



11. Questions of the Disciple (48-49)

शिष्य उवाच

कृपया श्रूयतां स्वामिन्प्रश्नोऽयं क्रियते मया ।
यदुत्तरमहं श्रुत्वा कृतार्थः स्यां भवन्मुखात् ॥ ४८ ॥

śisya uvāca

*kṛpayā śrūyatām svāminpraśno'yam kriyate mayā,
yaduttaramaham śrutvā kṛtārthaḥ syām bhavanmukhāt.* (48)

48. *The śisya said, "Kindly listen, O Master! to the questions that I now raise. Hearing their answer from your lips, I shall feel entirely satisfied."*

The entire *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* has, by now, changed from being a textbook into an outstanding poem, a literary masterpiece because, while writing this great work, Śaṅkara often excels the philosopher in him and becomes a poet to splash the entire power with brilliant colours of pure literary genius. Anyone with a poetic temperament and a taste for music cannot but feel enchanted by the ring of the mellifluous words used in the construction of each verse. There is a perfect mastery in this literary artistic garland of beauty and rhythm.

In his *bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara was too preoccupied with his philosophical theory, depicting his vision of oneness. But when he took up leisurely his experienced pen to produce this work, indeed a crest-jewel, both in style and substance – Śaṅkara, the poet blended with Śaṅkara, the philosopher. He has a special niche in the ‘poet’s corner’ and will perhaps be remembered as the noblest poet who ever wielded a pen to bring about a cultural revival.

The very conversational style of this verse relieves the monotony of the philosophy and brings into its arid fields the touch of the human hearts and the thrills of a warm, pulsating life. Here, an ignorant student reaches a seer, who is the fountain of knowledge and through a process of discussion, tries to attune himself to his Teacher for walking out of dark ignorance into the Master's brilliant domain.

It is evident that a student silently sitting like a statue even before the greatest of Teachers and for an endless period of time, can have no benefit of any spiritual evolution. The student has to rub his ideas and thoughts against the experienced head and heart of the Teacher and gain for himself a polish and a fragrance, at once divine and perfect. Discussion is the heart of satsanga.

The rudrākṣa-mālā remained nearest to the heart of Śaṅkara all through his life, for a period much longer than his disciples, Toṭaka and Sureśvara remained with him. But both these disciples have been immortalised and as long as we remember Ācārya Śaṅkara, we shall, with equal devotion and reverence, remember these two, not only as his great disciples, but as God-men themselves. The poor rudrākṣa-mālā!

The stones in the inner walls of the sanctum sanctorum of even the greatest temple, that have faced the Lord for years, have remained stones even after a thousand years. Hundreds of devotees, on the other hand, who have stood even for a few moments, before the altar, have reacted to the divine atmosphere and have been lifted from their sense of finitude. They have left the temple enveloped in the joys of a fuller existence lived in the process of a greater evolution.

Mentally and intellectually, it is necessary that we come to wrestle with the mind and intellect of the Master in order to develop inner health and beauty and vitality. That is why this text has a great message for the world of seekers.

