

## **Essays on Sanskrit words mentioned in Vedānta**

### **Seminar Andre Vas, June 2024, De Vlierhof, Germany**

These texts are written for those who want to know more about specific concepts used in vedānta. It is for deepening and specifying vedānta knowledge. These texts are not spoken teachings from teacher to student, in which the teacher gives the student exactly what she or he needs at that moment.

I had a lot of fun and meditation, authoring these articles. It was reflection but also celebrating this sparkling knowledge.

Reflecting and contemplating on vedānta is an endless game. When I ‘look’ into this word mirror, everything boils down to the same non-dual truth of myself. The invitation in reading vedānta texts is that the meaning of the concepts is fluid, just as something not understood flows into something understood.

I quote from ‘the heading’ svagata bheda’:

‘When I look at this text about differences without reading glasses, I see one grey mass. When I zoom in with reading glasses, I see all kinds of different words, with different meanings. When I mentally zoom in on objects, approach them seriously and become internally involved, I start living in real differences. But when I look with self-knowledge, all phenomena dance in one fullness of existence. The third eye of knowledge does not need glasses.

The beauty of vedānta knowledge is that in the free relaxation of unity all apparent differences, such as psychological dynamics and obstacles, even better come to light. This helps researchers to help each other in compassion and empathy.’

In the document below, Sanskrit terms are presented in their root form (prātipadika). In vedānta literature, you will frequently encounter these same words, often in the first case. In that case, an "h" is usually added at the end for masculine or feminine words, and an "m" for neuter words.

Handy: To quickly navigate to a topic of your choice, click (in the PDF) on the three small lines in the menu bar on the left. You can start reading at any heading.

This is a translation from Dutch with AI. For the personal editing of that translation, I used ‘English UK for spelling control’. If you find any faults (spelling, interpunction, content), please write me: [simonidus@gmail.com](mailto:simonidus@gmail.com)

Enjoy yourselves, Simon

## अबाध **abādha**

Unremovable. Undeniable. Untouchable. What cannot be taken away or touched (*bādha*)? Consciousness, existence itself is *abādha*. Therefore, is the self, I, *abādha*, not to be negated, inviolable and therefore free.

*Abādha* can mean both "that which cannot be removed" and "that which cannot be afflicted, oppressed, or disturbed." In Vedānta, the focus is primarily on the first meaning. What cannot be removed? The answer: That which is always present to allow things to appear—existence itself, consciousness. Since consciousness is without qualities or attributes, the second meaning also applies; it is free from all forms of affliction.

Let us look at it from individual perspective. Is it my body? No, the body is *bādha* (removable). An accident, an illness, even death is just around the corner. Before you know it, the body is gone—just a story that ends. Is it my mind? No, the mind is also *bādha*. If I experience a stroke, dementia, or if all memories in the subtle body are erased at the body's death, or in the dream world, there is little left of the waking-state personality.

Just as I as an identified person cannot escape from this body (people with suicidal thoughts, do have that tendency), there is no escape from consciousness. It is, always has been and always will be unchanged whatever it is. The expression is: *You cannot jump out of your skin.*

There is a presence that remains the same always. Even in deep sleep, there is a presence that illuminates the absence of objects. This presence is irremovable. I am thus present with everything my person experiences.

Vedānta claims that this is true not only in one life but over many lives. It is not that some consciousness flutters in and then inhabits the foetus or baby. No, body and mind appear within the consciousness that I must have always been. Why? Because it is a 100% stable, self-evident, equanimous presence, which does not move. My person appeared in consciousness and will dissolve back into it, just as it goes unmanifest every night. Consciousness is unchanging, so we can only speak of the apparent birth of the body, not real birth.

Vedānta not only confirms this but also asserts that this presence is the non-dual truth of everything, existence and consciousness itself. Speaking of "someone else's"

consciousness or "my" consciousness is nonsensical. Consciousness is consciousness. One consciousness.

In Vedānta circles, *bādhā* (negation) is also translated as sublation. This is generally translated as absorption. The German philosophical term *aufheben* (Hegel), to dissolve, to elevate, expresses this nicely. This dissolving, elevating means to cognitively (with knowledge) let an object merge into a more subtle whole. As if the object is absorbed into its origin. The object merges into its infinitely subtle substratum, consciousness, which stands alone. We do this in the *mithyā* teaching by tracing an object back to its substratum. For example, a shirt, cotton, fibers, molecules, atoms, quarks, bosons, waves, fields, space, concepts, information, knowledge, pure knowledge of pure consciousness. Why can I mentally dissolve objects into the "larger" or subtler? Because ultimately, it is nothing other than an expression of this subtle substratum, consciousness. Consciousness does not actually transform into anything; it only appears so (*vivarta*).

Is negation then nihilism, something negative? No, on the contrary. In vedānta, negation or denial means attributing the highest beauty to everything that exists. It is 'lifting up' the mind until I understand the true status of phenomena. Elevation sounds much better than negating or denying. Sublation becomes sublimation, a brilliant view of reality.

This can also apply to unconscious "dead" objects. I can see consciousness in a table because I know it! That is the power of knowledge. An object is nothing other than its supporting substance, consciousness.

This elevation is thus just a cognitive move, where I employ knowledge. Nothing dissolves, for things were never truly created, born, or formed other than consciousness-existence itself. We think we face "the problem" of a world, so we must apparently get to work.

Is elevation then just thinking everything away? That happens easily when you work with *neti neti* (not this, not this). But then I run the risk of being left with emptiness in a nihilistic way (a bit of a pitfall of Buddhism). No, we don't take anything away but first recognize that something is not what it seems to be and then recognize the fullness of myself in it. Elevation, uplifting is seeing light in dark matter. And "seeing" is done by "being" the light. And seeing means knowing that matter does not truly cover you. And seeing means knowing that matter is nothing but light. Elevation is the lifting of the apparent veil of matter, to the light that it truly is. This light already shines in all its glory, yet, strangely enough, I must first know this to experience its fullness.

We can also sublimate by following the path from gross to subtle. The gross body, the subtler body, via the even subtler causal body, to that which is so infinitely subtle that we cannot even call it subtle: the unremovable (*abādha*) reality, consciousness. What appears may be disregarded (*neti neti*), even though it still exists as consciousness.

Another way to look at it: Generally, in life, we encounter a sense of not finding any real foothold in the changing existence. That brings insecurity. Then we ask ourselves: Can I build on nothing? Is there nothing substantial? As soon as Vedānta tells me about the one stable presence, which I cannot deny, I am inspired. And if I also understand that this presence is without beginning and end, I realize that I cannot be born. Only some bodies and some minds were born. I am the very existence of that body which will perish. That I am unique as that consciousness-existence, comforts me infinitely.

I will see my autonomy and independence. That stability turns out to be the self. After a period of getting used to this non-dual self-view, it becomes self-evident that I am the only conscious being, the only conscious being of all. Vedānta tells us that this self is the existence of everything. And that everything is nothing other than that.

Isn't it wonderful? The only thing I can truly be sure of is my pure self. This allows me to endlessly build on myself. The reflection of this, the little self, may benefit from this self-view, because it too is nothing other than this consciousness. Thus, I may be fully self-assured.

But we cannot say that there is nothing. How can something come from nothing? Before creation, that which cannot be denied or removed must already have existed. I must already have existed. That which is always independently the substratum of everything (*satya*). That which is always simply (*sādhāraṇa*) present. That "outside of which" nothing exists. So there is no non-existence. The only thing that is, is that which has never really undergone any change. That is brahman or ātman as the causeless cause. That which makes everything possible, is simply, and will remain. This bearer of all appearances cannot be canceled.

So the conclusion is that I cannot perish (*abādhitā*). Knowing this, I can be forever at peace as myself.

अभ्यास **abhyāsa**

Repeated Practice.

This is essential at all levels of the (apparent) process towards freedom. First, in preparation: repeatedly invoking dharmic values, frequently assessing whether my lifestyle supports my practice, repeatedly affirming intentions for self-growth and the growth of others, regularly meditating on Īśvara (the divine), continually offering all my actions to Īśvara, and consistently expressing gratitude for all outcomes that come to me. It includes repeatedly listening to the teacher, reflecting on the logic of knowledge, and internalizing the truth even in challenging situations.

The 10,000-hour rule of the professional also applies to freedom. So you can be a professional in freedom. You can have a nice epiphany once, but it will not last without practice. Even though Ramaṇa Mahārṣi realized brahman at the drop of a hat, he must have recognized the value of keeping his person in practice for life, against distraction, for purity of mind.

Why? In Vedānta we work with the mind. What else should we work with? That is the problem with a human being. You are already free, so only the mind needs to be turned into permanent knowledge. Many years (many lives if you like) of ignorance require many years of repeated practice of knowledge. All aspects and levels are knowledge-related, and the practice/repetition therefore concerns thinking.

When seekers have persistently done the right work, Īśvara (the entire field) will place them in a setting to receive knowledge. This involves repeatedly listening to the teacher with an open mind until the teachings are fully received (śravaṇa). Only then can one ask proper questions and repeatedly reflect (manana) on the knowledge's logic. The mind can then grasp a Vedāntic concept, such as anvaya vyatireka: "time and again" discerning that I am the connection (anvaya) underlying everything—that I, consciousness, must always be present for anything to exist. And “again and again,” recognizing that what seems contrasting and different (vyatireka) is merely an appearance of this great connection.

Even in the final stage of nididhyāsana, contemplation on the truth of the Self, repetition plays a vital role in directing the mind back to the fact that I am the Self, pure consciousness. I am complete and alone as saccidānanda (existence, consciousness, bliss), without otherness or separation. This means being pure knowledge, present in every life situation.

For nearly everyone, this also means endlessly applying the teachings across all aspects of life until this vision becomes naturally permanent. Until I live in a non-dual vision and fashion, embodying the truth, where all phenomena seamlessly and mindfully align with me.

Grace must be earned, they say. In two ways: through the persistent practice of something in which you have growing faith and through actions in alignment with dharma, to harmonize with and dissolve in Īśvara.

What I need for abhyāsa is endurance. The Sanskrit word vyavasāya that goes with it means ‘condition’, ‘vocation’, ‘profession’ and even ‘determination’. This covers it all in one word. Behold the beauty of meaning-making in Sanskrit.

In our case, we are talking about mental fitness, facilitated by physical fitness. I obtain this through repeated training.

When I started studying Sanskrit three years ago, my memory did not work that well at all. But the potential was there of course. After all, as a person we can develop our karma by making the right choices. I simply and ‘calm’, continue to learn daily, and now absorb material much more easily. This is simply a law of the Medes and Persians. Staying calm and just persist, are key words here, just as with focussing on the truth of myself.

I discovered that when I have the flu or corona, and I take my attention away from thoughts about feeling sick, my mind can also stay focused on study or meditation. And that for a boy, whose life started as a longing, easily distracted, lazy and slow schoolboy and student.

If you discover how this works, a person can change immeasurably in one lifetime. Then the results will come naturally, and self-confidence will grow. Calmly continuing to train is a matter of having confidence in what you are doing. My lifestyle is always a mirror of what I stand for and where my priority lies.

Mental stamina comes from separating sense from nonsense in your mind. Cut the crap, so to speak, with the scythe of distinction. It is important to come to function in the subtle atmospheres of the intellect. In this, gross mental movements, such as worry, fear, insecurity, are counterproductive. They distract and tire. Self-examination and any study that goes with it, is not in itself tiring, because the study of the self reflects the noblest of noble things. If I recognize its value, I do not want anything else. Focus and mental condition then go together.

This is something that must be discovered within yourself. Regardless of how old I am. As people we are capable of much more than we think. Brains and subtle body are used for gross matters, but self-examination is a subtle matter. And once operating in subtle spheres, development goes quickly.

It is essential that I first recognize the value of the focus on knowledge. It has helped me enormously that I, and my teacher James Swartz played a crucial role in this, recognized in Vedānta what I was looking for. Such a deep recognition, without being able to put

your finger on it at that moment, is necessary to easily stay with something. There is something crucial behind this. Namely that you are what you think. If you think ignorantly, then you function ignorantly. If you think brahman, then you realize brahman (brahmavid apnoti param, Taittīri upaniṣad 2.1.1.). Gradually, my confidence grew, and I could stay with it even more easily. What happened here? I realized the value of the truth. And all the writing and study work that I do now is nothing more than a celebration of this. A playful, or if you like, stylized elaboration of the one truth.

So the question is ‘What do I actually want’. Do I let my attention drift too much with worldly fuss? Or do I want to ‘connect’ with the truth with my thought-world? Then it is not difficult to muster attention and energy for repeated study and self-examination.

### आचार्योपासन **ācāryopāsana**

Meditation (upāsana) on the teacher (ācārya).

Mainly by knowing that it is īśvara who reveals the truth through the teacher, by means of the knowledge medium vedānta. Both the student in person and the teacher in person are instruments of īśvara (Teacher, the student and īśvara are all the self-brahman-consciousness). In their enriching, educational friendship, Brahman is beautifully expressed.

Furthermore, meditation on the teacher is recognizing freedom, steadfastness, and independence in the teacher. The teacher represents the vision, drṣṭi, of the teaching of the tradition. This will all generate (self) confidence in the ignorant student.

The attitude of the student that facilitates the transfer of knowledge, accommodates the teacher. The right teacher only wants the students to listen with full attention and apply what she or he has to say. Reverence for the teacher therefore means especially reverence for the knowledge, and dedication to the knowledge.

That is the only thing a Vedānta teacher wants to see. The rest is not really of his interest. An attitude of gratitude and eagerness to learn is a great force for a student to grow quickly. You do it all for yourself because there is only yourself.

But for good teaching, the teacher must also be provided with a livelihood, so the saṅgha (the group) can also provide for that. In modern times, this is usually done by voluntarily organizing seminars and giving generous donations.

### अदम्भित्व **adambhitva**

Absence of pretension (dambhitva). Not to boast of something that is not my merit.

Not to have a facade. To be authentic. To be yourself. If I look at myself honestly as a person, this goes very deep, because even mind, body, disposition, and talents belong to Īśvara, and because I therefore cannot be the doer, and therefore cannot claim my actions. So if I am perfectly honest with myself, I ultimately see that no performance belongs to me, but all belong to Īśvara. Free from hypocrisy, arrogance, and self-glorification.

The devas agni and vayu suffered from pretension in Kena Upaniṣad chapters 3 & 4. They claimed a victory that did not belong to them. Īśvara in the form of a yakṣa then subtly taught them a lesson.

### आधिभौतिक तापस् **ādhibhautika tāpas**

Pain, suffering (tāpas), caused by visible worldly obstacles from the immediate environment. For example, problems with acquaintances, family and friends, my love partner, traffic, a shop closing, washing machine failure.

This form of suffering seems to be the easiest to solve of all forms of suffering, because I can exert influence and control on my environment.

But blind spots can maintain distorted relationships. For example, an aggressive attitude in traffic. While I suppose it is due to the outside world, I project my displeasure onto the world around me.

Someone who is pure on the inside will not be bothered by this type of pain so quickly. This person experiences a wonderful, neutral, funny world. Take, for example, an irritation about something as completely neutral as a material thing that breaks down or falls apart. Or the fluctuation of my mood with the fluctuations of my bank balance.

By praying om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ (om, peace, peace, peace) one wishes relief from the three kinds of suffering: ādhidaivika tāpas, ādhibhautika tāpas, ādhyātmika tāpas.

### आधिदैविक तापस् **ādhidaivika tāpas**

Pain or suffering (tāpas), caused by invisible, unexpected events, that seem to come from outside the person's living environment.



Examples are natural disasters, unwanted weather, earthquakes, the corona virus floods, forest fires, economic downturns caused by war or elections elsewhere in the world. This is a tricky type of suffering. Because what about children who are born in poverty, or in a country that is systematically at war? However painful it may seem; this point proves the existence of a law of karma over many lives. The way to bear this type of suffering is with īśvara prasāda buddhi, meaning a spirit of gratitude and devotion with īśvara.

Ādhidaivika is called '-daivika' (concerning adhi, the devas) because the forces of nature are seen as gods in Vedic times. That is how daiva also came to be called destiny. Karmic twists of fate with which I am unexpectedly confronted. If I have achieved the blessing of recognizing the laws of karma in it, I can learn to accept it, and from the peace that then arises, I can continue to grow, by making use of the laws of dharma and karma.

Destiny can of course also have a positive outcome, ādhidaivika sukham (happiness). Then daiva means blessing, grace (anugraha). A blessing can mean a favourable development in my life, but also a decisive insight.

So daiva can also mean: Unseen (adr̥ṣṭa), understood causes of a bad feeling due to unfavourable karma (pāpa), or an easy, happy flowing life due to favourable karma (puṇya-karma). This shows, for example, why one baby or toddler is calm and content and another, without any apparent reason, crying, whining and hysterical.

However, there is a pitfall of being relatively happy. The seeker becomes lazy and does not ardently desire freedom.

By praying 'oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ' (oṃ, peace, peace, peace) one wishes relief from the three kinds of suffering ādhidaivika tāpas, ādhibhautika tāpas, ādhyātmika tāpas.

## अध्यारोप **adhyāropa**

Superimposition. One thing, one matter placed on another. Due to a wrong conception, adhyāsa, the characteristics of one thing are apparently or wrongly attributed, āropa, to another. This results in their superimposition, adhyāropa, over the other. Generally, this refers to objects 'placed' on consciousness. But it is a seeming superimposition, not real superimposition.

Such a superposition leads, for example, to ahaṅkāra (ego), a wrong idea of the self. Ego is meant to guide the body through the world. But if I suppose I am the ego, superimposed 'before me', it becomes a powerful force, disturbing the modest place that the individual occupies in īśvara. For I cannot be that I-feeling, because 'it is placed on me'.

If I look properly, the 'I-feeling' is an object, of which I am the silent witness. I am the light of ordinary, original pure consciousness. And that light will effortlessly prevail when the body, the mind and therefore also the ego falls out of me, at the death of the body.

All objects of body, mind, senses, and the world are adhyāropā, superimpositions of consciousness, seemingly in consciousness. But not to worry, the nature of reality is non-dual, and awareness cannot change. All things, which seem to be placed on me, are also only an expression of myself, consciousness, which is pure knowledge. And these are therefore also dependent on me.

Hence the final insight is that one thing is not placed on the other at all. The original and the seeming effects all are the same. A final insight is also just an idea to let go of. What 'remains' is simply being in freedom, as freedom.

### अध्यास **adhyāsa**

Misconception. Wrong assessment. Literally: a dhi asa: 'There was (asa) no (a) discrimination (dhi), there was no correct understanding'.

Wrong assessment of an object. Confusing something with something that it is not. Sometimes used as: placing something on it, superposition (the term for this is actually adhyāropa). Confusing this with that. Adhyāsa is the result of upādhi, that which properties are attributed to its bearer. Like the colour of a flower in a pure crystal, when held close to it. Or like māyā's names and forms in cit, consciousness.

Adhyāsa, misconception about the objects I perceive is natural, for the appearances in consciousness seem very real. Avidyā, ignorance of my own pure nature as full bliss is related to it. And so adhyāsa, and not the events of mind, body, and world, is responsible for individual unhappiness. A misconception is knowledge-related, hence: ignorance (ajñāna or avidyā).

How do I dissolve ignorance, which comes from a misconception? By appreciating each object for what it is. When I am convinced that there is only blissful awareness, and I accept it completely, I can appreciate my inner and outer life as such. Then I can love everyone as myself.

Technically, there are distinct types of adhyāsa. For example, nirupādhikādhyaśa, which is a mistake (adhyāsa) without (nir) upādhi. This is a misconception in which the object that was misjudged disappears or changes into what it is, when the misconception is resolved. As in the misperception of a snake in a of rope. When I discover it is only a

rope, the snake disappears. Or someone who I judge a bad person, turns out to be a good person. When I discover the kindness of the person, who just has a kind of face at the outside, the bad person disappears in my head. Obviously, this kind of upādhi is based on subjective judgments.

Or sopādhikādhyāsa. A mistake (adhyāsa) with (sa) upādhi. A misconception in which the object that was misjudged continues to be sense-perceived, although cognitively its truth has been recognized. As in a mirage in the desert. Likewise, with the truth with a T. If I know that the world is nothing but a material expression or appearance of consciousness, the world continues to be seen/experienced sensually, even though I know that it is only I, consciousness. Because I need knowledge (jñāna) to unravel this error, sopādhikādhyāsa is also called jñāna adhyāsa.

### आध्यात्मिक तापस्    **ādhyātmika tāpas**

Pain, tāpas, caused by an obstacle that concerns me (adhi ātmā), for example worry, agitation, illness, physical disability.

Ātmā normally means in vedānta the self as consciousness, the single truth of everything. Sometimes, as here, ātmā is used as the small individual self. The person, identified with his story in the world.

In the case of ādhyātmika tāpas, it concerns problems that arise in my body and mind and do not come from the world. So all the suffering that is caused by the internal affairs of body and mind.

If we look closely, nothing happens outside the mind as far as our experience is concerned. Results from the world outside the body and mind, whether they are visible (ādhibhautika) or invisible (ādhidaivika) trigger the mind into a representation of what happens outside. The idea here is not to create double trouble. For example, by feeling sorry for myself. Aversion or preference produces a fear or a desire that bothers me. There is often so little going on. Īśvara takes care of us. If I feel bad, I am, usually the problem myself.

Having written that, it is true that a calm environment and lifestyle facilitate a disciplined practice of these kinds of insights.

For a wise person it does not matter what happens around him. For a wise person it is the other way around. As a person he will always facilitate his environment (visible, dr̥ṣṭa) and pray for the great invisible whole (adr̥ṣṭa), of which he knows that it all concerns

himself as saccidānanda (sat, existence, cit, consciousness, ananda, the bliss of limitlessness).

By praying om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ (om, peace, peace, peace) one wishes relief from the three kinds of suffering ādhidaivika tāpas, ādhibhautika tāpas, ādhyātmika tāpas.

## अद्वैत **advaita**

Non-dual.

Reality is not-two. One existence-consciousness, which in its infinite unity is bliss. Why not two? All phenomena have the same ground, the same substrate. All phenomena are just a non-dual expression of this ground. Therefore, the truth is singular. Consciousness does not really change into objects; this is only an appearance (vivarta). The individual who attributes authenticity to appearing phenomena is in ignorance of the non-duality of reality.

Why do we say non-dual. Because one refers to two, three etc. Not two refers to no other number.

Vedānta is the knowledge of it in the apparent reality. Therefore, vedānta, although in the first instance essential to see my freedom, is an instrument to be thrown away. A self-ignition with a huge effect: self-actualization.

The term advaita vedānta is a tautology, since the traditional vedānta, as intended, always has non-duality as its starting point.

Just a short bit of logic. We exist and we are conscious. I also see that all experiences come and go. No experience is stable. But we are consciously present in every experience. This permanence, and the facts that we are conscious and exist, mean that I am the infinite, non-dual consciousness itself. If we have first made the right distinction between consciousness and the mind with its content, then 'your' consciousness cannot be different from 'mine'. It must be the same light that makes the whole thing appear in it.

## अहङ्कार **ahaṅkāra**

I-thought, I-feeling, I-sense.

Along with buddhi (intellect), manas (mind) and citta (memory), ahaṅkāra is one of the four functions of the complete inner instrument (antaḥ karaṇa). It is also translated as ego, but this need not be taken negatively. It is only a function of the mind, which ensures that the body survives in the world, by feeding and caring for it. Every human being has such an ego.

However, it is a misconception that I am ahaṅkāra. It is an upādhi (that by which qualities are wrongly attributed to their carrier, the upahita) of ātmā. This is the result of the universal superposition, adhyāropa, on the self (pure consciousness) of the karmic manifestation (the life of this person with his mind and body in this world).

Now I, pure consciousness, am coloured with all kinds of feelings that revolve around my little self. For example, the thought that I am the doer of all kinds of actions, or the owner of all kinds of things. The solution to the identification (tādātmya) with this is to see that ego belongs in the body-mind-sense complex. And that this complex is an instrument of īśvara's (consciousness plus the total manifestation) play.

Then I get to see that there is no separation, and the world revolves on all egos together. One consciousness, one īśvara, one being, one world. What is my place in it? I can only be the carrier, the ground of it.

The ego plays its role in mind and body, but how can I be something so trivial, when I am the whole? Once I understand this, I would be crazy to let myself be diminished in this way. I can only be the unchanging silent witness of it. That which always is.

The combination of ego and ignorance causes ego to claim all sorts of things, which then causes it to suffer. Fear, desire, depression, profit, the feeling of having acquired something (yoga) and the fear of losing that security (kṣema) again.

Ahaṅkāra comes from aham- (I) kāra (maker, doer, also called author or agent). I-maker, the doer. The feeling that cognitively appropriates all sorts of objects that do not belong to it.

Because there was already identification with ego in previous lives, the supposed individual developed habits (vāsanā's) and desires (kāma's), which led to new karma. This individual amount was reserved in the total pot of karma and reincarnates into a new jīva. This is apparently born. Then, around the first year of life, the ego manifests itself, which produces a feeling of self-awareness, which is called ahaṅkāra.

Look, because we are consciousness, there is certainly such a thing as the subjective perspective. But there is only subject, so we don't have to speak of subject anymore, but this is something different from ego, which is objectively observable.

Ego is very natural. That in one psychosomatic unit, which is a human being (plus consciousness!), there is a pivotal thought, which allows the body to relate to the outside world is very logical. But this generally escalates. For example, in a depressed person. In such a constitution everything is measured by the yardstick of me. I experienced it for a period in my life. I related everything to myself. There was little neutral to be seen in the world. Sadness is a constant stream of thoughts, related to the ego. Suffering is an ego disease anyway.

People see themselves as victims, while they are only a beautiful instrument in a beautiful, apparent game. This is bizarre if you look at it that way. It is precisely the fear of everything, that assesses things that have nothing to do with me as relevant and brings them so threateningly close.

In a narcissistic, selfish, excessive person, everything also revolves around the I-feeling. Over and over again, 'I' must be satisfied with intense, often addictive acts. And for that, others must give way. Every person naturally carries some of these dynamics within him.

Ahaṅkāra merges with mama-kāra (me-maker, the me-feeling). It is the nature of ahaṅkāra to claim constantly what belongs to īśvara. The joke is that when I think 'this thing is mine, this feeling is mine' I limit myself to that, while I am the whole.

Identification is the misattribution of ever-changing characteristics to the unchanging being that I am. When ahaṅkāra manifests, the mind is objectified as 'this', creating a duality (this is my mind, my thoughts, and feelings). Then I appropriate God's things. But the body and mind belong to the field of God's play.

It creates an endless I-I-my-my feeling. Such limiting, dualistic views create an irrational but compelling sense of deficiency or inadequacy. This leads to seemingly endless loops of fear and desire, to alleviate or overcome that apparent deficiency. All I need do is know that as its consciousness I am the free totality, existence itself.

From the narrowed I to the infinite self.

## अहिंसा **ahimsā**

Non-violence or peace. To abstain (a-) from intentionally hurting (himsā) any being by thought, word, or deed.

This is the primary value from which all other values follow. Why? Because there is only consciousness. I exist, so I must be that, So there is nothing but me, the whole. If I hurt anyone, I hurt myself. So for the jñānī (the knower of his svarūpa, his or her true self) it is

a natural state. For this jñānī ahimsā is self-evident, because for him or her there is no other, and the self does not cause itself any suffering.

For an ordinary mortal, ahimsā is difficult, because survival feels like a struggle, and appropriating things that belong to someone else is part of it (mā grdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam, Īśopaniṣad 1, do not appropriate anything that belongs to someone else; esoteric message: Everything belongs to Īśvara).

Ahimsā is a value from the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā, and is also called the value of values, because the saying is, do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself.

The logic behind this is the non-dual truth that if someone hurts someone else, he hurts himself. A person feels this unconsciously or at least is confronted with the karmic consequences. In general, this is a nagging sense of guilt, which we are used to deny.

#### अखण्ड आकार वृत्ति ज्ञान **akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna**

Knowledge (jñāna) in the form (ākāra) of a unique thought (vṛtti) pertaining to the nature of the indivisible reality (akhaṇḍa). Consciousness is derived through this vṛtti, and recognized as the truth of myself, the silent observer, the object(s) and the connection between the two.

When it is utterly understood what ‘indivisible reality’ means, all concepts of my identity with the truth will disappear, including akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti. So because this vṛtti is also an object, although removing ignorance into knowledge, it also goes away.

This vṛtti does not objectify the ātmā and need not do so, because the ātmā reveals itself. The self-revealing, undivided consciousness is you and all is that. This recognition is the result of the working of the words of vedānta.

Akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna is mentioned in combination with the terms vṛtti vyāpti and phala vyāpti. A sensory stimulus of an object or a memory is represented in a mental movement in the mind (vṛtti vyāpti). What I experience is therefore by definition a representation of the object or the memory in the mind. Even materialists will admit this. The meaning that then arises on the basis of my conditioning is called the fruit of perception (phala vyāpti).

So akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñānam is immediate meaning (lakṣyārtha), without any superficial form.

In self-realization, immediate knowledge is the phala vyāpti. The phala, the fruit, is then the form of akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñānam, which only points to the self, to nothing else. See how subtle, you can hardly speak of form here. It goes towards pure meaning, knowledge.

So no vṛtti vyāpti takes place in self-realization because the self is not an object and therefore cannot be perceived by the senses. This knowledge can easily become stable because it is independent of movements in the external world.

Then ignorance about the non-dual truth of myself as existence consciousness disappears. If it is also understood that the mind is an upādhi (something that falsely gives an attribute to its bearer) of pure consciousness, and if it is seen that thoughts are upādhis of the pure mind, they cannot stand.

Then both knower and knowledge disappear. And I am the wholeness. In the nididhyāsana phase I still contemplate on akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñānam.

Sometimes you also come across the following translation of akhaṇḍākāra vṛtti in literature. A thought (vṛtti) that expresses the formless (akāra, no dash on the first a) and undivided (akhaṇḍā).

### अमानित्व **amānitva**

Absence of pride, conceit or arrogance (mānitva). Not boasting about a talent or achievement.

After all, everything belongs to God (īśvara). So all respect and thankfulness should go to īśvara. Just when respect seems justified, recognizing with all my heart that all respect should go to īśvara, because it is all knowledge, all power. So suppose I have a talent or certain disposition in something, I should even be more honoured and grateful instead of proud.

The right teacher, the svāmī, the jñānī just understands this, and knows that accepting respect and gratefulness as his own, would mean, that she or he is not free. Therefore, freedom means infinite modesty (ananta vinaya).

Also showing off with performance, concerning the teaching, or even needing a spik of esteem, regard, honour, admiration, deference, reference, appreciation is the perfect yardstick to know whether I stand on my own as freedom, or whether I deeply regard myself as an inferior, separate entity. This is an area where blind spots easily occur. For myself, this applies when investigating why I am going to such lengths to deliver this



document properly. It should be to celebrate my nature as a Brahman, just like everything else in life. In doing so, I should be happy, or rather I should find it self-evident, to deliver this to you. Perhaps it supports someone here and there.

There is a value that resembles amānitva, namely adhambhitva. The difference between amānitva and adhambhitva is that with the first I do have the capacities and skills, without being proud of them. Adhambhitva means absence of dhamba, pretence. With pretence I am proud of a skill that I do not even possess. I derive identities from capacities and talents that I do not have at all. Then I do not know my personality well, or I pretend to be better than I am. Pretence is more ignorant and misplaced than pride. I think I can do something well when I cannot.

Pride is also pretence, because all capacities belong to īśvara, and so I have nothing to be proud of. The karmic lesson to be learned here is that to be ‘someone’, I must always keep up pride and pretence, otherwise I lose my identity. This is of course deadly tiring. Both are values from the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā.

### अनधिगत **anadhigatva**

Literally: Not otherwise passable. Unique, not otherwise approachable. This concept has several nuances.

The means of knowledge (pramāṇa), as shown in the scriptures of vedānta (vedānta śāstra pramāṇa), are unique in revealing brahman as the self, as myself. This is because the knowledge tool of vedānta is unparalleled in its approach and effectiveness. People are generally overwhelmed; at how little they know when they come to vedānta. And amazed that there is such a thing that can set you free.

Literally, an-adhi-gata means, ‘has not gone’. This expresses the most esoteric meaning of this term. You cannot go somewhere where you already are. So you cannot go via the imperfect path of objects to something perfect, which is already limitless, and which you already are. You cannot do anything either, to get what you already are. Only I can have my ignorance about it removed. Hence the uniqueness of ‘has never gone’. And hence the uniqueness of knowledge, to see what already is. To see what I have never left. Hence the path of knowledge is also called the pathless path (apathah panthāḥ). I do not have to and cannot walk a pathless path, and yet, as we know, there is an apparent world of ignorance where I can do a great deal, to make knowledge possible, of the only real fact.

The unbiased listening (śravaṇa), the meaning of the sound of words plays a key role in this. I am ignorance in my mind about what I already am. Knowledge comes to my mind,

through the ear, through hearing. Then my ignorance about myself is gone, and I see my mind as a funny expression of consciousness (my)self. It is the meaning that does it. The realization that I am the ground of everything as consciousness. This cannot be understood by any other means of knowledge such as sense perception (pratyakṣa) or inference (anumāna).

The impassable path of advaita vedānta is unique. Seeking is ‘being away from the truth’. Living in the world as if it were real is like being away from yourself. Hence the feeling of a strange kind of homesickness that people live in. The key word here is ‘real’. If I see life as a dream in consciousness, then we call life unreal. Appearance. What I seek is myself, the truth of it. This self is abādhita remember not to be denied, not to be erased.

The substrate consciousness is the only reality of everything. The path to something infinitely more subtle is impassable (a-gata) for the mind, which is not sensitive (jaḍa) and material. The mind cannot go there and cannot observe it either. The truth just is. ‘I am’ is only available through knowledge that removes ignorance because it is already the case. This makes the pathless path of knowledge yoga (jñāna-yoga) ‘unique’.

### अन्तःकरण **antaḥkaraṇa**

The inner (antaḥ) instrument (karaṇam). The instrument with which one thinks and feels. It is called inner because there are also outer instruments (bāhyakaraṇāni), such as ears, skin, eyes, nose and tongue (in their physical form called golakāḥ). There is a subtle difference with the inner senses (jñānendriyāṇi), which are part of the subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīra). The golakāḥ are the gross physical organs, and their associated brain lobe in the gross body (sthūla-śarīra).

It is funny to also mention the bāhya sādhanāni here. These are also outer instruments, but then external means or aids outside the body. Such as the scriptures, the satsang, the the order, timing, and coherence of words of the teacher in my ear, AI for all I care. All work together for knowledge to be discovered.

Inner we can now formulate very precisely as everything in the subtle body, more subtle than the gross body. Outer is everything that is gross, including my physical body, outside or external. The five elements, so to speak, in their recombined, coarsened form. So I see that it does not matter whether something breaks in my body, in someone else's body or in the world. It is all the five elements. All the same, whatsoever.

The inner instrument consists of vṛtti's, mental revolutions, which we also call thoughts. We can divide these into four categories. You can see these as four functions of the mind:

Buddhi (intellect, decision-center), manas (mind, doubt, emotion-center), citta (memory), ahaṅkāra (ego). That is why antaḥkaraṇa is also called buddhyadicatustaya, the foursome (catustaya), beginning (adi), with the most subtle of the four, the intellect (buddhi).

In the teachings of vedānta the word mind is used both for this entire fourfold instrument and for manas, a specific function of it. The context determines how to interpret the word mind, antaḥkaraṇa or manas. Sometimes even the subtle body is meant by the word mind.

Antaḥkaraṇa is part of the subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīra), which also contains five organs of action (karmendriyaṇi), five organs of knowledge (jñānendriyaṇi) and five energies or life currents (prāṇāḥ), 19 parts together.

The mind, especially the intellect, is the only mental position where knowledge and ignorance can take place, which are mutually exclusive.

The world and the inner instrument are interdependent. In the cognitive world of the inner instrument my apparent self (ego-thought) meets the world.

The inner instrument becomes a non-observer when (as in deep sleep) objects are no longer perceived. Then the mind ceases to be mind. When no object is perceived, there is no thought, and no thought, no world. Thus, mind and world are interdependent.

The inner instrument takes the form of memories and representations of the world. The world and all these mental movements depend on consciousness, as the true ground. The mind and the world manifest together, and dissolve together.

The totality of all subtle bodies (including all antaḥ-karaṇams) is called hiraṇyagarbha. This is translated as golden foetus or womb and should be seen as the radiant pure blueprint of mind and manifestation of īśvara. That is why we call God good. Every fresh moment god reflects to me a perfect creation, with beautiful laws. It is up to me to recognize these beautiful laws and implement them in my mind. If I do not dharmically attune myself with God, it becomes a mess. As I look at the world, I ask myself honestly: ‘Who not dance with god?’.

The individual inner instruments, driven by ignorance, disturb the sacred whole, by making (good and) bad choices. In this way, īśvara is forced to give results. First, we made the bed, now we must lie in it. This disturbance is especially reserved for humans. Animals naturally follow God's nature. A human being must think to follow God's nature, quite a challenge, but also an invitation to mokṣa (freedom).

It is therefore the striking side note to the beautiful reality, that an individual mind is a rather special, specific constellation of ignorance, but in reality nothing other than a part of the whole of īśvara.

This small unit of ignorance then sets up all kinds of confusing agendas and strategies, to survive. Fears and desires become motives. Then I no longer see how wonderfully beautiful and ingenious everything interacts.

### अन्तःकरण शुद्धि **antaḥkaraṇa śuddhi**

Purity (śuddhi) of the inner instrument (antaḥkaraṇa), the mind. Pacification of one's way of thinking, through a certain degree of control. A certain degree of control and tranquillity in emotions and rāga-dveṣa's (likes and dislikes).

With a healthy inner calmness and distance, I can better assess situations and react appropriately.

Karma-yoga is the most efficient means of this kind of transformation. By acting according to dharma and unconditionally accepting the results of my actions as meaning to learn from, my mind evolves into harmonious atonement and attunement with the harmony of the way the world, (īśvara) beautifully works. This will bring inner peace. Of course, upāsana also helps here, the discipline of meditating on my participation in the glory of īśvara.

With a healthy inner calm and distance, I can better know what I am, and how the world relates to me.

Antaḥkaraṇa śuddhi is an essential condition for knowledge, jñāna, because only a mind that is free from bias and prejudice can listen purely and therefore hear well what is being taught. Otherwise, whatever is being taught is, at best, filtered and interpreted by what I suppose it means. So then the mind makes the knowledge fit or adapt to my existing set of ideas and notions. A big problem, because the whole point is I need a mind which knows that it is not real as such, that is not me as such. This is the difficult shift to make.

Or without a clear mind the knowledge is even rejected. This means that the meaning is not heard and understood, and I will not know the truth of myself.

In a 'pure mind' it is the guṇa sattva that is dominant, and that reflects consciousness clearly.

### आर्जव **ārjava**

Straightforwardness, alignment of mind. Clarity. Honesty and openness. Truthfulness. Integrity.

Alignment of thought, word, and deed whereby someone does not think one thing, say another, and then perhaps even do the third.

In order to develop ārjava I have to keep my promises. In particular, I need have clarity about the commitment to myself. I must know what I want and then be sincere to myself.

Both ṛta vada, speaking aligned with the relative truths of human life and satya vada, transparency and honesty in my speech, are the result of ārjava.

Furthermore, I want to be punctual and keep to agreements. Every agreement is an agreement with īśvara. This value from the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is therefore a beautiful value.

We can also sublimate this value to the greater plan. When I have my affairs in order in my mind and know the laws of īśvara, my life goes like a rocket, and everything flows easily, because I am always in line with the good life. Living with īśvara means good living.

By fulfilling all my vows, I will develop self-respect and self-confidence. A white lie may then be appropriate to consciously prevent the suffering of others.

Furthermore, I should not help others without consent. When I talk about Vedānta, am I not feeding my self-esteem? Only when I have my inner affairs in line with the outer world can there be a pure agreement about the setting between listener and listener.

## अर्थ artha

Goal, pursuit, meaning, wealth. The word artha can mean many things. In Vedānta teaching it is one of the four goals that people pursue (puruṣārthāḥ): artha, kāma, dharma, mokṣa.

Artha is the pursuit of security through material gain. Livelihood security to use a modern word. Money, a house, pension etc. This is vain pursuit. The (gross) body of a human being is mortal, the spirit (subtle body) reincarnates, and is therefore very changeable during life and very transient over many lives. So as a human being I am never safe.

Only the underlying goal mokṣa is total security. The living insight that I am free, impersonal, unthreatened, secure, independent, silent pure consciousness, is total safety. As full consciousness there is no otherness. That is called pāramārthika. Pāram artha, the supreme, ultimate thing, beyond (para) goals and objects (artha's). We could also say 'prior' to goals and objects. Meaning the independent substratum on which all apparent

manifestation depends, from which everything arises and in everything merges back again.

### असाधारण **asādhāraṇa**

Unusual. That which is always different, and therefore magical (māyā). All changing phenomena, objects of the world in the mind that are continuously changing, and therefore always unusual. We are so used to living in objects in the wonderful world, that we find that crazy samsāra normal. Live is often experienced as a madhouse. It is like Forrest Gump said: 'Live is like a box of chocolates, you never know what ye gonna get.'

Let us take a good look. Why does a person have compassion for another. Why can we empathize so well with the other or sympathize with the other. Two reasons here. One, every jīva has the same basic design, the circuit board of the mind is equipped with the same functions doubt, sadness etc. So we can understand the other well. Two, there is no other. My mind is a temporary manifestation of consciousness. 'Other people's' mind is a manifestation of the same consciousness. Therefore, it is completely logical that I have compassion for the other or am empathic because the other is the same one as me. They sometimes talk about self-compassion. But that is a strange concept. I don't need to have compassion for the self, it is not pitiful at all. And is there really a difference between how I look at my mind and that of another? This is looking objectively. And then I come back on topic:

Seen like this, it is unusual (asādhāraṇa) to consider myself as just one separate self among many. Once I see that, it is very unnatural and against my true nature. What I see are all chit-chattering thinking machines that appear in that one consciousness.

But what would then be the right definition of what is ordinary (sādhāraṇa)? It must be that which always is, that which makes all observable things possible. That which is always the silent ground, witness, and revealer of all objects. How more ordinary can you get? That ordinary is you: Tat tvam asi, consciousness. What appears is extraordinary (asādhāraṇa).

Self-realization is the full, difference-less presence of the truth of the self. So self-realization is finding oneness normal. James Swartz also includes the word 'ordinary' in his definition of what is real. This prevents arrogance and the feeling of being special once I have understood 'it'.

'We should slink off with our tails between our legs into the ordinary boundlessness that is infinitely normal, instead of blowing our horns in the apparent world that is abnormally wonderful.'

### आस्तिक āstika

Ways of thinking that rely on the Vedas as a means of knowledge (pramāṇa). In particular the six darśanas, viewpoints or philosophical schools. Veda literally means knowledge. This is about knowledge of the panorama of existence. Hence the word asti. Asti means 'he, she, it is'.

Vedānta is the only one of these six traditions that states that existence, shining as consciousness is (in reality) the only thing that is. So that reality is non-dual. Vedānta likes to be called āstika, but not darśana. Vedānta is not a viewpoint. Non-duality cannot be one of several viewpoints.

Vedānta presents the non-dual truth of the Upaniṣads, the deepest message of the Vedas. This means that Vedānta states that it encompasses all other viewpoints. Vedānta seems to argue with other directions but only tries to present logically the only possible outcome of one non-dual truth.

In contrast to the āstikas there are nāstikas. Traditionally these are followers of traditions in ancient India, who do not accept the Veda's as a true textual source (śāstra). These are: Cārvākas (materialistic-atheistic), Jains, and four divisions of Buddhism: The Mādhyamas or Śūnyavādins, the Yogācāras or Vijñānavādins, the Sautrāntikas and the Vaibhāṣikas.

Especially in the Brahma Sūtras, vedānta 'relates' itself with impeccable logic to other directions. Or rather, especially in the Brahma Sūtras, Vedānta incorporates other directions into the one non-dual vision of consciousness.

### असुर asura

Demon. An entity that deceitfully goes against the dharma, lusting for power, and pursuing sensual pleasures. Literally, asuras are beings that are not sura (reflections of god, solar beings).

In early Vedic times, 'did people believe in or defined' good asuras (ādityas) and bad asura's (danavas). Later they became bad counterparts of the good devas, gods. The point

is that a person can be an asura and a deva at the same time. We have a dark side of blind desire in us, and a serving, holy side.

Nowadays we would call people who are materially minded, lusting for power and self-gain, asura. So someone who thinks mainly of artha and kama, and in doing so does not shy away from lies and hurting others. Predominant guna is tamas. In general, the demon class raksasas are seen to be even more destructive and evil.

### आत्म विचार ātma vicāra

Inquiry (vicāra) into the nature of the self (ātma). Only such an inquiry leads to liberation. In the course of my search, I find that the intense urge to understand existence boils down to wanting to understand myself. And that this self is existence itself, in which everything shines as consciousness.

This inquiry is successfully completed by one who is sufficiently qualified, which means that one's mind is sufficiently prepared with karma-yoga, a healthy set of values, an accommodating lifestyle and a practice such as the fourfold practice sādhanā catuṣṭaya (see there). Then one can expose oneself to the right teaching by a suitable teacher.

Ātma vicāra, self-inquiry is an inquiry carried out by studying the Upaniṣads, with the help of a guru. The conclusion (siddhānta) is that I am existence itself, shining as consciousness. I can do all kinds of inquiry. But investigating the only thing I am certain of, myself, is unique to vedānta.

It requires a different means of investigation. All these many years, I have, as it were, ‘overlooked myself’, that is the striking thing that vedānta shows me. It is investigating the subject, not objects. There appears to be only subject, so we also drop that concept at a certain point. What remains is simply being myself, but as I really am. This is so simple that it is difficult.

It is just like a mentally ill person. At a certain point, they must admit that they cannot figure it out and need help. That recognition is half the work. To investigate reality (of myself), I therefore also need help from outside in the form of a means of knowledge.

The method is to let the words of the teacher, and the scriptures work on an open, unprejudiced mind, to see that the objects are nothing but a temporary expression of myself, pure consciousness. Thus, my individual ignorance is removed, and I stand alone, full and contented as consciousness.



## आत्म विनिग्रह ātma vinigraha

Control or grasp (vinigraha) of the body-mind-sense complex (kārya karaṇa saṅghāta) to regulate it in preparation for ātma vicāra, self-knowledge. In this concept, the word ātma is used to refer to the individual's small self-experience, which is another denotation of kārya karaṇa saṅghāta. So ātma here is not ātmā as the one and only self.

For self-control, upāsana yoga is prescribed. Aṣṭāṅga yoga and mindfulness (vipassanā) insight meditation also work well. It is all focus training. Discipline. What is missing in aṣṭāṅga and vipassanā is the knowledge that when we meditate on an object it must be īśvara (all knowledge, all matter). Upāsana kills two birds with one stone. It is not only calming, stopping, and controlling the mind, but it also brings about a great deal of surrender to the greater. Thinking of God (with a little vedānta knowledge) is deification of God's values (dharma) of good, ethical life, and disidentification with ego (ahaṅkāra). In my meditation I can let all my difficult personal stuff flow into God, merge into God. Getting a grip on myself (on my mind) is therefore a mind expansion. It can be understood how this works.

If this control is not there, mind and body will spread out too quickly in life. Then my neurosis will enter relationships with worldly affairs, with all kinds of confusion. If I give in and go into all kinds of worldly temptations, I cannot focus on my truth. An extrovert attitude prevents hearing the truth of yourself, meditation on God and contemplation of yourself.

A jñānī (one with self-knowledge) oversees the panorama of reality and the existence of people in it. He only attributes divine value to objects. An ajñānī (non-knower) attributes value and authenticity to separate worldly objects. To become contemplative, one must first control the mind. Ātma vinigraha is a value mentioned in Bhagavad Gita verse 13.7.

## आत्मा आत्मन् ātman ātmā

Self. The true self. The true I. The only thing that is. I as existence itself, shining as consciousness. I, as that which is free (mokṣa) and stands alone (kaivalya). That which as substrate and truth is free from (and always the witness of) gross, subtle and causal bodies (sthūla, sūkṣma, kāraṇa śarīrā) and the world, and yet makes alle phenomena apparently possible (vedānta explains how).

The self is beyond or prior to the five levels of experience (pañca-kośāḥ), in the sense that it can seemingly manifest experience through and in the self. The self is the self-evident, unchanging, infinite, ever pure silent witness (sākṣī), of the three states of

experience (avasthā trayāḥ). That which is simple existence, consciousness, fullness (sat cit ānanda).

Ātman or ātmā is equal to brahman. All manifestations of it are called anātmā, not self. Note: The relationship ātmā and anātmā is non-dual, and therefore not an ordinary relationship, but an ontological relationship (satya mithyā). Forms appear to the self as objects that are dependent on it. This is what we call mithyā, false or dependently real, and therefore transient and changeable. Satya is the independent reality of this, also called consciousness (cit) or self.

The material expression that is not self, is therefore dependent on its substrate, pure consciousness, pure knowledge, self. Anātmā is therefore ātmā, but ātmā as an independent, infinitely radiant self is free from all objects of anātmā, not-self.

The term ātmā, is necessary from the perspective of an ignorant living being (the jīva), to start inquiring (ātma vicāra) into. So that I can say, I self-evidently exist as consciousness. But consciousness itself is of course totally without any self and knows nothing of a self. It is existence itself, sat, brahman.

The term ātmā invites one to see brahman as self. I-myself am as consciousness, the pure witness, the objectless subject of all objects. Because I exist, I must be the truth itself. The term exists to lift the individual living being from its oppressive position to the truth. That is also why ātmā is etymologically (via Indo-European language lines) related to the Dutch *adem*, and the German *atem*.

For the wise there is no self at all. The whole concept of self is an inert concept, invented to look at 'her or his' consciousness from your personal perspective. The self is therefore actually an invitation to look at it the other way around. As consciousness, to see the person as a funny appearance of your free attribute less self. For the wise there is only the full existence, in which everything apparently takes place, like a mirage in desert air.

Everything and therefore all people seem numerous and varied, but are simply ātmā, because the self is unchanging, omnipresent, and undivided consciousness. Always the same, just as gold is always the same in all golden objects.

The word ātmā is also sometimes used in scriptures to mean 'self', 'I' or 'particular mind' in the ordinary sense of I, the person. For example, in the word jīvātmā (the individual self, as experienced in ignorance by the living entity, man) or in ātma vinigraha (control of the individual mind).

In this way the word ātmā emphasizes the fundamental human problem of adhyāsa, where you falsely tell yourself (ātmā) what you are not: limited, mortal, defective and in numerous ways inadequate. This is why mokṣa, freedom through a correction of the self-

image with jñāna, knowledge of the false ideas one has about oneself, is the science of something that I have already proved to be.

The teacher can explain when the universal (samaṣṭi) self is meant, and when the individual (vyaṣṭi) self.

There are indeed three kinds of meaning of ātmā distinguished, of which only the first is true: 1. mukhātmā: The principal (mukha) only, essential, real ātmā, which is brahman, consciousness, existence, bliss. 2. mithyātmā, the false (mithyā), dependent self, the temporary sense of self during life, because mukhātmā is identified with the body-mind complex. 3. gaunātmā: qualities (guṇāḥ) that are apparently superimposed on ātmā, and thus seem to belong to ātmā. These are all objects and attributes, since ātmā is attribute-less.

Finally, a Sanskrit technical remark: Ātman is the root form (pratipādika) in Sanskrit, ātmā is the first (strong) case.

### आवरण शक्ति āvaraṇa śakti

The concealing, covering, obscuring force. Tamas, one of the three qualities of māyā, which gives matter and inertia, is the quality (guṇa) that belongs to this concealing force. Āvaraṇa śakti plays a key role in individual ignorance because it seems to cover knowledge of myself.

But is my true nature really covered? Just as a thick cloud obscures the sun, āvaraṇa śakti covers the self so well that ātmā is not seen for what it is. But this is only from a small, private bundle of senses on a spot on earth. The sun itself is of course not covered at all and is always shining brightly. I, consciousness, am not covered at all either. I always shine on all objects or on the absence of objects. I, ātmā, continuously illuminate all objects that appear in me. I cannot be turned off, whether I appear covered or not.

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Āvaraṇa śakti thus causes on an individual level the wrong conception (adhyāsa) of being covered. This leads to āropa (assigning attributes to myself, the attribute-less). Then an apparent connection is made between me, consciousness, and the objects that appear in consciousness or seem to be ‘placed’ there, adhyāropa (superimposition). Note that this

connection is false! This produces a sense of self in body and mind: ahaṅkāra (ego). This ego desires (kāma) objects because it thinks it needs them. This produces action (karma) and saṁsāra (the transactional game in which we think we are participating).

The five elements form the tools that are used here. Āvaraṇa and vikṣepa go hand in hand, just as tamas and rajas go hand in hand. The paradox here is that what seems to conceal is actually a projection or appearance of the light to the light. With the knowledge of the self this is a beautiful paradox.

All knowledge (sattva), all power (rajas-tamas), is always potentially present. Unmanifested as māyā, manifested as īśvara. It is essential to realize that it is vivarta, an appearance, that comes and goes. It is not real. To realize this I need enough sattva, the guṇa that reveals.

So why do I live in a private tube, seemingly dissociated from others? Well, one specific karma stream of a jīva means that for a specific individual, all knowledge, all power is covered with āvaraṇa śakti tuned to the prārabdha karma that is projected by vikṣepa-śakti that 'produces' that one individual, a living bundle of small knowledge, small power. Thus, I can understand the tube that I live in as a human being, or rather the oppressive film that is shown to me. After all, I am just the empty screen, full of itself.

Just as an individual seeks knowledge about the world, which is nothing but the revelation of what was already there, but was covered, the individual gains knowledge of the ignorance of his true nature as boundless, endless ātman/brahman.

I just have to understand the self-luminosity (svaprakāśa) that allows everything to be, including the senses, which in turn perceive a world through the subtle body. This is nothing more than a play for the 'third eye' of pure knowledge-consciousness. When it is unmanifested, as in deep sleep, knowledge is not evident. In the waking state my luminosity becomes visible because there are objects, precisely attuned to karma, all of which are managed by īśvara.

Because there are also objects such as mind and intellect, in the waking state there is the possibility of self-knowledge. My intellect either knows (something) or does not know (something). Ignorance itself has no real or independent existence. It is only a particular perspective on or of knowledge. There is no independent entity called ignorance other than wrong knowledge. Ignorance at the level of mūla avidyā (individual ignorance at the root or potential), is thus still free from any form of division, as in deep sleep. There is no experience of duality until it is caused by the arising of vikṣepa śakti. What is not veiled is that I am existent (asti), radiant (bhāti) and infinitely pleasant (priya).

Āvaraṇa śakti is a potentiality, a possibility in this limitlessness and non-duality of īśvara as pure knowledge. When this name and form (nāma-rūpa) take on (through vikṣepa śakti), īśvara ‘manifests’ as the world in all its diversity, just as the dream manifests from the slumbering waking entity.

It is always important to realize that consciousness is not really covered but remains pure. It is only apparent superimposition. When I see a red mountain, do I become red myself? Just as when I perceive my mind and body, do I become my mind and body?

So in knowledge I can say: ‘Everything is me, even though everything (all possibilities) seems covered. Why covered? This is because the limitations of the individual senses are precisely attuned to the āvaraṇa śakti of my specific karma. īśvara ‘sees’ everything, of course. Well, everything is īśvara.

But it is all just appearance. Everything is but an expression of me, the fully shining being. That which appears and that which does not appear, I am, but I as the shining itself, am free from it.

Āvaraṇa śakti is also called āvṛti śakti. In īśa upaniṣad verses 15 & 16 an esoteric-poetic game is played with this tension field. Note that the sun that was used above as a metaphor for the self-shining of consciousness, is in īśa upaniṣad, presented as the covering object, the sun disk, that with its physical light via my senses, fools my intellect and thus tries to stimulate me to attribute authenticity to the world. The sun-god Pūṣan, in this case a revealing aspect of nothing but īśvara, is then asked to reveal himself as myself as the pure intelligence of consciousness.

In Bhagavad Gītā 15.2 this is confirmed and Kṛṣṇa in turn says:

Yad ādityagataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayate 'khilam |  
yac candramasi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakaṁ ||

The light that is in the sun, which illumines the entire world, and the light that is in the moon and in the fire, know that light to be mine

By this is meant: Know that I am the light that makes all physical light possible.

### अवतार avatāra

A descended being. The divine (īśvara) descends, which means it manifests as a special kind of divine jīva, in this world of earthly life (bhū loka). This type of living beings can enlighten humanity with knowledge of dharma and knowledge of truth.

So an avatāra comes to restore the balance of dharma. This is part of the law of duality. Too much badness will be compensated by goodness. Kṛṣṇa is a good example of this. At crucial moments he plays a role in the victory of the dharmic Pāṇḍavas over the adharmic Kauravas.

That Kṛṣṇa is not an ordinary human being, but an avatara of Viṣṇu/īśvara is evident from the 11th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, where he shows himself to Arjuna as viśvarūpa, all forms of the universe. Here the difference between jīva as small knowledge, small power and īśvara as all knowledge/all power is shown. In the purāṇa literature, avatārās are often somewhere in between, because they then apply a specific aspect of īśvara.

Kṛṣṇa is also the bringer of self-knowledge, by being the teacher of Arjuna.

In principle an avatara has no karma. Better said: there is apparently only prārabdha-karma (karma that has begun to work itself out and must be worked out minimally in life). An avatāra will not generate new to come karma (āgāmi-karma), because of her or him being an ethical appearance. Because the avatāra usually know she or he is the self, she or he knows there is no karma, so she or he has no karma at all. However, the avatāra is free of karma.

Literally, ava means down. Tāra comes from the Sanskrit root tṛ, which means to cross over, to the other side. In the deepest sense it means: Crossing over different orders of reality, which is not a crossing over but a cognitive shifting through the swamps of mental ignorance by knowledge.

The avatara knows that she or he as consciousness, is never really manifested. The manifestation is an expression or appearance of and in consciousness, brahman, that I am.

### अविद्या अज्ञान avidyā ajñāna

Individual ignorance (individual) of the fact that I am existence itself, shining as consciousness. Ignorance that I am unlimited, whole, and complete.

Ignorance is also called incorrect or incomplete knowledge. Avidyā or ajñāna is the individual (vyaṣṭi) aspect of māyā that manifests in the jāgrat avasthā (waking state) and the svapna avasthā (dream state) of the jīva, while it remains unmanifested and undifferentiated in the suṣupti avasthā (deep sleep).

Ātmā, the self, with the avidyā upādhi (the apparent but not real conditioning by ignorance) is known as the jīva, the individual. Brahman with the māyā upādhi, is īśvaraḥ. Of course, brahman and ātmā, are the same truth.

Ignorance is a specific state of knowledge of the mind in which tamas predominates. Thus āvaraṇa ‘covers’ śakti, the concealing power of knowledge. Jñāna-śakti with its quality sattva reveals knowledge of myself as free, full consciousness. Consciousness, pure, unlimited, attribute-less knowledge is already there, but needs to be discovered by a means of knowledge like vedānta. In order that pure knowledge can shine (bhāti). That is why sat cit ānanda is mentioned in the taittirīya upaniṣad (Brahmānanda valli 2.1) as satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma, brahman is truth/existence, pure knowledge, limitlessness. Cit and jñānam are synonymous here. And ānanda (bliss) and ananta (limitlessness) are synonymous here.

It is not merely an absence of knowledge. Ignorance is opposed to knowledge, and is therefore a form of knowledge, which is overcome only by right knowledge.

Ignorance hides that which is true and causes the projection of something else in its place. That ‘something else’, that incorrect or incomplete knowledge, when accepted as true, is opposed to that which is true.

That incorrect or false conclusion takes place in the mind, in vedānta, called the inner instrument (antaḥkaraṇa). Enlightenment is therefore only for the mind. This needs to be made even more precise. One of the four functions of the inner instrument is the intellect. It determines how someone thinks. Knowledge therefore takes place through or in the intellect. The intellect thinks: ‘It is true that I am the light of brahman’, Or the intellect thinks: ‘I am a miserable little person’. In both cases the conviction (saṅkalpa) determines how my life looks, as a reflection of divine light, or as a projection of low self-esteem and sadness. That is how quickly your life can change when ignorance is replaced by its opposite knowledge. In principle we are talking about an immediate shift.

Since the mind (manas) doubts (vikalpa), and will therefore fiddle with self-knowledge, a well-developed intellect is needed for knowledge (vidyā, jñāna) and therefore for freedom.

Ignorance cannot occur in ātmā, because ātmā is impeccable, pure consciousness, knowledge. Ignorance only occurs in the jīva and is held in the mind. The jīva is an apparent union of consciousness and mind. When it is recognized that the jīva status is nothing more than appearance, its ignorance also disappears. When the identification with the mind (and the body) ceases, the wise see no ignorance, although they do recognize it in the appearances around them.

Ultimately, there is no ignorance, no mind and no māyā. If you come to a wrong conclusion because of avidyā, you come to adhyāsa, a wrong assessment of objects (including people). It is adhyāsa, delusion, not seeing things as they are, that is the direct

cause of saṁsāra, while ignorance is of course the fundamental or ultimate cause (mūla avidyā). Ignorance is beginningless, but not endless. When a mind clear enough to understand self-knowledge hears the truth about itself, ignorance will disappear, the knowledge that removed ignorance will also disappear, and the self will shine forth, free as itself.

## बाध bādha

That which can be denied or dissolved (by correct knowledge). We can thus deny the truth to everything that has a beginning and an end. That which is persistent and permanent is abādha, undeniable and insoluble. What is always persistent and permanently present? That can only be me, consciousness, which must always be present, for things to appear (from this consciousness).

The negation bādha is not motivated by nihilism, but by fullness. I deny the limitation of things. When I touch one thing, I touch everything. This is also called sublation (dissolving into a subtler greater whole, German philosophical: *aufheben*).

Negation is the cognitive cancellation of objects, by recognizing the truth, its deeper substrate as 'I am'. It is not trying to cancel people or wipe out or exorcise things I don't like or hide myself in a cave.

In vedāntic methodology, bādhaka is any step that negates a previous statement, like the methodology apavāda vākya. By means of a proposition (vākya), we carefully take the individual seeker step by step (padapadam) along to the truth. When she or he takes a step further in his understanding, we deny the previous step, by denying the previous proposition (apavāda). Therefore, once in knowledge, there is no way back. In the light of knowledge former steps have disappeared, you can only go more truthfully. This is how knowledge works. Once a kid knows what an apple is, it sees an apple. Once you know that everything you see is consciousness, everything is just you, with apparent names, forms and functions. Why? Because your thinking is anchored in this knowing. Then it is just so, and you no longer need knowledge. Because you are no longer looking wrong. To get there requires trust, openness, and flexibility of mind. This brings automatic trust, openness, and flexibility of mind.

In vedānta, knowledge (jñāna) corrects errors not merely by negating them, but rather, by sublimating them into the infinitely subtler perspective of brahman, which is called sublation.



For example, we first build up a human being, by describing the five sheaths (kośa's) of a human being. Then it is proven that we are not all those things that we thought we were as human beings. We do this by stating that we are the seer of the seen (dṛg-dṛśya), that they have a beginning (ādi) and an end (anta), and that they are changeable (vikāra).

Thus, we have detached ourselves from them by discrimination (viveka). Then we deny the duality of discrimination, with the following steps. We distinguish between satya and mithyā. This is the next step of negation (bādhaka): all objects are dependent on their real substrate consciousness, so they are not real. So step 1. Because of their dependence they are not separate from it. Step 2. By seeing that mithyā is also satya, just as the pot is clay, and the wave is water. For example, I can start with the gross body and then make myself step by step more subtle in tissue, organs, cells, molecules, atoms, quantum mechanics, space, information, intelligence, consciousness.

The last step of negation is the knowledge that consciousness does not really change into an object, but apparently (vivarta pariṇāmi). There are no objects, there is no manifestation. There is only pure consciousness. Negation can thus be called the dissolution of objects into truth. The ultimate 'step' is, together with all other objects, letting go of knowledge, but that is a natural thing in this phase. It is just immediate being, not an step.

Conclusion: negation, neti neti or bādhā is not simply denying everything. On the contrary, it is very precisely and subtly demonstrating that what is not what it seems to be (objects) are expressions or appearances of myself.

## भक्ति **bhakti**

Devotion, love, respect and reverence, homage, worship. Love for God, is love of God. Since everything is God, also bhakti is in reality non-dual.

In the Bhagavad-Gītā (7.16-18) four kinds of devotees (bhakta) are distinguished. The arti, who turns to God to free himself from misery. The arthārthī, who seeks safety and pleasure. The jijñāsu as a sincere seeker of knowledge of the truth of himself. All three are devotee's because they want something from God, but only the jijñāsu will soon learn that pure devotion is 'love for nothing'. He or she does not need anything in return, and on the contrary, she or he realises that the necessary step to freedom is the surrender of the jīva in love of God. Since everything is love, the invitation here is loving everything and everybody because all are God. So seeing God in everything. It is a bit sad that the

bhakti of some institutional religions is exclusive and not inclusive. What they don't understand is that they are belittling God by doing this.

The fourth kind of devotee is a jñānī (knower), who knows all of this. Loving everything as his or herself, she or he loves automatically. Because it is fully understood that love is the nature of anything.

This kind of love that is called para-bhakti, non-dual love, this is the love of freedom: Pure devotion for and of himself, ātman. This will radiate all-encompassing love in itself.

A jñānī plays games of love. The knower knows that everything is an apparent manifestation of the consciousness that she or he is as the self. Therefore, he loves everything unconditionally as himself. Furthermore, the jñānī plays the other dual types of devotion, because the emotion of love is the most beautiful thing that is manifested. It is the reflection of the glory of himself, of God. Para-bhakti means 'being as good as god'. Mind you, as free consciousness, not as a person.

Because bhakti is expressed through action, it falls within karma-yoga and vedānta states that there is no separate path of bhakti (bhakti mārga) to freedom. For the karma yogī offers all his actions in a dharmic spirit to the divine, īśvara. At the end of his process a true karma yogī has given back his entire life and possessions, including all his thoughts and feelings, and accepts the results of his action. This is pure bhakti. Bhakti is not a separate, distinct path to truth. But we can see bhakti as a qualification for freedom. For it is the love of dharma, of doing good, and the love of dharma is love of īśvara, the divine love for the divine all.

In other words: The highest form of bhakti is ātma vicāra, self-enquiry. The result is namely that which makes beauty beautiful, para bhakti. This is non-dual and the expression of the knowledge that everything is me. Because of this I experience everything as the full experience of the pure love of myself.

We can divide dual bhakti in two. The more exalted form of dual bhakti is meditation (upāsana) or acting (karma yoga) constantly on the fact that the entire universe is a manifestation of Bhagavan (name of īśvara used by bhaktis). This devotee is called the upāsaka or karma yogī. This selfless and desireless (niṣkāma) love for all that is, makes one happy. It expresses the spirit of thankfulness and reaching out. It makes one feel light.

In the more material lower form of devotion there are material and psychic needs and interests, and I do actions out of desire (sakāma karma) for something. Then I am occupied with the world, I do not see that that is also God, and so I isolate myself in an individual who wants something from God, showing myself as a narrow-minded being.

## ब्रह्म लोक **brahma loka**

Highest of the seven heavens. Also known as satya loka. It is said that through extremely good karma you can reach this highest heaven and if you are also lucky enough not to be distracted by all those beautiful things over there, out there you can be taught by Brahmāji himself ☺, so then your ignorance is taken away there.

But this can also be done here on earthly level, bhū loka, so why should you worry so much about it and run the risk that it will not all turn out that way? Brahman is the truth and certainty of myself, here and now. It is absurd to wait if you know that it is already the case.

Brahma loka is the seventh vyāhṛti, known for example from the longer gāyatrī mantra mantra version. A vyāhṛti is a sacred exclamation. Why is this important? Such a sound, such a word expresses a mental level. In the psyche. Brahma or satya loka is thus the highest form of qualification to understand that freedom is never in the future but is already the case. Hence sadyomukti (sadya mukti), freedom here and now. This knowing means immediate freedom from individuality in this life: jīvan mukta.

## ब्रह्मन् **brahman**

The only existence. That which is called absolute truth.

Brahman cannot be expressed in words. But it is fun to philosophize about brahman. First you can say: I am brahman, what or who else must brahman be? We cannot deny that brahman is existence. Existence is that I exist. So I am that existence brahman. Hence the word ātmā or ātman, itself. The word brahman implies the limitlessness of absolute reality, while the word ātmā implies the omnipresence of reality. But it is important to realize that these are just words. Brahman is also the same as consciousness, the same goes for it. There is a subjective experience from first hand, only the objects of experience are not really what they seem to be, but also just brahman, the pure light of consciousness. Brahman is pure, without qualities. It is infinite pure knowledge, and therefore unknown in its apparent possibilities.

The word brahman comes from the Sanskrit root bṛh and means broad. Brah-man then means that which is broad or large. This means that which is infinitely broad or large.

With infinitely large we should not think in relative cosmic terms. We must remember here that it is infinite in its apparent possibilities, without being a speck of non-Brahman. So it can make everything appear, without becoming anything. Unchangeable, therefore. With that the mathematical riddle of infinity or limitlessness is solved. Infinity can be infinite, because there is not really anything, because nothing really happens. And that can express itself infinitely easily in infinity.

The context determines whether the term brahman refers to saṁgha-brahman, brahman with qualities, or brahman without qualities or nirṁgha-brahman.

Nothing exists outside brahman, therefore brahman is non-dual. The potentiality in brahman to manifest we call māyā, also just a word. When māyā is in operation, it is called īśvara (saṁgha-brahman, brahman with qualities). Then brahman apparently takes on qualities. But brahman remains the division less, ever-available, unmanifest reality behind and beyond all manifestation.

We should not confuse brahman with brahmā, the concept of the Creator-God, which as a word and as an appearance is a derivative of brahman. Brahmā is (an aspect of) īśvara. The satya-mithyā lesson must be understood to understand that brahmā is brahman, but brahman is not brahmā.

Brahman is sādharmaṇa, common. It is just the truth because it is infinitely normal. Why normal? Reality had no distinctions. And certainly not about being spiritual or not. Brahman is spirituality. There is no point in talking about spirituality. Brahman is the only conscious being, consciousness itself. And with that, far too much has been said.

### ब्रह्मनिष्ठ **brahmaniṣṭha**

Literally, one who is situated in (niṣṭha) or is permanently certain (niṣṭha) that he is brahman. And therefore, also one who knows that brahman is the non-dual truth of everything. This person will not consider himself a jīva (individual living being). Therefore, one who is established in the knowledge of brahman. In the knowledge that the self is the absolute reality, and who reflects the beauty of this in word and deed. Also called a knower, a jñānī.

It is a desirable quality for a teacher. But a brahmaniṣṭhā is not enough to be a good teacher. Ideally, a guru is not only brahmaniṣṭha but also sampradāyavit, someone who knows the tradition and recognizes it as the source of his wisdom. But the most important quality for a teacher is śrotriya, the capacity of someone who knows the meaning of the scriptures and can communicate them systematically. It is the divine word-scripture

means of knowledge (śabda-pramāṇa) that removes ignorance, nothing else, so the guru needs to be able to wield it.

Sometimes three levels of self-realization are described. Jijñāsu, one who knows that what he or she seeks is self-knowledge and goes for it. Brahmaavid, one who has self-knowledge but has not yet fully reaped the fruits of it. And brahmaniṣṭha. One who is fully established in the knowledge that he or she is full as brahman. He or she enjoys the fruits, is content, experiences no otherness, is fully mindful, spontaneous, and cheerful, because his or her mind reflects full awareness, being, bliss (sat cit ānanda).

### ब्रह्मविद् **brahmaavid**

One who enjoys brahma vidyā, the knowledge (vid) that he or she is brahman (pure consciousness, existence). So a brahmaavid knows brahman, not as an object, but as oneself.

Yet brahmaavid is sometimes distinguished as a stage before brahmaniṣṭha, one who is firmly established in knowledge. After the jijñāsu stage, the conscious desire and search for knowledge and the knowing that it is knowledge that is the key to removing ignorance and becoming free, the brahmaavid comes to know. However, he or she does not yet fully enjoy the fruits of knowledge, such as contentment, cheerfulness, non-otherness, wholeness, limitlessness, etc. This is because there is a period for deep-rooted tendencies (vāsanās) and persistent traces of ignorance (viparīta bhāvanās) to be worked out, exhausted and extinguished

This is an important fact. 'Vigilance is the price of freedom', Svāmī Cinmayananda stated. When I realize what I am, I am not ready yet. Knowledge and ignorance exist on very refined, quicksilver-like terrain. Ignorance can arise very quickly. It determines a thought, a vision in the mind. That is why it is also called the seed or root of ignorance (mūlāvidyā).

Ignorance is faster than its sour fruits, the false human and world views in my mind. Fortunately, a brahmaavid can recognize this in time, and have the knowledge available. James Swartz calls this stage, 'blinking on and off'. As vedāntins we must not become arrogant and lazy. Vigilance means that conscious work still needs to be done. This is contemplation (nididhyāsana): consciously considering myself as the only principle.

When this vision is fully automatic, when I am forever what I am, it is called brahmaniṣṭha, being established in brahman. This is not a phase. One is simply the whole,

and the whole is single. The person who apparently reflects this is content, in love, spontaneous, cheerful, problem-free, effortless, objective, etc.

## बुद्धि **buddhi**

Intellect. The ability to determine, reason, recognize, choose, deliberate, discriminate, decide, will. Along with manas (mind), ahaṅkāra (ego or I-feeling), and citta (memory) one of the four functions of antaḥ karaṇa, the entire inner instrument. Of everything that is available to a human being, the intellect is the most determining function of the subtle body, sūkṣma śarīra. This is because the intellect is 'closest' to the intelligence of īśvara.

A healthy, calm, clear, sharp intellect is the 'cognitive gate' to enlightenment. Hence vedānta is the knowledge that puts an end to knowledge. Everything, the inner and the outer world, represents itself in knowledge in the buddhi.

The buddhi is the function, the only function, where recognition of the self, the ātmā, takes place. It is also the function where its non-recognition takes place: individual ignorance. Enlightenment is only for the buddhi. When the self is comprehended in the buddhi, one sees the buddhi also as an object of knowledge, and one knows that the light of consciousness also makes the intellect shine, albeit as a reflection of the original light of course.

What happens when I react to life in the world? The doubting mind (manas) presents the still unclear input to the intellect, buddhi. The intellect judges it based on what it knows and decides (saṅkalpa) about what to do. This output is determined by your conditioning (saṁskāra), the series of complexes over many lifetimes. The intellect is the centre of interpretation of what comes in and of decision about what goes out. If doubt (vikalpa) of the mind (manas) is dominant, based on confusion about what it is to live in a changing world, one will lead an uncertain life.

When the discrimination of vedānta and knowledge of īśvara's stable laws and values and knowledge of the non-dual nature of reality are dominant and clear in the intellect, it is clear how we should respond healthily to the world. The degree of refinement of buddhi and the intensity of the I-experience distinguishes man from an animal and gives a sense of free will. A refined intellect will have more freedom of choice to act according to the dharma, the blueprint of God. A refined intellect will have more choice and insight to learn from life.

Because buddhi is the place of judgment and decision, it is 'the seat' of dhṛti, the will. Determination or decisiveness, saṅkalpa is a judgment of worth or suitability - 'this is

worth having or doing,' this should be done (or not done)', that runs through every desire and encourages its fulfilment. The decision is influenced to varying degrees by rāga dveṣa's, under the influence of vāsanā's, impressions from the past. Whether or not memories from memory (citta) occur.

Identification with a thought that expresses a desire or judgment, about the body's passage through the world, means that ahaṅkāra (the I-feeling, ego) has arisen, making it 'my will', 'my decision', etc. In this way, buddhi and ahaṅkāra determine the intensity of the will, and how far the desire reaches in the world, which influences the karmic results. Manas (e-motion centre) then sets this will in motion.

Nuance: "The buddhi relates to objects during cognition, but cannot know itself, because it is a capacity, not an object. The buddhi is the knowing faculty, in which jñāna śakti is manifested. However, since it denies ignorance, it cannot be said that it is not recognized. Therefore, unlike a pot, it is neither an object of cognition nor an object of non-cognition." Pañcadaśī 8:23. It is the 'seat' of the knower.

Another way of expressing the above: when the inert buddhi is saturated or associated with the light of consciousness, it is made conscious and the feeling of 'I' arises. And this limited I is then a knower. But limited I is an upādhi, which makes it appear that consciousness, my true nature, is a limited I.

This limited 'I'-thought (aham vṛtti) is also known as ahaṅkāra (the variable false 'I' concept) or jīva (the individual soul). Limited individuality, acting (of course) from a limited, incomplete perspective, yields limited results and thus becomes a saṁsārī, a living entity traveling from birth to birth.

Ultimately, carrying akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna (knowledge in the form of undividedness) in the intellect removes this ignorance, so that one is the wholeness of brahman/consciousness.

One more remark: In the spiritual world, vedānta is seen as intellectual. And indeed, vedānta recognizes and confirms the leading role for the intellect, in everything a person thinks, does, and speaks. Even a feeling does not go without subtle judgement in a person. It is no different. Ignorance is also largely intellect. If we are thinking beings, then let us think brilliantly, enrichingly, elevating. The funny thing is that many people in the spiritual world sing the Gāyatrī mantra. It ends with the following line: dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt, which means: 'May he/it (īśvara) enlighten and inspire our intellect'.

## चित् cit

Consciousness. Pure knowledge. Pure intelligence. Source of all apparent manifestation and at the same time the one, only unchanging reality (also known as sat, existence). ‘I am cit’ Synonym of caitanyam.

There is a difference between consciousness itself and the awareness of something that reflects names and forms of the upādhi māyā.

At the individual level, consciousness shines on the upādhi mind and what we experience is reflected consciousness (cidābhāsa) of the individual, as an individual mirror image.

But the reflected cidābhāsa light is not different from the original cit. There is apparently only an upādhi maintained.

It is like distinguishing water from a wave. Water is always water, regardless of its present appearance as a wave, and yet the wave has an unmistakable existence, but that existence is the existence of pure water.

The ever-present cit is not perceptible as an object. It is the subject and substrate of every object. When objects appear, we can infer cit. Just as a ray of light is not noticed until something interrupts it. But the object itself is also nothing but cit, seemingly appearing as some loose thing or fact.

When fully manifested (via the unmanifested potency māyā), cit is known as (has the status of) the omnipotent, omniscient īśvara. When cit is only partially manifested (via projection and concealment), as in a jīva, it has the status of avidyā, ignorance. Then cit appears partial and incomplete.

Objects without a medium to reflect consciousness are not (self)-conscious but are an expression of and in consciousness. These are the inanimate or unconscious objects. This is because these objects do not have an inner mirror in the form of a subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīra). This is also the case with the unconscious artificial intelligence.

Just to be clear. It is all illusion. Cit is pure and there is nothing else. Because of the infinity of consciousness, a game is played in it, which we perceive. Everything can be reduced to consciousness. Everything is nothing but consciousness, which can apparently express itself, and can cause ignorance in a supposed individual.



## चित्त citta

Memory. The power of recollection. One of the four functions of the inner instrument (the total mind, antah-karaṇa). And therefore, part of the subtle mind (sūkṣma-śarīra). This is the personal database of mind-stuff that remembers fragments of stories about my history as a person in the world, and impressions of facts and trivia.

It is important to realize that feats of memory are also pure information, and therefore neutral. Life in the world that apparently manifests itself in me is a miraculous working out of collective karma.

In fact, only one thought comes out of memory at a time. The film of life is nothing more than an apparent sequence of infinitely fast images from consciousness of consciousness in consciousness, which reflect a life to me.

How can I use memory correctly? By training it with correct knowledge. Then I can have the complete knowledge of reality at my disposal (vedānta). In this way I can approach life with the right non-dual vision and continuously know what I really am (consciousness existence bliss).

In addition to citta, it is important to train the other capacities of the inner instrument manas, buddhi and ahaṅkāra into capacities that facilitate pure clarity. Then I am free, and smile at the power of māyā-īśvara, who with a strange and wonderful ingenuity tries to ridicule me as an individual.

## दर्शन darśana

Literally: Point of view, perspective. Name for each of the six traditional philosophical schools. They all follow the Vedas and are therefore called āstika. From asti 'he, she, it is'. This refers to the starting point of existence self (ātman) of brahman. They are called sāṅkhya, yoga, nyāya, vaiśeṣika, pūrva mīmāṃsā (or karma mīmāṃsā), and vedānta (or uttura mīmāṃsā, final consideration). We prefer to write the word 'vedānta' in a lower case, because it is only a cluster of concepts, which is not the truth itself.

Vedānta does not consider itself one of the darśanas. The reason is simple: The single truth to which vedānta points directly and to which vedānta as a means of knowledge directly leads, includes all other points of view. Therefore, it cannot be part of a list of different schools. Vedānta seems to debate with the other points of view but does nothing other than apply them logically. Vedānta incorporates them into the means to knowledge that leads to the ultimate self-insight of fullness.

Therefore, Vedānta is not a philosophy. I will list three more reasons. First, a philosophy is a theory, which remains a theory, because there are so many theories, and because there is a whole evolution of philosophy. But the teaching of Vedānta does not change, it is fixed because it offers a objective analysis of human experience, ‘from outside’. Vedānta is not a theory, because it itself also states that its intermediate steps are not true. It only claims that they are necessary to come out of ignorance.

Reason two: Vedānta takes your own experience as its starting point. And points to the self-evidence of consciousness. Strangely and funny enough, it needs to be pointed out to us.

Point three: Vedānta is a means of knowledge for freedom. It uses the devotional psychology of other points of view to guide you to the truth and peace of yourself. This type of psychology consists in the first instance of giving away, of surrendering the problematic self-image to the greater. And then Vedānta really gets going. Then the fact will be proven to you with all kinds of logic, that you are equal to this greater. During the inquiry journey, the student reaps growing fruits of wisdom, and his or her confidence grows. The freedom that you now see for yourself is the ultimate prize and also the proof that vedānta is the last knowledge that you can have, because all ideas, all words, are concepts, and not true. Other points of view do not work like that.

Vedānta first distinguishes object from subject, I. Then one identifies with the subject and drops subsequently the object-subject split. Then everything is seen through, as expressions of the self, also all concepts of vedānta and remains the pure being, which always was.

Hence also the word anta in veda anta, end, and the word uttura (last) in uttura mīmāṃsā, as a counterpart to one of the other Pūrva (earlier) Mīmāṃsā. Nothing wrong with pūrva of course, it is the main part of the holy Veda's. It just comes first, as relative knowledge, in preparation.

## देव deva

Literally, that which shines. Fem: devatā or devi. A deva is thus a reflection of the svarūpa (real, true nature) of īśvara, which is the pure light of consciousness.

Underlying meaning: The principle of knowledge and the potential power by which something specific has its existence. Which means a deva is an aspect of īśvara.

All devas form one īśvara or īśvara seems to break down into many different entities. īśvara is thus the whole (samaṣṭiḥ) of the corresponding deva parts (vyaṣṭi's).

In the Vedas, deva is a general term for a natural phenomenon, corresponding to a specific sense (indriya). Devas are seen as specific manifestations of the Lord (usually in the form of laws, such as the laws of optics that govern vision). It can also be the five elements: ākāśaḥ, space, vāyuḥ, air, agni, fire, āpa, water, pṛthivī, earth, according to the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, and smelling.

This can be traced back to the early Vedic period, when the nature religion (seeing elements of nature as gods) of the Aryan nomadic peoples from the North-Western Caucasus region, merged into the unfolding wisdom of the Vedas.

That is why the elements of nature and the sun, and the moon are described as devas. Only later did the entire pantheon of gods appear in the purāṇas. This runs parallel to the increasing complexity of agriculture and urban development. People were distracted, no longer understood the core message of the Vedas, and were told the truth wrapped in myths and stories.

But more complex or not, devas remained expressions of īśvara's power and knowledge. For example, Sarasvatī or Dakṣinamurti, knowledge. Or Lakṣmi, wealth.

Self-inquirers can use devas to meditate on an element of the divine. Bonus: To look in such a way that I see that it is my own light that makes the deva shine.

## धर्म dharma

Literally: That which supports or sustains everything (from the Sanskrit root dhr̥). This evolves into the meaning of that which carries objects according to universal laws.

Layered Hinduism is also called 'sanātana dharma', permanent, eternal dharma.

Dharma in the broad sense is then equal to the divine order of apparent reality. It is divine because it is a reflection of that which is always good śiva, śreya, sat cit ānanda.

The world with all its physical (biological), ethical and psychological laws is the material expression of a perfectly harmonious, radiant order. This order is neutral and beautifully set. The dharma of fire is being hot, its burning quality, the dharma of sugar is to be sweet etc. The dharma of matter is to take up space, or to perform a dance according to strict physical laws. The dharma of a wolf is to hunt other animals. If that were not so, the cosmos would collapse.

But now man. Mankind has a special position in this whole. With the thinking, reflective capacity in the inner instrument, man appears to be able to disturb the harmony, or to see through it with knowledge, which leads to complete satisfaction. What a challenge to be human, what a reach. Capable of the most beautiful, capable of the worst. Of course, animals can also show unbalanced tolerance, think of the trail of destruction that a mad

elephant leaves. But in general, animals do more or less what they do. But what is the individual dharma (svadharma) of a human being? This seems complicated.

But vedānta shows that the svadharma of a human being is simply to be free. Why? Because of our existential alienation, we humans are always looking for meaning. Or at the very least, humans are trying to escape feelings of oppression and bondage. And what does man do then in his ignorance? Man thinks that exploitation of his environment and therefore the earth, yes nowadays even the cosmos, is the solution. While we only have to come out of ignorance. Beings who do not cooperate with the divine laws of the universe act ignorantly, disturb the harmony, and develop bad karma (pāpa). This is the human dharmic tension field: Finding connection with God's dharmic order, by means of 'living well' and then step out of it.

This total dharma (sāmānya dharma or sādharma (ordinary) dharma) is impersonal and applies to everyone. Animals and plants behave quite naturally (svabhāva) according to this order. Nature is a wonderful mechanism, in which everything plays into each other. People are thinking beings (manuṣya). They have the challenge to make choices based on a whole complex of knowledge. A specific form of this knowledge is the ignorance, of functioning as if I am an autonomous, individual, limited being. This gives a feeling of free will. We think that we are separate and therefore have to take care of ourselves and shape our lives. In this way people are able to confirm or disrupt the dharma (think of pointless violence, climate issues). In this way we get people who morally decline and people with a pure heart. The great advantage (prayojana) of right action is that it brings us closer to freedom because a mind without worldly problems, stress, desires, and worries is clear to learn to understand reality.

Īśvara has programmed a sense or experience of doubt and free will into our minds. The doubt to search for truth, and the feeling of freedom of choice to be able to choose it. This choosing is understanding what my true nature is. The doubt to say: The fuss of this life cannot be true (rightful doubt). The feeling of free will is present to step out of the relative order saṁsāra, into the absolute being. Just with one mental step. Just by understanding. That is why this is the direct, immediate way (aparokṣa). That is why it is said that it is the immediate fruit of thought (phala vyāpti, see there) that brings self-knowledge, independent of any image formation (vṛtti vyāpti, see there) about the (outside) world. Why is this the only reason for free will? Everyone knows that we as individuals are complete dependent, both in our minds and in our bodies, on countless factors outside our minds and outside our bodies about how life goes. Karma yoga is proof of this, the devotee mentally returns everything where it belongs: One system of co-dependency. Moreover, brain research confirms that actions are already dictated

before the person is aware of them. The cosmos, a manifestation of one divine dharma, is one gigantic system, and the individual is a micro-cog in it.

In saṁsāra, in mithyā there is no free will. It is a feeling of free will. It only seems that way. All will is a reflection of the 'will' to understand yourself as the reality. To get out of that nagging feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction. As long as I want objects, free will is a sham, because all objects are interdependent in a great cosmic system. There can be no ceiling without walls. A relationship is based on mutual dependence. Self-knowledge can happen independently of objects. This is God's invitation

Dharma and karma go hand in hand in a person. Good karma arises when an action is in line with dharma. Bad karma when dharma is violated. This is how the meaning of dharma as ethics arises. If a little knowledge of īśvara is added, karma changes quickly, from something that drives someone (sakāma karma) to desires to karma for spiritual growth only (niṣkama karma): action without worldly desires.

The svabhāva (calling, individual karma that works out in this life, here and now) of a person can change considerably in one life if one lives consciously, if one practices, and if one makes proper choices towards freedom. From a saṁsārī (someone who lives a worldly life), to a karma yogī (someone who lives a truly spiritual life), to a jñāna yogi (someone who practices self-knowledge). This is the scope in which a human being lives. Self-enquiry is coming from one's svadharma, through the objective sāmānya dharma of īśvara, to the understanding of one's true nature (svarūpa), beyond dharma and adharma.

Dharma is thus the playing field to grow, to mature and to qualify, ripe for the truth. Following the dharma in line with īśvara's creation, brings a balanced life in the sense of puṇya, good karma. Then ultimately the setting will be created that I hear and realize the truth.

This is called the specific, momentary dharma (viśeṣa dharma) of a living being. The jīva is placed in situations, to learn, to prepare for freedom, mokṣa. The situation is then always an invitation to do the right thing. So viśeṣa dharma is situational dharma. What does this situation tell me? What can I learn to understand here?

It is a huge gain when I understand that when I feel bad about something, I am not thinking according to dharma. That I realize that I am not dancing to the beat of god's creation (īśvara sṛṣṭi). That I do not have my karma yogīc mind in order, because I do not accept īśvara results. For that, relative knowledge is also needed, such as knowledge of psychological laws, to understand my defence, survival, and projection mechanisms. If I

see how that works in myself, I can also recognize it in the other. Then I can approach ignorance with empathy and compassion.

Then I relate effortlessly, because I see that the other cannot help it either because of ignorance. Almost everyone lives, to all kinds of degrees, in personal subjective worlds (jīva sṛṣṭi).

But the wise person acts automatically, naturally, and spontaneously in the right way. His or her engine is namely the dharma of īśvara, without him or her having to think about it. The wise person is consciousness. And therefore, whole, and alone. The mind that appears in him is dharmic, and therefore a reflection of that which is always good. The wise man has a mind that experiences no otherness (ananya manasa), and embraces everything and everyone in his bliss (ānanda) within. Then individual dharma (viśeṣa dharma) and total dharma (sāmānya dharma) coincide.

### ध्यानम् dhyāna

Meditation. Meditation is a mental activity directed towards an object. Even if the object is a stilled mind (nirvikalpa-samādhi), it is still an object.

If the object is saguṇa brahma (īśvara), and it results in neutrality and steadiness of mind, meditation is called saguṇa brahma upāsana.

Upāsana is more truthful form of meditation than meditation on mind and body because it is directed towards īśvara (consciousness with the appearance of manifestation in it). So upāsana is īśvara dhyāna. This is prescribed by vedānta to still and control the mind (ātma vinigraha or śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti). Together with karma yoga (for discrimination, objectivity, and a burning desire for freedom) it is the perfect preparation for knowledge yoga.

In upāsana there still is a difference between the meditator and that which is meditated upon. Meditation as such, is a dual activity. But both the meditator and the object of meditation have their basis in consciousness. Here meditation moves towards non-dual contemplation (nididhyāsana). First the meditator's attention is shifted from objects to the subject, myself as consciousness, I meditate on myself as consciousness: nirguṇa brahma upāsana. Then all objects are seen as appearances that are dependent on myself, free, attribute-less consciousness. All so-called objects are mithyā (dependent, non-real) and I am satya (independent, free, and real). In nididhyāsana there is no difference between the meditator and that which is meditated upon. There is non-dual fullness, with the knowledge that this is already pure consciousness. As long as this is practiced it is called

nididhyāsana. When the fullness of being is out of itself, there is no more question of doing anything, not even of contemplating. That is freedom, mokṣa.

Dhyāna and upāsana are sometimes used synonymously. But in general, dhyāna is used somewhat more generally, and upāsana, as stated earlier, somewhat more precisely as devotional meditation to īśvara and all its objects.

Formally, meditation is defined as vijātīya vṛtti rahita sajātīya vṛtti pravāha rūpa saṅga brahma viśaya mānasa vyāpāraḥ. This means it is a mental (mānasa) activity (vyāpāra) whose object (viśaya) assumes the form (rūpa) of saṅga brahma (īśvara), in which all thoughts (vṛtti) that are devoid of (rahita) or other than the intended object (vijātīya) are abandoned and only the thought (vṛtti) about the intended object (sajātīya) flows uninterrupted (pravāha) for a while.

It is recommended to sit formally several times a day to meditate on some aspect of the teaching. With the remark that īśvara is also an aspect of the teaching, albeit the most important one. If the mind wanders, a japa (chanting mantra) helps to bring it back.

Vedāntic lifestyle is meditating with eyes open, in the midst of life, in the midst of action. After all, truth is all-inclusive, so it must be practiced in all facets of existence. Hence the divine yoga of karma yoga. The vedāntin also contemplates with his eyes open in the midst of action and determines everything as an ocean of consciousness. Then at a certain point contemplation ās the self, kicks in:

“Meditation will not reveal ātmā, because the meditator is basically ātmā,” states Swami Dayananda. When this is seen, one is ripe for nididhyāsana, contemplation of self, the nature of reality.

The four hindrances to all forms of fruitful meditation are: kaṣāya (poisonous, unprocessed, emotional problems), laya (lethargy, sleep), rasāsvāda (attachment to silence and bliss of meditation) and vikṣepa (extraversion of the mind).

## गुरु guru

Teacher. Literally, dispeller (ru) of the darkness (gu) of ignorance.

A guru conveys the true nature of the vision of reality. A guru is an ācārya (a teacher with the right constitution and attitude, ācāra) but not every ācārya is a guru. To be a guru, the teachings must be unfolded in a way that effectively removes the ignorance of the qualified student. Furthermore, a guru is more an example of living freedom (brahma-

niṣṭha) than an ācārya (brahmavid). But this is a bit of nitpicking because what matters is the result in the student (śiṣya).

A Vedānta guru knows that only the words of the Upaniṣads, unfolded in the right way in the right order with the right means of knowledge (pramāṇa), will dispel the student's ignorance about himself, the world and God.

The guru can point out the obstacles to the disciplined student (śiṣya), if the student is open to it. It is useful if the guru and student have a personal connection, but this is not necessary. The qualified student (adhikārī), will have to see through this at some point, and recognize through knowledge that the free guru is not something other than the freedom of her or himself.

The Upaniṣads themselves explain that the investigation into the nature of reality, because of its subtlety, may only be done with the help of a guru who knows along which lines the knowledge has been passed down (lineage, sampradāya). This is not only because only the knowledge that is recorded in the śāstra liberates, but in order to understand even one verse of the Upaniṣads properly, one must understand the whole of the Upaniṣads. Therefore, one needs a teacher who is an expert in the scriptures (śrotriya). This is actually the most important aspect of a teacher, because only the meaning of the words, spoken with the right intention, in the right order and completeness, will work on the ignorance of the listener in śravaṇa.

Furthermore, the teacher has been taught by a sampradāyavit (an expert in the sampradāya, the tradition), and has therefore become a sampradāyavit himself. Another advantage of the tradition is the safeguarding of the integrity of the guru. A guru knows exactly what is and what is not expected of him. For example, a vedānta guru will not give personal advice on what to do, he limits himself to transferring knowledge. Also, there is hardly conflict in the vedānta satsang, because of the great attention paid to value practice. Teacher and student are friends, but with the authority of the teacher concerning knowledge.

By strong preference, a guru is also self-actualized as brahman, in other words, self-established as brahman (brahmaniṣṭha). His freedom, independence, self-assurance, and cheerfulness will thus inspire and give confidence to the qualified aspirant.

A feminine form of guru would be gurvi, but that is not used, because the guru (knows that she or he) (is) the neuter brahman (is).



## गुरु शिष्य परम्परा **guru śiṣya paramparā**

Lineage (paramparā) in which knowledge is passed on by teacher (guru) to student (śiṣya), whereby the student eventually becomes guru himself. This is important because a Vedānta teacher does not claim that the knowledge is his. The paramparā runs back in time as well as in the one conscious being to the divine concept īśvara.

Hence a teacher must also be sampradāyavit, knower (vit) of the tradition (sampradāya). The tradition prevents abuses. Such as giving advice to people about what to do. The idea that the ego must be defeated. The idea that the teacher would be superior to the student (they are equal, this is expressed in friendship, sakhī bhāva). And a tradition can, on behalf of īśvara, intervene if a teacher exhibits a-dharmic behaviour.

A clear lineage ensures that the teaching remains complete, unchanged, intact, which is important, because the Vedas and the teaching do not come from people (apauruṣeya), but have come to the seers (ṛṣi's), 'seen' in their minds. Both seer and seen are of course īśvara only.

## हित वद **hita vada**

Auspicious, favourable (hita), appropriate, sensible speech (vāda), which contributes to the situation. So interesting for my conversation partner and to the point. Is the conversation useful and helpful for this moment and for the other person? Am I only talking to break the silence. Am I jumping from one topic to another? Preferably there is a certain continuity of the argument that works towards a solution. Preferably I transfer knowledge, or I investigate something with my conversation partner in order to learn together in a certain dialectic.

Speech is meant to elevate a situation. To bring our knowledge to a more mature level. Preferably such a conversation or monologue is not interrupted by an irrelevant remark or interruption. In this way I can always ask myself: Am I bending the conversation towards something that will bear ripe, positive fruits?

In addition to ṛta vāda (truthful speech), satya vāda (straightforward speech) and priya vāda (loving speech) one of four types of speech in the scriptures on dharma (dharma śāstra), such as the Manu Smṛti (Mānava Dharmaśāstra).

## इच्छा शक्ति **icchā śakti**

Power to desire or to will. An aspect of vikṣepa śakti, the projective power of māyā.

This power manifests itself in a mind in the dhṛti, the will with which a saṅkalpa, a decision about an intention or an action, is enforced. Icchā śakti thus determines the scope of a desire, how binding it is, and to what extent it determines my life, and reaches out in the world. Usually with a disproportionately disruptive force, given the influence of human desire on the ecosystem.

The idea is that desire is sublimated into a desire for freedom. This will help the world in its balance.

## ईश्वर **īśvara**

God. Literally: supreme, exalted, auspicious (vara) lord (īśa). Īśvara is consciousness that seemingly manifests as world and being.

Īśvara is a concept for us devotees to work with, to think ourselves out of the matrix. From the perspective of a living individual, īśvara is consciousness plus a world. Since everything is pure consciousness, there must be an apparent force in (brahman) consciousness. That is what we call māyā. By itself, māyā is nothing. I, consciousness, must be present to activate māyā. When māyā is recognized as something to be worshipped, we call that īśvara. So manifestation is māyā associated with the consciousness that I am. Another way of saying, māyā and manifested īśvara (actually one and the same) are in me. Where māyā is only the mysterious, apparent force, īśvara is equal to brahman, the truth, pure consciousness, which appears to have taken on the qualities of māyā, causing a world to appear. That is why īśvara is also defined as saṅga (with guṇas, qualities) brahman. But formulated like that, it is all seen from the individual perspective. For a jñānī (knower) who sees as non-dual consciousness, there is only Īśvara, consciousness plus false appearance. Then there is no point in calling it īśvara. Seen this way, īśvara is the celebration of being infinite love. A seeming bhakti play, where things simply are what they are.

Īśvara is therefore manifestation of the potency māyā, which consists of all knowledge (sarvajña), all power (sarva śakti). Brahman manifests itself apparently (vivarta) as the entire universe (creation, sṛṣṭi), in all its causal, subtle, and gross aspects. This is only possible because brahman is pure intelligence. In reality nothing happens because brahman is changeless, silent, and full.

A formal definition for īśvara is: māyā upahita caitanya brahma. The pure consciousness (caitanya) brahman as free uncoloured, attribute-less carrier, as underlying substrate (upahita), when recognised and acknowledged (and thus manifested) that it has the inherent, unmanifested creative power māyā.

For the devotional person in us, īśvara gets the role of Lord of All, and is then also called Bhagavān: That which possesses the highest values (bhaga's). As an object of devotion (bhakti) and meditation (dhyāna or upāsana), Bhagavān is then saguṇa brahma, brahman with the highest qualities. For the vedāntin, devotion is an intermediate stage, because it is dual. The pitfall of devotion is that it usually involves the personification of īśvara. In itself there is nothing wrong with that because it brings feelings of happiness. Religious people are often relatively happy. But personification stands in the way of a 100% assessment of īśvara as neutral, necessary for a mind who wants mokṣa. This step from an informal personal idol (iṣṭa devatā), which always listens, to a mature image of god as a neutral order, which does not conform to my personal preferences is essential. We do this with the formal karma yoga (in action) or upāsana yoga (in meditation).

So I will write īśvara with a capital letter as Bhagavān, as something to which my love continuously flows. Then I can see God as my ever-present, greatest friend, I take care of Bhagavān like a baby (Bālakṛṣṇa) or throw my body under his crushing wheels (Jagannātha) or my individual being in it's destructive force (śiva in the narrow sense). Bhagavān is that which takes me into his heavens, which takes care of me, and to which my love can always flow. The disadvantage is that I remain the little one who relates to a Great Personal God. This only becomes non-dual devotion, when I worship everything as myself.

īśvara is in reality completely neutral and objective. Nothing personal, and so we write īśvara with a small ī. It is just one big, consistent machine that lets a world shine within itself according to consistent laws. Why is this important? Since my body-mind is a puzzle piece of īśvara in the whole, I want to let 'his' neutrality reflect in my mind. Although it does not feel like that, the person is also 100% neutrality. Even a physically felt sense of fear, is just a neutral sensation. Why? Because īśvara is 100% neutral, and I am part of that. And, because my consciousness and īśvara's consciousness are the same truth! Advaita, non-dual. Is neutrality boring? No, consciousness-īśvara is -vara, grace in its own, blissful. That there is a difference between nirguṇa brahman and saguṇa brahma is an illusion. It is the difference between the happiness of the small bhakta, and the free bliss of the full jñānī, enjoying apparent life, from a free, objective standpoint.

The duality of religion raises even more problems. The individual who completely surrenders, will live in a state of happiness. But the dual mind of the faithful devotee,

might, when things go wrong in life, start doubting (vikalpa) his or her belief. There are many testimonies of this in all religions. Hence the importance of doubtless knowledge (saṅkalpa).

In case of setbacks, suddenly there are complaints of an unjust, merciless (nairghṛṇya), partial (vaiṣamya) God. But I would do well to investigate carefully why I get back bad results. That I can learn something from it is a blessing in itself. For those who are open to it, adversity can be used as an invitation for a wake-up call.

Generally speaking, it boils down to the fact that I have been living too extroverted a life. Illness or loss are such an invitation to introspection. Those are the moments to be honest and courageous in life. There are legions of testimonies from people who said, that burn-out changed my view of existence. That things initially went downhill, and everything in my life collapsed, turned out to be my greatest blessing. Once we see how this works, we don't have to be afraid of anything. Where does all that blessing come from? Īśvara as the distributor of the results of action (karma phala dātā).

That is the beauty of vedānta. It defines God, by giving it a place in the panorama of reality. Can we define God exactly? Well, in reality, god and consciousness are simply the same. Just as I am simply (sādhāraṇa) brahman. god becomes mysterious when māyā by the grace of the light of consciousness is seemingly set in motion. When māyā comes into action, that is Īśvara. And Īśvara is just a working title that we use to understand all this.

God. Literally: supreme, exalted, auspicious (vara) lord (īśa). Consciousness that seemingly manifests as world and being.

That is the beauty of vedānta. It defines God, by giving it a place in the panorama of reality. Can we define God exactly? Well, in reality, God and consciousness are simply (sādhāraṇa) one and the same. Just as I am simply (sādhāraṇa) brahman. God becomes mysterious when māyā is seemingly set in motion by the light shining on it. Then māyā comes into action, and that is Īśvara. And Īśvara is just a working title that we use to understand all this.

Only then does everything become unusual (asādhāraṇa), and a wonderful moving world (jagat) appears. So we can roughly see god as consciousness plus all possible objects (manifested, vyakta and unmanifested, avyakta, perceptible, gocaram, and unperceptible, agocaram), including the personal subconscious or causal body, subtle body, and gross body.

We can use Īśvara well on our mental journey towards freedom. Firstly, to dismantle the authenticity of my person by dedicating everything to Īśvara (īśvara arpana buddhi). This

is called karma yoga. I continuously remember the divine (īśvara smaranam) in everything I do. I think and do everything discreetly, according to the dharma of īśvara, and receive all results of action in a spirit of gratitude (īśvara prasāda buddhi). By knowing that I am acting discreetly in line (yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam) with īśvara, I join the divine. When I thus remove the tension from my life because I know that I am always cradled in Bhagavān's long arms, and I in turn love everything as Bhagavān, and I tenderly care for the ignorant class of children around me, my mind is ready to understand my nature as consciousness, just as īśvara's nature as consciousness.

So we cannot avoid īśvara's dharma. Because I begin my spiritual quest as a supposed, small person, I must first join the manifested whole, otherwise I only see through the small, while I must see through it all, to become one with it. In this way I come to understand that everything is the altar of that which is always good. Thus, we can conclude that karma yoga is already bhakti yoga is, in honour and equality with īśvara.

Karma yoga and upāsana yoga (meditation) can just as well be called īśvara yoga. We tend to call this 'connecting with god', but a better description of īśvara yoga is: How does the person fit seamlessly into god? How do I walk in line with god? It is nonsense to 'connect' me as a conscious being with consciousness. I have been that eternally already. It is also nonsense if jīva wants to connect with īśvara, I have been a part of that that (apparently) a lifelong or over many lives, if you wish. Just as I cannot jump out of my skin, I cannot jump out of consciousness, and I cannot escape god. I can only contribute to god.

I just have to investigate how I fit into the whole best. You have those halls of mirrors or moving houses at the fair. Both represent the learning process in this life. īśvara (māyā) can be compared to that. If I don't get confused by the mirrors, I come out of the hall of mirrors well, and I had a fun time. And if I bump my head, I immediately adjust. Then I learn and grow. The moving house is next level. The devices with their movements are īśvara. If I move exactly along with all those strange devices, I have had an entertaining journey, and I come out of it unscathed. But if I cannot estimate exactly how I let the body move rhythmically, I am covered in (karmic) bruises. If I could have known in advance that it would not work out, because I am too old, have an injury, or a balance disorder, then I should have estimated that I should not have started it. Then it does not suit me (not my (svabhāva calling, destiny and disposition).

Nobody says that it is easy to estimate 'what the meaning and destination is', and how to let my (svabhāva) flourish in it. Even more subtle and difficult is to see īśvara as a blueprint of my own mind. Action starts with thoughts. Do my thoughts go against īśvara's flow? What is natural, what is appropriate? The investigation goes deep. Which

thoughts create inner friction? People pay a lot of attention to physical health, but a healthy mind is more essential for balance and happiness.

He or she who walks in line with Īśvara has a wonderful life and is ready for truth.

When Vedānta then explains how you relate to Īśvara, so how you are equal to Īśvara and how you are different, you can meditate on Īśvara, and contemplate yourself (nididhyāsana) on your identity with Īśvara as the substrate of appearances, the circle of reality is complete.

How do I do this practically? I see Īśvara as a factor in me and of me. As the appearing superposition of a person and a world in me. I then stand free as the bearer and silent witness of all that, free from any thought about it, as it were embracing and enclosing everything. And I know that all objects are mithyā.

Seers (ṛṣi-tva) must have an incredibly nuanced panorama of reality. It is being beyond god with attributes, it is being equal to god as consciousness, but being full conscious, which consciousness itself does not have since it is attribute-less and thoughtless. That is what makes being human so special, especially the researchers of themselves.

Important: The person, the thinking ‘part’ of a seer, is a tiny part of Īśvara. The qualities of the person and the qualities of Īśvara are not real. What remains is my equality with God as the ocean of consciousness. Meditation on God and contemplation on myself are also actions. They are mental actions. To realize all this I have to go through and complete all these stages of the pathless path. So karma yoga, upāsana yoga, śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana, knowledge is needed.

In other words, Īśvara is generally defined as saṁbhava brahma. Saṁbhava brahma is nirguṇa brahma (consciousness without qualities), once it assumes the temporary status of creator (brahmā), the pervading, maintainer (viṣṇu) and dissolver (śiva) of the universe. When consciousness māyā, the upādhi (something that apparently, not really gives properties to its medium/carrier, the upahita) of brahman, is illuminated by consciousness, the potency of consciousness with māyā manifests in Īśvara. Īśvara is therefore consciousness plus illusory properties, māyā only the illusory potential for properties.

But what I see is not an illusion, it is simply pure consciousness, just like the sense that sees it. Also, the thought that there would be such a thing as separate objects is in itself an illusion, but in reality just consciousness.

Vedānta dares to define god. Because to be the non-dual god, you have to understand god first. So I am not the concept god, but I am god as pure consciousness. Why? There is nothing other than god. And to put all this like this, I must exist, so...

The jīva (consciousness plus a little bit of īśvara) does not exist outside īśvara! Yet, and that is what makes the truth as expressed by vedānta so difficult, saṁbhava brahman is actually no different from nirguṇa brahman, because it is dependent, or better yet, because it is an apparent expression of its substrate. 'Where mithyā (dependent objects) is, there is satya (the independent existence-consciousness), itself.'

Everything, even this language, these definitions, are an expression of that, which can only be myself, because I know that I am. Pure consciousness is therefore also called īśvara. Not everything is god, but god alone is, said Svāmī Vivekānānda.

### ईश्वर अर्पण बुद्धि **īśvara arpaṇa buddhi**

A mind awakened to īśvara surrenders all actions to īśvara. Arpaṇa is translated as sacrifice because its deeper meaning is 'giving back'.

This is of course wonderful. The person recognizes that he/she is in situations that he/she has not consciously created (all created by the divine law manifesting prārabdha karma, karma that already began). I realize that nothing really belongs to me and instead everything belongs to īśvara alone. I recognize that I live sacrificially in devotion as a perso and thus make my life sacred and in line with dharma.

Then I come to know that I, pure consciousness, am free from all of it, and the entire īśvara play is seemingly happening within me. The order that governs all situations is dharma, and dharma is the lord. With this understanding, the person will automatically become attuned to the divine wonder that is the world. Thus, the person comes to live in the altar (arpaṇa) of the world, regarding his body and mind as an altar.

This divine order determines the order of life and what is expected of the person in every situation. A karma yogī acts with the realization of this fact with a mind full of gratitude for all the results that come to him as a gift of īśvara (īśvara prasāda buddhi).

### जगत् **jagat**

The universe, the world. Literally: The changing. The world is seemingly cyclically manifest and de-manifest. This can also be expressed as: nāma-rūpam (name and form). But then names, forms, and functions in a dizzying event.

The reality of the world is a borrowed, dependent, changing, transient mithyā-reality. It has never been born and yet it exists, in the sense of it stands out of and in me, consciousness as consciousness.

Jagat is a product of consciousness associated with māyā and is because it is apparent, material, inert (jaḍa). We call matter dead or inert because it is nothing at all in itself. It cannot be separated from consciousness because it is consciousness. Everything is therefore actually the light of consciousness, even if it does not appear so sensually. The senses play a leading role in misinterpreting the world. All science is based on that etc.

The good news is: I don't have to depend on something (the world), which I know will pass away and has no sustainable status in itself, and where no lasting happiness can be achieved. The lasting happiness is me.

Anecdote: jagannath in Sanskrit means, ruler (nātha) of the world (jagat), and is worshipped in the form of enormous carts. Devotees let themselves be crushed under the enormous wheels, which was an ultimate act of surrender. The English word juggernaut is derived from that. Which means something like merciless, destructive, overwhelming, and inevitable. This expresses that the world is inevitably that which rises and falls. I cannot really rely on the world, even if it physically appears that way.

### जिज्ञासु jijñāsu

Devotee with an ardent desire for the knowledge (jñāna) that brings freedom (mokṣa). Vedānta is the means of knowledge for this. Third of four types of devotees (artī, ārhārī, jijñāsu, jñānī, BG (7.16). The jijñāsu is a karma yogī, who has gained sufficient discrimination (viveka) to recognize that it is knowledge that will surrender his or her doer-ship to the divine field to grow toward the freedom of being itself.

There is a difference with the mumukṣu. He or she has just begun his or her spiritual journey. The mumukṣu is a seeker but does not know what he or she is seeking. The seeker hops from spiritual technique to spiritual technique, or from philosophy to philosophy to free him or herself from his or her sense of separateness. The jijñāsu is a step ahead because he or she knows that it is knowledge that needs to be found. What is the important insight behind this? Well, if I know that ignorance is the problem, I slowly understand that I try to understand what the case is already. Not that I am working towards something that I still have to become. I understand that I am not working toward something that I have yet to become. I must acknowledge at this point that I am living in ignorance.



Next two stages: Brahmaavid. I know that I am brahman, but it is not yet fully developed and accurately available in all situations of my life, in all facets of my being. Deeply embedded habits regularly stand in the way of self-knowledge. I continue to do my nididhyāsana (contemplation on the truth of myself) consistently.

Brahmaniṣṭa. I become firmly and assured in the knowledge. So firmly that I am brahman, and there is no need for firmness and certainty anymore, because there is nothing left to relate to. The knowledge has become direct. Everything is me, pure consciousness. The apparent fruits that are experienced in this way are a natural cheerfulness, contentment, love (non-dual devotion, para bhakti) for everything, no otherness, no fear, fullness, wholeness etc.

### जीव jīva

A living entity (from Sanskrit root jīv, life).

Life is consciousness associated with a causal, subtle, and gross body. Thus, consciousness identifies itself through an I-feeling with the appearance of the body-mind-sense complex. Then I become someone who falsely experiences kartṛtvam (doer-ship) and bhoktṛtvam (enjoyer-ship). A formal definition is: ajñāna upahita caitanyam: [A jīva is] the carrier of pure consciousness with [therein apparently given a sense of limitation by] vyaṣṭi ajñāna, individual ignorance.

Another definition is: A jīva is pure consciousness plus the apparent manifestation of and in consciousness of a reflector (a reflecting medium, the subtle body, sūkṣma-śarīra), plus that which is experienced, the reflection (cidābhāsa). The main point here is: That which manifests is nothing other than that from which it manifests, it is apparent (vivarta) change (pariṇāmi), not real change. Both the original and the reflector and the reflection are brahman-consciousness. Thus, it can be seen and understood that what we experience are only projections and reflections (manifestations) of consciousness.

In both definitions it is important to pay attention to the first part of the formula: Pure consciousness. This is the only truth to a living being, and also to non-living beings. The only difference between a living being and a non-living entity is the presence of an individual subtle body. Knowing that everything appearance is in itself all smoke and mirrors, inert, dependent, borrowed (mithyā), makes me shine as I am.

The reflector and the reflection (the perceived) are nothing but reflections of brahman, which are dependent, which come and go, and which are changeable (mithyā). Reflections are therefore also pure consciousness, but with an apparent upādhi

(something that apparently gives a property to its carrier, the upahita). The essence and the substratum of the jīva is ātmā, the boundless self, just as water is the essence and the substratum of the ocean wave, and just as clay is the essence and the substratum of the clay pot.

It is important to realize that the jīva, the part (vyaṣṭi), does not exist outside īśvara, the whole (samaṣṭi). But not in the sense that a person is just a small piece of god. No, the deeper, supporting reality of jīva is the same as the deeper supporting reality of īśvara. But in the appearance, in the story, īśvara includes all the jīvas.

Brahma satyaṃ jaganmithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ, said Śaṅkara. ‘Brahman is real, the world is dependently real (on brahman), god and the person are not different (both being brahman’.

Similarly, the jīva, who is story-wise a cut-up piece of īśvara, can experience the happiness of devotion, surrender to the greater and get absorbed in love games. But this is not correct. The jñānī knows that the love relationship jīva-īśvara is mithyā, and sees everything as self. Therefore, the jñānī does not lose her- or himself in love games but plays love games consciously.

Somewhere a jīva knows this and the ignorant person who does evil will always have to bite back or suppress the doubt. This is because it all takes place in that which is always neutrally okay. Values simulate the the value of values, namely truth itself. Doing or thinking wrong is deviating from truthfulness. Therefore, such a person has bad feelings. Doing evil out of ignorance of this, means doing evil to oneself.

The jñānī simply lets the devotion for existence take place (in itself). The jñānī knows that she or he already is. This is because the relationship between mithyā and satya is a relationship of substance. Not a relationship of size or quantity. Every single object is reducible to its substrate consciousness. And the substrate is always undivided (akhaṇḍa). Thus, both the true nature of jīva, the apparent part (vyaṣṭi), is the infinity of brahman, just as the true nature of the total (samaṣṭi) is īśvara, the infinity of brahman.

In the story of life, īśvara is all power, all knowledge, and jīva is nihil power, nihil knowledge. Seen in this way, jīva is a nihil piece of īśvara. Certain spiritual teachers without proper knowledge confuse these perspectives. They project īśvara onto their jīva, and thus play ‘The Special or Chosen One’ with powerful qualities and a need for admiration and respect. This comes out of needy-ness and a deep sense of small-ness. Sects are the effect of this. Self-evidently following dharma is the criterium for an upright teacher.

In reality there is only brahman, seemingly manifested through māyā as īśvara. And everything and everyone is the whole, even though it seems that I as a jīva am limited. Understanding this is the fullness of freedom.

### जीवन् मुक्त **jīvan mukta**

One freed from apparent individuality (of 'jīva-hood'), here and now in this earthly life (jīva). Unattached (asaṅga) to the thoughts and feelings of the person, unidentified. From the nature of existence itself. One who knows that his identity is brahman, consciousness, fullness.

One thus who knows the status of his person, as an illusion (magic of māyā) that miraculously appears in his silence. Jīvan mukta knows that the world with all beings appear in consciousness, and that consciousness pervades all beings. Jīvan mukta sees everything as this consciousness and is therefore freedom itself.

This freedom is known by śravaṇa (hearing the teaching), clarified by manana (reflection) and confirmed in life by nididhyāsana (contemplation).

The knowledge of being free is so clear and unwavering to the jīvan mukta that he or she becomes freedom itself. A contentment and fullness that is forever, because it is beyond time and space. Even though things seem to appear, nothing can overshadow him or her.

However, the world will still be experienced. But it causes no disturbance, since it is known as mithyā, dependent and an expression of the self. Knowing that ahaṅkāra (I-feeling) and mama-kāra (mine-feeling) are also only ātmā, both remain fictitious and seemingly operate for transactions with the world.

Because the jīvan mukta has no guilt or regret about the past, nor worries about the future, the present is met with loving, compassionate non-difference, while being naturally completely balanced. There is complete freedom from becoming, and therefore from saṁsāra. Thus, a jīvan mukta has attained jīvan mukti, liberation during life, through knowledge. This gives immediate liberation of the jīva and for the jīva during life in this present life as a result of a change of perspective. The insight that it was always like this, but that I was ignorant of it, gives an immediate result, hence the term sadya mukti (sadya - now, in the present). The sadyomukti is therefore a jīvan mukta.

Jīvan mukta is compared to videha mukti. Videha mukti is the idea that there is only real freedom after the death of the body, for the one with the knowledge that he is not the doer of his karma. The idea is then that his or her subtle body will not reincarnate further. The paradox here is that one thinks of freedom in a future. While freedom is of course already

immediately present, for those who understand it. Videha mukti thus becomes a kind of soteriology, doctrine of salvation. This means that salvation and freedom are near, so in the future, so in time. But freedom is already the case, only we do not know it because of ignorance.

Three requirements or conditions are sometimes mentioned for jīvan mukti. In order to be able to fully be free, the following must apply:

- tattva jñāna – Knowledge of reality (of myself). Main requirement: Knowledge is the only way to see through what our mind and senses mistakenly present to us. Ignorance is namely the problem. Knowledge can only be let go after knowledge. Ignorance is only resolved in śravaṇa, hearing the truth from the teacher, through knowledge.
- vāsanākṣaya – Sufficient neutralization (falling away, kṣaya, of its binding force) of the deep-rooted tendency (saṃskāra consisting of vāsanā s) that maintains saṃsāraḥ. If deep conditionings manifest too strongly, knowledge cannot hold. This is also called viparīta bhāvanā, habitual self-deception. Contemplation (nididhyāsana) on the truth for a long time is necessary for this.
- mano nāśa - Elimination of the excessive influence of the mind. A certain degree of balance and rest in the inner instrument (antaḥkaraṇa śuddhi) is necessary, to give ignorance no chance. Also, the mind itself must be convinced by reflection (manana) of the logic of vedānta. This is because the average person will say: 'It is impossible (asambhava), that I stand alone, and everything is me. That cannot apply to me'. The main difference between the mind of a swami (self-controlled mind) or mahātma (great mind) and someone who sees himself as small, separate, and inferior, is the arrangement of the mind with self-judgments. In order to let go of Vedānta and knowledge, I will first have to have a stable understanding of how things are.

### ज्ञान शक्ति jñāna śakti

At the macro level, the power that carries ‘all knowledge’ within itself. At the individual level, the power to think, discover, know, recognize, and remember.

Jñāna śakti is inherent in māyā, and manifested inherent in īśvara. The quality that belongs to this power is sattva guṇa. This is the power that destroys the ignorance in the individual mind and reveals brahman by revealing knowledge.

But jñāna śakti is also inherent in vikṣepa-śakti, the projecting power, because intelligence provides the concepts that seemingly create and set in motion a creation. It is the ‘total knowledge’ of īśvara, and the ‘limited knowledge’ of jīva.

At the true level, consciousness is pure knowledge. Pure knowledge makes it appear as if something is manifesting, but in reality it remains consciousness – pure knowledge (also called jñapti).

### काम kāma

Desire. Wish that sets mind and body in motion. Kāma is also more specifically translated as sexual lust, but in vedanta kāma is the general force that extracts and deludes me, by pulling me towards the attractiveness of objects, so I am not absorbed in the bliss of myself.

Kāma is caused by ignorance, and the power to wrongly assume that I am dependent on (desirable) objects in the world. Once in operation, kāma is a major driving force to maintain ignorance, because it reinforces relationships with worldly dynamics because happiness is out there, not self-evident in me. Knowledge sublimates a worldly desire into a desire for freedom.

Īśvara can only give the result of saṁsāra when living beings (jīvā, consciousness plus seemingly an experience of individuality) have desires. Thus, desire is the reason and the driving force of life and of the world. And thus, desire is the potential engine of manifestation. Rīgveda (10.129) says: kāmāḥ tad agre samavartatādhi ‘Desire arose in the beginning’. Svāmīs sometimes say it like this because of the laws of karma: ‘Īśvara is forced to give results, because of desires of jīva’.

In reality, there is only Īśvara. Through the apparent duality of Īśvara, the non-duality of brahman shines. In its simplicity, Īśvara must therefore be one closed, energetic-physical system (entropy). Manifestation stands or falls with the fact that ignorant living beings can realize their nature as consciousness. It is a great facilitating game of desires and desire satisfaction with as apotheosis the satisfaction (peace) of the desire for freedom of a person, by cognitively seeing through the game, and the recognition that I am the principle in which everything apparently takes place.

In Vedānta, all perspectives connect. Māyā is the three guṇas, potential for energy. Everything in the closed energy system is in flux, constant change. Change requires a principle, one thing changes into another. This follows laws. Since every appearance is based on knowledge (sattva guṇa), every desire will yield a result. This movement is provided by the power of projection (vikṣepa). Rajas is the type of energy (guṇa) that goes along with it. This brings us to the individual perspective of desire. Namely, a person wants to get out of his sense of limitation, and desires greatness, value, meaning,

certainty, etc. etc. Why does a person desire that? In reality I am infinitely great (the boundlessness, infinity of brahman, which literally means greatness). Due to ignorance, a person thinks that he has to make his individual great. This great misunderstanding produces the most foolish desires and strategies. The problem is that in the dual world, every satisfaction of desire produces its opposite. This can be more desire, addiction, envy of others, fear of losing what has been acquired (yoga kṣema, Bhagavad Gītā 9.22). It is not so strange that people live as if the devil (matter) is on their heels.

In addition to the direct results from the world, kama-karma leaves a trace in the causal body, a so-called vāsanā. This vāsanā will again sprout in the subtle body into a new desire. At birth, people already have a certain package (saṁskāra) of these kinds of vāsanās with them, which seek a route in life to work themselves out. Karma, action, intensifies and renews kama and thus drives saṁsāra. This dynamic is facilitated by īśvara by giving it a context, maintenance of results and end through knowledge.

On the dynamics of desire. If I do not get what I want, the desire gets frustrated. This leads to krodha (anger), confusion (moha) and sorrow (śoka), and sometimes self-destruction (vināśa) (Gītā 2.62-63). A desire begins as a thought. The thought attains the status of a desire when there is a will (dhṛti) behind it (which drives it to fulfillment). The will is the motor that drives the desire to more mental or physical action of the gross body with corresponding mental and/or physical results. Then new karma is born, which leaves a new vāsanā, which generates a new desire. In such loops people are trapped.

Since ignorance is a natural state, desire is natural. But desire arising from tamas (the material guṇa of inertia) degrades a person in life and that hinders spiritual progress. Gradually converting such desires into rājasika desires (by making them discrete and fulfilling them in accordance with dharma) is a step in the right direction. When the rājasika desire is sublimated by puruṣārtha niścaya, the conviction (niścaya) that my human goal (puruṣārtha) is freedom (mokṣa), it becomes a sāttvika desire. Desire formed in sattva is free from deadening motives. It is as good as non-desire and helps clear the path to freedom.

Removing desires is neither possible nor necessary. As explained in the first part, I desire because I am alive, and I live because I desire. That is the wheel of existence. Desire becomes a problem when I fall under its spell, according to Swami Dayananda. When I act from a pure dharmic desire, purely to contribute, with the sole purpose of freedom, that is called niṣkāma-karma. I fall under the spell of wanting, needing desire when I identify with it, when the desire is meant to enrich ahaṁkāra, ego. Then I act from a binding desire (sakāma karma or kāmya karma) and want things from the world/īśvara.

At its core, every desire is a wish to be free from the desiring person. A person seeks peace within himself. The paradox is that people satisfy desires precisely to quiet the pressure of desire in the mind for a moment. The circular movement of kāma-karma-vāsanā on a micro scale goes hand in hand with the cyclical saṁsāra. Thus, a person is a plaything in the divine field of saṁsāra.

Desires therefore work counterproductively. Even in realizing the truth. Initially, a fervent desire for the truth of myself is necessary, but in order to truly be what one already is, this desire must ultimately come to rest completely.

However, the desire for freedom is necessary in order to focus on the teaching. In order to stay with it and to confidently create circumstances that help with the practice. It is the knowledge (!) of these dynamics that removes the sting of desire from the circular movements in which we are trapped. Then I can simply be what I am. Then I can consciously make a choice, and I can see that it is unwise to respond to a binding desire. Then desire becomes an apparent game, which in reality has been extinguished (nirvāṇa).

With insight into the subtle dynamics of something like desire, we see that vedānta, besides being the key knowledge that and how I am free, can also be the relative knowledge that hinders knowledge. If I practice vedānta out of desire to have something noble to do, without seeing that vedānta itself is also an object, that is not enough. I have to apply the right meaning to myself, myself, over and over again. That is real, sincere desire for the free self, the only being that is.

### कर्म योग **karma yoga**

Action yoga, dedicating actions to īśvara (god) with best intention, according to dharma, and accepting results with gratitude.

In this way my personality discharges itself of desire and responsibility, and makes the ego, the doer, milder, and life lighter and lighter. Why light? After the consistent surrender to the greater, through karma yoga, my life becomes a reflection of the light, which I know how to appreciate through self-knowledge after sufficient karma yoga. I am the light of consciousness itself, and nothing else. Karma yoga produces an objective, balanced mind (vairāgya), in which disapprovals and preferences are neutralized, through which I can more easily understand and realize the knowledge that tells me that I am whole, full, and unlimited consciousness.

When I dedicate everything to god, by giving back what I thought I was and what I thought I had, I come to see that everything is īśvara (god). This works especially if I act

according to dharma, the whole of harmonious laws on which the cosmos revolves. In this way I contribute to the divine miracle, which makes me happy. Bad actions (eventually) give disturbing results. Good actions bring me into balance and make the mind calm and steady. In this way I acquire the discipline to prepare the mind for knowledge of the truth (of myself).

Doing good actions is beautiful, but it is only called karma yoga when I worship īśvara with my actions. In this way I internalize īśvara by remembering him (īśvara smarana), in everything I do. With the right dharmic intentions, karma yoga brings me into alignment with everything that is, īśvara. In this way my life becomes harmonious, and my mind peaceful.

To put it slightly differently: Karma yoga is the natural attitude in which all actions are mentally offered, entrusted, sacrificed to īśvara (īśvara arpaṇa buddhi). Since all actions essentially come from īśvara and take place in īśvara, I return them where they belong. To live as a person in īśvara's altar is immense pleasure.

Since karma yoga is devotion to īśvara, there is actually no difference with bhakti yoga. Therefore, bhakti yoga is not a specific path to freedom. The real grace is the knowledge of the function of karma or bhakti yoga (!).

It is elevating to be devoted to your own actions. The five great forms of worship or sacrifice (pañca mahā yajña) of karma yoga are:

- deva yajña - Worship of īśvara, the Lord, in the form of gods, devatās or recognition of the sublime qualities of īśvara.
- pitṛ yajña - Worship of the Lord in the form of ancestors and superiors.
- ṛṣi yajña - Worship of the Lord in the form of seers (ṛṣi's), teachers and scriptures. Also called brahma yajña, after the brāhmaṇāḥ, those who preceded in the knowledge of brahman.
- manuṣya yajña - Worship of the Lord in the form of fellow human beings.
- bhūta yajña - Worship of the Lord in the form of the natural world of environment, plants, animals, etc.

When practiced consistently, the actions of the karma yogī are not in conflict with dharma (dharma aviruddha karma). So the first stage of karma yoga is doing my actions for god, the second stage is receiving the results, a gift (prasāda) from īśvara (īśvara prasāda buddhi), whether it is in accordance with my likes or dislikes or not. That acceptance brings evenness and equanimity of mind (samatva) when results come out of the field.



It enlightens the karma yogī, because he is relieved of stress and responsibility for the results, and it sharpens his discrimination (viveka) about what he can control and what he cannot. So what can I control? That I act according to my best wisdom and ability, and that I gratefully accept lesser results at first sight as a lesson! That is the only way to grow quickly to maturity! Thus, every situation of life becomes meaningful. A great blessing.

This way of life purifies the mind in preparation for knowledge, jñāna, because karma yoga involves control of emotions and modes of thought. Including giving up personal prejudices in the form of rāga-dveṣas, attachments and aversions. Also, I cannot condemn other people's ignorance, because I know that it is an effect of īśvara.

This 'putting dharma first' (following the example of dharma), requires discretion in action (yogaḥ karmasu kauśala), which helps to develop the subtlety of the mind and to become an upright, grateful, cheerful, modest person. This brings dissociation from dealing with sorrow, duḥkha saṁyoga viyoga.

Karma yoga carried to its utmost, and with knowledge, returns the separated individual to where it belongs, īśvara. This is as good as truthful knowledge. When I have given everything away, as 'not mine', I experience the fullness of what remains. What remains is me, pure consciousness. Karma yoga carried to its utmost is as good as enlightenment, because I see that all actions and all results are īśvara. When śravaṇa then takes place in such an open, unagitated, self-disciplined, devout mind, there is little that will stand in the way of knowledge – then there is jñāna, knowledge – and freedom from saṁsāra follows.

So karma yoga involves much more than seva, service in a certain spiritual setting such as an āśrama. Karma yoga is the preparatory means for jñāna yoga, knowledge yoga. If he or she has not done his or her karma yoga well, one has to do knowledge yoga for a long time. So a pure karma yogī is a bhaktī. The jñānī is the one who no longer has to achieve anything with his or her bhakti or karma yoga, but one who purely enjoys love.

For freedom you cannot skip the dharma of īśvara. For the pure mind, knowledge (jñāna) yoga or vedānta is a simple no-brainer. This mind recognizes in the lessons the framework of its own being, and the knowledge unfolds its own nectar. The work of becoming pure is the most difficult. One who does not attain mokṣa must again enter the karma yoga state. This is true for everyone.

## क्रिया शक्ति **kriyā śakti**

Power (śakti) of action (kriyā). The power to act, to make or to do is inherent in māyā, and manifested inherent in īśvara. The quality that belongs to kriyā śaktiḥ is known as rajoguṇa (rajas) and is expressed in vikṣepa śakti, the projective power, the power that seemingly 'throws out' a world, also called manifestation.

In a human being, kriya śakti also implies the power to know, jñāna śakti, and the power to desire, icchā śakti, for an action is preceded by a thought and a desire, a wish, in which knowledge is present. Also, an action needs a saṅkalpa, a proper assessment of the situation and decision what to do.

These three powers, jñāna, icchā, kriya work together in the projective power vikṣepa śakti.

Of course, īśvara is the mechanism for all this. Māyā-īśvara, this amazing universal opera in me. But it feels that I, as a person am doing it. Another reason I am not the doer is that there is no doer. Consciousness (cit) is eternally free of apparent agency.

## क्षान्ति **kṣānti**

An accommodating, appropriate, non-reactive, non-judgmental attitude towards others.

This is a subtle value from the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. Why subtle? Because the other person cannot help it either, and acts according to his conditioning. Not disturbing the other requires an accommodating attitude. Before I know it, I have radiated a judgment (possibly with my facial expression or body language) or given an unsolicited advice, which generally turns out to be counterproductive. Even though I can clearly see that the other person is making an unwise choice, or is saying something insignificant.

So I should only object to someone, if I assess that the other person will understand and is willing to listen. In fact jñānī's (wise knower) are carrying out this value all the time, busy accommodating all day, because:

Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī |

yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneh ||

That which is night for all beings, therein the restrained (the wise) is awake; and that in which the beings are awake, is night for the seeing wise.

Bhagavad Gītā 2.69

Fortunately, this is an effortless endeavour out of self-evident love. Kṣānti becomes automatic for the one who sees love everywhere. And with love I mean the full limitless sameness of consciousness. Love and attention directed towards a detached object can only be true love if love for one object means love for all objects.

### कूटस्थ नित्यत्व **kūṭastha nityatva**

Brahman compared to an infinite, eternal (nityatva) anvil (kūṭastha) on which the world with all its constantly changing forms dances. The anvil expresses the solidity of the unchanging ground that is consciousness/brahman.

There is no way consciousness can be ‘moved’ from its place. Never arising, never passing away. The One, who is its true nature, is like an infinite anvil: of imaginary Teflon, untouchable, imperishable and independent. Like a Blue Lotus or Tefal Pan from which everything slides.

### लक्ष्यर्थ **lakṣyārtha**

The deeper meaning that is needed for self-knowledge and self-realization. It is the underlying intention of the teacher and the tradition that is the means of knowledge for freedom. Since the teacher uses the methodology of apavāda vākya (negating the former teaching in an continuum of subtler and subtler meaning), the meaning slowly shifts. In this way, the listener is led step by step to the truth.

It is up to the teacher to expose the meaning by properly providing the means of knowledge of words (śabda-pramāṇa). It is up to the student to let the meaning do its work on his mind.

This is an ingenious and subtle process in Vedānta because temporarily valid meanings in the methodology are again let go in the process (apavāda vākya). Ultimately everything has to be let go in the freedom of being, even the concepts of vedānta. This continues until the self-inquirer knows that he or she is the only and deepest meaning for himself or herself (tādātmya). Tādātmya means asking the crucial question: What do I take myself to be? This confronts me with the fact that I have to realize the deepest meaning.

## लोक loka

Place. Place where a living being can be.

It means in particular: mental place in the intelligent field. You are no more or less than your thoughts. At what level of suffering and happiness are the thoughts that are presenting themselves to me. At what level between ignorance and knowledge are thoughts in the mind?

Karmically speaking, a loka is the place where the subtle body manifests again, after the death of a previous body. The Vedic way of looking at it is as follows: Of the fourteen temporary abodes, lokas, seven are lower. These are called forms of hell (naraka). They only allow the experience of suffering but not allow doer-ship and are only meant for the exhaustion of pāpa, the result of bad karma. The seven higher loka's are forms of heaven (svarga). Except for the earth, they too only allow experience in the form of enjoyer-ship, not doer-ship, and are only meant for the exhaustion of puṇya.

This is expressed in this way because you cannot escape the effects of causal action. This is simply a law, also for the enlightened. The only difference is that the enlightened one sees that the entire field of cause and effect is mithyā (dependently real, not truly real).

The earth, bhū lokah, our playing field, is an exceptional location. It is the only place where people have a choice, with free will, doer-ship and enjoyer-ship. It is the turning point in the lokas, the point where change occurs (hence the name bhū, becoming). It is the place where puṇya and pāpa can be acquired (and exhausted) and where mokṣa can be achieved, by making proper use of the sense of free will and choice. Actually, pure free will can only be applied by stepping out of the apparent reality, and by realising myself as pure consciousness. Because a person uses his intellect and free will here, I do this by exposing my mind to knowledge. In the field of co-dependency of māyā-īśvara there cannot be free will because it is one (system), in which everything interacts and influences each other.

The heavens and hells are a bit of a simplified system. In reality, these situations are intertwined, and the types of hell and heaven are simply the karmic results that one goes through psychically.

Bhu loka offers the unique opportunity for jīvan mukta, freedom from the person. This is achieved by the realization (knowledge) that I as consciousness am free from the jiva, here and now in this life. Therefore, it is said that a thinking person has good karma in earthly life.

If after death there is insufficient puṇya or pāpa to earn or loose time in (respectively) svarga or naraka, the jīva remains in a sort of unmanifested state like deep sleep until the

next birth. Memories are associated exclusively with the previous physical body and do not continue after the death of the body (except in very rare cases). However, vāsanas, impressions, tendencies, preferences, aversions, psychic constitutions etc. do travel on. Karma will work itself out further in a new situation.

The seven higher lokas begin with this earth, bhū, and are in ascending order bhū, bhuva, suva or svaha, maha, jana, tapa, with satya (also known as brahma-lokaḥ) being the highest. In descending order, the seven lower ones are: atala, vitala, sutala, talātala, rasātala, mahātala, with pātāla being the lowest of them all. The highest of the seven heavens satya loka, is also called brahma loka. Extremely difficult to attain, and it is said that Brahmaṇi teaches you the truth there, so that you become free over there. Vedānta says: Why bother so much when you can attain mokṣa here and now (sadyomukti)?

### मनस् **manas**

Mind, spirit. One of the four functions of the inner instrument (antaḥ-karaṇa). Manas is the basis of feeling and is therefore also called the reflection of the heart in vedānta. The heart symbolizes the self.

After all, everything we call heart takes place in this feeling and emotion centre of the subtle body.

Doubt (saṁśaya) or indecision (vikalpa) resides in manas. That is why a person flies in all directions in life. Incoming stimuli are received in manas and outgoing action is initiated by manas (emotion).

Manas presents the still unclear input to the intellect, buddhi. The intellect judges it based on the conditioning and decides (saṅkalpa) what to do. This output is determined by your conditioning (saṁskāra), the totality of complexes over many lives.

The intellect (buddhi) is the centre of interpretation of what comes in and decision of what goes out. If the mind (manas) is dominant, one will lead an uncertain life. With vedānta dominant and clear in the intellect, it is often clearer how to respond to the world. Because the intellect reflects the infinitely subtle consciousness in its refinement better than manas, buddhi is dominant over manas in a qualified person. This is because buddhi is the seat of crucial knowledge.

The sum of all minds is sometimes called hiraṇyagarbha. Manas is a special manifestation of jñāna śakti, the faculty of knowing, and icchā śaktiḥ, the faculty of desiring. It consists of all kinds of vṛttis, which are constantly changing. So there is

always a stroboscopic switching between vikalpas, doubts, options, and alternatives, until there is a saṅkalpa, decisiveness, efficiency of the intellect.

The increase and decrease of vikalpas can easily result in circles of bad feeling - bad thoughts. This is because a negative feeling gives a negative thought, and a negative thought gives a negative feeling. The well-known downward spiral. The invitation here is to see things neutrally in themselves and to do self-inquiry into my basic self-image. Am I thinking upliftingly or am I thinking in dynamics of self-rejection? A negative feeling about myself is ignorance. I should immediately investigate which specific thought in me makes me feel so bad. I should not look for this in the outside world, which is also simply neutral.

Through the identification with the body and the intervention of the I-feeling (ego, ahaṅkāra) that goes with it, manas divides everything that is presented into 'I', 'mine' and 'not I', 'not mine', thereby attributing properties to the self that it does not have.

An important condition for a life in knowledge is that buddhi controls manas and not the other way around.

## मनुष्य manuṣya

Man. A living being (jīva) by īśvara's grace of having been given a thinking mind (from the Sanskrit root man: to think).

Firstly, a man is a living being (jīva) because of a subtle body, and secondly, a man has a well-developed intellect (buddhi), which distinguishes a man from other jīvas, such as plants and animals. The intellect is such a powerful mental mirror that a man is endowed with the ability to reflect on himself.

The degree of knowledge in the intellect is what a person makes it for what it is. 'As one thinks, so one becomes'. Usually, one is ignorant and considers oneself to be a limited being. If a person knows that one is freedom, consciousness, existence, then one is no longer a person. The thinking of the intellect is the key to self-knowledge which leads to mokṣa, freedom.

Manuṣya lokaḥ, the world of humans, is an alternative name for bhū lokaḥ, the world of beings in becoming by learning, and the world of decay and mortals. This is the level where one works out karma and can understand reality.

The texts (śāstra), f.e. Śaṅkara's vivekacūḍāmaṇi verse 2, point out that it is a privilege to be a thinking being, and an even greater privilege to be a vedānta student, because of the qualification for self-knowledge.

This privilege can be acquired karmically, and not otherwise. It does not come easy to anyone. Grace is earned.

### मिथ्या **mithyā**

Word used to distinguish what is dependently real, in the light of satya (existence-consciousness, I), that which is independently real.

Satya and mithyā are therefore two ontological terms, ways of looking at 'being'. How can I look at reality at an essential level. Both define one reality at a different level, as two different orders of reality. There is only one being, but with satya (absolute) and mithyā (relative) we can express why a world appears in (conscious) being.

All objects (visible or invisible phenomena) in themselves, as limited things, feelings, or thoughts, are mithyā. To exist, they must depend on something, which is conscious of them. No consciousness, no object. Furthermore, all objects have a beginning and an end. This makes them changeable, in constant flux, which expresses their impermanence. An object has an infinitely short span. It can never stand alone. Think of an eroding rock, or a body that has constant cell renewal etc. Everything that is changeable, is mithyā.

Vedānta defines as real, that which always is (satya, existence-consciousness) and as unreal that which has a beginning and an end (mithyā).

Satya is the substrate consciousness, which stands freely on its own, is infinitely present, has no beginning or end and is unchangeable. Consciousness is the only thing that really exists. There had to be a principle for the big bang to take place, there must be a principle here and now to be aware of objects. Satya is existence itself. Mithyā is an expression or apparent manifestation of satya and therefore dependent on satya. Satya is unchangeable, mithyā is everything that is apparently changeable in it. Satya is imperishable, while the objects that we call mithyā as separate things, always perish, expire, evaporate.

Mithyā is defined in two ways: adhiṣṭhāna ananya, that which has as its basis (adhiṣṭhāna) in something else (ananya). This something else (which in reality is not something else of course, but the substrate, the in-ground of the objects) is satya, existence, consciousness. This means again that a separate object has no independent existence etc.

Second definition: *sad asadbhyām anirvacanīya*, that which cannot be expressed in words, even if we try. Sometimes something seems to be this or that, but we can also look at it differently. Thus, all objects appear to be concepts. If I see a sweater, I can also see threads or knitting patterns. If I see threads, I can also see wool etc. A physicist sees nano particles or strings in it, and if he or she has just studied a new groundbreaking theory, he sees the observation in the light of those new concepts. That even in science everything is falsified is typically what the concept of *mithyā* expresses. Things never turn out to be exactly what we thought they were.

The fact that *mithyā* cannot be expressed precisely brings us to the following definition: *Mithyā* is that which is not absolutely existent, but also not non-existent (*sad asadbhyām*). In this way we already sense the elusiveness of *mithyā*.

And rightly so, because *mithyā* turns out to be just *satya*, but *satya* is free of *mithyā*. In this way, non-duality is at best described in words. But this being versus non-being relationship remains a strange, absurd (*sad asad vilakṣaṇa*) relationship. That is why *mithyā* is generally translated as false. By this we mean: The appearances of reality has no existence of their own, but a borrowed existence from consciousness. They are not the objects that the senses (also *mithyā*) conjure up for us, but they are an expression of *satya*, consciousness.

The following analysis confirms and clarifies this and makes the difficult philosophical concepts practical: A table can also be seen as wood, fibres, molecules, atoms, quarks, concepts, information, knowledge, intelligence, consciousness. We can apply this to any material object. Whoever understands the *satya mithyā* relationship, understands the reality of himself: Not a person, but consciousness. In every thought there is a neutral principal present that illuminates it. Consciousness is always the case and expresses itself in objects that come and go.

*Mithyā* is therefore an ontological term (term of being) that indicates what is neither absolutely real nor unreal, but what is empirically, objectively, relatively, and dependently real. Thus, three characteristics are mentioned: What is *mithyā* has a beginning and an end (is impermanent), is dependent on something else (its substrate consciousness) and is subject to change. Therefore, everything that is experienceable can be classified as *mithyā*. Every experience as a separate fact is *mithyā*, because it is actually *satya*.

*Mithyā* is a way of expressing *asat*. Something that depends for its existence on its observer or on its substrate *sat*, just as a perception (an object perceived) depends on its observer, or a golden ornament depends on its substrate, gold. The perception and the ornament are known only when the observer and the gold are present. Remove them and



the perceived object and ornament disappear. The point is: Consciousness cannot disappear, it is existence itself.

Therefore, the knower and the perception in the mind, and the ornament in the world are both mithyā, dependent on reality, not real, but certainly not illusions or delusions. The form itself is an illusion, adhyāsa. An illusion does exist. Illusion just means that it is not what it looks like. An illusion means: it is not what I think it is. And non-existence does not exist, so it is useless to talk like that. At this point it is good to introduce a third order of reality, next to satya and mithyā, namely tuccha: Objects that even are not real in the relative reality. Like horn on a hare, or Middle earth civilisations etc. These are even in the world of objects fantasies, no more than thoughts.

It does not matter for the truth: All objects are simply existence-consciousness itself. Thus, we can see the threatening world, as the ocean of consciousness that I am, in which there is some crazy movement (mental and physical waves). The jñānī does not experience mithyā, only satya. The experience is the bliss of indivisibility, fullness, and wholeness. So a thing has no existence of its own but borrows its existence from existence itself.

If we express this in language, we appear to have to reverse the rules of syntax. A table does not exist (as itself), but existence tables (appears temporarily as a table). Hence the term vilakṣaṇa (strange, absurd, strange, funny) for mithyā.

An appearance in consciousness can thus be seen as (an expression of) consciousness itself. Mithyā is a synonym of mṛṣā, unreal, untrue, and vaitathyam (term by Gauḍapāda, the guru-grandfather of Śaṅkara, used in his Māṇḍūkya Kārikā), untruth.

Ultimately it is essential to realize that mithyā in its deeper reality is satya. It is a non-dual relationship, and therefore not a relationship. 'Where mithyā is, there is satya', in the words of Andre Vas. There is only satya, even if mithyā appears.

## मोक्ष mokṣa

Freedom from the idea of being limited. Freedom from the ignorance-induced false identification with body and mind. Freedom from saṁsāra, the beginningless, endless cycle of birth and death. Freedom from emotional dependence. Freedom from the desiring person. Freedom from the sense of limitation, uncertainty, and insecurity. In short, freedom from dependence on objects.

Why free? Because freedom is the complete objectless consciousness-existence. Infinite, undivided and unbound. This gives the free experience of being whole and full, the only

experience that approximately expresses the attribute-less. So without fears, threats, resistance, or any form of division, being uncomplicatedly okay, because you fully know you are non-dual consciousness, and experience everything like this.

This can only be achieved by the self-knowledge that I am pure consciousness, the substrate, the truth of everything. The thing is, I am already that freedom but am ignorant of it.

Mokṣa is ‘being’ the only principle, which can seemingly manifest as things, which seemingly seems to limit itself, and thus makes individual ignorance possible, through identification with body, mind, and world. In short, mokṣa is freedom from the limitations (and consequent unhappiness) of apparent individuality. It is freedom of the individual, and for the individual. Because the world seems like a hassle, knowledge must be fully internalized, available at any moment. Then at some point the world will for good acquire the status of mithyā (highly relative, because dependent, changeable, impermanent).

It is called ‘freedom’ because I stand completely alone. No threat, no other. When I see that clearly, freedom of the individual will follow.

Mokṣa is also known as parama śreya, the highest welfare, and as saṁsiddhi, the greatest attainment. Again, the realization is paradoxically something that was already so. Therefore, only possible by knowing it.

Mokṣa is not and cannot be an event that takes place in time. For what begins must also end. It is the ever-existing fact that must simply be recognized, acknowledged, and understood as such.

Mokṣa is for the waking state, jāgrad avasthā. In the state of deep sleep (suṣupti avasthā) it is not at all an issue whether I am free. Then I only experience the bliss of consciousness because there are no objects, albeit in ignorance that I am consciousness. In the dream state (svapna avasthā) knowledge that I am free is possible, but this will require a long, deep actualization of the self. Moreover, in the waking state the person is ‘enlightened’ from his dreams, he sees that dreams are fake.

The message of the māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad is that we are none of the three states, but the fourth (turiya), which is not a state of being, but the existence of the three itself, free from its possibilities of expression. All three states are dependent (mithyā) on, and nothing but existence itself (satya).

Freedom comes in two steps:

I. Being free from something: The three states (avasthā traya), the five shells (pañca kośāḥ) of the person, the three bodies (śarīra traya) etc. We do this by distinguishing (viveka), that I am the seer, the witness of it.

II. Recognizing that what seemed to be something substantial, can only be an appearance, manifestation, expression of the self (ātmā) (satya mithyā identity), the only thing that is. ayam ātmā aham, I am that self.

Being alone (kaivalyam) expresses non-duality (not two, one). The only thing I can say with certainty is that I am. The rest is uncertain. All that uncertainty is thus an expression of: 'I am'. All those things that I am free from, are an apparent expression of myself. Thus, freedom is 'I am', without otherness.

The freedom that is mokṣa is freedom from ignorance of what I always was: Existence itself, shining as consciousness.

All that is, is the self (ātmā). When this is seen, misconceptions dissolve, such as misplaced emotional reactions in the form of uneasiness or sorrow (including jealousy, anger, depression, fear, anxiety, regret), which all too often result in inappropriate action, which feeds seeming ignorance even more. All such unhappy reactions leave a residue of unfinished business that perpetuates the cycle of emotionally driven problems and desire known as saṁsāra. A cycle that never ends until it is broken by correct knowledge of oneself and the world.

When identified with the mind, ātmā seems to be the knower of various vṛttis, thought forms, but mokṣa is knowing that ātmā is free from all vṛtti's. Freedom means knowing that any separate concept is 'all fluff and no substance'.

In mokṣa, ātmā is known as the free, uncontaminated substrate of every vṛtti, regardless of the state of mind. Free, but enjoying my wonderfully rich world of experience and appreciating it as divine. In mokṣa, ātmā is known as the unchanging consciousness in every (variable) cognition – pratibodha veditam matam (Kena 2.4).

This means that consciousness is 'experienced' in every experience, but, crucially, not as a specific experience of a specific object! Consciousness is 'experienced' as the unchanging, uncontaminated, full, boundless presence in (the existence of) all experiences. This is also described as the 'simple experience of being itself, besides which there is nothing'. By knowing, in depth, everything is determined as consciousness, after all, consciousness is all there is, and everything is that. Then a wise person reaps the benefits of the tension-free, carefree, full, contentedness of 'I just am'.

In knowledge there is only the presence of the natural, effortless, unchanging presence of yourself, the presence of existence, the only existence. It is the presence that makes

everything shine, that made possible the continuous sense of self, that shined from day to day, from year to year, from early childhood, the adhiṣṭhāna, that turns out to be the support of everything, through which an unbroken continuity or sameness of self is the undertone.

Confusing that continuous, unchanging presence with the ever-changing kārya karaṇa saṅghātaḥ, the body-mind-sense complex, leads to saṁsāra. This mistake is like confusing unchanging water with its ever-changing forms of waves, foam, vapor, etc.

Nuance: mokṣa has two kinds of meaning, a relative and an absolute. First: As a fourth goal of a human being (puruṣārtha) in the sense of ‘liberation’. Liberation from the ignorance that and how I was already free. The three worldly goals that occupy a human being are security livelihood (artha) in the form of money and possessions. Desire (kāma) for experiences that make me special and valuable. And dharma: Good life, the desire to be a good person.

These earthly goals are called preyaṣa, which literally means ‘preferable, loving this above...’. This indicates time and space bound ways to get out of my sense of smallness and inferiority. But this never ends and drives feelings of greed, desire, restlessness, and superiority thinking. I have to keep ‘going’ and doing things to be and remain somewhat happy. Why am I so busy? This is because of the existential feeling (which I am not aware of) that I should be full and complete (because I am), which creates an existential restlessness in me to achieve more. ‘To come home to my natural full being’. In other words, I pursue worldly goals to fulfil my sense of limitation. This leads to existential frustration.

But worldly goals simply cannot accomplish this. Thus, every person ultimately, even after many lives, arrives at the goal of mokṣa. Then he first learns that ignorance is the problem, and knowledge is the solution (from mumukṣutva to jijñāsu). Ultimately, one only comes home to oneself, independent of the world. How simple and wonderful is that? I do not have to do anything, and I do not have to go anywhere to be free. The person in the world keeps appearing, but no problem, it plays her or his feather-light game. Liberation then passes into ‘being what I am’: Freedom as complete, full consciousness.

Because it is only ignorance that is swept away by knowledge, the real second meaning is therefore not liberation, which expresses a ‘becoming’, but freedom, which expresses a ‘being’. It turns out to have always been completely good (śreya). Liberation is still relative to worldly goals: I am free from something. Liberation expresses relativity and duality. But ignorance and knowledge are not dual. Ignorance and freedom are an either-

or, not an and-or. Liberation expresses that one achieves something. Freedom is standing absolutely as myself. A fact that was already the case.

In reality, nothing has ever changed. Because I recognize the status of objects as mithyā (relatively real), I also recognize ‘my entire past’ as never really happening. What changes is a shift in meaning and appreciation in the intellect. Consciousness itself has nothing to do with that. Freedom stands alone. The things that one first thought one would be free from were never real. As a full, conscious, sole being of consciousness, I was always already free, including all phenomena.

### मुमुक्षुत्व **mumukṣutva**

Intense, ardent desire for freedom (mokṣa).

Because a person feels uncomfortable and limited due to ignorance of his fullness, a person becomes a seeker. Every person is a seeker of happiness. But a spiritual seeker tries to see beyond ‘the end of his nose’. Almost everyone tries to get out of feelings of inadequacy. We all develop strategies for this that will determine life. To get out of this feeling of existential homesickness, we undertake all kinds of things. The earth in particular has to endure a lot, because of human dissatisfaction. It is the nature of people to project their restlessness and unfulfillment, and to set up all kinds of worldly strategies of desire satisfaction, with all the consequences for other people and nature as a result. A mumukṣutva discovers that it is freedom (mokṣa), that he or she seeks. She or he is about to discover that it can only be knowledge of his or her full nature, that is the solution. Then a mumukṣutvam becomes a jijñāsuḥ.

In first instance, one adopts all kinds of spiritual strategies and programs. One hears the bell ringing but does not know where the clapper hangs. Because we think that we are a doer, we engage in all kinds of practice and self-help. But the point is that the self cannot and does not need to be helped at all. What we can ‘do’ is to make the mind a bit more mature, balanced and calm. This as a preparation for truth.

Mumukṣutva is mentioned by Śaṅkara as the last qualification in the list of four important qualifications/practices (sādhana catuṣṭaya) for vedānta will work for a seeker. This desire for freedom is the engine of my path to freedom. To recognize the value of the inner work, and the perseverance, one must have this intense existential desire.

The other three qualifications are as follows: If the intellect is subtle enough to separate truth (nitya, that which always is) from untruth (anitya, that which continuously arises and vanishes, objects) (viveka), with appropriate inner distance and neutrality towards

objects (vairāgya) and with sufficient rest and control (śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti) one is suitable for vedānta.

This does not mean that one should not come to vedānta if one is not yet suitable. Almost no one is 100% qualified. What matters is that I realize that I first do the work on my person, until the core message of vedānta effortlessly works on me. And that with the full realization that I practice out of self-love, to elevate myself.

In the traditional setting this was more serial. First prepare a large part of life. Then the truth. In most modern aspirants, self-help and knowledge-practice are intertwined. But in any case, the desire for freedom is necessary. Practice (sādhana) only works when the worldly desire is sufficiently sublimated into the desire for freedom. Then a teaching like vedānta comes my way, which removes the ignorance of how freedom works.

The special desire for freedom arises from the recognition that all desires are in fact expressions of the desire for freedom from limitation and the accompanying sense of inadequacy, vulnerability, fear, and compulsion. This recognition of the underlying motivation to be free will bring with it an abiding dedication.

When I discover that freedom is possible, I experience an enormous relief and confidence is stoked. An unwavering dedication to the quest for freedom comes over me. Why? Because I have recognized that freedom is the great, secret goal of a human being, without my knowing it before! Desire becomes devotion to God, all motivated to help myself (behind this is the identity of divine truth and truth of myself). Ultimately, there is only devotion to myself, even when I help others. Is there anything more beautiful than that? Isn't that wonderful? This devotion must be complete, because freedom is freedom from everything that stands in the way of freedom.

The term mumukṣutva is also used as a preliminary stage for a threefold series of stages of seeking and knowing. In mumukṣutva this is the stage where one does not yet know that it is knowledge that one is seeking. Knowledge removes my ignorance that I am already free. One 'does' everything to find, and flies from one thing to another in the spiritual supermarket.

He who knows that it is knowledge that is sought is called jijñāsu. This aspirant joins vedānta to hear the knowledge. A brahmavid has then understood through knowledge that he or she is brahman but has not yet fully internalized it. A brahmaniṣṭha is finally established in his knowledge of brahman. He lives the fruits of cheerfulness, fullness, infinity, carefreeness, contentment.

## नेति नेति **neti neti**

Literally: "Not this, not this". Sandhi form (sound blending) of Sanskrit na iti, na iti. It is an expression used in various places in the bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad.

It means that I understand that objects (this) do not stand alone, and all point to the deeper substrate of consciousness. If I understand that all things are in themselves an expression of consciousness, I can effortlessly apply 'neti neti'. So it denies everything that can be objectified, physical or subtle.

Saying neti neti is actually saying: This object, that object (iti iti) I am, consciousness, too. But I am not as such, not as a separate object. Separate objects as such I may deny, as being, not what they seem to be.

Because there is no point in denying everything. This only leads to psychic dissociation. First the teaching must be internalized. Then I do not have to deny, but I may embrace in love.

The concept of mithyā is important in this. This means that all objects are relative: Transient, changeable, and especially dependent on satya, the independent consciousness. Because only the self (ātman) is satya, namely imperishable, unchangeable, and independently real, the entire universe as such is denied as not really real. Denial of objects does not mean that there is nothing. No, there is only being. Names, forms, and functions are nothing more or less than borrowed existence of existence itself. Like a dream in the dreamer, like a mirage in the desert, like a wave in the water etc.

All objects are an expression of ,myself, consciousness, the only being, that to which the terms ātman, brahma, sat cit ānanda refer. How? A pot is actually its deeper substrate, clay. All names, forms, and functions, are actually their deeper substrate consciousness. How is that possible? Because all names, forms and functions are nothing but elaborations, concepts of the pure intelligence that is consciousness. And pure full consciousness is you. Tat tvam asi.

Consciousness is unchangeable and is not limited by the apparent forms it can take. Just as an ocean is not limited by its waves, which are no more than temporary appearances within it. By carefully pushing aside everything that is transient and objectifiable (and therefore untrue because it is not really real), the non-objectifiable, unchangeable truth is implicitly revealed.

Neti neti we also call bādha, negating because of it being dissolved in a sublter whole. (Sublimating objects in their true nature, sublating, see abādha and bādha). Lifting up is actually raising the apparent blanket of matter, to the light that it really is, although it did

not really cover me. You do this with knowledge, so simply by knowing that it is so, even if it seems otherwise (ignorance).

This is also how apavāda vākya works, the denial of a previous proposition. A concept can express a truth, but the truth is not a concept, but unknowable, and only what I am. As long as we express something, it is not that, and yet we have to go through the concepts, and discover knowledge, to be the truth.

All in all, it is important to state that with neti neti I do not separate myself from all objects, but that I see that they are all me, myself, consciousness. All objects turn out to be myself. Other people too. Only with a non-dual vision I can easily love everything unconditionally. Because I, consciousness, am all that there is. Objects are also this knowledge. Brilliant conclusion: 'Since the spectre of ignorance is in consciousness, I love it unconditionally'.

### निदिध्यासन **nididhyāsana**

Contemplation. After the means of knowledge vedānta has been heard (śravaṇa) and reflected upon (manana), and (hopefully ☺) understood, I will have to apply it to all facets of my personality. Understanding that and how everything is consciousness, and that I am that, is called self-realization. Correct self-knowledge is when worldview and self-image coincide.

Making this permanent by contemplating it 24/7 is called assimilation of knowledge or self-actualization. And this in the midst of life. This is necessary because ignorance can manifest itself in all kinds of ways.

Contemplation is also described as a special form of meditation, dhyāna, in which the separation or difference between the meditator and the meditated is absent, because the 'object' of meditation is yourself. But I am not an object. So contemplation is not meditation, because meditation has an object of meditation. Contemplation is the truth (expressed by the knowledge of vedānta) living. It is the consistent view that I stand alone as consciousness, and I see everything as the fullness myself.

Upāsana is an earlier stage where dhyāna, meditating on an object or field of perception, becomes meditating on 'all is īśvara', and being dedicated to that in action through karma yoga.

In nididhyāsana I know the truth or the essential nature of myself and investigate how that self-knowledge holds up in all kinds of situations in life. In this way I find out what



my deep-rooted limiting beliefs (viparīta bhāvanā) are that stand in the way of instant knowledge.

Nididhyāsana (didhyāsa, the desire to dwell on ni, well-established knowledge) is only possible after sufficient śravaṇa (hearing the teaching, unfolded by a qualified teacher). Also manana is important (reflecting on the logic of the teaching). Only then is the required knowledge sufficiently established to be worth dwelling on.

Nididhyāsana is meant for removing the obstacles to the full establishment and assimilation of what has already been correctly understood from śravaṇa and manana. That removal is the uprooting of viparīta bhāvanā, competing, deep-rooted, false ideas about oneself, based on identification with body and mind. So nididhyāsana is not meant for acquiring knowledge; that is the role of śravaṇa (and to some extent manana).

Formally, there are two applications of assimilation/contemplation. Both are abhyāsa rūpa nididhyāsana. Repeatedly applying to myself the knowledge and insights I have acquired. This requires careful introspection. I carefully observe and analyse how the knowledge (non-dual vision) affects my relationship with situations in daily life and thoughts and feelings in the mind. Pure objectivity plays a vital role in this because consciousness is 100% pure and 100% objective. It is the continuous recognition of 'being without any charge' of phenomena because the nididhyāsani himself is free, completely peaceful brahman.

This practice is therefore also known as brahma abhyāsa rūpa nididhyāsana. That is the first, most well-known application. This is informal nididhyāsana. But informal is more challenging than the formal form, which is explained in a minute. Brahma abhyāsa rūpa nididhyāsana means to continually, in every situation, remember that it is all me, and how this vision can serve as a basis for apparent interaction and activity. In this way, life will be lived out of the truth of myself. Knowing that I am brahman, my life becomes a reflection of brahman. Abhyāsa is a fusion of abhi āsa, literally: 'towards how it was'. This is not meant conservatively but refers to 'staying with the non-dual vision, of the non-dual reality of myself'.

When this vision is fixed, and I see that I do nothing, but things just simply appear and disappear, I am free. When no more effort is needed, there is no more nididhyāsana. The nuance in contemplation is that there is someone in practice, namely the one who contemplates. Even though 'that I am brahman' contradicts this. This is the joke of this practice. The fruit of contemplation is namely immediate freedom. It gets better when contemplation, the other way around, is experienced as an expression of freedom. The trick is to see through this whole plan as mithyā, not independently real. The knower (jñānī) knows how this works, lets the knowledge be the knowledge, and is all one.

The second form is the somewhat more formal samādhi abhyāsa rūpa nididhyāsana. Here I create a situation in which I formally pause, and at set times, consider what I have correctly understood about the truth about myself. I can do this pausing in a formal meditation setting. This means that I contemplate the non-dual truth of myself in a somewhat more formal position, in seclusion. Normal meditation is meditation on an object. This formal contemplation is focusing on the teaching, which tells me that I am not an object.

Especially for those who, because of unfavourable, restless prārabdha, are unable to derive full benefit from vedānta study, even after long śravaṇam and mananam and practice of brahma abhyāsa rūpa nididhyāsanam, it is useful to calm the mind sufficiently to appreciate the fact that they are brahman. This samādhi abhyāsa rūpa nididhyāsana is a sitting contemplation in which the mind is absorbed in a kind of samādhi, which means that it is absorbed in the understanding gained through śravaṇa, so absorbed that nothing else occupies the mind. Again: The difference from ordinary meditation is that not īśvara but I myself am the object of contemplation. The I see that both jīva and īśvara are appearances in me. I contemplate on the apparent relationship of the person with īśvara and how both coincide in a deeper sense as brahman, which I am (aham brahmāsmi iti, so I am brahman, bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 1.4.10).

When the non-dual vision is clear, and is lived naturally, and both the true status of both ignorance and knowledge are let go, nididhyāsana also ceases.

To complete the festivities of this article: synonyms you may encounter for nididhyāsanam are nirguṇa brahma upāsanam (meditation on brahman without qualities) and svasvarūpa anusandhāna (meditation on my true nature).

### निरुपाधिक अध्यास **nirupādhika adhyāsa**

When a misconception (adhyāsa), mistaking one thing for another disappears after correct judgement takes place, this is called nirupādhika adhyāsa. For example, a rope is mistaken for a snake. When I come to know it is a rope, the snake disappears. This type of mistake is called nirupādhika, because the upādhi disappears (nir) when the correct judgment takes place. The snake, which is only prātibhāsika-satyam, subjectively real, cannot continue to exist if the rope is known.

So these kinds of mistakes are made from a subjective experience of reality. Because I am anxious, I see figures in the twilight of my room, or I mistake a stump in the forest for an assailant (sthāṇu puruṣa nyāya). The other way around also applies: When I am

longing for love, I see other people as objects that will make me happy. But I can only be truly content with myself as the whole of love.

In the same way, I experience the world as real and unsafe. First, I will have to solve the subjective errors (nirupādhika adhyāsa), and see that the world is a neutral divine field. Then, when my likes and dislikes are neutralized, I am ready to solve the error of knowledge (jñāna adhyāsa). Then my mind is receptive enough to know that everything is just a manifestation, expression of the substrate consciousness. The objects will continue to appear, like a mirage in the desert (sa, with upādhika, sopādhika), but I know with my knowledge that they are not real, but just a temporary appearance of consciousness. Sopādhika adhyāsa and jñāna adhyāsa are the same type of error.

### निर्विकल्प समाधि **nirvikalpa samādhi**

A state of absorption or absorption in the self, in which there is no second thing. Literally: The mind, or more specifically the intellect (dhi) is always the same (samā). For non-dualists, samādhi has the meaning of absorption in self-knowledge ‘aham brahmasmi’, I am brahman.

But the common meaning of samādhi is nirvikalpa samādhi. There are no more representations of objects in the mind, no more various concepts (vikalpas), no more mental movements (vṛttis), but the full experience of the presence of existence and consciousness.

Note: There are no (nir) mental objects or divisions (vikalpas) in nirvikalpa samādhi. Just as in deep sleep, the objectless is experienced. But the difference with deep sleep is that instead of the absence of objects, the presence of existence-being is consciously experienced. This is a very subtle vṛtti, because it is an experience of the unmanifested (avyakta), and thus an experience.

Brahman as such can never be experienced. For it is that which makes experience possible. This is the first reason why nirvikalpa samādhi is not mokṣa.

In this type of samādhi the mind is therefore perfectly even (sama) of cognition (dhi), like a completely empty mirror, reflecting medium. But it is still a state of mind. And the mind is simply not the self (reason number two).

In nirvikalpa samādhi no distinction between knower-knowledge-known is experienced, just like in deep sleep. But: Unlike sleep the mind is awake, which means that vṛtti's are possible, and that the state will therefore lead to thinking again. That is the third reason this state is not freedom (mokṣa). Samādhi takes place in time and therefore will end.

Because mind is changeable, every samādhi is transient and cannot be an experience of ātmā, since ātmā is not experienceable. Consider: Waking and dreaming states and nirvikalpa samādhi express a duality (reason number four) because they alternate in the same domain of unmanifested and manifested.

Therefore, nirvikalpa samādhi is reflected bliss, which is mithyā, because it is borrowed and dependent on the original ānanda of consciousness (reason number five). To attribute authenticity to reflected bliss is ignorance, and so this is also considered a subtle vṛtti. One who regularly experiences nirvikalpa samādhis will become attached to them.

Because you can get into samādhi, it is something that is achieved. Whereas mokṣa is the freedom that only is, and ‘always’ was. Even though sleep is technically slightly different, the succeeding duality between waking and sleeping is the same as the duality between samādhi or not.

Some say that the world looks different after nirvikalpa samādhi, but that is not true, because how I see the world depends purely on my knowledge of reality. After you have experienced nirvikalpa samādhi, you have to interpret that experience. And to interpret the experience you have to have a pramāṇam, a means to knowledge. All together, nirvikalpa samādhi is not mokṣa. Mokṣa is the freedom to be free consciousness forever.

In deep sleep (suṣupti) thoughts are unmanifested. In nirvikalpa samādhi thoughts are also standby in potential and will reappear after absorption. The pull of prārabdha karma (karma that works out in this life), brings the person out of nirvikalpa samādhi (or out of suṣupti, deep sleep), and projects the world again. There will be potential, individual ignorance (ajñāna vṛtti), ready to manifest as the old song of a story in a world.

In yoga (aṣṭāṅga yoga), written down in eight steps by Patañjali in the yoga sūtras, nirvikalpa samādhi is the final goal. It is a system to train yourself towards equality of mind. Yet it will never be permanent. One may not sufficiently see that what one is trying to achieve, non-dual consciousness, is already the case. Every experience, every object, is already nothing more than a (temporary) manifested expression of the self.

Aṣṭāṅga yoga is of course useful to prepare yourself for freedom. The pitfall, however, is that the meditator or yogi is so attached to or proud of his samādhis that he or she will not recognize the value of self-knowledge. Conversely, it is quite possible that the jñānī practices samādhis for fun, even if he or she knows that he or she is not the doer. But this is not logical, because the jñānī is always full and satisfied as it is and will therefore not quickly experience a stimulus to feel differently than īśvara suggests to her or him.

This is how we arrive at savikalpa samādhi: Equality of mind with (sa) vikalpas, apparently different thoughts and forms of the world in the mind. This is the apparent

state of the wise. Her or his mind sees everything with open eyes as waves in the same (samā) ocean of consciousness. This seeing is therefore done with the eye of knowledge (also called the third eye). According to the truth, this free wise person is consciousness, and sees everything as the same, because she or he knows it! The experience is then a fullness, contentment, unity. Even though thoughts appear, and a world appears. It is like meditating or contemplating with open eyes. But pure savikalpa samādhi cannot be meditation or contemplation. To see everything equally in the mind, even knowledge (jñāna-yoga) cannot be practiced anymore. The wise man is then simply the whole existence, regardless of what keeps appearing.

This is refined business. Both the knower in the mind and the purest reflection of truth in the mind (akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti) are experienced as not real. In pure savikalpa samādhi one is simply what one is (brahman, consciousness, aloneness), regardless of what happens, and including ‘everything’. The wise man therefore knows that the whole concept of savikalpa samādhi with the appearances of that mithyā is false (dependent, changeable, and impermanent).

Nirvikalpa samādhi is also called asamprajñāta samādhi or nirbīja samādhi.

### निश्चय तात्पर्य **niścaya tātparya**

Perseverance (niścaya) to understand the essential meaning (tātparya) of what I hear in the first stage of vedānta: śravaṇa, listening. And perseverance to logically investigate my own experience in this and to reason out the logic of the teaching in the second stage of vedānta: manana, reflection.

### निश्चयात्मिक बुद्धि **niścayātmika buddhi**

An intellect (buddhi) that knows with conviction (niścaya) what is necessary for spiritual growth and remains therein. The intellect is essential for the realization of living knowledge. The intellect is in ignorance or in knowledge.

In this, the intellect must be strong and determined (niścaya) in its goal of freedom (mokṣa), because the intellect is decisive (saṅkalpa) in what to think and do, and only an intellect that can receive knowledge clearly is receptive to the removal of ignorance.

## न्याय nyāya

Logic. One of the six traditional philosophical schools from the Vedic period (darśana). Focused on logic and inference (anumāna) from sense perception (pratyakṣa).

It attempts to logically create realities that cannot be refuted. It states that our senses provide us with direct awareness of objects. This is related to the Western philosophical concept of direct-, naïve-, or perceptual realism. Reasoning about objects leads to knowledge of them. It states that jīva, the individual being, goes through endless cycles of birth and death.

Vedānta is happy to engage in debate with Nyāya. This amounts to trying guide the interlocutor along the fact that there must be something that makes all logic and conclusions possible, and that that is the truth. The point that vedānta makes is that every conclusion shows an entity that is aware of it. This indescribable and objectifiable entity is the truth of everything. That is you.

Nyāya states that truth is defined in terms of correspondence with facts from empirical reality and that the testing of truth is pragmatic. Knowledge must stimulate fruitful activity.

Nyāya sees the self (ātman) as an individual soul, separate from mind, body, and world. Souls, atoms, space, time, bodies, and world are independent, eternal substances. Knowledge of all these realities, attainable by logical reasoning, is a state of bliss according to Nyāya, and thus freedom (mokṣa).

## ॐ तत् सत् om tat sat

Om tat sat is an expression in which all three words essentially refer to brahman, the absolute reality of myself. On the way, there are nuances.

Om is a sound that symbolizes or expresses the truth of myself, being the radiant fullness of consciousness, beyond which is nothing. It is also called a symbol without members (pratīka). This is because as a primal sound (śabda), belonging to the element space (ākāśa), it symbolizes the link between unmanifested and manifested. Of course it is about what it expresses, what it means (lakṣyārtha), not about the sound itself.

In Om Tat Sat, Om means that all forms of the past, present and future are this single brahman. (This) sound is a primal form that thus symbolizes all forms. Why? Om can also be spelled AUM. A stand for all objects with words, pronounced from out of the throat. U for all objects with sounds in the middle of the mouth (U). M for all objects

expressed by words pronounced from the front of the throat. Pronouncing AUM is pronouncing the entire range of manifestation. This is symbolism of course. We can go on like this, it is a rich symbol. The m $\ddot{a}$ ṇḍūkyopaniṣad states that A stands for waking state, U for dream state and M for deep sleep state. This also means creation, sustenance, and dissolution, which is parallel with (all objects of) past, present and future. The bible confirms this by stating: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Why a sound, a word? Sounds and specifically words, express meaning, and meaning stands for knowledge, and knowledge is an expression of pure knowledge, pure intelligence, that is unchangeable consciousness. Therefore, also the m $\ddot{a}$ ṇḍūkyopaniṣad states: oṃ ity etad akṣaram idaṃ sarvaṃ, Oṃ, the word is all this.

Tat literally means that. It means brahman as the intelligence behind all forms, which is called māyā (unmanifested) and īśvara (consciousness plus māyā manifested). It is all power and all knowledge as an ode to the non-dual reality. Thus, I have the possibility to celebrate the non-dual fullness in the love (bhakti) that I can direct to the lord with meditation (upāśana). Why tat, that? Because the apparent manifestation brings about the divine miracle of a life in a world. It seems to be there, to be that an object, but it is only an expression of myself. Knowledge and intelligence are pure knowledge and pure intelligence.

Sat is brahman in the sense of pure existence (shining as consciousness). I am this existence. The existence itself that makes everything stand out, ‘ex-sist’ (seemingly). These three words express the one that cannot be expressed. Oṃ tat sat takes you from forms to the truth via the only possible link, intelligence. Oṃ tat sat is mentioned in verse 23 of chapter 17 of the bhagavad gītā, and explained in the 4 following verses.

## पाप pāpa

The bad result of action (karma) that is not in line with dharma, the divine universal values and laws. A-dharmic action therefore gives later (currently invisible) a (potentially) unpleasant result (pāpa), which is currently invisible. In other words, every action has an effect. If not immediately, then later.

Pāpa is meant to be learned from. This is the point. For a human being, the universe is a meaningful field to learn from. Can I, as a person, receive īśvara's results as a gift, to learn to attune myself to his honest creation, to become mature and fit for the knowledge that leads to freedom.

Pāpa can be quite directly visible (dr̥ṣṭa phala). If I hit someone, I get hit. It can also be adr̥ṣṭa phala (not directly visible). These are the unpleasant things that happen to us in this life or even in future lives. Mostly they are inexplicable, and we feel injustice. We call it, the ominous fate. Better I can ask myself when I feel bad, or sad, why do I feel like that. Is it pāpa or could it be a weaving error of thinking in the mind that is being showed to me? With this attitude I can initiate an evolution of thinking towards wisdom.

Because I live in ignorance of īśvara, and the true nature of īśvara, like living in ignorance of the truth of myself, life is full of suffering, disasters, diseases, and finitude. I find god, īśvara, the giver of results (karma phala dātṛ), biased or partial (vaiṣamya) or merciless (nairghr̥ṇya). But this is ridiculous. Things are the way they are for a reason. We must develop complete trust. Everything that is empirical reality, is a changing order that proceeds according to perfect laws, which are completely neutral. Laws of karma are also neutral. No dharma in mind in action -> a lesser result. This is difficult to understand for a subjective being like an average human being. All I have to do is accept, with devotion and gratitude what comes (karma yoga). That already makes me happy and light.

Note: If I do not feel sorry for myself and others, I can even better approach and help ‘others’ emphatically and compassionately.

Overall, these insights stimulate us to live in gratitude, acceptance, and surrender. And then we learn: What can I do better next time to grow as a human being, suitable for knowledge. And it also shows that grace (kṛpā or anugraha) must be earned.

## परिणामा pariṇāma

Change, evolution, growth.

I suppose I change because as a person I go from one thing to another, while I am actually unchangeable. The changing person is a superposition. I, consciousness am a-pariṇāma, unchangeable.

A pariṇāmi upādāṇa kāraṇa is a material (upādāṇa) cause (kāraṇam) that undergoes a change (pariṇāma) in the substance or material itself to become an effect. That type apparently takes place in the moving, transactional world (vyāvahārika satya) of īśvara: Example: churned butter becomes ghee, burnt wood becomes smoke and ash, a seed changes into a plant, body and mind go through the stages of egg, seed, embryo, baby, child, youth, adult, old and dead. The situation is always new and can never return to the old. Every cell, and with it the body, changes continuously.



But of course, I cannot build on this changing order. What can I build on? I am the unchanging substrate, on which it is all 'built'. Cause and effect belong here to the same apparent material order of reality mithyā.

With vivarta pariṇāma this is not the case. Vivarta means appearance. Vivarta upādāṇa kāraṇa, is a cause, which does not really undergo a change. Consciousness, brahman, the causeless cause of everything seems to change in the objects of the world. But they are changing appearances of myself, consciousness, not real changes. I, the substrate, remain the same. This must be understood to be freedom.

### परिणामि उपादान कारण **pariṇāmi upādāṇa kāraṇa**

Material cause (upādāṇa kāraṇam) undergoing a change (pariṇāma) in the substance or material itself to become an effect, for example churned butter becomes ghee, burnt wood becomes smoke and ash, a seed changes into a plant.

A human being goes through six demonstrable irreversible stages of life (ṣaḍ-bhāva-vikāra), but in fact change is of course a continuum: Egg, seed, embryo, birth (jāyate), baby (asti, being), child, youth (vardhate, growth), adult (vipariṇāmate, change to maturation), elder (apakṣīyate, decay), and dead. The situation is always new and can never return to the old.

This is the case in the empirical reality of īśvara. Cause and effect belong here to the same apparent order of reality mithyā. This order is called the moving, transactional world (vyāvahārika satya) of īśvara. It is important to realize that these are neutral laws of change of cause and effect. Think of action vs. puṇya (favorable) or pāpa (unfavorable) karma. It is good to know these and play and live with them to have a good life.

Matter never stands still, so īśvara is also the changes in matter. But īśvara is not only matter and its change. Īśvara is the underlying pure intelligence/pure knowledge/consciousness of reality. And so īśvara is also called the effective cause (naimittika kāraṇa) of appearing matter. There is only īśvara, brahman, which is therefore the self. This brings us to the next type of change: That expresses that the whole rataplan does not undergo any real changes.

This is called vivarta (literally: whirlpool, illusion, unfolding). Vivarta upādāṇa kāraṇa is a material cause (upādāṇa kāraṇam) in which another form (vivarta) is taken without giving up its own intrinsic nature. For example, mother of pearl that appears to be silver, or a piece of desert that appears to be an oasis (fata morgana or mirage) but is a desert. Vivarta could be called appearance.

Seen in this way, cause and effect belong to different orders of only one reality. The effect actually turns out to be the original or the cause. It is not the truth, but the sense perception (caused by a force called māyā) that deceives us and so knowledge of the original consciousness that I am is sufficient to bring freedom.

Brahman, independent and unchanging is satya is vivarta upādāna kāraṇam. Therefore, brahman is called the causeless cause (nirmitta nirmāṇa kāraṇa). Phenomena are caused, but upon closer examination they turn out not to be real, but an apparent expression of the cause or ground of it, myself. Effects seem to come from brahman, but this is nothing but brahman itself with name, form, and function.

This non-dual reality, reality (sat) itself is called pāramārthika-satya (beyond or before, para, goals and effects, arthas).

### फल व्याप्ति **phala vyāpti**

The fruit (phala) of meaning that permeates (vyāpti) the mind, based on prevailing knowledge and the experience of immediate insight (aparokṣa anubhūti).

In the mental process of understanding objects, as in sense perception, a mental movement (vṛtti) precedes it. In the sensory process this is a sensory stimulus. The worldly object is seen, and the mind takes on a representation of the object (vṛtti vyāpti), based on the knowledge and conditioning of the specific person. Phala vyāpti is the second mental movement (vṛtti) that then permeates (vyāpti) the mind. It is the cognition of the representation of the object. Meaning arises, depending on how the knower views the object. Now the object has been interpreted in a certain way.

At best this interpretation was objective. Attuned to the neutral empirical reality (vyāvahārika) of īśvara. Then one is qualified to see through the neutral reality and to be the truth. But usually, subjective meaning arises through personal colouring in the mind (prātibhāsika). Then it is difficult to let vedānta take effect. Yoga (qualifications), and karma and dharma yoga are then prescribed to connect with the brilliant order called īśvara.

In self-knowledge no vṛtti vyāpti takes place. This is interesting: In a pure setting, the action apparently comes from the teacher, not from the qualified student. The mind of the receptive, suitable student is open like a mirror, so clear, that immediately the fruit (phala) of self-knowledge occurs: aham brahmāsmi, I am brahman, free consciousness.

So self-realization is only phala vyāpti in śravaṇa (hearing the truth of myself). In this case no karma is created (rather karma is dissolved). The karma of the student is that he

or she understands that he or she must first do the apparent work, to become a mature, dharmic person, in step with īśvara. Then there have been mental movements, namely hearing the teacher's teaching, possibly there was some reflection, manana, with or without the teacher's help.

But again, and again one must return to that pure setting of knowledge that removes ignorance from outside. Only a fairly pure mind immediately accepts the fruit, of the undivided self. Only when an aspirant is a ṛṣi (seer), will the work bear fruit (phala), and is the truth be 'seen', with the third eye of knowledge (the intellect).

As long as it is a thought, it has a form, but the point is that the teaching points directly to the non-dual self. And correctly understood, the subject of the teaching is not an object. So if there is a representation (vṛtti vyāpti) of ātmā, if I imagine brahman in my mind, this is wrong self-knowledge, ignorance.

The correct phala vyāpti is of the nature of akhanda ākāra vṛtti, a thought (vṛtti) that takes the form (ākāra) of non-dividedness (akhanda). Sometimes it is said: akhanda akāra vṛtti, a thought (vṛtti) that takes the form (ākāra) of non-dividedness (akhanda) and formlessness (akāra). It does not matter.

The point is: Because this particular knowledge points to the non-dividedness of myself, I come to recognize that no object, however subtle it may be, is able to be a representation of awareness. No thought (vṛtti) stands, therefore I also let go of phala vyāpti, and stand free as the self. For every thought, even this subtlest thought of thoughts, is also a kind of form, object.

Akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna is, poetically: the sigh of the self, the paradoxical gate of knowledge, of knowing the truth, to the pure being of truth. Correct akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna therefore dissolves itself. Therefore, knowledge is lakṣyārtha, of implicit nature, and therefore, as far as truth is concerned, phala vyāpti does not hold.

For the meaning points in its full glory to the fullness of the self-evident self-standing alone, and so also the fruit (phala) of śravaṇa, in which the mind has heard the teaching and temporarily assumed the form of self-knowledge, will disappear.

Nididhyāsana is an intermediate stage. Deep-rooted tendencies and identifications and disbelief about the truth of oneself, disturb the immediate (aparokṣa) reference to and identification with the self. Then self-knowledge is actively called into being for contemplation. Note: It is always īśvara that plants a thought in an individual mind. This is called grace. Grace is simply allowing the laws and logic of the means of knowledge to take place. Grace also takes place in nididhyāsana, because self-knowledge is

remembered over and over again. This memorizing is like śravaṇa, it will work on the ignorance that has been triggered by a situation.

Then one day both ignorance and knowingness (phala vyāpti) disappear, and one is, what one naturally already was: Ordinary, effortless, problem-free, objectless consciousness-existence.

### पितृ लोक **pitṛ loka**

Place, location (loka) of ancestors (pitṛ, means literary father).

We can only be with the ancestors mentally. Therefore going to pitṛ loka is to bring the mind into a devotional state, into a state of respect. As in performing pitṛ yajña, honouring and respecting caregivers and superiors.

This is one of the five great worships (pañcamahā yajñas), objects of devotion for the karma yogī. Traditionally it is the worship of īśvaraḥ in the form of manes (a Latin term for revered, deceased relatives) by offering rice balls and water, which brings a blessing to the descendants who make this offering.

In modern terms: The worship of ancestors who are the link to my existence. Or the worship of other parties who represent authority such as the government or superiors. This type of worship has a function. Often an undermining attitude towards authority stands in my way to grow up. I want tax advantage, or tax evasion even. Undermining superiors is undermining īśvara, with all the karmic problems that it entails.

Worshipping ancestors is of course one of the ways to surrender to īśvara, that which controls everything. Mentally worshipping everything I am dependent upon, is a way to transform frustration, trauma and anger into forgiveness and love. It is often a turning point for those who had resentment towards, for example, their parents. Ancestors are of course that aspect of īśvara that launched us into this life to gain knowledge. Any devotion or love directed towards an object is devotion directed towards īśvara. And via īśvara I can forgive myself. Forgiving myself is forgiving everyone.

A balanced mind is only obtained if one also shows the necessary gratitude for all aspects of existence. Incidentally, all these things happen in the mind. So all the lokas like pitṛ loka are reflected in the mind.

## प्रक्रिया prakriyā

Method. Literally: 'Something to do'.

What do we 'do' in Vedānta? We follow the methodology.

We cannot deny that there is life, and that a world appears. We know all this from the representation in our mind, which is a meaning-giving instrument. As long as the self-inquirer still experiences that the objects that appear to her or him are real, independent entities, she or he will have to make use of the teacher who repeatedly releases the right methodologies on the mind. Until ignorance tilts and disappears, and non-dual knowledge is firm. As long as ignorance is operating, prakriyā's are needed for realization. So we practice knowledge according to a methodology. Why? Because ignorance also follows logic and methodologies, although deceptive ones. That may be corrected. Suffering is also following a certain logic: 'I am not completely okay, and the outside world is against me'. As long as I experience traces of suffering, it is grace to practice devotion yoga (karma yoga and upāsana) and knowledge yoga.

Vedānta is the knowledge yoga that uses methods of discriminative, analytical investigation (viveka) to correct confusion about ātmā. In general, these methods amount to first imagine that consciousness stands free from the objects that appear to it and then reveal that the objects are nothing but this consciousness itself. A mind that has reached a certain purity after a bit of objectivity and detachment (vairāgya) and a (dual) dissociation through discrimination (viveka), can more easily understand the non-duality of reality (myself). Examples:

- adhyāropa apavāda viveka prakriyā - Method of recognizing a superposition (adhyāropa), something 'placed upon it', and cognitively removing it (apavāda, apa, away from the vāda, proposition, especially the fallacy of the truth of an object or argument), by recognizing its dependent state (mithyā). All objects, even the most unmanifest subtle vṛttis, are superpositions. They do exist but are in reality nothing other than that of which they are a temporary expression, namely the truth of myself: free, peaceful, open, infinite, attributeless consciousness.
- avastha traya viveka prakriyā - Method for the logical recognition of the three states of deep sleep, dream, and waking as mithyā (relatively dependent truth, not standing alone, but an expression of something else). It is recognized that these three states arise in myself, as myself, independent existence-consciousness (satya). The self is then called the fourth (turiya): original consciousness, brahman, ātmā. This is the central teaching of the shortest 'king of the' Upaniṣads the māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad.

- *dr̥g dr̥śya viveka prakriyā* - Method for the distinction of seer - seen. The seer (*dr̥k*) in this method stands for awareness itself, and is invariable and independent, the seen (*dr̥śya*) is variable and dependent. First it is established that the unstable, moving world is sense-perceived and represented in the mind. Then it is seen that the contents of the mind are also moving, unstable and very transient, and perceived by a deeper principle. So I cannot be the mind. Then it is pointed out that the seen is nothing but an effect, manifestation, or expression of the seer, but that the seer is free from the seen. It is good to mention that in this analysis the seer (*dr̥k*) is the silent witness principle (*sākṣī*) that makes everything possible, and not the knower (*pramāṭṛ*) in the mind that interprets. This knower is nothing but a combination of intellect and ego (*ahaṅkāra*), which belong to the seen (*dr̥śya*), as a vain, transient phenomenon. An excellent analysis of this is given in the text *dr̥g dr̥śya viveka* traditionally attributed to Ādi Śaṅkara (or according to many scholars Bharatī Tīrtha).

- *kārya kāraṇa viveka prakriyā* - Method of distinguishing between cause (*kāraṇa*, this is the consciousness, the carrier of everything) and (the apparent) effect (*kārya*). The effect carries its cause within itself. The nature of the change of cause into effect is *vivarta* (apparent). Why? Cause is *satya* (independent existence), *sāra* (essential, substantial), *ekam* (one) and *nitya* (infinite). Consciousness appears to take on a new form (*pariṇāma*), but remains unchanged. It is temporary appearance of names, concepts, functions, and material forms. Therefore, reality is non-dual. A similar method is called *sṛṣṭi* (creation) *viveka prakriyā* (where creation appears to be, in reality consciousness is). The beauty of such methods is that with such a method in mind, everything can remind me of the true freedom of the self.

- *pañca kośa viveka prakriyā* - Method for recognizing and cognitively removing the five sheaths of a living being like man, discussed in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. The sheaths are: *annamaya kośa* (sheath, kośa made of, *maya*, food, *anna*). *prāṇamaya kośa* (life energy, *prāṇa* sheath), *manomaya kośa* (mind, *manas* sheath), *vijñānamaya kośa* (intellect, *vijñāna* sheath) and the *ānandamaya kośa* (bliss, *ānanda* sheath). The important thing is that they are not layers stacked on top of each other, but that according to the reality from *ānandamaya kośa* to *annamaya kośa* the domains seem to interpenetrate each other in their functioning from subtle to gross. For each sheath or layer, it can be shown that I cannot be them as such. Four proofs of this: 1. *Anityatvam*, all the sheaths (*kośas*) are not infinite (*nitya*), but impermanent. 2. *Dr̥śyatvam*, all the sheaths are objects, and therefore perceptible. 3. *Jaḍatvam*, all the sheaths are (subtle or not but) matter and therefore, as such, inert (*jaḍa*), dead material. The body is not aware of me, nor of itself, nor are thought. And: This is a subtle one. Is there sensitivity in my body? Well, there must be

consciousness to be aware of something. So the real living thing about anything, including the body, is consciousness itself. This also applies to the mind. 4. Duḥkha miśritatvam, mixed with suffering. Every shell has some form of suffering or attachment. I, sat cit am ānanda, blissful, so I cannot be the kośas. The conclusion can only be that consciousness permeates all layers, domains, and sheaths, in a non-dual 'arrangement'. Better formulated, all sheaths are nothing but pure consciousness, the only thing that is.

- śarīra traya viveka prakriyā - Method for recognizing and distinguishing the three material bodies of a living being, from the substrate that underlies them. From subtle to gross: kāraṇa śarīra (causal body), sūkṣma-śarīra (subtle body, including the nervous system, where feeling manifests, which falls under prāṇa, energy body) and sthūla śarīra (gross material body). It is important to realize that they are all made of matter. Even though kāraṇa śarīra is only a very subtle vṛtti that permeates the other bodies. The real, shining in all this is sat cit, the untouchable reality, I. The bodies, feelings, thoughts seemingly dance on me, the stable (anvil, kūṭastha of) consciousness. I stand infinitely radiant still.

- tanmātra viveka prakriyā - Method to distinguish the entire material creation from their subtle, unmanifest form. Tanmātras are the five subtle elements space, air, fire, water, earth in their pure un-recombined form. The still pure sattva portions of each tanmātra form the sense instruments (jñānendriyāṇi), the still pure rajas portions form the instruments of action (karmendriyāṇi). Once they start combining according to a certain formula, grosser, manifested forms take place such as mind (manas) and intellect (buddhi) of sattva guṇa, the prāṇas of rajas guṇa and the body and the material world of tamas guṇa. I am the only conscious being, permeating this mathematical play of matter within myself, consciousness.

## प्रमाण pramāṇa

Means of knowledge. A correct means of knowledge is that which produces accurate, doubt-free knowledge of something significant, not yet understood or known, and which cannot be denied by any other means of knowledge.

Vedānta primarily uses all valid means of knowledge, based on or derived from perception (sense perception).

The problem of ignorance is that we humans do truth-finding by the means of our perception caused by māyā. All science is based on sense perception and its derivatives. Vedānta takes the self-inquirer through the logic of all means of knowledge and finally

tells her or him that the truth of the self is not perceptible, because it is the perceiver itself.

This can only be said to me from outside with words that come from outside. What does that mean? The mind of man is not subtle enough to understand the truth by itself, because man lives in the matrix of untruth (asat), and judges everything by perception and its derivatives. What authority can I appeal to? Īśvara, who is all knowledge (sarvajña), while a human being, including our science, is small knowledge (alpajña). So the means of knowledge that comes to me is not of human origin (apauruṣeya). It has previously been seen by the seers (ṛṣī).

Vedānta is called a śabda pramāṇa, a means of knowledge of divine words, a word mirror that with the meaning of knowledge removes my ignorance, so that I can be free to be what I am: Being, infinitely radiant as consciousness. The ignorant thoughts in my mind are also made up of words, so I need other words which invoke correct meaning, to remove ignorance. I cannot make them up with my own mind because I think in an ignorant frame already.

In Indian antiquity there are five more means of knowledge valid. Of course, vedānta also embraces them as preliminary means of knowledge for relative knowledge.

- pratyakṣa pramāṇa - Knowledge by means of sense perception. Is actually always of the nature of sopādhika adhyāsa. This is the wrong attribution of a property to the bearer, which it does not actually possesses, but which nevertheless continues to be perceived: blue sky, bent stick in water, mirage in desert, but also experiencing a body as skin and hair, or the outside, while there is flesh, muscles, organs, excrement in it. It is never what I suppose I see. Everything falls ‘apart’ into smaller, particle subtleties. Parallel to this: I am attribute-less consciousness. All sense perception deceives me. Because I am never a perceived property, even if it seems so, through body, mind, world perception. I am ever free and full. That is why I only trust my senses to relate the body (vyāvahārika) in the world. Thus, vyāvahārika satya is not reality, but what works for the body.

- anumāna pramāṇa - Knowledge derived from direct sense perception (pratyakṣa). Where there is smoke, there must be fire. Another example: A person seems to be irritated, so the person must be under the influence of an emotion. Science is primarily based on pratyakṣa, sensory information. Vervolgens is wetenschap ook vooral gebaseerd op resultaten van instrumentarium en methodieken afgeleid (anumāna) van zintuigelijke waarneming, pratyakṣa.

- anupalabdhi pramāṇa - Knowledge through absence of an object. Devadatta or Jan are not here, so they must be elsewhere. Another important example: Absence of vedānta



knowledge produces the individual ignorance of the seeker, in the sense that the wanderer feels that something is not right, and needs to be found or understood, but he or she cannot fill this in (without a śabda pramāṇa through a teacher).

- arthāpatti pramāṇa - Arthāpatti is a bit vaguer. It is the knowledge that is obtained by postulating or assuming something to make otherwise inexplicable facts or circumstances understandable. When direct observation or inference (anumāna) cannot fully explain a situation, arthāpatti helps to bridge the gap by introducing an assumed fact that logically explains the situation. It is an inference to the best of my ability. The classic example: Devadatta is alive. He is not seen eating during the day. Devadatta must eat at night. In Vedānta, arthāpatti is used to solve the following paradox. Proposition: reality is non-dual. The world is diverse. Therefore, the world must be an appearance of reality. In modern science, arthāpatti is used as follows. Sometimes a scientist has to intuitively discard the least likely choices. This is called ‘disjunctive syllogism’ or ‘exclusionary reasoning’. In our case, it could also be that Devadatta lives on light, or only secretly eats nutritional supplements, but that is less likely. Likewise, once you see how self-evident the self is, it is entirely plausible that the cosmos rests on an underlying, stable principle. But this cannot be proven by the means of science.

- upamāna pramāṇa - Knowledge by comparison. An example: An unknown animal looks like a deer, so it must be some kind of deer. The use of metaphors, allegories in the teaching we could call upamāna. Every example in Vedānta falls short. This is basically because the meaning that the examples point to is always the truth, and that is unknowable, and inexpressible. Vedānta only wants to point out that you are it, and that there is nothing else.

This brings us back to the means of knowledge that we need for the self-knowledge that leads to freedom:

- śabda pramāṇa - Authoritative knowledge from scriptures or authoritative words of the teacher, such as the Upaniṣads/ vedānta. The only means for mokṣa, because I need to be told that I have a wrong self-image. That I am free, pure consciousness. Śabda pramāṇa is also called: āpta (reliable) vacana (words). Why reliable? Because they come from absolute power and knowledge: Īśvara. How do I know that for sure? Because it has set people absolutely free. And because, once its message ‘I am conscious and I exist’ is applied, it, with a bit of extra logic, becomes self-evident. The grand prize of existence is the proof.

Vedānta is thus a śabda pramāṇa, a means of knowledge through implicit meaning (lakṣyārtha) through words that evoke meaning. It is also called a word (śabda) mirror. Because ātmā is not an object of knowledge, no other pramāṇa can reveal it directly. The

self is not even the subject (the knower) of knowledge. It is the truth, the nature (svarūpam) of everything, the subject of vedānta, and because this is infinitely subtle, that you can no longer speak of subtle, it can only be revealed by what the pramāṇa points to.

The means of knowledge vedānta must work on the mind/intellect of the listener in a specific way. It must be systematic, in proper sequence and completeness. In the one that is ready for it, erroneous forms of knowledge (ignorance) will be removed with the true form of knowledge. Then the ignorance of 'I am' disappears. Then the knowledge also disappears, and I 'become' what I already was. That implication points to the ever self-evident, self-evident self (ātmā), which expresses itself in objects (superimpositions), from which I as substrate am free.

### प्रमाणम् प्रवृत्ति **pramāṇam pravṛtti**

Being engaged or involved in (pravṛtti) the means of knowledge (pramāṇam). Actively recognizing the usefulness and therefore consciously undergoing the means of knowledge śabda pramāṇa. The pramāṇa is the means of knowledge to mokṣa by means of implicit meaning of words. This is also called vedānta, coming straight from īśvara, via the seers, upaniṣads (śruti), the later scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gītā (smṛti), to the teachers, to me.

I commit myself to listening unceasingly and faithfully to my teacher in the first stage of vedānta: śravaṇa, and to regard self-enquiry leading to freedom as my primary goal in all my activities. That is the only thing that works. This only works if my mind is open, objective, unprejudiced, without pretensions, in balance, peaceful etc. The right attitude is: 'I will remain with this (niścaya) until I am free, whatever happens'.

Pravṛtti expresses a certain pro-activity, a choice to go for the means of knowledge and to stick with it. It expresses a professional and committed attitude. Half a dedication will not work.

The quality that makes pramāṇam pravṛtti blossom is trust (śraddhā) in the lessons and the teacher. What is this trust? Acceptance that what the teacher teaches is true. A difficult point, but in vedānta it is guaranteed by tradition. In addition to my own dedication, the teacher's behaviour will of course be in line with dharma. But I can only judge someone else's value system if I have healthily adjusted my own value system.

Furthermore, the transmission of the effective knowledge tool advaita vedānta knowledge must be in order and freely available. Fortunately, I do not have to worry about that. Integrity is inherent to vedānta, because the teacher teaches from his freedom, and

therefore selflessly. This is something that may be asked of the setting teacher student. The trust in the teacher and the knowledge tool will then slowly turn into complete trust, in me, myself and I, and I let go of the teacher. Nothing more beautiful than that.

Trust is possible because the teacher has also trusted the tradition that goes back to the divine. What else can you trust better than God, reality itself?

### प्रशान्त (चित्त) **praśānta (citta)**

Calmness of mind. Being naturally cheerful and still (due to vairāgya, neutrality and detachment), under all circumstances. Willingness to let both pleasant and unpleasant situations take their course.

Mentioned as one of the two primary qualities necessary for the study of Vedānta. What happens when one's mind is pacified (upaśamaṁ) and cheerful? Through the relief, calmness and contentment, the bliss of radiant consciousness is reflected in the mind, and it easier to understand why I am the original awareness.

This may also be for the moment being, because a desire has just been satisfied, and the mind becomes still (priya, moda, pramoda). But the latter is not what is meant here. New desires will flare up after the satisfaction of the previous ones.

In this case, peace and cheerfulness mean a more permanent stability. How do we attain that? Through karma yoga. One who dedicates (all actions of) his person and life to the total field and accepts the results that come from the total field, becomes a stable, light-hearted person. Little can disturb such a person. Then the real bliss of being the fullness of pure limitlessness can be unfolded lightly, by knowing it with self-knowledge. Then the feeling of reflected bliss turns out to be the original bliss of the simple fullness of the whole.

The other qualification for an adhikārī (suitable aspirant) is śamānvita: To be endowed or provided (anvita) with or of śama, control of the mind. This control can be obtained by, for example, zen, vipassanā of mindfulness meditation, of aṣṭāṅga yoga. But in the vedānta tradition, especially for this upāsana is prescribed, bringing the mind back from a fragmented, extroverted focus, to a one-pointed focus (ekāgrata) on īśvara. Why one-pointed? Because īśvara is one. This quality trains the mind, to be ready for non-dual knowledge later. When one has acquired these two qualifications, one is ready for self-knowledge.

## प्रातिभासिक सत्य **prātibhāsika satya**

Subjective reality of a human jīva (living being). Coloured, personal, view of the world based on conditioning.

If I do not see the world as an elaboration of all the neutral laws of īśvara, I live in a separate fantasy, private world. I create my own world, as it were. This is therefore also called jīva sṛṣṭi.

This entails all kinds of problems. Desires, fears, preferences, disapprovals, and values are projected onto the world and others. Furthermore, all sensory information is 'coloured and distorted' by my mind. In this way I will live in strong emotional dependence on objects. I will judge situations with preference or aversion.

In order to grow into a mature personality, I will have to attune myself to the neutral empirical or transactional reality of īśvara (vyāvahārika satya). īśvara is nothing more and nothing less than a set of beautiful impartial laws and their effects. That level of reality is also called īśvara's creation (īśvara sṛṣṭi). As a human being I am nothing more than a cog in the whole, meant to contribute dharmically to the whole, which is like dharma itself.

Then I experience the meaning of the objects purely on their function in the story. Only then can I see īśvara's brilliance and know how to appreciate all laws and phenomena. Only then can I recognize ignorance, especially in my own mind. Only when my world of thought is objective, am I fully suitable for the means of knowledge vedānta. We already sense that ahaṅkāra (ego, the misplaced I-experience) plays a much more dominant role in prātibhāsika satya than in vyāvahārika satya. Living in the objectivity of vyāvahārika it has precisely the function, delimited enough to survive.

A problem for assimilating vedānta is that with a state of mind of prātibhāsika satya, I project all kinds of ideas onto the teaching, deny parts of it, or use it to fit into my existing complex of strategies. In this way, of course, knowledge cannot do its work purely on my ignorance.

This is another way of describing that we cannot skip īśvara. We must first attune ourselves to the neutrality of empirical reality.

In the famous rajju sarpa nyāya example of a rope or snake, the 'seen' snake is a subjective misconception and misinterpretation of a (badly illuminated) rope, based on a chronic distrust in my mind. The experience of rope is vyāvahārika satya, the experience of a snake that is actually rope is prātibhāsika satya. As a metaphor, rope stands for pāramārthika-satya, existence-awareness, and the snake stands for an expression of

ignorance. These are beautifully connected in the last line of Śaṅkara's morning prayer (prātaḥ smaranam):

yasminnidam jagadaśeṣam aśeṣamūrtau

rajivāṃ bhujāṅgama iva pratibhāsitam vai

(For the ignorant) the world remains, in that which has no remnant, as a snake is imagined in a rope.

Happiness stands or falls with a healthy, sober self-image. Whether that is the real self or the relative self. In prātibhāsika this self-image will be distorted. For example, it contains general subjective interpretations such as "I am smart/stupid", "She is nice/terrible", "This is taking a long time". In extremis: "The world is against me" is really a thought that people have. Or the other way around: "I am a blessing to the world", which is also nonsense.

As soon as we project values onto the world, we will continuously have problems of inner voice. There is only one value to be projected onto the world, namely īśvara. And this is because the value of values is god or the self. Thus, everything can only be appreciated as existence-consciousness.

Objects as experienced by the prātibhāsikī are formally called viṣaya (binding objects, usually loved ones around us). Objects as named by the vyāvahārikī are formally called padārtha (non-binding objects).

Thus, we arrive at the third level of reality. The status of both prātibhāsika satya and vyāvahārika satya are understood by the wise who understands that and how mithyā (dependent) is actually satya (independent). This non-objectifiable truth (consciousness) is ātman, the self, and is called in this system of three pāramārthika satya. This literally means beyond (pāram) goals and objects (ārthāḥ). Pāramārthika satya expresses the reality of the one who knows that he or she is brahman, free from prātibhāsika jīva and vyāvahārika īśvara.

### प्रतिपक्ष भावना **pratipakṣa bhāvanā**

Technique to make neutralize the mind, by imagining the opposite (pratipakṣa) wholesome, helpful meaning, thought or attitude (bhāvanā) and possibly practicing an opposite strategy. There is a whole psychology behind this.

Why do I have to do this? If I am unhappy about something for a long time, the strategies I have devised myself apparently do not work. Every therapy stands or falls by the

recognition that I could not figure it out myself and ask for help. In this case I ask for help by practicing the radical opposite. In this way I always know what I have to do, and I can transform quickly. If I am tormented by hatred towards someone, I am brave enough to put love on it.

Cognitive therapy also makes use of this by looking for the oppressive thought at the root, and replacing it with a healthy, constructive thought.

This expresses that Vedānta looks at the mind as a neutral instrument to guide the body through the world in love, and ultimately to teach me to think out of the matrix of ignorance.

I use the extremely effective technique of pratipakṣa bhāvanā when I unjustly judge or think something destructive. It is also an effective tool for a binding desire or irrational fear.

This technique is usually applied to convert negativity into positivity, but this is not necessary. An overly inflated self-image ('if it is difficult to remain modest') can also produce obstructive pride, arrogance, and pretension.

It is about neutralizing the mind in line with objective empirical reality, as a stepping stone to freedom. In fact, it is about arriving at value zero, by playing the dualistic poles off against each other within myself. The fact that we can make a mathematical equation of it is proof of the objective nature of reality. It requires a lot of willpower. But it is liberating and equanimous when I start to achieve results.

How do I do it? Just very straight and practical. If a preference, desire or even addiction clearly sabotages my development, I will temporarily practice an aversion to it. For example, I drink far too much coffee, then I consciously think: 'Damn, that is actually a disgusting black stuff!'. I imagine the person who seems to bother me the most and meditate on my love and attention for her or him. If I am afraid of spiders, I go for them. I take the spider in my hand, and see that nothing happens, except for a bit of tickling. After a while I exclaim: 'How is it possible that I was afraid of that!'. This is a tried and tested fear therapy. People with a fear of flying are stimulated to go flying. Likewise: If I think I don't understand something, even if it seems important to me, I still go for it. At some point I forget that I did not know.

Often the wrong values get in my way. So this method can also be applied to practising the opposite value. It helps to bring destructive values such as greed or jealousy to light and to actively practice generosity or a favour factor. After all, every glory of someone is īśvara's glory. This can be done with every value. A well-known example is forgiving

your parents for a supposed bad or mean upbringing or neglect etc. You don't forgive them for their sake, you want to get rid of the poison inside yourself!

In this way, when I have an unfavourable emotion or tendency, I can deliberately cultivate an emotion or tendency that is the opposite of it. Who wants to carry mental poison with them for a long time? So it is a form of meditation, by consciously and mindfully recognizing the destructive thought. If necessary, I call for help. Or at the very least, I can listen well to feedback from people I trust.

To draw strength, it helps enormously to call upon īśvara in prayer. After all, īśvara is all knowledge, and so I use 'his' knowledge in recognizing the limiting, destructive pattern. īśvara is also all power, and so I also tap into 'his' barrel to wade through the destructive parts of my viscous conditioning, and simply see things, neutral as they are.

A just god only expresses that the entire practical field simply does its work consistently. If I feel bad, that is purely an invitation to look differently. Then I will have a wonderful life. Righteousness (dharma) is so exactly in line with straight fullness (ārjava).

Life is meant to be learned from. In doing so, I do not have to shy away from occasionally giving the mind a tough time. Only then will I see that the mind is neutral, and not myself. The mind, and its material instrument the brain, are very malleable and changeable. By listening well to īśvara's message, I can become a completely different person in one life, ready for freedom!

Loving and kind instead of being hostile, admiring instead of jealous, confident instead of insecure.

Consistent application of well-chosen strategies will fade away bad, belittling thoughts and habits, by creating others who counteract and displace them, so that wholesome habits can overcome unwholesome habits.

This is an efficient way to turn my obstructive conditioning into suitable conditioning for knowledge. While this practice is helpful in dealing with rāga-dveṣas and their associated emotions, it is ultimately intended to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the neutral transactional world (vyāvahārika-satya) of īśvara. That level of reality is also called īśvara's creation (īśvara sṛṣṭi).

Pratipakṣa bhāvanā is applied by one to one's own mind. A similar technique is also used by teachers, by using a dissenting viewpoint by someone else (the pūrvapakṣī) in the satsang, who provides comments. In texts, such an opposing, dissenting objector (pūrvapakṣī) is introduced by the writer himself. Then it says 'objection,...' Ādi Śaṅkara used this frequently.

### प्रवह नित्यत्व **pravāha nityatva**

Brahman compared to an infinite (nityatva) stream (pravāha) of changing appearances/expressions of brahman, me (ātman).

Thus I abide as if the world were flowing through me like a river (yadi lokah nadīvat mayā pravahati).

Beautiful comparisons, comparable to ‘ocean of consciousness’ (caitanya sāgara).

### प्रेयस् **preyas**

Literally: Desirable, dear, pleasant.

In Vedānta, preyas refers to the three earthly, useful, relative, time-bound goals. These are artha, security of existence, self-preservation. Kāma, desire for possessions and pleasure. The current decadence of spoiled leisure activities leisure. Dharma, good works/ethical life. De wereld verbeteren om me zinvol te voelen en om mijn zelfwaardering op te krikken. So preyas refers to relatively, temporary happiness.

Ordinary mortals are generally occupied with satisfying the goals of preyas. They revolve endlessly in saṁsāra. Gradually, some recognize the deficiency in this. They become seekers of meaning. The fortunate ones who recognize what the problem is, eventually come to Vedānta. There they are told that happiness can never come from an object. When the desire for any of the three goals is satisfied, my own happiness is temporarily discovered (reflected), because my restless mind pauses for a moment. What is really happening here? Happiness is not created, no, the pressure of karma and desire is temporarily removed, allowing the reflection of ānanda to shine for a while. But desires feed new desires, so happiness is often short-lived. Why shouldn’t I enjoy my happiness right there, without having to do anything? That is why I need a transformed, contented mind, with fewer needs.

Conclusion: Happiness always comes from myself alone. The joy cannot be in the object. I have never seen happiness jump from an object, through sense impulses, into me.

Then seekers are told that everyone is acting upon an underlying goal, on which the first three goals are based. Namely, one is constantly acting from a sense of separateness and narrow-mindedness, trying to fulfil oneself. By perfecting goals, one is perfecting oneself, which is not possible, because the world is not perfect, and because we are already perfected as consciousness. Furthermore, everyone will admit after analysis and honesty: worldly goals do not seem to make me truly, permanently happy.



That is why spiritual seekers often say, 'I feel something is wrong about my life.' That is a fair statement. What is wrong? First, the way I look at myself is wrong. And second, as a result, I start chasing experiences and possessions from the world, which make me an even more wanting individual.

The individual develops all sorts of strategies to get out of this sense of incompleteness. Why do you feel this uncanny feeling? Because you are already whole and full, but you do not know it. The homesickness is justified! What is the solution? I can come home to myself, but this can only happen through knowledge of what I already really am: existence itself, radiant as consciousness, expressing itself in phenomena of person and world. The underlying goal turns out to be śreyas, the one and only highest goal, that is always good. This good is free consciousness itself, mokṣa, the freedom to be full, whole, and complete.

Śreyas distinguishes (viveka) what is real (sat, satya, ātmā) from what is not real (asat, mithyā, anātma). Śreyas and preyas (without distinction, aviveka), are mutually exclusive. They cannot be followed simultaneously, only successively, because śreyas is associated with vidyā, and preyas with avidyā. Once I have discovered śreyas, I will see preyas as temporary pleasures (or discomforts) to let the remaining karma shine for what it is, and let the body play out in the world.

When I have worked out the preyas goals in a dharmic way, and understand that they cannot bring lasting bliss, one is ready for the highest goal śreyas. With śreyas in mind and īśvara in mind, the right setting will quickly be created to hear, understand, and practice the truth.

### प्रिय वद priya vāda

Loving speech. Accommodating way of speaking, with focused love, and therefore with attention to the feelings of the other. Not hurting the other with my words. Or even better: Wanting to elevate the other with my speech.

Even when I speak the truth, I sometimes may have to restrain myself. I must consider how the other person will receive my message. For example, I should not teach someone without asking, without agreeing on the setting. Proselytizing does not work because the listener first needs a desire to look outside the box existentially, and to be qualified to listen. Unwanted vedāntic advice does vedānta no good. We must handle knowledge with caution. Only when someone asks ten times why I am doing so well, can I consider

talking about it. Otherwise, the listener will resist. It will start a discussion. And a discussion about knowledge is of no use.

The other side of this point is that I should not keep the knowledge with me if someone else could benefit from it. That is why the sources of vedānta should always be free available. Universal knowledge about the truth is universally available by itself anyway. The one who does not want to share his knowledge is called a miser (kṛpaṇa).

In a relative way too, it may be that I do not always have to speak the truth. Even a white lie can support someone if the fact would be too confronting for him or her.

Priya vāda is therefore about a loving (priya) way of communicating, in which you serve the other. Do I speak with a certain pleasure that the other can notice? Do I hold back my cheerfulness if I understand from compassion that the other is not feeling well and could be shocked by it? Kṛṣṇa also withholds his pleasure and infinite bliss to assist Arjuna in his sorrow, in the Bhagavad Gītā.

The undertone is important and will be felt by the listener. Overall, this requires ingenuity and empathy. Successful dialogue depends on my ability to recognize and serve the nature of the situation (viśeṣa dharma).

For the wise, 'priya vāda' is problem-free and effortless, because they see the other as themselves and the exalted other reflects the self, as that which is always good.

In addition to ṛta vāda (truthful speech), satya vāda (straightforward speech) and hita vāda (proper speech) is priya vāda one of four types of speech in the scriptures on dharma (dharma śāstra), such as the Manu Smṛti (Mānava Dharmaśāstra).

## पुण्य puṇya

The meritorious or favourable influence or quality that results from right or proper action. Right action is nothing more or less than acting according to the blueprint, the dharma, the laws as intended by all power, all knowledge which is also called īśvara. If there is no tension with life around me, I will easily be happy.

This resulting favourable influence remains invisible, adṛṣṭa, until it manifests as sukham, a pleasant, desirable event, feeling or situation. Every pleasant, favourable situation is the result of puṇya-karma.

For believers who desire the happiness of heaven, puṇya can lead to other lokas such as svarga loka (heaven), or a heavenly state in the mind. Since every action is limited, the favourable result puṇya will end. In this way puṇya also works out to the type of relative

happiness that one desires. In today's consumer culture, good karma is often seen as having a perfectly curated home, and at least two vacations a year. This is considered "paradise on earth." Yet, half the time, people live in fear of losing it.

For the 'one who wants to know' puṇya works differently. Only sincere seekers, who are willing to sacrifice everything for freedom, will succeed. Initially, such a person is told that it needs to connect to the universal values of dharma because he or she wants to understand īśvara. Because īśvara is that which is 'always' good (śiva), a seeker of knowledge will by surrendering to 'god', slowly qualify for the 'permanent' freedom of himself. This person will recognize that transient good actions also bring transient good results. If this person knows how to suspend his personal states enough and strives for knowledge, complete knowledge will come through a means of knowledge such as vedānta in the person of a teacher, and ignorance can dissolve.

### पुण्य पाप puṇya pāpa

Puṇya pāpa, the invisible result (adr̥ṣṭa-phala) of right or wrong action, karma, is stored in māyā (the universal causal body) in a dormant, unmanifest form. It manifests at the right time as happiness (sukha), satisfaction (tr̥pti) or distress (duḥkha, śoka) respectively in the various situations and events of life.

Then we come to the second meaning of karma, namely its visible, fruitive (dṛṣṭa-phalam) outcome. That manifestation and doses of puṇya and pāpa karma are known as prārabdha-karma (literally karma that has already begun), that part of total karma with which one lifetime begins, and which will work out in any case in this lifetime.

Neither the world nor īśvara is responsible for anyone's happiness or unhappiness. I am responsible. This may seem like a scary statement, but it is good news, because it means that I can take control over my happiness. I write 'control of my happiness', because control of my life is of course up to īśvara as the karma phala dātā, the provider of results. When I understand how this works, I can begin to make wise choices for myself, culminating in the choice of choices, the totally committed, determined vow (dṛḍha vrata) to freedom that I take up for myself. Where I am now is based on previous choices for action in previous lives or the life up to now, or on the results of choices in the current dharmic field, made in the here and now of this life (āgāmi karma, literally karma to come). The self-inquirer places his dilemmas 'on the refined, sensitive scale of his own being and mind', and asks himself the question: 'Does the choice for this action contribute to self-insight, knowledge and freedom?'

Mythologically speaking, the karmic record is kept by citragupta, who is of course nothing but an aspect of īśvara. They call him the karmic bookkeeper. The total stock of karma is called sañcita karma, sometimes also called anārabdha karma, karma that has not yet begun.

Advaita vedānta states that I, as limitless awareness, am free of karma. As the real substrate consciousness, I am not the doer (akartā), nor can karma touch (the svarūpa of) a human being (na karma lipyate nare, īśopaniṣad 2).

### पुरुष तन्त्र puruṣa tantra

Dependence (tantra) on the person (puruṣa). This concept is used for action.

Every action is limited and therefore has a limited result. An action can therefore never bring about the infinite (ananta) consciousness. An action takes place in the anta order, the order where things are finite. Who does actions? Persons, people, hence the dependence upon the person.

A person does actions in the dharmic field of īśvara. This is a field of laws. Everything is given by īśvara. Also, the feeling of free will is given and therefore borrowed. Because of that I can make choices that give a good result if they are aligned with dharma, or bad results if this is not the case.

The results of the (karma or rāja) yogi are therefore also limited. I have to dedicate my actions to īśvara to make my mind balanced, I have to sleep to experience the bliss of consciousness, I must go through the eight steps of aṣṭāṅga yoga to attain object-lessness and pure presence (samādhi). Sacrifice, sleep and meditation are actions and states and actions and states will end. This will not bring freedom (freedom is what makes it all possible) but it is a good preparation for freedom. Freedom has no end because it is already the case. Hence:

Vastu tantra, the counterpart of puruṣa tantra. Means that I am dependent (tantra) on the meaning of a topic or subject (vastu) through knowledge. I cannot do anything for that. Knowledge is immediate. I know something or not. A topic or subject has already its meaning. In the case of truth, sat-cit-ānanda, the object of study or contemplation is the subject, I. This makes it hard. Since the subject is infinity itself, knowledge refers to limitlessness attribute-lessness.

Either I am ignorant of its real meaning, or I know it. Do I know it, then I am it. Brahmaid āpnotiparam ‘the knower of Brahman attains the absolute’, taittirīya upaniṣad 2.1.1.

This expresses that to realise brahman I must know that and how I am freedom. Why? Because I am already free, and apparently ignorant of it. I can do nothing for it (dependence on action, puruṣa tantra). I know that I am brahman or not (note, not: I know Brahman or not).

So, to know that I am brahman, is independent on the actions of the person. Right actions do help to prepare me for the immediate knowledge that I am brahman. I can control my mind, I can meditate, do karma yoga, I can practice values etc. Hence also the dependence on (the relative knowledge and the value pattern) the person. But that is all in the apparent, relative realm.

### पूर्व मीमांसा pūrva mīmāṃsā

Analysis of the first ‘earlier’ (pūrva) part (the karma kāṇḍa or ritual part) of the Vedas which is called pūrva mīmāṃsā (analysis, reflection). It is therefore also known as karma (action) mīmāṃsā.

Which actions in particular? Sacrifices wrapped in rituals (e.g. yajña, yāgaḥ, kratu, homa). With what result? By leading a good (dharmic) and healthy (think of e.g. ayurveda) life, I end up in heaven (svarga). Is that lasting freedom? No, heavenly conditions also end. Is it real freedom? On the contrary, the Upanisads state.

Īśa Upaniṣad is clear about this. The desire for material glory is like entering darkness (andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ (3), covered with darkness due to blindness). It is spiritual suicide (ye ke cātmahano janāḥ (3), that which makes a man kill himself). Those who are stuck in performing rituals or those who are stuck in worshipping god(s) enter darkness (9). But then paradoxically in verse (11): Performing both leads to freedom and infinity.

This means that right, sincere action with right devotional attitude will lead to knowledge, which will immediately lead to freedom. From karma kāṇḍa to jñāna kāṇḍa, from action to knowledge. And thus, from pūrva mīmāṃsā to uttara (highest, ultimate) mīmāṃsā (analysis). Uttara mīmāṃsā is synonymous with vedānta. Vedānta means the end of knowledge, or the knowledge that makes knowledge redundant. So first (pūrva) the relative knowledge (mīmāṃsā) that leads to preparatory action, then the highest (uttara) knowledge.

Again: Are rituals, devotion and wholesome action of no use? On the contrary, vedānta states. The Upaniṣads reveal that the vedas are constructed in such a way that all rituals and the attitude of karma yoga (dedicating action to the divine) and therefore pūrva

mīmāṃsā, lead to a pure mind, which will lead to the knowledge that I am freedom itself. This knowledge is revealed in vedānta or uttura mīmāṃsā.

Of course, the founders and followers of pūrva mīmāṃsā look at reality differently. They assume an infinite self, but state that this is individual. An infinite individual is not possible. All infinity, whatever it may be, is infinite. That this self is a doer (kartṛ) a enjoyer (bhoktṛ), seeking heavenly spheres.

Vedānta agrees with them that the Vedas are eternal and do not come from people (apauruṣeya). But Vedānta kindly points out to pūrva mīmāṃsā that it ignores the apotheosis of the Vedas. Namely, the knowledge that absorbs all other schools of thought into undeniable truth.

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā states that if I follow dharma, I will enter a higher loka (heaven). This is consistent with the view of many religions.

Furthermore, some Karma Mīmāṃsā followers also incorrectly say that the Veda instructs you to take action in combination with jñānam for mokṣa, and that mokṣa only comes from a combination of the two (jñāna karma samuccaya vāda).

In the canon of Indian philosophy, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā is one of the six philosophical schools, darśanas, with which Vedānta debates. The tradition as such began with the Purva Mīmāṃsā Sūtras (ca. 300–200 BCE), written by Jaimini.

Using the concept of vipaṇam (barter, reciprocity), ṛtam (relative truth) can be explained. Simply put: I perform rituals and sacrifices and receive the Lord's blessings in return, in the form of (finite!) blissful experiences. It is spiritual sale (vipaṇa). Here it is stated that material existence is endless and that I better acquire the best possible place in it (in heaven, among the devas).

This reminds me of the Catholic indulgence trade in the European Middle Ages. I go buy a ritual, and get favourable karma in return, that I am in good standing with God. It seems that this also happened a lot in the Brahmin culture, something that someone like Buddha rejected. But unfortunately, he threw the baby out with the bathwater. Why? We say: Surrender the individual (give it away) with karma yoga and knowledge yoga. What you get in return is God and freedom and fullness (pūrṇatva). I hear that Buddhist practitioners struggle with the concept of emptiness. The way I look at myself is essential. As something to which nothing can be added, completely satisfied. Or as the Buddhist emptiness (śūnya). Both concepts express being free from objects, but they work differently on ignorance.

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā expresses that the cycle of karma is everlasting, and the best one can aspire to is a higher birth. Vedānta does not deny this cycle of saṁsāra but states that it is only appearance (vivarta), not real (mithyā).

Purva Mīmāṃsā claims that the primary purpose of the Vedas is to engage people in rituals to create good karma, and that therefore it is the primary responsibility of the mature soul to know and carry out the exact meaning of the sacrificial injunctions of the Vedas.

An interesting figure in this arena of visions is Maṇḍana Miśra. He wrote both non-dual texts (brahmasiddhi, brahman realization) and Mīmāṃsā texts. He is said to have been defeated by Śaṅkarācārya in a debate on the question of whether liberation occurs directly through hearing/seeing knowledge (śravaṇa) or whether it can be ‘attained’ in time (the bhāmatī vision) through contemplation (nididhyāsana).

Either on the question whether it is pure knowledge that liberates, or also the combination of action knowledge (jñāna karma samuccaya). Śaṅkara won the debate on the basis of the following argument: Even though meditation and contemplation (both actions) have a function to remove deep-rooted obstacles, only the direct, immediate action of knowledge can remove ignorance when a qualified mind comes to śravaṇa (the vivaraṇa view). Simply put: If knowledge does not yet work, we must first return to right action to qualify ourselves, and then turn to knowledge again. Nowadays we follow the vivaraṇa view. As long as there is a doer, who is doing something, even if it is contemplation of his true nature, mokṣa is impossible. In fact, it is always isvara that holds knowledge before the doer-free self. So it is an apparent god-seership ‘relationship’.

Tradition has it that after his defeat Maṇḍana Miśra became the famous follower Sureśvara, author of Naiṣkarmya-siddhi among others. This name change is doubted by science.

The historical facts are not relevant. What is important for us is to understand the nuances of the discussion and to see that one can go through provisional insights in one lifetime as a preparation for irreversible insight.

### पूर्व पक्ष **pūrva pakṣa**

Methodology that uses an alternative opinion or claim, usually from an earlier, pūrva, point of view, such as from the other darśanas (Vedic schools of philosophy). Why earlier? Because Vedānta refutes ignorant positions that previously did not work for inquirer, to find out her or his real nature. Being complete freedom and peace.

The counterargument or objection comes from the opposite (pakṣa), ignorant side. The objector may be present in the satsaṅga. But traditionally an objector (real or imagined) is introduced in Vedānta texts as a means of clarification by the teacher. Not only to expose the shortcomings of opposing views, but to give the reader greater clarity and precision in understanding the words and view (dṛṣṭi) of the commentator.

In manana it is also a way for the self-inquirer to sharpen his or her knowledge. Logic falsifies shortcomings or errors, just as in science. The pakṣa, the defective counter-assertion, is ‘consciously’ evoked in my mind or presented by the teacher and refuted by the logic of vedānta. Then the siddhānta, the correct conclusion, is presented.

Putting aside wrong views is a necessary step to unburden the mind in preparation for hearing what is right. A proper teacher appreciates stubborn questioners in the satsaṅga because the doubts and obstacles of ignorance are universal and therefore apply to everyone.

In the history of truth too, great sages did not shy away from debates. In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya debates away, and thus presents the famous neti (negating objects by knowing they are pure, full consciousness) methodology. Ādi Śaṅkara travelled all over India, engaging in debates. In this way he worked his way through a web of misunderstandings in India around 800 AD.

For the aspirant who is ready for it, the knowledge presented will provide an ‘aha experience’, which is called apūrva, literally: ‘never seen before’, ‘unparalleled’, and therefore ‘to put it mildly’ life changing. People who have surrendered to the means of knowledge know how this can be and how it works.

### राक्सस rāksasa

A demon. A sentient being who goes systematically against the dharma in the pursuit of wealth, power, position, etc. The predominant guṇa is rajas, projecting, extroverted, binding energy. Raksasas are sometimes seen as a specific type of asura. Asuras are beings who are not sura (reflections of god, solar beings).

These are of course references to the demons in our own psyche.



## ऋत वद **ṛta vāda**

Truthful speech (vāda). Ṛta as an adjective means 'truthful', so not absolute truth. Furthermore, meanings such as order, rule, truth and logos are provided from the vedas. In vedānta, ṛta is used in the sense of relative truth. Then the meaning of ṛta vāda becomes: Speech that has been investigated by well-founded knowledge.

Repeatedly in the teaching the importance of growth or transformation from a subjective reality (prātibhāsika satya) to a neutral mind, attuned to the empirical reality (vyāvahārika satya), as īśvara intended, in order to be ready for truth (satya), comes to the fore.

Ṛta means truthful in the sense of sincere, right, well thought out, and inquired into. Am I just making things up that serve my ego? The question is her: 'Would I rather be right or would I rather be happy?' Are the facts I am talking about substantiated and elaborated?

Four pitfalls of prātibhāsika, which undermine ṛta vāda: One: We often speak from a confirmation bias. I only process information in my argument that fits my view of humanity and the world. Two: We often want to get rid of something quickly and instinctively choose an obvious option. But a person has many more options for nuance available because he is a reflective, thinking being. Three: The primacy effect. That which we encounter first has the greatest influence on my conviction. The subjective mind of many people 'in the spiritual world' works like this. 'It was my first feeling, so it must be true for me'. Four: The mindset is guilty. We are used to taking incriminating arguments more seriously than exonerating arguments.

The arguments can lead us to want to defeat another person and be condescending about another person, based on only a few things we know about this person, without knowing the person well. So I should not judge based on direct observation or hearsay but say things that have been thoroughly researched. Only then can I speak about someone with nuance.

Along with priya vāda (loving speech), satya vāda (straightforward speech) and hita vāda (right speech), one of the four kinds of speech in the scriptures on dharma (dharma śāstra), such as the Manu Smṛti (Mānava Dharmaśāstra).

## साधन चतुष्टय **sādhana catuṣṭaya**

The group of four (catuṣṭaya) qualifications (sādhana) that are necessary for ātma jñāna (self-knowledge) and mokṣa (freedom).

Vedānta only works as a means of knowledge (pramāṇa) on one's mind when the mind is calm, balanced, and neutral enough. The four achievements, treated in this article, are indicators of that. Only then can the mind hear the teaching purely (śravaṇa) and reflect it in the mind without distortion or addition. Only then is the mind subtle enough to have thoughts that express that the mind itself is also only apparently real.

A qualified mind connects with the neutral, dharmic reality of īśvara. A qualified mind is not bothered by personal, subjective experiences such as agitation, arrogance, self-satisfaction, attachments, aversion, dullness.

Since reality is objective, the mind must also be objective. Generally, people live in psychological projections. They see the world according to their interpretation of the world. But a peaceful, balanced, and cheerful mind meets the four qualifications as defined by śaṅkara in tattva bodha and vivekacūḍāmaṇi and other texts: The qualifications are:

- viveka Discrimination between what is infinite and what is finite (nitya anitya vastu vivekaḥ).
- vairāgya Objectivity and some degree of inner detachment from the experiences/enjoyments of objects and results, here, in this world and in the next or previous lives (iha amutra artha phala bhoga virāgaḥ).

It is said that one who is blessed with these two qualifications, is already as good as free. That one has recognized what is temporary, and therefore not real, and has inwardly distanced her or himself from it. Also needed is refinement and control of the mind to understand non-duality, and thus to be free. That qualification is known as:

- śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti sixfold (ṣaṭka) accomplishment (sampatti) of mind-control, beginning (ādi) with śama, control or (pacification) of the mind (mano nigrahaḥ śamaḥ). The remaining five are:

- dama Control or restraint of the external senses (bahir indriya nigrahaḥ damaḥ).
- uparati/ uparama Knowing what I have to do, i.e. my duties. Cessation (uparama) of everything else (svadharma anuṣṭhānam eva uparatiḥ).
- titikṣā Tolerating all forms of suffering without resistance, revenge or seeking previous remedies, free from worry or complaint (sahanam sarva duḥkhānām apratikāra pūrvakam cintā vilāpa rahitam sā titikṣā).
- śraddhā Trust associated with the scriptures (śāstra yute viśvāsaḥ śraddhā). Logically, we can only have trust in a teacher who follows the means of knowledge (pramāṇa) of the

scriptures. The chance that a self-imposed teaching of a teacher is contaminated with personal bias is too great. For trust in the teaching, trust in life in general is needed.

- samādhāna Focus, concentration and stability of mind (manasaḥ sthiratā ca samādhānam).
- mumukṣutva Intense, burning desire for freedom (mokṣe icchā sā mumukṣutvam).

These qualities make the mirror of the mind pure. Imagine a pure mind hearing the knowledge that all phenomena you can enjoy, or suffer from, are unreal as independent objects, but temporary appearances of yourself, pure consciousness... Imagine that everything, absolutely everything, including the mirror of the mind, is but an expression of this pure, free, self.

### साधारण sādharmaṇa

Ordinary. Universal, common.

That which is always the same for everyone and all objects. What is that? Consciousness. The same presence, which makes everything possible, and is therefore infinitely ordinary. That which is always the denominator, silent witness, and substrate (adhiṣṭhāna) of everything. That must be consciousness. After all: How can something be determined or observed without consciousness (of it)?

Whether I am doing well or whether things go south, afterwards I conclude that I was always the same. Just like that. When I close my eyes, and I try to feel how old I am, without thoughts, I feel nothing at all. Whether I am ten years old or 80 years old, I am ‘just’ the same.

It is exactly the opposite, then how we are used to looking and talking. We find life normal, with its antics, pranks, and exploits. What is normal about that madness of saṃsāra, the vain pursuit of mankind in particular? Every desire turns out to have been a pitfall. Eccentric lifestyles seem normal, but we sell our soul to the devil (read: to the untrue, material life).

The specific aspects of life, that we are so used to, are not normal at all. Life is all turbulence, innovation, change and decay. Never a dull moment, they say, in lives where everything goes wrong.

Specific aspects of life, which we are so used to, is not ordinary, in the sense of always being the case, but is turbulence and change. Never a dull moment, they sometimes say, in lives where everything goes wrong. Hence māyā in the meaning of ‘magic’. All

phenomena, appearances and objects are therefore unusual: asādhāraṇa. We are so used to living in objects in the wonderful world, that we find that mysterious samsāra ordinary. Manifestation, the world we are used to, is the deviant crazy wonder, that appears through my senses. I consciousness, stand in infinite simplicity, towards that moving wonder in me.

I, consciousness, am just ordinary, modest, free, and silently present. So that which is by definition the most ordinary of the ordinary, namely that which always is, is that which makes all the unusual temporarily possible.

That which is without attributes, the true ground, the real substrate of everything. That which is always the silent ground, witness, and revealer of all objects. Our true nature, existence, consciousness.

James Swartz therefore includes the word 'ordinary' in his definition of what is real. This prevents arrogance and the feeling of being special, for the self-realized. 'After self-realization we should slink away with our tails between our legs into the boundlessness that is infinitely ordinary (silent), instead of blowing our trumpets in the apparent world that belongs to īśvara.'

Formal definition: Ordinary is that which is common or general to all and everything (sāmānyaṁ sarva sāmānyaṁ vastu sa sādharmaṇam). That is, you!

### सगुण ब्रह्म विषय मानस व्यापार **saguṇa brahma viṣaya mānasa vyāpāra**

Formal definition of meditation (dhyāna, upāsana). An action (vyāpāra) for the mind (mānasa) with as object (viṣaya) brahman with properties/attributes (saguṇa). Saguṇa brahma is another name for īśvara. Upāsana is therefore seeing in my meditation that every object is īśvara.

### सगुण ब्रह्म **saguṇa brahman**

Brahman, the absolute pure consciousness, with (sa) attributes/properties (guṇas). Another name for īśvara.

The non-dual pure god brahman or īśvara that I myself am (ātmā), as the self-evident light that makes everything possible, can seemingly manifest as a god with properties, of which I as a living being (jīva), only perceive the perspective of my karma, and seem bound to the happenings of life.

Brahman, the absolute being, consciousness, bliss without (nir) attributes/properties is expressed as nirguṇa brahman (brahman without properties).

When the potential power māyā manifests in the property-less brahman, it seems as if brahman gets properties (saguṇa). But this is vivarta, not real change, but apparent change.

Nirguṇa brahman is free from saguṇa brahman because the qualities of saguṇa brahman are completely dependent on nirguṇa brahman. First, I have to understand the difference to see that there is no difference.

Saguṇa are the material possibilities of the pure knowledge that I (aham brahmāsmi) am. Consciousness is so infinite that it permits all forms that pure intelligence can imagine, shine within itself, without actually changing itself. This is the subtle message of vedānta.

But to see that I am pure consciousness, I must first mentally return the qualities that I assume I have as a person (mind, body and senses) to where they belong: To the divine play with all knowledge and all qualities (saguṇa brahman or īśvara) that is going on within me. That is the essential intermediate step, which is bypassed in modern spiritual practice. Otherwise, I will somehow confuse freedom and greatness in my mind, and personality and enlightenment. Only then can I come to know that everything is an expression of pure consciousness.

Formal definition: Brahman endowed with qualities or properties (guṇasampannam brahma saguṇabrahma).

### सजातीय भेद **sajātīya bheda**

Members that differ within the same collection of objects.

For example, beings of the same species, literally 'same by birth'. Biological phenotypes within a biological species. Or in all (samaṣṭi) subtle bodies (hiraṇyagarbha), an individual (vyaṣṭi) subtle body or jīva. Within the category of trees: an oak and a beech.

Consciousness is unique, stands alone and is the unique true order of reality. Therefore, there are no different or multiple 'consciousnesses'. The plural form alone sounds absurd. Consciousness therefore knows no difference and is thereby asajātīya bheda.

Sajātīya bheda is part of the tripuṭi bheda, the threefold differences. The other two are svagata bheda, parts of the one object or member, and vijātīya bheda, different objects.

Formal definition sajātīya bheda: The distinction between entities belonging to the same category or class (samānavargīya vastu viṣaye bhedaḥ sa jātīya bhedaḥ).

## शक्ति śakti

Power. Capacity. Potency. Skill.

The only conscious being to whom all power belongs is śaktimān, the ruler īśvara (consciousness + māyā manifested). Everything is that. It is the idea of power and the giver of results (karma phala dāttā).

Below are a number of examples of powers that play a role in the explanation of vedānta. They are no more than perspectives to see how all knowledge, all power apparently plays out in the manifestation of specific beings. So if I see a talent, it is good to see it as īśvara's talent. If I am jealous of someone else's capacities, I can also see īśvara in that. If something bothers me, I can see an invitation to learn something about īśvara's magnificent power machine the cosmos.

Āvaraṇa śakti, the seemingly concealing force, caused by the guṇa tamas and the cause of individual ignorance.

Dravya śakti, the potential force for matter, based on tamoguṇa. This force is necessary to keep the creation consistent according to physical laws, given the fact of mobility (rajoguṇa).

Vikṣepa śakti, the projecting force caused by the guṇa rajas, which makes the entire world appear to ignorant beings, because the light of consciousness seems covered by āvaraṇa śakti. This āvaraṇa śakti in combination with karma śakti is jīva's world of experience, small and ignorant in relation to the omniscience and omnipotence of īśvara. A human being is actually consciousness, plus an appearance, but by āvaraṇa śakti the greater part of the entire creation (which is itself a projection, a superposition) is filtered out. Because of this a human being lives in a boxed-in world, although his true nature as a supporting consciousness-existence is identical to īśvara. Māyā is all powers and knowledge together, but then in potential.

Ichchā śaktiḥ, the power to want and desire. Is part of vikṣepa-śakti (rajas guṇa), the projecting, creative power of māyā-īśvara, and on an individual level the cause of extraversion and agitation of the mind. It is said that by the desire of living beings (jīvas) īśvara is lawfully forced to give results. To begin with, a world appears to work out the desires.

Kriya śakti, the power to act, make and do (rajas guṇa). Through kriya śakti the individual can act (with or without the lord (śaktimān) in mind, karma yoga: īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi). And thus return the claim on objects and actions where it belongs.

Jñāna śakti, the power to think, discover, know and remember (sattva guṇa). The power that unfolds self-knowledge in relation to individual ignorance.

All this expresses and enfolds individually in medhā śakti, the cognitive faculty of the intellect (sattva guṇa). Necessary for the shift from ignorance to knowledge, necessary for self-realization. This intellectual faculty for insight and understanding of an individual human being (a manuṣya, a thinking being), may be used in an enriching manner.

### समष्टि samaṣṭi

Universal. Total. The whole being. The term is linked to the term vyaṣṭi, the individual manifestation form of the whole. This teaching is meant to clarify the relationship between the individual perspective and the total perspective.

This can be understood by examples: gold is the samaṣṭi perspective of the gold of a ring. The total space is the samaṣṭi perspective of the space in a pot. And the ocean is the samaṣṭi perspective of ocean waves. Gold, space, and ocean are of course not aspects but substrates or deeper substances of the wealth of forms in which they express themselves. Thus, samaṣṭi always includes, supports or embodies vyaṣṭi, its individual, local expression or manifestation.

The perspective as a single living being (jīva) is called vyaṣṭi, the total picture (īśvara) is called samaṣṭi.

Interesting and important: The relationship between the whole and the part is one of substance, not of number, size, or time! If you touch a wave, the whole ocean is touched. Everything can be reduced to consciousness, the only truth. A body consists of cells, molecules, smallest particle, information, intelligence, pure intelligence-consciousness. Consciousness is often compared to space, but consciousness is not spatial. We do not know what consciousness is, and it does not matter. What we do know is that it is non-dual. Hence, I, who as jīva seem to be limited power, space knowledge and manifestation, am the whole!

The famous statement of śaṅkara tell's us: Brahma satyam, jagan mithyā, jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ. Consciousness is the samaṣṭi, the whole of both jīvātmā and īśvara-brahman, and so they are equal. How can that be? Because the jīva is in reality pure consciousness, brahman, which is undivided. And because īśvara is also pure consciousness in the same

way. Although brahman literally means ‘great’, it knows no dimensions, numbers etc. Consciousness is consciousness. And everything, no matter how small or insignificant (vyaṣṭi), is that. It only seems that there is a part and a whole.

So every individual thing is an expression of a deeper reality, which carries the individual. So every individual thing does not appear to be part of a greater reality. But the ignorant experiences it that way, because of the concept of space.

This is what distinguishes advaita vedanta from all other views. A table is made of wood. Wood is made of fibres. Fibres consist of molecules. Molecules are atoms. Atoms, quarks, bosons, strings. Smallest particles consist of space (!). Space is a concept. A concept is information. Information consists of knowledge, intelligence. Knowledge, intelligence consists of pure knowledge and pure intelligence. Pure knowledge and pure intelligence consist of (pure) consciousness. And that is always and everywhere the case.

Therefore, everything is consciousness, and the apparent laws of māyā, for example the laws of projection, concealment, and karma, ensure that a person lives in an individual world through his senses. But in his deepest ground (cit, brahman) the individual is the same as the whole. This applies to everything.

Also, for something mental like kindness. It is not for nothing that kindness is recognizable as the substance or essence of all individual acts of kindness. Individual persons show dharmic behaviour in one dharmic divine field and recognize that from each other. This is because there is no other. A happy person, generally behaves kindly, because he begins to connect with the truth of bliss (ānanda), the bliss of full existence. Bliss is reflected bliss, you understand?

People (vyaṣṭi) automatically contribute to īśvara (samaṣṭi) because they discover that dharma, that which supports everything, brings happiness. If this fails due to ignorance and, for example, the confusion of greed, then you get adharma. With greed, the ignorant person projects the whole within himself onto the insignificant within himself and thinks that he or she gains by doing so. But the chronic dissatisfaction of living beings means that they have first done themselves an infinite injustice, by wrongly assuming that they are an individual. The only thing that is gained by doing so, is more ignorance. This too is easily recognizable in worldly conditions, and suffering.

The jñānī knows that he or she is the whole, complete and full.

Until this is recognized, jīva will be the individual (vyaṣṭi) ignorance of the knowing īśvara (samaṣṭi). And I better surrender my jīva to the greater. Karma yoga and upāsana is the giving away of limiting ideas about myself to the greater. I can do this properly only when I understand somewhere that I have never been small or a part.



Knowing this helps me to recognize my deeper identity with īśvara as brahman, which is the greatness of boundlessness. Therefore, samaṣṭi does not mean total in the sense of sum, but total in the sense of the entire deeper reality. This seems to be a small part of the space that a pot closes off, but in fact the pot does not close off the space at all.

They often used counterargument of a solitary tree in a forest is flawed, since a tree cannot exist alone, far from any forest. All things are connected by the supporting consciousness because they are an expression of this deeper truth. Hence the whole cosmos is one organism of laws, just as the world economy is one big, individually uncontrollable engine of growth and destruction. One consciousness, one system, no problem.

But given the specific karma of this jīva, a tree can certainly fall in a forest without my noticing it sensually or thinking about it mentally. Consciousness is everywhere. The mind and senses of an individual are not everywhere. How can I experience objects in my dream, or experience the objectless in deep sleep, while consciousness, manifested as another person, does not experience it? That is also no problem. Karma and our senses are always fooling us and seem to cut everything up. But as consciousness I know that everything is myself.

I cannot avoid the fact that I love everything. Why? As sat cit ānanda I love myself completely.

Same insight, but the other way around: I am always loved, because ‘everyone loves himself’, because everything is pointing towards self-love and self-preservation. I quote verse 2 from the advaita makaranda of śrī lakṣmīdhara kavi: aham asmi sadā bhāmi kadācit nāham apriyaḥ

I am. Forever I shine. Never am I unloved.

Brilliant!

### समत्वम् **samatva**

Equality. Always the same.

Because consciousness is completely equal in itself, samatva means evenness of mind. The better the mind simulates consciousness in this, the easier self-realization.

Equanimity of mind in all aspects of life, but especially regarding acceptance of the results of action.

Does my mind remain calm and balanced, where I would rather be triggered? A completely equal view of body, mind and environment is only possible if I know that I am 100% evenness as the self.

### संसार saṁsāra

The endless cycle of becoming, arranged according to the universal values and laws of īśvara, including repeated births and deaths, also called transmigration.

Literally it means ‘flowing together (saṁ) (from Sanskrit root sr)’. This expresses the consistent order according to which everything proceeds. For an individual, life and the world are often confusing, but for īśvara everything follows a perfect logic.

In this way saṁsāra means, funnily enough, about the same as the panta rhei ‘everything flows’ of the Presocratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus (540-480 BC). Incidentally, this was intuitively close to vedānta via nomos (law), logos (insight, knowledge) and the description of a unity behind dialectical (dualistic) parts, which dissolve into their opposite.

Saṁsāra, which is no more real than a dream, is the result of the puruṣa, the personification of consciousness, identifying itself (through ignorance) with the modifications of the guṇas. This leads to the perception of the difference between an individual and īśvara. An individual desires, does and chooses, īśvara lawfully gives what it asks for or earns.

Saṁsāra is often characterized as a treacherous ocean that a jīva tries to cross (tarati, he-she crosses) with a lot of difficulties and efforts. Mokṣa is ‘arriving at the other side of the ocean of saṁsāra (saṁsāra sāgarasya pāragamanam)’.

This attainment is of course self-knowledge and is effortless. Crossing the ocean, therefore, must be understood well. The idea is that I must be emotionally mature first, for knowledge to work. That is the hard part. If we are talking about oceanic, then we can better see ourselves as an ocean, in which the senses swim. A sense is no more an object than the object that the sense perceives. That is an expression that approaches the ocean of consciousness somewhat more.

Saṁsāra is also formally defined as śarīrādi upādānam eva lakṣaṇam yasya saḥ saṁsārah - "Saṁsāra is that which is characterized by the assumption of bodies, etc." The word ādi after śarīra (body), means 'and so on'. That expresses exactly what saṁsāra is. It goes on and on, and there seems to be no end to it. Whoever remains ignorant and sees his personality and the world as real, will (seemingly) endlessly assume bodies, will

(seemingly) endlessly engage in actions, will (seemingly) have to bear the consequences of actions and will (seemingly) endlessly encounter different worldly contexts, and in doing so (seemingly) gain experiences that we call heavenly (svarga loka) or hellish (naraka loka). Thus, quite a fuss, that saṁsāra.

Freedom from saṁsāra consists only in recognizing and fully establishing that everything is brahman: pure absolute consciousness. And that I am that brahman. Then I see that I was never born and could never die. My body-mind as the main character of the story called saṁsāra is (seemingly) born in me, and (seemingly) continuously dying in me, something we call change.

### संस्कार saṁskāra

Complex of impressions in the mind. Character. Conditioning. Entirety of tendencies and urges.

Literally, saṁskāra means the degree of refinement of mind. Vedānta continually calls for this. Refinement is an art, for which you can acquire a taste. Knowledge takes place in a very refined area. Consider: Being present in full glory with the meaning of undividedness (akhaṇḍa) in an apparent world of division requires subtlety. Someone with too many gross material interests will have difficulty with that.

This must be ‘felt cognitively’. Consciousness itself is infinitely subtle. You cannot be present there because it is presence itself, not the experience of presence. This presence is inferred because we cannot deny that an object is appearing, and we are the silent witness of that. Presence and object cannot be split from each other (an important argument of vedānta for self-evident identity as consciousness).

Just before Uddālaka Āruṇi first says to his son: tat tvam asi, he teaches: sa ya eṣo'ṇimaitadātmyam idaṁ sarvaṁ tat satyaṁ sa ātmā. ‘That subtlety of all this is the truth, is the self’. Of course we should not take this literally. The word aṇima in this, means smallest particle, or: the finest possibility. Of course, we know that no matter how refined, whatever we experience, or experience is a reflection, not the original. The original is infinitely more direct. And so is being just itself. What (better than who) else could that be than myself? Ye don't have to do anything for that.

A refined karmic and psychic constitution (saṁskāra), helps enormously to understand and realize this.

The word saṁskāra is related to the word saṁskṛta, which is the Sanskrit word for ‘Sanskrit’. It points to the refinement or perfection of the language. Why refinement?

Saṁskāra is what I think I am. It is the sphere of influence why I act and make decisions, the way I do. A refined personality will be present in the intellect, and will let the intellect rule the other functions of the mind. This person will be therefore knowledge-oriented, and suitable for the extremely refined means of knowledge vedānta. The role of intellect is severely underestimated in the spiritual world. The reason is simple. I can only be free, if I understand (knowledge) the cohesion and correlation of sat and asat, ātmā and anātmā. Objection: What about love? Well, an intellect that sees everything as that which is always good (I have no problem at all, calling the truth love'), will live in a field of love.

When we try to feel what our conditioning is, we often feel a web of feelings. It is good to make these specific by means of specific problem analysis, and then specific practice the solution. A teacher or therapist can help with this analysis.

The saṁskāra of one person falls apart into several specific traces, tendencies, colourings (vāsanās). These habits can be wholesome or not wholesome, binding or not binding. If I can get them in the inner view, I can make a choice about them, and act differently (karma). An action leaves a trace in the individual causal body (kāraṇa-śarīra) or subconscious and will thus strengthen or soften the habit.

In this way I want to influence the desires, attachments, likes and dislikes and thus make my entire saṁskāra sattvic. Sattva guṇa is the guṇa that clearly reflects consciousness. Through which I prepare myself for knowledge of my true nature.

In other words, the more refined the mind, the better it is suited for the knowledge that brings freedom. As soon as I have a strong value for sex, food, possessions, power, that is an expression of an excessive tamas and rajas guṇa, and habits that manifest from these values will be binding. That is an obstacle for spiritual growth.

Tendencies travel with the subtle body from birth to birth. I, as a person, am therefore born with a certain constellation (saṁskāra).

All aspects of this saṁskāra again determine the reactions to the actions of the prārabdha karma, the karma that has already begun. These reactions, these actions can in turn lead to new karma (āgāmi-karma). I want to do something with that. A gross saṁskāra leads to infinitely more saṁsāra. It is a matter of refining until the reflection is fine enough to see how I am infinitely fine.

In Sanskrit, saṁskṛti also means culture. Likewise: a cultivated person is someone with a refined saṁskāra. So it is no coincidence that in the vedānta world you generally come across cultivated people.

## सङ्कल्प saṅkalpa

Thought that carries a certainty and decisiveness within it.

It can be a decision about what should happen. But it can also mean clarity about an assessment of something.

In short, manas, the mind doubts (and is made up of vikalpas). Buddhi, the intellect decides (and is a function that expresses saṅkalpa). Vikalpa expresses a certain division in the mind. In saṅkalpa there is a momentary harmony because all functions of the mind agree on how something should be judged, and how to act on it. Everyone's experience flips between the two, but the pinball machine of self-confident people is a bit more clearly arranged.

In action, there must first be an obvious conviction (saṅkalpa) based on my conditioning of the intellect that decides whether or not I will take action, and of which kind. Of course, in general movement of the body this goes in an extremely fast fashion. But also, general movement is based on general conditioning (saṁskāra) of body-mind, just like with saṅkalpa. This means that my life is always a mirror image of who I am as a person.

It is the will or willpower, dhṛti, the strength of a conviction and decision (strong or weak, steadfast or hesitant, correct or incorrect) that determines how much value the insight or assessment has for me, with how much motivation the jīva puts it into the world, how far the action will carry, and how intense the karmic consequences will be.

Saṅkalpa can be very inspiring. For example, if someone recognizes injustice and has the dharmic attitude available, to make a decisive assessment (saṅkalpa), and courageously intervenes or speaks.

Saṅkalpa is not necessarily enriching. In the case of disruptive habits, addiction (strong rajas, and in particular tamas), for example, there can be a strong, unshakable conviction that I must have drugs. Or a strong misunderstanding that I have to stay in a relationship 'out of loyalty or love', although it happens to be destructive for both lovers. So it is important what the underlying vāśana (unconscious fragrance) is, based on which, someone makes decisions in the intellect.

The constitution of the intellect, and the manifesting vāśanas in the form of thoughts in the intellect, are therefore important.

In the desire for mokṣa, the recognition of the value of advaita vedānta may be called a noble form of saṅkalpa. This can generate such a determining mental willpower about what the seeker must do, that she or he wants to put everything aside to achieve her or his goal.

This for example means that I can use saṅkalpa in meditation to focus on the truth of īśvara. That I strive for sattvic (balanced, refined) saṅkalpa. That I make choices based on dharma, so whether my action contributes. That I practice a saṅkalpa as correct self-knowledge.

So in saṅkalpa it is important what the content of the thought is, whether 'this' is worth having or doing or not. When something catches my attention and I judge it to have no noteworthy value, it becomes just a passing thought and disappears.

If, on the other hand, it is seen to have value, it is thought about (or even cherished), and that value turns the thought into a desire. The perceived sense of value arouses emotion and will (all manas), which then drive the desire and propel it toward fulfilment. Depending on the nature of the desire—and the will, the force behind it—that drive toward fulfilment may drive the desire for a either a fraction of a second or perhaps for decades.

A person who wants to attain mokṣa at all costs will persist until he or she gets there, even if it is over many lifetimes. In someone who has recognized the value of vedānta, the whole vikalpa-saṅkalpa business comes to rest, because that seeker knows that he or she has found what he or she was looking for and is no longer a seeker. Then all you must do is stay with it, which is a celebration.

Some more refinement. The opposite of saṅkalpa is vikalpa, doubt. I hesitate between different vikalpas about what to do. This is a function of manas, the mind. It is sometimes said that a person hesitates between saṅkalpa and vikalpa. But this is not true. If saṅkalpa were part of a doubting process, it would not be saṅkalpa. So I hesitate and weigh up the pros and cons with the doubt function of the mind (vikalpa-vikalpa). Doubt really does have a function. Because suppose that in my inner instrument destructive saṅkalpa bubbles up all the time. Or I notice that I am stuck in my spiritual 'process'. If I am stuck, while I know that I apparently do not know, it is the doubt that tells me that it must be different. After which I can search and discover what my obstacle is. The most important doubt is that we doubt the way we look at life, and that makes us a seeker after truth in the first place.

What happens in saṅkalpa? The mental impulse (vṛtti) saṅkalpa in the intellect gives a cognitive blow to the yo-yo of vikalpa's, based on the available conditioning and knowledge and sets the mind in motion towards action.

That is why self-confidence is such a strong force, and a blissful state. The teacher should play an important role in this, by showing you why you are in the satsang, and what the value will be for your life and self-image.

Jñānīs (knowers) do, in principle, not create new karma, and live out their svabhāva (that which is still the individual intention at that moment, also called prārabdha-karma). Besides the fact that the wise sees everything as itself, actionless whole, a jñānī experiences the manifestation very calmly. Not that she or he knows what is going to happen. For her or him too, the horizon of īśvara is completely open. All that comes are The Olympic Love Games' played, or a love affair with God. But it seems as if the pinball described earlier is traveling a one-lane road.

Certainly, with the dharma and self-knowledge automatically 'in sight', decisions unfold completely naturally. With saṅkalpas based on an assimilated life-changing teaching such as vedānta, and thus with the reflection of the light of consciousness consciously in mind, even the sky is limitless.

### साङ्ख्य saṅkhya

The word saṅkhya literally means number or, more precisely, enumeration, listing. This term is used philosophically because it stands for precise, systematic, discriminating investigation.

First, saṅkhya is the name of a dualistic philosophical system, traditionally named as one of the six points of view (darśana) of Indian philosophy. It is attributed to Kapilaḥ. He was one of the great representatives of a philosophical upsurge in humanity between 600 and 500 BC. In the West with Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Pythagoras, and in China Lao Tzu and Confucius.

Saṅkhya describes twenty-five realities (tattvas) in a dualistic way, hence the meaning 'enumeration'. Of these, puruṣa, consciousness, and prakṛti, nature/matter, are the most important, two terms that Vedānta borrows when it brings apparent reality into play in its knowledge-methodology. The remaining twenty-three are elaborations of prakṛti. Consciousness thus acquires a separate status in saṅkhya, which vedānta gratefully elaborates on. Liberation is obtained in saṅkhya by shifting my identity with discrimination from the material mind/body to consciousness, puruṣa.

In this respect saṅkhya resembles advaita (non-dual) vedānta, but is in fact a dual system, because saṅkhya states that matter, the world, nature (prakṛti), has evolved from consciousness, and is therefore a real material change (pariṇāmi upādāṇa kāraṇa). So then you have a material world, which consciousness looks at. This is step one in the distinction that Vedānta begins with (seer versus seen, dṛg versus dṛśya). But this is illogical, because if consciousness is potentially everywhere because it can look at

everything, then this can only happen with non-dualistic penetration (vyapti), as vedānta points out. And this penetration or pervasion can only happen if the one (the infinite person, or the only conscious being puruṣa) is the substrate, the deeper reality of its material expression (prakṛti).

However, advaita vedānta establishes the impossibility of shifting my identity from something material to consciousness if the effect (matter) has really changed and has therefore evidently become something other than consciousness. I can only shift my identity, if the change of consciousness in world is an apparent change (vivarta upādāna kāraṇa). So it is not a real creation, but a non-dual manifestation of consciousness, also called appearance, without awareness changing a bit.

Because vedānta needs a theory of creation/appearance to deny later, it has embraced the most plausible theory from the old days, and that is Sāṅkhya. It is strikingly touching how sāṅkhya plays a role in the way īśvara unfolded 'his' knowledge to the seers. It is not without reason that knowledge is sometimes called sāṅkhya in vedānta, as the name of chapter two of the Bhagavad Gītā indicates.

Also, for example, the somewhat technical pañcīkaraṇa (combining and recombining the five elements) of Sāṅkhya is gratefully used in building up body and world, the inner instrument and sense organs and energy body. Nowadays, vedānta has no problem using modern science for this. The essence is, however, that every manifestation is the substrate of consciousness, as its cause, because prakṛti is the mirage in the infinite person Puruṣa (Puruṣottama).

Thus, vedānta takes Sāṅkhya as its starting point, because it helps in the razor-sharp distinction (viveka) of consciousness (puruṣa) and matter (prakṛti). This is the first crucial step of vedānta. The distinction of the silent witness (sākṣī) in me and all objects of person and world (prakṛti). Then vedānta points to the knowledge, at least as crucial, that what appears is nothing other than what or where it appears in.

As mentioned, the second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā deals with this from many persuasive angles. Here the meaning of the word Sāṅkhya has shifted from analysis to knowledge. The chapter is called Sāṅkhya Yoga. It is the apparent practice of the self-knowledge that I am consciousness, the only thing that is real. The word Yoga is also simply translated as 'the subject' of contemplation, and that topic is you yourself.



### सर्व शक्ति(मन्) sarvaśakti(man)

Possessing all power (sarvaśaktiman), all strength (sarva śakti). This refers to īśvara, the manifestation according to consistent laws of all potency of māyā.

It is usually mentioned in the same breath as sarvajñā, because the connection between pure consciousness and force and matter, can only mean pure intelligence, knowledge. Only pure knowledge can seemingly work out in the apparent power games of matter and power. So māyā (potential) or īśvara (manifested) is all knowledge, all power. All matter is energy.

From the old sāṅkhya teaching, from which vedānta borrows to explain manifestation, energy consists of three manifested gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas. These again express three kinds of powers respectively as jñāna-śaktiḥ, the power to know, vikṣepa/kriyā-śaktiḥ, the power to project, move and do, and dravya-śaktiḥ, the power that makes inert matter appear-precipitate, and that can fix laws into one consistent whole.

This whole māyā business is so quite incomprehensible, so I do well to worship everything as a miraculous appearance of the Lord īśvara, which in the deepest sense means that I value and worship myself as ātmā. Thus, the circle is always perfectly round and finished.

### सर्वज्ञ sarvajñā

Omniscience. This is Īśvara, namely all (sarva) knowledge, all power.

When we say ‘the omniscient’ we personify the divine too much. All knowledge in the sense of ‘all possibilities for an apparent play of forces’ is not someone.

Sarvajñā is a relative term, because of all, sarva. This means that the knowledge in my individual mind, is alpajñā, the small (alpa) knowledge of the jīva. This is a combination of interpretations based on coloured conditioning (biases) and hints of knowledge based on jñāna and dharma. If I think I know much, I project īśvara onto jīva, the individual living being, and I will be seduced to the abyss of hubris. The one that flies high will fall deep.

Consciousness is pure, infinite intelligence. Infinity therefore means that there is even the possibility of making things appear to conscious beings with senses, without losing its purity. So infinitely intelligent. In sarvajñā, the knowledge with which consciousness can present itself ‘via māyā’ in the mirror of subtle bodies, seems to form as a material world.

The total complex īśvara, (consciousness plus māyā manifested) thus has all knowledge in detail.

The wise individual is omniscient in a different way. He has the knowledge that everything here is really himself brahman, named brahmavid. This is the knowledge that the jñānī, the knower, enjoys. He or she recognizes the oneself in everything but does not have all knowledge of everything in detail (as īśvara does), so if for example the name of something or someone is not known, the jñānī will still not know it. The jñānī knows only one thing, he is an ocean of consciousness, and everything is that. The rest is play, based on apparent conditioning. One jñānī can manifest as a genius, another as a low literate. No problem at all.

Even the greatest inventors and intellectuals are simply 'little knowers' compared to īśvara. In fact, often mahātmā's (great minds) see the many possibilities of the matrix, and see the limitations of their mind even better, because of the horizons they explore. 'The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know', said Alfred Einstein.

This is because the human mind is structured to learn knowledge successively and to reproduce it successively, and to forget successively. īśvara is the sense of time of individuals. īśvara facilitates all jīvas integrally and thus simultaneously gives them what they ask for (through their action) and what they therefore need and deserve, and therefore also immediately projects the world in which they must work that out. Thank God that there is only one thought for me at a time.

Māyā is the concrete potential elaboration of the pure knowledge of consciousness. īśvara is the beautiful manifestation when consciousness lights māyā up, so to say. One could see māyā as a kind of AI, from which you can derive facts and connections. It is not conscious and not self-conscious. But it is consciousness. Just as with AI, one tries to make use of it as clever as possible. Complication: In contrast to ordinary AI, where jīva is the external user, jīva is itself part of māyā-īśvara.

This means that īśvara as antaryāmī (inner facilitator, director and controller, plants thoughts in my head, lets the jīva study nicely, and lets it spout vedānta connections like crazy.

Thus, life is not only a wandering through īśvara's magnificent world, but also a wandering through īśvara's magnificent infinite knowledge. This reminds me of the story 'The Library of Babel' by the Argentine writer Jorge Borges. He describes the universe as an infinite library of infinite possibilities of books. Since there are infinite languages, and infinite combinations of letters, punctuation marks and sentences, this perfectly

represents the idea of all knowledge (sarvajña). Īśvara is the infinite library, and for jīva this is a Babylonian state of mostly confusion.

The ordinary mortal moves endlessly through the paths of the library. What the mortal does not realize is that he himself is a book on the shelf. But it turns out that the library, pure knowledge, stands still and only starts moving when authenticity (read ignorance) is attributed to the stories contained in all those books. Thus, the Babylonian library is but a labyrinthine dusty place, into which life is breathed, when there is a desire to read. Likewise: There is only manifestation if there is a karmic desire to live.

The concealing force (āvaraṇa śakti) causes this ignorance because it covers the manifestation of all knowledge. Thus, the jīva only gets to see, according to the exact program of his or her karma, what he or she can and should know and experience.

Ignorance is a logical consequence, because the jīva only gets to see what is relative to the course of his body (and mind) through the world. Jīva identifies himself with it and experiences a feeling of authenticity with objects and keeps the ignorance going.

Incidentally, Īśvara is also called sarvavit. This is usually used in the sense of ‘knowing all details. Not that Īśvara is a person who knows everything. He is the knowledge; he is the details. To stay with the book metaphor for a moment. As sarvavit we could see Īśvara as the bearer of the infinite library and as the writer and content of all knowledge and of all stories (of all individuals) in all books.

That is why Īśvara is called sarvajña & sarvaśaktiman. He who has all knowledge, and all power, even to let himself fall apart into innumerable living beings, apparently. This we can also call the total intelligence. The entire universe can thus be reduced to an unreal manifestation of the pure intelligence (consciousness, pure knowledge, jñapti) of the one conscious being brahman.

In Sanskrit terms sarvajña is an upapada samāsa. A compound (samāsa) in which the second unique word (upa-pada) jña only occurs in this construction.

सत् sat

Existence, Being, Truth.

There are three ways to express the absolute brahman. Consciousness (cit). Being (sat). And boundlessness-bliss (ānanda). These are three ways to contemplate the truth of myself.

Sat is 'existence in itself'. It is the existence of everything. There is nothing outside this existence. There is only one existence. There is no non-being. Everything is that. Sat is that which makes all three times possible (past, present and future). It is the independent, changeless, and without division and without attributes.

It should be clear that existence is not a feature, only existence exists. All forms of existence are ultimately forms or modes of pure existence (as ocean waves are expressions or forms of water).

Language, the syntax of grammar of māyā and therefore of humans, has turned everything upside down, hence the confusion of living beings who think that they are a part of existence, or own a specific existence, because appearance seems to be so organized. But nobody is a part, because only the whole is, and that is not divided, so I cannot be a part.

When I say: 'My body is', it seems as if the body has an individual existence. But it would be more correct to say: 'Being bodies or is-ness bodies'. 'The world is', then becomes: 'is-ness worlds'. 'Man exists', then becomes 'Existence man's (very temporary)'.

Here the remark that people think exactly the opposite. I think that I am a person who is looking for the fulfilment of spirituality. It is the other way around: Spirituality (existence in itself) seems to have temporarily appeared in the form of a person. And has apparently lost itself in ignorance. So why do people have a longing for spirituality? They are their missing, being itself.

When one says: 'I am spiritual', or 'She is a spiritual person', does one mean: Of the spiritual type? Or when one says: 'I have a spiritual interest'. 'Yes of course I have a spiritual interest, because I am the spirit!'. And if I were not interested in myself, I might as well stop. But that is the whole point. I cannot stop at all. Everyone is the one infinite spirit. Existence without beginning or end 'just is' (sādhāraṇa). Of course, it cannot be divided into different (bedhas) types.

And if I commit suicide, nothing will change, and there will apparently be a new struggle, in a new life. It is like a computer game that I end prematurely, hoping that it will go better next time. But there is nothing to give up, that is the whole point. Everyone must understand why we are seeking and then seek to understand.

Furthermore: Pure existence, existence itself, is intrinsically formless, and has no limit. It is therefore all knowledge, all possibilities. Because it is unlimited (ānanta), it is nothing but cit, pure consciousness.

One conscious being and being consciousness. Being and consciousness are synonyms. Consciousness is, and being is consciousness. From the perspective of jīva: To know (be aware) that I exist, I must be there. To be there, I must be aware that I am.

सत् चित् अनन्त **sat cit ananta**

Sat (existence), cit (consciousness), ananta (infinity, limitlessness).

It is a trinity because it expresses the same principle. Sat, cit and ananta are therefore not aspects of truth. These words express the only reality that is, namely you and I, the absolute reality, brahman, ātmā, the self, I.

The terms are purely concepts in the apparent reality of my mind, which help me to understand the non-dual reality of myself. So the concept of limitlessness expresses my fullness (pūrṇatvam) very beautifully.

That reality is the timeless, independent spiritual principle, without transactions. It is the only principle. It is independent and free because it is unlimited by name, form, or function. When objects appear, we say it is all-pervading, because from the point of view of the objects, the objects consist of the substrate or substance pure awareness.

Why is sat cit ananta free and unlimited? Because everything that is experienced as dependent and unfree is permeated and encompassed by sat cit ananda. Conversely: It is pure because it has a seemingly infinite (ananta) potential to manifest. Manifestation is apparent manifestation. No real changes take place. All self-contained objects are not it, and it cannot be known as an object. Why not? Because I am it!

It is therefore important to realize that I, as a knower, cannot know it. If I think I do know it, then I have a false self-image as a knower. And then I have a false image of the truth as an object.

The truth cannot be grasped by the mind because the mind is only a material, inert appearance of sat cit ananta. And the knower, as the one who interprets and understands, is only an I-function in the intellect. So I cannot know the truth, but I can be it. And I can know that the truth is freedom because it is property-less and attribute-less. How wonderful it is to be that.

What needs to be understood is that I need to make the movement from objectifying something to being something. What the heck with determining phenomena all the time? Let everything take its course and be it! Such an attitude helps enormously in letting go and realising myself. Who does not want to be her or himself.

To understand is to be. I need relative knowledge to be pure knowledge.

The knower her or himself is an object, and you cannot know as an object that distinct witness-consciousness, which is the ‘infinitely subtler’ pure substratum-consciousness that makes knowledge itself possible (after vijñātervijñātāraṃ vijānīyāḥ (bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad 3.4.2).

Because consciousness exists by itself, it does not depend (satya) on anything for its existence. Instead, the known depends (mithyā) on consciousness, which is presence as silent witness (sākṣī) of its own manifestations.

If I shine a flashlight into the dark universe at night, I may see a column of light. But if there is rain, fog, flies or dust particles, I can only see the column of light properly. That is how it is with a human being. He is only self-conscious of the reflected light, because of the appearance of objects such as senses, mind, and world. But only by the grace of the original light that I am. We should enjoy the show, instead of worry about the reflected movement.

In deep sleep bliss is evident, but in waking and dreaming not. This is only because we allow ourselves to be fooled by silly things and stories that present themselves to us.

When there are no objects, as in deep sleep, I am simply quite purely what I am, without knowing about it as a jīva. In the waking and dream state I can know myself, through the self-knowledge that I am the objects that the magical lord māyeśvara (māyā īśvara) shows me, and that I am the light that shines on God. The relation light-object is non-dual. The known is nothing other than that which makes knowing possible, so consciousness is existence, cit is sat. I exist; therefore, I am conscious. I am conscious; therefore, I exist.

Only this existence-consciousness has, as the only thing that is, the nature of fullness, pūrṇa. Fullness, totality expresses ananta, infinity, boundlessness, beginning-lessness, endlessness. Endlessness in the sense of having endless possibilities, without itself changing intrinsically. That is then called pure knowledge, or pure intelligence.

Sat and cit are vidhi vākyas, words that affirm an inherent meaning. I am consciousness, I am existence.

Ananta is a niṣedha vākya, a statement that is negating. I am not anta, ending. Niṣedha vākya are often used to express the truth of myself. Unchangeable, invisible, unknowable etc. This is logically so because there are numerous objects to be negated as not true.

Ānanda from the famous saccidānanda is derived from ananta, and means the bliss. Bliss of the infinite (ananta) full being.

## सत्त्व sattva

One of the three qualities of energy (guṇas) of māyā. The other two are rajas and tamas. Unmanifested, the energies are pure. Manifested, these three are combined, influencing, and contaminating each other, and therefore confusing. Sat-tva is thus actually the pure reflection of sat.

The inner instrument (antaḥ-karaṇam), including buddhi (intellect), manas (mind), ahankāra (ego, I-feeling) and citta (memory) is made of combinations of the sattva components of the five elements. Likewise, the five organs of knowledge (jñānendriyāṇi). This is because all these functions have a mirroring function. Sattva is namely a reflection of sat, existence itself.

The challenge is to keep the mirror of the mind as clean and sattvic as possible and therefore reflect sat as pure as possible. This helps judging dharma and be able to think clearly objectively, and to be able to perceive purely. And finally, to understand that my personality is just a reflection of consciousness (cidābhāsa). For knowledge to take place, I want a lot of sattva in my personality. A sattvic personality is calm, balanced, stable and cheerful.

Sattva is the knowing, revealing, balanced, neutral, intelligent aspect of reality (something that is sattvic is called sāttvika). So when īśvara is reflected quite purely (objectively!) in my mind, my mind is predominantly sāttvika. This manifests itself in qualities such as neutrality, balance, calmness, happiness, pleasure, knowledge-orientation, and righteousness.

The term sattva is the name given to the quality of jñāna śakti, the power of knowledge that estimates in the individual case how to ‘read’ creation and respond to it. It is the power of knowing inherent in māyā. It is therefore in the individual the power that reveals the truth.

Enough sattva is needed for living self-knowledge, because the mind (intellect) must be clear and subtle enough to have ignorance removed by the subtle teaching. Sattva reflects consciousness-existence (sat) quite purely and therefore gives a person the capacity for clear knowledge and the capacity to experience happiness without having to do anything for it.

However, a guṇa is also a force that apparently binds. One of its meanings is sinew, string, cord, or rope. A predominance of sattva means that vṛtti's in the form of pleasure and/or knowledge arise. By identifying with these vṛtti's (by identifying with being

happy and having the knowledge that I am free) there is the subtle danger that the person becomes dependent on a sense of pleasure and knowledge for happiness and thus becomes attached. Note: Knowledge itself is not freedom. If I am a Vedanta knowledge-freak, there is the pitfall that I get stuck. Similarly, if I am attached to the bliss in meditation, I get stuck. This is also called 'being stuck in sattva'. In this way even sattva can (apparently) bind.

Brahman, ātmā, the self, is not a feeling of happiness. The bliss that is spoken of is being boundless, full, and infinite. It is being without fear, without threat, oneness without another. None of these descriptions express a concrete feeling. Neither does fullness. The rock-solid knowledge of being whole and complete of course presents the sage with feelings of contentment, freedom, and happiness. But she or he knows that experience is not it but enjoys it anyway. Why is enlightenment not experienced? Because, awareness, the light has no faculties.

A topic like peace is even more subtle. It is not an object, but one could call it an experience of absence of objects, like the reflected bliss in deep sleep.

If the sage thinks him or herself to be self-realized, but she or he is not cheerful and content, she or he will have to be wise enough to see that there is still work to be done to make the mind clear. But this is optional, because the sage in his or her pure nature is not a doer. A sage does not have to be happy in theory, but this is very unlikely, because for her or him there are no threats, tensions, or fears.

After all, as consciousness, the wise person knows no otherness and desires for something outside of him or her. The wise person is full. But the wise person himself with his or her possible feeling of happiness, is of course just an object, and objects are mithyā (dependent). The wise man knows that all this is himself, consciousness.

## सत्य satya

Independent reality. The reality. Satya comes from sat, non-dual existence, equal to consciousness. Why the term satya in the description (varṇana) of the true nature of myself (ātma svarūpa varṇana) and not just sat? To distinguish it from what it is not (anātman, not self).

Mind, body and the world appear. All these moving temporary objects we call mithyā, dependently real. What do they depend on? On satya, that which is independently the support (ādhāra), the carrier, the substrate (adhiṣṭhāna) of all objects of mithyā.



To understand that there is only one truth, we temporarily describe two orders of reality. One independent order, namely, consciousness-existence itself. That is what we call satya in this teaching. And one (false), unreal, dependent order. What does this false order mithyā depend on? Of satya. Why dependent? Because mithyā is simply satya, which temporarily takes on names, forms and functions. Mithyā is that which is changeable, impermanent, and dependent on what satya stands for: consciousness. Satya is that which is unchangeable, impermanent, and independent.

The relationship (sambhanda) between satya and mithyā is initially called kāraṇa kārya, cause and effect. But kāraṇa does not really change into kārya. The effect kārya is simply a temporary expression of kāraṇa, the cause. So it seems that sat changes, but it does not. Sat remains sat, there has never really been a creation.

What then is the nature of the relationship between satya and mithyā? Advaita, non-dual. The objects of mithyā are only appearances of satya. False means that the objects are dependent. Truth means that the substrate of consciousness-existence (cit, sat) is completely free and independent.

The one who truly sees this, let's go of satya, and speaks only of sat. Satya is an ontological concept we use. That is the fun of reality and the fun of the means of knowledge advaita vedānta. At first there is still talk of a relationship, but after several negations (apavādāḥ) of previously necessary explanation, nothing remains of the dual relationship. Then there is only pure sat, being. And the one, that sees it like that, is free.

What then is all satya? Everything. That which cannot be destroyed by anything in all three time periods waking, dreaming, sleeping. The states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping are in themselves mithyā and therefore not other than that which makes them possible (satya). Again, once that is understood, then everything is sat: Beginningless, endless, unchangeable, causeless, independent, self-contained, inviolable, indestructible. Free from the limitations of time, space, and object. The unchanging substrate in which apparent change takes place. Without which this apparent change would not be observable.

In other words: Satya is used as an ontological term (way of expressing being) in combination with mithyā, the relative, dependent order of reality. Mithyā includes all objects, experiences that are dependent on their deeper ground satya, like a table is wood, fibres, molecules, atoms, quarks, concepts, information, knowledge, intelligence, consciousness. The correct way to express non-duality is: Mithyā is satya, but satya is free from mithyā. Or: Where there is mithyā, there is only satya (Andre Vas).

Note: The word ‘satya’ is also used in a relative way in the sense of ‘honesty, sincerity’. It is listed second in the yamas, a list of five dharmic guidelines in aṣṭāṅga yoga. Here satya is an instruction to speak only the truth and never to lie. I want to speak non-injurious truth to accommodate the other (also known as vāk tapas).

In Vedic speech discipline satya vāda expresses that what I say truly represents my mind. This is an invitation to bring harmony between inner life and outer life.

Satya is also a name of the highest of seven heavens, or sacred statements (vyāhṛtiḥ), starting with the level where people live out their karma bhū loka (which already includes good karma) and then bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahāḥ, janāḥ, tapaḥ, satyam, as recited in the gāyatrī mantra. Satyam is then the so-called place (heaven) where you end up with the best karma, although still ignorant. Synonymous with satya loka is brahmā loka. The creator god brahmājī himself teaches the knowledge of brahman there.

Of course, realizing the truth by seeing my freedom as satya can also simply 'take place' immediately here as a living being (jīvan-mukta), here and now (sadyomukti) in earthly life, through self-insight.

### सत्य वद **satya vāda**

Honest, sincere, aligned speech.

In this case, it means aligning what my inner experience with what I present outwards, through speech. Without double agendas. In this way, there can be no split in the personality. So, my speech should resonate, truly, with what I think. Otherwise, I am living a split and have to be on my toes all the time. This mode is an invitation to bring vital and mental harmony, and harmony with īśvara and this mode promotes sincere spontaneity.

For example, a person will have to align his animal instincts with his self-reflection. This is the evolution from plant-man to animal-man, to man, to god-man. We do this with knowledge. When I am in harmony with īśvara, life is easy. I have nothing to hide. The person must be an open book to qualify for freedom. If this is not in alignment, I am not honest with myself and I develop blind spots and complexes.

If I have something to hide, it eats me up. If I have negative feelings about something, this poison eats me up. If I feel like that, I better start working on that point in myself. Pratipakṣa bhāvanā, practising the opposite thought is an excellent exercise for that. It clears and lights me up.

Satya vāda is the expressive form of the value ārjavam from chapter 13 of the Bhagavad Gītā, straightness between what I do, think, and speak.

Furthermore, satya, speaking and saying the truth, is also the second yama (self-control, prohibitions) in aṣṭāṅga yoga.

Along with priya vāda (loving speech), ṛta vāda (true speech) and hita vāda (right speech), satya vāda is of the four kinds of speech in the scriptures on dharma (dharma śāstra), such as the Manu Smṛti (Mānava Dharmaśāstra).

### शौच    śauca

Cleanliness, both internally and externally.

A clean mind is specifically meant. If the mind is pure, it will radiate to the environment and others. Seeing reality as one promotes having a pure mind. So, purity of body, emotions, intellect, and environment.

It is not likely that my body and house will be dirty, if my mind is clean. External beauty of body and environment helps with inner beauty and vice versa. For example, it can help to have the house clean and tidy, to also make the mind calmer. If I get rid of things, I will think less about them, and therefore I will have less worries. The sannyāsī understands that possessions mean worries.

The basis is therefore inner beauty. A tidy character will radiate as a tidy environment. Of course, an obsessive-compulsive disorder on hygiene is not meant here.

Svāmī's and mahātmās often look impeccable and orderly. This happens spontaneously, because they naturally reflect purity, clarity and dharmic order. I heard Swami Anubhavananda give a talk about ironing his orange gerua. An action he loved to do.

Only a pure being is qualified to understand the truth. Mentioned in chapter 13 of the gītā as a value. Sauca is part of the teachings of niyama (the virtues or commandments of aṣṭāṅga yoga) and part of sāmānya dharma.

### सित उष्ण    śīta uṣṇa

Cold and heat. Intended as a metaphor for tolerance, forbearance (titikṣā), perseverance and endurance (vyavasāyina) about feelings, pain, ailments, disorders and challenges for mind and body. Before I realize that I am not the body and the mind, I will first have to

achieve some dispassion and tolerance regarding changes, such as fluctuations in cold and heat.

Acceptance of what comes, even if it sometimes seems uncomfortable. Of course, we do not have put ourselves in danger, but it is often opinions that we subtly and quickly develop in the form of preferences and aversions that really bother us. This is called double trouble. First a bit of discomfort itself and then all kinds of difficult thoughts and the whining about it.

Cold and heat are namely 100% neutral. An important qualification for spiritual growth is therefore not to have an opinion about everything. An inquisitive, mindful attitude can help here: 'This is cold, this is heat, so what, interesting!'

In chapter 2 and chapter 13 of Bhagavad Gītā, cold and heat are mentioned as examples of this dynamic, but this of course applies to all feelings and sensations, and that is why it is often added with ādi, etcetera.

Kṣānti is the value of tolerance and accommodation towards fellow human beings, which is related to this value of sensory tolerance.

### सोपाधिक अध्यास **sopādhika adhyāsa**

Sa upādhika (with upādhi, that which apparently gives qualities to its bearer). This is a form of adhyāsa, misconception, in which one fact is confused for another in a natural, sensuous way, while it remains visible.

For example, at sunrise/sunset, blue sky, a bent rod in water. The fact that I see the sun rise/set is wrongly confused with the fact that the earth rotates. In the same way, the fact that the sky is blue is wrongly taken for the fact that the blue part of sunlight is scattered more by the earth's atmosphere than other parts. And the fact that a rod appears bent in water is wrongly taken for the fact that light refracts more slowly in water, because water is denser than air.

Sopādhika adhyāsa is also known as jñāna (knowledge) adhyāsa. I need knowledge to know how things are. Because they are natural effects of īśvara's creation (sṛṣṭi) (being vyāvahārika satya), such sensations continue to exist even when one understands that what I see is not what it seems.

In the same way, the world continues to appear even though the sage knows that it is not real, but an expression of consciousness, the self. In fact, all phenomena can be analysed back to consciousness, the only truth and bearer of it.

Yet the world with all its effects continues to be experienced. The observer still sees the sun rising and setting. The sky still looks blue, and the rod bent. In the same way, I continue to experience feelings after self-realization. This is not a problem for the one who understands the truth. These sages appreciate the truth of reality by cognitively dissolving the upādhi (that which apparently gives qualities to its pure bearer). Thus, everything is experienced as itself in non-duality.

The difference between sopādhika adhyāsa and nirupādhika adhyāsa (a mistake that disappears when I see through it) is that the latter usually arises from subjective experiences, often from fear or desire. The personal world that I create in such a subjective state of being (prātibhāsika satya) is called jīva sṛṣṭi, the creation of the specific living entity. I mistake a rope for a snake because I am afraid of snakes. Whenever I see something moving in the house, I think it is an intruder or a mouse. When the government develops a vaccine, I think it is a conspiracy.

Once the rope is no longer mistaken for a snake (nirupādhika, no upādhi adhyāsa), and I have thus neutralized my likes and dislikes, I join the neutral order of īśvara (vyāvahārika satya), and simply see that it is a rope. Only a neutral mind that is ready to see through the sopādhika adhyāsa with a proper means of knowledge and appreciation of the mirage of the world as mithyā, is ready for freedom. After knowledge there is only pāramārthika satya. Then it is seen that all objects are nothing but consciousness.

## श्रद्धा śraddhā

Trust.

What kind of trust? Impeccable trust that if I connect myself to the means of knowledge from the scriptures (śāstra yute viśvāsaḥ śraddhā), freedom will follow. For that I must also have trust in the teacher, who in the Vedānta tradition fortunately recognizes, follows, and knows the proven tradition, and is therefore called a knower of the tradition (śrotriya).

Trust is an essential quality of a sincere seeker. This is a two-stage model. First, I have trust in the means of knowledge. Then the means of knowledge prescribes that I must have complete trust in reality, in life in existence. Why? Because it is īśvara's order. And when I join īśvara's order in trust, I see how beautifully everything works. When I have general trust, life is going like a rocket.

Śraddhā is the fifth of a group of six attainments, as set out by śankara, which help to calm and control the mind (śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti).

Śraddhā is simply the acceptance as true of what the guru and śāstra teach. This happens because there is recognition of the enormous value and effectiveness of the teaching. If I accept what is said as soon as possible, I will reap the fruit of freedom much sooner. As I listen to the teaching, I begin to reap the fruits. Trust grows along with it, and self-confidence too. One can find a tipping point in trust. Once I have discovered the logic of my own reality, I develop an unshakable trust in the śāstra and in the words of the guru. Then the meaning of the words is taken as fact.

Of course I need an honest teacher for that. Vedānta tradition guarantees that, by the following criteria: An advaita vedānta guru has no other interest than to help you further. A vedānta guru tells the truth, and transmits wisdom, but will not give advice.

Furthermore, a vedānta guru behaves dharmically. If you feel that the person of the vedānta guru in the satsang demands too much of a role, that is debatable. The Vedic means of knowledge does not come from people (apauruṣeya), and is therefore completely objective. A good teacher sees you as an equal friend, because he knows that every jīva is basically the same, and that his students are not jīvas but consciousness, her- or himself. You feel that friendship or love or not. And you may judge your teacher on this. So you do not have to be afraid of annoying situations in vedānta satsaṅga. happened, but is rare.

Why trust? Because somewhere I have to recognize that freedom is possible. Those who have gone through it know how it works. Is a life without real fear possible? Yes, it is possible. Mind and body can certainly be scared or something like that, but, with increasing trust, I will also increasingly reap the fruits of being full, whole and happy. Until I understand that feelings of anxiety have nothing to do with me. This provides itself. More fruits more trust. And through trust in the knowledge, my personal self-confidence in life also grows. It is an upward spiral.

Initially, in any teaching situation, a certain amount of faith, viśvāsa, is necessary. But śraddhā enables us to distance ourselves from what I thought I was, the little I (ahaṅkāra) or ego. Not through faith, no, through recognizing the impeccable logic of vedānta.

To step away from your previous ideas requires trust and courage. I had to bang my fist on my inner table. Draw a line in my life. If not, no more. I change course and..., change my lifestyle and..., surrender to..., trust, śraddhā.

Only when I have cleared the blocks and resistance in my mind can I realize something infinitely more spacious and beautiful. When the teaching is heard clearly, avadhāraṇā arises, faultless understanding from conviction.

Pure hearing, without omissions, distortions, or additions, is possible only when there is respect for both the teaching and the teacher (ācāryopāsana). Respect because the teacher represents the teaching (the means of knowledge, pramāṇa) of īśvara. Not because he is so nice or wants to be liked. No, to serve myself. The only thing a teacher wants is devotion and perseverance in the teaching (pramāṇam pravṛtti and niścaya). 'Respect and love together is śraddhā', says Dayananda.

### श्रवण śravaṇa

Hearing and listening. Listening is hearing with meaning.

Śravaṇa is the first, essential stage of vedānta, jñāna yoga. The other two stages are manana (reflection on the logic of the teachings) and nididhyāsana (contemplation on the truth of myself).

To hear purely, my mind must be neutral, subtle, and balanced. The mind is like a (water) mirror that reflects consciousness but obscures it with the mud of ignorance. Ignorance can be seen as mist on a mirror, or ripples in the water. The one who has his or her deep waters, mirror, or surface neat and clean is prepared to understand what is being said, and to reflect the bliss of consciousness pure enough to understand. Then knowledge sweeps away all ideas that I am anything other than pure, original consciousness.

The thought that I am an individual is natural and logical, but unknowing. Because the mind is ignorant, the individual will have to hear that he is not an individual.

Something special happens in the listening phase. If my thinking is ignorant, how can I ever understand self-knowledge with this ignorance? Or reason out of it logically (manana) or contemplate (nididhyāsana). No, śravaṇa is where it 'happens'. This article is so long because I like to hammer on about it. That is why you need a teacher, and an impeccable means of knowledge. Something that is exceedingly difficult for a human being to accept, and especially for a modern human being. What is difficult? That I accept that I do not know, and cannot figure it out myself, and surrender myself to education, which since man became a full-fledged, cultivated, linguistic being, has been completely stable for millennia, making seekers see their freedom. Of course there are special enlightened individuals who have reincarnated, but they are so rare that we cannot assume that we are that ourselves. We, ordinary mortals, must accept the invitation to look completely out of the box. Whoever can do that, whoever wants to get rid of his old thinking, goes fast. It is not for nothing that it is called a second birth (dvi-ja). The seeker who surrenders is no longer a seeker. He or she is no longer the old one. And she or he

wants to get rid of the old one. What an infinite relief! How can I stay the old one, if self-realisation is shifting my identity from something insignificant, to that which makes immeasurable space spacious. My first svabhāva (relative nature) turns out to be apparent. My second, real svabhāva is the svabhāva of existence, which we all share. When I see that, my relative svabhāva may frolic around happily. Look:

There is only one consciousness. Knowledge comes (seemingly) from consciousness and evokes the pure self-knowledge of an apparently knowing unit (the teacher jīva), to another ignorant unit (the student jīva), within the entire īśvara system. Evoking means calling up something that is already hidden in you. This is logical because you are consciousness already, pure knowledge, and everything is that. It must be aroused, called up, revealed, discovered. The knowledge 'is already in you' but is apparently covered with ignorance. Śravaṇa is evocation. The covering is apparent, because the light that you are, already shines completely freely on ignorance. Ignorance is a superimposition, something that appears to me, not something that I am. Among other things, the means of knowledge makes you see that.

To see ignorance as haze on the mirror, or ripples in the water. We would like to let go of the mud in the water metaphor here. The one who has his mirror clean enough, or whose surface of the water is still and calm enough, is prepared to understand what has been heard, and to reflect the bliss of consciousness pure enough to understand. Then knowledge wipes away all notions that I would be something other than pure, original consciousness.

There are several challenges in this. What the vedānta (teacher) has to say is a divine position, supported by tradition. Not that the teacher is special, no, it is the knowledge that the teacher transmits, that is divine. To be able to surrender to this really requires quite a bit. Again, listening is difficult. To begin with, I must have no judgments about the intent of the satsang and have trust (śraddhā) in the impeccable authority and knowledge of the teacher.

Furthermore, I must not have a scattered (vikṣepa) or absent-minded mind, so that I am distracted all the time. Listening is the result of hearing. The auditory organ naturally picks up sounds. But to fully focus my attention on what is being said, I need to be able to muster a focus (samādhāna), often for days, because ideally, the teaching addresses the entire panorama of ignorance and therefore needs to be told in full.

I need to be somewhat fit and rested, so as not to become dull or sleepy.

Furthermore, I often struggle with a certain belief system or frame of mind that is ignorant. Then my mind will intentionally or unintentionally adjust aspects of the



teaching, so that it suits this belief system or frame of mind (confirmation bias). Some people puzzle aspects of vedānta into the trainings or therapies they give. This is not the intention of advaita vedānta.

Furthermore, the mind can become inspired and start to fantasize or ruminate. This means adding my own ideas, beliefs, or embellishments to what is being said. Then I suddenly wake up from my own autonomous thought patterns. Without the right precision, little will be understood well.

How do I prepare my mind for śravaṇa? With karma and upāsana yoga, sādhanacatuṣṭaya (essential qualifications), a sincere values inventory, and the resulting accommodating lifestyle adjustments. Also, aṣṭāṅga yoga, Buddhist mindfulness or various forms of meditation practice ensure a well-prepared mind. The path to freedom is not a sinecure. But if I work on my personality, happiness, self-esteem, and independence will gradually grow. In modern self-inquirers, understanding the truth and emotional maturation go hand in hand.

Śravaṇa can even happen unexpectedly. This is called hearing of āpātata (unexpected, sudden, superficial) jñāna (knowledge). Such moments have often brought us to vedānta. A person's mind can be ready that he or she finds himself or herself in a situation, through an encounter with a sage, or a lecture to which he or she is taken, seemingly by chance. Coincidence? Well, all we know is that the truth comes to you. So who cares? Answers to the how and why are of no use and belong to īśvara.

A formal note about the context: Śravaṇa, hearing, is a śruti (scriptures) or śabda (spoken words) pramāṇam (means of knowledge), which brings ajñāna nivṛtti, the removal of errors caused by ignorance. Manana (reflection, logic and Q & A) is then needed to remove doubts. But viparīta bhāvanā (disturbance by deep-rooted patterns) is removed only by nididhyāsana. After I have had my first aha erlebnis (self-realizations) in śravaṇa, I fall back repeatedly into ignorance, basically into binding old fears and desires. In nididhyāsana I put obstacles in the light of self-knowledge and thus assimilate the realization of aham brahmāsmi in all aspects of life (actualization). After actualization there are no more moments when the knowledge is not immediately available (all moments are mithyā, not real), and my experience merges with the fullness, wholeness, and freedom that I already was.

Back to the crucial point of this topic: ‘The realisation of my true self is śravaṇa, even if I memorize knowledge in nididhyāsana, it has the same dynamic as in śravaṇa. We can see available knowledge from memory as grace of īśvara. When the teaching comes again to ignorance, it is always from outside! Śravaṇa simply means ‘from outside the individual mind’. My whole self-concept as a person is individual ignorance. There is no place for

knowledge in that. A subtle point. Over and over again, the invitation is to come out of the box of my narrow-minded comfort zone.

Śravaṇa does not create knowledge; it exposes knowledge. Knowledge comes from outside, just as with the seers (ṛṣayaḥ) of ancient India. Knowledge was always present as the consciousness in which the potential was apparently present. It is revealed or exposed to the tiny person who is karmically ready for it. Whoever understands how this works, can start working on his mind. For the one who understands, obstacles, mistakes, misunderstandings, and doubts will be removed, by śravaṇa in the satsang or whatever a modern listener has access to. There are loads of material on you tube nowadays, for example the ‘you-tube Svāmī’ Sarvapriyananda.

But the advice is still: Undergo a complete teaching from a live teacher, ask questions (manana) and interact with him. That student who eagerly exposes himself to the help of the teacher, goes fast!

Again, this important but subtle point: Knowing is not an action. It is present meaning. Listening is also not an action. The one who acts is īśvara through the speaking teacher. The student does nothing but lets the pramāṇa work on the superimposed ignorance. So you are not ignorant at all! That is what they are telling you. Just as being what you are is difficult, and infinitely simple, being silent in satsang is difficult. Listening is opening yourself, while doing nothing. Who would immediately assume that he is an ocean of consciousness, bliss, infinity, and freedom, outside of which there is nothing else?

So self-knowledge is not the result of the action of the listener. It is the discovery of what is apparently already potentially present. Otherwise, reality cannot be non-dual. It happens naturally and effortlessly when the meaning of certain words, which come to the ear, is understood without distortion or addition. This is īśvara's blessing, this is the blessing of the self.

So self-knowledge occurs only in śravaṇa, not in the other two stages of manana (reflection) and nididhyāsana (contemplation). These are necessary to remove the blockages to let the knowledge work purely. But then one will always have to return to śravaṇa, the removal of ignorance through knowingness by listening.

The fact that ignorance can be removed only from outside, and I therefore need a teacher who will present me knowledge, taught according to a correct, effective method, is called vivaraṇa. This contrasts with bhāmatī, which holds that it is a linear process, completed by the removal of the obstacles (pratibandhas) in nididhyāsana. After many discussions over the centuries between Vivaraṇa and Bhāmatī schools, modern Vedānta teaching logically follows the vivaraṇa position, because you cannot do anything to be the truth

that you already were. Only ignorance can be removed by the meaning of the words in śravaṇa.

How could it be otherwise? Since I am the non-dual truth, my ignorance must disappear through the warm, wise words of vedānta, like snow melting before the sun. Then the self-shines as if by itself, as it always did, but of which I was ignorant.

Reflection and contemplation are of course forms of doing. The purely qualified thus only need śravaṇa. Manana and nididhyāsana, are to be re-qualified. This is a very subtle point, but essential.

### श्रेयस् śreyas

Highest good or goal, also called parama śreyas. That which is always good. The only thing that is, and therefore the only thing that is good.

That can only be free, peaceful, boundless consciousness. That which transcends dharma and adharma and is desirable for all people of all times and places. Knowing to be that is mokṣa, freedom (from happiness and unhappiness).

Śreyas, absolute happiness is that which makes possible and encompasses preyas, the relative worldly feeling of happiness. Śreyas is the original, and preyas is the reflected extract of this. The satisfaction and pleasures of preyas are ‘borrowed’ from śreyas. How does that work? When a desire is satisfied, the restlessness in my mind stops for a moment, the mind is like a clear mirror and I experience the reflected bliss of ānanda, the original bliss.

The wise know that true bliss can never be in the object, and that full joy is only in the experience of infinity, wholeness, and fullness of being itself.

Preyas are the relative human (puruṣārtha) worldly goals. This is artha, security of existence. And this is kāma, pleasure, desire-gratification, leisure. Dharma. And this is dharma, doing good, improving the world. The human goal mokṣa is the striving for śreyas. Preyas and śreyas are mutually exclusive, because the one who strives for complete freedom from himself learns that worldly goals are mithyā (dependent, temporary, and changeable). And śreyas is paramārthika satya, the independent truth of everything, beyond (para) all goals (ārthika).

They cannot be followed simultaneously, but only successively, since śreyas is associated with vidyā, knowledge and preyas with avidyā (ignorance).

For disciples of Vedānta, the trick and challenge is to recognize this highest goal, and not fall for relative goals such as safety, desire, and good action. These relative goals make us active, to get out of the feeling of narrow-mindedness. The mind falls on objects, and we surrender to saṁsāra. And then we have to come home from a cold shower. When everything may give way to the highest goal, one can quickly grow to freedom through self-knowledge.

### स्थूल शरीर **sthūla śarīra**

Gross/physical body.

Constructed from the tamas parts of the five elements space, air, fire, water and earth in their increasingly coarser, recombined (pañcīkaraṇa) forms.

Sthūla śarīra is part of a system in which three bodies (śarīra traya) are distinguished, of which a jīva (an individual living being) consists of. In addition to sthūla śarīra, the gross body, these are sūkṣma śarīra, the subtle body and kāraṇa śarīra, the causal body.

The purpose of mentioning these bodies is to demonstrate their relative nature, in relation to their real, deeper carrier consciousness. They are dependent, temporary, and transient and they are lit up by the silent witness consciousness, that you are. To be dependent on consciousness in this sense means that they are in their deeper ground consciousness itself.

When I begin to discriminate, I may say: ‘they are not me in themselves’. Vedānta shows that the three bodies are nothing but an appearance of the deeper truth, which I am. Then I can cognitively uplift them as myself, the consciousness that they are in reality, like waves in the ocean. We are that ocean. In this way we can see ‘through’ the dance of differences (with our knowledge eye).

Why is the gross body temporary and transient? Well, it goes through six stages/changes (ṣaḍ bhāva vikāraḥ), so there is never a fixed identity that I can build on (I am the identity, which permeates the stages): First conception and stay in the womb (asti), birth (jāyate), growth (vardhate), change and maturity (vipariṇāmate), decay (apakṣīyate) and annihilation (vinaśyati).

The body is the place (loka) where the subtle body is connected in the story. This is a temporary, karmic psycho-somatic encounter, which occurs, day in day out, in the waking state. Wherever my body is present, subtle organs like mind, organs of knowledge, senses and action are present. This is what māyā does, and that is why I assume that I am a body or mind that traverses the world.

When this story ends, the body falls apart, and sthūla śarīra merges into the element earth. Traces of the subtle body, a package of inclinations, desires, fears, travels onwards, and is placed by īśvara in a new situation to manifest itself again.

Thus I, the self (ātmā), seem to be connected and bound to the gross body via some world of experience in the subtle body. But if I analyse my experience well, with the knowledge of vedānta, I see that it all takes place in me, and that I, as consciousness, must pervade everything.

In addition, the gross body is material and lifeless, inert (jaḍa), and in no way aware of all this. The subtle body, where feeling is experienced, penetrates the body, and consciousness penetrates both. Mind and body are me, but I am free from mind and body. Thus māyā, that factor that has conjured up the strange state of life, has literally turned the world upside down. This may be reversed.

To clearly separate this, sages in India also call their body (sthūla śarīra prapañca) and the world (jagat- or sthūla prapañca) in the waking state (jāgrat) simply 'the five elements' (pañcabhautikāḥ). This is an enriching form of humour. It helps to look at the body somewhat objectively and contemplatively. The five elements just appear, so what?

### सूक्ष्म शरीर sūkṣma śarīra

Subtle (sūkṣma) body (śarīra). Regarding the three guṇa's (qualities), the subtle body is built up from the sattva and rajas aspects of the five elements, still in their subtle state (tanmātra).

The subtle body is made to experience division, in the form of all kinds of experiences, especially pleasure or pain. Furthermore, it is programmed to work out and create karma in an apparent life, and to reincarnate into a next life.

The subtle body is not called subtle body for nothing. Its most important function is namely the refined intellect (buddhi) in the inner instrument (antaḥkaraṇa) in the subtle body, which is subtle enough to understand the knowledge. The intellect in the subtle body is the key to freedom.

A birth (janma) is when the subtle body meets a gross body (sthūla sūkṣma śarīra saṁyogaḥ janmaḥ), based on karmic data. Death (maraṇam) is when the subtle body detaches itself from the gross body (sthūla sūkṣma śarīra viyogaḥ maraṇam) via the udāna prāṇa. In between, the subtle body temporarily withdraws unmanifested into the causal body (kāraṇa), and is absorbed into īśvara's body of knowledge, which will again

lead to manifestation when the time comes. This all happens via neutral laws, which can be deduced, but cannot be studied exactly.

Advaita vedānta states: Do not focus too much on your personal karma. Fascination with the details of my life and personality is an obstacle. What is advisable is that I do right actions, for example in my lifestyle, to get appropriate results to let my subtle body mature to emotional maturity, to understand my freedom. For that I must understand that every thought, every action leaves a trace. Cause and effect.

Because it is all mithyā. The whole shadow play of saṁsāra will never end if I nourish its authenticity. It plays out as an expression of the imperishable, infinitely peaceful self, which is never born, can never die.

Sūkṣma śarīra is composed of five organs of action (karmendriyaṇi), made of the five still pure rajas aspects of the five elements, five organs of knowledge (jñānendriyaṇi) made of the five still pure sattva aspects of the five elements, five energies or life currents (prāṇāḥ), each made of the five combined aspects of rajas, plus the fourfold mind (antaḥkaraṇa), each made of the five combined aspects of sattva, of which the main functions are intellect (buddhi), memory (citta), mind, heart or emotional centre (manas) and I-experience/ego (ahaṁkāra). Altogether nineteen tattvas (principles).

The subtle body is a body in the sense that it is a 'body' or a collection or combination of capacities or powers which experience authenticity to worldly life (ignorance). The effect is that it looks like the self (ātmā) has become identified and therefore seem to limit itself.

Under the influence of the prāṇa (energy) udāna, the subtle body leaves the gross body, at the death (maraṇam or pralaya) of the physical body to apparently continue in a new body. Death is therefore the separation of the subtle and gross body. Because it concerns an identification with an appearance of oneself, it is like a lucid dream for those who know. It is all only apparent; nothing really happens.

The self (ātmā), associated with the subtle body of a sage, knows that he or she is pure, single consciousness, and will not reincarnate further. This is because there is no desire to want anything in the world, nor the insight that there is anything to lose in the world. Important: We program God with our intentions and actions. God must give me results that are revealed in the subtle body. Consciously good intentions, in harmony with the good action, qualify my thinking and feeling world for freedom.

This freedom goes so far that a wise person is just as little identified with his 'own' subtle body as with that of another one. A wise person may think and say wise things but may also make mistakes. No problem at all, she or he is free.

Overall, we observe that both ignorance and knowledge take place in the intellect of the subtle body. The wise person, like the self, is free from both ignorance and knowledge. The wise woman, the wise man is free from the wise woman or man.

In other words: There is no reason for īśvara to give such a subtle body a result in the form of a new life. Why not? The wise person does not need anything from the world to reap the fruit that she or he is bliss. What is the bliss? That she or he is free from the whole expedition altogether. Inclusive jīva en īśvara.

So see the limiting power of neediness!

The following is not meant as hard science, but to distinguish between subtle and gross body. And to show that the mind is not in the brain, but is 'connected' to it, to work together. To get a living experience via the subtle body, the subtle body works together with the gross body, which is part of the gross world. Take sound for example. Before consciousness activates sound, which is manufactured in a device, which sends out a blue-tooth signal, which from a speaker or earphones via my ear, the brain, the subtle body, the causal body becomes a living experience, which appears to consciousness, a lot has 'happened'. An ear is nothing more than an organic receiver, and the brain part that belongs to it then acts as an amplifier or converter. That is why an ear can be replaced by a hearing aid, which replaces the organic hearing aid. Just like the lens of my reading glasses.

Feeling is in the subtle body. That only works if consciousness 'shines' on it, as it were. Consciousness remains free and unchangeable, but the upādhi is then 'activated', and it seems as if I am influenced by feelings or thoughts. The subtle body is a module 'between' the gross body, the causal body and consciousness. It is all one big, objective machine. In principle, there is no difference between devices without a subtle body, such as nails, hair, and chip machines from ASML. Even if man thinks that he has appropriated something, and man distorts nature into culture, it is all one big īśvara machine.

The subtle body specifically penetrates the nervous system, including brain. That reaches all parts of the body, except nails and hair. The subtle body does not reach the latter two.

Because the subtle body, and therefore feeling, is limited to the borders of my body, I suppose I stop at the borders of my body, and that I stand separately in the world as a body. This is a strong driver of ignorance.

The subtle body and its gross instrument, the gross nervous system, therefore go together in a person. A bit like the subtle body and its instrument, the gross brain. That there is no pain experience related to the grey matter of the brain (for example when it is cut) can be

explained in this way. The brain is the main organ to connect the subtle body with the rest of the body via the nervous system, and thus with the world. Through the brain, the feeling is 'reported' from the rest of the body (where the subtle body reaches), so to speak. The brain is not identical with the subtle body but is pervaded by it.

The other two bodies are the gross body (sthūla śarīram) and the causal body (kāraṇa śarīra). In the Vedānta, these three bodies are explained, to refute their status as independent realities (śarīra traya apavāda). Why? Because they are expressions/appearances of awareness, by māyā.

### स्वगत भेद **svagata bheda**

Difference in the parts of which one object is made.

Examples: Legs, tabletop, and screws of a table. Or leaves, trunk, and branches of one tree. So all parts of one biological phenotype (unique specimen of the species). Another beautiful example of svagata bheda is that manas, buddhi, citta and ahaṅkāra are parts of the same inner instrument: antaḥkaraṇa, a part of a jīva, a living being.

Advaita vedānta looks at a living being differently than biological science. A living being (jīva) is namely consciousness associated with the appearances of the three bodies (causal, subtle, and gross). But these three individual bodies are not svagata bheda within one jīva. This is because they pervade each other. The reason for this is that subtle and causal body are interconnected in respectively the total subtle (hiraṇyagarbha) and total causal body (antaryāmīśvara or kāraṇambrahma) of īśvara. And therefore, all karmas interact and work beautifully together in this way. By now we know that īśvara, as saguṇa brahman is nothing other than brahman itself. So we can understand, the non-duality between all apparent differences. Even the tiniest differences of svagata bheda are without difference all together.

The joke with differences is that you first have to determine the objects. Sometimes a jīva is meant to be the subtle body that travels on after the death of the gross. Sometimes the mind refers to the subtle body (19 parts). Sometimes the mind refers to the inner instrument (4 parts). But you could also say: 'The mind consists of countless thoughts and feelings'.

It all depends on how you look at it. A body has billions of parts (cells, bacteria, you name it), but 4 limbs. Nothing stands alone in the apparent world. Everything is in motion. You can look at something one way and another way. This is precisely the point. Because objects are never what they seem (just ask scientists), the relative world of ever-



changing differences is unpredictable. Only that conscious being that makes this possible and establishes it is reliable and always stably true.

When I look at this text about differences without reading glasses, I see one grey mass. When I zoom in with reading glasses, I see all kinds of different words, with different meanings. When I mentally zoom in on objects, approach them seriously and become internally involved, I start living in real differences. But when I look with self-knowledge, all phenomena dance in one fullness of existence. The third eye of knowledge does not need glasses.

The beauty of vedānta knowledge is that in the free relaxation of unity all apparent differences, such as psychological dynamics and obstacles, even better come to light. This helps researchers to help each other in compassion and empathy.

What is fixed and independent is therefore me myself (ātmā). That is the non-dual truth, consciousness, and therefore without difference. Even though ātmā seems to take on many forms, the forms are mithyā, nothing other than ātmā itself. I, consciousness, am abheda, non-difference. That is the whole point, of this lesson.

Svagata bheda is part of the tripuṭi bheda, the threefold differences. The other two are sajātīya bheda, copies of the same collection, and vijātīya bheda, different collections. It is all appearance. The reality is a-svagata bheda, a-sajātīya bheda, and a-vijātīya bheda.

### स्वामी स्वामिनी svāmī svāminī

Literally: One who has/possesses (min) himself (sva). This expresses mastery over oneself, and knowledge that and how there is nothing outside of oneself.

The one who knows that she or he is the self, with such control over his mind, that this knowledge is available all the time, and continuously sees everything with non-dual vision.

The word svāmī has subsequently acquired the meaning of spiritual teacher. Because the one with self-knowledge and perfect control is suitable to pass on the knowledge of the tradition from teacher to student (svāmī śiṣya paramparā), producing new future svāmīs.

A svāmī is a man, a svāminī is a woman. Svāmī is also the name of a title of someone who has taken the vows of sannyāsa.

In Sanskrit grammar, svāmī is the first case of the stem form svāmin.

## स्वप्रकाश svaprakāśa

Self (sva) shining (prakāśa). Self-revealing. Consciousness does not need enlightenment to illuminate everything.

Everyone knows that he is conscious. If you know that you exist (sat), and that you are conscious (cit), you are already 2/3 enlightened 😊.

The ‘third part’ is a bit more difficult. This is the ānanda part, which expresses that you are the fullness, infinity and bliss of existence itself, shining as the total consciousness that is everything and everyone. To make that a knowing, living experience you need a means of knowledge like vedānta.

This starts with the realization that I am shining, that it is my own light (prakāśa), and that there can be no world if I am not conscious of it. George Berkeley, founder of subjective idealism, wrote: "Esse est percipi", “to be is to be perceived”. This is example of the limited vision of much Western philosophy. As usual, Vedānta turns things back. Percipi est esse. Perceiving is (an apparent mode) of being.

It is characteristic for ignorance (of philosophy and science) that no reference is made to the silent observer, and that is written 'Observation is being itself', meaning that ‘the existence’ of observation makes a world possible.

This is apparently the power of ignorance, which every seeker experiences. The viewer looks ‘over or beyond’ its own light, at the objects that deceive him, thoughts, and feelings in the first place. Once you see that you are ‘looking beyond yourself’, it is shocking that you were first searching in a world that is only a tamasic, material shadow of yourself.

It is like the story of the tenth man. I forget to see myself as the full glory of what I want to solve.

What we are looking for ultimately turns out to be completely self-evident self-shining-ness.

It is not only self-revelation of self-shining that illuminates, but also the ever-present presence in all experiences as the inconspicuous carrier, that permeates and illuminates everything. The one who sees this clearly with self-knowledge, illuminates in fullness. The light is potentially all knowledge. The individual can recognize this, in 'I am'.

'Whatever is, I always am'.

Thus, truth reveals itself to myself as myself.

See also svataḥ siddha.

### स्वर्ग svarga

Heaven, also called svarga loka. The seven heavens or higher lokas begin with this earth, bhū lokāḥ, and are in ascending order bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapaḥ, satyam.

Svarga is, figuratively speaking, where I go because of good karma. But a limited action always brings a limited result, so a stay in heaven also ends, just as a heavenly feeling is temporary. Experience takes place in the mind. So mind management means doing the right dharmic action and cultivating the right dharmic thoughts, so that the mind becomes a heaven, not a hell.

The Upanisad describes heaven as concealing darkness. Why? My karma has been so focused on desire (sakāma) for a better life or heavenly spheres, that I have turned my constitution (subtle body) outward, focused on material, worldly or heavenly pleasure. This is what is meant in the isa upanisad verse 9 with:

andhaṃ tamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyām upāsate

tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyām ratāḥ

Those who are focused on rituals (this can also mean modern strategies against existential insecurity) in order to become better off, enter blinding darkness (of svarga loka).

Into even deeper darkness enter those who focus on worshipping gods (brahma loka, a kind of super-heaven).

This is a bit of an exaggeration, but having said that, the same īśa upaniṣad states immediately afterwards: 'Whoever practices both (karma yoga and upāsana yoga), not as an end in themselves, but as a means to freedom, will ultimately taste infinity'.

So heaven seems like a lot, but we would be better off focusing here and now (sadyomukti) in normal earthly life on moksa, freedom from (and therefore also for) the living, individual being (jīvan-mukti).

### स्वतः सिद्ध svataḥ siddha

Self (svataḥ) evident (siddha). A person generally realizes that he or she is a conscious being. Some actively seek lasting happiness.

What I am actually looking for is the happiness of the freedom of being limited. So that I can be completely myself: The infinite existence itself, the radiant consciousness. That I am conscious is self-evident to everyone, but that I am bliss is not.

That is where advaita vedānta kicks off. I-myself must always simply be (sādhāraṇa) present as 'I am'. The only thing I am certain of in my life is that I am always there. Even after deep sleep, I report the bliss of absence of objects.

Vedānta and yoga point out to me that if I do not think about anything, I am completely okay. We all know this from time to time, when thinking stops for a moment, a desire is satisfied, or in the radiant presence of deep sleep. As soon as I relate to something again, or give my attention to something (in body, mind, or world) I am suddenly not so ok anymore. My own thinking is always the problem. Not that I have to stop thinking, that is impossible. I just have to know the un-true status of my thoughts.

Yoga calls samādhi, absence of thoughts, the end goal. Vedānta says that the experience of this bliss is a reflection of consciousness in the mind. For vedānta, bliss is the experience of the fullness of complete existence, both of self-evident being, and of the objects that appear.

Vedānta proves that I am always ok, because vedānta shows that all objects are dependent, transient, temporary (3x mithyā, false) expressions of myself. Hence the fullness, completeness etc. This fullness of all-inclusive being, makes me always ok. That I am fully ok, can become self-evident. If I focus on my stable, free presence under any circumstance, I recognize and can realise my self-evident beingness.

When I am also told that all thoughts are not-self (anātman), I suddenly understand that I don't have to do anything to be completely okay.

The teaching reveals more and more that this silent witness consciousness (sākṣī cit), that I am, is the ground and truth of everything. Then I see that the apparent fuss is a play in the whole of myself. Then I see that I am not the doer. And that I don't have to do anything to be completely satisfied. It is this knowledge and the self-evidence of being conscious and existence itself (I have to be conscious to be able to establish that I exist, and I have to exist to be conscious), that makes me see my complete freedom.

See also svaparakāśa.

तत् त्वम् असि **tat tvam asi**

‘You are that’ (Chāndogya 6.8.7). This famous ‘great statement’ (mahāvākya) contains the entire Vedānta. The word ‘tat’ refers to Brahman, infinite, pure consciousness. But because a person is being addressed, or more precisely: because the personification of ignorance is being addressed, there is still a mental distance between brahman and the ignorant. ‘Tat’ means that.

The word ‘tvam’, you, initially refers to its literal meaning, namely the ordinary individual, ‘you’, is being addressed.

Then the meaning begins to shift to the implicit meaning (lakṣyārtha), namely to the true nature (svarūpa) of you, pure consciousness. ‘Asi’ expresses the identity between ‘you’ and ‘that’. ‘Asi’ expresses an appeal, an invitation to equation: ‘you are that’. It is an invitation to understand this. Vedānta is the explanation, the means of knowledge to understand this. Vedānta says, you are brahman, consciousness, with an apparent, temporary personal upādhi, an individual experience, which has appeared in you, unlimited consciousness, so that it seems that you are limited.

Tat tvam asi is an identity mantra, like most great statements, which point directly to your true nature (svarūpa mantra).

‘Asi’ literally means ‘you are’. So ‘you are tat’. ‘You are brahman’. Not that you become brahman of course, no you have always been as brahman, and can now, because you know it, say to yourself: ‘aham brahmāsmi, I am brahman’.

The teacher says: ‘I will explain it to you, know that ‘you are that’!’. Uddalaka, the father says nine times to the son, Śvetaketu: ‘Realize tat tvam asi!’ (Chāndogya Upaniṣad verse 6.8.7. - verse 6.13.3). What love!

The crux of an identity mantra is: On which side of the equation am I with my self-image (tādātmya)? On the ignorant ‘tvam’ side, or on the ‘side of truth ‘tat’. Then ‘tat’ becomes ‘aham’, me. The mantra could also be: ‘tat tvam asi aham asmi’. ‘That which you are, I am’. There is only one of us.

As soon as I cognitively shift my identity, according to the truth, I am free. In fact, an identity is an equation, which expresses non-duality. So once I am free as an endless ocean of consciousness, I know nothing else, then that everything, the seen and the unseen are this ocean of consciousness. And that both sides of the equation are that. So also, tvam, the previously assumed person, who of course keeps appearing. Then I can also see the bliss and the joke of the person, and be unconditional love, including the person with all his shortcomings.

How is that? Well, it is not a how! Kena upaniṣad 1.3 expresses it very nicely: 'anyadeva tadviditād atho aviditād adhi'. It is completely different from the known, and different from the unknown.

This expresses 'pure being' nicely. Immobile, imperishable and without otherness.

'Earlier' I saw, through ignorance, and mistakenly identified with the person consciousness (wrong turnaround, viparīta) as something outside of me. I had objectified it as tat. After understanding, there is nothing outside of me.

Gradually, in the course of analysing this sentence, I realise the identity between reality and myself. In principle, I don't need to know anything more. This great mantra mahāvākya implies that the essence of you, the individual (namely pure consciousness) does not differ from brahman and that the comparison therefore applies.

After all, jīva, the living being is consciousness, with the apparent superposition of body and mind on top of it. And the superposition is also nothing other than consciousness, which expresses itself materially. Māyā, that so-called magician, seems to split non-duality into duality. But I cannot find a thing, where my presence is not.

If I felt myself addressed as 'you' in the equation, I was the bound, ignorant, individual watcher or dreamer. If I felt myself addressed as 'that', that also felt strange. 'That' expresses 'elsewhere'. No, advaita is the being not-two of tat and tvam, and therefore conclude that you must be existence itself.

It also does not work if someone with enlightenment disease takes 'tvam' as the sarvajña (all knowledge) and sarvaśaktiman (all power) of īśvara. "That one's got their head in the clouds, and īśvara will chop that little bubble one day—no problem."

Arrogant is someone who, out of his sense of insignificance, has to pretend to be great. I only have to worry about my own arrogance, īśvara takes care of other people's arrogance.

But if I get irritated by that, I compare myself with it, and I am just as petty. Let īśvara handle all ignorance, and see: 'tat tvam asi', you are infinitely pure (brahman). You may claim being brahman because you are brahman. Thus, I see that all objects that appear in me are not real, but temporarily appeared names and forms of brahman, arrogance not excluded, wisdom not excluded.

To be free I must dare to claim Brahman! Otherwise, the guru points at me and says: 'You are brahman', then I shrink and say: 'I brahman, how can that be? I feel so small and insignificant'. Experiencing the impossibility of 'tat tvam asi' is a well-known

obstacle (pratibandha), called asambhava. Just try to understand and claim it, the result is unbelievable.

Why am I myself, it? Because the only thing I can feel for sure is that I exist. I cannot rely on anything else. Even though I see things outside my body, the only thing I know for sure is that I exist. If I accept non-duality, then I am brahman. Then the equation dissolves, as it were. And I am simply full.

By expressing the truth as an equation, it reconciles the apparent division/separation between the worshipper and the worshipped. Then I can worship everything as myself (parama bhakti).

The blessing of a good teaching like vedānta is as follows. Destiny (karma momentum) picks you up as an individual and takes you along all logic. Asi expresses that the things that appear to me 'are' not what they seem to 'be'. The common denominator here is 'being'. Vedānta takes you from the relative 'being' of things to 'absolute being' itself.

So first in the divided world understanding the equation between apparently different things. Then the result: I am boundless, ever free, pure knowledge, infinite in its apparent possibilities. I am without attributes, so without any comparison as tat tvam asi. The whole path to self-knowledge turns out to be false mithyā afterwards. Therefore, a person who develops cannot go back. You cannot be an 'old soul', you cannot become 'the old one'. You are that which makes young and old possible. Knowledge burns the ignorant path behind you.

The comparison shows that brahman is not some remote entity that I have to pull towards me. In essence, Brahman, I and the world were always one. Again, I exist and am conscious, so I must be.

The Bhagavad Gītā is divided into three parts of six chapters (three śaṭkas) on the basis of tat tvam asi. The first part is about tvam, you (tvam padārtha). In this the person with his doubts and conflict about dharma-adharma is elaborated, and the person is immediately given the solution (chapter 2). Part two is about tat, īśvara (tat padārtha). Here it is shown how kṛṣṇa is actually īśvara-brahman (divine). Part three (asi padārtha), the identity of both is demonstrated. That the true divine nature also applies to us, so-called mortals.

### उपाधि upādhi

Literally: 'placed (dhi) upon (upa)'. That which apparently transfers its attribute to a nearby receiver, an upahita, by remaining close to it.

The famous example: When a blue lotus is brought close to a clear crystal, the crystal (the upahita) appears blue. The crystal has no colour in itself, but 'seems' to become 'blue', and thus to take on the property of the upādhi blue flower. But the crystal remains intrinsically pure, colourless. The blue flower we could call a manifesting medium for blueness. The upādhi in this example is the flower, not its blueness. So the crystal never became blue and yet it seemed so for a while. In the same way, consciousness, which you are, by definition takes on no property.

The upādhi of pure consciousness is māyā, the mysterious potential power that makes a cosmos appear with living beings in it. That is why we learn what an upādhi is. But an upādhi is not real, since there is nothing but consciousness. The upādhi and the object that gives off its quality are mithyā. It all seems so. And so is ignorance the upādhi for consciousness in the individual case. This also just seems so.

Because consciousness is endless pure knowledge, it can easily seem to take on the individual experience of ignorance, in the form of the three bodies (causal, subtle, and gross). After self-knowledge it turns out not to be true. Then the upādhi immediately changes from ignorance to knowledge. Apparently, consciousness can seemingly manifest objects and upādhis within itself. All I have to do is not to fall into the appearance of upādhis, not to relate to them, not to attach any value to them, except the value of the holiness, bliss and enjoyment of the totality of the picture. And therefore, the enjoyment of the self.

Upādhi is an effective teaching instrument, the ideal means of knowledge to understand the relationship upādhi upahita. I am the upahita, the only, non-dual free carrier of apparent objects, which apparently project characteristics, functions, attributes into me. Because they are dependent on me, I am permanently free.

The carrier (upahita) is consciousness, and the upādhi is of another order of reality, namely mithyā, a temporary, transient, dependent form of the carrier. Consciousness itself remains untouched, pure, and clean, whatever appears in it. It only needs to be separated cognitively because the objects continue to appear, or continue to act as upādhis that apparently, but not really, affect me.

The type of appearance that keeps appearing after self-knowledge is called sopādhi (sa upādhi, with upādhi). Examples of lessons are: A mirage that seems real, the sky that seems blue, the sun that seems to rise, a stick that seems to bend in water. Essential conclusion: I consciousness, remain pure, no matter what object of māyā (the basic upādhi) appears in me. I need knowledge to know that what I perceive is not real, but only 'attributes' of the upādhi māyā.



This error that is dismantled, once I discover the unreality of objects that keep appearing (sopādhika adhyāsa) by knowing it, is also called jñāna (knowledge) adhyāsa. The errors continue to be experienced, and I need knowledge to know that they do not stand independently but are consciousness.

Nirupādhi is an upādhi that manifests through subjective experience (pratibhāsika). These arise from deep unknowing dynamics such as fear or desire. For example, a snake is seen in a rope near the well, or a desirable potential partner is seen as an object that will bring me happiness. As soon as I know the object as it is, this type of upādhi disappears (nir). Then I only see rope. Or then I only see a partner as someone with whom I can celebrate my own happiness (the best approach for a successful relationship), without being involved (entangled) in it. Then I (at least one of the two jīvas) can meet the other independently and purely. It does not necessary take two to tango, for a successful relationship. One free, independent jīva is enough. Why? Because this jīva knows that there is no relationship, and therefore this jīva will always be able to agree with the other if necessary and thus accommodate (the value of kṣānti).

Nirupādhis arise because I suppose the world is threatening or desirable to me. Because I assume the world is real, I feel threatened or repelled by the world.

The truth is that I, as the intrinsic pure light of the apparent world, am neither harmed (akṣata of akṣara) nor touched (asparśya) by any properties of the apparent world.

The three bodies (śarīra traya) or the five layers of personality (pañca-kośāḥ) are the upādhis for a human being. Māyā seems to be the upādhi for īśvara. Jñāna tells me that it is not so. Then I can be what I am.

The translation for upādhi sometimes used, as 'limiting or conditioning aid or adjunct', is misleading because the limitation suggested by the upādhi is not real.

### उत्तर मीमांसा **uttara mīmāṃsā**

Later (uttara) investigation (mīmāṃsā). It is called 'later or latest' because it is the investigation that ultimately makes all investigation redundant. This is in accordance with the word vedānta. Anta, the end of or by veda, knowledge. The knowledge that makes all other knowledge unnecessary. Why? When I know the single truth (of myself), I know the truth of everything (everything is myself).

Veda Anta and Uttara Mīmāṃsā are thus equivalent to the final logic of the vedas, revealed in writing in the upaniṣads. It is the knowledge that is the end of all knowledge. So called because it comes after all the preparatory work of the pūrva mīmāṃsā (previous

investigation), which is equivalent to the great first action-part (karma-kāṇḍa) of the vedas.

The words *uttara* or *anta* (from *vedānta*), therefore, mean ‘last’, because it comes after the qualification through the karma and upāsana yoga of karma kāṇḍa. Then you are told one single message (śravaṇa): ‘tat tvam asi’, you are that. If, after hearing, that is not yet fully understood, reflection (*manana*) and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) on this knowledge follows.

We could say that *uttara mīmāṃsā* comes after the five philosophical schools (*darśanas*) of the Vedas. Because it concerns the highest non-dual knowledge, which refutes the previous five other schools. Refuting here actually means elevating by negation (*bādha*). Then *uttara* becomes *uttama*, the supreme of the supreme.

We could also say that *uttara mīmāṃsā* encompasses all other philosophical directions, because it points directly to the self, which is consciousness, the independent substrate of all ways of thinking. It is the final investigation, the final knowledge, which once understood, also abolishes itself (*bādha*). What remains is that which is inalienable (*abhāda*). One's own existence, shining as consciousness, outside of which there is nothing.

*Uttara mīmāṃsā* is therefore the ultimate (*uttara*) self-inquiry (*ātmā mīmāṃsā*). Why ultimate? Whoever passes through the gate of knowledge, finds no path behind him, and no path in front of him, and just (*sādhāraṇa*) is...

### वाच्यर्थ **vācyartha**

The literal meaning (*artha*) of words (*vāc*). By definition, this cannot be enough to understand something. Why not? A word-image is gross, the truth it points to is infinitely subtle. Meaning dissolves into its essence, pure meaning.

*Lakṣyartha*, the implicit meaning, in the extreme case refers directly to the self-evident consciousness. We must always search for a level of meaning deeper, more subtle, until this search for meaning ceases.

We can understand the *lakṣyartha* of the lessons, in the sense that we can understand that we are truth. But we cannot know the *lakṣyartha*, because we cannot know consciousness as such (as an object). Hence knowledge is the self-knowledge of ‘being the truth’, not knowing the truth.

Synonymous with vācyārtha is mukhyārtha, which we could translate as the superficial meaning of a word. As if we looked the word in the mouth (mukha) or in the face (also mukha). Or the fleetingness, with which a word comes out of the mouth (also mukha) into the ether. Meaning takes place on a more subtle level.

The intellect that wants to grasp īśvara is blessed with the meaning of the words that enter it.

### वैराग्य **vairāgya**

Dispassion. State or attitude of mind that expresses objectivity, neutrality, cognitive detachment, and inner distance.

Vai comes from vi and means, reversed/away from, and raga comes from raj, colour. Vairāgya means that you do not colour an object with values and therefore do not become internally attached to it. An object in itself (so not seen as its deeper substrate consciousness) is simply neutral, inert, material manifestation-appearance. Later, when the non-duality of reality is understood, you assign each object the only full value, namely the full value of consciousness, the only truth itself.

Vairāgya is therefore translated as objectivity or detachment. ‘Without passion for objects’, is better. Detachment expresses duality. I am not attached to something. Better is therefore: ‘Not being mentally involved in a specific object’.

Vairāgya is one of the four main qualifications (sādhana catuṣṭaya) for freedom. Because of his or her neutral attitude, the vairāgī is independent of the results of actions for his or her happiness.

The formal definition is therefore: iha amutra artha phala bhoga virāgaḥ vairāgyam. This means: 'No binding passion for and attachment to the results of experience here (iha), in this world and hereafter (amutra)'.

Why vairāgya? Because an objective, unattached, independent mind is ready to understand, and thus to be, the pure objectivity of consciousness. That consciousness is neutral, without values, does not mean that it is worthless. On the contrary, because it is single complete saturation (a bit too much a label), it is completely valuable, the only value of all, namely the truth.

An objective detached mind is 'as good as' the self, consciousness. Then I realize that I am fullness, and that everything arises in this fullness of existence. With this attitude I reach out from the bliss that is. Then I do not have to do anything to be okay, and it does

not really matter what happens. It is more that I celebrate life, and carry it out from the fulness, instead of having to draw happiness from the world.

Passion here refers to the passions of attachment and aversion or the impulses of sympathy and aversion. Wherever there is attachment, there will be protection (kṣema) and therefore dveṣa, aversion. Both are inverted forms of craving and therefore come from adhyāsa, delusion, followed by superposition (adhyāropa), the imposition of false characteristics (leading to false evaluations).

So vairāgya does not mean that there is no pleasure. What you get in return for the qualification is the permanent, full enjoyment of the full being itself, without dependency or addiction. The passion you get in return is a continuous cheerfulness and enthusiasm for everything, because you know that and how it is the blissful self.

Dispassion – freedom from the pull and pressure of attachment and aversion – is developed by seeing repeatedly the limitations of everything and seeing that everything is subject to time and therefore cannot give lasting happiness (only the timeless reality gives timeless happiness).

All actions are inherently defective, because all achievements involve some degree of suffering. All worldly pleasures are inherently painful. In the attainment (yoga) of a goal (artha), such as possessions or status, there is inherent insecurity and fear of losing it. People generally adopt protective, conservative (kṣema) behaviour out of fear of losing achievements. This is the great joke of existence, because we are going to lose everything anyway, in the dissolution (pralaya) of the gross body. Furthermore, the satisfaction of a desire stimulates a related, reinforced desire in the future, through the force of habit (vāsanā). Overall, an action always carries its opposite within it. This is what James Swartz calls 'the zero-sum of reality'.

The result of an action, because it is limited, can never give unlimited satisfaction. Every action of a human being on earth is limited, binding and dependent (puruṣa tantra) because by definition it produces a limited, binding, and dependent result.

As for spiritual development: Only one without binding passions is able to hear the teaching without mixing his own interpretations, or without distorting the teaching to suit his prejudices (confirmation bias). Only one without binding passions can muster the attention required to listen to the teaching undisturbed (śravaṇa). Only one without passions will have the refinement of mind required to clearly understand the teaching. Just hearing and reading such statements is a liberating relief for a contemplative, refined mind. For the desirous, distracted mind it is likely to be a torment.

Vairāgya and the other main quality viveka (discrimination) go together. Viveka means that I can separate the sense from the nonsense. That I can separate relative matters from the main thing. Simply put, this means that I recognize what comes and goes and therefore recognize what is temporary and transient (anitya) and what must always be there (nitya) in order to distinguish at all. If I want to develop objectivity and inner distance (vairāgya) from transient matters, I will first have to be able to clearly distinguish these matters (viveka). The reverse also applies: If I want to be able to recognize (viveka) what I cannot build on sustainably, I will first have to adopt an inner position of observation, contemplation, detachment, and objectivity (vairāgya).

The Sanskrit of this term is interesting: vairāgya is the 'neuter form' of virāga - free (vi) from passion or attachment (raj -> rāga), which is still masculine. This must have been consciously chosen by earlier mahātmas of vedānta. The neutrality of the word indicates the quality of the neutral vairāga.

### वैशेषिक **vaiśeṣika**

A philosophy or school of thought (founded by Kaṇādaḥ) with its own metaphysics, epistemology, logic, etc., which seems to conflict with vedānta in some respects. Vaiśeṣika is traditionally one of the six viewpoints (darśanas) with which Vedānta debates. Some say that Vedānta is one of the six, but it is better to say that Vedānta includes all the other five in its non-dual vision and therefore does not contradict them. Why? Vaiśeṣika ascribes authenticity to differences, Vedānta holds that differences are only apparent, and are in reality expressions of one truth: existence-consciousness, which is yourself. In its infinite subtlety, Vedānta, as it were, sublimates the differences in the thought of other schools of thought.

Vaiśeṣya means difference, or specific. Vaiśeṣika is therefore also called 'qualified monism'. This is therefore not pure advaita, non-duality. It claims that within the one (hence monism) great consciousness there are many separate ātmās (multiple particular selves). It is narrated that in Vaiśeṣika only pratyakṣam (perception) and anumānam (inference from perception) are valid and reliable pramāṇas (means for knowledge).

Because the truth, as that which makes everything possible, cannot be objectified, this gives the problem that perception and its derived methodologies and instruments can never lead to the discovery of truth. This is exactly the same problem as in modern science. The basis of this is that a true means of knowledge cannot come from people with their instruments such as senses and thinking faculty. However brilliant Mr. Kaṇādaḥ may have been, he is limited in his vision, because he focuses on sense

perception. There is a remarkable difficulty here, because Vaiśeṣika does appeal to the divine Vedas (āstika) as a means of knowledge.

The difference is that Vedānta also analyses one's own experience, but in a completely unique way. Vedānta points to the factor of consciousness, as the condition and in-ground for all differences to appear at all.

Vaiśeṣika states that one obtains liberation and knowledge, through complete understanding and living through the world of experience. But that cannot be freedom. Because dependence on experience is as capricious as experience itself. Moreover, complete understanding of the world of experience is reserved only for the impersonal, neutral power īśvara as being all knowledge (sarvajña).

And that is precisely the point: Vedānta as a means of words (śabda pramāṇa) provides a means of knowledge that a human being could never conceive (apauruṣeya), because through knowledge it points to a reality that is infinitely more subtle than science will ever be able to find, and which the mind cannot reach. Why? The researcher himself, Kaṇādaḥ himself, the scientific researcher himself is the truth, including all vaiśeṣyas, so-called differences and specifications of reality.

Experience as an object is always mithyā, dependent and transient, relatively true. In experience one will therefore never find freedom. Vaiśeṣika further states that the world is absolutely real and that its building blocks are atoms: the smallest indestructible particles. We now know that atoms contain even infinitely smaller particles, which break down in waves, or fields, which in turn consist of information, dependent on the conscious observer.

Science today is also increasingly beginning to accept that the smallest manifestations are more information-like in nature than energy-matter, which is beginning to tie in somewhat with Vedānta, which states that consciousness, the ground of everything, is pure knowledge, which can seemingly express itself through a concept like māyā as an efficient cause (nimitta kāraṇa) and a material cause (upādāna kāraṇa), without really changing (vivarta).

### वस्तु तन्त्र vastu tantra

Literally: Dependence (tantra) on the meaning of the object, the thing, the topic to be understood (vastu) itself, because only knowledge of the topic can unfold the meaning.

Whether I know an object depends on my knowledge of it. Only when my knowledge of it is correct, do I know the thing. Science has proven that they have never been able to put

their finger on an object 100%, because an object has infinitely many 'layers' of reality, depending on how I look at it. Do I see a table, wood, fibres, structures, molecules, atoms, neutrons, bosons, strings, information etc.? What is it? So far finite objects.

The subject (vastu) of advaita vedānta is reality, existence (sat) itself, truth. That is quite something. In order to know the vastu of reality, namely truth, I am dependent (tantra) on knowledge of truth. Here is the point: The subject of inquiry is also the subject of reality, in the sense of silent witness, which cannot perceive itself. I can only know myself, without the mediation of perception or derivatives thereof. The label 'vastu' is no longer an object, but the subject. Why? Because I cannot know it as an object. I can only know it by being it, and understanding how it relates to the objects it seemingly conjures up. This is the knowledge upon which I am dependent (tantra).

What I want to know is not an object, but a subject that I want to know (in order to know myself). So vastu is ātmā (self). What do I depend on to know it? Knowledge (jñāna). Knowledge says: The self is the only reality. All names and forms (nāma rūpa) are appearances of this self. It is that which is the silent witness of everything as itself. It is free and full.

That which manifests from vastu is mithyā and therefore: Only vastu, existence itself is free. Identified with saṁsāra, so with the experience of being in saṁsāra, nothing is free. There are all the loose parts, bound and dependent on each other.

So whether I am free depends only on my knowledge of vastu, not on vastu itself, which is simply what it is, the truth which as consciousness-existence is the ground of everything. If I am ignorant, I must seek knowledge and rely on it. If I am not ignorant, I am independent.

Action has a limited result. Knowledge has an unlimited result, because what I know of is limitless. Since brahman is not an object, I cannot experience brahman. I can only know that it is unlimited and infinite. I cannot know brahman as such, only know that I am it. I am the freedom of brahman. Then: First, I was dependent (tantra) on knowledge to know the subject (vastu) of myself. Now I know it. Brahmavid āpnoti param. He who knows brahman 'attains' (is) it. Taittīriyopaniṣad 2.1.1.

This I could never have known through action, yoga or anything like that. For action (karma) is dependent (tantra) on a human being (puruṣa), and gives a limited result. As we all know, people with their antics are by definition capricious.

## वेदान्त vedānta

End, conclusion, anta (literally and figuratively) of every Veda (knowledge). It is the culmination, the ultimate goal and the fulfilment of the Vedas. Hence it also means the 'end of knowledge', or more precisely 'the knowledge that is the end of all forms of relative knowledge'. The knowledge that makes all other forms of knowledge redundant. By this is meant: 'When I know brahman, the absolute truth consciousness, I know everything as myself'.

When vedānta has done its work, one lets it go and one is what one is, consciousness-existence, the only thing that is, and from which everything apparently arises and into which everything apparently goes down.

Vedānta is the jñāna kāṇḍa (the Upaniṣads), the knowledge part of the Vedas that deals with the self-knowledge that I am non-dual consciousness. We are talking about knowledge, because the problem is ignorance of what I really am. The earlier part of the Vedas, the karma kāṇḍa, is the preparation for this.

Vedānta is a knowledge medium of words (śabda pramāṇa). A word mirror (śabda darpaṇa), which makes me understand myself. It is the ultimate and most complete method to see that I am mokṣa, freedom.

The entire path of Vedānta includes, karma-yoga (like bhakti, focused love), qualifications, inventory of values (like dharma), meditation on the world like īśvara and then śravaṇa (unbiased listening to the words of the teacher, who presents the knowledge medium of the tradition), manana (reflecting on the lessons, asking questions), nididhyāsana (contemplation on yourself as the non-dual truth, consciousness). Self-realization occurs by definition in śravaṇa, because individual ignorance is removed by wisdom that comes from outside.

Vedānta is not a school of thought, a philosophy, a way of seeing (darśana), a system of ideas, a series of disagreements. It is a pramāṇa, a means that I let work on my mind by listening to the teacher unfold the lessons of the tradition. It shows how everything that seems to diverge (vyatireka) is held together by one connection (anvaya), namely consciousness. It offers the ignorant a level of thinking that he or she must first acquire in order to understand the next level. Then one contradicts (apavāda vākya) the previous level and takes the self-inquirer a step further.

Not by replacing one set of concepts with another, but by seeing through the flaw in my interpretation of reality. This continues until vedānta has revealed the non-dual nature of reality to the self-inquirer.



The term advaita vedānta can of course be used perfectly well, but it is a tautology. The term vedānta is enough. Knowledge (veda) is namely non-dual self-knowledge.

Vedānta is not part of what academics call the six systems or views (darśanas) of Indian philosophy. It is a view on reality, that happens to be effective to remove ignorance, about knowing what I am. It encompasses in its non-dual view all other views. Vedānta is not meant for proselytizing, it is only meant to be shared with those who are searching for their true nature, which is the true nature of reality, which is freedom.

### विद्य आनन्द **vidya ānanda**

Literally ‘the bliss of knowledge’.

In a broad sense this means the following. Knowledge (vidya or jñāna) shows me that I am bliss (ānanda), which is boundlessness (ananta), endless possibilities. Hence the famous sat cit ānanda, appears as satyam ‘jñānam’ anantam brahma in the taittiriya upaniṣad (2.1.1). Consciousness (cit), is called knowledge (jñānam) here. How does that work? We can interpret vidya ānanda in two ways. Firstly, by knowledge as pure knowledge, in the sense that consciousness has infinite, unprecedented possibilities to make entire universes appear. This can only be based on knowledge. This knowledge is pure, because it remains what it is. It creates nothing, nor does anything change, it only seems that way.

The second meaning is a more specific one. Here vidya ānanda means: Showing my level of knowledge (level of ignorance usually) to the teacher, in the second stage of vedānta, which is called manana (reflection). By asking questions to the teacher without embarrassment, or by engaging in conversation, when the specific topic is on the agenda, I learn fastest. The teacher can recognize where my knowledge still shows gaps and corrects them. We could also call this the bliss of vulnerability. By opening my mouth to the teacher, what I do not yet understand becomes clear, the knowledge is created precisely in my mind, and obstacles to understanding are exposed. We all have blind spots, and they show themselves fastest this way.

Only in vulnerability do bits of ignorance come to the surface, which can be placed in the light of truth again. Usually, people are afraid of this. And that is precisely the obstacle. But what have we got to lose? Knowledge is a discovery, not something I acquire and have to hold on to. Especially the student who combines respect and eagerness in his or her contact with the teacher, will learn quickly. Why? He or she sucks the knowledge out of the teacher and thus experiences the relative vidya ānanda of maturation and cognitive

and spiritual growth. A vedānta teacher loves nothing more than enthusiastic, dedicated students.

This stage requires courage and already a certain amount of freedom. Not to hold my ignorance inside is liberation from obstacles. The only thing I may lose is ignorance, nothing else, and who would not want that? Everything I hold inside limits me, locks me in my process. Whoever understands how this works, will grow quickly and will taste the spontaneity of a jñānī, who has no secrets in his infinite innocence, and who laughs at 'his' clumsiness, because it is not his clumsiness. What freedom!

### विजातीय भेद **vijātīya bheda**

Objects of various categories.

For example, a chair or a tree, a dog or its master, a human being. Vijātīya bheda is part of the tripuṭī bheda, the threefold differences. The other two are svagata bheda, parts of the same specimen, and sajātīya bheda, specimens of the same collection.

Time (kāla) and space (ākāśa) and the other four pure elements are the only objects that fall purely into this type of difference. All other objects can be placed in all three categories of differences. This means that a thing is never what it looks like, can be interpreted in diverse ways, and is relative.

For example, a chair is part of one interior (svagata bheda) and can be a rococo example of chairs in general (sajātīya bheda). Chairs and tables then differ from each other as vijātīya bheda.

Another example of vijātīya bheda is mind and brain. Even though they work together, the brain is an instrument at the disposal of the mind, which is of a different, more subtle order. Mind in the sense of mind (manas) is sajātīya bheda in relation to buddhi, citta and ahaṅkāra in the concept of part of one antaḥkaraṇa, the fourfold inner instrument. Brain is sajātīya bheda in relation to other body parts such as toes within one body.

Just as we cannot conclusively define an object (think of the analysis of an object from mithyā to satya, table, wood -> molecules -> bosons, strings -> information, knowledge, intelligence -> consciousness), we cannot exactly capture differences either. When we think about the moving world (jagat) it is one moving quantity of categories. Types of differences are also continuously in motion, depending on how the observer relates to them.

This ‘types of differences’ teaching is about the fact that consciousness, the truth, cannot be categorized in any way. It is the ground of all apparent differences and is itself therefore difference-less. It is categorically the revealer of all differences, the silent witness, the pervading and real content of all objects. It is independent and the only, single truth (satya), while all objects are dependent on the substrate of consciousness and are mobile and different from each other (mithyā).

### विकल्प vikalpa

Doubt, alternative idea or option. Imagination, division.

Kalpa means projection, form (from the Sanskrit root klp), vi means apart, away from. This is interesting. So vikalpa is the fragmentation of the unity into thousands of mental shards. Welcome to the mirror palace of the mind.

Thus, vikalpa means mental division, and this results in misinterpretation of perception.

In individual ignorance, the truth is covered, and a scattered thought-world is projected. Whoever projects a uniform, confident thought-world lives in a correspondingly quiet world. It is the projection of a range of choices and doubts, which give a fragmented worldview. So vikalpa stands for the fragmentation, absent-mindedness, doubt, and mobility of the mind.

Such division in the mind leads to seeing many options for action. Options that apparently use free will to make a choice. The feeling of free will is caused by the ignorant assumption that there is an I (ahaṅkāra), which would have to make choices autonomously. This creates doubt and choice stress. While an individual is just a link in the cosmic engine. And the wise always knows what has to happen (saṅkalpa) because his or her intellect is impregnated with īśvara and the knowledge that īśvara decides and does anyway. I better leave it that way, because otherwise I create karma. ‘Whatever comes to me I do’.

The way to get into this state of mind is karma yoga. One, adopt an attitude that makes me contribute to the whole in love. Two, accept what comes back from the field. In short, surrender.

The two terms saṅkalpa and vikalpa are usually used together to refer to a thinking activity in which the mind tries to work towards a certain decisiveness (saṅkalpa). The thinker thinks she or he knows what to do. But doubts can still arise. Suddenly other options (vikalpas) are created in the mind, weighing, and considering between the different options for action.

The doubt is of course between vikalpas, because a saṅkalpa would not be a saṅkalpa if it is part of the doubt between left or right. In saṅkalpa one has already decided.

The knowing-wise has hardly any vikalpas, because he lives with self-knowledge as saṅkalpa (decisive conviction).

It is the challenge of the intellect to mature and have a feeler for īśvara. Then issues are neatly solved, and one knows unerringly whether one can do something, or nothing, whether one knows something, or does not know something, or to choose the best choice between the options that manas offers. Buddhi thus gives a blow to the doubt of vikalpa, and gives a clear assessment of the situation and clarity about what needs to be done.

Is doubt bad? No, it is not. There is nothing without reason. The whole plan is designed in such a way that there are ways out. Hence the doubt function vikalpa. Suppose I have a limiting belief (saṅkalpa) that is all-determining in my life. For example: I have to live symbiotically with my partner, to be connected (I can better see that I am symbiotically connected with Bhagavān). Or I need alcohol or drugs to not feel bad. Suppose I had no doubt. Then I would not have a nagging feeling that there are other, better, sustainable solutions to be happy.

Likewise: Suppose I am running after security of existence (artha), or I am running after pleasures, leisure activities and distraction from the emptiness and dullness of my experience (kāma), or I must and will provide informal care or improve others and the world (dharma), but I keep getting cheated from life, and feel cheated in my happiness etc. Then it is the built-in doubt (!) that tells me that I may have to start thinking differently, that ignorance is the problem and knowledge the solution to freedom (mokṣa). This is also sometimes expressed by people, for example in their midlife crisis: 'This can't be it?' Doubt can turn a person into a seeker of truth.

Conclusion: In someone who knows that he is the self, vikalpa plays a much smaller role. This person lives, as it were, in saṅkalpa, because he or she (the person) lets himself or herself be lived by īśvara, and therefore always spontaneously and mindfully does what needs to be done. And it does not matter to her or him what happens. Hence surrender. As consciousness, such a sage does not do anything himself and knows: Īśvara apparently decides what happens. That sage gladly hands over his apparent life, to an apparent god, who is the 100% professional in living a good life. So why not let god run life, and enjoy the show? If one lets the long arm of īśvara reach into all the details of one's life, one is rocked forever. This is easiest if I declare myself as free consciousness, without any fuss.

## विक्षेप शक्ति **vikṣepa śakti**

Projective force. Rajas, the name of the activating quality of māyā, gives rise to the vikṣepa śakti which, through its projective force, gives rise to the appearance of an external world. On a micro scale, this is related to the restlessness of having to do something and the force of action, the kriyā śakti of a person. As in heaven, so on earth. Every force of īśvara, has its repercussions in the jīva.

Through vikṣepa śakti, the objects that are made of the material quality tamas, (related to the concealing force āvaraṇa-śakti) come into motion, and project a reality into or onto ātmā. This is called superposition (adhyāropa) and leads to falsely (adhyāsa) attributing validity to my body and mind and things in the world.

Haha, here it comes: Objects outside the body only appear when the senses and mind are active, and feelings and thoughts are only experienced when the mind is active. Since consciousness is not space, ‘everything is always and everywhere’, so infinitely present in potential. Therefore, mithyā has a relationship of substance to satya, not of quantity or anything like that, see mithyā. This means mithyā is satya, together they are sat only.

Because the sense instruments, organs, and the brain, and the mind are active, the object is taken for what it is not (ignorance, avidyā). By the laws of tuned karma of the jīvas, a coherent happening emanates from consciousness. But in principle, or better in potential, everything is possible at the same time. That is what Arjuna saw when Kṛṣṇa-īśvara showed Himself in His total unmanifested form viśvarūpa in chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gītā. Arjuna briefly received a divine eye there (divya cakṣu, this is not a third eye, because that means the cognitive wheel of knowledge, ajñā cakra).

In life, the alignment of karma-appearance is sometimes spontaneously disturbed or expanded. Think of certain mental disorders such as psychosis or schizophrenia, spiritual epiphany, or paranormal abilities. This can also be consciously sought with drugs. Think of hallucinations and cosmic experiences when using Ayahuasca. These kinds of experiences are a tip of the veil of the possibilities, but nothing special. It all falls into the category of experience. The singularity and synchronicity of īśvara explains why consciousness is non-dual. It carries infinite possibilities for projection in its pure intelligence. In this way, it can effortlessly project a cosmos in or on itself in one go.

The funny thing is that physics also speaks in these kinds of terms. Examples: Big Bang singularity: ‘This is the moment at which the universe began from ‘a state of infinite density’ and temperature according to the theory of the Big Bang’.

Or gravitational singularity: ‘At the centre of a black hole there is a gravitational singularity, a point where the curvature of space-time ‘becomes infinite and the known laws of nature, such as those of the theory of relativity, collapse’.

I do not know if the dear reader has ever heard of Schrödinger’s cat. That confirms the role that the observer plays in determining an object. The physicist Schrödinger had the following, gruesome thought experiment. A cat in a closed box, in which a device has been installed to poison the cat. As long as the box remains closed, according to Schrödinger the cat can be dead and alive at the same time. Only when the lid of the box is removed, and there is an observer, is it determined whether the cat is dead (poisoned) or alive. He wanted to show the absurdity of the behaviour of quantum particles.

That particles really do behave like this is increasingly demonstrated in modern physics. What it all boils down to is that a particle does not necessarily have a specific location within quantum mechanics. This is explained as follows: As long as you do not observe where a particle is, there is only a probability distribution: you have a certain percentage chance that it is in location A, a certain percentage chance that it is in location B, and so on. In physics terms, it is in a superposition (!), a combination of multiple possible positions. If you then observe the particle, that superposition immediately changes into a single position.

If you extend that idea of the particle world to the world around us, you get Schrödinger's cat story. Vedānta extends the results of these sciences to reconcile the infinity of consciousness via māyā with our life. It states that perception manifests objects: *dr̥ṣṭi* (the seer) *sṛ̥ṣṭi* (creates). *Sṛ̥ṣṭi* is of course not a real creation, it is an apparent projection, caused by the apparent force *vikṣepa*.

The perception of an object therefore means that as soon as I start to experience or perceive something, there is so much obscuring force (*āvaraṇa*) present that what I have to deal with becomes a manageable chunk. Why? Well, in ignorance there seems to be an endless cyclical happening, called *samsāra*. The source of this power is previous karmic pressure of fears and cravings. The funny thing is that it is apparently set in motion. *Jīvas*, out of their ignorance, cherish desires for objects or fears of objects, which are also cyclically caused by previous concealment and projection. And so *īśvara* keeps facilitating them. The only way out of this is the knowledge that projection is appearance, not real creation, or evolution. Creation and evolution do not contradict each other either. They are both not really true, but if we call projection or appearance creation, then the creation of *samsāra* proceeds according to *īśvara*'s biological laws of evolution, among other laws.

Vikṣepa śakti is the means (not the cause, the apparent cause of every apparent effect is consciousness) through which thoughts arise in the mind.

Vikṣepa-śakti is threefold:

- jñāna śakti – the power to know
- icchā śakti – the power to desire
- kriya śakti - the power to act

From consciousness-māyā (māyā cannot be separated from consciousness) all objects have their basis in knowledge (jñāna). When this power is reflected in the mind of an individual, it gives the power of knowledge. The power that I can know something about things in the world, but also the ability to understand the truth through knowledge, and thus the power to remove ignorance.

If I know something about an object, I can desire it (icchā śakti). This reflected icchā śakti can even give rise to a desire for freedom (mumukṣutva) and a desire for knowledge (ijñāsu). Anyone who wants to know what this life really is, will gradually discover that only knowledge can bring freedom, through a desire to understand these kinds of dynamics. Rajas, the guṇa 'behind or under' vikṣepa, is then used beneficially to sublimate my desire for worldly matters into a desire for truth and freedom.

This desire can lead to the activation of the capacity for action (kriya śakti). With this I enter into relationships in the world, and this dynamic keeps the mind of the individual extrovert. With all the psychological projecting tendencies that entails. This projection will over-actively focus on external concerns, desires, and emotions. Existential agitation is the result.

Vikṣepa thus manifests itself in the excitement, distraction, inattention, and disconnected thoughts that arise from the manifesting, scattering, and tossing activity of macro vikṣepa śakti. All sorts of things are superimposed on the mind, causing me to talk myself into all sorts of problems, while in fact I have 0% to do with the world.

Born from the rajas of māyā, vikṣepa is also one of the four hindrances to meditation – the others being: kaṣāya (latent emotional problems), laya (sleep, lethargy) and rasāsvāda (attachment to the nice feeling, the silence of meditation, which causes one to remain there).

## विवर्त vivarta

Literally: 'whirlpool'. This word is used to express the illusion of the dizzying world and life, caused by the infinite pure knowledge of consciousness, seemingly expressed by the potential force māyā, and manifested in īśvara.

Note: Illusion does not mean, it does not exist. Illusion means it is not the object in itself that I see, but unchanged consciousness, myself. The most accurate definition is: The change of consciousness into an appearance, which is not a real change. It is a seeming appearance, or false transformation. It is used to express apparent changes of the cause (kāraṇa) 'consciousness' into the effect (kārya) 'objects', while consciousness does not actually change. Hence the title 'causeless cause (nirmitta nirmāṇa kāraṇa)', for brahman-consciousness, which is therefore self-existent or self-manifesting (svayambhū).

Vivarta therefore means 'false' or 'apparent'.

Vivarta upādāna kāraṇa is a material (upādāna) cause (kāraṇa) in which another form is taken without the cause consciousness intrinsically changing in nature (prakṛti). All objects are vivarta, apparent, because consciousness does not become an independent object, it only appears so.

This is, in contrast to pariṇāma upādāna kāraṇa, in which changes in the apparent transactional (vyāvahārika) world are irreversible. Like milk being churned into cheese. On a worldly level everything is one big mess of irreversible change. From the symbiosis of egg and cell to an old man or woman, to his or her deathbed. This apparent change is irreversible change. On a true level there is no change at all. From real level to worldly level there seems to be change, but this is only appearance (vivarta). This is how the jñānī (knower) looks.

This is also evident from deep sleep. Every night we fall back on the experience of consciousness without objects, which is the same. Back to square one, wonderfully with ourselves, in the hollow of infinity. Because it is a reflected experience in the potential mind that is switched off, sleep is unfortunately temporary. The silent witness, who is always self-evidently present.

But it is even better demonstrated by the silent witness, who is ever self-evidently present as consciousness (of all or nothing).



## विवर्त उपादान कारण **vivarta upādāna kāraṇa**

A material (upādāna) cause (kāraṇam) that apparently (vivarta) creates an object (the effect), without changing the intrinsic nature (consciousness) of the cause. If the knower knows this, the mind is in knowledge, if the knower does not know this, the mind is ignorant.

Some examples from relative reality are mother of pearl that looks like silver, or a rope that looks like a snake. In the first case, latent greed is triggered, because one thinks that it is silver that is glittering. But it turns out to be the sunlight shining on the mother of pearl Abalone shell. In the second case, there is a basic fear present, and a snake is mentally superimposed on a well-rope. The one with a neutral mind, will simply know what he sees (vyāvahārika satya or īśvara reality), and will not experience any further anxiety. The one with imagination (prātibhāsika satya or jīva reality) will fall again into vivarta, into the apparent change.

As is often the case in all methodologies, including vedānta, all examples fail to express the truth exactly. This is how you can understand vivarta upādāna kāraṇa in the light of truth: Besides vyāvahārika and prātibhāsika, the apparent, relative levels of reality, there is only one real level of reality, namely pāramārthika satyam. This is the cause. The bottom line is that in every appearance and change of appearance, you see consciousness, because you know it (knowledge). The change (pariṇāma) of awareness into matter is not real (vivarta).

This cause (the substrate consciousness) and the effect (every visible or invisible object) belong to different orders of reality. One is real (satya), the other dependently real (mithyā). This is because the effect is not a real effect at all, but in fact remains the original. In ignorance we base our (relative) truths on sense perception and its derivatives. The challenge for self-realization is therefore not to really go into what the senses suggest. This is difficult for a living being with senses and feelings etc. But it is the self-knowledge of the original that is sufficient to bring freedom.

Brahman is vivarta upādāna kāraṇam, because brahman-consciousness seems to take on the names, forms, and functions in which we live. But it is not a real change. It is an illusion, vivarta. Firstly, everything remains dependent on consciousness, secondly, all objects are finite and transient, while the cause remains infinitely the same.

Just look at deep sleep, anesthesia or coma. Consciousness is completely present, but without experiences. The objects have ‘disappeared’ again in the self-māyā-prakṛti.

A nice example is māyā-īśvara used as a spider (ūrṇanābhi) with a potential of web threads (ūrṇāni) in its belly (literally navel, nābhi). Certain species of spiders spread their webs from their own bodies and take them up again when needed.

This example is used to express the step from unmanifested māyā to manifested īśvara. But in reality, the series of changes cit -> māyā -> īśvara is apparent (vivarta).

Pure knowledge or intelligence is called the efficient cause (nimitta kāraṇa) of consciousness, which apparently plays a game with itself. So there is an intelligent knowledge component (nimitta) and a material-energetic component (upādāṇa), but both are vivarta, producing apparent changes, not real ones.

Like a dream that turns out not to be real. This is why one of the meanings of vivarta is 'whirlpool'. It expresses the vertigo of saṃsāra. Consciousness apparently takes on material forms in infinite multiplicity based on infinitely pure knowledge, while consciousness itself (I!) remains unchanged.

So, I am the cause of matter but change into matter in an ontological relationship that is satya-mithyā (independent-dependent, imperishable-imperishable and unchanging-changing). In the laws of īśvara's creation (īśvara sṛṣṭi) pariṇāmi upādāṇa kāraṇam is the case. This means that in empirical reality (vyāvahārika) every form changes into a new form (pariṇāma), without any value judgment, but according to dharmic, consistent laws.

A young body becomes old. When milk is churned into butter, it is irreversible. An atom that is detonated does not return to its compressed energy form.

But on the true (only in reality) level of reality (pāramārthika, that which is beyond purposes, arthas and effects, kāryas) brahman has never changed. Consciousness, the only reality, is infinitely peaceful, silent, and free. No nuclear power or (consumerist) Kali Yuga can change that.

### वृत्ति व्याप्ति vṛtti vyāpti

The form that the mind takes on of the representation of an object, when no living meaning has yet been risen.

The object can be a thought or feeling, generated from within, but usually it means the representation of an object from the external world by the perceptual process. When an object (with its environment) is perceived by the senses, a corresponding thought form, a representation of the entire perception, environment, and all, is generated in the mind. A mental image.

But the world is not mental like subjective idealism says. A representation of the world comes into the individual mind, coloured by my conditioning. Such a thought form is called a *vr̥tti*. That *vr̥tti* permeates (*vyāpti*) the mind, or the mind takes the form of the *vr̥tti*. That is the same thing. Permeation (*vyāpti*) can also be defined as: The mind takes the form of what it thinks it is dealing with. Although we know it is only a projection on an empty screen.

Because truth is non-dual, in individual ignorance there seems to be only one thing at a time. Hence individual living beings (*jīvas*) live with time, a succession of moments. Individual beings experience everything singularly. When I ruminate (uncontrolled association-stream of thoughts), I undergo a mental journey without a destination, from which I suddenly wake up, and hopefully bring my attention back to *svadharma* (what I need to do) according the *svabhāva* (what I ideally am at a certain moment as individual) of the individual. I.e., what must happen, for things to flow easy.

In this way my karma becomes a kind of mental tube, through which I have to pass. A succession of mental impressions. Memory and sensory impressions, which reflect my life in my mind. There is always only one mental experience, one thought at a time in the mold of the mind. Life is just a stream of *vr̥tti*'s. This becomes deadly tiring when you experience them as real. Then they get mentally charged.

Īśvara works differently. It knows no time, is therefore 'pure synchronicity', and can only be silence itself. A *jīva* experiences a manifestation from moment to moment (*kṣaṇika*). Īśvara is the apparent manifestation. In Īśvara nothing happens at all. It is silence itself. For the same reason (!) I, *ātmā*, am also silence itself. As the ground of everything, I am none of them. Īśvara is time (*kālo* 'smi, Bhagavad Gita 11.32), and therefore gives time (*kāla datta*). And the giver of something is self not burdened with anything.

It is the source of ignorance and the experience of time that destroys new worlds (*loka kṣaya*) of the individual every moment. The ignorance of this therefore lies with the individual. One could say: *Māyā* only manifests to worship Īśvara or not, once the consciousness is seemingly ignorant in the '*jīva*'. *Jīva* has new thoughts all the time to confirm this. *Māyā* -> Īśvara is the infinite information, of which a person makes a story, according to *dharma*, or against *dharma*.

A life story is a series of *vr̥tti*'s, mental snapshots, which seem to have a logical sequence, because of the consistency of *dharma-īśvara*.

The *vr̥tti* is perceived in the mind because it is simultaneously illuminated by consciousness (this is of course because it is nothing but consciousness itself, hence my constant presence in the complete process). The screen of the mind is a reflection of the

screen of consciousness. It is this self-illumination of the vṛtti by consciousness that causes the vṛtti to be perceived or known by consciousness.

After the vṛtti has taken the form of the object, the ignorance of the object disappears. The object becomes known, according to how we assess it, determined by our conditioning. This is the second mental movement in the process. And this resultant realization of the meaning is called phala vyāpti (from phala, fruit). Now we know what object we have perceived. Or rather, we think we know it. It could be an ignorant assessment or a true judgement.

If the external object is a rope, and the phala vṛtti is a snake, then the person is not attuned to the empirical reality (vyāvahārika) and experiences the fear that 'snake' causes. There was already fear beforehand, which initially caused the wrong phala vyāpti. That all kinds of misunderstandings and problems arise through this subjective (prātibhāsika) experience, needs no explanation.

Now the point. Brahman, consciousness, cannot be a mental image. Since brahman is my own nature (svarūpa), it cannot be an object that the mind can handle. In fact, the mind itself is an inert and gross object, and therefore not real (mano buddhi ahaṅkāra cittāṇi nāham, I am neither mind, intellect, ego, nor memory, Ādi Śaṅkara, Nirvāṇaśatkam).

The cognitive shift from ignorance to knowledge, which is called self-realization, cannot be vṛtti vyāpti. It cannot take up any form. It is the direct (aparokṣa) realization that I am brahman. This self-insight cannot be obtained from sense perception (pratyakṣa) derived (parokṣa) perception. I am it already. I am not an object. This realization is a phala vyāpti, the immediate realization of the fruit of direct knowledge.

What is the content of the phala vyāpti that brings mokṣa? This is expressed with the famous 'akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna'. Knowledge (jñāna) in the form (ākāra) of a realization (jñāna) of undividedness (akhaṇḍa).

This is how we can define enlightenment very precisely. Immediately means without the mediation of a thought process. I know! Note: Then phala vyāpti cannot stand either. The mind with its phala vyāpti is then also a castle in the air (mithyā). I know that I am that which the phala vyāpti made me see. Then the fruit leaves and I am existence-awareness, and automatically see everything, including my whole life, as that. The fruit 'akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti jñāna' is also a thought, an object, division. It is the thought that makes me realise my undividedness. Then I can only be there, in my full glory. I am!

I have used many words here, but this is only a game to come to self-knowledge. I enjoy the vedānta philosophy, but I know that I am neither the words, nor the meaning, nor the connections between them, nor the enjoyment. The realised know they are bliss

(anugraha) through which all words (seemingly) shine (vāco vibhānti nikhilā yadanugraheṇa (Ādi Śaṅkara, prātaḥ smaranam, morning remembrance). They are undescrivable fulness. Simpler than simple.

## व्यष्टि vyaṣṭi

Individual. The microcosmic being. The apparent part of the whole (samaṣṭi). There is no vyaṣṭi without samaṣṭi (the whole), no golden ornament without gold, no pot space without space, no kindly act without kindness itself.

Each vyaṣṭi is a specific, individual reflection in time of the corresponding samaṣṭi of īśvara. Touch an ocean wave and the entire ocean is touched. Touch something and you touch yourself, consciousness. So, when you touch the ocean, every individual wave is touched, hence a dharmic attitude (values) is desired.

The individual perspective vyaṣṭi is possible because the total projection from consciousness (vikṣepa śakti), is apparently covered by the veiling force (āvaraṇa śakti) according to the number of tendencies (karma) that have to work out. Thus, we can see māyā-īśvara as a huge algorithm of karmic instructions that work out in the rat race or dance of the world. Just how you want to look at it.

Important! The relationship between individual and totality is in essence not a quantitative relationship but a relationship of substance. And the substance is therefore not matter, but pure consciousness. Take a table. A table consists of wood, which in turn are made up of fibres. Fibers consist of molecules. Molecules consist of atoms. Atoms consist of electrons and a nucleus. Electrons and nucleus consist of quarks, bosons, strings. Quarks, bosons, strings consist of space. Space consists of a concept of it, of information. Information consists of intelligence, knowledge. Knowledge is the unmanifested pure knowledge of consciousness, which is not two (advaita). So, a table is not just one of many tables, a table is an expression of the non-dual whole consciousness.

So, the one whole seems to be divided into separate objects, which seem to be part of a larger object, the cosmos. But this is illusion. The part is the whole and the whole is the part. Every moment is an expression of the same truth that you are. One truth, one reality.

One individual, one jīva, the smallest in relative reality is therefore also just brahman, the greatest, and īśvara, the greatest in relative reality is also just brahman: Jīvo bramaiva nāparaḥ, the one living does not differ from brahman, according to śaṅkara.

Verse 20 of the Kaivalya Upaniṣad expresses this beautifully:

aṇor aṇīyān aham eva tadvanmahān aham, I am smaller than the smallest (an atom), I am equally wholly the greatest!

Then: viśvam aham vicitram, Wonderful, I am the world! (Or didactical more correct: The world is me).

Again, that an individual experiences his own individual reality is because a large part of the projection (vikṣepa śakti) of all power/knowledge of īśvara is veiled (āvaraṇa śakti) into a tunnel vision of ignorance. Knowledge dissolves this.

To avoid misunderstandings. Ignorance is identification with the I-experience called ahaṅkāra, which seems to be steering the route my body and mind have to travel through life. That is why I think I am small. It seems as if I must navigate my body through the world. Therefore, in ignorance there is such a thing as free will. But in relative reality, what happens is the execution of a great script of the whole, since everything is related to everything.

If I then see this narrow self-image (vyaṣṭi) as identical with samaṣṭi īśvara, the whole, I have not understood it (advaita shuffle or enlightenment sickness). Jivo bramaiva nāparaḥ, means that the substrate of jīva (vyaṣṭi) and the substrate of īśvara (samaṣṭi) are the same brahman. Not that the person of a tiny bit of the story and the god of the complete story are the same.

### व्यावहारिक सत्य **vyāvahārika satya**

The practical, empirical transactional level (vyāvahārika) of reality (satya). In which ‘apparently’ separate objects engage in transactions with each other.

Etymologically it comes from √vah, i.a. carrying, (trans)action, behaviour, flowing. Vy ā expresses its extrovert-ness. One object wants to meet the other. Relating to the endless flowing and meeting of objects. Hence transaction. Hence also division.

But vyāvahārika satya does mean neutral, objective transaction. It is a level to use, to get out of my subjective experience. It is the order in which the functions function as they function, without my value judgement. It is the relative reality in which everything interacts according to the completely neutral laws of īśvara. Why pure? Vyāvahārika is devoid of any value judgement. Vyāvahārika consists of the results that science tries to find. But that will be difficult, because the knowledge of vyāvahārika belongs to īśvara, the whole. It is the arrogance of humanity that it thinks it can put its finger on it exactly.

There is an important distinction with prātibhāsika satya, that other relative reality. Prātibhāsika satya is the order, as a jīva experiences it. In general, these are personally coloured, subjective experiences, which are not attuned to the neutral reality of

vyavahāra, in which things are as they are, tathātā. Each person lives in his own private creation (jīva sṛṣṭi).

Vyāvahārika is the creation as God has placed it (īśvara sṛṣṭi). Note: Whoever is somewhat in line with this has a good life and is qualified for freedom. The mind of this qualified aspirant contains a proper level of sattva guna. That aspirant is ready for pāramārthika satyam. Beyond (pāram) goals and objects (ārthāḥ). The pāramārthiki knows that he is param satyam, the highest reality.

But before I am eligible to see my freedom as ātmā-brahman, consciousness, I will have to experience reality as dispassionate and neutral (vairāgya). This is a level that cannot be skipped for self-realization. The one who lives too much in prātibhāsika satya has too many binding obstacles to freedom. This individual creates his own personal fantasy world (jīva sṛṣṭi) based on likes and dislikes and goals, fears, desires and goals. Rajas guna and tamas guna are then dominant. This perpetuates ignorance.

How do I raise my view from subjectivity (prātibhāsika) to objectivity (vyāvahārika)? First, by understanding that it is very cool to look at things even a little bit as īśvara. Neutrality brings calmness, balance, and wisdom. It yields human- and world knowledge. It teaches you to understand the laws of life. Why actuality is the way it is.

The tools are: Meditating (upāsana) on the mechanism (īśvara) behind practical reality and through karma yoga: Offering actions to the field (īśvara arpaṇa) and gratefully accepting results from the field (īśvara prasāda). Then I surrender my subjectivity (fears, desires, fantasies). Only when I see that the entire field of practical possibilities is divine, am I ready to see that it is all an expression of the self, consciousness.

## यक्ष yakṣa

A mysterious, divine appearance. Yakṣa means to honour. Yakṣas were previously seen as nature spirits, in the sphere of a kind of guardians of the treasures of nature.

In the Kena Upaniṣad, chapter 3, īśvara appears as an unknowable yakṣa to show the devas their ignorance and arrogance. The devas claim their victory over the asuras, while all glory goes to īśvara (all knowledge, all power). Then the devas boast about their divine powers.

The yakṣa challenges the devas agni and vayu to burn or blow away a blade of grass. This does not work, because the blade of grass represents the imperishability and inviolability of consciousness. This is of course because consciousness-brahman is not an object in the

world, therefore it can never be burned as an object, set in motion, or be known other than myself. The Gītā also says this nicely:

nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ Weapons do not cleave this (brahman), fire does not burn this.

na cainam kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ Waters cannot wet this, wind cannot dry it. (whereby the element of air (vayu) is given a somewhat more modest role as wind).

Finally, Guru Ma Uma reveals to Indra the true nature of the yakṣa with his blade of grass as brahman, because Indra shows respect and opens himself to this knowledge.

## योग yoga

Literally: Connection.

Connecting to what? To consciousness. The crux of the truth is that the connection was always there, but that ignorance prevents us from experiencing it that way.

The eight-step plan of aṣṭāṅga yoga, written down by Patañjali in his Yoga Sūtras, tries to give a manual how to connect with consciousness. What it excels in is an experience of the reflection of consciousness. This experience, called nirvikalpa samādhi (absorption without differences), is not consciousness itself, but a reflection of it in a mind without objects.

The definition of yoga according to Patañjali is: yogaścitta vṛtti nirodhaḥ, the cessation of fluctuations in the mind.

This experience of absence of objects, seems like deep sleep, but with full experience of the pure presence that I am. Then I am free from the person, with all his worries, for a while. This is attractive and that is why yoga is popular, although most do not get beyond physical exercise and some calming of mental life, that comes with it. It remains an experience and will therefore pass. It means that before and after samādhi you would not be ‘in yoga’. Which is not possible, because all objects are expressions of consciousness.

Consciousness is not specifically experienced; Awareness is the awareness itself of all experiences. Experience is an apparent expression of consciousness. Ultimately, vedānta states that I experience nothing other than consciousness. Whoever understands this is always this full experience (pūrṇatvam). So, this is not a discrete experience. Since there is only consciousness and everything is a manifestation of it. This is something I must understand. Knowledge is the key to permanent freedom from ignorance, which is the reality of myself.



Is Aṣṭāṅga-yoga, and all its modern derivatives, useless? On the contrary. It is a powerful means to make the mind calm and balanced. If such a mind opens itself to non-dual knowledge, then the self is realized. Another important clause is, that there is not too much attachment to the sattva in the mind, or the state of samādhi. Otherwise, I still confuse knowledge and experience.

Vedānta itself prescribes karma yoga and upāsana yoga to qualify me for freedom (mokṣa). Karma yoga is connecting with the divine by dedicating my dharmic action to īśvara, and not attaching to any result. Am I not yet connected with God? Certainly, 100%. Again, it was ignorance that made me realize that. So, karma yoga is connecting with consciousness, via God. What is striking is that knowledge also plays an important role here. It all comes down to being cognitively in yoga with God, because I am in yoga with God. In upāsana yoga I practice that in meditation.

Vedāntic yoga best expresses the spiritual paradox: Jñāna yoga or knowledge yoga is the practice of knowledge, that I am what I seek. I am always fully present free, whole, blissful, simply existing, radiant as consciousness. This is not a connection, but a knowing that I coincide with the truth. That I am the truth sat cit ānanda. That I already was. The vastu (the central subject) freedom is tantra, dependent on knowledge.

This paradoxical misunderstanding is expressed even more humorously by Gauḍapāda (in māṇḍūkya kārikā 3.39) with the concept of asparśa yoga: The yoga of non-touch (a-sparśa). Everything I can touch is relative, dependent, impermanent, and changeable (mithyā). That which I am is the only thing that is, independent existence, shining as consciousness (satya). When I touch something, I touch myself. This is becoming such a joke. Because nothing that I touch with my body, or that I think about is real. The rest is pure being.

Asparśa also means that I am not attached to consciousness itself in thought, which are objects (also sparśa). This would again result in a strange dual split. Consciousness is something you are, but you do not know it. The more I ‘surrender’ myself to objects, the more I intensify my ignorance. The more I try to be in yoga with others (living objects), or things (dead objects) the further I go out of yoga (away from myself).