

42. Realise your true Self by destroying all limitations

The soul can realise itself only by the destruction of all limitations. The mind is the greatest of these. The mind undergoes two stages while being destroyed: destruction of form (*rupa-laya*) and destruction of the formless aspect of the mind (*a-rupa-laya*). The agitations of the mind stuff are the forms (*rupas*). Then comes the stage of equilibrium where there is the positive bliss (*ananda*) of being *sat* and awareness (*chit*), where also the formless mind disappears. The annihilation of the mind is of two kinds, namely, the mind pattern and the mind itself. The former applies to sages liberated while still alive; the latter to the liberated when deceased (*videha-mukthas*). Now, only the destruction of form (*rupa-laya*) is possible. This makes the person enjoy the bliss derived from the experience of identity with Brahman.

So, the mind is a limitation of the individual soul (*jivi*). It has to be conquered; the body-consciousness must disappear; steady faith has to be cultivated in wisdom (*jnana*). Delusion will then fade away. All “I-feeling” will go, and every moment, the spring of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) will well up in the individual. That is the real direct experience of the Lord (*sakshathkara*). The great masters also emphasise this discipline and dwell on this bliss. This, verily, is the truth.

43. Four qualifications for inquiry into the Atma

To entitle one to inquiry into the *Atma*, one must be endowed with the four qualifications. Scholarship in all the *Vedas* and scriptures (*sastra*), asceticism, mastery of ritual, dedication to repetition of the name of God (*japa*), charity, pilgrimage —nothing will help in granting that authority. The sacred revelations (*sruthis*) say,

So equanimity, self-control, withdrawal of the senses, and steadfastness only these confer that title, not caste, colour, or social status.

Shaantho dhaanthah uparathih thithikshah ...

Be one a pundit versed in all the holy scriptures, a wise person (*vidwan*), or an illiterate, child, youth, or old person, a celibate, householder, forest dweller, or renunciate (*brahmachari*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha*, or *sanyasin*), a *brahmin*, soldier, merchant, or labourer (*kshatriya*, *vaisya*, *sudra*), or even an outcaste, man or woman —the *Vedas* declare that

Everyone is qualified, provided they are equipped with the four qualifications (*sadhana-chathushtaya*).

Mere reading of the scriptures (*sastras*) does not entitle one. Instead, the attainment of the four qualifications mentioned therein is essential.

The doubt might then arise: How can a person who has not read the scriptures attain the four qualifications?

My reply is, how does the person who reads scriptures attain them? “Because one knows the scriptures, one acts in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, gets mental purification thereby, and acquires renunciation (*vairagya*) and other qualifications in increasing measure.”

But then one asks: How can these be cultivated by one who doesn't know the scriptures. Well, why can't they be cultivated? By the accumulated fruit of the educative influences and good deeds in past births, it is possible to get qualified for inquiry into the nature of *Atma* (*Atma-vichara*) in this birth, without scriptural study.