

20. *A firm conviction of the intellect that Brahman alone is Real and the phenomenal world is unreal is known as discrimination between the Real and the unreal.*

Here is a complete and exhaustive definition of the faculty of discrimination. In its application to a student of Vedānta, discrimination is the capacity to know the Real from the unreal from a mixture of things, for Truth or Reality is that which is changeless and ever-present.

Just as scientists enquire about the basis of life by an analysis of the things of the outer world, so too, the scientists of the inner world, the ḍṛśis, tried to understand the fundamental of life in us. This ‘fundamental’ is that Truth which is changeless and omnipresent. So, when we enquire into life and try to understand it in its pure essence, we come to experience that Life which is present everywhere at all times. This universal factor, the substratum is what is meant by the word ‘Brahman’ in Vedānta.

To come to a logical understanding and arrive at a complete intellectual appreciation of the fact that this permanent substratum alone is ever existent, changeless, formless, and therefore, immortal, is to understand that Brahman alone is Real and the world of plurality that we now cognise is unreal and imperfect, although it be Its magnificent and wondrous manifestation, changeable, impermanent and joyless. To build up life in this correct perspective and to order our existence on the basis of this value is called ‘viveka’ in Vedānta.



तद्वैराग्यं जिहासा या दर्शनश्रवणादिभिः ।
देहादिब्रह्मपर्यन्ते ह्यनित्ये भोगवस्तुनि ॥ २१ ॥

*tadvairāgyam jihāsā yā darśanaśravaṇādibhiḥ,
dehādibrahmaparyante hyanitye bhogavastuni. (21)*

21. That desire to give up all transitory enjoyments gained through seeing, hearing and so on, and also experiences gained through equipments ranging from a mortal body to the form of Brahmā is called 'detachment'.

A complete and exhaustive explanation of vairāgya is given here. It is not only a detachment from external objects and circumstances that are conducive to joyous experiences, but it is a mental condition in which, the mind no longer runs after the phenomenal world in the hope of gaining peace or joy. The idea is that through discrimination when one has come to, at least, intellectually appreciate that sense objects have not in themselves any intrinsic value for joy and that they are ephemeral, naturally, the mind will never take wandering flights into the realm of the objects with a craving for them.

It has been logically concluded in our śāstras that a man's mind will constantly hover around and land on objects only when it is convinced that there are three desirable qualities in them. They are – a sense of reality (satyatvam) of the objects, a belief in their permanency (nityatvam) and a faith that they contain potentialities for satisfying our craving for joy (samāhitatvam). When we understand through discrimination that the objects perceived through the senses are all in fact unreal (asat), ephemeral (anitya), and that they have no real capacity to give us joy, riddled with sorrow as they are, our minds will not pant after them.

In Śrī Jñāneśvara's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Yogirāja, beautifully brings out this idea in a series of inimitable similes. Describing the attitude of a man of detachment towards sense objects, he gives some examples, which are very striking and effective. He says that a man of true detachment will run towards sense objects with as much enthusiasm as one would rush out to embrace a dead queen's rotting body; with as much satisfaction as one would decide to quench one's thirst by drinking the pus flowing out from a leper's wound and with as much readiness as one would enter a boiling cauldron of molten iron to take a