

## Class #3: Introduction to Vedanta-1

Hinduism = Vedic knowledge (Different from the religious practices of Hinduism)

- Religion = should be seen as a support to spirituality, like a cup or plate
- Spirituality = Science of life; the content, not the vessel that supports it. Science is science. There no American science apart from Russian science

Vedic knowledge is a complete set of insights into what constitutes us: *Who are we?*

### The fundamental teaching of the Gita reflects Vedic knowledge

Bhagavad Gita = Vedanta = Spiritual Knowledge

The context of the Gita is the practice/understanding of the spiritual science of life for an active person (one very much involved in the struggles of life—like Arjuna).

### The basic premise of Vedanta/Bhagavad Gita

In life, gain of anything is one of two types:

1. Gain of something I don't have. Apraptasya Prapti – अप्राप्तस्य प्राप्ति  
Such as: going somewhere or drinking water to quench thirst
  - a. Here, action – karma कर्म is primary; Jñana ज्ञान is secondary/supporting.
2. Gain of something I already have, but don't know I have it. Praptasya Prapti – प्राप्तस्य प्राप्ति
  - a. In this case, the role of Jñana are reversed. Knowledge becomes primary and action becomes secondary/supportive.
  - b. Example: Friend thinks his passport is lost and frets. But the passport is in one of his 16 pockets. Whew! Ex: My credit card has disappeared and I fret. But then I remember: I used it last night on the phone. I still haven't found it, but know it's somewhere on the desk.
  - c. The more I go looking for something, the more lost I will be.
  - d. This is saying: "You are what you want to be."

\* The symptoms of both 1 and 2 are the same.

**Basic goal of life for everyone: To be unconditionally happy.** We don't know if this is even possible. So we settle on dependent happiness, which is like "happy hour" (we're happy until it wears off).

**VEDANTA MAKES AN OUTLANDISH PROPOSITION:** Your sense of unconditional freedom is of Praptasya Praptih (#2), not Apraptasya Praptih (#1). You already have what you're looking for!

**3 things we all are looking for:** Do you know you are already all 3 of them?!

1. I always want to live. I don't even want to think about disappearing.
2. Not only should I not disappear, I should not be unhappy while here. (or else: suicide)
3. I should know I am alive and I am happy. (I don't want to be a mummy or in a coma)

It is just that I am looking at the wrong place. You're overlooking unconditional freedom. Look again: It's right here in pocket #3!

We believe we're very limited, generally unhappy, occasionally happy, occasionally feeling a sense of freedom. But we're dependent on things. "I'm doing well, but..." "I'll be happy when..." I don't believe I have unconditional freedom, and I need to get "it." "I'm working on...." This is common to us all.

We doubt that we have what we're looking for, because it's against our experience. So Vedanta counteracts that doubt.

EX: The 10<sup>th</sup> Man. Kids want to go swimming, and older boy says he'll be responsible. There are 10 people, but when he counts, there are only 9! There is panic/sorrow. He gets everyone out of the water, but no matter what he does, the count remains the same - 9. A wise man happens to walk by and understands what is ailing them; he counts them. There are 10 people—the young man forgot to count himself!

It is possible that your experience is not taking into account something that you did not see. If you saw it, you would not be unhappy. You are making an incomplete inventory of who you really are.

Experience and knowledge are two different things.

Experience: kid grows up watching the sunrise, thinks the sun moves

Knowledge: we learn that the earth moves—not the sun. Similarly, we think we're sitting here quietly, but we're moving 20K feet per second!

Your experience of unhappiness lacks the true knowledge. And even with true knowledge, you can allow for a different experience (enjoying the sun "rise").

So we ask: *What is it I am missing?* And this is where the teaching starts. This is the main objective of the person.

Every living being is given 2 powers, by the creator:

1. Power to act, to do (kriya Shakti – क्रिया शक्ति)
2. Power to know (jñana Shakti - ज्ञान शक्ति)

Vedanta provides a reflection of you. Like the mirror for your home: at first the mirror is the object you shop for, but once you hang it on the wall *you* become the object. You now look at yourself vs. the mirror. As such, *try to examine yourself and see yourself in the reflection of these talks.*

### **Karma and Jñana**

The Vedas are segmented into two sections:

1. Karma Section (actions, rituals, prayers): 90%
2. Jñana Section (knowledge of God, world, individual): 10%

The reason the karma yoga section is so big is that there are infinite ways to act.

Example: You want to go to San Francisco and know the general direction (jñana), but there are an infinite number of ways to get there (due north, veering south, out and back, around the world, etc.)

Vedanta, teaching the goal is to understand I am what I am trying to be is naturally focused on **jñana**, but karma plays a secondary/supportive role (karma becomes karma *yoga*) not karma. Bhagavad Gita expounds that jñana and karma are not alternate paths for unconditional freedom! They are complementary.

What is it that each one of these (karma, jñana) paths needs?

1. Ingredients for karma: Depends on the action.
  - a. EX: you want to accomplish physical work, you need strength.
  - b. EX: you want to go to SF, you need some method of conveyance.
2. Ingredients for jñana: Depends on what kind of knowledge.
  - a. Requires appropriate preparation/mental growth.
  - b. If knowledge is elementary, even a child can grasp it. but if subtle and sophisticated like particle physics, lots of preparation is needed— elementary school, high school, college etc.
  - c. Knowledge of self is even more subtle than learning mathematics or physics, etc. We will be talking about the preparation needed to understand the self.

### **NATURE OF THE HUMAN BEING'S QUEST FOR FREEDOM:**

(freedom being synonymous with happiness)

**Purushartha** – पुरुषार्थ 4 things we all strive for, each one leading to the next:

1. **Artha** अर्थ. Things for security (home, money, work, basic food, etc.)
  - a. Most important for us

2. **Kama** काम. Fun, pleasure (privilege of choosing any food, etc.)
3. **Dharma** धर्म. The right way of going forward (focus is on future). The right things to do with my life for a better future (helping others, etc.)
4. **Moksha** मोक्ष. Complete freedom. (1-3 are incomplete freedoms)