

Trust Pending Understanding, *Śraddhā*¹

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What is *śraddhā*?

guruvedāntavākyaṣu viśvāsaḥ śraddhā.

Viśvāsa, trust, faith, in what? In the words of Vedanta, *vedānta-vākyaṣu*. What is that faith here? That they are a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge. You give the status of *pramāṇa* to the words of Vedanta. You don't look at them as theory, as speculation, as philosophy, but take them as an independent means of knowledge. That is called *viśvāsa*. If it is philosophy, you don't need *śraddhā*, but because these words are supposed to fulfill a promise, you do require *śraddhā*. If it is a philosophy, why do you need *śraddhā*? Do you have *śraddhā* in Kant? No, that is philosophy, so you have to understand what he says, and because it is speculation, you don't require *śraddhā*. But when you take Ayurvedic medicine, there is *śraddhā*, because you don't know what it is going to do. A promise is held out. Many people have taken this before and it has worked for them, so there is no reason why it should not work for you. One good thing about Ayurvedic medicine is that we do not know the contraindications. There is no pamphlet saying things like, "Sometimes people die;" this is wonderful. It is wonderful, because when I take medicine after reading all these contraindications, my *śraddhā* in it is only 10%. There is a 10% chance of getting a brain tumor brain, so I only believe in that 10%. It is only different in a

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lottery, where even though you have one chance in a billion of winning, still, you will buy a lottery ticket. There, you think you are going to be the one in a billion, but here, the 10% chance is what you will believe in. In fact, that's how it should be, I suppose, but your trust in the medicine goes away. The advantage in Ayurveda is that you don't know. There are no contraindications

mentioned anywhere, so you take it with *śraddhā*. And then suddenly you get up in the morning and find that you are better. But it can prove itself otherwise. Ayurvedic medicine can also create problems, but unless it proves itself otherwise, there is faith, *śraddhā*, that it is verifiable. That faith, however, is

different from the *śraddhā* we are talking about here.

Here, it is faith in a *pramāṇa*. This *pramāṇa* is more than verifiable; it is just you. Who you are—for this, it is a *pramāṇa*. You have no problem at all; it has to reveal itself. And therefore, it is more than *śraddhā*, really; it is surrender. It is surrender to the *pramāṇa* so that the *pramāṇa* can operate; that's how it presents itself. "I am a *pramāṇa*. *Ātman* is to be understood by Vedanta." That's how Vedanta presents itself—*vedānta-vijñāna-suniścitārthāḥ*.² Vedanta itself is the *pramāṇa*, and Vedanta itself tells us this. What is already there, it is supposed to reveal, and I have nothing against that. This is called *śraddhā*.

In the *śāstra* there is *satya-buddhi*, the attitude, "This is true." Only when there is the attitude towards the *śāstra* that it is true, is it a *pramāṇa*. If it is regarded as

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²Mundaka Upanisad 3.2.6

speculation, we don't have *satya-buddhi*, and with *satya-buddhi*, it becomes a *pramāṇa*. Suppose I hold up a flower and say, "This is a rabbit." When I say this, you have no *satya-buddhi* in my words. You have *satya-buddhi* in your eyes. What your eyes see, alone, is true, not what the Swami says. If I say that this is a rabbit you are not going to accept it. Why? Because what your eyes see, that sight, cannot be denied.

Because your whole soul, your *ahaṅkāra*, your ego, everything is at the altar of your eyes. And therefore, when I say, "This is a rabbit" you cannot accept that, because *satya-buddhi* is only in the *pramāṇa*, your eyes. Similarly, when the words of the *śāstra* tell you that you are the whole, *tat tvam-asi*, because it is a *pramāṇa* for you, you have *satyabuddhi* in those words. Even though you have every reason to believe that it is not true, in your question, "How can I be the whole?" you can either dismiss the whole thing, or mean, "I think I don't understand this." Then you give the benefit of the doubt to the *śāstra*, and you enquire. And when I say that you are not only the whole, you are the center of the entire creation, *jagat*, this is a statement which is not going to be understood by you as it is said. It requires analysis leading to understanding, because it is an equation.

An equation is never understood just by seeing it. It is understood only when you inquire into both sides of it. The equation which is Vedanta is *tat tvam asi*, you are that. *Tvam*, you, is one side of the equation, and *tat*, that, is the other side. Now *tat* means the cause of the entire world, *jagat-kāraṇa*. That is what we call Īśvara, the lord. This individual, *jīva*, who is ignorant, who is of limited knowledge and limited power, is equated to Īśvara, and therefore, this equation is not tenable. But at the same time, the *śāstra* makes the equation about

you, and therefore, you have to look into your own notion about yourself to determine whether it is true. And then, you have to know what is Īśvara, what is the reality, etc. When you look into all this thoroughly, it becomes clear to you, but until then, you have *śraddhā* in the *śāstra*. The *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* is a *śraddhā* pending discovery.

An equation is understood only when you inquire into both sides of it. The equation which is Vedanta is *tat tvam asi*, you are that, the cause of the entire world. When you look into all this thoroughly, it becomes clear to you, but until then, you have *śraddhā* in the *śāstra*, a *śraddhā* pending discovery.



The Vedanta *vākya* is taken to be true. Even though it doesn't seem to be true for me, I accept that the meaning is true, and that I have to enquire and discover that. This is *śraddhā*. Therefore, when there is a doubt, I don't dismiss the *śāstra*, I question my understanding. This is what we gain through *śraddhā*. If we dismiss the *śāstra*, "Oh, it says things that are not true," that is not *śraddhā*. The

śāstra says deliberately that you are the whole, knowing full well that you are a limited being, that your body is limited, your mind is limited, and so on. All these limitations are accepted by the *śāstra*; otherwise it wouldn't even talk to you. Why should it? Unless there is an apparent difference, there is no necessity for an equation. An equation is necessary only when there is an apparent difference, and the difference is obvious, while the non-difference is not obvious. The non-difference is what is being unfolded. Therefore, you give the benefit of doubt to the *śāstra* and then enquire. This is called *vedānta-vākyeṣu śraddhā*. And this is extended to the Veda *vākyas* in general. The Veda *vākyās* also talk about what is beyond my reason, so I have nothing against that, and therefore, have *śraddhā*. Even though I am not interested in heaven, I cannot dismiss it either, so what is said by the *śāstra* is accepted as true. The whole Veda is looked upon as a *pramāṇa*. And for us, Vedanta, is unfolding a fact about the reality, about oneself, so in

the Vedanta *vākyas* we have *śraddhā*. And also, in what the teacher says, *guru-vākyeṣu*.

Śraddhā is not only in the *śāstra*, but in the words of the guru. The *guru-vākyā* is also important, because this *śāstra* has to be handled. How do you handle the *śāstra*? The whole thing is a method, and this method is something that is held by the *sampradāya*, the tradition. This tradition holds the key to unlocking the meaning of the *śāstra*, and therefore, the words of the guru also become important. Sometimes a custom made approach to the subject matter is required, based on who is the student. You have to find out where the student is and take off from there. You don't take off from where the *śāstra* is, but from where the student is. So what is not even said by the *śāstra* may be said by the teacher. For the time being, he may tell the student to follow a certain *sādhana*, a certain means, which is necessary to prepare oneself. To help the student gain a mind that is conducive for this knowledge, the guru may add a few things which may not be there in the *śāstra* at all. Knowing the student, he will know that this may be necessary, at this time, in this place, etc., understanding all the contributing factors to the student's mind. The modern student has his own problems, and the ancient student had his or her own problems, but one thing is consistent—the mind is typical. Still, whatever the problems are, they have to be taken into account, and then the preparedness, *adhikārītva*, has to be taught. There definitely there won't be any big discussion on psychology in our *śāstra*. It only talks about a simple *rāga-dveṣa* psychology; you learn to manage likes and dislikes and you will be okay. This is

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very simple psychology, but things are not that simple. Things are complex. The human mind is complex, so we have to address that also. The modern teacher has to take into account the factors that contribute to the complexity of the mind. Naturally, therefore, there may be a statement from the teacher which may not be

found at all in the Vedanta *śāstra*. But that doesn't mean you dismiss it—as long as the main vision is unfolded and the teacher is a *sampradāyavit*, one who knows the tradition of teaching. He knows not only the

meaning of the teaching, but the tradition of teaching, the method of communicating it to another person. And I find that those who don't have the tradition always commit mistakes in their statements, and people don't grasp exactly what they say. They say one thing, and what happens in the mind of the listener is entirely different. The *sampradāyavit* is the one who has the key. So in the *guru-vākyā*, in the words of the teacher, also, we have *viśvāsa*, *śraddhā*.

Śraddhā means trust. This is a must because the knowledge is gained only by the person who has *śraddhā*, *śraddhāvan labhate jñānam* (*Bhagavad Gita* 4.39). And this *śraddhā* is entirely different from the *śraddhā* in a non-verifiable belief. That one will go to heaven is a non-verifiable belief. There also, *śraddhā* is

involved. Even if somebody says, "God talks through me," you have to accept that, and there will be ten fellows who will accept it. Suppose someone says, "God talks to me every night in my dreams," and someone else says, "Once God came to me in a dream and told me, 'I never come in dreams'." Who will you believe? What if somebody were to say, "God talks to me." In those days, he would become a prophet, but

these days you would refer him to a specialist. If somebody says, “God talks through me,” you and your friend look at each other knowingly. This is a belief. You have to totally believe—the person, his words, his promises. And if that person says, “God talks through me and says that you are the whole,” I don’t care whether god talks to him or not—whether or not I am the whole, that is the question. But if he says, “God talks to me and says that you will go to heaven if you accept me,” I have a problem with that. Those who want to believe that can believe it, but I don’t need to believe that, because I am not interested in heaven in the first place.

Now, when the teacher says that the teaching is that you are the whole, you don’t have any reason to disbelieve it either. What reason do you have to disbelieve it? We can help ourselves to understand this with the tenth man story. It is a thing to be said here. Ten *śiṣyas*, disciples of a guru, decided to go on a pilgrimage. The guru said, “No, I have some other work and I cannot take you now.” In any class, there is always a leader, and in this class, there was a big guy who was the leader of the ten, the monitor, and he said, “You need not come, sir; I will take them.”

“Will you?”

“Yes. I will take care of them. I will bring them back.”

“Okay, be careful,” the guru said. These ten students have come from ten different families, and he is responsible for all of them. His name is Paramānanda and these are all the *śiṣyas*, Paramānanda-śiṣyāḥ. So the Paramānanda-śiṣyas start on a pilgrimage. On the way there was a small river which everybody could swim across. They could cross it by boat also, but all these youngsters could swim, so they decided to swim across. And they reached the other bank. Of course, this leader of the group, who is a responsible person, counted all of them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Where is the tenth man? Where is the tenth man? The

tenth man is gone! He thought he had counted wrongly, so again he counted, and again he got nine. Then one fellow said that he should group them and then count, so he tried eight plus one, seven plus two, six plus three, five plus four, he counted this way and that way and got nine each time. Naturally this fellow was alarmed. He cannot proceed with the pilgrimage. How can he go on without the tenth fellow? He can’t proceed, and he can’t find this fellow. Though he searched all over, there was no trace of that tenth man. So all of them became sad and were sitting under one tree with the leader, who was trying to figure out who is that tenth man. The tenth man is missing, but who is he? He cannot even remember his face. He tries to objectify the tenth man, but he cannot. So, this tenth man is gone, *daśamo naṣṭaḥ*. All of them became sad. Then, an old man who had seen them singing and whistling, as they were coming, saw them now, all sad, sitting there under a tree. “What happened?” he asked. The leader approached him and said, “We were ten, sir, now we are nine. One man is gone; we should have taken the boat, but we swam and this is what happened. One fellow is gone.”

“Were you ten?”

“Yes, sir, we were ten.”

“You say you are nine?”

“Yes, sir, we are nine.” Listen. He said, “The tenth man exists.” You know, “The tenth man exists” can be a statement of some assurance. What assurance? The tenth man exists in heaven; I see with my bionic eyes that he is there in heaven. That doesn’t really solve my problem. How am I going to answer my teacher? Thus, “The tenth man exists” is not an adequate statement, so he asked him, “Where? Where is he?” and the old man said, “Here.”

“Here? The tenth man is here? Do you see him?”

“Yes I see him.”

“Oh! Oh! Will you call him?”

“Yes. I will call him.”

“When?”

“Now.”

“Now?!”

“Oh!” The fellows had a relief. A relief from what? From this sadness of losing the tenth man. What is the relief? The tenth man exists—not in heaven; there is no promise held out. He doesn’t say that later he will produce the tenth man. That would mean an investment of your emotions, of your life, of many things. There is no investment here. He says, “The tenth man is here, now, and I will show him to you.” ‘Here, now’ means there is no reason for any of them to disbelieve his words, because there is no promise held out. There is no future involved here. “You will join the tenth man in heaven” also means that I should die now. This is not the promise; the promise is now, here, which is not a promise at all. ‘Now, here’ is only a method of discovery; he is going to call the tenth man. Let him call him. There is no reason for disbelief. This is *śraddhā*, a peculiar *śraddhā*. You allow the old man to call the tenth man, to show you the tenth man. Your allowing him is called *āstikyā-buddhi*, the attitude that the tenth man is around, and you are going to see him. This itself removes the sadness which was there in the loss of the tenth man. He was irretrievably lost. Now he is not lost; he exists.

But do you know the tenth man? Have you see the tenth man? Not yet. The old man is going to show him now, here. No traveling is necessary, no treading the path, no *bhakti-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, etc. He is going to show the tenth man right now. The joy which will be there in the wake of the tenth man’s sight is not yet born, but the sorrow which was there because of the loss of the tenth man, that is gone. There is no irretrievable loss now, because there is trust, belief, *śraddhā*. Let us use the word ‘*śraddhā*’ for *śraddhā*. ‘Belief’ and ‘trust’ don’t quite capture the meaning, so we will use ‘*śraddhā*’. “The tenth man exists, but I still have to see him;” this is *śraddhā*, *guru-*

vākyeṣu śraddhā. Similarly, this *śraddhā* in the Vedānta *vākyas* itself brings about a relief. The searcher has found an assurance here, more than an assurance, because the *śāstra* tells you, “You are the whole.” That itself is enough. I have been searching in order to become free from being small, and someone says, “You are.” There is no reason to disbelieve that, so I allow the *śāstra* to show it to me. I allow the old man to show the tenth man. I allow him, and he follows a method. It is a very interesting method.

He asked all of them to line up, and all of them lined up. This is not obedience. Because they want to find out, they are ready to follow any method. They are ready to go through the whole process. Once they had all lined up, he called the leader and asked him to count them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. The tenth man is gone. In fact, he didn’t

want to count again, because he had counted so many times; that ‘nine’ is the most irritating number for him now. But, even though he didn’t want to count, still, he has to follow the method, so he counted, “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. The tenth man is missing, *daśamo naṣṭaḥ*.” Then the old man said, “That tenth man you are, *tat tvam*

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asi.”

This fellow got enlightened. But at the same time, he can’t say, “Eureka!” like Archimedes, who jumped out of the bath and ran down the street shouting, “Eureka!” This fellow can’t do that, because this is entirely different. This is not Archimedes Principle. The tenth man can’t even talk about his story; he can’t relate the whole thing. He is humbled, really. Why? Because he has realized. Realized what? “I have been a fool.” This is the realization. There is no other realization. And so the man who was seeking that

tenth man happens to be the sought tenth man. And the moment he seeks him, in the very seeking there is a denial of the tenth man. Therefore, he has to stop seeking. But if he stops seeking, he won't find the tenth man, and if he seeks, he won't find the tenth man. What a position. Therefore, deliver yourself to the hands of the old man, when you are in such a helpless situation.

What is intelligent living? Intelligent living is seeking help when you are helpless. This is a helpless situation, and therefore, seeking help is intelligent living. If you can help yourself, help yourself. When you cannot help yourself, seek help. We all know about self-medication. Everybody has, in his room, lots of containers containing all kind of medicines, especially if he is coming to India from the west. Generally they keep it in the bathroom. I don't know why, but the whole bathroom is full of medicine—these tablets, those tablets, vitamin tablets. In a day they take half a kilo of tablets, because they are used to self-medication. For a headache, you yourself buy some brand of aspirin, or whatever, and take that tablet. But if the headache continues, you stop self-medication and go to a doctor. That is intelligent living. Seeking help is an intelligent approach; you know this very well. And we may have to seek help. That is why we have prayer, etc., which is seeking help. Here, since the searcher and the one who is searched for is myself, naturally, I require some help in the form of someone to point out what I am. At least, here in the tenth man story I may come across 'me', because it is my body. But if it is the owner of the body, the knower of everything, who is hidden in the knower as the one to be known, my God, there is no way of coming across that person accidentally. No way.

And therefore, because what is to be known is hidden in the knower, you require a *pramāṇa*. *Jñeya*, what is to be known, is the nature, *svarūpa*, of the knower, *jñāta*. What is to be known³, we will see later. Now we are just understanding that what is to be known is hidden in that very knower. The knower is good enough for knowing the world. Employing his perception and enhancing his perception by instrumentation, and inferring too, with the backing of all his education, the knower is adequately equipped to know the world. But to know himself, he is not equipped at all. This much he has to know. Only then will he seek help from outside, and the outside help here is the *pramāṇa*. That is the *śāstra*, which is to be handled. Medicine cures; the doctor doesn't cure at all. But don't self medicate; go to a specialist. Similarly here, even if you are a *śāstrajñā*, someone who knows the language, etc., and can read the *śāstra*, that is not enough⁴. Language is a necessity, but mere language will not help you; you have to go to a teacher. More about the teacher, etc., I will be saying all through this course. Thus, you have to seek help here, and when you seek help, you must have *śraddhā* in the source of help. If you go to a doctor and doubt, "Is he a doctor? He doesn't look like a doctor; he looks odd," it is a problem. When you go to a doctor, you trust the person; you have to. Especially if it is Ayurveda. It is purely *śraddhā*, and if it is Homeopathy, even more so, because Homeopathy is one system of medicine which cures you without medicine. Honestly, in those homeopathic pills, there is no medicine. That is their greatness—they don't have medicine and they cure you. And, they not only don't have medicine, but, at the same time, they have different medicines. The medicine doesn't have any measurable medicinal properties. Honestly, what can be detected in those pills is only sugar, but they have been 'potentized'. According to homeopathy, substances cause diseases. They are not cause by microbes, or anything, but by substances. Microbes are always present, so why does

³ *anādimad param brahma nāsattan nāsaducyate, Bhagavad Gita, 13.12*

⁴ *śāstrajñānopi brahmāṇamveṣanam na kuryāt*

one person get a disease, while another person doesn't? Substances cause diseases. So what do you do? If sulfur has caused the disease, you take one drop of the mother tincture of sulfur, drop it in a gallon of water, and stir it for two and a half hours. Then take one drop out of that gallon, and put it in another gallon of water, and stir it forever. This means that it is more powerful than the first one. There is not an atomic trace of that medicine anymore, but then, you take one drop of that and put it in another gallon of water, and stir. Now it is more powerful, more 'potentized'. I love this system, because there are two things in this. There are different medicines, because the original tincture was different, but without any medicinal properties. If you start from iodine tincture, it is a different medicine. So there are different medicines, but none of them has any medicinal trace. You can only detect the sugar. They give you dummies and tell you, "Take seven of them." All you need is one, and in those seven there may be only one that was originally taken from the vat of medicine. Not that there is any measurable medicine there, but it is medicine, according to them, because it started with sulfur. This is Homeopathy; it is a marvel. It works. When other systems don't work, this works. Of course, there is a time when nothing works; that is different. But this works. It is an amazing system. Similar cures similar. The gross substance causes illness, and the subtle aspect of the same thing cures. Similar cures similar.

This is the safest place where one can have *śraddhā*. Here, there is no way of it not working, because it is just talking about you, the self-evident you, being free.



And there is no cost at all. Only the charge for stirring. It is an amazing system, for which you must have

śraddhā. If you know all these things, it is very difficult to start taking that medicine, but it works, and therefore, you have *śraddhā*.

There it has to work, but here, it is to be seen right away. This is the safest place where one can have *śraddhā*. In all other

places, *śraddhā* is necessary, but the *śraddhā* can be wasted. Here, however, there is no way of it not working, because it is just talking about you, the self-evident you, being free. All your notions are falsified because these notions are notions. And their falsity is not difficult for anyone to see through. So what is said stays. And therefore, it is a different type of *śraddhā*. It is like the *śraddhā* in the words of the old man who said, "I will show you that tenth man now, here." When he is showing what is now, here, he doesn't produce anything; he only has to follow a method.

Not by time you are away from being the whole, not in terms of place you are away from being the whole. Then what is it that denies your being the whole? Only a method has to be followed to take care of that. That is all. Therefore *śraddhā* in the words of the guru and Vedanta is required, *guru-vedānta-vākyeṣu viśvāsaḥ, śraddhā*.