

Chandi Path, Vedoktam & Tantruktam Ratri Suktams (pps 90 to 98)

Broadcast live from the Devi Mandir by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Class Duration, 48 mins

Contents

- Discourse
- Question & Answer Session
- Further Information

Discourse

Om Sam Saraswatyai Namah. Namaste.

On page 86, we are going to read the Vedoktam Ratri Suktam followed by the Tantruktam Ratri Suktam on page 89 because they are related and we will discuss the relationship in a few moments.

Swamiji recites pages 86-93 in Sanskrit

Vedoktam Ratri Suktam

Let go back to page 86 and we will begin to translate The Praise to the Night of Duality. The first question is “Why do we want to praise the darkness of duality?” The most obvious answer is that you only know the light because of the darkness. Were there never any darkness, we would never see the light. How could you distinguish the light if there were no darkness? So the night of duality exposes the dawn and the sunrise of unity. The darkness of ignorance exposes the light of wisdom and that is why we are praising Her. We are praising Her in such a way as to say, “Hey, you did your job and exposed the wisdom. Now, we dwell in the light and thank you very much for leaving. Thank you very much for exposing wisdom to us, showing us the true way, and now you have left. Pranam.”

And now the actual the Durga Saptasati, the seven hundred offerings in praise of the Goddess Durga, begins actually with the Vedic praise of the night and it ends with the Vedic praise of the Goddess who is Unity. And in the middle are seven hundred verses or seven hundred oblations which tell us how we got there, how we make the transition from being subservient to the spell of the Goddess of Darkness, the delusion of ignorance, to the one Goddess of Unity.

Verse 1

This delusion of darkness and this ignorance is giving birth to individuality in many forms. So now we are seeing the individuals and we are not seeing the whole. We are not seeing the Divine. We are seeing the individual forms in this delusion of maya in this sankhya. We are seeing all the maya which keeps us from understanding the reality of unity.

Verse 2

So now this light is omnipresent. This darkness is also omnipresent. Here's a little story. One day, Darkness went to the Lord and said, "Lord, I know that you have perfection pervading throughout your creation. I read in the Vedas that it is all perfect. Because it is perfect, there is a reason for everything. Nothing happens without your order and I want to know the reason why the Sun is always chasing me around the Earth. From the dawn of creation, the Sun has been chasing me around the Earth. After all these years, I am tired and I would like to sit down and rest. Just for a minute let me catch my breath. Lord, please tell me why the Sun is chasing me around the Earth." The Lord said, "I better ask the Sun about this." He called the Sun and Darkness departed. He said, "Sun, why are you always chasing Darkness around the earth. Since the dawn of creation, Darkness has been fleeing from you. You have been chasing her all around the Earth and she never gets a chance to rest. Now tell me, what is the meaning of your behavior?" And the Sun said, "Lord, I am sorry for any inappropriate behavior but I have never seen Darkness. You please bring Darkness and show her to me and I promise won't chase her away." The light never saw the darkness; the darkness sees the light coming and flees.

Verse 3

Darkness is giving the definition. The light is coming, I got to split. The Goddess who comes and the Darkness departs. That is why we are praising the darkness. Thanks for leaving. It was nice of you to leave.

Verse 4

So remember the Vedic proverb: There are two birds sitting in the tree. One bird was busy pecking at all the fruits in the tree and the other merely sat and watched. So now we are saying "May we see Her effortless, unimpaird movements upon the earth, this is the Goddess of light, may we see the light as the bird sees from its dwelling in a tree." We can be the witness without attachment. Darkness has fled and now here we are the bird in the tree who is the witness of all activity in the creation.

Verse 5

That is what we are all looking for. Everyone one of us in every activity is looking for She, the Goddess of the Light. In everything we do is designed to bring us closer to light and to put us in a greater state of perfection.

Verse 6

They are the thieves. They are stealing from us the true nature of the soul. They are stealing from us. These wolves are devouring our divine nature, our divinity. They are stealing from us efforts we make to illuminate divinity.

Verse 7

Usha rneva yataya. Usha, please dismiss this ignorance and bring the sunrise. Oh dawning light, dawn on me and let this darkness and this individuality and all the blackness that surrounds me dissolve into the light.

Verse 8

That is, my nectar-like words are just like the milk of pure nourishment from a very beautiful cow, the best and most privileged cow in the goshala. That's the cow's milk I am going to offer to you with the nectar of my words. Vijaya bhava. "Hey, Night of Duality, thanks for leaving. It was nice to have you here and it is even nicer with you gone. Thank you so much." And that is the Vedic praise of the Goddess.

Tantroktam Ratri Suktam - The Tantric Praise to the Night of Duality

Now, let's talk about the tantric praise of the Goddess which comes from Chandi. Why is this called the tantric praise of the Goddess? Remember, Brahma was sitting there on the lotus coming from the Vishnu's navel and Too Much and Too Little said, "Hey, that looks like a nice place for us to sit. Let us devour the Creative Capacity and stifle the creativity of the consciousness of the universe. We will make him or her bereft of creativity. We will just devour your creativity." Vishnu was asleep and Brahma said, "I am an old man and I can't fight with these two strong, heroic warriors. I better wake up Vishnu." He tried repeatedly to wake up Vishnu but Vishnu didn't move because he was in yoga nidra, the sleep of perfect union. This is another form of darkness. "He is oblivious to Too Much and Too Little who are stifling my creativity. They are about to eat my creativity capacity and Vishnu is totally in darkness to the outside world. I am going to praise the Goddess of Darkness and let Her wake up Vishnu so that He can protect me." That is why it is called the tantric praise of the night of duality.

Verse 1

So The Revered One of Brilliant Light, that is the Brahma, the Creative Capacity within each of us who is facing immediate harm and impending destruction by the forces of Too Much and Too Little. They are saying, "Hey, get off that asana. You can't sit there. You can't meditate. Get up and get some more. Get up and get rid of something. You don't have the right amount. Don't just sit there." The Revered One of Brilliant Light extolled the Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the Perceivable World, Cause of evolution and devolution, Goddess of Sleep, the unequalled Energy of Consciousness.

The Creative Capacity said:

Verse 2

Svaha, God is my own. Svadha, those who support are my own. You are the consciousness of all the threes.

Verse 3

The eternal half-vowel or anusvar, the sound of an atom. It comes like a yawn, from where the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth unite and the axis of the sushumna, which is the meru danda that comes from muladhara to the sahasrara. At the point of junction between the two planes, you emanate a sound with a special mode of pronunciation.

Verse 4

The origin and the terminus and everything in between.

Verse 5

When you make mahapralaya and there is complete sanghar, there is not any duality remaining. Then You are the measurement of all existence. You are what is remaining.

Verse 6

So She is knowledge and She is ignorance. She is this maya of Vedanta which says there's only one measurement of true existence and She is this maya of sankhya which says I can't see the one. All I see is the many. I'm so busy with this world and worldliness that I can't see oneness. She's the ignorance and She's the wisdom.

Verse 7

Verse 8

Verse 9

Every time we articulate a mantra, we beat another asura over the head with our club of articulation. The discus of revolving time - Here we have fixed time guys. We need patience because it does take time.

Verse 10

Verse 11

If I can think it or I can see it, I can perceive it through any sensory perception, I can dream it, I can hypothesize it, it's all You! Whether it's true, correct, or false or incorrect, it doesn't matter, it's you because You are everything. The energy of everything in all is You.

Verse 12

Who has the capacity to express the limits of infinity? How can I begin to extol your qualities, your characteristics? The Creator of the universe, the Protector of the universe, the One who

dissolves and transforms the universe is subject to your will. If God himself is a servant of Maya, then what will I say about it?

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

And look at how clever Brahma was. He said, “Hey, I know that if these guys are deluded by their own egotism, they’re going to put their own foot in their own mouth. They’re going to destroy their energy themselves and it won’t be difficult for Vishnu to slay them.” All you have to do is awaken the Consciousness of the Master of the world. Everybody awaken the Consciousness of the Master of the world! Don’t let Him sleep. Every one of your Vishnu’s should rise up and conquer these two thoughts for the sustenance of the creative capacity. Let Too Much and Too Little get deluded by the strength of their own egotism. It won’t be hard for them to make a mistake. We’ll just send them off to hell. I want just the right amount so that I can continue to create in peace. Please awaken your Vishnu and let Him protect you, He’s the Protector. Let Him protect the creative capacity within me. Don’t let your creativity succumb to Too Much and Too Little. Find your balance and stay there.

Om. Let’s see if there are any questions.

Question & Answer Session

You said that the praise of the dark Goddess of Duality is a bridge from the Chandi Path because it is a bridge between these two...

Swamiji: Yes, between the Ratri Sukta and the Devi Sukta.

But the Chandi Path itself is part of the Markandeya Purana and also all the other ungas.

Swamiji: No, the other ungas are coming from various sources not connected to Markandeya Purana.

And this is also coming from a different...

Swamiji: No, this comes from Markandeya Purana. This one, this tantric praise, comes from Chapter One of the Chandi.

So Markandeya is telling us to read the Vedic Ratri Sukta and Chandi...

Swamiji: And then you’ll reach understanding of the Rig Vedic Devi Sukta. So the Chandi Path, the actual 700 verses of the Chandi, begins with the Vedic Ratri Sukta and is completed with the Vedic Devi Sukta. Now, how do we get from the praise of the Goddess of Darkness to arrive at the union with the Goddess of Unity? The Chandi is the path that explains the sadhana; that explains step by step how we move from recognizing individuality in the darkness, the delusion of ignorance to recognizing the Goddess who is Unity. She travels with all the Gods, She supports all the creation, She is one with everything, and We are one with Her. How do you get to that understanding? How do you achieve that realization? Read the Chandi.

I know you said that Vishnu is the protector but why is He the one that fights Too Much and Too Little?

Swamiji: Yes, the protecting consciousness will protect us. They're all connected and there's only one warrior and that's me. My Brahma, my Vishnu, and my Shiva are going to lead me in the battle and these particular demons have won boons that require that we call upon various aspects of the Goddess to energize, withdraw the energy from the demons, and make them weak and foolish. And give that energy to the Gods and make them strong and intelligent so the Gods will be victorious over the demons, the demons will be defeated in the battle, the demons will go to heaven, the Gods will remain in control of the purity, the clarity, and all the pure qualities we wish to gain. And for this reason, we're praising the Goddess and saying, "Okay, now please withdraw your energy from the negative forces inside my brain. I don't want them to have any energy when they send me a thought. I just want it to be a limp thought that I can dispose of immediately. And if you want to give energy to anyone, then give it to the Gods within because those Gods are going to be so strong and formidable, they'll be well armed and when any demonical negative thought comes and tries to attack my mind, they won't stand a chance."

In the puranas, Lord Brahma lied and was cursed by Lord Shiva that he would not be worshipped except in a Shiva temple. Is this just a story, a tradition, or does it imply something about our own creative capacity?

Swamiji: It implies much for our own creative capacity. Many of us have a difficult time organizing our creativity. We know we want to do something and we want to make an expression of the sincerity of our devotion and yet we have constraints. Our creativity is bottled up and it's so difficult to extract that creative essence from ourselves that we tend to just find a job and do something else because we can't determine how to our creativity in a way that will be meaningful and valuable to many people. Brahma was cursed because he told a lie. And he's not worshipped as prevalently as Vishnu who protects or as Shiva who transforms because we all see that we're in transformation. We all see that we need protection but not all of us see how we take that creative essence out from the innermost sanctums of our temple and put it out there where everyone can enjoy it. And in this way, Brahma's lack of worship is evident.

Can you please tell us the difference between a suktam and a stotram?

Swamiji: No, there is no difference. Usually, a stotram is written in sama and a suktam is written in pava. So that's one difference but the differences are so small you'd have to be a nitpicky pundit in order to explain it.

In verse four of the Devi Ratri Suktam, it is said that She is ours now.

Swamiji: Yeah!

In verse three, it says the darkness departs, so is the She that is referred to in verse four the dawning light?

Swamiji: Yes. She is ours now and She's the dawning light and we are full of usham, we are full of the light of wisdom. The dawning light is ours and now, you remember the story, the sun never saw darkness. Fill ourselves with the dawning light and we'll never see darkness. Even when Too Much and Too Little come to attack us, we'll say, "Hey, we know what our goal is

and we know just how much we need in order to achieve our goal.” So now, how does Too Much and Too Little have any affect on us? We have just the right amount.

How do we worship Brahma?

Swamiji: The way we worship Brahma is to do the puja and do the sadhana and do the Chandi and then figure out what your values are, what your goals are, what your objectives are, and how I want to make it manifest.

Can you please speak to us about patient forgiveness and how to develop that quality in our lives?

Swamiji: It's patience and it's forgiveness and I've got to forgive others and I've got to forgive myself because I know I'm going to blow it too. And how do we cultivate that? We cultivate that through the sadhana, through the Chandi sadhana. It's the best way I know how because as we are expanding the length of our asana, we have to cultivate patience because somebody's going to come and say, "Hey, that's not comfortable, get up, move your knee, move your leg, stretch your foot, do something, get up." And we will be patient and understanding and forgive ourselves for the times where we have to get up and try to make it a little longer and a little longer and a little longer. Just expand your asana 5 minutes a month. Just 5 minutes a month, it's not hard. Every one of us can do it. Five minutes more. Put the clock there and don't get up until it's five minutes more. At the end of the first year, you'll be sitting an hour. And the end of the second year, you'll be sitting 2 hours. Mine was 40 years ago. Now, I sit 40 hours a day.

The Ratri Suktam purports to be about the Dark Goddess Ratri but only the first three verses are about Her. From verse four onwards, it appears that the Light Goddess is being described. Is this correct?

Swamiji: Yep, it is! And what a joy! We get to praise the Goddess of Darkness because She left and because of what She left behind – Her sister, the Light. So as soon as we see the light, we don't want to go back to the darkness anymore. And if I can figure out how to stay with the light, then why should I go back to the darkness? Why should I allow those wolves to devour me and tear at my flesh? The egotism, the thieves, why should I allow them? I'll call on the Goddess of Light. Oh, Goddess of Light, save me, protect me, show me what I can do to be in the light all the time. And She said to me to go to the Devi Mandir and chant the Chandi every day. Well, I'm no dummy. That's what I did and that's why I have this brilliant satsang. All these illuminated beings to associate with who are filled with light.

In verse two, it says that She is omnipresent in the Goddess of Places High and Low but we just said that She's not omnipresent, She leaves when the Goddess of Light comes.

Swamiji: Darkness is repelled by the light.

But here we're saying She's omnipresent.

Swamiji: Yes, and She is repelled by the light so the light is omnipresent.

So even this verse is talking about the Goddess...

Swamiji: ...of Light, yeah. And both are true because wherever you have light there has to be darkness in order for you to know that there's a light there.

The Tantric Praise is more direct and the praise is evident. The Vedic Praise is cryptic. I understand the different words but put it together and it's not very clear to understand. Does the understanding of the suktam happen through sadhana and intuition because really it's not very clear?

Swamiji: Vedic Sanskrit is much more poetic whereas Tantric or Puranic Sanskrit is much more demonstrative. So here in this Tantric Praise, we're saying directly, "Hey you! I know who You are and this is how I describe You." And in the Vedic Praise, we are saying, "You are like the light that illuminates the darkness. And Darkness has departed and She is our benefactor because She left us. And She exposed you and we're free from Her now." It's a form of poetry. Now remember in the Vedas, there are the suktams which are independent and individual. So there's a praise of the Goddess of Darkness, there's a praise of the Goddess of Dawn, there's a praise of the sunrise, there's a praise of the midday. And they're not exactly in chronological order. Now in the Chandi, there's a story. So we have one thread that's going right through the story and of course it's much more easily discernible because we're telling a story and that's how it comes out in chronological order.

Can you explain the half vowel in verse three of the Tantric Praise?

Swamiji: We said the anusvar, it's the m with the dot. And actually it's the song of an atom. It's the sound of one spot. And it's nasal. And it's pronounced differently around India and of course in California, it's pronounced correctly.

In yesterday's class, we were saying that in one stage of the development of an aspirant, there's the removal of the pin, starting to go, it happens, somehow it's mystical how it happens but it happens. And today we're saying that there is a second thing that happens which is awakening of the consciousness. So my question is, is there a tandem process going on between removing of the pin and awakening of the consciousness?

Swamiji: Are they tandem? No, they're the same process. We're removing the pin which means we're unlocking the secrets which means that we're getting closer and closer to opening the doors of the secret of perceiving consciousness. That is, the perceiver will perceive perception. Or the perceiver will perceive the perceived. There's only one. It's all consciousness. So now here when the process of opening up the pin means I can open up the door to the secret, it means I can enter into the mystery of consciousness perceiving its own Self. And that's the mystery. It's mystery in the sense that it's mystical. It's a mystical experience. Not in the sense that we have to call Inspector Clouseau to come and find out the answer for us but it's a mystery in the sense that it's mystical. It's a totally mystical intuitive experience. It's not a rational experience, consciousness perceiving itself. What does that mean intellectually? Who amongst us could define it? What rishi could say more than neti neti? So that's the mystery that we open the door to the secret and find the mystery. Consciousness is awakening to its own perception. I am the only being in existence and all of this is my extension. It's not a figment of my imagination; it's an extension of my being. And that is the reality. And now how do we get there? This is the sadhana by which we get to that understanding.

Om Sam Saraswatyai Namah. Namaste.

Further Information

36 classes were held in 2008 to discuss the Chandi Path. Please visit us on the World Wide Web at <http://www.shreema.org/> for the other classes and for more information. The Chandi Path text used in this class can be found at the online bookstore.