



॥ विवेकचूडामणि ॥

... Vivekacūḍāmaṇi ...

AI Summary – Class 130

For Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, by Acharya Tadany Cargnin dos Santos
July 29, 2026.

Q&A – before class

The Self-Evident Nature of Consciousness (Ātman)

Dipti asked what it means for the Self (ātman) to be "evident" in the waking state.

Acharya Tadany explained that consciousness is self-evident, meaning it does not require any external means or instruments to validate its existence. Unlike objects that need perception or inference, consciousness is the constant witness that illuminates all experiences—physical sensations (hunger, thirst, fatigue), emotional states (happiness, sadness, anger), and intellectual conditions (knowledge, doubt, ignorance).

The Unchanging Witness vs. Changing Body-Mind Complex

Acharya Tadany emphasized the fundamental distinction between the witness consciousness and the objects it witnesses. While the body undergoes continuous transformation—from childhood (*kaumāra*) through youth (*yauvana*) to old age (*jarā*)—the consciousness principle (*dehī* or *ātman*) remains unchanged and eternal.

This was illustrated through Bhagavad Gītā verse 2.13: "*dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanam jarā*" (Just as the embodied soul continuously passes through childhood, youth, and old age in this body). The problem of spiritual seekers is misidentification—identifying with the changing body ("I am tired," "I am hungry") rather than recognizing the unchanging witness.

Summary

Consciousness as Illuminator: Vivekacūḍāmaṇi Verse 127

The core teaching focused on verse 127 from Śaṅkarācārya's Vivekacūḍāmaṇi: "*yaḥ paśyati svayaṃ sarvaṃ yaṃ na paśyati kaścana / yaś cetayati buddhyādi na taṃ yaṃ cetayati*." Acharya Tadany explained that *ayam* (this consciousness, this *ātman*) illuminates everything without



requiring any external instrument. The first line establishes that consciousness is "*yaḥ svayaṁ sarvaṁ paśyati*"—that which illuminates everything by itself, without assistance.

The teacher drew a crucial contrast: the mind requires instruments to know anything. To hear this class, you need ears; to see the text, you need eyes; to smell fragrances, you need the nose; to know textures, you need the sense of touch. Each sense organ (*jñānendriya*) operates within its specific domain—eyes cannot hear sounds, ears cannot see colors, the nose cannot taste.

Knowledge in the mind depends on employing the correct instrument for the appropriate object. However, consciousness illuminates whatever happens in the mind without requiring any instrument whatsoever. This is the meaning of *svayaṁ*—by itself, without external assistance.

The second line states that nothing can illuminate consciousness: "*yaṁ na paśyati kaścana*"—which no one perceives, which nothing knows. Consciousness is ever the subject, never the object. It is always the experiencer, never the experienced; always the witness, never the witnessed. This makes the study of consciousness extraordinarily difficult, even impossible from a purely empirical standpoint.

Why Science Cannot Objectify Consciousness

Acharya Tadany addressed the limitations of scientific approaches to studying consciousness. Science requires objects that can be perceived, measured, analyzed, and studied through instruments. However, consciousness is never available as an object of perception, inference, or any other means of empirical investigation. Even with the most sophisticated and powerful microscopes or telescopes, you cannot "see" consciousness itself, because consciousness is not an object—it is the eternal subject.

Scientists study the brain, neurons, synapses, neural networks, and particles, believing they are studying consciousness. But Vedānta clarifies that these are all inert objects (*jaḍam, acetana*) through which consciousness manifests. The brain is not consciousness; neurons are not consciousness; particles are not consciousness. They are inert instruments or media (*upādhi*) through which consciousness becomes manifest. If you remove the medium (the brain), consciousness is no longer available for study through that particular medium, but consciousness itself remains unchanged and independent.

The teacher explained that many scientists and scholars send him articles to review, asking for validation of their theories about consciousness. While their intentions are good, they lack the background in Vedānta and *śabda pramāṇa* (verbal testimony as a valid means of knowledge) necessary to understand this subject. Science misses the essential point: consciousness is not a product, property, or part of the brain; it is not produced by neurological phenomena. Consciousness is an independent entity that uses the brain as a medium for manifestation.

The Mind as the Borrower and Lender of Consciousness



Śaṅkarācārya states in the verse: "*yaś cetayati buddhyādi*"—that which enlivens the intellect (*buddhi*) and so forth. The *ātman* lends consciousness to the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*), which has a special capacity to borrow consciousness. But why can the mind borrow consciousness while other objects like clips, cases, or water cannot? Acharya Tadany used the analogy of electricity: when electricity passes through a tungsten filament, the filament glows; but when the same electricity passes through water, the water doesn't become bright. Both are material substances, but the tungsten filament has an intrinsic nature that allows it to manifest brightness, while water does not.

Similarly, the mind is material (*jaḍam* by nature), but it possesses a unique intrinsic capacity to borrow consciousness from *ātman*. This makes the mind a "secondary source" of consciousness—like a retail agent. Just as you can buy a book directly from the factory (the original source) or from a bookstore (a retail agent), consciousness is available at its original source (*ātman*) and through the retail agent (the mind). The mind borrows consciousness and becomes a live, sentient mind capable of knowing and perceiving.

The Three-Tier Hierarchy: Ātman → Mind → Body

Acharya Tadany outlined the complete structure of how consciousness flows through different levels. First, *ātman* is the original sentient source (*caitanya*). Second, the mind borrows consciousness from *ātman*, becoming sentient (*cetana*) and capable of perception. Third, the mind then lends this borrowed consciousness to the body, making the body alive and sentient. Thus we have: (1) *Ātman*—original sentient source; (2) Mind—secondary source that borrows from *ātman* and lends to the body; (3) Body—tertiary borrower that receives consciousness from the mind.

Importantly, consciousness stops at the body level. Beyond the body, no object can borrow consciousness. The teacher used a humorous example: if your dress could borrow consciousness, it would have its own moods and preferences—"I don't want to leave home today," or "You don't look good today, I don't want to be worn." Objects like clothes, though connected to the body, cannot borrow consciousness. This transmission stops at the boundary of the living body.

Not All Parts of the Body Borrow Consciousness

Even within the body, not every part borrows consciousness. Hair provides a clear example: though the roots are embedded in the skin and connected to the body, hair itself is inert (*jaḍam*). How do we know? When you get a haircut, there is no pain. If hair were conscious, cutting it would be painful, and every haircut would be traumatic. But we know from experience that cutting hair causes no pain. The same applies to nails—you can trim them without any sensation. This demonstrates that even within the body, only certain parts are sentient, while others remain inert.



The skin, on the other hand, has borrowed consciousness, which is why cutting the skin is painful and requires anesthesia during surgery. This selective borrowing of consciousness within the body demonstrates the precise and limited nature of how consciousness manifests through physical structures.

The Dead Body and the Necessity of the Mind as Medium

A crucial question arose: if *ātman* is all-pervading, why is a dead body still dead? Acharya Tadany clarified that while consciousness is indeed all-pervading (*sarvagata*), the dead body lacks the necessary intermediary—the mind. The body does not have the capacity to borrow consciousness directly from *ātman*. The body can only borrow consciousness through the mind.

When death occurs, the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*), which includes the mind, departs from the physical body. Without the mind to serve as the medium, the body cannot access consciousness, even though *ātman* is omnipresent.

The teacher jokingly imagined a factory that could manufacture minds like tungsten filaments for light bulbs—then you could simply replace the departed mind with a new one and reanimate the dead body. This is actually the premise of many movies and even appears in the Purāṇas, where certain yogis possess the power to transfer the mind from one body to another. However, even in such cases, the analysis reveals that if you transfer a mind from one living body to a dead body, the previously dead body becomes alive, but the original body becomes dead. Consciousness itself is not created or destroyed; it simply manifests or ceases to manifest depending on the presence or absence of the appropriate medium.

Ātman as Ever the Lender, Never the Borrower

The verse concludes: "*na taṃ yaṃ cetayāt*"—but nothing enlivens *that* (the *ātman*). This is the final establishing statement. *Ātman* lends consciousness to everything in manifestation, but nothing lends consciousness to *ātman*. *Ātman* is not like a bank that borrows from some sources and lends to others, making profit in between. *Ātman* is ever the lender, never the borrower. It is ever the subject, never the object. It is ever the experiencer, never the experienced. It is ever the illuminator, never the illuminated.

This teaching establishes the absolute independence and supremacy of consciousness. *Ātman* is self-existent, self-evident, self-luminous, and self-complete. It does not depend on anything for its existence or its capacity to illumine. Everything else depends on it, but it depends on nothing.

Different Capacities of Different Media

The class concluded with a question from H about whether animal brains can also serve as media for consciousness. Acharya Tadany confirmed that yes, any brain—human or animal—can serve as a medium for consciousness. However, the levels of consciousness manifested are limited or



expanded based on the intrinsic capacity of each medium. A human brain has the capacity to listen to Vedānta teachings, contemplate subtle philosophical truths, and assimilate this knowledge for liberation. A dog's brain, while also serving as a medium for consciousness, has limited capacity and cannot engage with such refined and abstract teachings.

This demonstrates an important Vedāntic principle: while the consciousness principle (*caitanya*, *ātman*) is universal and identical in all beings, its manifestation is conditioned by the nature and capacity of the medium through which it operates. The same sun shines on all objects, but different objects reflect that light differently based on their nature—a mirror reflects clearly, water reflects with some distortion, and a stone barely reflects at all. Similarly, the same consciousness pervades all beings, but manifests with different degrees of clarity and capacity depending on the nature of the body-mind complex serving as the medium.