = Water element (Jala Tattvam)

Ayurveda seeks to maintain balance among these three principles according to each individual's constitution, which impacts physical health, emotions, and psychology.

The Three Bodies and Their Lifespans

Physical Body (sthūla śarīram)

- Has the **shortest lifespan**
- Lasts from a few hours to approximately 150-200 years
- The oldest recorded person lived 122 years
- Dissolves at the time of physical death (Maranam)
- Made of the five gross elements
- Visible to perception

Subtle Body (sūkṣma śarīram)

- Has a **longer lifespan** than the physical body



- Continues to exist until Pralayam (the end of the universe)
- Survives physical death and continues in other realms
- Made of the five subtle elements
- Invisible to ordinary perception
- Contains the mind, intellect, and emotions

Causal Body (kāraṇa śarīram)

- Has the **longest lifespan**
- Never created - eternally exists
- Survives multiple cycles of creation and dissolution (sṛṣṭi and Pralayam)
- Only dissolves at the time of liberation (mokṣa)
- Exists so long as ignorance (Ajñānam) remains
- Invisible to perception

The Fourteen Planes of Existence (caturdaśa bhuvanāni)

Seven Upper Worlds

1. Bhūr Loka (Earth plane - our current existence)
2. Bhuvar Loka
3. Suvar Loka
4. Mahar Loka
5. Jana Loka
6. Tapo Loka
7. Satya Loka

Seven Lower Worlds

1. Atala
2. Vitala
3. Sutala
4. **Talātala**
5. **Mahātala**
6. **Rasātala**
7. **Pātāla**

Characteristics of Different Planes

Acharya Tadany explained that all fourteen planes are created from the five gross elements (pañca sthūla-bhūtāni). However:

- Higher planes have more subtle, refined bodies and experiences
- Lower planes have grosser bodies and more painful experiences
- We cannot perceive higher planes because our sense organs lack the necessary subtlety
- This is analogous to how animals cannot appreciate refined human pleasures like art or music, even if physically present



Microcosm and Macrocosm (piṇḍāṇḍa and Brahmāṇḍa)

The Parallel Structure

The text introduces the concept of piṇḍāṇḍa (microcosm) and Brahmāṇḍa (macrocosm):

Level	Microcosm (Individual)	Macrocosm (Universe)
Gross	Physical Body (sthūla śarīram)	Physical Universe (sthūla Prapañca)
Subtle	Subtle Body (sūkṣma śarīram)	Subtle Universe (sūkṣma Prapañca)
Causal	Causal Body (kāraṇa śarīram)	Causal Universe (kāraṇa Prapañca)

Identity of Microcosm and Macrocosm

Both are identical because:

- Both are made of the same raw material (the five elements at different levels)
- Both are inert (Acetanam) and insentient (Jadam) by nature
- Both are pervaded by the same consciousness principle
- Together, they constitute the cosmos or universe

The Five Features of Consciousness

Acharya Tadanu emphasized five critical principles about consciousness that will be repeated throughout the study:

1. Consciousness is Not a Product of the Body

Consciousness is not a part, product, or property of the physical body. It exists independently of material structures.

2. Consciousness is an Independent Principle

Consciousness is an independent principle that pervades the inert physical body and makes it sentient and alive. This is analogous to electricity pervading a light bulb and making it luminous - without electricity, the bulb remains non-luminous.

3. Consciousness is Not Limited by Body Boundaries



Consciousness pervades all three pairs (the three bodies and three universes at micro and macro levels). It is not confined to individual bodies but is one infinite, unlimited consciousness called ātmān or Brahman.

The consciousness principle is described as **Satyam jñānam Anantam Brahma** - limitless in both space and time.

4. Consciousness Continues After Body Removal

When the physical body dies, consciousness continues to exist but is no longer accessible for transactions and interactions. This is because the medium (the body) through which consciousness could be accessed is no longer present. The consciousness itself remains, but becomes imperceptible without its medium.

This is illustrated by the Bhagavad Gita verse: Just as a person discards worn-out clothes and acquires new ones, the consciousness principle discards worn-out bodies and acquires new ones.

5. Consciousness Pervades All Matter

The same consciousness principle pervades all beings - from rocks to trees to humans. The differentiation is not in consciousness itself, but in the combination of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas in different bodies.

Introduction to the Fourth Topic: jīva and Īśvara

Having covered three main topics:

1. Qualifications (preparatory requirements)
2. Analysis of the individual (vyaṣṭi vicārah)
3. Analysis of the cosmos (samaṣṭi vicārah)

The text now introduces the fourth and most important topic: the definitions of jīva (individual consciousness) and Īśvara (cosmic consciousness), and their relationship. These are crucial terms in Vedāntic study that will be explored in subsequent sessions.



Questions after class

Q1: What Defines the Separation of Bodies?

Question: What makes different bodies (rock, tree, human) separate? What defines their boundaries?

Answer: Functionality and intelligence define separation. The universe is formed by two aspects:

- **Intelligence aspect:** Creates functionality for everything to exist in harmony
- **Material aspect:** The physical substance

This intelligence accounts for creation, maintenance, and eventual dissolution. Different bodies are designed to survive in different environments - some bacteria thrive in extreme heat or cold where human bodies cannot survive. The intelligence behind creation ensures appropriate functionality for each form.

The differentiation occurs through the combination of the three gunas (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas):

- More Tamasic = More gross
- More Sattvic = More refined
- This creates a spectrum of existence from rocks to celestial beings

Q2: How Does Consciousness Pervade Different Bodies?

Question: What is different about consciousness pervading a rock versus pervading a human body?

Answer: Consciousness itself doesn't change based on the body it pervades. The consciousness principle is the same in all beings - rocks, trees, animals, and humans. The difference lies in the structure of the bodies due to the triguna (three qualities).

Using the electricity analogy: In your house, you have many different gadgets - mobile phone, computer, TV, light bulb. They all have different functionalities, designs, purposes, and



lifespans. But they are all powered by the same invisible electricity principle. Similarly, consciousness is the one principle that pervades and enlivens all beings.

The progression of understanding is:

1. First: Universe + Consciousness (two separate things)
2. Second: Material principle and Consciousness principle both exist, but matter is inert without consciousness
3. Third: Both are not separate from consciousness - "I am consciousness"
4. Final: There is only consciousness; everything else has temporary existence

Q3: Does a Rock Contain Consciousness?

Question: Would you say a rock is enlivened by consciousness?

Answer: Yes, consciousness is all-pervading, but in a highly solidified, extremely Tamasic state. At the fundamental level, even a solid wall is energy in motion - subatomic particles - just highly grossified energy.

A rock doesn't respond to stimuli like bacteria, viruses, or plants do because it is Tamasic to its extreme - so lethargic that there is no direct response. However, it is still pervaded by consciousness.

Plants are less grossified than rocks and respond to light stimuli. The spectrum continues from rocks (most Tamasic) through plants, animals, to humans (more Sattvic), with varying degrees of responsiveness.

Q4: Why Does Time Degrade Physical Bodies?

Question: Why does time lead to the degradation of physical bodies?

Answer: Time doesn't degrade the body - it's the nature of the body itself to undergo six changes (Shad Vikara):

1. Asti (existence)
2. Jayati (birth)
3. Vardhate (growth)
4. Viparinamate (transformation)
5. Apakshiyate (decay)



6. Vinashyati (destruction)

Time is not an actor - it's just a reference point for existence. Bodies come in time, stay for a while during time, and go away in time. Time itself does nothing.

Different bodies have different natural lifespans:

- Human bodies: Currently up to ~122 years (potentially 150-200 in the future)
- Giant Galapagos tortoises: 250-300 years
- Greenland sharks: 500 years
- Dinosaurs: Thousands of years

500 years ago, humans typically lived only 30-50 years due to prevailing conditions. Now people live to 100, and in the future may live to 150-300 years. It's the nature of the body and the conditions, not time itself, that determines lifespan.

Even planets have lifespans - our sun will implode in approximately 5 billion years, ending life as we know it.

Q5: Why Doesn't Consciousness Interact with Dead Bodies?

Question: When a body dies, why does consciousness stop interacting with it?

Answer: This question contains an important misconception. The body never interacts with the consciousness principle - not when alive, and not when dead. This is crucial to understand.

Just as a mobile phone doesn't interact with electricity (it simply requires electricity to function), the body (Anātmā) doesn't interact with consciousness (ātmā). If ātmā were an object of perception, it would exist within the subject-object framework of our transactional reality (Vyavaharika), which is not the framework of Advaita Vedānta.

A better way to frame the question is: Why can't we interact with the sūkṣma śarīram (subtle body) after physical death?



The answer: The subtle body continues to exist after physical death, but we can no longer interact with it because the medium (physical body) is absent from our perception. We have limited perception - limited hearing, seeing, speaking, bound by time and space.

The subtle body is still there, existing in one of the upper or lower lokas (planes), until it finds a new physical body to manifest again - either on this planet or another planet in this or another galaxy. The Prarabdha (destiny) of that subtle body may be to manifest in a body that only exists on other planets or in other galaxies.