

10. Vidya and Samskara

Anglicised education has gained prominence,

Spiritual studies have taken a back seat,

How, then, can purity of the mind

The essence of education--be developed?

TEACHERS! Students and Lovers of education! The entire visible universe is a cosmic university. In it, every human being has to learn how to eat, to walk, to speak and do many other things. So, Nature is the first teacher. At birth, man is like an animal. The parents teach' the child how to develop its human faculties. If the parents did not undertake this task, the child would remain an animal. Thus, the second category of teachers for a man are his parents. The ancient sages felt that it was not enough to develop the human qualities in the child and therefore envisaged a system of *Samskaras* (cultural training) for the spiritual development of the child. The *Samskaras* are intended not only to develop further the human qualities but also to eliminate all remnants of animal nature in man.

What is meant by *Samskara*? It is a system of practices by which the bad tendencies in man are got rid of and good tendencies are inculcated. They are intended to turn the *Pravritti* (outward-looking) tendencies of man towards the cultivation of the *Nivritti* (internal).

***Samskara* is applicable to all objects**

The process of *Samskara* (refinement) is not confined to specific things; it is applicable to every object in the universe. No object can be enjoyed by man without its going through a process of transformation. For example, take the case of paddy. The paddy that is grown and harvested cannot be consumed as such. It has to be converted into rice. In the process of transformation, the original paddy has considerably increased in its value as rice. The transformation process thus makes an object more useful and valuable.

Take another example, that of cotton. Cotton in its primary form has very little utility. But, when it is spun into thread and made into cloth, it becomes usable by man. There is a wide gap between the value of cotton and that of cloth into which it is converted. The same rule applies to gold. There is a big difference between the value of the ore that is extracted from a mine and the gold that is got from the ore after processing.

It is clear from these examples that all objects in the world, unless they go through various processes of transformation, cannot acquire much value. If that is the case with regard to ordinary objects, how much more is it necessary for man, who is more important than all of them, to go through this transformation? Man is the most precious object in creation. Men are more valuable than all the things in the world. It is man who imparts value to all objects. Today we are failing to give proper value to man.

Man loses his powers due to lack of self-control

What is the reason? It is because man is attracted towards the visible objects of the world experienced by the senses and is unaware of the *Atma* (the Spirit) within him. The powers that man is endowed with are limited. By appropriate practices he can make good use of them. But by involving himself in sensuous pleasures, man is losing his powers. The main reason for the loss

of the powers given to man is his lack of self-control. This accounts for the premature onset of old age among many people.

For accomplishing anything in the world, three things are essential: one, mastery over the senses; two, control over the mind; three, maintaining perfect bodily health. It is only when all these three requisites are present, that man can achieve his aims. If today man fails to achieve even petty objects, it is because he is deficient in all these.

To acquire these three, man has to practise *Dharma*, as laid down by the sages. The *Veda* declares- "*Yatho abhyudaya nissreyas siddhih saa Dharmah*" (that which is conducive to one's well-being here and the hereafter is *Dharma*). This means that in this world that which gives happiness and relieves sorrow here and the hereafter is *Dharma*. This calls for unity in thought, word and deed. This is true righteousness. Where there is no accord between what one thinks, says and does, his life is meaningless. It is by the harmony of thought, speech and action, that the true worth of man is manifested.

The three H's which are needed most

The mere human form is of no use to the world. It is by his thoughts and actions that one's humanness is revealed. Hence, all the studies that are pursued should be related to the body, the mind and the Spirit. Today's education stops with the concern for the body and does not proceed upto the heart. People speak about Education in Human Values (EHV). In my view, what is needed is not EHV but 3HV---education which embraces Head, Heart and Hand.

Students should reflect on the human values. One who pursues knowledge in the world may be a student or a scholar. But he cannot become thereby a *jnani* (a man of wisdom). There is a big difference between the scholar and the *jnani*. Ravana has mastered 64 categories of knowledge while Sri Rama had studied only 34 categories. Although Ravana had studied more subjects than Sri Rama, Valmiki described Ravana as *a murkha* (an irrational person). Why was Ravana dubbed as *murkha* ? Because despite his mastery of all skills and arts, he was a slave of his senses. The one who is a slave of his senses is a fool who has lost his reason. Rama was not dominated by his senses. He was their sovereign.

The difference between Rama and Ravana can be seen in three aspects: *Sarva loka hithe Ratah* (one who rejoices in the welfare of the whole world); *Jnana sampannah* (endowed with all wisdom); *Sarve Samudita Gunaihi* (one who is filled with all the virtues). Rama promoted the welfare of the world by adhering to Truth and setting an example in righteous conduct. Hence, the supreme importance of upholding truth should be recognised. Everyone should try to keep his promise and live upto what he says. The simple motto: "Truth is vital to speech", contains a profound message. All of you tend to speak a great deal. How much truth is there in your speech? This is the first lesson students have to learn. Without truth, what you speak has no value. Moreover, truth has to be spoken for the welfare of the world.

Learn to lead a worthy life

The educated persons of today are concerned solely about the well-being of themselves and their families and have no interest in the welfare of the world. Education should aim at making a person take pleasure in promoting the well-being of all people. After birth, as a person grows, he develops associations with relations, friends, teachers and many others. It is through these numerous relationships that one's human qualities develop. Without; these associations the lone individual would remain at the animal level. One's human nature is developed by society and

contacts with kinsmen, friends and others. You have to show your gratitude to all of them by striving for their well-being.

From this, you have to proceed to the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge. This is what is meant by the statement "Awareness is life." Confining your interests to a few subjects will result in narrow-mindedness. To acquire a wide outlook and have comprehensive knowledge of men and things, you have to cultivate many good qualities. Teachers today confine their teaching to imparting knowledge and skills useful for earning a livelihood. But they do not teach anything about life itself, how it should be lived and the basic goals of life. Learning to earn an income is not a great thing. Learning how to live worthily as a human being is what is essential. Teachers also should concern themselves about the essential meaning of life and teach the students about the basic truths about life.

Students today are seeking education not for the sake of knowledge but as a means to earning money or wielding power. This is not true education. It is the discovery of one's spiritual essence that constitutes real education. All the evils that we witness in the world today stem from a perverted system of education. The so-called educated persons have no control over their senses.

Self-control is the only means to real bliss

The primary need is for the development of self-control among students. They must be able to remain firm in their minds and unwavering in their outlook in any circumstance. This can be achieved only through spiritual discipline, which is also the means to real bliss. The world is in sore need of spiritual discipline. Spirituality is essential even in the pursuit of science. If you look at the orderly movements of the stars and planets in their respective spheres, you can see that; only a divine power can ensure such order in the Cosmos.

The gravitational pull of the earth is evident when an object falls, but the force of gravity is not visible. Likewise there are innumerable invisible divine forces operating in the universe. Because they cannot be seen, their existence cannot be denied.

Another fact to be noted is the way in which balance is maintained in Nature. If this balance is upset, there will be many untoward consequences. During the last World War, millions of men died in battle. After the war, the babies that were born were nearly all males. The reason is that the balance in the sex ratio has to be maintained in the Divine scheme of things. The Divine operates in this manner to preserve the Cosmic order. When this order is disturbed the world is in peril. Forgetting the role of the Divine and losing himself in the worldly pursuits, man is forfeiting his basic human estate.

Divinity underlies all creation

It should be realised that it is the power of the Divine that enables one to see, to speak, to move and to think. All the powers of the sense organs are derived from the Divine. Man in his conceit may imagine that he is the doer. This is the result of ignorance and folly. You have to ascertain what it is that underlies all creation, which is responsible for their existence. The answer is Divinity. Without faith in the Divine nothing can be achieved. There is no need to seek a reason for this faith. It has no reason or season. It is beyond reason, like the love of a child for its mother. The child loves the mother for the only reason that she is the mother. When one is asked why he has faith in God, his reply should be: "Because he is my God." You should develop such confidence. Only with such firm faith can you realise God. And that firm faith can considerably enhance your strength.

There are elements today who undermine whatever little confidence the students have. The students are innocent; their hearts and minds are unpolluted; they are selfless. But some interested persons infuse doubts in their minds. Some parents and some teachers are to be blamed. When teachers address the students, they must try to strengthen the faith of the students by their example. When a teacher's conduct is at variance with what he teaches, how can he serve as an example? When teachers call for discipline among the students, they themselves should adhere to discipline. If the teachers conduct themselves well, all will be well with the students.

Improve your mental balance as you grow

An ironic aspect of education today is that as a boy advances in education, his character goes on declining. Children in the primary school observe perfect discipline and are well behaved. As they progress towards the secondary school their purity and discipline suffer. By the time they reach the university, every thing becomes topsy-turvy. As they grow in years, they lose self-control. What is the reason? As they grow in years, their mental balance is upset and they lose steadiness of mind and self-control. The older boys have a harmful influence on the younger ones. Hence, it is most important that the senior students should correct themselves and set a good example to others.

Everyone should bear in mind that all the regulations and discipline that have been prescribed for the students are conceived solely in their own interest. Only those who are prepared to abide by these rules and regulations deserve to be here.

The role of teachers and parents

Then, there are the teachers. They become parents of children in due course. But that is not important in itself. They should become ideal parents. If teachers fail to bring up their own children in an exemplary manner, how are they going to mould the other children who come under their care? The children of teachers have been found to behave improperly.

Many parents spoil the children when they come home for the holidays. Whatever discipline the students had cultivated at school or college is undermined at home. Many parents tend to pamper their children and spoil them as Dhritarashtra did. Parents may commend what is good in their children, but they should not hesitate to chastise them when they go astray. It is because of the excessive indulgence shown by parents that many students are spoiled. Nor is that all. When a boy comes home and keeps up his spiritual practices, the parents rebuke him for his devotion and tell him that there is time enough for him to observe such practices in his old age. Parents of this type who undermine the seeds of devotion in their children are modern versions of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada's father).

Parents should see that the children are kept on the right path at all times. The students, for their part, should make it clear to their parents that they will not give up on any account the good things they have imbibed in their educational institution. When the children recite at home a prayer, before taking food, as they do in their hostel, they are sometimes ridiculed for observing such a practice. The boys should have the courage to tell their parents that the prayer is being said as an expression of gratitude to the Divine who is the provider of all things. You should not give up the practice, if you cannot persuade your parents to do so. Students should develop into such exemplary persons. Be respectful towards your parents, but do not hesitate to tell them what you feel to be right in all humility and reverence.

Mere book knowledge does not constitute education. Nor does it mean the ability to juggle with words. Education means broadening the heart. It implies development of control over the senses. It should make one seek to promote the good of the world. It should serve to instill all good qualities in the student. An education that is devoid of such qualities is worthless.

Excessive talk is responsible for students losing self-control and failing to acquire good qualities. Even the power to discriminate between what is transient and what is permanent is lost thereby. One does not know how to behave towards elders and strangers.

Restraint in speech develops mental agility

The effect of excessive speech on the behaviour and mental faculties of people was the subject of research in the Columbia University. The experiment was conducted in a primary school for twenty five years. The students were grouped separately in batches of ten. Those students who spoke the least were offered prizes. Tests were conducted on students indulging in excessive talk and those observing silence or reticence. It was found over the years that the intellectual abilities of students observing restraint in speech were of a high order. There was purity in their speech. They had a broad outlook. They developed enquiring minds. They had a high degree of discrimination.

In the case of students indulging in excessive speech, it was found that their memory power was weak. They were narrow-minded. They lacked discriminating power.

The result of the experiment testified to the wisdom of the ancient *rishis* who betook themselves to the forest for silent contemplation. Everyone of the practices of the ancient sages was designed to lead men to the highest stage. Remember that through restraint in speech you can develop mental agility.

Maintain uniformity in behaviour

Wherever you may be, whether in the college, or the hostel, or outside in your homes, you have to observe the same discipline and the same correct behaviour. That alone is genuine discipline. To behave in one way in the presence of Swami and in a different way when away from Swami is utterly unbecoming. Maintain uniformity in behaviour wherever you are.

Study well, but see to it that you make good use of knowledge you have gained. Realise the distinction between the scholar and *jnani* (man of wisdom). When you practise what you have learnt, the joy you derive from it is much greater than what you got from the study. The man who practises what he has learnt is a *jnani* (a wise man). The man who merely shows off his book knowledge is a pedant. You must become wise men as well as scholars. Then you become fit for realising the bliss of the Spirit ("*Jnaanath evatu kaivalyam*").

Consider well why you have chosen to come to this Institute when there are so many other Universities. Here we have in addition to academic education the accent on *Samskara* (spiritual discipline). Elsewhere there is education but not refinement of the Spirit.

Refinement should follow education

Only the combination of education and spiritual refinement can bring out all the qualities in a human being. *Samskara* means getting rid of all the bad qualities, bad habits and bad thoughts and developing good qualities, good thoughts and good actions. You should aim at goodness and not greatness. You may show respect towards the great. But you must revere and love with all your heart the good. The good are adored and loved wherever they may go. The great may be

shown deference. Don't be concerned about greatness. Cultivate love. Become the very embodiment of love. Then you can share that love with one and all.

Students! The Vice-Chancellor spoke about the importance of discipline. Whether you like it or not, you have to observe discipline. In due course it becomes a righteous habit. A child in the beginning does not like cooked food. But as feeding goes on, the child gets used to the food and even relishes it. Likewise, by regular practice, you get used to a life of discipline and even enjoy it. It is through regular practice that you achieve tranquillity.

In the pursuit of your studies, do not confine yourselves to the prescribed subjects. In addition to these special subjects, you have to acquire general knowledge and common sense.

Develop firm faith in God. All the ills afflicting the world today are due to the loss of faith in God. Why has man lost peace of mind? The reason is two-fold' One, indifference to what he has; two, craving for what he does not have. Man does not make proper use of what he has. Why should he hanker after what he lacks? One should be content with what he has got and should not worry about things he does not have. Then alone he can be happy. This is true education.

Inaugural address to the students and teachers of Sri Sathya Sai Institute, at the Institute Auditorium, Prashaanthi Nilayam on 15-6-1989.

God has four qualities and it is only when you cultivate them that you can understand Him. They are: Love, Beauty, Sweetness and Splendour. The development of Love is enough to add unto you the other three. When you are full of Love for the Divine in all creation, that stage is Beauty; when you are immersed in the sea of Universal Love, you reach the acme of Sweetness; when your mind loses its identity and merges with the Universal Mind, then there is Splendour indescribable.

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