

The course on “*Laghu-vākya-vṛtti* Realising Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi” comprises 4 lessons. A detailed description of the topics covered in each lesson is provided below.

Lesson 1: Introduction

- Introduction to *Laghu-vākya-vṛtti*
- Concept of mahāvākya
- Nature of the knowledge revealed by the mahāvākya
 - Not a product of action
 - Expounds the identity of the self and Brahman
 - Bestows the result of pūrṇatā or complete fulfilment and bliss that is independent of deśa, kāla or vastu
- The four main mahāvākyas found in the Upaniṣads
- Brief introduction to the Vedas and their sections

Lesson 2: The Eternal Consciousness [Verses 1–5]

- *Laghu-vākya-vṛtti* is an exposition of the mahāvākya “*Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*”
- The method of śākhā-candra-nyāya – The movement from the known to the unknown
- The concept and definition of upādhi
- A description of upādhis to Consciousness – the gross and subtle bodies, the senses
 - The text uses the known (upādhi) to point towards Consciousness
- The causal-body (kāraṇa-śarīra) and ajñāna as upādhi to Consciousness
- Ajñāna is kāraṇa-śarīra, being the cause for the other two bodies – gross and subtle
- The gross, subtle and causal bodies are all inert
- Nature of sākṣī as an uninvolved witness/knower
 - Properties belong to the upādhis; Consciousness is pure and unaffected by the properties of the upādhis
- Concept of reflected Consciousness – bodhābhāsa
 - Bodhābhāsa is Consciousness reflected at the level of the mind
 - Sākṣī is different from bodhābhāsa
 - Bodhābhāsa is not the ultimate ‘I’
 - Bodhābhāsa as the doer and the recipient of the results of karma
 - The doer along with the mind transmigrates
 - Process by which the true ‘I’ and the false ‘I’ can be distinguished
 - The false ‘I’ is perceived only in the waking and dream states
 - The false ‘I’ disappears in the deep sleep state
 - Consciousness alone illumines the ignorance in deep sleep
 - Consciousness can be experienced in the waking state by stilling the mind
 - When the mind is still, the stillness is illumined by Consciousness
 - When all the thoughts are there, all those thoughts are associated with reflected consciousness and illumined by the pure Consciousness.

Lesson 3: Realising Consciousness through the Thoughts of the Mind [Verses 6–12]

- The mind that is intrinsically inert gains sentience due to its association with Consciousness
- Mind reveals objects with the association of Consciousness
- The mind superimposes likes and dislikes on the Self
 - Consciousness does not take on the qualities of the object; it stays apart.
 - The real ‘I’ is the one that is aware of the false ‘I’ and its experiences.

- Thoughts come and go with different objects as their object but the Awareness remains the same.
- Example of pearls and thread to illustrate the relationship between Consciousness and thoughts
- Thoughts take our attention away from Consciousness
- Focus on the space between two thoughts
 - Increase the duration of the stillness between two thoughts
 - This is the doorway to realise Brahman

Lesson 4: The Practice and Abidance in *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi* [Verses 13–18]

- The present understanding is ‘I am a jīva’, associated with thoughts
- The practice of “*Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*” leads us to the pure Consciousness through the process of increasing the silence between two thoughts
- “*Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*” is the mahāvākya
- Initially, to experience ourselves as Brahman, we need to quieten the thoughts.
- By the above exercise, one can gain a glimpse of Brahman, albeit momentarily
 - The momentary experience reinforces faith, and it is not a blind faith anymore
- With this experience, practise contemplation on ‘I am Brahman’
- One must do brahmābhyāsa with single pointed devotion with the exclusion of everything else
- This is the pathway to Liberation.