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Advanced Vedanta Course

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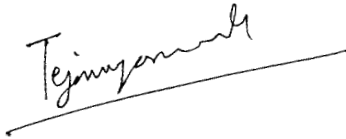
Blessed Self,

Hari Om!

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the study of the Advanced Vedanta Course. This course is based on the prakaraëa-granthas and aims to provide an in-depth knowledge of Vedäntic concepts. I congratulate Chinmaya International Foundation for having brought out these lessons in such an excellent manner.

My prayers and best wishes for your successful completion of the course. May this study pave the way for your inner transformation.

With Prem and Om,



Swami Tejomayananda
Head, Chinmaya Mission Worldwide

July 10, 2006
Guru Pürëimä

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Acknowledgements

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These lessons have been prepared under the guidance of Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji, Head of the Chinmaya Mission worldwide. Pujya Guruji conceived the idea of this course and his blessings ensured its completion too. The voice in these lessons is verily the echo of the voices of the Saints and Sages of India. We are ever indebted to them for having bestowed on us this life-giving and liberating knowledge of Advaita Vedānta.

Adi Sankara Nilayam
Guru Pūrṇimā, July 10, 2006

Swami Advayananda
Acharya, CIF



Advanced Vedanta Course

Guidelines and Instructions

We take great pleasure in welcoming you to the Advanced Vedanta Course.

This course is based on the prakaraṇa-granthas and comprises 24 lessons. These lessons are centred on the thought flow of Śaṅkarācārya's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*. While elaborating the concepts, help has been taken freely from other prakaraṇa-granthas such as *Tattva-bodha*, *Ātma-bodha*, *Vākya-vṛtti*, *Pañcadaśī* and so on. A list of important texts that have been drawn upon in the preparation of this Course has been appended. The aim of these lessons is to give an overall picture of the philosophy of Vedānta and an in-depth understanding of its concepts so as to enable you to live the Vedāntic way of life.

The Advanced Vedanta Course is a sequel to the Foundation Vedanta Course that is being presently run by Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF). This course can be considered 'advanced' only to that extent; it is in no way intended to connote that this course is meant for those who have already studied the prasthāna-trayī. If you have been introduced to Vedānta through the CIF's Foundation Vedanta Course or have already learnt the basics of Vedānta, you are sure to benefit from it.

This one-year course with 24 lessons has been planned in such a manner that a diligent student will be able to complete the course in a span of 12 months, that is at the rate of two lessons per month. At the end of each lesson are some questions that you are expected to answer.

You may take a fortnight to study each lesson and submit your answers to these questions. If you do not submit your answers continually and on time, you will be taken off our rolls. Once you have been taken off, if you want to continue the Course, you will have to re-register for the Course and start afresh from the first lesson. Needless to mention, those of you who have

genuine reasons for not submitting the answers on time may intimate the HSC Department and your requests will be duly considered.

The course content, glossary of the Sanskrit terms used in these lessons, as well as the index of the concepts will be sent to you at the beginning of the course.

For best results, we recommend the following method of study:

- Devote at least half an hour daily to study these lessons. You must spend at least 3 hours in a week for study and reflection.
- Once you are clear with all the concepts, answer the questions at the end of the lessons. We expect your answers to be to the point and in your own words. Ideally, you should avoid referring to the lessons while answering the questions.
- Make it a point to revise the earlier lesson before you start studying the new one. Once in three months, revise all the lessons that you have studied.
- As far as doubts are concerned – make a note of them in a separate book. As the concepts unfold in the subsequent lessons, you will see that your doubts are automatically cleared. Hence, we discourage learners from writing to us their doubts the very moment they arise. Revisit your ‘doubt-book’ before you start the study of the next lesson; it is sure that you will be able to answer many of your doubts by yourself. You are of course welcome to write/email us in case your doubts persist.
- These lessons are not meant for an intellectual appreciation of the Vedāntic concepts alone; they are aimed at enabling the actual living of Vedānta. Jot down the ideas that inspire you. Read this book often and see how far you are able to practise what you have understood.
- You may also discuss with like-minded friends the ideas you have understood. Such discussion is bound to enhance your clarity of the subject.

Knowledge of Vedānta must be coupled with spiritual practices like prayer, worship of the Lord, japa, meditation and so on. Only then will you be able to reap its full benefits. Hence, devote time for these spiritual practices also along with the study. If you ensure all these, you are certain to find that this study will transform the way you feel, think and live.

You are also welcome to pass on the information about the CIF's courses to your friends and fellow-seekers.

All your correspondence with respect to the Advanced Vedanta Course should carry your Registration Number and should be addressed to:

Advanced Postal and E-Vedanta Courses,
Chinmaya International Foundation,
Adi Sankara Nilayam, Veliyanad – 682 313.
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Adi Sankara Nilayam
Guru Pūrṇimā, July 10, 2006

Academic Director
CIF

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Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation

THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE, written in the Devanāgarī script, has nearly twice as many characters in its alphabet as has English. In these lessons, the Devanāgarī characters have been transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 and since then generally acknowledged to be the only rational and satisfactory scheme. The following is the key for the transliteration and pronunciation of the Sanskrit alphabet. One 'sound value' is given to each letter; f, g, w, x, and z are not used at all.

अ	a	like the <i>o</i> in son
आ	ā	like the <i>a</i> in far
इ	i	like the <i>i</i> in if
ई	ī	like the <i>ee</i> in feel
उ	u	like the <i>u</i> in full
ऊ	ū	like the <i>oo</i> in pool
ऋ	ṛ	like the <i>ri</i> in rig
ॠ	ṝ	no equivalent in English
ऌ	ḷ	no equivalent in English
ए	e	like the <i>a</i> in gate
ऐ	ai	like the <i>y</i> in my
ओ	o	like the <i>o</i> in note
औ	au	like the <i>ou</i> in loud
क	k	like the <i>k</i> in look
ख	kh	like the <i>kh</i> in khan
ग	g	like the <i>g</i> in gap
घ	gh	like the <i>gh</i> in ghost
च	c	like the <i>ch</i> in chuckle
छ	ch	like the <i>ch</i> in treachery
ज	j	like the <i>j</i> in jam
झ	jh	like the <i>geh</i> in hedgehog

ट	t	like the <i>t</i> in tank
ठ	th	like the <i>th</i> in ant hill (approximate)
ड	d	like the <i>d</i> in dog
ढ	dh	like the <i>dd</i> in midday (approximate)
त	t	like the <i>th</i> in thump
थ	th	like the <i>th</i> in Othello
द	d	like the <i>th</i> in then
ध	dh	like the <i>dh</i> in dhobi
प	p	like the <i>p</i> in put
	ph	like the <i>ph</i> in uphill (approximate)
ब	b	like the <i>b</i> in bad
भ	bh	like the <i>bh</i> in bhangra
ङ	ñ	like the <i>ng</i> in sing
ञ	ñ	like the <i>ny</i> in canyon (approximate)
ण	ṇ	like the <i>n</i> in under
न	n	like the <i>n</i> in nose
य	y	like the <i>y</i> in yap
र	r	like the <i>R</i> in Raja
ल	l	like the <i>l</i> in lap
व	v	like the <i>v</i> in avert (approximate)
श	ś	like the <i>sh</i> in shri
ष	ṣ	like the <i>sh</i> in shall
स	s	like the <i>s</i> in sand
ह	h	like the <i>h</i> in hat (approximate)
:	ḥ	a distinct hard aspiration that echoes the vowel which immediately precedes it
◌̣	ṃ	the nasal belonging to the preceding vowel, the precise sound of which depends upon the consonants that follow it. Represented by a dot above the alphabet.



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The following are the important texts that have been used in the preparation of the lessons. The commentaries of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda on some of these texts have been extensively used.

1. *Advaita-makaranda* of Lakṣmīdhara Kavi
2. *Ātma-bodha* of Çai karācārya
3. *Upadeça-sāra* of Ramaēa Maharñi
4. *Upadeça-sāhasrē* of Çai karācārya
5. *Jēvan-mukti-viveka* of Svāmē Vidyāraēya
6. *Ji'āna-sāra* of Svāmē Tejomayānanda
7. *Tattva-bodha* of Çai karācārya
8. *Dakñiēāmūrti-stotra* of Çai karācārya
9. *Dāg-dāçya-viveka* of Svāmē Vidyāraēya
10. *Dhanyāñākam* of Çai karācārya
11. *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* of Nārada Muni
12. *Nirvāēa-ñāikam* of Çai karācārya
13. *Nēti-çatakam* of Bhartāhari
14. *Naiñkarmya-siddhi* of Sureçvarācārya
15. *Pai'cadaçē* of Svāmē Vidyāraēya
16. *Badarēça-stotra* of Svāmē Tapovanam
17. *Bhaja-govindam* of Çai karācārya
18. *Manaū-çodhanam* of Svāmē Tejomayānanda
19. *Manēñā-pai'cakam* of Çai karācārya
20. *Yogavāsīñha* of Vālmēki
21. *Yogavāsīñha-sārasaì graha* of Svāmē Tejomayānanda
22. *Rāma-gētā* of Veda Vyāsa
23. *Laghu-yogavāsīñha* of Abhinanda
24. *Vākya-vātti* of Çai karācārya
25. *Vivekacūōamaēi* of Çai karācārya
26. *Vedānta-sāra* of Svāmē Sadānanda
27. *Vedānta-sudhā* of Brahmalēna Muni
28. *Sad-darçanam* of Ramaēa Maharñi
29. *Sarva-vedānta-siddhānta-sārasaì graha* of Çai karācārya
30. *Sādhanā-pai'cakam* of Çai karācārya
31. *Subodhinē* of Nāsiā hasarasvatē
32. *Hastāmalaka-stotra* of Hastāmalakācārya

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Course Content

(VI Sections, 24 Lessons)

Section I

(4 Lessons)

1. *The Nine Blessings*

Enumeration of the nine blessings

Human birth

Manhood

Sāttvic attitude in life

Steadfastness on the path of dharma prescribed in the Vedas

Knowledge of the deep significances of the Vedas

Differentiation between the Self and the not-Self

Direct experience

To be established in the awareness of the identity of Brahman and Ātman

Liberation

Milestones on the road to perfection

2. *Prakaraṇa-grantha, Maṅgalācaraṇa and Anubandha-catuṣṭaya*

Prakaraṇa-grantha

Maṅgalācaraṇa

Anubandha-catuṣṭaya

Adhikārī

Viṣaya

Prayojana

Sambandha

3. *Sādhana-catuṣṭaya*

Viveka

Vairāgya

Śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti

Śama

Dama
Upama
Titikṣā
Śraddhā
Samādhāna

Mumukṣutvam

4. Approaching the Guru

Qualifications of Guru

Śrotriya

Brahma-niṣṭha

Guru is indispensable

Duty of the Guru

The seven questions

Section II

(12 Lessons)

5. Sthūla-śarīra and Jāgrad-avasthā

Anātman

Sthūla-śarīra

Jāgrad-avasthā

Sthūla-śarīra as annamaya-kośa

Identification and attachment with the sthūla-śarīra

Giving up identification with the sthūla-śarīra

6. Sūkṣma-śarīra and svapna-avasthā

Sūkṣma-śarīra

Jñānendriya

Karmendriya

Prāṇa

Manas

Buddhi

Liṅga-śarīra

Svapna-avasthā and taijasa

Sūkṣma-śarīra as three kośas

7. Kāraṇa-Śarīra and Suṣupti-Avasthā

Kāraṇa-śarīra

Suṣupti-avasthā

Kāraṇa-śarīra as Ānandamaya-kośa

8. Nature of Paramātman

Paramātman

Effects of tādātmya

Ātma-anātma-viveka

Practice of ātma-anātma-viveka

Nature of Paramātman

Sat

Cit

Ānanda

9. Defining the Self

Definitions as word-pointers

Three kinds of definitions

Svarūpa-lakṣaṇā of Ātman

Taṭastha-lakṣaṇā of Ātman

Ātman as Enlivener

Ātman as Sākṣī

Atad-vyāvṛtti-lakṣaṇā of Ātman

Nirākāra

Nirvikāra

Niṣkriya

Nirvikalpa

Nirguṇa

Nirañjana

Nirmala

10. Nature of Bondage

The three limitations

Spatial limitation

Temporal limitation

Objectival limitation

The three differences

Sajātīya-bheda

Vijātīya-bheda

Svagata-bheda

Defining bondage

Understanding bondage

Characteristics of a baddha

11. Cause of Bondage

Ignorance

Rope-snake analogy

Post-thief analogy

Nature of ignorance

Anirvacanīya

Jñānavirodhi

Triguṇātmakam

Various appellations of ignorance

Ajñāna

Avidyā

Śakti

Māyā

The two powers of ajñāna

Āvaraṇa-śakti

Vikṣepa-śakti

12. Persistence of Bondage

Ajñāna is twofold

Anātmani ātma-buddhi

Jagati satya-buddhi

The power of vāsanās

Vāsanā-traya

Loka-vāsanā

Śāstra-vāsanā

Deha-vāsanā

Anartha-paramparā

13. Methods to Purify the Mind

Yajña

Dānam

Tapas

Japa

Tīrtham

Vrata

Vicāra

14. Six Steps to Liberation

Vairāgya

Śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti

Śravaṇa

Manana

Dhyāna

Samādhi

15. Pañca-kośa-viveka (Part 1)

Logical Basis for Ātma-anātma-viveka

Negation of annamaya-kośa

Negation of prāṇamaya-kośa

Negation of manomaya-kośa

16. Pañca-kośa-viveka (Part 2)

Constituents of the vijñānamaya-kośa

Features of the vijñānamaya-kośa

Negation of vijñānamaya-kośa

Negation of Ānandamaya-kośa

Section III

(2 Lessons)

17. Ātman is Brahman

Jīva

Īśvara

Differences between Jīva and Īśvara

Differences between Jīva and Īśvara are illusory

Ātman

Brahman

Identity between Ātman and Brahman

Mahāvākya

Interconnecting the mahāvākyas

18. Tat Tvam Asi

Tat

Tvam

Asi

Lakṣyārtha

Jahati lakṣaṇā

Ajahati lakṣaṇā

Bhāgatyaḡa-lakṣaṇā

Applying Bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā in ‘Tat tvam asi’

Section IV

(2 Lessons)

19. Nididhyāsana and Samādhi

Viparīta-bhāvanā

Brahmākāra-vṛtti

Anātma-vāsanā

Tackling anātma-vāsanā

Nididhyāsana

Dhāraṇā

Dhyāna

Samādhi

Savikalpa-samādhi

Nirvikalpa-samādhi

Difference between nirvikalpa-samādhi and savikalpa-samādhi

20. Sapta-jñāna-bhūmikās

Śubhecchā

Vicāraṇā
Tanumānasā
Sattvāpatti
Asaṁsakti
Padārtha-abhāvanā
Turyagā

Section V (2 Lessons)

21. Jīvan-mukti

Jīvan-mukta
Brahma-niṣṭha
Three types of karma
 Prārabdha-karma
 Āgāmi-karma
 Sañcita-karma
Jīvan-mukta's sañcita-karma
Jīvan-mukta's prārabdha-karma
Jīvan-mukta's āgāmi-karma

22. From Jīvan-mukti to Videha-mukti

Bādhita-ahaṅkāra
Yatheṣṭācaraṇa
Siddhis
Videha-mukti

Section VI (2 Lessons)

23. Path to Truth - 1 (verses 1-3 of Sāadhanā-pañcakam)

24. Path to Truth - 2 (verses 4-5 of Sāadhanā-pañcakam)



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Glossary of Important Vedantic Terms (in Sanskrit Alphabetical Order)

Akhaṇḍa – homogenous.

Akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti – the term akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti means thought (vṛtti) that has taken the form (ākāra) of the Homogenous (akhaṇḍa). This thought is also called 'brahmākāra-vṛtti'. Both these terms stand for the firm 'I am Brahman' thought which puts an end to ignorance.

Ajahatī lakṣaṇā – translated as 'implication by inclusion', this is the method of implication wherein the implied meaning is arrived by adding on to the direct meaning a special meaning related to the direct meaning.

Ajñāna – ignorance, in the Vedāntic context stands for the ignorance of the Self.

Ajñānī – ignorant, in the Vedāntic context stands for one who is ignorant of the Self.

Atad-vyāvṛtti-lakṣaṇā – description of an object through negation of what it is not.

Adhikārī – qualified aspirant.

Adhiṣṭhāna – substratum.

Adhyāsa – superimposition.

Ananta – that which is not limited, in other words, infinite.

Anartha-parampara – cycle of ignorance. This is the causal cycle of vāsanā (tendency), cintā (desire) and kārya (action).

Anātma-dharma – qualities of the not-Self.

Anātman – not-Self

Anātma-vāsanā – the basic tendency of identifying with the not-Self.

Anādi – that which has no beginning, that is beginningless.

Anitya – impermanent.

Anirvācya or Anirvacanīya – that which cannot be described as either sat (permanent) or asat (non-existent).

Anubandha-catuṣṭaya – the four preliminary considerations with respect to the text.

Anubhūti – experience; in the context of Vedānta stands for Self-Experience.

Anusandhāna – constant reflection or practice.

Antaḥ-karaṇa – the inner instruments made up of manas, buddhi, citta and ahaṅkāra.

Annamaya-kośa – the food sheath, corresponding to the physical body.

Glossary

- Anyonya-adhyāsa* – mutual superimposition. This is also called itaretara-adhyāsa.
- Aparokṣa* – known directly without any medium.
- Aparokṣa-jñāna* – direct Knowledge of the Self.
- Aparokṣānubhūti* – direct Experience of the Self.
- Apāna* – the physiological function of evacuation.
- Abhāva* – absence.
- Alpajñā* – of limited knowledge.
- Avasthā-traya* – the three states of awareness – waking, dream and deep sleep.
- Avidyā* – ignorance.
- Avyakta* – unmanifest, the term is used as an appellation for māyā also.
- Aṣṭamūrtibhṛt* – this term stands for the Lord and literally means ‘endowed with the eightfold form’. The Lord can be contemplated upon as being endowed with eight aspects: the five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth), the sun (representing all luminaries), the moon (signifying all planets and satellites) and the jīva or individual (standing for all conscious beings).
- Asat* – that which is totally non-existent like the ‘horns of a rabbit’ or the ‘son of a childless woman’.
- Asaṁsakti* – this is the fifth stage of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā and is translated as ‘absence of attachment or non-union’.
- Ahaṅkāra* – ego or the I-thought characterised by the notion ‘I am the gross, subtle and the causal bodies’ which expresses as the doership and the enjoyership notions.
- Āgāmi-karma* – results born from the actions of the present embodiment that are to be accrued to the individual in the future.
- Ācārya* – teacher.
- Ātma-anātma-viveka* – differentiating the Ātman (Self) from the anātman (not-Self).
- Ātman* – a term that is used to denote the Self.
- Ānanda* – bliss or happiness.
- Ānandamaya-kośa* – the bliss sheath, corresponding to the causal body.
- Āvaraṇa-śakti* – the veiling power of māyā.
- Āśramas* – stages of life. They are totally four in number – brahmacarya (student stage), gārhastya (house-holder stage), vānaprastha (retirement stage) and sannyāsa (monk stage).
- Itaretara-adhyāsa* – mutual superimposition. This is also called anyonya-adhyāsa.
- Indriya* – an organ.

Glossary

Iṣṭa-devatā – deity of one’s personal worship, such as Lord Śiva, Lord Rāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa and so on.

Īśvara – the Lord. Defined as the Sat-Cit-Ānanda Principle qualified by the macrocosm conditioning of collective gross, subtle and causal bodies, that is the entire gross, subtle and causal worlds.

Udāna – the vital-air that controls physiological reverse functions such as sneezing, burping and so on.

Udāsīna – indifferent.

Upaniṣad – the portion of the Vedas that contains the Knowledge of the Self as its subject matter. Traditionally, 108 *Upaniṣads* are considered to be authentic.

Uparama – effortless and natural withdrawal of the senses and the mind from the external objects.

Upastha – reproductive organ.

Upādhi – conditioning or limitation.

Upāsana – prayer or contemplation of the Lord.

Ṛṣi – those who have discovered the Vedas.

Ekānta – aloneness; also interpreted to mean single-pointedness.

Om – symbol of the Self or Lord.

Kartā – doer.

Kartṛtva – notion of doership.

Karma – action or fruit of action.

Karma-yoga – to do our duty with the feeling that through our knowledge, talent, strength and so on, we are serving the Lord, and accepting with equanimity the results of one’s actions – whether success or failure – as the prasāda of the Lord.

Karmendriya – the organs of action such as speech, hands and so on.

Kāma – desire.

Kāraṇa – cause.

Kāraṇa-śarīra – causal body.

Kārya – effect. Also means action.

Kāla – time.

Kāla-pariccheda – temporal limitation. One of the three kinds of limitations.

Kinnara – one of the various kinds of beings, higher in evolution than that of the human but lower in evolution than that of the deva.

Glossary

Kevala – of one nature and free of all the three differences – sajātīya-bheda, vijātīya-bheda and svagata-bheda.

Kośa – sheaths, totally five in number – annamaya-kośa (food sheath), prāṇamaya-kośa (vital-air sheath), mano-maya-kośa (mental sheath), vijñānamaya-kośa (intellectual sheath) and ānandamaya-kośa (bliss sheath).

Krodha – anger.

Kṣatriya – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. They represent the ruling-class – manager, administrator, politician and so on.

Gandharva – celestial musician.

Guṇa – though literally translated as quality, in the Vedāntic context, can be more precisely translated as ‘characteristic constituents’. There are three guṇas – sattva, rajas and tamas.

Guṇātīta – the Man of Self-Realisation who has transcended the three guṇas.

Guru – teacher.

Gurukula – traditional residential schools.

Gurūpasadana or Gurūpagamana – reaching the Guru for the study of Vedānta.

Golaka – the external ears, eyes and other appendages that are used as instruments by the indriya (inner faculty) to carry out their respective functions.

Ghrāṇa – nose.

Cakṣuḥ – eye.

Cit – Consciousness.

Citta – memory.

Citta-ekāgratā – single-pointedness of the mind.

Citta-śuddhi – purity of mind.

Cidābhāsa – reflection of Consciousness in the vijñānamaya-kośa.

Cintā – desires or thought agitations.

Chandas – Vedic prosody.

Jagat – world or cosmos.

Jaḍa – inert.

Japa – repetition of the Lord’s name.

Jahatī-ajahatī-lakṣaṇā – also called bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā. In this manner of arriving at the implied meaning, there is both the rejection and the retention of the literal meaning – the contradictory part is rejected and the non-contradictory part is retained.

Jahatī lakṣaṇā – the method of implication in which the word totally gives up its direct meaning and signifies a meaning that is related to it's direct meaning. Translated as 'implication by exclusion'.

Jāgrad-avasthā – waking state.

Jīva or *Jīvātman* – the limited individual or the bound self. Technically, the jīva is defined as the Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) Principle qualified by the microcosm conditioning of the individual gross, subtle and causal bodies.

Jīva-bhāva – the notion or sense of being a limited individual.

Jīvan-mukta – one who is liberated even while living, that is the one free from the sorrow even when the body is existant.

Jñāna – the term indicates knowledge in general. When compared with 'vijñāna' or 'actual Experience', this term connotes 'doubtfree intellectual knowledge'.

Jñāna-svarūpa – of the nature of Knowledge.

Jñānī – the one endowed with Self-Knowledge.

Jñānendriya – the organs of knowledge such as ears, skin and so on.

Taṭastha-lakṣaṇā – described as qualification *per accidens* or the description of an object based on its extraneous or associated property.

Tanumānasā – this is the third stage in the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā and is translated as 'attenuation or thinning of the mind'. This stage is equated to the states of nididhyāsana and savikalpa-samādhi.

Tanmātra – the five elements – space, air, fire, water and earth – in their subtle or ungrossified state.

Tapas – austerity.

Tamas – one of the three characteristic constituents or guṇas of māyā. This guṇa expresses as ignorance and stupor.

Tādātmya – identification or notion of 'I-ness' with respect to the not-Self.

Titikṣā – endurance or forbearance.

Tīrtha – pilgrimage or pilgrimage centre.

Turīya – literally means 'fourth'. Compared to the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep that we experience, the Self is called the 'fourth'.

Turyagā – this is the seventh and the last stage of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā and is translated as 'transcendence'.

Taijasa – refers to the dream state ego; this term literally means 'the effulgent one'.

Tripuṭī – this is the triad: the meditator-meditated-meditation, the enjoyer-enjoyed-enjoyment and so on.

Tvak – skin.

Dama – control of the senses.

Dānam – charity.

Dānti – another appellation for dama or sense control.

Deva or devatā – category of beings higher in evolution than that of the human who control the various phenomenal forces, such as wind, rain, fire and so on. Some of the popular devas are Indra, Vāyu and Agni.

Deśa-pariccheda – spatial limitation. One of the three types of limitations.

Deha-vāsanā – the tendency characterised by attachment towards the body.

Dr̥g – seer.

Dr̥g-dr̥śya-viveka – differentiation between the seer and the seen.

Dr̥ḍha-vāsanā – strong habitual tendency.

Dr̥śya – seen.

Dvandva – pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, joy and sorrow, praise and insult.

Dharma – essential nature of an object (same as svarūpa). This term is also used in the context of righteousness and nobility.

Dhāraṇā – literally ‘holding’ or ‘binding’. Herein one holds the mind to the object of concentration.

Dhyāna – contemplation. Also termed nididhyāsana, this is the continuous flow of a single thought referring to Brahman, dissociated from thoughts of other objects like the body.

Dhyeya-mātra-avasthiti – this is the state wherein the meditator (dhyātṛ) becomes the dhyeya (meditated), as against merely *knowing* the dhyeya. In this State of Being, the arrogation of the ego that ‘I am meditating’ vanishes and the tripuṭī or triad of meditator-meditated-meditation comes to an end.

Naraka – hell.

Nara-janma – human birth.

Nitya – eternal or permanent.

Nitya-jyoti – eternal effulgence.

Nitya-mukta – ever liberated.

Nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta – eternal, pure, awakened and liberated. This is the phrase which is often used to describe the nature of the supreme Self.

Glossary

Nirañjana – without taint.

Nirantara – without break.

Nirākāra – without form.

Nirukta – Sanskrit etymology.

Nirguṇa – without attributes.

Nirmala – without dirt.

Nirvikalpa or *Nirvikalpaka* – without thoughts or without distinctions.

Nirvikalpa-samādhi – the term ‘nir-vikalpa’ means ‘no-division’. In this state of absorption or meditation there is the absence of the tripuṭī or the triad of the meditator, the meditated and meditation.

Nirvikāra – without modifications.

Nirviśiṣṭa – unqualified.

Niṣkriya – without actions.

Niṣṭhā – firm abidance.

Padārtha-abhāvanā – this is the sixth stage of ‘sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā’ and is translated as ‘objectlessness’.

Pañca-kośa-viveka – the methodology of differentiating the Self from the five sheaths.

Pañcīkaraṇa – the process of pentamerous division and combination of the five subtle elements by which they are converted to gross elements.

Paramahansa – this term is used to indicate a Man of Self-Realisation who is beyond the relative concepts of dharma and adharma.

Paramātman – the Supreme Self of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Pariccheda – conditioning.

Parokṣa – not known directly, known through a medium, expresses a sense of difference and distance between oneself and the object concerned.

Pāṇi – hand.

Pāda – leg.

Pāpa – demerit.

Pāyu – anus.

Puṇya – merit.

Pūjā – worship of the Lord.

Prakarāṇa-grantha – these are ‘topical texts’ that explain a few selected topics of a particular subject.

Prakṛti – nature, an appellation for māyā or the Lord’s power.

Glossary

Pradhāna – an appellation for māyā or the Lord’s power.

Pramāṇa – instrument or means of knowledge.

Pramoda – the happiness of actually enjoying the object of one’s liking.

Prayojana – result.

Prasthāna-trayī – *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Brahma-sūtra* are collectively given this appellation.

Prājñā – the deep sleep ego or the deep sleeper.

Prāṇa – translated commonly as vital-airs. They are totally five in number and they control the various physiological functions. This word also refers to the first of the five vital airs that controls respiration.

Prāṇamaya-kośa – the vital-air sheath constituted by the five prāṇas and the five organs of action.

Prārabdha – destiny.

Prārabdha-karma – results of those actions that have caused the present embodiment and the experiences thereof.

Priya – the joy of perceiving the object of one’s liking.

Phala – result.

Baddha – bound person.

Bandha – bondage.

Bāhya-karaṇa – outer or external instruments constituted of the jñānendriyas and karmendriyas.

Buddhi – intellect.

Brahma – creator of the various universes (brahmāṇḍa).

Brahma-vit – literally ‘knower of Brahman’. In the scheme of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā the Jīvan-mukta who has reached the fourth stage of ‘sattvāpatti’ or ‘attainment of the Real’.

Brahman – a term used for denoting the Reality that is the substratum of the entire cosmos. This appellation is apt, for the word ‘Brahman’ is derived from a Sanskrit verbal root that denotes ‘that which is ever big’ (*bṛhatvāt brahma*).

Brahma-niṣṭha – he who has the direct Experience of the Self as being identical with Brahman and ever abides in this understanding.

Brahma-vidyā – the knowledge of Brahman.

Brahma-vidvāra – the term literally means ‘the superior knower of Brahman’. In the scheme of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā this is the Jīvan-mukta of the ‘asamsakti’ or

‘absence of attachment (or non-union)’ stage.

Brahma-vidvariṣṭha – this term literally means ‘the most exalted knower of Brahman’. In the scheme of sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā this is the Jīvan-mukta who is established in the seventh plane of ‘turyagā’.

Brahma-vidvariṣṭhān – this term literally means ‘the one who is higher than the Brahma-vidvara’. In the scheme of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā this is the Jīvan-mukta who is established in the sixth plane of padārtha-abhāvanā.

Brahmākāra-vṛtti – literally means ‘thought (vṛtti) that has taken the form (ākāra) of Brahman; also called akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti. Both these terms stand for the firm ‘I am Brahman’ thought which puts an end to ignorance.

Brahmāṇḍa – a total of fourteen worlds (lokas) together constitute one ‘cosmos’ or ‘brahmāṇḍa’.

Brahmaṇa – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. They are the knowledge-class such as the teacher, professor and so on.

Bhajana – devotional song.

Bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā – is that manner of implication wherein a part of the literal meaning is rejected and another part of it is retained. Also termed jahatī-ajahatī-lakṣaṇā.

Bhāva – feeling.

Bhāvanā – feeling.

Bhikṣā – food gathered by a monk for his physical sustenance.

Bheda – difference.

Bhoktā – enjoyer.

Bhoktrtva – enjoyership.

Bhoga-āyatanam – literally, ‘tenement of experience’; this term is used to describe the gross body.

Bhoga-sādhanam – literally, ‘instrument of experience’; this term is used to describe the subtle body.

Bhrānti – delusion.

Maṅgalācaraṇa – invocation.

Manana – constant reflection on that which one has heard from the teacher through arguments agreeable to the purport of Vedānta.

Manas – mind.

Glossary

Manomaya-kośa – the mental sheath constituted by the mind and the five organs of knowledge.

Mantra – a verse from the Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus.

Mala – literally 'dirt'; this term is used to indicate the impurities of the mind.

Mahātmā – this term literally means 'great-soul' and in the Vedāntic context is used to connote the Man of Realisation.

Mahābhūta – the five great elements: space, air, fire, water and earth.

Mahāvākyas – 'identity revealing statements'. Upaniṣadic sentences that point out the identity between Ātman and Brahman by falsifying the seeming differences that exist between the jīva and the Īśvara are termed mahāvākyas.

Māyā – this term indicates illusion or magic. Used as an appellation for the Lord's power.

Mithyā – illusion or that which is not truly existent.

Mukti – liberation from bondage.

Mumukṣu – the one desirous of Liberation.

Mumukṣutvam – the desire for Liberation.

Mokṣa – Liberation.

Moda – the thrill of attaining the object of one's liking.

Yakṣa – a demi-god.

Yajña – worship of the Lord. In the Vedic context this term stands for the fire rituals.

Rajas – one of the three characteristic constituents or guṇas of māya. This guṇa expresses as restlessness and desire.

Rajju-sarpa-nyāya – the example of the rope being misunderstood to be the snake.

Rasanā – tongue.

Lakṣaṇā – definition.

Lakṣaṇā-vṛtti – the method of implication.

Lakṣyārtha – implied meaning.

Liṅga-sarīra – literally means 'indicating body'; used as an appellation for the subtle body.

Loka – world or field of experience.

Loka-vāsanā – worldly tendency.

Lobha – greed.

Varṇas – castes. They are totally four in number – brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra, and the classification is based on one's qualities and actions.

- Vastu* – an object or thing. This term is also used to indicate Reality.
- Vastu-pariccheda* – objectival limitation or limitation by object. One of the three kinds of limitations.
- Vāk* – the organ of speech.
- Vācyārtha* – direct meaning of the word.
- Vāsanā* – habitual tendencies born from the impressions that are gained from experiences in this life or the earlier ones.
- Vikalpa* – difference or distinction; also used as a term for thought or volition.
- Vikāra* – modification.
- Vikṣepa-śakti* – the projecting power of māyā.
- Vicāra* – enquiry.
- Vicāraṇā* – translated as ‘reflection’ or ‘enquiry’, this is the second stage in the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā. The seeker in this stage becomes reflective and spends time thinking upon the words of the Scriptures and the Guru. This is the stage of study (śravaṇa) and reflection (manana).
- Vijātīya-bheda* – one of the three kinds of differences. This is the difference that exists between beings and objects of different species.
- Vijñāna* – when compared with ‘jñāna’, which is the intellectual knowledge of the Self, this term connotes the actual Experience of the Self.
- Vijñānamaya-kośa* – the intellectual sheath constituted by the intellect and the five organs of knowledge.
- Videha-mukti* – Liberation occasioned by the death of the body.
- Viparīta-bhāvanā* – the term ‘literally means ‘contrary notion’ and connotes notions that are at variance to the knowledge ‘I am Brahman’.
- Vibhu* – all-pervading.
- Viśiṣṭa* – means ‘qualified’. This implies possession of the qualities of the conditionings.
- Viśaya* – subject matter of the text or any object in general.
- Vṛtti* – modification of the antaḥ-karaṇa (inner equipment).
- Veda* – the revealed knowledge that forms the foundation of Hinduism. The Vedas were compiled and subdivided by Vyāsa into four – *R̥g*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Atharvaṇa*.
- Vedānta* – literally ‘end of the Vedas’, the term is used to denote the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*.
- Vairāgya* – dispassion.

Glossary

Vaiśya – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. They represent the business or trading class.

Vyaṣṭi – microcosm or the individual as opposed to the macrocosm or the totality.

Vyākaraṇa – Sanskrit grammar.

Vyāna – the vital-air which controls the physiological function of blood circulation.

Vrata – vow.

Śakti – literally ‘power’. Sometimes used as an appellation for māyā.

Śama – control of the mind.

Śarīra – body.

Śānti – mental peace. Also used in the sense of ‘śama’ or control of the mind.

Śāstra – Scripture; texts that cover a complete range of topics pertaining to their subject.

Śāstra-grantha – texts that cover a complete range of topics pertaining to the subject.

Śāstra-vāsanā – the propensity for too much studying of the Scriptures.

Śubhecchā – auspicious resolve. This is the first plane of spiritual unfoldment in the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā wherein one becomes a mumukṣu endowed with the burning desire for Liberation.

Śūdra – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. In the present day context they can be considered as those who serve the society with talents in carpentry, plumbing, manual labour and so on.

Śraddhā – faith.

Śravaṇa – listening. The ascertainment of the purport of Vedānta, through the words of the teacher, as being the oneness of the inner Self with Brahman.

Śruti – that which is heard, a term which connotes the Vedas.

Śrotram – ear.

Śrotriya – one who is well learned in the Vedic lore.

Saṅga – attachment.

Sajātīya-bheda – one of the three kinds of differences. This is the difference that is seen between beings and objects of the same species.

Sattva – one of the three characteristic constituents or guṇas of māyā. This guṇa expresses as knowledge and serenity.

Sañcita-karma – the collection of the results of all actions performed by the individual in his past embodiments.

Sat – the permanent, that is that which exists in all the three states of time – past, present and future.

Sat-cit-ānanda – Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the essential nature of the Self.

Satya – truth.

Satya-buddhi – notion of reality.

Sattvāpatti – ‘attainment of the Real’; this is the fourth stage of ‘sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā’. This stage is equated to the state of nirvikalpa-samādhi wherein the mind is utterly still.

Satsaṅga – company of the good.

Sadā-eka-rūpa – of the same nature.

Sannidhi-mātra – mere presence.

Sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā – the seven stages or planes of spiritual unfoldment.

Samaṣṭi – macrocosm is the collective as opposed to the microcosm or the individual.

Samādhi – absorption of the mind in the thought ‘I am Brahman’.

Samādhāna – single-pointedness or concentration of the mind-intellect.

Samāna – the vital-air that is in charge of digestion and assimilation of the food and liquids that we take in.

Samit – sacrificial faggots for the Vedic fire sacrifice.

Sambandha – relationship.

Sarvajña – all-knowing or omniscient.

Sarveśvara – omnipotent or all-powerful.

Savikalpa-samādhi – the absorption or meditation that is characterised by the perception of the ‘tripuṭī’, or the triad of meditator-meditated-meditation.

Samśaya – doubt.

Samśāra – literally ‘movement’; used in the Vedāntic literature to indicate the cycle of birth and death.

Sākṣī – Witness.

Sādhaka – an aspirant. In the Vedānta context connotes a seeker of Truth.

Sādhana – the means. This term is also used as a general word for all spiritual practices.

Sādhana-catustaya – fourfold qualification comprising of viveka, vairāgya, śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti and mumukṣutvam.

Sukṛta – results of past good deeds. Also termed ‘puṇya’.

Suṣupti-avasthā – deep sleep state.

Sūkṣma – subtle or that which is not perceived by the senses.

Glossary

Sūkṣma-śarīra – subtle body.

Seva – service.

Sevā-bhāva – the attitude of service.

Sthānu-puruṣa-nyāya – the example of the post being misunderstood as a man.

Sthita-prajña – Man of firm Wisdom who is established in Self-Knowledge.

Sthūla – gross or that which is perceivable by the senses.

Sthūla-bhūta – gross elements.

Sthūla-śarīra – physical body, also called gross body.

Svagata-bheda – one of the three kinds of differences. This is the difference that is found within the object itself.

Svatantra – independent.

Svadharmā – one's duty or one's real nature.

Svapna-avasthā – dream state.

Svayañjyoti – self-effulgence.

Svarūpa – an object's essential nature.

Svarūpa-lakṣaṇā – a definition based on the object's intrinsic characteristics.

Svarga – heaven.

Svādhyāya – study of the Scriptures.

Hṛdaya-granthi – 'knot of the heart'. This term connotes the identification of the Self with the not-Self (the body, mind and so on). This identification is called a knot, for it ties the Self to the not-Self.



cf

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Marks Distribution

Lesson 1

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer in brief | – | Marks 30 (5x6) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 2

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer briefly | – | Marks 20 (2x10) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 30 (1x30) |

Lesson 3

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------|
| I. Define the terms | – | Marks 32 (8x4) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 18 (3x6) |

Lesson 4

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Write short notes on | – | Marks 20 (4x5) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 30 (2x15) |

Lesson 5

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|
| I. Define the terms | – | Marks 6 (3x2) |
| II. Explain the terms | – | Marks 18 (3x6) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 26 (2x8+1x10) |

Lesson 6

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Differentiate the following | – | Marks 15 (5x3) |
| II. Write short notes on | – | Marks 18 (3x6) |
| III. List the 17 limbs of the Sukshma Sarira along with their functions | – | Marks 17 (1x17) |

Lesson 7

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------|
| I. Fill in the blanks | – | Marks 5 |
| II. Answer in brief | – | Marks 20 (4x5) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 25 (1x13), (1x12) |

Marks Distribution

Lesson 8

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Define the following terms | – | Marks 12 (4x3) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 18 (3x6) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (2x10) |

Lesson 9

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Match the following | – | Marks 8 (1x8) |
| II. Write short notes on | – | Marks 18 (3x6) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 24 (2x12) |

Lesson 10

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Define | – | Marks 6 (2x3) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 24 (3x8) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 11

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Differentiate between the following | – | Marks 6 (2x3) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 24 (3x8) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 12

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Write short notes on | – | Marks 10 (2x5) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 20 (2x10) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 13

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Write short notes on | – | Marks 20 (5x4) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 30 (2x15) |

Lesson 14

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer briefly | – | Marks 12 (2x6) |
| II. Differentiate between the following | – | Marks 24 (3x8) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 14 (1x14) |

Marks Distribution

Lesson 15

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer briefly | – | Marks 6 (2x3) |
| II. Write short notes on | – | Marks 24 (4x6) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (2x10) |

Lesson 16

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|----------------|
| I. Differentiate between | – | Marks 8 (2x4) |
| II. Write short notes on | – | Marks 18 (3x6) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 24 (3x8) |

Lesson 17

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Define the terms | – | Marks 10 (5x2) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 24 (3x8) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 16 (1x16) |

Lesson 18

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Differentiate between | – | Marks 4 (2x2) |
| II. Write short notes on | – | Marks 15 (3x5) |
| III. Answer briefly | – | Marks 21 (3x7) |
| IV. Answer in detail | – | Marks 10 (1x10) |

Lesson 19

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Differentiate between | – | Marks 6 (3x2) |
| II. Write short notes on | – | Marks 24 (3x8) |
| III. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 20

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| I. Write notes on | – | Marks 12 (3x4) |
| II. Answer briefly | – | Marks 38 (1x20) (1x8) (2x5) |

Lesson 21

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer briefly | – | Marks 30 (3x10) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Marks Distribution

Lesson 22

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Write short notes | – | Marks 30 (3x10) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 23

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer briefly | – | Marks 30 (3x10) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |

Lesson 24

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| I. Answer briefly | – | Marks 30 (5x6) |
| II. Answer in detail | – | Marks 20 (1x20) |





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LESSON 1

The Nine Blessings

TO AWAKEN TO a spiritual life is a rare blessing accorded to the most evolved and accomplished among humans. Śaṅkarācārya delineates at the very outset of his composition, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, a list of nine rare blessings. In this first lesson, we shall study in detail what these nine blessings are and, in doing so, discover our personal road map to God-Realisation.

Enumeration of the Nine Blessings

The following verse from *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 2) enumerates the nine blessings:

जन्तूनां नरजन्म दुर्लभमतः पुंस्त्वं ततो विप्रता
तस्माद्द्वैदिकधर्ममार्गपरता विद्वत्त्वमस्मात्परम् ।
आत्मानात्मविवेचनं स्वनुभवो ब्रह्मात्मना संस्थितिः
मुक्तिर्नो शतजन्मकोटिसुकृतैः पुण्यैर्विना लभ्यते ॥

*jantūnāṃ nara janma durlabhamataḥ puṃstvaṃ tato vipratā
tasmādvaidikadharmamārgaparatā vidvattvamasmātparam,
ātmānātma vivecanam svanubhavo brahmātmanā samsthitiḥ
muktirno śatajanmakoti sukṛtaiḥ puṇyairvinā labhyate.*

For all living creatures, a human birth is indeed rare; rarer still to attain full manhood; rarer than these is the sāt̥tvic attitude in life. Steadfastness on the path of the dharma prescribed in the Vedas is yet rarer; much more so a correct knowledge of the deep significances of the Vedas. Differentiation between the Self and the not-Self, a personal experience and, ultimately, to become fully established in the Knowledge that the Ātman is Brahman – these come later on and culminate in Liberation, which cannot be had without

the earned merits of a hundred crores of lives lived intelligently.

The following is a list of the nine blessings:

- (1) Human birth (*nara-janma*)
- (2) Manhood (*pumstvam*)
- (3) Sāttvic attitude in life (*vipratā*)
- (4) Steadfastness on the path of righteousness, as prescribed in the Vedas (*vaidika-dharma-mārga-paratā*)
- (5) Correct knowledge of the deep significances of the Vedas (*vidvattvam*)
- (6) Differentiation between the Self and the not-Self (*ātma-anātma-vivecanam*)
- (7) Direct experience (*svanubhava*)
- (8) To be established in the awareness of the identity of Brahman and Ātman (*brahmātmanā samsthiti*)
- (9) Liberation (*mukti*)

1. Human Birth (nara-janma)

Of the various kinds of births, human birth is indeed rare. There are so many species of living beings – unicellular amoebae, algae, plants, insects, fishes, animals, birds and so on. Among all, human birth alone is considered rare and noble. Why? Is it because of man's physical prowess? After all, the physical capabilities of most animals far exceed that of humans. The blue whale holds the world record for size; the cheetah holds the record for speed; dogs can hear a wider range of sounds than we can and even snakes can see a more diverse range of colours than their human counterparts!

Why then is human birth considered rare and noble? One reason why the modern scientific age, in ignorance, considers humans to be supreme is that scientists have deconstructed many natural phenomena and used that knowledge to create new sciences and technologies. But, even while science and technology has been harnessed to produce comforts and conveniences, it has also been misused to build weapons of mass destruction.

Human birth is noble, not because man has conquered nature by erecting tall skyscrapers that embrace the clouds or massive dams that forestall the powerful flow of gushing rivers. Vedānta points out that human birth is exalted because:

- (1) Human beings alone are endowed with the faculty of self-awareness (i.e. the ability to be objectively aware of one's actions, words, thoughts and habitual tendencies) that is capable of effecting a quantum change in their thinking.
- (2) All creatures in this world lead 'programmed' lives, largely guided by their instincts. They do not have the ability to choose their response and re-program themselves. Human beings alone have this rare capacity.
- (3) Above all, human beings alone are capable of noble and divine pursuits. Man alone can ponder over questions of vital importance: Who am I? Is there a purpose to life? Is there a creator of the world? What is the nature of the world? What is my relationship with God? and so on.



Exercise

Write down in clear and precise points how you think man is similar to and different from an animal. Now look at each point in which you have said that man is superior to animals.

For instance:

- *Man can go beyond his instincts and climb the ladder of evolution.*
- *Man alone thinks of the higher non-material aspects of life, such as religion and spirituality.*

Study each point and compare it against your life. Where do you stand in relation to it? Have you applied it in your life as much as you really can? Think!



The Vedas talk of births higher than that of a human, such as that of a yakṣa, kinnara, devatā and so on. By puṇya, or the merits earned through good deeds, one attains the state of a god (a deva); by pāpa, or the sins accrued by doing unrighteous and prohibited actions, one goes to naraka (hell). And by an even combination of puṇya and pāpa, one gains the birth of a human being. However,

then too we cannot consider birth as a deva to be superior to birth as a human because:

- (1) Births such as that of a deva, kinnara, yakṣa and so on are only 'bhoga-kṣaya-artham', that is for the sake of enjoyment. One goes to the heavens, enjoys the exalted pleasures therein for a finite period of time and then is born again on earth. Going to heaven does not solve the problem of suffering. It is only a temporary relief. It is as if a person, having earned a good amount of wealth, went on a holiday to an exotic place and spent hard-earned money on pleasures – but then had to return when the money was exhausted. So too a person earns the wealth of puṇya (merit), goes to svarga (heaven), enjoys the pleasures there and, when his puṇya is exhausted, ultimately returns to earth – back to square one!
- (2) Also, in heaven, there is no progress in one's spiritual life. Only in human birth (nara-janma) is there a chance to put an end to the cycle of birth and death. It is only as a human that one gets the right mixture of joy and sorrow, which can generate dispassion for all finite pleasures and help one turn towards the Higher. It is then that an individual becomes qualified for scriptural study, reaches a Guru, learns the way pointed out by Vedānta¹ and finally becomes liberated.

2. Manhood (*pumstvam*)

Having got a human birth, to have a 'masculine' temperament is even more rare. Hasty readers have concluded from such statements that women are prohibited from Vedāntic studies and that this is a condemnation of women. These conclusions are erroneous. The Hindu Scriptures are full of references to women being both students as well as teachers. Sage Yājñavalkya taught his

1. The term 'Vedānta' literally means 'end of Vedas'. The *Upaniṣads* that pertain to knowledge usually form the end portion of the Vedas, and hence it is the *Upaniṣads* that are basically termed 'Vedānta'. The term Vedānta can also mean the 'final essence' of the Vedas. Since the *Upaniṣads* deliberate on this topic, they have come to be called Vedānta. Texts such as *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Brahma-sūtra*, *Ātma-bodha*, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, *Pañcadaśi* and others also explain the Upaniṣadic thoughts and concepts; therefore, they too have come to deserve the appellation 'Vedānta'.

wife Maitreyī; Kapila Muni taught his mother Devahūtī; Gārgī questioned the wisdom of Yājñavalkya in a learned assembly of scholars; Cūḍālā taught the king – her husband ... the examples are too many to enumerate here. Agreed that women are not as physically strong as men; but then we are talking of scriptural studies, which have to be undertaken with the brain – and in which brawn has no significance!

Why then is ‘manhood’ (puṁstvam) considered rare? Swami Chinmayananda explains this beautifully: “By ‘puṁstvam’ is meant the manly qualities of the head and the heart. A woman is a symbol of softness, attachment, sentiments and anxieties; she is essentially a mother. Wherever these qualities predominate, there we have a ‘woman’. In this sense, there are many women among the bearded ones, and if firmness of determination, detachment, intellectual hardiness and steadiness of composure are signs of a better evolution, these masculine tendencies of head and heart are amply seen in many women.” Thus manhood is not a reference to the body but to an intellect that is free of the attachments and sentiments that blunt its sharpness and make the power of reasoning twisted, shallow and defective.

Manhood in the spiritual context essentially means courage, strength, a constancy to pursue with steadfastness and the will to achieve in the spiritual path. This is indeed rare.



Manhood in its higher and universal sense is expressed in a unique and telling manner in the poem ‘IF’ by Rudyard Kipling. It is interesting to note that this poem holds the world record for being the poem published the maximum number of times in anthologies of poems across the globe.

If

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;*

Lesson 1

*If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;*

*If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run –
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!*



3. Sāttvic Attitude in Life (vipratā)

'Vipratā' literally means 'brāhminhood'. By this is meant once again a certain psychological nature characterised by 'sattva'. The *Bhagavad-gītā* enumerates the brāhmaṇical sāttvic qualities as serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity,

forgiveness, uprightness, knowledge and belief in God. Thus when Vedānta declares that to be a 'brāhmin' is rare, what is meant is that to be endowed with these sāt̥tvic and divine qualities is rare. These qualities raise one from 'manhood' to 'mature manhood'.

4. Steadfastness on the Path of the Dharma Prescribed in the Vedas (vaidika-dharma-mārga-paratā)

Many consider mistakenly that it is enough to be a good person. But that is not so. 'Goodness' is a path to 'Godhood'. We have to build up sufficient purity of mind (citta-śuddhi) and single-pointedness of the intellect (citta-ekāgratā) in order to walk on the path to God-Realisation.

Śaṅkarācārya says that even among those who are endowed with sāt̥tvic qualities, there will be only a few who are steadfast and apply themselves faithfully to the techniques of spiritual progress, such as the daily study of the Scriptures, eschewing prohibited and desire-prompted actions, offering one's duties as worship unto the Lord, practising japa (repetition of the Lord's name), pūjā (worship) and so on. Not all take up these sādhanas (spiritual practices) even when advised. And after starting them, fewer still have the mental stamina to continue.

Spiritual practices, such as the study of the Scriptures, are sure methods to develop citta-śuddhi (purity of mind) and citta-ekāgratā (single-pointedness of the intellect) and move forward in our evolution. Thus, those who have moved to the next step of steadily living a life based on scriptural injunctions are more rare than those who are just merely good and mature humans.

5. Knowledge of the Deep Significances of the Vedas (vidvat̥tvam)

The *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* asserts: "Whatever is done with the knowledge of the meaning of the Vedic verses, and with an earnestness born of insight and faith, is more efficacious than what is done without knowing their inner meaning." Śaṅkarācārya explains this statement of the *Upaniṣad* with an example: "It is a matter of common knowledge that when a gemmologist and

a fisherman each comes across a diamond, the former gains a huge profit by his knowledge of the nature of the diamond, whereas the latter, because of his ignorance, fails to do so.” The example is self-explanatory – both the gemmologist and the fisherman get the diamond, but only the former benefits from it because he knows its worth. Thus, it is one thing to be able to chant the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Upaniṣads*, but quite another to understand, through the guidance of a Guru, its inner significances, deeper meanings and subtle suggestions. In contrast with ‘steadfastness in the Vedic path’, which means regular and dedicated religious practices, such as japa (repetition of the Lord’s name), chanting of the Vedas, performing selfless actions and so on, ‘vidvattvam’ refers to an understanding of the scriptural meaning in all its depth and expanse.

Vedānta is deep and subtle and cannot be grasped by the gross intellect. One needs a special faculty of perception – an intuitive capacity to go beyond superficial meanings – and a mature intellect to understand its uncommon and deep logic. Only by the dedicated practice of spiritual disciplines, that is vaidika-dharma-mārga-paratā, does one gain the purity of mind (citta-śuddhi) and single-pointedness of the intellect (citta-ekāgratā) that, in turn, lead to an understanding of the subtler implications of the Vedas. Thus, vaidika-dharma-mārga-paratā endows an individual with the capacity to proceed to vidvattvam – the right understanding of the Vedas. The former is action based merely on belief; the latter is action based on belief fortified with understanding. Hence, those who come to the level of vidvattvam are regarded as even more blessed than those who stagnate at the level of vaidika-dharma-mārga-paratā, that is mere practice of spiritual disciplines without understanding their logic and purpose.

6. Differentiation between the Self and the not-Self (ātma-anātma-vivecanam)

The ‘Self’ is the pure Consciousness and the ‘not-Self’ is the inert matter vestures – the body, the mind and the intellect. A right understanding of the Vedas (vidvattvam) gives one the ability to differentiate the pure Consciousness from

the matter vestures and, thus, one comes to be intellectually convinced that one is not the body, mind and intellect. Those who can intellectually differentiate between the two – the Self and the not-Self, the Real and the unreal – have progressed to a more advanced state of spirituality. The later lessons will detail the methods of ‘ātma-anātma-vivecanam’. (See Lessons 15 and 16.)



Exercise

Sit down in an erect and yet relaxed posture at a quiet time and in a place where you can be by yourself for a few minutes. Close your eyes, still your body and calm your mind. Quietly watch your body and mind. As you do so, you will get a clear sense of being apart from your body and mind. You are a powerful living presence who is a witness to your body and mind and yet quite apart from them. This quiet State of Being is the real You. This is referred to by Vedānta as the Self (Ātman). All else – be it the world and all its objects, people and situations and even your own body and mind – are different from the Self and are hence bundled together under a single term – the not-Self (Anātman).



7. Direct Experience (svanubhava)

The previous qualification – ātma-anātma-vivecanam or differentiation between the Self and not-Self – is of the nature of intellectual knowledge. But ‘svanubhava’ is higher than mere intellectual conviction, for it is of the nature of direct experience. By the steady process of meditation (samādhi), one transcends the conditioning of body, mind and intellect and merges with the pure Consciousness within. Very few people can come to this sanctum sanctorum of the Lord in one’s heart. This is rare...very rare.

8. To Be Established in the Awareness of the Identity of Brahman and Ātman (brahmātmanā samsthiti)

A person may have had a momentary experience, a flash of awareness of the Self in an inspired moment of contemplation, but that is not sufficient. There is the lurking possibility of fall. One must be continuously aware of one’s true nature and abide in the understanding that the Self in me - the Ātman - is the

Self - the Brahman - everywhere. This firm abidance has been described herein as 'brahma-ātmanā-saṁsthiti'. This is the summum bonum of our existence in this world, the very purpose of birth. This is the accomplishment that fills the abysmal vacuum of one's heart with overflowing beatitude.

A person who has come to this state is truly a perfect person, a man of God-Realisation who has climbed to the very zenith of his spiritual evolution. Such a person has been glorified in the *Upaniṣads* as a Jīvan-mukta (liberated while living), Sthita-prajñā (man of firm wisdom), Guṇātīta (one who transcended the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas) and a Paramahansa (great saint). Even his mere presence is a benediction on this world.

9. Liberation (mukti)

A person who has thus reached the very pinnacle of spiritual life is liberated from the cycle of birth and death. Once his body drops after the exhaustion of its destiny (prārabdha), he no more takes a new embodiment. This final Liberation from the body is called 'videha-mukti'. Those who are ignorant of their true nature, bound by the fetters of desire and cocooned in their own selfishness, they alone have to be reborn. A person free of all desires and selfishness has no rebirth. To fulfil which desire will he have to be born again? Śaṅkarācārya declares that this kind of perfect Liberation cannot be had without the earned merits of a hundred crores of lives lived intelligently.

Our salutations to such spiritual stalwarts!

Milestones on the Road to Perfection

On the basis of the discussion so far, we can chalk out our road map to perfection (arrow indicates the direction of progress):

HUMAN BIRTH → manhood → noble attitude in life → steadfastness on the path of dharma as prescribed in the Vedas → knowledge of the deep significances of the Vedas → differentiation between the Self and the not-Self → direct Experience → establishment in the awareness of the identity of Brahman and Ātman → **LIBERATION**.

By the Lord's grace and the result of our past deeds, we have attained human birth and have also stepped onto the spiritual path. We have come a long way. There is yet more distance to be covered. It is now incumbent on us to march forward and claim our birthright, Self-Knowledge, which alone can free us from all bondage and liberate us from the thralldom of saṁsāra (cycle of birth and death).



Verses for Reflection

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतद् देवानुग्रहहेतुकम् ।

मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

durlabham trayamevaitad devānugrahaHetukam,

manuṣyatvaṁ mumukṣutvaṁ mahāpuruṣasaṁśrayaḥ.

Manhood, burning desire for Liberation, the capacity to surrender completely to a Man of Wisdom – these three things are rare indeed, and wherever they are found, they are due to the Lord's own Grace. (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* of Śaṅkarācārya, verse 3).

तज्ज्ञानं प्रशमकरं यदिन्द्रियाणां तज्ज्ञेयं यदुपनिषत्सु निश्चितार्थम् ।

ते धन्या भुवि परमार्थनिश्चितेहाः शेषास्तु भ्रमनिलये परिभ्रमन्तः ॥

tajjñānaṁ praśamakaraṁ yadindriyāṅāṁ tajjñeyaṁ yadupaniṣatsu niścītārtham,

te dhanyā bhuvī paramārthaniścītehāḥ śeṣāstu bhramanilaye paribhramantaḥ.

Knowledge is that which quietens the senses. That Knowledge alone is worthy of knowing which is the ascertained theme of the *Upaniṣads*. They alone are blessed persons who strive to realise the Supreme Truth, whereas all others are wandering in the quagmire of delusion. (*Dhanyāṣṭakam* of Śaṅkarācārya, verse 1)



Questions

I. Answer in brief

1. What are the 'nine blessings'?
2. Why is 'human birth' considered rare?
3. What is the meaning of 'puṁstvam' (manhood)? Are women debarred from Vedāntic study?
4. What is vipratā? What is its role in the spiritual pursuit?
5. In what way is 'vidvattvam' superior to 'vaidika-dharma-mārga-paratā'?

II. Answer in detail

1. What are the milestones on the 'Road to Perfection'? Briefly explain each of them.

