

Ārṣa Vidyā Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA

33rd Anniversary – August 11, 2019 ¹

Swami Tadatmananda Saraswati on the Inner Divinity in All

It is a great joy to join all of you on this occasion and first and foremost, congratulations to you all for bringing up this building complex.² It is exquisite and you have worked so hard to bring it up. It is going to be a tremendous achievement that will bless so many people for decades together. Congratulations to you all. It was especially nice to hear Manu³ sharing his personal journey and describing how the teachings of Vedānta were very central in crucial times in his life when he underwent an inner transformation, and how he was very much blessed by the teachings. It seems to me that we perhaps need the teachings of Vedānta now more than any other time. Each and every one of us needs these teachings because they give us a perspective, an orientation on life, which is crucial for us as individuals. But, more significantly, I would like to share with you a perspective that these teachings are important to us as a community, as a culture, as a nation and as a world. We live at a time, and you know this very well, where there is a lot of divisiveness amongst people, not just in this country but everywhere. It is almost like some kind of virus that has been infecting people in Europe, in this country and in India. No country seems to be exempt from this virus attack. This virus of divisiveness, if we can call it such, is manifest in a variety of negative ways that we see in this country, where people who are not white and Christians are subject to various kinds of discrimination. We see how Mexicans are treated in this country. We see how Muslims are treated and the attitude towards Muslims. In fact, there is an attitude towards almost anyone who is different, anyone who is bold enough to wear a *pagadi* or turban, or the ladies who wear the *hijab* or headscarf. To wear that *pagadi* or *hijab* is an act of bravery in this country because it makes you a target for anger and possibly worse. In some cases, it makes you a target for violence. I don't want to go on about this at length, you know it too well. We see this virus of divisiveness every day in the newspapers and news sources.



The vaccine, if I can use that metaphor, for this virus of divisiveness, is this teaching! You all know very well that the vision of the *ṛṣis* taught us all clearly that our bodies are different, shapes are different, colors are different, ancestry is different, our minds are different, our inclinations are different, our likes and dislikes are different – each and every one of us is so different as individuals. But the *ṛṣis* taught us well that the consciousness within us all is the same. The consciousness with which I know what is happening in my mind right now, and the consciousness by which you know what is happening in your mind right now, that consciousness is one and the same. Because as we have all learned well from pūjya Swami Dayanandaji and all of our teachers, there is only one all-pervading consciousness. We call it ātmā, we call it Brahman, we call it Īśvara – whatever you call it, it is one, it is all-pervasive, and it is the truth of you and the truth of me. It is the truth which we, in casual terms,

1 The 33rd anniversary of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA was conducted on August 11, 2019 at the newly inaugurated Swami Dayananda Vijñāna Bhavanam. The talk given by Swami Tadatmanandaji on this occasion is summarized here. The talk was transcribed and edited by Krishnanand Maillacheruvu and V. Swaminathan, respectively.

2 Swamiji was referring to the new Swami Dayananda Vijñāna Bhavanam.

3 Dr. Karthik (Manu) Ramanan, an alumni of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, was the master of ceremonies at the anniversary.

call inner divinity. The problem of course is that when you meet someone you don't see that inner divinity. You see that turban. You see that headscarf. You see the color of the skin. You hear the accent of the voice – whatever it may be. These are the things that people respond to so strongly and fail to recognize that inner divinity. The truth of each and every one of us is that same śuddha caitanya, that same pure consciousness.

Why don't we see the inner divinity? Well, there is a very beautiful verse from the Guru *stotram* that we chanted many times at the feet of pūjya Swami Dayanandaji:

*ajñānatimirāndhasya jñānāñjanaśalākayā
cakṣurunmīlitaṃ yena tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ |*

(My Salutations to that reverential teacher, who opened my eyes, by applying the collyrium of self-knowledge in my eyes, which had got blinded by the cataract of ignorance.)

What a beautiful verse! We don't see that all pervasive, non-dually one, divinity. As an important aside, one will never see the divinity in someone else unless one discovers the divinity within oneself. The *jñāna* or *vidyā* or knowledge removes the covering or the veil of ignorance. In this way, “*cakṣuḥ unmīlitaṃ*,” our eyes are opened. The veil of ignorance is removed so that we can recognize not only our own inner divinity, our true nature as *saccidānanda ātmā*, but simultaneously recognize the divinity in others. How can it be otherwise? When you recognize your own innate divinity, how can you not recognize the divinity of every other person? Because it becomes so absolutely clear that it is the same consciousness, looking out through my eyes, and the same consciousness, looking out through your eyes. This is the teaching of Advaita Vedānta. This is the teaching we received from pūjya Swami Dayanandaji, from Swami Vidadatmanandaji, and all the wonderful teachers who are here at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. This is what brings about a transformation, which arguably, we need today more than anything else.

This virus of divisiveness can be treated with this medicine called Advaita Vedānta. Each and every one of us play a role in eradicating the virus. We are all blessed to receive these teachings. We have been blessed by that ointment of knowledge, so to speak. Our eyes have been opened up. And having our eyes opened up, we won't discriminate against that lady with the headscarf or the person who looks different or sounds different. Our eyes have been opened. At least, please don't tell me, “Swamiji, I am not there yet.” You are there! You've got it! I mean, definitely there is more maturation to take place for all of us! But you got it. Your eyes have been opened. You won't discriminate against those people. You understand that it is the same divinity that dwells within us all. But now comes the next step. It is our responsibility, our dharma, as Manu very nicely said, to help others understand. You can help others understand. The best way of helping others understand is bring them here for these wonderful classes and programs. What better way of helping others is there? Bring them to these teachings. So many of Swami Dayanandaji's teachings and the teachings of our other Swamis are all available on the internet. Even if people cannot physically come here to the Gurukulam, they can listen online and their eyes can be opened with the help of these teachings. And what can we say except to express our tremendous gratitude to Swami Dayanandaji, to our entire guru *paramparā*, the lineage of teachers, for giving us that medicine to open our eyes to the reality of the divinity of us all. Thank you. Om!