

activities sacred or secular, ritualistic or otherwise.¹ All these contribute to the true preparedness of the intellect for the higher flights to the brilliant peaks of transcendental glory and perfection.



ततः श्रुतिस्तन्मननं सतत्त्वध्यानं चिरं नित्यनिरन्तरं मुनेः ।
ततोऽविकल्पं परमेत्य विद्वानिैव निर्वाणसुखं समृच्छते ॥ ७० ॥

*tataḥ śrutistanmananam satattva-
dhyānam ciram nityanirantaram muneh,
tato'vikalpaṁ parametya vidvānihaiva
nirvāṇasukham samṛcchati. (70)*

70. *Thereafter comes 'hearing', then reflection on what has been heard and lastly, long, constant and continuous meditation on the Truth for the Muni. Ultimately, that learned one attains the supreme nirvikalpa state and realises the bliss of Nirvāṇa in this very life.*

Śaṅkara has already started an enumeration of the various techniques to be followed by a person on his march towards realising the eternal freedom of the soul. In this śloka, the Ācārya is outlining the different stages of practices which one must follow, when one has renounced all pursuits of ego prompted, desire ridden activities contributing to a life of sensuousness.

An individual who has enough detachment from the enjoyment of finite objects, who has cultivated the four great qualities and who has renounced all self-motivated activities, is fit for the process called in Vedānta 'hearing' the scriptures. Scriptures have to explain life as we perceive and live it now and indicate the Truth, the goal, only through finite words. Therefore, a direct approach to the text may misguide the seeker if he has wrong understanding.

¹ ibid. verse – 10.

It is imperative, that one must 'listen' to the exposition of at least one scriptural text from a true Teacher. In this transaction of wisdom, the Master also uses but finite words to explain the Absolute, there is no magic formula involved. Therefore, the student must be fully tuned to the Teacher so that the latter's experiences may, in resonance, be amplified and conveyed to echo in the heart chambers of the student.

This 'listening' to the discourses (*śravaṇa*), is to be followed by inner arguments and final assimilation by the intellect in a process called 'reflection' (*manana*), by which alone the ideas in the text can become the student's own philosophy. Even this intellectual conviction is not sufficient, for Vedānta seeks a fulfilment not in merely propounding a theory to explain the happenings of the world and the destinies of mankind but to lift man to the highest pinnacle of evolution of cultural purity, so that he may thereafter revel as a God-man on earth.

Therefore, a person must attain Truth through a process of rediscovery of his real Self by detaching himself from his wrong and false identifications with the matter. This technique of detaching oneself from the false, and rediscovering one's identity with the Self through disciplined currents of constant thought flow is called 'meditation' (*dhyāna*). It is indicated here that when *dhyāna* is practised for a long period daily and constantly – every word is important – for a long period of years (*ciram*), daily (*nityam*) and constantly (*nirantaram*), one gets established in God-consciousness and attains *Nirvāṇa* in this very life.

The word '*Nirvāṇa*' means 'blown out'. Modern physics tells us that the tip of a candle flame, though apparently whole and steady, is constituted of independent flickering at a greater frequency. Just as when a fan whirls at a great speed, its blades are not distinguishable but only one continuous whirling movement is observed. A movie is constituted of a number of individual pictures projected on the screen, but because of the speed and high frequency of the change, the movie gives us a continuous