

## Evidences of Truth by T. Sadashiva Iyer

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**[Page 1]** OUR Theosophical motto is "There is no religion higher than Truth". I take it that Truth means knowledge of true Existence, true Wisdom and true Bliss, or knowledge of Brahman. Brahman is the synthesis of Truth in all its aspects. How are we to get at this Truth ? What are the means (Pramāna) or criteria of reaching the true knowledge of Brahman ?

When we do not talk philosophy and when we behave like ordinary mortals, we look upon the knowledge we get through our physical senses (by ocular or direct perception) as the most definite and valid kind of knowledge. We are so certain of its truth that we contemptuously call other impressions "mere fancy", "mere imagination", "mere moonshine", "not a solid fact", "cloudland". The knowledge obtained through the physical senses is also, of course, knowledge of Brahman, according to Manu. But though it appears to be so real and complete, it is not the whole truth, and in fact, it very imperfectly represents the truth. We all know philosophy well **[Page 2]** enough, and I need not therefore elaborate the point that the senses are slayers of the Real. Even exoteric and physical sciences teach us that sense-knowledge is mixed up so much with illusion.

Therefore we turn to Logical Inferential Reasoning (Anumānam), not to destroy our sense-knowledge but to supplement and correct it. We correct the sense-impression that the sun goes round the earth by an elaborate process of reasoning which leads us to the opposite conclusion. So also the sense-impression that matter is destroyed and ceases to exist (say, by the agency of fire) is corrected by the reasoning which proves the indestructibility of matter in its essence, and that it is only the destruction of the form which gave rise to our incorrect sense-impression that the essence was also destroyed.

But logical inferential reasoning, in both its aspects (induction and deduction), can never get rid of doubt as to the absolute truth and soundness of its conclusions, as Mr. Balfour has so conclusively shown in his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*. Deduction depends on the validity of its premises, axioms and postulates, and on the perfect subtleness and strength of the reasoning powers. Induction, unless we have an infinite number of facts and an infinite mental capacity to comprehend all such facts, cannot also give us the exact truth. We all know the induction of the materialistic scientist that, because the physical brain is closely connected with thought, and in innumerable instances the strength, clearness, activity and the existence of thought seem to be invariably **[Page 3]** dependent on the strength, health, nourishment and existence of the physical brain, thought cannot exist without a physical brain composed of tangible cells and nerves and nourished by oxygenised blood. But when the facts of telepathy, hypnotism and mediamistic phenomena could no longer be pooh-poohed as mere fraud, the above inductive inference of the materialistic scientist came down like a house of cards. An inductive conclusion, though based on a million instances, becomes wrong if one single instance to the contrary is clearly proved to exist, and a higher law which would explain and include the single contrary instance also has to be searched for.

The ordinary statement of the so-called law of gravitation is all right for many practical purposes but it cannot explain the facts of yogic levitation or magnetic attraction, and hence, a higher and more accurate law has to be formulated, as H. P. B. has insisted in her writings.

Further, the mind being "the great Slayer of the Real". it has itself to be slain before pure Truth can be reflected in it. It is in a state of constant turmoil through the impinging of astral waves, and is always swayed by likes and dislikes, as the Chinese Classic of Purity insists. Wish is father to the thought, and we believe what we wish to believe; and can always find adequate reasons for those conclusions which are in conformity with our predilections, prejudices and tastes. We are satisfied that either Advaitism, or Dvaitism, or Vishishtādvaitism is the only true and [Page 4] reasonable religion, and the other two must be erroneous and utterly unreasonable. So long as the Ahamkāra of the reasoner is not killed, his reasoning powers will not lead him to the exact truth. Reasoning, again, on one's own sense-impressions *alone*, cannot afford adequately numerous data in a single incarnation to arrive at any truth worth the name.

We therefore pass on to the next means, called variously: Competent Testimony, Āpta Vākya, Shabda, Veda, Scriptures, Nigama, Universal Tradition, Historical Conclusions, Shāstras, Shruti, Smṛti, Itihāsa, Purāna, Āgamas, etc. By competent testimony, we can only mean the words of those who have conquered love and hate, and have seen truth exactly reflected in their inner mind (antahkarana) in the trance (samādhi) state, and after coming down to the ordinary waking (jāgrata) state have tried to communicate what they saw in samādhi, in the ordinary language then prevalent, for the benefit of, their contemporaries and of posterity. Such communications, when made through physical sounds and languages after translation into physical-brain-thought, must be tainted by the impurities of the physical brain and by the faults of the languages which act as media of communication. Further, unless the recipient's mind is as pure as that of the communicant's, the impressions on the recipient's mind become further clouded and tainted. Notwithstanding all these defects, this means is of almost the very highest value in arriving at Truth. It does not supersede the two preceding means but enormously [Page 5] supplements them. Especially in respect to truths of higher planes than the physical, planes in which our ordinary physical senses are powerless, does this come to our aid. Of course, if we obtain and develop by yoga the higher senses of higher planes and see truths direct on those planes, the Vedas become less and less useful, so far as their enunciation of those truths is concerned; just as a book of travel describing scenery is not of much use to the man after he has gone to the place and seen it for himself, though it was of great help to him in going and seeing. I must repeat that testimony does not supersede reasoning. Reasoning is still required:

(a) In accepting particular books and traditions and seers as competent testimony, and rejecting spurious passages and blind pretenders to seership.

(b) In meditating on and trying to find out the correct and logical meaning of the communications in the scriptures, written mostly in archaic languages, the meanings of the words, the idioms and expressions of which languages *must* have altered in time.

The scriptures (nigama), it is clear, must necessarily contain many elements calculated to mislead us. Have the communications come down without clerical mistakes and even forgeries ? What are

Apocrypha, and what are not ? Were all the communicants really those who had seen truths face to face ? When each religionist thinks his own scriptures to be the only true Vedas and all others impostures, when the higher criticism has knocked out the dogma of verbal inspiration, when versions differ, when interpretations [Page 6] differ, when Shaivas contend that other books are not less authoritative than the Samskrt Vedas, and Vaishnavas have their "double Vedas", it is clear without elaborate argument that testimony cannot be the highest and clearest means, though it has been indispensable to individual aspirants whom it has *helped* on their paths to see God face to face. The highest means for each, in the very nature of things, can be only direct vision by each of the Supreme. Hence Realisation in the purified heart by perfect intuition in samādhi is the highest means, higher than the Veda. Unaided individual effort to open that samadhic eye by even the pure of heart and steady of intellect can go but a very little way, just as a child's attempt in a lonely forest to learn things without the aid of an already developed language taught by its elders can go a very little way. It is only the mantra vibration taught by another (the Elder Brother, Guru, who has similarly received it from His own Elders in the succession of Teachers — Guru Parampara) that opens the divine eye that can see the Truth validly. As the *Kathopanishat* says: "Brahman is too subtle and evasive to be grasped by mere logic (tarka) and has to be communicated by another for proper comprehension". So the *Chhândogya* declares also, and the Lord says in the *Gîtâ* (iv. 34) that wise Seers of Truth ought to be approached with salutations to obtain Wisdom.

I have treated above of only four means, following the Shrîmad-Bhâgavatam. In the 19th chapter of [Page 7] the 11th Skandha (17th Shloka), the Lord mentions to Uddhava only these: Direct, Logical, Testimony, and Self-Realisation. I have humbly followed the Lord's classification, and have tried to show that the highest means is not the Veda but Self-Realisation. This (Âtma-Samvit) might be called in a very real sense direct, as it is as vivid and definite as the highest waking perception obtained by the most healthy physical senses, but it is far greater than ordinary sense-perception, which is very imperfect and very misleading. This Self-Realisation, being perception by the highest spiritual sense, called the divine eye, is the highest sense-perception, and being buddhic perception, is the real waking state. It can also be called logic, as it gives the highest and most exact logical coherence to all our other knowledge. Ordinary logic depends on the keenness, strength and clarity of the intellectual powers of discrimination, similarity and retentiveness. When two intellectual giants fight and differ, an ordinary man can only follow his prejudices and inclinations, and he gets bewildered by the wealth of dialectics poured forth by the combatants. Subtle fallacies are beyond his unravelling. This want of finality in mere reasoning is referred to in the *Vedânta Sûtras* (II, I. 11) and accepted by all schools of Vedânta and even by the Nayyâyika and Pûrva-Mîmâmsa schools. Intellectual men differ, because they have not got rid of the Ahamkara which clouds the mind, and also because truth is many-sided and has to be expressed in many ways when the medium is human language, even if it [Page 8] be a very perfect language like Samskrt — literally, the well-constructed language. So, again, this vision might be called the highest Veda, as all Vedas and Shrutis and Âgamas and scriptures are only the concreted results of this highest vision. What God Omniscient taught as Veda, no doubt, must be perfect truth. But what did He teach and how ? Did He teach in the Arabic language, the Hebrew language, the Tamil language, the old Samskrt or the new (in which the minor Upanishats are written) ? As H. P. B. said (*The Secret Doctrine*, 3, 72): "It is a loss of time to ask which (of the Scriptures) is the earliest; all are simply different versions of the one Primaevial Record of pre-historic Knowledge and Revelation." It is in this sense alone that all Vedas and Scriptures are Eternal. In page 119, she says: "Dogma and Authority have ever been the curse of humanity, the great extinguishers of Light and Truth". In the fifteenth chapter of the *Gîtâ* the Lord says: "I am the author of the Vedânta and I alone know the meaning of the Veda". So the mere admission that revelation is even verbally infallible does not help us much to find out valid Truth. The *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* itself has been commented upon by atheists, and our modern anarchists quote its sublime verses as justifying their

hideous actions; the devil can always quote scripture for his purpose. As cycle succeeds cycle and human language succeeds human language, old Vedas collected by the Vyāsa of a cycle must be discarded, not because they are false but because they cannot be understood and are very liable to be misinterpreted. More recent divine [Page 9] expressions of the same truths must be, and are, brought forward and made permanent by the Vyāsa of the next cycle. Hence, also, the necessity of the Lord's repeated incarnations to re-state the same old truths in newer language. Siddhasena Divākara says that scripture as a source of valid knowledge is "that which was first cognised by a competent person, which is not such as to be passed over by others" (through mere logical reasoning) ", which is not incompatible with the truths derived from direct perception", and which helps and guides you by laying down injunctions and instructions in respect of matters "which baffle perception and inference". These competent seers have to drink "Soma" to liberate themselves from their lower bodies (The Secret Doctrine, III, 124). The lower "Soma" takes you to svarga, and the higher beyond svarga to the imperishable worlds. Revelation there comes through the grace of the highest Guru (Shrī Krshna, or Dakshināmūrti, or Rudra-Shukra). Mere verbal repetition of scriptures will not give us true knowledge. Even reverent meditation on their hidden meanings can only be a help. It is the direct supreme vision which gives the most valid knowledge. This supreme vision is the highest perception, the clearest logic and the most infallible testimony. It cannot be affected by doubts as all the other three means can be. It is the vision which Arjuna enjoyed by the Lord's grace and which removed all his doubts. That highest knowledge on the highest plane has however to be repeated on that plane many times, so as to form part of our constitution, [Page 10] and has to be brought down by constant practice for use on the lower planes, for the further and final purification of our lower bodies, for the clear understanding of Truth on the lower planes, and for doing real good to the lower worlds and their inhabitants.

All lower evidence and knowledge then feed the Self-realising experience. Self-Realisation is the synthesis and the foundation and consummation of all the other kinds of knowledge and hence does not contradict or totally destroy them. Even the Vedas are below it. Hence the Vedas are spoken of depreciatingly in the *Gītā*. All the four Vedas are included in the lower knowledge in the *Mundaka-Upanishat*. All the Vedas are as useless to the man of pure-hearted intuition, who has seen truth, by God's or Guru's grace, as a small well to a man who is surrounded on all sides by floods of pure water. The mantra given by the Guru at Initiation, and which opens the inner eye, is greater to that Initiate than all the outer Vedas. As the Lord Buddha said in the *Kalama Sutta*, the traditional or literal meaning of the Vedas cannot be considered infallible till our own reason, and not only our reason but our highest samadhic consciousness approve of it, and then all the Vedas which were helps in the earlier stages become useless. This Self-Realisation is described by Maharshi Devendranāth Tagore as "the Light of Intuitive Knowledge in the perfectly purified heart". And the heart is purified by virtuous sacrificial work and still more rapidly by devotion.[Page 11]

Seeing the Truth once in Samādhi is not enough. "The light of Heaven seen in wakeful moments is soon forgot in dreams of busy life", as Saint Tukārām says, and as even Arjuna said before about the *Gītā* teachings to Shrī Krshna. Just as there are grades in the definiteness and clarity of sense-knowledge (the visual perception of an aged colour-blind man being much less valid and true than that of a healthy keen-eyed youth), so even in spiritual vision, that of one who has passed the fourth Initiation and has cast off all the ten fetters, and has seen God several times, or is seeing God continuously (like Nārada or Prahāda), must be more valid than that of another who has seen God only a few times. The later uncontroversial utterances of perfected seers like the recognised heads of the three Vedāntic schools, are more correct than their earlier utterances and more harmonious with one another.

All the four means give knowledge of Brahman. As Manu said: "The man who is deprived of even one of the ten physical senses is incapable of a true knowledge of Brahman, as water oozes away out of a pot which has even one hole in it". The Infinite Lord cannot be completely known even by Self-Realisation, which can only know his *true nature correctly but not fully*. As Light on the Path says: "One can enter the Light but can never reach the Flame". This Self-Realisation is the faith which can move mountains — as the Lord Jesus said. Faith is not (as the schoolboy said): "Believing what you know isn't so". It is not, as a calculating priestcraft [Page 12] teaches: "Believing a thing because reason revolts against its acceptance as truth", so that the greater the virtue of the faith, the more absurd and impossible the believed dogma looks to the reason. The real faith comes by the opening of inner clairvoyance (or clear higher sight) through the Guru's grace, and its indispensable preliminary is faith in the Guru. Neither of the two faiths is opposed to reason, but both are supported by the highest reason and by the scriptures. As Shri Rāmānujāchārya says, the truths of faith and of the scriptures cannot be disproved by the logical reason (though they may not also be capable of proof to all by the logical reason) and their probability can be supported as fully by reason as any other probability. All the Vedas might be destroyed for seers like Tirumoolar or Tāyumanāvar and they could create new scriptures and shastras which might be also called in a very real sense "the oldest and the eternal Vedas". It is the Svānubhava vision (which is a more valid means than all the Vedas) that Arjuna obtained through the grace of Shri Kṛṣṇa when the latter showed His Universal Form.

Let me close with a few words to my brother Theosophists. The existence and supremacy of the means called Self-Realisation can neither be established nor disproved by the controversial reason, as that evidence underlies all other evidence and they all depend for their respective validities on their being pervaded by its ray; our conviction of the reality of the waking state is due to our sense-perception being pervaded by a minute ray of Self-Realisation. [Page 13] Only by the ray of this in each of us can each of us accept it as the highest means. Does that faint Self-realising consciousness, or higher Intuition, not larger than a mustard seed, give us the undoubting belief that our Theosophical Movement is under the guidance of Those who are Masters in realised knowledge ? Does it assure us that it is destined to be *the* coming movement, that our revered President is in touch with and is the mouthpiece of Those who are the First Section of the Society ? Will that knowledge, free from doubt and hesitation, make us give up our life, worldly honours and position, wealth and comforts, if necessary, in the sacred cause of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion ? May it be so in the case of at least a few of us, for no mere external facts, intellectual disputations, or scriptural passages, will give us the strength of devotion necessary for the supreme sacrificial spirit required by the present times; and the manifestation of a ray, however feeble, of that spiritual intuition born in the purified heart through the grace of the Guru, is indispensable in each of the true workers in this grand cosmopolitan movement.