

which is to tread the path of discriminative analysis. This example, famous in literature of Vedānta, is given by Śaṅkara only to remind us how and in what way correct thinking can blot out the miseries of life, which are only the outcome of our misunderstanding and ignorance of Reality.



अर्थस्य निश्चयो दृष्टे विचारेण हितोक्तिः ।
न स्नानेन न दानेन प्राणायामशतेन वा ॥ १३ ॥

*arthasya niścayo dṛṣṭo vicāreṇa hitoktitāḥ,
na snānena na dānena prāṇāyāmaśatena vā. (13)*

13. *Neither sacred baths nor any amount of charity nor even hundreds of prāṇāyāmas can give us the knowledge about our own Self but a firm experience of the nature of the Self can be gained when we send our thoughts along the rails of arguments laid down in the salutary advices of the wise.*

Here again we find the superficial methods of easy religious practices condemned. Since the student is a Vedāntin, Śaṅkara's efforts are to show him the right and direct path. In thus indicating to the student the correct path, every Master has to be very severe in his criticism of the by-lanes of religion. No doubt, they too can help in the progress of the individual, but they are all primary lessons.

Techniques followed in the kindergarten are not applied in the university. A Teacher must pluck out the seeker from his floundering in the muck and mire of marshes and put him on the firm metalled road to Truth. Therefore, external methods of self-purification such as baths at the sacred confluences of rivers, visits to various temples and other sacred places, desire prompted or even unselfish charities, exercises such as breath control and āsanas are wholly condemned.

The hasty convert to Vedānta suddenly finds it very convenient to give up every religious practice and call himself an

accomplished Vedāntin. This attitude also has no sanction in the Master's advice. While condemning these preliminaries, he is, at the same time, very strict and severe in prescribing the more subtle and intense practices of Vedānta. For a Vedāntin, he prescribes correct thinking and continuous self-analysis. Merely giving up the usual methods of religious discipline is not the Vedānta prescribed by the Ācārya. If at all they are to be given up, it is only after greater abhyāsa called 'vicāra'. This ātma-vicāra is not to be done in any manner that pleases the individual. There is an exact method of correct and intense thinking and this method is advised in the scriptures. Therefore, vicāra, undertaken as taught by the ṛṣis (hitoktitah), alone can take us ultimately to our redemption.

