

VEDĀNTA 20/20
INTRODUCTION TO VEDĀNTA
SĀDHANA CATUṢṬAYA

Today we will start the study of a great work by Śaṅkarācārya called *Tattva Bodha*. The eight topics that we covered in the previous eight lectures is a background that one is assumed to have had in this text and so is not explicitly dealt with in the text. We covered those topics just in case some of you had not had the exposure to those topics before. Again a note of caution this study of *Tattva Bodha* will be in a summary form and not word by word that we are used to studying in *Bhagavad Gītā* or the *Upaniṣad*-s.

Tattva Bodha primarily focuses on *jñāna yoga*, the spiritual discipline. I have already introduced *karma yoga*, *upāsana yoga* and *jñāna yoga* as spiritual disciplines. Now we are going to concentrate on *jñāna yoga*, otherwise known as Self-inquiry, by undertaking study of this text. Contrast this book with others, say *Bhagavad Gītā* which is much more comprehensive dealing with *karma yoga*, *upāsana yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *jñāna yoga*. *Tattva Bodha* deals with only *jñāna yoga*. This is generally studied first because it presents the method of Self-inquiry in a systematic and comprehensive way. Self-inquiry leads one to Self-knowledge or Self-discovery. Self-inquiry leading to Self-discovery is the subject matter of *Tattva Bodha*. In addition it gives us the various technical terms that are required for conducting Self-inquiry. Any science has its own technical terms. In *saṁskṛta*, they are called *paribhāṣā śabdāḥ*. Just like there are technical jargon in medicine, law, mathematics, in science, dance, music and even in sports, so also in spiritual science. We need to know the terminology to understand the science. In *Tattva Bodha* these terms are systematically defined. So the text serves two purposes, one it gives the method of inquiry and two, it introduces the technical terms for better understanding of the science.

Tattva Bodha is a small text in prose form unlike *Bhagavad Gītā* which is in metrical verses so that the verses can be chanted. Except for the first and last verses, *Tattva Bodha* is essentially a text in prose. The first verse is a prayer invocation and the last verse is *phala stuti*. In our tradition, whenever we begin any work, we offer salutations, invoke God's grace, *guru's* blessings and then begin the work. This is called *maṅgala śloka*, a verse invoking auspiciousness. In order to overcome any obstacle in our efforts and for successful completion of the task we invoke the grace and blessing of the Lord and our *guru*. Let us chant the invocation verse.

वासुदेवेन्द्र-योगीन्द्रं नत्वा ज्ञानप्रदं गुरुम् ।

मुमुक्षूणां हितार्थाय, तत्त्वबोधोभिधीयते ॥

vāsudevendra-yogīndram, natvā jñānapradam gurum

mumukṣūṇāṃ hitārthāya, tattvabodhobhidhīyate

Sanīkarācārya salutes the Lord *Śrī Vāsudeva* who is the *Gītācārya* and hence the *guru* one who bestows knowledge. He is the *Yogīndra*, the *Yogeśvara*. This verse is also a *guru vandana*, salutations to his personal *Guru Śrī Govinda Bhagavadpāda*, *Govinda* being a synonym for *Vāsudeva*. The author states that having prostrated to my *guru*, this *tattvabodhaḥ* text, *abhidhīyate* is composed for the benefit *hitārthāya*, of *mumukṣūḥ*, those who are desirous of liberation. The verse also indicates the *anubandha catuṣṭaya*, the four factors that relate to any text, viz., *adhikāri* who is the *mumukṣu*, *viśaya*, *tattva*, the Truth here, *prayojana*, *mokṣa*, liberation and *sambanda*, the text reveals the Truth that Truth will liberate the seeker.

Now we will enter the first topic. *Tattva Bodha* begins with the qualifications required for Self-inquiry. This you must understand well because the study of any science presupposes the appropriate qualifications. If you want to enter a masters program in graduate school, you should have done undergraduate

work first. Some universities require that you take some entrance exams even before you can enter the college. In sports you have qualifying rounds, like for example in Wimbledon tennis tournament. This is true for Self-inquiry also. These qualifications are presented as *sādhana catuṣṭaya*, the four-fold qualifications, prerequisites. This is the topic for today. The qualifications are ***viveka***, ***vairāgya***, ***śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti*** and ***mumukṣutva***. In English they are respectively, discrimination, dispassion, six-fold wealth of virtues and intense desire for liberation. Now we will try to understand each one clearly.

The first qualification is *viveka*, discrimination. Here we use the word not in a negative sense. Generally it is used negatively as discrimination on the basis of race, caste, creed, color, ethnicity, gender, nationality, in all these it is used in the sense of bias, prejudice and such negative tones. Discrimination is not used in scriptures in a negative sense, but positively as a sense of judgment. It is the right understanding, correct judgment, discernment, differentiation, discretion, are the usual connotations. We ask differentiation between what and what? Discrimination always involves two things. *Tattva Bodha* defines it as ***nitya anitya vastu vivekaḥ***, knowing what is *anitya*, impermanent and knowing what is *nitya*, permanent. Therefore the differentiation of the impermanent and the permanent, differentiation of the eternal and the ephemeral is called *vivekaḥ*. How are we to understand this? If you look at the universe, we understand one fact. The whole creation, the universe is in the time-space framework. Therefore no object in the creation is beyond time and space. So everything is subject to onslaught of time, *kālaḥ krīḍati gacchati āyuh*. What do you mean by onslaught of time? That means every object is subject to birth and consequently subject to death also. Since I do not experience anything beyond time, I can say the whole creation is impermanent, or temporary, or ephemeral or perishable in nature. This kind of fragility is the nature of the entire creation consisting of things, beings, situations and relationships. There is no permanent object or person, or

situation and above all there is no permanent relationship. Since the whole world is perishable, nothing in the world can give me lasting security or support. So if I am going to expect lasting security and support from the world, my expectations are not going to be met. Disappointment will be the result. So the correct judgment is never to depend on the world for lasting security and support. The world just cannot give that. The world itself being an *anitya vastu*, it cannot give you *nityam*. That does not mean that the world is useless. That does not mean that the world should be rejected. Do not say that. The world can give you a lot of things and certainly you can use the world for a lot things. World can entertain you, can give you education, opportunity for service, growth. For all these and such other things, the world is very useful. When it comes to lasting security and support, leaning on the world is risky. This is wisdom with regard to *anitya vastu*. If I want to lean on something, if I want lasting security and support, I should turn toward *nitya vastu* and *nitya vastu* alone. In the language of *Tattva Bodha*, this permanent entity is *Brahman*. In religious language, in *purāṇic* language it is called God. So the first idea is, God alone can give permanent security and support, and not the world. This kind of understanding is called *nitya-anitya vastu vivekaḥ*.

The second qualification is called *vairāgya*, dispassion. Dispassion is opposite of passion. Passion is clinging to the world for security, support, happiness. Clinging, clamoring, yearning, longing for worldly things for happiness is being passionate. Psychological dependence on the world is passion. Just using the world for basic needs, minor comforts and entertainment is not passion. Use it and toss it. No passion, no problem. Depending on the world for everlasting security or happiness means passion for worldly things. Having understood that the world cannot be relied upon for lasting security and support, gradually weaning away from this world is called dispassion. It is not running away from this world, not rejecting the world, but use for what it

is. For security, support and happiness I switch channels. I use the world channel for certain things but for everlasting support and security I switch of world channel and tune in to God channel. Tuning out the world channel is dispassion. Of course this is born out of discrimination. Therefore, *vairāgya*, dispassion is the second qualification.

The third qualification is a set of six disciplines called *ṣaṭka sampattiḥ*. These are personal virtues, inner disciplines, self-management before trying to manage others, the world, situations and circumstances. The six disciplines are enumerated as *śamaḥ*, *damaḥ*, *upamaḥ*, *titikṣā*, *śraddhā* and *samādhānam*. *Śama* is mastery of the mind. This is the first inner discipline. Mind control in simple language. The second is *damaḥ*, mastery of sense organs sensory discipline or sense control. The third one is *upamaḥ*, which is reduction of extrovert activities, withdrawal of sense organs from sense object. Then one will get some quality time for self-inquiry. The fourth is *titikṣā*, mental toughness to withstand all forms of challenges in life. Face all kinds of experiences in life and not be swayed by them, forbearance is *titikṣā*. *Titikṣā* is an important word that has many shades of meaning. The fifth virtue is *śraddhā* which means faith in scriptures and also *guru* who helps in the study of scriptures. It is not a blind faith, but an open mindedness until I understand things clearly, a non-critical approach. It involves freedom from intellectual arrogance. If you are opinionated, close-minded, intellectually arrogant, that is a great obstacle to spirituality. Finally *samādhānam* means focusing capacity. The capacity to focus on the goal that I have undertaken. If I am listening to a talk, my mind should be focused on that and should not wander. Focus or concentration is *samādhānam*. These are the six-fold disciplines or virtues. They together make up the third qualification.

The fourth and final qualification is *mumukṣutva*, intense desire for liberation, desire for freedom. Freedom from the problems caused by depending on the

world, leaning on to *anitya vastu*. Depending on the ephemeral world causes a lot of psychological problems. First psychological problem is insecurity. I worry whatever I depend upon will give way. Especially if it involves people, there is constant worry of rejection. People who liked me, will they continue to like me? Insecurity with regard to family, and everything else, that is the basic problem. So you are constantly worrying. There is fear, frustration, disappointment, anger, hatred; in fact all psychological problems are caused by depending on the undependable, relying on the unreliable. It is not the mistake of *anitya vastu*, it is the mistake that I expect permanence out of the impermanent. Wrong expectation is the problem. The problems caused by such wrong dependence is *saṁsāraḥ*. *Mumukṣutva* is the strong desire to be free from *saṁsāra*. If this desire were not there, a person will travel from one impermanent thing to another impermanent thing. A *mumukṣu* wants to get out this rut. This is called desire for freedom. All these four put together is called *sādhana catuṣṭaya*. This is a prerequisite for Self-inquiry. *Tattva Bodha* begins with,

साधन-चतुष्टय-संपन्न-अधिकारिणां मोक्षसाधनभूतं

तत्तव-विवेक-प्रकारं वक्ष्यामः ।

sādhana-catustaya-saṁpanna-adhikāriṇām mokṣasādhanabhūtaṁ

tattva-viveka-prakāraṁ vakṣyāmaḥ

San̄karācārya says we will now expound the inquiry into Truth which is the means of liberation to that qualified student who is endowed with the four-fold qualifications. Such a student is *adhikāri* and only he can benefit from Self-inquiry. For others the Self-inquiry will be irrelevant. It will appear to be a waste of time or merely an academic exercise. Therefore the four-fold qualifications are required. The author however does not say how to acquire these qualifications. We have to do a little bit of introspection and find out where the gaps and try to fill them. For that the methods are the following.

The three qualifications of discrimination, dispassion and desire for freedom are acquired and nourished by the discipline of *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* is the most important discipline meant for acquiring these three qualifications. We have already discussed about *karma yoga* in the preliminary lectures. How about *śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti*? That is accomplished by *upāsana yoga*. So *karma yoga* and *upāsana yoga* together will give the qualifications necessary for Self-inquiry. They give you *jñāna योगyatā*. *Jñāna योगyatā* gives you *jñāna* and *jñāna* gives you *mokṣa*. Our entire spiritual discipline can be divided into two stages, first get *jñāna योगyatā*. and second stage gain *jñāna*.

The earlier portion of our scriptures tells us how to gain *jñāna योगyatā*. *Veda pūrva bhāga* deals with *jñāna योगyatā prāpti* through *karma* and *upāsana*. This portion is otherwise called the religious portion. The latter portion, the end portion of *veda*-s, otherwise called *vedānta*, deals with *jñāna prāpti* through *jñāna yoga*. This is not a religious portion, it is the philosophical portion of the scriptures. Thus our scriptures have both the religious portion to gain the qualification for knowledge and the philosophical portion to gain knowledge. *Vedānta* is also called *upaniṣad* because it puts an end to all problems born out of wrong expectations. *Upaniṣad* is the destroyer of dependence caused problems.

Finally I want to take up one more topic as part of this discussion. I said that *karma yoga* gives *viveka*, *vairāgya* and *mumukṣutva* and *upāsana yoga* gives *śamādi ṣaṭka sampatti*. In addition to these *yoga*-s, one more exercise is advised for *sādhana catuṣṭaya saṁpatti*. This exercise is very important. An ethical life in which one follows moral values. Righteous living is extremely important for cultivating *sādhana catuṣṭaya*. Many ethical values are talked about in the scriptures. Of them ten are important. We can call them the ten commandments of Hinduism if you like it and if you are so inclined. Without following them *sādhana catuṣṭaya* is impossible. I will briefly mention those

ten values as I have already talked about them earlier. If you have not heard them from me, you may do so at a later time in a different context.

The ten values are divided into two sets. The first set consisting of five values in which you avoid five things. The first one is called *himsā varjanam*, avoid violence. Avoidance of all forms of violence, physical, verbal as well as mental violence is called *ahimsā*. Violence is of two types, unavoidable and avoidable. Avoid the avoidable violence. Do *prāyacitta* for the unavailable violence. So *ahimsā* is the first value. The second avoidance is *asatya varjanam*, avoidance of falsehood, do not lie. Never speak untruth. Here also there are avoidable and unavoidable situations and same rules apply as before. The third value is *steya varjanam*, avoidance of stealing, *asteyam*. Stealing is any illegitimate possession. Any benefit that I acquire by illegal means is stealing. Avoid that. Then *maithuna varjanam*, avoidance of illegitimate sexual relationship, otherwise called *brahmacaryam*. The last avoidance is the *parigraha varjanam*, avoidance of over possession or too much accumulation. Avoid hoarding, amassing money, power and wealth. Lead a simple life. Share your wealth.

The second set of five positive values, the first of these is *śaucam*, cleanliness, purity, external and internal purity, purity in thought, word and deed. Next is *santoṣaḥ*, contentment. Be satisfied with what I get by legitimate methods, *yallabhase nijakarmopāttam vittam tena vinodaya cittam*. The third is *tapah*, self-denial practiced for mastery over senses. Various *vrata*-s, vows such as fasting, *maunam*, silence fall under this category, otherwise called austerity, penance and so on. The fourth is *svādhyāyaḥ*, scriptural study. This is very important and its importance is not understood much. Finally *Īśvara praṇi-dhānam*, surrender to the Lord and accepting everything that you get, *karma phala* as gift from the Lord. Accepting without resistance every experience and not allowing the experiences to generate negative emotions is surrender

to God. These are the five positive values to be practiced. The first five are called *yamāḥ* and the second set of five is called *niyama*. The *yama-niyama* should be followed in a moral, righteous life and along with *karma-upāsana yoga*, one can get *sādhana catuṣṭaya*, the four-fold qualifications. Then you are ready to walk the ensuing path of *jñāna yoga*.