

Introduction to the *Brahma-Sūtra*

Part 2

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Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā and *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā*

This *sampradāya* tells us that there are two important spheres, *karma* and knowledge (*jñāna*). Knowledge (*jñāna*) of means and ends is required to do *karma*. This being so, the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas* claim that knowledge is the cause for engaging in action (*karma-pravṛtti-hetu*) to gain things. According to them, all the chapters in the Veda convey the same thing—*dharma* and *adharmā*, *karma* that is to be done and not to be done. This *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* view was systematized by Jaimini in *sūtras*, which are commented upon by Śābara, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, and Prābhākara.

Mokṣa is important for anyone who accepts the Veda as a means of knowledge, a *vaidika*. Even those who do not accept the Veda as *pramāṇa*, also talk about *mokṣa*—the *Bauddha*, *Jaina*, and *Cārvaka*. Without *mokṣa*, there is no *darśana*, thus, *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* as a philosophy also presents *mokṣa*.

The entire *Veda* is divided into a *karma* section and a *jñāna* section. In *karma*, the means and results are different (*sādhana-sādhyā-bheda*) and those who perform the actions are also different. Here choice is involved—“The one who wants heaven should perform the ritual,” *svarga-kāmaḥ yajeta*. There are varieties of *karma* for varieties of ends, because people and desires are many.

Knowledge (*jñāna*) has an entirely different sphere. The *jñāna* in the Veda is not subject to negation, it is beyond the other five means of knowledge, and it is useful, as we saw. This subject matter is analyzed by Vedānta (*vedānta-mīmāṃsā*) and is kept at the end of the Veda. The topic is Brahman, so it is also analysis of Brahman (*brahma-mīmāṃsā*). The position being later it is also called *uttara-mīmāṃsā*, and it is presented by Vyāsa in the form of *sūtras*.

The *pūrva* and *uttara mīmāṃsā* are named only on the basis of the prior (*pūrva*) and latter (*uttara*) section of the Veda. The word Vedānta is purely positional; it does not mean ‘end of the Veda’. Even though the knowledge unfolded in Vedānta is “gaining which everything is as

¹ Published in the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam 14th Anniversary Souvenir, 2000

well gained”, the word Vedānta means what is at the end of the Veda, and is not used in the sense of the end of all knowledge. It is a separate body of knowledge, but has the status of being included in the Veda, because it has to talk about a topic (*viṣaya*) that is not negatable, not perceived or inferred, and is useful.

What is the difference between *pūrva* and *uttara mīmāṃsā*? *Karma* here is dependent on a doer (*karṭṛ-apekṣa*). It is not merely activity (*calanātmaka*). Even though karma implies motion/change, when you say the river flows, it doesn’t *do* a *karma*. Being non-sentient (*acetana*), there is no agency (*karṭṛtva*). In the *śāstra*, karma means something that is able to produce an unseen result (*adrṣṭa*), *punya* and *pāpa*. *Jñānam* is based on the object of knowledge (*vastu-tantra*), whereas *karma* is based upon a self-conscious entity who has the choice to do or not to do.

In the karma section, *karma-kāṇḍa*, all the karma talked about is dependent on a doer. It doesn’t establish whether the doer (*kartā*) is a reality. Going along with the human being who has the sense of doership and enjoyership, the *śāstra* talks about something useful (*phalavat*), and good (*hitam*). It does not go into the nature (*svarūpa*) of the doer.

Vedānta Addresses the Reality of the Doer

In Vedānta what is talked about is whether the doer is real. The Veda provisionally accepts the doer as real. Since desires are many, there will be a propensity to transgress the order of *dharma* to fulfill these desires. To stop that, the Veda says that there is such a thing as an unseen result (*adrṣṭa phala*); there is *pāpa*, which will result in an undesirable situation now or later. Certain things are prescribed for the manner, time, and order in which the karmas are performed. For example, it says, “Do this ritual at sunrise,” *udite juhoti*. This means that the tendency to sleep late has to be curbed and likes and dislikes have to be given up to some extent, making it possible to have an upper hand over them. One gains a certain capacity for discriminative inquiry (*viveka*) by doing this. It gives an inner ‘space’, and this freedom gives a certain tranquility and composure. With *viveka*, which is the innate state of the mind (*buddhi*), one is able to question and analyze with clarity what the purpose is of the karma that is being done. The *śāstra* says that the one who does this will go to heaven. But it also points out that the world (*loka*) that will be gained in the hereafter is time bound (*anitya*). Once the impermanence (*anityatva*) is understood, then the question arises of whether what one is seeking is limitless

(*nitya*) or time-bound (*anitya*). If it is *anitya*, one becomes an eternal seeker, since the sought is *anitya*.

The statement “Everything is loved for the sake of the self,” *ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati*, becomes a potent statement (*vākya*). In heaven (*svarga*), etc., what is looked for is a certain happiness (*sukha*) centered on myself. Satisfaction is always centered on ‘I’. Further, what is free from time (*nitya*) cannot be created. If it is eternal, it must have been there before creation. Only that which is uncreated can be *nitya*. All results of action (*karma-phala*) are created, and therefore *anitya*. When this discrimination (*viveka*) comes, a certain degree of dispassion (*vairāgya*) follows. Things are understood as they are, and one becomes objective.

“One must study one’s own Veda,” *svādhyāyo adhyetavyaḥ*. This is a Vedic mandate. That there is such a mandate is made known to us from the *sampradāya*. The study of the Veda itself, even if interest is lacking, gives a vague knowledge (*āpātata-jñānam*). “The self, my dear, is to be listened about,” *ātma vā are śrotavyaḥ*; “The one who knows Brahman gains the ultimate,” *brahamvid āpnoti param*; “The one who knows the self crosses sorrow,” *tarati śokam ātmavit*; “This self is Brahman,” *ayamātmā brahma*. All these statements are heard to produce the vague knowledge that the self is limitless (*ānanda*), real (*satya*), free from time (*nitya*). There is an attempt on the part of the *śruti* to turn the seeker towards himself, so that the object of inquiry (*vicāra-viśaya*) is oneself alone. ‘I’ becomes the subject matter of enquiry, because the sense of limitation that I have is born of the conclusion, “I am different from everything.” This sense of duality is what limits. There is no way of manipulating the whole world (*jagat*) which one thinks is out to get one. You cannot manipulate the forces to your advantage. As long as what limits is there, limitations will stay. What limits? Not being yourself.

Behind the seeking there is a freedom that is sought after, freedom from pain, which is part of the experiential world. It is the cause of pain, which is the sense of limitation, which you want to get rid of. The real aim of a human being (*puruṣārtha*) is, “I have to be free from being limited.” If that is discerned as the only *puruṣārtha*, then the attempt is only to free yourself. That is *mokṣa-puruṣārtha*. The pursuit of *artha* and *kāmā* are only in the absence of the clear understanding (*niścaya*) that the pursuit is for *mokṣa*. If this is understood properly, and it is accepted that there is *mokṣa*, then it will be clear that limitation is not true.

What can be gained is not the subject matter of Vedanta. What ‘is’, is the topic that is discussed. Sentences in the *karma-kāṇḍa* talk about what can be gained (*sādhyā-viśaya*),

desirable and undesirable, about injunctions (*vidhi*) and prohibitions (*niṣedha*). The statement, “The one who desires heaven should do the *jyotiṣtoma* ritual,” *svarga kāmāḥ jyotiṣtomena yajeta*, talks about going to heaven through a given means (*sādhana*), so there is a difference between the means and the end (*sādhana-sādhya-bheda*) in this statement (*vākya*). On the other hand, look at this statement, “All this is Brahman; there is no multiplicity here at all,” *sarvam khalvidam brahma neha nānāsti kiñcana*.” There is no second thing. When it talks about Brahman, there is no end to be accomplished (*sādhya*) involved. It is a statement about something that is already established (*siddha-vastu-viśaya-vākya*). The subject-object difference is swallowed here by saying that everything is Brahman.

The pursuit of *pramāṇa* (*pramāṇa-pravṛtti*) is only due to limitation. The pot is different from cloth, and so on. All *pramāṇas* operate in this manner alone—by distinguishing one thing from another. All sense organs operate on this basis, revealing different colors, sounds, etc. If you have fine hearing, it means you have a more disturbing world. To be sensitive is the prerogative of a human being, but in its wake, sensitivity also brings in more hostility from the world. You have to deal with more things.

The five *pramāṇas* are meant only for knowledge of things that are different from each other. Their sphere of activity is different from what can save me from limitation. The sphere of operation of Vedānta as a means of knowledge (*vedānta-pramāṇa-vyāpāra*), therefore, is different. It is useful (*phalavat*), because it gives freedom from a sense of limitation. “As long one creates even a little bit of duality, then he will have fear,” *udaramantaram kurute atha tasya bhayam bhavati*.” “From duality, indeed, is fear,” *dvaitād hi bhayam bhavati*. The Upaniṣad tells us that as long as there is duality, fear will remain. I can run from it, or seek something different from it. For the latter, there is a special subject matter, Vedānta. There is also a person who is qualified for it (*adhikāri*), a person who wants to be free from limitation, from seeking (*mumukṣu*), who has discerned this (*viveka*) and has a natural dispassion (*vairāgya*) for other pursuits. It is the knowledge of the *vākyas* that brings the ‘result’ (*phalam*) that is *mokṣa*. Between knowledge of the *śāstra* (*śāstra-jñānam*) and the result (*phala*) there is a connection of means and end (*sādhana-sādhya-sambandha*). There is also a connection between knowledge and *mokṣa*.

Necessity for *Uttara- Mīmāṃsā*? – *Pūrva-Pakṣa*

Is the pursuit of the *uttara-mīmāṃsā*, the analysis of sentences (*vākya*) of Vedānta, valid and necessary? Is there a subject matter? An argument is advanced that there is not. According to the *pūrva-mīmāṃsā*, the entire (*kṛtsna*) Veda is already analyzed in the *mīmāṃsā-śāstra*. There, *dharma*, *artha*, *kāmā*, and *mokṣa* are talked about and analyzed, and *mokṣa* is regarded as freedom from death (*amṛtatva*), which is heaven (*svarga*). It has already been discussed. Therefore, Vedānta, the *uttara-mīmāṃsā*, has no *puruṣārtha*. This is one reason for not starting the *uttara-mīmāṃsā*. It has no result (*phalam*). And it is not meant for *dharma*, *artha*, *kāmā*, much less *mokṣa*, because they have all been covered in the *pūrva-mīmāṃsā*. Therefore, this *uttara-mīmāṃsā* is not necessary because there is no goal (*puruṣārtha abhāvāt*).

There is no new unknown topic (*apūrva-viṣaya*). If you are saying this is analysis of what is embodied (*śārīraka-mīmāṃsā*), then you are doing analysis of *ātmā*. But *ātmā* is not the subject matter of the *śāstra*, because it is known; it is evident (*prasiddha*). The subject matter of the *śāstra* should be something that is not known by the available means of knowledge (*anadhigata*). There is nothing not known to me about *ātmā*. It is an agent and enjoyer (*kartā bhoktā*), and by *karma* and meditation (*upāsana*), it gains a certain result, which has all the qualities of immortality (*amṛtatva*), being a person who is happy (*sukhi*).

Nor can there be a special qualified person (*adhikāri*) for this. According to you, *ātmā* is already free (*mukta*). If it is already free, then who is the qualified person (*adhikāri*)? If he is not liberated, (*amukta*), then how will he get liberation by the words of the Veda? Therefore, only the one who has a desire for heaven (*svarga*) can be qualified for any *puruṣārtha*. If he has dispassion (*vairāgya*), which is necessary according to you, then why should he study this? *Mokṣa* is to be gained through the result of karma (*karma-phala*) which has been explained in the *pūrva- mīmāṃsā*.

Then we have to ask that exponent of *pūrva-mīmāṃsā*, “What about the Upaniṣads, which talk about established things (*siddha-vastu*), existent facts, like “This self is Brahman,” *ayamātmā Brahma*? There should be a way of explaining them. The *pūrva-mīmāṃsaka* replies that the entire Veda is meant for asking you to do and not to do certain things, and any statement that does not have that meaning is useless (*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānāarthakyam atadarthānam*). Therefore, these words of the Upaniṣads have no meaning. If they do, they

have to be connected to statements of injunction (*vidhi-vākya*) that ask you to do a given *karma*. Sentences that have established or existent things (*siddha-vastu-viṣaya*) as their topic should be connected to these statements of injunction.

For example, in the Veda there is a statement, “*Agni* cried and the tear drops became silver.” True or not, what is the use of the sentence (*vākya*)? It is something that cannot be known in any other way (*anadhigata*) and is not negatable (*abādhita*), but it is not useful (*phalavat*), because it is not connected to an action (*kriyā-para*). But since the *śāstra* is saying this, it must have connection. The *śāstra* being a *pramāṇa*, it cannot have useless words. This statement is interpreted as a prohibition (*pratiṣedha-vidhi*), an injunction of what you should not do. In a Vedic ritual, silver should not be given as a gift to the priest. If one does, there will be occasion to shed tears within a year. So the statement (*vākya*) is useful. In the same way, the statements of the Upaniṣad (*upaniṣad-vākya*) are also connected to statements about *karma* (*karma-vākya*). Their purpose is to make *karma* more efficacious. As you do the *karma*, you should think of *ātmā* as Brahman. This is to enhance the qualification of the agent of the action (*karṭṛ-saṃskāra*). The utensils used in rituals gain a certain religious disposition, *saṃskāra*, when purified by certain mantras. Similarly, if you think of *ātmā* as Brahman, you become better qualified to do this *karma*, and therefore, gain better results. This is one argument.

Alternatively, the *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* looks upon the statements of the Upaniṣad as injunctions for meditation. The statement, “This self is Brahman,” *ayam ātmā brahma* is interpreted to mean that this *ātmā* should be meditated upon as Brahman. That is also dependent on an agent (*karṭṛ-tantra*), the meditator. He should meditate upon himself as Brahman, to gain certain qualities. These are all meditative statements (*vākya*). The *Pūrva mīmāṃsaka* also accepts that as a legitimate view (*pakṣa*). One view accepts it as an accessory to *karma* (*karmāṅga*), and the other as an independent meditation (*upāsana*). Therefore, they maintain, in the first section (*pūrva-bhāgha*) of the Veda, *karma* is given, and in the latter part, *upāsana*. Both are actions (*kriyā*). Since all forms of action (*kriyā*)—physical, oral and mental— are already analyzed, there is no necessity for another *śāstra*.

The one who has a desire for *mokṣa* is also an agent (*karṭā*). There is no such thing as a self that is not an agent (*akarṭṛ-ātmā*). When there is no topic (*viṣaya*), qualified person (*adhikāri*), or result (*phala*), there will be no connection (*sambandha*) either. Therefore, the *uttara-mīmāṃsa-śāstra* is of no use.

Necessity for *Uttara-mīmāṃsā*: Response and Established Conclusion, *Siddhānta*

Now the fact that there is a topic (*viśaya*), a qualified person (*adhikāri*), a result (*mokṣa*), and a connection (*sambandha*) has to be established. How is *mokṣa* gained? Analyzing karma according to what it can accomplish, it is of four types. By *karma* you can (1) produce what is not there now (*utpādyam*), (2) reach that which hasn't been reached (*āpyam*), (3) cleanse (*saṃskāryam*), i.e. certain properties gathered by an object can be removed and it can be restored to its original condition, or (4) you can modify one form to another (*vikāryam*). All four of these are time-bound (*anitya*).

Mokṣa, should be free from time (*nitya*). If so, it cannot be produced, nor can it be subject to cleansing (*saṃskāra*), being reached, or being modified. So the result of karma (*karma-phala*) cannot be *mokṣa*. It has got to be something already existent. If it is existent, is it an object like the mountains? *Mokṣa* is not possible for what is inherently bound. I feel that am bound. If bondage is intrinsic to myself then I have no possibility of *mokṣa*, because the intrinsic nature of something cannot change. If there is a *mokṣa* it has to be centered on myself (*ātma-niṣṭha*), not on an object. Further, it is free from time (*nitya*). That means I am already free (*mukta*). There is no other *mokṣa*.

The same *śāstra* that tells you about heaven (*svarga*) etc. also says, “Just as the body born of karma here disintegrates, so too, when you go to heaven the body born of *puṇya-karma* disintegrates.” Even though the *śāstra* doesn't need to give reasons, being an independent *pramāṇa*, when it comes to what is real (*vastu*) it does give reasons, because this has to be assimilated. Heaven (*svarga*) etc., cannot be *mokṣa* because even though all the individuals (*jīvas*) are happy there, still, there is a gradient of happiness (*sukha-tāratamya*). Consequently, the happiness will not be complete, it will be stifled by comparison.

Thus, when heaven is dismissed as *mokṣa*, *mokṣa* becomes the topic. Why? Because every individual has a conclusion, “I am other than everything else.” There is a sense of limitation centered on oneself. The very fact that he doesn't want to be limited shows that he is by nature unlimited (*aparicchinna*). *Mokṣa* cannot be an object. To arrive at the fact, “There is nothing other than myself,” is *mokṣa*, limitlessness. This is *ātma-niṣṭhā*. The sentence, “The one who knows Brahman gains the limitless,” *brahmavid āpnoti param*, and other such *vākyas*, all talk about *mokṣa*. It can only be the nature of *ātmā*. Only then can it be *nitya*.

Everyone is a seeker of freedom (*mumukṣu*). All are seeking something or the other. The one who understands that he is seeking to be free from being a seeker is a real *mumukṣu*. Being free from being a seeker is *mokṣa*. One has to discern that. The person who has discerned it is a discriminating person (*viveki*). So we have established the qualified person, the *mumukṣu* and *mokṣa*. What is the subject matter?

If duality is not true, then I should look at myself differently. This limited person as a nucleus attracts different characteristics and attitudes, but continues to be the nucleus of what is limited. My own experience says that certain things that I think I am, are disappearing. There is this possibility of the self being entirely different. In the vision of the *śruti* also, the self is different. “Everything is dear for the sake of the self. . . The self, my dear, has to be seen,” *ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati. . . ātmā vā are dṛṣṭavyaḥ*. The *śāstra* asks me to look at myself, for “The one who knows the self crosses sorrow,” *tarati śokam ātmavit. Ātmā* should be known, and it should be known as limitless (*bhūmā*). “Whatever is limited, that is not *bhūmā*,” *yadalpam tanna bhūmā. Ātmā* is free from limitation, *anantam*.

The *śāstra* tells us that *ātmā* is the limitless Brahman (*param brahma*), the cause of everything (*sarvasya kāraṇam*), and it has a certain method of unfolding this reality. That Brahman “you are,” *tvam asi*. It has a subject matter. The self, *ātmā*, being evident (*prasiddha*) makes it a locus to commit mistakes. It is not recognized as it is, and thus, has to be understood for what it is (*jñeya-vastu*). Then there must be pursuit of knowledge (*jñāna-pravṛtti*). The transition from being one who wants to be free (*mumukṣu*) to one who wants to know (*jijñāsu*) is a quantum leap. That is why the first *sūtra* starts with *atha* and *ata*. This accounts for the quantum leap. Since you are a *mumukṣu* you should know Brahman. *Mokṣa* is possible because you are already free (*mukta*). Seeing yourself as an agent and enjoyer (*kartā bhoktā*) is a mistake. It is seeing the self as something in something that it is not, *atasmin tadbuddhi*—you see what is not there. The seeming life of becoming (*samsāritva*) is only a superimposition. That is why *ātmā* should be understood, for which a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), which is the *śāstra*, is necessary. Analysis of, and inquiry into the meaning of the sentences and words of the *śāstra* are sacred. There is a commitment here. The entire *śāstra* has one consistent meaning (*eka-vākyatā*), and one topic—you. Therefore, study of the *śāstra* is the study of you. You are of the nature of freedom (*mokṣa-svarūpa*). The entire pursuit of Vedānta is for the elimination of the cause of all that is undesirable (*anartha-hetu*), the removal of *saṃsāra* which is the removal of the superimposition (*adhyāsa-nivṛtti*). This is the result (*phala*).