

# Vivekachudamani Retreat 8-18 July, Thonse

## What do you think about...

### Verse 1: Prayer

1. Why can't the mind grasp the Self?
2. What mistake creates all suffering? What is root of everyone's confusion / seeking for more? Speak from experience.

### Verse 2: The Three Graces of Life

1. Why is human birth necessary for moksha?
2. What shifts mumukṣutvam into jijñāsā?
3. "Grace is earned. It's not accidental". Explain.

### Verse 3: Reason to Strive Now

1. What is suicide according to Shankara? [Wasting the precious opportunity. Explain]
2. What are we really seeking through desires? Attaining it or Freedom from it? Explain why. Speak from experience.

### Verse 4: Need for Knowledge on this Path

1. Why do people seek solutions everywhere except in understanding the very seeker, "I"?
2. How does the pursuit of artha, kama, dharma reinforce the sense of being limited?
3. What's the difference between recognizing the Self versus experiencing something new?

### Verse 5: Karma-Yoga Brings Purity

1. How do likes and dislikes prevent you from receiving help or being transformed by the knowledge?
2. Why does treating results as prasada (opportunity to grow) reduce victim mentality?
3. What makes the ring metaphor show action cannot reveal your true nature?

### Verse 6: Enquiry & Guidance Needed

1. What's the danger of thinking Self-inquiry means "going within" to find something?

### Verse 7: Success Depends on Readiness

2. What determines success in Self-knowledge more - having the perfect guru and ashram, or your own readiness? Why?
3. Why does an unprepared mind twist or misinterpret spiritual teachings despite hearing them correctly?

### Verse 8: Conditions for Success & Failure

1. Why isn't knowledge of the Self automatic or effortless like other types of knowledge?
2. What makes mokṣa (liberation) different from the other three human goals - dharma, artha, and kama?

### Verse 9: What are the Four Means?

1. What keeps a person's spiritual pursuit scattered across endless possibilities until they develop viveka?
2. How is virāga (dispassion / objectivity) different from disenchantment, apathy, non-concern?
3. Can you share a time when you enjoyed something fully but weren't devastated when it ended - what made that possible?

### Verse 10: Viveka

1. Can you share a moment when you realized seeking objects was really seeking freedom from insecurity?
2. Why does recognizing everything as time-bound paradoxically make life meaningful rather than meaningless?



### **Verse 11: Vairāgya**

1. What's one thing you've given tremendous importance to that you later realized had only the meaning you projected onto it?
2. How would your relationship with objects change if you saw them purely as means rather than ends?
3. Can you describe a time when intellectual understanding didn't immediately change your emotional habits?

### **Verse 12: Śama (Managed Mind)**

1. When have you resisted a situation you couldn't control, and what shifted when you accepted Īśvara's order? [Acceptance brought peace]
2. What would change if you truly saw your capacities as gifts from Īśvara rather than personal achievements?

### **Verse 13: Dama (Physical Restraint)**

1. Describe a recent situation where you successfully restrained an inappropriate response—what helped you pause?
2. When has removing yourself from a toxic environment been more effective than trying to mentally resist it?

### **Verse 14: Uparati (non-leaning on objects for emotional wellbeing) & Titiksha (endurance)**

1. What does "non-leaning on objects" (uparati) mean to you?
2. What is "endurance or ability to put up with small pinpricks of life" (titiksha) mean for you?
3. Repeatedly sharing your suffering story (ie: absence of titiksha) keeps you trapped in victim mentality. Explain.

### **Verse 15: Śraddhā (Trust in the teaching/teacher)**

1. How has the Vedantic teaching proven reliable in your own experience?

### **Verse 16: Samādhāna (one pointedness)**

1. "Mind is like an undisciplined child". What is your method of regaining some order/focus/concentration?

### **Verse 17: Mumukshutva**

1. When did you shift from seeking external solutions to questioning the "I" that feels limited?

### **Verse 19 & 20: Qualifications of a Guru & Attitude of the Disciple**

1. How can you tell if your devotion to teaching is genuine or performative?
2. Why must a guru's compassion be "without reason" to qualify as authentic?

### **Verse 23: Guru Expresses his Confidence**

1. What makes you "qualified to understand" (vidvān) according to this verse?
2. Which of the three processes (śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana) challenges you most personally?

### **Verse 24: Roles of Ignorance & Knowledge**

1. How does ignorance create bondage with the "not-Self"? [Misidentifying body-mind as true Self]
2. When have you mistaken a "rope for a snake" in your own life?

### **Verse 27: The Seat of Various Experiences – Physical Body**

1. If your current body and life circumstances are the "precise outcome of prior causes," how does this change your view of people born into privilege or poverty?



2. Can you identify a recent complaint you've had about your life - what would shift if you saw it as karma (product of an unseen past cause), rather than random unfairness?

### **Verse 28: "Eight Cities" of the Subtle Body**

1. What's the difference between 5 elements that makes up the mind, and 5 elements that makes up physical body?
2. If ignorance is in the mind (subtle body), then where is knowledge of reality?

### **Verse 29: Characteristics of Subtle Body & Dream State**

1. Can you think of a time when you confused something temporary belonging to your gross-subtle-body (mood, role, situation) with who you are? What was the "red rose" near the "clear crystal"?
2. "When point out what rose (upadhi) looks like, then the upadhi is negated". What does "negated" mean? Does it literally disappear?

### **Verse 30: Subtle Body as an Instrument**

1. When you say "I am angry" versus "anger is present / there is anger" can you feel the difference in identification? Create 5 more examples personal to you.
2. Suppose you're in tough or a fantastic situation. Then you remember, "Self (crystal) has no connection to this (upadhi)". How might this help you regain equanimity of mind?

### **Verse 31: What is Maya?**

1. What's the purpose of the Maya teaching?
2. What's the difference between Māyā's projection power (vikṣepa) and veiling power (āvaraṇa)?
3. How does the dream analogy help you understand Brahman projecting the world without changing?
4. When it says "Maya is ignorance", what is it actually saying?
5. How does understanding the three guṇas help you respond differently to challenging situations?
6. What's difference between maya & Ishvara?
7. Īśvara = \_\_\_ + \_\_\_.
8. Why would studying any science ultimately be studying Īśvara's Intelligence?

### **Verse 32: Maya is Indescribable**

1. Why is labeling things definitively (EG: "It's a pot, and that's that!"), in all cases erroneous?
2. Maya (pot) is neither *identical-to* nor *different-from* Brahman (clay). Explain.

### **Verse 33: What is the Unmanifest?**

1. What is the difference between your deep sleep and cosmic dissolution (pralaya)?
2. If the maya (macrocosmic causal-body) is the seed of the universe, what waters this seed into manifestation? What causes another big-bang?
3. When ajnani goes to sleep, all that remains is his individual causal-body. He then wakes up, and ignorance of Self continues, just as it was yesterday. What does this mean? Where is ignorance of Self located?

### **Verse 34: Introduction to the Self**

1. What does "limitlessness" mean for you?
2. What moments/events still trigger in you that sense of limitation or disorientation? Making you forget "Self has no connection to this"?

### **Verse 35: The Absolute Entity**

1. What's the difference between the unchanging "I" and the changing "I-thought"?



2. Which kosha do you most commonly mistake for your true Self? (Body, Energy, Emotions, Doubts, Thinking [need to be smart], need to feel good all the time [anandamaya]?)
3. "If dream-awareness was different from waking-awareness, then you couldn't say in the waking 'I dream'". Explain.

### **Verse 36: The True "I" or Self**

1. During your day today, did you notice any moment without the witnessing presence?
2. If you said "no" to above question, why would that be a contradiction?
3. "If thoughts are your intrinsic nature, you couldn't exist without them". Explain.

### **Verse 37: The Unseen Seer**

1. Why is it impossible for the mind to illumine ātmā?
2. What would happen if you were actually the happiness-vritti?
3. What is not evident to the Self?
4. Suppose you said "X is not evident to the Self", why is that statement a contradiction?

### **Verse 39: The Origin of Bondage**

1. What practical difference does it make in one's daily choices if one deeply knows "I am free of this body, and life"?
2. Can you share an example when you sought perfection in your or another's body/mind, or in some place/experience?

### **Verse 40: How Truth is Veiled**

1. What follows veiling in the waking state? (IE: "I don't have full knowledge of the rope, therefore \_\_\_\_".)
2. Based on Q1, how does this change your perception towards irresponsible acts? Can you truly blame the person?
3. Can you remember a time when you projected a false conclusion? What was the root cause of that projection?

### **Verse 41: Merciless Persecution by Rajas**

1. Why do we link objects (hopes, future dreams, better life, smoother relationship) with happiness?
2. "A denied desire produces anger". Why? Can you give example from your life?

### **Verse 46: Food Sheath**

1. What makes the body a "modification" of food?
2. When do you notice suffering from body-identification?
3. Why can't flesh and bone be the ever-pure Self?

### **Verse 47: Body is a Known Object**

1. How does consciousness (your true nature) differ from genes or atoms?
2. Why do we grieve lost youth if change is natural?
3. If can't find consciousness in one atom, then how many atoms do you need to add up to produce a brain that suddenly has consciousness?

### **Verse 48: Composition & Function of Pranamaya Kosha**

1. What is prana and how does it manifest in daily experience?
2. When have you felt prana draining or vibrant?
3. Why do we say "I am tired" instead of "the body is tired"?



### **Verse 49: Why Pranamaya Kosha is Not-Self**

1. What are the key reasons prana (energy) cannot be Self?
2. "I'm alive". This is identification with prana. How do you discern between "aliveness" and Self?
3. Why is prana called the most noble kosha?

### **Verse 50: Composition of Manomaya Kosha**

1. What happens when you see objects without likes/dislikes?
2. How does emotional charge distort what you perceive?
3. How does the mind shape itself to different objects? Give metaphor.
4. What's the difference between consciousness and sentiency?

### **Verse 51: Why Mind Cannot be the Self**

1. Why can't the changing mind be the Self?
2. "Mind's nature is sorrow". Explain.

### **Verse 52: Composition of Vijnanamaya Kosha**

1. Vijnanamaya is the decision maker, the inquirer in you (Atma). Give some examples of this.
2. How to discern between the I-thought (ahamkara/ego) and Self (atma)? This is CRUX of Vedanta.

### **Verse 53: The "Reflection of Consciousness"**

1. What creates the sense of individual "I"? [Reflected consciousness. Better word is "confined"]. Use example of "confined space" in a pot, to explain what "reflected consciousness" is.

### **Verses 54-55: The Nature of "Jiva"**

1. What compels jiva to keep performing actions?
2. Why does jiva need different bodies and realms?
3. Yesterday has affected today. This is called "karma". What is "karma" in your own words?

### **Verse 56: Vijnanamaya Cannot be Self**

1. Vijnanamaya manifests as changing roles, decision maker, inquirer/analyser. Why can't it be the real you?
2. How does deep sleep prove intellect isn't self-effulgent?
3. When does your sense of individual "I" temporarily disappear?
4. The fact that you were able to answer Q3 above, what does that show?

### **Verse 57: Composition & Features of Anandamaya Kosha**

1. Why is there fullness/happiness/freedom from concern in deep sleep?
2. How does calling yourself "happy" reveal ignorance of your true nature?
3. When have you experienced priya, moda, and pramoda in sequence - like seeing something desirable, getting closer to it, then finally enjoying it? [Personal experience varies]
4. Why would the seeker have no motivation to do anything without the anandamaya kosha?

### **Verse 58: Its Manifestation in the Three States**

1. If deep sleep is so blissful, why doesn't everyone pursue it as the ultimate goal?
2. What wakes you up out of deep contentment (whether nirvikalpa samadhi or deep sleep)?
3. Why is the bliss of deep sleep called a "reflection" rather than the real ānanda of Self?
4. When you say "I was happy yesterday," what does this statement?
5. Share a time when interruption of sleep made you angry. Why were you upset?



### **Verse 59: Conclusion: Anandamaya Cannot be Self**

1. What remains constant when your level of happiness changes throughout the day?
2. From now on, whenever you pursue “feeling good, becoming happy”, what are you placing your “I” in?
3. Share something that once made you extremely happy but no longer does - what does this reveal?

### **Verse 60: The Witness Survives the Negation**

1. After negating body, breath, mind, intellect, and happiness - what's the one thing you cannot negate?
2. “Self not hidden inside the koshas - waiting to be discovered”. Explain.

### **Verse 61: Summary: What is the Self?**

1. If the Self witnesses deep sleep where "time ends," what does this reveal about your relationship to time?
2. Self is the "unproved-prover". Explain.
3. Self is the “irreducible knower”. Explain.
4. Self has no relationship to anything. No relationship to life, body, karma, punya, papa. Explain + give metaphor.

### **Verse 62: Disciple: "Nothing Left After Negation!"**

1. When you negate all objects of awareness and there's nothing left, what does “there's nothing left” show?
2. Ever experienced a "blank void" in meditation, or total Oneness in some medicine/drug induced experience? What was there?

### **Verse 65: Always Shines as "I, I, I, etc"**

1. “Just like eye proves itself the fact there is sight of different forms. Similarly, Awareness proves itself by the fact that different experiences, sight, no-sight, etc - are evident”. Explain.
2. How can awareness illuminate "emptiness-experience" yet remain completely untouched by that emptiness?
3. Ahaṁkāra (ego) is that which contracts/expands. It's what everyone mistakes their “I” to. Give example when you (atma) identified with the expanding/contracting “I” (ego)?

### **Verse 66: You can do this! You were made to succeed!**

1. How does removing a "notional idea" differ from gaining something new through practice/action?

### **Verse 67: What is Consciousness?**

1. How does anantam (limitless) prevent mistaking Brahman for just "another existing thing"?
2. Why can't you judge a wise person (jivanmukta) by their mind-state or body-condition?
3. If vṛtti-jñāna (thought-knowledge) comes and goes, what "knowledge" remains constant before, during, and after thoughts?
4. How does the absence-of-thought being recognized prove awareness doesn't depend on thoughts?
5. Why can't an attribute (like sadness) permanently stick to awareness? What would happen if it did?

### **Verse 67b: A Pot is Only Clay**

1. Why do we say “clay is MORE REAL than pot”?
2. To say “clay is more real than pot”, is that a license to look down upon the pot? To call “pot” as illusion?
3. When clay becomes pot, then fork, then chair, was clay ever actually bound to any form?
4. When looking at your hand - are the bones there? Blood? Cells? Genes? Atoms? Because you don't “feel/see” them, does it mean they're not there?
5. If everything reduces to awareness eventually, why do you still experience solid, separate objects?
6. In your daily life, what is that one thing where it causes you to give more reality to the changing forms, and forget about it's underlining substance?



7. Ignorance of satya-mithya relationship is what cause you to feel small, isolated, unimportant. Explain.

### **Verse 68: Universe is Mithya**

1. If the pot (world, your body-mind) is only clay (Brahman), what exactly are you pointing to when you say "pot"?
2. "A mind resting in its truth, has no need to argue or prove how others are wrong. A mind not resting in truth - is loud, opinionated, and attacks other views". Can you relate?

### **Verse 71: The Lord's Words in the Gita**

1. What does Krishna mean by "I am not in them" and "they are not in Me / no being is in Me"?
2. From clay's perspective, why are there no pots "in" it?

### **Verse 73: A Superimposition Cannot be Independent**

1. Superimpositions (upadhis) are "meaningless". What does this mean?
2. Describe an experience where something that felt deeply meaningful, but later seemed insignificant?

### **Verse 75: Remove the Contradictory Qualities**

1. The liberated wave "respects differences in forms, while recognizing its truth". Convert this to standpoint of a jnani.
2. Why is it safer to say "I and Ishvara enjoy the same truth", over "I am the truth of Ishvara"?
3. In what everyday situations do you most forget your essential nature and identify almost completely with limitations?

### **Verse 76: Conditionings are Different & Unreal**

1. What is the key difference between Ishvara's upadhi (maya) and jiva's upadhi (panca-kosha)?
2. Which of your five sheaths do you find hardest to see "not I"? What will be your practice to reduce this residual identification?
3. If upadhis are mithya, why do we take them so seriously in daily experience?

### **Verse 77: Eliminating the Conditionings**

1. What does it mean to "negate" an upadhi intellectually versus destroying it physically?
2. How can a jnani simultaneously worship Ishvara and teach non-duality without contradiction?

### **Verses 79-80: Example - "This is that Devadatta"**

1. Imagine Devadatta gained 100 kilograms, lost all hair, and became a monk - at what point would he stop being Devadatta?
2. If gray-haired Devadatta insists "I'm not that young guy anymore!" - is he confused or just attached to his new upadhi?
3. If we need the sentence "This is that Devadatta" to INSTANTLY recognize Him despite superficial changes, how many lifetimes do we need to recognize "Tat Tvam Asi" (You are That Brahman)?

### **Verse 83: The Man of STEADY WISDOM**

1. How does akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti differ from ordinary pot-vṛtti?
2. Why must both intellectual and emotional obstacles be removed even after the akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti arises?

### **Verse 84: Jivanmukta's Fullness is Continuous**

1. What does "world is forgotten" mean?
2. What's the difference between a jivanmukta's actions to reach out and help, vs. ego-driven savior complex?



**Verse 85: Absence of 'I' and 'My'**

1. “Jñānī's relationship to the body is one of a trustee, and not of owner (mine!)”. What does this mean for you?

**Verse 86: Not Concerned**

1. What's the relationship between resolving past/future and appreciating ever present Ishvara's order right NOW?
2. “The law of karma (cause-effect) is impersonal. It doesn't love nor hate you. It just returns corresponding results based on quality of your past actions”. How does this statement change perception of what happens in your life?

**Verse 88: Even-Minded & Unperturbed**

1. When life throws you a surprise, how will you see presence of Ishvara in that situation? Use concrete examples.
2. What annoyance has lost its grip on you - happens less, bothers you less, or you bounce back faster?

**Verse 89: Receiving Worship or Torture Alike**

1. How does seeing praise/insult as return-of-past-investment, help you take it with more composure?

**Verse 91: Sanchita is Annulled**

1. If karma accumulated over lifetimes and you have infinite things to work out, how can it then vanish for you instantly?
2. What actually gets destroyed - karma or the believer in karma?
3. Does Self-knowledge destroy karma or reveal it never belonged to you?

**Verse 93: Unattached & Indifferent to Agama Karma**

1. What does it mean that Self "permits" without protest?
2. Why is a jnani not touched by agami (consequences generated by his present actions)?

**Verse 95: Prarabdha Has to be Worked Out**

1. Share an example where, although you changed for the better, it didn't stop consequences of the past.
2. Where is the jnani's mind attention during daily challenges?

**Verse 100: Prarabdha is Only a Relative Theory**

1. If prarabdha-karma (present life situations) is also mithya (like pot is to clay), then why does guru speak about it as if it's real?

