

In this sense, Vedānta is heretical and revolutionary. The attitude with which one should do the 'hearing' (śravaṇa) of the scriptures is totally different from the attitude with which one is asked to do 'reflection' (manana) upon what one has heard. Again, neither the śraddhā nor śravaṇa nor the intellectual freedom of manana is permitted to poison the deep serenity of the thoughtless meditation hours. Thus, a student of Vedānta is taught, from the very beginning, to be original at every moment and to live ever in the white heat of inspiration, at once thrilling, divine, and ennobling.

Here, as soon as the student reaches the Master, he is washed clean of all his traditional beliefs. This is, indeed, a kind of shock therapy by which the student is brutally shaken out of the deep ruts into which he may have fallen and shown new dimensions of thought along the right, the straight path.

His wrong notions about religion, his confirmed belief in rituals, his blind faith in hearsay, are all shown here as having nothing to do with true and permanent Liberation. Learning the śāstras, invoking gods through sacrifices, selfless work and even devotion to a personal God have been denied as having any capacity to give us mukti 'even in the lifetime of a hundred Brahmās', which is, according to our mythology, equivalent to 311,040,000,000,000 years!! This is not at all a statement of despair but a way of self-discovery, the secret of which is for the seeker to realise that the Self in him is the Self in all, as prescribed here. The method of this discovery, the meaning of the Self and so on, are all the theme of this text.



अमृतत्वस्य नाशास्ति वित्तेनेत्येव हि श्रुतिः ।

ब्रवीति कर्मणो मुक्तेरहेतुत्वं स्फुटं यतः ॥ ७ ॥

*amṛtatvasya nāśāsti vittenetyeva hi śrutiḥ,
bravīti karmaṇo mukterahetutvaṁ sphuṭaṁ yataḥ. (7)*

7. It is clear that Liberation cannot be the effect of good works, for Śruti herself declares that there is no hope for immortality by means of wealth.

Amṛtattvam is the goal indicated in all the Upaniṣads. When it is translated as merely immortality, readers are apt to misunderstand it to be a profit that can accrue to a man only after his death. This misunderstanding then must take away the edge from religion and dry up all enthusiasm for spiritual living, especially from the modern man who wants immediate gains. He is not ready to invest even a thought in a proposition that will yield to him a great profit only at a future time. Even if we promise him a great existence after death, the modern educated youth will not be interested, since what he seeks is immediate joy and perfection, here and now.

At this healthy insistence of the sons of the land, the old orthodox paṇḍita despairs and brands them as atheists. This is an unfair conclusion. Correctly interpreted, the 'immortality' promised by the Śrutis is not a state or condition that comes to us after our departure from this world. It is a perfection that can be lived here and now. By the term 'immortality' the ṛṣis indicate a state of continuous existence, which has in it no experience of finitude. The disturbances caused by the multiple experiences that rise and fall in us are the causes for all our sorrows and man, knowingly or unknowingly, is struggling hard to continue his experiences. It is very well-known that even in deep sorrow, if the experiences are continuous, the experiencer must come to smile in his sorrow, else, we would not have had even one peel of laughter from our slum areas.

The rich man wants to stretch continuously his experience of joy in his wealth but, alas, it diminishes with the passage of time. All over the world, modern man is struggling to increase his joy in life, to maintain his virility, to lengthen his lifespan in a thousand and one other activities.

There is an anxious impatience with law of finitude that seems to whip man from all sides. The word 'immortality' in Vedānta indicates not a continuous and monotonous living in joy in a hazy yonder there but a perfection here within ourselves by which we can, irrespective of the circumstances that play around us, come to live a continuous experience of tranquillity and peace.