

if not properly harnessed and intelligently applied. So Śaṅkara declares that even after gaining all the above qualifications, rarer still are those who will find the energy to apply themselves faithfully to the methods of integration as suggested in the literature of the Vedas.

Selfless karma, rituals and practices of devotion, japa, pūjā and so on, alone can purify the inner personality and bring more and more integration to it. Concentration increases through desireless actions and a person who has greater concentration (ekāgratā), has necessarily a finer antaḥkaraṇa. So, a steady concentration must be the initial attempt of all seekers, especially those on the path of knowledge.

vidvattvam – When such a man-man has developed a high power of concentration, he becomes fit for a profitable study of the scriptures. But without the true knowledge of the 'whys' and the 'wherefores' of the techniques, he will not be able to keep up his enthusiasm for sādhanā because of his limited understanding. Therefore, the study of the scripture is indicated here and the literature that shows the goal, declares the path and gives the rational arguments for both, is the Upaniṣads.

When a man-man, having developed his powers of concentration through selfless actions, studies the scriptures properly, he gains discrimination between Spirit and matter, the Real and the unreal. Soon he comes to realise that the Self in him is the Self in all and ere long he gets established in his experience of godhood.

Śaṅkara in enumerating these stages of self-development gives us in a nutshell the unwritten chapter in Darwin's half declared theory of evolution. Here we have all the various stages through which man consciously, by right living and self progress climbs on to the lap of the Lord, there to merge with Him, there to become Śiva. This is called mukti – the full and final Liberation of a mortal from all his limitations.

The last line is not a cry of pessimistic despair; it is the call of hope, urging man to wake up and act, to grow and achieve the highest gain. No reader of this verse should consider himself as standing low down in this upward procession. One who feels charmed by the call of Vedānta, who can appreciate its arguments, who feels a sympathetic understanding of the ideal indicated, is indeed at the fag end of his transmigration, the product of an entire evolutionary past. If he makes use of his present chance with diligent and careful application, success is guaranteed to him by Vedānta. This is a call to man to throw off his lethargy, his dejections, his sentiments of self-pity and to wake up to face life and through understanding, to grow fast to reach the goal – here and now.

