

Satsanga with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

The Four Requisites of Vedanta

Every text must satisfy four prerequisites, called the *anubandha*. In the Vedāntasāra text and Vedanta, these prerequisites are identical since both deal with the same subject matter. The four-fold factors are stated in the following passage.

तत्र अनुबन्धो नाम अधिकारिविषयसम्बन्धप्रयोजनानि ॥

tatra anubandho nāma adhikāri viṣayasambandhaprayojanāni.

The preliminary questions of Vedanta are the determination of the qualifications of the student, the subject matter, its connection with the book, and its purpose [Vedāntasāra, 5].

Tatra means 'with reference to the *anubandha*.' *Anubandhonāma* means 'that which is known as the *anubandha*'. They are the *adhikārī*, *viṣaya*, *sambandha*, and the *prayojana*. The word *anubandha* can be translated either as primary or preliminary questions, or as preliminary requisites. Thus, the *anubandha* are prerequisite conditions that a text should satisfy before a student proceeds to study it.

Adhikārī means a qualified student. It is necessary that a text should specify for whom it is meant. One who is qualified to study the text or will benefit the most from its study is considered an *adhikārī*, a suitable or qualified student. Generally, an author uses the preface to indicate the audience that the text addresses. Any communication requires that the communicator keep his audience in mind. When you write a letter, you have to keep in mind the person to whom you write. For example, a letter that you write to your child will be different from a letter you would write to your parents. Similarly, the author of a text also tailors his exposition. In a classroom setting, the manner in which a teacher deals with the subject will depend upon the students attending the class. The same topic may be dealt with a little differently in different classes. Every audience is unique and what you write or say depends upon the audience for whom the writing or speech is meant.

Viṣaya is the subject matter of the text. It is necessary that an author clarify the nature of the subject matter right at the outset. Generally, an author uses a preface or an introduction to specify the subject matter or *viṣaya*.

Prayojanam means purpose. What is the purpose of studying the text, or what does a student hope to achieve as a result of the study of the text? The subject matter of Vedanta is the knowledge of *jīva-brahma-aikya*, the identity between the Self and *brahman*. What do I gain from this knowledge? It is natural for this question to arise. In fact, before we undertake even the smallest of tasks, we typically ask: What is the purpose? Why should I do it? What is in it for me? The benefit of gaining this knowledge is called its *prayojanam*.

The fourth factor is *sambandha* or connection. There are different kinds of connections such as the connection between the student and the text, or the connection between the text and the purport of the text. Suppose the identity of the *jīva* and *brahman* is the subject matter and the purpose is liberation, what would be the relationship between this knowledge and its purpose? After gaining the knowledge, is it necessary to do something to become liberated?

In Vedanta, knowledge itself is a means of liberation

This is where Vedanta differs from the *karma-kāṇḍa*, the earlier portion of the Vedas dealing with rituals. In the *karma-kāṇḍa*, it is necessary to study the text to gain knowledge of the various rituals, which are the means for the attainment of various ends such as the heavens, wealth, or progeny. What is the relationship between that knowledge and the attainment of the goal? The connection is that after gaining knowledge of the rituals, it is necessary to actually perform the rituals to achieve the various ends. For example, it is not enough that I know how to prepare a tasty dish; I need to make it to enjoy eating it. Thus, in the case of knowledge pertaining to actions or rituals, the knowledge enables the performance of action and the action, in turn, becomes the means to attain the purpose. In the case of the knowledge of Vedanta, is it necessary to do something with this knowledge to gain liberation? No, this knowledge is itself a means to liberation; the means and the end are one. In the case of the *karma-kāṇḍa*, the means are different from the end. That knowledge is different from the result because it requires a link in between: the performance of action. In the case of Vedanta, however, no action is to be performed; nothing need be done with the knowledge; the knowledge itself is liberating. Why is it so? It is because bondage is a product of ignorance. There is no real bondage. Only if the Self were really bound would it be necessary to do something in order to release the Self.

Bondage is but a notion

A story is told to illustrate this idea of bondage. A teacher and disciple once lived in a hut in a forest. The disciple studied under the guidance of the teacher and served him well. One of the duties of the disciple was to take his teacher's four cows to graze each morning and bring them back in the afternoon and tie them up. One day, when the disciple returned with the cows, he found that one of the four ropes was missing. He had nothing with which to tie the fourth cow. He was concerned that the cow would wander away and was therefore disturbed and restless. He went to his guru and sought his advice. The teacher said, "Don't worry. Go and tie the cow." "But how can I tie the cow without a rope?" asked the disciple. The teacher said, "Don't worry. Do as I tell you. Go and tie that cow just as you tie her every day." Even though the disciple did not understand his teacher's instructions, he decided to follow them. He went to the cow and made the same motions that he made everyday while tying the cow. To his surprise, the cow became quiet and rested the whole night. In the morning, when the time came for

him to take the cows to graze, he untied the three cows that he had tied with the ropes. Since the fourth cow was not tied, he expected her to start walking with the other cows, but the cow would not walk. He was confused and went back to the teacher and reported, "Look, that fourth cow is not moving." The teacher asked, "Did you untie the cow?" The disciple answered, "Where is the question of untying? I did not tie the cow to begin with." The teacher said, "Go and untie the cow." Again, the disciple went and enacted the untying of the cow and, to his utter surprise, the cow started walking. The sense of being tied or bondage of the cow was merely a notion; it felt that it was tied and, later, that it was untied. Similarly, we feel that we are bound. The sense that I am tied, bound, and limited is only a notion. The Self cannot be tied. It is all pervasive and subtler than the subtlest. It is unattached and unconnected. There is nothing that can bind the Self.

The Self is not confined to this body. It is not a mere entity. It is the *akhilādhāram*, the sub-stratum of the entire creation. And yet, all of us feel that we are limited beings: I am a man or I am a woman; I am good or I am bad; I am successful or I am a failure. Why is this so? Ignorance brings about an identification of the Self with the body, which causes all these notions.

Liberation is the removal of the false notion of bondage

Liberation is the removal of this false notion of bondage. The words of the Upaniṣads remove these notions. The various mindless notions or complexes that we entertain about ourselves make us sad, unhappy, restrained, or suffocated in life. I experience freedom the moment I am free from complexes. In deep sleep, there are no complexes and, therefore, I don't experience bondage. As soon as I wake up, however, there is again identification with the body; my personality takes hold of me and I feel bound and limited.

The knowledge of the true nature of the Self releases us from this bondage. In Vedānta, knowledge is the very means as well as the end. The beauty of it is that as soon as you learn about the true nature of the Self, you will be released. To the extent that you understand your nature, you become free from this notion of bondage. Thus, the *sambandha* or connection between knowledge and liberation is that knowledge *is* liberation. Knowledge and liberation are not separated by any distance in time, place, or activity.

Jñānam labdhvā parām śāntimacireṇādhigacchati, having gained the knowledge, one attains ultimate peace [Bhagavad Gita, 4-39]. Peace is freedom from conflict. It does not mean the absence of thought. This knowledge makes us free from reactions, complexes, and conflicts, and one gets established in peace. Therefore, it is very important to understand this *sambandha* or connection. When we understand that this knowledge is itself

the means to liberation, we don't look for anything else; all we desire is this knowledge¹.

¹ Based on Vedāntasāra lectures. Transcribed and edited by Malini, KK Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.