

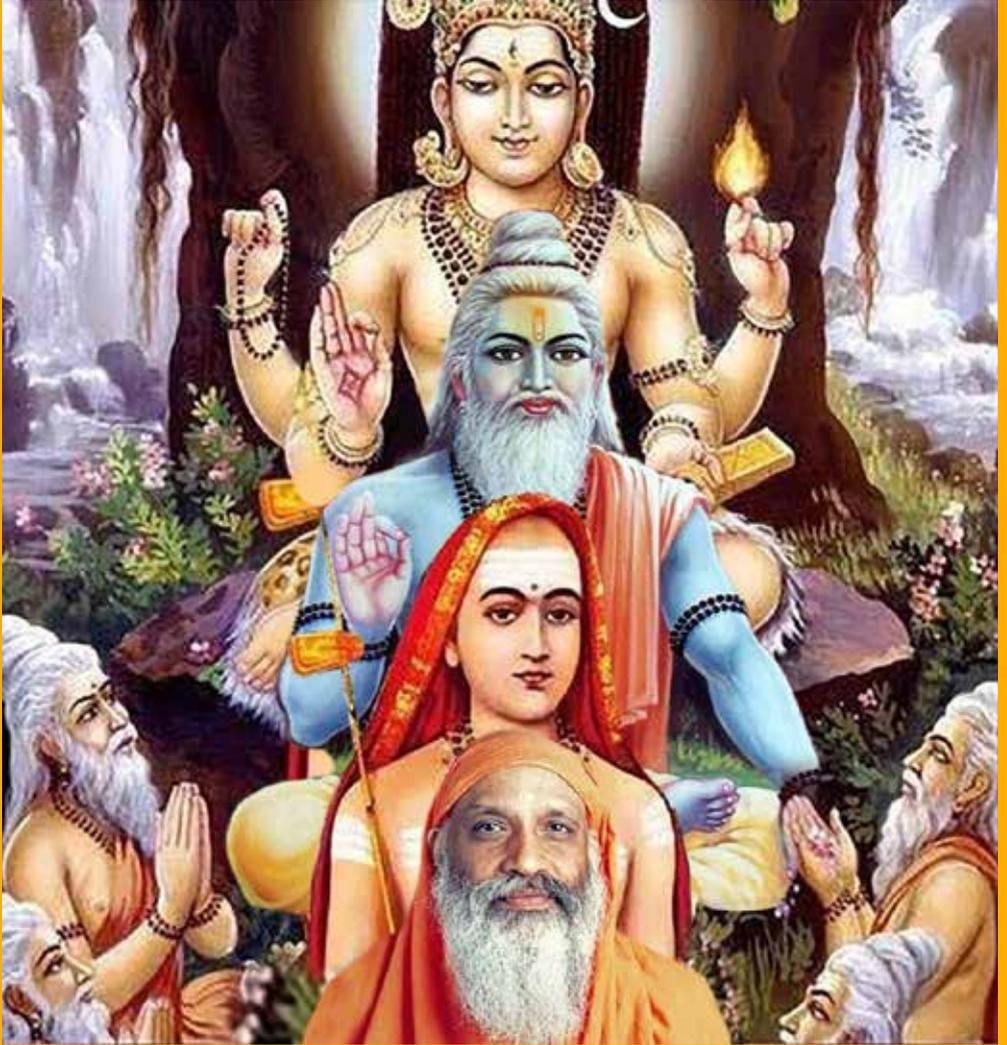
VEDIC WISDOM FESTIVAL

Insights into Vedic Wisdom



Aarsha Vidya Foundation

www.vedicwisdom.in



Guru- śiṣya paramparā

From top to bottom:

Bhagavān Śrī Dakṣiṇamūrti (Lord Śiva as the guru)

Bhagavān Veda Vyāsa

Adi Śankarācarya Bhagavatpāda

Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji

॥ सदा शिवसमारम्भाम् शङ्कराचार्य मध्यमां
अस्मदाचार्य पर्यन्तां वन्दे गुरु परम्परां ॥

I salute the lineage of teachers beginning with the ever auspicious
Lord Shiva (linked by) Adi Shankaracarya in the middle and extending
upto my own teacher.

Aarsha Vidya Foundation is a registered trust in
Mumbai dedicated to sharing the teachings of Vedanta.

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ĀrshaVidyā and Vedic Wisdom	8
What is so special about the Veda?	10
What is Vedanta?	12
Who is a qualified student for Vedanta?	13
The teaching of Advaita Vedanta	15
The dance of Karma	18
The story of the Ego	22
The Vast canvas of Vedic Wisdom	25



FOREWORD

8th December 2019

Gita Jayanti

Dear Reader,

Words have the power to delight, heal, pain and evoke so much. Words can imprison us and also liberate. And when the words are spoken by none other than Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, the words liberate us from limiting notions about ourselves, the world and Isvara.

Through the Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna (and us) –

*Just as a well lighted fire reduces wood to ashes, so too Arjuna,
the fire of knowledge reduces all actions (results of actions) to ashes. (4.37)*

While we may not have the knowledge or the materials to perform a yajña (a worshipful fire-ritual offering to devatas), one yajña that all of us can undertake is a jnana yajña.

Our wrong notions such as *'I am just a human being and afraid of loss and sorrow, The world has denied me, God has so been unkind to me'*, born of our actions and our identities, are spirited away. The ananda, fullness that I am, is revealed when the cover of all our wrong notions is destroyed.

On the occasion of Gita Jayanti in 2019, Aarsha Vidya Foundation is very happy to offer this yajña-prasad in the form of this booklet, to you. Hinduism is so vast that it is easy to get lost in its huge, glorious canvas of texts, practices and customs. This yajña-prasad brings together some articles based on the teachings and writings by our guru, Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji (1930-2015), a renowned global Advaita Vedanta teacher and a visionary. It also has a couple of articles which offer a glimpse of this profound Vedic Wisdom which can transform our lives.

Much like prasada that is received, eaten, digested and assimilated do read these articles and allow your life to be enriched.

With love and prayers,
Brahmavidananda
Brahmaprajananda



WHAT IS ĀRṢAVIDYĀ? WHAT IS VEDIC WISDOM?

The Sanskrit word Ārṣa means that which comes from a Rṣi. A Rṣi is one who knows, or sees, so a Rṣi is a seer. Seer of what? He is a seer of what is, of things that others don't see. Vidya means knowledge, that which is opposed to error and ignorance. Thus, Ārṣa Vidyā means knowledge of the Rṣi-s. In our tradition we look upon the Vedas as a revelation from the Lord himself. We do not look upon the Vedas as human composition, they are not products of human intellect. They are revelations from the Lord to the Rṣi-s. This body of knowledge has been coming down from generation to generation through the lineage of teacher and student (guru-siṣya-paramparā). This body of knowledge is called the Veda.

The knowledge of the Vedas is Ārṣa Vidyā. It can also be known as Vedic wisdom. Like any body of knowledge, such as physics, we do not know when it started. We cannot say that physics started with Newton. Even monkeys know some physics. When a monkey jumps from one tree to the other, it makes sure that it catches the other branch, because if it doesn't, the monkey knows it will fall. And thus physics is a body of knowledge of laws that already exists, which animals instinctively know in order to survive. As with physics, Ārṣa Vidyā didn't start at a given time. The Vedic tradition that has been coming down to us in an oral form has no beginning. Therefore, we say Ārṣa Vidyā is beginningless.

India happens to enjoy the privilege of preserving and retaining this ancient, living tradition which belongs to humanity. Vedas were primarily received and transmitted in śabdārūpa, form of words, alone. They were not written and hence Rṣis also transmitted to their disciples only verbally and the śiṣyāhā listened and learned. It was a Karna Paramparā, oral tradition and not a Hasta paramparā, written tradition although in time, texts began to be used as aids for learning.

Whether in the south of India, or in the east or west or in the Himalayas, there was this flow, this Ganga of knowledge. It has always been flowing in a simple form between the banks of gurus and śiṣya-s and between the banks of parents and children nurturing the hearts. It is all due to the efforts of our ancestors and teachers. Eight hundred years of calculated destruction by foreign rulers wouldn't have allowed this tradition to exist anywhere in the country if it didn't have intrinsic worth.

It is not a mystic tradition, a set of beliefs, which will die when the person holding it dies. Any belief's survival requires organization. But here, without organization, without a hierarchical structure, without a papacy, without diocese, without congregation and parish, it has survived. To do this, it must have intrinsic worth. **It is not simply beliefs handed down; it is knowledge handed over.** In order for a belief to survive it only requires repeated saying and some anesthetized minds. A belief, being a judgment before knowledge, is not like a provisional belief that you have for a teacher until he proves himself wrong, or that you have for a theory until it is proved to be wrong.

Knowledge is something which is communicable, like one plus one is two. That the sum is two is not a belief or opinion. One plus one is always two for Americans as well as Indians. It is a fact and therefore it is communicable.

Ārṣa Vidyā is communicable. It is a vision that can be communicated and shared by a person who himself or herself has been exposed to the sampradayā, methodology, of teaching. This methodology of teaching is so thorough; it doesn't leave anything to be desired.

Ārṣa Vidyā is not something that blesses you later. It is a tradition of immediate blessing and this is why it works.



WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE VEDA?

The Veda like all knowledge has its source in the very source of the creation that we call as *Ishvara*. (Derived from the root “vid “in Sanskrit which means, “to know”.)

Veda is a means of knowledge by which we come to know of the four human goals called as purusartha-s (dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa) and of the means of attaining them.

Whether the person is a warrior in the Masai group in Africa or an investment banker on Wall Street, the Veda classifies all human pursuits in the following four fold way – artha, kāma, dharma and mokṣa. Veda recognises **all these pursuits as valid**.

1.Artha consists of things that provide security from struggle such as finances, property, resources. What might go in the name of *roti, kapda aur makaan* or necessities of life. The pursuit of Arthais to avoid pain and discomfort. (*dukha nivrtti*)

2.Kāma consists of sense pleasures such as travel, novel experiences, fame, companionship. The pursuit of kāma is for gaining happiness. (*sukha prāpti*)

3.Dharma is the framework of universal values and principles. Vyāsa with upheld hands in the Mahābhārata, declares – All wealth and security can be gained by following dharma alone.

Dharma is also the invisible result called puṇya acquired by the performance of the actions prescribed by the Veda. This puṇya helps in *sukha prapti and dukha nivrtti* in this life as well as future lives.

The above three pursuits are not the final purpose of the Veda. The means prescribed in the Veda are only to enhance artha, kāmāand dharma. We can start a business to gain money and also perform a Vedic ritual, Lakṣmi homa to enhance our success.

4. The final purpose of the Veda is **Mokṣa**. Mokṣa is freedom from the sense of limitation that is experienced by people in the human condition. The pursuit of artha, dharma and kāmā gives us relative happiness. All are limited and involve loss and effort and cannot give us total fulfillment. To a discerning mind, the human heart seeks total satisfaction and freedom from the sense of limitation. What we are really seeking is mokṣa.

Knowledge of Physics, Chemistry, Economics can be gained by the five means of knowledge that we have like perception, inference etc. The Veda which talks about the means for the above is communicated through words, called as *śabdapramāṇa* (means of knowledge), which is referred to as verbal testimony. The means of knowledge is called as *pramāṇa*. Thus, *śabdais* a pramāṇain addition to perception, inference, postulation, comparison and non-perception. We cannot gain the knowledge by ourselves.



WHAT IS VEDANTA?

Vedanta is a solution to the problem of taking myself to be a mortal, imperfect, and subject to various limitations. These are the conclusions to every individual. Vedanta is the teaching which solves this problem. In its vision, you are the solution to the very problem from which you suffer. “I am Brahman, the whole” is Vedanta. Therefore, Vedanta is the solution.

Vedanta does not offer a solution. The solution is Vedanta.

Vedanta is the knowledge found at the end of the Veda, it is called Vedanta (anta, meaning end). The first part of each of the four Vedas is called *karma-kānda* and the last portion is called *jñāna-kānda*. *Karma-kānda* is the section dealing with rituals and prayers, whereas the *jñāna-kānda* deals with only with realities – the nature of the self, the world, and God; how these three are interconnected; and whether there is a difference between them or not. This knowledge of realities liberates the person because Vedic vision is that you are the whole and there is no difference whatsoever between you, the world, and God.



WHO IS A QUALIFIED STUDENT FOR VEDANTA?

Anyone who wants the knowledge is qualified. To want the knowledge is the first qualification. If your answer to the question, “Do you want to know?” is “Yes” then you are qualified. But, you may well ask, “How can you say I am qualified just because I want to know?” Then I would say, “If you can know, you are qualified.” If I teach you that you are the whole and you understand what I say, then you are qualified. And if you do not understand what I say, it simply means that you have to qualify yourself.

You are qualified for the knowledge, but in order to understand what is being said- “You are the whole,” you must equip yourself. There are, therefore, four qualifications - referred to in Sanskrit as *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *śatkasampatti*, and *mumukṣutvam*.

Viveka is the capacity to understand realities. If you have *viveka*, you have already analyzed your experiences in life, experiences that once considered so important- your job, your marriage, your children, some power or pleasure, such as music. You have understood that a thing is important until you acquire it and, then it becomes unimportant and something else becomes more important. But, if you analyze them, you find that these more important things are not in any way different from those that were important previously.

This analysis of personal experience and the experience of others leads you to the understanding that there is no real answer to this problem. And if you understand that, then what is the answer? You are the answer. The answer is not your experiences.

You are the problem and you are the solution. The whole problem is self-non acceptance. That I do not accept myself is the problem. And yet I must come to see myself as acceptable. If I have to accept myself, I must be acceptable. Therefore, to resolve the problem, I have to know that I am acceptable.

Limitlessness alone is acceptable. Thus, if I am acceptable, I cannot become limited. In fact, there is no question of becoming at all. I can never become limited. I appreciate, then, that I cannot become acceptable by any process of becoming. No change, then, will make me acceptable. If, without any change, I have to be acceptable, then I must necessarily shift my vision about myself from that of seeing myself as unacceptable.

Vedanta tells me that I am acceptable because I am the whole.

At least this much knowledge, I must have. I should at least know that any pursuit, other than knowledge, will not remove my sense of limitation. This particular disposition, achieved through an analysis of one's experiences, is *viveka*.

Once there is *viveka*, then a certain dispassion, *vairāgya*, towards life experiences is possible. You gain a certain objectivity. You understand the limitations of money, power, and all other pursuits. You may continue pursuing them, but with a clear understanding of their limitations. To be able to seek only what is to be sought means that you have *vairāgya*.

The third qualification, *śatkaśampattiis* a set of six disciplines consisting of a certain composure within yourself (*śama*); control over your pursuits so that you do not get carried away by fancies (*dama*); freedom from a sense of ownership (*uparama*); the capacity to put up with small difficulties (*titikśa*); trust in the means of knowledge we call Vedanta and in the words of the teacher whom you have come to recognize as one who is capable of teaching (*śraddhā*); and the capacity to set the mind on a given object of inquiry for a length of time, a certain self-satisfaction and cheerfulness, so that the mind can absorb itself (*samādānam*). The final qualification is a desire for freedom from bondage (*mumukśutvam*). This desire comes from discerning the problem as a fundamental problem of self-non acceptance and wanting to be free from it. Seeing the problem and seeking a solution is *mumukśutvam*. A person who has *mumukśutvam* is called *mumukśu*, one who desires to be free.

People generally do not know about these four-fold qualifications. They seek solutions without really knowing what they are seeking. Therefore, it is an education in itself just to understand the problem.

The main qualification, therefore, is to see the problem very clearly and to know that I seek the solution only in terms of knowledge. If this much understanding is there, I am a qualified student for Vedanta.

Without these qualifications, knowledge cannot take place. I must see that this is the solution, that I am the solution, and that there is no other way of solving the problem. This is the solution, for which I seek a teacher to teach me. Once I am committed, the commitment will bring all of the other qualifications.



THE TEACHING OF ADVAITA VEDANTA

When we talk about self-knowledge, we have to **identify who that self is**. What do we mean when **we say ‘I’**? It is an irony that the word ‘I’ has no definite object. Every other word elicits a known object or concept in the mind. Say the word “pot” and the corresponding thought-form of the object pot is there. This is **how language functions**. If I hear the word “pot” and see “cot” you would say I have erroneous knowledge. If I see nothing, you would say I am totally ignorant of the object “pot.” If I use the word “gagaboogai”—a meaningless, nonsense word—I use it as just that, not to connote something in the world.

So who is this ‘I’? **Who is this ‘I’ that I experience so intimately—who is myself?** It seems to be this I who is unhappy, who cannot get his life together, who wants to fulfill his potential, his capacities, who wants a meaningful relationship, who does not want to suffer, and, now, who wants to know himself. I want to address this I. I want to see this I. Who is he?

It is my experience that I am here as a conscious being and everything else is the world. We can reduce the entire creation to two factors, one the subject and the other the object. **Anything I can objectify is an object and the one who objectifies is the subject.** I am not there in an object because it is something I know. Here object includes not only the tangible but also the intangible, such as time and space.

While it is an acceptable fact that I am the subject and as a subject I am not anywhere in the world as an object of my knowledge, one tends to conclude that I, the subject, am the physical body. But, then, we tend to overlook the fact that the physical body is an object. I know my body and all its corners and crevices. But since the subject and object are always two different entities, since the knower of anything is distinct from the thing he knows, then I cannot be the physical body. Similarly, **if I try to attribute the identity of ‘I’ to any function or system of the body, it resolves in the same subject-object, knower-known relationship.**

If I am neither the physical body, its sense organs, the psychological system, nor any relative role I play, then **what is left? I must be the mind.** The thoughts of the mind are objects. Each perception, conclusion, doubt, etc., is known as an object. So even though I say, “I am restless, I am agitated,” I am only speaking of **conditions that belong to the mind.** The thoughts come and go but I am still here. Before the thought arrives, while the thought is there, and after it goes away, I am very much present. So, that means I am independent of thought.

Vedantic Teaching

We showed in the beginning that people's urges and pursuits, if reduced to their fundamental forms, would be expressed in the desire to live and live happily and to be free from ignorance. When the teaching unfolds the nature of the self, its identity is revealed as:

<i>sat</i>	existence which is never negated.
<i>cit</i>	awareness, the basis of all that is known.
<i>Ananda</i>	fullness, without limit.

If awareness is the real meaning of 'I' then 'I' is not this limited person

All the problems one suffers from belong to the limited I,
the relative I,
the falsely identified I.

It is something like an actor, playing the part of a beggar, who takes the hunger and poverty of the beggar home with him after the show. All problems belong, in fact, to the object of one's knowledge, not to the subject who witnesses them. **It is something like watching a congested traffic scene and saying, "I am congested."** Yet we watch the traffic of our thoughts flow and take its various conditions upon ourselves. **These problems belong to the mind. The problems belong to the object, not to the subject.** That is true objectivity.

A wise man, a liberated being knowing himself to be full and complete, is not dependent on a situation or thing or condition to be full. You could say he is a master of himself because he knows the truth of himself. **In knowing the truth of himself, he naturally comes to know the truth of the world, of the objects of knowledge.** The problem that he originally took as real and thus needed to resolve, he now sees as belonging to a false person. He knows, "I am the one who gives reality to that person. I have no problem. I am so full and complete that nothing can add to me or take from me." That is seeing oneself and one's life as they are. Only then can a topical problem be tackled for what it really is.

Vedanta has always been an oral tradition, passed from teacher to student. It is a means of knowledge (*pramāna*). As an oral tradition, it requires a teacher who handles the words and unlocks the meaning behind the words. To say, "You are full, you are limitless," is one thing, but to make the student see what that actually means is another. If that is not done, the words just evolve into another conditioning.

Thus, the subject matter being so unique, being **neither an object nor a concept**, yet undeniably there, the communication of it requires very special handling. Words must be elaborately defined so that what is meant is what is received.

Paradoxes must be juggled, illustrations handled, and contexts set up so that the implied meanings can be seen. For this a teacher is necessary, because he knows the truth as well as the methodology for revealing it.

Finally, he who comes to this teaching comes to it with a particular attitude. Being a *mumukṣu*, desirous of knowledge, he has discerned the nature of the problem to a degree, and so there is receptivity, openness to what the teacher teaches. What is sought is very simply *the truth*. This distinguishes the teaching from all other types of learning and problem solving. We find that in the very learning process there is love and trust that come from the relief of discovering the means for what you really want to gain. The teacher is not an authority but a candle that lights another candle.

Thus, this knowledge gives a person the end that he was seeking in all his pursuits and in all problems. He sees the true nature of the “owner” of the problem and the true nature of the problem itself.



THE DANCE OF KARMA

From The River of Wisdom podcast by Swamini Brahmajprananda

You may or may not know how to jive or do the tango or dance with a person. But one dance you want to definitely master is the dance of karma.

When you learn the dance of karma, you are in charge of your happiness. You are in charge of your life.

All Eastern traditions such as Hinduism and its off-shoots Buddhism, Jainism and other Eastern traditions recognise the monumental role of karma in people's lives.

Karma, a Sanskrit word means wilful or deliberate action by a human being who has free will. Karma also means the results of the action. Although your dog is very loving to you, the dog or any other animal or bird does not have karma. Only human beings have karma.

The Vedic tradition offers us a profoundly liberating understanding of karma and I am sharing main principles here -

1. The Principle of Actions and results in the form of punya and papa.

- Every deliberate or wilful action that we do, produces two forms of results. One is a Visible result – Drishta Phalam - and the other is an invisible result – Adrishta Phalam.

If the action is a good action, there is a good visible and invisible result, and if there is a bad action, there is a bad visible and invisible result. E.g. if I do something for a charitable cause, firstly the visible result is that someone is benefited from it. The second result is that since I have done a noble action of helping others, it produces an invisible result called Punya.

On the other hand, when I cheat someone to earn money, the visible result is quite evident-increase in bank balance. The invisible result is negative called Pāpam.

Thus every deliberate action in addition to visible results produces invisible results called Punyam and Pāpam. There is no English translation for papa or punya. Now that the words are understood I will continue to use these Sanskrit words.

The second principle of karma is

2. The Principle of Conversion of punya and papa to sukha and dukha

– The invisible Punyam is converted into situations of sukha i.e. happiness and pleasure in the form of supportive people, opportunities, your own talents, skills and abilities – in fact all that is wonderful about your life.

The invisible paapa gets converted into dukha, or sadness and pain which manifests in our lives in the form of unsupportive people, difficult situations, illnesses and many conflicts.

Do we know when the punya and papa can get converted into experiences of happiness and sorrow? The chances are good that most of the results of our actions, punya and papa we will reap in this lifetime itself. But the shastra, our scriptures also clearly reveal that any karma result can fructify at any time. The duration will never be known by us. Some Punyams can give immediate Sukham while some Punyams can give delayed Sukham.

The example given in the Shāstra is the different types of seeds that are planted on the same day. An olive seed, a mango seed, a coconut seed. Even though the date of planting is the same, different seeds take different duration of time to become full-fledged results.

Since the Punyam and Pāpam can fructify at different duration, some of the Punya and Pāpa may not fructify in this lifetime itself. This means that un-fructified Punya Pāpams remain in the case of every individual which becomes the cause for rebirth for reaping the result of our actions.

The scriptures say that one can escape from the criminal law of the country but never from the cosmic Moral Order, the law of karma pervaded by the intelligence of the Lord. The cycle of birth and death is caused by the law of Karma.

The third principle is

3. Principle of shastra guidance and motive

What produces Punyam and Pāpam is based on two norms. The first norm is the scriptural injunction. Whatever the scriptures promote or enjoin – those actions will produce Punyam. Whatever the scriptures prohibit – such actions will produce Pāpam. Even if you don't know what is in the scriptures the understanding of right and wrong that lies in every human heart is enough in most cases to do the right thing. When in doubt, seek advice from the elders.

Suppose you are doing an action which is not discussed in the scriptures at all – travelling by train – what would be the norms for judgement of such activities ? The norm is based on the motive. What is the motive of my actions ? If my motive is good and noble, that Karma will produce Punyam and if it is not so noble it produces Pāpam. The same principle of motive is used to determine justice for an alleged criminal too. Therefore based on the norm of Shāstrik injunction and motive, it is decide whether a Karma is Punyam or Pāpam.

How do we know about these principles of karma?

The Vedas have revealed this knowledge to us. You may not have even heard of the Vedas but you are connected to it if you understand and believe in the laws of karma. As you can see the understanding of Karma is not based on logic but on a means of knowledge called the Vedas. Just as the eyes are a means of knowledge for sight, the Vedas are a means of knowledge for all those areas of life that cannot be understood by perception or inference. There is no way for any of us to have arrived at the understanding of punya and papa without the revealed knowledge of the Vedic tradition.

Okay, so what does the law of karma have to do with me, how do I benefit?

1. If I accept the Law of Karma, the first benefit is **I become proactive and take responsibility for my actions.** Hence I take responsibility for my present and future. Taking responsibility means I see that I can actively shape and contribute to, not control every situation I am in.

I start to take charge of my life.

This is because the Law of Karma says that my present situation is the result of my past actions – visible and invisible and a combination of punya and paapa. I try and focus on good karma which will increase the visible result and also increase the invisible result, punya. If I can intelligently live in the present, I can contribute to and influence my future. It helps me accept and enjoy and exercise my free will. The more I do this, the more I see that I am in charge of my life.

People wrongly think that the Law of Karma leads to fatalism. In fact the Law of Karma prevents fatalism and resignation as proactivity and responsibility cannot coexist with resignation.

2. Second advantage if I accept the Law of Karma is it helps me in accepting some of my inexplicable sufferings. Acceptance does not mean Agreement – very good this happened to me.. Acceptance means this is how reality is.

The situations in my life that prompt me to lament - “Why me?”why me?, it is the Law of Karma helps me in accepting reality.

I know that I am responsible for every one of my suffering through my immediate past action or through my remote past action. I am responsible does not mean I am to blame. It just means I played a contributory role. I may not even remember which remote past action for my current state – good or bad, is responsible. Can I blame myself either for actions done in this lifetime or in previous lifetimes? Not really because I did my best with the knowledge, power and experience I had then. Moreover I don't know under what helpless circumstances I had to do some wrong actions. So I naturally glide into a pragmatic approach of not blaming myself or blaming anyone in the world. The Law of Karma helps me to accept my reality and the reality of others.

3. The third advantage if I accept the Law of Karma is that **it truly explains the disparity and differences in the living being**. Why were some born with a silver spoon and others not even with a paper plate? Why was I born to these sets of parents, under these unique circumstances? Of the seven billion people on the planet why am I closely related with only ten to twenty people for most of my life? Everyone is a unique combination of the results of their actions – punya and papa.

It also answers one of the fundamental questions asked by many questioners – Why do bad things happen to good people and why do good things happen to bad people ? There is no answer in physics or psychology for this. Karma which is not the principle of chance but cause and effect all the way helps us see where the pieces of the puzzle fit in perfectly. Your whole life journey is our papa and punya unfolding every day.

4. The fourth advantage if I accept the law of karma is that **our devotion to Ishvara is not shaken**. The world over, people question the Lord's sense of justice. There have been many religious people who did not understand the Law of Karma and therefore blamed God for their suffering and turn atheists. It is a bit like saying, when I put my finger in the fire, the fire should not burn my finger or it should burn only the tip and not the rest of it. The nature of fire is to burn. After doing your karma you don't get to choose. Once you do a karma, the impartial laws take over. The nature of the law of karma is to give results. And so, your devotion and understanding of Ishvara is not shaken as you see Ishvara's intelligence pervading the law of karma and your heart can only expand in wonder.

In understanding the laws of karma and seeing its advantages you learn the dance of karma, you learn when to lead and when to yield. In the dance of karma there is never a dull moment, every moment is a moment to learn, a moment to make a connection, a moment to offer your gifts to the world, a moment to be generous, a moment to...the possibilities are endless!

Enjoy the dance of karma. It promises to be with you for this lifetime.

You matter. Your life matters, What you do with your life matters.



THE STORY OF THE EGO

From The River of Wisdom podcast by Swamini Brahmajnananda

Once upon a time lived the ego. It had been fed a lot since childhood. Hence it used the words I, me and myself a lot.

There was never any room for anybody. Wherever the ego went, I, me and myself went along.

The ego was a good encroacher. It would claim things that did not belong to it. At the same time, the ego felt threatened very easily. It was very fragile, you see. If anyone did not pay enough attention, it would start yelling and shouting. If it was not given credit, it would sulk or bad mouth others. There was no way that the ego could be relegated to a corner.

And then one day a word mirror called Vedanta was shown to it. Expecting to be praised, the ego asked, ‘Mirror mirror on the wall, who is the greatest of them all?’ And the mirror said – “The one who is in touch with reality.

That must be me, the ego thought. The mirror said, “Who are you really? You are just a bunch of concepts about the self. Some ideas about the self. If I start the enquiry into you, you as the ego will really understand how great you are. When I the ego is understood as Atma, you have no problem.”

The ego said – “Don’t you know me? I am so accomplished. Whatever I have achieved is all because of my efforts, my dedication, my hard work. I am totally self made. No one can take it away from me.”

The mirror smiled compassionately and she said – “I hear you. As the ego did you create your body? No, it was given to you. As the ego, did you create your mind? No it was given to you. As the ego, did you invent the people around you and the many situations that you were in? No. As the ego, did you create the knowledge of the many fields of knowledge? No, you just discovered what was there.

The ego said, “But I made the most of my body, mind and the many situations I was in. You are jealous of me. That’s why you cannot digest my success.”

And the mirror said, “Why should I be jealous of you? I am very proud of you. In fact all your accomplishments have made you strong, so strong that you can look at the reality of yourself.

Intelligent living demands that you are in touch with reality. But, the success that you claim is yours. Is it really yours? Anything you claim, whether it is your success as a professional, your success in the marathon, your success in the exams or the success in keeping the extended family together, are they really yours? So many factors and people and principles go into it. The actions you definitely contribute to, but the results are not in your hands. You are a contributor not the controller.”

The ego said, “I am getting a bit suspicious about you. Why are you putting me down? That’s why I kept far away from all this stuff.
I don’t want to suppress myself nor try to be humble. That’s all spiritual nonsense.”

The mirror said – “You don’t have to suppress yourself at all nor be humble. Just be willing to enquire into yourself.

Let me tell you the truth of who you are.

Do you exist? Yes.

Do you exist when you are sleeping? Of course. My body is not functioning much. But I definitely exist.

What about between two thoughts?”

The ego said – Yes I am.

“When you say ‘I am’ you use the body-mind to say it. But actually, you are free from the body and mind and hence the many difficulties related to it.

Consciousness you are.

Because you do not know who you are, you have ignorance about it. Because you the conscious being is associated with the body and mind, you think that you are just this body-mind. You are the ahankara. Just a concept about the self. A concept because you do not know the reality about yourself.”

The ego said to the mirror – You are making some sense. But I don’t know where you are going with all this.

The mirror said, “When you see the reality of who you are neither will you be excessively proud nor will you be self-condemning. The problem with pride is that it takes little to deflate it, as it is just gas. On the other hand if you are always finding fault with yourself and feeling worse about it, see the extent of ego you have. You have limited yourself only to the concept of the body-mind, which you are never happy with.”

“When you are in touch with reality, you see the world as it is. The world is filled with wonderful opportunities: therefore you make use of these opportunities as a source of learning and you use the vehicle of your body-mind, etc. to the best of your ability. It is your means to shed ignorance.

When you are in touch with reality revealed through the shastra mirror, you see that you, the limitless conscious being are expressing yourself through the medium of the limited body-mind. Hence there is the experience of limitation. But no limitation of time or place can really limit you.”

“When you are in touch with reality you start to be more grateful because you see so much that has been given to you. You are even more grateful because you see the possibilities of what you can do. When you know the truth of yourself, the shadow or the ego that was masquerading as your light is no longer there. Yes, sure the mind-body is there. Now it is just a functional identification.”

“You enjoy yourself and the world for what it is. Because you chose to bless yourself with this enquiry, you now bless the world with your presence and teachings. You can now laugh at the story of your own ego and share with others.

If you were to now ask me, ‘Mirror mirror on the wall who is the greatest of them all?’ I would say “You because you are in touch with reality. You have committed to the pursuit of self-enquiry which will reveal your dazzling light.”

The mirror and the ego had a good laugh.

You matter. Your life matters, What you do with your life matters.

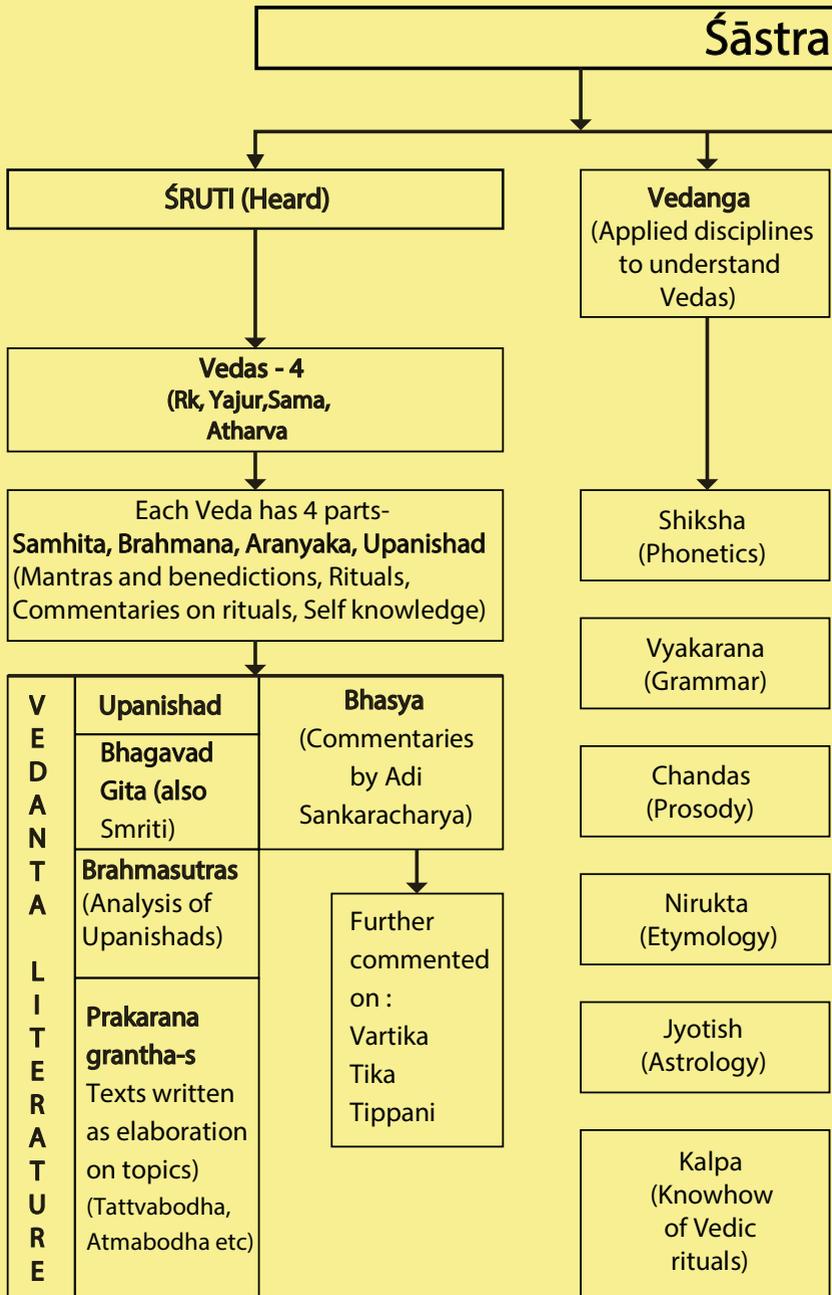


THE VAST CANVAS OF VEDIC WISDOM

Our Sastra refers to a body of knowledge the purpose of which is to direct and teach. It is so vast that it will take lifetimes to master even a few subjects. Yet it is important to be familiar with the depth and breadth of our own culture. Knowledge was passed on through guru-śiṣya lineage in different subjects. The table gives us a glimpse of most of the disciplines of knowledge which were eventually written.

A few things to note:

- 1.The table presents the major texts of the sastra and is not exhaustive.
- 2.No person can master all these disciplines
- 3.For the purpose of Vedanta, we study Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Brahmasutras along with Prakarana granthas and Sanskrit (for a full course of study)
- 4.The teachings of dharma are imbued in the Ramayana and Mahabharata.



(Hindu religious scriptures)

Upa Vedas

SMRITI (Remembered)

Puranas

Itihasa
(History)

Dharmashastra
(Teachings on
dharma)

Agama
(Tantra)

Ayurveda

Maha Puranas
(18)
(Bhagavatam,
Devi Purana,
Skanda
Purana, Shiva
Purana etc

Ramayana

Apastamba

Vaishnava

Artha
Shastra

Maha-
bharatha

Gautama

Shaiva

Dhanur
Veda

Bhagavad
Gita

Baudhayana

Shakti

Sthapatya
Veda

Upa Puranas
(18)

Manusmriti

Gandharva
Veda

Vasistha

Yajnavalkya
Smriti

Aarsha Vidya Foundation is a registered trust sharing the profound wisdom teachings of Vedanta with all. In addition to regular classes, we conduct retreats, workshops for adults and youth, customized programmes for corporates, counseling for spiritual and emotional issues and pilgrimages.

We aim to build a retreat centre/ashram close to Mumbai to provide a peaceful space for people to grow spiritually and to create traditional teachers for the current and future generations.

Contributions are much appreciated and welcome. All contributions to the trust are exempt under 80G of the Income Tax Act.

Swami Brahmanidananda Saraswati, the founder of Aarsha Vidya Foundation is a traditional and contemporary teacher of Vedanta. For more than three decades he has been sharing Vedic wisdom through traditional classes, workshops for personal growth, seminars, corporate workshops and intensive retreats. The details of the programmes and ongoing classes and much more can be accessed at www.vedicwisdom.in

Swamini BrahmaPrananda Saraswati is a trustee of Aarsha Vidya Foundation and has dedicated her life to sharing the teachings of oneness and dharma with all. She holds traditional Vedanta classes in Mumbai and online and co-conducts retreats in India and abroad. The details of her ongoing classes, courses and programmes can be accessed at www.discoveratma.com

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‘ Trust in the infinite wisdom of Isvara is surrender’

Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji