

Qualified Student of Vedanta¹

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Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Question: Swamiji, who is a qualified student for Vedanta?

Any one who wants the knowledge is qualified. To want the knowledge is the first qualification. If your answer to the question, “Do you want to know?” is “Yes” then you are qualified. But, you may well ask, “How can you say I am qualified just because I want to know?” Then I would say, “If you can know, you are qualified.” If I teach you that you are the whole and you understand what I say, then you are qualified. And if you do not understand what I say, it simply means that you have to qualify yourself.

You are qualified for the knowledge, but in order to understand what is being said- “You are the whole,” you must equip yourself. There are, therefore, four qualifications—referred to in Sanskrit as *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *samādhiṣaṭkasampatti*, and *mumukṣutvam*.

viveka is the capacity to understand realities. If you have *viveka*, you have already analyzed your experiences in life, experiences that once considered so important— your job, your marriage, your children, some power or pleasure, such as music. You have understood that a thing is important until you acquire it and, then it becomes unimportant and something else becomes more important. But, if you analyze them, you find that these more important things are not in any way different from those that were important previously.

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This analysis of personal experience and the experience of others leads you to the understanding that there is no real answer to this problem. And if you understand that, then what is the answer? You are the answer. The answer is not your experiences.

You are the problem and you are the solution. The whole problem is self-nonacceptance.

That I do not accept myself is the problem. And yet I must come to see myself as acceptable. If I have to accept myself, I must be acceptable. Therefore, to resolve the problem, I have to know that I am acceptable.

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Limitlessness alone is acceptable. Thus, if I am acceptable, I cannot become limited. In fact, there is no question of becoming at all. I can never become limited. I appreciate, then, that I cannot become acceptable by any process of becoming.

No change, then, will make me acceptable. If, without any change, I have to be acceptable, then I must necessarily shift my vision about myself from that of seeing myself as unacceptable. Vedanta tells me that I am acceptable because I am the whole.

At least this much knowledge, I must have. I should at least know that any pursuit, other than knowledge, will not remove my sense of limitation. This particular disposition, achieved through an analysis of one's experiences, is *viveka*.

Once there is *viveka*, then a certain dispassion, *vairāgya*, towards life experiences is possible. You gain a certain objectivity. You understand the limitations of money, power, and all other pursuits. You may continue pursuing them, but with a clear understanding of their limitations. To be able to seek only what is to be sought means that you have *vairāgya*.

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The third qualification, *samādhiṣaṭkasampatti* is a set of six disciplines consisting of a certain composure within yourself (*sama*); control over your pursuits so that you do not get carried away by fancies (*dama*); freedom from a sense of ownership (*uparama*); the capacity to put up with small difficulties (*titikṣa*); faith or trust in the means of knowledge we call Vedanta and in the words of the teacher whom you have come to recognize as one who is capable of teaching (*śraddhā*); and the capacity to set the mind on a given object of inquiry for a length of time, a certain self-satisfaction and cheerfulness, so that the mind can absorb itself (*samādhānam*).

The final qualification is a desire for freedom from bondage (*mumukṣutvam*). This desire comes from discerning the problem as a fundamental problem of self-nonacceptance and wanting to be free from it. Seeing the problem and seeking a solution is *mumukṣutvam*. A person who has *mumukṣutvam* is called *mumukṣu*, one who desires to be free.

People generally do not know about these four-fold qualifications. They seek solutions without really knowing what they are seeking. Therefore, it is an education in itself just to understand the problem. The main qualification, therefore, is to see the problem very clearly and to know that I seek the solution only in terms of knowledge.

If this much understanding is there, I am a qualified student for Vedanta. Without these qualifications, knowledge cannot take place. I must see that this is the solution, that I am the solution, and that there is no other way of solving the problem. This is the solution, for which I seek a teacher to teach me. Once I am committed, the commitment will bring all of the other qualifications.