

Kaivalyopaniṣad
Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati's transcribed talk

This is the fifteenth part of the serial article, continuation from July 2022 newsletter.

The next verse describes renunciates in greater detail.

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः संन्यासयोगाद्यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः ।
ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥ ४ ॥

*Vedāntavijñānasuniścītārthāḥ sannyāsayogādyatayaḥ śuddhasattvāḥ
te brahmalokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve*

वेदान्तविज्ञान-सुनिश्चितार्थाः - those who have the well ascertained knowledge of the Upaniṣads ; संन्यासयोगाद्यतये - by total renunciation ; यतयः - the seekers ; शुद्धसत्त्वाः - the pureminded ones ; te - they ; ब्रह्मलोकेषु - in the abode that is *brahman* ; परान्तकाले - at the time of death ; परामृताः - being absolute and immortal ; परिमुच्यन्ति - are totally freed ; सर्वे - all ;

The pure-minded seekers who by total renunciation have the well-ascertained knowledge of the Upaniṣads, being absolute and immortal are all, at the time of death, totally freed in the abode that is *brahman*. (4)

This verse can be explained in two ways. One way is that it describes aspirants or seekers, and the other is that it describes the wise. In both ways, the verse is meaningful.

Vedānta is a *pramāṇa*, means of knowledge

Vedānta means the Upaniṣads. *Vijñāna* means *viśesa-jñāna* or particular knowledge, the unique knowledge that Vedānta or the Upaniṣads reveal. Vedānta is a *pramāṇa* or means of knowledge. Just as the eyes are the *pramāṇa* or valid means of knowledge to perceive colors and forms or the faculty of hearing is the means of knowledge to perceive sounds, so also, Vedānta is the valid means of knowledge for knowing the self, which cannot be known by any other means of knowledge. We have the organs of perception, with which we perceive the objects of the world, but the self is not an object. The self is the subject, one's own self, so it can-

not be perceived with the organs of perception, and, therefore, also cannot be the object of any other *pramāṇa*, such as inference, presumption or comparison, all of which are based on perception. For example, we can infer that there is fire on the hill when we see smoke. All inference is based on some perceptible evidence — we perceive the smoke and thus infer the presence of fire. However, even as *ātmā*, the self, is not available for perception, it is also not available to the other means of knowledge, like inference, presumption and comparison, which depend on perception.

The Upaniṣad is not a means of knowledge in the sense that the eyes are the means of knowledge to see a flower or the faculty of smell is the means of knowledge to experience its fragrance. The eyes reveal the colors and forms, but Vedānta does not reveal *ātmā*. We should know in what manner the word *pramāṇa* applies to Vedānta. When we say that the eyes are the *pramāṇa* for color and form, it means that color and form are revealed by the eyes. Without the eyes, one would not be able to perceive color or form. We cannot experience the fragrance of a flower without the faculty of smell, and we cannot experience the touch of the flower without the faculty of touch. Yet can we say that we cannot experience the self without the Upaniṣad? No, we cannot say that because we ever experience the self. We do not require anybody to tell us that we *are*. That we are is a self-evident fact. We are, we shine, we are conscious, and we always love ourselves. *Aham asmi, sadā bhāmi, kadācinnāhamapriyaḥ*; “I am, I am conscious, I never dislike myself.” These are self-evident facts; we do not need the Upaniṣad to know that we are or that we are conscious or that we love ourselves.

If the Upaniṣad is not a *pramāṇa* in the sense of revealing *ātmā*, in what sense is it *pramāṇa*? It is a *pramāṇa* in that it teaches that we are nondual, that we are *brahman*, limitless. It is for this knowledge that the Upaniṣad becomes a *pramaṇa*. If we did not experience the self, there would be no problem at all in life; there would be no *saṁsāra*, because there can be error only when there is experience: No experience, no error. Is it not so? When can one mistake the rope for a snake? It is possible only when the rope becomes an object of one’s awareness and, in not be-

ing recognized as a rope, is then taken to be a snake. We may say that one has only the general knowledge of rope, but not the particular knowledge of rope. We see that there is an object, so the 'isness' of the object is known while its 'ropeness' is not. This kind of unique condition should obtain for error or superimposition to take place.

If we see a rope, but not as a rope, the mind will project a snake or something else upon it. If it were pitch dark and nothing is visible, one would have neither general knowledge nor particular knowledge, so no superimposition would take place. On the other hand, in broad daylight, one would see the object as rope and have both general knowledge and particular knowledge, and, again, no superimposition would take place. It is in the evening, in twilight or a semi-dark situation that we would see the object, but not the ropeness of it; that is when superimposition takes place.

A similar situation obtains with reference to the self. Indeed, we experience ourselves. We have the general knowledge of ourselves in that we are; without that, there would be no scope for superimposition. In the deep sleep state, when we are not even aware that we are, there is no superimposition, there is no *samsāra*, meaning, there is no sense of smallness or inadequacy. In the deep sleep we are blissfully ignorant, because, in that state, there is neither general knowledge nor particular knowledge of *ātmanā*. The wise person is one who is blissful because he has both. He has the general knowledge that he is, as well as the particular knowledge that he is *brahman*, nondual. Everyone else has the general knowledge of being, but not the particular knowledge of being limitless, of being *brahman*; instead, one takes oneself to be a *jīvātmanā* or limited being. That is why the Upaniṣad is the *pramāṇa* to reveal the particular aspect that one is nondual, one is *brahman*. It is the *pramāṇa* not for revealing the self, but for revealing the particular aspect of the self about which we entertain this error, *adhyāsa* or *adhyāropa*, superimposition.

The *vijñāna* or particular knowledge that Vedānta reveals is *tat tvam asi*, you are *brahman*, you are limitless. This cannot be revealed by any available means of

knowledge. Vedānta is the only source of knowledge that tells us this and makes us see the truth of it.

Upon gaining the knowledge, the meaning and scope of the 'I' changes to become all-inclusive. We are the 'I' that does not exclude the 'you.' We recognize that we are all-inclusive, there is nothing apart from us, nothing separate from us. This is what Vedānta teaches us. Only when we recognize that as the nature of the self do we become totally free from every lack; when nothing is apart from us, nothing can be lacking in us. We are complete in every way. There is then a total satisfaction about ourselves. That is Vedānta-*vijñāna*.

Suniścitarthāḥ are those who have the ascertained understanding about what Vedānta teaches and in whom this determinate knowledge, which Lord Kṛṣṇa calls *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhi*, has arisen, such as in the clarity that "This is the knowledge that I want." Pūjya Swamiji says that a mature person has no choice. The immature person has many choices. For people who do not have that degree of *vyavasāya* or determination in their life, there are many choices; today this, tomorrow something else, and so forth. But for a mature person there is no choice, because a mature person recognizes that all he wants is to know himself and all he wants is this knowledge. There is no real choice. The only choice concerns inconsequential things like whether to eat *idli* or pasta, but for important goals, there is no real choice; whatever he does is directed toward gaining the knowledge. That is *samādhāna*; the mind is very clear. Take hiking as an example. We know that we want to reach a destination and every step leads to that destination. You might choose a particular path, either a steep one or one that takes longer, but every step is directed toward the destination. So also, a mature person would not waste even a moment in anything other than making his whole life a process of reaching his destination. Here reaching is nothing but knowing and making whatever preparation is required for that knowledge. That is called devotion, commitment. So the *vedāntavijñāna-śuniścitarthāḥ* are those who have discovered that degree of commitment for the knowledge that Vedānta reveals, namely, that the self is *brahman*.

To be continued...