

PODCAST 214, REMOVE BOTH

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 214th episode.

What do we understand by Vedanta? V E D A N T A. The very word means the final part of the Vedas. They are the *Upanishads*, where the Vedas culminate and reach their pinnacle.

But the meaning is neither deep nor is it correct. Veda means 'knowledge'. The meaning of Vedanta is 'the point where all knowledge has come to an end', where even the idea that 'you know' has disappeared and only 'being' remains.

The exact meaning of Vedanta is the state where the restlessness of knowing has ceased and there is only being, pure being which remains. Knowing is a subtle tension in itself. We all know that as we have experienced it. So knowing is simply the last restlessness, the last tension.

When this knowing also drops and only being remains, in this state of being, where not even a ripple of knowing arises, where there is nothing to be known, where there is not even a desire to know something, it is in this moment of absolute relaxation that Vedanta happens. We have to understand Vedanta from this perspective. This may appear to be quite new but at the same time this is another dimension to our knowing or knowledge, whatever you may call it.

Vedanta begins where knowledge comes to an end. Veda is knowledge. Vedanta means it comes to an end, where one is released even from knowledge because deep down knowledge is also bondage. That's the reason why we find ego among knowledgeable people. The pomp and show and the craving for recognition is very prevalent among knowledgeable people.

You can enter within only when you have let go of both unhappiness and happiness. This you can understand. Now try to understand exactly the same thing in relation to this duality. When you have not only let go of ignorance but also of knowledge, then the ultimate experience begins. As long as you have not left your knowledge behind, then your ignorance too has not been left behind.

Happiness and unhappiness are one duality. Knowledge and ignorance are also just another duality. In other parts of the world there have been wise men who have said that ignorance has to be left behind. It's only in this country that the wise men have said that knowledge also has to be left behind.

Vedanta is a state where even knowledge has fallen away, where nothing remains to be known, where not only has ignorance disappeared, but the idea or the feeling that you know something, has also disappeared. Let us try to ponder over this thought for some time.

Ignorance does not create ego because how can 'not knowing' create an ego? It is knowledge which creates ego. Ego happens when I know that my 'I' is strengthened.

Ignorance is related to outer things. Knowledge is related to the ego, inside. When I say, 'I know', the emphasis goes to the 'I' and the 'I' is strengthened. When I say, 'I don't know', all I am saying is that there's something unknown to me, unfamiliar to me, something which I do not know. So, the ego cannot be strengthened by this ignorance.

In ignorance you make mistakes and do stupid things. In fact you do many stupid things and you make many mistakes. In knowledge there's only one mistake and that is the ego. In ignorance many diseases surround you. In knowing, only one disease surrounds you and that is the ego. But remember one thing. All diseases combined are nothing compared to the disease of the ego.

Please note this important point: It is necessary to destroy ignorance through knowledge, but then, do not cling to that knowledge.

If you get a thorn in your foot, you have to pierce it out with the help of another thorn. But don't forget that the second thorn is as much a thorn as the first one. It may be logical for you not to consider the second thorn to be a thorn, because it has helped you so much to take out the first thorn. But then, you'll be very much mistaken. In the first place, it was able to take the original thorn out because it is also a thorn and in all probability, it is even stronger than the first thorn. Otherwise it could not have taken the first thorn out.

If you think that the second thorn (knowledge) is very kind because it helped you so much by getting rid of the first thorn (ignorance), and now you want to keep the second thorn in the same wound where the first one was, this may certainly be a logical thing to do. It helped you so much in your time of need, so it does not feel nice to throw it away.

But if this is the case, although you have got rid of one thorn, you will now be pierced by a bigger and a stronger thorn. If this kind of logic gets stuck in your mind, then you'll never be able to get rid of any thorn! Please understand this.

Because of your ignorance, you are unhappy. The ignorance hurts you and it has created wounds. Yes, and it's because of it that you are suffering and you are in misery. But now the new thorn of knowledge will also create a wound and your unhappiness and suffering will continue. It would be better if you gratefully throw the second thorn away also. Thank it! It has served you. But throw it away because it is also a thorn.

Ignorance must be removed with knowledge. But then you don't hug the knowledge and sit down with it. This is the essential meaning of Vedanta. Throw knowledge away as well. Knowledge is useful only as long as the thorn of ignorance has not yet been removed. The moment that the thorn of ignorance comes out, knowledge becomes useless.

If a man is sick, he needs medicine -- but only for as long as he is sick. And if we understand it correctly, it is not the man who needs the medicine. It is the sickness that needs it. So, in reality, it's not the man who takes the medicine. It is the sickness which absorbs it. The moment the sickness is gone, the medicines are no longer

useful. Likewise, you don't need knowledge! Knowledge is only a medicine which is needed in order to cure the sickness of ignorance.

There are many people who become addicted to the medicine so they continue to take it even when the sickness has been cured. However, remember this thing. It is easy to get rid of a sickness, but to get rid of the addiction to the medicine is very difficult. If the medicine becomes an addiction, then it is very difficult to get rid of it because medicine does not act as an enemy. It appears to be a friend.

A sickness which seems to be an enemy, is not difficult to get rid of. But a sickness which starts to look like a friend will be very difficult for you to get rid of. You can escape from an enemy, but it is very difficult to escape from an apparent friend. In the same way, knowledge is an enemy that appears to be a friend, because it destroys the first enemy which is called ignorance.

Vedanta is a state where you remain alert about knowledge but you don't cling to it. When ignorance is dissolved, a man becomes knowledgeable. When knowledge is also dropped, then he becomes the experienter -- please note this -- the **experienter**.

Ashvalayana, the composer of the *Kaivalya Upanishad*, is a saint. He was a knowledgeable man, a Maharishi and a great sage. But he had not experienced the truth. He had replaced ignorance with knowledge and he was holding on to that knowledge. But he was devoid of the experience, just as any ignorant person is. That's why he had to come in search of a Master.

The first thing the Master said was, "Only one who knows the decisive meaning of the knowledge contained in Vedanta."

So the first word to be understood is Vedanta, 'freedom from knowledge'. The second thing to be understood is the decisive or conclusive meaning of the knowledge contained in Vedanta. As long as you have not experienced that for yourself, all meanings are uncertain. No matter how much you know, that knowledge will not take you beyond uncertainty. The truth is that the more you know, the more your uncertainty will grow. This is the difficulty of all scholars. They know so much that they lose their certainty.

The ignorant are very certain. This is why ignorant people are able to create so much more trouble in the world than knowledgeable people. Ignorant people feel so certain within themselves about things, that they can risk their lives for anything. This is their disease, that they become so certain that they can risk their lives for any cause. This certainty is very deluded. It is there because of ignorance.

A knowledgeable person becomes completely uncertain. He may start to do something and he will see a thousand alternatives. In one single word, he senses a thousand different meanings. In every single statement, thousands of dimensions start to open up. Where to go? How to go? This very moment comes to a halt. He just stops.

The ignorant are very quick to go anywhere. They are always ready to go anywhere because they don't see very much. Even if they get a small glimpse on some path, that is enough for them to start walking on it. But knowledgeable people become incapable of moving. They simply come to a standstill because they say that as long as the meaning is not first clarified, they cannot go on.

Buddha told a story about a pundit who was struck by an arrow. Buddha was there and he asked the man, "Should I pull the arrow out?"

The pandit said, "First let me find out who shot me and why? Was the man who shot me a friend or an enemy? What was his motive for doing this? What would be worse, my death or my survival? Is it certain that my survival will be beneficial or is it better if I die? Until all this is clear, how can I let you pull out the arrow? And is this arrow poisonous or not? Is it my destiny or is it just a coincidence? Is this my fate or is it merely accidental? All this has to be cleared before we pull the arrow out."

Buddha said, "Perhaps all this will never become clear or certain, but one thing is certain. You'll be dead before you clear all this up. You'll be gone."

The pandit said, "But it's also not right to pull the arrow out until I know why all this has happened."

Therefore, a fool goes rushing in, even if it is in darkness. On the other hand, even if a pundit sees light, he will see so many shades and aspects of it that he will remain standing where he is, unable to move on.

Now, it will be good to understand another meaning of the word 'decisive'. There is the decisiveness or certainty of ignorance and there is the uncertainty of knowledge. But there's decisiveness, which is the decisiveness or the certainty of experience. See how many dimensions there are! When a person has become certain through experience, then in a sense, once again his certainty becomes like the certainty of the ignorant person.

When Vivekananda came to Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna was very certain. When Vivekananda asked, "Does God exist?"

Ramakrishna said, "Why go into all this useless talk? Would you like to meet God?" This answer would not be possible from a knowledgeable man.

Vivekananda had also gone to a knowledgeable man. He had gone to Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, who was a Maharshi like Ashvalayana or equal to that status. Vivekananda asked Debendranath the same question, "Does God exist?"

However, the way he asked was such that the wise man became perplexed. Vivekananda held him by the collar, shook him and asked, "Does God exist?"

Debendranath hesitated and said, "Sit down! Sit down calmly. Then I'll tell you."

But Vivekananda said, "Your hesitation has said everything! You have hesitated and your answer is coming out of hesitation. You don't know! You may know much about God, but you have not **known** God!"

He asked Ramakrishna exactly the same question, but Ramakrishna created exactly the reverse situation. Ramakrishna said, "Drop all this meaningless talk. Tell me if you want to meet God."

Now, this was a question in response to a question, and this caused Vivekananda to hesitate. He said, 'before coming here I had not thought about this. Now I came only to ask. If you give me some time, I would like to think about whether I really want to meet God or not.'

This is what happens. We'll continue in the next session.

Thank you for your time.