

evolutionary equipments. In all the lower strata of existence, evolution is not a conscious development on the part of the individual but an involuntary thrust up received by him from the course of nature.

Millennia of growth, change and decay must pass before a rock becomes soil, the soil anchors a tree, the tree bears fruit and the fruit contributes towards the making of a human being. Millions and trillions of spermatozoa and ova are produced, but only a few of them are united to create a human being. Of all the countless possibilities, to be born a human is a rare chance indeed and having thus got a human form, what do we do with it? Man, because of his mind and intellect equipment, is to an extent, free from nature in evolving himself. Man alone, of all the species of the living kingdoms, can hasten his own evolution by cooperating with the great eternal scheme of things around him. Physically, he has evolved to perfection and nature has nothing more to improve him. His next lap of evolution awaits him at the level of his mind and intellect and this is a process in which nature cannot help him at all.

With this conclusion of the śāstra in mind, when the Ācārya takes up his pen to guide the generation, he must necessarily exclaim and conclude that there can never be a greater fool than the one who, being blessed with a human birth and the necessary mental and intellectual capacities, does not intelligently invest them for the higher purpose of self redemption and self rediscovery.



वदन्तु शास्त्राणि यजन्तु देवान् कुर्वन्तु कर्माणि भजन्तु देवताः ।
आत्मैक्यबोधेन विना विमुक्तिः न सिध्यति ब्रह्मशतान्तरेऽपि ॥ ६ ॥

*vadantu śāstrāṇi yajantu devān kurvantu karmāṇi bhajantu devatāḥ,
ātmaikyabodhena vinā vimuktiḥ na sidhyati brahmaśatāntare'pi. (6)*

6. Let erudite scholars quote all the scriptures, let gods be invoked through sacrifices, let elaborate rituals be performed, let personal gods be propitiated – yet, without the experience of one's identity with the Self,

there shall be no Liberation for the individual, not even in the lifetime of a hundred Brahmās put together.

A disciple who has come to the feet of a Master of Vedānta, is expected to already know some of the traditional techniques of the religious world wherein, for purposes of training the animal-man into the man-man, various methods of discipline have been advised such as study of the scriptures, performing sacrifices, making offerings, worship of a personal God and even selfless sevā. Here the Master is addressing those few, who, having practised all these with sincerity and diligence for a number of years, have come to feel poignantly their limitations and in their growing dissatisfaction with ritualistic religion, have rushed to the Master's feet, seeking guidance along their path for self redemption. To such a student, the Master has to tell the naked truth and all of it, keeping nothing back. So here is a passage, which reads like an out and out condemnation of the ritualistic aspects of all religions.

There is a type of dull seekers who have become so addicted to their method of spiritual practices that they would rather claim a dreary patience with life and its pains, with their disappointments in sādhanā and faith, than dare take up a more satisfying and advanced practice. This is, in fact, an expression of their superstitious fear at leaving the path, which they have been practising for so long. A devotee, who has been through kīrtana, pūjā, japa and dhyāna, developing his devotion for a personal God for a number of years, will not dare to drop for a short time even an iota of his daily routine, even if he were asked to do so by the greatest living Master in the world. Just as one gets addicted to a false way of living, so one can easily become habituated to whatever is accepted as a good way of living. To live in a routine will never yield the secret of living in inspiration. To get habituated to any method is to get into a rut and balk at all progress. We must have the freedom, at every moment, to change our pattern of living and seek new methods of keeping the mind and intellect occupied in lively warmth of love and cheer. Else, even our worship becomes mechanical and in the end, stultifying.