

Brief Introduction to Vedanta

Vedanta is a subjective science that provides rational insight into human life.

Vedanta does not offer solutions to life's problems; it gives techniques to dissolve problems.

Vedanta does not portray pessimistic or optimistic picture of life; it is a realistic approach to life!

Vedanta is the view of life as perceived by enlightened, wise men of all ages. It is not a conservative, religious outlook of life.

The Vedanta Teachers

- The *mantra-s* of Rig Veda
- The Upanishads
- Bhagavad-Gita
- Veda Vyasa's Brahma Sutra/Vedanta Sutra
- Gauda Pada's Karika
- Adi Shankaracharya
- Swami Vidyanaranya of Sringeri Mutt
- Swami Vivekananda, Swami Chinmayananda

Vedaanto naama Upanishad pramaanam – the knowledge found in Upanishads is Vedanta.

Pramaa karanam pramaanam – means of knowledge.

Bhagavad-Gita is also acclaimed by many as a scripture on Vedanta.

Adi Shankaracharya established the view of Advaita Vedanta through his commentaries on Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita.

Advaita means Non-Dual. The Absolute Truth – *Brahman* is Non-Dual – One without a second.

Who is God?

A.N. Whitehead (*Science and the Modern World*):

“Religion is the vision of something that stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final goal and yet is ~~beyond all reach~~; something which is the ultimate ideal and the ~~hopeless quest~~.”

Who is the soul (Jiva)?

Jiva (individual soul) is experienced as 'I' – the subject of all experiences.

It is possible to doubt the existence of an object but is never possible to doubt or deny the subject.

“A man may doubt of many things, of anything else, but he can never doubt of his own being.”

– Bradley (*Ethical Studies*)

Jiva - Individual Self (soul)

Jagat - World (matter)

Jagad-ishwara - God (Cosmic Soul)

Soul (Jiva) is God of limited matter (BMI)

Cosmic Soul (Jagad-ishwara) is God of total matter (world)

Without identifying with BMI, soul (jiva) is Ultimate Self (Brahman)

Without identifying with world, jagad-ishwara is Ultimate Self (Brahman)

The goal of Vedanta is to realize that soul (jiva) and Cosmic Soul (jagad-ishwara) are essentially ONE.

Life is divine and one in all, known as *Brahman* which is eternal and immortal.

Brahman expressing through matter (BMI) is referred as *Jiva* (the individual soul).

Soul -Jiva has two forms of identification: gross matter – Body; subtle matter – Mind. This identification is Ego.

From the standpoint of the soul *Jiva*, the total gross matter is the world and the creator of this is God (*Ishwara*). Both are the manifestations of *Brahman*.

The world of matter is inseparable from spirit. God (*Ishwara*) himself appears as the world of matter since soul -*Jiva* perceives it through matter (BMI).

Recognizing the homogeneous presence of Brahman and raising above identification with matter (BMI) is the state of enlightenment – Liberation *Moksha*

Great Statements

- Consciousness is the Absolute *Prajnanam Brahma*
- This Self is Absolute *Ayam Atma Brahma*
- You Are That *Tat Tvam Asi*
- I am the Absolute *Aham Brahmasmi*

$$C = B; A = B; C = B = A$$

Atman = Brahman = Consciousness

Practice of Vedanta

Characteristics of a student:

1. The ability to distinguish between eternal and temporary values - Discrimination *Viveka*
2. The renunciation of the desire to enjoy sensual pleasures in this and in the other world - Dispassion *Vairagya*
3. The cultivation of virtues like restraint of mind and body, withdrawing the senses from objects of desire, fortitude, concentration and so forth – *Shama-adi-shat-sampatti*
4. The desire for freedom - *Mumukshutvam*

Practice of Vedanta

The method of gaining the Self-Knowledge:

1. Formal study of Vedanta under the guidance of a competent teacher- Listening (*shravanam*)
2. Stage of reflection – independent thinking in order to convince oneself what is taught to him (*mananam*)
3. Constant and uninterrupted meditation with view to make knowledge, an immediate and direct experience (*nididhyasanam*)

Brahman is one in many manifestations

Indram mitram varunam agnim aahuh
Atho divyas sa suparno garutmaan
Ekam sad vipraa bahudhaa vadanti
Agnim yamam maatarishvaanam aahuh

- *Rig Veda*

Agniryathaiko bhuvanam pravishto
Roopam roopam prati-roopo babhoova
Ekastathaa sarva-bhootaantaraatmaa
Roopam roopam prati-roopo bahischa

- *Kathopanishad*

Mayaa tadam-idam sarvam jagad-avyakta moortinaa
Matsthaani sarva-bhootani na cha-aham teshu-avastitah

- *Bhagavad-Gita*

Atman is the imperishable Self

Na jaayate mriyate vaa vipaschit
Naayam kutaschinna na babhoova kaschit
Ajo nitya shaashvatoyam puraano
Na hanyate hanyamaane shareere

- *Kathopanishad*

Antah-shareere jyotir-mayo hi shubrah
Yam pashyanti yatayah ksheena-doshaah

- *Mundakopanishad*

Aham aatmaa gudaakesha Sarva boothaashaya-sthitah
Aham-aadischa madhyamcha bhootanaam-antameva cha

- *Bhagavad-Gita*

Realizing the Self through Knowledge

Aatmaa vaa arey drishtavyah shrotavyah
mantavyah nididhyaasitavyah

- *Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad*

Na chakshushaa grihyate naapi vaachaa
Naanyair-devais-tapasaa karmanaa vaa
Jnaana-prasaadena vishuddha-sattvastu
Tam pashyante nishkalam dhyaayamaanah

- *Mundkopenishad*

Na hi Jnaanena sadrsham pavitramiha vidyate
Tat svayam yoga samsiddhah kaalenaatmani vindati

- *Bhagavad-Gita*

Knowledge leads to Liberation

Bodhonya-saadhanebhyo hi saakshaan mokshaika saadhanam
paakasya vahnivat-jnaanam vina moksho na sidhyati

-Atma Bodha (Shankaracharya)

Jnaanam labdvaam paraam shaantim achirenaadhigacchati

- Bhagavad-Gita

Jantoonaam nara-janma-durlabham

Athah pumstvam tato viprataa

Tasmaat vaidika-dharma-maarga parataa

Vidvadvatvam asmaat param

Aatmaa-anaatma vivecanam savanubhavo

Brahmaatmanaa samsthitih

Muktirno shata-janma-koti-sukritaih

Punayair-vinaa labhyate

- Vivekachudamani