

Chathurdashavidyaa - Introduction

aum namah shivaya

Couple of weeks ago, a friend wanted to know more about the vedas (after reading the posting of Sri Chakra Vivaranam where chathurdashavidyaa was explained in brief). Wanted to write on this since then but somehow didn't get a chance.

We will be seeing chathurdashavidyaa in brief in a short series of posting starting the next day. This series of posting, even if not fully grasped, will give us a vague idea as to how vast shastras are and as to how to respect the great masters of the past like Sankaracharya and others who have mastered this fourteen-fold science.

This is no surprise as in ancient times, after upanayana a person would master the fourteen-fold science and only then would enter into the world. Many those who argue against sanyaasa saying that it is our duty to marry, ancient people married, even rishis married etc. should first understand as to the background of the people whom they are referring to - these ancient people who married will well versed in the shastras and hence they marrying didn't cause any trouble for them or for their family - instead since they were almost realized, marriage helped them realize Brahman easily and even impart knowledge to their family thus setting the stage for other people also to attain realization. The perfect example for this is Vachaspati Mishra who wrote the bhaamati commentary though was married in his life.

Vedanta is never against marriage, even in today's state. A person who has the desire to marry (sensual pleasures) will definitely marry - nobody can stop the person. Hence marriage isn't something that shouldn't be had or that married people cannot attain realization - just that we have to gain knowledge of the shastras, without this irrespective of whether we are married or not, we will only experience sorrow. This is what we see in many ashrams today where people are not married but there is no happiness, only sorrow and sorrow alone though such ashrams are presided over by great realized masters.

Swami Amritagitananda puri, a sanyaasi disciple of AMMA, once said that brahmacharis/brahmcharinis once approached him and asked a question - when a sanyaasi comes to the ashram (who is not part of the ashram), he praises the path of renunciation saying it is great & way to moksha but when a grihastha comes to the ashram to preach, he says that grihastha marga is great and way to moksha; we are confused as to which is right. To this swamiji replied that both the paths can lead to moksha (sanyaasa karmayogascha nisreyasa karavubhau - both renunciation and action will lead to moksha) but what is important is Ishwara. Without Ishwara, both the path are useless.

Thus it doesn't really matter where one is but what matters is whether one is focused on Ishwara.

If this is the case, then why some people who are devoted to Ishwara experience only sorrow?

?To tell the truth, a person who is devoted even little bit to Ishwara will experience nothing but happiness or bliss alone (this is the case with mahatmas as well). But if we don't experience bliss, then that means we don't have true devotion. True devotion has no bounds - where there is true love, even miseries will become blissful. Physical pain, family problems, financial problems etc. all will become blissful if a person is truly devotional to Ishwara.

Truth is that such people who ask these questions don't know as to what is devotion. And these so-called learned idiots even would go to lengths to quote from shaastras (including Gita) that bhakthiyaa labhyastu (I am attained through devotion). Such people simply reject the next word of ananyayaa (bhakthiyaa labhayastu ananyayaa - means through ananya bhakthi, I am attained). Ananya bhakthi means without anything else - Ishwara alone is the ultimate goal, Ishwara alone is everything. Such is true devotion as explained by the Lord beautifully in the 12th chapter of Gita.

But not knowing the true essence of shaastras, such people make big claims. And then there are others who don't even know the shaastras and make claims of devotion when one just daily visits the temple. Such people who visit temples would be drinking in the night and doing other bad activities but still they are devotional.

Once when was in an aunt's house, the aunt was talking about Vedanta with another uncle and me saying that everything is brahman. To this the uncle said "yes, they say the entire world is Brahmana". The very next topic was about marriage of a cousin in which this uncle's daughter (one of the daughter) wasn't given a gift packet of food items in the end - the uncle was complaining that "they didn't do good, they didn't give her" with full anger.

This is how devotion and knowledge has become today - on one side people sit in lectures and even giving lectures saying that everything is brahman and on the other side, they will shout at their wife for not making coffee (but giving tea only).

It is essential to learn the shaastras properly so that we will come to know that bhakthi and jnaana are not two but one and the same - the emphasis or the path may be different but both focus on Ishwara as pervading the entire world alone.

Even before learning the shaastras, it is essential to understand what the shaastras are, what is their importance, why to learn the shaastras etc. This is what we will also be focusing on this short series (other than a brief on the fourteen-fold science). A clear understanding - even if it is brief - of the shaastras will ensure that we don't end up yet another life in futile but spend it for realization and attain realization in this very birth itself.

May we all strive to understand the fourteen limbs of science so that we will be able to grasp the truth of Brahman in it, abide in Brahman and thereby ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 1

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In the previous posting, we said we will be starting to learn in brief the fourteen limbs of science and also that knowledge of shaastras is very important or essential for life itself.

In order to understand the significance of knowledge, we need to know what knowledge is and what the subject of knowledge is - without these being answered, we will not be able to gain knowledge and thus we will not be able to experience eternal bliss but will only experience sorrow and sorrow alone.

Knowledge has two perspectives to it - one is pure knowledge (chit or chaitanyam) which is Consciousness (as this is the entity that helps to gain all other knowledge or perception); other is knowledge of objects/things.

Though we can argue that Brahman or Self of the nature of pure knowledge isn't a subject of any other knowledge and hence cannot be known through any means but even though we cannot see our own face still we can get an idea from a mirror - similarly though Brahman isn't an object (but subject of everything), it can still be indicated.

Now coming to knowledge of objects/things, this can be split into two - first is worldly knowledge or knowledge of everything that the world is and second is knowledge about the source of the world (Brahman).

?Now knowledge about the source of the world is only paroksha jnaana or indirect knowledge (indicative knowledge) whereas aparoksha jnaana is direct experience of Brahman or Brahman itself.

Thus jnaana -> aparoksha (Brahman) + paroksha
Paroksha -> laukika (worldly) + aatmeeya (about Brahman)

Chathurdashavidyaa includes all jnaana except aparoksha but since a mastery of this and implementation will grant a person aparoksha jnaana therefore it isn't wrong to say that chathurdashavidyaa includes all jnaana (aparoksha jnaana as well).

It is this chathurdashavidyaa which we call as shaastras or scriptures. We can derive or interpret this word of shaastra in different ways - best is that it is a shastra or weapon that destroys ignorance along with its impurities of likes-dislikes, sorrows-sufferings etc.

It is generally a wrong notion that shaastras only talk about renunciation and those who learn the shaastras will take up sanyaasa - if this was the case, there would be too many sanyaasins in the world. It is also a wrong notion to think that shaastras only talk about Brahman - anything and everything under the sun is explained in the shaastras.

Oh, are computers explained in the shaastras?

No but advanced mathematics is explained which is the basis of computers. And in ancient times, rishis didn't need computers to do stuff. Even emailing or chatting wasn't needed as there was linking of the mind (they could talk through telepathy).

That the shaastras contain everything is essential to understand as without this, we will not have full faith in the shaastras - instead we will try to seek alternatives for bliss or happiness.

Jnaana or knowledge is found only in the shaastras - laukika jnaana can be found elsewhere but knowledge of Brahman can only be found in the shaastras. If we learn the shaastras, along with brahmajnaana we will also learn other sciences and way of living in the world as well.

All the problems in the world are because we don't realize our true nature of blissful Brahman (as experienced in deep sleep state) and since brahmajnaana is only in the shaastras, therefore shaastras and jnaana in itself is very essential or inevitable.

If it is asked as to what is the use of bhakthi, karma, yoga etc. then the answer is that all of these can strengthen our mind and make us eligible to gain and implement jnaana. Of

course ultimately bhakthi is surrender unto Ishwara who is none other than Brahman - a jnaani uses the word of remembrance whereas a bhaktha uses the word of surrender - when in both cases, the end result is brahman alone exists, how can they both be different?

If the shastras term the final step of the spiritual path towards eternal bliss as bhakthi, people might not understand it properly. Hence and in order to show brahman's very nature of chit, the final step is mentioned as jnaana. Thus jnaana is inevitable in order to attain eternal bliss. AMMA hence mentions again and again that all problems are because we don't know the shastras - if only we knew the shastras, we will know how to handle anything and everything in the world in a blissful way.

Now as to why Brahman is to be known and everything else will only give sorrow, the shastras are very clear about this but any sadhaka with a little bit of intellect will be easily able to understand that the world we currently experience can only give sorrow. This is because the world is constantly changing. Happiness can be attained from any object but if the object is changing, then the happiness level also will change. And after a while, when the object itself vanishes then happiness derived from the object also will vanish. Such happiness which is ever changing isn't happiness at all - true happiness is that which remains ever the same. All other happiness is temporary happiness which is sorrowful alone (more sorrowful than sorrow itself, we can say).

Thus wise people will never take resort to temporary happiness as they know it will only give sorrow. Thus wise people will seek happiness from anything other than the world. Now as to what is other than the world, a normal person would answer that there is nothing apart from the world but a wise person will know that there should be something which has permanent happiness or eternal bliss - this is because temporary cannot exist without a permanent entity. A variable in mathematics is always a constant and it has no existence without the constant. Thus the temporary world has a permanent entity - this permanent entity is not part of the world but beyond the world and the basis of the world. This entity thus is the source of the world and its substratum as well. This entity is the source as from it only the temporary world appears to exist. It is the substratum as temporary world is just an illusion in it. Anything temporary is just an illusion in the permanent entity even as a variable is an illusion of a name in the constant at any point of time.

This substratum is what shastras call as Brahman and it is blissful in nature. And since it alone is blissful therefore we have to seek this entity if we desire eternal bliss. Some may argue that they don't want eternal bliss but temporary happiness is enough but such people are fools as happiness-sorrow alternate in this world therefore temporary happiness will soon become temporary sorrow. And one will be whirled between happiness and sorrow. Of course there would be fools who are so foolish to just depend on this whirling but such people cannot be helped at all.

Therefore shastras are only for those who are currently experiencing sorrow from the world (or not experiencing eternal bliss) and are wise enough to understand that there is a blissful Brahman that has to be sought out. And shastras is the source of that blissful Brahman (that which indicates Brahman and directs us to Brahman).

It goes without saying that shastras are inevitable for attaining bliss (there is no other alternative to shastras). Those who think that a Guru is enough and we don't need shastras are also wrong - a Guru will give us knowledge of the shastras in one or the other way - if it is argued that a Guru like AMMA might give us knowledge in simple form and thus we don't need to learn the shastras at all are also wrong, all the swamis in the mission as well as people in ashram are also directed by AMMA to learn the shastras.

We may get a small picture of taj mahal but this cannot replace the original one. We may get a duplicate mp3 player but this cannot replace the actual one. Similarly we may understand things easily from the words of mahatmas but that can never replace the shaastras which are the original.

A Guru is definitely a living embodiment of shaastras but a guru cannot replace the shaastras. This is like saying that we cannot replace one hand with another hand - both have their purposes. A Guru is accessible easily to us and can guide us in the way we understand whereas for shaastras, we have to get proper manuals or way-of-understanding. A true guru will guide us to the shaastras as shaastras are the very basis of the guru - and only through learning the shaastras, a guru can create gurus out of shishyas.

Thus it is very clear that shaastras are inevitable for attaining bliss as they are the source of Brahman which can give us eternal bliss. If we are sadhakas striving for eternal bliss then shaastras definitely is required for us and we should start learning/understanding/implementing shaastras soon itself so that an entire life wouldn't be wasted in futile worldly activities.

There will always be few who will not agree with the above mentioned words - for the reason that they are logic and many would even quote master's words or the shaastras themselves that Brahman is beyond words and thoughts/logic. Such people quote shaastras loosely - logic is essential to ascertain things - everything has its place, similarly logic has its place as well. Improper use of logic can cause harm is what the quotation of shaastras say - proper logic can on the other hand guide us quickly to Brahman and make us realize Brahman very soon itself (this is like saying a tablet, when taken in small proper quantity, can remove disease and if taken in large quantities can even take away our own life).

For people who claim that above is only based on logic, there are other reasons to learn the shaastras. Shaastras are our age-old tradition - a man/woman who doesn't know his tradition is like one who doesn't know his own name/father/mother. Therefore it is essential to learn the shaatras to know our tradition/culture/background.

For people who are so devoted to their Guru or Ishwara, shaastras are again inevitable as it is through the shaastras that we learn about our Guru or Ishwara. Only shaastras can hint at our Guru or Ishwara - all other explanations are futile and useless. When we learn the shaastras, we will find real glory of guru or ishwara - and those who think that shaastras are jnaana and will reduce bhakthi should remember that through the shaastras, by learning the glory of one's guru or Ishwara, one will attain supreme or complete devotion. Therefore it is essential to learn the shaastras for bhakthas and shishyaas.

For people who are followers of science, it is essential to learn the shaastras as through this all the questions that baffle scientists can be answered. Questions like what is this universe made up of, where from it came, where is it going, where is it situated etc. can be answered beyond doubt only the shaastras. There is no use going to mars or any other planet for this - but learning of the shaastras will make us know all this here itself.

Lastly no logic is required - we are to be considered fools if we don't know the shaastras as only through shaastras we learn our very nature. Everywhere else we learn about body, mind, the world etc. but only in the shaastras we can learn about ourselves (I that pulsates inside I that I exist-I exist). And one who doesn't know himself is an idiot - and such idiots will experience nothing sorrow alone - and such idiots should feel shy and ashamed of themselves. If at least a person starts to know who I am, then they are to be praised and

encouraged as they are coming out of being idiots and striving to become intelligent/learned/blissful.

It might take many births to master the shaastras so is it worth learning them? Definitely - once we start learning them we will find that the crux or essence is what is important. Once we get this essence then the rest becomes very easy or simple. Even if we don't know much of the shaastras but know its essence, that is enough and we will realize within few births itself. Therefore it is definitely worth learning the shaastras.

:)We will start with parts of the fourteen-fold science in the next day.

May we all strive to learn the shaastras, even if little bit, so that we will be able to put an end to all sufferings and rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 2

aum namah shivaya

In the previous posting we saw that Brahman alone is real and blissful whereas the world we currently experience is just an illusion of names and forms in the substratum of Brahman. We also saw that knowledge, as the shaastras preach, is essential and inevitable to attain eternal bliss as knowledge from the shaastras alone can direct us and indicate us towards blissful Brahman. Until a person attains this knowledge and implements it in one's life, sorrows will always be there irrespective of whatever the person does.

Though we didn't see in the previous posting, it is important to remember the essence of shaastras as sarvam brahma mayam or everything is filled in and out with Brahman. Keeping this mind or remembering this in our mind is implementation of knowledge. Knowledge shouldn't just be in our intellect but our actions should be presided over in the mind by knowledge - this would mean that irrespective of the action or the result of the action, we will be able to remain blissful (as there is nothing here but Brahman alone exists - whatever is happening in the world is nothing but just an illusion, a long dream). Thus mere jnaana or knowledge isn't enough, vijnaana or implementation of jnaana (living jnaana in our life) is required. Though the gap between jnaana and vijnaana is very small, still the result or effect will be vast. There are many people who have jnaana or knowledge of the shaastras but many of them don't have eternal bliss because they are not living the knowledge in their life (means they forget knowledge often - rarely do they remember knowledge when it comes to day-to-day life and activities).

Jnaana can be compared to learning to code and vijnaana is when we use this as means of living. Jnaana isn't of much help unless it is converted to vijnaana. Therefore it is essential to not just learn the shaastras but live it in our day-to-day life. Each and every activity should have jnaana in our mind (that Brahman alone exists here).

Just to point out, if we remember this even the worse possible action cannot affect us - we will be blissful even while experiencing or performing such an action. Since jnaana is implemented in the mind therefore externally we can behave like a normal worldly person (externally shouting at a person while internally remembering that there is nothing but Brahman alone exists here). Hence nothing really changes - just our perspective changes and that makes life blissful instead of sorrowful with lots of problems.

Let's go back to the topic of chathurdashavidyaa - fourteen-fold science. Sorry that didn't take it up earlier (or may have mentioned, then too sorry). Vidya is science - science is based on the two pillars of logic and experience. This is something which, so-called scientists of today, say shastras don't have. But to be right, only shastras can claim to have both logic and experience. This is because only shastras give a complete picture of anything and everything.

Whatever the so-called sciences of today have found are all filled with assumptions and voids here and there. For eg:- where did the earth come from? Where did galaxy come from? Where is it going? - no answer whatsoever. "Oh, the world came out of a big bang - and it is expanding - wait a second, it is contracting & not expanding". Thus varied are the answers of sciences of today.

Oh, this is wrong - you only took one small science.
Ok, let's take up our body itself - what is it made up of?
Cells, molecules, bones etc.

Then how is it different from a dead body?
Dead-body's heart doesn't have any pulse.

How does the heart get pulse?
Oh - it just is there, that's it.

From where the pulse started? Why it started? Why it ends? After ending, where does the pulse go? We all know the rules of science that something cannot just vanish into nowhere - there should be a logical explanation but so-called scientists have no clues to this logical explanation.

And when a great master vanishes from a particular place in order to serve the disciple or devotee in another place, then it is not scientific.

Why so?
Because we, the so-called scientific fools, say so.

?The above doesn't mean personal hatred for scientists is there in this mind but just that wanted to show the state of so-called sciences of the world which are fully incomplete. These sciences only cause more and more confusion rather than clearing things (which they are supposed to do).

Until we are very clear about this, we will not seek the shastras. Instead of reading shastras, we will read blog postings of people visiting some places here and there in the world. All these are also fine as long as we learn the shastras. Shastras are THE SCIENCE or Vidya as they are based on logic and experience - the shastras explain each and everything very clearly (beyond doubt and that which can be experienced by one and all equally).

No, science provides money and food (source of livelihood) but shastras aren't. Yes, shastras can't provide livelihood (today it can to an extent) but shastras provide blissful living which any science of the world cannot. Without this blissing living, life itself is a waste irrespective of where we are, who we are and how much money we have. Therefore shastras definitely stand much higher than the sciences of today.

You are wrong, amma says that science and shastras have to go hand in hand.

Great compassionate masters like amma are so compassionate that they slowly will take us towards shaastras. If it is said that shaastras alone are enough, nobody will come to shaastras. Imagine a guru telling shishyaas that there should be no cellphone with them from tomorrow - there will no cellphone in the class the next day but there wouldn't be any shishyaas as well.

AMMA also says so because we don't have to go against science as it isn't an obstacle if follow the shaastras. We can use science for the benefit of learning or spreading the shaastras (through technology for example).

Now, the questions unanswerable by science have to be answered by the shaastras if we have to become convinced ? (lest people say this is just some humbug - even shaastras don't have answer so they aren't any better than sciences of the world).

Where did the world come from? Where is it situated, where is it going to?

The world came from Consciousness or Brahman - so in essence, it is just an illusion - that which appears as real but doesn't really exist. We all experience this during the state of deep sleep so experience proves this. Logic proves this - the world has come from one source that has to be sentient (consciousness) and it merges unto that source, in between it remains in the source so this means it is just an illusion in the source of Brahman.

Regarding body, dead-body doesn't have Consciousness reflected in it. The power of Consciousness is strong that it triggers energy to start (has energy really started? No, but it appears to have started from definitely Consciousness). This energy (total energy) causes small bodies to have pulses or pranaa. This pranaa is present in the physical body but it is a subtle entity along with mind, intellect etc. These subtle entities last longer than gross - even as electricity lasts longer than the bulb through which it is experienced. When bulb gets old, electricity moves from this bulb to another - similarly when the gross is old, the pranaa and antah karana take up a new body.

Now if it is questioned as to where the source of Consciousness came from or exists, the answer is that it self-exists and hence doesn't need any source. And this is experienced by all - the I that pulsates as I-exist, I-exist is self-existing as it doesn't need any proof whatsoever.

The above is just a small sample of how shaastras have the answer to anything and everything in the world and hence they are so aptly called as vidyaa. They are knowledge of everything and they also grant us the way to live blissfully (at all times irrespective of any conditions). Hence they are essential for not just sadhakas but to whoever seeks eternal bliss (true sadhakas are those who strive for eternal bliss but this isn't always the case).

Now going back to the fourteen-fold sciences, the fourteen include four Vedas, six vedaangas and four upaangaas (or upavedas). These together encompass vidyaa or knowledge. It is known that in ancient times people used to master all these fourteen when in a gurukula (learning under the guidance of a guru). And only after these fourteen have been mastered, will the shishya come out of the gurukula (graduate, to say in a way) - then the shishya is fully enabled with knowledge of livelihood and living as well. Such a shishya then continues in the world doing his or her actions while remaining focused on the goal of moksha. And thus within a short time (or at least by the end of this birth), the shishya realizes. But before the life ends, the shishya imparts this knowledge to his partner and to people around as well (through words and deeds) - the shishya also sets the tradition of learning these from a guru to his or her children. Thus the tradition of knowledge and realization through knowledge continues.

There are many who will not learn the shaastras themselves but will say that women cannot learn the shaastras. On the other hand, there are women running around trying to protect their clan saying that they have eligibility to learn the shaastras - they are also doing nothing at all - if they get eligibility, still they aren't going to learn but just that they need eligibility.

In ancient times, wasn't common for women to learn the shaastras. But women were treated equally (unlike today when equality in name or legally is there but real equality is completely missing) and the shishya would teach his wife thus making both of them go towards realization. Of course today many missions support and encourage women as well to learn the shaastras and preach as well. Gender bias isn't something that we find in the shaastras as shaastras speak about Brahman beyond gender - and this brahman being our very nature, it is the right of every person (man or woman) to realize Brahman through shaastras. If there are aacharaas or conducts mentioned in scriptural texts or by masters, it has a purpose which is very different from gender bias or degradation of women - for example, women aren't supposed to go to temple during period, we can argue that this is gender bias but this isn't the case - the reason being very simple that the mind will be fluctuating along with physical problems as well and hence during such times, they cannot focus on Ishwara & they going to the temple will also create bad vibrations (for other people around them) as well. And just because during these periods, women cannot visit temple doesn't mean they shouldn't remember Ishwara or chant naamas - these are times when one should definitely remember Ishwara, chant naamas and sing bhajans because such times require more focus and concentration for oneself (to not let oneself get affected by physical conditions). Of course, these are controversial topics and hence wouldn't delve a lot on these.

Just we should remember that shaastras don't discriminate between gender in any way (yes manu smriti does say but such statements are false interpretations of manu smriti itself).

Going back, Vidyaa or science is essential for anything and everything in life to be blissful. Yes, we can live without vidyaa but we cannot live blissfully. We may have money, name, power or anything else in the world but without vidyaa we will have no peace, no contentment, no satisfaction and no eternal bliss. Hence vidyaa is essential or inevitable for sadhakas like us who crave for eternal bliss.

As to the parts of vidyaa, we will start with vedas in the next posting. ?Sorry for the wait but rather than merely learning chathurdashavidyaa, we should also know its significance or importance - only then we will ardently seek it amidst all the busy schedules of the world.

May we all strive to gain vidyaa thereby making our lives devoid of sorrows and sufferings and filled with bliss and bliss alone.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 3

aum namah shivaya

Pardon the break in postings for the last couple of days. In the last posting, we saw as to what the meaning of vidyaa is and why it is very essential for our life. To put it briefly, vidyaa is the science of living life blissfully amidst all the problems and chaos that we see in the world around.

Will problems ever get eradicated from the world?

Definitely no as the world is temporary which itself means it is filled with problems.

Then what can be done?

We can just understand that the world itself is an illusion and then instantly all problems will cease to be problems. Then even though problems may exist, we will not be affected by them. Instead we will try to solve them in the best possible way. If it is solved, then we are blissful and if it isn't solved, still we will be blissful.

It is this blissful existence irrespective of external situations that is the ultimate goal of life. And absolutely no way to eternal bliss without knowledge of the Self or Brahman, termed as vidyaa. Any other remedies or solutions like going to a beach or a resort or even going to a spiritual master will only remove sorrows/problems temporarily. It will give us temporary happiness but not eternal bliss. Eternal bliss can be achieved only through knowledge and not through any other means.

Thus it is essential and important for each of us to start gaining vidyaa slowly so that at least by the end of this birth, we are a little bit blissful and content rather than being totally discontent with life. If we give up our life in total discontentment, it will get continued in the next birth. Thus we will be whirled between birth and birth with nothing but discontentment and sorrows alone.

Vidyaa has fourteen parts or components to it. We can say that all fourteen are essential in order to gain knowledge of anything and everything. But if some core pieces, we understand then even though we may not learn or know other pieces we will still be able to remain blissful. It is necessary to keep this in mind as mastering all the fourteen parts requires considerable effort and undistracted and concentrated effort (which is almost impossible for majority of people today).

The fourteen parts are the four vedas, six vedaangaas and four upavedas. Today we will see a brief about the four vedas.

The word Veda means knowledge or to know. Vedas are the source of knowledge and can be said to be encyclopedia of knowledge. But unlike other encyclopedia which is different from the entity it describes, Vedas aren't just encyclopedia of knowledge but they are knowledge themselves. Vedas are very sacred indeed for many reasons.

They are the source of all knowledge and above all, they are the source of Brahman (indications about Brahman and how to realize Brahman) which is eternally blissful in nature and the only reality as the substratum of the world. They have very sacred chants merely chanting of which will have great effects. For eg: the sacred chant on Siva, Rudram and Chamakam are so powerful that wherever they are chanted or listened, that area will be devoid of problems of any kind (we aren't talking merely about problems externally remaining and internally vanishing but problems externally as well vanishing).

Now if it is asked as to why we can't solve all problems by merely playing rudram everywhere? Then the question itself has the answer - it is impossible. Majority of people will not agree to playing rudram around wherever they are let alone play in the entire world. But it is true that wherever these sacred chants are played, problems will just end. There have been many people who have benefited out of chanting of rudram in many ways.

Vedas are also sacred as they stand for Brahman. This is because even though they may talk about a lot of things, the main subject-matter is Brahman and Brahman alone. Since

Brahman is sacred (pure and blissful), therefore Vedas which have for their subject Brahman also has to be naturally sacred.

Vedas are sacred finally because they stand for the entire world. Lord Brahma created the three worlds by chanting the three words of bhoo, bhuva and suva - and while chanting, the vedas were also created from his very breath. Thus Vedas can be said to be the very breath of Ishwara or Brahman. Therefore we say that Vedas are eternal (as they are very breath of Brahman). And as a result of this, we also say that Vedas are apaurusheya - no person created it but it came into existence of its own.

Now, it is important to remember that Vedas don't stand for mere books - it isn't like a book with chants of four vedas is the Vedas. Vedas aren't books - Vedic chants or slokas can be put into a book but Vedas are much beyond mere books or chants or slokas. They have the power of Brahman in and out of them.

Thus there are many people who master the vedic texts (books of Vedas) but they haven't mastered Vedas as mastering Vedas means realizing Brahman itself.

Since Vedas are Ishwara's breath, therefore one needs to deal them with respect. A small word of caution - it is bad to play (not childish plays but mocking plays) with Vedas or with realized masters, such actions will have its repercussions and hence it doesn't matter if one learns or follows Vedas but one should show it some respect.

Vedas or knowledge itself in ancient times were imparted orally (hence they are called sruthis or that which are heard) unlike today where we write down stuff, read from books etc. As a result of such system today people have no memory capacity at all - even the most intelligent person in the world can only capture less than 30-40% of what is being heard. But this isn't a problem as long as we learn the shastras or right vidya without which anything because useless (as cannot eradicate or remove sorrows).

Since vedas were srutham or heard and learnt, therefore this tradition as it passed down ages became spread across many parts. This means there wasn't any proper classification or structuring of the Vedas. Vyaasa was the person who formalized the Vedas or brought in a proper structure to the Vedas. And this formalization put Vedas into four - rig veda, yajurveda, saamaveda and atharvaveda.

Great masters are those who don't just formalize systems and then forget it but they will ensure that the system is followed properly. Hence Vyaasa appointed four of his disciples to each of the four Vedas - rigveda was assigned to Paila, saamveda to Jaimini, yajurveda to Vaishampaayana and atharvaveda to sumanthu.

Rigveda primarily has chants, saamaveda has chants that can be sung, yajurvedas has more proses and atharvaveda has rituals and chants for curing diseases etc.

Before we get into the parts of the Vedas, there is an interesting story about two different version of yajurveda. Yajurveda was assigned to vaishampaayana. Vaishampaayana's favorite disciple was yajnavalkya who mastered the entire yajurveda from him. But somehow there was a row between both and as a result, vaishampaayana requested yajnavalkya to let go of all the knowledge imparted to him. Yajnavalkya thus vomited out all the knowledge. This vomit was precious and hence other disciples of vaishampaayana became birds (tittiri) and they ate the vomit. Thus this yajurveda is called Krishna yajur veda (Krishna or eagle were the birds). Yajnavalkya after having forgotten the vedas did penance to learn it from Sun (who was taught by the Lord himself and who had another big

portion of the Vedas). And he learnt from Sun god - thus this yajurveda is called shukla yajurveda. To finish the story, it is said that vaishampaayana reconciled with yajnavalkya who then taught vaishampaayana the shukla yajurveda.

Vedas, since they are taught orally, would become a little different as time passes by - two disciples learn from the same Guru but when they preach in different areas, slight changes in texts will appear. These different versions of the same vedas are called shaakhaas or recensions. Purana says that there are 1080 shakhaas though only handfuls are extinct today. The most famous of these is the brihadaranyaka Upanishad which has kanva shaakha and maadhyandina shaakha - the former was commented upon by Adi Sankaracharya whereas the latter was commented upon by Vidyaaranya.

Since Veda encompasses all knowledge therefore Vedas are also split into four different components. Unlike worldly sciences, all these four take us to the ultimate vidyaa of brahmavidyaa (giving us eternal bliss). But each of these four have a definite and distinct purpose towards moksha. The first is the samhita or chants as praises to Ishwara - second is the braahmana which has ritualistic actions - third is aaranyaka which has rituals and upaasanaas - last is Upanishad which has knowledge about Brahman.

Realization or completion of knowledge can be split into three distinct steps - first is purity of mind or chittha shuddhi; second is concentration of mind or chittha ekaagrataa; third is knowledge or jnaana.

Gaining jnaana but without chittha shuddhi or ekaagrataa is like a container in which water is poured but the container is not clean and broken. Without the mind being proper, knowledge will not be effective. Purity of mind means not too many thoughts in the mind - mind that doesn't easily run hither and thither - mind that doesn't have that many desires - mind that doesn't seek a lot of things. But such pure mind alone isn't enough, it should also be capable of concentrating on anything at will. This is concentration of mind - that mind which can focus on anything and ignore everything else completely. Such concentration is essential to ignore the world that we currently perceive and focus on the non-dual reality of Ishwara. Finally pure and concentrated mind isn't enough - many people have such minds but the goal in the mind is worldly objects - instead we need the goal of Ishwara in our mind. And this goal of Ishwara is known only through jnaana or knowledge of the shaastras. Until then we may hear about Ishwara but we will not know Ishwara to be eternally blissful. When we grow up, we learn about Ishwara not as blissful and substratum of world but as someone who can grant us things. This is really wrong - Ishwara can grant us worldly pleasures but Ishwara is the ultimate goal of life. If Ishwara as ultimate goal of life in the form of eternal blissful Consciousness substratum of the world isn't kept in mind, such a mind is of no use and will only cause sorrows in the long run.

These three steps may be progressive or happening together but these three are definitely required (ideal case is one after other but such cases are rare).

These three are served through the four parts of vedas. Samhita or praises to Ishwara purifies our mind - braahmana which has ritualistic actions as well help to purify our mind when we remember Ishwara and offer everything to Ishwara. Then concentration is attained through various upaasana or forms of meditation - these are found in aaranyakaas. Finally jnaana or knowledge about Brahman is gained through the Upanishads.

A veda shaakha will consist of these four parts but in many cases we find overlapping of parts - for example Ishavasya Upanishad is part of vaajasaneyi samhita, chandogya and kena Upanishad are part of talavakara braahmana.

It is said that it is tough to master even one shaakha completely - it takes almost a life to master. Hence people only master one shaakhas of a veda rather than all the four vedas. In the traditional system of families, each family has a particular veda associated with it which is the primary veda to be mastered. This depends also on the area where a person lives.

Often Vedas lose their hold on society and then they have to re-established along with aachaara or code of conduct. This is what Adi Sankaracharya did by establishing four mutts in four corners of the world and assigning one veda to each mutt. Aachaara shouldn't be mistaken as something followed by just very traditional family or people - these are code of conduct of life in order to attain the goal of moksha. Many of these code of conduct can be scientifically also said to be valid and having purpose today but will not take this up as science comes very late when shaastras have put all these with proofs long ago itself.

Irrespective of how many people follow it and other conditions, vedas will always remain the same. These are like a river - the river has beautiful water in it and flows to many places. This is irrespective of whether the water is used or not - similarly vedas are sources of Brahman and ways to eternal bliss irrespective of whether many follow it or none follow it. A person who learns the vedas will benefit through eternal bliss in this birth or at least in the next few births.

Thus sadhakas like us should strive to master at least few parts of the vedas (if not an entire shaakha, at least Upanishads and if not many at least a few of the Upanishads).

An article on the four vedas can never be complete without analysis of Upanishads (core of Vedas as these are knowledge portions). We will see a brief about Upanishads in the next posting.

May we all strive to learn at least few things in Vedas so that we will be able to put an end to sorrows and sufferings and be able to rejoice in bliss here and now itself through knowledge and abidance in Brahman.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 4

aum namah shivaya

In the previous posting we learnt about the Vedas in brief. We saw the three distinct steps of purity of mind, concentration of mind and knowledge for the goal of moksha. And since moksha is the ultimate goal of life therefore one ought to implement these three steps so that yet another human birth doesn't go waste in sensual pleasures and worldly activities.

Purity of mind is attained through nishkaama karma or selfless actions. Nishkaama karma is generally action performed as an offering unto Ishwara. Any offering has no attachment to the offering and no expectation thus making the result a prasaada or blessing of Ishwara. Thus as AMMA says, if good happens it will become Ishwara's grace and if bad happens then it will become Ishwara's will. Thus everything will be Ishwara's alone - and since blissful Ishwara cannot give anything other than bliss, therefore we will experience only bliss.

Here it is important to remember that Ishwara isn't just a person in some place (not even avataara purushas body is Ishwara) - Ishwara is all-pervasive Consciousness, the very basis of the world and the substratum of the illusory world. If this nature of Ishwara isn't kept in mind, then we will not be able to experience bliss but only temporary happiness.

But irrespective of whether we remember as to who Ishwara is or not, offering of action will purify the mind. Such a mind will not crave for lot and hence thoughts and desires will be less in the mind. Such a pure mind will become concentrated when practicing sadhanas like dhyaana, japa etc. These practices will focus on the Lord and therefore our mind will be concentrated rather than distracted into many things. Such a concentrated mind alone can remember subtle concepts in the shaastras.

But above purity and concentration of mind, knowledge or jnaana is essential. This knowledge can be found only in the shaastras (this isn't merely worldly knowledge but knowledge of everything). This knowledge when one knows, there will remain nothing else to be known.

Jnaanam teham savijnaanamidam vakshyaami asheshatah
Yat jnaatvaa neha bhooyo anyat jnaatavyam avashishyate

Knowledge along with implementation, I will tell you completely; knowing this, there will remain nothing else to be known.

Kasmin u bhagavo vijnaate sarvamidam vijnaatam bhavati
Knowing what, everything will become known - tell me that O guru

Is there an entity by knowing which everything becomes known? An entity which is the basis of everything?

Definitely there is - this entity is termed as Brahman in the shaastras (as it is very big, brihatvaat - and as it appears as the world, brimhanatvaat). This entity of Brahman is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. This entity is the source (kaaranam) and substratum of the world that we are currently experiencing.

Before we enter into a brief analysis of Brahman, Brahman can be known only through the shaastras or the portion of Vedas called Upanishads. The word Upanishad, as Sankara beautifully describes in his Upanishad bhashya, comes from the root SAD which has three meanings of visharana, gati and avasaadanam - it removes bad qualities, it takes us to Brahman and it reduces vaasanaas. Upa and ni mean to approach and with steadfastness. Thus Upanishads are the source of Brahman and that which helps us towards the goal of moksha. Sankara says that Upanishads are not mere books but even the knowledge of Brahman can be called Upanishads - thus it is both the text as well as the knowledge in the text too.

Without Upanishads (knowledge of Brahman), one cannot attain moksha (eternal bliss). One may attain the knowledge of Upanishad as found in smriti texts like gita or puraanas or through the word of great masters but the ultimate or final source and authority of Brahman is the Upanishad.

As we learnt in the previous day, each veda (shaakha) has one upanishad in it. Thus there are 1180 (may have wrongly given as 1080 in the previous posting, pardon the same) Upanishads but only just more than 100 are extant today. Of these Upanishads, there are 10 Upanishads that Sankara commented upon and these are called dasha Upanishad or

mahaa Upanishad. Other Upanishads are called minor Upanishads. The names of 108 upanishads can be found in the muktikopanishad in the form of instruction from Rama to Hanuman - Upanishad brahmayogin has commented upon the 108 Upanishads (this has been released in various volumes by Madras University, I believe).

The dasha Upanishads have been further commented upon by other acharyas including acharyas of other Vedanta systems.

Why commentaries are as important or in some cases more important than the actual Upanishads?

Because Upanishads are in old vaidika Sanskrit and the language and concepts of such traditional and deep texts are impossible without the help from a learned master. And in order to maintain the meaning of these texts correct (without corruption) and to spread them more, Adi Sankara wrote bhashyas or commentaries on these Upanishads. Sankara bhashyas (as commonly called) are inevitable for any sadhaka who wants to master the Upanishads (Sankara's Upanishad bhashya, gita bhashya and brahma sutra bhashya have been released in three volumes with just actual Sanskrit text by Motilal Banarsidas).

Sankara's bhashyas though explain the Upanishads, themselves are tough nuts to crack and hence Anandagiri (jnaanaanandagiri) wrote tikaas (gloss - short commentaries) on Sankara's bhashyas.

Vidyaranya's big work of Anubhoothiprakaasha split into chapters and explaining the major Upanishads is another notable work explaining the Upanishads.

The dasha Upanishads are isha, kena, katha, prashna, mundaka, mandukya, aitareya, taittiriya, chandogya and brihadaranyaka. Mandukya is shortest of all with just 12 slokas but very deep concepts and brihadaranyaka-chandogya are big Upanishads.

Noteworthy here is Vidyaranya's dipika on brihadaranyaka Upanishad and sureshwaracharya's vaartika on sankara's brihadaranyaka and taittiriya bhashya.

Let's now get back to Brahman in Upanishads. This same Brahman is named variously as Ishwara, Paramaatman, Bhagavaan, Vishnu, Siva etc. in various texts. Brahman, as we saw earlier, is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and bliss.

Brahman is Existence in nature as it is the source of the world - that source which is eternal (if brahman as source of the world isn't eternal, then we have to find a source for Brahman and that has to be eternal - if that isn't then its source has to be eternal - thus we will get into infinite regression) has to be always existing or existence in nature.

Why can't Brahman have existence as a quality?

Existence if a quality would make Brahman not eternally existent - quality isn't always present in an entity but it may be present or not, it will fluctuate in quantity - hence existence isn't a quality of Brahman but Brahman's very nature.

Any entity existing has to have light falling upon it. But Brahman as existence requires eternal light and this light is Consciousness. Consciousness means the pulsation of I-exist, I-exist - the eternal proof or light that illumines existence constantly.

That which is Existence and Consciousness and is eternal is therefore unlimited (limited means existing only for a period of time). That which is unlimited is blissful in nature - bliss is unlimited happiness.

Thus nature of Brahman is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Brahman is absolute as Brahman alone exists beyond the world. There is no relation of Brahman with anything else as nothing apart from Brahman really exists.

So then the world which comes from Brahman?

The world is just an illusion - a mere appearance in Brahman. It appears very real but is really unreal. That the world has no essence is clearly known by its nature of temporaryness. Today we see something and tomorrow it vanishes. This clearly means that it isn't eternal and that which isn't eternal is definitely unreal (only appearing to be real). Even as dream world which is really unreal appears real while experiencing it, similarly this world appears very real when experiencing it but is really unreal.

Thus the shastras say "neha naanaa asthi kinchana" (there is no duality whatsoever here), "mattah parataram naanyat kinchidasthi dhananjaya" (there is nothing apart from me here, O Arjuna).

If the world is unreal, then what about me?

I is generally identified with the body-mind-intellect and the world with respect to objects and people. Since the world is unreal therefore this I is also unreal. But it is a matter of fact and direct experience that I am always there from day of birth till day of death and without any change as well. Thus there is a changing I and a changeless I. This changing I is as unreal or illusory like the world whereas the changeless I is eternal.

The changeless I thus is nothing but Brahman. It is this I that is the basis of the entire world - hence the changing I or ego poses as real I thereby causing troubles as it creates an impression of the external world (as the real I is the basis of the entire world).

Changeless I can be easily known through the analysis of three states in a day. The waking state is where I gets identified with the gross, dream state is where I gets identified with the subtle and dreamless deep sleep is where I remains as bliss. Irrespective of these three different states, there is an I that serves as link between all these three. This link is unchanging and remains without getting affected the least. This I is a mere witness to the changes in the states as well as the changing I.

Since most of the time, we identify ourselves with the changing I therefore we experience sorrow that is the nature of changes. But once we realize that I am changeless Brahman, then (that very moment itself), we get rid of sorrows and experience only bliss. And when this realization that I am Brahman is natural, then a person is realized as there is only bliss (and no more sorrows can taint the person).

This blissful natural state is the state of moksha and the ultimate goal of life. All aims or struggles, irrespective of whether we are worldly or spiritual, are for this goal only. Spiritual people knowingly seek it and therefore attain it (even if after few births) but worldly people seek it unknowingly and therefore don't attain it.

This is in brief the knowledge found in the Upanishads (crux as Upanishads also talk about creation among many other things). Sankara beautifully thus summarizes knowledge into three parts (all three we have briefly discussed) thus:

Brahma satyam jagan mithyaa jeevo brahmaiva naaparah
Anenavedyam satshastram ithi Vedanta dindimaa

Brahman is real, the world is an illusion and the I (that pulsates inside is) is Brahman alone, not different from it. With this, knowledge or truth about everything is known - thus roars the lion of Vedanta.

The three parts are:

1. Brahman is real (brahman alone is real)
2. The world is an illusion
3. The individual or I is really changeless eternal and blissful Brahman

If a sadhaka is able to grasp all the three, then moksha will very easily be attained. Even if one focusses on at least one of the three, moksha will easily be attained. But often people are unable to believe that they are Brahman or Ishwara. It is fine to worship Ishwara, do sadhana, learn shaastras etc. but to say that I am Brahman is something people are scared of.

Irrespective of whether we like it or not, accept it or not I am Brahman. The quicker or sooner one accepts this, the quicker one will rejoice in bliss. Thus all aims, through vidyaa, should be to strengthen these three parts of knowledge. Without this, life itself will be futile and hence Kena Upanishad says that if we attain brahman here, then it is useful (true) whereas if we don't then it is a big loss. It is after many births that we attain the precious human birth. And rarely do people even come to know about Brahman let alone understand it (like we are doing) - thus if we let go of this opportunity to attain moksha, it will definitely be a big loss. Therefore we shouldn't let go of this opportunity - instead we should strive to attain moksha here and now itself.

Lastly have to mention that the dasa Upanishads are from different vedas (all four vedas). Rig veda has the aitareya Upanishad, saama veda has kena and chandogya Upanishad, prashna-mundaka-mandukya are from the atharva veda, taittiriya-katha are from Krishna yajur veda and finally shukla yajur veda has isha and brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Each of the Upanishad in itself will give us knowledge about Brahman and guide us to moksha but all the Upanishads in total are enough to dispel any doubts about knowledge (the three parts that Sankara beautifully gave) so that we will be able to ever immerse in knowledge of Brahman.

May we all strive to remember the three parts of knowledge at all times so that we will be able to get rid of sorrows and rejoice in bliss here and now itself.
aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 5

aum namah shivaya

In the last posting we learnt knowledge in the Upanishads as split into three parts of Brahman alone is real, the world is an illusion and the I that pulsates inside us is Brahman alone (not different). With this we concluded a brief analysis of the chaturvedas.

Next parts of chathurdashavidyaa are the 6 vedaangaas. We will see three of the vedaangaas in this posting (and the rest in the next posting). We should keep in mind that each of these are a full doctorate topic in itself - hence we will only be very briefly learning them. Interested sadhakas can learn them in depth from the texts that are available on them.

Many times mere knowledge or texts of knowledge isn't enough unless we know how to interpret them or utilize them. Though vedas are texts or guides to Brahman, there needs to be guides to vedas as well. The various vedaangaas serve this purpose - the main purpose being to guide or give us a key to unlocking the vedas to their full glory. Without these keys, we will still be able to gain knowledge out of the vedas but we will not be able to relish the beauty of the vedas.

A great musician is singing and two people go there to hear it. Both enjoy the music and are taken to a different state. But one knows music whereas the other only is a rasika. Both enjoy but the levels of enjoyment are definitely different for both - the person who knows music will enjoy much more than the rasika as finer nuances of music is known by the person. Similarly we may know the slokas of the vedas and their meanings as well but if we know them in their full details then we will be able to relish or enjoy them more.

In ancient times we can definitely say that we just needed to learn the slokas and their meanings as gurus were all apt (well learned in the shaastras and living that knowledge in their life) but today this isn't the case. Each and every person wants to be a guru and becomes a guru if there are one or two followers behind him or her. And such gurus themselves are struggling in the world and they add on to their struggle. Such gurus cause themselves harm (in the form of ego) and others as well (by taking them away from the spiritual path).

We should also remember that gurus aren't mere mentors - there are mentors each and every place in the world but such mentors also cause us only harm if they aren't gurus. With mentoring comes a little dependency and expectation on both sides - this in turn binds a person to the world rather than taking towards the goal of moksha. Thus wise sadhakas would stay away from mentors or false gurus and seek only one who is established always in Brahman (blissful at all times).

Thus in today's time, learning vedaangaas would definitely help sadhakas understand the real import of the shaastras and relish in the beauty of the shaastras.

Many argue as to which is the oldest of languages - some say tamil, some say Sanskrit and so on. All these arguments are one futile and two wrong. Sanskrit obviously is one of the oldest language in the world but even the Sanskrit found in the vedas are little different than the Sanskrit that we know today - therefore there are times where one finds vaidika usage (different and at times contrary to vyaakarana or grammatical Sanskrit).

It is futile to argue which is oldest language but it is also wrong to just fight that Sanskrit is greatest language. Many people today run behind spoken Sanskrit and say that a reformation through learning and speaking of Sanskrit is required today - such people also are definitely fools.

Sanskrit definitely is our tradition but Sanskrit knowledge without using it to learn the shaastras is futile only - it will only add to the ego (which is already sailing high in majority of people for one or the other reason). Thus going around saying Sanskrit isn't getting due credit and all are fine but until it is used for moksha through learning of the shaastras, it is really of no use at all. Sadhakas would do good to remember this that Sanskrit knowledge is useful only if used to learn the shaastras - if not, it is as useless as the entire world we currently perceive through our eye of likes-dislikes filled mind.

Going back to vedaangaas which are essential in understand the vedas and their real import, the first three vedaangaas are shiksha, kalpa and vyaakarana.

Shiksha

Shiksha is that vedaangaa which gives us knowledge about pronunciation of slokas in the vedas. Pronunciation will thus include words, letters (different types) and different ways to utter letters as well as words. All these are essential in order to read, write or speak any language. The same applies for Sanskrit or vedas as well.

Vedic chants are very powerful that mere chanting of them will get rid of many problems that we face in life. But it is essential in order to chant them in the right way. The story of kumbhakarna can be remembered here - he wanted to ask nirdevatvam (or the state without devas) but instead he asked nidrevatvam (state of sleep). Such stories in the puranas are meant to warn us that improperly chanted slokas can have adverse effects.

We find AMMA constantly saying that there are devataas for tune, rhythm etc. and hence we shouldn't sing a song wrongly - so what to speak about vedic chants.

Of course there are chants that are harmless - the slokas in the Upanishads are harmless as they talk about non-dual Brahman. Where there is non-duality, what harm can be caused by whom and from whom? But other chants like rudram and all have to be carefully chanted.

And in case we do make mistakes in chanting, it is essential to remember that all these laws/rules are applicable within the world. If we seek the person beyond the world (who controls the world), then all sins will be expelled instantly. And that one person is Ishwara or Brahman. If we have devotion unto Ishwara and then chant any hymns - even if we make mistakes, such mistakes will not harm us at all.

Why are words, pronunciation etc. important?

Because words convey meanings. Meanings become void or become entirely different if words aren't used properly. This applies to names as well - if we call Obaama, Obama - he will not like it and it will thus have an adverse effect on us. And even if there is no adverse effect, we will not get what we want.

Through vedic chants and slokas we want moksha through purity of mind and knowledge. But if words aren't used properly to read or chant, then the end result will not be achieved. Instead of understanding something as "not do", we may understand it as "do" and thus great misery will befall us.

Hence the importance of words and pronunciation - and thus the vedaanga of shiksha. Since there are different vedas and different shaakhaas in vedas, so each of these have different shiksha texts on them (as reading/understanding etc. will vary from one veda to another).

A simple example is - the atharva veda Upanishads use the term of Brahman for supreme being whereas katha Upanishad uses atman and isha Upanishad uses ishvara. Praatishaakyaas are the oldest textbooks on shiksha. And more popular is panineeya shiksha (which is available in text and sutra form as well).

Kalpa

Next in vedaangaas is kalpa. This deals with rituals that are essential in our day to day life as well as rituals for attaining certain specific goals in life.

Such rituals themselves help easily in pleasing devathaas ruling over particular activities and when these devathaas are pleased, our desires will be fulfilled. Since today we don't offer anything to devathaas, hence there are so many natural calamities - hence the Lord

says that we should give to devas and they will give to us and mutually helping each other, we will be able to attain the supreme state of moksha.

The same rituals if performed with an attitude of surrender or offering (meaning no fruit is desired or expected), then it leads to purity of mind. Such a pure mind thereby will be devoid of worries and in such a mind Brahman will be able to easily reside (thinking or contemplating of Brahman will be easier in a pure mind).

Kalpa or rituals are defined in texts in the form of sutras (aphorisms). These are generally of two types - srautha sutras and smaartha sutras. Srautha is based on sruthi (vedas) whereas smaartha is based on tradition. Smaartha is further split into grihya and dharma (grihya has normal activities whereas dharma has are rules or norms for living in society).

Kalpa sutras also differ for various vedas. And in brahmana kula, the brahmana is associated with a particular veda - and based on the gotra (sub-sect of kula), dharma sutras are also assigned. For example, srivatsa gothra which comes under Krishna yajur veda has apastamba sutra as the kalpa sutras.

Many people mock at the rituals in vedas while themselves doing stupid rituals in the world. For eg: we wear tie, what is the purpose of it? To look great and civilized. It is really a stupid activity to wear tie and roam around but still we do it. But people generally don't mock at the traditions the current world has but will mock at traditions in the vedas.

Vedic tradition and rituals have scientific and clear cut purpose which many of us don't know. For example, smoke from homa kunda purifies air as well as is good if breathed. AMMA gives a very beautiful example to illustrate this - when we go to the temple we offer garlands to the deity - does the deity need garlands? Thus people mock and say "why waste money for garlands - why not feed the poor" etc. AMMA answers saying that we don't know the actual reasons behind this simple ritual. The deity really doesn't need garland but when we want to take a garland, we will go to the flower shop and buy a garland. The flower shop person makes his earning as a result. And when we offer it to the deity, we are pleased and the flower shop owner is also happy as he earned money. And if more and more people do this, then in order to get more flowers people will plant trees. And planting trees will help nature (avoiding a lot of problems). Thus indirectly many ways this simple ritual helps - today we run behind green activities but this simple ritual serves the purpose and more as well (giving contentment to us and the flower shop person as well - not to speak about the pujari and others who see the deity with the beautiful garland).

Thus rituals in the vedas have their purpose and we shouldn't either mock at them or reject them without knowing their real purpose.

Vyaakarana

The last vedaanga for today is vyaakarana or grammar. This is one vedaanga which we all are very familiar with. Grammar is essential in order to learn a language - learning a language is required to read, write and understand any words/texts in the particular language. Since vedas are in Sanskrit, therefore having a knowledge of vyaakarana is essential.

The one text for vyaakarana is panini's sutras often called as panini's ashtaadhyayi as it has eight chapters in it. But this text in itself isn't that easy to understand - hence

Patanjali's mahaabhaashya on panini's text along with kaatyaayana's karika on the same are required to be learnt to get a good grasp of grammar.

Since these three are tough to master, hence later acharyas have written summarized and simpler versions - the most famous of these are bhattoji dikshitar's siddhanta kaumudi and laghusiddhanta kaumudi by varadaraja.

We have thus covered the first three vedaangaas. We will see the last three vedaangaas in the next day.

May we all strive to understand the import of vedas through vedaangaas so that we will be able to put an end to sufferings and abiding in Brahman be able to rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 6

aum namah shivaya

In the previous posting, we learnt the first three vedaangaas of shiksha, kalpa and vyaakarana. In this posting we will the rest of the three vedaangaas of nirukta, chandas and jyotisham.

Just to recap, vedaangaas are essential in order to understand the subject-matter of vedas clearly (beyond any doubt). This is very valid today as there are so many different interpretations, versions etc. of the vedas and not to mention the various false gurus (so-called gurus) in the world.

There are two sets of people who realize Brahman – the first is uttama adhikaaris and second is both madhyama and manda adhikaaris. The first set of people is those who realize Brahman very easily, without much effort required in performing sadhanas or learning the shaastras. Such people are very rare to find in the world. Majority of people form the second set of people who have struggle hard with respect to sadhana and have to learn the shaastras over and over again.

How many times have we heard the vedic dictum of aham brahmaasmi or "I am Brahman" and yet we forget it over and over again – remembrance comes when we listen to it yet again. Such seekers are of the second type of seekers. Of course we can say that such people will not attain moksha as moksha is our very nature. Hence everyone is entitled to moksha either now or in this birth or in a future birth. Irrespective of whether we want moksha or not, we have to attain it at one point or the other.

Moksha is our home – we have gone away from our home. Majority of people don't even know they are away from home and hence they roam around in the world. And then one day a person realizes that there is a home. This person may try to go back to his home or ignore it. And out of those who try to go back to home, some are very close to home and therefore reach home quickly whereas others are far and hence they read after sometime. And some, though may be far, walk at a brisk pace without any distractions and hence they too reach home quickly whereas others though may be near walk slowly and hence will reach home later. But irrespective of where one is or how fast one walks, one will have to reach home. The first struggle is to know that there is a home and to strive to reach that

home (desire first to reach that home). Majority don't even know that there is a state of moksha which is our very nature state and hence they roam around the world enjoying worldly pleasures and spending time doing nothing useful at all. Out of the very many people in the world, few realize that there is a state of moksha and thereby they strive towards it.

Of such strivers, some are uttama or higher seekers as they have purity of mind, concentration of mind and often knowledge as well to an extent. Thus when they get little knowledge from the Guru, they instantly realize. Others have to reflect upon the guru's words while working for purity and concentration of mind – thus a repetition of purity, concentration and knowledge happens – after a while, they too realize (but this "while" could be few births as well).

Some say that the uttama adhikaaris are those who have been madhyama and manda adhikaaris in the past birth and due to their past efforts, they have become uttama adhikaaris now. But such statements aren't really valid for us – what we have to focus on is where do we stand, what do we have to do to attain moksha and how to attain moksha in this very birth itself.

Since majority of people are madhyama and manda adhikaaris and have to learn the shaastras over and over again, therefore it is essential to learn/understand the shaastras properly – improper understanding will obstruct our progress and reduce the speed of progress as well. Hence the importance of not just learning the vedas but also to learn the vedaangaas so vedas can be interpreted and understood properly initially itself.

Nirukta

Keeping this in mind, let us continue with the brief on the rest of the three vedaangaas. The fourth is nirukta which deals with etymology. Yaaska is generally considered as the father of nirukta as he wrote a commentary named nirukta on the older text of nighantu.

Nirukta is the way of interpreting words – words meanings can be derived in multiple ways. One single word can mean different things when they are interpreted or derived differently. Such derivation becomes essential when two or more words are compounded into a single word. In such cases an inappropriate splitting of words for meaning can lead to wrong meaning taken up – this can mean that the interpretation/meaning of the vedic sloka itself will be wrong. Such wrong knowledge in turn can take us away from the spiritual path and hence we should have at least basic knowledge of the vedaanga of nirukta.

When learning Sanskrit itself, many acharyas teach nirukta directly or indirectly – the rules based on which one should interpret simple words and compounded words as well. Sometimes one needs a guru in order to definitely understand a particular sloka (as the direct meaning of a word might not fit and we have to take an indirect meaning depending on the context). But if we don't have a guru, then we should strive to learn the shaastras through bhashyas and if Sanskrit isn't well known then through reputed commentaries or speeches in other languages.

Chandas

Next vedaangaa is chandas or metre. Though this isn't directly related to the vedas meaning, this part is important in order to give poetic value to the various slokas in the vedas. Many of the slokas in vedas might be prose-like and hence chandas wouldn't be there but in many other slokas, chandas will be essential or required. Chandas is rules for slokas – for eg the most common chandas of anushtup, found in bhagavad gita, has 8 letters in each quarter of the sloka. The rules aren't just this but also like which all letters

should be long (deergha) or short etc. This vedaangaa is a system in itself and is essential in order to write works in poem form or to write songs.

What has metre to do with vedas and their subject-matter?

Not directly but indirectly. Even as the road has nothing to do with us eating food in a hotel but still it plays a vital role in us reaching quickly and safely to the hotel, similarly chandas ensures that everything is auspicious and without obstacles in the spiritual path while learning the shastras. There are devataas presiding over each and everything thing in the world and if these devataas aren't pleased properly, they will cause obstacle in the world thus obstructing us from moving further in the spiritual path. And such devataas will be pleased through these parts like metres. Even as songs cannot just be sung randomly but have to set in a particular tune and beat, similarly metres also are essential in order to please devataas properly.

Moreover slokas randomly written will have no rules whatsoever and without rules, it is often the case that chaos ensues immediately. Imagine this to be like a cross-section road which has no traffic signals or police in it – immediately accidents will happen, people will shout at each other and there will be nothing but traffic and traffic alone.

Thus this system of chandas is to be learnt by a person who wants to go deeper into not just Sanskrit but the vedas as well. There are very many texts on chandas but the one I have found very simple and useful is vritti ratnaakaram of kedaarabhatta.

Jyotisham

The last vedaangaa is jyotisham or astrology. This is a part which we all are very familiar with – each one of us would have used this in one way or the other. Of course many (even those in ashrams like amma's ashram) see astrology in a mocking way – such people ought to remember that astrology is part of the vedas and all great masters (including AMMA) seek astrology for auspicious moments to start any activity. Thus we have to see this with little respect.

Astrology is a logical science and called vedachaksu or eyes of the vedas. Rituals or activities have auspicious or appropriate moments. Even as there are proper times to plant seeds, beget children, cook food, eat food etc. similarly there are proper times for anything in the world. Simple things like cooking and all are fine even if we don't do it in the right time but very significant activities (that have huge effect based on their result) require right appropriate times for them to start.

Ritualis or yajnas we find in the vedas are similar – they have huge effect and if performed wrongly have adverse effects. Hence it is important to find a proper time to start them. The apt time is found through the part of astrology called muhurta (unfortunately this word is today related just with marriage but this just means right or appropriate time). And such right times also change from person to person as well as place to place.

There are other parts as well as to astrology which includes predictions of past and future based on birth horoscope, prashna etc. All these are very valid and if used in our day-to-day life, we will find that environment is very conducive for us to succeed in all our endeavors.

If this is so, why is astrology seen badly today?

Blaming isn't right but still it is due to current day astrologers. People just read one or two books on astrology and then become great astrologers able to predict anything and everything. One ashram astrologer in Amritapuri once said to a friend that astrology cannot be learnt from gurus, it has to be learnt from book and experience – partially the statement

is current but it has a big mistake in it. Astrology, more than any other science, requires what is called as intuition or ishwara-guru kataaksha – grace of ishwara and guru will give a person far-sightedness and thus able to see things in the right perspective. Two people may see the same horoscope and know all rules of astrology but still one person who has vision of future (based on proper knowledge of shaastras and sadhana which gives ishwara-guru's gace) will be able to predict in the right way than the other person.

There is no accusation whatsoever on the astrologer quoted above – everybody is good in one or the other way. But the science of astrology isn't a piece of cake we can just chew up in a year or two. Only a sadhaka who has done sufficient sadhana and attained siddhis of controlling the mind will be able to predict the future accurately by looking at horoscope or by not even looking at horoscope but based on situations around the person himself.

This one vedaangaa is very vast that unless one has grace of Ishwara or Guru, it will take many births to master the system.

The importance of this system can be known by anna hazare's fast which ended in a failure because the time chosen by him to fast was an inappropriate one (this has been discussed beautifully in astrological magazine of the particular month).

Texts of astrology are vast but the oldest ones are paraashara's hora shaastras and varaahamihiraa's brihat jaataka. Some useful and common ones (of later acharyas) are saaraavali and phaladeepika (have found these very helpful). Though all these texts are in sanskrit, translations in all languages are available.

It should definitely be mentioned here that Bangalore Venkata Raman (in short B V Raman) has done a great service by writing very many books on astrology as well as starting the astrological magazine. His books are definitely a treasure for people starting on astrology as well as a manual for advance astrologers.

This one vedaangaa even if not learnt will be helpful for all people in their day-to-day activities hence even if we don't learn it, we should seek astrologers for various purposes in order to avert danger and achieve success in all endeavors.

With this we have discussed in brief all the six vedaangaas. All of these are a study in themselves but we have to just be content with a brief on them. At least this brief should serve as a motivation creating interest in seekers to learn them in deep.

Ultimately we have to always remain focused on the goal of moksha – without this, any science will not be able to give us eternal bliss. Vedaangaas thus should be used to move towards moksha and not just for worldly purposes. If we use these vedaangaas properly the we will be able to understand the import of vedas thus strengthening our conviction about Brahman and thereby leading us quickly towards realization of Brahman.

May we all strive to learn the vedaangaas in order to understand vedas properly so that our conviction about Brahman as non-dual reality behind the illusory world will be strengthened thereby making us ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 7

aum namah shivaya

In the last posting we completed the vedaangaas which are essential in order to understand the vedas (the true import of vedas) properly. The final four parts of chathurdashavidyaa are the four upavedas which we will see in this posting.

The four upavedas are arthaveda (part of Rigveda), gandharvaveda (part of saama veda), dhanurveda (part of yajur veda) and Ayurveda (part of atharvaveda).

Each Veda in itself is very vast – it is filled with knowledge of all sorts. Without knowing that Vedas encompass all knowledge/sciences that we can find in the world today, people running behind worldly sciences seeking degrees, higher degrees and often doctorates as well. All these worldly sciences cannot give us eternal bliss (but will only give sorrow in the long run).

It can be argued that Mundaka Upanishad says that even chathurdashavidyaa is aparaa or lower type of vidyaa and higher type of vidyaa is direct experience or realization of Brahman. But in order to know Brahman, the only source we have is the shaastras (chathurdashavidyaa). If it be argued that mahatmas are also the source of the shaastras, mahatmas are living embodiments of the shaastras – this means they are also based upon the shaastras. Their very existence, their very state, their very path etc. is based on the shaastras. Without shaatras or shaastra jnaana, a mahatma cannot be born or created. This doesn't mean such mahatmas need to know each and every scriptural statement but just that they will have knowledge of the subject-matter in the shaastras (such masters will easily be able to explain all the portions of the vedas without quoting the vedas) – examples of such masters is Ramana Maharshi who used to quote from various scriptural texts in local language though hadn't learnt any of those in Sanskrit form. Another example is AMMA whose words are reflections of the shaastras though she rarely uses scriptural quotations directly.

Thus Vedas are the source of all knowledge including knowledge of Brahman (indicating or pointing-out Brahman). Without the Vedas, other knowledge in the world will not give us eternal bliss but only sorrow in the long run.

Since Vedas are very vast therefore there are portions of the Vedas which can be said to be independent themselves. Such independent part is called upa veda (secondary veda sort) and each vedas has one upa veda associated with it. These deal with certain topics in particular and such topics are required or essential in worldly life as well as can be used for the ultimate goal of moksha also.

Many people think that Vedanta talks about Brahman only and hence worldly life will become waste if we learn Vedanta and we will not get solutions to worldly problems. But this is wrong – Vedanta has explanations for anything and everything in the world. Great solutions to worldly problems can be clearly found in the Vedas. And masters who are living embodiments of the Vedas show that anything and everything can be solved through the Vedas (or vedic knowledge). Vedanta thus isn't a science of Brahman but a science of living blissfully while experiencing the pleasures of the world. Vedanta or Vedas aren't against sensual pleasures but they just tell us that we should control the pleasures and not the other way around (sense objects shouldn't control us) – most of the times, sense objects control us and hence we become a prey to them.

Tasty food is fine as long as it is for survival and when we are hungry. But tasty food shouldn't control us – this means we want only tasty food and just for taste. Food is for survival of the body and therefore irrespective of whether tasty food or not, food comes out

in the same form – its purpose is to fill the tummy, nothing more and nothing less. Forgetting this will make us get controlled by the tasty food. Until this doesn't happen, it is fine to eat tasty food.

People either take this extreme or that extreme and hence misunderstand Vedanta. Vedanta is all about the perspective (mental attitude) and not external actions. Thus many people get deluded by looking at mahatmas and thinking that they get angry, upset, affectionate etc. (AMMA was upset today, AMMA is not feeling well today etc.) – all such statements come out of utter ignorance. Mahatmas are ever blissful irrespective of external state. They cannot just be judged by their external appearance or external action.

Our puranas itself tells this point clearly – on one side we have Vishnu who adorns all ornaments and enjoys with his wife in the milky ocean whereas on other side we have Siva who has renounced everything. Both of these devataas are Brahmajnaanis – but externally they are different. Thus by external appearance or external actions we cannot judge a mahatma. And similarly external actions don't make us spiritual or a vedantin.

Spirituality or a vedantin is one who remembers in the mind that Brahman alone exists here and everything is just an illusion in Brahman. Then what is this world? Just a divine play. Like an actor dons his role and portrays it perfectly while remembering his real state, similarly a sadhaka should also perform his actions in the world perfectly while internally remembering that there is only Brahman present here.

Thus Vedanta isn't against worldly life and Vedanta has the answer/solution to any question/problem that we can find in the world. This is something we ought to remember at all times (as this glorification will make us learn, understand and implement Vedanta in our day-to-day life thus making our life blissful and imparting bliss to others as well).

Back to upavedas. Arthaveda is also called arthashastra – it generally talks about wealth as well as worldly rules/laws etc. There are many works that deal with these concepts in depth – manu smriti does to an extent, vidura niti is another elaborate work, chaanakya niti is another very popular text. This upaveda is very essential in order to lead a peaceful life in the world – peaceful worldly life is essential in order to progress in the spiritual path (if worldly life is in sorrows, we will have time only to rectify it – no time will be there to progress in the spiritual path). It isn't mere enough to understand the laws of a country or state but it is also essential to understand laws the rule the entire world (laws or prakriti). Such rules/laws include birth-death, karma, higher-lower worlds etc. Such knowledge will also help us understand the importance of spirituality (and attaining moksha here itself).

Next upaveda is gandharvaveda – this includes art, dance and music. Music has become very popular in today's world thanks to great masters like the trinities of Carnatic music. As Tyaagaraaja aptly says there is no use of all these sciences without devotion to Ishwara or Brahman. These cultural sciences (as we can call them) are very easy means to focus on Ishwara. Therefore one has to use these not just to fill one's stomach but for the ultimate goal of moksha.

Among texts of sangithashastra, saarangadeva stands out. Purandaradaasa of course is called the father of Carnatic music. And there have been very many masters who have explained this shastra through works, poems and songs.

Next upaveda is dhanurveda. This deals with fighting (means of fighting) including archery. Such sciences were essential in ancient times even as it is today (but with more technological weapons like rifles, automatics etc.).

Many will ask as to how fighting can be a means to moksha and as to how it can even not obstruct our progress. The answer is very obvious in the Lord's words to Arjuna that "remember me at all times and fight". Wherever fight is required, one shouldn't shy away from it. Actions, as explained earlier, are just an illusion in this big drama or play. One shouldn't shy away from it – rather one should perform in the best possible way while remembering that Ishwara alone exists. And one who remembers that Ishwara alone exists, such a person though might kill many people doesn't kill at all.

The world is filled with duality – good and bad. To tackle the bad, we cannot take any other means than to fight. Hence fighting is inevitable and one has to take resort to them in the best possible way.

Those who claim ahimsa is great and all – real ahimsa is seeing everything as Ishwara. Those who implement external ahimsa are in fact doing himsa internally. Each moment one doesn't remember Ishwara (that everything is Ishwara), one kills Ishwara – therefore it is himsa. Thus the so-called great ahimsaavaadins (like Anna Hazaare) would do good to keep in mind that real ahimsa is seeing everything as Ishwara. It is fine to fight against corruption through the path of non-violence but if one doesn't remember Ishwara, then one's life will be wasted (and so will be case of followers as well). One will fight and fight against corruption – will corruption end? Definitely no, it hasn't ended in the past (puranas clearly show this) and it will not end in the present or future. One can fight against it but forgetting Ishwara and fighting will cause attachment to fighting which in turn will lead to one's downfall from the goal of moksha (as Ishwara who pervades the entire world).

Thus such sciences are essential wherever they are needed – in order to remove adharma in our mind, we have to fight and conquer it (lest kaama krodha conquers our mind from dharma or Ishwara).

Last upaveda is Ayurveda. This deals with increasing longevity through proper health care as well as medicines for diseases. There are many parts of atharva veda which deals with many mystic things – there are slokas to attract people, kill one's enemy etc. – many of these are dangerous in that it has to be chanted in the proper way and for the benefit of the world. We can say that Ayurveda also is similar to this – Ayurveda can be dangerous if one doesn't follow it correctly (in the right way). Ayurveda has proven to be highly effective and fully successful for many diseases where our English medicines have been proven failures in many cases. English medicines or treatments often have their side-effects whereas Ayurveda doesn't have any side-effect whatsoever. This upaveda can be used not just to cure diseases but also to maintain a balanced physical body (and in turn mind) so that we can fully concentrate on the spiritual path towards the goal of moksha.

Upavedas are thus scriptures that can be used directly or indirectly towards the ultimate goal of life as moksha. Therefore they also be learnt and implemented, if and whenever possible by ardent sadhakas.

With this we come to an end to the description of the four upavedas as well. We will see in the next posting a brief on the fifth veda before concluding this short topic on chaturdashavidyaa.

May we all strive to use upavedas in order to progress quickly and smoothly towards the goal of moksha so that we will attain moksha and ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - 8

aum namah shivaya

In the last posting we learnt in brief the four upavedas which help us to maintain a conducive environment thereby enabling us to learn the vedas properly and implement the truth propounded in the vedas quickly and easily so as to not let yet another precious human birth go waste.

Today we will see what is known or called as the fifth veda and that which is greater than even the fifth veda.

Vedas as we know are the source of Brahman as the substratum of everything and everything else that we collectively call as the world. Anything and everything in the world is defined or described in the vedas in one or the other way. Those who argue that Vedas don't have computers in them – the logic of computers are there in Vedas (as vedic mathematics), computers or robots are also variously found in the puranas (which are extensions of the vedas – vedas in story form or vedic truth explained through various stories about devas and asuras). Thus anything and everything directly or indirectly can be found in the vedas.

This source of all knowledge is both good and bad. It is good that we don't need to seek anything else. It is bad as there are many things in it therefore choosing the right/apt one is very tough. One can get lost in an ocean trying to find an island whereas in a river, it is easy to find its shore or places to rest. Thus Vedas should be dealt with what is known as hamsa buddhi (intellect like a swan) – even the swan separates water from milk and only drinks the milk, similarly a sadhaka should only take appropriate portions of the Vedas (directly talking about Brahman) and the rest should be ignored.

There have been great masters who have tried to help us in doing this separation and none other Vyaasa stands out among these masters. Vyaasa of course is the one who categorized the vedas and ensured they are learnt and spread by his disciples. For very normal people's benefit, Vyaasa wrote the 18 main puranas and the 18 sub puranas – these explain the ultimate truth as well as concepts through stories so that everyone will be able to understand it very easily.

And finally in order to benefit people, Vyaasa wrote the mahad grantha of Mahabharatha. This epic is very vast that any other epic or book (any religion, any language etc.) will seem very small compared to this. This deals with everything that one has to know and through illustration of the great story of pandavas and kauravas as good and bad – and the Lord as savior for pandavas or good. The epic fight between pandavas and kauravas isn't just happening outside but inside our minds as well. If the Lord is there, then good will prevail and if Lord is not there, then the bad will prevail in our mind. Therefore one should always have the Lord in the mind so that good prevails and one experiences eternal bliss. Seeing it in a different way, wherever the Lord is there will be everything (including prosperity, wealth and above all bliss) –wherever the Lord isn't there, there will be sorrow and destruction alone.

Thus this mahad grantha of Mahabharatha, since it deals with dharma in particular, is called the fifth veda. But as with the other four vedas, there are only certain portions which are very useful for sadhakas – rest has to be ignored, if not one will get distracted, deluded and taken away from the spiritual path. The great portions of Mahabharatha are the famous

Bhagavad Gita and Sanatsujaateeya (former is an instruction from the Lord to Arjuna whereas the latter is an instruction from sanatsujaatha maharshi to Dhritharaasthra). Compared to the huge size of this fifth veda, these two are very very small (just under 800 slokas compared to almost 1 lakh slokas in total). Hence one will easily get lost in what is generally called as dharma.

Dharma itself is two – higher dharma and lower dharma. Higher dharma is moksha or realization through complete focus on the Lord whereas lower dharma is the right way to lead life in the world so as to experience temporary and peace. When one focuses on Ishwara, the world becomes insignificant and when the world is focused on, Ishwara becomes insignificant.

This is because the world is an illusion in the Lord even as water is an illusion in desert. When water is seen, desert is ignored and when desert is seen, water is ignored. Similarly when world is significant or focused on, the Lord vanishes (or is ignored) and vice versa. In other words, when higher dharma is focused on then lower dharma becomes not that significant whereas when lower dharma when focused on makes higher dharma insignificant.

Since Mahabharatha focuses on the lower dharma (of the world) therefore it misses focusing on the higher dharma. That which doesn't focus on higher dharma will only give sorrow. We can say that this happens with other four vedas too but other four vedas have a significant portion focusing on Brahman or Ishwara whereas with Mahabhartha that isn't the case – and in the four vedas, focus is always directly or indirectly on brahman whereas mahabharatha primarily focuses on lower dharma.

Thus after writing the four vedas, the 18 puranas and the fifth veda of Mahabharatha, Vyaasa was still not content (there was something lacking in him). Then Narada approaches Vyaasa and asks as to what happened – then Vyaasa says that he is somehow not content. To this Narada says that you focused on dharma than on the Lord and hence your mind is not content, write a work focusing only on the Lord and your mind will become content. Thus Vyaasa wrote another grantha encompassing around 12000 slokas focusing on the Lord everywhere. This mahad grantha which thus is greater than even the fifth veda is the Bhaagavatha purana (Mahaabhaagavatha puranam as some call it). Bhaagavatham, like other puranas, talks about the stories and glories of the Lord. But even while explaining all the glories of the Lord, focus is always on the Lord. Each and every chapter in Bhagavatham focuses on the Lord in one or the other way. Hence distractions aren't possible through this mahad grantha.

This great text of Bhagavatham have been extolled by great masters of the past who have written commentaries and great masters of the present as well – Prof. Balakrishnan Nair has written a summarized translation-sort of Bhagavatham in Malayalam in a book called bhaagavatha hridayam and he has given numerous discourses on parts of Bhagavatham; Nochur gives discourses frequently on Bhagavatham; Swami Tejomayananda has written a book describing the chathusslokee bhagavatham (and a summary of bhagavatham as well).

Thus this great text of Bhagavatham ought to be learnt by ardent seekers if they wish to attain moksha in this very birth itself and quickly as well. Bhagavatham itself defines itself as the fruit from the tree of Vedas which has been eaten/plucked by the parrot of Shukha. Such is the greatness of bhagavatham that it is very sweet for all sadhakas. Though it contains bhakthi, karma, yoga, jnaana etc. the emphasis at all times is on Ishwara and Ishwara alone. This is something that we can clearly see in each and every part of Bhagavatham.

It was through learning of this text of Bhagavatham that Parikshit attained moksha within seven days – hence when thakshaka, the snake, came to bite him it couldn't harm Parikshit in any way as he was no longer the body but realized person. In remembrance of this, even today lots of bhagavatha sapthaahams are done everywhere. This is where bhagavatham text is read during the morning and evening explanations follow and within seven days entire bhagavatham is covered. Such sapthaahamas fulfill the minds of all people – whether it is temporary fulfillment or permanent fulfillment.

Finally after writing Bhagavatham, Vyaasa became content, satisfied and blissful in his mind.

To an ardent sadhaka who seeks moksha, such texts are direct ways to moksha and therefore such a sadhaka will read, learn and remember them over and over again.

Ultimately though there are so many texts available (and these days in many languages as well), what is important is whether we are able to strengthen our conviction that Brahman alone exists here and remember Brahman in our mind at all times. If this isn't achieved, then any number of texts (however great they may be) will not help.

There are many people who know all the 700 slokas of Gita – there are many who attend many bhagavatha sapthaaham – yet there is no peace or bliss in their mind. This is because there is no focus on the goal of Brahman. Until and unless a person focuses on Brahman, bliss will not be experienced and sorrows will not vanish. Thus more than the number of texts we read or learn, more than the number of classes we attend, more than anything else what is important is whether we are able to remember Brahman as the substratum of the world at all times – even if we are able to remember at least for a few times in a day, we will eventually attain moksha. But if we aren't able to remember Brahman, then whatever we do we will end up again in sorrows and sufferings alone.

Again there are many people who go to various temples, are devoted to deities and also visit great mahatmas like AMMA and others – still they are also sad. Even people staying in various ashrams are sad for one or the other reason. Recently a learned and reputed sanyasin left a mission to serve elsewhere (will not quote names in order to maintain sanctity of the person and the mission as well). Why do all this happen? People have everything in the world still no bliss, no peace and no satisfaction. Worldly pleasures are there, so-called satsanga in the form of retreats, bhajans, discourses, camps etc. are there, association with great masters is there – yet no peace.

Why is this so? Because there is no focus on Brahman as non-dual reality behind the illusory world. It isn't enough to worship just a particular form-deity or an avataara purusha or one's guru – it is essential to see them as all-pervasive Brahman. Without focusing on non-dual reality of Brahman, there will be no peace wherever one goes. These aren't personal words but Sankara states very clearly in Vivekachoodamani and the Upanishads are also very clear about this – until we seek Brahman, we will not get bliss wherever we are, whoever we are and whatever we do.

Being ardent sadhakas, thus it is essential to remember Brahman irrespective of what posting we are reading, what we are learning, what we are doing, where we are in the world etc. And this focus on Brahman is the primary subject of chathurdashavidyaa though it gets lost in the huge chunk of knowledge available. This set of postings should help sadhakas to bring back focus unto the ultimate reality of Brahman.

We will see a brief summary of chathurdashavidyaa in the next posting thus concluding this short series.

May we all strive to always remain focused on the ultimate reality of Brahman as pervading the entire world of illusory names and forms so that we will be able to put an end to sorrows/sufferings and rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya

Chathurdashavidyaa - Summary

aum namah shivaya

Finally we come to the end of this short series explaining in brief vidyaa. We will see a brief summary in this posting.

Vidyaa or science may appear to be many as we find in today's world. But as the Lord says in Gita that he is aatmavidyaa or brahmavidyaa among all other vidyaas. Put in AMMA's beautiful words, there is knowledge for livelihood and knowledge for living. The former are what we concentrate in the world through our studies in school, college etc. and used for earning money that helps sustain our body plus the body of other dependent as well.

There is nothing wrong with worldly sciences but just that we cannot attain perfection through these sciences. The reason for this is that worldly sciences deal with the external world. The world as we experience it is temporary or constantly changing. Such a constantly changing world can never give us happiness (put in simple newton's terms, inertia or change is something that everyone tries to avoid as much as possible). Only that which is changeless can give us eternal bliss. Another reason why changing entities cannot give us eternal bliss is because change means such entities are subject to birth and death. That which dies after a period of time cannot give us happiness as the object itself doesn't exist (it has to exist to give us happiness). Therefore the shaastras clearly proclaim that anityam asukham lokam or lokam shokamayam samastam - the entire world is temporary and therefore sorrowful.

Though worldly sciences can definitely make our lives better externally, they can never give us eternal bliss. Today the world has advanced to a state never seen before - technological advancement has led to web conferences, everything at one's tip, soft-copies of everything in the world etc. But has this reduced the sorrow that one faces? Has this given us more bliss or peace of mind? Definitely no. Sorrow, if not decreased, has only increased. Similarly happiness hasn't increased but only decreased. Earlier people committed suicide using simple rat poison and in their huts but now people commit suicides using revolvers in a five-star hotel room or their bungalow. Thus any external advancement will help improve one's inner state of mind.

To improve one's inner state of mind, one has to seek the shaastras. The shaastras, as one generally thinks, doesn't just deal with inner mind or inner peace - it also tells us in detail how to attain external objects/happiness as well. As we have seen in this series, shaastras deal with everything in the world and also the ultimate science of all which is science of the entity called Brahman.

In Chandogya Upanishad, we find Naarada approaching sage sanatkumara asking him to instruct in true bliss. At that time, sanatkumara asks naarada as to what all he knows - to this, naarada enumerates all the sciences available at that time. But he had no

brahmavidyaa and hence there was no peace or bliss.

Bliss can be attained, as we have seen, only from that which is eternal. This eternal entity is the source of the world that we currently perceive. Anything changing requires a changeless substratum similarly this world requires a changeless substratum which is Brahman. This Brahman is that from which the world has come, in which the world resides and unto which the world merges at the time of its destruction. Thus Brahman is eternal and it is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss absolute.

True or ultimate vidyaa is about Brahman. Brahman is the source of everything and non-dual in nature - hence it is inexplicable. Even as one's face cannot be seen, similarly Brahman cannot be seen. But one's face can be seen through a mirror, similarly Brahman can be indirectly hinted at through the mirrors of shaastras. Shaastras are the only source of Brahman. Mahatmas are but resonances of the views found in the shaastras. Thus Paramaartha beautifully says that a guru after teaching the shishya how to interpret the shaastras (one cannot teach the entire shaastras as they are vast in themselves) tells that if at all u find any conflict between my statements and the shaastras then without any thinking reject my statements as shaastras are the ultimate authority.

Of course we can say that this temporary world is just an illusion therefore shaastras are as illusory as the world itself. But this shaastras tells us how to come out of this world. Shaastras cannot give us brahman - if this was the case, then very many great scholars of the world would be realized (but we don't see this happening at all). But shaastras will direct or point us towards Brahman and hence they are essential.

It is only in the shaastras (and of course mahatmas words) that we can find mention that the world is just an illusion and Brahman alone is real. But if this is so, what does this vidyaa have to do with me - for this, the shaastras say that the I that pulsates inside each one of us as I-exist, I-exist is nothing but Brahman alone.

Thus entire vidyaa is put in this half sloka by Sankara:

Brahma satyam jaganmithyaa jeevo brahmaiva naaparah
Brahman alone is real, the world is an illusion and the jeeva (I that pulsates inside us) is Brahman alone, not different.

This is the summary of entire vedas or in short chathurdashavidyaa itself. Ultimately Brahman alone exists - this is explained gradually in many ways through various scriptural texts. Each of them have a different purpose though ultimately they all direct us towards this truth that Brahman alone exists. Therefore the moment we forget this ultimate truth that Brahman alone exists, we will fall a prey to the illusory world and hence will not get any peace or bliss. Thus all efforts should be made by a sadhaka to remember that Brahman and Brahman alone exists at all times.

Mere remembrance of this truth itself will reduce all our worries, problems and sorrows. But in order to strengthen this knowledge, all the fourteen parts of vidyaa has to be learnt. Essentiality or necessity of all these fourteen will differ from person to person. Even as certain people will be able to find a route on being given instruction just once, similarly there are certain people who understand that brahman alone exists immediately upon instruction and such people will not have to learn all the fourteen parts. But there are others who even after learning the fourteen parts, will not be able to gain conviction on Brahman - such people therefore will have to do intense sadhana of japa, dhyana, bhajans etc. and learn more texts written by various acharyas (elucidating certain portions of the vedas).

As Chinmaya puts it beautifully, Vedanta is subjective and hence it will depend from seeker to seeker as to how soon one progresses, how soon one becomes blissful etc. If required, we should do more sadhana or different types of sadhana that will ensure that our mind is both pure and concentrated. Only such a mind can go beyond the passions or pulls of the world and focus on the non-dual reality of Brahman.

We learnt that the fourteen parts of vidyaa are the four vedas of rig, yajus, saama and atharva (each of which have samhita, braahmana, aaranyaka and upanishads - upanishads are called vedanta as they deal with the supreme being of Brahman and ends knowledge completely - there will remain nothing else to be known), the vedaangaas of shiksha, kalpa, vyaakaranam, niruktham, chandas and jyotisham and the four upaangaas or upavedaas of arthaveda, gandharvaveda, dhanurveda and ayurveda.

Ultimately upanishads or Vedanta is the pinnacle of vidyaa as this is where Brahman is extolled in its full glory. And this is what puts an end to all seekings and makes our life blissful. All other parts will help in understanding or gaining more clarity on the upanishads. But since upanishads are tough to understand therefore we have the Lord himself giving us bhagavad gita (an essence of upanishads) and Vyaasa writing the brahma sutras (which are a logical analysis of the concepts of the upanishads) - all three together being called prasthaana traya (sruthi prasthaana of upanishads, smriti prasthaana of gita and nyaaya prasthaana of brahma sutras). And since these three in themselves are tough to understand therefore masters like Sankara have written bhashyas or commentaries on these. Sankara's bhashyas themselves are tough nuts to crack and hence we have acharyas like anandagiri writing tika on sankara's bhashyas and many other acharyas like vidyaaranya writing other commentaries on prasthaana traya. And other than prasthaana traya, we have acharyas starting with Sankara writing many individual texts either on entire vedanta or on certain topics of vedanta. Thus we have works like laghu vaasudeva mananam, vedanta saara, vivekachoodamani etc. giving summary of vedanta and works like naishkarmya siddhi, vaakyavritti etc. dealing with certain topics or aspects of vedanta alone.

Today things have become much better as not only all these texts available in soft-copies and translations to discourses to classes available on all of these.

But still there will be doubts and confusions. Some of these doubts and confusions often lead to contrary systems in themselves. Thus other than Vedanta, we have five other systems of philosophies based on the shaastras (and six systems that aren't based on the shaastras we as well). These six are called shad darshanas or six philosophies. The one thing common in all these philosophies is the goal of bliss or happiness. Though some may say it is achieved through a proper understanding or categorization of the external world, others may say it to be understanding to perform rituals in the right/apt way. Ultimately, as Vidyaaranya puts it beautifully, all these systems progressively take us from the external world to the pinnacle of Brahman or eternal bliss. It is enough to learn just the system of Vedanta but it also gives us better view or understanding of Vedanta itself when we compare it with other philosophies and learn it in this counter way. Of course studies of shad darshana should only be undertaken after one has understood clearly the system of vedanta lest one gets confused and even forgets vedanta or gains lack of faith in vedanta.

The shad darshanas are often paired in two - nyaaya & vaisheshika, saankhya & yoga, mimaamsa & vedanta. It is impossible to even encompass these briefly in few postings and hence will not tread down that way. But to not mention the shad darshanas in a series on chathurdashavidyaa wouldn't do justice to the topic. In one sentence each, nyaaya & vaisheshika focus on the external world and understanding about it - the former focuses on

logical aspect whereas the latter focuses on more of categorization. Saankhya & yoga emphasize more on insentient entity of prakriti and sentient entity of purusha - a mixture or improper knowledge of both lead to sorrows. The former focuses more on theory whereas the latter focuses on practice. Mimaamsa & Vedanta give more emphasis on the Vedas - the former emphasizes on former part of vedas which is karma khaanda and latter focuses on latter part of vedas which is jnaana khaanda.

Please do keep in mind that these are systems in themselves and it will take sufficient time to learn even one of them. We are currently just striving to learn Vedanta and hence the one sentence explanation is nothing at all for these systems. But they will at least give a very vague idea about the systems.

There are sutras attributed to various rishis on each of these systems - which explain these systems in depth. There are other works too that explain these systems. Will not quote the names in order to avoid confusion and cause distraction from Vedanta.

With this, all essential aspects of vidyaa as chathurdashavidyaa is complete. And hope that this short series inspires sadhakas to take up each of this topic (for betterment of oneself and to move quickly towards moksha) to learn and understand them in depth so that we gain conviction about Brahman and are able to ever abide in Brahman as pervading the entire world. Thus we will be able to attain the state of moksha or blissful existence soon itself.

Any doubts/questions/comments, please feel free to mail admin@vedantatattva.org.

May we all strive to respect, learn and understand chathurdashavidyaa (if not, at least Vedanta) so that always abiding in constant contemplation of Brahman as the substratum of the world we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

aum namah shivaya