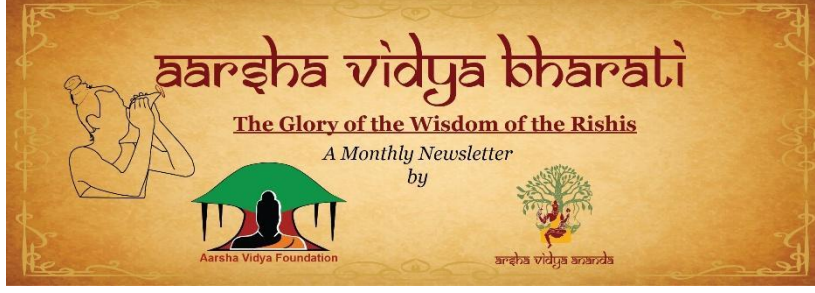

Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Mar 2024

Phalgunā 2080 - Chaitra 2081

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



This is one of many articles from our monthly newsletter. Access the [mar 2024 issue](#) or read any of [the articles](#).

Four Essential Factors for Learning



Just like a seed requires light, water, soil and air to blossom into a tree, the Vedic tradition offers us an insight about four factors that are essential to our learning and growth –

आचार्यात् पादमादत्ते पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया ।

सब्रह्मचारिभ्यः पादं पादं कालक्रमेण च ॥

ācāryāt pādamaḍatte, pādamaḥ śiṣyaḥ svamedhayā |

sa-brahmacāribhyaḥ pādamaḥ, pādamaḥ kālakrameṇa ca ||

One part from the teacher, one part from one's intelligence, One part from fellow students, and one part only with time.

Although in Vedānta we cannot strictly quantify the role of each of these factors, it is important to see how these four factors shape our learning.

Role of *Ācārya* – The *Ācārya* or the teacher is the one who *svayam ācaret*, who upholds a life of integrity and Dharma. *Śāstrāṇi ācinoti* – who masterfully gathers pearls from the *Śāstra* and shares it at the right time and place. A guru will be

an *Ācārya* but an *Ācārya* need not be your guru. A guru being a relational word is a guru only for the one who considers her/him a guru.

A guru can give you 4 types of learning and four types of *dīkṣa*, sacred initiation:
Mantra dīkṣa – Initiation into a mantra by a teacher
Upadeśa dīkṣa – Initiation into the teachings of Vedanta
Sannyāsa dīkṣa – Initiation into the lifestyle of a sannyasi, a monk.
Śaktipat/Śrividya/Yoga/Tantra – *dīkṣa* related to different *sādhana*-s.

It is possible that one may not have the same guru for all of the above.

Still having a live guru with whom one can relate and resonate is a deep blessing because a traditional guru embodies the *Śāstra*. Unlike other learning, in Vedanta the role of the teacher is primary. Why? Because one is dealing with the reality of the identities due to ignorance of oneself and hence the means of knowledge must be wielded by another person. Familiarity with some words need not mean knowledge.

Some students can have the best *Ācārya* but they are not humble enough to learn or they are impatient with themselves or they are too busy with other pursuits that they cannot devote enough time to the learning.

Role of the student

The *śiṣya* or the student of Vedanta needs to have the intelligence to understand what the teacher is teaching. The *medha*, intelligence does not have much to do with formal education but rather in having a thinking mind that has gone through life's experiences and has the leisure and objectivity to examine them. The *śiṣya* understands the pursuit of *mokṣa* and its two aspects of self mastery and self discovery.

Your spiritual journey is entirely yours to make. Sometimes the pursuit may seem overwhelming for the *śiṣya* and enough reassurance from the guru may not be enough or the student may fool oneself into thinking that one is making enough progress. Here is where the third factor comes in.

Role of fellow students or rather a *sangha*, a spiritual community

The word *gurukul* is the family of the guru comprising the students and hence it is common for fellow students to refer to each other as gurubhai or gurubehen, gurubrother or gurusister. They share a common pursuit of *mokṣa* and similar obstacles of a distracted mind, unresolved issues from the past and so on. Walking on common ground, fellow students stop feeling alone and helpless. Fellow students can be mirrors for each other's journey. Much rich learning is possible when one listens to the stories of fellow pilgrims. There are moments of aha, moments of empathy, moments of inspiration, moments of camaraderie and a lot of fun.

The *sangha* gives the shy, introverted people an opportunity to open up and break through their conditionings and the extroverted people an opportunity to actively

listen to the others. It also becomes the responsibility of fellow students to not indulge in gossip and avoid judgments of each other.

By itself a *sangha* is not enough because they still need guidance collectively as well as individually. And finally the fourth factor

Role of time

Millions of lifetimes have passed in identification with the body-mind form leading to the entrenched conclusion that 'Identity is reality'. Just as a foetus requires a full 9 months to develop so too learning Vedanta requires time.

The main teaching of Vedanta is short and simple – *Tat tvam asi*. That *Īśvara* you are. But the teaching is filtered with one's entrenched notions of oneself, the world and God. These have to be chiselled away firmly and consistently which require time for attending classes and camps, reflecting on the teaching, applying what needs to be applied, discussing with fellow students and so on.

One could have the best guru, make adequate effort and also be a part of a supportive *sangha* but be very impatient. What is required is patience with the process, patience with the guru and patience with oneself which is only possible in the flow of time.

So, as we sit on the banks of the ancient river of wisdom we recognise that the river will reach the ocean to discover that all along, one's reality as water was the only truth.

In February, we enjoyed being with some of you in our first Vedanta camp of the year. We look forward to seeing all of you during the celebration of Mahashivaratri.

With love and prayers,

Brahmavidananda
Brahmaprajnananda