

confusion of the Ātman with the anātman – the idea that ‘I am the body’ can not be destroyed by either of these types of weapons.

Wind and fire are nature’s powers of annihilation. Wind dries up things and destroys them. Fire destroys them by burning them. The conviction that ‘I am the body’, this ignorance can neither be dried up nor can it be burnt down.

Habits or even some of the imbecilities can be changed by acting contrary to them. Activity is another instrument with which human beings can put an end to habits, tendencies, urges and so on, but avidyā cannot be ended by even millions of activities because avidyā is the very cause for all activities.

Thus, this avidyā cannot be ended by any known scientific instrument of annihilation, nor by any of nature’s rupturing reactions resulting in destruction, nor by millions of activities, noble or ignoble. This is precisely the despair of existentialism. The way out is given in the last two lines of this verse.

Mere erudition will never be sufficient. At best, it can puncture ignorance, but it cannot cut it down. So this non-apprehension can be ended only by the sword of discrimination, which results in the first hand experience of the pure Self. This sword has to be sharpened by the cleansing of the inner instruments – the mind and the intellect. ‘Dhātuḥ prasāda’, the term as used here means, ‘purification of the inner instrument’. This purification can be done by reducing the vāsanās, for when vāsanās are reduced, agitations of the mind are reduced. Quieter the mind, the greater is the contemplative power in man and a developed power of contemplation makes his discrimination sharper.

With this sharpened sword alone can the confusion between the Self and the not-Self be finally removed.



श्रुतिप्रमाणैकमतेः स्वधर्म-
निष्ठा तयैवात्मविशुद्धिरस्य ।
विशुद्धबुद्धेः परमात्मवेदनं
तेनैव संसारसमूलनाशः ॥ १४८ ॥

*śrutipramāṇaikaamateḥ svadharmā-
niṣṭhā tayaivātmaviśuddhirasya,
viśuddhabuddheḥ paramātmavedanam
tenaiva saṁsārasamūlanāśaḥ. (148)*

148. *He who has deep devotion to the Śrutis and who is established in his svadharma – for these alone contribute to the purity of his mind – he who is of pure mind realises the supreme Self. By this knowledge alone is saṁsāra destroyed, root and branch.*

The man whose intellect is soaked in the knowledge of the Upaniṣads, whose mind has become single pointedly devoted to the truths declared in the scriptures (Śrutis), that man alone is really able to walk steadily the narrow path of svadharma. Svadharma is, 'the nature (dharma) of one's own self (sva)'. He who has knowledge of the Self alone will be able to live the nature of the Self. Else, again and again, he will slip into the natural idea 'I am the body'. When one lives selflessly for a long period of time according to the dictates of svadharma, one's mind and intellect become purer and purer meaning, calmer and quieter.

When one works in the world dedicatedly, without the ego and the egocentric desires, the existing vāsanās get exhausted and no new vāsanās are created. When there are no vāsanās, there can be no agitations in the mind. The mind becomes calm and quiet. A calm mind is a pure mind. In the pure mind alone is the experience of the supreme Self possible. An agitated mind cannot apprehend Reality.

Knowledge of the Śrutis gained through sincere, daily reading and continuous reflection upon them, facilitates selfless and dedicated activity which helps one to quieten the mind. Then,