

Indeed the Masters of Vedānta were not impractical men, being ignorant of the ordinary man's sense attachment. They certainly realised that to control the sense organs and to avoid their gushing forth into their respective sense objects is very difficult for an ordinary man. And yet, where viveka has come, vairāgya is natural and he who has gained a certain amount of freedom from the charms of sense objects is fit for Liberation. The idea is that so long as the individual thirsts for anything, his entire energy will be consumed in its acquisition and possession and there will be nothing left in him to supply him with the required dynamism for listening, reflecting and meditating upon the contents of the scriptures.

That 'such a one alone is fit for Liberation' is a very positive statement denying sensuous people any hope of success in spiritual life. Not even men who are erudite scholars in all the six schools of Indian philosophy are recognised by the śāstras as fit for total Liberation from ignorance and ignorance-created misunderstandings in themselves. With mere book learning, without the purity of the heart, tranquillity of the mind, the application of the intellect and body's self-denial, no progress in spiritual life, which can take us towards complete Liberation from our limitations is ever possible.



आपातवैराग्यवतो मुमुक्षून् भवाब्धिपारं प्रतियातुमुद्यतान्।
आशाग्रहो मज्जयतेऽन्तराले निगृह्य कण्ठे विनिवर्त्य वेगात्॥ ७९ ॥

*āpātavairāgyavato mumukṣūn bhavābdhipāram pratiyātumudyatān,
āśāgraho majjayate'ntarāle nigrhya kaṇṭhe vinivartya vegāt.* (79)

79. *Those who have only an apparent dispassion and are trying to cross the ocean of change are caught by their throats by the shark of desire which violently dragging them along, drowns them in the middle of the ocean.*

In the last verse, we noticed how Śaṅkara, with an enthusiasm almost amounting to fanaticism, insisted that spiritual life can be claimed as a birthright only by those who have a true spirit of dispassion. Here the Ācārya warns us that false vairāgya cannot sustain us for long.

A spirit of detachment and a craving for dispassion may be generated in us as a result of repeated tragedies. A tragic bereavement, a shocking disappointment, a painful failure, an agonising physical pain, all these have been found, either individually or collectively, capable of creating a temporary sense of vairāgya, termed in Sanskrit as ‘śmaśāna vairāgya’ – an aversion to life and its finitude which is usually generated when one has occasion to visit a cremation ground. This passing phase and temporary mood is not a solid capital upon which a person can build his entire future in the spiritual world. No doubt, these temporary mental moods may be capitalised in training the mind and intellect to generate more and more sense of discrimination, which will ultimately increase the intensity of true vairāgya.

True dispassion is a wise condition of the ego created from a deep intellectual conviction, which in its turn, has its roots in perfect discrimination. Only in the maturity of an individual's spiritual florescence, can one hope to gather the fruits of wisdom.

False vairāgya has ruined more men than even atheism has ever done. Hundreds and thousands of indiscriminate people, in almost all the religions of the world, reach the sanctuaries of their respective monasteries. In the long run, however, they discover that they are not fit for a life of total renunciation and perfect self-control. Many of them who find sufficient moral courage return to the marketplace and the world of contentions to fight for and acquire and enjoy material wealth. But many come to live a choking life of frustrations and sorrows, with neither the capacity to live the life of renunciation nor the daring to return to the world of cut-throat competition. A few, though wearing the apparel of seekers, surely live a sensuous life; they are the leprous ulcers on