

॥ विवेकचूडामणिः ॥

VIVEKA CHOODAMANI

PART 1 of 9

The Crest Jewel of Discrimination

PART 1: **The PURPOSE** of Human Life

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

TEXT

11.1

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA



Sandeepany's Vedanta Course

List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

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Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– Swami Gurubhaktananda, 30th June 2018, the Auspicious Birthday of Guruji

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text

11.1



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VIVEKA CHOODAMANI – Part 1

“The Purpose of Human Life”

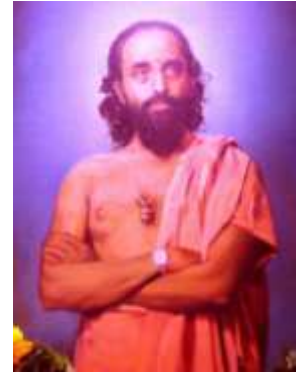
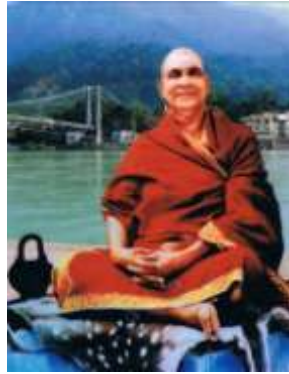
Composed by **Sri Adi Shankaracharyaji**

Part 1 of 9: (Verses 1-66 of 581)

Reflections by

SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA

on the 109 Lectures by **Swami Advayanandaji & Swami Nikhilanandaji**
at the 15th Vedanta Course, Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai
from January 28th to July 3rd, 2012



Adi Shankaracharya

Swami Sivananda

Swami Tapovanji

Swami Chinmayananda

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Personal Dedication

- 1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan**
who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;
- 2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj**
the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;
- 3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)**
for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;
- 4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji**
my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

VIVEKA CHOODAMANI

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THE GANGA RIVER
at Vasishtha Guha

॥ विवेकचूडामणिः ॥

VIVEKA CHOODAMANI – Part 1

“The PURPOSE of Life”

VIVEKA CHOODAMANI
"The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination"

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

PUJYA SWAMI CHINMAYANANDAJI writes the following in his Introduction to his book on the *Viveka Choodamani*:

"Vedanta is truly the Science of Life. Sri Shankara, the great interpreter of Vedanta, not only gave us his commentaries on the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, but also many primary texts which introduce the seeker to the joys of Vedanta. One of the greatest texts he has written as an introduction to Vedanta, is the *Viveka Choodamani*, which means, 'The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination'.

"A careful study of these verses with the full freedom to enquire will give any student a correct understanding of the entire theory of Vedanta and he can, even without a very serious study of the scriptures, start his daily practices with tremendous benefits.

"There are hundreds of seekers who, without understanding the fundamentals, are aimlessly struggling along a so-called spiritual path. Naturally, they suffer agonies of painful disappointment, although they have behind them years of painstaking practices. An exhaustive and careful study of this text helps to avoid all the pitfalls on the way to progress. It is my intention to bring forth from every verse not only its obvious meaning, but also its hidden import which gives out a wealth of information and helpful suggestions to ensure a steady progress."

The *Viveka Choodamani* is a prime text in the **Vedanta Course** at Sandeepany.

Bondage is caused by a lack of enquiry, and ceases only by making an enquiry. If we turn to differentiate Self from the non-Self, if we shift our attention from the world of names and forms to their substratum Brahman, then we can arrive at the final goal quickly.

The *Viveka Choodamani* is a Prakarana Grantha. Its theme is: DISCRIMINATION.

It is a very famous text of Bhagavan Sri Shankaracharyaji. It has great poetic beauty.

Swami Chinmayanandaji has said, "This text is sufficient to lead the spiritual life."



VIVEKA CHUDAMANI – Part 1

Verses 1-66, 66 No.

The PURPOSE of Human Life

1.1 INVOCATION & OVERVIEW

(Verses 1-2, 2 No.)

THE TITLE OF THE text is itself a beautiful simile. If we take the Vedas as the human body, the Head is the Upanishads; all the great texts of scriptural commentaries may be thought of as the crown; and in this crown, there is a **crest-jewel** called the *Viveka Choodamani!*

It is incomparable. Whatever we want to know in spiritual life is here. “The text is definitely something very special” – this has been the impression of Students of this Course.

One can say, “Poetry has married philosophy. The priest is none other than Sri Shankaracharya. Through the pages of this book, we are enjoying the wedding feast!”

Verse 1: “*Namaskara Mangalacharana*”

सर्ववेदान्तसिद्धान्तगोचरं तमगोचरम् ।

गोविन्दं परमानन्दं सद्गुरुं प्रणतोऽस्म्यहम्

॥ १॥

1	<i>sarva vedaanta siddhaanta</i>	<i>Only through the Upanishads, is the essence of</i>
2	<i>gocharam tam agocharam;</i>	<i>That perceived, not through any other means;</i>
3	<i>govindam paramaanandam</i>	<i>To Govinda, who is of the nature of Bliss Absolute,</i>
4	<i>sadgurum pranato'smyaham.</i>	<i>who is my Sad-Guru, I offer my salutations!</i>

How is the Truth Known?

1-2 The Vedas have many messages, for all stages of growth observed in mankind. There is something in it for everyone. Its final message, however, is to be found in the Upanishads. The philosophy of the Upanishads is called **Vedanta**.

Gocharam: “*acquired*”. The only means to acquire this knowledge, other than direct experience of it, is the Shrutis, also called Upanishads.

Agocharam: There are no other means to know the Truth. What are these other means? There are six Pramanas or means by which we obtain knowledge. This will be explained later in the text. Here we simply summarise those means:

i) Pratyaksha, direct perception; ii) Anumana, inference; iii) Upamana, similarity or comparison with other knowledge; iv) Aarthapatti, postulation; v) Anupalabhdhi, known by the absence of something; and vi) Shabda or Agama, an accepted authority in a particular field. In the case of spiritual or metaphysical knowledge, the sole authority is the scriptures.

To know the Self we need means beyond the realm of perception through the senses. This is what is meant by Agocharam. Knowledge always moves forward “from the known to the Unknown”.

The “Namaskara Mangalacharana”

3-4 This comprises an Ishtha-Devata, Namaskara-Roopa **Mangalacharana** (see *Tattwa Bodha*, where three types of Invocations are defined). All three words – **Govindam Paramaanandam Sadgurum** – are in the same case, the 3rd case, placing them all at the same level. This is called **Saamaanaadi Karanam** in philosophy. All these words have the same locus.

Namah is actually ‘Na Mama’ or ‘not mine’. It indicates dissociation with body, mind and senses. That which is beyond these known instruments is saluted. This is the highest form of Namaskara. The hands are placed together at the chest to represent this Advaitic salutation, telling the other person “We are One.”

Each person studying this text, should offer his salutations to his preceptor, Acharya, Teacher or Guru, and ask for his blessings.

Verse 2: Overview of the Whole Book

जन्तूनां नरजन्म दुर्लभमतः पुंस्त्वं ततो विप्रता
तस्माद्वैदिकधर्ममार्गपरता विद्वत्त्वमस्मात्परम् ।
आत्मानात्मविवेचनं स्वनुभवो ब्रह्मात्मना संस्थितिः
मुक्तिर्नो शतजन्मकोटिसुकृतैः पुण्यैर्विना लभ्यते ॥ २॥

1	<i>jantoonaam narajanma durlabham atah, pumstvam tatah viprataa;</i>	<i>Among all living creatures, a human birth is very hard to obtain; further, more difficult is it to attain full manhood; and even rarer is a Sattwic attitude in life.</i>
2	<i>tasmaad vaidika dharma maarga parataa, vidvattvam asmaat param;</i>	<i>Even then, steadfastness on the Vedic path is rarer than all these; correct knowledge from scriptures is more rare.</i>
3	<i>aatma anaatma vivechanam svanubhavah, brahmaatmanaa samsthitih;</i>	<i>Discrimination between the Real and unreal, personal experience of being established firmly in identity with Brahman – what of them!</i>
4	<i>muktir no shata-janma-koti sukritaih, punyair vinaa labhyate.</i>	<i>Indeed, liberation is no matter of chance – a hundred crores of lives lived intelligently, earn the merits without which it cannot be attained.</i>

The theme of the entire text is outlined in this section. In particular, Verse 2 is a classic poetic summary of the whole book. The entire PLAN of *Viveka Choodamani* is contained in this verse.

1-4 In this verse the author says how blessed we are, getting something unasked – the human body. If we do not use these gifts to go towards God, what fools would we be!

The author sounds a note of compassion in this verse; this is followed by a tone of urgency to embark on the spiritual journey; and he seems to express utter disbelief if one were to waste such an opportunity.

The PLAN may be followed from this table:

Jantunaam ¹Narajanma *durlabham atah,* ²Pumstwam *tato* ²Viprataa;
tasmaad ³Vaidika-Dharma-Maarga-*parataa,* ⁴Vidwattwam *asmaat param;*

Aatma-anaatma ⁵Vivechanam ⁶Swanubhavah, ⁷Brahmaatmanaa Samsthitih;
⁸Muktih *no* ⁹Shata-Janma-Koti- ¹⁰Sukritaih Punyair-*vinaa labhyate.*

VOL. No.	PART No.	VERSE Nos.	TOPIC (Sanskrit)	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
VOL. 1	PART 1	1 – 66	<i>Nara-Janma, Pumstwam, Viprataa, Vaidik Dharma Maarga, Vidwattwam</i>	THE BASICS: Precious human birth; Manliness; a Sattwic life; being steadfast in the Vedic way of life.
	PART 2	67 – 146	<i>Vivechanam – 1</i>	SRAVANA: Correctly understanding the deep scriptural Truths.
VOL. 2	PART 3	147 – 224	<i>Vivechanam – 2</i>	MANANA: Removal of Doubts through deep Self-enquiry.
	PART 4	225 – 266	<i>Brahmatmana Samsthitih – 1</i>	NIDIDHYASANA: Personal Effort to remove all mental Vasanas.
VOL. 3	PART 5	267 – 341	<i>Brahmatmana Samsthitih – 2</i>	SAVIKALPA SAMADHI: Intermittent Abidance in the Self.
	PART 6	342 – 425	<i>Brahmatmana Samsthitih – 3</i>	NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI: Firm abidance in the Self.
VOL. 4	PART 7	426 – 479	<i>Muktih no Shata Janma Koti</i>	LIBERATION: from all bondage to the phenomenal world.
	PART 8	480 – 520	<i>Swanubhavah</i>	FEEDBACK: Disciple's experiences after attaining realisation.
	PART 9	521 – 581	<i>Sukritaih Punyair</i>	CONCLUDING CONVERSATION: Life in the shoes of a Saint.

In this fourth verse, the theme is quite clear. Acharyaji summed it up as, “One can get a **Doctorate in Foolishness** if one does not utilize such a rare opportunity to make rapid spiritual progress.”

1-2 Incidentally, Acharyaji said the students of this Vedanta Course are fortunate to possess these graces already. We ought not to waste this opportunity but go for it!

The need for knowledge of the Self is stressed again here. Only knowledge can remove ignorance. [This is the point where *Atma Bodha* began.] Simply doing good works is just not enough for this path.

3-4 Lukewarm effort in Sadhana is just not good enough to a spiritual giant like Shankaracharya. How foolish must it seem to him to waste even a minute on *not* basking in the Self! This theme is emphatically concluded in the next verse.

Verse 5: *How Foolish to Waste the Opportunity!*

इतः को न्वस्ति मूढात्मा यस्तु स्वार्थे प्रमाद्यति ।

दुर्लभं मानुषं देहं प्राप्य तत्रापि पौरुषम्

॥ ५॥

1	<i>itah kah nu asti moodhhaatmaa</i>	Is there a greater fool than the man
2	<i>yastu svaarthe pramaadyati;</i>	who neglects his efforts to rediscover himself,
3	<i>durlabham maanushham deham</i>	having got the rare chance of a human birth,
4	<i>praapya tatra api paurushham.</i>	and that, too, possessing masculine qualities?



1.3 THE MEANS TO LIBERATION

(Verses 6-16, 11 No.)

THE ELEVEN VERSES OF this section seem to have been carved out of the great anguish which the author clearly feels for humanity that is searching but not availing itself of the true and only means for liberation, viz. Knowledge of the Self.

Sri Shankaracharyaji stood first and foremost for a rational approach to spirituality. There was no room in his approach for superficial display of religiosity if **Knowledge** were to be excluded from it.

Verse 6: *The Need for Knowledge on this Path*

वदन्तु शास्त्राणि यजन्तु देवान्
कुर्वन्तु कर्माणि भजन्तु देवताः ।
आत्मैक्यबोधेन विनापि मुक्ति-
र्न सिध्यति ब्रह्मशतान्तरेऽपि

॥ ६॥

1	<i>vadantu shaastraani yajantu devaan</i>	Let erudite scholars quote all the scripture , Let gods be invoked through sacrifices ,
2	<i>kurvantu karmaani bhajantu devataah;</i>	Let elaborate rituals be performed (by the Karma Kandis), Let personal gods be propitiated (by the Upasana Kandis);
3	<i>aatmaikyabodhena vinaapi muktih na sidhyati</i>	yet, without the knowledge of one's Self-identity , there shall be no liberation for the individual,
4	<i>brahmashataantare api.</i>	not even in the lifetime of a hundred Brahmas!

There may be the risk of arousing criticism when a writer proceeds in this vein. But Sri Shankaracharyaji courageously sets the tone of his conviction by doing so regardless of the consequences of his remarks. Perhaps, in his day the essential purpose of knowledge was being ignored, even trampled. It is likely that knowledge became the prerogative of the scholarly and the erudite.

Verse 7: *Good Works Alone are Not Enough*

अमृतत्वस्य नाशास्ति वित्तेनेत्येव हि श्रुतिः ।
ब्रवीति कर्मणो मुक्तेरहेतुत्वं स्फुटं यतः

॥ ७॥

1	<i>amritattvasya na aashaa asti</i>	There is no hope for immortality
2	<i>vittena iti eva hi shrutih;</i>	by means of wealth . Thus does the Sruti herself
3	<i>braveeti, karmanah mukteh</i>	declare – that by good works alone , liberation
4	<i>ahetutvam sphutam yatah.</i>	cannot be effected. This is made abundantly clear.

1-2 ‘Wealth’ here means material wealth, and money does not even make it into the list! The wealth of virtue is foremost. The wealth of good deeds, good Karma or Punya, is another very important wealth. **3-4** Yet, for all their value to society, these are not in the category of knowledge of the Self, which alone opens the door to liberation.

Verse 8: *The Preliminaries in a Nutshell*

अतो विमुक्त्यै प्रयतेत विद्वान्
 सन्न्यस्तबाह्यार्थसुखस्पृहः सन् ।
 सन्तं महान्तं समुपेत्य देशिकं
 तेनोपदिष्टार्थसमाहितात्मा

॥ ८॥

1	<i>atah vimuktyai prayateta vidvaan</i>	Therefore, striving to gain inner freedom, the learned seeker
2	<i>sannyasta baahyaartha sukhasprihah san;</i>	should <u>renounce</u> all his desires for <u>sense pleasures</u> .
3	<i>santam mahaantam samupetya deshikam</i>	A good and generous <u>Master</u> should then be duly approached.
4	<i>tena upadishhtaartha samaahita aatmaa.</i>	To the true significance of <u>the teaching</u> given by him, he, the seeker, should attune himself.

Verse 9: *Save Oneself from ‘Drowning’*

उद्धरेदात्मनाऽऽत्मानं मग्नं संसारवारिधौ ।
 योगारूढत्वमासाद्य सम्यग्दर्शननिष्ठया

॥ ९॥

5	<i>uddhared aatmanaa aatmaanam</i>	He should lift himself by his <u>own efforts</u>
6	<i>magnam samsaaravaaridhau;</i>	from the <u>ocean of change</u> in which he is drowning.
7	<i>yogaaroodhvatvam aasaadya</i>	He should attain the state of <u>Yogaroodha</u> and
8	<i>samyag-darshana nishhthayaa.</i>	be established in it through <u>right discrimination</u> .

Verses 8 and 9 take one through a lightning glimpse of the preliminary stages of the spiritual path, in preparation for what is to come in the rest of the text.

1-4 When with the Guru, the seeker is advised to focus on the learning, abide in the teaching, get attuned to the words, instruction, way of living and schedule of the day.

5-6 Reaching the Guru is an immense step, a huge milestone on this rigorous path. The spiritual path begins here. However, it does not relieve one from the responsibility of walking the path himself – “One should lift himself by himself”.

7-8 The Yogaroodha state is described in more detail in the *Gita*, (VI-4). When one has total dispassion, when nothing is enticing to the Yogi, when his mind is totally available for the Sadhana under his Guru, then he is said to be in the Yogarudha state. Acquiring the Sadhana Chatushtaya is a prerequisite to come to the Yogarudha state. From the Yogarudha state one can begin serious Sadhana.

Verse 10: Start With Karma Yoga

सन्न्यस्य सर्वकर्माणि भवबन्धविमुक्तये ।
यत्यतां पण्डितैर्धीरैरात्माभ्यास उपस्थितैः

॥ १०॥

1	<i>sannyasya sarva karmaani</i>	<i>Renouncing all actions motivated by desires, for the</i>
2	<i>bhava-bandha vimuktaye;</i>	<i>sake of liberation from the bonds of birth and death,</i>
3	<i>yatyataam pandhitaih dheeraih</i>	<i>may the wise and learned man put forth effort</i>
4	<i>aatma abhyaasa upasthitaih.</i>	<i>in the practice of remaining firmly in the Self.</i>

1-4 The best starting point on the spiritual path is declared to be Karma Yoga. The *Bhagavad Geeta* also verifies this. Lord Krishna repeatedly requests Arjuna to stick to the practice of Karma Yoga to begin with.

Karma Yoga provides all the opportunities to chisel out the sharp edges of our personality. The spirit of this instruction is that the whole mind needs to be fully focused to pursue this path. Presently, the focus of the aspirant would most likely be his duties at work and at home. “Sannyasa” here should not be taken to mean donning the ochre robes. It means giving up self-centred actions.

Through Karma Yoga, the mind is gradually made introverted to search within, and to abide within the Self. Only when this is substantially achieved, does the practice become predominantly internal. Sri Shankaracharyaji rapidly covers the ground of Karma Yoga in this text as he is very anxious to get going with his main subject, **Viveka** or Discrimination, also called **Atma Abhyasa** here, meaning abidance in the Self.

Verse 11: Karma Yoga Brings the Purity

चित्तस्य शुद्धये कर्म न तु वस्तूपलब्धये ।
वस्तुसिद्धिर्विचारेण न किञ्चित्कर्मकोटिभिः

॥ ११॥

1	<i>chittasya shuddhaye karma</i>	<i>Charitable acts help to purify the mind,</i>
2	<i>na tu vastu upalabdhaye;</i>	<i>but do not lead to the attainment of Reality.</i>
3	<i>vastu siddhih vichaarena</i>	<i>The Self is attained only by discriminative analysis,</i>
4	<i>na kinchit karma kotibhih.</i>	<i>and not in the least by crores of actions.</i>

1-2 The above message is made absolutely clear now: *No amount of action alone can bring us the jewel of liberation.*

The point to note is that Karma Yoga should not be relegated to a low level as a result of this verse, but seen in the context of its rightful place in the overall context of spiritual life. The preparatory value of Karma Yoga should never be under-rated.

3-4 At the same time, Shankaracharyaji always reminds us of the limitations of Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is not an alternative to applying one’s pure intellect to discriminative analysis. There is no doubt about this.

In order to make sure that he gets his message across, Shankaracharyaji emphatically concludes the verse with – *“not even through crores of good actions.”*

Verse 12: The World for What it Is

सम्यग्विचारतः सिद्धा रज्जुतत्त्वावधारणा ।
भ्रान्त्योदित महासर्पभयदुःखविनाशिनी

॥ १२॥

1	<i>samyag vichaaratah siddhaa</i>	Only through steady and balanced thinking , is gained
2	<i>rajjutattva avadhaaranaa;</i>	the ascertainment of the truth of the "rope" , by which
3	<i>bhraanti-udita mahaa sarpa</i>	the delusion-created, terrifying snake
4	<i>bhaya dukkha vinaashinee.</i>	of fear and sorrow is destroyed.

Verse 13: The Seeker Cannot Avoid Self-Enquiry

अर्थस्य निश्चयो दृष्टो विचारेण हितोक्तिः ।
न स्नानेन न दानेन प्राणायमशतेन वा

॥ १३॥

5	<i>arthasya nishchayah drishhtah</i>	The conviction of the Reality is seen
6	<i>vichaarena hita-uktitah;</i>	by enquiry along the lines advised by the wise;
7	<i>na snaanena na daanena</i>	and not by sacred baths, nor any amount of charity,
8	<i>praanaayama shatena vaa.</i>	nor even hundreds of Pranayamas;

1-4 To get rid of this delusion we do not need more actions, but only to make an enquiry, directly facing the 'snake' (the world of experience). Then it vanishes altogether.

5-6 There is a strong tendency in man to get 'stuck' to outer practices and perform them mechanically without the inner feeling that is primary. When the time is ripe for it, we need to give up all these and use intellectual enquiry with greater purpose.

7-8 Vedanta is not against any of these practices. The only purpose of these lines is to draw attention to the true need. In the case of Pranayama, its central purpose in Yoga is to bring the mind to a quietened state called **Yogarudha**. As a Sadhana, there is no other need for it. Sri Shankaracharya himself has on numerous occasions practised these.

The Summary of Renunciation of Actions

When a great work is tackled, the preparation for it takes most of the time. So it is with Self-enquiry. The steps of Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana require enormous focus. All *other* activities are requested to be given up. If this reason is not understood correctly, active people do not welcome such suggestions, and the lazy ones simply love them!

The central guideline here is: If it is only for personal pleasure, then give it up. Desire-prompted activity must yield first. It is wrong to call this "Abandoning one's duty". In actual fact, it just drops off on its own when the desire for God gets intense. That is the correct way to look at these verses.

Up to this point we have been seeing the need to adopt Enquiry as our primary means to attain liberation. With that objective now driven home, the Teacher proceeds further. He shifts the focus to the readiness of the student for the Sadhana that lies ahead.

Verse 14: Success Depends on Qualifications

अधिकारिणमाशास्ते फलसिद्धिर्विशेषतः ।

उपाया देशकालाद्याः सन्त्यस्मिन्सहकारिणः

॥ १४॥

1	<i>adhikaarinam aashaaste</i>	Upon the primary qualifications in a seeker depends
2	<i>phalasiddhih visheshhatah;</i>	the ultimate success of all his spiritual endeavours.
3	<i>upaayaa deshakaalaadyaah</i>	Other means such as place and time, etc., do have a
4	<i>santyasminsahakaarinah.</i>	place, but they are essentially secondary.

This is a huge clarification, as there is so large a tendency for students on this path to blame their lack of success to outer things, invariably the Guru and his Ashram! Sri Shankaracharya is well aware of this tendency, and wisely places the onus squarely on the shoulders of the student himself.

1-2 Only the primary factor can give us the guarantee of success. Overriding all other factors in one's Sadhana is the qualification of the student. We ourselves as Sadhakas are the direct cause of our success or failure.

3-4 Everything else is to be regarded as secondary. The student has to take full responsibility for his growth on this path. No one else and nothing else is to be blamed. There are no scapegoats for difficulties that may arise in one's Sadhana.

Even the texts we study are part of the package of secondary factors. In themselves they do not give us the guarantee that we will succeed.

The Story of Indra & Virochana

Acharyaji told us the story of Indra and Virochana. Both were given a chance to do their Sadhana in Heaven. Can one ever hope for a more conducive environment? Both learned under Lord Brahma Himself. Can one ever hope for a greater Guru? Yet, each disciple came back with differing results. Indra succeeded due to his correct attitude. But Virochana came back the same 'idiot' that he was, because he never relinquished the idea that he was only the body.

Verse 15: Enquiry & Correct Guidance Needed

अतो विचारः कर्तव्यो जिज्ञासोरात्मवस्तुनः ॥

समासाद्य दयासिन्धुं गुरुं ब्रह्मविदुत्तमम्

॥ १५॥

1	<i>atah vicharah kartavyah</i>	Therefore, deep Self-enquiry must be made
2	<i>jjjnaasoh aatma vastunah;</i>	by the true seeker regarding the Reality of the Self.
3	<i>samaasaadya dayaasindhum</i>	Then by all means approach the ocean of kindness, the
4	<i>gurum brahmaviduttamam.</i>	Guru, who is the best among the knowers of the Self.

1-2 "Learn to enquire". Hard work and steadiness is what is called for. There are no 'short-cuts' on this path.

3-4 This puts an end to the myth that the disciple can simply lean on the greatness of his Guru to achieve success on the path.

There is no magical ‘touch’ which will send the disciple into ecstasy. All such ideas have to be given up. The kindness of the Guru is defined as “causeless compassion to all”. It is not tainted by worldly ideas of kindness. The saint acts with compassion for all. There is no favour in his outlook for any selected disciples. His kindness is not to be judged by our relative standards.

In short, do not go to a Guru to ask for ordinary favours. Ask only for Knowledge.

Verse 16: Retentive Power & Ability to Defend Ideas

मेधावी पुरुषो विद्वानूहापोहविचक्षणः ।

अधिकार्यात्मविद्यायामुक्तलक्षणलक्षितः

॥ १६॥

1	<i>medhaavee purushho vidvaan</i>	A man who has a retentive memory and is learned,
2	<i>oohaapoha vichakshhanah;</i>	capable of clear analysis and having argument skills ,
3	<i>adhikaari aatmavidyaayaam</i>	is deemed a fit person for this knowledge of the Self,
4	<i>ukta lakshhana lakshhitah.</i>	for he has the above-mentioned qualifications.

1-2 The word **Medha** may be translated as “memory”, but it does not necessarily mean prodigious memory for memorizing verses, although Vedanta teachers do ask one to do that if students are young and have the ability. The real meaning of Medha is that the student should be able to retain within his intellect the concepts taught in class so that the teacher does not have to go on repeating them as he builds up the structure of logic in the disciple.

A basic application of the intellect on any secular science is therefore considered as a pre-qualification for a student. It shows that some ability is there for intellectual grasping of concepts. This path of enquiry demands a high level of intellectual ability. The Sadhana itself develops that. The practice of **Brahmacharya** also ensures these conditions.

Another useful aid in playing the role of a teacher is to be able to present one’s argument logically so that false arguments may be countered by good arguments. This is a very helpful secondary qualification, not a primary one.

3-4 One who possesses such qualifications is deemed to be fit to be a disciple.



1.4 QUALIFICATIONS of DISCIPLE & GURU

(Verses 17-32a, 15 No.)

FOUR QUALIFICATIONS HAVE been formulated by the great Vedanta Acharyas. They are the result of the practical experiences encountered by them over many centuries. They enquired into what the Upanishadic Rishis expected of their students. After gathering all the related facts, they formulated **SADHANA CHATUSHTAYA** – the four basic steps that prepare a student for the practice of Vedantic Sadhana.

The sequence is carefully selected. They reflect the order of priority of the four steps, each one logically following from the previous step.

Vedanta Acharyas are quiet confident that in the presence of these qualifications, realization is certain; and in their absence, it is impossible.

This is the scientific basis why some students succeed and others do not. There is nothing personal in this. Each student ensures his own success, or is responsible for his own failure.

Verse 17: The Fourfold Qualifications

विवेकिनो विरक्तस्य शमादिगुणशालिनः ।
मुमुक्षोरेव हि ब्रह्मजिज्ञासायोग्यता मता

॥ १७॥

1	<i>vivekinah viraktasya</i>	A man of <u>discrimination</u> and <u>detachment</u> ;
2	<i>shamaadi guna shaalinah;</i>	endowed with qualities such as <u>calmness</u> , etc.,
3	<i>mumukshoh eva hi brahma-</i>	with a burning desire for <u>liberation</u> – he indeed is
4	<i>jijnaasaa yogyataa mataa.</i>	considered to be fit for enquiry into the Reality.

Verse 18: The Conditions for Success & Failure

साधनान्यत्र चत्वारि कथितानि मनीषिभिः ।
येषु सत्स्वेव सन्निष्ठा यदभावे न सिध्यति

॥ १८॥

1	<i>saadhanaani atra chatvaari</i>	The Fourfold Means (<u>Sadhana Chatushtaya</u>) is here
2	<i>kathitaani maneeshhibhih;</i>	prescribed by the wise, experienced teachers.
3	<i>yeshhu satsu eva sannishhthaa</i>	Only in their presence can one succeed on this path;
4	<i>yadabhaave na sidhyati.</i>	and if they are absent, failure is certain.

Verse 19: What are the Four Means?

आदौ नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः परिगण्यते ।
इहामुत्रफलभोगविरागस्तदनन्तरम् ।
शमादिषट्कसम्पत्ति-
मुमुक्षुत्वमिति स्फुटम्

॥ १९॥

1	<i>aadau nitya-anitya vastu vivekah pariganyate;</i>	i) First comes the Discrimination between the Real and the unreal;
2	<i>iha amutra phala bhoga viraagah tadanantaram;</i>	ii) here and hereafter, from the enjoyment of fruits of actions, to have a spirit of Detachment ; after that
3	<i>shamaadi shhatka sampattih</i>	iii) the Sixfold Virtues such as Sama, Dama, etc; and
4	<i>mumukshhutvam iti sphutam.</i>	iv) lastly, a burning Desire for liberation . This is clear.

Verse 20: 1. VIVEKA

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्येत्येवंरूपो विनिश्चयः ।
सोऽयं नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः समुदाहृतः

॥ २०॥

1	<i>brahma satyam jaganmithyaa -</i>	"Brahman alone is real; the world is unreal" -
2	<i>iti evam roopah vinishchayah;</i>	when this conclusion becomes a firm conviction;
3	<i>sah ayam nitya-anitya vastu</i>	Such discrimination between the Real and Unreal
4	<i>vivekah samudaahritah.</i>	is considered to be Viveka .

In *Viveka Choodamani*, as compared with the basic text *Tattva Bodha*, the author takes the definition of Viveka a notch further.

In *Tattva Bodha*, the discrimination was between the "permanent and the impermanent". Hearing this, a seeker may still feel drawn to them - "So what if they are impermanent; at least they are there to be enjoyed."

In *Viveka Choodamani*, the word used is Mithya or 'false'. If a thing is seen as false there is smaller chance of desire arising for it. Acharyaji gave the example of a fruit basket on a coffee table in the lounge. When it is known that they are made of plastic, there is no desire for them.

Verse 21: 2. VAIRAAGYA

तद्वैराग्यं जिहासा या दर्शनश्रवणादिभिः ।
देहादिब्रह्मपर्यन्ते ह्यनित्ये भोगवस्तुनि

॥ २१॥

1	<i>tad vairaagyam jihaasaa yaa</i>	Vairaagya is defined as - "The desire to give up
2	<i>darshana shravana aadibhih;</i>	the seeing, hearing, etc,
3	<i>dehaadi brahma paryante</i>	from the mortal body right up to the world of Brahma,
4	<i>hi anitye bhogavastuni.</i>	of all objects of enjoyment as they are merely transient ."

1 The word used for giving up is **Jihaasaa** (some even use the word Jugupsa, which includes the suggestion “with revulsion”). We are attracted to pleasures because we do not see any faults in them. But the moment they are viewed as repulsive, we do not hanker after them. This is what the author is seeking to instill in the student’s mind – revulsion.

There is a verse often quoted by Vedanta Acharyas which means:

“If Vairagya cannot come after seeing the complete contents of our own body, what else has to be done to teach one to acquire dispassion!”

2 What is meant by “giving up”? There are no loopholes in the interpretation. It is clear that all sensory contact through all the five senses is included. One cannot say, “I will give them up mentally, but enjoy them physically!”

3 The range of objects to be given up is the full spectrum – from the body to the objects in the furthest Heaven, viz. Brahmaloaka.

4 The reason for giving them up is also included: “They are **Anitya**, or transient”.

Verse 22: 3.1 SHAMA

विरज्य विषयत्रातादोषदृष्ट्या मुहुर्मुहुः ।
स्वलक्ष्ये नियतावस्था मनसः शम उच्यते ॥ २२॥

1	<i>virajya vishhaya vraataad</i>	<i>Detached from the chaos of sense objects,</i>
2	<i>doshha drishhtyaa muhurmuuh;</i>	<i>through a process of continuous observation of their defects again and again;</i>
3	<i>svalakshhye niyata avasthaa</i>	<i>resting constantly in contemplation of the Goal –</i>
4	<i>manasah shama uchyate.</i>	<i>such a mind is described as being in Shama.</i>

2 The “continuous observation of their defects” is necessary as it is the only real way of making the mind disenchanted with the sense pleasures. It forms a mental check against being drawn to them. **Muhur-Muhur** means “again and again”. The mind is tutored to repeatedly withdraw from objects. Why?

3-4 It is made to attach itself to the Self, and find its peace there.

Verse 23: 3.2 DAMA & 3.3 UPARATI

विषयेभ्यः परावर्त्य स्थापनं स्वस्वगोलके ।
उभयेषामिन्द्रियाणां स दमः परिकीर्तितः ।
बाह्यानालम्बनं वृत्तरेषोपरतिरुत्तमा ॥ २३॥

1	<i>vishhayebhyah paraavartya</i>	<i>Turning back from the sense objects and</i>
2	<i>sthaapanam svasvagolake;</i>	<i>placing, in their respective centres of activity,</i>
3	<i>ubhayeshhaam indriyaanaam</i>	<i>both kinds of senses (of knowledge and of action) –</i>
4	<i>sa damah parikeertitah;</i>	<i>this is declared to be Dama or self-control.</i>
5	<i>baahya anaalambanam vritteh</i>	<i>Freeing the thoughts from the influence of objects,</i>
6	<i>eshha uparatih uttamaa.</i>	<i>this is the highest form of Uparati (self-withdrawal)</i>

2 Swa-Swa Golaka translates as “in their respective centres”, that is, the gates are closed on the senses from running outwards. They are told to sit still. That is Dama.

5-6 Uparati was defined as “adhering to one’s own duties” in *Tattva Bodha*. Now it is taken to first principles as “free from the influence of external objects”.

In general, we see that each step of the Sadhana is being taken a notch further in this book. The same author is now drawing in the rope on the senses!

Verse 24: 3.4 TITIKSHAA

सहनं सर्वदुःखानामप्रतीकारपूर्वकम् ।
चिन्ताविलापरहितं सा तितिक्षा निगद्यते

॥ २४॥

1	<i>sahanam sarva dukkhaanaam</i>	<i>Endurance of all sorrows and suffering,</i>
2	<i>aprateekaara-poorvakam;</i>	<i>without struggling for redress or revenge,</i>
3	<i>chintaa-vilaa-parahitam</i>	<i>and free always from anxiety and lament –</i>
4	<i>saa titikshhaa nigadyate.</i>	<i>that is proclaimed to be Titiksha (Endurance).</i>

1 Whilst pleasure is considered to be the main cause of distraction (from the Self), pain and sorrow is equally distracting, and needs to be addressed.

Vedanta’s answer to pain and sorrow is Titiksha, development of the ability to bear pain or sorrow. “What cannot be cured has to be endured.” This applies to all the three types of sorrows we have learned in *Tattva Bodha* (Adhyatmic, Adhibhautic, and Adhidaivic).

2-3 To grasp the attitude towards this pain, the author adds two points: there should be no thought of seeking redress or revenge for such pain, and it should be borne with a stout heart. We have to learn to choose our battles in life – rather use the same energy for the greater internal battles with the mind.

Acharyaji teased the South Indian way of expressing reaction to pain. “They utter ‘Ayo!’ for any pain. And if the pain is increased, it becomes ‘Ayoyo!’”

Verse 25: 3.5 SHRADDHAA

शास्त्रस्य गुरुवाक्यस्य सत्यबुद्ध्यवधारणम् ।
सा श्रद्धा कथिता सद्भिर्यया वस्तूपलभ्यते

॥ २५॥

1	<i>shaastrasya guru-vaakyasya</i>	<i>The scriptural texts and the words of the Guru,</i>
2	<i>satya buddhi avadhaaranam;</i>	<i>understanding readily their exact import –</i>
3	<i>saa shraddhaa kathitaa sadbhir</i>	<i>that is said to be Shraddhaa by the wise.</i>
4	<i>yayaa vastu upalabhyate.</i>	<i>By it the Reality can be attained.</i>

In this verse Shankaracharyaji puts a *crown* on Shraddha or faith.

Faith is that through which the Vastu (“thing to be attained”) is reached. What is generally called ‘blind faith’ is actually ‘belief that is pending discovery’. In any field of study we see this pattern. The chemistry teacher says water is H₂O, and no one questions it. When

we were young we accepted these things without question because we got 2 marks for it! In Vedanta for such acceptance the prize is even greater – one can get *liberation* for it!

We start with faith and end with firm conviction after the necessary enquiry is complete. Let us not shun faith; it is what gives us the confidence to go further.

In secular sciences we can verify facts by referring to textbooks. In spiritual science, we do not have that facility. We have to have faith.

In secular science if there are differences of opinion, the later version is taken as superceding the previous. In spiritual science, the Guru's instruction has to be taken as the "latest" version, which overrides all previous versions. That much of faith is needed.

Verse 26: 3.6 SAMAADHAANAM

सर्वदा स्थापनं बुद्धेः शुद्धे ब्रह्मणि सर्वदा ।
तत्समाधानमित्युक्तं न तु चित्तस्य लालनम्

॥ २६॥

1	<i>sarvadaa sthaapanam buddheh</i>	<i>Always engaging one's intellect</i>
2	<i>shuddhe brahmani sarvadaa;</i>	<i>in the pure Brahman under all conditions –</i>
3	<i>tat samaadhaanam iti uktam</i>	<i>is said to be Samaadhaanam.</i>
4	<i>na tu chittasya laalanam.</i>	<i>Indeed, it is a mind free of all oscillations.</i>

1-2 A literal translation of **Samaadhaana** gives us: "Firmly placing our intellect on the pure Brahman always."

4 Laalanam: This is an interesting word in the verse, translated as "oscillations". The literal meaning is "the play we have with children". With children we often act in the way they do, becoming like them just for fun. Here the author tells us never to do the same with our intellect. Never pamper the intellect. We should not take the intellect lightly. Never entertain fancies that come to it from the un-sifted mental mass.

Verse 27: 4. MUMUKSHUTVA

अहङ्कारादिदेहान्तान् बन्धानज्ञानकल्पितान् ।
स्वस्वरूपावबोधेन मोक्तुमिच्छा मुमुक्षुता

॥ २७॥

1	<i>ahangkaaraadi dehaantaan</i>	<i>From ego-sense right down to the body-idea,</i>
2	<i>bandha anajnaana kalpitaan;</i>	<i>all bondages are created by ignorance.</i>
3	<i>svasvaroopaavabodhena</i>	<i>By the knowledge of one's own real nature,</i>
4	<i>moktum ichchhaa mumukshhuta.</i>	<i>to be freed from these (bondages) – such a desire is called Mumukshutva.</i>

1-2 Release from what? We all wish to be released from our sorrows. The difference between the spiritual student and others is that the former seeks this release internally. Others may complain, winge, and cry out for changes to their environment.

3-4 Not so the aspirant. He aims to liberate himself from within – the only liberation that is lasting and worthwhile.

DISCUSSION ON SHAD SAMPATI

Verse 28: **5. The Place of GRACE**

मन्दमध्यमरूपापि वैराग्येण शमादिना ।

प्रसादेन गुरोः सेयं प्रवृद्धा सूयते फलम्

॥ २८॥

1	<i>manda madhyama roopaa api</i>	Even though it (Mumukshutva) is dull or mediocre,
2	<i>vairaagyena shamaadinaa;</i>	by dispassion and by the sixfold virtues,
3	<i>prasaadena guroh sah iyam</i>	and by the Grace of the Guru , it can be
4	<i>pravridhhaa sooyate phalam.</i>	increased and be made to bear fruit.

1 Half-hearted and mediocre requests to God are also accepted. Acharyaji gave us a humorous example. A child in the class raises his finger to go to the toilet. The teacher is very familiar with this scenario, so he refuses at first. After a few minutes, up go two fingers, and he can see the call is desperate. Then the teacher permits the child to go. In the same way, our call to God has to be desperate – three fingers may be needed at times!

Such are the loving ways of Acharyaji to deepen our love for God.

2-4 The aspirant should never feel dejected that his aspiration is not strong enough. Acharyaji said, “Never feel that you are not cut out for the spiritual path. Make yourself cut out for it. This verse and the next compassionately indicate the way in which the half-hearted and mediocre aspirations can be made intense. It is indicated in the next verse...

Others ask, “Why have the problems come to **ME**?” The aspirant asks, “Why have they come?” He seeks the root cause and eliminates it. Unless this approach is there, we will always seek outside for solutions, and get nowhere.

Verse 29: **The Primary Qualifications**

वैराग्यं च मुमुक्षुत्वं तीव्रं यस्य तु विद्यते ।

तस्मिन्नेवार्थवन्तः स्युः फलवन्तः शमादयः

॥ २९॥

1	<i>vairaagyam cha mumukshhutvam</i>	The spirit of Renunciation and a Yearning for liberation of an
2	<i>teevram yasya tu vidyate;</i>	intense type – he in whom these are present,
3	<i>tasmin eva arthavantah syuh</i>	in him alone shall become meaningful and
4	<i>phalavantah shamaadayah.</i>	fruitful all the sixfold virtues.

Three sequential steps are involved here:

A: Vairagya (which includes Viveka). **1a** We must learn to ‘find faults in pleasures’. This is one type of fault-finding we are permitted to have. Do “Japa” of these defects! Instill in the mind that they are unreal.

B: Shamadi (Shat Sampat), the “sixfold virtues”. **4** Acharyaji gave each student a Sadhana Chart to fill in regularly. It is like a spiritual diary to record our progress in

developing the sixfold virtues. We are to maintain it regularly. The Chart represents Acharyaji's love and concern for our spiritual growth.

If we obey the Guru's instructions in this regard, we obtain his compassion and Grace. Of God's many Hands, the Guru is a special one among them. It is the one He uses to place on our head to bless us. We cannot imagine how much God wishes for the student's success, but through the Guru, we can feel His warm hand of encouragement on our head.

When parents wish to encourage their children, they invariably stroke them over the head or face, or tap them on the shoulder!

C: Mumukshutwa, 1b burning desire for liberation.

Acharyaji here made an interesting insight into the relationship between these three. He said that **A** makes **B** easier to develop, and **B** leads the way for **C** to increase. We can measure in our hearts whether we have **A** and **C**, but **B** is very hard to measure. However, by noting **A** and **C** (which is what this verse and the previous are indicating), we can infer how we are faring with **B**.

Verse 30: In the Absence of the Essentials

एतयोर्मन्दता यत्र विरक्तत्वमुमुक्षयोः ।

मरौ सलिलवत्तत्र शमादेर्भानमात्रता

॥ ३०॥

1	<i>etayoh mandataa yatra</i>	Wherever these two are of a dull type , i.e.
2	<i>viraktatva mumukshhayoh;</i>	Dispassion and Yearning for liberation,
3	<i>marau salilavat tatra</i>	there, like the mirage-water in a desert,
4	<i>shamaadeh bhaanamaatrataa.</i>	the six virtues only become appearances .

Verses 28, 29 and 30 teach the importance of Vairagya and Mumukshutwa for God.

1-4 In a battery, **A** and **C** are the terminals and **B** is the battery acid inside. To check whether the battery is alive or dead, we simply connect a lamp to the two terminals. If it glows, we know the battery is working; if it is dull, it means the battery is flat.

Similarly, **A** and **C** (Vairagya and Mumukshutva) are weak, then **B** (Shat Sampat) will only be a mirage. A mirage is only an appearance of water, not actual water. There will be no substance in **B**. It is not uncommon to see this in practice. Aspirants who are short on **A** and **C**, are more likely to make **B** into a show of the six virtues.

Verse 31: 6. The Place of BHAKTI

मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी ।

स्वस्वरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते

॥ ३१॥

1	<i>mokshha-kaarana-saamagryaam</i>	Among the ingredients necessary for liberation,
2	<i>bhaktih eva gareeyasee;</i>	<u>Devotion</u> alone is the most important.
3	<i>svasvaroopaa anusandhaanam</i>	Constant attempt to live up to one's Real nature
4	<i>bhaktih iti abhidheeyate.</i>	is designated as Bhakti .

1-4 This verse first of all assumes that **A, B** and **C** as outlined above are in place in the aspirant, that is, he has *Vairagya*, the *Shat Sampat* and *Mumukshutva*. Beyond these, what would be the single most important factor that would take the seeker to the Goal?

The answer to this question is **BHAKTI**.

SHANKARACHARYA UNFAIRLY CHARGED

There is a controversy about Shankaracharyaji's use of the word '**BHAKTI**'. Vested interests of the Bhakti path proclaim that Shankaracharya is trying to entice their followers by making this claim. However, it is purely from the point of view of their worldly interests and no more. Shankaracharya defines Bhakti from the Vedantic perspective, and this in essence is not in conflict with the definition for Bhakti by the Bhakti schools of thought.

The definition is: "*Bhakti is a constant and consistent effort to raise the ego-centre from its welter of false values to the memory and dignity of Self-hood*" – Swami Chinmayanandaji.

Spiritually, there is no flaw in this definition, as it aims to bring the aspirant to a state of oneness with the Self, which is the essence of Love or Bhakti. The Vedantic term for it is ***Nididhyasana***. This Bhakti is founded on Knowledge as obtained during Sravana and is the basic Vedantic Sadhana.

The malpractices arising within the Bhakti field come under criticism using this pure definition. There is no room for "intellectual slavery" in Shankaracharya's view. The Vedantin's Bhakti does not render him helpless to use his intellect to grasp the truth about the delusion of Maya. For this reason, many of the slavish attitudes in vogue at the time amongst the practitioners of Bhakti is quiet rightly not encouraged by Shankaracharyaji. Vedanta makes full use of the intellect for the great purpose it was created, which is to enquire deeply into the nature of one's true Self. An intellect devoted to the Self, is capable of the purest form of Bhakti!

Verse 32a: *Bhakti Inseparable from Self-Knowledge*

स्वात्मतत्त्वानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यपरे जगुः ।

॥ ३२.१॥

1	<i>svaatma tattva anusandhaanam</i>	<i>Constant enquiry into the Real nature of one's Self</i>
2	<i>bhaktih iti apare jaguh;</i>	<i>is declared by others as defining Bhakti.</i>

Verse **32** is a little unusual. Not only has it got two distinct parts, but also the two parts fall into two separate Chapters! The second part is placed in the next Chapter.

1-2 The Vedantic definition for Bhakti was '***Swa-Swaroopa Anusandhanam***'. Now the Bhakti Yoga definition is subtly different: '***Swa-Atmatattva Anusandhanam***'. In the case of the former, knowledge (Sravana) has been received first, and so the nature of the Self is known intellectually before the Vedantic meditation begins. In the Bhakti Yoga case, the knowledge of the Self comes as one does the devotional practices or Upasanas or worship prescribed by the Bhakti school. There is no intention in Shankaracharyaji to make this difference into a bone of contention between the two systems.

Example: Cash Payment or Hire Purchase

A simple example may help to understand this difference. If one wants to buy a car, there are two methods he can adopt. He can earn all the money needed and then buy the car for cash; or he can buy the car before having earned all the money and pay for it in instalments over a period of some years. Vedanta is the first method, where one acquires all the knowledge in advance. Bhakti is the second method, where the knowledge is gained in instalments while doing the devotional practices.

The purpose of all this is to draw a comparison between Vedanta and Bhakti Yoga. There is only a small technical difference. Sri Shankaracharya has used the term "Bhakti" as an equivalent to what is normally called Vedantic enquiry. Enquiry is viewed as a form of worship. Enquiry requires knowledge first, whereas worship does not. The two approaches only start from different origins, but end at the same point, namely, complete union with the Self, which is the culmination of Bhakti, whether Vedantic (Advaitic) or Dvaitic.



1.5 APPROACHING ONE'S GURU

(Verse 32b-40, 9 No.)

VERSE 32 CONTINUES by introducing a totally different theme – the meeting of the Master with his disciple. From here on, in nine exquisite verses of great poetic beauty, the themes covered are:

i) *The Guru*: – what is it that makes him so sought after by an aspirant.

ii) *The Disciple*: – what openness and humility marks him out to receive the teaching.

iii) *Their Sacred Relationship*: The greatness of the love and devotion that is the basis of the Guru-disciple relationship.

To Shankaracharyaji, this is something unimaginably sacred. Truly, Sri Shankaracharyaji considers himself blessed to speak on behalf of both the Guru and the disciple on a topic upon which hinges the perpetuation of a sacred Parampara on earth – an unbroken lineage of realized sages that has preserved this great knowledge in India and the world.

Verse 32b: The Reason for Approaching a Guru

उक्तसाधनसम्पन्नस्तत्त्वजिज्ञासुरात्मनः ।
उपसीदेद्गुरुं प्राज्ञं यस्माद्बन्धविमोक्षणम्

॥ ३२.२॥

3	<i>ukta saadhana sampannah</i>	One who has the <u>above-mentioned qualifications</u>
4	<i>tattva jijnaasuh aatmanah;</i>	and is anxious to know the Self,
5	<i>upaseeded gurum praajnam</i>	should <u>approach a preceptor</u> learned in this field,
6	<i>yasmaad bandha vimokshhanam.</i>	by which (contact) one is <u>released from bondage.</u>

This is the second part of Verse 32. A new theme of approaching the Guru begins.

3-6 The focus is the approach of the disciple to his Guru, and the Guru's response to it. It forms a most revealing aspect of Vedantic discipleship. It is such a sensitive aspect that Sri Shankaracharyaji very soon drops his intellectual pen and picks up the thread in some of the most magnificent poetry written in Samskrit. The poet in the author comes to the fore in dealing with the sheer beauty of the relationship between the Master and the truly yearning disciple.

Verse 33: The Qualifications of a Guru

श्रोत्रियोऽवृजिनोऽकामहतो यो ब्रह्मवित्तमः ।
ब्रह्मण्युपरतः शान्तो निरिन्धन इवानलः ।
अहेतुकदयासिन्धुर्बन्धुरानमतां सताम्

॥ ३३॥

1	<i>shrotriyah avrijinah akaama</i>	<i>i) One well-versed in scriptures, sinless and unsmitten</i>
2	<i>hatah yah brahmavittamah;</i>	<i>by desires; ii) who is a full knower of the Supreme,</i>
3	<i>brahmani uparatah shaantah</i>	<i>abiding peacefully in the Supreme,</i>
4	<i>nirindhanah iva analah;</i>	<i>like fire that is devoid of fuel; iii) who is an</i>
5	<i>ahetuka dayaa sindhuh</i>	<i>ocean of mercy needing no cause for its expression;</i>
6	<i>bandhuh aanamataam sataam.</i>	<i>and iv) is an intimate friend to the good and humble.</i>

1-6 This verse provides the **Guru Lakshana** or the signs by which a Guru may be recognised. The words of Gurudev, Swami Chinmayanandaji are themselves quoted here:

“Shankaracharyaji exhausts his list of adjectives in enumerating the qualities of the true Guru. It is well-known that in all constitutions, laws are prescribed for both the governors and the governed. Since this is a text laying down the rules for spiritual progress, Shankaracharyaji is as vehement in prescribing the specifications for a true and honest teacher as he is in describing the prerequisites for a true spiritual aspirant.”

Acharyaji himself in all humility could not dwell for too long on such a theme. “Who am I to judge the Divine Teachers?” – with that he desisted from saying anything further, allowing the greatness of the Guru as expressed in this verse, to go directly to our hearts. He directed us to our role of perfecting our discipleship rather than judging the Guru. It was most touching to feel with Acharyaji his reverence for this unique and delicate relationship.

And thus we pass one of the most comprehensive verses we are ever likely to find in literature on the greatness of the Guru.

Verse 34: *The Attitude of the Disciple*

तमाराध्य गुरुं भक्त्या प्रह्वप्रश्रयसेवनैः ।
प्रसन्नं तमनुप्राप्य पृच्छेज्ज्ञातव्यमात्मनः

॥ ३४॥

1	<i>tamaaraadhyaa gurum bhaktyaa</i>	<i>Such a preceptor, when worshipped with devotion,</i>
2	<i>prahva prashraya sevanaiah;</i>	<i>when with surrender, humility and service</i>
3	<i>prasannam tam anupraapya</i>	<i>he is pleased, he should be approached</i>
4	<i>prichchhet jnaatavyam aatmanah.</i>	<i>and asked to explain that which has to be known.</i>

1-2 After reaching such a Guru, what does the disciple do? He spends time to serve him with humility and surrender at his holy feet. Living with such a high soul is itself an education.

3-4 In due course, the student begins to understand and appreciate the great love that his Guru always has for him. The student’s knots are untied. He opens himself to his Guru. The Guru, too, has had time to observe the growth of his student. When the disciple thus sees that the Guru is pleased, he chooses an appropriate moment to approach him . . .

“Guruji, can I ask something?”

“Yes, my child, what is it?”

And thus the most important dialogue ever in a disciple’s life is begun.

Verse 35: The Disciple's Prayer

शिष्य उवाच ।
स्वामिन्नमस्ते नतलोकबन्धो
कारुण्यसिन्धो पतितं भवाब्धौ ।
मामुद्धरात्मीयकटाक्षदृष्ट्या
ऋज्व्यातिकारुण्यसुधाभिवृष्ट्या

॥ ३५॥

0	<i>shishhya uvaacha;</i>	<i>The Disciple says:</i>
1	<i>svaamin namah te nata-lokabandhah</i>	<i>O Master, salutation to Thee! O kinsman of those who surrender to Thee!</i>
2	<i>kaarunya-sindho patitam bhavaabdhau;</i>	<i>O Thou, the ocean of mercy to those fallen in the "Sea of Change";</i>
3	<i>maam uddhara aatmeeya kataakshha drishhtyaa</i>	<i>Save my soul; (even if it be only) with a side-glance of Thy eyes,</i>
4	<i>rijvyaa ati kaarunya sudhaabhi vrishhtyaa.</i>	<i>directed at me, full of compassion, raining the nectarine Grace supreme.</i>

1-2 The poetic shift is immediately palpable. We are in another realm altogether, beyond that of the intellect. The disciple offers worship first.

3-4 Then, as though with some hesitation, he asks for something that would cause *least trouble* to his Guru – just a passing glance of Grace!

What drives him to seek his Guru's Grace? We shall see that and, more importantly, the significance of the "nectarine rain of Grace" in the next verse.

Verse 36: His Painful Encounter in the World

दुर्वारसंसारदवाग्नितप्तं
दोधूयमानं दुरदृष्टवातैः ।
भीतं प्रपन्नं परिपाहि मृत्योः
शरण्यमन्यद्यदहं न जाने

॥ ३६॥

1	<i>durvaara samsaara davaagnitaptam</i>	<i>I am being roasted in this changing world as though by a blazing inferno;</i>
2	<i>dodhooyamaanam duradrishhtavaataih;</i>	<i>I am being tossed about by the cruel storms of misfortune;</i>
3	<i>bheetam prapannam paripaahi mriyoh</i>	<i>I am terrified and I seek refuge in thee; O Lord! Save me from the throes of death;</i>
4	<i>sharanyam anyad yad aham na jaane.</i>	<i>Thou art my safe refuge for shelter – a safer abode I know not."</i>

Owing to the urgency of the call for help, this verse is recited at almost twice the normal speed to match the spirit of the disciple's desperation. It also has a pulsating rhythm to it.

1-4 Most significant to all aspirants is his cry for help. He sends out an S.O.S. signal. He sees himself hurled in the midst of an ocean. He is lost. There is a surge of fear in his words. The only thing that will help his struggle is a compassionate glance from his Guru.

The disciple's state may be compared with that of a person who has just suffered from third degree burns being hastened to the emergency department in a hospital. There is no time to waste. Such is the intensity of the disciple's feeling to be liberated.

Acharyaji's account tried to capture the poetry, too. "Misfortunes are rattling me, they are violently shaking me. It is as though Fire is picking me up and hurling me back into the fire! Now I am getting frightened. I surrender completely to thee. Save me! Another refuge I do not know. I seek refuge in thee to free me from this blazing fire."

Now we can understand why he described, in the previous verse, the Guru's glance as being 'nectarine rain'. Feeling worldly existence as a blazing inferno in which he is roasting, a Monsoonal rain of Grace alone would bring relief to him. Poetry alone can express this.

The Guru is held in the highest esteem here. The disciple is not begging him for anything selfish. He seeks liberation – that which the Guru is most delighted to deliver, for it is that alone which has brought Guru and disciple together by God's mysterious Hand.

Acharyaji prayerfully ended with a line brimming with gratitude: "May the Guru help us, too! How can we leave such a teacher? Leave him and know that spiritual death is certain."

Verse 37: *Acknowledging the Goodness of Saints*

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो
वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्णाः स्वयं भीमभवार्षावं
जनानहेतुनान्यानपि तारयन्तः

॥ ३७॥

1	<i>shaantaah mahaantah nivasanti santah</i>	<i>Peaceful and magnanimous are the lives of saintly souls.</i>
2	<i>vasantavat lokahitam charantah;</i>	<i>Like the spring season, they live only for the good of humanity.</i>
3	<i>teernaah svayam bheemabhavaarnavam</i>	<i>They have by their own efforts crossed over the dreadfully vast ocean of Samsara.</i>
4	<i>janaan ahetunaa anyaan api taarayantah.</i>	<i>Now, with no ulterior motive, they help other people also to cross over.</i>

The disciple has approached the Guru, and now Sri Shankaracharyaji has his chance to extol the Guru. His heart overflows with the remembrance of his own Guru.

1a There is a calmness and peacefulness about the Guru, free from all agitation.

1b He is non-judgmental, accepting, open to all who come to him with sincere yearning. Magnanimous sums up his personality.

2 They are like the spring season for the good of humanity. In spring everything looks so fresh – even the grass stretches itself tall and smiles to all. The grasshoppers prance

about in joy. All nature seems to be celebrating. To such a fresh and cool season is the Guru's temperament compared.

3-4 They have been through the mill, as it were, and are now ready to help others to cross the dangerous chasm of worldly pitfalls. A tribute is paid to the "Guru" in the Mahatma. How caring he can be to young seekers! The Guru is completely selfless in assisting other seekers. There are no strings attached to his service of them. Indeed, such Masters are very rare.

Verse 38: The Service Rendered by the Guru

अयं स्वभावः स्वत एव यत्
परश्रमापनोदप्रवणं महात्मनाम् ।
सुधांशुरेष स्वयमर्ककर्कश-
प्रभाभितप्तामवति क्षितिं किल

॥ ३८॥

1	<i>ayam svabhaavah svatah eva yat</i>	Indeed, it is their natural nature to be so –
2	<i>parashramaapana udaprananam mahaatmanaam;</i>	to remove the troubles of others is the inclination of magnanimous souls ;
3	<i>sudhaamshuh eshha svayam arkakarkasha- prabhaabhi taptaam</i>	The moon is seen to express its own nature: Scorched by the flaming rays of the sun,
4	<i>avati kshhitim kila.</i>	the earth is cooled by the moon, is it not?

Another beautiful simile is used to describe the soothing, calming influence of the Guru – the *moon*. The disciple's predicament has been described as "being scorched by fire". What better antidote for his pain than the cooling comfort provided by the moon!

A quote from Swami Chinmayanandaji himself was read out in class, as they were unmatched in their beauty: "A man of full realization instinctively becomes a lover of the whole universe. He may dwell in a cave in the Himalayas or he may walk about in the market-place – wherever he be, irresistibly, instinctively, he will spread around him an aura of knowledge, light, cheer, joy and peace. It is his very nature."

Verse 39: The Soothing Words of the Guru

ब्रह्मानन्दरसानुभूतिकलितैः पूतैः सुशीतैर्युतै-
र्युष्मद्वाक्कलशोज्झितैः श्रुतिसुखैर्वाक्यामृतैः सेचय ।
सन्तप्तं भवतापदावदहनज्वालाभिरेनं प्रभो
धन्यास्ते भवदीक्षणक्षणगतेः पात्रीकृताः स्वीकृताः

॥ ३९॥

1	<i>brahmaananda rasa anubhooti kalitaih, pootaih susheetairyutaih</i>	The experience of the elixir-like Bliss of Brahman , which has sweetened, purified and cooled
2	<i>yushmad vaak kalasha ujjhitaish shrutisukhai, vaakyamritaih sechaya;</i>	thy speech, making it issue as from a pitcher, in streams from Thy lips, delightful to listen to – do thou shower such nectar-like speech (on me)!

3	<i>santaptam bhava taapadaava dahana jvaalaabhih enam prabho;</i>	For tormented am I by <u>earthly afflictions</u> as by the tongues of a forest fire, O Lord, do Thou bless this (i.e. me)!
4	<i>dhanyaah te bhava deekshhanakshhanagateh, paatreekritaah sveekritaah.</i>	Blessed are they who receive even a passing glance from Thy eyes, and accept it as an assurance of Thy protection!

In the two last verses of this chapter, we return to the outpourings of the disciple's heart.

1 The first point about this verse is the fitting usage of words: The first line has a sweet melody in it, appropriate to "the nectarine speech, honeyed by the elixiric bliss." The words chosen are soft sounding.

2 *Kalaasha*: "pitcher, water-jug". This literal translation does not do justice to the Samskrit word. Kalasha is a sacred vessel, used for doing poojas in the temple. The holiness associated with it is the real tribute paid to the Guru by using this word. The metaphor is that the words from the Guru's lips are as if coming out of a sacred vessel in his throat!

Sechaya: "sprinkle". There is also a delicate touch added here to describe how the Grace comes from the Guru. It becomes an action reminiscent of worship, where water is sprinkled in all directions.

3 Then in the third line, the forest fire and earthly afflictions are described. The meter is quickened, the words chosen have a snappy tone about them – "Santaptam", "Bhava-taapa-dava-dahana", "Jwala-bhir-enam".

4 In the last line the cooling comfort of the passing glance is described in rhythmic words as "Deekshana-kshana-gate" and "Paatreekrita Sweekrita".

That is why they are said to be oozing out of the sacred *kalasha* vessel!

Verse 40: *An Ardent Request to the Guru*

कथं तरेयं भवसिन्धुमेतं
का वा गतिर्मे कतमोऽस्त्युपायः ।
जाने न किञ्चित्कृपयाऽव मां प्रभो
संसारदुःखक्षतिमातनुष्व

॥ ४०॥

1	<i>katham tareyam bhavasindhume tam</i>	How do I cross this <u>ocean of relative existence</u> ?
2	<i>kaa vaa gatih me katamah asti upaayah;</i>	What is to be my ultimate destination? Which of the many means should I adopt?
3	<i>jaane na kinchit kripayaa ava maam prabho</i>	I know nothing of these, Please <u>save me</u> , O Lord!
4	<i>samsaara duhkha kshhatim aatanushhva.</i>	How to end the <u>misery of this life</u> in the finite, kindly describe this to me in detail.

The disciple continues to express what he would like the Guru to do for him. His humility is pure and unaffected. There is no trace of hypocrisy in his attitude or in the words he has chosen. He is artless, guileless, unpretentious.

He does not face his Guru as a learned person. He “does not know anything” – that is his posture before his Guru.

In the last line the disciple sums up by expressing his wish to end the misery of living “life in the finite”. He awaits the life Infinite with eagerness, as it was explained to him by the Guru. He cannot wait to get all the details of such a life.

In short, the **Sishya** or disciple places himself on the operation table and pleads to the surgeon, his Guru, to perform the necessary operation. We have to give Shankaracharya full marks for communicating so beautifully the delicate emotions between Guru and Sishya.



1.6 LOVING ADVICE OF THE GURU

(Verses 41-47, 7 No.)

THE CHAPTER ON *Guru Upasadana* has ended. Now the *Guru Upadesha* begins.

The immediate prescription to such a disciple who has just poured out his heart to the Master is to offer him *hope*, not in words but through a warm, inviting, loving attitude.

The Guru responds unpremeditatedly, and embraces the disciple with love and kindness. This is the most understood language that stands for hope and protection. In words, it is like saying, “Welcome, my child, I promise to help you!”

Verse 41: *The Guru Responds Spontaneously*

तथा वदन्तं शरणागतं स्वं
संसारदावानलतापतप्तम् ।
निरीक्ष्य कारुण्यरसार्द्रदृष्ट्या
दद्यादभीतिं सहसा महात्मा

॥ ४१॥

1	<i>tathaa vadantam sharanaagatam svam</i>	<i>In this manner, he (the Disciple) speaks of his own desire to seek the protection of his Guru</i>
2	<i>samsaaradaavaa anala taapataptam;</i>	<i>from the forest of Samsara (worldliness), in the fire of which he is being tormented.</i>
3	<i>nireekshhya kaarunya rasaardra drishhtyaa</i>	<i>Showering him with a look of pity and kindness, he (the Guru), beholding him in this pitiful state,</i>
4	<i>dadyaad abheetim sahasaa mahaatmaa.</i>	<i>bestows upon him protection from fear, as a spontaneous gesture of his large-heartedness.</i>

Verse 42: *No Need for Further Qualifications*

विद्वान् स तस्मा उपसत्तिमीयुषे
मुमुक्षवे साधु यथोक्तकारिणे ।
प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय
तत्त्वोपदेशं कृपयैव कुर्यात्

॥ ४२॥

1	<i>vidvaan sah tasmai upasattim eeyushhe</i>	<i>The learned one, to such a seeker standing before him, i) who has thus approached him;</i>
2	<i>mumukshhave saadhu yathoktakaarine;</i>	<i>ii) who has rightly determined to seek; iii) who has abided by the protocol on procedure;</i>
3	<i>prashaanta chittaaya shamaanvitaaya</i>	<i>iv) who possesses a serene mind, v) and who is endowed with tranquillity –</i>
4	<i>tattva upadesham kripayaa eva kuryaat.</i>	<i>the instruction about the Reality should be imparted with utmost kindness as an act of Grace.</i>

1-4 These lines confirm the presence of Sadhana Chatushtaya in the disciple. There is already the full qualification in every breath of the disciple. What need is there for further testing? In such a situation, with the disciple panting for a refreshing breath of knowledge, the Guru steps forward into his life as on a *rescue operation*. The sense of urgency is in the air. There is not a moment to waste.

The rarest, finest human aspiration has to be met by the rarest and finest response of acceptance and kindness. When the demand is there, the supply has to come, too.

Verse 43: *The Guru Expresses his Confidence*

श्रीगुरुवाच ।
 मा भैष्ट विद्वंस्तव नास्त्यपायः
 संसारसिन्धोस्तरणेऽस्त्युपायः ।
 येनैव याता यतयोऽस्य पारं
 तमेव मार्गं तव निर्दिशामि

॥ ४३॥

0	<i>shreeguruvaacha;</i>	<i>The Guru says:</i>
1	<i>maa bhaishhta vidvan tava na asti apaayah</i>	<i>Fear not, O brilliant one!</i> <i>For you there is no danger.</i>
2	<i>samsaarasindhoh tarane asti upaayah;</i>	<i>To cross over this ocean of worldliness, there <u>is</u> a way.</i>
3	<i>yena eva yaataah yatayah asya paaram</i>	<i>By this way alone have all the saints crossed over this world.</i>
4	<i>tam eva maargam tava nirdishaami.</i>	<i>That very same Path (that they all have trodden) I shall unfold to you (who are the fit person for it).</i>

1 Fear of failure is allayed from the student at once. He is praised for his intellectual courage to spurn the wide world of attractions, and seek his salvation from the clutches of Maya. The Guru shows his confidence in the disciple: “There may be danger for the one who still has attraction for pleasures, but for you there is none, for your dispassion is like fire – nothing can withstand it.”

Let us keep in mind that what follows is spontaneous. It is not a strategically worked out plan to ‘lure’ anyone. Here is human trust at its noblest and most refined. This is how it unfolds itself as Nature intended it to:

2 Fear is answered with words of hope – “There is a way out of this mess. Come, I will show it to you.”

3-4 Is the disciple going to be a “guinea-pig” of the Guru? No, the Guru is not going to experiment with his disciple. He is giving him a life-line which has been time-honoured and proven to work by innumerable Rishis of the past. There is no question of the blind leading the blind here. Using authentic methods, the disciple is offered all the assistance he needs.

The journey to the Beyond is the most worthwhile journey to be made with this vehicle of the human body.

Verse 44: The Supreme Means to Supreme Bliss

अस्त्युपायो महान्कश्चित्संसारभयनाशनः ।
तेन तीर्त्वा भवाम्भोधिं परमानन्दमाप्स्यसि

॥ ४४॥

1	<i>asti upaayah mahaan kashchit</i>	There is one <u>supreme means</u>
2	<i>samsaara bhaya naashanah;</i>	capable of destroying the fear of Samsara;
3	<i>tena teertvaa bhavaam-bhodhim</i>	by which you will cross the sea of Samsara
4	<i>paramaanandam aapsyasi.</i>	and attain <u>supreme Bliss.</u>

1-2 This is the means. There is a certainty in it, due to which there is simply no room for even a trace of fear on this path.

3-4 And what is the assurance given? It will spell the end of your tossing ride on the waves of Samsara. “You **will** succeed!” There is no doubt whatsoever.

On this solid foundation, begins the Master’s great teaching...

Verse 45: The Foundational Texts Glorified

वेदान्तार्थविचारेण जायते ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।
तेनात्यन्तिकसंसारदुःखनाशो भवत्यनु

॥ ४५॥

1	<i>vedaanta artha vichaarena</i>	By contemplating upon the meaning of the <u>Upanishads</u>
2	<i>jaayate jnaanam uttamam;</i>	is born the highest knowledge (of the Supreme Reality)
3	<i>tena aatyantika samsaara</i>	by which the <u>endless world</u> of names and forms
4	<i>duhkha naashah bhavati anu.</i>	with all its sorrows is immediately <u>brought to an end.</u>

1-2 The correct bottle of medicine is pulled out of the shelf by the consummate Master. As we said earlier, this is not a time for experimenting. The medicine has been tried and tested, not on animals as today’s drugs are tested, but on great seekers. The results have been published in every *Upanishad* in the form of Mantras.

3-4 Naashah: “annihilation”. The word is justifiably selected. This medicine will totally annihilate all traces of the disease of delusion and sorrow. That is a guarantee. Sorrow is removed at its very root. The destruction is once and for all. “You will be fearless forever!” assures the Master.

Once a match is struck in a cave, no matter how ancient the darkness was, it disappears in an instant!

Verse 46: What the Disciple is Required to Do

श्रद्धाभक्तिध्यानयोगान्मुमुक्षोः मुक्तेर्-
हेतून्वक्ति साक्षाच्छ्रुतेर्गीः ।
यो वा एतेष्वेव तिष्ठत्यमुष्य
मोक्षोऽविद्याकल्पितादेहबन्धात्

॥ ४६॥

1	<i>shraddhaa bhakti dhyaana yogaan mumukshhoh mukteh</i>	<i>Faith in the paths of devotion, meditation and Yoga, coupled with intense longing for liberation –</i>
2	<i>hetoon vakti saakshhaat shruteh geeh;</i>	<i>these are the chief factors mentioned clearly in the words of the scriptures.</i>
3	<i>yo vaa eteshhu eva tishhthati amushhya</i>	<i>Whoever he be, in these alone stand his hopes</i>
4	<i>mokshhah avidyaa kalpitaad deha bandhaat.</i>	<i>of liberation from the ignorance-created bondage to the body.</i>

The important point in this verse is that **an attitude of enquiry** is strongly suggested for each of the three stages of Sadhana.

1 The three things needed are as follows:

Shraddha: “Faith”. This indicates the attitude needed for Sravana, listening to the Guru or the scriptures. This is the ‘yes-ness’ towards what the scriptures and the Guru are saying to us. That which the teacher says is cherished as valuable.

Bhakti: “Devotion”. This indicates the attitude needed for Manana, which is the process of reflection upon Sravana. In this stage, the knowledge that has been heard is ‘masticated’ and thoroughly assimilated and digested. This requires the digestive juice of devotion to go along with it. Without devotion Manana is fruitless and dry.

Dhyana: “Meditation”. This indicates the attitude to have for Nididhyasana. Indeed, the latter is often described as meditation itself. The digested material is now absorbed by the system and it goes to nourish every cell of the Sadhaka’s spirit. This requires total attention and focus on the inner transformation that occurs. The introspective mind is needed for such an accomplishment, and this comes only in a mind that delights in meditation.

The word ‘Yoga’ in the text follows these three. It means ‘union’. It can be paired up with all three words together with their respective Sadhanas, to obtain Shraddha-Sravana Yoga, Bhakti-Manana Yoga, and Dhyana-Nididhyasana Yoga.

Some commentators also regard it as a fourth quality needed in the Sadhana at the fourth stage, which is Samadhi. In this stage the mind is fully absorbed in the Self. Nididhyasana has culminated by bringing the Sadhaka to the stage of complete abidance in the Self. This is union of the individual self to the Supreme Self, which is Yoga at the highest level. That could be a second interpretation, which is also quite valid.

2-4 The verse gives the assurance that whoever pursues the Sadhana with these three attitudes, is certain to be liberated.

Verse 47: Roles of Ignorance & Knowledge

अज्ञानयोगात्परमात्मनस्तव
ह्यनात्मबन्धस्तत एव संसृतिः ।
तयोर्विवेकोदितबोधवहिः
अज्ञानकार्यं प्रदहेत्समूलम्

॥ ४७॥

1	<i>ajnaanayogaat paramaatmanah tava</i>	Through contact with <u>Ignorance</u> you, who are the Supreme Self
2	<i>hi anaatma bandhah tatah eva samsritih;</i>	indeed, experience the <u>bondage of the not-Self;</u> from this alone proceed birth and death.
3	<i>tayoh vivekah uditabodha vahnih</i>	By discriminating between these two (Self and not-Self), the <u>blaze of knowledge</u> arises;
4	<i>ajnaana kaaryam pradahet samoolam.</i>	(then) the effects of ignorance are <u>burnt down</u> together with their very roots.

The Acharya in Shankaracharyaji here uses his experience to guide the student. Every student faces the difficulty of correctly assessing the hurdle that he has to conquer. The danger of over-exaggerating the problem is addressed in this verse.

1-2 The Problem: To limit the extent of this danger, the Acharya wisely tells the student, “Come, it is nothing very serious, you have not done anything really wrong. You have not committed any offence or crime. It is just that this ‘Ignorance’ which dominates man’s mind, has made you identify with the body and has made you insecure; that is all. From that the whole world drama has been set afoot.

3-4 The Solution: The Acharya continues: “Now you do just one thing – do careful Viveka. I am not going to ask you to do any severe austerities, etc. That is not for you. You just stick to Viveka for a while and your problems will be burnt away by the ‘blaze of knowledge’ that will arise.”

Sometimes it is the small instructions that are most useful to spiritual aspirants. We tend to overlook them. A good Teacher builds up the wall of knowledge one brick at a time.

Prashna Beeja: The Seed of the Disciple’s Questions

This verse has the predetermined effect of arousing some basic questions in the ripe student’s mind. Several new ideas are thrown at him, and the teacher expects them to rebound to him in the form of questions.

That does indeed happen. And virtually the rest of *Viveka Choodamani* is an answer to those questions . . .



1.7 THE DISCIPLE'S QUESTIONS

(Verses 48-55, 8 No.)

BEFORE OPENING THE 'Question Box' of the student, it is noteworthy to see the nobility of his mind from his words up to this point. We know that this student has the three basic noble virtues for studentship:

a) He is *self-disciplined*. The true meaning of being a disciple is to submit voluntarily to the discipline asked by the Guru.

b) He is *not a moral wreck*. He has lived his life according to the Shastras to the best of his ability. We know that he has followed the scriptural rules in obtaining whatever he desired in the world.

c) He is *noble-minded*. He is making a sincere effort to emulate the conduct of the great, the noble, the wise. They are his role models.

When such a student used to approach Pujya Gurudev (Swami Chinmayanandaji), he used to say at once, "Shoot!" meaning "Fire away. I am ready to answer."

Verse 48: *Hope Prompts the Disciple's Questions*

शिष्य उवाच ।

कृपया श्रूयतां स्वामिन्प्रश्नोऽयं क्रियते मया ।

यदुत्तरमहं श्रुत्वा कृतार्थः स्यां भवन्मुखात्

॥ ४८॥

0	<i>shishhya uvaacha;</i>	<i>The Disciple says:</i>
1	<i>kripayaa shrooyataam svaamin</i>	<i>Kindly listen, O Master,</i>
2	<i>prashnah ayam kriyate mayaa;</i>	<i>to these Questions being posed by me;</i>
3	<i>yad uttaram aham shritvaa</i>	<i>On hearing the reply to them coming</i>
4	<i>kritarthah syaam bhavanmukhaat.</i>	<i>from your own mouth, I shall be satisfied.</i>

1-4 This student phrases his appeal very intelligently and reverentially, not with 'hands in his pocket'. He begs his Master to listen to his questions, and carefully ensures that he hears the answers from his own lips; that he is not asked to go and "google" it for himself. He is confident his Master will clear all his doubts to his satisfaction.

Verse 49: *The Disciple's Seven Questions*

को नाम बन्धः कथमेष आगतः

कथं प्रतिष्ठास्य कथं विमोक्षः ।

कोऽसावनात्मा परमः क आत्मा

तयोर्विवेकः कथमेतदुच्यताम्

॥ ४९॥

1	1. <i>kah naama bandhah;</i> 2. <i>katham esha aagatah;</i>	i) "What is this BONDAGE ? ii) How has it come into being?
2	3. <i>katham pratishhthaasya;</i> 4. <i>katham vimokshhah;</i>	iii) How does it continue to stay? iv) How can one get out of it completely?
3	5. <i>kah asau anaatmaa;</i> 6. <i>paramah kah aatmaa;</i>	v) What is the not-Self? vi) What is the Supreme Self?
4	7. <i>tayoh vivekah katham;</i> <i>etad uchyataam.</i>	vii) How do I discriminate between these two? Please explain all these to me."

1-4 This is regarded as the verse upon which the rest of the book hinges. It is the **King-pin** of the whole book. [Acharyaji asked the class to memorise the verse by the following morning.]

We see the rapid build up of trust in the disciple for his Guru – within the relatively short space of 10 verses), the student is ready to fire 7 important questions. That certainly is a measure of the comfort he feels in being in the presence of his Guru.

We do not need to add commentary on the questions here, as the whole book will answer them little by little. We only need to understand the *mind-set* of the ripe aspirant, who is seen here to be the one who knows a little of the basics of the subject, but not well enough to clear all his doubts. Such a student is ripe for Vedantic study.

There are seven Questions in all. Really speaking, they can all be summed up into one major question: "**Please solve my problem in life?**"

The device used in *Viveka Choodamani* is the **DIALOGUE**, or Q & A format.

Verse 50: The Guru Appreciates the Questions

श्रीगुरुवाच ।

धन्योऽसि कृतकृत्योऽसि पावितं ते कुलं त्वया ।

यदविद्याबन्धमुक्त्या ब्रह्मीभवितुमिच्छसि

॥ ५०॥

	<i>shreeguruvaacha;</i>	<i>The Guru says:</i>
1	<i>dhanyah asi kritakriyah asi</i>	<i>Blessed are you! You have fulfilled your life!</i>
2	<i>paavitam te kulam tvayaa;</i>	<i>By you is your whole clan sanctified.</i>
3	<i>yat avidyaa bandha muktyaa</i>	<i>By freeing yourself from the bondage of ignorance,</i>
4	<i>brahmeebhavitum ichchhasi.</i>	<i>you wish to attain the absolute Brahman!</i>

There will be time enough to deal with the issues raised, but here the matter of the moment is to capture the Guru's appreciation of such a bright student, who epitomizes the alert and enquiring student of Vedanta.

1-2 "Congratulations! Blessed are you, indeed!...You have fulfilled your life!...Your whole lineage is purified!" The Guru simply gushes forth with exuberance!

3-4 The Guru sees through these seven questions the earnest desire to get rid of Ignorance. He sees all the favourable signs in the disciple. His Sadhana Chatusthaya is amazing. He is like a ripe fruit – and it now cannot take long for the fruit to fall!

The Guru is filled to the brim with appreciation for such a student.

Only one verse to congratulate the disciple . . .

Now the job begins in earnest for the “master craftsman” in the Guru. Without any ado, he places the responsibility straight into the hands of the disciple.

Lesson: SELF-RELIANCE
“The Ball is Always in Your Court” – says the Guru.

This is the theme of his very first three verses, which we take together:

Verse 51: Simile 1: Clearing Financial Debt

ऋणमोचनकर्तारः पितुः सन्ति सुतादयः ।
बन्धमोचनकर्ता तु स्वस्मादन्यो न कश्चन

॥ ५१॥

1	<i>rinamochana kartaarah</i>	<i>To relieve one from debts and obligations,</i>
2	<i>pituh santi sutaadayah;</i>	<i>the father or the sons are there to help;</i>
3	<i>bandha-mochana-kartaa tu</i>	<i>But, to redeem one from bondage,</i>
4	<i>svasmaat anyah na kashchana.</i>	<i>there is no person other than oneself.</i>

Verse 52: Simile 2: The Load on One’s Head

मस्तकन्यस्तभारादेर्दुःखमन्यैर्निवार्यते ।
क्षुधादिकृतदुःखं तु विना स्वेन न केनचित्

॥ ५२॥

5	<i>mastak anyah tabhaaraadeh</i>	<i>The load that is placed on one’s head</i>
6	<i>duhkham anyaih nivaaryate;</i>	<i>causes fatigue that can be relieved by others;</i>
7	<i>kshhudhaadi krita duhkham tu</i>	<i>but the pangs caused by hunger</i>
8	<i>vinaa svena na kenachit.</i>	<i>can end by no one except oneself.</i>

Verse 53: Simile 3: Treatment in Illness

पथ्यमौषधसेवा च क्रियते येन रोगिणा ।
आरोग्यसिद्धिर्दृष्टाऽस्य नान्यानुष्ठितकर्मणा

॥ ५३॥

9	<i>pathyam aushhadhasevaa cha</i>	<i>The right diet and proper medicine,</i>
10	<i>kriyate yena roginaa;</i>	<i>when followed faithfully by the patient,</i>
11	<i>aarogyaa siddhih drishhtaa asya</i>	<i>alone leads to his recovery from illness;</i>
12	<i>na anya anushhthita karmanaa.</i>	<i>not when the treatment is taken by another!</i>

Sadhana is not a team endeavour. We have to do it for ourselves (notwithstanding that doing Sadhana with others can be of great help).

The three examples quoted here give adequate clarity on the need to take full responsibility for one's spiritual growth. Only someone who is not sincere will have a problem with that. For the sincere, this self-effort is given with great joy – hence the theme of this section is “**Self-reliance**”.

As one progresses, one reaches greater heights of understanding of oneself. There is so much of joy just in treading the path, however difficult it may appear to be from the ordinary standpoint. The spiritual aspirant finds joy in things which are usually considered a drudgery by the worldly-minded.

From this perspective, these verses are clearly superfluous for the kind of disciple we have in this text. The lesson is for us, the readers, who may still have the mentality of bargaining with God for some favours.

Verse 54: Simile 4: Seeing the Moon Oneself

वस्तुस्वरूपं स्फुटबोधचक्षुषा
स्वेनैव वेद्यं न तु पण्डितेन ।
चन्द्रस्वरूपं निजचक्षुषैव
ज्ञातव्यमन्धैरवगम्यते किम्

॥ ५४॥

1	<i>vastusvaroopam sphuta bodha chakshhushhaa</i>	<i>The Real nature of things is, through the eye of <u>clear understanding</u>,</i>
2	<i>svena eva vedyam na tu pandhitena;</i>	<i>to be known or <u>experienced by oneself</u>, and not through men, however learned.</i>
3	<i>chandrasvaroopam nija chakshhushha eva</i>	<i>This is just as the real form of <u>the moon</u> is, through one's <u>own eye</u>,</i>
4	<i>jnaatavyam, anyaih avagamyate kim.</i>	<i>to be <u>known or experienced</u>; How can it be understood in any other way?</i>

1-2 All that has been heard about the spiritual path so far by the student serves, at best, only as a map charting the road ahead. It does not shorten the journey by a single foot. This fact is obvious, but when it comes from the revered lips of one's Guru, it gives us the strong sense that we are now embarking “on the real thing”. A great sense of commitment and rising to the occasion is aroused in the heart of the seeker. There is eagerness generated that might border on impatience to ‘get on with it’.

3-4 The Guru has chosen as his example the actual sighting of the moon instead of hearing about it from someone else. Nothing stops us from choosing our own simile:

For example, it may take months of preparation for an overseas tour. The thrill that the traveller feels when he is actually in the air cannot be imagined – flying to his destination, and then visiting the places he had only seen in brochures prior to that. There is nothing like the actual experience. It is the same with the spiritual journey, and the Guru is here whipping up the student's appetite for it.

Such a spirit is needed at the outset, as any experienced aspirant will vouchsafe. Hence, there is merit in the Guru's words; he is only creating the right feeling in the mind of the disciple. The thrill of the spiritual adventure has to grip him fully.

Verse 55: *Simile 5: The Chains of Bondage*

अविद्याकामकर्मादिपाशबन्धं विमोचितुम् ।

कः शक्नुयाद्विनाऽऽत्मानं कल्पकोटिशतैरपि

॥ ५५॥

1	<i>avidyaa-kaama-karmaadi</i>	<i>Ignorance, desire and action –</i>
2	<i>paasha bandham vimochitum;</i>	<i>to free oneself of the bondage resulting from these,</i>
3	<i>kah shaknuyaat vinaa aatmaanam</i>	<i>who will be able to do that, except oneself?</i>
4	<i>kalpa koti shataih api.</i>	<i>For they may span hundreds of crores of Kalpas!</i>

In the context of the chapter we are in, it is not so relevant to go into a discussion of the “chains of ignorance, desire and action”. There will be time enough for that later. Nor is it important to concern ourselves about exactly how long ago the bondage began. The spirit of the verse is to prepare the student’s mind for the journey that he is about to embark upon. Here is a journey that promises to transform his life into something meaningful.

The poetry continues, unabated. A hundred crore of Kalpas? Of what relevance is that to someone who is desperate now to get out of the scorching flames of worldliness! It is poetry alone that is of meaning here, not the fact. Just the knowledge of having reached such a critical juncture compared to earlier history is sufficient to motivate the student to pour forth 100% effort towards his Sadhana in the days and months to come with his Guru.

The stage is thus set for a new phase in the life of a promising future Mahatma or Rishi in the making.



1.8 FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE

(Verses 56-61, 6 No.)

A NEW THEME OPENS up in this Chapter, and its verses have to be seen in the context of that theme. If the context is ignored, then the danger lies in misinterpreting it as criticism of other significant philosophies existing in India at the time of Sri Shankaracharya, and in the rest of the world. This is not intended here.

Vedanta has always been grateful for what it has received from the other schools of philosophy. It has never been critical of them. Later in this theme, one finds Vedantic scholarship itself comes under strong criticism. Hence, we have to be very careful of how to interpret these verses.

The instruction of the keen student has just begun. His appetite for the journey ahead has been whipped up in the last section. Here, the Goal of liberation and that alone is held as the aim of the ensuing study. No detraction from that is to be permitted.

Too often in the spiritual field, we find that the seeker's mind yields to other tempting fruits which come in the wake of his study. This whole section is intended to steer the mind of the student away from these alluring side issues. The power of other side issues to deflect one from the central goal is enormous, and is described in the verses that follow.

There is a good reason why blinkers are placed beside the eyes of a racehorse. It is so that his attention is not deflected to the horses running next to him, but focussed entirely on the running track ahead. A similar purpose is served by the verses of this chapter to keep the mind of the seeker focussed on the one thing that matters – the Goal ahead.

Verse 56: *Can Any Science or Technique Help?*

न योगेन न साङ्ख्येन कर्मणा नो न विद्यया ।

ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वबोधेन मोक्षः सिध्यति नान्यथा

॥ ५६॥

1	<i>na yogena na saangkyena</i>	Neither by the Science of Yoga nor Sankhya,
2	<i>karmanaa no na vidyayaa;</i>	nor by Technique of ritual nor learning,
3	<i>brahma-aatma ekatva bodhena</i>	but by realizing one's identity with Brahman
4	<i>mokshhah sidhyati na anyathaa.</i>	is liberation possible, not by any other means.

1-2 In this verse, the intention is clearly to rivet the student's mind to the ultimate goal, not to criticise Science or Technology.

3-4 It is emphatically said here "Liberation is realization of one's identity with Brahman, nothing else." On the spiritual path, the only means required is the direct realisation of the Reality. All else is only to assist our intellect to generate sufficient motivation to take the plunge and begin the journey.

Verse 57: Can Any Talent Help?

वीणाया रूपसौन्दर्यं तन्त्रीवादनसौष्ठवम् ।
प्रजारञ्जनमात्रं तन्न साम्राज्याय कल्पते

॥ ५७॥

1	<i>veenaayaa roopasaundryam,</i>	<i>The beautiful form of a veena;</i>
2	<i>tantree-vaadana-saushhthavam;</i>	<i>the proficiency of one playing on its chords;</i>
3	<i>prajaa ranjana maatram tat,</i>	<i>these are Talents just to please an audience;</i>
4	<i>na saamraajyaaya kalpate.</i>	<i>they do not make one competent for sovereignty.</i>

This verse just points out another possible distraction facing a spiritual aspirant.

1-2 A classic example of diversion is taken up – proficiency in a particular art form. The *Veena* should be taken to include any other art form that has the power to deflect the aspirant from his central Goal.

3-4 An art such as music can leave an audience spell-bound. It can reach a height which absorbs the audience to such an extent that they are flooded with a rare type of thrill. They are freed momentarily from the tribulations of their mind. Such an audience can, quite understandably, be extremely appreciative.

Talent in an art performance can attract people to the performer. What then? The temptation of name and fame is encountered. The incentive to perform well could easily change – from a pure love for the art to the desire for more fame and applause!

This introduces the fuller implications of the same thing happening in the spiritual field also. The next verse spells this out . . .

Verse 58: Can Erudition & Scholarship Help?

वाग्वैखरी शब्दझरी शास्त्रव्याख्यानकौशलम् ।
वैदुष्यं विदुषां तद्बहुक्तये न तु मुक्तये

॥ ५८॥

1	<i>vaagvaikharee shabdajharee</i>	<i>Loud speech in an unending steam of words;</i>
2	<i>shaashtra vyaakhyaana kaushalam;</i>	<i>efficiency in expounding the scriptures;</i>
3	<i>vaidushhyam vidushhaam tadvad</i>	<i>such Erudition and Scholarship may bring some</i>
4	<i>bhuktaye na tu muktaye.</i>	<i>material satisfaction, but not liberation.</i>

1-4 Here, the danger is described without any disguise. Scriptural erudition accompanied by the art of lecturing is not free from the danger to enchant people; it has the same status as a *veena* performance in that respect. The message is clear: “Don’t make *Shastra* a *Kala* (an art form) just to entertain people.”

If we do, we may get closer to being celebrities, but further away from Self-realisation. Can we see the deep concern that Sri Shankaracharyaji has for our real spiritual welfare which makes him draw our attention to such suicidal danger?

Acharyaji also rose to the occasion with valuable expansion on this theme. He highlighted the danger of making fine public performances that fall on all types of ears, not all of them of pure motive. Some may feel, “Ah, what a talented young speaker. He will

make a good husband for my daughter.” The difficulty of resisting the temptations of this world is being highlighted at the outset of the young student’s training.

Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji used to give this advice to students, “You should always feel that you are doing Manana of the Shastras and the audience is just overhearing your reflections. Thank the people who hear you, but always feel you are not teaching, but only doing your Sadhana.”

Verse 59: Can Study of Scriptures Help?

अविज्ञाते परे तत्त्वे शास्त्राधीतिस्तु निष्फला ।
विज्ञातेऽपि परे तत्त्वे शास्त्राधीतिस्तु निष्फला ॥ ५९॥

1	<i>avijnaate pare tattve</i>	Without knowing the supreme Reality,
2	<i>shaastraadheetistu nishhphalaa;</i>	the study of the Shastras is futile.
3	<i>vijnaate api pare tattve</i>	Having known the supreme Reality,
4	<i>shaastraadheetistu nishhphalaa.</i>	the study of the Shastras is again futile.

The emphatic point driven home by this magnificent juxtaposition of two opposing statements is simply this: “The Shastras are useful **only for realizing God**, not for any other purpose, however worthy it may appear to be.”

Both statements are seen to be true only in the light of the above point.

1-2 In the first statement, the intellectual joy of studying the scriptures has somehow overtaken the purpose of the study, to realise God.

3-4 In the second statement, it is simply telling us that if the whole object of studying the scriptures has been fulfilled (by realizing God), then there is no further purpose for the study. Neither of these statements is to be construed as criticism of the Shastras, or permit observers to criticize the student who is undertaking the study of scriptures.

Our model student must surely feel ever so grateful to his Guru for bringing home this timely advice before he even begins the study.

Verse 60: Can Any Philosophy Help?

शब्दजालं महारण्यं चित्तभ्रमणकारणम् ।
अतः प्रयत्नाज्ज्ञातव्यं तत्त्वज्ञैस्तत्त्वमात्मनः ॥ ६०॥

1	<i>shabdajaalam mahaa aranyam</i>	Books and Philosophies constitute a thick jungle,
2	<i>chitta-bhramana-kaaranam;</i>	they may be a cause for the confusion of the mind;
3	<i>atah prayatnaat jnaatavyam</i>	Therefore, through right efforts should be known
4	<i>tattvajnaih tattvam aatmanah.</i>	the real nature of the Self by true seekers of God.

1-2 The dangers facing an intellect are here openly displayed. Here the student is alerted to the pitfalls of intellectual gymnastics. Whether the subject is Vedanta or something else, all students are faced with the danger of falling into this pit. An inquisitive intellect can easily get lost in “the jungle of commentaries and philosophies”.

3-4 The only way out is to *keep a focus on doing the Sadhana* prescribed by the scriptures. Following the guidelines of the Guru is the main safeguard in keeping focus.

Verse 61: *Only Knowledge of Self Can Help!*

अज्ञानसर्पदष्टस्य ब्रह्मज्ञानौषधं विना ।
किमु वेदैश्च शास्त्रैश्च किमु मन्त्रैः किमौषधैः ॥ ६१॥

1	<i>ajnaana sarpa dashhtasya</i>	<i>For one stung by the cobra of ignorance,</i>
2	<i>brahma jnaana aushhadham vinaa;</i>	<i>the only remedy is the knowledge of Brahman.</i>
3	<i>kimu vedaih cha shaastraih cha</i>	<i>Of what use are the Vedas and scriptures, or</i>
4	<i>kimu mantraih kim aushhadhaih.</i>	<i>of what use are Mantras and medicines?</i>

The theme is concluded with this verse summarising the main point of the section.

1-2 Another metaphor is introduced here, adding a final ‘sting’ to the message on misusing the knowledge of the Shastras. If one is an aspirant, indeed, he will feel the pang of ignorance as if he had been stung by a cobra. A cobra’s sting is no joke – a flashing hit and certain death awaits the victim, unless he is treated immediately. A snake kills its victim only once, whereas Ignorance kills us birth after birth crores of times!

3-4 The thirsting aspirant will rush for the correct medicine and take it. Brahma Jnana is the medicine all right, but what a tragedy it would be if, instead of taking the medicine, one starts playing games with it as in intellectual gymnastics, etc; or starts spraying it as a perfume all over himself!

Alas, the victims of the ‘snake bites’ of intellectual vanity in the field of Vedanta have been many. The teacher, with all the compassion in his heart, is forewarning the sincere student of this grave stupidity.



1.9 DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF SELF

(Verses 62-66, 5 No.)

FINALLY, TO END THIS first Part of the book, the Guru pushes the student's mind towards the practical aspect of spiritual life. After all the study, the student has to put in many years of intense practice of all the knowledge he has received. There is no short-cut out of it, no bypass for this step.

Verse 62: Medicine Has to be Taken!

न गच्छति विना पानं व्याधिरौषधशब्दतः ।
विनाऽपरोक्षानुभवं ब्रह्मशब्दैर्न मुच्यते

॥ ६२॥

1	<i>na gachchhati vinaa paanam</i>	<i>The disease does not get cured by merely uttering the medicine's name, without drinking it!</i>
2	<i>vyaadhih aushhadha-shabdatah;</i>	
3	<i>vinaa aparokshha anubhavam</i>	<i>So too, without direct realization, by merely uttering 'Brahman', none can be liberated.</i>
4	<i>brahma-shabdaih na muchyate.</i>	

1-2 "Take the medicine to get better". There is no other way.

No healing is achieved by merely looking at the bottle of medicine, writing articles about its glory, and giving it a high-sounding, attractive name!

3-4 Applying this to spiritual life is straightforward. The prescription is given in the Shrutis as direct realisation of one's identity with Brahman. It does not help us if the name Brahman sounds fascinating or not; nor does it help us to repeat the name Brahman without taking the medicine. It may sound obviously absurd, yet Sri Shankaracharyaji spells it out, for he knows the actual situation that prevails in the world regarding these matters.

Verse 63: The World Has to be Negated!

अकृत्वा दृश्यविलयमज्ञात्वा तत्त्वमात्मनः ।
ब्रह्मशब्दैः कुतो मुक्तिरुक्तिमात्रफलैर्नृणाम्

॥ ६३॥

1	<i>akritvaa drishyavilayam</i>	<i>Without taking any trouble to negate this world,</i>
2	<i>ajnaatvaa tattvamaatmanah;</i>	<i>without taking trouble to know the nature of Self,</i>
3	<i>brahmashabdaih kuto muktir-</i>	<i>how can mere repetition of "Brahman" set one free?</i>
4	<i>uktimaatrapphalairnrinaam.</i>	<i>Surely it will end only in a wasteful effort of speech.</i>

1-4 If one has fallen into a muddy ditch, the job of cleaning himself of the mess is unavoidable to become clean again. The teacher stresses yet again the need to be practical in Vedanta to get out of delusion, not just remain in a theoretical tower and preach wasteful words on it. Actual practice is the only thing that can really help.

The two important things needed to be done are: i) Negation of the world; and ii) Grasping the nature of the Self. Without accomplishing these, Brahman would be mere idle talk over a coffee table.

Expressed differently, the two steps are: i) removing the idea of duality altogether; and ii) living in the full realization of one's true nature as the Self.

Verse 64: *The Enemies Have to be Conquered!*

अकृत्वा शत्रुसंहारमगत्वाखिलभूश्रियम् ।
राजाहमिति शब्दान्नो राजा भवितुमर्हति

॥ ६४॥

1	<i>akritvaa shatrusamhaaram</i>	Without taking trouble to <u>eliminate his enemies</u> ,
2	<i>agatvaakhilabhooshriyam;</i>	without bringing the entire land under his sway,
3	<i>raajaa aham iti shabdaat</i>	by merely repeating ' <u>I am the Emperor</u> ',
4	<i>nah raajaa bhavitum arhati.</i>	one cannot become an <u>Emperor!</u>

Clearly Sri Shankaracharya is still not satisfied that he has successfully driven home his point on practical Vedanta. Hence, yet another simile appears before us.

1-2 An emperor has no power over anyone unless he has dealt sufficiently well with all his enemies. **3-4** Otherwise his power would only be in his imagination.

Application: In the same manner, the spiritual aspirant, who has the potential to be 'the Emperor of all emperors', only gains that power when he has overcome all the deadly enemies of vices within himself. As students of Vedanta we are to constantly remember to attend to overcoming all our negative traits.

Verse 65: *Excavating the Treasure of the Self*

आप्तोक्तिं खननं तथोपरिशिलाद्युत्कर्षणं स्वीकृतिं
निक्षेपः समपेक्षते न हि बहिःशब्दैस्तु निर्गच्छति ।
तद्वद्ब्रह्मविदोपदेशमननध्यानादिभिर्लभ्यते
मायाकार्यतिरोहितं स्वममलं तत्त्वं न दुर्युक्तिभिः ॥ ६५॥

1	<i>aaptoktim khaanam tatha upari shilaad, yutkarshhanam sveekritim;</i>	Instructions of an <u>engineer</u> on how to carry out excavations – clearing the earth, removing stones lying above it – first need to be grasped well;
2	<i>nikshhepah samapekshhate na hi bahih shabdaih tu nirgachchhati.</i>	The <u>Treasure</u> being sought is hidden in the ground; indeed no amount of <u>calling out with words</u> will ever make it just come out!
3	<i>tadvat brahmavidaa upadesha manana dhyaanaadibhih labhyate;</i>	In the same way, the instructions of a <u>realised saint</u> on how to carry out reflection and meditation, first need to be grasped well;
4	<i>maayaakaaryatirohitam svam amalam, tattvam na duryuktibhih.</i>	Hidden under delusion and its effects is the <u>treasure of the Pure Self</u> ; It is not obtained through mere <u>argumentation!</u>

Sri Shankaracharyaji is still not happy that the message has gone through. He is not satisfied with just burial, he wants to cremate as well!

1-2 In this extended metaphor, the whole subject of direct experience is re-capped with an example that makes the student clearly see the ridiculousness of expecting any success by simply staying at the theoretical level.

To successfully excavate any treasure from beneath the ground surface, an engineer's advice ought to be sought first. He will instruct exactly where to dig and how deep to dig. Following his instructions, it is easy to find the treasure.

3-4 This example is then applied to our problem – **Aparoksha Anubhuti** or Direct Experience of the Self.

Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji says, "In the spiritual treasure hunt, rich treasure lies beneath the outer crude layers of matter in the bosom of man. The seeker must have the assiduity, industry, hope and patience to dig in the right place in the right manner, with unabated enthusiasm. The endeavour is made with the pick-axe of thought and the spade of discrimination. With these we remove the earth of attachments to the body, mind and intellect. This is called reflection and meditation (**Manana** and **Nididhyasana**)."

Verse 66: Curing the Disease of "Bondage"

तस्मात्सर्वप्रयत्नेन भवबन्धविमुक्तये ।

स्वैरेव यत्नः कर्तव्यो रोगादाविव पण्डितैः

॥ ६६॥

1	<i>tasmaat sarva prayatnena</i>	Therefore, by all the means at his disposal,
2	<i>bhava-bandha vimuktaye;</i>	to be free from the bondage of births and deaths,
3	<i>svaih eva yatnah kartavyah</i>	Effort alone has to be made by one's own means
4	<i>rogaadau iva pandhitaih.</i>	by intelligent seekers, exactly as one does in illness.

At last the great Acharya seems to be satisfied that his student has got the message. He is now ready to go ahead with answering his questions. Now that the student knows that he alone is fully responsible for putting into practice what he learns from his Guru, the Guru's effort to teach him will not be in vain.

"Strive hard" is the key to success on the spiritual path. And success is defined only in terms of the ultimate goal of liberation from all bondage that leads to births and deaths.

END OF PART 1



