

Discrimination

In the ancient days, the seers laid down four qualifications for students before they considered them fit to hear the higher Vedāntic truths. Those four qualifications were discrimination, dispassion, the sixfold virtues, and a burning desire for liberation. But what did they mean by discrimination? They wanted us to discriminate between what is real and what is unreal. But where do we even begin in that discrimination? They said that whatever is real should have always been present in the past, be present now, and be present forever in the future.

If they were sitting in a place like this Samādhi Hall, they would recognize that no matter how permanent the contents of this Samādhi Hall seemed to be, that in the context of history they will all disappear. They will not last. Neither will Gurudev's Samādhi Shrine last, nor will we last as a body and mind. What then will last? Even the earth that we are sitting upon won't last forever. It came into being. It will disappear someday.

But then, they concluded that the space that contains all this will last. It was here before anything appeared in it; it is here now, and we can't imagine space ever ending. It appears to be eternal in time and infinite in dimension. Thus they concluded that space must be the reality, and so they declared that Space is Brahman. Later, however pondering on this, they came to another conclusion. They said that there is something that knows that space, that is conscious of space. Therefore they declared that Consciousness is Brahman. Consciousness both includes space and transcends it.

Thus in our discrimination between the real and the unreal, we can look at Gurudev's holy Samādhi Shrine and recognize that it is certainly contained in space. We can recognize that we too are contained in space. Then if we recognize that Consciousness includes and transcends that space and it is we who know that space, it undermines our false conviction that we are the center of the universe. We see that we are part of the universe, that each one of us is a temporary subject seeing everyone and everything else as objects. We are that Consciousness that knows the space.

Thus, they said that this sort of discrimination will give us dispassion for the temporary world and for our false ego. But that is just the beginning. We must practice the virtues and have a burning desire to be

liberated from this false center that we are presently identifying with. This is the Vedāntic approach that makes us qualified to hear the highest truth from our *guru*.