Chapter 2

Introduction to jñānam and its divisions

Introduction:

This chapter is the sum and substance of the research conducted throughout this work. This work aims at providing a newer perspective to the future researchers, on the same topic or allied topics. This work rather should be known as a path-clearance job, as this work, after a detailed review of literature seems to be the first of its kind. To substantiate; this chapter will focus on the necessity of the unification of the jñānam (knowledge), which is superficially trifurcated, based on its practices, contents and properties. When the knowledge is understood as one or the trifurcation is understood as a continuum, then the dualities seen today and the conflicts witnessed today will be almost nullified. Though the world is huge in its size and it appears too random, it is interlinked by one force and anything and everything found on the surface has the most important property called ‘inter-connectedness’. In the scientific terminology, ‘The butterfly effect’ is the phrase used to explain the aforesaid phenomenon. ‘The butterfly effect’- ‘the phenomenon whereby a small change at one place in a complex system can have large effects elsewhere, e.g., a butterfly flapping its wings in Varanasi might change the weather in Chicago’. With the whole world interwoven and related closely to one another, one needs to understand the system of knowledge. Knowledge which is basically one is trifurcated. In the vedic terminology, the trifurcation is as, svarūpajñānam karmajñānam and upāsanājñānam. Here svarūpajñānam is referred to the knowledge of ‘Self’\(^{45}\). However svarūpajñānam as seen, from millenniums of centuries is eventual result attained through the practice of karma and upāsanām. Hence, at the first place one should comprehend that the fruits in the form of ātmajñānam is only after placing a great

\(^{45}\)The knowledge of ‘self’ is different from knowledge of ‘Self’. Knowledge of ‘self’ is the knowledge one has about himself or herself in regards with attitudes, attributes and a few materials one possesses. Whereas, the knowledge of ‘Self’ is the knowing the root of his or her existence and thereby understand the root of this universe
amount of effort, which is in the form of *karma* and *upāsanām*. Hence one needs to discover the interconnectedness among the three, which will motivate one to move towards the last *puruṣārtha*, i.e., *mokṣa*.

Human-beings are engaged in three-fold actions:

1. Acquisition of knowledge.
2. Performing *karma*
3. Being communion with god.

The corresponding *saṁskṛta* terms, as told earlier are *jñāna*, *karma* and *upāsanā*. The purpose of knowledge is to select the right kind of *karma* among diverse choices that we have. Performing good quality *karma* is to seek nearness of god when we attempt to sit for meditation. In this respect, one should say that *karma* is more important than *jñāna* because the purpose of the latter is to select the former. Similarly, one could further say that *upāsanā* is more important than *karma*, because the purpose of the latter is to succeed the former. However, this view is true only to a small part. *Maharṣi kapila* the author of *sāṅkhya* states- the liberation happens only by the knowledge of the ‘Self’. Thus the ultimate goal of human life is emancipation, which is undoubtedly acquired through *jñāna*. *Jñāna* brings in the greatest reward and hence, *jñāna* is more important. So knowledge is more important. This then would contradict the earlier observation that *upāsanā* is the result of *karma* and that, in turn, is the result of *jñāna*. So to negate that contradiction the below passage is phrased.

**Supremacy of *jñānam*, *karma* or *upāsanā*:**

Let us try to reconcile the seemingly paradoxical statements about the supremacy of *jñāna* as stated by *kapila* and its subservient status in the description that we laid out in the beginning. *Kapila’s* concept of *jñāna* is experiential knowledge about the self, i.e. self-realization and not the trivial worldly knowledge that is acquired from books and others. Self-realization is gained in the highest echelons of *upāsanā* when the practitioner has subdued the functions of body and mind thoroughly as prescribed by many ancient scriptures and also in the recent time *yoga* treatises like the one of
A devoted practitioner when proficient in āṣṭāṅgayoga practices captures a certain flash of subtle knowledge and then begins a new life. Knowledge so gained is received direct from the Omni-present and all-pervading god or supreme lord, which in advaitic terms is known as brahman. It may be referred to as intuitive knowledge or rtambharāprajñā. This is well summarized in the trilogy of aditi, anumati and sarasvati. Aditi is the universally prevalent instinctive knowledge that is present among every human being. Anumati is the intellectual knowledge that we gather from diverse sources that allows us to tread on the righteous path. Sarasvati is the state of the higher intellect that obtains the intuitive knowledge. All the three mechanisms have the common origin, namely god, the creator of the universe and knowledge, too.

The present system of education doesn’t encourage one to obtain the sublime subtle spiritual knowledge direct from god. There is another lacuna that needs to be pointed out. A sharp intellect is fine for the intellectual knowledge (anumati) but it is important that the same sharp intellect must be pure and pristine too and only that can make him deserve the flash of spiritual knowledge. This is what is missing in the last five thousand (5000) years of the world history. After the epic, great Indian war the mahābhārata, the greatest casualty was the great vedic tradition of knowledge – the rṣi tradition – literally, the ‘seers’ blessed with the intuitive knowledge in the high state of upāsanā became scarce. Then several scholars began to interpret vedas from their sharp penetrating intellect without reaching the required proficiency in the upāsanā faculty. The result was that their interpretations were faulty and lacked the depth and height of the spiritual knowledge that vedas discussed. The greatest contrast can be seen between Professor Max Mueller and maharṣi dayānanda (1824-’83), both contemporary. The former was a representative of the modern academic intellectual tradition that emphasizes knowledge (jñānam) that may be void of upāsanā while the latter inherited the true vedic tradition of backing the intellectual prowess with purity and loftiness of upāsanā. The result was that Max Mueller’s interpretation of the vedic literature was un-inspiring but maharṣi was able to open the closed vistas of true light of the vedic knowledge. Today’s absence of ‘jñānam backed by upāsanā’ has led the humanity to all kinds of miseries and there is a vicious nature of the downslide that the decline gets rapidly accelerated. Further decline in the human quality leads to further
decline. Indeed, nobody would today bother if the top scientist in a university lives a wrecked personal life, say, having extra marital relationship. The moral code of conduct may not be necessary to obtain high laurels in the modern society though such a person may not deserve the true spiritual knowledge experientially.

In summary, the three-fold human pursuits of jñānam, karma and upāsanā present echelons of human progress in a continuous sense that every day must include each of the three pursuits. A truly developed human being gradually reaches a superior quality of all the three pursuits and then comes a time that the knowledge (jñānam) is not merely second hand (from books, teachers and other external sources) but is obtained experientially by dwelling in deep meditative moments. Generally, there is a shift in the particular human beings from gross knowledge of matter to subtle knowledge related to spirit as they progress. The vedas state\(^{46}\) “that mind converge the hymns of ṛgveda, lyrics of sāmaveda and prose of yajurveda as do the spokes of a wheel into its axle. The all-pervading and omnipresent god inspires it in the intellect of a noble soul. May my mind of such immense attributes harbour benevolent thoughts”. Our mind is a fantastic instrument. Besides performing karma through the five organs i.e., for manipulation, locomotion, speech, excretion and procreation, acquisition of knowledge through the five organs i.e., senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, a wonderful memory and its ability to extrapolate events in different space-time thinking, it can obtain true intuitive knowledge from the all-knowing indeed, the creator of knowledge that god is. In order to obtain true intuitive knowledge, the mind, particularly its innermost intellect referred to as citta in the above stated vedic verse must be made receptive by:

1. Subduing the functions of karma

2. Subduing the functions of acquisition of knowledge through senses

3. Subduing the ‘thinking’ operations

\(^{46}\) Shukla-yajurveda 34.5
4. Purity of intellect by repetitive upāsanā as only the proximity of god can cleanse the intellect of the inhibiting impressions called saṁskāras.

Where do we go wrong? There is a skewed thinking in the modern world that one’s intellectual ability is judged based on IQ alone. Besides IQ, EQ and MQ are important too – the ‘Emotional Quotient’ and ‘Moral Quotient’, respectively. IQ refers to the intellectual strength whereas the EQ refers to the intellectual health and MQ will refer to intellectual purity. Then regular practice of sandhyā, the vedic meditation will enable one to raise the SQ, the ‘Spiritual Quotient’. Now there is increasing awareness about EQ besides IQ because even if one is intelligent the poor balance of emotional health may not deliver intelligent solutions. For example, one could get angry unprovoked and spoil an important negotiation. Furthermore, one must be morally upright otherwise one may utilize the intellectual faculty to harm the society, say, by popularizing alcohol instead of spirituality. In the above-referred verse of yajurveda, god has put important conditions for the humans to be able to receive true sublime knowledge from him.

Now after showing the existing integration between the three, let us now see as to why such synthesis is required? In the age old days, people looked at all the three equally and had fixed their goals as emancipation and from that standpoint their actions were justifiable and commendable. But with so many changes in the present scenario, let us discuss as to why a novel interpretation of karma (as ritual)/yajña and upāsanā becomes inevitable. Karma in itself though is scientific, the usage of the same is extinct and hence the rituals appear meaningless. And for some jñānam becomes a herculean task as it calls for too much of perseverance and discipline. So can we find a mid path? Yes, we can. To substantiate the above said words, let us relook at yajñas, or karma per se and the need of the same, for the social well being.

**Karma:**

*Karma* has been in many contexts demeaned either by authors, commentaries or by many interpreters. *Karma* has also been interpreted as diametrically opposite to jñānam or an obstacle to jñānam. However, there are chances that men would have
also constantly misunderstood the crux of the discussion over the centuries and have been aversive towards vedic-rituals considering it to be bondage or as an impediment in attaining the mokṣa. But by going to the root and analyzing the reality behind would give us a better picture of the same and the necessity of its compulsory implications. Karma, however is a set of actions based on the mantras found by sages through persistent sādhanā. Man’s mind when untamed is eager to cling on to innumerable actions randomly. Though the random actions haven’t served him in any productive ways, still man has been content, in fact complacent of his achievements and accomplishments spiritually. This has led to his downfall and collectively to the world’s failure. In such a situation karma can be of a great aid because, it creates regularity. Karma has the capacity to create in man an inbuilt mechanism, by which he does actions on a regular basis. Further the vedic-karmas, accentuates upon the regular performance of karmas, not just mechanically or blindly, but a performance with conscious efforts and with thorough understanding.

As said earlier, the understanding of the vedas is at three levels

1. upāsanāṅgajñānam or pratīkopāsanam
2. karmāṅgajñānam or karmāṅgopāsanam
3. svarūpajñānam or ahamgrahopāsanam

Upāsanāṅgajñānam will be dealt in detail, in the further chapters. Whereas the next two will be briefed here with an intention, to prove that karmāṅgajñānam and svarūpajñānam are the two extremes and are hard to pursue, especially in today’s given scenario. The karmāṅgajñānam becomes a very tedious and daunting task, only when the anga is equated with vedic-karmas. Hence, the second element intended here to prove is that karmāṅgajñānam and svarūpajñānam have taken a new shape according to the time and needs a novel interpretation according to the age. Though it is a fact that karma is hard to pursue, it is also a fact that one needs to learn and digest that karma need not be necessarily, yajñas. To shed more light on all these the next passage is dedicated.
Karma has too many meanings in the Indian scriptures. Hence, herein a brief account of ‘karma as equated with vedic-rituals’ will be provided to understand it scholarly and also comprehend its impracticalities if completely adopted in today’s scenario.

Yajña:

Yajña is derived from the root- yaj devapūjana dāna saṅgatikaraṇeṣu. Hence, the yajña has in it three meanings, which have to be contextually understood as per the context.

Yajña when understood from the sacrifice purpose, is divided into two according to pūrvamimāmsakāṣ 47- prakṛti and vikṛti. Prakṛti is one kind where the whole of the yajña process and procedure or ‘do how’ is readily available for implementation of the same 48. Whereas, in vikṛti the yajña has to be followed based on the prakṛti 49.

Further, yajña from the sacrificial perspective can be divided into, viz, śrauta and smārta. Śrauta form is divided into four- nitya-yajña naimittika-yajña kāmya-yajña prāyaścitta-yajña and niṣiddha-yajña.

- nitya-yajña – daily obligatory duties
- naimittika-yajña – occasional obligatory duties
- kāmya-yajña – rites performed to obtain desired results
- prāyaścitta-yajña- rites for expiation of sins
- niṣiddha-yajña – forbidden actions

Smṛtis is the root word for smārta. In saṁskṛtam, smārta means "relating to memory, recorded in or based on the smṛtis , based on tradition, prescribed or

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47 प्रकरान्तेन यथा: हिरूपः। प्रकृतिः: विकृतिः: इति Artha Sangraha Page 75
48 आद: प्रकृतियागस्तु य भवति विषय समस्तन कर्मजातं वेदे समुपसम्भवे। यथा- दर्श्यूपर्यमसेत। Artha Sangraha Page 76
49 हिरीय: यथय प्रवचनानि अस्त्रानि इत्य्यद्धैशिव यज्ञानि वेदोमिव गमयते। चर्चाः कमासिद्धेन प्रकृतिवृत विकृतिः: कर्तृयेति मीमांसासमव हि अनुरूपते। उद्दाहरणानि जीवाणुपूर्वेऽि: इत्यादिि। उत्तमान भाष्यायाम: एवज्ञातीकाः। Artha Sangraha Page 77
sanctioned by traditional law or usage, (etc)”, from the root *smṛ-smaraṇe* (to remember).

*Smārta yajña* is based on the idea of a tradition called *smārtas*, who believe that the worshiper is free to choose a particular aspect of god to worship, to the extent that the worship practices do not contradict the *vedas* and the *smṛtis*. So in that sense an orthodox *smārta* is unlikely to view gods of non *vedic* religions favourably, even though he may hold the religion acceptable to its own traditional followers.

There are approximately 400 *yajñas* described in the *vedas*. Of these, 21 are deemed compulsory for the twice-born, i.e., *dvijās*- *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*. They are also called *nitya-karmas*. The rest of the *yajñas* are optional, i.e., *kamya-karma*, which are performed for particular wishes and benefits. The *aupāsanā* is not part of the above list, but is also compulsory.

Out of the 21 *nitya-karmas*, only the *agnihotra* and the *aupāsanā* are to be performed twice daily, at dawn and dusk. The remaining ones have certain allotted frequencies over the course of the year. The more complicated the *yajñas*, the less frequently it is performed. The most complex ones need to be performed only once in a lifetime. The first seven *yajñas* are called *pāka-yajña* ‘cooked sacrifice’, the second seven *havir-yajña*, oblations ‘burnt offering’ and the third seven are called *soma-yajña* ‘soma sacrifice’.

- Seven are *paka-yajñas* - *aṣṭaka*, *sthālipāka*, *parvāna*, *śrāvaṇi*, *āgrahayaṇi*, *caitri* and *āśvīyuji*. They involve consecrating cooked items.
- Seven are *soma-yajñas* - *agniṣṭoma*, *atyagniṣṭoma*, *uktya*, *ṣoḍaśi*, *vājapeya*, *atirātra* and *aptoryāma*). The *yajñas* that involves the extraction, utility and consumption of *soma* (in the general sense nectar, but extract of a particular tree specifically) is called a *soma-yajña*. Others are usually referred to as *havir-yajñas*.
- Seven are *havir-yajñas* (agnyādhāna, *agnihotra*, *darśa-pūrṇamāsa*, *āgrayaṇa*, *cāturmāsya*, *niruudha-paśu-bandha*, and *sautrāmaṇi*). They involve offering *havis*.
• Five are the *pañca mahā yajñās*.
• Four are *vedavratas*, which are done during *vedic* education.
• Remaining sixteen are one-time *saṁskāras* that are done at different stages in life. They are *garbhādhānā, puṇśavana, sīmanta, jātakarma, nāmakarana, annaprāśana, chudākarma/caula, niskramaṇa, karṇavedha, vidyārambha, upanayana, keśānta, snātaka* and *vivāha, nišeaka, antyeṣṭi*. These are specified by the *grhya sūrās*. Some *grhya sūrās* like *vaikhānasa* prescribe two more *saṁskāras* like *viśṇu-bali* and *pravāsagamana/pinḍavardhana*.
• *Yajñas* such as *putrakāmeṣṭi*, for begetting sons, *aśvamedha*, to rule, *rājasūya* for royal consecration etc. are among the 400 which are not compulsory.

**The drawback of śrauta and śmārta yajñās:**

The drawback in *śrauta-yajñās* will be enlisted here to emphasize the need of a better system to make life journey towards ultimate a better one. Obviously the better system is *upāsanā*, about which a detailed discussion will be presented in the last chapter.

*Yajñas* in reference to *śrauta* - *Śrauta* is a complex system in the current world scenario, as the strength in people to execute such strenuous *yajñās* has gone down drastically. Apart from the strength factor, the absence of scholarly people who can execute such tasks is the primary factor, which has led to the erosion of the *śrauta-yajñās*. Modern civilization has imposed certain constraints like time, facilities available, practicability of certain *aṅgas* and finance. The below enlisted drawbacks are culled out from the ‘understanding veda karmakanda’ by G.K.Kannan.

1. *Mantras* accompany, even while arranging materials for a *yajña*, like cutting tree for an *yūpā*; cutting *darbhā* grass; tracing, digging levelling of *vedi*, preparation of *sadas* and *dhiṣṭiayas*, etc. Roofing the enclosure- collecting different types of water, *clsy* etc., preparation of bricks at site and so on. But, now materials are pre-arranged without *mantras*. At the time of *saṁskāras*, as
per the format, symbolic motions are carried out accompanied by relevant mantras.

2. *Mantras* have to be recited when the *patnī* actually pounds, winnows the required quantity of grains for *puroḍāśā* preparation. But now, what we see is the flour for *puroḍāśā* is kept ready. Token motions are displayed by *patnī* with toy models to the accompaniment of mantras.

3. Presence of live animals and actual objects are a sine qua-non for certain consecrating purposes. Ex. 1. Horse for treading ground and materials for purification purposes. 2. Goat and cow for tethering and milking for obligations in pravargya. 3. Black and white horses, while building the *citī* in *agni-cayana*. 4. Oxen drawn *havirdhāna* carts for *soma* transportation. But, now dolls, pegs driven into the ground with tethering ropes, toy carts are employed to the accompaniment of stipulated mantras.

4. *Avāntara dīkṣā* time for the *yajamāna* is for a long period lasting weeks/months for *vedic* study, *vrata*, etc., in *ekāha-soma-yajña*. But now, *avāntara dīkṣā* has been cut to one day. Now, the *soma* stalks of *vedic* times are long extinct. Stalks somewhat resembling the original *pūṭīka* are used nowadays. The purchase and transport of *soma* stalks are symbolically gone through with mantras near the *yajña- ṣālā* itself.

5. *Dakṣiṇā* (sacrificial fees) are in terms of *paśu*, large amount of gold, etc. Now token gold piece and the present Indian currency are resorted.

6. *Jīva paśu* /live animals are used in *agni-śomīya-yajñas savaniya-yajñas* and *soma –yajñas*. In Tamil-nadu, Andhra-pradesh, many still today follow strictly the *vedic* injunctions to the best of their ability, use *jīva paśu*. In some other parts of India, ājyal/puroḍāśal/figures made out of flour, replace *jīva paśu*.

7. *Yajña* grounds or *vedis* were larger in area as per rules of the *sūtras* and śastras. Now, due to limitation of space, area of *vedis* are much reduced.
With all these practical problems seen glaringly, one need to understand that there are pragmatic problems in performing the yajñas today at the same scale and same intensity and also to desire the same amount of fruits which our ancestors used to wish.

Though in the recent past a few attempts were made to perform yajñas with the same intensity, the point to be thought of sincerely- ‘was the intensity only in the abundance of materials like a huge place to perform the sacrifice or was the intensity in the lavish ways of spending money to meet all the requirements of the sacrifice or was the intensity in performing the sacrifice completely as per vedic rules and regulations?, like in the earlier days, where the indra and other gods and goddesses when offered the sacrifice were visible in the place of yajña to receive their oblations.

Well this looks an extreme path for man today who is more a machine than a lively man. To a man of this generation, this appears tedious, cumbersome and illogical on the grounds of today’s modern definition of ‘science’

The one of the greatest drawbacks in the performance of smārta yajñas is in its authenticity of the steps followed during yajñas. No proper prescriptions of the devatā, mantra and dravyas are found. There are too many human interpretations and the reason for many being sceptical about the smārta yajñas can now be inferred.

**Pañcamahāyajñas:**

The yajñas which can be practically followed and implemented in everyone’s life for the betterment of one’s own self and one’s own country and thereby construct a balanced and normal society is possible through the practice of pañcamahāyajñas.

**Pañcamahāyajña**

starts after one is married. The responsibility of the grhaḥastha to provide for the sustenance of the daily routine of life around him, is celebrated in the Indian classical literature as pañcamahāyajña. These yajñas are to be

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50 पञ्चमहायज्ञ: । तन्येव महालवणः मनस्यवः देवययो ब्रह्मयः हृति। अहह्रः मृत्युवः विवषः हृते। तथेव भूतवः समापोः अहह्रः ख्यातोद्धारः। स्वतः कुष्टियोद्धारः। स्वाहा। कुष्ठियोद्धारः। स्वाहा। स्वाहा।।

SB 11.3.8.1-3
performed by a grhaṣṭha on an everyday basis. It is in fact performance of these five yajñas, which determine a real grhaṣṭha. By the performance of the same the householder shares his daily victuals with the representatives of different aspects of the creation, and thus seems to remind himself afresh everyday of his responsibility towards all creation and dedicate himself to the sustenance of at least as much of creation as falls within his reach.

**Deva-yajña** is the first among five yajñas. It is all about cultivating devotion with an understanding that all creation is a manifestation of lovers and expressing gratitude for all that is given to us. It is offering daily worship to the Gods in recognition of their presence as the various laws and functions that govern the universe. Worship of god can be any form, sacrifice of the dravyas, i.e., a ritualistic sacrifice. Vedic chanting or chanting of a few selected verses or hymns. Repetition of a specific mantra for a specific desired fruit or even without any anticipation of the same. Dhyana, as in meditation upon the lord or any other noble object. Rendering services voluntarily to temples with time, energy and resources. Preserving temple culture is an important aspect of deva-yajña. Vedic culture has been nurtured in temples for thousands of years. As all creation is non-separate from the supreme-being and five great elements, the god and nature or both the creation and creator was worshiped and given due respect. One god is worshipped in the form of various deities. One supreme-being for the sake of convenience is invoked in different forms. This unique and personalized form of worship is unique about the yajña. As one progresses in this yajña, he starts to sacrifice the results of the actions, he/she performs. The sameness of mind is the final result of such a yajña and the end result is a complete harmonious personality free from evil and malice. This is the highest state one can achieve and one needs to achieve. Such individuals are boon to the society.

**Pitravajña** is the reverential bonding with parents, grandparents, ancestors, forefathers and the entire family tree. This is all about caring and performing rituals for our ancestors in specific. It also involves upholding certain value systems and traditions handed over to us by our ancestors and passing these on to our children and future generations. Caring for parents is an important aspect of family life. At some
point in our lives, we find ourselves becoming the link between two generations. Parenting becomes a full time responsibility and at the same time, our relationship with our parents undergoes significant changes. We need to balance both roles and be more available to them in order to provide economical, emotional and physical support too. In the vedic culture, our self identity is not looked at solely from an individual standpoint, but includes the family and cultural background as well. The consistency is in terms of values, philosophy, life style and customs. Our self worth includes respect for our family and culture. Within the Indian family unit, the relationships between people are highly interdependent. The individual is considered independent and yet an essential and integral part of a larger family unit where the well being of one member lies in the well being of all. A certain amount of voluntary sacrifice is required for family harmony. We need emotional maturity to understand and accept this aspect. The family dharma or kula-dharma is handed down from one generation to the next. Dharma means righteousness. In the vedic lore, we find a word vriddha-vyavahāra, which means the conduct one should equip with to know the right ways of conduct with the elderly people in the family. This also speaks of the etiquette, one need to be aware of. Hence, scriptures prescribe certain compulsory ceremonies like śrāddham on special days. We begin any occasion or celebration in the family by offering prayers to our ancestors as a way of thanksgiving and to seek their blessings for our prosperity and that of progeny. This reinforces our place and survival in the entire kula or clan.

Bhūtayajña is appreciating all creation as supreme-being and hence preserving and living in conformity with the laws of nature, worshipping animals, plants trees, forests and all other forms of life. Worship is considering nature and all forms of life as sacred and showing kindness and compassion to them. Both recognition and sensitivity are involved; by recognizing cosmic forces, we do not take anything for granted. Sensitivity to environment and understanding of ecology are vital for preservation of life. Our reverential contribution to this sacrifice involves working to improve ecological balance in all respects, such as feeding and caring for animals, planting trees and protecting them, nurturing plants, protecting and sustaining water bodies and preserving environment. Reverence to nature is steeped in our culture. We
revere trees, plants, animals, rivers and mother earth. We worship the **tulsi** as a manifestation of goddess. Ancient temples had trees associated with sacred place and were located behind the sanctum sanctorum. For instance, pupil tree, banyan and neem tree were considered sacred and worshipped. All our deities are associated with animals and birds as vehicles to encourage us to develop respect and kindness towards them. We worship deities, along with the vehicles. Feeding domestic animals and birds is a part of the daily routine in most households. All these different forms of worship should be understood with the spirit and attitude of nurturing, non-violence. Non-violence is the highest form of virtue and righteousness and is a commitment to a life-style of least disturbance. In a relative world, absolute non-violence is though not possible; it can follow and practices with limitations and not convenience. In the whole of vedic culture, nature is never looked at us as a commodity. All natural resources are there for the use of all living beings. We have to use them with care and caution and not abuse or plunder them. Tampering with delicate balance is short sighted. All environmental issues are due to not being in harmony with the nature. When the ecology is disturbed then all the economic activity and prosperity will be affected. Sustainable development and resource management entails using natural resources in ways that are beneficial to human beings and our environment. This must be done while maintaining their availability to support biological diversity and continuing human use in the future.

On a simple level, environmental awareness is in understanding the interconnection of all the things and living in a manner that respects the ecological balance. At a deeper level environmental awareness is an appreciation of the lord, with reference to creation. When we are in harmony with the natural laws which are consistent, unbiased and non-separate from lord, we remain in harmony with ourselves.

When we understand the importance of each of the five sacred *yajñas* it helps us to perform all our duties with the right attitude. We are able to perform the various rituals with a true understanding of the spirit behind the form. The inner harmony and rhythm born out of performing the five sacred duties helps us to pursue our goals
successfully in alignment with *dharma* with least offers. We then become blessed with all forms of wealth in our lives.

**Manusyayajña** is service to humanity with the attitude of serving the lord. Seeing divinity in everyone and serving people in the highest form of service. In such a form of service, there is only gratitude towards the person for giving us an opportunity to serve. Service is being sensitive to the needs of fellow human beings, sharing and caring for them. As individuals, corporate entities or as collective bodies, we care and express that we care. We can share our knowledge, wealth, resources, time and also pray for others. The way we serve heartily our guests is a great contribution towards the society. This shows the mutual respect. By sharing, we grow from being only to a consumer to a contributor. Living beings when we contribute something that will bring about more joy, happiness, light and freedom. Merely getting on is not really living. To live is to be a positive contributor. To grow from a consumer into a contributor, we must cultivate compassion. This value evokes the largeness of the hearts, love, giving, gentleness, understanding and respect for all humanity. There are many ways and occasion one can find to give away gifts with respect to all those who deserve. Giving in the right way is the mark of the growth. To grow into an adequate and secure person and to help others to grow is our culture, and this growth does not happen without our initiative. Our way of life should make us grow into the fullness that we are capable of. Corporate and collective bodies have a larger role to play in this sacrifice. Growth has to be inclusive and beneficial to the society. We have to contribute proportionately to our capacity. To do this, we need to understand the objective value of money and its role in our lives. Money is a means for accomplishing various ends, but it can neither fulfil our need for emotional security, nor can it compensate for an underlying sense of inadequacy. A true sense of security however is born of an appreciation of inner fullness, not of external wealth. When we understand the objective value of money and recognize its limitations as well, we can handle money in a mature way and share it with others graciously. Our success is because we are in the right place, at the right time. It is because of grace and we have to be grateful for that. When we are in a position of power, coming out of the grace of
being at the right place, at the right time, then the power has to be used for caring and giving.

**Brahmavajña** is our venerated contribution to preserve vedic culture through worship of the scriptures, the sages and the teachers of vedic vision who have contributed to the spiritual culture of this land. This sacrifice is the effort to understand the scriptures under the guidance of a teacher trained in the orthodox and in a traditional way. Supporting vedic schools, and the teaching of *vedânta* and many other institutes which promotes Indian thought system is important aspects of this sacrifice. The *vedas* have to be read, which have been preserved in the highly sophisticated oral tradition. The perseverance of the *vedas* leads to the fulfilment of the life goal and achieve in process the *puruṣārthas*, i.e., *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The *vedic* culture has a self-sustaining strength and that has had a very less impact of all the invasions this country has and had in the past. The essence of vedic culture is its teaching tradition based on the *vedas*. It addresses the fundamental problems that are relevant to the life of every human being such as non acceptance of our limitations, our urge to be free from being a wanting person and our need to be free from sorrow and mortality. The teaching tradition helps us discover our essential nature as being free from limitations. This knowledge enables us to live in harmony with all beings and our environment. This is the depth and strength of the vedic culture.

Manu in his work, concludes the idea of *pañcamahāyajñas* with these words

- The householder ought to eat only what is left after making reverential offerings to the *devās*, *ṛṣīs*, ancestors, *bhūtas* and the guests.

- A householder who cooks for himself alone does not partake of food, but partakes merely of sin. For the wise one the leftover of the *pañcamahāyajñā* alone is proper food.

He at the end blesses the disciplined couples, with a śloka which says- let you all partake of *vighasa* and *amṛta*. What is left after feeding all others is indeed *vighasa* and what is left after accomplishing the *yajña* is *amṛta*. 

47
Thus at this juncture, such a sacrifice, as listed by the *vedas*, for the welfare of one’s own and the rest in the society can be undertaken and can guide thereby the humanity towards ultimate truth.

**Svarūpajnāna:**

Now let us try and figure out as to what is *jñāna*?

The knowledge of *svarūpa* is in other terms known as ‘*jñānayoga*’. *Yoga* i.e., the union with the knowledge is *jñāna-yoga*. Knowledge is here the knowing of the absolute, i.e., the *parabrahman* or *ātma*. So *jñānayoga* is the knowledge of the supreme. The monism *advaita-vedānta* or the philosophy of *śaṅkara* or the *vyāsa sūtras* provide the seeker knowledge about the experience of one’s own real ‘Self’.

The philosophy of *śaṅkara* which is both physical and metaphysical lays down a path which requires a thorough understanding to know what *jñāna* of the *svarūpa* means. Or the in other words to understand the *jñāna* of *svarūpa*, one has to experience it! Brahman is real and the world which we live is non-real. Non-real is relative and this shouldn’t be confused to the negation of the world. The no-real world’s glimpse is experienced by all of us in a deep sleep state. Our existence is based on the *brahman* which is energy according to physicists, consciousness according to psychologists and *ātman* or soul according to philosophers.

*Śaṅkara*’s philosophy can be based on three broad heads for convenience:

1. Metaphysics
2. Epistemology
3. Ethics

**Metaphysics:** The *brahman* as the source of the world. The people herein are essentially *brahman*. The questions he raised were basically to address the existential issues. The knowledge of the *brahman* is the be all and end all of human life. *Ātman* is the other word for *brahman* and the division of *ātman* at micro level and macro level, as *jeevātmā* and *paramātmā*. The *ātman* cannot be identified with the body as if done
by the charvākas for the attributes like recollection, sentiency etc., do not belong to the body. The chaitanya is also not the perception of the four elements grouped together. The ātman is not a mere series of impermanent mental states as is held by Buddhists, for some permanent entity is required to cognize the whole as series. The world is also not a void for someone is required to cognize it to be so.

Ātman is of the nature of pure intelligence or eternal knowledge. Before creation it is non objective consciousness. After creation it becomes the knower of the external world. This, however, is different from the distinction of organs like an eye or an ear for the act of knowing, for it perceives or hears even in dreams. This means ātman is eternal.

Ātman is the knower so long as the external objects exist. Without them ātman remains as pure existence, knowledge or bliss. Ātman is changeless and the substance of all our experience.

Epistemology: Śaṅkara’s standpoint about the epistemology of the empirical world has given rise to some controversy. The way out is to get beyond the world of name and form to realize the basic reality. According to śaṅkara knowledge is a correct apprehension of the thing to be cognized. Such knowledge depends not on human notions but on the thing-in-itself. Knowledge is always dependent upon the thing. It is uniform and is called samyajñjñānam. It is to be distinguished from activity. Activity is concerned with creating something and is related with some human being. It can done or undone or done otherwise. It has nothing to do with revealing the nature of anything. Knowledge is just opposite of this. It has to create nothing but to reveal what exists already and doesn’t depend upon the individual concerned. It is not a mental activity but its result. This characteristic of knowledge makes it independent of space, time, circumstances, etc., because the knowledge depends upon entity. Activity depends upon the individuality and hence upon space, time, etc. Thus though all knowledge seems to be uniform, śaṅkara differentiates between the knowledge of empirical object and the objects of absolute reality. These two forms may be termed as particular knowledge and universal knowledge. According to śaṅkara, scriptures do not give a direct vision of reality. They only serve
to lift the veil of ignorance from the eyes of our intellect. Reality shines itself as soon as the veil is lifted. This is *pāramārthikānubhava*. Logic is incapable of giving us a direct view of reality either, because it is vitiated by the central flaw, viz, *avidyā*.

*Avidyā*: is his explanation for the eternal subject without an object becoming split up into the object becoming split up into subject and object. *Avidyā* means ignorance of the fundamental basis and projection of something other than reality and attributing that other than reality. *Adhyāsa* and *avidyā* are equated and generally one gives raise to the other. The datum in *adhyāsa* is changeless, while its interpretation changes. *Avidyā* is natural, but not inevitable. It is not altogether unreal, it is *anirvacanīya* and so his theory of error is called *anirvacanīyakhyāti*.

**Ethics**: man is the only ethical subject of the universe according to *śaṅkara*. Ethical judgements of his conduct generally take two forms:

i. Theory of value or axiology a theory to be pursued or sought. These are judgements of values.

ii. Theory of obligation, i.e., a theory of what is to be done. One must know the ends to be kept in view before knowing the means to be employed to achieve them.

Every human being is after continued pleasure or happiness. Man identifies himself with the finite body and seeks pleasure through that medium. The result is grief. By going beyond *avidyā*, one can access to eternal bliss. Any form of *karmas*, are not directly helpful to liberation. The performance, of sacrifice, austerity, fire rituals, etc without desire for fruit are moderately useful for the purification of mind. There are two kinds of *sādhanā*, one is internal and one is external. According to *śaṅkara*, qualification of knowledge, 1. **discrimination** between internal and non-internal, 2. **Non-attachment** to enjoyment of fruits, eternal and non-eternal, or heavenly, 3. **Rigorous discipline** in the form of control of mind and bodily organs etc., and 4. **Desire** for liberation. These would lead to *cittaśuddhi* and eventually *mokṣa*. 
Conclusion:

Upāsanā- A bridge between jñānam and karma:

Coming back to the relevance of upāsanā, we notice that, in the upaniṣats, it is held as the subservient to the realization of jñāna-marga. It partakes both in it karma and jñānam as it is used to enrich both the margas/paths that is jñānam and karma. According to śaṅkara, as mentioned earlier in the first chapter, upāsanā is kartr-tantra which means to be dependent on the agent, the doer, like karma, whereas knowledge is vastu-tantra which means to be dependent on the object. Knowledge arises out of inquiry which is direct and immediate. Like any other direct knowledge, viz, the knowledge of the pot, the knowledge of the brahman is also objectively determined. It cannot be prevented whether one likes it or not. But unlike knowledge, upāsanā is fully dependent on the will, likes, dislikes and the mental setup of the person who undertakes it. So, it can never be vastu-tantra like knowledge and action as the case may be. In the case of action, such as vedic rites, upāsanā forms the essence without actions become meaningless. So upāsanā is the rationale behind the actions. But in the context of knowledge upāsanā becomes conducive by redirecting the mind towards the self. In any way upāsanā acts as a smooth bridge between two severities called jñāna-marga and karma-marga. The fruit of proper, scientific and systematic practice of upāsanā is shown in the below mantras.

The end result of any path of sādhanā undertaken:

For him who sees this, reflects on this and understands this, the prāṇa springs from the self, hope springs from the self, memory springs from the self, the ākaśa springs from the self, fire springs from the self; water springs from the self; appearance and disappearance spring from the self; food springs from the ‘Self’, strength springs from the self; understanding springs from the ‘Self’, meditation springs from the self, consideration springs from the self, will springs from the self; mind springs from the self speech springs from the self, the name springs from the self the sacred hymns spring from the self the sacrifices spring from the self-ay, all this springs from the self.
On this there is the following verse: The knower of truth does not see death or disease or sorrow. The knower of truth sees everything and obtains everything everywhere. He (the knower) is one before the creation, becomes three, becomes five, becomes seven, becomes nine; then again he is called eleven, one hundred and ten and one thousand and twenty. Now is described the discipline for inner purification by which Self-knowledge is attained: When the food is pure, the mind becomes pure. When the mind is pure the memory becomes firm. When the memory is firm all ties are loosened.  

51
Chapter 3

Upasanas: A study in prasthana traya

Introduction to the Upāsanās: At the outset, it would be a fair deal to know about our spiritual inheritance, which was gifted to the mankind through the vedas, by the venerable seers. The supreme and sublimest of the knowledge passed on to the mankind are concentrated and culminated in upaniṣats. Our rṣis or seers thoughts remain forever fresh, relevant and contemporary. They are universal as well and there is nothing complex and narrow in its view which makes them cloistered or confined to one small sect religion or caste. In the words of Swami Ranganathananda of Ramakrishna Mission; “In Czechoslovakia, people told me that their inherited idea of religion and philosophy had been quite different, and that they had felt greatly impressed with the way the vedānta expressed the idea has nothing parochial about it; it is not toed down to any particular creedal or social or political expression, but is universal and human. They were very much impressed with ideas, and their response was immediate”. The absolute beauty further about the seers whose revelations were these magnum-opus scriptures, i.e., upaniṣats, is that they never claimed or copyrighted for themselves the scriptures. A stiff stimulating situation what we find right now is the understanding the scriptures, practising them and again raising ourselves to that level and prove its worth, thereby evaluate our own worthiness and also justify upaniṣat’s contemporariness. Apparently aged scriptures are inherently young and beyond all other consideration they are immortal as it preaches immortality. Man’s intellectual development, technological growths, industrial enlargements, or even the financial expansions are in no way comparable on equal conditions with the spiritual leaps and religious advancements rṣis have achieved through their sādhana. So it is rightly said by śrī kṛṣṇa in his tenth (10th) chapter that spiritual knowledge is best among the knowledge⁵². Upaniṣats or the adhyātmavidyā put forth by the potent and high-calibre rṣis conveys the idea of an accomplishment or the scale of height and true excellence an individual can reach. This grand tradition of scaling human heights of excellence never ever died, but only looked depleted and

⁵² अध्यात्मविद्या विधानांम् B.G. 10:32

53