Upaniṣad is the essence of entire Vedas, the crux of entire Vedic literature. These have to be learned and understood differently in a diff style. They are also known as Vedanta, the last segment of Vedas.

*Upa* = Closest

*Ni* = *Nischayayena* (firmly)

*Sat* – that which takes you closest to the Truth. It can’t be perceived, explained or put into words. For example, you may be able to use few adjectives to describe the witnessing a beautiful sunrise; but you can’t experience the fulfillment of gaining the experience while the sun was rising! Nothing can substitute a subjective experience. An Upaniṣad can take us closest to the truth, but words have their own limitations. Words can’t take you beyond a certain limit or a certain level. Words are pointers or indicators hinting towards the truth but cannot give us the experience of the truth.

*Shraddha* is not a belief system or can’t be translated as trust. Perhaps it is faith. When we listen to Upaniṣads we need to understand that though these are words indicative of some meaning, they are trying to point towards something beyond the words. So don’t get caught up in the mantra or the words of the mantra. Try to find or reach that which is being pointed towards. Other learning processes are simplistic in that they have a certain reason, logic, and applications that we can understand. You can become very versatile in it if you master the reasoning and logic in the realm of the known.

Upaniṣads are pointing towards that truth which is presently unknown. This truth is referred to by different names, but the Upaniṣads keep it as generic and simple as possible. There is no identification with a name or a form, they point towards the truth as truth alone. If we say it as “God”, our minds don’t function because it is trying to grasp something it has never experienced. God is associated to a concept, an image, a form, or a resemblance of a form, but is it really God? Probably not. Understanding something about a known factor is very easy. The entire world of logic functions only in the realm of known. Upaniṣads are not trying to speak about something which is known. Even the language of science deals with logic because it is in the realm of the known. Even discoveries are with respect to already existing factors and shed more light into the details of what was not known about it thus far.

Truth is not something which we have experienced or we have known, or which our minds can intellectually create a concept of. It requires intuitive hearings which don’t follow the words, but follow that which is indicated through the words. This is a difficult task because we are either busy trying to follow the print, or trying to write about what is being heard through that print! We are busy in trying to churn or process that which has been understood. In fact Upaniṣads point towards something that which we can never understand. Upaniṣads cannot be understood through the process of understanding (word limitations!) but through the process of intuitive listening. We hear by default but are we truly listening? When we hear something that doesn’t make sense, we call it noise; and when it makes sense we call it sound. But here sound is not the priority. You have to grasp *that* which is being indicated through the words that make sound. In trying to understand the Upaniṣads, we have to go through a process of unlearning what we have learned so far in our lifetime.
ātmapūjopaniṣad

We can’t get caught onto the intellectual processing or the idea/concept of what we are trying to understand here. Apply intuitive hearing to understand that which is being indicated. It can take us beyond the words. Pujya Gurudev used to explain that the athlete who pole vaults, holds the pole at one end, runs a certain distance and then sticks the pole in a designated spot. The athlete then lifts himself up with the momentum created combined with tension created in the pole. He has to know when to release the pole – can’t be too early or too late. Else you won’t cross your mark and reach in the safe zone. If you never leave the pole, you may land safely but you don’t cross the mark.

Similarly, with words, they can help you reach a certain level. After that drop the word and merge with that which is being indicated. If you hold on to the word, you miss the essence of that which is being indicated. So it is a delicate balance. Learn intuitive listening which is beyond making sense or the sound and the noise. It has to take us to the silence which is the substratum for both. Though it is sound, don’t get caught up in the sound, transcend the sound.

The main purpose or rather the only purpose of the knowledge of Upaniṣad is to take the seeker to the indicated standpoint. This ātmapūjopaniṣad of 17 mantras has a mystical sense of presentation. The smaller and concise it is, the deeper is the message encoded inside. It may appear that there are only 17 sentences in these mantras, the smaller it gets, the deeper is the mysticism encoded in it. It contains indicators of nuggets of truth. This Upaniṣad, though small, it is very powerful in it’s own sense of mysticism.

ātma (self) pūja (worship) upaniṣad is trying to teach the seeker how to worship the self. Entire language is filled with mysticism. This Upaniṣa is found in the Atharva Veda and each mantra contains potent meaning. It directly starts with the indicator – there is no method, process or technique taught.

Mantra 1: om tasya niścintanaṁ dhyānam. Worshipping the Self begins directly with dhyānam. Om is a symbol of tasya (That). Upaniṣads have kept it beyond the fragmentation of religion and customs. If we are bound by religion, customs and practices, we’d lose the entire depth of it. So the rishi is trying to keep it beyond the narrow paths of any traditions or customs. They are not trying to indicate it as a particular name or form of God. They’ve kept it very generic and open as tasya. That truth is represented by Om. Constantly remembering (niścintanaṁ) is called dhyāna.

The 16 steps of pūja is the premise of the entire Upaniṣad. Shiva Manas pūja for example explains how to focus and do the manasic pūja with the form and name. A step higher than that is to release the name and form. Truth is symbolized by Om and dhyāna is constant remembrance of that truth. Those 16 steps are being redefined with a subtler aspect of meaning. Whenever we sit for pūja, there are a lot of arrangements to be done and then the main pūja begins with dhyānam. We contemplate on the Lord whom we are trying to pray to. We chant a shloka for whichever form of Lord we pray. Here dhyānam is redefined as om tasya niścintanaṁ dhyānam. Constant remembrance of that truth which is symbolized by Om, that remembrance itself is called dhyānam.
What is Om? As many masters have put it, the crux of entire Vedas, Upaniṣads, Bramha Sutras, Prakarana Granthas, etc. is the Bhagavad Gītā. The essence of Bhagavad Gītā is the Gayatri mantra, and the essence of Gayatri mantra is symbolized through this one symbol called Om. It was the first sound ever produced and various religions have come to a common understanding on this standpoint that the world was created from the word and the word was with the Lord. In Hindu religion we believe that before the entire creation came about, there was the first Adi Tandava — Lord Shiva’s dance of happiness (unlike the Pralaya Tandava). Before Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati came together to become Ardhā Narishwarā, Lord Shiva started playing the damaru to set everything in motion. Before it could even hit the leather on either side, the first motion of the damaru generated the first primordial sound Om. Then there were 14 other sounds created which Panini has further decoded them and we have the Sanskrit language recorded in the Maheshwar Sutra of 8 chapters (each chapter takes one year to learn!).

Sound is nothing but a vibration that represents energy. Om is thus that powerful energy from which all other modifications have occurred. It permeates all other sounds and is the source code for all sounds. Om is the first form of energy and it’s expression. It is a formation of 3 syllables A (uh) – U (oo) – M (muh). A (uh) is the first effortless guttural sound that can be made even by an infant. When you shut the mouth, you hear “mm”.

The Akṣara (imperishable, indestructible or cannot be broken any further) mālā (garland) is made of set of vowels and consonants. The first letter is A (uh) not just in Sanskrit, but also in other languages. We have 22 languages in India and 16000 dialects. They all begin with A (uh). The akṣara mālā ends with the Puh-varga (Pa, pha, bha, ba, Ma). The last row is Oshtya wherein both upper and lower lips have to come together to make a cognizable sound. They have found the origin of the sound in every aspect of the akṣara mālā and thus the Sanskrit vocabulary has not been impacted by space or time nor has it changed for past so many 10s of 1000s of years (unlike English language). The last syllable in the varna mālā is Muh. Our mouth is fully open with the first sound A (uh) and completely shut when we say Ma (muh). A little O is thus in-between a fully open and completely shut mouth. That inbetween sound is oo. A combination of these syllables A (uh) & U (oo) – becomes O (oh); followed by the maKaara M (muh), the combination of A (uh) –U (oo) – M (muh) becomes OM. These three syllables represent the waking, dream and deep sleep state. A (uh) is when we are completely open to all experiences in time and space around us in the waking state. U (oo) is when we are sorta asleep and mind is sorta functioning. In-between is the dream phase. The last one is M (muh) where everything has come to a close or the sleep state.

Another explanation — the entire world is recognized through sounds. It includes waking, dream and deep sleep states. The world of objects is represented through nāmā (names) and roopa (forms) that go together. All names are produced from sounds that are in between A (uh) – U (oo) – M (muh), hence the entire world of experiences is represented through this one syllable OM. The first form of expression of energy or vibration is this primordial sound called OM.
**ātmapūjopaniṣad**

*om tasya niścintanam dhyānam*. Constant contemplation or cognition is called *dhyānam*. When we are so ingrained in our identity that we don’t need any other reminders, we don’t forget who we are or don’t need special practices to remind ourselves. *om tasya niścintanam* doesn’t mean that there is a constant repetition of *dhyānam* but rather, there is a consistent awareness that is represented through the constant awareness. Anything that is limited by time, space, words, it will have a lot of confusion. This *dhyāna* has nothing to do with processing, but with constant awareness of “being”. I am that which is being indicated through that OM which is the essence or the silence. When we chant OM there is a gap between one OM and the next. This in-between gap is the silence, or the platform or forum on which the wave of sound can occur. The wave of sound cannot be sustained forever. When it finally dies away it merges back into its source which is silence. It is NOT a void, rather, it is an awareful silence. One has to be aware of that constant equilibrium of silence, and that is called *dhyāna*. There is no commentary of the mind wherein you are constantly trying to assert something or remove the assertion of something. It does not depend on any logical processing, *dhyāna* just exists. That pure silence is called *dhyāna*. Thus the first step in *ātmapūjopaniṣad* (how to worship oneself), is to do nothing, or rather, to stop everything! That silence has nothing to do with the outside activity, it is the constancy of silence of the awareness within which is indicated or symbolized through the OM. Constantly being in that silence is called *dhyāna* and is not limited by time, space, material, gender or any limitation that you can visualize. It is beyond any processing, or beyond any logic and reasoning conditioned by the mind and intellect. That constant silence which exist because of which we can listen to all the rumbles of mind and intellect; that screen on which the mind and intellect is constantly projecting on, that state of being is called *dhyāna* which is represented through the symbol of OM.

When somebody is introduced to the chanting of OM as a *dhyāna* process, it has nothing to do with how many *mālās* you go around (that process is called *japa*). The idea is not how many times or how long you chanted OM, but how quickly can you get into that silence? Being conscious, alert, awareful and awake, yet there is absolute silence that is undisturbed by what is being projected by the mind and intellect. Currently our state is being constantly tossed in the processing of mind and intellect. We are constantly shaken within that processing. What do we aim for? While being in the processing, we want to be shut down. Mind and intellect is a valid port of entry to interact with the outside world and there will certainly be the movements and agitations within the mind and intellect. The constant *sādhanā* to be done is to walk away from the movement and observe the movement. OM takes us to that observatory platform. The world is in constant fluctuation and movement and OM takes us through them to the observatory platform and from this silent platform I can observe the entire universe and it’s movements. Once I know I am different than all these movements and fluctuations the moment I cognize that, I am not scared of any fluctuation. *Dhyānam* is thus being in that silent observatory platform that the OM takes us to observe the fluctuations - whether it is a fluctuation of the stock exchange or in my moods, or however overwhelming the fluctuation may be. That is the first step of ātma pūja (worship of self) is to reach to that essential standpoint wherein you go beyond the logic, feeling, processing, and from where you can observe this logic, feeling or processing. Then you know that I am NOT these fluctuations.
ātmapūjopaniṣad

Day 02

Structure of Upaniṣad is based on premise of the rituals we perform. The 16-step Shodasha upapchar pūja are sixteen forms of upapchar (offering) to the lord. These sixteen steps are for mediation and abiding in the Self. True meaning of worship has been lost over a period of time as we focused on the processes without trying to understand the meaning behind those steps. So while we retained the processes, we lost the meaning. Thus the ātma (self) pūja (worship) Upaniṣad (which highlights or indicates worship of Self) provides the true meaning of each step from an absolute standpoint. Pointers are limited because words can take us only so far. Beyond this, we have to use our intuitive listening to understand what is meant by the words without getting carried away by the words or the logic behind them.

*dhyānam* - The first step in pūja was to invoke or meditate; *nishcitnayanam* – to be able to do it through the process of awareness, not through the mind or intellect. *dhyānam* is awareful being. The next step is *avahanam* - to invoke and invite presence of divine Lord. *sarvakarmanirākaraṇamāvāhanam*.

When we’ve been eagerly waiting for someone to arrive and they come over, we go overboard in inviting them. We don’t simply open the door and expect them to walk in. We invite them and welcome them inside. True invitation is *sarva karma* (all actions) have to cease. To invite the divinity within, we have to stop “doing” all activities. *Karma* (actions) is only an external expression of something internal. Actions are louder expressions of our own thoughts. Way we act, what we do, and how we behave is a direct expression of what we think inside. No matter how much we try to mask what we think and do, we are usually caught because our thoughts are finally expressed.

Desirelessness is the right form of inviting somebody. But often when we sit in front of the altar of Lord, we have a *sankalpa* (list of things desired) we read out even before we invite the Lord! *Purohit*-s ask us to repeat our *sankalpa* loudly and while we list all grand things, he blesses us “may all the desires be fulfilled. May Goddess Laxmi bless you with *dhana* (money), *dhānya* (grains), *vastu* (things), *kanaka* (gold), all kinds of items. “ If we sit with desires, the invocation itself is tainted. So it is wrong to sit in front of Lord during pūja, with the sole purpose of asking from the Lord. We have been so conditioned in our minds to always demand everything out of wherever we go. If we visit someone we ask “what have you got for me?” and if someone visits us, we demand to know “what have you got for me?” Entire calculation is based on what’s in it for me and how do I benefit from this transaction? We remain as beggars as long as there are hidden agendas that we keep demanding in an attempt of getting rather than giving.

Only beggars or someone who doesn’t have anything asks. We ask habitually not because we don’t have possessions, but because we lack faith and trust in Lord’s providence. On one hand we chant *Tvameva mata cha pita tvameva ,tvameva bandhushcha sakha tvameva* (You alone are my mother, my father, my brother, and my friend.); *Tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva* (You alone are the knowledge, my real wealth.) *tvameva sarvam mama-deva* (You are everything for me. You are verily my God alone.) If
God is truly our parent, would S/He really neglect their children?!! For example, Sun’s job is to provide heat and light and dispel darkness. Does Sun give special rays because people in India worship Him? The people pray and praise the Sun regularly. But Sun isn’t sitting there ready to bargain or to be bribed. That’s not the definition of God. On the other hand, there is no Sun-worship in this country (USA). Sun doesn’t take vengeance and thereby dispel “bad” rays on the fellowmen. He is the divine Lord, and HE showers His rays with or without worship. We worship the divine as omnipresent, omnipotent, as our father, mother, everything. So do you really think that divine form won’t take care of us? We just don’t trust Him. As mere mortals when we send kids to camps or field trips, we equip them with everything and do it in excess, just in case they may need it. The kids have enough to fall back upon. So there is no way that the divine entity whom we worship as our father and mother will ever abandon us. We claim that the divine takes care of me, yet why do we nag and demand from Him when we sit in front of Him? Our trust in God is then questionable.

Sit in front of the Lord with the attitude that I am working or doing or worshipping purely in sense of an offering only. There is nothing to demand or ask for anything in return. Such pavitrata (purity) or innocence with which we sit in front of the altar is an āvāhanam (invitation) of the Self. Every karma (action) has a list of hidden agendas behind them. Different inner intentions guise outer actions – why do I do what I do? We sit with same corrupted system and expect meditation to then control our blood pressure! Meditation is a sacred subtle pure act; don’t demand things. We want to benefit out of every action. We rarely do an act for the sake of it. Even parenting has an expectation from the kids. But this is not a bargain or a business. Hidden agendas in all karma-s constantly calculating how much I do, how much I express, how much I take, how much will I benefit at the end of the day for my own personal growth? We are conditioned to think like that since childhood. Parents manipulate children’s actions promising to love them more if they behave in accordance to our expectations. Even simple act of sharing is no longer unconditional. We are always thinking what more we can gain out of the act. If we give for the sake of self-gratification or for fame, it corrupts the very act of giving.

All our actions are chaotic and seem as though expressing madness. Invocation or invitation can never be done with impure actions always done in anticipation of some gain. If someone shows up at our door, although externally we welcome them and exclaim, “Long time no see!”; but internally if we fight within our self – couldn’t they have called prior to coming? Did they have to show up just now? ...etc. then will the outward invitation have any impact whatsoever?

We claim the divine to be omnipresent and omnipotent, present everywhere but invoke the divine with a different internal cause. That rupture or friction won’t be fulfilling even when we try to invite the divinity because it lacks the purity of invitation. We invite outwardly, but we aren’t present internally and moreover we invoke for the wrong cause! sarva karma nirākaranam āvāhanam. It is not easy to simply give up the underlying intentions of an act. Some activities are taught so they understand that giving should be an unadulterated part of our existence. Teach this to kids at the right age. As human beings, we are conditioned to be most selfish. We don’t care if our demands wipe out others as long as it sustains my existence.
From birth we are just known to take without giving anything back. We give with anticipation and we are not ready to give unless my returns are greater than what I give. We expect punya (merits) or an increase in credit score. Giving is always taught in this bargaining language. That is why unlike children, we as adults can’t enjoy simple moments. Children relish each moment due to their innocence. There is no impurity of intention in their actions, hence we don’t get angry if a child accidently kicks us or even urinate on us! It doesn’t offend us because there is no intention behind their action. Whatever they do, they do it with for the sake of doing it and that becomes a play. If it is done with different intentions then it becomes plagued.

The entire creation is His Leela (play) and it sprouts out from Him with no purpose in mind, as though a playful expression. Is there any act in our life born out of innocence without any intention behind it? Moment our ego recognizes innocence, that innocence itself is ruined. You can’t act out being innocent. It has to be without the layer if ego and its expressions. There is nothing to calculate. The calculating identity is called abhimān. Mān is to calculate. Abhi ān is to calculate our own worth from all sides and angles. We are skeptical of presenting ourselves wherever our own identity or calculations are reduced. We avoid going to places that make us uncomfortable. Whatever we do, say, act, think is the outward expression to constantly maintain that abhimān while glamorizing it. Various equations constantly run in our mind. Even kids have figured out to do certain things with their mom and other things with their dad in return for a particular favor. They know exactly when to approach and what to ask. We label this process of constant calculation as “education” and spoil their innocent. We give raw data and overload of information purely to know how to calculate and how to present our self. Entire nature thrives only on giving. When we sit on the seat of meditation we can’t sit without doing something. Even when we sit for meditation, we calculate whether we can sit or spare that much time. In 24-hours we can’t give up sleeping, eating, and other pleasurable activities, but we readily give up meditation because we can’t gauge what we get in return!

If we ask what do we get in return after spending so much time in meditation, where is the purity even in the act of meditation? After working all day we want to get back home and there is no hidden agenda in it. Just like sleep takes over without any hidden agendas. Similarly we should sit for meditation without any purpose. Purity is in being purposeless. Child’s act has no motives or purpose behind their actions. We somehow then get conditioned from childhood to motivate ourselves for a certain cause. Act and work or put efforts so that you have a better future result. With that constant purpose we never put in what’s required for that action or cause of action. We lose the purity and then we calculate how to manipulate the time, people and situation. So we are constantly in our inner net and when we are out of meditation, we are in internet. With this impurity, meditation won’t have any impact or retain any kind of purity. The technique won’t work unless we rid our self of the conditioning of constantly anticipating a result.

All kāma (desires) are nothing but pure agitations. We have a continuous stream of various thoughts and desires and amazingly we are conditioned to think that each desire should have purposefulness. We are gratified living a purposeful life. We have a need to meet or accomplish many of the purposes
ātmapūjopaniṣad

throughout the day. Such is the act of meditation as well. We are so far away from the purity of meditation. We don't purify when we meditate; in fact we need purity of intention before we can get there. It is a willful act if you WILL, you can stop the conditioning from taking over. Even if I am working 18 out of the 24 hours, if I can develop an attitude I am doing what I am doing just for the sake of doing it, then something magical and beautiful happens. You see yourself relishing and enjoying act of doing it. Beauty of dwelling in the act itself is beautiful and so sacred. Since we aren't in that level of purity, we have to be also taught the ethical and moral codes and guidelines of operation. Our intentions have no limits and cross these boundaries anytime. But when you pursue the act for cause of the act, you don't need the moral and ethical codes because they will be an expression of purity and they can't be void of the ethics and morals. The acts will express as value-based. But since we aren't assured of that purity of intention in our act, the rishi-s in fused us with values, morals and ethics so that we don't derail.

At that moment when the purity of the intention is just expressing to do what you are supposed to do just for the sake of performing. The more you perform, you can clearly experience no fatigue or tiredness, boredom or mechanical operations that burn you out. We burn out because act is taking me in one direction, my intentions pull me in another direction; desires pull me another way while my anticipations pull me in a totally different direction. At the end we get tired of constantly being stretched and pulled in all directions. So when we sit there, that purity is the true form of invocation. Without the purity realized within, whatever act we do in the name of action for something else It can't ever lead or take us close to the innocence within. Even act of meditation becomes a stressful endeavor. People claim their agitations increase with meditation and wonder where are going wrong. We start meditation with a purpose and intention. That itself corrupts the entire process. Put your intentions aside and for example, irrespective of the driving conditions, if you drive for the sake of driving, you'll realize that driving doesn't become stressful. While sitting and eating at the dining table, eat for the sake of eating and you'll be able to relish the taste. We never eat, we just gobble. The act of eating itself is so sacred. Perform your activities with heightened awareness for the sake of it and you'll hit the equilibrium within because it takes you closer to the purity and innocence within. It is not corrupted with the intentions or desires. When you close your eyes with that purity embedded in silence discussed earlier, there'd be a true invitation and an invocation to the divine to really come forth. Without that purity, you come out of meditation more frustrated.

Such an understanding changes our entire meaning of invitation. O Lord, I do not want anything from you, just your presence is fine! Without that purity we can't surrender. As mentioned earlier, this isn't a bargain deal wherein you surrender and He does everything for you. The intense purity alone can be a true form of inviting and inviting the divine within.

After inviting, the next step is to seat them. Sometimes it is awkward that we open the door and don't even welcome them or ask them to sit. What is the intensity of that seating? The 3rd mantra niścalajñānamāsanam indicates that niścala (unwavering) jñānam cognition is a true form of the āsanam (seat). The rishi-s have offered such a penetrating definition of all our rituals and have taken the
structure of pūja vidhāna and redefined it. This is the intention and meaningfulness of rituals that have lost its meaning.

The āsanam (seat) has to be niścala (unwavering). If you offer an unstable seat, you can’t expect the guests to adjust themselves! The seat will break; likewise it will be uncomfortable if it is constantly wobbling. The person sitting will be uncertain of not knowing when it will fall. In order for us to focus, the āsanam (seat) has to be niścala (unwavering). If we ask an agitated person to calm down, they get more agitated! There are certain practices as that we must the āsana siddhi and be able to maintain a firm posture without moving. Find a comfortable posture (e.g. sukhāsana) and try to sit comfortably. But we can’t sit at ease because the body is outwardly expressing the inner condition of our mind. If the mind is agitated, the body can’t be niścala (still). Observe someone who is agitated and notice how their body can’t sit quietly. There has to be some movement or the other. People may close their eyes during meditation, but their agitated minds can never let them be in that state of being peacefully restful. The mind at that moment can vent out only through the body as its source and the body is curtailed. The body can’t stay in curtailed environment, so it starts oozing out and expressing out through various constant movements.

Agitations are so deeply engrained that even our sleep is disturbed and there is no restfulness even in sleep. We seem to be constantly agitated. So here niścala (unwavering) let’s start with physical part. If the body can’t be rested, you can’t control the mind. So practice āsana siddhi first. Before you can even think of controlling the mind, put that body in a manner wherein it remains in that condition without moving. We can perhaps sit comfortably for 30 minutes without fidgeting. What we try to camouflage internally in the mind expresses as agitations at the body level. We don’t realize the subtler aspect that if we are constantly agitated, the agitated mind eventually takes a toll on us physically. Even doctors point out so many diseases directly impacted by a constantly agitated mind. We see migraines, asthma, blood pressure, ulcers etc. which are psychosomatic disorders and are a direct impact of the mind’s agitation on the human body.

Imagine the environment wherein we have four restless minds under one roof. It impacts everything physically. We may think it’s our right to get agitated and angry and scream loudly, but we are simply polluting everything outside, including our own body. Begin with at least the gross physical aspect and realize that the external agitation is nothing but a reflection of the internal chaos and insanity. All this is restlessness at the body level.

Mind has two aspects to it. One, it does a flawless job and we have scope of tweaking it. As a processing unit it gathers information from stimuli of external world through organs of perception. It processes this each moment into bundles of experiences and is highly efficient at this. As long as we are awake, that aspect of processing in our mind can’t be and should not be tweaked. No one can touch that circuit system because it is already doing such a flawless job. The second aspect of the mind is like wherein we have few rivers whose presence can be felt even from 20 miles away! Our minds have become like those huge drainage systems. Our vāsanā-s keep triggering the unwilled thoughts and we have absolutely no
control over them. Whenever the unwilling uncontrolled thoughts enter our system, we have no way of managing them. We have never been trained to be vigilant or acknowledge them so that we can swim out of those thoughts. We don’t have to feel compelled to drown in these thoughts or feel gushed in it each time the wave of thoughts overtake us. We can always come to the secure banks wherein the presence of agitations will not impact us.

Practice selective impact so that you can control whether or not you allow the agitations to have an impact on you. Our mind is in such a constant rut that we haven’t known anything other than the two phases – one, where mind is constantly agitated and falls asleep when it gets tired of the agitations; second, wherein we are so tired of sleep that we wake up. Observe yourself when you wake up from a dream and notice how tired you feel. The agitations of our mind continue even in the dream state. There isn’t a moment left to rest peacefully. But when you wake up from a deep sleep you find yourself so well composed. There is so much peace within. niscajñānamāsanam is the awareful cognition and existence in spite of all agitations. More you resist, more powerful it gets. Don’t try to throttle these agitations; instead, the actual āsanam is when you can step aside from this processing and observe the processing pass by. Moment you truly step aside you will realize that there is no flow. You are the conscious principle which is connected to the thoughts and empowers the thoughts to move. Moment you step aside from it, don’t try to stop it or fight it or control it. Control comes in the picture only when we are afraid of it. Why be fearful? Step aside and teach yourself to observe it flow by. That sacred ground of witnessing and observation platform is the true āsanam. Unless this true āsanam is gained, we may be simply tying ourselves down in Padmāsanam (yoga posture) but the body is simply sitting. The mind has already taken off and while the body is present, the mind is completely absent.

These postures are very evident when you see vagueness and emptiness in eyes and they are totally lost. If internal chaos can’t be curtailed or observed, no processes of meditation can help. It is a simple process of turning on/off a switch. Once you master this art, it is like playing on a sea shore. You challenge waves to touch your feel. As it touches, you go behind. As it recedes, you step ahead. Similarly you play with the mind. When you see it going, step back. When it recedes, step forward. No other entertainment may be required. Observe your own mind and experience niscajñānamāsanam. Without acquiring the firm platform within you, it is impossible to achieve this prerequisite as a jumping pad or leap pad towards liberation. niscajñānamāsanam, thus the unwavering cognition in the sense is jñāna.

Day 03

In this ātmapujopaniṣad, they are trying to redefine the processes which have been left behind meaning. If we don’t understand the meaning and why rituals are being performed, or how they have to be, it renders them useless. This is something similar to the story of a sādhu (hermit) who regularly fed a cat in early morning. As his name and fame spread, word was out that he performed miracles and soon he was elevated to a status of with his own ashram and regular satsang-s that he conducted. Each morning he did a pūja and meditation thereafter. The cat still regularly visited him sharp at 5 AM and
people attributed it as a “miracle”. Instead of shooing the cat away, they put the cat in a bamboo basket so that it didn’t disturb everyone. This habit continued for as long as the sādhu lived. When the next person who took charge of it couldn’t perform these daily rituals without the cat’s presence! Finally after a period of time when the cat died, the people wanted to replace it with another black cat exactly like the older cat. People take it to such extremes so as to write a thesis on why a pūja and meditation has to be performed while a black cat is in the basket, and what are the benefits out of it.

When an act loses its purpose and intention, it is a shame that we don’t even pause to ask why we are doing what we are doing. This particular Upaniṣad gives us an amazing depth into the 16 steps which are called the Shodashā Upachāra pūja. We have seen the first three steps.

om tasya niścintanam dhyānam Broad minded rishi-s haven’t given a specific name, form or a process. tasya indicates that divine, symbolized by Om on which we must constantly contemplate. This contemplation is not a thought process, but a process wherein you are aware of that Om within regardless of what you are doing externally. That is the first step, dhyānam (contemplation). Next is āvāhanam (invoke) and invite sarva karma nirākaraṇam āvāhanam. Cessation of all the causes of karma is called āvāhanam. When you sit for meditation, it is usually misunderstood as an activity. In fact, meditation is not a verb, it is a noun. It is a state of being.” Doing nothing” is also a verb and it indicates an action. We exist in such conditioned state that we misunderstand meditation also as a process of doing We are addicted to our processes of doing and do not gain satisfaction until we actually do something. So we try to meditate when in fact meditation is actually a process of undoing! sarva karma nirākaraṇam āvāhanam is when there is no itch of desires or any hidden agenda as to why I am doing what I am doing and are uninterested in the return of investments of our actions. We have a lot of underlying intentions even in our hidden agendas.

Even Bhagwan Shri Krishna had to market His philosophy and show Arjuna on the battle field the benefits of doing certain things. It goes to show that the human mind is conditioned to work only when there is a perceived benefit out of it. We all have that itch of desire to have something or get something. sarva karma nirākaraṇam āvāhanam is the ability to give up that hidden agenda. I am sitting in meditation not to acquire possess or get something but just to-be. Then we realize there is a big monster within – our own unattended mind that is constantly in agitation. So the third step explained was niścala jñānam āsanam. The āsana (seat) has to be niścala (without any movement). Our bodies may be forced to be in one posture, but internally the mind is constantly running. Sadly, it is either running or in pause mode when we sleep. There is never a third position wherein the mind isn’t actively jumping around, yet not sleeping. We have a mind but we don’t have accessibility to that mind. It operates however it feels like – runs, stops, gets agitated, mood swings, etc. More we try to control it, the more its whims and fancies get strengthened. So try to observe the mind without resistance and without becoming the mind. niścalajñānamāsanam. Now the fourth step in traditional pūja is padyam or washing feet.
You’ve invited the guest and in olden days you’d wash their feet as they are stepping in and bring them inside, seat them and provide some refreshing water. That step is to invoke the divine within and invite them, wash their feet. This is given in the fourth step – \textit{samunmani\textbbl{b}h\textbbl{a}v\textbbl{a} \textbbl{p}\textbbl{a}dyam}.

Mind has a natural tendency to flow outwardly. The organs of perception are the interface through which we perceive the outside world. It is constantly trying to relate and associate to the outside world through the organs of perception. Eyes perceive various forms, ears – sounds, nose – smell, tongue – taste, skin – touch. Our mind easily functions outwardly and this is the natural disposition. Hence it seems so difficult when we do japa or meditation and mind doesn’t seem to cooperate or focus. It is so easy to watch a movie because mind easily adapts itself to the movie and merges with it. We become so engrossed in it and even cry our hearts out! Outward focus, concentration and absorption on jewelry, stock market, gadgets etc becomes so naturally easy and no attention deficit is seen in it! But try to withdraw and focus on the internal through meditation, \textit{dhy\textbbl{a}na} or \textit{japa} and observe how mind reacts.

To maintain the mind turned \textit{unman\textbbl{i}} (inwardly) constantly is the true flow of offering in cleansing the feet of the divine. Until the mind turns within, whatever processes we do in the name of spirituality is yet another unrelated doing process! People are so rigorously associated with rituals (chanting marathons) and many people will be interested in chanting Hanuman Chalisa 108 times or Vishnu Sahasranama; perhaps doing a \textit{p\textbbl{u}ja}, \textit{yagna}, \textit{havan}, etc. but without a mind turned within, it does very little good. Everything else becomes a mere process otherwise. Even highly spiritually recognized places such as Uttarkashi are where Ganga ji turns within. Whenever we turn towards our own source, that is the moment of spiritual unfoldment. Root word \textit{k\textbbl{a}sha} = to illumine. The moment when mind turns towards its own source, it is a celebratory moment. While birthdays can be a platform to invoke the blessings of the Lord and of our elders in order to make something meaningful of our lives. Until then, can we don’t deserve to celebrate! In fact, celebrations shouldn’t be by us but by those who believe our contributions have benefitted them and have been worthwhile. Those celebrations are meaningful.

The day we turn towards our own source to the core within, that day is worth celebrating. A real spiritual seeker is born on that day. Otherwise we are just a paperweight on this earth having achieved nothing else. There must be a valid reason to celebrate. That moment when our mind turns within, it is \textit{samunmani\textbbl{b}h\textbbl{a}v\textbbl{a}}, which is not an easy task. To flow with the flow is easy but it is difficult to swim upstream for example. Mind always flows towards outside things. To turn that mind within, we need a \textit{Satyatta\textbbl{v}a\textbbl{u}ddhi} (conviction) for us to change. There is a firm conviction because of which the mind constantly associates itself with the outside world. Mind is constantly searching for fulfillment by relating to something it can associate itself with. In a state of feeling incomplete it is constantly searching for a person, place, time or incident that it can interact with and feel sense of completeness. It is always experimenting with the world outside that my fulfillment is out there somewhere. As long as our mind is convinced that my sense of peace and fulfillment is out there, we can’t turn mind within. Perhaps that’s why many seekers are born in intense moments of sorrow and turn towards spirituality in these miserable situations when their basic convictions of happiness are shattered. When left with no other support, we suddenly turn inwards.
An intelligent wise person e.g. Siddhartha – lived a luxurious life not knowing old age, disease, hunger or death. His father was over-protective because he was told that the child would either become a great king or a great ascetic. The father wanted him to become a great king, so he spent lavishly in shielding the child from all miseries. On his sixteenth birthday the child requested to step out of the palace and came across four situations – disease, old age, hunger and death. His common question to the charioteer was “Will I also go through this situation?” Siddhartha was so intelligent that someone else’s misery shattered his Satyatta buddhi! Sorrow is thus the best stepping stone and teacher for spirituality because it shatters our preconceived notions and straightens our thinking. Human beings are hopeless creatures. We perpetually hang on to hope in spite of going through miserable situations. Perhaps my interaction did not go well and I should try again . We go through the same sequence, same environment, same conditions; we try to find solutions with same vigor while repeating the same mistake again and again! Such is our miserable unconscious living. We have to shatter and dissolve that Satyatta buddhi and search a meaningful anchor in life. Rishi-s have said that the only place we can find it is in the core of our own being. It is not out there, but we will never know it until the mind turns from outside to inside. Until the seeker is born, we just go through mundane processes in the name of spirituality.

We may have a big altar or alter our external dress and appearances but it has nothing to with spirituality. Color of cloth, (or no cloth for naga-babas), tikka, matted hair, or mundan – has nothing to do with spirituality. We sit in front of the altar not at all connected with the altar. Throwing flowers or chanting is not spiritual. It is born when the conviction that my happiness, fulfillment and contentment is out there is shattered, broken, dissolved. When the search for happiness in the outside world stops a fearless spiritual seeker is born. There is nothing I have to fear in the world. The day I am convinced that my happiness is within, I don’t anticipate, expect or wait for something out there to happen for giving me happiness. That day, samunmanībhāvaḥ pādyam a seeker hood is born and is a true day to celebrate, dance and enjoy. You really feel unburdened and realize that you don’t need to run around so many factors that you’ve been chasing. Once this seeker hood is created, the next step is given in fifth mantra.

sadāmanaskamarghyam. Water is offered to wash face and hands and be ready with a cloth so they can clean. sadā amanaskam arghyam Earlier we talked about turning the mind within. Before that it was to watch the mind and it’s agitations without getting identified. Here we need amanskaM – the ability to have total accessibility to our own mind. Having control implies that you can turn it on or off at will. Can we dictate terms to our own mind to function as we want it to do? Mind won’t listen to these instructions. We may want to discipline but mind loves indiscipline. So we have no control over our eating, sleeping, exercise etc. but mind doesn’t like too many restrictions because it doesn’t want to lose its freedom. We make a conscious decision (e.g. to wake up early in the morning) but we don’t wake up the moment the alarm rings. We completely overrule the intellect’s decision and mind breaks all these various decisions. Over a period of time of such behaviors, we lose confidence. We have lots of will but
no power. Intellect has the clarity but doesn’t have the force or stamina to implement it because mind is totally inaccessible.

We should be able to put everything aside for a few moments in a day and order the mind to NOT think. The unwilled mind is inert in nature and does not have the conscious principle associated with it. So it lacks the authority and drive to drive itself. When you the consciousness look at your mind and order it to not move, it doesn’t have the capacity because it doesn’t have the connection to the source engine to run by itself. We have never made a conscious cognition of this problem, or an effort to practice it. An unscrewed bulb is inert and has no capacity to glow unless connected to the power source. Similarly a mind doesn’t have its own strength or energy or power to run around. Break these overwhelming patterns within you. After all they are all just thoughts with the capacity to ruin our lives.

My own thoughts take my own power and my own energy to ruin me. How do we break this pattern? Pujya Gurudev gives a beautiful quote – Freedom is the ability to NOT do what you like. Break the mind’s pattern. It is inert in nature and while it has residual effects of habits, these habits can be broken. Hence we have practices such as fasting to break these habits. Don’t hog bowlful of fruits, nuts, deep fried vadas, chutneys, payasam, etc.. We eat more than what we normally eat! Or we go to the other extreme and drink tea or coffee on the hour! Fasting is a process to break the mind’s existing patterns. Shivaratri for example is to break the pockets of comfort zones that the mind has developed. Shatter each one of them. Wherever mind feels comfortable, force it into discomfort. Work on your own mind, not somebody else’s. It has become very sloppy and complacent in its comfort zone. Identify these zones and shake up your mind. Let the mind never settle in a comfort zone.

This is a major difference in the Eastern and Western philosophy. While the West talks about recognizing, glamorizing and enhancing the comfort zone; the East has always identified as THE problem. Shatter whatever gives us that comfort. Never allow the mind to settle in a pattern. Be completely unpredictable to your own mind. Pujya Gurudev always said: When dealing with yourself deal with your head, but deal the world outside with your heart. But we do exactly the opposite! We want the world to be perfect and unpredictably surprising to us. We expect the world to understand us with their heart but we don’t give them that opportunity. Be ruthless with yourself and break every pattern of comfort that the mind can settle in. When you observe that the mind has started liking a certain pattern, break it. If we don’t have the courage to break our own patterns, no guru, no theerthayātrā, no temple, no scripture can help us get out of our own shackles. Only our scriptures talk about it and tell us that we are useless unless we take the courageous step to get out of the comfort zones.

How long will you stay in the cushioned environment? That is not the purpose of your life. You are here to be liberated beyond the comfort zones. Our amplified comfort zones become compulsive behaviors and we get irritated if things don’t fall in a certain pattern. If our food for example, doesn’t fall under the usual items we don’t feel satisfied or satiated. Hunger is a disease and food is simply a medicine provided for that disease. Break the pattern with that attitude. Next layer is the security of the comfort zones.
zone that can be shattered by a simple act. No locking system can really protect our hollow homes, but we go to extremes in protecting it. None of these items - the lock, keypad, monitor, sensor, that you put, can truly bring security. There may be days where we forget to even lock the door. Security is a concept of comfort zone in which we create layers of security. We are scared of any event or any person that can destabilize it. In fact, it should be our responsibility to destabilize the mind of all its comfort zones. Let the mind not stay in one comfort zone for a long time. Hence all the sanyasi-s have been advised not to stay in a place for more than time taken to milk a cow. There is a high probability of getting attached to the surroundings. It is amusing to watch the attachments we have created. Break these consistently with processes such as fasting etc. These aren’t meaningless processes, but have been designed purposefully so that the mind is whipped out of its comfort zones. Eat bland food, avoid spices, or eat only fruits for a week perhaps.

Put in a constant vigilant awareful effort to observe our own mind, it’s comfort zone and kick it out of the comfort zone. Do this for a year as a rigorous practice and whip out the mind wherever you find it getting into a comfort zone. Then you will find that the unconscious unwilled aspect of the mind seems to be projecting itself and you gain accessibility to the mind because you have broken the pattern. Then you see the mind can be applied to anything. Such a prepared mind is called arghyam, an offering of washing the hands. We will see the next one tomorrow.

Day 04

In âtmapûjopaniṣad we’ve done the first five mantras. The premise of this Upaniṣad is that the pūja ritual has lost its meaning over a period of time. From an ultimate standpoint, what would the core 16 steps of pūja mean to an individual as a seeker? This saadhana and the process of preparing a seeker and seekerhood in that seeker have been redefined in the sixteen steps. We are in the sixth part of the mantra.

Mantra 6

sadādiptirācamiṇiya The water offered for refreshing is called ācamiṇiyam. The ability to see one’s life in a new light as every experience passes by. If this one particular mantra can be taken and redesigned for today’s world, this’d be mantra for stress management! Every experience that comes by, looks similar; but when we pay close attention to it, we will agree that there are variations in every experience. As the mind repeatedly indulges in that experience and goes through that experience as the experiencer there is a trail left behind. Every repeated experience of the same kind leaves its trail creating certain patterns around it. Yesterday we saw sadā amanaskam arghyam. In order to lead an intelligent life of alertness and conscious effort, we need to break the patterns of comfort zone that the mind creates for itself. The moment mind likes doing something and gets in a pattern; there is a high likelihood of complacency developing in our behavior. Once a pattern is developed, it is extremely difficult to get out of it and experience the experience for the sake of experience. We corrupt the current experience with our past trail of experiences and there is a certain amount of memory guiding
Doctors were taking care of him at Uttarkashi, and he avoided coming to Delhi for treatment. He looked maharaj had settled in Uttarkashi at age 37 and had never come down below Haridwar after that.

When Pujya Gurudev met Swami Tapovan ji maharaj in his last days, Gurudev requested him to shift from Uttarkashi to Delhi so that adequate medical treatment could be provided. Swami Tapovan ji maharaj had settled in Uttarkashi at age 37 and had never come down below Haridwar after that. Doctors were taking care of him at Uttarkashi, and he avoided coming to Delhi for treatment. He looked at Gurudev and asked “Does death not occur in Delhi? If you promise that, I will follow you!” Whatever prārabdhā is there and whatever is required to take care of this body is being provided. Changing places
is not a guarantee that nothing impacts it. Tapovan ji continued “Even that is an experience to be celebrated.” It isn’t a sadistic approach. If every moment has been a celebration, why should the last moment be mourned upon? Death can be a celebration only when every moment of our life is celebrated. We can celebrate only when we see beauty. Truth has it’s curtness to it and we forget the beauty aspect because we are so conditioned to the bluntness. Why are we unable to see the beauty if it truly does exist in every experience? The experience is not flawed, but our perceptions are being fogged. Covered and clouded in our own prejudices we don’t see the beauty.

sadā dipti refers to the one who has trained themselves to see the beauty in every experience. Even in parenting we find this dichotomy. One parent is worked up and will insist that the child be perfect in everything, grow up quickly, participate in each activity and thus has very highly stressed kids. Other parent will be exactly opposite - very relaxed and poised; will say look at each moment in child’s growth and enjoy it. They don’t want to enforce instant learning. Even in that enforcement, you can step back to see the amazing growth and unfoldment. It is like gardening when you sow a seed. Each time you are amazed when you see a tender and delicate sapling grow out of the seed. It appears to be unable to fend for itself because its roots aren’t deep enough to penetrate into the earth. The two halves of the seed is still clinging on to the sapling and it still has the nourishment in it which the sapling draws from. God has already provided for it. It is amazing when you realize that the tender sapling has so much power, energy and patience to tear the hard earth apart. It isn’t a small little hole, but the entire chunk is displaced. The sapling looks too tender for us to even imagine that it has the capacity to displace that amount of earth!

Look at the beautiful flowers bloom; or the sun rising; or even mundane things like sipping coffee. We have been dragging our lives so unconsciously that we don’t drink, but only gulp coffee to remain awake and jumpstart our day without even relishing the sip. We are too clouded by our prejudices. Step back and allow the experience to unfold. Understand the entire experience. If you use the earlier experience to understand the current unfolding experience then our perception is clouded. But if you use the earlier experiences to guide you after the experience is unfolded then it is called wisdom.

The source for prejudices and wisdom is the same – your past experiences. But we need to have patience with our own experience and life. Patience is strength, not a weakness. It becomes a compromising weakness only if we are going down in the path of life. In the path of growth, patience is always a virtue, strength. Every experience we go through has something divinely beautiful to offer us and cater to our growth. Our patience within us strengthens us for our next step even after when we go through a horrible situation or horrifying experience. When a piece of iron is put in the fire, every hammering stroke is only to sharpen it to the finest detail. The fire and each merciless stroke remove all the impurities from the iron and it brings forth the purest finest sharpness within it. In order to find that sharpness we need the patience to see every aspect of life in that divine beauty in it.
If you think your life is going rough patches, think about Lord Shri Krishna’s life! We may face tough troubled overwhelming times, but we aren’t beaten down! These small little things can’t dampen our spirits. Provide yourself with patience so you can train yourselves to strengthen and grow beyond. Even before it takes over, we already brand experiences and run away from it. The more we run away, the more we create the layers of unconsciousness inside. We are that much further away from the reality of experience operating in our own virtual world. Mind has the capacity to do that! We unconsciously perceive the experience through the unconscious layers which we have left unattended.

Use the earlier part of the experiences – not to stem anxiety out of it but to let the experience unfold. Then use the earlier experience wisely to cater to the existing situation. Once you learn the skill, you will be able to master any situation that life throws at you. Observe the experience and study it carefully as it unfolds. Respond to it rather than reacting to it. Don’t let fears and anxieties creep in from past experiences. Instead, allow the experience to unfold. Once you understand and know the beauty in the episode, the fears and anxieties are automatically removed. If we can repeat this with every experience without branding it or taking it for granted we will find amazing satisfaction. Regardless of the outcome or results of actions, just performing that act in itself is immensely satisfying. You feel that the day has been well lived and are satiated within. However overwhelming it may be, you will find the satisfaction. The preparation of the mind to equip itself with capacity to see the brightness or brilliance of beauty in every experience is called ācamaṇīya. Ever ready to see the beauty and freshness in each experience is called ācamaṇīya. We feel refreshed and rejuvenated when we are prepared to know that experience.

If you are ever scared, afraid or anxious of something, sit back and diagnose it for yourself. Cut through the layers of our own experience and ask yourself why do I have the fear? What am I resisting? I may have seen the flaws when I went through the earlier experiences and I don’t want to go there. But it gives us no right to stop that experience from unfolding. We try to avoid it and keep running away from the experiences. Once we learn the skill to see the glory or beauty in every experience life doesn’t become monotonous. 95% of our life seems to be constantly repeating itself. Same face, same work, same boss, same house, same peers, same road, same rush hour! Everything is same, but when we go through the same things we find life is boring, meaningless, and we burn out. But the one who has learned the skill to find the glow of beauty in every unfolding experience has a fearless mind and is beyond anxiety or prejudices.

When such a prepared mind sits on the seat of meditation it instantly connects to the core within. For the rest of us, we find it so difficult to sit in that posture. Mind carries so many burdens and is not in the moment to connect within. The mindset has to be first created with the ability, knack and skill to see the beauty in every experience we go through. We should not only see the truth and auspiciousness in each experience but we should identify and see the beauty. You fill surely find yourself relieved of all burdens and negativity that weighs us down overwhelmingy. When such a mind sits for meditation, there are no more layers to peel off. You sit and you are absorbed within. No more aches, itches, or any paraphernalia required! That preparation is called ācamaṇīya.
Once this mind set is prepared, we go to the next step

varākṛtaprāptih snānam. varā = effortless; kṛta = grace; prāptih = experience. Only one who has that mindset can be in that abhisheka. Abhi = now; shek = dancing. One unique feature of this Upaniṣad is that it doesn’t recognize God even by the word God or paramātmā or ētmā! It uses the word “That” however you define it. In troubled times or overwhelming situations we question the very existence of divinity or divine grace. Once the earlier mindset is created, you see the showering nature of grace all around you. Let’s say you are enjoying a cool breeze on a beautiful day. Sitting at home you can’t complain that you aren’t enjoying the warmth of the sun. Whose mistake is it that the doors and windows are closed? Divine grace is similarly always flowing. But we aren’t able to see it, perceive it or experience it. Then we complain that the grace is flowing only towards the few qualified seekers who can experience it.

Grace is anyway showered abundantly; you don’t need any qualifications for it. Once you experience the grace around that whatever you are doing, you are in synch with life and happening. You aren’t doing anything abrasive or swim against the current and painfully being pushed away. Intelligent way of living would be to locate the current, synch your swim with the current so you swim effortlessly. Instead, right from childhood we develop a conditioning to resist everything good and auspicious. We instantly react negatively to any good advice provided. We think that such a reaction is asserting freedom and independence and condition ourselves to constantly think, behave and act always against the current. In such a behavioral pattern, our movement is always negative. We are constantly pushed with negativity towards the same thing we are avoiding. No wonder our frustrations are heightened when we are asked to be happy where we are with who we are!

To remove the negativity, first find out if we are in synch with our life. Sadly enough, 90% of humanity is yet to figure out life even at ages 50, 60, or 70 years. They have no clue of the direction their life is supposed to be in. We have bound ourselves so much that it is impossible to unwind. We have to remove the resistance in order to find that grace all around us, within us and without us. The resistance can be removed only when we understand what direction of the flow of our life. For example, when swimming in the river, we don’t really have to know swimming. We just have to find out the direction of the water flow and float in it. Manage the float and you will find that you can reach where you need to be.

Everything that happens in our life is an incident not an accident. Everything happening to us is through the world around us, and not by the world around us. If you think it is by the world, there will be resistance due to the feeling of separateness. We will always want to put a stake that I am bigger than, higher than, nobler than, that which is being pushed unto me. So there is a constant resistance and you conclude that the world is unfair when you can’t battle the resistance any further. You go in a self-pity mode glorifying and glamorizing it to seek attention. Self pity is born out of thinking that I am going through unjustified situations that life is throwing at me and dragging me through. We are not where we

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are because of a mistake. It is an incidental cause that has led to this particular moment and it is my effort in the cause that has led me to the moment. It has been given to me by the world around me. The world isn’t pushing it on me; I asked the world to give it to me.

Once that resistance is understood not just conceptually but at a deeper level, we realize that these experiences aren’t random incidences happening by the world around me; rather, they are happening through the world around me. We even say “don’t shoot the messenger” – the entire world is a messenger! Let’s also get it clear that this understanding is for one’s own application in one’s own life. Don’t let your mind trick you into taking this wisdom and make others apply it in their own life! This is for applying the knowledge in our own life. Once you change your mode of thinking, you will see that every particle around you is nothing but divine grace flowing. That’s when you understand the magic of this beautiful creation. Everything is placed exactly where it needs to be. There won’t be any resistance or agitations. You will drop the “Why” and no longer ask “Why is this happening?” or “Why is it happening to me?; rather, all the why’s just disappear. An intelligent person doesn’t question with “Why”, but drops the why intelligently and sees everything in perfect synchronization. People call this as a miracle – I was just thinking about it and it happened! It isn’t a miracle. The resistance was minimal at that moment and you were awareful watching it happen as it was supposed to be. When we are in synch with that we see that beauty happening. Imagine life wherein every experience is an amazement – wow, this is exactly what I thought! It is not anticipation, but it is a wonder and an awe of seeing things fall in place around you. Nothing seems inappropriate. At that moment, the seeker has seen grace flowing.

Life is already in motion; you just have to understand which direction life is taking you and synchronize with it. See everything happening right at its pace and be awed by the placement! When you are in synch, you don’t even need to think, speak or act. Life happens through you. To indicate this height of sharanāgati (complete surrender) – not to a particular form of God or deity, but towards that divine itself – you see life as beautiful experience coming towards you. There is hardly any resistance from within. Such an individual Lord Krishna denotes Look at His life; He never looked back the place He left. From Mathura → Vrindavan → Dwarka, once He left, He doesn’t even look back, He was that dispassionate. He only carried His flute everywhere He went indicating that once you synch yourself and empty your resistances within, music flows out from that piece of bamboo and the individual’s life becomes a melody. Unless we empty the patterns of residences our life is a malady.

Once you completely empty the resistances and surrender to life itself, the divine starts expressing beautifully as musical melody through our life experiences. When the divine expresses, it is no more an individual expressing, but it is like one person doing 1000 people’s job in a short period of lifetime. It took one Vivekananda and by 38 years, he attained māhāsamādhi. In a span of 20 years (age 18 – 38) he revolutionized the way Hinduism was thought. Similarly, one Adi Shankaracharya, from age 9 – 32, he accomplished so many voluminous works on the social front, spiritual front, literature music, bhakti, jñānā tantrā, mantra, yoga – all these aspects in a short lifetime. Our own Gurudev, started with five
people attending his first lecture – that one man’s effort is now spread in 40 countries. All these men have dropped their resistance, tuned to life and beauty expresses through them.

In the earlier mantrā we saw how to observe and appreciate the beauty; and then the next step is that beauty expresses through this person’s personality exuberating in this world. That showering of beauty and grace is the true abhishek. varākṛta (effortlessly) once we tune to the divine grace that fine tuning is called true abhishek. It is not pouring the oblations with mantrā- s torn on one side feeling so good of pouring all the water and the other side feeling miserable for wasting so much milk! Neither of those standpoints is true. We just have to fine tune with the divine standpoint to see beauty expressing through. Such a person doesn’t require values, morals and ethics to draw a boundary in their life; they become the examples by which values, morals and ethics are fine tuned instead of becoming binding factors.

In the pūja process, after the snānam (bath) is done, the decorations are done.

Day 05

Yesterday we saw snānam. Find the grace constantly showering is called abhishek of the lord. When some people work, there is so much beauty and joy in their work because they are constantly basking in that gracefulness. When that grace constantly flows from us to the world around us, it is an effortless flow of divine grace of the Lord. Let us see the next mantrā.

sarvātmakatvam dṛṣyavilayo gandhaḥ. In the shodasha pūja the main format of pūja, you invoke the presence of the Lord through all the upachārās – dhyāna, āvāhana, āsana, pādyam, ārghyam, āchamaniyā and snānam. After this bath, you put on clothes and spend a lot of time in front of the mirror depending on how much time is available! We cover the divine form of the Lord with vastrā (clothes) ābhushanā and alankarā (ornaments). The beauty is sarvātmakatvam dṛṣyavilaya gandhaḥ.

True gandha (fragrance) is when sarvātmakatvam – we are able to identify with and become one with everyone around without having any dṛṣya vilayo (barricades). Our animalistic territorial tendencies are seen even in these big cats (e.g. lion, tiger, cheetah, leopard, etc.) who mark their turf and leaves it’s sign all around its area. It marks it’s line beyond which the other animals are not permitted to enter. This is heightened during the mating or delivery season, and we see huge ferocious attacks and fights amongst these animals who try to defend their cubs against the attackers.

Similarly, our notions of I, me and mine haven’t formed in just this one lifetime. We have a strongly ingrained security feeling and the need to have all these possessions to feel secure. So we stake and mark “my” territory. There is a deep urge to create barricades for a sense of security. On a pleasant evening in Chitrakoot, once Laxman asks Bhagwan Ram ji the meaning of māyā as indicated in scriptures. Bhagwan Ram ji says mein aur more toratey māyā When we create barriers such as I/mine, you/yours, the difference is called māyā.
Can we claim anything as mine at birth? Even this body isn’t ours and is born unto parents. Thanks to them we have what we have. Can we live in a vacuum in this society? People may create and buy oceans and islands, but even then you can’t operate in isolation. We are supported by known and unknown factors every moment. Even amongst our close relations, the closest being that of a mother and child, there is a barrier. Although the child is our own extension, we life and love them only until the relationship is in our favor and to our liking. When they challenge our liking as they go through middle school, we create a generation gap thereafter. Teenage syndrome gives birth to the individuality and the child grows in their own patterns. Their individuality doesn’t succumb to what I like, and we see ruptures thereafter.

We all cherish family life from a distance. We are conditioned to see everything through barriers. We even create a barrier between our own children in our tendency to constantly compare their accomplishments. If we can’t stop the comparisons amongst our own kids, what to talk to the rest of the world?! With such a strong barrier, there is no way we can go out to the world with an attitude of extending ourselves and accepting everyone around there. Go with imagination of strong feelings of genuine love with everyone and you will be pleasantly surprised how you are accepted in the environment. If we go with fear, apprehension, anxiety, that presence is rubbed in the environment. If you force yourself in, the environment naturally goes into a defensive mode to guard itself.

Notice how all creatures live in equilibrium without any animosity in the presence of great masters,. With Bhagwān Ramana Maharishi, the villagers would be outside and animals would be flocking around him. The peacocks, snakes, cows, buffaloes, all creatures would be there. Even in Lord Shiva’s family portrait, there is such a mark of contradiction. The nandi, mouse, tiger/lion, and muruga coexist beautifully. Mouse is the food for a snake, just as snake is the food for a peacock. Similarly bull is the food for the lion/tiger; yet they are in perfect balance managing contradictions in life. This can happen only when shackles and barriers are dropped. The self importance given psychologically is called self worth or pride. Each one has an image or value for one’s self. It is an imaginary value based on which we develop our self-confidence. We create that imaginary fictitious idea and project on everyone.

During small get togethers, the most frequent topic of conversation is not about jewelry or stocks or politics or gadgets or toys. More important than all these topics is each one’s attempt to try to push their own self-worthiness on others. We narrate various incidents “...if it weren’t for me ...” stories. We push this situational analysis on everyone around, sometimes we do it subtly, sometimes we do it obviously. We try to project this through various assets or other belongings and show our huge assets and possessions. All that is pure imagination. It is beneficial to a certain extent in the preliminary stages when we require the crutches as a support system. After that we have to drop them as we gain confidence. You can create yourself a temporary fence so that others don’t cross the boundaries. Once you’ve gained enough strength and confidence after a protected growth within those barriers, you must break all those barriers. Instead, those barriers themselves become our definition of existence and we define ourselves and self-worth based on these barricades. It’s a psychological security we create for ourselves.
You can create these barriers as long as you consider yourself weak and unable to handle certain situations. But don’t define your self-worth on it. Identity can’t be based on these imaginary barriers. Drop the crutches when you can walk without support. Once we get a sense of self with, we can’t carry those barriers. Yet we want to be accommodated in every environment! Even huge houses can be transported and installed with two vehicles in the front and in the back that warn people of the “wide-load”. When people encounter these wide-loads, they step aside and give way to allow these wide loads to move. You don’t mind stepping on the side if it is an infrequent event. But what would you do if a road always has these wide-loads? Wouldn’t you cautiously avoid using that road? Similarly in life’s traffic, few times we are accommodative of the wide-load personalities that we encounter. Soon we start avoiding them indefinitely. Don’t become a wide load with so many layers of barricades. Drop them – drṣya vilayo.

sarvātmakatvam – extend and embrace everything as your own as they do in the bhakti mārg.In jnānā mārg the same purpose is achieved by dropping and denouncing everything claiming that nothing is mine. Both mean the same, the jnānā is from the standpoint of an ego and bhakti is from the divine standpoint. One claims nothing belongs to it while the other claims nothing is other than it! Both speak about the same thing but have different modes of expression. Drop the barricades consciously. If you feel restless or out of place, it has nothing to do with the environment. We feel that way due to our own multi-layered complex barriers. It is difficult to deal with people who are always agitated or irritated with everything in life. A few minutes with those people is tolerable, but soon we also get tired.

If we leave a cloth in water, the color eventually bleeds. Similarly, if we leave our personality in the environment, it will bleed. We create the rigid barricades and we want to push those everywhere we go. We expect others to accept us as we are, yet we don’t accept them or accommodate them easily. Accept them without penalizing them and maintain your sanity. Focus on accepting them as inner growth and you are ready to grow spiritually. If acceptance is not for manipulating the environment, then that same sacrifice becomes tolerance and compassion flows. If patience belongs to one, then we draw equations – how long should I tolerate this? With existing ruptured barriers around, we see an increase in the divorces, etc. Remove these barriers and strengthen yourself.

Accept everyone sarvātmakatvam by dropping the barriers drṣya vilayo. True gandhah (fragrance) of a magnetic personality is not from external barriers but when you connect with the core within. There is no scheming required to attract audiences or environments. Your mere presence draws in everybody yet you remain in amazing quietude within yourself. Whenever you were with Pujya Gurudev, you could always experience this immense joy. Beauty of his presence was that everyone in the environment felt that Pujya Gurudev had given them most special attention. Their presence had no barriers, it just penetrated all barriers.

There is joy in just being with these masters. Everyone in that environment felt that they were special. The feeling is across the audience because their presence has no barriers. It penetrates all barriers. Even
our barriers vanish in their presence, such is the true fragrance. What do we need in order to be in that fragrance?

*dṛgaviśiṣṭātmānah aksatāh* Usually the *aksatāh* (rice) is the uncooked unbroken rice. It is not the broken fragmented one, but the full grain. In our haste, we usually mix it with water, add turmeric and pinch of *kumkum* and mix it to make the colored unbroken rice. Moment you add rice, there are two things that happen. (1) It will not last long with the moisture added. It changes its shape and form. As the water leaves the grain, it starts breaking down. So usually you add 2-3 drops of ghee or oil in a bowl. Then add the turmeric and *kumkum* to mix and make the *aksatāh*. The word *kṣatāh* = that which can be destroyed. *aksatāh* = indestructible. We offer the *aksatāh* back unto us when we bend down before elders and well-wishers, they pour it on us. In the temples it is offered as *Prasad* to us for putting it on our heads. The blessings gained are the *aksatāh*. So many things have been ingrained in our customs and traditions, but unfortunately if we don’t understand them, they lead to so many unfortunate events. For example, recently I was invited to a destination marriage where a few members from each side of the family were invited for the marriage. The newer generation who get into the wedding ceremony claim that they don’t want to waste money and want to keep the ceremony limited to a restricted number of people. But they don’t realize that the marriage is not a platform for two selfish people to get together. The reason family, friends, and everybody is invited is because this is a crucial time of getting together. Two individuals are getting under one roof and require lots of blessings. So we invite everyone in order to bless the couple for a lifetime of blessings! We go to the other extreme without understanding the significance! In getting those blessings, all that we are offering back unto them is food. It is the only thing that human beings will consume in a limited quantity. There comes a point and they will say I don’t want anymore. Rest anything you give will have a demand – only this much? But with food they will say ENOUGH. Born out of that satiation, they bless the newlywed couple.

A true blessing one gains is *aksatāh* – indestructible and unframented. The actual blessing for the seeker is *dṛga viśiṣṭāt mānah aksatāh*. It is the ability to step out of all movements and observe them as a witness. We witness all movements and it is the true form of blessings. Life will have all kinds of experiences. It will not change its turns just because you have surrendered to the path of spirituality. It will have its ups and downs. Many people enter spirituality with the wrong notion that God will protect me. But God is not our servant waiting to be summoned at our beck and call. The ups and downs of life are inevitable, and life doesn’t become smooth just because we’ve submitted to spirituality. But we will be enabled with inner strength wherein we can withdraw from any movement and observe it from a distance. Overwhelming situations can be handled skillfully. The solution is not the difficulty. The problem is we don’t have the ability to see the problem for what it’s worth. Most of it is imaginary and self conceived. Moment we withdraw from it and see it in front of us, that witness hood *dṛga viśiṣṭāt mānah aksatāh* – we can choose which thought to propel and which one to drop. Which emotion to entertain, and which one to drop. Only such a person can truthfully represent their emotion properly without any hidden agenda. For the rest of us, we express the emotions in anticipation of something in return. Whether it is love, compassion or any emotion. The one who has stepped back and knows how
to use the emotion, they can use the emotion as a beautiful tool to simply express it. In such a person’s hand there is no positive or negative emotion there is just the pure emotion and they know how to use it to bless the environment.

For us, anger is bad. But in the hands of such masters, anger is a blessing. Such people’s anger is considered to be an āshirwād (blessing). In Bhagavad Gitā, anger is called an entrance to hell and while anger takes us there, pride keeps us there. On the other hand we argue that none of the sages had any control over their anger, how did they become a sage or a rishi? Look at Durvāśa – in his entire lifespan, Kunti devi was the only person who could please him and was not cursed by him. He blessed her with the mantra to invoke the devās. Otherwise he was known to be such an angry rishi that even Draupadi was scared of him. She was terrorized that sage Durvāśa has sent a message that he is here with his students and will dine with us. Keep the food ready and they will come after performing the pūja. She is scared of figuring out where to find food for 1000 people! They were living in a forest and so she didn’t even know where to get the ingredients from. And sage Durvāśa is not the kind to even listen to any excuses or explanations. But the beauty is that whomever he got angry on, that person attained liberation because they were directly ushered in front of the Lord. They got the darshan (vision) of the divine! While many of us argue that mahatmas should not have anger, but If their anger brings me darshan of divine, why not use that anger?

Until we reach to that point, wherein we witness everything in life ... what is witness? Leading every moment of life without guilt is being a witness. Guilt-free denotes that when we do something wrong we feel guilt; or when we do something that we were not supposed to do; or when we don’t do something that we were supposed to do there is guilt. That individual who is constantly leading an unconscious life alone can have guilt. The ones who live consciously won’t have any situations wherein they have to face guilt. Every waking moment is accounted for. Not a single moment passes by without your awareness. It is a difficult but not impossible task. It becomes second-nature to us to maintain this perfect balance. Just like in cycling, it takes a lot of effort to learn how to balance a bike, but once you learn it, even if you don’t bike for 15-20 years, you never lose that balance which has been ingrained in you. You’d be shocked how difficult it is for you to fall because this balance is so ingrained in them.

Similarly, maintain this balance of consciously being involved in all movements wherein we are in the movements, but the movement is not in you. You are in the world, but the world is not in you. ... You are in the environment but the environment is not in you. Be consciously present in the world and represent every thought and emotion justly; such a witness hood and conscious living wherein there is no overwhelming burden of guilt within. Imagine how free such a person must be! The burdens we carry – whether it is of the guilt, or of other barriers, they weigh us down. Unburdening oneself is the closest moment to realization! We’ve been burdening ourselves for lifetimes together. The true blessings can be when we are able to unburden ourselves and it can happen when we witness our own life and movements without getting affected by it. Consciously being in that moment however we are.

Next we will see the significance of puspmā offering flowers.
Day 06

cidādīptih puspam. The pūja ritual has various steps and so far we have seen nine of them until aksatāh. Next we light lamp, symbolizing the consciousness. It not only lights up the Self, but illumines and kindles others without losing anything. In professional trade we may not share everything because we want to preserve ourselves. The sutra is different. The more you want to preserve, sooner you will lose it; and the more you share, the more you will glow! Offer the water, flowers uttering the Lord’s name with each offering. Chanting 1000 names or 108 names is commonly used to help the mind focus. We can thus identify and stay focused with that one thought which praises the Self. You transcend mind so that it provides a platform for mind to think through various glorious aspects of the divine. Think of a name and all qualities associated with the name will come in picture. This is a great way to introduce to new seekers who don’t the personality or characteristics of the divine.

cidā dīptih puspam Just as that flower has beauty and spreads fragrance to the entire nature, we should try to offer our vāsanā-s (tendencies) unto the feet of the Lord. While doing so, we pray that may each layer be replaced by the virtues of the Lord. Yad bhāvam, tad bhavati. Why limit your imagination? Think big, and think of the grandeur of nature as you offer unto the Lord’s feet. What exactly are we offering here? The preliminary stage of seeker hood, we sit in front of the Lord and ask for everything. Once we understand the divine grandeur you’d seldom ask for anything. If at all you must ask, ask for intelligence so that you can make the best use of what is already provided. We use only fraction of what’s provided in every facet of life. Whether it is with our homes, our gadgets, our capacities, we never use it to the fullest potential. Even when seeking something from the Lord, we tend to focusing on our limitations and request them to be fulfilled through His blessings (e.g. I don’t have xxx so please provide me with the same). Instead, focus on the higher and connect to the divinity within. This connection can’t happen as long as we’re focused on our shortcomings. Hence traditional pūjas say invite divinity within yourself and worship the divine while you remain established in that divinity.

Before the pūja we do ātma pūja and perform the rituals such as Anganyōsa, Karanyōsa, Hridayanyāsā. Nyōsa = establish the Higher divine order. Meditate and worship the divine. Don’t concentrate on your inadequacies or weaknesses because you won’t gain any benefit out of a meditation that reaffirms our deficiencies. Meditate such that you visualize the strength within; envision the magnanimity and opulence; recognize the amazing patience represented by the Lord. Focus on His valor, values and integrated personality. Constantly be thinking of the uttkrushta bhāv – simply stated, think big. As you think, so you become.

Most of us go to the Lord out of bhaya (fear) while a few do go out of bhakti (devotion). Mind is constantly in fear. Only a whiplash can successfully put the fearful mind into devotion and hence the fear factor is introduced. A childish mental status doesn’t understand through reasoning. Sometimes even the fear factor doesn’t work. As a mortal, even we don’t carry vengeance or anger against our own child. Can the divine father / mother be vindictive? Invoke God with the bhāv that it is my own parent, my own brother, sister, my OWN. tvameva sarvam mama-dev-deva (You are everything for me. You are
verily my God alone.) Don’t meditate on our fallacies because God knows each one of them without us having to repeatedly tell Him. Use the opportunity to acknowledge the fallacies and work upon them by meditating on the divine aspect. If for example, we don’t serve people with the attitude of serving the Lord, then the service becomes very frustrating over a period of time. We tend to focus on the external daridrata (poverty). Throughout the entire waking hours we focus on lack of things and reflect only on negative qualities, so we become exactly what we hate! Think big and meditate on something Higher which will replace this lower cidā dīptih pusparam.

Such a mature seeker hood itself becomes an offering of fragrance. Why should the process to reach God who is an epitome of bliss and happiness be miserable? If you are doing the sādhanā to reach state of happiness and are constantly crying sadly, what’s the use? Tears of joy are different than meditation on our pathetic state of existence. Don’t even try bargaining with the Lord who owns the entire universe. What more can you give to Him? Joyfully offer with the realization that you aren’t the limitation anymore. That glow will be seen in the person’s eyes. Physically you may smile through lips, but spiritually we smile through our eyes. Parents can make out if something whacky or untruthful is going on if they just observe the eyes. There is a certain glow in the eyes when one is not fearful or scared of losing anything. Please display clarity through the eyes. That glow is called cidā dīptih pusparam.

Such should be an offering unto the divine of fragrant flowers.

Day 07

sūryātmakatvaṁ dīpaḥ - After this step of offering flowers, the next step is to offer dhoopam and deepam just before food is offered. Why do we light the agarbatti (inscence stick) and lamp before offering food? This is to create a beautiful ambiance wherein we infuse the fragrance of an aromatic candle using essential oils and have flower decorations. The beauty itself will prepare the mind. Serving food is an art and has to be done tastefully. If food is shoved in your plate as it is being served, would anyone feel like even touching it no matter how hungry the person may be? On a practical side, by the time the food preparations have come to an end, we may get distracted by the smell of food. So light an agarbatti to mask the food smell. A mahatma once said that we offer untouched food to the Lord, such that it is not eaten or tasted prior to the offering. So the agarbatti fragrance ensures that we don’t touch the food even remotely with our organs of perception, the nose! The agarbatti fragrance allows us to offer food intact food to the Lord sūryātmakatvaṁ dīpaḥ. Light or illumination is shown to the Lord on the altar saakshaat deepam sandarshayami.

Surya mārg is generally called the uttara mārg (northern path). Secondly, utt + tara = tru taraney (to move forward and reach the Highest). The highest one can go is to reach the core within. Uttara is only way to reach the ultimate or Supreme. All other paths of Karma (actions), Bhakti (devotion), Gnana (knowledge) all three paths merge in dhyāna (contemplation) alone where we identify with the Supreme. You’ll know how you feel once you reach there! sūryātmakatvaṁ dīpaḥ is self-revealing. You don’t need a flashlight to illumine the sun. Clouds cannot “cover” the sun, they simply obstruct our
vision and our eyesight. Presence of the clouds is also illumined by the sun alone! Similarly in light of the sun we recognize our ignorance. sūryātmakatvaṁ dīpaḥ indicates that the sun is seen effortlessly.

On the seat of meditation, how does one know whether or not you are realized? You will know that just like you know when your hunger or thirst is quenched. A master once said that the moment of realization is extremely humbling. If for example when searching for your eye glasses you realize that they had always been placed on your nose, how would you feel? Such is the feeling at the moment of self-illumination and Upaniṣads tell us in their own words what that experience is like. Self-realized people are worshipped as God incarnate.

paripūrṇacandrāmṛtarasaikīkaraṇam naivedyam The best part of the pūja is naivedyam that is offered to each God per their likes. True sense or other name for naivedyam is prasadaḥ manaha saumyatvam where you reach to a state of accessing the mind at will. You can run or withdraw it at will and awarefully. Credible accessibility dictates terms to the mind and gaining that kind of true blessings is naivedyam. How is that experience of the ultimate? It is paripūrna (complete) without lacking anything and is flawless. There are no voids and it is complete unto itself.

When one is connected to the core within, you have the experience of being nitya (eternal) shuddha (pure) Buddha (consciously aware) mukta (liberated). You get freedom from the 5 elements. Death occurs due to excess or minimum presence of one of the 5 nascent elements. But the conscious principle cannot be touched by any of these 5 elements. The four elements cannot even touch the space, it is so pure and subtle. You can’t break space, corrupt it with smell or pollute it, and neither can you burn it. None of these four elements can touch space. The conscious principle which knows the space an sis conscious of space provides validity of existence for space and is always liberated. Hence it is called mukta (liberated). The nitya (eternal) shuddha (pure) Buddha (consciously aware) mukta (liberated) swaroopa is liberated.

This Upaniṣad such an experience is amruta rasa The best fruit you could eat is probably a juicy mango. The rasa (juicy) makes it so likeable. There is a sophisticated process of eating the ripe juicy mango and you can relish it by squeezing it just right such that it neither tears the skin nor does it ooze out. Then you have to eat it artfully without messing your hands or face. Rasa also denotes essence of various things brought together. Similarly this experience isn’t dry or insipid. It is the rasa or the tattva. It is juicy and full of life. A seeker may be confident, but could be grumpy or crying. However, realized masters are always full of life oozing or overflowing with life. Our current flow or rasa equates to being in a cracked pot that leaks constantly. No amount of water poured in the pot can fill us up or sustaine the energy. We are constantly draining our energies and thus feel fatigued. Therefore realized masters who may do the work of 1000s of people, but they are always full of life because there is no drainage of energy. They are completely full from within. This rasa is the amrut (ambrosia) the unending essence that is the underlying source of the throbbing energy constantly oozing out. Such are the realized masters who are the source of bliss and happiness vibrant with energy.
paripūrṇacandrā implies a full moon during which the herbal qualities of certain Ayurvedic medicines are heightened. Science teaches us that we require the sun rays for photosynthesis. But exposure to moonlight is equally important. The moon’s light provides the divine medicinal qualities to herbs. That rasa from the moon is referred to as somarasa. It is intoxicating and has been since misinterpreted as alcohol or liqueur. Essence filled rays of the moon are life-sustaining. While both sun and moon rays are essential, and provide light, the moon takes harshness of sunlight, turns it into reflection and cools it down.

Moon is the adhīsthānā (presiding) deity of mind. Behavior patterns of people is said to be tied to the waxing and waning of the moon. At night time during the high tide it is at it’s highest. Earth is 75-80% water and these waters are strongly influence by the moon. Similarly our bodies are made of 78% water. During full moon we see a lot of hyperactivity and depression sets in during the new moon. Such is the effect of the moon on our mind. The one who has transcended the mind finds the paripūrṇa candrā amrutha rasa which is complete to itself (i.e. no waxing or waning). Such a first hand experience is the true naivedya, an offering unto the Lord. You start seeing the world as your expansion, not your limitation. Masters thus serve with special care. Hence our Pujya Gurudev designed the Chinmaya Mission’s motto as “To give maximum happiness to the maximum number for the maximum time.”

niścalatvaṁ pradaksinam After naivedya we do a pradakshina and seek forgiveness for various things done and we take ultimate refuge at His feet. Earlier we saw uttara direction headed north; while pradakshina indicates South direction. The south symbolizes a place of death’s abode. Thus pradakshina denotes all that which takes us to the limitation of death and misery. Pra consciously wiping clean, no one will do it for us. We have been provided with intellect to use for internal cleaning. Anything that limits us or takes us south has to be removed by gaining the niścalatvam (unwavering). Only Paramatma is unchanging stability within. The divine core is unchanging, and rest everything is dakshina and changes; constantly morphing and the movement in world is denoted by the chala (that which moves). Only the divine core within us, our Param-atma is niścala.

As long as you see movement you know you arent there yet. Bhaja Govinda beautifully teaches us – Satsangatve Nissangatva (coming to satsang takes you to the next step of being able to painlessly relieve oneself of all attachments); nissangatve nirmohatvam – once given up, all delusions due to attachments are gone; nirmohatve niścalatvam – in that peaceful stability alone can one experience bliss. Happiness can’t be found in an agitated mind. All movement should cease. In Yoga Saadhana he says in the second mantra chittah vritta nirogaha. Yoga is the ability to stabilize without forcing, and you can do this through disidentification. All movements require a source of energy. You are that source. Once you pull the plug on it and disidentify, it will automatically die a natural death. The slow mind is a sharp intellect. The intellect gains the stability and becomes the witness. From that witnessing you gain the firm strength to negate everything that is going south! You effortlessly disidentify and painlessly give up all limitations.
so‘ham bhāvo namaskārah At the end we offer sashtanga namaskar. This Sa + ashta + aanga + pranaam = saashtanga dandavat pranams. We offer eight limbs unto the lord. The head itself has seven organs (2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, 1 mouth) + hands + legs. The namaskārah has to be done by joining both hands and bow down with folded hands. Right brain controls the left part of the body and vice-versa. Right brain is more emotional while the left brain is more logical and sequential. When we are asked to use the right hand for most of our activities, it was with the intention of remaining conscious of all logic and reasoning behind it. It isn’t that the left hand is inauspicious, but over a period of time it has come to be defined in that manner!

Putting both hands together indicates that I have brought both brain hemispheres together and I am completely offering myself unto you. With a complete presence of mind in that moment, na mamaha attitude of salutation, I can’t claim anything as my own. Everything is You and Yours. With such an attitude I prostrate to the Lord in you and offer my namaskārah Such a deep significant act, do it with complete presence of mind joining both hands for a true offering.

so‘ham bhāvo namaskārah. Nothing of mine is to be claimed as my own. so‘ham bhāvo that which I have been indicating with words as ultimate truthful reality is now essentially own experiences; I am that truth is my experience. Once you affirmatively experience that you are that reality, that is when true naivedya can be offered. At that time there is no ego barrier and you can truly offer to the Ultimate. Until then presence isn’t cognized. Therefore true naivedya is when one realizes one’s own nature. There is a famous portrait of Lord Shri Krishna in the Vata patra Shayi (sleeping on a banana leaf). You see Shri Krishna sucking on His own toe. There are three components when dealing with the world. I the experience interacting with the world of experiences (objects) through process of experience. But here, the one who is holding the toe (enjoyer) is also the one enjoying the object of the enjoyment. All three merge into one Conscious Principle.

A tilak also has three lines with one red dot denoting the experience, experienced and the experience, all three merge into one conscious identity called realization. This is the so aham bhaava. Get to that one unifying focal point of self realization.

parameśvarastutirmaunam - Mantra Pushpanjali is the stuti of the Lord. maunam is the ability to be absorbed in that silence, that is the true stuti. It is not just silence in speech, but the silence that indicates prashānti. Shānti (peace) can always be disturbed by Ashanti (agitations). Prashānti thus is that platform which enables presence of both Shānti (peace) and Ashanti (agitations) without getting disturbed by either of those. We are always vulnerable as long as we are dealing with polarity (e.g. shanty/Ashanti; sukha/dukha) and we are susceptible to be broken down. Prashānti is that absorbed state of silence where you observe both shānti and ashānti. Neither the presence nor the absence of sound disturbs you. Sometimes when we are home alone, we can’t stand that state of silence. We switch on the radio or play some music to simply fill in that void. That’s not the silence we are referring to. We are so absorbed in the silence that even though there are movements, the movement doesn’t touch you. It is like watching the torrential rains from your balcony. You don’t get wet or disturbed by
the rain, but you can simply observe the rain. Similarly, when we observe the thoughts in our mind, we don’t get disturbed or agitated by their presence; and neither do we get uncomfortable if the mind is not engaged in anything. The greatest stuti is being in that quietude and having the ability to be absorbed in deep silence completely absorbed in it. You are completely awake, alert and vigilant, yet the mind isn’t agitated. So far we’ve experienced only either the sleeping mind or the agitated mind. Experience of that silent mind is called stuti.

No other Upaniṣad has made it this clear so easily and given us the three simple steps. (1) We know and experience the agitated mind; (2) We know and experience the sleeping mind; (3) Realization is the awareful awakeful mind deeply absorbed in silence. Such is the true state of a silent mind.

sadāsantoṣo visarjanam – The visarjanam is the last step. At the end we bid farewell to that deity, invoked in that form. Contrary to the popular belief that we “drown” the deity, we actually return it back to it’s primordial state. We’ve borrowed the material from nature in order to make the deity. So it is only fair that we return back to the nature whatever we’ve borrowed. When Hanumanji was asked to get the medicine Sanjeevani for saving Laxman’s life, He found that every plant fit the description of the plant. So rather than second-guessing, He picked up the entire mountain, saved Laxman’s life, and then returned the mountain back to it’s original state. In this manner He restored the nature’s balance.

Usually visarjana (immersion) of idols is sadā santoṣa (ever content). Once you know you are the source of happiness, would you be fearful, anxious or miserable? Visarjana is completely giving up the apprehensions, worries and dejections. There will be painfully miserable experiences in our life, but we have a choice to be miserable and sad. Giving up the misery and sadness and exercising the choice NOT to be distressed and depressed is true sadāsantoṣo visarjanam. Remain in the satisfied content peaceful environment.

This in true sense is called pūja and concludes the Upaniṣad. There are four more lines. Sincere seekers should sit on the seat of meditation and thus meditate like this. With this true understanding they are then assured of self-realization. Knowing one’s Self is the greatest benefit and accomplishes the purpose of our human birth. I am That Self within, always complete and overflowing with joy. This is the self realization of a mumukshutva seeker. Thus come sacred end to a positive beginning of seekerhood.

Let us invoke blessings of Pujya Gurudev and the Lord within to sincerely practice this so that we realize in this lifetime. May this lifetime serve it’s true purpose of realizing the Self within us.

Chant the shānti mantrā

Om Tat Sat