

## Vedanta - The Science of Sciences

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### Abstract

*Ved nta* is *Brahmavidya*; *brahmavidya* is *sarvavidyapratistha*, meaning ‘the one firm foundation of all sciences’. References to it can be found in the *Mund ka Upanishad* and *Bhagavad Git*. All the arts, all the sciences, all the human disciplines are the one Consciousness manifests itself in various ways. If there is a science that concern itself with this all-underlying Consciousness, is the Science of all sciences. How *brahm vidya* naturally becomes the Science of all sciences (*Sarvavidyapratistha*) is also implicit in Narayana Guru’s restatement of ved ntic wisdom, particularly in his *Dar anam la* (Garland of Visions). In this book, Guru has been able to string together all the points natural or possible in the context of human understanding treated as a whole, a veritable garland of visions of the Absolute. Nataraja Guru, elaborated and reintroduces *Da anam la* as forming the nucleus of a Science of sciences in his *Integrated Science of the Absolute*. Brahman being the one Absolute Reality that assumes the form of everything perceivable and conceivable in all the worlds, which form the object matter of all the sciences, a science that expounds that Brahman has necessarily to be the one Science that could find expression in all the sciences.

### Keywords

*Brahmavidya,*  
*tmavidya,*  
*consciousness,*  
*sarvavidyapratistha,*  
*happiness:*

### 1. Introduction

Ved nta is the Science of sciences or the philosophy of sciences, expressed by the seers of India. It is meant to be a philosophy with a way of life. Ved nta is the Science of the Consciousness, the Truth of all truths, and the Light of all lights, because it concerns itself with the ultimate problems of knowledge or wisdom in the light of the Absolute. To avoid suffering in life and secure happiness that is everlasting, free from bonds of birth and the cyclic course of being and becoming is its overall aim.

To seek, find and know the real nature of oneself and the world is the ultimate human achievement transcending and subsuming all others where individualized life experience is concerned. Its attainment corrects the errors of man throughout his history in understanding existence, and the mistaken views of dogmatic religion and mechanistic materialism which have conditioned his mind and kept from him the knowledge of his true nature. Gaining that knowledge brings him the gifts of wisdom which enable him to live free

of fear, desire and anger, fulfilled in life and at peace with himself and the world.

This wisdom, too, is one. Through the course of human history there have always been some few enlightened visionaries, a few saints and seers, whose mission has been to restore to light the perennial knowledge of ultimate reality which, over the long passage of time, becomes lost to view. The interpretations of their vision have, of course, been expressed in the particular language and context of the time, culture, religion and social environment in which they lived. Inevitably, those expressions have differed very much, but they have all proclaimed the same oneness of reality.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest source of Indian wisdom is Vedas. Vedas contain the intuitive vision of the ultimate Reality by the ancient seers. The word 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'vid' meaning knowledge. There are four Vedas – Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Each Veda consists of four sections, the Mantras, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

The darsanas of Indian philosophy are classified into the heterodox (non-vedic or nastika) - those do not recognize the authority of the Vedas. And the orthodox, those recognize the authority of the Vedas. The heterodox darsanas are Charvaka (Indian materialism) Jainism and the four Buddhist Schools (Sautrantika, Vaibhashika, Yogachara and Madhyamika). The orthodox darsanas are Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva-Mimamsa and Uttara – Mimamsa or Vedanta.

Vedanta represents the finality of Indian wisdom, as the very word suggests. Vedanta literally meaning the finality (anta) of knowledge (veda). In the sense that is the body of knowledge contained in the Upanishads, the concluding section (anta) of the Vedas, also it is called Vedanta. Originally the Upanishads were themselves called Vedanta. Later the name given to indicate the philosophy derived from the

Upanishads-Advaita (non-dualism), of Sankara, Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) of Ramanuja and Dvaita (dualism) of Madhva.

Absolute truth cannot ever be dualistically conceived, and it has been apparently so constructed as with the Dvaita (dualism) and Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) of Madhva and Ramanuja respectively, the unity of the Absolute has not really been marred, because it is the structural perspective and not the content as such that has been at the bases of those "Varieties" in Vedanta so called. The canon of these three Schools is Prasthanatrayi (The Upanishads, the Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad Gita together known as Prasthanatrayi). The primary source of Vedanta is Upanishads.

According to Nataraja Guru, scientifically speaking, there cannot be more than one Vedanta, if by Vedanta we mean, or we ought to mean, the wisdom of the Absolute. Infact, however, it has become a common practice, both in the religious and philosophical context, to speak of varieties or kinds of Vedanta.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Vedanta Attempts Integrated Wisdom

Vedanta considered as the culmination of ritual of the Vedas and as the integrated and finalized version of the philosophical tradition of the Indian soil, orthodox and heterodox, anterior to it must offer a common basis justifying the Vedantas of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva as possible varieties of Vedanta.

Both philosophy and Religion, materialism and idealism, all the orthodox and heterodox systems, varieties of Vedanta, find the Upanishads, the Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad Gita their natural point of revalued and restated integration. "Vedanta represents the integration and the finest blossom on the tree of Indian wisdom as Paul Deussen would say. Nothing significant is lost nor

<sup>1</sup> Muni Narayana Prasad, Guru, *The Vedanta – S tr s of Narayana Guru*, 1 Edn, D.K. Print World, XVI, (1997).

<sup>2</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Vedanta Revalued and Restated*, 1 Edn. Narayana Gurukula, 91, (1982).

any crowing crest - jewel of doctrinal conclusion omitted or bypassed by Ved nta”.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. How can Ved nta be considered as the Science of all sciences?

Ved nta is Brahavidya (the science of the Absolute) and tmaavidya (the science of the self) at the same time. The self and consciousness or knowledge are not different according to Ved nta. Vedanta is the Science of all sciences. Brahavidya is the basis of all sciences: Mundak Upanishad claims, what it teaches is sarvavidyapratistha.

*om brahm dev n m prathamah sambhauva  
visvasya kart bhuvanasya gopt |  
sa brahmavidy m sarvavidy pratisth m  
atharv ya jyesthaputr ya pr ha || ||*

Brahma, the creator of all and the sustainer of the world, merged as the first of gods. He taught the science of Brahman (brahmavidya), the basis of all sciences, to Atharva, his eldest son.<sup>4</sup>

India's culture, ancient as it is, has its own time-honoured concept of arts (*kal*) and sciences (*vidy*). The former divisible as aesthetic and utility arts (*h dyakal* and *upajivana-kal*), are sixty-four in number and the latter, eighteen. Each branch of science, each branch of art, has its own source book, each beginning with the rather odd claim: the origin of this science has come from Brahm the Creator who taught it first to so-and-so. The implication is: the particular science or art is as old and exalted as the world is, and it has reached to us as handed down from generation to generation. Hence the primeval source of the world is the primeval source of all sciences too.

Ved nta is the science of Brahman, the science of tman, the science of arivu and the science of Consciousness. Innumerable are the ways in which one Consciousness can unfold itself and

find expression. All the arts, all the sciences, all the human disciplines are the one Consciousness manifesting itself in various ways. That means, one Consciousness underlies all branches of studies, which for convenience sake, we call 'sciences'. If there is a science that concerns itself with this all underlying Consciousness, then that science should be the foundation of all sciences as well. Ved nta, particularly as visualized by Narayana Guru, is nothing other than that science. It is thus the Science of all sciences.<sup>5</sup>

How Brahma-Vidya naturally becomes the science of all sciences (Sarvavidyapratistha), is also implicit in Narayana Guru's restatement of Vedantic wisdom, particularly in his Dar anam la (A Garland of Visions). In Dar anam la, Narayana Guru has been able to string together all the points natural or possible in the context of human understanding treated as a whole, a veritable Garland of visions of the Absolute as the title claims it to be.

Nataraja Guru, Narayana Guru's direct disciple elaborated and re-introduces Dar anam la as forming the nucleus of a Science of sciences in his *Integrated Science of the Absolute*. Brahman being the one Absolute Reality that assumes the form of everything perceivable and conceivable in all the worlds, which form the object matter of all the sciences, a science that expounds that Brahman has necessarily to be the one Science that could find expression as all the sciences.<sup>6</sup>

In this book, Nataraja Guru stated clearly how all branches of every field of discipline is a particular way for the function of the human mind to find expression.

Consciousness growing and branching out as all sciences (represented symbolically by the verses of the Vedas) is compared in the Bhagavad G t to a (holy) fig tree (asvatha) that grows upside downrooted in the unknown high and branching

<sup>3</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Vedanta Revalued and Restated*, Narayana Gurukula, 93-94, (1982).

<sup>4</sup> Muni Narayana Prasad, Guru, *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1 Edn, D.K. Print World, 6 (1998)

<sup>5</sup> Muni Naraya Prasad, Guru, *The Philosophy of Naryana Guru*, 1 Edn. D.K. Print World, 78 (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Nataraja Guru, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, 2 Edn, Vol. 1, D.K. Print World, 43 (2001)

downwards forming the ever growing world of human disciplines. Certain downward growing branches tend to seek to know the root; they thus bend upwards in their growth. Likewise, some roots grow down to become objects of study in the world here.<sup>7</sup>

Dar anam la consists of ten visions, each with 10 verses. Adhyaropa Dar ana, Apav da Dar ana, Asatya Dar ana, M ya Dar ana, Bhana Dar ana, Karma Dar ana, Jnana Dar ana, Bhakti Dar ana, Yoga Dar ana and Nirv na Dar ana. These visions are structurally strung together like precious stones forming a garland meant to be an ornament enhancing the dignity of man through wisdom. The garland of visions is the product of both inner experience and confirmation from outer textual sources.

The ten points of view that have been strung together into a garland, belong each to an epistemological, methodological and axiological positions of its own. This is intended by him when all such positions have been dealt with in a symmetrical order. The garland as a whole is meant to cover the whole range of possible positions. In each the central normative model is fully respected, giving its scientific clarity and position. Each vision proves itself by conforming to an overall structural scheme. The more one analytically or synthetically scrutinises the series of verses, the more one discovers how there is a self - consistency and correctness in the various technical terms used by the correct Ved ntins.

Though, the Guru gives one distinguishing name to each vision or chapter in the Dar anam la. Their names are incidental and change nothing on the final analysis from the absolutist content in terms of the value of each position. As in a parallelogram of forces, it is the equilibrium that counts. Whatever the duality involved, it is resolved in terms of the same equilibrium by the principle of compensation. Thus, he should be

taken as treating of the same Absolute, whatever chapter we might be reading at any given time.<sup>8</sup>

This way of looking at the subject – matter is nothing new, for it is also known in the Socratic tradition. The Good, the Truth and the Beauty are treated as fundamentally the same.

From realism to idealism each of the ten chapters represent a tenable and representative philosophical or scientific position to each of which various subdivisions of schools can be imagined to belong. Thus, cosmology, theology, empiricism and positivism can all be thought of together, in the first chapter which starts by the supposition that the objective world has a reality of its own. Every other chapter similarly covers or answers to positions known to Western philosophy. The next four chapters can be called empiricism or cosmology. The sixth chapter roughly covers all aspects of instrumentalism, itself an offshoot of pragmatism as known in the West. The seventh chapter covers reason, while the last three chapters where the accent is on axiological interests cover Devotion, contemplation and Absorption.

When Dar anam la is thought of as a whole it has such a self-consistency at every stage that the question of proof does not arise. Each Darsana or vision results from the meeting of the a priori and the a posterior, wherein outer experiment neutralizes inner experience, and as such yields both dialectical as well as apodictic certitude at each stage.

When the garland is completely thought of, the reader will be able to recognise how the string from opposite sides meets at the top or behind at the back of the wearer. At the most central part of the Dar anam la (50th verse) is found one of the most famous of the great maha-vakyas of the Upanishad: Sat-eva-tat. This hangs as a secret pendant, representing an extra/jewel referring to the overall unity of the garland. The maximum

<sup>7</sup> Nitya Chaitanya Yati, Guru, *Bhagavad G t* , 2 Edn, D.K Print World, 329, (2001).

<sup>8</sup> Omana, S, *Vedanta – The Science of Consciousness* Sree Narayana Guru's Vision, 1 Edn, D.K. Print World, 237, (2022)

richness of certitude is meant by the Guru to reside at this central position. The two opposite ends of the string have to be tied together to make the complete epistemological, methodological and axiological circle. Within the scope of this circle - Narayana Guru has admirably succeeded in giving symmetrically conceived equidistant positions to all the philosophical views Eastern and Western, and also all significant modern scientific knowledge so as to present a sufficiently attractive edifice representing a wisdom free from geographical and traditional frontiers.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. A Science that Excludes Nothing

In the Advaita Vedānta of Narayana Guru, all the different Sciences, even the seemingly opposite become naturally integrated, Because the field of Vedānta is inconceivably vast for the reason that infinite is the possibility of the one Reality or Brahman becoming manifest. Within the range of this infinite field of interest there is room for each human discipline, each having its own value as a partial, miniature version of the one all – encompassing nanda content of *Brahman*; for this reason Narayana Guru's philosophy cannot be considered one of the many schools of thought. On the other hand it is a holistic vision of the Real, whereas the existing different schools of thought give stress to one or another aspect of what really exists. A student of any particular school or discipline, therefore may find parallels in the Guru's words, but a single discipline never covers the entire range of existence as the Guru's vision does. For example, ideas basic to Savism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Jainism, Nāya, Vaisesika, Sākhya, Yoga, will be found in the Guru's works, but his vision transcends the bounds of all such 'isms'. So too, notions acceptable to physicists, metaphysicists, biologists, psychologists and mystics, will be seen in the Guru's speculations, yet the Guru's philosophy is beyond all of them.

In Narayana Guru's Philosophy, Brahman, ātman, arivu, God are synonymous. How he

experientially and intuitively perceives this non-dual Reality is given expression to in different contexts of his works. For example, concluding one of his Tamil hymns to Siva, called *Tevaram*, he says:

In the plenitude of Existence, all that is unreal having become no obstruction, that the notion of the primeval cause gone, the necessity of a mould in which the world is cast gone, the notion of effect gone, all conceptualization of the Real gone, the non-dual meaning-content of *tat* (That) and *tvam* (you) that throws away all the sufferings, all the evils and also death – that transcendental Form is my God.<sup>10</sup>

#### 5. Conclusion

Narayana Guru avowedly is an *advaitin* (non-dualist). Yet his non-dualism is not opposed to any other 'ism' like Visistha Advaita of Ramanuja, Dualism of Madhva, Buddhism, Jainism, Materialism, Idealism, Physics, Metaphysics, micro-cosmic vision and macro-cosmic vision. Still all such schools will find Narayana Guru's vision fully acceptable, each finding its own room in the all-inclusive mansion of its vision. His non-dualism is such that all the multiple 'isms' merge in the unitive vision of Reality.

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<sup>9</sup> Nataraja Guru, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, 2 Edn, Vol.1, D. K. Print World, 145, (2001)

<sup>10</sup> Narayana, Guru, *Thevaram*, 1 Edn, Narayana Gurukula, 148, (2003)

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