

# UNIVERSAL VALUES

## Key words

integration of ethical values  
the level of individual preparedness  
Self-knowledge  
Self-inquiry  
moral maturity  
universal standard of ethics

*“If you think inquiry is closing your eyes and looking within, you are sadly mistaken. You cannot see your face with your eyes open or closed unless you have a mirror. To see yourself you need the mirror of Vedanta, a word mirror that reveals your self. When you look into a mirror you do not see the mirror, you see yourself. Self-inquiry is Vedanta. It is a lifelong practice of inquiry into the world, the Jiva and the Self...”*

James Swartz

## INTRODUCTION

This module will focus on the topic of Universal Values and is based on the books **“The Value of Values”** by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and the **“The Essence of Enlightenment: Vedanta, the Science of Consciousness”** by James Swartz. A proper study of these two books will give anyone a thorough insight into this topic.

In this introduction we will explain the need for developing moral maturity in a student of Vedanta, as well as describe the importance of Universal Values for Self-inquiry.

We will also list the 20 Universal values and explain why beginner students of Vedanta should evaluate their own behaviour based on these ethical guidelines.

We hope these set of values, which can be considered the Universal Standard of Ethics, will inspire the student to examine their thoughts, emotions and actions. By analysing their thought patterns in light of these values, students can identify the effect of their ethical behaviour on others as well as on themselves.

In this module you will also find practical exercises which will help you identify the areas requiring a deeper understanding of your own habits, ideas and values, and your way of expressing them.

The science of Self-inquiry is a very precise methodology which requires a high level of maturity and preparedness from its practitioners. One of the ways to achieve this preparedness is to assimilate these Universal Values as part of your personality. It means living the value and becoming the value.

### Why are Universal Values Important for Vedanta Students?

As we have learnt so far in the course, Vedanta is not “any” science. It is not another branch of science which adds to the current classification of sciences.

Vedanta is an “inquiry”; an inquiry into yourself; hence the name “Self-inquiry”.

You do not need a PhD or a special education to take part in the process of Self-inquiry. But at the same time, you’re expected to be qualified for inquiry and have a burning desire for freedom (Moksha).

You have to understand the real purpose of this inquiry; the fact that the Self can never become the object of the inquiry. The culmination of this inquiry is the realization that I, the inquirer, am a whole complete non-dual limitless actionless Awareness.

Consciousness is not available for the methods of analysis, logic and investigation conducted by the existing sciences. Commenting on the methodology of the current sciences, Sundari, a teacher of Vedanta, says:

*“But it is not a valid means of knowledge for consciousness because science (like religion and philosophy) is flawed, a prisoner of a methodology that is based on perception and inference of objects alone. Even if science approaches understanding consciousness, it is still attached to its epistemology, the senses. It is limited to interpretations or assumptions inherent in its methodology. Thus it objectifies consciousness, seeing it as something we have instead of what we are...”*

The methodology of Vedanta is based on the logic that the subject can never be an object; i.e. the perceiver cannot be the perceived. This analysis results in the recognition of the innermost non-objectifiable subject of experience, which is the Self.

*I am ever the One that is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.*

*I am ever the One that is pervasive as all.*

*I am ever the One that is eternal auspiciousness.*

*I am ever the One that is nondual.*

*I am ever the One that is the undivided and perfectly full.*

**The Song of Ribhu**

To achieve this result from Self-inquiry, Vedanta proposes inculcating certain ethical values to prepare the mind for inquiry.

According to James Swartz:

*“You cannot ignore the moral dimension of reality in your quest for freedom because values or lack thereof impact directly on the ability to understand and assimilate knowledge.”*

Thus we can say that moral maturity of a Vedanta student could be considered an indirect means for achieving Self-Knowledge. This fact is highlighted in the Bhagavad Gita.

## What are these Values?

Acting as Arjuna’s true friend, guide and guardian, Lord Krishna provides him with advice on his duties, the idealistic attitude towards life and the actions he should adapt.

Among these different topics, the Lord points out the 20 qualities of an enlightened mind, values which in this context he calls Knowledge.

As we will see later, the term “knowledge”, that Krishna uses to refer to the set of values, is not synonymous with the term “Self-knowledge” which is the main goal of Self-inquiry.

Here we are talking about the knowledge of values which are indispensable to every Vedanta student to begin Self-inquiry.

More over the knowledge of values should not only be understood theoretically, but should also be integrated in one’s mental, verbal, and physical actions.

These actions are the indication of a person’s maturity and a proof of them being qualified to learn Vedanta, and use the means of Self-inquiry effectively.

It is important to understand that the aim of teaching these values is not to force them on somebody, but to invite everyone to discover the practical benefits of assimilating these values in their life.

## The Structure of this Module

The very next chapter will delve more deeply on the topic of why values are a means for Self-Knowledge.

The subsequent chapters will focus on one value each. We also have a video for each value. The videos and the text of each chapter are same. It’s the same text presented in different formats.

At the end of each chapter, we have a set of practical exercises which will help you determine your level of understanding and ability to apply the value in your own life.