

The Source of Happiness ¹

Vākyavṛtti verses 24, 25

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In the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*², there is a dialogue between Maitreyi and her husband, Yāgñavalkya, a great scholar, and a Vedantin. One day, he called Maitreyi, the senior of his two wives, and told her, in effect, “I am leaving for the forest to live a life of renunciation, *sannyāsa*. I have lived this married life, *gṛhastāśrama*, very well, and now, I would like to take to a life of *sannyāsa*.” From this we understand that the *śruti*, the Upaniṣad, tells us that a life style of renunciation, *sannyāsāśrama*, is conducive for gaining clarity, *niṣṭā*, in this knowledge. It also tells us that everyone is supposed to be a *sannyāsi* in the end. A story in the Upaniṣad, in the Veda, is not a historical account. It is meant to convey something. What is conveyed here is that living a married life, as a *gṛhastāśrami*, you can study Vedanta and gain knowledge of the self. Yāgñavalkya has proved this in his own life. Married, with two wives, he was able to gain this knowledge, and even teach it to kings. That has already been shown in this Upaniṣad. Now he wants to gain a certain *niṣṭā* in this knowledge. Gaining *niṣṭā* means making the knowledge much more real, in order to enjoy the fruits of that knowledge. And for that, one has to live a contemplative life. That is what is pointed out here. If one doesn't have *niṣṭā*, then one has to live a

¹ From classes on *Vākyavṛtti* at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, September 1997, transcribed and edited by Constance DiMartino.

² *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.5 and 4.5.6

contemplative life, and, therefore, a contemplative life is advised by the *śāstra*. To illustrate this, there is this story in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Here, Yāgñavalkya tells Maitreyi, “I have divided all my property into two and I am giving half to each of you. I am leaving for the forest, to live the life of a mendicant, a *sādhu*.” Their property was real estate, a lot of cattle, and perhaps some gold, and so on. Cattle were the wealth in those days. When he had said this, Maitreyi didn’t say, “Okay.” She said, rather, “You are giving me all this cattle, this wealth. If I had all the wealth in the world, would I gain immortality by this wealth? Will I gain what you hope to gain?” When she asked this question, Yāgñavalkya told the truth. “By wealth there is no hope of immortality, “ *vittena na āśā asti*. By wealth you are not going to gain what has to be gained in terms of cognition. Then, he continues to talk to her. That is the basis of verses 24 and 25 in the *Vākyavṛtti*.

Yāgñavalkya tells Maitreyi that an object becomes very dear, not for the sake of the object. The love that you have for an object is not for the sake of the object; it is for yourself, *ātma*, alone. An object becomes an object of love because it is connected to oneself. If it is an object of love, it is very clear that the object gives you a certain sense of security or joy, a certain happiness. Therefore, the love for the object is not for the object’s sake; it is for your own sake. Here, ‘your own sake’ means the pleased self’s sake; the secure self’s sake. So, love is, finally speaking, for the secure self, the pleased self. Since one doesn’t know that one is secure, that one is innately pleased, one needs something else to evoke the pleased self, the secure self.

This is what we call *samsāra*—the dependence upon another person, another situation, for your own sense of wellbeing. That dependence is *samsāra*. The thing that you depend upon is also insecure; it is also time-bound. Your body itself is time-bound. And, therefore, it gives only the semblance of happiness, a little spring in the desert of absence of happiness. That occasion to see the pleased self is definitely very desirable. The *sukha*, a certain joy that you discover in *samsāra*, is all you can get. But then, that is not born of the object; it is born only of yourself, the pleased self. Therefore, Yāgñavalkya tells Maitreyi, specifically, that the husband becomes very beloved to the wife, not for the husband sake, but for the wife's, for herself alone. And it is true the other way around also. The person, husband or wife, is important because he or she makes the other person happy. If he or she makes the person's life miserable, you find that the joy is gone. This is how we get the situation where, "I love you" for some time.

We start with "I love you," then after some time it becomes, effectively, "I allow you" which may be articulated as, "I think we need some space." This is only because the person no longer evokes the pleased person in you. On the contrary, he or she evokes the displeased person. This may be due to some psychological transference about which the person has no understanding. Whatever the cause, what you love becomes perceived as a source of unhappiness. This is a very unfortunate thing.

The fact is everything becomes beloved only for the sake of the self, *ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati.* Yāgñavalkya discusses

this in detail giving Maitreyi a very big list. One loves one's child, one's house, one's wealth, etc., not for the sake of the child or the wealth or the house—it is for one's own sake. This is a very important thing to understand. Even an altruistic action like community service is not so much for the sake of the community as it is for one's own sake. Whether the happiness is because of some recognition or some improved self-image or some genuine empathy with the people you serve, you are the one who sees yourself happy through that action. You do that service so that you can see yourself happy. It is not for the community's sake; it is for one's own sake, even though it does reveal a certain expansion on the part of the person that is a mark of growth. Instead of just confining one's own world to a simple nuclear family, the person's heart is able to extend to cover the community. This shows that the person has achieved a certain level of maturity. Still, in the happiness of the community, the person feels that he or she will be happy, and therefore, again, everything becomes beloved only for the sake of the self, *ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati*. For great social workers, inspired people, their self is identified with the community. It can expand to the entire humanity, or even to the entire universe. You can extend it to all the *devatas*, all the living beings here, even the minerals, and so on. You can expand your heart to accommodate everything that is here. That means that you care for everything. You don't even divide things into inert and sentient. You extend your care not only to all people, not only to all living beings, like trees, flora and fauna, etc., but even to minerals, to all that is here. You don't abuse anything because you care. That is exactly the capacity for expansion of the human heart. This is because you see yourself as a part of the whole, not a totally isolated person. That expansion is the

growth of the person. But still, it is the same person, the same self and everything that is beloved is beloved for the sake of this self. That is established. The care that is extended is all for your own pleasure, for, if the community, etc. are unhappy, you are unhappy. Thus, naturally, it comes back only to your self. Even though, as I told you, community service indicates a certain degree of maturity, which is why it is considered desirable, at the same time, when we analyze it, we find that it is for your own self, finally. And therefore, what is the most beloved is yourself alone.

That is the reason no one wants to die. Everyone wants to live, even just one more day. Nobody wants to die today, unless he is racked with interminable suffering. Even the person who wants to commit suicide, if asked, "Why do you want to commit suicide?" will say something like, "Because I don't see any possibility of being happy." That is a particular type of thinking—"I don't see how I can be happy. I have lost my money; I have lost my fame; I have lost my name; therefore, I want to commit suicide." The entire future is viewed as very bleak, as without hope. Once there is no hope, one wants to put an end to this life. Suppose someone wants to commit suicide because he lost some money—say two hundred thousand dollars. Now suppose I tell this person, "I will arrange for this money. Next week I will give you this money. You need not pay it back" What will happen to his suicide plans? He will just drop them on the spot. What does it mean? The person's heart is not in dying; it is in living. If he can live one more day, he wants to live, but he does not want to live so unhappily. He wants to live with a hope of being happy.

It's not that people live happily, but they need to have a hope of being happy. They have to be able to hope that they will pick up some small bit of happiness tomorrow. Everybody wants to think that tomorrow is not going to be as cloudy as it is today, that there is going to be some bright sun of happiness tomorrow at least. This is what hope is. The human heart doesn't give up. Why? Because the nature of the human being is happiness. Naturally, therefore, it cannot give up. In spite of all the problems, the human being does pick up a moment of joy now and then. Because of this, one cannot give up hope—unless there is a particular type of thinking. That is why we have all these emergency telephone numbers. Whenever anybody has this kind of thinking, if they can just call somebody, talk to somebody, that thought of giving up can go. Somebody has to express care. Somebody has to say, “Hey, it's not that bad. Even this will pass away.”

“Even this will pass away” is a very good mantra. There is a poem that expresses this very well. A person was given a ring by his father as the father lay dying. As he gave the ring to his son, he told him that whenever he is in trouble he should look at the ring. The son wore the ring, but forgot about his father's words. Eventually he suffered a financial setback and lost all his money. In despair he went to a nearby bridge to jump into the river and put an end to his life. Just then, he was looking at his ring and suddenly remembered his father's words. “Whenever you are in trouble, look at the ring.” Knowing he was in trouble, he took off the ring and looked at it very closely. Inside the ring, which had never looked at, these

words were inscribed: “Even this will pass away.” He remembered that there was a time when he didn’t have money. Those days passed away. Then he made money. Those days also passed away and now he had no money. Well, these days will also pass away. He walked off the bridge repeating, “Even this will pass. Even this will pass.” He came back. Why? Because he wants to live.

Everybody wants to live—that is the love for the self, *ātma*. Do you know why? Because *ātma* is eternal. At this moment, it is here. It is existent. I am a being and I cannot visualize this being, me, being totally decimated. That is the reason all theologies have a belief in an afterlife. People accept that because of the need to be. This need to be is very big. It is the reason people buy a good burial place, overlooking a waterfront, for example. And there are people to take advantage of this need, inducing you to buy the best casket, the best flowers, playing on your emotional vulnerability on the loss of a loved one. All this is because we don’t want anybody to disappear. In fact, death is such a difficult thing to deal with because it leaves a void. That person is no longer here—he is not going to be seen in the future, all the way down to ‘eternity’. You are not going to see that same person in the same form. That is very disconcerting. All the way to the 'end' of time you are not going to see that person in that form again. It’s a void. And a void we cannot handle. Though that person is gone, the position of my being a son or daughter or spouse remains. That doesn’t go away. Even if he is your ex-husband, still, you are stuck being an ex-wife. That position doesn’t go away. Since the position remains, when the person because of whom you

got that position is not there, naturally, all the omissions and commissions will rush to your head. As long as the person was there, you could settle accounts with him or her. Now, that person is not there to settle accounts with anymore. And therefore, your own omissions and commissions come to the surface. “Why did I do this?” “Why did I not do this?” It is called the affliction that comes after the fact, *paścāt tāpaḥ*, and it is unavoidable. Why did I not do the right thing? Why did I do the wrong thing?, *kim aham sādhu nākaravam kim aham pāpam akaravam iti*.³ This is what really makes a person sad. That sadness is deep because you cannot do anything about it—you are facing a void. Ultimately, that sadness is because you cannot accept a void. And a void is not acceptable because there is no void at all.

There is no such thing as a void, as total nonexistence. Even the absence of a thing, or its non-existence, *abahāva*, you are conscious of. That I don’t have a pot in my hand, that I have no horns on my head you are conscious of. When you appreciate that, the appreciation implies the presence of you, the presence of an existent conscious being. Therefore, total decimation doesn’t exist at all. Total absence, *atyanta-abhāva*, does not exist. Certain combinations, like a man with horns, also do not exist. A man exists, a horn exists, but the horn of a man does not exist. The man is there, and you are appreciative of the man at a given time, but at the same time, you are also appreciative of the fact that his horn does not exist. Similarly, in my hand there is no pot. My hand exists and the pot exists elsewhere, but on my

³ Taittiriya Upanisad 2.9.1

palm, there is no pot. That absence implies presence, the presence of you, naturally. No human being, self-conscious human being, can visualize and accept a future decimation. Therefore, there is a love to be. That love to be, Yāgñavalkya says, is because you love yourself. If you don't love yourself, then why would you love to be? If you hated yourself, you would not love to be. But you do love to be.

The love for son, wealth, etc., is all for the sake of the self. Wealth includes home, vehicle, etc., including the contents of the home, like your carpet, your Persian carpet. People have a great value for all these things. I remember when I once went to meet a swami who was staying in a particular house in Madras. The house was facing east and had two floors, a ground floor and a first floor, or as you say in America, the second floor, where the swami was staying in one room. And there was a covered area where myself and another person were waiting to meet the swami. He was in his room and we were waiting, sitting on a carpet—a nice carpet, perhaps a Persian carpet. As we were sitting, one of the employees of the house came and asked us to get up and sit on the chairs. We sat on the chairs. And he rolled up the carpet. I thought that he was taking it to be used for a better purpose, perhaps. But then, he rolled up the carpet and kept it there, right in our presence, in one corner and left. That's a very interesting thing to me, so naturally, I was not going to keep quiet. The next time he came to where we were sitting, I asked him, “Why did you do this? Why did you just roll up this carpet and keep it in the corner?” He said, “Amma [the lady of the house] is down in the kitchen and

asked me to please roll up the carpet and keep it in the corner.” I asked him, "Why?" "Because, now it's eleven o'clock in the morning, and the sunlight will come and fall on it." Remember we were in a covered but open area with no window, so the sun would fall straight on the carpet and the color of the carpet would fade. Really. She is down in the kitchen. Her heart is where? Her heart is in the carpet. Not even in the carpet—in the color of the carpet. This is how people live their lives—you don't know where the heart is. It is all over—in all these antiques, in so many things there is a little bit of heart. It is everywhere. Or it is empty. Our hearts have gone everywhere, lost in many things. In things that we have, and for some people, in things that they don't have, in things that others have. Then, when I come and say, “You are *ānanda*.” it doesn't make any sense. "What *ānanda*?" you wonder. Your heart is in this and that so these words don't make any sense. It is lost everywhere. Please understand this. This is what people talk about as attachment, but I won't say it is attachment—it is total identification. It is not like something that is attached to you, but rather, an identification. It is a way of looking at things. Things are there, but then, you see a life without them as a lost life. And therefore, with them you feel some kind of security. With respect to son or daughter, of course, this is expected. It is considered legitimate. When the son or daughter is unhappy, I am unhappy; when she or he is happy, I am happy, *putre naṣṭe aham naṣṭaḥ putre puṣṭe aham puṣṭaḥ*. That is expected. But then, look at these things—carpets, vases and all these things we prize. The heart is lost in all of them. All of them, because they are

connected to you become beloved to you, *ātma-śeṣatayā priyāḥ bhavanti*. They are considered very important and play a significant role in your wellbeing, not because they have any intrinsic capacity to give you that kind of wellbeing, but because you think you need them. Because of that, because of their connection to you, they become beloved. Therefore, what do you really love? Not the objects, but yourself alone. Honestly, it is yourself. The objects evoke in you a pleased person. Perhaps a person whose aesthetic sense is satisfied, or a person to be admired by others for having good taste. Why should you want anybody to think that you have good taste? Because you doubt that you have good taste. That is the problem. If you have no doubts, then you don't need others' certification that you have good taste. And even if you get it, you have to accept that you have a good taste. Then, once you have it, you don't need others' approval. So, even in the approval of others, what you love is not others' approval, but self-approval. You need the approval of others, because in their approval you feel that you are somebody. Otherwise, you feel empty inside. There is an abysmal emptiness inside. Naturally, you want to fill it by "being somebody", and for that, you need others' approval.

Another thing to note here is that every individual is as good as he thinks he is. And what he thinks of himself includes what others think about him. Not only what others think about him, but what he thinks others think about him, because he doesn't really know what others think about him. This is each individual's reality. And, therefore, to

be pleased with oneself is not an easy thing. Naturally, whoever evokes the pleased self becomes an object of love.

putra-vittādayo bhavā yasya śeṣatayā priyāḥ.

dṛaṣṭā sarvapriyatamaḥ so'hamityavadhāraya

Vākyavṛtti verse 24

putra-vittādayaḥ- son, wealth, etc.; *bhavāḥ*- things; *yasya śeṣatayā* – being connected to one; *priyāḥ* – [are] beloved; *dṛaṣṭā* – the seer/subject; *sarva-priyatamaḥ*- the most beloved of all; *saḥ aham iti* – “I am that”; *avadhāraya*- ascertain

Things like son, wealth, etc., being connected to oneself, [are] beloved. The subject is the most beloved of all. Ascertain, “I am that.” *Vākyavṛtti* verse 24

Being connected to oneself alone, son, wealth, etc. become objects of love. Who, then, is the most beloved, *priyatamaḥ*? It is yourself alone. Because you love them all for your sake, you love yourself. Therefore, the self alone, the seer or subject, *dṛaṣṭā*, is the most beloved, *priyatamaḥ*. The subject loves the object because the object makes the person happy. And therefore, the most beloved is yourself. What kind of self? The pleased self. That we must note. Therefore,

what do you really love? The pleased self. It is *ānanda* you love, for in the 'pleased' of the pleased self there is *ānanda*. It is the *ānanda* that you love. The self is there even when you are unhappy, but unhappiness is not what you love. Happiness centered on yourself is what you love, and that happiness is yourself alone. That is what you love, because it is your nature. The self, the pleased self is the most beloved of all, *draṣṭā sarvapriyatamaḥ*. That pleased self is indeed myself; this is the conclusion *so'ham ityavadhāraya*. May you understand, "I am that alone".

parapremāspadatayā mā nābhuvam aham sadā

bhūyāsam iti yo draṣṭā so'ham ityavadhāraya

Vākyavṛtti verse 25

parapremāspadatayā – being the abode of the greatest love; *mā na abhuvam*- “May I not cease to be”; *aham sadā bhūyāsam iti* – “May I always be.” *yaḥ* – the one who; *draṣṭā* – the seer/subject; *saḥ aham iti* - “I am that”; *avadhāraya*- ascertain

The subject, being the abode of the greatest love, one [wishes] “May I not cease to be. May I always be.” Ascertain, “I am that.”

Vākyavṛtti verse 25

“May I not cease to be,” *mā na abhuvam*. Nobody wants to cease to be. One always wants to be. Even the love to have children is a love for eternity. When you want to live through them, when you want to leave something behind, that is a love for eternity. In some form or the other you want to be. Really speaking, the wish is, "I want to be there forever", *sadā bhūyāsam*. This only shows that you love yourself. The self, *ātma* is the object of your love; you want the self to be. Why? Because it is *ānanda*.

That is also the reason you love sleep. There is *ānanda* in sleep. There is not only absence of suffering, *duḥkha*, there is *ānanda* also. When there is total absence of *duḥkha*, there is no individuality, which is why sleep is such a wonderful area of *ānanda*. That is the reason you are very, very conscious about creating the optimum conditions for your sleep. You want to make sure that your sleep is not disturbed, that you get that sleep. You switch off the phone. You don't even want it to ring. You make sure the pillow height is proper, that there is not too much light and that the mosquito curtain is drawn. to sleep. Because you want to sleep. Sleep is such an important experience. The elaborate preparation that is made to go to sleep indicates how important it is. Then, what happens in the morning? You don't want to get out immediately. You wake up, but you don't get up; you are so reluctant to get up. All through one's lifetime, it is the same. As a child your mother had to call you and coax you to get

up. Later also, it is the same. Right on the bed a man will rub his hand over his face to see if he has to shave. Just to get another ten minutes of sleep. What does it mean? We are so reluctant to come out of it, but so enthusiastic to get into it. It is like watching the ballgame when your team is winning. You don't even want to get up for dinner. You want a TV dinner, because you want to keep watching. As with sleep, you are reluctant to come out of it, and you are so enthusiastic to go into it. Why? It means the island in between must be a happy island. It is a happy island.

This happiness, is it because of your knowledge? No. Is it a product of your skills? Is it from the big house you have or the boat you are going to get? No. Is it coming from the important job you have, or the business? No. Or from your children, etc.? No. Then from what? It is from nothing else. I won't say it is from nothing, but from nothing else. Nothing else means nothing except what is left out. What is left out? *Ātma*, myself. That is the *ānanda*. What is left out is yourself alone. You are the source of *ānanda*. In fact, you are *ānanda*. And if you are happy without any of these things, everything is a plus. If you are *ānanda*, everything becomes a plus because nothing is going to make you different. You are what you are. Nothing can sully it; nothing can touch. This is the truth about yourself. Therefore, *ātma* is not only consciousness. It is *ānanda*; it is limitless.

Consciousness has no height; it has no width. From consciousness, no object is away; nothing is away. What is the distance between space and consciousness? Is there a distance? If there is a distance, that distance is space. When you think of space, it is consciousness. Space is consciousness, but consciousness is not space. Time is consciousness; consciousness is not time. And in time and space is the whole universe, so the whole universe is consciousness, but consciousness is not the universe. And consciousness is like consciousness. It is unlike everything else and everything else depends it. It is this limitless you experience in deep sleep and also while you are awake, whenever you are happy.

Please understand this one thing. Some people say that between desires, you become happy. Between the fulfillment of one desire and the rise of another desire, you become happy. But there is no such rule at all. After fulfilling a desire, you can also be unhappy. And you need not fulfill any desire to be happy. Look at this. Every human being is like a teabag. Why, you may ask. Because you know his or her strength, only when he or she is in hot water. You laughed. What desire did you fulfill? None at all. You didn't fulfill any desire. Please understand. That means you need not fulfill a desire to be happy. That means you need not change to be happy. That means you are happy. Experiential happiness only reveals your fullness. To whatever degree happiness is there, to that degree, your own fullness is revealed. Therefore, it has nothing to do with the world. It is not going to be disturbed by the world.

The perception of the world cannot destroy happiness. In fact, perception of the world is an addition to fullness—an addition without any addition. I consider it a value addition. It is something like this. Coimbatore became a big textile center like Manchester. How? Originally agriculturists were growing cotton in this area. They would sell it to some people who would gin it. Then they thought that they could do the ginning themselves and get the profit from that. This is called value addition. You sell the same cotton, but the seeds are removed so the value is greater, and you can also sell the seeds for cattle feed or cotton seed oil. Then, the ginned cotton is sent to somebody for spinning. So they thought, "Why don't we also spin the cotton? Another value addition. The same cotton you gin and then you spin it and sell the spun cotton. Then it goes to the weaving factory. Eventually you add a weaving unit and sell the woven cloth. It is all value addition, the cotton remaining the same. Similarly, you are already *ānanda*. And you have a mind—a value addition. Having a mind means there is a world also, which you are objectifying. Another value addition—the same *ānanda*, plus a value addition. The whole world, *jagat*, is a value addition—nothing else. There is no addition, it is only a value addition. Therefore, already you are full and the world makes life colorful. It's purely a value addition. There is no real addition. That is why the Upaniṣad says *pūrṇamidaḥ pūrṇamidam*—that is whole and this whole. Whole plus whole is still whole. The world, the *jagat*, is purely a value addition. Therefore,

the subject-object perception doesn't in any way stand between your happiness and you, because the whole thing is you. This is the vision of Veda. It has nothing to do with emptying your head, as so many people maintain. "Remove your thoughts; you will be happy." This is just nonsense—top to bottom—all nonsense. Consciousness, *cit*, is the nature, *svarūpa*, of *ātma*, yourself. *Ānanda* also is the *svarūpa* of *ātma*; existence, *sat*, also is the *svarūpa* of *ātma*, of you.