

previous occasion, then as the lessons proceed, the Master will not be able to give his discourses freely since the student, at every moment, will have to speak out his misunderstanding, doubts, and confusions. Every time the Teacher will have to go back to the chapters finished earlier and that would necessarily mean no progress at all. Such a dull-headed, wool-gathering mind is not a fit instrument for the study of the science of Vedānta.

‘Vidvān’ means learned or well-informed. This does not mean a man already well versed in the scriptures, because without listening to the teachings of a Master, no amount of self-study in the scriptures will make one a true ‘vidvān’. What is meant here is that the student must have a fairly good general knowledge of the world outside and also a certain amount of insight into his own psychological and intellectual composition. The more general knowledge an aspirant has, the easier it will be for the Master to make him understand the subtle Truth through a variety of examples and metaphors.

An argumentative spirit of enquiry and understanding is also absolutely necessary for walking the path of knowledge. In the other paths of self-discovery, this spirit of independent enquiry is not so much emphasised because the seekers walking them do not demand an explanation for personal conviction. But, for the man who wants to walk the path of knowledge, a blind faith neither in the scriptures nor in the Teacher can supply a sufficient motive force. He needs a conviction that rises from within himself, born out of his own intelligent thinking and intellectual absorption of ideas.

Summarily, a student of Vedānta must be a man of receptive and agile intellect, ready to catch every subtle idea thrown out by the Master and through a process of intellectual assimilation, get at its true significance. If this agility of the head and heart is lacking, he cannot hope to have a steady and unobstructed progress in meditation. In the following verses Śaṅkara gives details of the qualities, which are prerequisites for a student of Vedānta.



विवेकिनो विरक्तस्य शमादिगुणशालिनः ।
मुमुक्षोरेव हि ब्रह्मजिज्ञासायोग्यता मता ॥ १७ ॥

*vivekino viraktasya śamādiguṇaśālinaḥ,
mumukṣoreva hi brahmajijñāsāyogyatā matā. (17)*

17. He alone is considered qualified to enquire after the supreme Reality, who has discrimination, detachment, qualities of calmness and so on, and a burning desire for Liberation.

If the former verse gives us the broad characteristic of those who are fit receptacles for Knowledge, here we have more clearly etched specifications.

These terms have often been found to frighten away the students since their orthodox interpretations have been rather severe and relentless. But on a closer analysis, they are found to be very healthy instincts present in every bosom. Only a very few of us, however, are conscious of them and even fewer consciously develop these qualities in themselves.

Viveka is the capacity to discriminate between the Real and the unreal, between the true and the false, between the permanent and the impermanent. It is a faculty which we employ in almost all our day-to-day decisions but when it is brought to play into the inner constitution of the individual it is called 'viveka'.

Vairāgya is commonly translated as detachment. For many, it holds an uncanny fear, for it seems to point more to a condition of a living death than to a state of a better and fuller living. The 'vairāgya' of Vedānta is only a fulfilment of viveka. Having discriminated between the Real and the unreal, it should not at all be agonising to pluck ourselves away from the false (unreal).

When, through discrimination, we are intellectually convinced of the fallacy of our way of thinking, detachment is the fructification of that discrimination. Accordingly, it manifests to the degree to which we have been convinced that my shadow is not really me, it does not take an iota of my energy to rid myself of the