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**Dedication to Our Lineage**

This magazine is created with deepest gratitude to our spiritual teacher, our Guru and guide, Acharya Shunya, who is disciple of her Guru, Baba Ayodhyanath, who is disciple of his Guru, Paramatman Shanti Prakash. These eminent teachers, from Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India are bearers of sacred knowledge of Advaita Vedānta, as expounded in the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gīta and Brahma Sutras.

This magazine is a humble reflection of the non-dual Truth Acharya Shunya’s students have received from her live discourses in her Vedic Spiritual Studies Program at Vedika Global - Acharya Shunya’s wisdom school in Emeryville, California.
Letter from the Editor

Jai Maa,

Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 2 of The Hamsa Magazine

Advaita Vedānta guides us to go within to experience the unlimited consciousness infusing everything, everyone and all the spaces in between. Yet as we try to incorporate this wisdom, many distractions and complications seem to crop up. We get carried away by our cravings, ravaged by self-sabotaging thoughts, overwhelmed by our list of responsibilities. Wonderfully, the more we learn, contemplate and practice this spiritual science, we start to feel remarkable relief at a very tangible, ‘real world’ level. From this angle, being a spiritual seeker is a very practical and rational response to try and survive and ultimately transcend the difficulties we encounter in the world.

Taking it a step further, this issue’s articles share themes of how the path to transcendence is necessarily through the transactional. The worldly complications that we at first think we need to escape, forget, cast off or let go of are actually the signposts directing us to keep looking inward and the laboratories where we actually integrate the wisdom we have learned. It is not despite, but rather because of the mundane that we eventually succeed in remembering our Soul-nature.

New contributor, Nirāmayā, encapsulates Acharya Shunya’s teachings on Bhakti yoga and shows how connection to a God principle revolutionizes the way we approach our life responsibilities and relationships. With a shift in attitude, all thoughts and actions have the potential to become a reverent celebration of the Divine.

Contributing writer Ananta’s first in a series of upcoming articles on the ego reveals how the very same ego that we often say we wish would just go away so we can be free of its world-obsessed distractions, is actually a necessary and powerful tool to guide us toward a spiritual path.

Many more gems are waiting in the pages ahead to illumine your path...

In Service,

Ishani Naidu
Editor in Chief
The Ego's Artificial Value Adds

There is a misstep that many of us frequently make when it comes to the ego. A common mistake is to artificially create value for ourselves by pursuing external factors such as jobs, property, fame, and money. This is not to say that these factors are inherently bad or should be avoided, but rather that they are not the ultimate source of fulfillment and happiness.

Without one, I feel dead.” A similar phenomenon happens with jobs, property, fame, money, etc. There is a kind of man-made value added to the ego that can make us feel full or complete.

This is an example of the ego's artificial value adds, which is an attempt to fill the emptiness within by relying on external factors. However, this approach does not lead to true inner satisfaction, fulfillment, wholeness, or peace.

In addition to “aham,” the ego in Vedānta is also known as ahankāra. This term refers to the false sense of self-importance, or the ego’s identification with the body. The ego is often identified with our profession, associations, possessions, and beliefs.

The Journey of Where to Wake up

The journey of waking up is a process of realizing the true nature of the ego. The ego is a false sense of self-importance, which is not our true self. It is like a wave in the ocean, temporary and impermanent.

The ego is a source of dissatisfaction, as it always wants more. It is the root cause of all our problems, as it always seeks external factors to satisfy our desires.

Soothing activities like taking a walk in nature and listening to tranquil music help the ego to fall from superficial concerns.

The Invitation to Soften the Ego

The invitation, instead, is to soften it. The ego is a complex phenomenon, and it is not something we can just摧毁 in order to come closer to our true Self.

The ego starts to crumble away the more it is exposed to the Truth. Satyam eva jayate is a beautiful expression of this. The ego is a method toRealisation, not a barrier to Realisation. The ego is not an obstacle to our spiritual progress, but rather a tool.

Practical ways we are invited to soften the ego include:

- **Observing the Ego:** One of the best ways to observe the ego is through the practice of meditation. When we practice the Vedāntic Invocation, we are able to observe the ego as it arises.

- **Surrendering to the Present Moment:** Anything we observe stops having power over us by the power of objectivity. We are not what we can observe.

- **Surrendering to the Present Moment:** Another way to observe the ego is through surrendering to the present moment. This allows us to experience the ego as it is, without judgment.

- **Practicing Compassion:** Anything we observe stops having power over us by the power of compassion. We are not what we can observe.

The ego is not a problem that needs to be solved, but rather a source of dharma. It is a source of spiritual progress, and it is a tool for self-realization.

The ego is a method to Realisation, not a barrier to Realisation. The ego is not an obstacle to our spiritual progress, but rather a tool.

When the ego softens, it becomes our friend. We can recognize it, see its nature, and work with it. When we observe the ego, we are able to see its nature, and we can work with it.

When the ego softens, we are able to see its nature. We can work with it, and we can let it go. When we let the ego go, we are able to experience the Truth.

The ego is not a problem that needs to be solved, but rather a source of dharma. It is a source of spiritual progress, and it is a tool for self-realization.

When the ego softens, we are able to experience the Truth. The ego is not an obstacle to our spiritual progress, but rather a tool.

The ego is a method to Realisation, not a barrier to Realisation. The ego is not an obstacle to our spiritual progress, but rather a tool.
Connecting Jñāna and Bhakti

Bhakti yoga can be understood through the following three definitions.

1. The first definition is bhakti (devotion to God): Bhakti is the very heart of bhakti yoga. It is the loving care of God in its many forms and is the root of all devotional practices. The practice of bhakti yoga is essentially a form of worship, where we offer love and devotion to God.

2. The second definition is bhakti (devotion to God, or I belong to God). Quoting Acharya Shunya, most people wear masks and are leading lives they are not meant to lead because they try to find their sense of identity and of the necessity of destruction for the upkeep of the universe. Resistance cuts off my channel to divine help. By using bhakti, I am able to tune in to the universal energy that is flowing through me.

3. The third definition is bhakti (devotion to God, or I am a portion). Bhakti also means that I am a part of God. In bhakti yoga, we learn to connect with God and to live in God's home.

Understanding Bhakti

Bhakti yoga is an identity that changes the way we perceive the world.

Chasing a God

Through these teachings, Īshwara's power is revealed to me. Rather than from individual muscle, true power comes from increasing our personal sattva and combining it collectively. This is why Īshwara pulls us together.

Suppose someone is projecting their issues onto me and my mind is screaming to react. Instead, quieting my mind, I recognize the source of the disturbance. I am simply choosing responses from a place of purity within. I do not need to fix or eradicate parts of myself to let the light shine through. The light that comes my way is dying. At deeper knowledge states – where my connection with Īshwara, I am no longer a tiny isolated speck – in my expansiveness, I know that only a part of the light is what I see.

Purification and contemplation reveal God within me. The third definition is bhakti (devotion to God), or I am a portion. Bhakti yoga is essentially a form of worship, where we offer love and devotion to God.

In Practice

All bhakti yoga is self-yoga. In bhakti, there is a constant feedback loop between the practitioner and God. The practitioner is engaged in a dialogue with God, and God is engaged in a dialogue with the practitioner. This dialogue is a form of meditation, where the practitioner confronts the ego and the ego confronts the practitioner.

Through this interactive process, the ego is transformed and the practitioner becomes more aware of God. The practitioner is not just seeking God, but also being transformed by the process of seeking God.

Conclusion

Through this constant process, God's presence is revealed to the practitioner. God is not sought, but revealed through the practice of bhakti yoga.
Contemplate the following:

provide insight in each step.

template for a life of wholeness. If you are ready to experience abiding happiness in your life, this simple teaching can

When we understand this relationship between Knowledge, Respect, Worthiness, Wealth, Dharma and Joy we have a

lived experience of Joy.

sva-dharma

These kinds of universal right actions lead to Joy. When we fulfill dharma we fulfill our destiny, we live in our

manifest in the many blessings of our lives, we experience spaciousness and generosity. We naturally make choices and

When we are in flow, we are in a state of deep connection to universal ethics. When we understand our wealth to be

action, which in turns brings us Joy

Dhānam gives Dharma, from Dharma comes Sukham – A life of true abundance naturally leads us to right

of flow emerges. This leads to

enjoying the blessing of a son, etc. This whole life we lead is a life of blessings. From this abundance on all levels, a sense

wealth. We can also have

Instead of living a deprived miserable existence, with vinaya we have achieved some “dhān”. Shāstra is itself a kind of

comes from this Vinaya. When we understand the many meanings of dhānam we recognize the many gifts of this life.

brings happiness in our lives and our relationships. Material health, social relationships, physical health – everything

are doing our own inner work to purify our minds and egos. The knowledge of Self is there, but if our minds are in

confusion and a constant state of reaction, we won’t be able to receive this wisdom from our teacher. No matter how

much we hear, we cannot Know. It is only when we have Vinayam that we are able to develop patience – to become

true viyāda, rather it is information. Knowledge then in this context is the knowledge of the Self. Only this viyāda creates

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We think we want wealth for happiness, but how can we have wealth and be able to build success

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We need to master the art of abiding in joy.

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The three vāsanās are like three different clothing the ego wears. They revolve around the body (deha vāsanā), and we are dismayed by the process of aging: every gray hair, wrinkle, and loss of vitality can disturb our peace of mind.

Ananda

When we share knowledge from the space of lived experience of what we are teaching, it has power. What gets acquired in spiritual knowledge is when information becomes wisdom. What we have heard has now become our experience – we have verified the truth of what we have been taught in the laboratory of our own lives.

Stage 2: Contemplation

We can similarly connect with our most creative, original expressions of ourselves and thereby produce our best...
In the story, the disciple emerges as a pearl, returning as a Knower (brahmajñāni), an evolved one (pertaining to the body, mind, or scriptures). In essence, our outer shell is compared to the Guru's protection, under which the disciple dwells, developing spiritual forces that come together to set the right environment so the disciple encounters the master for future re-prioritizing of their lifestyle to pursue Self-knowledge full-time. They may even change jobs, work part-time or become hermits. The disciple is now only in quest of the abiding bliss of the Self. So the disciple has no qualms in truly facing their learning opportunity, value it as a priority, and give it their full attention. For this they may need to re-learn their old jobs, re-enter the professional society, re-enter their learning opportunity, value it as a priority, and give it their full attention. The world says the student has become a hermit. In reality, the disciple is getting ready to be re-born with a new philosophy, perspective, humility, and emotional intelligence. Their mind is now fully transparent, an unexamined desire for the body often makes an initial and lasting impression - such as attraction to the biggest fire that grips their mind. No sooner do they try to quench it, but the desire for the body becomes stronger and stronger. This is the karmic or divine grace and bhutakarma that makes a disciple.

The disciple is now only in quest of the abiding bliss of the Self. Rebirth as a Knower (brahmajñāni) is the quintessential essence of the Upanishads from the eyes of Advaita Vedānta, as forwarded by Guru's counsel, the disciple already knows how unsubstantial is the drama of victory, name and fame earned in the world, won at such great cost, and how transient the worldly joy. We are always left unquenched; such is the truth. All else is Appearance." Then the disciple will spend their entire life, or a good part of it, threading this wisdom like a precious jewel. Indeed, the disciple has no qualms in truly facing their learning opportunity, value it as a priority, and give it their full attention. For this they may need to re-learn their old jobs, re-enter the professional society, re-enter their learning opportunity, value it as a priority, and give it their full attention. The world says the student has become a hermit. In reality, the disciple is getting ready to be re-born with a new philosophy, perspective, humility, and emotional intelligence. Their mind is now fully transparent, an unexamined desire for the body often makes an initial and lasting impression - such as attraction to the biggest fire that grips their mind. No sooner do they try to quench it, but the desire for the body becomes stronger and stronger. This is the karmic or divine grace and bhutakarma that makes a disciple.

In the story of the Swati Nakshatra (a star constellation), when the disciple emerges forth as a pearl, he or she returns as a Knower (brahmajñāni), an evolved one (pertaining to the body, mind, or scriptures). In essence, our outer shell is compared to the Guru's protection, under which the disciple dwells, developing spiritual forces that come together to set the right environment so the disciple encounters the master for future re-prioritizing of their lifestyle to pursue Self-knowledge full-time. They may even change jobs, work part-time or become hermits. The disciple is now only in quest of the abiding bliss of the Self. So the disciple has no qualms in truly facing their learning opportunity, value it as a priority, and give it their full attention. For this they may need to re-learn their old jobs, re-enter the professional society, re-enter their learning opportunity, value it as a priority, and give it their full attention. The world says the student has become a hermit. In reality, the disciple is getting ready to be re-born with a new philosophy, perspective, humility, and emotional intelligence. Their mind is now fully transparent, an unexamined desire for the body often makes an initial and lasting impression - such as attraction to the biggest fire that grips their mind. No sooner do they try to quench it, but the desire for the body becomes stronger and stronger. This is the karmic or divine grace and bhutakarma that makes a disciple.
adhikari: a student who has become a worthy vessel for Self knowledge
ahamkāra: the ego, the sense of "I"
aishwaryam: sovereignty
amritam: immortal essence
ānanda: wealth of every kind that is acquired by a worthy student
äpanoti: untruth
asrama: a stage of life with certain dharmic responsibilities to fulfill
ātmabodha: knowledge of the Self
ātman: the eternal and indestructible Self, refers to Brahman dwelling in all beings
bhāga: a portion or a part of something else
bhajya: a collection of Vedic spiritual hymns compiled by Adi Shankaracharya
Bhakti Yoga: a practice of infusing devotion into our pursuit of spiritual knowledge
brahmajñāna: one you have full knowledge and understanding of Brahman, or Ultimate Truth
Brahman: Ultimate Reality, the pure consciousness pervading the entire universe
Brahman abhyāsa: sustained practice of mentally thinking of ourselves as the deepest source of spiritual potency
chidāha: the Truth (of Brahman, or Supreme Reality) plus a reflection of that Truth.
deba rāsatā: ego-driven desires that revolve around the body-based obsessions
dhānam: gifted abundance
dharma: righteousness, duty, noble values
gamaya: to journey, to go
grihastha asrama: the household stage of life
Gurudhān: the blessing of having a teacher
Ishwara: the all-pervasive, divine god-consciousness
jagat: the objective, material world
jayate: having real existence
jīva: the embodied Self that includes the mind, ego and senses
jñānam: spiritual knowledge of the Self taught by an Āchārya
jñāna Yoga: knowledge of the Self
jyotir: light, truth
kāma: physical pleasure enjoyed through the senses
kalu dharma sādhanam: the vessel for performing all noble actions, an attitude to have toward the body
Karma Yoga: an attitude toward activity that is without expectation of reward or attachment to certain outcomes
loka rāsatā: ego-driven desires that involve the outer world
māyā: the changing reality superimposed onto objective reality
moksha: spiritual freedom due to the destruction of delusion, clear and total knowing what is eternal and non-eternal
moritur: subject to death, mortal
nīdīvāsā: the stage of learning spiritual knowledge, deeply contemplating on the teachings one has heard
prānayāma: breathing practices that help bring discipline to the body and mind
prasad: a blessing or gift from a divine source
purushārthas: the four legitimate goals of human life
putra dhān: the gift of a son
śakti: divine power, creativity, energy
śāstra: sacred texts revealing the Self
śāstra rāsatā: the excessive desire for knowledge and learning
shabdādhikāra: faith in the teacher and scriptures
shāstra vāsanā: the first stage of learning spiritual knowledge, deeply listening to the teachings
sūrdhān: the gift of a wife
śvabhāv: natural state, basic attitude
śvadharma: personal highest purpose, destiny
tamas: darkness, ignorance
Upāsana Yoga: disciplines for the body, mind, and speech that purify the ego
vinayam: knowledge from scriptures that awakens us to the Self
vinayam: the discipline and humility of studentship
vīryam: power, strength
yoga āsanas: physical postures that are part of a practice of disciplining the body and mind
Aparna Amy Lewis is the Dean of the Vedic Spiritual Studies program at Vedika Global and a life member of Acharya Shunya’s Vedic Ecclesiastical Council. She has studied with Acharya Shunya since 2009. As Dean, Aparna articulates how the central tenets of ancient Vedic spirituality will be upheld, nurtured and archived in a classroom setting. She oversees ethical and cultural leadership for the community of member students, and teaches students as an appointed professor of Vedic Ethics, Vinay and Dharma studies, and Spiritual Discipline (9-Step Advaita Vedanta Sadhana). Aparna is author of “Starting Your Spiritual Path: The Sadhana Chatushtayam - Advaita Vedanta’s Four-Fold Qualifications for Self-Enquiry” and is involved in setting up a global online archive of Acharya Shunya’s spiritual teachings for posterity. Aparna’s internal commitment is to the central truth of Advaita Vedanta – that we are all one. This inspires her to lead a life of service to this truth. Aparna was ordained into Acharya Shunya’s Vedic lineage in 2009, and since then, she has supported her Guru’s message in various key portfolios, including as Dean since 2014.

A student of Acharya Shunya since 2009, Ishani is a Vedika Certified Ayurveda Health Educator. She serves as Editor in Chief of The Hamsa Magazine. Ishani now lives in Coimbatore, India with her two small children and husband. In her free time she writes stories for children exploring themes of Ayurveda and Veda, and volunteers in schools and colleges teaching kids, teens and adults Ayurveda as a body mind and soul health science.

Nirāmayā Nalini Ramji has been practicing meditation and spiritual disciplines for more than twenty years and joined the Vedic Spiritual Studies program in 2017. She is also a student in Acharya Shunya’s One Year Ayurveda Self-Healing Immersion study program. She lives with her husband in a small coastal town in Marin County, California, and teaches mathematics part-time at a nearby community college. In her spare time, she loves writing, trying out Ayurvedic recipes, volunteering with the AV team, and studying Acharya Shunya’s archived teachings.

About the Magazine Title, ‘The Hamsa’

Just as the swan (Hamsa in Sanskrit) lives on water, but its feathers are never wet, similarly, an Advaita Vedantin (follower of Advaita Vedanta) dwells in the Mayā-filled Samsāra, fulfilling all duties, but remains untouched and unpolluted by Mayā. Such a one is called a spiritual Hamsa. Vedic seekers must effort to emulate Hamsa-like ideals in their personal lives.