

Introduction to the *Brahma-Sūtra*

Part 1

Swami Dayananda Saraswati¹

Among the various forms of Sanskrit literature, one is *sūtra*. Generally, works in the form of *sūtra* (*sūtra-rūpa-grantha*), are considered source works (*mūla-grantha*), and present a particular subject matter. They are often descriptive in nature, like the *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* (which are not extant) which present the Sāṅkhya's school of philosophy, the *Vyākaraṇa Sūtras* that present grammar (*vyākaraṇam*) using a meta language, the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*, and the *Yoga Sūtras*. These *sūtras* form one group i.e. they are descriptive and present a given subject matter.

Then there are *sūtra* works that analyze the subject matter. The two works (*granthas*), the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* and the *Brahma Sūtra*, which is also called *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā*, analyze the subject matter of the Veda. The *Brahma-Sūtra* begins with “Now, thereafter, an inquiry into Brahman [is to be done]”, *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*. It is written by Vyāsa and consists of four chapters. In the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*, the prior portion (*pūrva-bhāga*) of the Veda is analyzed. It starts with “Now, then, an inquiry into *dharma*,” *athāto dharma-jijñāsā*. It was written by Vyāsa's disciple Jaimini, and analyzes the *Karma-Kāṇḍa* section of the Veda, which consists of various religious *karmas*, the means (*sādhana*), for given ends (*sādhya*). These *sūtras* are analytical in nature, analyzing the various rituals and the part they play in gaining a given end.

Requirements of a *Sūtra*

Here, in the *Brahma-Sūtra*, we are dealing with *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā*, analysis of the latter portion of the Veda. The definition of *sūtra* is that it be brief (*alpākṣaram*), but not ambiguous (*asandigdham*); it must be clear. These are two basic requirements. Not only does it have to be brief and clear, a *sūtra* must be meaningful (*sāravat*). It must deal with a topic for which there is some necessity for discussion. It should not be something obvious, which we can discover by some other means, because the individual for whom the *sūtra* is written is assumed to be a rational person who can think logically. Further, it has to keep the whole picture in view (*viśvatomukham*). The law of harmony requires that any new law must be in harmony with the existing ones. *Viśvatomukham* means that it faces in different directions, in order to see and to account for what went on before, what is happening now and what is going to happen later. The

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idea behind the requirement of *viśvatomukham* is that it must fulfill the law of harmony. Another meaning is that one *sūtra* can serve more than one purpose. The third *Brahma-sūtra śāstra yonitvāt*, for example, is viewed by Śaṅkara in two different ways: Brahman is the source of the *śāstra* (*śāstrasya yoni*), or the *śāstra* is the source, the means to know (*pramāṇa*) Brahman (*śāstram yoni*). Both meanings have to be accepted. They are not optional.

Further, a *sūtra* must be *astobha*. *Stobha* is something extra that is inserted but does not add to the meaning. In order to remain of minimum syllables (*alpākṣara*), a *sūtra* has to be free from superfluous words (*astobha*). It has to be concerned only with its subject matter. A *sūtra* must also be *anavadya*, without defect. Many defects are possible—a contradiction between what was said before and what is said later (*pūrvāpara-virodha*), a grammatical defect, or a fault in using a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa-virodha*). There should be no defect with other disciplines of knowledge. These are the general rules for a *sūtra*.

Sampradāya

The *sūtra* literature, especially that of *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vyākaraṇa* are not very self-explanatory. They depend on tradition for their elucidation. This is *sampradāya*. The meaning of *sūtras* like, “Now, thereafter, an inquiry into Brahman [is to be done]”, *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*, and “[Brahman is] that from whom is the birth, etc., of this [world] ” *janmādyasya yataḥ*, is fairly easy to understand, but when it comes to *tattu samanvayāt*, it is a problem. You have to find the relevant sentences (*vākyas*) from the Upaniṣads to understand what is being discussed. For that you require the teaching tradition which presents the Upaniṣad *vākya*, and tells you why it is this *vākya* the *sūtras* is referring to, and how it is to be understood.

In the *Brahma-Sūtras* the words of the Upaniṣads are analyzed. Their vision is to present what the Veda wants us to know, and who can know. The style adopted in this presentation is very important. Vyāsa’s style in the *Brahma-Sūtras* is that of the grammarian Pāṇini. He presents the topics under different headings (*adhikaraṇa*). The *Brahma-Sūtra* has four chapters (*adhyaya*), each having four sections, and is arranged according to topics (*adhikaraṇa*). The first four *sūtras* each comprise a separate topic (*adhikaraṇa*). The topics covered are so significant and complete, that in these first four *sūtras*, the whole *śāstra* is contained. The purpose of writing the *Brahma-Sūtra* is fulfilled in these four. The assumption is that anyone who studies these four can study the rest independently.

Here the topic, the subject matter (*viśaya*), is open to contention. There is always a possibility of doubt (*saṃśaya*), in which there are two possible stands (*koṭidvaya*). The opponent's stand is stated first and is thus, the 'prior view', (*pūrvapakṣa*). Then there is the settled conclusion (*siddhānta*), as well as the connection (*saṅgati*). Together they constitute one topic (*adhikaraṇam*). The main vision is non-dual (*advayam*) Brahman. The possible doubts come only when the topic has already been determined. That is why this is an analytical book.

The topic is presented in the three source works on which the tradition stands (*prasthāna-traya*). Besides the *Upaniṣads*, in the tradition the *Bhagavadgītā* is also accepted because it is consistent with the *Upaniṣads*, and also covers certain related topics that the *Upaniṣads* do not. The third work of the *prasthāna-traya* is the *Brahma-Sūtra*.

In the analysis of the subject matter, one's knowledge (*jñānam*) gains firmness (*dārḍyam*). A thorough study of the *Brahma-Sūtras* brings clarity of knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*). The *Brahma-Sūtra* has four chapters but one topic— that which is embodied (*śārīraka*). Therefore, it is also called *śārīraka-mīmāṃsā*. *Śārīraka* is what is meant by the word 'you' (*tvampada-abhidheya*). By analysis you come to know that it is nothing but the meaning of the word 'that' (*tatpada-abhidheya*) which is the cause of creation (*jagat-kāraṇam*), Brahman. This knowledge of identity, of oneness (*aikya-jñānam*) is the result of this analysis (*mīmāṃsa-phalam*). Even though the book is analytical, the aim is only knowledge of oneness. Doubts on various allied topics that inhibit the knowledge are created, and then negated, for it is only knowledge that is free from doubts (*saṃśaya-rahitam-jñānam*) that liberates. Knowledge (*jñānam*) that is the nature (*svarūpa*) of oneself is *mokṣa*, in which "all doubts are removed," (*chidyante sarva-saṃśayāḥ*, MuU 2.2.8).

By analyzing and presenting the subject matter the *Brahma-sūtra* becomes a source book (*mūla-grantha*). The commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* is considered to be a *bhāṣya*, rather than just an explanation or gloss (*vṛtti*), because in a *bhāṣya* you have to defend what you say. Śaṅkara's *bhāṣyas* are on the *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Brahma-Sūtra*. As the author of this three-fold *bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara is known as *bhāṣyakāra*. Patañjali's *bhāṣya* on Pāṇini's grammar *sūtras* is known as the *mahā-bhāṣya*, and Patañjali, therefore, is known as the *mahā-bhāṣya-kāra*. Śabarā's *bhāṣya* is on the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras* of Jaimini. They are all source books (*mūla-granthas*). Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* is regarded as clear and easily intelligible (*prasanna*)

as well as profound (*gambhīra*). The depth is its beauty. But since the topic is so profound, even the simple way it is presented can seem very difficult. Thus, there are further commentaries and *ṭīkāś* to help us understand the *bhāṣya*. *Ṭīkāś* on Śāṅkara's *bhāṣya* have been written by Padmapāda, Vācaspati Mīśra, Ānanda Giri, and Govindānanda. There are commentaries on *ṭīkāś* also. Vācaspati's commentary on Śāṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, which he called *Bhāmatī*, is commented upon line by line by Amalānanda in his *Kalpataru*. And Appaiah Dīkṣithar comments on the *Kalpataru* in his work *Parimala*. As the analysis continues more logic is introduced and thus it becomes a pyramid.

Means of Knowledge (*pramāṇa*)

The whole Veda is looked upon as an independent means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*. This adjective 'independent', is important because it reveals a certain fact about *pramāṇa*. In the tradition the number of *pramāṇas* that are accepted by a given school of thought is also important. The *Cārvāka* will say that direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) is the only valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), and based upon that, will make conclusions about realities. Someone else will accept direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). Even though inference is not immediate, like perception, it is still regarded as a means of knowledge. Others look at *anumāna* as having two steps, and accept presumption (*arthāpatti*). The two steps lead to the conclusion that the observed data is otherwise not possible (*anyathā-anupapatti*). How do you conclude that a whole pot of rice is cooked? The datum, one grain of rice will tell whether it is done or not. This is the two step inference; (1) I see that one grain of rice is cooked (2) if one is cooked all must be cooked. What is arrived at by inference (*anumāna prāptam*) cannot be arrived at by perceptual knowledge (*pratyakṣa-jñānam*). But perceptual knowledge gives rise to immediate knowledge (*aparokṣa-jñānam*), whereas inference gives rise to hidden knowledge (*parokṣa-jñānam*). This is a very important means of knowledge—our daily life is governed by inferred knowledge. Comparison (*upamāna*), that which gives rise to knowledge which is similar or approximate to something (*upamitti-karaṇam*) is also accepted as *pramāṇa*. It can give rise to indirect knowledge (*parokṣa-jñānam*) of an object. If you don't know what a bison looks like, then it is likened to a buffalo, which you know. On this basis, you can recognize the bison when you see it. Direct perception forms the basis for the data for all of these, which are different forms of inference, but they are all independent means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). The knowledge of the absence of something is also arrived at by and independent means of knowledge. *Anupalabधि*,

non-recognition, cannot be direct perception. Direct perception is gained by the eyes which only see an object which reflects light or is a source of light. If there is no object that the eyes can come in contact with, we cannot call it perception. For instance, there is no pot in my hand. How do you arrive at this knowledge? You cannot say it is direct perception, because there is nothing for the eyes to see. It sees only the hand. Nor is it inference, perception, presumption, or comparison. The absence of pot is understood when the hand is looked at with the thought of the pot (*ghata-buddhi*). It is a different means of knowledge, *anupalabdhi*.

Beyond these five means there is one more—words as a means of knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*).

Words of the Veda as a Means of Knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*).

If the words of the Veda (*śabda*) are accepted as a means of knowledge, the cause of the world (*jagat kāraṇam*) can be arrived at, not otherwise. When we say *śabda* is an independent means of knowledge, it means words reveal knowledge that we cannot gather through the other five means of knowledge.

For example, there is a place called Gomukh, where Ganga emerges. This knowledge I gained from someone, who in turn gained it from someone else who went to that place. This particular collection of words (*śabda-samūha*) is not an instance of words acting as a means of knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*). Still, *śabda* is an independent *pramāṇa*, because the five means that we have looked at are not adequate to know what the Veda has to reveal. And we know of no other way of gathering knowledge apart from these five *pramāṇas*. If there is a fact, a phenomenon, to be known that is beyond the scope of these five, it has to be to my benefit (*hitam*). That knowledge should be topic of what we call *śabda-pramāṇa*. The subject matter of *śruti* has nothing to do with a topic that can be the scope of the other five means of knowledge. The topic made known by *śruti* (*śabda-viśaya*) has to be something that cannot be arrived at by any of the other known means of perception or inference (*anadhigatam*). It is something that is heard in words, and passed on from ‘ear to ear’ (*karṇa-paramparā*). This is called *śabda* or *śruti-pramāṇa*.

If it is passed on from ‘ear to ear’, who got it first? How? Sitting under a tree did it suddenly occur to someone, “The *agni-hotra* ritual is a means (*sādhana*) for getting to heaven”? Was it a hunch? We know that nothing in life happens suddenly; one only recognizes it suddenly.

This sudden occurrence of recognition is also from a source of knowledge which is beyond the five means. That source can be called *Īśvara* (for now). The recipients of this knowledge were the *ṛṣis*. Such knowledge is not born of the means normally given to a human being. Though it is beyond knowing in the usual way, yet it is not unknown. It is heard (*śrutam*).

It can be argued that *agni-hotra* is a simple *karma* that someone could have conceived of. Even conceding that, still, there is no way of figuring out that it is a means for *punya*, or that this *punya* is an unseen (*adr̥ṣṭa*) result that manifests later. All these are not within the scope of the means of knowledge we have available to us, but they are understandable. This particular means-end (*sādhana-sādhya*) connection cannot be known in any other way than by *śabda*. Therefore, the subject matter of *śruti* is what cannot be arrived at by the five means of knowledge. Only then is *śabda* an independent *pramāṇa*. As an independent means of knowledge, it does not require any corroboration. In order for or a means of knowledge to be considered independent, what is arrived at by it cannot be arrived at in any other way.

Inference can be converted into direct knowledge. Whether or not there is fire where the smoke is seen can be verified. But when you are dealing with sub-atomic particles, for instance, it is knowledge that will always be indirect (*nitya-parokṣa-jñānam*). *Śruti* also reveals this kind of knowledge; it talks about an always remote heaven (*nitya-parokṣa-svarga*), for example. We simply have to accept it, because it is knowledge born of something other than perception or inference (*anadhigata-jñāna-janaka*). It cannot be refuted, because what it talks about is not refutable. If it contradicts something you know, then it is already refuted.

This knowledge was received by *śabda* as a *pramāṇa* by the *ṛṣis* through the grace of the Lord (*Īśvara-anugraha-prāptam*). A *ṛṣi* is someone who sees, but not through the senses. The knowledge that he receives is revealed to him and revealed knowledge is something that cannot be contradicted, (*abādhitam*). Further, it must have the capacity to reveal something useful, (*phalavat arthabodhakatvam*), and it should not fall with the five means of knowledge (*anadhigata*). This is the general definition for *śabda-pramāṇa*.

If this is the definition of the Veda as a *pramāṇa*, then is there a way one can contradict this *pramāṇa* by another *pramāṇa*? A *pramāṇa* is something that is to be used and then understood in terms of what it is revealing. If the Veda says something, how am I to contradict it? A *pramāṇa* is a proof by itself (*svataḥ-pramāṇa*). Perception and inference can be verified,

being within the scope of our knowledge and having as their scope things that can be objectified. But what *śruti* says is proof in itself. It is taken as an independent *pramāṇa*.

In the Veda there are a number of means and ends (*sādhana-sādhya*). For example, “The one who desires heaven should perform the *jyotiṣṭoma* ritual, *svarga-kāmaḥ jyotiṣṭomeṇa yajeta*. This is a statement of injunction (*vidhi-vākya*). The means and end are for a person with a desire to go to heaven. How does he come to desire heaven (*svarga*)? It is like a commercial. A commercial introduces a new product that you have not heard of, and then makes you desire that product and sells it to you. Similarly, the *śāstra* itself tells you about the existence of heaven, its desirability, and the advantages of being there. A desire is created in you for it, since you are looking for a place that offers happiness (*sukha*) that is not inhibited by *duḥkha*. The *śruti* itself does the tourism promotion for going to heaven. It also gives an option—heaven can also be gained by doing daily and occasional duties (*nitya-naimittika-karma*). It connects you with a certain means or discipline (*sādhana*) promising heaven (*svarga*) later. The means (*sādhana*) of the *jyotiṣṭoma* ritual is unknown to me, and so is the end (*sādhya*) heaven. There are two unknowns. Neither can be arrived at by perception or inference. I cannot prove that it is not true, nor that it is useful. The section dealing with the *jyotiṣṭoma* in the *śāstra* tells who can do this, what are the results, etc. Here, both the end and the means are unknown. The *śāstra* also gives us unknown means for known ends. For instance, in the ritual prescribed for the birth of a child, (*putra-kāmeṣṭi*), the desire for the end, a child (*putra*), is known. Because it is something known, there can be a desire for it. Through the ritual, *putra-kāmeṣṭi*, an unseen result is produced to meet with any undesirable unseen result that is obstructing the fulfillment of the desire, thus neutralizing the obstacles.

We have seen that the subject matter of the Veda has *anadhigatatvam*—a subject matter that cannot be revealed by any other means of knowledge—and cannot be negated (*abādhitā*). It also must reveal something useful (*phalavat artha-bodhakatvam*). This has to be understood.

Śruti's words are deliberate. They have results and a subject matter useful for one thing or the other. If progeny is not what we want, then we turn the page to one that has something for us. Desires and people are many. Likes and dislikes are varied. Means and ends are also different. A known means, like charity has an unknown end, like heaven. Unknown means can have known or unknown ends. This is the Veda's subject matter. It is not scientific because it is beyond our means of knowledge. Nor does it talk about what is beyond us. The entire collection

of words (*śabda samūha*) in the Veda, is looked upon as a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). As such, it cannot be negated (*abādhita*), is not known by another means of knowledge (*anadhigata*), and reveals something useful (*phalavat arthabodhakatva*)—*abādhita-anadhigata-phalavat arthabodhakatvam pramāṇam*.

Intended Meaning (*vivakṣā*)

The whole Veda is looked upon as *pramāṇa*. Both the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsakas* and *Vedāntins* accept all six *pramāṇas*. Since the Veda is a *pramāṇa* in the form of words (*śabdātmakam*), understanding the words in a sentence in any particular section (*prakaraṇa*), becomes important. Once the words are looked upon as a *pramāṇa*, their meaning in a given topic implies one's objectivity. Mere knowledge of grammar is not enough. Objectivity must be there. One has to find out the intended meaning (*vivakṣā*). This is important in understanding words. On the part of the speaker there is an intention to convey an idea. There is something he wants to say (*vaktum icchā vivakṣā*). This intended meaning (*vivakṣā*) is what we are committed to. When two people come out of a room and one says, "The door," it is understood to mean, "Lock the door." This is known from the context. The word 'door' is just a word, but the meaning given to it by the context makes it a sentence. With these kinds of words, the intended meaning (*vivakṣā*) should be looked for. To gain absolute objectivity in looking at the words, one has to look at what is intended by the person. *Śraddhā*, trust in the veracity of the speaker, and love gives that objectivity. Because the Veda is an independent *pramāṇa*, what it says should be looked at.

Knowledge Centered on the Object (*vastu-tantra*), Action on the Person (*puruṣa-tantra*)

Pramāṇa operates in a choiceless manner. If the eyes happen to fall upon an object, whether likeable or otherwise, it still produces the sight of the object. The data the eyes bring in, the everyday data, is most of the time ignored. Even if you choose, *pramāṇa* still operates on its own. It will see what is there. This is knowledge (*jñānam*); it is centered on the object (*vastu-tantra*), not the person's will (*puruṣa-tantra*). Knowledge is as true as the object of knowledge. In this, the person's (*puruṣa*) choice is not involved. Seeing takes place regardless. There is no choice. The person (*puruṣa*) does not come into the picture in knowing.

On the other hand, *karma* is based upon one's will (*puruṣa-tantra*) which means that one can choose to do something, or not to do it, or do it differently, as the situation permits. All forms

of *karma* are dependent on the person, the agent (*kartr-puruṣa-tantra*). The nature of knowledge (*jñānam*) is the opposite. Here there is no choice, except the choice of the person to know (*puruṣārtha*). One has to choose to know, especially here, where the topic is the self (*ātma-viśaya*). Whether or not to know the self is purely based upon choice, but the knowledge itself has nothing to do with choice.

You may choose to see a place that is promoted by tourism. Having gone there, the picture you see has nothing in common with the one given to you by the promoters. Now, should you take what you wanted to see or what you see as knowledge? The latter of course, even though the desire is different. The eyes are unmindful of your desires, will, choices, and intentions. They have no regard for them. It is the same with ears, nose, and everything that falls within sensory perception (*pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*).

Pramāṇa operates only in terms of what is there. A distorted version of what is there is only due to a defect in the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa-doṣa*), either for want of light or other factors. The eyes operate only in certain areas, where certain conditions are fulfilled, within the range of their operation. You have no choice in how and what they see. Knowledge (*jñānam*) presented in this manner, is opposed to *karma*.

Karma is presented as something one can do, need not do, or do differently (*kartum vā akartum vā anyathā vā kartum śakyam*). The choice is there. Whereas, in *jñānam*, you may only choose to know a subject matter; only up to that point is there choice. Choosing does not give the knowledge. What is to be known depends upon the nature of the object and the *pramāṇa—pramāṇa-prameya-tantram jñānam*.

The object determines the type of knowledge; it is *prameya-tantra*. A pot, for instance, if the means of knowledge has no defect, gives pot knowledge. When the pot is there and there is no defect in the means of knowledge and it is said, “This is a pot,” you have no choice. The choice is not there to know it, or not know it, or know it differently. It is a pot, nothing else, and there is no choice.

In *karma*, in doing a ritual, you can do it now, or another day. Options are offered for doing it differently also. In offering clothing in a *pūjā* (*vastram samarpayāmi*), what is usually offered instead is rice (*akṣata*). You need not do it at also.

You can make a choice to know (*jñātum śakyam*) the pot or not (*ajñātum śakyam*) in that you can choose to operate the *pramāṇa* or not. Your eyes are open, you see; eyes closed, you don't. This is the choice you make—to see or not see. That is dependent on your will (*puruṣa-tantra*) not the *pramāṇa*. Once your eyes are open, the activity of the means of knowledge begins (*pramāṇa vyāpāra*). When the object is within the range of sight, then sight takes place. This is a rule with reference *pramāṇa* (*pramāṇa-vidhi*). When the *pramāṇa* is operating, is there a choice not to know (*ajñātum śakyam*)? No.

Knowledge (*jñānam*) and *karma* are opposed, in the sense of there being no choice and choice. Knowledge taking place is dependent on the object (*vastu-tantra*). When the *pramāṇa* is in the form of words (*śabdātmakam*) and is independent (*svataḥ-pramāṇa*), it can be glossed over. My knowledge of what *śabda* has to say depends entirely on my capacity to look at the *śabda*, and see what the author wants to say (*vivakṣā*). If what is said and what is understood concur, then there is understanding of what *śruti* says (*śruti-artha-jñānam*). If I have predetermined idea, or philosophy and want *śruti*'s support for this reality, then that does not become *śruti-pramāṇa*. There is no *śraddhā* in it.

If *śruti* conveys it, then whether it is *anadhigata*, beyond the other five means of knowledge, *abādhitā*, not subject to negation, and *phalavat*, useful, has to be seen. In duality (*dvaita*) these three criteria are not fulfilled. The dualists maintain that there are differences between word and word (*śabda-śabda*); between word and form (*śabda* and *rūpa*); between form and form (*rūpa-rūpa*); and within a given form. Thus, there are differences between species (*vi-jātīya-bheda*), within members of a species (*sajātīya-bheda*) and within a given member of a species (*swagata-bheda*). There is no usefulness (*phala*) in this. As a limited person, my life of searching starts. I want to be free from this limitation. How and when is this possible, when there are things on earth that are not me?

For *śraddhā* to be complete, you have to be free from ideas of your own, which is difficult. The greatest blessing that the human being has, however, is this capacity to suspend all ideas and look at the situation afresh. I can be as innocent as a baby. Only because of this capacity to suspend all ideas (*apohana*) is the pursuit of *pramāṇa* possible (*pramāṇa-pravṛtti*). Even in simple sight, we are doing this every day. You thought something was one thing and it turned out to be different, like mistaking salt for sugar. Even though you thought it was sugar, the *pramāṇa* of taste beats that conclusion. This capacity to suspend your notions can be done when a *pramāṇa* is operating. As long as it happens to be my eye, ear, sense of taste, touch and

smell, I have this objectivity. One perception does not prejudice the other. Even if you have *śraddhā* in my words, when I hold a flower and say, “This is a rabbit,” you will think seriously about that *śraddhā*. This is so because the ‘whole’ of you is behind your eyes and my words. The words as *pramāṇa* do not have the backing of the *pramāṇa* of the eyes. This is a contradiction to *pramāṇa*. Understanding it differently (*anyathā vā jñātum śakyam*) does not exist.

Subjective experiences do not have the status of a *pramāṇa*. It is important to understand that the *Rṣis* are not presented as mystic experiencers reporting their personal experiences. They are seers of mantras (*mantra-dṛṣṭāraḥ*), not simple experiencers. They had no experience of rituals. They had a vision of means and ends, a revelation. When what they said is considered as a means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, then the whole approach is different. Our attitude becomes appropriate while operating the *śāstra* as a means of knowledge. This is *śraddhā*, objectivity.

The meaning conveyed by the *śāstra* (*śāstrārtha*) should be in keeping with what it wants to say (*vivakṣā*). When you look at the whole picture again and again then you begin to see the intended meaning (*vivakṣā*). Once that becomes clear, a tradition of unfoldment (*sampradāya*) gets started and upholds what the *śāstra* says.