

Title: *Vedanta: Discovering the Essence of Existence*

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Abstract

This article delves into the profound philosophy of Vedanta, a cornerstone of Hinduism, which explores the ultimate nature of reality and existence. Rooted in the canonical texts—the *Upanishads*, *Brahmasutras*, and *Bhagavad-Gita*—Vedanta addresses life's most essential questions: *Who are we?* And *What is our purpose?* It introduces *Brahman*, the infinite foundation of all, and provides pathways to realization through the *Mahavakyas* (Great Sayings). Through a blend of timeless wisdom and practical relevance, this article reveals Vedanta's potential to transform modern lives by fostering self-awareness, liberation (*Moksha*), and universal harmony.

Keywords

Vedanta, Brahman, Hindu Philosophy, Upanishads, Mahavakyas, Moksha, Maya, Consciousness, Self-Realization

Literature Review

Vedanta emerges as one of the most significant contributions to global philosophy, offering insights that resonate beyond cultural and temporal boundaries. Scholars like Swami Vivekananda and Adi Shankaracharya have emphasized Vedanta's universal applicability, framing it as a path toward self-realization and liberation. In contemporary discourse, Vedanta bridges ancient metaphysics with modern concerns, highlighting the relevance of its teachings in a world dominated by materialism and individualism. Textual studies, such as those on the *Upanishads*, reveal recurring themes of unity, consciousness, and transcendence, which continue to inspire philosophical and spiritual seekers alike.

This article builds upon these foundational interpretations while making the concepts accessible to modern readers by weaving philosophical depth with everyday language.

Vedanta: Discovering the Essence of Existence

What is Vedanta?

At its core, *Vedanta* means “the culmination of knowledge” (*Veda* = knowledge, *Anta* = end). However, it is far more than an intellectual pursuit. It reveals the ultimate nature of reality, referred to as *Brahman*. Unlike most forms of knowledge that involve external exploration, *Vedanta* invites us to turn inward and recognize an eternal truth that is already within.

Vedanta rests on three canonical texts: the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmasutras*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. These ancient works are not just religious or philosophical documents—they serve as guideposts for addressing life’s most profound questions.

Brahman: The Infinite Foundation

Central to *Vedanta* is the concept of *Brahman*, the infinite essence of existence. *Brahman* is not an object, person, or place but the unchanging reality beneath all change. It is described through three interconnected aspects:

- **Pure Existence** (*Sat*) – The foundation of all that is.
- **Pure Awareness** (*Chit*) – The light that illuminates all experience.
- **The Infinite** (*Ananda*) – Beyond time, space, or limitation.

Here is an analogy: Imagine watching a movie. The characters, emotions, and story seem real, but beneath it all is the screen that remains unchanged. *Brahman* is like that screen—the eternal reality that supports all appearances.

Four Guiding Lights: The Mahavakyas

The essence of *Vedanta* is distilled into four great declarations (*Mahavakyas*) from the Vedas, each offering a profound insight into the nature of reality.

1. ***Prajnanam Brahman* – Consciousness is Brahman**

The awareness that allows you to read this text is itself *Brahman*. It is not external but the essence of your very being (*Aiteriya Upanishad, Rig Veda*).

2. ***Aham Brahmasmi* – I am Brahman**

This realization shatters all boundaries. You are not merely an individual entity but one with the infinite reality (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajur Veda*).

3. ***Tat Tvam Asi* – That Thou Art**

This statement reminds us that the divine is not outside us but is us. The perceived separation is an illusion (*Chandogya Upanishad, Sama Veda*).

4. ***Ayam Atma Brahma* – This Self is Brahman**

What we call the self—our personality, thoughts, and identity—is just a reflection. The deeper truth is that we are infinite and eternal (*Mandukya Upanishad, Atharva Veda*).

The Illusion of Separateness

If we are already *Brahman*, why do we feel so limited? *Vedanta* addresses this with the concept of *Māyā*—the illusion that creates a sense of separateness. *Māyā* distorts reality, making the infinite appear as finite and the one appear as many.

Consider this analogy: A pot filled with water reflects the vast sky, but the pot's boundaries create an illusion of separation. Similarly, our sense of individuality is like the pot—an apparent separation from the infinite reality of *Brahman*.

From Not-knowing to Knowing

Vedanta is not about belief but realization. Most of us live as though we are characters in a dream, unaware that we are the dreamer. The journey is not about acquiring something new but rediscovering what has always been true.

Imagine holding a gold bracelet and thinking of it as mere jewelry. *Vedanta* teaches us to see it for what it truly is: gold first, bracelet second. In the same way, our essence doesn't change, no matter the form or circumstances of our life.

Why Vedanta Matters Today

In a world of constant distractions and fleeting pleasures, *Vedanta* offers timeless insights that transform how we live:

- **Freedom from Fear:** If our true self is infinite, what is there to fear?
- **Deeper Relationships:** Recognizing others as part of the same infinite reality fosters compassion and connection.
- **True Freedom:** Liberation (*Moksha*) is not an escape but a realization that we've always been free.

Vedanta invites us to stop seeking happiness outside and instead look inward. It reminds us that we are not mere waves in the ocean of life—we are the ocean itself.

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