

Freedom

Camp by Swami Sadatmanandaji at Anaikatti asram from March 2018

The word freedom has two parts- 'free' and 'dom'. 'dom' means status or condition. Like wisdom is a state of being wise. Similarly freedom means the state of being free. The word freedom is a relative word unlike 'black', 'white', etc. Like when we say- this person is married. Or he is a brother. Means he is married to someone or he is brother to someone. Similarly you cannot use the word freedom without a context. There are various types of freedom talked about. One is physical freedom which means freedom of movement. Like I may have a disease which creates physical bondage. When the disease is cured, there is physical freedom. Or I was physically tied and then released. Then there is social freedom where I am not discriminated against because of gender, caste, etc. There is political freedom where every citizen has the right to vote and participate in the process of government. So word freedom is used in different contexts. We use it even in our day to day transactions. We say –*"I am busy now but hope to be free later when this assignment is over"*. So any time I use the word freedom it implies one particular bondage from which I am free. People have different kinds of idea of bondage in their mind. Based on that they will be using the expression *"I will be free."* If you have taken a loan, you will say - *"I will be free from loan in 3 years"*. Depending on what is considered to be bondage, your freedom will be decided in your mind. So we use the word freedom in the context of some bondage.

Now question is what is this bondage?

We use this word but we don't give thought to what it is. Bondage is that which is undesirable to you, unacceptable to you and you find yourself with it.

So both these conditions should be there for something to be considered as bondage. Eg . Eating every day is not bondage. It is something which is acceptable to you. If something is acceptable to you and it is there with you, it is not a bondage. A particular disease is undesirable to you but you don't have it so it will not be considered bondage by you. So if something is a bondage to me, it will have these two conditions – It should be unacceptable to me and it is there with me. Thus, Bondage is that which I find myself with and is unacceptable to me.

What is the bondage from which I want to be free?

We think so many things as bondage and we want to be free from them. But being free from all those things which you think of generally as bondage is not the ultimate freedom. Because even if you become free from the situation from which you want to be free, you don't find yourself to be completely free. Like you feel after your exams you will be free. But after the exams you are not completely free. You have now got the responsibility of finding a job. You are tied up again. So all those freedoms which you keep talking about, even if you get them you don't find yourself to be completely free.

Vedanta talks about that ultimate freedom having gained which, you don't have to work for any other freedom. Conversely if you have not got that freedom, then all other freedom will not make you free completely. Ultimate freedom is that attaining which you don't have to work for anything else and without gaining which you will not be completely free. When that freedom comes even apparent bondage, those things which I was calling bondage before are no longer bondage. Everything including my body becomes a luxury for me.

If they are there fine, if not there also I am fine. Modern civilization converts luxuries into necessities. Like earlier, cellphone was a luxury, now it is a necessity. Whereas Vedanta is converting all so called necessities into luxuries including your own physical body. If it is there you are comfortable, if it is likely to go away, you are not afraid. That is ultimate freedom which makes you free from all struggles to be free. That ultimate freedom we will look into.

What is that bondage from which Vedanta helps us to be free ?

Vedanta is a means of knowledge which gives me the knowledge of making me free. This is provisional understanding of Vedanta. That Vedanta is talking about fundamental bondage. This can be seen in various ways. One of the ways to look at this fundamental bondage is –**Self-non-acceptance**. I am not totally acceptable to myself. At experiential level this is a fundamental bondage. Because of this I struggle to be somebody. All the time people are also asking you –“*what are you doing*”? So I study hard, become a graduate, post graduate. Then I struggle to get a job. People don't like me to be without a job because you are nobody without it. Even if i have a job i am not satisfied with what i have. So with reference to the job I have I am not acceptable .Next question - why are you not married? I am not accepted remaining unmarried. Then comes having children which is the beginning of another story. So I am always struggling to become somebody because I am not acceptable to myself. There is nothing wrong in getting married, having children. But we are just discussing the basis behind all that we do and that basis is: “ I am not acceptable as I am.” That governs my life. Since I am not acceptable to myself, I seek acceptance in vicarious ways. I seek acceptance of myself through others. I think that if others accept me, I must be acceptable. This is how I try to seek self-acceptance which I am not able to get on my own. That is why I look for big achievements so that I can be acceptable to significant near and dear ones. This is what I have observed. Like when my brother got good results, my father congratulated him. I also want to be appreciated like that. So my struggle for self-acceptance brings in competition. Wherever there is competition, possibility of losing is there. So there is fear, insecurity, anxiety. This is called samsara . Samsara is the struggle to become somebody for self-acceptance. You want to be accepted in your eyes or at least in somebody's eyes. So I am seeking acceptance from others because of which there is so much struggle to achieve something and there is jealousy, competition, insecurity, controlling tendency. In spite of doing all this, I don't have complete self-acceptance. Because their value system changes. My near and dear ones even if they accept me, my judgment about myself does not let me accept myself. I feel he/she does not accept me fully. He accepts me once in a while or he does not like me as much as he likes the other person or he is simply saying that and does not really mean it. So I have a judgment about his/her judgment about me. I judge that he/she judges me to be unacceptable. That is how struggle remains. So self-non-acceptance is the bondage which everybody has. This is one way of looking at bondage. This bondage is centered on 'I' i.e., non-acceptance of myself. It can be called spiritual bondage. Spiritual means related to spirit which is the self. Self Non acceptance is spiritual bondage.

Another way to look at this spiritual bondage is **my dependence on the world to be happy, peaceful and secure**. The world has to behave in a particular manner, then only I can be happy. This is centered on I. Similarly I can have peace if my parents, in-laws, spouse, etc. are happy. This dependence on the world consisting of objects, people and situations is spiritual bondage. Another way of looking at spiritual bondage is **my sense of helplessness** I feel helpless with regard to so many things connected to my spouse, my children, government, my own body and my own mind. This helplessness is there with everybody.

Even the president of the United States will have this sense of helplessness. Whatever position you may have, your sense of helplessness does not go away. I want to do something and I cannot do it. So there is a sense of helplessness.

These are some of the ways we can see spiritual bondage. Anybody who has not attained this ultimate freedom, will have this bondage. All these bondages have their basis in one thing- **sense of limitedness**. I am limited in terms of time because I am mortal, limited in terms of my resources in the form of money, etc. Limited in terms of knowledge. Everybody has some areas of ignorance. You know a little bit of Sanskrit or physics. But you cannot say I don't have any ignorance in these fields.

Many years back, the physicist declared that we have only a few more things to figure out , then we can close down the physics dept. But now the vastness of knowledge in physics is found to be so much that they have to branch it out. So even with regard to knowledge also I feel limited. However big I am considered in society, I feel I am a limited individual. So fundamentally speaking the sense of limitation is the bondage. If we analyze then we find that whatever we consider to be bondage, its root is in the sense of limitation you feels about yourself. If you don't feel this sense of limitation, then Vedanta is not required for you.

But if you experience bondage, then this is the cause. This sense of limitation can go only when I become limitless. Thinking that I will become limitless, I add so many things to myself. I try to gather so many things - money, relationships, power, etc. Thinking that if I have this I will be alright. But this approach has not succeeded and cannot succeed because mathematically we are wrong. Any finite number plus any other finite number, will be finite only. I find myself to be finite and even I add any number of finite things, I cannot become infinite. Not knowing this fact, I try to add so many things thinking that by adding those things I will be limitless. In fact we can learn from the experience of others. If someone can learn from the experience of others, they are mature. If someone cannot learn from one's own experience, then he is immature. So some people are immature in this area because they do not learn looking at others. They see that a given person added so many things, but did he get that sense of limitlessness? Did his life reflect that limitlessness ? The answer we get is "no".

If you ask the person how are you? Generally he will say fine because that is etiquette. It is said that – "*When how are you is the question, don't complain your indigestion*". But if you talk with him for some more time, he will start telling you all his problems. Thus the fact that I am feeling a sense of limitation and in spite of my struggle I have not attained freedom from sense of limitation is evident from my continuous struggle. At the same time I cannot give up my pursuit for seeking freedom from limitation. Because once in a while we do have a glimpse of being free from limitation. When there is a happy experience, or you see a beautiful natural scene, at that time your sense of limitation is suspended momentarily. At that moment, you are no longer a demanding person. Even in deep sleep you are free from the sense of limitation. You like sleep and natural scenes because it gives glimpse of yourself being free from sense of limitation. It is not the nature you like, but the pleased self, invoked by nature is what you like. Once you have experienced your height, you cannot settle for anything else. That is the observation we have. A musician when he has gone for a very high pitch once, even though he goes high enough, he cannot settle for that because he knows he can go to a higher pitch.

Similarly, once in a while experientially we have this sense of freedom. Therefore we cannot give up this pursuit. If that experience was not there at all, then we might have settled for less. But at the same time this experience is not good enough to make me free from the conclusion I have about myself. It is a very peculiar situation. I have a conclusion that I am limited which makes me struggle to be free from limitation. Momentarily I have the experience of being free from limitation, but at the same time that experience does not make me change the conclusion about myself. This is because in certain situations experience is not good enough to bring change. Experience is not a complete knowledge. Experience gives *samanya jnanam*-general knowledge. But it does not give complete knowledge. Your wrong conclusion cannot be corrected merely by experience. Your search for limitlessness continues, in spite of your experience of being free from limitations once in a while. Like you search for a book or an object, but don't find it because you have a particular idea about how the book is or object is. So experience itself does not teach you, unless you make special efforts to learn from experience. Otherwise all old people should be wise, mature.

But we see some people remain immature even when they are 80 years. For example several times this experience is there that money does not give complete security. Even then, how come one did not learn from his experience that in spite of having money insecurity continued? That is why they say – History gets repeated by itself because people don't learn from history. If they had learned, it would not have got repeated. So experience itself does not teach but it can become the basis for learning, if you have the mind to learn. Here also we do have experience of being free from limitation. But that experience does not become the basis to remove my ignorance about my being limitless. My search for limitlessness continues. I struggle to gather so many things, but it does not work. At the same time, I cannot give up this struggle. But there must be a solution for this problem of sense of limitation, because this desire to be free from limitation is a natural desire. We see the provision for the satisfaction of any natural desire. Like there is a desire for thirst, which is satisfied by drinking water which is available. That gives me hope. The desire to be free from limitation is a natural desire and it must have a solution. The desire for freedom is a natural desire because it is universal. Everyone has this desire irrespective of country, gender, age etc.. In this situation Vedanta comes and tells that being unacceptable, helpless is a mistake, an error, a wrong conclusion. Missing the fact and taking something else to be the fact is a mistake. You have missed the fact about yourself and are taking something else to be the fact about yourself. That is the mistake you are committing about yourself and because of that you struggle. But in reality you are free from all limitations. You are acceptable. This is what Vedanta tells me.

What is Vedanta?

Vedanta is the end portion of the *vedas*. *Veda* is a body of knowledge in the form of words. The first portion of *vedas* is called *karma-kanda* and the end portion of *veda* is called *vedanta*. *Vedanta* tells me that my struggle to be free from limitation is because of a mistake about myself. I have concluded myself to be limited and therefore I am trying to be free from limitation. Vedanta says that really you are not unacceptable, you are not helpless, you are not ignorant. But my experience shows something different. Now there is a contradiction between what Vedanta says and my experience. Therefore the vision of the self on the part of Vedanta and the idea of the self on my part must be different. Because in my understanding I am limited and about the same 'I' Vedanta says it is limitless. So about one and the same "I" there are two conclusions. There is some discrepancy and this discrepancy needs to be resolved. Therefore I have to understand how Vedanta is telling me that I am free from limitations. That is where start, the enquiry into the self. *Vedanta* says – You are seeing yourself to be limited because you do not know what really you are.

Therefore your need to know the self through inquiry. It means I need to do self-inquiry. Self-enquiry does not mean the enquiry by the self but enquiry into the nature of the self is self-enquiry. Any enquiry has to be done with the help of appropriate means of knowledge. Here the appropriate means of knowledge for knowing the self cannot be the eyes, etc., cannot be inference, etc. Therefore we have to go to an appropriate means of knowledge

I have to become limitless. To become limitless, I struggle to add so many things to myself. But it is not happening and it cannot happen because finite + finite is finite alone. At the same time I am not able to give up this struggle, so there must be a way out. And occasionally I have this experience of limitless. Therefore only possibility left is maybe I am limitless, but I do not know how. That is possible because we have the experience of something being with us and not knowing it is there. Pujya Swamiji gives the example of glasses. Glasses are with us, but we are searching. We have similar experience with keys being with us and we are searching. Such situations are there. So when such situations are there, when something is already there with us and we are missing them, then attainment of that missing thing is not by any action. It is only by recognising the fact that it is with me. That is why in *sastra* we talk about two types of attainment –

i) ***apraptyasya praptih*** - *praptih* is attainment. The attainment of the unattained and that is by action. Like I don't have money so I can do action and attain it. Or I want to attain particular weight. Right now that particular weight is not attained, but by exercise, etc. one can attain it. So most of the things are falling in this category. So we do some action and attain it. *Apraptyasya praptih karmana eva*.

ii) ***praptyasya praptih*** – attainment of the attained. Something is already attained but I think, it is not attained. That attainment is only by knowledge. Similarly this *purvatvam* that I am seeking in my life through all struggles, maybe it is *praptyasya praptih*. It cannot be *aprapta* because it cannot be attained by any effort, any achievement which can result only in limited result. If I am really finite, then no amount of effort will make me limitless. So the possibility is maybe I am limitless and I don't really know I am limitless. So let me know who am I. If you just ask the question who am I, the answer is not going to come. Because whatever I know about myself is not showing I am limitless. So as Pujya Swamiji says, if you keep asking yourself the question who am I, then one day you will get the answer-“ *You are an idiot* “. Therefore simply asking yourself who am I without appropriate means of knowledge, this answer is not going to come based on the knowledge you have. If you have the knowledge of the self, then you don't have to ask this question. Any knowledge comes by using appropriate means of knowledge. To know the colour of the clip or to hear sound, you have to use appropriate sense organs which are the means of knowledge. But these sense organs cannot give you knowledge of the self. In fact sense organs cannot see themselves so how can they see the self behind them ? I can hear about the self, but I cannot hear the self. There is a difference. Similarly I cannot see , touch, etc the self. So *pratyakshadi pramanam* are not appropriate means of knowledge to know the self.

Another means of knowledge is *anumanam* - inference. That also cannot be valid means of knowledge because inference is based on perceptual data. Like a classic *anumanam* is – “There is fire on the mountain, because I see smoke”. Both fire and smoke are available for perception. Hence their concomitance can be known thro' inference. I have seen fire and smoke somewhere together, so I can infer - *where there is smoke, there is fire*. So *anumanam* is possible only where there is perception. Since self is not available for perception, the self cannot be even inferred. Therefore inference is also not valid means for self-knowledge. Generally we use these two types of means of knowledge- *pratyaksha* and *anumanam* – and both are not valid with regard to self-knowledge.

So what is the way out? Our attention is drawn to one more means of knowledge available to us – *sabda pramanam*. Many times we get the knowledge in the form of words. Like on radio we hear the news that the PM inaugurated this particular institute or someone tells you there is a beautiful *asram* in the Himalayas called Narayana asram. Ears heard the sound, but the words reveal the meaning. Like the word *gha, ta* is heard. But the knowledge – *tatra ghatah asti* – is got by *sabda-pramanam*. But generally words give me indirect knowledge. But sometimes you may get direct knowledge. Like I introduce this person to you at this *asram*- This is Mrs Girija. This is direct knowledge of the person in front of you whom you did not know, but have heard of.

Sometimes there is a very peculiar situation. To explain this situation there is a story of 10 boys who went on a pilgrimage. They crossed the river. Having crossed the river, the leader of the group wanted to make sure all have come. He counted – 1,2,3,4.....where is the 10th man? *dashmah nashtah*. Somebody comes and tells them – “*You are the 10th man*”. Here the means of knowledge is *sabdah* which gives the knowledge of the missing person. When I see a clip, I get direct knowledge. When I infer fire from smoke, it is indirect knowledge. Now the knowledge of myself is not direct knowledge like that of a clip nor indirect knowledge like that of fire. But the knowledge of the self is like the knowledge of the 10th man and is called *aparoksha jnanam*- immediate knowledge. So *sabda pramanam* can give indirect knowledge or direct knowledge or immediate knowledge. Only the word of an *apta-purushah* – a well-informed person alone can give immediate knowledge. In spiritual context we call that person a guru. So guru is a person whose words give me knowledge about myself. Regarding the self, direct perception is not possible because self is not in front of the sense organs. Indirect knowledge is not possible because the self is not away from me. So only possibility is the knowledge thro’ words of a person who knows the self. If he does not know the self, his words cannot become *pramanam*. So the person whose words are means of knowledge about the self is called *apta-purushah* or guru.

Now the question will be, if I cannot know the self by myself using direct or indirect means, how can the guru know? The only way is he came to know from his/her guru. So there is a lineage of teacher and student. Then the question is- who is the first teacher? We answer this question by a counter-question. You are the son or daughter of your parents. They were also connected in this way to their parents. Then who were the first parents? Whoever is the first father, is the first teacher. The first father we provisionally call *Ishvara*, since we have not yet understood who *Ishvara* is. That *Ishvara* who is the first father and mother is the first teacher. So *Ishvara* is the initiator of the lineage of the link of teacher and student and the last lineage of the link initiated by the Lord is one’s own teacher. That is why we chant- *sadashiva samarambhamasmadacarya paryantam.....*and also present the lineage of teachers tracing back to *parmatma - narayana padmabhuvam vashishtam.....*

This teaching initiated by the Lord is called *vedas*. *Vedas* has got two parts- *veda-purva-bhaga* which is the first part and *Vedanta* which is the last part of the *vedas*. The first portion of the *vedas* is dealing with certain actions, certain meditations which can be used for various results. *Vedanta* is dealing with the reality – the truth of the individual, this world and the creator of this world.

One important thing is that the subject matter of *vedas* is not scientific. *Vedas* are not talking about something which is scientific. Many people have got a craze to say our *vedas* are scientific. We are not apologetic about it that *vedas* are not scientific. Of course one has to understand what is meant by science. If you understand science as valid system of knowledge then of course *vedas* are like science.

But that is not the common definition of science. Science is a system of exploration where repetitions are required and which is available for logicality. Vedas are not like that. Subject matter of *vedas* are not scientific. It is not even logical. But it is also not illogical. It is neither proved by logic nor disproved by logic. It is alogical. Means not available for logic to prove it or disprove it. This should be understood clearly. Vedas talk about various karmas to give different results. The connection between the karma and the result cannot be proved logically nor can we disprove it as illogical. Like the result of doing *putra-kameshti-yajna* is a son. Also Vedas talk about *svarga* and how to reach there. We can neither prove nor disprove it logically. So subject matter of *vedas* is not scientific, not does it need to be scientific. But *vedas* does talk about scientific things. The velocity of light is given in a mantra in *rig-veda* in a particular way. Even such descriptions which talk about scientific truths does not make the *veda* scientific. That is not the subject matter of *vedas*. Like in my talk, I may give you the recipe for idlis. But my talk was not meant for that. It was just an example or glorification. Similarly there in *rig-veda*, the velocity of light is given to show the greatness of the sun. But if this mantra is recited and you understand the greatness of the sun, then you will get *adrshtha punyam*. For that *vedas* are *pramanam*. Vedas give high specialised knowledge. They do not have *tatparyam* to reveal something which can be figured out by human intellect. Vedas may talk about it, but that is not the *tatparyam* of the *vedas*. Like I want to communicate about the self, but I talk about so many things. All of them are the tools to reveal the self. So we have to get out of the pressure to prove *vedas* are scientific. In fact if science can reveal, why do we need *vedas* and if *vedas* are contradicting science, *vedas* will be dismissed. So *vedas* are neither scientific nor logical. They are logical. Also *vedas* is not a philosophy. Philosophy is a view based on intellectual speculation. Though the word ‘philo’ and ‘sophie’ means love for knowledge, we don’t call students of Vedanta as philosophers. Love can imply commitment. So commitment to knowledge can also be called philosophy. But generally philosophy is used in the sense of speculation done by individual or group of individuals. Like we have philosophy of Aristotle. But *vedanta* is not Sankaracarya’s philosophy. Vedanta is a means of knowledge revealing what really I am. Many also say *vedanta* is theory and yoga is practice. Vedanta is neither of them. It is a valid means of knowledge. Like your eyes when it sees an object does not theorise or practise the object. It just reveals the object. Similarly Vedanta is a means of knowledge with regard to the self.

What is the subject matter of *vedanta*?

Vedanta starts the subject of the self with these two words- *drk* (experiencer=seer) and *drsyā* (object of experience=seen). *Vedanta* says all the things in the world can be brought under these two categories - the seer and the seen. Everything comes under these two - *drk-drsyau dvau padarthau sthah*. In the vision of Vedanta there is a confusion regarding the knower and the known. Even though we seem to be very clear that I am the knower and everything is known. This I (*drk*) is called *atma* in Sanskrit. Everything else other than I, is *anatma*. I have clarity that this book is different from me. Even with regard to near and dear ones I have clarity. Like I am *drk* and my spouse is *drsyam*. That is why I buy two tickets for us when I travel. But when it comes to the body, the problem starts. Because we use the expression- ‘*I am fat, I am dark*’- when it is the body which is fat or dark. We have other complexes- ‘*I am old*’. People do not like to reveal their age. So we have this conclusion that I am as good as this body. Sometimes I use this expression – “my body”. I am aware of this body, but I consider it to be me. Here Vedanta is saying that why don’t you see this fact that like the clip you are aware of, whatever you are aware of, you are not that. Similarly this body is available for your objectification. I am aware of this body, so I am different from this body. This is where *viveka* starts.

In Bhagavad Gita chapter 13 Bhagavan starts the teaching with this *viveka – idam sariram kaunteya, kshetram ityabhidhiyate*, O son of Kunti. This body is to be known as the field (and you are the knower of the field). Since you are aware of this physical body, you are not this body. If I own up this wisdom which is only the starting point of *Vedanta*, my life will be simplified. There will not be any complexes based on this body. Like I know well- my dress is orange I am not orange. So even if someone calls me orange, I won't feel bad. Based on nationality, social status, gender one is indian -foreigner, brahmin-non brahmin, male-female. All these are superimposed on the self. I who am illumining this body is neither male nor female. If this is understood well than complexes based on gender will not be there. It is just based on physical difference. So first lesson Vedanta gives is that you are not this physical body. You are someone who is pervading this body, illumining this body, aware of this body, but not limited by this body. So the self is not some mystical entity. I am someone who is aware of this body.

Like light is pervading this clip, but light is not limited by this clip. I am present in every part of this body, but not limited by this body. This is called *annamaya-kosha viveka*. Something which provides basis for committing a mistake is *kosha*. So body is the basis for making a mistake and it is product of food. From the first level of *annamaya-kosha viveka* itself, there is relief. So much simplification in life.

Then *Vedanta* says what about your sense organs? You say- I am seeing, I am hearing.....Based on these organs so much complex is there. People don't feel bad to have glasses, if their eyes are not seeing properly. Have glasses is no problem, in fact it is fashionable and looks scholarly. Idea is there no complex with regard to glasses. But people have a complex with regard to hearing aid. Even when they are old, they don't want to wear it. It shows identification with sense organs. I am these ears. *Sastra* says that you are someone who are aware of your ears, of your eyes. Even the ophthalmologist asks you with which lasses can see better. So idea is - you are someone who is aware of your eyes, aware of your ears, nose, etc. Being aware of them, I am not limited by them. They are object of my knowledge. This is one complex.

Bigger complex is the mind. Based on the mind we have these complexes- I am short tempered, emotional....All these are the conditions of the mind. I am aware of my mind. I know best whether I am really affectionate or not. I am someone who is aware of the condition of the mind. I am the illuminator of the mind. I am not the mind. If I assimilate this, most of my problems are gone. All our struggles are because of that. Based on the mind I make some conclusion. I say-“ *I am never understood by anyone. I am always misunderstood* “. We have so many such complexes. Vedanta helps you to see that like the objects outside, like the body and the sense organs, mind is also available for your objectification. Mind is very intimate to me, but still I do not miss the fact that it is not me. Thus Vedanta reveals this fact that I am different from and not limited by body-senses and mind.

Then, who am I ?

I am the awarer of all of them. But my being aware of all of them is my referential introduction. In fact I am the content of the awarer/knower. Which is consciousness. I am awareness which is consciousness which is the content of knower, one who is aware of everything. This word awareness or consciousness is used in different connotations. I am present in every part of this body, but not limited by this body. So I first understand, what awareness does not mean in this context.

Sense of limitation can be a mistake due to the ignorance of the self. And self-ignorance can be removed by knowledge of the self. For any knowledge we need a *pramanam*-means of knowledge. *Pratyaksha* or direct perception or inference will not help me get the self-knowledge because they are appropriate means of knowledge. So only means available is *sabda pramanam*. *Sabda eva pramanam* – means of knowledge in the form of words. *Sabda* are of two types- *laukika* and *vaidika sabda*. *Laukika sabda* will not help to know the self because it is based on *pratyaksha* and *anumanam*. Like I describe an *asram* in the Himalayas. That description is based on *pratyaksha pramanam*. So *laukika sabdas* are based on other *pramanams*. The self is not available for perception anytime. Therefore *laukika sabda* will not work. Only the words of a person who has understood the self very well with the help of guru is the valid means of knowledge for the self. *Sastra* which is dealing with self-knowledge is called Vedanta. Finally, this lineage of teacher and student is traced back to the Lord. And the words of the Lord which is called *vedas* is *pramanam* for the self. That part of *vedas* which is dealing with the self-knowledge is called *Vedanta*. So *Vedanta* which is the end portion of *vedas* is the means of knowledge for the self.

Question is- How do you prove that Vedanta is the means of knowledge for the self ?

We don't have to prove this. Any means of knowledge is a means of knowledge can be established only by using it. Like eyes help me to see colour can be proved only by using the eyes to see colour. The validity of the means of knowledge comes from the means of knowledge itself. That is how the epistemological order is. So if you want to know if *vedanta* is a *pramanam* or not, you have to use Vedanta. That is why Vedanta cannot be forced on anyone. If you don't accept Vedanta as a means of knowledge, you will not know whether it is a means of knowledge. With reference to eyes and ears we do not get a doubt because they are my own. But with regard to Vedanta which is coming from outside, we get a doubt. But the order of *pramanam* is such that you can know something is a *pramanam* only by using it. You may say- there is risk involved that I may not get the knowledge. We take so many risks in life, so we take one more risk. *Vedanta* is revealing the self by using *drk-drsya viveka*. It starts by saying that there are two types of entities- *aham* (self) and *idam* (this) i.e, knower and known. Everything you are confronting is known. Body is also *drsya*. I pervade this body, illumine this body but I am not limited to this body. Many people think that *Vedanta* is creating disconnect between me and the body, *Vedanta* is taking us out of this practical world. This is incorrect. Vedanta says you are very much there inside the body, but you are not limited to this body. There is objectivity about the body. You are seeing the body and its limitations and accepting its limitations and positive qualities. Body is useful, but body has limitations and I am okay with that. Appreciating the limitations of the body, the utility of the body without making any judgements based on the condition of the body, is called objectivity about the body. It is the first lesson of *Vedanta*. If the first lesson is assimilated well, there is so much relief.

Then comes the sense organs, then the mind. Mind has so many emotions. I illumine all these emotions. I am not anyone of these emotions. Anger is there in the mind. I illumine the anger. Therefore I am not angry or jealous. Jealousy is happening in the mind. I am not jealousy. Jealousy disappears. Sadness is there in the mind. I am the illuminator of sadness, hurt. Memory also is not me. Memory is the cause for all judgements we have. I have a memory of being misunderstood, So I say I am always misunderstood. This memory becomes the basis of judgement about myself. That memory also is something I am aware of. Some memory disappears in course of time. Some memory comes and goes. Many people have complex about having poor memory. They feel- "I don't remember anything". But once you know, I am one who is aware of, who is the illuminator of the coming and going of memory, then I am free from memory. Thus Vedanta makes us relaxed in all respects.

I am aware even of the knowledge and ignorance that my *buddhi* has. One has to be objective that *buddhi* has some knowledge and does not have some knowledge. Many people have a complex about not knowing English. Ignorance is the first step of learning. So learn English. But do not have complex about what the *buddhi* does not know because I am not the *buddhi*. That is the objectivity Vedanta gives with respect to *buddhi* also.

Then who are you? I am the awarer, knower, experiencer, with reference to all things you are aware of and without reference to all things, you are the content of awarer which is called awareness. Like the sun is the illuminator of all planets - *prakasaka*. But without the reference of all planets, you cannot call sun illuminator. It will be called illumination – *prakasha svarupa*. Similarly I am awarer, knower, etc with reference to things I am aware of. Without reference of all of them I a content of everything called awareness, otherwise called consciousness. Awareness or Consciousness is that because of which the mind is aware of various objects, mind is capable of objectifying various things. Because of which the body, mind sense organs are all sentient, that principle is called consciousness and that is what really I am. All other things I talk about myself is only a mix-up. Essentially in reality I am consciousness making everything conscious.

What is consciousness?

The word awareness or consciousness is generally used in the sense of being well-informed. Like political awareness means being informed about political affairs, social awareness is being informed about social issues in society, economical awareness is being aware of the financial affairs of the country. There awareness is used in the sense of being informed. It is a quality of a mass of people, of society. But here when we use the word consciousness it is not in the sense of being informed. In fact the word awareness does not imply a quality, but an entity which is the reality of everything, which is making the body-mind and senses conscious. Like a tree is a tree because of treeness. Similarly body, etc become conscious because of this reality and therefore it is called consciousness. Consciousness is not a quality of a thing nor of the body, nor the mind. Consciousness is an independent reality. In science, consciousness is considered to be an epiphenomenon of the brain. It is an incidental thing happening in the brain but does not contribute to the main process. This is a provisional understanding. Science has not understood so much about consciousness. That is not the understanding we are talking about. Even though the word 'ness' is used, which indicates a quality, like richness, kindness. But here consciousness is not a quality. It is not even a part of the body, sense or the mind. It is not a particular happening of the body etc. It is the true nature if me the individual. In other words what essentially I am is consciousness. What essentially I am is not limited to this body or mind. It is obtaining in all the minds, all the bodies. In fact the very space in which everything is contained is containing consciousness. There is no space outside consciousness. Space is something I am aware of. And the illumined factor which illumines space will pervade the illumined space. Like illumined book is not outside illuminator light. Consciousness is not limited by space. Similarly time is also contained in the same consciousness. I am someone who is aware of time. So time is also object of me, consciousness. Therefore I consciousness is not limited by time. So time-wise I am limitless and even space-wise I consciousness am limitless. Even with regard to ignorance, I am not the one who has ignorance. I am aware of both ignorance and knowledge. Therefore I am neither ignorance nor knowledge. Once I know this, then the complex born of them goes. In fact if you are frank about ignorance, people don't disrespect you. It is unnecessary fear. Truth is I am free from knowledge or ignorance of the intellect. It does not make any difference to me the consciousness. I am neither *buddhu* nor *buddha*. I am the illuminator of both of them.

So I have this understanding that I am free from all complexes. Ignorance does not limit me, neither space nor time limits me. I have no problem of self non-acceptance because I am completely acceptable to myself. I have no limitations at all. Therefore the problem of self non-acceptance goes away. The sense of helplessness goes away because nothing to be achieved by doing anything. Thus there is the understanding that I am consciousness and the limitations which belongs to the body-mind complex does not get transferred on me and therefore I am self. This is the teaching of Vedanta of the true nature of myself. Technically this is called *tvam padartha vicara*. This is an important part of *vedantic* teaching, but not complete teaching. Some more is required to complete it.

During the analysis we said that I am this body different from body, senses and mind. I am consciousness who am illuminating all of them. But now what is the relationship between the world which is objectified and the consciousness. What is the status of the world because you cannot dismiss it since it is there. So now I have to explain 'what is the status of this world'.

For that *Vedanta* introduces another topic - the analysis of the word 'tat- that' referring to the Lord. In that enquiry, *Vedanta* first says that this world which includes my body-mind sense complex is intelligently put together. Therefore world is a creation and every creation has to have a cause. The cause is of two types- maker and material. Most of the religions talk about only one type of cause and that is the maker. They say that God is maker of this world. But all of them are silent on material cause of this world. Where did god get the material to create the world? This question is not addressed by other theologians. *Vedanta* addresses it. The material cause and maker of this world is one and the same entity and that entity is introduced in *Vedanta* as *brahman* or *Isvara*. Who is *Isvara*? The maker and material of this world is *Isvara*. *Vedanta* goes further and says that generally maker and material are different. Like to make pot, the pot maker is the maker and clay is the material. Or table for which maker is carpenter and material is wood. But sometimes there can be the situation where, the maker and material can be the same. Like spider is the maker and material for the web OR your dream world for which you are the material and maker. Another thing we observe is that any effect will be pervaded by the material cause. Like clay pervades all pots. Wood pervades all furniture. Similarly the maker and material called *Isvara* will be pervading the entire world. That is why, for us, *Isvara* is not an entity sitting in heaven. The entire creation is pervaded by *Isvara*. That is why Hindus are accused of having many Gods. The truth is there are not many Gods, not even there is one god. But we say there is only God. Even the word God should be understood. God is not the one who is sitting somewhere and controlling everything. God is both maker and material. That is the only reality.

Then question is raised- I should see God everywhere. I see table, chair, etc. but I don't see God. How to appreciate *Isvara* is every-where? *Sastra* gives the ways to appreciate *Isvara*. We will talk of two ways-

- i) **Appreciating *Isvara* as the order** which makes things the way they are. This book is there in the form of a book because of a particular order, order means a set of laws which makes things the way they are. Because of the laws two papers can be glued together. When the object falls down, it implies physical order. The factor which connects two situations is because of order. Because of order situation A is resulting in situation B. Like situation A in the form of dropping the object is connected because of order to situation B in the form of falling on the ground. That because of which things behaves the way they behave is called order. Order is of various kinds –

* physical order Like objects fall when dropped, All the planets are moving around the sun because of physical order.

* physiological order – food eaten is converted into energy.

* psychological order- If I have a particular background, I will behave in a particular way. If I am hurt repeatedly, I have a tendency to hurt others. If I have been exploited, then I will not be able to trust others.

* Epistemological order - I am able to speak , that also is order and that you can hear is also order and because of the words heard , understanding is taking place, that is epistemological order The discipline of knowledge dealing with understanding is epistemological order.

So I can appreciate the all-pervasiveness of *Isvara* by seeing the order in every situation. This is a beautiful way of appreciating *Isvara*. Order makes the things, people the way they are. My spouse is the way he/she is because of order. I am the way I am as an individual, is because of this order. This particular understanding that everybody including me is in order will help us to accept people as they are. Generally we ask this question – how come he /she is like that? That creates difficulty in accepting the person. But once I understand the behaviour of the person is in order, then it is relatively easy to accept the person. This is how we see in our life? If an adult makes a noise here, then we get angry with him. But if a baby makes a noise, then we don't get angry with the baby. Because we have this understanding that baby does not know and will behave that way only. So our acceptance of the child is easy because we take it to be in order. Somebody is shouting in the hospital. When you come to know he is shouting because he has very intense pain, then you don't get angry, you accept it. So now you understand that every behaviour has got some background which creates that behaviour and that is the psychological order. Then our acceptance of people is easy. Also even my acceptance of myself as an individual in the relative sense will also be easy, when I understand that my behaviour is also in order. Many people have guilt about how they treated their parents, etc. But now they can validate themselves that in that situation, with that background, this is how I could be. I can accept myself. My behaviour is not outside the order. In fact anybody's behaviour is not outside the order.

A common question asked is- does this mean we should not punish offenders? Answer is- yes you do. Because the punishment is also a part of the order. But you won't hate the person who did wrong. You act to maintain social harmony, but you don't hate the person. You do what is to be done without having any hatred towards others. You even do not hate yourself for what you have done because my expression, my responses are in order. This is how you appreciate *Isvara's* presence in all situations. You don't require a particular situation to appreciate *Isvara*. You see *Isvara* as the order making the things the way they are, making the people the way they are. Then appreciation of *Isvara* is there all the time.

i) Another way of appreciating *Isvara* – ***Isvara is of the nature of existence. Sat brahma.***

The book is, mind is, clock is. Existence 'is' which is common everywhere is an expression of *Isvara*.

So I appreciate the all-pervasiveness of *Isvara* as Existence. For that you don't require a particular place, time or object. Wherever you are, you can appreciate *Isvara* as Existence.

That is how I appreciate *Isvara* which is the material and maker as all-pervasive.

The question is – whenever I appreciate existence, it is always with some name and form. I say- book is. So I appreciate existence with the name book and form book. Existence always seems to be with some *rupa, rasa, gandha*, etc. How to appreciate pure existence?

Our *Sastra* says that we should do this **thought experiment**. You imagine that eyes are not there. Then form and colours will not be established. Still existence will be there in the form of *sabda*, *sparsha*, *gandha*. Sound also you negate, still existence is there. Now all the attributes are negated, will there be existence or not? It seems like there is no existence. But no. Existence is still there in the form of 'I' who is negating everything. So pure existence will be culminating into 'I' the knower who is essentially awareness. So Isvara who is existence is non-separate from 'I' the consciousness. So the truth behind the world in the form of existence and the truth behind consciousness is one and the same. This fact is revealed by a particular sentence- *tat-tvam asi* – that Isvara you are. That is the equation which reveals the truth behind the individual and the total.

For this we give the example of wave and ocean. The truth behind the individual wave and the truth behind the total ocean is water. From the standpoint of water wave and ocean are the same. Similarly from the standpoint of existence-consciousness I and the Lord are one and the same. I can say- I am Isvara. I am *brahman*. This is the vision of Vedanta. I the consciousness is the truth of everything. Nothing is away from me. Therefore there is no sense of limitation. In the vision of wholeness my sense of limitation is resolved. I am completely acceptable to myself, because nothing is lacking in me. I am limitless existence consciousness.

Someone may say that this is too heavy for me. But this alone will give me ultimate freedom. For ultimate freedom this vision of myself being reality of everything is alone the means. There is no other means. But to have the means for ultimate freedom, I need to have relative freedom. To make more money, I need to have some money. Similarly ultimate freedom can be owned up through this knowledge, only if the person has some relative freedom.

to be continued...

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