

Satsang with Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Vedanta ¹

Question: Swamiji, what is Vedanta?

I would say that Vedanta is a solution to the problem of taking myself to be a mortal, imperfect, and subject to various limitations. These are the conclusions to every individual. Vedanta is the teaching which solves this problem. In its vision, you are the solution to the very problem from which you suffer. “I am Brahman, the whole” is Vedanta. Therefore, Vedanta is the solution.

Vedanta does not offer a solution. The solution is Vedanta. Wherever there is a solution, that solution is Vedanta. A solution can only be in the form of “I am the whole. I am free.” Anything that unfolds this particular piece of knowledge is Vedanta, whatever else it may be called.

Because Vedanta is the knowledge found at the end of the Veda, it is called Vedanta (*anta*, meaning end). The Veda is a body of knowledge handed down from one generation to another. It has no authorship in that it has not been authored by any given individual. It is a body of knowledge said to have been revealed to the ancient sages who, in turn, handed it over to the next generation, which handed it over to the next one, and so on, right down to our own time.

This lineage is called *karna-parampara* in Sanskrit, meaning “ear to ear.” The knowledge is heard through one pair of ears and, having been retained, is passed on to another pair of ears. In this way, the whole Veda is maintained intact.

The Veda is divided into four – *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*. These four Vedas are again divided into two parts according to subject matter. The first part of each of the four Vedas is called *karma-kanda* and the last portion is called *jñāna-kanda*.

Karma-kanda is the section dealing with rituals and prayers, whereas the *jñāna-kanda* deals with only with realities – the nature of the self, the world, and God; how these three are interconnected; and whether there is a difference between them or not. This knowledge of realities liberates the person because Vedic vision is that you are the whole and there is no difference whatsoever between you, the world, and God.

The teaching is generally in the form of dialogues between a teacher and a student. One particular dialogue or a few dialogues together makes up one *upaniṣad*. Therefore, Vedanta, otherwise known as the *upaniṣad*, forms the body of knowledge which is the solution to the fundamental human problem. This is why we do not say Vedanta offers the solution. We say the solution is Vedanta because the solution is in the form of knowledge, which is Vedanta.

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