

## VEDIC WISDOM

There is no disease equal to greed.  
 There is no enemy greater than anger.  
 There is no sorrow that is greater than poverty.  
 There is no happiness equal to wisdom.

Belief in God has declined.  
*Dharma* has disappeared.  
 Atheism is on the increase.  
 There is no respect for the *guru*-preceptor.  
 Devotion to God, respect for our ancient culture,  
 and tradition have been given farewell.  
 There is no patronage for true education.  
 Only bread-earning education has become the order of the day.  
 These, alas! Are the signs of modernity!

“I am in the Light;  
 The Light is in me;  
 I am the Light.”

The *jnani* who has realised thus will surely become one with Brahman.

Dear Students!

The *Vedic* literature is the most ancient in the world. It is a treasure house of wisdom. It has contributed to the all-round development of man. The *Veda* is the first-ever book in human history. It is the birthplace for human culture and the basis for all kinds of powers. All branches of learning have their origin in the *Veda*. All *dharmas* and virtues have sprung from the *Veda*. The *Veda* is endless, unfathomable, indefinable, and blissful. The word *Veda* is derived from the Sanskrit root *Vid*, meaning knowledge of *jnana*. *Easwara jnana* (knowledge of the Lord) is *Veda*. *Atma jnana* (knowledge of the Self) is *Veda*. *Brahma jnana* (knowledge of the supreme Absolute) is *Veda*. *Adwaita jnana* (non-dual knowledge) is *Veda*. *Veda* is *vijnana* (knowledge par excellence). All these terms are synonyms for Self-knowledge or *Atma jnana*. The divinity of the *Veda* is all-pervasive and has eight aspects of splendour, viz., *sabda Brahma-mayee* (sound Brahman), *charachara mayee* (movable and immovable), *jyothirmayee* (effulgence), *vaangmayee* (speech and literature), *nityaananda mayee* (everlasting bliss) *paratpara mayee* (transcendental), *maya mayee* (delusion), and *sree mayee* (prosperity). This is indeed the *Prajnanamaya Brahma* (constant integrated awareness). It does not pertain to one individual, one place or time. It is universal. Knowing that it is not possible for ordinary people to understand such sacred *Vedic* literature, Sage Vyasa compiled it into four volumes.

The *Veda* consists of three “*kandaas*” or Cantos, namely, *Karma Kaanda* (cantos dealing with rituals and other actions), *Upasana Kaanda* (cantos of devotion), and *Jnana Kaanda* (cantos of wisdom). These three divisions represent the progressive steps in

man's spiritual evolution. Man starts with actions, recognising that the human body is meant for achieving *dharma* (righteousness) through *karma*. When he goes on performing good *karmas*, he will in due course become fit for understanding *Upasana* (devotional practices). When he worships God over a period of time, with love and in a spirit of dedication, he attains the final stage of *Jnana*. On the whole, *karma*, *upasana*, and *jnana* may be considered as three stages of one process, comparable to the flower, the raw fruit, and the ripe fruit respectively. Since the common people cannot understand and practise the teachings of the *Veda*, subsidiary literature has been created later in the form of *Puranas* (mythological treatises) and *Ithihasas* (epics), so that even the lay people can practise *karma*, *upasana*, and *jnana*.

The end of the *Veda* is *Upanishad*, which is therefore, called *Vedanta*. The *Upanishads* have named the three paths of *karma*, *upasana*, and *jnana* as *yogas*. The essence of *karma yoga* is to dedicate all actions to God or to perform all activities as offerings to the Lord, for His pleasure. *Upasana yoga* consists of loving God whole-heartedly and with *trikaranasuddhi* i.e., harmony and purity of thought, word, and deed. It is not true *upasana* if one loves God for the sake of achieving his worldly desires. It should be love for love's sake. The followers of *jnana yoga* consider the whole universe as the manifestation of God. Believing that Divinity resides in all beings in the form of *Atma*, is called *Jnana*. Students may wonder how there can be *Ekatwa* (Oneness) when there are so many different forms and names, different kinds of behaviour, and different doctrines etc. This doubt can be cleared by considering the example of an ocean. In the fathomless ocean, there are numberless waves. Each wave is different from the other in its size, shape, etc. and it looks as though there is no connection between one wave and another. But a little thinking will reveal to you the fact that they are all different manifestations of one and the same water, and also that they are not different from the ocean. In the same manner, all the different names and forms in the universe are the waves or manifestations of the one and the same ocean of *Sath-Chith-Ananda* (Existence-Awareness-Bliss). Hence, the essence of all manifested beings is only *Sath-Chith-Ananda*, despite the superficial or apparent differences in names and forms and their behaviour.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, which came into existence later, is the essence of the *Upanishads*. However, it deals with the path of *karma*, *upasana*, and *jnana* in three *shatkas*, each *shatka* comprising six chapters, thus making up the total of eighteen chapters in the *Gita*. The first *shatka* deals with the path of *karma*, the second one with the path of *upasana*, and the third one with the path of *jnana*. To sum up, the *Veda* gave rise to the *Upanishads*, which in turn gave rise to the *Bhagavad Gita*, which serves as a practical guide for human conduct. The *Bhagavad Gita* is not the property or monopoly of the Indians. It is the word of God and is, therefore, a universal scripture. There is only one God for all, although there may be different religions and different names and forms of God. In whatever name and form one may worship, it reaches the one and only God. There is only one sun. There are no separate suns like American sun, British sun, Chinese sun, Indian sun, Pakastani sun, and so on. Each country may see the sun at a different time. Just because all of them cannot see the sun at the same time, it will be foolish to think that there are different suns for different countries.

*Vedas* have very vast, profound and deep meanings. The *gurus* or preceptors of ancient times used to adopt stern measures and enforce strict discipline while teaching the *Vedas* to their students. That is why the *Vedas* have survived till today, successfully withstanding the onslaught of time. Actually, the *Vedas* are not books in the usual sense of

that term. No one claims authorship for them. They are called *Sruthis* or knowledge acquired through hearing. Since time immemorial, the *Vedas* have been coming down through a succession of *gurus* and disciples through the process of hearing. The *gurus* used to utter the *mantras* with particular intonations, which were prescribed for the purpose and scrupulously followed by the disciples. The *gurus* of those days were selfless, pure-hearted, and overflowing with love for their students, but unsparing in the matter of discipline among the students. The students too were generally observing the required discipline very scrupulously. If anyone disobeyed the master, he would be summarily dismissed from attending the classes. The *gurus* would never tolerate any student who was guilty of one or more of the *akara panchaka arishtas* or the five transgressions beginning with the letter “A,” viz., *alakshyam* (negligence), *avinayam* (disobedience), *ahamkaram* (ego), *asuya* (jealousy), and *asabhyata* (lack of social etiquette).

Vysampayana was the foremost among the disciples who learnt the *Vedas* from the Sage Vyasa. Vysampayana sanctified his life by implicitly obeying his *guru* and by learning his lessons studiously and thoroughly. After completing his studies, Vysampayana established a *Gurukula*—for teaching the *Veda* to his disciples. By *Gurukula* is not meant a separate institution with its own set of rules and regulations like the present-day schools and colleges. The *guru*’s house itself constituted the *Gurukula*. Whatever kind of food the *guru* ate was given to the disciple as *prasad*—holy food. The disciple should stay with the *guru* day and night. One disciple by name Yajnavalkya joined Vysampayana’s *Gurukula*. He had a keen intellect and could learn his lessons very fast. The *guru* was also highly pleased with him. People who knew Yajnavalkya began praising him with the result that he developed *ahamkaram* (ego) followed gradually by *alakshyam* (indifference) and *asabhyata* (lack of decorum.) Vysampayana noticed these lapses on the part of Yajnavalkya. One day, he called him and told him sternly, “Yajnavalkya! You don’t deserve to stay in this *Gurukul* any longer. You must leave this place immediately. Before you leave, you must return all that you have learnt from me.” Accordingly, Yajnavalkya, who recognised his own shortcomings, vomited all that he had learnt from his *guru*. His vomitings were eaten by *tittiri* birds, and the latter began chanting the *Upanishad*, which was therefore named as *Taittiriya Upanishad*.

There are two traditions or *sampradayas* in the *Veda*, viz., *Brahma sampradaya* and *Aditya sampradaya*. That which was vomited by Yajnavalkya came to be known as the *Brahma Sampradaya*, also called the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. After leaving the *Gurukul* of Vysampayana, Yajnavalkya sincerely repented for his delinquency and atoned for it by giving up food and drink and practised *Suryopasana* (Sun worship), undergoing severe austerities by way of penance. Pleased with this penance, the Sun God appeared before him in the form of Vaaji and told him, “My child! What is past is past. You should guard yourself against such lapses in future. Betraying the *guru* or God is highly dangerous. Be careful hereafter, I will now teach you the *Vedas* again.” So saying, the Sun God taught him the *Vedas*. The reason for the Sun appearing in the form of Vaaji was that Yajnavalkya’s forefathers always used to do *anna dana* (free distribution of food), so their family got the name Vaajasam. The *Veda* taught by him was also called by the alternative names of *Sukla Yajur Veda*, *Vajasas Khanda*, and *Aditya Khanda*. *Yajur Veda* has been divided into two. For this reason, although the *Vedas* were originally four in number, they have subsequently become five, namely *Rig Veda*, *Krishna Yajur Veda*, *Sukla Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, and *Atharvana Veda*. Recognising that the Sun appeared before him as Vaaji and taught him the *Vedas* because of the free distribution of food by his ancestors, Yajna-

valkya gave primary importance to *anna daana* in his teaching which, among others, included the following:

“There is no gift higher than the gift of food and no God higher than the parents. There is no truth higher than *japa* and *thapas* (reciting the holy Name and doing penance). There is no *dharma* higher than compassion and no gain higher than the company of the good. There is no enemy more dangerous than anger and no disease more serious than indebtedness. There is no death more horrible than ill-fame and no wealth more valuable than fame. There is no ornament more beautiful than *smaran* (remembering God through chanting His names).” Yajnavalkya, moreover, emphasised specially in his teachings to his disciples the extreme importance of service to parents and *guru*, as well as *anna dana* (free distribution of food).

Students! we began these classes on the holy *Ekadasi* day—day eleven of the lunar fortnight, and we are also concluding the classes on this *Ekadasi* day. Hence, you should consider all these classes as *Ekadasi Vratam* (observance of the vows of *Ekadasi*). During the fortnight, you have had the valuable opportunity of listening to the lectures from highly distinguished speakers, with rich experience behind them. What they taught you with wholehearted zeal and enthusiasm you have listened carefully with much interest and faith. But what is more important than listening is to put into practice at least some of the things you have learnt and thereby to set an example for others to follow.

You must always remember the five life-breaths relating to the *Vedas*, which I mentioned earlier. You should avoid these five things: (1) indifference to what the *guru*, parents, and other elders teach you, (2) disobedience to the aforesaid, (3) *ahamkara* (ego), (4) jealousy or envy toward those who are better off, and (5) violating the social etiquette or decorum.

Students! What has been taught to you during these fifteen days is the essence of the sacred *Vedanta*. What has been given to you is the nectar obtained by the churning of all the holy scriptures—*Sastras*, *Puranas*, and *Ithihasas*. You are the future leaders, pleaders, and patrons of Mother India. You should lead exemplary lives, treading the path of *sathya* and *dharma* (truth and righteousness). Under no circumstances should you deviate from this ideal path. Let your secular education go hand in hand with spiritual education.

The *Vedas* have taught about two kinds of *dharma*: *vihita dharma* and *nishiddha dharma* (prescribed *dharma* and prohibited *dharma*); in other words, the Do’s and Don’ts for regulating one’s life. Unfortunately, today, the prescribed things are being given up and the prohibited things are being taken up. This is sheer folly and ignorance. The prohibited things should be rejected, even though you might have taken lots of trouble to acquire them. For instance, you have purchased from the market a big mango fruit for five rupees. Just because you have spent five rupees on it, will you eat the skin outside and the stone inside the fruit? No, no. You will eat only the pulp and reject both the skin and stone. Similarly this world is like a fruit, and you have to accept what is good in it and reject what is bad for you.

Students! You are highly fortunate. Even though there are several millions of people in the world, is it not your exceedingly good luck that only you, who are but a few hundreds in number, have been able to get the benefit of this golden opportunity? However, the purpose of this Summer Course will be served only if at least some of you stand as exemplars to others. You may take up any job, business, or agriculture and occupy any position in your life, but it is extremely important that you do not lose self-confidence while discharging your duties. Lack of Self-confidence is the main cause for all the pre-

sent-day problems like foul play, injustice, losses, failures, sorrow, and pain. People do not believe in themselves, not to speak of believing others. First of all, develop Self-confidence, and that in turn will give you self-satisfaction. Without self-satisfaction, you cannot have contentment. Once you have gained self-satisfaction, then automatically you will be ready for self-sacrifice. Needless to say, where there is self-sacrifice, there will be Self-realisation naturally.

Every student should undertake *sathkarmas* (good actions) which lead to *chitta suddhi* (purity of mind). Where there is purity, there will be *jnana siddhi* (dawn of wisdom). These are all within yourself only. You need not search for them anywhere outside. In this connection, let us consider the example of the wall-clock over there. It has three hands to indicate seconds, minutes, and hours respectively. There are sixty points, and twelve hours marked along the circumference of the clock. When the second-hand moves across all the sixty points, the minute-hand moves by only one point. When the minute-hand moves over sixty points or the full circumference, the hour-hand moves by only one hour-mark or one-twelfth of the circumference. Now, the second-hand may be compared to our actions. If a large number of good actions are done, the minute-hand, which represents *chitta suddhi* (the purity of mind), will move by one point. *Chitta suddhi* is the stage of *upasana* when one engages himself in loving God and worshipping Him in various ways over a period of time, leading to *Atma viswaasam* (Self-confidence), which represents the hour-hand. The perceptible move-ments of the second-hand and the minute-hand should bring about the imperceptibly slow movement of the hour-hand. Otherwise, no purpose is served by the second-hand and minute-hand. So also, unless your good actions, worship and love of God, lead to *Atmaviswas* or Self-confidence, the former two will be futile.

Whenever you have time, it will suffice if you take up at least one of the nine modes of *bhakti* (such as *sravanam*, *kirtanam*, etc., already explained to you in My earlier discourses). God does not consider how wealthy or how learned you are; He is concerned only with the sincerity and purity of your mind and heart and about how whole-hearted and genuine your love is. Valkimi was a hunter. Nanda was an untouchable. Kuchela was a pauper. Dhruva and Prahalada were mere lads of five years. Sabari was a tribal woman, illiterate and uncivilised. But all of them had won God's Grace in abundance, because of their wholehearted devotion, love and surrender. Follow the example of Sabari, who always thought of Sri Rama and His happiness, and dedicated all her thoughts, words, and deeds to Him alone, so much so that every action of hers was transformed and sublimated into the highest *thapas* (penance.) From her example, you must learn the lesson that meditation does not mean sitting idle in a particular posture of the body, as if you are posing for a photograph. As in her case, your entire life must become a continuous meditation wherever you may be staying and whatever you may be doing. Whatever you eat or drink must be offered to God as *naivedya* or holy offering. In this manner, if you offer everything to the Lord, you will naturally be prevented from engaging yourself in bad actions or evil ways in your life. Therefore, students! I am bringing My long discourse to a close, with the hope and blessing that you will practice with your hands what you have heard here through your ears, and thereby sanctify your lives and also contribute your share to make the future of Bharath (India) bright and prosperous.