

# Viveka, Power of Discernment: Problems in Implementation

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PROBLEMS AND UNCERTAINTIES are part of our life. One wrong decision is enough to upset a person's career. The noted psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) of the last century said: 'I had learned to see that the greatest and most important problems of life are all fundamentally insoluble. They must be so, because they express the necessary polarity inherent in every self-regulating system. They can never be solved but only outgrown.'<sup>1</sup> Swami Bhajanananda argues that Jung had understood the important principle discovered in India: 'The higher the plane of consciousness we attain, the greater becomes our knowledge and power to deal with the problems of life.'<sup>2</sup>

Analysing the deficits of our senses and intellect covered with illusion and inborn tendencies, an attempt is made to show how our intuitive power is obstructed and our power of discernment is coloured in our dealing with crucial problems at important junctures of life. It is with the holistic knowledge and wisdom acquired with the purity of mind that one can regain clarity of vision, so as to lead a successful and peaceful life. Swami Vivekananda said: 'The only explanation must come from beyond the sense-plane, we must rise to the superconscious, to a state entirely beyond sense-perception.'<sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

Swamiji pointed out:

We are caught, though we came to catch. We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came



Carl Gustav Jung

to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked. ... We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always struggling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us—depletes us, and casts us aside (2.2).

This is true almost for all of us. One wrong decision, one careless step, is enough to ruin one's career and peace of mind, since life is full of uncertainties, conflicts, and problems. Patanjali says in his *Yoga Sutra*: '*Duhkhameva sarvam vivekinah*'; the persons endowed with spiritual discrimination regard all experiences as painful.'<sup>4</sup> Material objects of enjoyments cannot give us lasting happiness; they only lead us to pain and sorrow.

Living beings do have some kind of discernment all the time. Plants discern between light and shade, animals choose what to eat or not. But the human being is equipped with a unique discerning faculty, *viveka*. Everyone possesses this faculty in varying degrees, but it is generally used only in the realm of common objects or ideas in the relative plane. With the help of *viveka*, our intellect does all types of differentiation. From childhood onwards, *viveka* develops discerning ideas, emotions, morality, justice, governance, and so on.

At every level in daily conduct, we unconsciously practise *viveka*, otherwise, we will suffer endlessly. Something that is good in a certain situation, could be not so good when the circumstances change. The human being has special privilege of judging things, right and wrong. As sub-human animals are devoid of this faculty of discernment, the results of their actions do not accumulate. While thinking human beings are endowed with this power of distinguishing between good and bad actions, there is no way out for them but to reap the consequences of their actions. But they are not always able to use that power rightly. Whether this judging is undisputable is determined by the purity of mind of the judge. An impure mind cannot lead to the Truth.

There are two categories of discernment, objective dharma-*adharm*a leading to moral values and noble ideals, and subjective dealing with *nitya-anitya*, permanent-ephemeral.

The basic problems of life cannot be solved through ordinary means, but one has to go to the source of these problems. One might find some temporary solution through reasoning but the ultimate solution is through transcending the problems. In order to solve the problems of life and find the truth, the human being must rise to a consciousness level higher than the mind and reason, which belong to the limited realm

of ignorance. So what is the solution? The Mahabharata directs that great persons tread only the path well-lit by the light of discernment. It is the power of wisdom and not the power of muscle. From the philosophical standpoint, this discernment is the function of *buddhi*, intellect, involving both the faculties of intuition and will. The former is introspection, while the latter is heavily determined by one's attitude and *shraddha*. A person who does not believe in the importance of virtue, cannot practise discernment between virtue and vice.

The *Katha Upanishad* says that the objective of our inner vision is to examine, select, and adopt *shreya*, the long-term beneficial goal, rather than *preya*, the immediate apparent pleasurable goal.<sup>5</sup> A person's natural tendency is to tread the path of ease and comfort avoiding restraints and responsibilities. The senses are so powerful that they drag the mind to the immediate pleasure. Every one aspires for unalloyed joy, uninterrupted peace, absolute freedom, and cessation of misery. The main difficulty in choosing the right type lies in the fact that the higher forms of happiness are not immediately obvious. So naturally one tends to stick to *preya* leaving aside *shreya*.

The reason for the tendency to lean towards *preya* has been elaborated in the *Katha Upanishad*, which states that our sense organs are inclined to 'see' the world outside and not to 'see' the Self inside, for which one needs long practice with patience. The inner Self is realised only by some wise discerning persons, who turn inward the focus of the sense organs (2.1.1). We must see not only the appearance, but also what lies behind it through spiritual wisdom. That is why the *Mundaka Upanishad* says: 'The Self is not comprehended through the eye, nor through speech, nor through the other senses; nor is it attained through austerity or actions.'<sup>6</sup>

Curiosity can only lead to increased levels of knowledge and skill, but not necessarily lead to wisdom. However, for the spiritual aspirant, guidance comes from *viveka*, the light of conscience. **This *viveka* or discernment between the real and the unreal is an essential requisite for a spiritual aspirant.** One has to discern the worthwhile from the worthless in the world, identifying the eternal from non-eternal objects through *viveka*. A non-eternal object is *vikari*, changing and is characterised by six steps of change from its birth to its destruction.

### **The Shortcomings of Our Sense Organs**

Every human is equipped with five sense organs but each of them has inherent limitations, though some lower animals have some sense organs that are more sensitive than humans. However, it is through these sense organs that we perceive and understand the external world. Sensual enjoyment is attended with various defects. It leads to pain, weakness, severe exertion, craving, and mental restlessness.

The modern technology can extend, modify, and improve the capabilities of the senses to a certain extent. The human field of vision is not a 360-degree full roundabout, but about 120-degree horizontal and 135-degree vertical vision. 'Angular resolution' is one of the terms used to describe an optical device's ability to distinguish very small details. The typical set of human eyes have an angular resolution in the order of one arc minute, a unit of angular measurement, give or take a few arc seconds. The most well-known of human sensory limitations is that the typical human eye is only capable of perceiving light at wavelengths between 390 and 750 nanometres. Of course, calling it the 'visible' spectrum is a bit of a misnomer, as plenty of animals are capable of perceiving light with frequencies outside this relatively narrow band of electromagnetic radiation.

The range of frequencies that can be picked up by the human ear is usually cited as 20–20,000 Hz; however, the upper limit on that range tends to decrease pretty steadily with age. The sense of taste is arguably the weakest of the human senses. The limits of odour detection have proven difficult to pin down. The sense of touch is remarkably complex and involves the detection of everything from pressure, to itchiness, to temperature. But the receptors in our skin are not distributed in a uniform way around our bodies. Some parts of our body, such as our fingers and lips, have more touch receptors than the other parts of our body.

These limitations of human perception have a direct impact on how we understand the world and the beyond. Swamiji said: **'Identify yourself with Atman, not with human limitations. Dis-identify yourself with the body, and all pain will cease.'**<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, when we observe a pair of opposites, we normally compare the difference of kind and not just the difference of degree. This is easier for having positive contrasts like heat and cold, rich and poor. This involves the feeling of consciousness in temperature and wealth respectively. But it is difficult to understand the concepts of negative contrasts like differences in the degree of motion without understanding the concept of rest. Here, the problem is in understanding the concept of an unchangeable substratum.

Apart from these sense organs, mind is also important, which has been categorised as the sixth sense organ in the Gita.<sup>8</sup> Mind is part of the subtle body and influences not only the physical brain, but the entire body through the sense organs. The brain and the mind are intimately connected. However, mental activity is not merely brain activity, but the mind is carried over across lifetimes. So the truth that we experience through our senses is but the truth contained

within the narrow boundaries as determined by the senses. Moreover, the mind is the controller of all the five sense organs through thinking, feeling, and willing.

The mind usually works with the external world through the senses that enable us to grasp the sense objects. Normally the eye is capable of capturing eighty-two per cent of the sense objects, ear ten per cent, and the remaining three sense organs of smell, taste, and touch only eight per cent of perception. Each sense organ, however, is associated with its own individual limitations as stated above. These limitations do have some constructive purpose. For example, nature has provided us eyelids for closing our eyes, while the ears are always open. This could be construed as a message of Nature, that we need to restrain what we see and be always alert of what we hear.

This limitation of human perception has a direct impact on how we understand the universe. What comes in the mind is unaffected irrespective of whether it is channelised into one, more, or all the five senses. For instance, the total amount of water that can flow from a reservoir would remain the same, irrespective of the number of outlets. The intensity or depth of perception of the remaining sense organs will be far more if one of the sense organs does not function or is wilfully withdrawn. A golden example is Helen Keller, who overcame the adversity of being deaf and blind to become one of the leading humanitarians of the twentieth century.

### ***Characteristic Features of the Mind***

When our mind thinks and reasons, it can see only a part at a time and so cannot have an integral view of things. And that is why truths that have multiple dimensions always escape human thought and reason. This is similar to the conceptualisation of an elephant by blind persons.

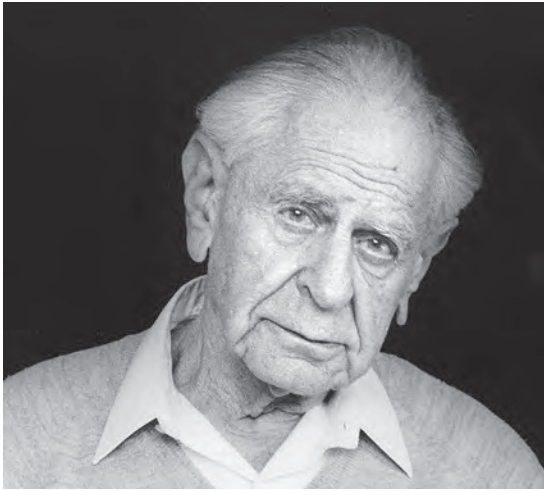
Further, all our five senses are designed to function in order that the relative differences in stimuli can be perceived. An absolute homogeneous, changeless entity cannot be perceived by our senses. If such a perception were possible, time, being the index of change, would cease to exist in our perception. So, the human being is incapable of perceiving the timeless, changeless, homogeneous absolute ones.

It is therefore impossible to have an objective perception of changeless objects. Therefore, it is impossible to perceive the eternal and changeless Brahman through the senses. Hence, if one could isolate the senses from relative perception and if thoughts could be removed from the mind, one can perceive the true reality.

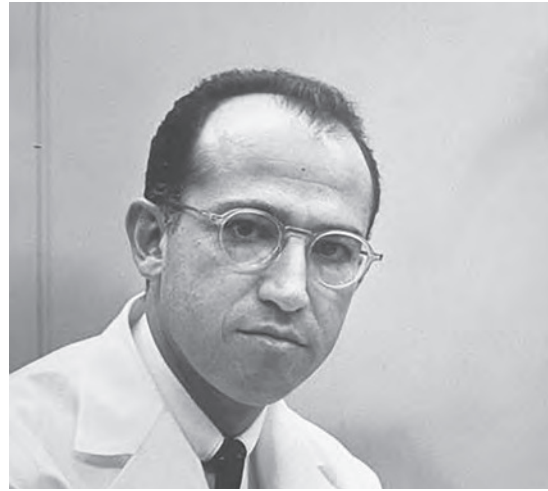
### ***Influences on Our Intellect***

The intellect is a weak instrument of knowledge as it has to work with the limitations of sense organs, though it is an important tool for living in the marketplace of the world. The ordinary intellect usually works on the surface and is unable to penetrate deep into matter. Patricia Churchland, a renowned neurophilosopher says: 'Brains are not magical; they are causal machines.'<sup>9</sup> So unless the heart is developed, one cannot live a balanced and fruitful life. The root cause of most of our problems is a lack of emotional management, a lack of understanding, care, respect, and compassion.

Most organisations and institutions face the problems of malfunctioning such as conflicts and misunderstanding because their leaders lack the skills to manage themselves emotionally, arising from the immaturity of the heart. 'In a high-IQ job pool, soft skills like discipline, drive and empathy mark those who emerge as outstanding', says Daniel Goleman.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, as said by Aldous Huxley, 'It is man's intelligence that makes him so often behave more stupidly than the beasts. ... Man is so intelligent that he



Karl Raimund Popper



Dr Jonas Salk

feels impelled to invent theories to account for what happens in the world. Unfortunately, he is not quite intelligent enough, in most cases, to find correct explanations.<sup>11</sup> Swamiji pointed out: 'Intellect ends where religion begins.'<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the intellect needs a proper container with high storage capacity, along with proper assimilation; otherwise one would not get the desired results.

### **Intellect and Intuition**

Karl Raimund Popper (1902–94) says in his book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*: 'There is no such thing as a logical method of having new ideas, or a logical reconstruction of this process. My view may be expressed by saying that every discovery contains "an irrational element", or "a creative intuition", in Bergson's sense.'<sup>13</sup> 'Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. ... We simply stop when we are satisfied ... for the time being' (94). Albert Einstein said: 'The mind can proceed only so far upon what it knows and can prove. There comes a point where the mind takes a leap—call it intuition or what you will—and comes out upon a higher plane of knowledge, but can never prove how it got there. All great discoveries have involved such a leap.'<sup>14</sup>

It would be relevant to mention some intuitive discoveries. Jonas Salk (1914–95), the inventor of polio vaccine, kept intuition as his 'clinical assistant' and used to say: 'It's always with excitement that I wake up in the morning wondering what my intuitor will toss up to me like gifts from the sea.'<sup>15</sup> While visiting the baths, Archimedes suddenly awoke to a significant principle of buoyancy that would enable him to measure the volume of an object based upon the amount of water it displaced. Frederick August Kekulé (1829–96) discovered the tetravalent nature of carbon, the formation of chemical or organic 'Structure Theory', but he did not make this breakthrough by experiment alone. He had a dream of a snake coiled and biting its tail. Dmitri Mendeleev's (1834–1907) periodic table is one of the best examples of synthesis in science, an idea that brought about the ability to make predictions about the discovery of new elements. What is less known is that Mendeleev had the idea in a dream and not while he was sitting at his desk thinking about the order of the universe.

### **Interference with our Inbuilt Samskaras**

A person is a tool in the hands of the mass of one's accumulated tendencies or samskaras. The



Dmitri Mendeleev

quality and range of our thought, speech, and action are determined by the kind of samskaras, being the so-called hidden forces. Animals do not have any choice as they are guided by their instinct. According

to the Gita, 'the doer or agent of action who is free from attachment, non-egotistic, endowed with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected in success or failure is said to be sattvika.'<sup>16</sup> Such a person alone can take an unbiased decision with respect to the work undertaken.

Only those who are selfless and free from the ideas of doership and enjoyership are not bound. Swamiji said: 'We only deserve things when they have ceased to bind us. When all bondages ceases, really and truly, all things come to us. Only those who want nothing are masters of nature.'<sup>17</sup>

What we know to be our mind is only its luminous and conscious part. There are millions of our sunken thoughts remaining submerged as the dark, unconscious mind influencing our body, mind, and personality. These tendencies are stored up in the unconscious part of our mind, which lead to automatic behaviour over which we have no control. The prodding of good and evil that one feels in the present is the momentum of one's own thoughts nurtured in the past. Both good and bad tendencies are present in each of us. It is only the proportions that vary from person to person. They may be latent in us, but are likely to come up under stimulus from favourable circumstances.

The good and bad tendencies remaining in

one's subconscious mental plane might overcome one anytime and put one on the pre-created track. The dominant tendencies unfold as actions over time. According to the Gita, one is driven towards the goal in spite of oneself, by the force of one's previous striving or practice.<sup>18</sup> If that is so, it makes sense to create good samskaras rather than bad ones. By one's intense self-effort, one can build one's good personality, no matter what one inherits from the past. But bad samskaras already created cannot be easily destroyed. At least we should not give them an opportunity to wake up. If we keep them inactive persistently for a considerable period of time, it would be difficult for them to rise again.

**Our inborn samskaras markedly influence the development of our intellect.** This samskara is deeply inbuilt in us. This is evident from Duryodhana's statement when Sri Krishna came to persuade him to abstain from fighting the Kurukshetra War: 'I know what dharma is, but I am unable to perform it; I know what adharm is, but I am unable to abstain from it; it seems as if some god sitting in my heart propels me to do all actions.'<sup>19</sup>

This means that in spite of clearly knowing the pros and cons of a particular action, we are often overwhelmed by our inbuilt prejudices and tendencies. The Gita says: 'Even a wise person acts in accordance with one's own nature; beings follow nature; what can restraint do?'<sup>20</sup> Hence the primary task of a spiritual seeker is to create good samskaras and get rid of the bad samskaras. Further, the Gita says: 'Objects fall away from the abstinent person, leaving the longing behind. But this longing also ceases for one who sees the supreme' (2.59). Only those having a strong power of discernment can avoid temptation and thereby overcome samskaras.

### **Intellect and Environment: Nature and Nurture**

When the human genome was discovered towards the end of the last century, it was thought that the inbuilt genes carry all the tendencies that are unchangeable. But it has since been revealed that the inborn characteristics are not the last word. It is subject to change in the environment where one is living. Biology is about nature, while culture is about nurture. Evolutionary biology can explain the genetically determined behaviour but not the behaviour that is learnt or is the result of contact with the environment. Different traits of genes do vary in how sensitive they are to environmental differences. Differences in environment can cause genetically identical individuals to behave differently. The environment produces adaptive behaviour. Therefore, one should have a combination of nature and nurture. Inheritance and learning are combined in a way that cannot be passed into genes or environment.

### **Intellect and Illusion**

Vedanta asserts that Brahman is truth, being the Reality, while the manifested universe, *jagat*, is *mithya* or illusion. It says that the universe is only *vyavaharic* or relative truth, while the *paramarthic* or the supreme eternal truth is only the Brahman. It is the power of *maya*, *avarana* shakti, that creates such an illusion and as a result, the reality of things is hidden. Then, we are diverted from the Reality by the power of *vikshepa* shakti. This *avarana* is the creation of our inherent *tamasic* nature, while *vikshepa* is our *rajasic* quality.

The universe as such is an objective reality. But its perception is subjective. Therefore, it is obvious that its perception would be different for different persons depending upon one's competency, that is the level of one's attachment to

the body-mind complex. The same universe appears variously to different people. This changeable universe cannot be real. The world is ever changing in time and space. How can a changeable thing be regarded as truth?

This illusion does not leave anyone, even the very wise, discerning person. In the *Chandi*, which is a part of the *Markandeya Purana*, it is said that the Mahamaya forcibly distracts even the wise from the truth.<sup>21</sup>

### **Supremacy in Discernment**

Every perception involves an object that is perceived and a subject who perceives. The objects and the forms of perception change, while the perceiver is unchangeable. We say we have a body, mind, and sense faculties of perception—they are all objects perceived by a subject. The subject objectifies the body, sense, mind, and feelings as well. The feelings are nothing but objects in relation to the subject. There is a subject who is the perceiver of all these but does not take part in any of these expressions. The feeling of pleasure, pain, or anger belongs to the object.

Change happens only in the object, the body-mind complex. The subject does not change. The characteristic of the seer is unchangeability. I am separate and distinct from all these. The mind is also an object since it undergoes changes according to desire, feeling, determination, faith, steadfastness, and so on. But unless the mind is attached to objects, there cannot be any perception. That which is constant and changeless is the perceiver.

This is aptly illustrated in *Drig-drishya-viveka*, the discernment of the seer and the seen. The topic deals with the discernment between *drik*, the observer, the experiencer, seer, illuminator, or subject, and the *drishya*, the observed, the experienced, seen, illuminated, or object. There is non-discernment, mixing-up of the seer-seen,

which is the cause of all problems that seriously affect our life. One is required to resolve the problem for ultimate success in life or moksha for spiritual aspirants.

The first verse of the treatise *Drig-drishya-viveka* goes as follows: '*Rupam drishyam lochanam drik taddrishyam drik-tu manasam, drishya dhi-vrittayah sakshi drigeva na tu drishyate*; the form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. The eye is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness, the Self, is indeed the perceiver. But the Witness is not perceived by any other.'<sup>22</sup>

**There are three levels of discernment:**

Level 1: The sense organs and the sense objects.

Level 2: The mind and the sense organs.

Level 3: The witness Self and the mind.

And finally the qualities of the *sakshi*, the witness Self, are discussed.

The eyes see and the world of forms are seen. Eyes cannot see the eyes themselves. The seer is one, while the seen are many and different. The seer is relatively unchanging, the seen keeps on changing. In the second stage, the mind becomes the seer, eyes become the seen. In the third stage, the mind itself is the seen. There are many thoughts, feelings, emotions, and ideas in the mind. There is a continuous stream of movements in the mind but the knower of the mind is the same. There is a seer of mind called the Witness, which is unchanging.

This may be understood with the following example. If you feel your misery, then you cannot be miserable. You are the knower of the misery of the mind, because the knower and the known are different. Misery is a feeling in the mind. Similarly, you are the knower of the happiness of the mind. You are eternally undisturbed regardless of the states of the mind or the status of

the world. Reference may be made to Swamiji's statement: 'Mind is an instrument in the hand of Atman just as body is an instrument in the hand of mind.'<sup>23</sup>

The Gita illustrates this by saying: 'One who is free from the notion of egoism, whose intelligence is not affected by good or evil, though one kills these people, one kills not, nor is one bound by the action.'<sup>24</sup> Such a person realises the real witness Self in the form of pure consciousness. The problem is that we are strongly attached to the mind and through the mind to the world. Whatever is there in the mind, you are the witness of the mind, and the witness is ever separate from the mind.

This discernment should be cultivated step by step, from the body to the sense-organs and to the mind, by gradual development of a new set of values that *drig-drishya-viveka* signifies. The transformation is from objective to subjective, outer to inner, and ultimately to the completely unattached but fully knowledgeable witness Self. We have to learn to get out of that, which we cannot hold on to. Harder we hold on to the world, body, or mind, the more is our bondage and suffering. That is why we feel trapped.

The world, the physical body, the sense organs, and the mind are made of insentient elements. When these inert objects function as sentient elements, there must be a borrowing of consciousness from somewhere else. Just like a fan does not have the capacity of rotation by itself but rotates by borrowing invisible power from the electricity. In the same way, our insentient body, sense organs, and mind are blessed by the consciousness of the real Self behind.

### **Adhikari and the Power of Being Selfless**

A human being has the freedom to perform certain actions according to one's competency, but



one usually follows the way as per one's temperament. Swamiji said: 'We are heirs to all the good and bad thoughts of the universe, if we open ourselves to them.'<sup>25</sup> He said on other occasions: 'If we make ourselves pure and the instruments of good thoughts, these will enter us. The good soul will not be receptive to evil thoughts. Evil thoughts find the best field in evil people; they are like microbes which germinate and increase only when they find a suitable soil' (6.134). 'There are hundreds of thousands of microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak, until the body is ready and predisposed to receive them. There may be a million microbes of misery floating about us. Never mind! They dare not approach us, they have no power to get a hold on us, until the mind is weakened' (2.3).

The essential qualification of a spiritual aspirant for becoming an *adhikari*, qualified, for spiritual life is to be strongly disinterested in the fruits of all activity in this world or beyond. Acharya Shankara in his *Vivekachudamani* identifies three kinds of fruits of actions: Anything that upgrades name and fame, anything that brings happiness of the body, and undue emphasis on scriptural studies.<sup>26</sup> One is required to avoid all these three.

That's why spiritual teachers demand *chitta-shuddhi*, the purification of the mind from the objective and the subjective, being material taints and inbuilt attachments. By purity and unselfishness, one can make the obscuring medium less and less dense until as clean as glass. The more one handles materialistic transactions the more impurity as material taint would be induced. The mind, full of desire, is distracted and fluctuates from the Reality, but when it is fully freed of distractions, it becomes a powerful tool for discernment. When desires vanish and there is no bondage, people truly

enjoy the world. King Bhartrihari describes the qualities of a *viveki*, a person adept in discernment of the Real from the unreal: 'The steadfast ones do not deviate from the righteous path even if they are praised or insulted by ethicists, even if the goddess of wealth comes and goes according to her sweet will, and even if their death is impending today itself or after an aeon.'<sup>27</sup>

But it is only through the purity of mind, that is, by removing all attachments and prejudices, that one can get the knowledge of Reality. It is only ethical to follow those who have attained this knowledge. The *Katha Upanishad* says that the 'Atman reveals itself only to the spiritual aspirant who selflessly prays to Atman.'<sup>28</sup> It reveals itself only to the wise, the one who is prepared with appropriate strength.

The law of electromagnetic induction applies to similar class of materials, magnetic or dielectric as the case may be, not to dissimilar materials. Induction will not grow up there if a non-magnetic material be brought near a magnet. To increase the effect of attraction, one should be nearer and also the medium should be conducive and the effect will automatically be induced, if it be pure. Once you have attained that quality the result is bound to come. Similarly, when all mental resistances cease, one's personality becomes a fit vehicle for the transmission of perfection. In this way, our ancestor-rishis saw this world in meditation to be devoid of worldly turbulations.

### Conclusion

*Viveka* is neither wisdom nor intellectual jargon but a state of mind without illusion. It is not prejudiced. However, it is not the state of self-realisation. To achieve this, one has to make the mind devoid of materialistic impurity. The purpose of self-purification is to release one's higher

nature from the thralldom of the lower self. The Gita says that when a person loses one's discerning faculty, one is 'destroyed'.<sup>29</sup> The implication of this verse is that a human being can be called so only as long as one's mind is able to discern the right from the wrong. When this discerning faculty is lost, one ceases to be a human being. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'An ordinary jiva is called *manush*, human being. Only one who has realised one's true nature is a *man-hunsh*. [That is, only such a person is conscious of one's dignified nature.] That is why you are a *man-hunsh* [true human being].'<sup>30</sup>

The Vedanta literature says that we pay more attention to the cleaning of the external surroundings without paying any heed to the cleaning of our internal selves. It is important to remove our internal impurities like desires. Swamiji said: 'Does seeing depend upon our own efforts or does it depend upon something outside? It depends upon ourselves; our efforts take off the dust, the mirror does not change.'<sup>31</sup>

Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* directs one to the route of self-realisation through his ashtanga yoga. This path firmly declares that establishment in the virtues of *yama* and *niyama*, being the preliminary disciplines, is essential for the absolute control of the mind. Intellectually, we take a self-centred view of the world, since such a view works well with the limited sense organs. However, on the spiritual plane, we ought to take a holistic or God-centred view, and strive for the effacement of the individual self. We need to become a partner in the business of God, not try to make God a partner in the business of ego.



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28. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.23.
29. Gita, 2.63.
30. M., *Shri Shri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (Kolkata: Udbodhan, 2015), 331; 5 October 1884.
31. *Complete Works*, 7.47.