

Qualifying for the study

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Categories : [Knowledge \(ch.2\)](#)

Date : October 4, 2013

Sankhya yoga/Topic of knowledge(Chapter 2...continued)

After having seen a dimension of this knowledge, in Chapter two Lord Krishna also talks about who is ready for this knowledge. What does it take to get this wisdom? Vedanta is not elitist, nobody is denied this knowledge. At the same time, like any other discipline, there will be certain basic qualifications. E.g. If I want to study calculus, I should know basic algebra...If I am doubtful about basic maths, then I am not fit for studying Calculus. But that doesn't mean I can't get myself ready. I have to start where I am and work right through until I am ready for studying Calculus. In the same manner, there are certain basic qualifications laid down for the study of Vedanta and the *Gita*.

To put it in a nutshell, the qualifications can be summed up in a sentence—to be able to think clearly, feel strongly, and act decisively. That's a tall order for most of us. This is broken up into quite a few qualifications in the traditional approach. Here, we are not talking about your educational qualifications, we are not asking whether you know Sanskrit or not, though it's good if either the teacher or the student knows Sanskrit...It's better if the teacher knows it.....All these are only helpful for the study of Vedanta.

What is necessary is traditionally known as *viveka*, *vairagya*, *shatsampati* and *mumukshutvam*. Let us look at each one in brief.

Viveka is the quality of discrimination; not to discriminate against anyone, but to be able to take up an issue which is muddled, mixed up and to be able to separate out the separate issues and to get a clear perspective about what is on hand. Similarly, about my goals in life—*viveka* would be what am I really after, have I really clarified that?....Have I clarified what I am, what I am not, to see that all I do in life is connected to the roles and I am a person independent of the roles. This ability in a nutshell would be what *viveka* is about; that means one who has enough self-awareness to think about issues like 'What are the roles I am playing? And who is the person in this role?' Of course if I can be calm and centred like a samurai warrior, and say 'I am a witness of all the actions done by the body and mind, I am the calm and peaceful centre in the storm of activity,' that would be the height of *viveka*.

The second qualification is '*vairagya*'... '*Vairagya*' very often is translated as dispassion and that people feel we cannot have. In fact, today we always say 'You should have a passion with respect to your job.' So '*vairagya*' is not dispassion actually; a better way of looking at it would be 'objectivity'... To be able to see everything in life in an objective manner. E.g All of us need money...Money has an objective value, money can get things done. To this money, you always add a subjective value. You think 'If I have money, I will be happy.' Well, if I have money I may be happy, I may be unhappy. Happiness or unhappiness does not depend on the money I have even though the comfort I have may depend on the money I have. Therefore, one has to look at everything very objectively—the things that I do, my roles in life, my positions, the people I relate with....to be able to see this very objectively is *vairagya*. One way of starting that is by recognizing that we all have a subjective component to us. In fact, some of the best things in life have a subjective component to it—the appreciation of art, music can be highly subjective. So how does one become objective? The beginning would be to start recognizing that 'subjectivity' is a part of my life. Once I am aware of that I can learn to appreciate the 'objective' component, at the same time see where I am being subjective. And if it's something like music, literature, I enjoy the game, and if it is something else like my relationships, work, etc I try to be more objective so that I am more effective.

The third value is called '*shatsampati*', the six-fold inner wealth. They are called *sama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titiksha*, *shradha* and *samadhanam*. Let us take *sama*, *dama* together. They are nothing but a certain discipline in my life. E.g. Someone is abusive towards me, I feel like whacking that guy, but at the physical

level I say, 'No, I will not whack him', it is inappropriate behaviour. And so I control my anger at the level of my physical response and I say, 'No, I will not do it'. This will be called *dama*. But the anger and resentment are still inside me. To process and handle that anger psychologically would be called '*sama*', so I do what is necessary in terms of thinking and feeling, take care of that anger. This makes the complete discipline of *sama* and *dama*.

Next one is '*uparathi*'. *Uparathi* is enjoying a certain conflict-free mind. In Vedantic terms, this would come in terms of doing what has to be done. I keep my subjectivity aside, I keep my likes and dislikes aside and do what has to be done. That frees me from a great degree of conflict and I start enjoying a certain amount of inner poise. This will be explained further in the later posts on karma-yoga.

Titiksha. It is being able to put up with the pin-pricks of life. I'm sure everyone who lives in Mumbai has used public transport—it doesn't come on time, it's crowded, etc etc. Are you going to crib about it? Or do what you can about it? So being able to put up with all the pin-pricks of life—a power failure, a late train, overcrowded buses.....Stop cribbing, start living. This would be *titiksha*...

Sorry to interrupt, Swamiji, but isn't that a defeatist, fatalistic attitude?...

No, you can do what you can to change it, but stop cribbing and start living.

Coming back to the qualifications....the next one is '*shraddha*'. This can be a bugbear, because it is very often translated as 'blind belief'. But that's not what it is. One never gives up independent thinking. It can start with, at the very least, an open mind...I am willing to give it a shot, I am willing to examine issues and see whether they are fine or not. I'm going to give the *Gita* a chance to bless me, I'm going to give myself a chance to be blessed, I'm going to give a teacher a chance to make it understandable. This 'giving a chance' is what *shraddha* is about, at least to start with. Later on, it can go to deeper issues like having trust and confidence in the *shastra*, in the teacher, in myself, so that I can get what I need out of it.

Next is '*samadhanam*', forbearance...to accept people for what they are. This is also easier said than done. I can accept the whole world but not my neighbour. Leave him out, everyone else is OK. To recognize that everyone in life is struggling with their minds like I am struggling with mine, and, therefore, to have a compassionate understanding and let them be. I am not saying that you have to be great friends with this person, but you can accept them for what they are. You need not follow a fool but can you let a fool be a fool? A non-judgemental but evaluative understanding of people is what it means. That would be '*samadhanam*'. This forms the third group of six values.

The last one is called '*mumukshutvam*', the desire for freedom. This is the motivating factor for people to study Vedanta or the *Gita*. Do I really value my search, my commitment? Why am I studying all this? The study of the *Gita* or Vedanta is a value-based study and the value is 'freedom from my personal sense of limitations'.....As a human being, we are all limited and we all struggle against this limitation. All of us have this struggle. The desires that I have both in terms of what I want and what I don't want is an expression of the struggle to free myself from the existential issues that we talked about in an earlier post. So to recognize that I have this need within me and to commit myself to my personal freedom from limitations is what '*mumukshutvam*' is all about. One who has all these qualifications is a great student of the *Gita*. We may all have these qualifications to an extent, we could always do with some refining. Why are these necessary? Remember that in the *Gita* what we want to know and what we want to become is one and the same thing. Like Arjuna wanted to be a fulfilled being, he wanted to know what is that fulfilled being. Because he wanted to be that. What we want to know and what we want to become are one and the same.

This seems to be the qualification of someone who already knows the truth.

Yes, a student has in a relative manner what the wise person has in an absolute manner. That is the only difference. In a student, these are values to which he has paid attention and cultivated. In a wise person, all these are natural and in fuller measure. '*Viveka*' becomes '*gyanam*', objectivity is natural and so is *shatsampati*; *mumukshutvam* has fulfilled itself in the sense of the freedom he enjoys...

Now Krishna has only alluded to these values in the second chapter of the *Gita* and elaborated them in his

own way in the thirteenth chapter. I have thought it appropriate to elaborate it here from other sources in Vedantic literature.

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Views – 169

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