

# Adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvam

understanding the ultimate validity of Self-knowledge

## Adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvam

How does one gain this appropriate knowledge, the knowledge of truth, **tattva-jñāna**, which also the same as the knowledge of self, **ātma-jñāna** ?

Knowledge is not gained by sitting under a bodhi tree. Sitting quietly under a bodhi tree may be fine for some other things. Perhaps a reflective person sitting under a tree for some time may figure out certain things about the world and its miseries, but knowledge will not come to that person simply because he sits quietly.

For any knowledge to be discovered, there must be a valid, effective and an appropriate means available to know whatever that one seeks to know.

## ADHYĀTMA-JÑĀNA-NITYATVA

**Adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva**, deals with the valid, effective and appropriate means for gaining self-knowledge, **ātma-jñāna** which alone fulfils the value '**tattva-jñānārtha-darśana**', a desire for liberation which has matured into inquiry into **tattva**, the truth.

**Adhyātma** means centred on **ātman**, self, and **jñāna** is knowledge.

**Adhyātma-jñāna** is the knowledge for which the subject matter is **ātman**, oneself; **nityatva** indicates constancy.

**Adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva** is constancy in knowledge centred on the self.

## WHERE CAN ONE FIND THE TEACHING FOR WHICH THE SUBJECT MATTER IS ONESELF, ĀTMAN?

Not in the usual disciplines of learning, such as in mathematics, physics, or chemistry or in anatomy, physiology or psychology.

Self-knowledge is the subject matter of a tradition of teaching called **Upaniṣad** or **Vedānta** or any name equivalent to these names.

The scriptures, at the end of the **Vedas**, where this teaching is found, are also called by the name of the teaching, **Upaniṣad**.

Thus, **adhyātma-jñāna**, the self-knowledge, indicates the teaching and the books containing the teaching whose subject matter is the truth of oneself, of the world and of the Lord are called **Upaniṣads**.

In fact, the very word '**Upaniṣad**', etymologically, means **adhyātma-jñāna**.

## THE GAIN OF KNOWLEDGE: LISTENING, REFLECTION, CONTEMPLATION

**Adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva** centred on the knowledge of the self, is a value for constancy in the study of the scriptures known as the Upaniṣads and other texts of Vedānta.

**Nityatva** means constancy in scriptural study until self-knowledge is gained, clear and free from doubt.

For the **gain of any knowledge**, the answer to the question, "How long must I study?" has to be, "Until you know it", which means "Until you understand the subject matter." The gain of understanding is not something for which a specific time can be set.

**Gain of knowledge** is not like gain of a result produced by an action wherein, given the relevant factors, the amount of time needed to produce a result by a particular act can be calculated based on experience.

The time for understanding cannot be similarly calculated. All that can be said for understanding is that if one wants to gain certain knowledge, using the proper means for gaining that knowledge, one must study until the subject matter becomes absolutely clear.

When you have the right means of knowledge for the knowledge you seek, it is simply a matter of continuing to use that means **until the knowledge is gained and is clear and steady**.

## Śravaṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana

The study of Vedānta, until knowledge of self is clear and steady, involves three things, listening, **śravaṇa**, reflection, **manana**, and contemplation, **nididhyāsana**. These are the three things that constitute constancy centred on self-knowledge, **adhyātma jñāna-nityatva**.

Of these, **śravaṇa** is the primary means; reflection and contemplation are concurrent but secondary means, being simply aids to **śravaṇa**.

The basic **śravaṇa** is listening to the words and sentences of Vedānta unfolded by a competent teacher, but **śravaṇa** also can be the "hearing" that occurs when one, by oneself, studies the written scriptures. **Śravaṇa** is study of Vedānta in order to find out what it has to say about oneself, about the world and about God.

## Jñeya

Vedānta unfolds what Lord Kṛṣṇa calls **jñeya**, that which is to be known, that ultimate knowledge which is liberation itself.

The ultimate **jñeya** of Vedānta is stated cryptically in the **mahā-vākyas**, great statements. These statements occur in the form of dialogues between the teacher and student in which the teacher unfolds the meaning of the **vākyas** by a teaching methodology, which makes precise, in context, the intent of each word.

## Tattvamasi - that you are

**Śravaṇa** includes a thorough inquiry into the meaning of these statements. Study of the great statement "**tattvamasi - that you are**", for example, requires an inquiry asking questions

Is this just a mystic statement to be enjoyed like a fanciful poem?

Is it a factual statement?

What is the meaning that Vedānta gives to this statement?

Can one find out from Vedānta what is meant by "**that**"?

What is "**you**"? What is the connection between "**that**" and "**you**"?

What, if anything, does it mean to me right at this moment that I am a "**you**", which is "**that**"?

The answers to these and similar questions are found by studying the **mahā-vākyas** and other supporting sentences that unfold the great statements.

## Śrotiya and brahma-niṣṭha

The way of study is to listen to a teacher who is both a **śrotiya**, one who is learned both in the language of the **śāstra** and in the methodology of teaching and a **brahma-niṣṭha**, one who is clear and steady in the vision of the truth of himself.

Such a teacher, by clearly creating a context for the student, will unfold the meaning of Vedānta word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, negating the unintended meanings.

The teacher will unfold not only the meanings of the words and sentences but also how the sentence connects to the previous sentence and how it is connected to the following sentence.

The whole teaching of Vedānta is in the form of words; therefore, one must necessarily see what the words used are meant to unfold. One must see neither more nor less but exactly what the words are meant to unfold.

## The means of seeing

Using the words of Vedānta to "**see**" myself is like using my eyes to see colour. If with my eyes open and focused I find that there is not enough light to see colour or to see it clearly, the light should be brighter.

But the need for more light does not mean that it is the light that sees. The eyes remain **the instrument that does the seeing**.

Similarly, words and sentences, like the eyes, are **the means of seeing**. To use these **means**, I must throw light upon the words and sentences, analyse them, and discover their exact meaning as unfolded by the scripture.

These words are about me. With a fresh, open mind made ready by right attitudes, I try to discover what the words say about me. In order to discover, I question the words and sentences.

## Jīva, jagat and Īśvara

What do the words say about how I am connected to this world? How am I connected to the Lord if there is one? Is there a Lord? And, if so, is the Lord the creator of the world? What is said about this world? Am I inside the world as part of it? Or, am I just here, and the world is here, too, but each of us is independent of the other? Is the world created? If so, is that creator a person or a principle?

In **śravaṇa** such questions are addressed to the words of Vedānta dealing with the individual, the world and the Lord, **jīva**, **jagat** and **Īśvara**.

Vedānta is studied to answer questions on each of these topics.

In the beginning of study, these three topics are seen as a triangle with each topic enjoying its own identity, occupying its own position.

As the study progresses, as the words and sentences of Vedānta are analysed in order to understand the nature of each of these entities, the "triangle" disappears. The three are seen as one.

You discover that the individual, the world and the Lord, **jīva**, **jagat** and **Īśvara** have their being in one thing, one absolute non-dual reality, and that reality you are, **tvamasi**.

Thus, it is by these three means, listening, reflection, and contemplation, that one commits oneself to the pursuit of the value, "**adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva**", the value for constancy in the knowledge centred on self, which simply means constancy in the study of Vedānta. With the analysis of **adhyātma-jñāna-nityatva**, the individual examination of each of the twenty **jñāna**, value, is complete.