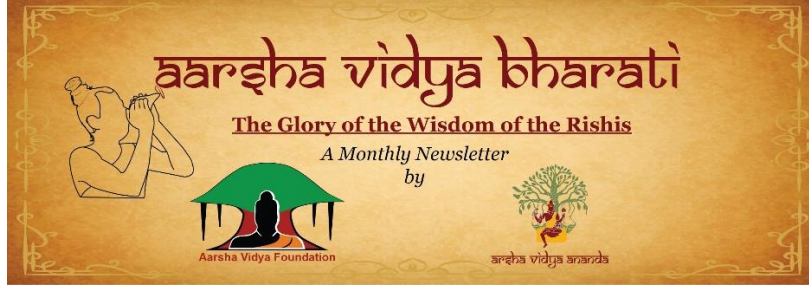

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A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Value of values

An introduction and, Amānitvam (1/20)

By Ananta Ahluwalia, USA

We are all on a journey of knowing the truth of our self. “Who am I?” is a question that beats in every heart at some stage and with this beating heart many seekers approach Vedanta. In chapter thirteen of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Śri Bhagavān* unfolds the nature of the knower and the known. He describes *kṣetra* as the field of activities or the body, gives the qualifications for knowledge and expounds *kṣetrajña* as the knower of the field. Knowledge (*jñāna*) encompasses the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), the place where knowledge occurs (*antaḥ-karaṇa* or mind) and the qualities present in the mind that make a person qualified to know. *Bhagavān* puts forth twenty values of *jñānam* that help us to gain self-knowledge. What is the value of these values? The worth of anything is measured in terms of the personal benefit gained from it. However, we tend to apply values more consistently and absolutely to others than to ourselves. What can we gain by applying them to ourselves with equal gusto? Just as poorly digested food creates illness, poorly assimilated values disturb the mind. When something interferes with the expression of our values it creates conflict in us. By living a life of well-assimilated values, the mind gains peace and integrity and becomes ready to grasp its inherent fullness (*pūrṇatvam*).



Values are universal in content and situational in application. ‘Pride goeth before a fall’ is a well-known adage, but the personal value of *amānitvam* (absence of self-conceit) dawns on us when we see its folly through repeated situational and objective self-inquiry rather than self-condemnation.

Just as we do not expect praise for pointing out our nose and eyes to a captive audience past age two, we outgrow the childishness of demanding praise for powers (*śaktīs*) granted to us (the *kṣetra*) and their inherent limitation. We recognise that all that we have, is given. We recognise the underlying inadequacy and self-doubt that fuels our inflated sense of self and stirs turbulence in us, and we discover genuine self-worth and self-acceptance.

As night goes away when day emerges, so also *amānitvam* arises when we shine the light of self-inquiry on the shadows of the mind (Ego) and we no longer seek significance through external praise. What do we truly have claim over? Our body, mind, relations, possessions, accomplishments, none of these was 100% created by us. Everything is given to us in this life. There is an intelligent design and value to everything, even perceived limitations. Even the glorious Sun, who makes life possible on this planet, becomes covered by clouds or eclipsed and continues to serve its purpose unconditionally. It casts its benevolence on all beings alike whether it is acknowledged by them or not. Friendly gut microbes are imperceptible to the naked eye but critical to our immune system. Completeness is in and through incomplete forms. The self-acceptance that comes from such introspection settles the mind for the knowledge that *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* is in and through all the forms. Ultimately, we gain freedom (*mokṣa*) from the notion of being limited. Thus, values help us to deal with situations effectively and develop a harmonious frame of mind in which knowledge can occur.