

Session 2 – Caste and Body types

January 19h, 2014

Jai Swaminarayan! Sahajanand Swami Maharajni jai, Bapashreeni jai, Sadguruoshreeni jai, Swaminarayan Bhagwanani jai, tatha anant anadi muktoni jai!

A humble prayer in their feet and lotus-feet of our Guru AMPP NarayanMama and LeelaMasi to augment this assembly with their divinity and grace, and to enhance our knowledge and guide us towards them.

Last week we talked about Soul, Atmanishtha, and touched upon 24 elements. There were also some questions and suggestions. So today, we will digress from our flow and talk about caste system first, because it seemed like there was some interest in talking about it more. After that we will continue with our conversation on soul-body-mind. Following soul-body-mind conversation next week, we will talk about what is liberation and why liberation and at that time, we will incorporate Vishalbhai's suggestion and cover why worship at all. To maintain continuity, moving forward, I would like to suggest that we whenever there are major topics like Caste system, we discuss them in a separate interaction. So as soon as we have 2-3 topics, we setup a separate session and Vishalbhai this is just a suggestion so that we have continuity in a given session on the topic that we are discussing. But just for today, because we will learn what works best for us as we move along, just for today we will digress and talk about caste system and move back to our main conversation on soul-body-mind.

The other thing is that because we were not able to leave any room for Q&A last week and we ran overtime, this time I think we should be done in about 45 minutes and there is a logical break at that time, but if we are not able to cover everything in 45 minutes, I will still pause at 45 minutes so that we leave room for any further conversation or discussion.

So what we will do today is, move away a little bit away from the norm of spiritual interaction, and play a quick and easy mental game. It is very simple. We need to pick a range of number that includes a given number. For example, we pick number 5 and a range from 0-10 includes number 5 and range from -10 to 20 also includes number 5, and a range from 4 to 100 also includes number 5. What we need to do is to pick a range of numbers that include the number 50. We do not have an interactive Webex, we cannot share what everyone's thinking, but think of a range in your mind that includes number 50. We will pause for 10 seconds and then share the experiences I have had when I have run this at other places. So let's pause for 10 seconds first so that everyone gets a chance to pick a range. PAUSE. Most of us – almost 80-90% (this includes me as well when I learnt about it the first time), pick the range anywhere between 0 -100. If we picked a range outside of 0-100, we are amongst the remaining 10-20% of the population. As part of my job, I have to lead change in the organization and in the sessions when I am bringing everybody onboard the change, we play this same game with my team and my executives and every single time most of the people pick a range 0-100. Why is that? Why don't we look at the big picture and pick a range from -ve infinity to +ve infinity, or for that matter, from -10000 to 10000? That

also includes the number 50. It is for 2 reasons – first, human beings always tend to think close to home and comfort zone than looking at a broader perspective, and second, we want to be accurate and correct all the time. Because of these 2 reasons, most of the people do not pick a wide range, they pick range close to the number.

And that's exactly what happens with a lot of our belief system and a lot of our thinking, and same goes with the perspective of the caste system. So let's do this today – let's step out that range of 0-100, and think infinity to infinity or take a broad perspective of caste system. It bothers me that India's caste system is so talked about, all over the world. Caste system existed in every culture, not just Hinduism. The problem is, that India has taken a guideline for building a structure in the society as something that is written-in-stone. For example (those on Webex. I have some slides up there. Those not on Webex, don't worry, I will be talking to the slides), Europeans, Hispanic/Latino, Japanese, etc. – everybody had a caste system. In Europe at the top was the Pope/Church. For the longest time the church ruled a lot of Europe. Then there are monarchs. Followed by the Nobles, then the knights & vassals, followed by merchants, farmers and craftsmen, followed by peasants and serfs. There was a similar system in Japan with Emperor at the top, followed by the Shoguns, followed by Daimyo, then the Samurais, then the Peasants, then the Chonins. I knew that there was caste system around the world, but I did not create these slides. We get a lot of information around this on the Web. I did not create these slides, I got them by googling on "Caste System in Europe." I have also shared the links to these images for those who are interested.

These cultures probably did not call it a caste system. They called it classes of the society, but irrespective of what you call it, it is creating that distinction in different classes of the society. So the caste system or the classification of the society has been around in all cultures around the world and is not limited to Hinduism or India. If one looks at these classes closely, it becomes evident that these classes were similar – at the top were the educated ones, the rulers and the nobles; the second level were the protectors, third level was the merchants and the trade people and 4th level was all the remaining. It is a very similar structure across all the cultures. Since similar classes existed all over the world, there seems to be a method to madness and as it is similar across the boundaries of cultures and nations, and maybe there was there a single source for their creation. Isn't it? Some Hindu deities like the trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh and Vairaj Purush have claimed to have created a caste system in some of the Purans and scriptures. So what is this caste system actually?

This reminds me of a story that my Mom used to tell me. By now I think you know that my Mom used to tell me a lot of stories. One of the stories she told me was that when the world was made, human beings did not know how to live. They went to Lord Shiva to ask for guidance. Lord Shiva was busy in meditation so the prime disciple Nandi was guarding the gates of Kailash and human beings asked Nandi, "What should we do? How should we live our day-to-day life. We don't know when to eat, we don't know when to do what." So Nandi said, "Fine. I will take your message to Lord Shiva and come back with an answer." So Nandi goes away for 2-3 days, finds Lord Shiv and talk to him and says, "Lord Shiv, Human beings have this problem.: And lord Shiv says, "Well. Tell them that "Tran vaar nahay an eek vaar khaay (meaning bathe thrice a day and eat once a day)." And along the way Nanadi was repeatedly remembering the answer and he switched it by mistake and he came back and told the

human beings, “Lord Shiva has said that you bathe once a day and eat thrice a day.” And that’s how our eating habits or diet system was formed. And I have always wondered what would have happened if we bathed three times a day. A lot more laundry and water. What I want to bring about is that when the creation was formed, human beings were so ignorant that they did not know what to do with the days that were given to them and live that was given to them.

So the caste system probably was formed to provide a framework for the society. Initially, during the early days of creation, there was a need to guide humans into a structure and help them understand what they are naturally good at. In management, we are taught to recognize our strengths and leverage them. There is a well-known book called Leadership by Strength, and a lot of senior executives struggle with it. Caste system is a framework that helps one understand one’s strengths or orientation – some have strengths in learning, science and education, some in protecting other and warfare, some in trade and commerce and some in service. Scientists have recently discovered that there are genes related to things like leadership skills, convincing skills, etc. There is a genetic code for that. So somewhere in the system of creation, our orientation was built into our genes and may be it was carried forward from one generation to the other. And the system was designed to help us understand at a high level what we are naturally good at or naturally capable of in a given body/birth. Doing anything different than our natural disposition would take a lot more effort – but it is not impossible, there are exceptions everywhere, it is just a little more harder. However, over the years, the genetic code is all mixed up, and those early principles no longer hold. Other cultures have moved on, and we do not see caste system anywhere else now. It is more or less gone. But India has either stayed in that old mind-frame or even worse, has moved backwards. In fact, what has happened is that with strong belief about one’s caste from generation to generation, it has become a built-in part of the ego system and clinged to us as a “Sanskar”. “Sanskar” here does not mean cultural values. We will talk little bit about “Sanskar” in the later part today. But there is an example here from Lord Swaminarayan’s lifetime that there was a lower caste boy and Shreeji Maharaj asked him to say a 100 times, “I am a soul and not a lower caste person.” So he said that 100 times and then Shreeji Maharaj asked him again, “Who are you?” and the boy replied, “I am a lower caste person.” So it has become ingrained in our Sanskar.

In past 50 years though, in India, it has been more of a political hype than anything else. There is some truth to it, I am not denying it, but some of it hype as well.

Before I move on, I wanted to share one incident from AMPP NarayanMama’s life. Binduben, you and Vidyanagar Satsang Mandal would remember this. NarayanMama used to come to Vadatal on Poonam (full moon) and whenever he would have time, he would come to Vidyanagar and usually visit Bipinbhai Swadas’ place. And in India we did not have the culture of using disposable glasses, so whatever is in the household will be used to serve water to the Satsangi’s who have come along. And you serve in batches after serving-washing-re-using the available utensils. There were about 50-60 people and they were being offered water, and NarayanMama was specifically offered water in a steel glass. This was because there was a belief that spiritually elevated people should be offered anything in steel utensils. NarayanMama actually explained it in a very nice way. He said the crystal glass, the transparent glass is cleaner than steel but it is a belief that steel glass is cleaner. And he explained that what happens is because it is easy to clean crystal, people simply wash it with water and do not use soap to clean it and

that's why it may not be as clean as the steel glass because steel glass needs to be cleaned thoroughly. But if clean the crystal as thoroughly as the steel glass, than it is cleaner than the steel glass. So what I want to say is that there were beliefs in the society and Anadi Mukta like NarayanMama would always come back and give us right understanding around those beliefs.

AMPP Mama used to say that caste is based on our deeds – if we are into education, meditation, worship, we are a Brahmin and likewise for other castes. The blind-belief in the Indian society to determine caste by birth is not the right way to look at it. Scientists have determined that the probability of the leadership genes not being passed from parent to child is not negligible, probability is substantial. So determining caste by birth may not be completely true in this age. The second level of determination comes from our natal charts – janma-kundali. In our Hindu natal chart, there is also a mention of varna or caste – and it determines what characteristics we are actually born with. So it is very possible that one is born in a Brahmin family is a Vaishya by natal chart and Shudra by deeds. The natal chart determines what we are born with. However, the natal chart is governed by the planets and constellations – that's where the limit is – it does not take us beyond that. Have we ever heard in any religion or culture that the Gods have a caste or ghosts and animals, for that matter have a caste? No. So that is the limit of this distinction – it is only in humans, and had some merits earlier, but those have been compromised. And even when it had merits, it was a guideline, not a rule.

The other thing in the society was no inter-caste marriage had 2 merits to it – first it made sure the genetic code was not in conflict (when it was not compromised) and second, it gave a basic idea about the value-system of the families involved and ensured the families could get along, and the bride and groom could get along in terms of values – it is better than getting into a complete unknown. So it had 2 merits and that's about it.

In the spiritual world, the caste system does not exist. Soul or any higher entity does not belong to any caste... In fact even the gender discrimination goes away beyond Mul-purush. Many devotees across all religions have been born into all different castes. AMPP NarayanMama took birth in Lohana community, AMPP Abaji Bapashree and Parvatbhai were from Patel/Kanabi community... AMPP Somchandbapa was from Vaishya community. If caste was so important, why would Anadi Mukta be born in other castes than Brahmin? Shreeji Maharaj stayed at Sagram Vaghari's place and even wore their clothes... why would He do that if caste was so important in spiritualism. Abaji Bapashree mentioned in Bhuj that "Ava brahmanane na jamadiye to shun paap laage?" when Brahmins were acting up. Would it hurt if we don't feed such Brahmins? So Shreeji Maharaj and Anadi Mukta have never supported caste system. They have gone to the extent of saying that it is ok to eat food from a Satsangi-shudra than from a non-Satsangi Brahmin. Here the meaning is Shudra and Brahmin by birth. Satsangi is not limited to followers of Lord Swaminarayan, but someone who is good by deeds and is Satsangi by deeds. In today's world there are many people who are nice human beings but are not followers of Lord Swaminarayan. In fact, when I was in school, Lord Swaminarayan was mentioned as a social reformer in history textbooks. And He worked tirelessly towards abolishing vices like caste system.

After all this, it begs the question – why do we have the distinction mentioned in Shikshapatri? If one reads it carefully, the distinction is mentioned twice – once about what type of Kanthi to wear and what

type of Tilak to do – that's it, and second time about what each individual should do. So what is wrong in asking one who is inclined towards knowledge and education, to do that? What is wrong in asking one inclined towards business to do business? It is all about behaving according to our orientation. Secondly, while the shloka in Shikshapatri are universal and when it was written, the caste system was extremely strongly followed. So an objective outlook probably would not have been appreciated. But if we read life and times of Lord Swaminarayan or any of His Anadi Mukta, we will not find them discriminating against anyone.

This limited belief and stringent boundaries around the classification has been built by human intellect, not by God. So let's get out of that range of 0-100 and think infinity-to-infinity. If we do not do that, we will remain bound and stuck by the bindings of this world and not progress spiritually. All the attachments and ego related to caste, birth, creed, gender, will have to be given up to attain ultimate redemption.

That was a long digression on caste system

Let's move back to the main topic of our series of interaction – soul-body-mind. To quickly recap(Webex) – the 24 elements of our body are 5 fundamental elements – Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Sky/Space; 5 senses of action – Tongue, Hands, Feet, Excretory organs and Reproductive organs; 5 senses of perception – Ear, Skin, Eyes, Tongue, Nose; 5 Quintessence – Sound, Touch, Vision, Taste, Olfactory; and 4 inner organs – Mind, Intellect, Sub conscious mind and Ego.

We went into the details of 5 fundamental elements, but did not anything else in details. Lets move forward.

There are mainly three types of bodies – Gross/Physical, Subtle/Astral and Causal. Gross/Physical body is what is visible with naked eye and 5 elements and 10 senses belong to Physical body. So Physical Body consists of those 15 elements from the 24 elements. Physical body is associated with awakened state of mind and is predominantly Satva-guna oriented. So there are three types of Guna and during our course of interaction we will continue talking about those but to describe briefly Satva guna is all that is related to knowledge, peace and purity. Rajas is related to all the desires, actions and activities. Tamas is all about ignorance and arrogance.

So physical body is associated with awakened state of mind which is predominantly Satva-guna oriented, and is effect (there is cause and there is effect. We will continue talking about cause and effect as we continue our series) of Sthiti avastha of Vairaj Purush, which is then further attributed to Pradyumna or Sattva Ahankar, in the next level of hierarchy, by Bapashree. We will go through hierarchy but very quickly to understand what I am saying is there are souls or human beings, then there are Devas & Daityas, then there is trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh, then there is Vairaj Purush. After Vairaj Purush there is a level called Ahankar or three types of Ahankar. They are also called Aniruddha, Pradyumna and Sankarshan. That's the level we are talking about here. Sthiti avastha is the state of operation or maintenance of the three states of creation, operation and destruction. Awakened state of mind is the effect of the Operation state of Pradyumna. Lifespan of the physical body is determined based on number of breathes. How many breathes will one take. So if someone is fast breather,

ultimately what that person is doing is reducing the lifespan. That is why there is a lot of emphasis on control on breathing in ancient Chinese and Indian cultures.

Residing within the physical body is the /SubtleAstral body. 5 Quintessence and 4 Inner Organs belong to the Astral body. 15 elements of the Physical body also exist in the Astral body but in subtle form. Astral body is gaseous in nature and is not visible to the naked eye. Subtle body is associated with dreaming state of mind and that state is predominantly Rajas oriented, and is the effect of creation state of **Hiranya-garbh** or Aniruddha or Rajas Ahankar. Ghosts (bhoot, pret, etc.) are souls without physical body. They are mentally disoriented like our dreams are, but are usually governed by a strong will or a desire and they try to fulfill it through others. Kids, and sometimes grown-ups too, are afraid of ghosts. But, don't be. They are simply defocused souls who don't have a body, a visible body. Since the subtle body is gaseous in nature, it is able to travel through a lot of physical barriers and distances. A lot of out-of-body experiences (we read about them a lot – like a patient on a surgery table had an out-of-body experience) are nothing but the subtle body leaving the physical body and looking back on itself.

The subtle body is tied/connected to the physical body through what is called a silver cord, what looks like a silver cord. Now I have not seen the silver cord and my knowledge does not come from that type of experience. But those who can see these connections in meditation, say that there is a kind of a silver cord that connects physical body and gross body for the life of the physical body. At the end of life of the physical body, the cord breaks and the subtle body moves on to the next physical body, or stays in the state of a subtle body till the fruits of karma render another physical body to the soul. This concept can be best explained by the laptop example that we took in Session 1. Once our laptop gets old and outdated, we buy another laptop. But we have to take a backup on an external hard drive and whenever we buy another laptop, we transfer the data back on the new laptop. That's a concept similar to when a subtle body leaves the physical body and then gains another physical body. There is a post-death ritual in Hinduism where a silver cord is used to cut something. I have witnessed these rituals. And the fact that the subtle body is connected to the physical body through a silver cord, kind of tells us the relevance of that ritual.

Sometimes we meet a dear one in a dream and get up thinking, "Wow! It was so real. It felt so real. It felt like I actually met that person." IT could be that the two subtle bodies actually met. Because in dreaming state of mind, the subtle bodies could go out of physical body and actually travel and then return, because they are tied to the physical body with a cord. I would like to clarify that when Mukta are visible in the dream, they are in their divine form all the time. Just as the boundaries of physical body do not apply to them, the boundaries of subtle body also do not apply to them.

Shreeji Maharaj has explained Physical and subtle body in Sarangpur 14th Vachanamrutam and three states of mind in Sarangpur 6th and Gadhada Pratham 65th Vachanamrutam, for anyone who is interested in reading further about this.

Sometimes when we are too tired, we go into a state of deep sleep, where we become completely unaware of our surroundings. This state of deep sleep is predominantly Tamas oriented and is an effect of destruction state of Sankarshan or Tamas Ahankar. This state is associated with what is known as

causal body. Causal body is very interesting. For those interested, can research more literature on Causal body. However, the explanation given by AMPP NarayanMama and passed on to me by PP JituKaka, is one of the best and all-encompassing explanation that I have found for causal body. For understanding causal body, the way they have explained it, let's first delve a little bit on what we know about inner workings of brain. There is a lot of brain research going on these days and there are many findings or discoveries, which are very interesting. In interest of time, we will only highlight a few relevant findings.

We all know the parts of the brain at a high level – there is cerebral cortex, cerebellum, the limbic system, and the medulla oblongata. There are neurons within the brain which are the brain cells. The limbic system has multiple parts to it, and one such part is called Amygdala, which is believed to be the seat of all desires and emotions. That is where the desire arises and travels to other parts of the brain, and comes to our intelligence. Science has figured all that out. Another interesting part - Hippocampus in the limbic system, is considered as the long-term memory store. Science is progressing day-by-day, and every week there is a new finding. There is research going on to refute these two beliefs, but this is what we know today. We also know today that intelligence is determined not by the number of neurons in the brain, but by the number of connections between the neurons. It has also been researched that new connections between neurons keep forming and they are formed by repetitive learning – or by traversing the same neural path again and again. Another finding is that when an experience is stored in our memory, it is stored in a neuron as a single all-encompassing experience – with experience of all the senses tied together. It is not that the sense of smell is stored in one neuron, and sense of taste is stored in another neuron. Say for example we relish a great food dish, that has good visual effect to it – it looks good, it smells good, it tastes good. That entire experience is stored in one neuron. It is not stored in separate neurons. That is why we remember an entire experience, only when we smell a familiar smell. And lastly, there has been a research done where something becomes a part of long-term memory only if the emotions from amygdala are feeding into it. This is one of the latest discoveries in the field of brain research that have been published.

This is the principle of formation of long-term memories is very interesting because it is explained all across in Hinduism as non-attachment. If we are not emotionally attached to an experience, it does not get stored in our long-term memory. Let's take it all one level further... I want to emphasize that Man and Chitta are extremely subtle and science probably has not even understood what these are, but it is all relative. So let's take one level further and call the subtle sentient awareness of desires in the amygdala as "Man" or mind, long-term memory storage in hippocampus as "Chitta", neuron connections through repetitive learning as manan-chintan, storing an entire experience in one neuron as initial formation of Sanskar. We mentioned Sanskar a little earlier today. Sanskar is therefore an impression of experiences and desires on the Chitta. I want to emphasize that Man, Chitta, Sanskar, manan-chintan are all much more subtle than the parts of brain that we see. Consider brain to be the hardware and Man, Chitta, etc. to be software's software – extremely subtle.

So once a desire arises, it moves through the mind, intellect, etc. for fulfillment and the memory/impression of it is formed in the Chitta as a "Sanskar" because of manan-chintan. These desires if unfulfilled, (or sometimes fulfilled but with associated fruits of karma done to fulfill them) take an

extremely subtle, but tangible form, and cling to the soul through the electromagnetic energy. This form is not visible through whatever science has discovered yet, but it exists. And since the process of their creation is more or less now been discovered by science to support teachings of AMPP NarayanMama, it makes logical sense as the next step, let us all accept that the desires take tangible, subtle form and cling to the soul through electromagnetic energy. Let's hope science catches up with that soon. The collection of desires or fruits of karma that cling to the soul is what is called the Causal body. It is the cause for soul to take births and have physical and subtle bodies and it is associated with the deep sleep state of mind that we talked about a few minutes back.

There is 4th type of body, not described in a lot places, and it is called Great Causal body. So in the spiritual hierarchy, there is perishable and non-perishable world. Causal body is made up of desires of the perishable world and great causal body is made up desires of non-perishable world beyond Mul-Purush, and is associated with Transcendent state (Turyaavastha). That is the one that is the most difficult to get rid of. As we walk through these levels, we will understand what perishable and non-perishable are, but the line distinction or transition is at Mul Purush.

Let me recap in one minute - today we spent sometime talking caste system and continued our conversation on types of bodies and states of mind, and cause and origination of states. Next week we will talk more about senses and inner organs and if time permits, we will talk about What is Moksha or liberation and Why liberation. We will continue with Q&A related to the interaction in the interaction, and larger topics we will take a separate interaction.