

Indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam

dispassion towards sense objects

Indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam

Indriya means sense organ and **artha**, stands for object. **Vairāgya**, dispassion, comes from the word **rāga**, passion or desire joined to the negative prefix, **vi**. Thus, **indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam** means dispassion towards the objects of the sense organs or the absence of a compelling drive for worldly pleasures and possessions.

Rāga is more than just a fancy or preference; it is a craving for something. One who is free from such cravings is called a **vairāgin** and the state of his mind is called dispassion, **vairāgya**.

WHAT DOES DISPASSION MEAN?

Does it mean putting a barrier between sense objects and me?

Should I turn my head away, not look or listen when there is something that fascinates me?

No, dispassion is not a state of inner suppression. It is a serene state of mind characterised by total objectivity toward the things of the world, the objects of the senses.

Dispassion is not suppression of desire. Dispassion and self-suppression are contradictory states of mind; they are mutually exclusive.

Self-suppression is predicated on the presence of passion to be overpowered or crushed. **In dispassion there is nothing there that requires suppression.** No compelling desires command the mind of the **vairāgin**.

HOW CAN A MIND BE FREED FROM COMPELLING DESIRES?

How can I gain a dispassionate disposition?

Dispassion is gained by clearly seeing objects for what they are; by seeing, without subjective distortion, how objects relate to me, to my happiness and welfare.

Basically, a human being seems to find himself or herself a wanting person. All my compelling desires turn upon this human sense of want.

The common human experience is that I am not complete, I am lacking and I want to be a complete person.

Seeing myself as incomplete, unfulfilled, inadequate, insecure, I try to bring completeness to myself by the pursuit of pleasure and the acquisition of things. I devote myself to two of the fundamental human pursuits, the struggle for **kāma** and that for **artha**.

ARTHA AND KĀMA

Kāma is the Sanskrit word for all forms of sense pleasure. **Kāma** indicates not just eating, but gourmet eating, not just drinking, but also drinking as a compelling pleasure.

Artha stands for all that I think will bring me security in life-wealth, power, influence, fame and name.

As a human being, there will be no end to my longing and struggle for **artha** and **kāma**, so long as I feel both insecure and incomplete and think that **artha** and **kāma** have the capacity to provide security and completeness, and I will not be able to gain dispassion for sense objects, **indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam**.

RĀGA

To become free from the compelling drive that is called **rāga**, the desire for things, **artha** and pleasures, **kāma**, I must analyse and discern that having a number of things does not make me secure nor does any amount of pleasure fill my sense of emptiness. I must discover that my struggle to fulfil my sense of want is endless. No accumulation of wealth is enough to silence the inner anxiety, no pleasure sufficient to bring lasting fulfilment.

Every gain, acquisition of any kind of wealth, also involves loss. No gain is ever absolute. Every such gain involves a concomitant loss, a loss through the expenditure of time and effort required; a loss through responsibility assumed; a loss through some other alternative abandoned. Gain involves loss. A lasting sense of security is never achieved through **artha**.

PLEASURE

When I analyse pleasure I find the same result. Human struggle for **pleasure** does not produce lasting contentment. I, like other human beings, live in a private, subjective world where I see objects as desirable, undesirable or neutral, neither desired nor undesired.

When I observe reflectively, I find that what is desired by me is not desired by me at all times, at all places; nor is what I desire necessarily desired by other persons. **What I desire, what brings me pleasure, is subject to constant change.**

Moments of pleasure require the concurrent availability of three factors, availability of the object of pleasure, availability of the appropriate effective instrument for enjoyment, and presence of the proper frame of mind to enjoy the object.

Being dependent on these ever-changing factors, moments of **pleasure** are occasional and fleeting. Objects and instruments are bound by time; the mind is whimsical. It is subject to mood-change, discovering monotony in what was formerly desirable.

Analysis of pleasure shows that pleasure, like possessions, fails me in my effort to find fullness and completeness. **Pleasure** proves to be momentary and capricious while possessions, no matter how many, do not equate with security.

TO BE DISPASSIONATE

My **rāga**, my passionate desire for possessions and pleasure, is based on my conviction that through the gain of **artha** and **kāma**, my sense of want will end. When I clearly see that is not the case, the best I can hope for in the aggregation of wealth is the exchange of one kind of anxiety for another.

Moreover, the most I can claim from pleasure is a collection of fleeting moments, impossible to hold or predict. Hence, I am ready to discover in myself the state of **vairāgya**, not from self-denial but from an understanding that loosens the hold of **rāga** upon me.

I see that objects, whether sought for pleasure or security, really cannot give me what I seek basically. If I wish to be dispassionate, I must know this fact very clearly.

OBJECTS ARE USEFUL, BUT NONE OF THEM CAN GIVE ME WHAT I REALLY WANT

I see that I cannot find complete or lasting security in wealth or power or fame, nor can I find lasting fullness in accumulated moments of pleasure.

When I do not place my security, my fullness, and my happiness in these things, I become more objective towards them.

I treat them as objects, which I can assess for what they are rather than for what I subjectively expect from them. As simple objects rather than the answer to my most profound needs, they assume their proper position. I do not give them an extra value that, in reality, they do not have.

I see money as money, not as a guarantee against insecurity.

I see a house as a house, not as a source of happiness.

I see land as land, not as an extension of myself through possession.

I see these things as they are.

VAIRĀGYA IS A STATE OF MIND

When I see objects stripped of the subjective values that I have projected upon them, when I cease to look upon them as a source of happiness, I become objective. I become dispassionate.

This is the mental state of **vairāgya**.

Vairāgya is a state of mind brought about by understanding, not a state of mind compelled by a commitment to self-denial or deprivation.

It is a knowledge produced by observation, inquiry and analysis.

I question why and what I desire and what I achieve by fulfilling my desires. The understanding born of this analysis reduces the world to an objective fact for me; releases it from the tangle of my own subjectivity, the tangles of my likes and dislikes that bind me to situational happiness.

No house binds me; I am bound to the house because of the subjective value I place on it, a subjective value based upon my failure to understand its inability to deliver what I expect from it.

Things do not catch and hold me; it is I who catch them.

The handle is in myself, my subjective values based upon failure to understand the limitations of things to fulfil me.

When I understand, the handle disappears and I see things as they are.

This state of seeing, understanding, is called **indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam**, dispassion toward sense objects.