



॥ विवेकचूडामणि ॥

... Vivekacūḍāmaṇi ...

AI Summary – Class 128

For Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, by Acharya Tadany Cargnin dos Santos
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Summary

Introduction to Consciousness / ātmā

Acharya Tadany conducted a Vedānta class based on Śaṅkarācārya's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, exploring the profound nature of consciousness and the self (ātmā). The class focused on ślokas 125-126, which define ātmā as pure consciousness and explain its relationship to the body, mind, and various states of experience.

Five Fundamental Capsules of Vedānta

Acharya Tadany emphasized five essential principles that students should remember throughout their study and daily life:

1. Consciousness is not a part, product, or property of the body
2. Consciousness is an independent entity that pervades and enlivens the body
3. Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body
4. Consciousness survives even after the body perishes
5. The survived consciousness cannot be interacted with due to the absence of a reflecting medium (the body)

Acharya Tadany used the analogy of light and the hand to illustrate these principles — just as light pervades and illuminates the hand without being limited to it, consciousness pervades the body while remaining independent and unlimited.

The Word "I" (Aham) and Its Unique Connection to Consciousness

A central teaching of the class addressed how the word "I" (aham) uniquely indicates consciousness. Acharya Tadany explained that while all other words describe inert objects (jaḍam), only the word "I" can exclusively be used by conscious beings. No inert object can use "I."



According to śāstra, the primary meaning of "aham" is consciousness alone. However, over time, a gradual error has occurred: the word "I" has come to refer to a mixture of consciousness and physical/mental attributes (body, mind, intellect). This is similar to pointing at one's hand to show light — eventually, people see the hand as primary and the light as secondary, even though the original purpose was to indicate the light itself.

The Three States of Experience (Avasthā Traya)

Acharya Tadany discussed how ātmā serves as the illuminator (sākṣī) of all three states of consciousness:

- **Jāgrat (Waking State):** The mind is fully active, experiencing thoughts created by the external world
- **Svapna (Dream State):** The mind is partially active, experiencing thoughts created entirely from memory
- **Suṣupti (Deep Sleep State):** The mind is fully passive, with no thoughts present

The entire human life can be understood as experiencing either an active mind (with thoughts) or a passive mind (without thoughts). ātmā illuminates both conditions but is never itself subject to activity or passivity. If ātmā had active or passive states, it would be subject to modification (savikāra), which contradicts its nature as unchanging consciousness.

ātmā as Witness (Sākṣī) Beyond the Five Kośas

Śaṅkarācārya defines ātmā as distinct from the five layers of personality (pañcakośas):

1. **Annamaya Kośa** (physical sheath) — corresponds to the gross body (sthūla śarīra)
2. **Prāṇamaya Kośa** (vital sheath)
3. **Manomaya Kośa** (mental sheath)
4. **Vijñānamaya Kośa** (intellectual sheath) — these three correspond to the subtle body (sūkṣma śarīra)
5. **Ānandamaya Kośa** (bliss sheath) — corresponds to the causal body (kāraṇa śarīra)

ātmā is *vilakṣaṇa* (distinctly different) from all five kośas, serving as their witness rather than being identified with any of them.

Understanding How ātmā "Knows"

Acharya Tadany clarified an important subtlety: when we say "ātmā knows" or "ātmā is aware," we must understand that this is not an action involving will, choice, or time. The verb "knows" (vijānāti) typically implies an action with beginning and end, but ātmā's knowledge is not like this.



Using the analogy of the sun illuminating the earth, Acharya Tadany explained that the sun does not decide to give light or perform the action of illuminating. Rather, illumination happens naturally in the presence of the sun because light is the sun's very nature (svarūpa). Similarly, ātmā does not perform the action of knowing — everything simply becomes known in the presence of ātmā, which is awareness itself.

The correct understanding is: *in the presence of ātmā, everything becomes aware*, rather than saying ātmā performs the action of making things aware.

Life as Experience of Active and Passive Mind

Acharya Tadany explained that all human experience can be categorized into two types:

- **Active mind experience:** Thoughts created by the external world (waking state) or by memory (dream state). Even in waking state, memory can override external perception — as in the rope-snake example, where one mistakes a rope for a snake
- **Passive mind experience:** The thoughtless state of deep sleep

Whatever we experience is determined entirely by thoughts occurring in the mind, whether sourced from external stimuli or internal memory. ātmā remains as the constant illuminator of both the thoughtful mind and the thoughtless mind.