

**Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati**  
**Arsha Vidya Gurukulam**

**Indian Schools of Philosophy (1 of 3)**

*Question*

What does the word Mīmāṃsaka mean?

*Answer*

Mīmāṃsa means analysis. We call the school of thought that has analyzed the Veda as 'Mīmāṃsaka'. They were the first people to analyze the statements of the Vedas and arrive at the purport of these statements. They have done excellent work in developing methodologies to analyze and determine the meaning of the statements of the Vedas. The Vedantins also follow the methodologies developed by the Mīmāṃsakas in analyzing a text. It is important to determine the *tātparyā* or purport of a text. Since these scriptures are a *pramāṇam*, means of knowledge, we have to understand what is intended to be conveyed by these statements. Even as you listen to me now, a part of your mind is determining what I am trying to convey and my intention. Sometimes, we say exactly what we mean and sometimes it may be said in an indirect way; sometimes, we suggest the meaning and, sometimes, we leave the listener to infer what is meant. The listener has to continuously analyze the sentences and determine the purport, the intended meaning. Communication takes place only when the listener understands a statement in the same sense in which it was intended by the speaker. Similarly, the scriptures intend to convey a certain meaning and we should understand the intended meanings of those statements. Therefore, it becomes very important to analyze the purport of the statements. What is the theme of the Upanishads? What do the Upanishads intend to convey? The Upanishads may vary in size and content and many things may be stated. We have to analyze and understand the central idea. The Vedantins conclude that the Upanishads want to convey that 'you are Brahman'. The one who thinks that he is a *jīva*, an isolated individual, is Brahman. Not only is there one god, but there is *only* god – One without a second. We arrive at this conclusion upon analyzing the statements of the Upanishads. If somebody else comes to a different conclusion, e.g., you are different from god, the whole teaching will be different. Therefore, it is very important to determine the purport of a text.

What does the Bhagavad Gita teach? Śrī Śaṅkarācārya would say that the Bhagavad Gita's main teaching is your similarity with Brahman; there is no cause for grief and you are already free. The study of the Bhagavad Gita is meant to free us from grief, sorrow, and delusion. What is the cause of grief and delusion? It is ignorance. How does the study of the Gita free us from ignorance? It leads us to the knowledge of the Truth. Therefore, knowledge is the main theme of the Bhagavad Gita. What about *karma*? It is a means of knowledge too. Some may conclude that *karma* is the main theme and knowledge is achieved through *karma*. There are certain methods of analyzing these scriptural statements that were developed by the Mīmāṃsakas. In fact, they are called Mīmāṃsakas because they are experts at analyzing the Vedas. After all their analysis, the Mīmāṃsakas determined that the Vedas teach us *karma* and that the main purpose of the Veda is to enjoin action – the various dos and don'ts. Why is it so? They believed that one can attain *mokṣa* by performing the rituals prescribed in the Vedas. However, the conclusion of the Vedantins is different. They believe that the Vedas primarily teach the knowledge of the Self. To a Vedantin, *karma* is the means to *jñānam*, not vice versa. The Vedantins use the analytic method of the Mīmāṃsaka to challenge their conclusion. These debates and discussions often determine the meaning of the text. What is the main subject matter? What is the theme? What does the Veda want to convey? When the purport becomes clear, everything else also becomes clear<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 2005 Arsha Vidya Gurukulam Family Camp *satsanga*. Transcribed and edited by Chaya Rajaram and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.