

experience. So too, the ‘wholeness’ of the candle flame is only apparent. This example is often quoted in the *Yogaśāstra* to explain the mind in man which seems to be a substantial factor, though created by the frequency of the flow of thought waves. In one who has realised one's own Self and has transcended the mind, there is no more rising of thoughts. This state is indicated by the term, ‘*Nirvāṇa*’, the state of Self-realisation.

This mokṣa condition is possible in two stages, just as before sleep, there is a period of dozing followed by the deep sleep state. During dozing, we are conscious that we are ‘going to sleep’ and that our conceptions and perceptions of the outer world are slowly and steadily becoming obscure. But the deep sleep state is a period when we are neither conscious of the outer world nor even of ourselves.

Similarly, in meditation also there is a hazy period of awareness, wherein we are conscious of ourselves nearing the Transcendental and that state of samādhi where there is still a vestige of the ego is called ‘*savikalpa samādhi*’. The egoless moment where the subject alone is, revelling in its own glory when the yogī experiences the infinite bliss of pure Existence, that state is called ‘*nirvikalpa samādhi*’. That is the experience of godhood and after this Īśvara darśana, there is no falling back into the values and impulses of the lower, worldly life any more.

Not only does Śaṅkara explain the various states enroute this divine pilgrimage and describe exhaustively the goal with its experiences but he also insists that this is not a post-mortem experience to be gained in some future embodiment, after the death of this body, in a special area called ‘heaven’ or in another world. He insists that a Muni experiences the bliss of Nirvāṇa even here and now. Muni in Sanskrit, in its etymological meaning, has an import equivalent to ‘a man of discriminative reflection’.



यद्बोद्धव्यं तवेदानीमात्मानात्मविवेचनम् ।
तदुच्यते मया सम्यक् श्रुत्वात्मन्यवधारय ॥ ७१ ॥

*yadboddhavyam tavedānīmātmānātma vivecanam,
taducyate mayā samyak śruti vātmanyavadhāraya. (71)*

71. Now I am going to describe the discrimination between the Self and the not-Self most elaborately. It is what you ought to know. Listen to it properly and receive it well in your mind.

Earlier the student had asked the Master about the discrimination between the Self and the not-Self (verse – 49). This verse onwards, Śaṅkara gives an elaborate description of the various layers of matter envelopments which together constitute the not-Self, identifying with which the Self behaves as though it is limited, bound and conditioned to suffer as the saṁsārin. A mere repetition that, ‘viveka’ means ‘discrimination’ between the Self and the not-Self will not in itself be very helpful to a seeker unless he is able to realise the exact meaning of the Self as contrasted with the perceived world of plurality.

The Ācārya stresses the importance of this theme of discussion by saying that each student should not just listen but must come through a process of independent, discriminative self-analysis, to a firm conviction of the Truth of what is discussed hereunder.

