

*antaḥśritānantadurantavāsanā -  
dhūlīviliptā paramātmavāsanā,  
prajñātisaṅgharṣaṇato viśuddhā  
pratiyate candanagandhavat sphuṭā.* (274)

274. *The fragrance of the supreme Self, like the fragrance of sandalwood, is covered by the dust of unending vāsanās deeply ingrained in the mind and is again clearly perceived when it is purified by a continuous scouring with Knowledge.*

Because of the vāsanās, the human personality putrefies and gathers the stinking smell of lust, greed, anger, delusion and so on. The smell of flesh and its sensuality are the very characteristics of our personality at present. It does not have the beautiful fragrance of our essential nature. Instead of being useful to other members of society, we are ready to disturb them at all times. Indicating this, Śaṅkara gives an example.

Sandalwood, when put in water and allowed to remain in it for a long time, emanates an obnoxious odour from the rotting wood. Ordinarily, it has the most heavenly fragrance (divya-vāsanā). But when it remains in contact with water for a long time it starts stinking. If the wood is taken out and rubbed against a stone, the fragrance slowly emerges to waft pleasant satisfaction to all.

Similarly, even though you are the Ātman, because of your identification with the body, the stink of your vāsanā is coming out at the moment. Lust, anger, greed and so on, contribute their stink at all times. Love, mercy and kindness have no accommodation in the heart. To gain its original status, the personality needs a little ‘rubbing’. It should be rubbed against the ‘greater knowledge’ in meditation. The filth and the stink will go away and one’s real nature will then be revealed.

By rubbing, we are not giving the smell to the sandalwood. Its fragrance is already in it. It was not available, that is all. Similarly, divinity is not to be given to you from somewhere else. The Upaniṣad thunders, ‘That thou art’.

The inner essentially divine fragrance is covered by the dust of the dirty vāsanās at present. The dirty vāsanās are the social, the physical and the vāsanās for acquiring knowledge. Because of these ultimate propensities, the divinity in us is not able to express itself. Hence emanates the stink of our personality

Under such circumstances the personality needs some ‘rubbing’, a little ‘scraping’ with the ‘right knowledge’. By meditation when the ‘right knowledge’ is poured into the mind, it leaves its filthy, unworthy vāsanās. Then the real nature of the Self manifests Itself, just as the sandalwood on scraping wafts its refreshing fragrance.



अनात्मवासनाजालैस्तिरोभूतात्मवासना ।  
नित्यात्मनिष्ठया तेषां नाशे भाति स्वयं स्फुटा ॥ २७५ ॥

*anātma-vāsanājālaistirobhūtātma-vāsanā,  
nityātma-niṣṭhayā teṣāṁ nāśe bhāti svayaṁ sphuṭā.* (275)

275. *Innumerable desires for things that are the not-Self cloud the desire for Self-realisation. When these have been destroyed by being constantly established in the Self, the Ātman manifests all by Itself.*

The real fragrance of the Self is veiled by the cobwebs of our preoccupations with the hungers to enjoy the not-Self (anātma vāsanā). It is like the dusty cobweb at the window which obscures the beauty beyond the window. The worldly vāsanās, meaning the irresistible urges of the lower – the BMI, PFT & OET – cloud the higher urges in us.

By constant meditation upon the Self (nitya-ātma-niṣṭhayā), alone can one remove these cobwebs. Study of the scriptures, practice of meditation, sincere devotion to the Lord and selfless dedicated activity in the world, these will bring religion and spirituality into every minute of our lives.