

A student, thus prepared, when he comes to 'hear' a discourse from the Master, not only hears the words but spiritually lives the Truth; this is called 'listening'. Unlike the other techniques of self perfection like devotion and yoga, in Vedānta the student has nothing to do or gain, save to 'hear' and truly 'listen'. In the other paths, techniques are advised and explained and the experience comes to the student when he gains a certain amount of perfection in quiet and steady practice of them.

In Vedānta it is a scriptural discussion between a saint of inner experience and a student of inner purity. It is a Guru-śiṣya saṁvāda and the experience of Reality which is the theme of discussion is brought within the experience of the student, immediately and instantaneously, if the student is ready to receive it. Therefore, Śaṅkara is perfectly orthodox when he declares that the disciple shall experience Liberation if only he knows the 'art of listening' to the spiritual voice that sings through the Master's words.



मोक्षस्य हेतुः प्रथमो निगद्यते वैराग्यमत्यन्तमनित्यवस्तुषु ।
ततः शमश्चापि दमस्तितीक्षा न्यासः प्रसक्ताखिलकर्मणां भृशम् ॥ ६९ ॥

*mokṣasya hetuḥ prathamō nigadyate
vairāgyamatyantamanityavastuṣu,
tataḥ śamaścāpi damastitikṣā nyāsaḥ
prasaktākhilakarmanāṁ bhr̥śam. (69)*

69. For Liberation, first comes extreme detachment from finite objects of sensual satisfaction. Then follow calmness, self-control, forbearance and complete renunciation of all selfish actions.

This is a text which not only expounds Vedānta but is also full of practical instructions to a real seeker who wishes to be fully established on the path of spirituality and maintain his progress in his programme of self-development. Any true seeker will be

impatient, not only to understand the nature of Liberation but also to get a detailed discussion on the specific cause and conditions under which final Liberation from the pains of mortality and the sorrows of finitude can be had. Here the Ācārya enumerates the conditions of the mind in which the true wisdom can blaze forth.

Among them, the capacity to be completely detached from the craving for things known to be finite and perishable is considered most important. A discriminative intellect (*viveka*) can grow and fulfil itself only when there is full detachment (*vairāgya*). Without developing sufficient disinterest in the acquisition, possession and enjoyment of the sense objects of the world, we cannot enter the portals of true wisdom. When we become acutely conscious of the finite and impermanent nature of the world of objects, our minds, which are always athirst for stability, continuity and perfection, will immediately be repelled from their usual playgrounds, the by-lanes of sensuousness, where we spend a large amount of our vital energy everyday. Detachment is the method of economising in the expenditure of life's energy and disciplining, conserving and rightly applying this new found energy to raise ourselves from the state of bondage to one of inner freedom and spiritual suzerainty.

Śama, dama and titikṣā are again qualities¹ to be developed by the seeker himself so that he may discipline and train the newly released energies for right application in a concentrated, single pointed meditation.

When there is detachment as a result of pure discriminative perception of a better balanced intellect and when this mental condition is reinforced by self-control, calmness and forbearance, the individual entertains no more egoistic, desire prompted schemes of activity. The idea of renunciation of all activities is not to be misunderstood as amounting to an existence as inert as the rocks on the Ganga banks. He relinquishes all the desire prompted

¹ *ibid.* verse – 20 to 24; In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*-4.4.23 there is a famous reference to these qualities of calmness, self-control, forbearance and so on.