



FOUNDATION VEDANTA COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

Centre for Sanskrit Research and Indology



Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

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Benediction

Blessed Self,

Hari Om!

I am indeed very happy to welcome you for the Foundation Vedanta Course. Vedānta is the science of life. Your decision to study the Vedānta is indeed commendable for by doing so you have already given your life a noble direction. The knowledge that you will gain from this Course will help you achieve a greater vision of life and give clarity in the spiritual path that you have embarked upon.

I invoke the grace of the Lord and the blessings of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji so that you successfully complete the Course. May you take pleasure in discovering your real identity and true nature.

With Prem and Om,

Swami Tejomayananda

Head, Chinmaya Mission Worldwide



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Gratitude

We are happy to bring you the revised edition of the Foundation Vedanta Course which has served students well for about 5 decades. The Foundation Vedanta Course presents the fundamentals of Vedānta in a clear and lucid style. This Course is ideal for those who wish to embark on their spiritual journey for it deftly combines the theoretical knowledge of Vedānta with practical tips for its application in day-to-day life.

The need to bring the revised edition of the Foundation Vedanta Course arose because the structure of English language and the presentation of written content have changed quite a lot in the last five decades. Replacing some fairly convoluted Victorian English we now have a crisper format of sentence construction. Visual bulleting of points, demarcation of the essential thoughts from their explanation, and such other formatting changes were also required to make the Course material reader friendly.

The initial edits were done with the help of Ms. Dina Khemasia. A few sections of the course material were also rewritten. Smt. Sarala Suresh, Research Fellow, Chinmaya International Foundation Shodha Samsthan, incorporated the diacritical marks for the Sanskrit-transliterated words. Br. Sagar Chaitanya went through the entire course material and suggested corrections even as he caught errors that had escaped attention. Sidhu, Yuvaveer, CIF, assisted in incorporating the edits in these early phases. Our special thanks to Renjith who redid the diagrams and illustrations.

Chinmaya International Foundation is very much indebted to Smt. Jasjit Mansingh—a member of the Delhi Chapter of the Chinmaya Mission and herself an author and an editor of immense skill and vast experience—for her vigilant eye. She has dexterously edited the text of the Foundation Vedanta

Gratitude

Course and has paid attention to every small detail. We owe to her the perfection that we see now in the Course material—exquisite sentence construction, ease of flow, thorough punctuations, and many more such editing nuances which alone has given excellence to the Course material. It was altogether a work of devotion from her.

In her work she was ably assisted by Br. Kutastha Chaitanya who ensured that all her edits and suggestions were rightly incorporated. The beautiful type setting and formatting is the handwork of Smt. Radhika Manoj, Data Entry Operator, Chinmaya International Foundation.

Smt. Arundhati Sundar and Sri. Natarajan Minakshisundar, are the major sponsors for printing the Foundation Vedanta Course. Dr. Rayapati Sreenathan is the co-sponsor of the same. All of them are students of the CIF Home Study Courses. To them my immense gratitude.

Our heartfelt thanks to all the students of the Foundation Vedanta Course worldwide who have made this endeavour most worthwhile. They have been the perennial inspiration behind this labour of love.

Ādi Śaṅkara Nilayam
June 30, 2010

Swami Advayananda,
Acharya, CIF





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Glossary of Important Vedantic Terms (in Sanskrit Alphabetical Order)

Akhaṇḍa – homogenous.

Akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti – the term akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti means thought (vṛtti) that has taken the form (ākāra) of the Homogenous (akhaṇḍa). This thought is also called 'brahmākāra-vṛtti'. Both these terms stand for the firm 'I am Brahman' thought which puts an end to ignorance.

Ajāhatī lakṣaṇā – translated as 'implication by inclusion', this is the method of implication wherein the implied meaning is arrived by adding on to the direct meaning a special meaning related to the direct meaning.

Ajñāna – ignorance, in the Vedāntic context stands for the ignorance of the Self.

Ajñānī – ignorant, in the Vedāntic context stands for one who is ignorant of the Self.

Atad-vyāvṛtti-lakṣaṇā – description of an object through negation of what it is not.

Adhikārī – qualified aspirant.

Adhiṣṭhāna – substratum.

Adhyāsa – superimposition.

Ananta – that which is not limited, in other words, infinite.

Anartha-parampara – cycle of ignorance. This is the causal cycle of vāsanā (tendency), cintā (desire) and kārya (action).

Anātma-dharma – qualities of the not-Self.

Anātman – not-Self

Anātma-vāsanā – the basic tendency of identifying with the not-Self.

Anādi – that which has no beginning, that is beginningless.

Anitya – impermanent.

Anirvācya or Anirvacanīya – that which cannot be described as either sat (permanent) or asat (non-existent).

Anubandha-catuṣṭaya – the four preliminary considerations with respect to the text.

Anubhūti – experience; in the context of Vedānta stands for Self-Experience.

Anusandhāna – constant reflection or practice.

Antaḥ-karaṇa – the inner instruments made up of manas, buddhi, citta and ahankāra.

Glossary

- Annamaya-kośa* – the food sheath, corresponding to the physical body.
- Anyonya-adhyāsa* – mutual superimposition. This is also called itaretara-adhyāsa.
- Aparokṣa* – known directly without any medium.
- Aparokṣa-jñāna* – direct Knowledge of the Self.
- Aparokṣānubhūti* – direct Experience of the Self.
- Apāna* – the physiological function of evacuation.
- Abhāva* – absence.
- Alpajñā* – of limited knowledge.
- Avasthā-traya* – the three states of awareness – waking, dream and deep sleep.
- Avidyā* – ignorance.
- Avyakta* – unmanifest, the term is used as an appellation for māyā also.
- Aṣṭamūrtibhṛt* – this term stands for the Lord and literally means ‘endowed with the eightfold form’. The Lord can be contemplated upon as being endowed with eight aspects: the five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth), the sun (representing all luminaries), the moon (signifying all planets and satellites) and the jīva or individual (standing for all conscious beings).
- Asat* – that which is totally non-existent like the ‘horns of a rabbit’ or the ‘son of a childless woman’.
- Asaṃsakti* – this is the fifth stage of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā and is translated as ‘absence of attachment or non-union’.
- Ahaṅkāra* – ego or the I-thought characterised by the notion ‘I am the gross, subtle and the causal bodies’ which expresses as the doership and the enjoyership notions.
- Āgāmi-karma* – results born from the actions of the present embodiment that are to be accrued to the individual in the future.
- Ācārya* – teacher.
- Ātma-anātma-viveka* – differentiating the Ātman (Self) from the anātman (not-Self).
- Ātman* – a term that is used to denote the Self.
- Ānanda* – bliss or happiness.
- Ānandamaya-kośa* – the bliss sheath, corresponding to the causal body.
- Āvaraṇa-śakti* – the veiling power of māyā.
- Āśramas* – stages of life. They are totally four in number – brahmacarya (student stage), gārhastya (house-holder stage), vānaprastha (retirement stage) and sannyāsa (monk stage).
- Itaretara-adhyāsa* – mutual superimposition. This is also called anyonya-adhyāsa.

Indriya – an organ.

Iṣṭa-devatā – deity of one’s personal worship, such as Lord Śiva, Lord Rāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa and so on.

Īśvara – the Lord. Defined as the Sat-Cit-Ānanda Principle qualified by the macrocosm conditioning of collective gross, subtle and causal bodies, that is the entire gross, subtle and causal worlds.

Udāna – the vital-air that controls physiological reverse functions such as sneezing, burping and so on.

Udāsīna – indifferent.

Upaniṣad – the portion of the Vedas that contains the Knowledge of the Self as its subject matter. Traditionally, 108 *Upaniṣads* are considered to be authentic.

Uparama – effortless and natural withdrawal of the senses and the mind from the external objects.

Upastha – reproductive organ.

Upādhi – conditioning or limitation.

Upāsana – prayer or contemplation of the Lord.

Ṛṣi – those who have discovered the Vedas.

Ekānta – aloneness; also interpreted to mean single-pointedness.

Om – symbol of the Self or Lord.

Kartā – doer.

Kartṛtva – notion of doership.

Karma – action or fruit of action.

Karma-yoga – to do our duty with the feeling that through our knowledge, talent, strength and so on, we are serving the Lord, and accepting with equanimity the results of one’s actions – whether success or failure – as the prasāda of the Lord.

Karmendriya – the organs of action such as speech, hands and so on.

Kāma – desire.

Kāraṇa – cause.

Kāraṇa-śarīra – causal body.

Kārya – effect. Also means action.

Kāla – time.

Kāla-pariccheda – temporal limitation. One of the three kinds of limitations.

Kinnara – one of the various kinds of beings, higher in evolution than that of the human but lower in evolution than that of the deva.

Glossary

Kevala – of one nature and free of all the three differences – sajātīya-bheda, vijātīya-bheda and svagata-bheda.

Kośa – sheaths, totally five in number – annamaya-kośa (food sheath), prāṇamaya-kośa (vital-air sheath), mano-maya-kośa (mental sheath), vijñānamaya-kośa (intellectual sheath) and ānandamaya-kośa (bliss sheath).

Krodha – anger.

Kṣatriya – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. They represent the ruling-class – manager, administrator, politician and so on.

Gandharva – celestial musician.

Guṇa – though literally translated as quality, in the Vedāntic context, can be more precisely translated as ‘characteristic constituents’. There are three guṇas – sattva, rajas and tamas.

Guṇātīta – the Man of Self-Realisation who has transcended the three guṇas.

Guru – teacher.

Gurukula – traditional residential schools.

Gurūpasadana or Gurūpagamana – reaching the Guru for the study of Vedānta.

Golaka – the external ears, eyes and other appendages that are used as instruments by the indriya (inner faculty) to carry out their respective functions.

Ghrāṇa – nose.

Cakṣuḥ – eye.

Cit – Consciousness.

Citta – memory.

Citta-ekāgratā – single-pointedness of the mind.

Citta-śuddhi – purity of mind.

Cidābhāsa – reflection of Consciousness in the vijñānamaya-kośa.

Cintā – desires or thought agitations.

Chandas – Vedic prosody.

Jagat – world or cosmos.

Jaḍa – inert.

Japa – repetition of the Lord’s name.

Jahatī-ajahatī-lakṣaṇā – also called bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā. In this manner of arriving at the implied meaning, there is both the rejection and the retention of the literal meaning – the contradictory part is rejected and the non-contradictory part is retained.

Jahatī lakṣaṇā – the method of implication in which the word totally gives up its direct meaning and signifies a meaning that is related to it's direct meaning. Translated as 'implication by exclusion'.

Jāgrad-avasthā – waking state.

Jīva or *Jīvātman* – the limited individual or the bound self. Technically, the jīva is defined as the Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) Principle qualified by the microcosm conditioning of the individual gross, subtle and causal bodies.

Jīva-bhāva – the notion or sense of being a limited individual.

Jīvan-mukta – one who is liberated even while living, that is the one free from the sorrow even when the body is existant.

Jñāna – the term indicates knowledge in general. When compared with 'vijñāna' or 'actual Experience', this term connotes 'doubtfree intellectual knowledge'.

Jñāna-svarūpa – of the nature of Knowledge.

Jñānī – the one endowed with Self-Knowledge.

Jñānendriya – the organs of knowledge such as ears, skin and so on.

Taṭastha-lakṣaṇā – described as qualification *per accidens* or the description of an object based on its extraneous or associated property.

Tanumānasā – this is the third stage in the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā and is translated as 'attenuation or thinning of the mind'. This stage is equated to the states of nididhyāsana and savikalpa-samādhi.

Tanmātra – the five elements – space, air, fire, water and earth – in their subtle or ungrossified state.

Tapas – austerity.

Tamas – one of the three characteristic constituents or guṇas of māyā. This guṇa expresses as ignorance and stupor.

Tādātmya – identification or notion of 'I-ness' with respect to the not-Self.

Titikṣā – endurance or forbearance.

Tīrtha – pilgrimage or pilgrimage centre.

Turīya – literally means 'fourth'. Compared to the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep that we experience, the Self is called the 'fourth'.

Turyagā – this is the seventh and the last stage of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā and is translated as 'transcendence'.

Taijasa – refers to the dream state ego; this term literally means 'the effulgent one'.

Glossary

Tripuṭī – this is the triad: the meditator-meditated-meditation, the enjoyer-enjoyed-enjoyment and so on.

Tvak – skin.

Dama – control of the senses.

Dānam – charity.

Dānti – another appellation for dama or sense control.

Deva or devatā – category of beings higher in evolution than that of the human who control the various phenomenal forces, such as wind, rain, fire and so on. Some of the popular devas are Indra, Vāyu and Agni.

Deśa-pariccheda – spatial limitation. One of the three types of limitations.

Deha-vāsanā – the tendency characterised by attachment towards the body.

Dr̥g – seer.

Dr̥g-dr̥śya-viveka – differentiation between the seer and the seen.

Dr̥ḍha-vāsanā – strong habitual tendency.

Dr̥śya – seen.

Dvandva – pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, joy and sorrow, praise and insult.

Dharma – essential nature of an object (same as svarūpa). This term is also used in the context of righteousness and nobility.

Dhāraṇā – literally ‘holding’ or ‘binding’. Herein one holds the mind to the object of concentration.

Dhyāna – contemplation. Also termed nididhyāsana, this is the continuous flow of a single thought referring to Brahman, dissociated from thoughts of other objects like the body.

Dhyeya-mātra-avasthiti – this is the state wherein the meditator (dhyātṛ) becomes the dhyeya (meditated), as against merely *knowing* the dhyeya. In this State of Being, the arrogation of the ego that ‘I am meditating’ vanishes and the tripuṭī or triad of meditator-meditated-meditation comes to an end.

Naraka – hell.

Nara-janma – human birth.

Nitya – eternal or permanent.

Nitya-jyoti – eternal effulgence.

Nitya-mukta – ever liberated.

Nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta – eternal, pure, awakened and liberated. This is the phrase which is often used to describe the nature of the supreme Self.

Glossary

Nirañjana – without taint.

Nirantara – without break.

Nirākāra – without form.

Nirukta – Sanskrit etymology.

Nirguṇa – without attributes.

Nirmala – without dirt.

Nirvikalpa or *Nirvikalpaka* – without thoughts or without distinctions.

Nirvikalpa-samādhi – the term ‘nir-vikalpa’ means ‘no-division’. In this state of absorption or meditation there is the absence of the tripuṭī or the triad of the meditator, the meditated and meditation.

Nirvikāra – without modifications.

Nirviśiṣṭa – unqualified.

Niṣkriya – without actions.

Niṣṭhā – firm abidance.

Padārtha-abhāvanā – this is the sixth stage of ‘sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā’ and is translated as ‘objectlessness’.

Pañca-kośa-viveka – the methodology of differentiating the Self from the five sheaths.

Pañcikarāṇa – the process of pentamerous division and combination of the five subtle elements by which they are converted to gross elements.

Paramahansa – this term is used to indicate a Man of Self-Realisation who is beyond the relative concepts of dharma and adharma.

Paramātman – the Supreme Self of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Pariccheda – conditioning.

Parokṣa – not known directly, known through a medium, expresses a sense of difference and distance between oneself and the object concerned.

Pāṇi – hand.

Pāda – leg.

Pāpa – demerit.

Pāyu – anus.

Puṇya – merit.

Pūjā – worship of the Lord.

Prakarāṇa-grantha – these are ‘topical texts’ that explain a few selected topics of a particular subject.

Prakṛti – nature, an appellation for māyā or the Lord’s power.

Pradhāna – an appellation for māyā or the Lord’s power.

Pramāṇa – instrument or means of knowledge.

Pramoda – the happiness of actually enjoying the object of one’s liking.

Prayojana – result.

Prasthāna-trayī – *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Brahma-sūtra* are collectively given this appellation.

Prājña – the deep sleep ego or the deep sleeper.

Prāṇa – translated commonly as vital-airs. They are totally five in number and they control the various physiological functions. This word also refers to the first of the five vital airs that controls respiration.

Prāṇamaya-kośa – the vital-air sheath constituted by the five prāṇas and the five organs of action.

Prārabdha – destiny.

Prārabdha-karma – results of those actions that have caused the present embodiment and the experiences thereof.

Priya – the joy of perceiving the object of one’s liking.

Phala – result.

Baddha – bound person.

Bandha – bondage.

Bāhya-karaṇa – outer or external instruments constituted of the jñānendriyas and karmendriyas.

Buddhi – intellect.

Brahma – creator of the various universes (brahmāṇḍa).

Brahma-vit – literally ‘knower of Brahman’. In the scheme of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā the Jīvan-mukta who has reached the fourth stage of ‘sattvāpatti’ or ‘attainment of the Real’.

Brahman – a term used for denoting the Reality that is the substratum of the entire cosmos. This appellation is apt, for the word ‘Brahman’ is derived from a Sanskrit verbal root that denotes ‘that which is ever big’ (*bṛhatvāt brahma*).

Brahma-niṣṭha – he who has the direct Experience of the Self as being identical with Brahman and ever abides in this understanding.

Brahma-vidyā – the knowledge of Brahman.

Brahma-vidvara – the term literally means ‘the superior knower of Brahman’. In the scheme of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā this is the Jīvan-mukta of the ‘asamsakti’ or

‘absence of attachment (or non-union)’ stage.

Brahma-vidvariṣṭha – this term literally means ‘the most exalted knower of Brahman’. In the scheme of sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā this is the Jīvan-mukta who is established in the seventh plane of ‘turyagā’.

Brahma-vidvarīyān – this term literally means ‘the one who is higher than the Brahma-vidvara’. In the scheme of the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā this is the Jīvan-mukta who is established in the sixth plane of padārtha-abhāvanā.

Brahmākāra-vṛtti – literally means ‘thought (vṛtti) that has taken the form (ākāra) of Brahman; also called akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti. Both these terms stand for the firm ‘I am Brahman’ thought which puts an end to ignorance.

Brahmāṇḍa – a total of fourteen worlds (lokas) together constitute one ‘cosmos’ or ‘brahmāṇḍa’.

Brahmaṇa – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. They are the knowledge-class such as the teacher, professor and so on.

Bhajana – devotional song.

Bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā – is that manner of implication wherein a part of the literal meaning is rejected and another part of it is retained. Also termed jahatī-ajahatī-lakṣaṇā.

Bhāva – feeling.

Bhāvanā – feeling.

Bhikṣā – food gathered by a monk for his physical sustenance.

Bheda – difference.

Bhoktā – enjoyer.

Bhoktrtva – enjoyership.

Bhoga-āyatanam – literally, ‘tenement of experience’; this term is used to describe the gross body.

Bhoga-sādhanam – literally, ‘instrument of experience’; this term is used to describe the subtle body.

Bhrānti – delusion.

Maṅgalācaraṇa – invocation.

Manana – constant reflection on that which one has heard from the teacher through arguments agreeable to the purport of Vedānta.

Manas – mind.

Glossary

Manomaya-kośa – the mental sheath constituted by the mind and the five organs of knowledge.

Mantra – a verse from the Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus.

Mala – literally 'dirt'; this term is used to indicate the impurities of the mind.

Mahātmā – this term literally means 'great-soul' and in the Vedāntic context is used to connote the Man of Realisation.

Mahābhūta – the five great elements: space, air, fire, water and earth.

Mahāvākyas – 'identity revealing statements'. Upaniṣadic sentences that point out the identity between Ātman and Brahman by falsifying the seeming differences that exist between the jīva and the Īśvara are termed mahāvākyas.

Māyā – this term indicates illusion or magic. Used as an appellation for the Lord's power.

Mithyā – illusion or that which is not truly existent.

Mukti – liberation from bondage.

Mumukṣu – the one desirous of Liberation.

Mumukṣutvam – the desire for Liberation.

Mokṣa – Liberation.

Moda – the thrill of attaining the object of one's liking.

Yakṣa – a demi-god.

Yajña – worship of the Lord. In the Vedic context this term stands for the fire rituals.

Rajas – one of the three characteristic constituents or guṇas of māya. This guṇa expresses as restlessness and desire.

Rajju-sarpa-nyāya – the example of the rope being misunderstood to be the snake.

Rasanā – tongue.

Lakṣaṇā – definition.

Lakṣaṇā-vṛtti – the method of implication.

Lakṣyārtha – implied meaning.

Liṅga-śarīra – literally means 'indicating body'; used as an appellation for the subtle body.

Loka – world or field of experience.

Loka-vāsanā – worldly tendency.

Lobha – greed.

Varṇas – castes. They are totally four in number – brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra, and the classification is based on one's qualities and actions.

Glossary

- Vastu* – an object or thing. This term is also used to indicate Reality.
- Vastu-pariccheda* – objectival limitation or limitation by object. One of the three kinds of limitations.
- Vāk* – the organ of speech.
- Vācyārtha* – direct meaning of the word.
- Vāsanā* – habitual tendencies born from the impressions that are gained from experiences in this life or the earlier ones.
- Vikalpa* – difference or distinction; also used as a term for thought or volition.
- Vikāra* – modification.
- Vikṣepa-śakti* – the projecting power of māyā.
- Vicāra* – enquiry.
- Vicāraṇā* – translated as ‘reflection’ or ‘enquiry’, this is the second stage in the saptajñāna-bhūmikā. The seeker in this stage becomes reflective and spends time thinking upon the words of the Scriptures and the Guru. This is the stage of study (śravaṇa) and reflection (manana).
- Vijātīya-bheda* – one of the three kinds of differences. This is the difference that exists between beings and objects of different species.
- Vijñāna* – when compared with ‘jñāna’, which is the intellectual knowledge of the Self, this term connotes the actual Experience of the Self.
- Vijñānamaya-kośa* – the intellectual sheath constituted by the intellect and the five organs of knowledge.
- Videha-mukti* – Liberation occasioned by the death of the body.
- Viparīta-bhāvanā* – the term ‘literally means ‘contrary notion’ and connotes notions that are at variance to the knowledge ‘I am Brahman’.
- Vibhu* – all-pervading.
- Viśiṣṭa* – means ‘qualified’. This implies possession of the qualities of the conditionings.
- Viśaya* – subject matter of the text or any object in general.
- Vṛtti* – modification of the antaḥ-karaṇa (inner equipment).
- Veda* – the revealed knowledge that forms the foundation of Hinduism. The Vedas were compiled and subdivided by Vyāsa into four – *R̥g*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Atharvaṇa*.
- Vedānta* – literally ‘end of the Vedas’, the term is used to denote the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*.
- Vairāgya* – dispassion.

Glossary

Vaiśya – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. They represent the business or trading class.

Vyaṣṭi – microcosm or the individual as opposed to the macrocosm or the totality.

Vyākaraṇa – Sanskrit grammar.

Vyāna – the vital-air which controls the physiological function of blood circulation.

Vrata – vow.

Śakti – literally ‘power’. Sometimes used as an appellation for māyā.

Śama – control of the mind.

Śarīra – body.

Śānti – mental peace. Also used in the sense of ‘śama’ or control of the mind.

Śāstra – Scripture; texts that cover a complete range of topics pertaining to their subject.

Śāstra-grantha – texts that cover a complete range of topics pertaining to the subject.

Śāstra-vāsanā – the propensity for too much studying of the Scriptures.

Śubhecchā – auspicious resolve. This is the first plane of spiritual unfoldment in the sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā wherein one becomes a mumukṣu endowed with the burning desire for Liberation.

Śūdra – one of the four classes into which people were divided in the Hindu society. In the present day context they can be considered as those who serve the society with talents in carpentry, plumbing, manual labour and so on.

Śraddhā – faith.

Śravaṇa – listening. The ascertainment of the purport of Vedānta, through the words of the teacher, as being the oneness of the inner Self with Brahman.

Śruti – that which is heard, a term which connotes the Vedas.

Śrotram – ear.

Śrotriya – one who is well learned in the Vedic lore.

Saṅga – attachment.

Sajātīya-bheda – one of the three kinds of differences. This is the difference that is seen between beings and objects of the same species.

Sattva – one of the three characteristic constituents or guṇas of māyā. This guṇa expresses as knowledge and serenity.

Sañcita-karma – the collection of the results of all actions performed by the individual in his past embodiments.

Sat – the permanent, that is that which exists in all the three states of time – past, present and future.

Sat-cit-ānanda – Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the essential nature of the Self.

Satya – truth.

Satya-buddhi – notion of reality.

Sattvāpatti – ‘attainment of the Real’; this is the fourth stage of ‘sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā’. This stage is equated to the state of nirvikalpa-samādhi wherein the mind is utterly still.

Satsaṅga – company of the good.

Sadā-eka-rūpa – of the same nature.

Sannidhi-mātra – mere presence.

Sapta-jñāna-bhūmikā – the seven stages or planes of spiritual unfoldment.

Samaṣṭi – macrocosm is the collective as opposed to the microcosm or the individual.

Samādhi – absorption of the mind in the thought ‘I am Brahman’.

Samādhāna – single-pointedness or concentration of the mind-intellect.

Samāna – the vital-air that is in charge of digestion and assimilation of the food and liquids that we take in.

Samit – sacrificial faggots for the Vedic fire sacrifice.

Sambandha – relationship.

Sarvajña – all-knowing or omniscient.

Sarveśvara – omnipotent or all-powerful.

Savikalpa-samādhi – the absorption or meditation that is characterised by the perception of the ‘tripuṭī’, or the triad of meditator-meditated-meditation.

Samśaya – doubt.

Samśāra – literally ‘movement’; used in the Vedāntic literature to indicate the cycle of birth and death.

Sākṣī – Witness.

Sādhaka – an aspirant. In the Vedānta context connotes a seeker of Truth.

Sādhana – the means. This term is also used as a general word for all spiritual practices.

Sādhana-catustaya – fourfold qualification comprising of viveka, vairāgya, śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti and mumukṣutvam.

Sukṛta – results of past good deeds. Also termed ‘puṇya’.

Suṣupti-avasthā – deep sleep state.

Sūkṣma – subtle or that which is not perceived by the senses.

Glossary

Sūkṣma-śarīra – subtle body.

Seva – service.

Sevā-bhāva – the attitude of service.

Sthānu-puruṣa-nyāya – the example of the post being misunderstood as a man.

Sthita-prajña – Man of firm Wisdom who is established in Self-Knowledge.

Sthūla – gross or that which is perceivable by the senses.

Sthūla-bhūta – gross elements.

Sthūla-śarīra – physical body, also called gross body.

Svagata-bheda – one of the three kinds of differences. This is the difference that is found within the object itself.

Svatantra – independent.

Svadharmā – one's duty or one's real nature.

Svapna-avasthā – dream state.

Svayañjyoti – self-effulgence.

Svarūpa – an object's essential nature.

Svarūpa-lakṣaṇā – a definition based on the object's intrinsic characteristics.

Svarga – heaven.

Svādhyāya – study of the Scriptures.

Hṛdaya-granthi – 'knot of the heart'. This term connotes the identification of the Self with the not-Self (the body, mind and so on). This identification is called a knot, for it ties the Self to the not-Self.





FOUNDATION VEDANTA COURSE

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Course Content (IV Parts, 24 Lessons)

Part I

(8 Lessons)

Lesson 1

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.1 Freedom and Licence | 1.2 Art of Right Contact |
| 1.3 Man's Heritage | 1.4 Joy of Living |

Lesson 2

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2.1 Inevitability of Action | 2.2 Secret of Success |
| 2.3 The Sacred and the Secular | 2.4 Dual Path |

Lesson 3

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3.1 Where is Peace? | 3.2 Harmony of Existence |
| 3.3 Personality Rehabilitation | 3.4 Mind and Man |

Lesson 4

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 4.1 Path to Perfection | 4.2 Mechanism of Action |
| 4.3 Law of Karma | |

Lesson 5

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 5.1 Play of the Mind | 5.2 Fundamentals of Living |
| 5.3 Harmony and Poise | |

Lesson 6

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 6.1 Science and Religion | 6.2 What is Religion? |
| 6.3 Vitals of a Nation | 6.4 What is Culture? |

Course Content

Lesson 7

- 7.1 What Makes a Human Being?
- 7.2 Essence in a Human Being
- 7.3 Path to Divinity
- 7.4 State of Divinity

Lesson 8

Revision of Lesson 1-7

Part II ***(6 Lessons)***

Lesson 9

- 9.1 Fundamentals of Vedānta
- 9.2 Food Sheath
- 9.3 Vital-air Sheath
- 9.4 Mental and Intellectual Sheaths
- 9.5 Comparative Study of Mind and Intellect
- 9.6 Bliss Sheath

Lesson 10

- 10.1 Five Sheaths and Self
- 10.2 Three bodies and Ātman
- 10.3 Nature of Ātman

Lesson 11

- 11.1 Catharsis of Vāsanās
- 11.2 Reflection, Contemplation and Meditation
- 11.3 Microcosm and Macrocosm

Lesson 12

- 12.1 Six Schools of Philosophy (Ṣad-darśanas)
- 12.2 Microcosm and Macrocosm
- 12.3 Mahāvākyas: Great Declarations
- 12.4 Philosophy and Religion

Course Content

Lesson 13

- 13.1 Fall and Rise of Human Beings
- 13.2 Fall of Human Beings
- 13.3 Veiling Power (Āvaraṇa)
- 13.4 Agitation of the Mind (Vikṣepa)

Lesson 14

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Part III
(5 Lessons)

Lesson 15

- 15.1 Seek the Eternal
- 15.2 'Wealth' and 'Woman'
- 15.3 Turn Inward—Here and Now
- 15.4 Process of Detachment

Lesson 16

- 16.1 The Changing and the Changeless
- 16.2 Desire, the Devil Within
- 16.3 A Bouquet of Flowers
- 16.4 What is Renunciation?

Lesson 17

- 17.1 Test of Perfection
- 17.2 Three fold Path of Perfection
- 17.3 Man of Perfection
- 17.4 The One Reality

Lesson 18

- 18.1 From Bondage to Liberation
- 18.2 External Disciplines (Bahiraṅga-sādhanā)
- 18.3 Passions Veil the Self
- 18.4 Internal Disciplines (Antaraṅga-sādhanā)

Lesson 19

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Course Content

Part IV
(5 Lessons)

Lesson 20

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| 20.1 Purpose of Existence | 20.2 State of Perfection |
| 20.3 The Distorting Elements | 20.4 Dynamic Mind |

Lesson 21

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|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 21.1 Preliminaries to Meditation | 21.2 Process of Meditation |
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Lesson 22

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 22.1 Logic of Meditation | 22.2 Significance of ॐ |
| 22.3 Secret of Realization | 22.4 Faith that Assures |
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Lesson 23

Revision of Lessons 20-22

Lesson 24

Highlights of the Course





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Guidelines for Study

THE STUDY OF any literature makes a person learned and scholarly; and so will the study of Vedānta if the course is confined to merely acquiring bookish knowledge. However, if the knowledge thus acquired is combined with a sense of devotion to the Lord, the combination will lead to the subjective development of your personality.

It is, therefore, necessary to choose your own idol, or a picture of the Lord you cherish, and put it in your place of worship. It may be in your study, prayer room, or a quiet dedicated corner in your home. If you do not have an idol, or picture, the sign of 'ॐ' (Om)¹ may be framed and used as your symbol of Truth. This picture should be fixed on the wall, at eye level, while you sit for prayer in front of it.

Spiritual practices performed in the early hours of the morning, yield the best results. Hence rising early becomes one of the important aspects of a spiritual programme. To get used to it, you will start from the first day of the course by getting up half an hour earlier than your usual waking time, but not later than 6.30 a.m. or earlier than 4.00 a.m. Once up, first clean and wash your face and sit in a comfortable position in front of the idol or picture and think of the Lord. If you cannot do this, or if you do not have a Lord to think of, you should try and think of the expression of divinity, seen everywhere in the world. It could be the wonderful creation like the sun, the moon, the earth, the living creatures, or it could be the various laws of nature functioning in the cosmos in perfect harmony and rhythm. To begin with, do not pray for more than ten minutes. Try to maintain a feeling of devotion and enjoy every

1. The Sanskrit letter 'ॐ' is pronounced 'Om'. It represents the infinite Truth, the reason for which will be discussed in detail in the lessons to follow.

minute of it. However, if you fail to maintain such a feeling and become restless, do not continue. But do cultivate the habit of sitting down every day to pray at least for a few minutes. By consistent self-application, you will develop a taste for it.

After prayer, carefully study the lessons sent to you for about half-an-hour. The period of study may be increased to an hour-and-a-half if required. The time allotted for studying and preparation of each lesson is a fortnight. By the end of each fortnight the lesson allotted should have been studied at least twice so that you have a firm grasp of the thoughts and ideas contained therein.

Answer the questionnaires at the end of the lessons *without referring to the lessons*. The answer papers should be returned within three days of completing them. If you have any doubts and questions pertaining to the subject already studied, please send them to us. Do not send any questions on other general topics. All your doubts will be answered or cleared as you proceed with the lessons. Premature discussion will only lead to confusion.

It is desirable to adhere to the timings, preferably early dawn as suggested for studying, but if you are unable to do so due to official or other commitments, you may fix any other regular time that suits you. It is important to have a regular routine.

After the early morning study is over, you should prepare a plan of your work for the rest of the day. Similarly, the work must be broadly planned for the week at the beginning of the week; for the month at the start of the month, and likewise, for the year. Every morning the day's work, be it official, social or domestic, must be planned out carefully and be completed during the course of the day. A schedule of work should be prepared, in the order of its importance, and it should be followed strictly without interruption. An exception can be made for emergency work if necessary.

Another quality to be cultivated by the sādḥaka (seeker) is to maintain perfect cleanliness. In warmer countries the physical body needs a bath at

Guidelines for Study

least once or twice a day; the teeth, nails and other parts of the body are to be kept spotlessly clean. Besides the body, the mind too must be clean and pure; therefore, you must constantly endeavour to keep your thoughts clean with a readiness to love and serve everyone. In addition, try to maintain a cheerful attitude towards life, which is a natural outcome of the study and assimilation of Vedānta.

If you are already following a spiritual practice under the guidance of your teacher, please do not change it but continue it more devotedly. These Vedānta lessons are not meant to estrange you from your faith, they are designed to strengthen and encourage you on whatever path you have chosen.

The lessons of the Foundation Vedanta Course do not contain dogmas nor do we lay claim to you as our special and exclusive student. You may continue to follow your own faith and serve your own teacher. These Vedānta lessons are based on universal principles and seek to encourage you on the path to Truth. Our intention is to strengthen with knowledge (jñāna) your efforts on the spiritual path and enable self-unfoldment.

With this preparation, you are ready to begin the actual study from Lesson 1 onwards. The lessons will be dispatched to you from our office every month. Please ensure that your answers reach us in the prescribed time. If not, you will be taken off from our register. However, special permission for extension of time may be possible in case of sickness or any other emergency, on request.

Welcome to the Foundation Vedanta Course, and best wishes for your success.





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Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation

THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE, written in the Devanāgarī script, has nearly twice as many characters in its alphabet as has English. In these lessons, the Devanāgarī characters have been transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 and since then generally acknowledged to be the only rational and satisfactory scheme. The following is the key for the transliteration and pronunciation of the Sanskrit alphabet. One 'sound value' is given to each letter; f, g, w, x, and z are not used at all.

अ	a	like the <i>o</i> in son
आ	ā	like the <i>a</i> in far
इ	i	like the <i>i</i> in if
ई	ī	like the <i>ee</i> in feel
उ	u	like the <i>u</i> in full
ऊ	ū	like the <i>oo</i> in pool
ऋ	r̄	like the <i>ri</i> in rig
ॠ	r̄̄	no equivalent in English
ऌ	l̄	no equivalent in English
ए	e	like the <i>a</i> in gate
ऐ	ai	like the <i>y</i> in my
ओ	o	like the <i>o</i> in note
औ	au	like the <i>ou</i> in loud
क	k	like the <i>k</i> in look
ख	kh	like the <i>kh</i> in khan
ग	g	like the <i>g</i> in gap
घ	gh	like the <i>gh</i> in ghost
च	c	like the <i>ch</i> in chuckle
छ	ch	like the <i>ch</i> in treachery
ज	j	like the <i>j</i> in jam
झ	jh	like the <i>geh</i> in hedgehog

ट	t	like the <i>t</i> in tank
ठ	th	like the <i>th</i> in ant hill (approximate)
ड	d	like the <i>d</i> in dog
ढ	dh	like the <i>dh</i> in midday (approximate)
त	t	like the <i>th</i> in thump
थ	th	like the <i>th</i> in Othello
द	d	like the <i>th</i> in then
ध	dh	like the <i>dh</i> in dhobi
प	p	like the <i>p</i> in put
फ	ph	like the <i>ph</i> in uphill (approximate)
ब	b	like the <i>b</i> in bad
भ	bh	like the <i>bh</i> in bhangra
ङ	ṅ	like the <i>ng</i> in sing
ञ	ñ	like the <i>ny</i> in canyon (approximate)
ण	ṇ	like the <i>n</i> in under
न	n	like the <i>n</i> in nose
य	y	like the <i>y</i> in yap
र	r	like the <i>R</i> in Raja
ल	l	like the <i>l</i> in lap
व	v	like the <i>v</i> in avert (approximate)
श	ś	like the <i>sh</i> in shri
ष	ṣ	like the <i>sh</i> in shall
स	s	like the <i>s</i> in sand
ह	h	like the <i>h</i> in hat (approximate)
:	ḥ	a distinct hard aspiration that echoes the vowel which immediately precedes it
.	m̐	the nasal belonging to the preceding vowel, the precise sound of which depends upon the consonants that follow it. Represented by a dot above the alphabet.





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PART - I

LESSON 1

THE FOUR TOPICS covered in Lesson 1 are: Freedom and License, Art of Right Contact, Human Heritage, Joy of Living. A fortnight should be sufficient to complete the first lesson. The student who is tempted to go through these pages superficially could conceivably complete the entire lesson in a day or two but then the purpose of the study would be lost.

Please read each topic at least twice, prepare your own notes or jot down the salient points so that you can revise them later and capture the ideas of the lesson at one glance. Do not cover more than one topic per day. Reflect deeply upon the various ideas and their implications until you grasp them thoroughly.

The course does not merely aim at intellectual understanding but intends to achieve, besides understanding, a *subjective* assimilation of the ideas contained. Only if you make the knowledge your own, will you grow spiritually.

All correspondence and papers pertaining to the lessons should be carefully filed and preserved.

1.1 Freedom and Licence

Human beings have made this world a glorious place to live in. The powers of nature were feared and felt to be threatening since prehistoric times. Over the ages they began to be better understood and have been harnessed to serve the needs of mankind. The land which was formerly barren and wild has now been prepared to yield food in abundance. People have grown from a primitive and barbarous state to a civilized and intelligent society. The comforts and amenities provided are almost heavenly and human beings have been indulging

in these without restraint. However, it has been observed that even though there are plenty of riches and material prosperity, life is full of worry, anxiety and dissatisfaction.

This paradox in life has been the subject of investigation by the spiritual masters in India who, from time immemorial, have dedicated their lives to the general welfare of humankind. In their subtle enquiries, they discovered that the agitations and sorrows of the mind are caused by uncontrolled and excessive indulgence in sense enjoyment. Such indulgence cannot provide happiness for long; besides it dissipates one's personality and ultimately leads to distress. For example, while the first helping of a sweet is enjoyable, the second and the third have diminishing value. Further, as the number increases, it becomes not only sickening but also detrimental to one's health. Hence, these ancient thinkers formulated certain basic regulations of self-restraint and discipline for gaining deeper and more enduring happiness from one's contact with the world of things and beings. Let us see how this works in life's experiences.



Experiences are gained in life when an individual makes contact with the world. Individuals are the subject, and the world is the object of their experience. In the present day, science and its achievements have developed the objective world to be a much better place to live in. With such development, one would naturally expect to be happier, but this is not so. On the contrary, human beings are more distressed and discontented with life. The main reason for this paradox is the human tendency to indulge perpetually in the sense objects of the world.

Human beings have five sense organs. These are eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. They are also called the organs of perception and they have a natural tendency to 'graze' in their respective fields. Moreover, the sense objects of the world are extremely alluring and an individual is all too easily enticed into sense indulgence.

Becoming an easy prey to them is the first step. The next is to get intoxicated by the joys arising from indulging in them. After that it is all down hill. The indulgence increases day by day until one loses one's energy, health and all. This is licentious enjoyment.



Lesson 1

However, the essential nature of human beings is absolute freedom. An individual resists any shackles on one's personality, and does not relish being told what to do or not do. He revolts against injunctions and precepts and opposes the idea of any spiritual practice prescribing self-restraint. Little does he realize that freedom is essentially built on intelligent self-restraint and discipline. For instance, the freedom of movement on the road is subject to the discipline of the traffic lights. If this discipline is not followed, there will be no control at all over the movement of people and vehicles and this will lead to confusion and chaos. Freedom, thus, loses its meaning and degenerates into licence in the absence of adequate regulations and directions.



As opposed to unrestricted enjoyment, by avoiding overindulgence, one can enjoy the contact of one's sense organs with the sense objects so long as it is done in a disciplined manner. This can be done by intelligent regulation of one's activities. Such regulation alone lends charm and significance to enjoyment. Without it an individual oversteps the capacity to enjoy until at last the sense contact becomes mechanical and yields no joy at all. If indulgence still continues, it ruins one's health and saps all the vigour and vitality resulting in pain and sorrow. The example of the sweet demonstrates this truth.

Religion points out this unfortunate end and warns human beings to discipline and regulate their lives from the very beginning so that they will not be victimized by the senses and develop a sense of monotony, but rather continue to enjoy life. Not understanding this friendly warning, one allows oneself to be misled by a general feeling that religion shackles freedom and enjoyment. This misunderstanding has led to an aversion to religion as such.

Religious masters provide human beings with guidelines for exercising self-restraint in the right proportion so that their personality does not suffer from any setback through wrong contacts with the world but, on the contrary, remains healthy and vigorous for progress on the path towards absolute Perfection and Bliss.



Clearly then, the inability to distinguish between freedom and licence is at the root of the modern generation's aversion to religion. The scriptures provide the resources for a subjective scientific analysis which enables one to intelligently

understand and appreciate the need for voluntary self-restraint. Scriptural guidance, thus, serves the same purpose as instructions do in a service manual for the efficient operation of a machine. The human machine is the most complex of all, requiring subtle tuning and adjustments, as prescribed in the religious manuals, in order to maintain healthy and efficient contact with the world. By adhering to these instructions, one gains contentment and happiness and by foolishly ignoring them one invites suffering and sorrow upon oneself.

The responsibility rests squarely with the individual to exercise an informed choice. We must choose whether to make or mar ourselves. The credit or blame cannot be passed on to another.

The scriptural books provide an exhaustive scientific method of better living, and a mature intellect finds in them a thorough technique of self-development leading to the experience of the supreme Reality. In the past, such books have moulded human beings into a prosperous and dignified society. The beauty of this method is that it has been tested and tried. The modern generation would do well to explore it for their own betterment and benefit.



Human beings alone, of all living creatures, have the capacity to choose their actions. All other living creatures tread a beaten path. They do not have the choice to act contrary to their own nature.

A tiger is a carnivore, therefore, it must hunt and kill its prey. It cannot live on roots and fruits, nor graze on grass as does its natural prey, the deer. Just as there cannot be a vegetarian tiger neither can there be a meat-eating cow. The order of nature is clearly defined. Fire will burn and be hot. Water is fluid and wet, don't expect it to be dry and still!

Human beings, however, have freedom, and the capacity, to live a life of their choice. They must, therefore, be all the more careful in choosing the right path. The signposts to progress and prosperity are provided by religion.



1.2 Art of Right Contact

The civil laws of a country protect the freedom of its people but condemn

Lesson 1

their licentiousness. Laws are framed with a view to restrain people from being reckless and irresponsible in their activities. Similarly, the scriptures prescribe the code of conduct in life which enables people to develop and maintain proper contact with the world. Intelligent appreciation of, and faithful adherence to, this code will bring about a healthy existence and a dynamic life. This can be well illustrated by an example taken from daily life. Consumers of electricity have the freedom to use it in their homes in any manner they wish, but to benefit by its power they will have to maintain a proper relationship with it. Such a relationship is maintained only by faithfully following the laws of electricity. However, if these laws are violated the same power which is meant to bless humankind, will destroy them by electrocution.

The general complaint among human beings is that the world is full of evil and imperfections and that they have to encounter problems and challenges at every moment. They feel threatened and afraid. In such a chaotic state of affairs, they ask how one can find peace and happiness. To this desperate appeal, the religious masters, time and again, have explained that peace and contentment do not exist in the external world but are generated within one's heart by establishing a proper mode of contact with the outer world.

The troubles and tribulations of the world are a blessing in disguise since they help in perfecting one's personality when the art of right contact is applied. A rough surface is, as a rule, essential for sharpening a blunt instrument. For example, the roughness of a grindstone is used for sharpening tools provided one knows the art of using it. Similarly, in life the personality of an individual gets honed in a turbulent world when one knows the art of maintaining proper contact with it. Therefore, the evils of the world are not the problem, nor the impediments in life. It is the individual's inability to adequately face the challenges when confronted by them, and failure to convert that challenge into an opportunity for growth.



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There are several rules and laws governing nature which one has to respect and follow if one wishes to coexist peacefully with it. However, if one chooses to disregard and disobey them, disharmony is created which leads to sorrow and suffering. The example of electricity demonstrates this idea of peaceful and beneficial coexistence with the world of objects.

The world being one and the same, different types of human beings interact with it in different ways depending upon their emotional and intellectual make-up. The scriptures improve the emotional and intellectual standards of an individual and this enables one to establish a proper contact with the objects and the beings of the world. This is an art which is to be gradually developed through individual effort. Without doing so, and maintaining wrong relationships one complains that it is such a bad world! The world is no doubt a mixture of good and bad, but one can intelligently apply oneself to obtain the maximum happiness from it. This art of right living has been compared to the skill of one who has learnt the knack of sharpening a knife on a rough grindstone. The one who lacks this art will succeed only in blunting the knife!



In not recognizing this simple truth, the right perspective of life is lost and humanity perpetually complains of bad times and a bad world. It is not the world which is to be blamed but, rather, the inner nature of the individual who perceives it as such. It can be compared to a glass half filled with milk, which is viewed differently by different people according to their respective emotional and intellectual textures. One looks at the empty upper half and complains that it is not full; while another sees the milk in the bottom portion and straightaway enjoys it.



The example of viewing the glass half filled with milk shows that the world can never be perfect. It has both the good and the bad in it. The pessimist sees the negative side of life (the empty portion of the glass) and worries about it, while the optimist sees the brighter side – the half full glass – and enjoys it.

One must first learn to be grateful for what one has; such an attitude brings about a mental tranquility within. When one's mind is tranquil, one's faculties are alert and actions are effective, but a mind which is agitated, with desires to procure things that one does not

Lesson 1

possess, loses not only peace but also its concentration and efficient application in the world.



Similarly, in life, the wrong mental attitude has created a continuous procession of unintelligent mourners. A lame individual in a wheel chair despairs at the sight of a healthy pair of legs moving past him or her. The individual who can walk, sighs at another swiftly passing by on a bike, the individual with a bike is jealous of the car owner while the latter keeps worrying about the taxes he has to pay and is also never at peace! Such, indeed, are the sorrows of human beings but the intelligent need not despair. The remedy to this problem is indicated quite clearly in the scriptures.

The first step to relieve oneself of the self-inflicted distress is to develop a sense of gratitude to the Lord for whatever He has provided, which many less fortunate are denied. Secondly, one must refuse to crave for more. When such an attitude of reverential gratitude is maintained, there is bound to be mental equanimity which alone enables one to act rightly and bring about peace and prosperity in the world. This idea is well summarized in the old saying, "I had no shoes and complained, until I met a person who had no feet."

1.3 Human Heritage

Independence is the very essence of human beings. An individual who disengages from slavish dependence upon the world of objects, in order to gain little bits of joy, is truly independent and lives a cherished life of dignity. Others are like feathers floating in a summer breeze, flung hither and thither by the problems of life and challenges of the world. Tantalizing are the sense objects of the world, whetting one's appetite for sense enjoyments. The sense organs are irresistibly lured to their fields of enjoyment and to the false glitter of joy that they provide. To resist the onslaught of the senses and stand apart from their influence is the privilege and glory of a human being. Such

individuals stand out like a lighthouse in the sea of life, graceful and unaffected by the turbulent waves of desires assaulting them. But others who fall prey to the enchantment of the senses, are tossed about mercilessly by their desires like an abandoned boat in the sea.

While facing the challenges of life, one gets confused and does not know which step to take. A human being is essentially divine; but can hear the call of the Higher in his heart only when the clamour and din of the chords of 'I want' and 'Give me' subsides. For those lost in the bewildering sea of human existence, the scriptures are like a mariner's compass which alone can guide us to a safe harbour of peace and bliss. And just as a mariner trusts the accuracy of the compass and follows it, we must pursue the path indicated in the scriptures, the spiritual guide who helps us to reach the state of perfection with faith and devotion.



In Vedānta, the world is frequently compared to the ocean. The surface of the ocean is constituted of an infinite variety of waves, which are perennially rising and falling. Although the surface is always agitated and restless, deep within the ocean remains as one mass of water, serene and unaffected by the surface disturbances. Similarly, the world, when superficially viewed, has a variety of objects and beings which are ever changing and constantly going through cycles of birth and death. However, behind these changing factors there is a changeless substratum which is the all-pervading Reality supporting them all.

Human beings today live mainly on the surface, being engaged in the changing phenomena of objects and beings. One's identification with the changing aspect of the world renders one a limited being who is at times joyous and at other times sorrowful. However, if one identifies with the homogeneous Truth that pervades the world, then one rises above the fluctuations of joy and sorrow and enjoys permanent serene happiness.

An individual's relationship with the modern world is comparable to a boat abandoned in mid-ocean. Like the boat, one is tossed back and forth by the changes occurring in the world causing one to suffer. Scriptures alone can guide individuals from their present state of agitation and sorrow to live a meaningful life of peace and bliss.



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A Person of Perfection, who has thus gained mastery over his environment, remains ever composed and unruffled by the vagaries of the changing world. Such an individual is sometimes mistaken to be without emotion, like a statue which remains unaffected whether a garland is put round its neck or whether brickbats are flung at it. Such persons are often criticized and condemned for their state of apparent indifference to, and disinterest in, the affairs of the world. But the critics are ignorant of their supreme achievement, their inward strength and purity. It is not true to say that such individuals are devoid of feelings or emotions; they certainly have them but they do not allow their feelings or emotions to overpower them. In other words, they do not succumb to them. An emotion or feeling of love or sympathy is a virtue. Indeed, one must have emotions but should not become emotional, for emotionalism ruins one's poise and balance in life and is an impediment to one's progress, both material and spiritual. Sentiments adorn a person but sentimentalism is a scar on one's personality.

The ancient masters of India were stalwarts who stood firm in the midst of life, unshaken by its vagaries rather like the grand Himalayas. Their hearts were filled with emotion and sympathy for the suffering of fellow human beings, but their heads remained high above all worldly disturbances. Inwardly, they were in constant union with the supreme Reality.



A human being consists of a body, a mind, an intellect, and the Life Principle which makes these inert equipments sentient. The physical body and its sense organs dwell in the realm of perception and action. The mind dwells in emotions and the intellect in thoughts and ideas. Religion permits you to use your body and senses to perceive and act, but warns you not to get involved or caught up by your perceptions and actions. Similarly, you are allowed to feel the emotions, but you must avoid being overwhelmed by them. Again, at the intellectual level you may entertain thoughts and ideas, but do not be rigid. If you thus stand apart from the influence of perceptions, emotions, and thoughts you become truly independent in life. To live thus and reach the state of perfection is a human being's heritage.



A wise person never allows the faculty of discrimination to be disturbed by the gusts of emotions rising within. To keep oneself thus balanced one has to find an ideal in life and then raise the personality from the level of petty emotions to the height of one's chosen ideal. The secret of success in life is to constantly maintain one such ideal and put in all efforts to achieve it without being carried away by emotions. This intellectual honesty of living up to one's conviction, with full dedication to the chosen ideal, brings deep serenity to an individual's life. When all individuals comprising a society dedicate themselves to an accepted ideal and gather the courage to live up to their intellectual conviction, then such a society is bound to be glorious and dynamic. Thus the development of beauty and strength of individual lives culminates in a greater society, a nobler nation.



Perfection can be reached by diverting your attention from the body, the mind, and the intellect to the Life Principle, the unchanging factor which animates them. To begin with, you may choose an ideal to work towards which is higher and nobler than the usual selfish interests that we have in life. Thereafter, dedicate all your activities to this ideal. You are then bound to progress in life materially and spiritually. A perfect individual is one who chooses the highest divine Principle as the ideal and dedicates all activities to it. Such an individual lives a life of total independence and is freed from the influence of the changing perceptions, emotions, and thoughts.



1.4 Joy of Living

All human activities are motivated by two impulses: revulsion from sorrow and a yearning for joy. Human beings avoid and discard disagreeable things and unfavourable environments, and they court the agreeable and the conducive. But as objects and environments are constantly changing, the search for happiness becomes an exercise in futility. The methods employed by different individuals to procure happiness may be distinct and varied, but the goal is common to all.

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Since happiness is the goal of all human endeavour, it is of prime importance to discover where it is exactly located. The firm and common belief today is that the joy experienced by the sense organs lies in their respective sense objects. Pursuing such a misconceived belief, individuals constantly strive to acquire, possess and aggrandize more and more wealth and objects of the world. Many succeed in amassing a great fortune but are disappointed to find that their happiness has not been enhanced with the growth of their wealth. Others who are not so preoccupied with procuring wealth alone but lead a simple and honest life seem to be far happier and contented. These are striking paradoxes in life. Just think of the millionaire sitting and moping in his palatial home and, on the other hand, an impoverished and ill-clad peasant singing and dancing in ecstatic joy in his humble hut. Wealth is by no means a measure of happiness. Money can buy whatever is desirable but joy is not inherent in sense objects. If it was inherent then each object should provide the same quantum of joy to all those who come in contact with it. This is obviously far from the truth. For instance, a cigar may arouse a sense of joy and satisfaction in one but it may be absolutely repugnant to another.



Absolute happiness is the goal of all human efforts. An individual uses the threefold equipment—the body, the mind, and the intellect—to gain more and more happiness. Even the happiest individual in the world constantly endeavours in his own way to find more satisfaction and contentment in life. Happiness is sought in two ways: the first is by avoiding sorrows, which is the negative way of gaining happiness, and the second is by experiencing the joys positively.



If joy is not to be found in the sense object, then where should we look for it? This leads us to the fundamental question—what is happiness? These questions were the basis upon which the ancient R̥sis made a thorough and scientific investigation into the human personality.

They discovered that happiness has little to do with the possession of objects. It is, in fact, a state of the mind. A clear relationship exists between the state of mind and the joy or sorrow experienced. When the mind is agitated there is sorrow and when it is tranquil there is joy. Happiness is thus to be measured by the tranquility of one's own mind. Happiness is, indeed, a subjective phenomenon.

At times, tranquility of the mind may be brought about by contact with the sense objects but then it is temporary in nature. No enduring real satisfaction or joy can ever be obtained from sense gratification. Not knowing this, and believing the sense objects to be a source of happiness, one runs after them in vain. The spiritual masters rigorously assert that human beings are the roof and crown of creation and have the unique capacity of quietening the mind thereby enjoying real tranquility within, without having to depend upon any object or being. This capacity is dormant in human beings, but, being unaware of it, we foolishly endeavour to procure happiness through the sense objects, which have only a false glimmer of joy.



Where do we seek happiness? We ignorantly believe that happiness resides in the sense objects of the world. Hence, we pursue, acquire, and indulge in them. This belief appears to be true since we experience a feeling of joy when we contact the object of our desire.

Let us analyse this seeming truth with an example. A smoker, who smokes almost without a break, gets joy out of each cigarette. We conclude that the joy is directly produced by the cigarette. If this was true, each cigarette should produce the same quantum of joy. But this is not so, because, when a cigarette is smoked by that person after being denied for a week or two, it produces a feeling of far greater joy. Happiness is, therefore, not in the object, but rather in the state of one's mind. In the normal course, the desire for a cigarette agitates one's mind, say, every five minutes and when it is fulfilled by smoking one, the agitation is quietened—albeit temporarily. The quietening of the agitation is the joy that the smoker experiences. Thus, when the cigarette is denied to that person for a week the desire to smoke intensifies and the mind becomes more agitated. However, such agitation immediately quietens down when the person smokes the first cigarette after a week's abstinence and, hence, a feeling of greater joy is experienced.

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Happiness is a purely subjective phenomenon which has no material bearing on the objects experienced. The object, however, in certain cases may create a temporary quietening of the mind, but it is always the quiet mind which produces happiness. Fortunately, human beings are gifted with the unique capacity of quietening the mind without dependence upon the objects of the world. It is, therefore, absurd for an individual to be a victim of his circumstances or subservient to the environment.



The scriptures explain this truth and help one to awaken this dormant faculty. Once the art of quietening the mind is learnt, the human mind will not find it necessary to pursue the material world and its enchanting objects to gain peace and happiness. This is the real joy of living. Once this art of quietening the mind is learnt, the individual subsequently gets established in a state of permanent and complete happiness which is independent of the environment and the circumstances of life. Such an individual stands out like a beacon guiding others who are still groping in the mire of sense objects trying to find a solution to the problems of life.



Happiness can be expressed in the form of an equation: $H = \frac{Df}{De}$

*Happiness is equal to the number of desires fulfilled
divided by the number of desires entertained.*

The quantum of happiness increases either by increasing the nominator or decreasing the denominator or by a combination of both. The fulfillment of the existing desires quietens the agitations created by the desires. Alternatively, by entertaining fewer desires the agitations in one's mind are lessened. In either case, therefore, it is the lessening of the agitation, or the quietening of the mind, that produces happiness.

Though the above formula for happiness is irrefutable, there is a danger in relying on sense indulgence for one's happiness as this generally causes more desires to spring up. With the increase in the number of desires, the denominator of the equation increases resulting in the reduction of happiness. The best way of establishing permanent happiness is to reduce the number of desires entertained by our mind by directing our thoughts to the all-pervading divine Reality.



Foundation Vedanta Course

Reference

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LESSON 2

BY THE END of the first fortnight, you should have completed Lesson 1, covering the first four topics. Study Lesson 2 carefully for the second fortnight following the same procedure as instructed in the first lesson. Also revise the chapters of the first lesson during this period.

Immediately after the second fortnight is over, answer the attached questionnaire covering Lessons 1 and 2, without referring to the literature sent to you. The answers should be sent to us for correction. Any doubts or questions pertaining to the first two lessons may be attached to the answer paper sent to us.

2.1 Inevitability of Action

Action is the *sine qua non* of life. Any living organism in order to live must act in the world. However, the quality and texture of activities differ from individual to individual. Based on the mental texture and attitude to work, the great thinkers of the past in India have divided human beings into three classes:

- (1) Labourers (vyavasāyī)
- (2) Workers (sevākāri)
- (3) Person of Achievement (yogī)

The distinction between each of the three varieties does not arise from the nature of work they perform, but the manner in which they carry it out. Their temperaments and mental outlook differ from each other and so does the goal and vision in life which inspires their activities.

A 'Labourer' is the one who practically has no ideal in life. Such individuals work selfishly for the purpose of earning some profit or a wage with which

they exclusively seek to benefit themselves and their families.

There is sweat and toil in the work performed and such an individual slaves only for procuring more comforts and pleasures for his own egoistic living. The goal or purpose of existence does not extend beyond the sense pleasures and egocentric satisfaction. One who lives thus, may be engaged in any vocation but will still be termed a 'Labourer'. The word Labourer in this context does not mean factory labourer or any other labourer of that sort for there may be many in the high ranking positions, like that of a minister or a judge, who will also fall under this classification if they work in society with an eye on profit alone. A Labourer may be found in all walks of life regardless of one's position, power and status.



The three classifications enumerated in this chapter are found everywhere in the world. They depend upon the manner in which each individual performs his or her activities. All activities, however, fall under two broad categories:

- (1) those motivated by desires and*
- (2) those that are not motivated by desires, that is without desires.*

Under the first category, the desires motivating the actions may be either wholly self-centred or directed for a higher cause like the welfare of a society or a nation. When the desires of an individual are purely selfish and his actions are done merely for individual profit, then such a person will fall under the classification of a 'Labourer'. However, if one's ideals are higher than serving self-interest, and one works for the welfare of a larger community, then such a person would be classified as a 'Worker'. In both these cases, there is an underlying desire motivating their action.



Similarly, in any field of vocation, if there be an individual who works less selfishly, having in mind a better vision of life, or a definite goal, or an inspiring ideal, such an individual is termed a 'Worker'. The Worker does not merely work for profit but constantly entertains an ideal of perfection and struggles to realize it for the benefit of society. All inspired political, social and religious

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workers come under this category. In contrast to the Labourer, the ego or selfishness in the case of a Worker is considerably reduced. The cause for which the latter works expands to accommodate the interests of the entire society or nation.

When the ego is totally eliminated and the individual works in the world only fulfilling his or her obligatory duties for the general prosperity of all, such a person reaches the highest and the noblest state and is known as a 'Person of Achievement'. Such an individual works neither for the sake of wages nor for the success of any ideal but performs duties with selfless dedication and finds peace and fulfillment in the very activities that he or she performs. Fulfillment lies in the completion of one's duties to the best of one's ability. Such an individual makes no claim to rights; the focus is rather on duties. Besides, such an individual is unconcerned about the fruits of labour and remains unaffected by either the commendation or condemnation by society. The example of Jesus Christ, being crucified on the Cross, demonstrates the ideal of the equanimity of the Person of Perfection even when the most heinous injustice known to human history was meted out to him.



In the case of a Person of Achievement, there are no desires at all motivating one's actions. Such individuals are attuned to the supreme Reality and are forever in a state of total fulfillment. None of their actions can bring them any further satisfaction or joy. Still they perform those duties with a sense of total indifference towards the fruit of their actions.

An action performed without an egocentric desire or an anxiety for the enjoyment of its fruit is the noblest of all. Every seeker must aspire and endeavour to reach this State of Perfection.



The three gradations exist in all walks of life. They are not dependent on *what* one does but rather on *how* one does one's work. The present trend is to look for profit alone; this lacks the vision of a goal or an ideal to strive towards and

achieve in life. Consequently, there is no interest, enthusiasm or inspiration in one's work at all. Life becomes a monotonous routine of mechanical living with nothing to aspire for or achieve. An individual must first focus on an ideal, a purpose or a goal in life. Once the vision of an ideal is conceived, there is joy in one's activities and one develops a keen appetite to live life. Thus, the mind can be raised from the attitude of a Labourer to the dignity of a Worker and, thereafter, if one works on selflessly until one discovers fulfillment in the very activity, one will reach the exalted status of a Person of Achievement.

This is the need of the hour. The profit motive needs to be erased from the human mind and substituted by the philosophy of work. The earlier this philosophy is imbibed and applied in life, the sooner will human beings grow into a contented, efficient and progressive society.



Note that the gradation in the three types of human beings is not dependent upon the type of activities performed, but upon the mode of performance. It will, therefore, be useless to complain of your vocation or your environment since any work that you are doing can be converted into the noblest type by maintaining the right mental attitude towards it.



2.2 Secret of Success

The value of work is measured by the ideal which inspires and guides one to work. The quality of action improves by adopting better ideals. The nobler the ideal, the greater will be the beauty and efficiency of action dedicated to achieve it. All human beings of distinction have such ideals and their actions have left behind a rich harvest for successive generations to reap and enjoy.

Individuals are generally found wanting in a definite ideal for channellizing their activities. Most people today work with a selfish attitude and a vision which does not extend beyond the interests of their own kith and kin. With such a narrow and self-centred mental attitude, there can be no joy in any work undertaken by them. An individual may be the head of an organization

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but may still find the work monotonous and become fatigued even with the minimum efforts that are put in. Such work proves worthless and becomes a burden on society.

Fatigue in work results mainly from mental dissipation. It is not uncommon to find in air conditioned offices people who become tired and exhausted even before they have completed a few hours of work. On the other hand, old farmers who physically labour in the open fields all day long feel fresh and spirited enough in the evening to enjoy some recreation like folk dance and music. The reason for this contradiction in life lies in the state of their minds. The latter have a relatively clean and pure mind uncontaminated by selfish motives and their work is designed for the general welfare of all whereas the former are self-centred and their minds are ever burdened with egocentric desires and anxiety for enjoyment of the fruits of their actions. These two negative forces sap the vitality of an individual and leave one practically impotent for any constructive work.



A selfish individual works only for his or her own welfare and perhaps for that of the family. The mind of such an individual is riddled with desires and expectations of the fruits of the actions and he can never be at peace. Besides, with such an agitated mind, he cannot be efficient in any field of activity. As a result of this, both spiritual and material progress is impaired.



The secret of success, therefore, lies in overcoming a negative outlook and thereby conserving mental energy for applying it to action. This is achieved by choosing an ideal or goal in life which is high enough to be beyond one's own selfish interest and working with constant dedication towards its achievement. Where there is a definite and noble vision or ideal to work for, one is inspired and absorbed in the activity. Any such inspired endeavour, besides producing pleasure and cheerfulness in life, leads one to success.

A student needs to know what exactly is meant by choosing a higher ideal before one applies oneself to work. An ideal is that which propels one to activity. In the case of a selfish individual, the ideal is the welfare of oneself and perhaps that of the family. One works only for this purpose and will not exert the least for anyone beyond one's own family. The same individual can choose a higher ideal by creating a larger field to work for. Such a person's interest then grows to look after the welfare of not only the family but that of the community and society as well. When an individual thus dedicates himself to a nobler cause or higher ideal, he becomes more efficient and successful in the world. This individual who is selfless is obviously more powerful and productive in his effort than the one who is self-centred. A striking example is that of Mahatma Gandhi who obliterated his ego at the altar of the nation and proved himself to be a personality of amazing dynamism and strength.



Hence it is suggested that you fix your ideal or vision above your egocentric and constricted view of life and work for the chosen ideal. By doing so, you begin to gain inspiration to work for a nobler cause which provides relative peace and tranquility in your mind. Such inspired and dedicated work turns out to be more efficient than selfish and desire-ridden activities. Thus by gradually elevating the ideal and broadening your vision of life, you enjoy greater peace and your life becomes more efficient and progressive as well.



Spiritual science helps one to gradually develop a broader vision and practice the art of working for a larger cause. The satisfaction of a good job done selflessly is far superior to, and more comforting than, the impermanent joys arising out of mere acquisition and enjoyment in the material world. Real success in life lies in the development and integration of one's inner personality scriptures provides the key to it.



The highest and the noblest of all ideals is to work for the Lord Himself. Be an ambassador of

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the Lord and execute His will in all your actions. When that state is reached you enjoy perfect peace within and, at the same time, work dynamically in the world. This combination of peace and action is found to be lacking everywhere; individuals seem to have one or the other but not both.

The Vedāntic way of life gives one the capacity to be dynamic in one's activities and simultaneously be peaceful and tranquil within. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the ideal of such perfection as he demonstrated perfect peace even while he was engaged in the momentous actions in the battle of Mahābhārata.



2.3 The Sacred and the Secular

When an individual contacts the world of objects, he or she experiences either joy or sorrow. A series of such experiences, arising out of constant contacts with the world, constitutes life.

The material scientists, who investigated the economical, political and scientific fields, believed that human life could be made better and happier by improving the objects and amenities in the world. With this idea in mind and an earnest desire to serve mankind, these scientists strove for many years before they succeeded in creating the present world of wondrous achievements. The world has developed as never before in human history and a human being is pampered with comforts and luxury. But sitting in the midst of it all, he is beset by stress and strain and enjoys no peace or happiness.

After making a thorough scientific investigation into the causes of such a contradiction, the spiritual thinkers of India discovered that the external objects of enjoyment cannot by themselves bring about inner happiness. When an individual's control over outer nature far exceeds the control over his inner nature, an imbalance is created in society. This imbalance is the pith and substance at the heart of the much talked about subject—'world crisis'.

Philosophy rehabilitates a person's inner personality and provides the necessary equilibrium in order to make life more perfect, comprehensive, universal and, in short, more human. The rehabilitation and control of one's

own inner nature alone can give one the requisite capacity to enjoy life's experiences. Without the reconstruction of the human personality, a mere rearrangement and beautification of the external world will be of little consequence in providing peace and happiness to the world. Moreover, to do so would be as futile and absurd as serving a sumptuous meal to a person suffering from indigestion who cannot bear even the sight of food. A meal can be enjoyed only when the person eating it possesses a keen appetite. Similarly, an appetite for life is created by the development of one's inner personality and this alone can help one to enjoy the material achievements of the modern world.



Scientists are of two classifications: objective scientists are those who direct their enquiries and investigations to the world while subjective scientists direct them to the human personality.



Material growth and prosperity raise the *standard of living* whereas spiritual inner rehabilitation improves the *standard of life*. Both the standard of living and the standard of life have to be equally developed and balanced so that one may sail through life's challenges cheerfully and with ease. The standard of living is like the mast of a ship; if it is to be high, the keel must be made deep and wide to balance the height. The depth of the keel measures the standard of life. When the mast is disproportionately high, the vessel topples over. However, if the keel is sufficiently deep and broad, the ship is stable despite the height of the mast. Similarly, in life if the standard of living alone is raised at the expense of the standard of life, that society or nation meets its downfall, but whenever the standard of life is well established there is peace and prosperity always.



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When broadly viewed the world consists of material wealth, people, and natural resources. Based upon these, there arose three categories among the objective scientists: the economist, the politician and the scientist. The economist deals with the wealth of the country and tries to establish a proper relationship between an individual and the wealth in the world. The politician observes and studies the people and formulates methods and policies by which an individual can maintain the best relationship with the people. The third variety, the scientist, experiments upon nature and derives from it various laws for one to follow and thereby enjoy one's contacts with the natural phenomena. All three are engaged in trying to provide happiness to human beings by raising their standard of living.

The fourth variety of scientists consists of the subjective scientists who investigate and research into the human personality and draw the individual's attention to the divine Centre within. Their investigations and findings are also logical. Their efforts too are directed to serve human beings and bring them more happiness but by raising the standard of life.



Scientific achievements have a definite and distinct place in human society. It is only fanatic materialism divorced from inward development that is detrimental to an individual. In the same manner, a fanatic religion without material development would also lead humanity to a dark age, as was experienced during the medieval era in Europe. The obvious solution to the problems of the world today is, therefore, a harmonious blending of the sacred and the secular. Only a healthy individual with a sound religious discipline living in a materially prosperous state can spread the fragrance of peace and happiness.



We must understand and realize that both the categories of scientists are necessary to maintain a balance in life, which alone can promote happiness in the world. They have approached their subject scientifically and deduced irrefutable laws governing life. Since we belong to the scientific era and accept only that which is rational, there is no reason why we should not study and apply these logical principles in our lives for a better and a more purposeful life.



2.4 Dual Path

Material prosperity by itself cannot provide happiness to an individual if one has not developed a healthy inner personality to enjoy it. Inner spiritual growth is achieved by practising intelligent self-restraint and discipline according to the teachings of the scriptures.

The idea of self-control and discipline is abhorrent for most people in the modern world. They consider both as shackles binding their natural freedom and, therefore, avoid spiritual practices. There are others who neither understand nor appreciate the efficacy of self-control and discipline as a practical code for right living but follow the scriptures unintelligently and forcibly deny themselves all enjoyment in the world. When such unintelligent self-denial, practised beyond one's capacity, creates mental suppression and repression, which ultimately generates an aversion to religion. Hence religious discipline stands condemned for generations. Some shirk it without even an attempt to follow it while others attempt it wrongly and declare it to be impracticable and worthless.

To condemn religion on such grounds is like calling a dog mad just for the purpose of killing it. Religion helps an individual to develop one's personality and enjoy a better and more cheerful life. An intelligent and proper understanding of the laws governing one's inner personality according to the scriptures inspires higher ideals and gives the individual a healthier and nobler vision of life. As one progresses in one's inward expansion, the lower tendencies automatically drop off. The consequent rejection of lower values following one's higher understanding is the art of sublimation (as opposed to suppression) which the scriptures envisage. An individual's personality is clogged with imperfections and negative tendencies just as a mass of cotton is mixed with impurities. To remove the impurities from the cotton the common procedure of carding is adopted. In the process, the entire mass is combed and beaten so that tiny flakes of pure cotton separate and fly about while the heavier impurities settle down. Similarly, to remove the negative tendencies

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in an individual the noble values of life are taught and as one assimilates them one soars to higher realms of perfection leaving negative tendencies behind.

The basic knowledge of what is noble and ignoble is known to one and all. In spite of such knowledge one chooses the vicious path, which is detrimental to one's well-being. The Ṛṣis analysed the reason for such conduct and discovered that there are two distinct and separate paths in life, namely the 'Path of the Pleasant' (preya) and the 'Path of the Good' (śreya). Human beings face the problem of choosing one of the two paths at every single moment of their lives. The Path of the Pleasant, as the name suggests, pleases, fascinates and entices an individual to take to it. On the other hand, the Path of the Good, which is based on sound religious tenets, is resisted by an individual. The former caters to one's own sense gratification and provides one with immediate pleasures but subsequently results in disappointment and sorrow. In striking contrast, the latter is detestable in the beginning but later on leads one to happiness and a sense of fulfillment.

	<i>Path of the Pleasant</i>	<i>Path of the Good</i>
1.	Guided by the demands of the sense organs.	Guided by the subtle intellect.
2.	There is temporary joy in the beginning, but sorrow in the ultimate analysis.	It is unpleasant in the beginning but provides permanent happiness later.
3.	More alluring—caters to the extrovert mind.	Its beauty is hidden. It is perceived by the introvert mind only.
4.	Is the path of devolution.	Is the path of evolution.
5.	Majority of people take this path.	Hardly a few people appreciate and follow this path.
6.	It is based on sense gratification.	It is based on sound knowledge.
7.	All religions repudiate this path.	All religions recommend this path to reach the Abode of Truth.

The irresolute mind tries to gain immediate flickers of joy by choosing the Path of the Pleasant. This denies one an opportunity for enjoying greater and serene happiness. Religion, like a kind policeman, stands between the two and directs humankind to take the Path of the Good. Those who with determination and strength choose the right path emerge as mighty personalities and lead the rest of humankind to everlasting peace and happiness.



Distinction between suppression and sublimation: So long as an individual lives at the level of the senses and does not appreciate the higher values of life, it would be detrimental for one to take to self-denial and suddenly and forcibly give up sense pleasures. If one does so, one will merely be suppressing inherent tendencies, which cannot but erupt with greater force at a later time. Suppression, therefore, results from an independent and forceful self-denial based upon blind belief, untrained enthusiasm, or from sheer superstition. However, if a seeker practises self-restraint and simultaneously educates oneself with the knowledge of the higher values of life, the mental vision and capacity widens and develops continually. When one's vision is thus developed and maintained, the lower animalistic tendencies automatically disappear like the mist before dawn. This is called sublimation. Sublimation, therefore, is the elimination of some of the known false values of the mind as a result of intellectual conviction and conscientious persuasion.

Suppression degenerates an individual's mental attitude while sublimation improves and strengthens it thereby enabling the individual to be a greater and mightier personality.



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5. *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 3, commentary by Swami Chinmayananda, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust Publication, Mumbai, India





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Questions for reflection

(Covers Lesson 1 and 2)

(Please note that the following questions are for the personal reflection of the student and are not to be sent for evaluation.)

Duration: 2 Hours

Marks: 100

1. Distinguish between freedom and licence. What is the part played by religion in checking the deterioration of freedom into licentiousness? (10)
2. Explain what you understand from the example of 'sharpening a tool with a grindstone'. (10)
3. "I had no shoes and complained, until I met an individual who had no feet." What is the philosophical significance in this statement? (5)
4. In the comparison between the 'boat and ocean' and 'human beings and life' equate the parallels: (5)
 - (1) Waves of the ocean are compared to _____
 - (2) The mass of water below the waves to _____
 - (3) The abandoned boat in the ocean to _____
 - (4) Lighthouse to _____
 - (5) Mariner's compass to _____
5. "Sentiments adorn a person but sentimentalism is a scar on the human personality." Explain with reference to the context. (5)
6. Write notes on the two impulses that motivate all human activities. (5)
7. What is happiness and where would you look for it? How would you increase the quantum of happiness? (10)

Questions for reflection

8. Based upon the mode of performance of activities, there are three categories of human beings working in the world. Enumerate and describe them briefly. (10)
9. What is the significance of the advice given by the religious Masters to choose an ideal or goal in life? (10)
10. Distinguish between *Standard of Living* and *Standard of Life* giving a suitable illustration. (10)
11. Write a short note on the *Path of the Pleasant* and the *Path of the Good*. (10)
12. Distinguish between *Suppression* and *Sublimation*. (10)

