

## SUMMARY OF VIVEKACHUDAMANI

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**INTRODUCTION:** This work is attributed to Sri Adi Sankara. This is an introductory text giving the gist of Vedantic teaching. The meaning of vivekacudamani is crest jewel in the form of discriminative enquiry and discriminative knowledge. Out of the total 581 verses, the summary of only selected 108 verses is presented.

**PRAYER:** I salute sadguru Govinda, who is an embodiment of happiness and knowledge that can be gained only through Upanisads.

**PRAISE OF THE HUMAN BIRTH:** Only due to Isvara's grace we obtain the rare advantages of human birth, desire for freedom and association with a great Teacher. A person not using these advantages wastes his life.

**KNOWLEDGE ONLY MEANS FOR MOKSHA:** Moksha can be gained only with the knowledge of identity of jivatma and paramatma. Proper action with proper attitude can only purify the mind and cannot give atma jnana. Knowledge of atma can be obtained only by enquiry of the Sastra. The seeker should approach a Teacher having compassion and atma jnana and with his guidance do enquiry of the Sastra.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** A seeker having the qualifications of discrimination, dispassion, determination and desire for moksha only can gain atma jnana. Viveka is discriminative understanding that Brahman is nityam and jagat is mithya. Vairagya is dispassion towards enjoyments from the body of a human being upto Brahmaji.

Sama is seeing the limitation of sense objects and making the mind available for spiritual studies. Dama is withdrawing the sense organs from their respective objects and placing them in their respective places. Uparati is non leaning on external objects. It is the spirit of sannyasa. Titiksa is forbearance of pain without complaint. Sraddha is ascertainment that the Sastra and the words of the Guru are the means of knowledge.

Samadhanam is non wavering of the mind and ability to focus on Brahman.

Mumuksutvam is the desire to give up bondage or a sense of inadequacy and insecurity through understanding one's true self.

**APPROACHING A GURU:** A qualified student, desiring to know atma tatvam, approaches a learned Guru, who can give freedom from bondage.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GURU:** Guru should know the sampradaya, the content and method of teaching and should have received the same from his Guru. He should be free from unethical activities, reveling in Brahman, calm like a flame without disturbance, having compassion and helpful to the seekers. The seeker should express his devotion to the Guru through prostration, humility and service.

**SISHYA'S PRAYER:** Sishya prays as follows: "Oh Guru! I am scorched by the forest fire of samsara. I am shaken by the winds of papa. I see no other refuge. I surrender to you. Please protect me. Saints like you are composed, doing good to others like spring without expecting anything in return. Having crossed samsara, you make others cross samara by giving knowledge."

**GURU'S ASSURANCE:** In response to the Shisya's request seeking freedom from Samsara, the Guru replies: "Oh Vidvan! Do not worry. I will show you the way to cross samsara. This samsara that you experience is due to the identification of the self with anatma. The fire born of the discriminative knowledge of atma-anatma burns samsara along with its roots."

**SISHYA'S QUESTIONS:** "What is bondage? How did it come about? How is it sustained? What is the way to freedom? What is anatma? What is atma? How to differentiate them?"

**GURU'S ANSWERS: The Guru starts to answer the questions: 'I will teach that by which atma-anatma viveka is done. Listen carefully and ascertain for yourself.'**

**WHAT IS ANATMA? Anatma can be explained in the following ways:**

- **Anything that can be objectified**
- **Avidya and its products**
- **Three gunas and their products**
- **Three bodies**
- **Three koshas ( locus for committing mistake)**

**Gross body, subtle body and causal body are all anatma.**

**Gross body** is born of grossified elements **due to purva karma**. It is an abode for experience of pain and pleasure derived from the gross objects of the world. The distinct state of the gross body is the **waking state**.

**Subtle body** is presented as a group of 8 cities consisting of the five organs of action, five organs of perception, five pranas, five subtle elements, the intellect, avidya – confusion between self and non-self, kama and karma – action and its result. It is born of the subtle elements. Its presence indicates that jiva is present in the gross body and hence it is also called **lingasarira**. Subtle body accounts for the difference between inert and sentient. It has impressions of previous experiences. It causes the experience of pain and pleasure. It becomes an adjunct to the atma due to its qualities being mistaken to be that of the atma. The distinct state of a subtle body is the **dream state**. Just like chisel is a tool for the carpenter, the subtle body is the tool for all activities of the jiva.

**Causal body** is the cause for both the gross body and the subtle body. Total causal body is called Maya or Avyakta. Maya is the sakti of Paramesvara. It is beginningless and has three gunas (aspects) -**sattva, rajas and tamas**. Maya **cannot be categorically explained** as independently existent (sat) or non-existent (asat), separate or identical

with Brahman, and as being with parts or without parts. It is thus a great wonder that escapes any categorical explanation. It can be discerned through its effect only by a refined mind that is exposed to Shastra.

The Avyakta composed of the three gunas is the karana sharira. The distinct state of a causal body is the **deep sleep state** in which the mind, its functions and the sense organs are resolved.

**WHAT IS ATMA?** The Guru now starts answering the question.

**Knowing the real nature of atma, one is freed from bondage.**

**ATMA: Atma is manifest through "I" thought.** It is the witness of three states of experience. It is distinct from the five koshas (as though coverings). It illumines the presence and absence of the mind and its thoughts during waking, dream and deep sleep. In its presence, everything becomes evident. It is self-effulgent. It is of the nature of pure consciousness.

**WHAT IS BONDAGE? :** Having **"I" sense in the anatma due to ignorance, is bondage** and is the cause for samsara. Just as a silk worm gets trapped in its own cocoon, the jiva get bound to samsara due to this ignorance of the atma.

**HOW BONDAGE:** Maya's *avarana sakti* (veiling power) covers the atma 'as it were' which is part-less consciousness like shadow covering the sun. Maya's *viksepa sakti* (projecting power) makes one think that the anatma body is atma ("I"). It afflicts him with binding desires and anger.

**HOW BONDAGE IS SUSTAINED:** For tree of samsara, **ignorance is seed**; identification with body is the sprout; the desires are the shoots; **papa and punya karma are water**; the body is the trunk; the pranas are the branches, the sense organs and organs of action are the tips of branches, the sense objects are the flowers and sorrow **is the fruit. Jiva is the bird, feeding on the fruit.**

**HOW FREEDOM IS GAINED FROM THIS BONDAGE:** By **commitment to Shruti with shraddha and Svadharma with shraddha**, one gains a pure mind. Study of the scriptures with this purified mind leads to atma

jnana. This knowledge of the self destroys samsara along with its root, freeing the person from this notional bondage.

## HOW TO DISTINGUISH ATMA FROM ANATMA

This is explained in two steps which make up the important stages in the understanding of atma.

- **Atma – Anatma Viveka based on Drk-drshya viveka**
- **Resolve drshya into drk.**

This atma-anatma viveka is to be done very carefully as even separating the stalk from munja grass. If one is not careful, the fingers may get cut or the grass may get damaged. Similarly, one may walk away with a wrong understanding of the atma or may not understand it completely, if viveka is not performed carefully requiring shraddha and a subtle and capable mind.

Further, Viveka is explained with the help of Pancakosha prakriya. All the five kosas are anatma due to their nature being different from atma.

The **physical body or annamaya kosa** is a modification of food, born, sustained and going back to food. The physical body is a pack of dermis, epidermis, flesh, blood, bone and excreta. It cannot be the part-less, eternal atma because it is impermanent, always changing, made of parts, inert and can be objectified.

**The pranamayakosa** is a modification of air. The pranamaya kosa is made up of the pranas endowed with five organs of action. It cannot be the atma as it is subject to modification, coming and going, is inert and is dependent on food for its sustenance.

**The manomaya kosa** consists of five organs of perception and the mind. It is the cause of division of objects as "mine" and "I". It cannot be the atma as it has a beginning and end, changing, experiencer of unhappiness and can be objectified. Discovering that 'I'm' not the mind is the ultimate solution to all mental issues.

**The vijnanamaya kosa** is made of the buddhi with its thought modifications and the sense organs of perception. It identifies with the

body-mind-senses as 'I', creating the sense of being a 'doer'/ 'enjoyer', and is the cause for samsara. Vijnanamaya enlivened by reflected consciousness is the jiva. It performs all karma and experiences the results of karma taking birth in various forms. It cannot be the atma as it is ever-changing, inert, limited, objectified, time bound and inconsistent.

**The anandamaya kosa** is a modification born of avidya, endowed with the reflection of ananda. During the experience of ananda, avarana shakti is predominant, vikshepa shakthi is resolved momentarily as one no longer identifies with the body-mind-sense. It seems to manifest in different levels -priya, moda and pramoda, when in association with objects of desire. It cannot be the atma as it is conditional, being a modification of prakrti, has different gradations of experience.

By cognitive separation and not by physical separation, one negates the five kosas. After negation, what remains is the Saksi, witness consciousness, in the form of bodha, knowledge.

**TVAM PADA VICHARA: JIVA SVARUPA:** A viveki understands that atma is self-effulgent and is always of the nature of fullness. **Consciousness alone is real. Everything else is only name and form.**

Now, the Sishya raises a question that after negating everything he did not find anything remaining. Guru replies that **when everything is negated, the knower of this absence remains un-negated.** One should understand that he is that Atma which shines as 'I', which by itself is not objectified.

After understanding that the nature of oneself as pure consciousness, Isvara and the world still remain. Complete knowledge is gaining the understanding that I'm the cause of the world, the reality of the jiva, Isvara and the jagat. In order to accomplish that, TAT PADA has to be enquired into.

**TAT PADA VICHARA: BRAHMA SVARUPA:** When one understands oneness between Atma and Brahman, he is released from samsara and gains freedom from the sense of limitation.

Brahman is defined in two ways:

- **Tatastha laksana**, indirect means using extrinsic features, as **cause of this jagat**.
- **Svarupa lakshana**, direct means using the intrinsic feature, as **Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam**.

Brahman is pure existence (Satyam) unconditioned by any object, which is unqualified consciousness (Jnanam). Since it is free from any qualifying factors, it is not limited by space, time or object (Anantam). In the Sruti, Ananta is referred as Ananda, because the seekers are interested in happiness.

**Brahman is the truth upon which the jagat comprising of all nama-rupas are superimposed.**

This truth is pointed out by quoting both from the Sruti and Smriti.

**Mundakopanisad 2.2.11** declares that this world is Brahman. The world which is superimposed cannot be apart from its adhistana, the locus. If the jagat is taken as satyam, then Brahman will have limitation of space and object, Vedas will become apramana and Isvara will become a liar. Hence it is illogical.

In **Bhagavad Gita 9.4**, the Lord says that the jagat is not independent of the Lord, but the Lord is independent of the jagat. Moreover this jagat is not perceived in deep sleep. Jagat is superimposed on Brahman like the snake superimposed on the rope.

**ASI PADA ARTHA:** Chandogya Upanisad states “tat tvam asi” nine times pointing to oneness of Jiva and Isvara. The vachyārtha of Jiva and Isvara, have mutually opposite qualities like the glow-worm and the sun, the well and the ocean, the servant and the King and the atom and the Himalayas. The difference between Jiva and Isvara is only in the upadhi. Jiva’s upadhi is panchakosa and Isvara’s upadhi is maya. A king has the upadhi of kingdom and a soldier an armour. If the upadhi is removed both of them are nothing but human beings.

The implied meaning of Jiva and Isvara cannot be arrived by jahad lakshana or ajahand lakshana. But it can be arrived at by jahad ajahad laksana or bhaga tyaga laksana. The implied meaning of Jiva and Isvara can be arrived at, only after dismissing the upadhis (attributes) and understanding both of them as chaitanya.

From the statement "This is that Devadatta", we understand that it refers to the same substantive, a person although the place, time and qualities are different. Similarly oneness in the form of consciousness is understood between Jiva and Isvara as revealed by hundreds of mahavakyas. Only this Sat exists. The creation is nothing but super imposition of name, form and function to this Sat.

Dream is a pradhikasika satya or subjective reality, dismissed on waking. Similarly the world called vyavaharika satya or empirical reality is dismissed from the stand point of parmartika satya or absolute reality.

**FRUIT OF KNOWLEDGE: JIVAN MUKTI:** Jnani understands himself as limitless consciousness. He is free while living. He has clear understanding of atma and has uninterrupted happiness. For him the world is as good as forgotten. He has no 'I' or 'mine' sense. His body follows just like a shadow.

He is not engaged in brooding of the past, anxiety about the future or obsession for the present. He sees everything as Isvara's order. He sees everything as manifestation of Isvara. In his vision, there are no desirable or undesirable qualities or objects. He has equanimity whether he is worshipped by noble people or criticized by immoral people. A Jnani will not depend upon external situations for happiness and security.

Actions done during dream are falsified on waking up. Similarly after getting Brahma jnana, sancita karma accumulated over millions of earlier births gets dissolved. Space is not tainted by liquor smell in a pot. Similarly agami karma done after Brahma jnana, do not affect the Jnani as he has no doer-ship.

**PRARABDHA OF A JIVANMUKTA:** From the view of an ajnani, it appears at the empirial (vyavaharika) level that even after jnana,



prarabhda karma continues. An arrow released thinking that the target is tiger, will hit even if it is known to be a cow later.

For a Jnani, from the absolute (paramartika) point of view, there is no prarabhda., just as there is no connection for the waker with the dream objects after waking up. There is only non-dual Brahman.

**THE ESSENCE OF TEACHING:** The reality of Jiva and the Jagat is the same non-dual Brahman. They appear as different due to the various names, forms and functions. Abiding in the understanding of non-dual Brahman is moksha. Sruti is the only pramana with reference to Brahman.

**SISHYA'S GRATITUDE:** Sishya expresses his gratitude to the Guru, since only due to the Guru's grace he gained atma jnana. He says that he is blessed; he has accomplished what is to be accomplished; he is able to clearly appreciate himself as happiness, i.e. fullness; he has gained his svarajya. He salutes the Guru again and again, due to the deep sense of gratitude.

**GURU'S FINAL MESSAGE:** The Guru blesses the Sishya and advises him to recognize atma everywhere, see himself as consciousness and enjoy atma ananda.

The Sishya reverentially salutes the Guru and take leave of him. The Guru moves around sanctifying the entire earth by his mere presence and teachings.