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Presented by



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This book is a collection of question and answer sessions from various talks and satsang-s by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

It is brought out on the occasion of the first **Vedic Wisdom festival** in Mumbai on **24th and 25th November 2018**.

Dear Reader,

It is a joy for us to share glimpses of timeless wisdom from our Rishis, up to our own guru Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji (1930-2015), a renowned global Advaita Vedanta teacher and a visionary.

Whether you are looking for yet another experience, managing emotions better or some insights into relating better or where God fits in or who a wise person really is, you will find this and much more in this book. We have carefully and lovingly put together some great question and answers with Pujya Swamiji, which are excerpts from his talks and innumerable satsang-s.

Each of these gems will serve as a window of insight, a doorway of understanding and an impetus for action. Much like prasada that is eaten, digested and assimilated many of these gems are to be read, reflected and contemplated upon as they gently flow and enrich your life.

Aarsha Vidya Foundation is very happy to bring this prasad to you

We will meet soon, you and us, in the journey of self discovery and everlasting fulfillment.

With love and prayers,

Brahmavidananda

Brahmprajnananda

If I give people the freedom to be what they are and to think what they think, only then I am free in relationships. At the same time my compassion for them continues to exist - that will sustain the relationship on a healthy platform.



More often than not, it is the sense of insecurity in us that causes us problems in life. Since it is only a 'sense', only understanding that the I is always secure solves this problem.



Vedanta does not say you will become free, but that you are already free. It shows a possibility for me to know, if I do not know that fact. Vedanta being a means of knowledge and not a scripture of faith, I can give it a trial and expose myself to Vedanta when I am ready for it.



Duty is what one has to do in a given situation in keeping with one's conscience. We have only duties, no rights. For example, husband's duty towards his wife becomes the wife's right. Wife's duty becomes husband's right.



If all perform their respective duties, others' rights are automatically taken care of! This is the fact in every relationship.



You do not bring Iśvara into your life. You find that Iśvara is already there in your life. One needs to be more aware of his presence in the form of various orders and in the form of existence and consciousness that sustains the jagat of the insentient and sentient.'

#### **Fighting Shadows**

In this world that we relate to, there are different things and situations that are important to us like money, power, name, fame, influence, respect from people in general, and respect from the significant people in our lives. These significant people have to respect our values, our thoughts, our skills, our looks, and even our age. And, naturally, we always worry about what others think about us.

What others think about me is what I think about myself. I think about what they think of me, and then I surmise, "They don't think that I am anything great," which means I don't think I am anything great either. I think I am useless because that is what I think others think about me, which may not be true at all.

All human beings have this problem in some degree. We always think about what others think about us. But what we think others think about us is usually wrong. Then, afterwards, we struggle against that and protest. We want to assert that it is not true at all, that the others don't know what we are fighting against. We are fighting against something. It is something like Don Quixote who is fighting shadows. Similarly, we are fighting against shadows all the time.

These shadows are all in our mind and we give an undeserved reality to them.



#### Darsan in a Temple

When you go into traditional Indian temples, you will find that the sanctum, the main shrine always remains dark. They methodically create that darkness. It is not that they did not know how to provide some windows. They in fact, create this darkness so that when you enter into the sanctum, you find that it becomes darker and darker. Thus, in the shrine where the Lord is, it is all darkness.

In the dark shrine, there is an idol that is carved of stone. In south India, it is a black stone. In fact, it has to be a black stone. According to the scriptures, it has to be solid silica, a monolithic stone. With regular application of oil, it becomes darker. So the whole thing is dark. All that is there is one single flame.

As you enter this temple, you pass through the compound which is a miniature world. There, you will find various dance forms and musical instruments sculpted and people with different kinds of physiognomy. As you go inside, you find it becomes darker and darker.

In the darkest place is the Lord. Why? Because we are ignorant of the Lord especially when our eyes are not trained or educated to see the Lord. Coming from the outside, you do not see the Lord. You stand in front of a black stone that is all dark. You do not see anything there. All you have is sufficient knowledge, sufficient light, to see that there is a statue and there is the Lord. The Lord is decked with precious stones. In that flame of the oil lamp all the diamonds, rubies and emeralds glitter and you know, therefore, the Lord is there. But to know what he is, what his nature is, the light is not enough.

To know that there is a Lord only our intellect, buddhi is good enough. It is like an oil lamp. But to know what that Lord is, you require better light and that is the light of the ārati flame. When the priest waves the ārati, he will ask you to behold the Lord, darśan. Then, from the feet to the head of the Lord he will show the burning flame.

In the light of knowledge, you see the Lord. There you see the whole form. It is no longer purely a belief. It is like daylight, knowledge.

What was a simple belief is converted into a flame of knowledge, into a light of knowledge. That is the spirit. You must instill the spirit, otherwise the form has no meaning.



#### Q: Swamiji, what is the purpose of living?

The purpose of living is living, living with satisfaction. The pursuit of power, money and fame is to nourish the ego. But you must know you are okay without them. This is mokṣa, freedom. Freedom from being a seeker.

What are we seeking?

We are seeking the cessation of seeking. And the cessation of seeking is finding satisfaction within you. If you can discern that, then it is like the river meeting the ocean, giving up the notion that it is small and recognising that it is complete.



#### Q: Swamiji, but is it not true that being thus satisfied, I would stifle progress?

By being unsatisfied you keep working towards more and more goals, as if the next set of goals will bring you that much wanted satisfaction. It is like a rat race. At the end of the rat race, the winner is still a rat. It does not become, say, a cat!

Satisfaction cannot become the driving force. On the other hand, by working with satisfaction, you will have a greater capacity to achieve.

Behind every achievement there seems to be a desire for satisfaction, not for the achievement. But when you are satisfied from within, the sky is the limit for achievement.



# Q: Some teachers say that the rational mind cannot comprehend the Truth of Self because the mind is stuck in its pattern of thinking; they say that only intense experiences will shake these patterns loose. Would Swamiji please comment?

How can experience shake a thinking pattern? A logical pattern cannot be shaken by anything. You know from being taught that the earth goes around the sun. Does your everyday experience of a rising sun shake that thinking? How can wrong thinking, firmly entrenched notions, be shaken by mere experience?

You think you are the physical body. Yet every night in a dream experience, while the body is stretched out on the mattress with a pillow under its head, a 'you' unconnected to the body, works and eats and plays, is happy and sad. That dream experience does not shake your conclusion that you are the body.

A teacher may use your dream experience as an aid to help you discover, through knowledge, that you are not the body; but the experience itself does not do the job on the wrong thinking.

Only right thinking that comes from knowledge, from seeing, not from experiencing, can shake wrong thinking.

Techniques which incapacitate thinking do not really work for seeing yourself.

You can arrest thinking for a while but you cannot shake off wrong thinking. When thinking returns, the wrong thinking will repeat itself.



#### Q: Why, then, do we hear so much about techniques?

There is some benefit in working for quietude, a quiet mind is a useful mind, ready to learn, ready to see. To work for such a mind is understandable. There are techniques and practices that are helpful. Certain breathing practices, prāṇāyāma, physical exercises, yoga, certain diet are all fine if their purpose is understood.

A relatively contemplative lifestyle and assimilated ethical values are also important. All these constitute preparation of the mind for knowledge. It is the same in any branch of knowledge.

The mind must have proper preparation for learning. It must be ready to be taught the particular subject. Learning to read comes before study of literature.



Q: Swamiji, the way you explain it, it seems that the man of self-knowledge still is a normal person, like us. But when we think of a renunciate, sādhu, we think of him as having all sorts of healing powers.

That is an unfortunate idea and it is not correct. A sādhu is a saint and he is harmless.

Non-injury, ahimsā is his forte. This is the main thing for him. Because of this saintly quality, his thoughts and his visions are pure. They can bless people. Then too, if the saint knows what it is all about, if he has been exposed to the teaching, his emotions become much more real.

Real emotion means it enjoys that degree of reality that an emotion can enjoy.

A saint does not give emotions an extra meaning. Thus, for him there is no confusion, no conflict.

He is not subject to the opposites because he is an abiding person, he abides in his own glory. He naturally relates properly so all his emotions are well-defined and clean. His good thoughts may help another. That is why people seek out the saints.



## Q: How does this teaching help a person who struggles with the practical problems of day-to-day life like competition and the need to survive?

The very conclusion that one has to compete and succeed comes from ignorance. There is a sense of insecurity based on oneself, based on 'I.' Yet the body has no sense of insecurity, nor does the mind itself. The problem is centred on 'I.'

If I am insecure, then I have to become secure, I have to prove myself, I have to be more than what I am. Then all the pressures start. If you ask how this teaching helps in day-to-day life, I would say that it removes the sense of insecurity. If you do not need to prove yourself to feel secure, then you will be free from pressure.

Being pressure-free, you can do all that you can. So, this teaching is indeed practical. In fact, I would say that the most practical person is one who is free.'



Q: Swamiji, out of discrimination comes knowledge and that knowledge leads to freedom from certain wants, a lessening of desire for things. Does that mean that eventually ultimate knowledge will lead to total freedom even from physical wants?\*

No. There are two types of wants. 'I want this' is one type. That is okay. Then, 'I want this so that I will be happy' is another. The want that I think must be fulfilled in order to be happy is the binding want. Suppose 'I want this' is there but whatever result comes, I will happily accept. If I do not get what I want, I will not be unhappy. This is called total freedom from want.



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# Q: If we understand Vedānta as philosophy, how do we actually put what you say into practice?

Vedānta is to be understood. It is not something you practice. If a sugar crystal is ignorant of its being sugar and wants to be sweet, it has to be taught that it is, indeed, a sugar crystal. It need nodo anything else besides gaining the knowledge of the truth of itself.

Similarly, understanding the truth about myself is Vedānta; understanding itself is the end to be accomplished.

There are certain things that have to be practiced. For instance, if you want to maintain good health you have to follow a regimen, exercise regularly and reduce stress. You understand these instructions very clearly if they are spelt out. But, you still have to practice them to get results.

Thus, there are things in life that are achieved by knowing alone. Then, there are ends that cannot be accomplished by knowing them alone; they have to be practiced.

Knowledge alone is necessary to know yourself. But to understand the truth of yourself, you need a prepared mind, a mind that is clean and simple. This is accomplished through various means, sādhanas such as prayer, meditation, contemplation and yoga.



### Q: Swamiji, what is freedom?

I define freedom in a two-fold way: freedom from the past and freedom from the concept of past, present and future. These are the two types of freedom. Freedom from the past refers to your own past life, meaning this life, your childhood and so on. Everyone's past has its own problems and these problems affect the person in the present. What I face now, at this moment, is not viewed objectively. It is always stifled, conditioned, prejudiced and distorted by my own past.

Freedom from this past means freedom from my psychological past. Freedom from one's psychological past is a relative freedom, described as freedom from the pressures of one's likes and dislikes.

There is also an ultimate freedom, called liberation or mokṣa. Freedom is always from something undesirable. To be under the influence of the past is not very desirable because you miss the present. All sorrow, hurt and pain are due to the past. Because the present, which becomes the past, also causes pain, you become subject to further pain. So, the hurt gets more hurt and the sad become more sad. That is how it is.

There is also the freedom from being small, being an individual and being mortal, one who is subject to disease and death. Here, too, there is bondage in that there is a sense of imperfection and inadequacy in terms of time, place, strength and knowledge, all of which form the very core personality, essentially, since the body-mind-sense complex is taken to be the self, 'I.' This bondage is the basic bondage and is something I want to be free from.

Being in the form of pain and therefore undesirable, I do not accept it.

Ultimate freedom must necessarily be centred on the 'I' since I am the one who is bound and also the one who has to be free. This freedom is either already intrinsic to the self or it is not there at all.

If it is intrinsic to the self, then the bondage is born of self-ignorance and error. Removal of the ignorance and thereby the error, is freedom. Vedānta says that the self is already free, here and now and that it has always been free. Therefore, the already free self is recognised as it really is, meaning I am free. Being identical with Brahman, the cause of the whole creation, I am everything, I am the whole.

This particular knowledge is what is meant by freedom. For one who has this knowledge, there is no further birth, which is an extension of the freedom that is knowledge. There is oneness between the individual and the Lord.

That I am the whole is a fact; it is the truth of the individual. It is also the truth of the Lord. The Lord can say, 'I am the whole,' and the individual can say the same thing because both are Brahman. This vision, gained through knowledge, is the only real freedom.



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#### Q: From where does happiness come?

Does happiness belong to the world? If it comes from the world, then what is the object that makes you happy? Which part of the world makes you happy? There is no one object in the world that makes you happy all the time. No situation can be considered as happiness because the same situation can make the person unhappy later. People are happy or unhappy in different situations.

So, no situation, no object, no particular time or place can be considered a source of happiness.

Then you have to ask if happiness is inside you. If you say inside you, what do you mean? The mind? If the mind is the source of happiness, then there should be no sorrow. But the sorrow is also in the mind. So you cannot say a thinking mind is a source of happiness. Nor can you say you become happy when the world is absent. That is not true. You may enjoy the world and be happy. You may enjoy music and be happy. You may enjoy ice cream and be happy. You may enjoy dancing and be happy. You may enjoy a person and be happy. The sensory experience of the world can give you happiness. So you cannot say the world makes you unhappy. It is not true because it is contradicted.

Thus, you cannot say the world makes you unhappy because the world also makes you happy. Actually, happiness has nothing to do with the world or with the mind. You cannot say that the mind is absent when you are happy because the mind is awake when you are happy. Similarly, senses are not absent, body is not absent, world is not absent, mind is not absent but happiness is still there.

Therefore, when happiness is there what is present? I would say there is only yourself minus your notions. What do we mean by 'minus your notion'? I am a seeker. I am identified with the I notion, ahaṇkāra with its history of identifying itself as a limited, wanting, mortal being. The particular notion of being a mortal or a limited being is momentarily resolved because something very absorbing for you has happened and therefore you have forgotten yourself and are happy.

What does it mean to forget yourself? It is not that the 'I' is gone. What is forgotten is only your history and your problems. You forget all of them and you are happy. That means that happiness becomes a state. In that state, what is there is fullness, which is limitlessness. That is the 'I' which is

manifest. In fact, there is no seeker-sought division whenever you are happy. The world is not sought and you are not a seeker.

You do not want the mind to be different. You do not want the body to be different. At that time all that is there is fullness. You are fullness. The world also is fullness. The same fullness is there.'



# Q: Not knowing what happiness is, people ask, Swamiji, I understand ātmā. It is sat-cit-ānanda but how do I experience ānanda, bliss?

The person who asks this knows different types of bliss and now wants separate distinct bliss. It should be other than chocolate bliss, disco bliss or any other bliss that he knows. He wants a new bliss that is ātmā bliss!

He has seen all the other types of bliss starting as a baby with balloon bliss and later, going to Hawaii bliss. Everything else he has done and now he is ready for ātmā bliss. These people feel that once they have experienced this bliss they are enlightened. I say you ARE already enlightened.

Suppose you experience some bliss for which you have been given certain techniques. You press here, look here or there, etc. Then afterwards you experience some bliss. How will you know that this is ātmā bliss? By defining ānanda as happiness, bliss, a word that is meant for communication is completely destroyed and denied its communication by being defined as an experiential word. It becomes something to be experienced. Naturally, you start looking for bliss to be experienced. Suppose you experience some bliss. That bliss will not say, 'I am ātmā bliss.' It cannot make a statement. Then, how will you know?

Again you seek a bliss experience and again you have to interpret that bliss. Is this ātmā bliss?

So, naturally the question comes, 'What is the means of knowledge to interpret bliss?' Perception as a means of knowledge is not going to help you. You will only say that for a moment I seem to have bliss and now I do not. Saying 'I was bliss' is entirely different from saying 'I am bliss.'

You are in fact, bliss and the only bliss. Any bliss experience that you have is

nothing but the manifestation of the limitlessness that you are.

Ānanda, happiness, the word that we generally use as a symbol, is only a defining word for limitlessness.'



Q: Swamiji, our scriptures tell us that detachment is the way to salvation, mokṣa. I have been practicing this for years, but it is not working. What should I do?

Attachment exists only in human beings. It is much more than an emotional fact. Attachments or detachments are physical, emotional and intellectual. Mere emotional attachment, which has its start in childhood, is called bonding.

A child is helpless and puts trust for his being in his mother and father, not realising that they may themselves be fallible. Thus the child is bonded. He discovers comfort and security in that bond. Suppose, for example, the child is scared of a cockroach. He immediately seeks protection from his mother. Later he may discover that his mother is also afraid of cockroaches. With such experiences he gradually discovers that his parents are not infallible and there will be an erosion of trust.

Thereby, the child's helplessness grows. Yet for the sake of survival he keeps himself attached. This is how one grows into an attachment based on a false sense of security. This is how one becomes helpless and feels incomplete. The scriptures say detachment is the path to freedom. But the more you detach, the more you find yourself attached.

I say you are always detached, because that is the nature of the self.

There is another detachment that Lord Kṛṣṇa talks about in the Gītā; sparśān kṛtvā bahirbāhyān.... Shutting out the external objects\* and keeping the eyes closed, keeping the movement of the exhalation and inhalation in the nostrils rhythmic, one who has mastered his organs of action, senses, mind and intellect, one for whom mokṣa is the ultimate end, who is free from desire, fear and anger, that wise person is always liberated indeed. BG 5.27, 28.

What does that mean? Do not internalise them. Otherwise even when you are physically very much away from these objects, you become attached to them. Anyone or anything that bothers you is also inside you.

Keep them outside.

That does not mean you should not care for anyone. Care is important. But Lord Kṛṣṇa cautions against too much attachment. Caring is always in terms of love.

When anyone bothers you, have trust in God. This trust works like the Emergency Room. Here you need no appointment. It is always open and ready to help anyone. When you develop such trust in God, you can relax; in the same way, prayer always helps.

Living in trust is called detachment.

Have a game plan, but remember you do not always call the shots. There are things beyond your control. That is where prayer helps. With this attitude you become more objective. With objectivity your likes and dislikes are under control.

Detachment is to learn to be objective.

It is like knowing that money has value but that value is not inherent in money. Money can buy you a house, but it cannot make a home. A home implies understanding. In reality, it cannot buy you the finer things in life, like the ocean, a moonlit night and so on. However, that does not mean money does not have value. This is objectivity. And, when you are objective, you are detached.



Q: We keep hearing that there are teachers who, through touch, can cause all things to fall into place so that you realise the Truth. Could it be that through experiences you can get enough glimpses of the vision of Truth so that you then will not have to go through the heavy intellectual resistance to accepting that vision? Does it boil down to clearing the intellect?

No. The Truth of oneself is not an intellectual conclusion nor is it

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something to be 'reached' by experiences. The guru is not an elevator who touches you and you go 'up to Brahman.' Brahman is you, not a place to be reached. It is not through an experience that you become Truth.

There is nothing to become. There is nothing to transform.

You are the Truth that you are seeking.

The teaching of Vedānta is simply a means of knowledge, pramāṇa and an instrument that shows you what you are.

What you are is not an intellectual conclusion.

An intellectual conclusion is an inferential conclusion about something that is not available for immediate perception but about which there are data available from which logical conclusions can be reached.

You need not be inferred because you are right here with yourself; you are immediately present.

You are available to be known, not to be inferred.

You fail to know yourself only due to ignorance, not due to lack of availability.

Knowledge, not inference and not experience, destroys that ignorance. Vedānta directly teaches what you are. The use of logic is for the removal of doubts to give clarity to your vision. We use certain reasoning methods, yukti to remove the blocks you may have that interfere with your clear vision. These blocks are always rational and can be removed by reason.

We use your experiences also. We help you assimilate your experiences in terms of knowledge. In fact, we help you see that you have always had the experience of yourself. You do not require a new experience to see yourself. There is no source of the vision of fullness, ānanda that you call happiness, except yourself.'

Whenever, at any time, you pick up a resolving moment of happiness, you experience your essential self.

Viṣhayānanda means happiness gained through a desirable object, something in which there is a 'kick' for you and for a moment that 'kick' swallows up all the other wants of the wanting mind. That fullness, ānanda, that happiness, sukha is but yourself, really.

Through some gain, through some sensation, through a profound appreciation of beauty, a certain mental condition occurs in which, for the moment, you are just with yourself, you do not want a change in anything whatsoever. In the quiet clarity of a mind that wants no change, you pick up yourself as a moment of happiness. You do not recognise that happiness as yourself and instead attribute it to an object or a situation experienced.

Desiring happiness all the time, you continually seek it through all your actions. You know that you want happiness again. The very fact that you want happiness shows that you know it. Nobody desires something that is unknown. What you do not know is that you are happiness; you cannot help but seek it because it is your very nature and you cannot settle for anything else or anything less.

You do know that there are moments of fullness which are moments of happiness.

You do not require some strange, new experience to know that. Even if you gain some new experience that reveals happiness to you, it makes no difference. Whether the experiences you have are usual or unusual, they still have to be assimilated in terms of knowledge.

Experience itself does not give knowledge. It is only experience. It comes and goes.

The scriptures, śruti, particularly the upaniṣads, provide the basis for the knowledge that the moments of happiness I experience reflect my real nature, which is limitless fullness.

Śruti is the means of knowledge for what one cannot account for through perception-based data. Not only does experience not give me the knowledge of the nature of fullness, but also experience does not give me the vision of the whole. Slipping into myself does not give me knowledge of the whole, knowledge of the Truth of me, of the world and of the creator. It is the knowledge of the whole that frees me just as I am.

For that knowledge I need to know, very well, what is apparently real, mithyāand what is limitless reality, satyam.

It is not enough just to be myself, I have to account for this world or things will not fall into place. If I do not discover the nature of the world as well as the nature of myself, the world will overwhelm me and I will have to

escape the world.

Vedānta has been presented as an experience. This has been a wrong presentation.

Vedānta is knowledge, not a happening. A teacher unfolds the knowledge of oneself until it is clear.

Doubts and vagueness are eliminated by logic, bringing clarity of vision. Vedänta is immediacy of knowledge. When that immediacy of knowledge is presented as experience, confusion follows.

This confusion has arisen, atleast in part, because of a word in Sanskrit, 'anubhava,' which has been translated in English simply as 'experience.' Such a translation causes the expectation of a 'happening,' not a 'seeing.' I would rather translate 'anubhava' as 'immediate knowledge.

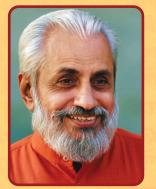
For the qualified student, that which comes after teaching is knowledge in keeping with the teaching and that is anubhava. 'Due to confusion, we use wrong words. Because we use wrong words, we are confused. When we use right words there is no problem. If I use the word 'experience' for knowing myself, I will be confused. Let's stop using that word; knowing myself is a question of self-recognition.

So, what you are really asking is 'Is there such a thing as clear knowledge?' Yes. In fact, knowledge must be clear. Knowledge is not gradual, but clarity is gradual. Clarity is gradual because I keep creating doubts.

At some moment of teaching when a quiet mind has surrendered itself to the teacher's words as means of knowledge, pramāṇa, a thought form, vrtti will form true to the oneness that is 'I'.

This thought form comes instantly, not gradually. But then, until all doubts are cleared, other thought forms will come to challenge it. In preparing the mind for self-recognition, there are things that can be done to have a quiet mind. That quiet mind is experiential.

So, you may say that experientially, you first obtain a quiet mind. That is useful, because without a quiet mind, the teaching does not work.







Swamini Brahmaprajnananda Saraswati

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Swami Brahmavidananda Saraswati, the founder of Aarsha Vidya Foundation is a traditional and contemporary teacher of Vedanta. For more than three decades he has been sharing Vedic wisdom through traditional classes, workshops for personal growth, seminars, corporate workshops and intensive retreats. The details of the programmes and ongoing classes and much more can be accessed at www.vedicwisdom.in

Swamini Brahmaprajnananda Saraswati is a trustee of Aarsha Vidya Foundation and has dedicated her life to sharing the teachings of oneness and dharma with all. She holds traditional Vedanta classes in Mumbai and online and co-conducts retreats in India and Brazil.

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