

Is Vedanta Scientific (Pujya Swamiji's talk)

We often hear that *Veda* is scientific. Is this true?

The *Veda* as a whole is looked upon as a means of knowledge in the Vedic tradition of learning. Being an independent means of knowledge, the subject matter of *Veda* has got to be one which is beyond the scope of other means of knowledge and it has to be meaningful as well. It talks about a heaven, *punya*, *papa*, duties, rituals with their results to be experienced here or in the hereafter. This subject matter is certainly beyond the scope of the means of knowledge like perception, inference and so on which a human being commands. It does not expect any corroboration from other sources of knowledge, much less the subject matter revealed by the *Veda* is subject to contention on the basis of other means of knowledge. Any contention is only with reference to a subject matter within the domain of perception, inference etc.

Science is a body of knowledge gained by one's perception and inference. Any scientific theory is therefore subject to contention. An error is committed when one makes a statement that the '*Veda*' is scientific. Neither a scientist can accept the declaration nor one who knows the tradition can stand it. Proper it would be to say that the *Veda* is not illogical inasmuch as its area is independent of perception and inference.

When the last portion of the *Veda*, that is, *Vedanta* talks about the truth of oneself, does it reveal totally an unknown Self? If it does, the Self would be like heaven, which exists without any possibility of immediate knowledge in this life. If it talks about a Self which is self-evident, then the Self cannot be the subject matter of the *Veda*, it being already evident. *Vedanta*, therefore, cannot be a part of the *Veda* since it reverses its status of being an independent means of knowledge. It will have no subject-matter to be looked upon as one solely revealed by the *Veda*.

A human being employs various means of knowledge including the *Veda* to know. Every

piece of knowledge becomes evident to the person through a relevant means of knowing. This person does not come to be evident through any means of knowing. Employing a means of knowledge presupposes the presence of the person who employs. Naturally the person is self-evident. So, existence of oneself does not depend upon any evidence born of any employed means of knowing. Self-evident existence of oneself is revealed when one says: "I am". So the *Veda* does not need to reveal the existence of the Self. If this Self is Brahman, the cause of the entire world, which is non-dually one, then there is no way of knowing that Reality by the individual, whose existence is no doubt self-evident but is taken to be the knower other than the known and who is subject all forms of limitation. *Vedanta*, in this area, is a means of knowledge to free oneself from the error. So it has a subject matter to be included in the *Veda*.

Here, in *Vedanta*, the subject-matter being myself, the knowledge unfolded by its sentences has got to be immediate. If any intellect raises any objection to the way in which the *advaita-sampradaya* presents the meaning of the sentences like "*tat tvamasi*"—that you are, we employ reason along with the texts of the *sruti* and *smriti* to see the fallacy in the arguments raised by the one who objects or differs. If the non-dual vision is contented on the grounds of a given form of reasoning and experience, again the fallacy is shown in the arguments advanced. Thus reason and experience are meaningfully employed by the teaching tradition.

When the doubts and errors are cleared, the vision of *Vedanta* that "I am Brahman", the whole stays without any blemish, proving that *Vedanta* is a means of knowledge, independent of perception and inference. So the subject-matter of the whole *Veda* is not within the domain of science. Of course there are a lot of statements about things empirically true. They can be scrutinised by the scientists to find out how far they are true.