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Preface

This Book

Baba has clarified that the word vidya used for this vahini (stream), means "that which (ya) illumines (vidh)".

It is this sense that is highlighted in expressions like Atma-vidya, Brahma-vidya, and even the name Vidyagiri (giri means hill or mountain) given to the campus of the Institute of Higher Learning at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Baba makes us aware of the comparatively less beneficial lower learning, which deals with theories, inferences, concepts, conjectures, and constructions. The higher learning hastens and expands the universal urge to know and become truth, goodness, and beauty (sathyam, sivam, sundaram). Baba has come as Man among men on a self-imposed mission to correct the wrongs inflicted on mankind through the fanatically blind pursuit of lower learning. The human race has to voyage on an even keel; it is leaning too alarmingly toward the briny grave; the lower learning is lowering it into the bottomless pit. Only spiritual knowledge - that which illumines (vidya) - is the remedy.

From His childhood days, Baba has stood forth as an educator, a guru, as the villagers loved to address Him.

Without hesitation, He warned elders at Puttaparthi, teachers in the schools, and headmen of castes against cruelty to animals, exploitation of labour, usury, gambling, pedantry and illiteracy, hypocrisy, and pomp. Through quips and jests, parody and satire, songs and plays, the young teenaged teacher ridiculed and reformed society, which honoured or tolerated such evils. Through devotional songs (bhajans) sung in chorus by groups of men and women, He reminded them of the universal human values of truth, morality, peace, love, and nonviolence as early as 1943, when he was barely seventeen. These were the basic acquisitions that the Higher Learning (vidya)

can confer on votaries.

As Lord Krishna, He said to Arjuna,

Adhyatma Vidhya, Vidhyanam.
Adhyatma Vidhya, Vidhyanam.

Among all the kinds of knowledge, I am the Atmic knowledge.

The world can be saved from suicide only through this Atmic knowledge. The search for truth and totality, for unity and purity, is the means; the awareness of the One is the consummation of the process. This message is the sum and substance of every discourse of His during the last five decades.

This precious book provides us the chance to peruse nineteen essays that He wrote in answer to appeals for the elucidation of the principles that must guide us while rehabilitating education as an effective instrument for establishing peace and freedom in us and on Earth.

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Editor, Sanathana Sarathii

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1. Higher Learning

That which has no origin knows no beginning. It was before everything or anything was. There was nothing prior to It. For that very reason, It has no end. It expands as far as It wills, progresses as diverse as It feels, and, through Its fullness, fills the universe. Knowledge of this supreme principle is known as "that which illumines (vidya)" - spiritual knowledge, wisdom, awareness.

Many seers with manifold experiences of this unique awareness have visualised in their illumined hearts the sovereign secret underlying the captivating beauty of the cosmos. Compassion toward humanity has prompted them to communicate the vision through human language to arouse the innate thirst in the soul for immersion in that bliss. Spiritual learning (vidya) causes this urge in the hearts of the seers.

Vedic literature

Sound is the very core of the Veda. Sound is associated with harmony and melody, so the Veda has to be heard and ecstasy derived therefrom. It is not to be analysed, commented upon, and judged. This is why the Veda is called "that which is heard (sruthi)". Only through listening to its recital can the awareness of the Atma and of the bliss it confers be earned. The bliss thus acquired manifests in words and deeds that confer bliss on all around.

The term Vedanta is generally used by many to indicate a school of philosophical thought. But Vedanta is only a special section of Vedic literature. All the Upanishadic texts form part of Vedanta. Vedanta is the consummation of Vedic thought. The Vedas themselves are invaluable guides toward the Highest.

The hymns (riks) of the Rig veda are ecstatic effusions from the spirit of humanity extolling the delight derived while contemplating the orderliness and beauty of nature outside them. The Sama veda is the precious verbal

treasure that enables humanity to praise the Creator and His creation in song. The mystery of this world and of the worlds beyond is elaborated in the texts that are comprehensively called Atharvana veda. The formulae for rites and ceremonials - beneficial or merit-yielding or sacrificial - have been collated as the Yajur veda.

The Vedic literature grouped into these four collections - each under a different name - has four more branches: the Mantras, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads. The mantra texts (mantra-sastra) are also called collections (samhithas), and all sacred formulae are grouped together in them.

The texts that describe the means and methods of utilising them and benefiting by their proper recital are known as Brahmanas. The word Brahma has many meanings. In the expression Brahmanas, it means mantra.

The Brahmanas deal mostly with ceremonials and kindred external activities. The Aranyakas deal with the inner significances and internal disciplines, like withdrawal of senses and elimination of attachments. The Upanishads attempt, by philosophical analysis, to harmonise the two paths. They form the final phase of Vedic studies and are called Vedanta. They can even be considered to be the essence of Vedic teachings. They are the cream of the entire Vedic scriptures. When the Vedas are assimilated by scholarship, the Upanishads emerge as butter does when milk is churned.

All forms of Vedic literature mentioned thus far form the most ancient body of knowledge, Vidya Upanishad - the word is formed by the root shad getting the two syllables upa and ni as prefixes. Shad means sitting, but it has also another meaning: destroying. Ni means steady, disciplined. Upa means near. The pupil has to sit near the guru or preceptor, paying steady attention to what is being communicated. Only then can the pupil learn the fund of knowledge and the skill of discrimination.

The Upanishads, the Brahma Sutra, and the Bhagavad Gita - these are the basic roots of Indian philosophical thought. Together, they are known as the

Authentic Triad (Prasthanā Thraya).

The material and non-material worlds

This material objective world becomes visible to our eyes, pleases our senses, fascinates our minds, and informs our brain. But in and through this very world, there is one reachable non-material subjective world.

When the non-material world is known, both worlds reveal themselves as partial expressions of the same indivisible consciousness (chaitanya). The two supplement each other into the one Fullness (purnam). From the Full (Parabrahma), the individual (jiva) that is its complement arises. When the individual sheds the material corpus in which it is encased, the eternal Universal Consciousness is again the one Fullness, the Parabrahma principle.

Purnam adah; purnam idam; puurnath purnam udachyathe;
purnasya purnam adaya; purnam eva avasishyathe.

That is full; this is full; from the Full arose the Full;
when the Full is taken from the Full, only the Full remains.

Spiritual education

The education process (vidya) teaches that the cosmos is a manifestation of the Lord's sport and nothing else.

The Upanishads declare this truth thus:
This world is the residence of the Lord:
Isavasyam idam jagath.

Therefore, no one can entertain a sense of personal possession or even a trace of egotism. Renounce the feeling of attachment and feel the presence of the Lord everywhere. Welcome the spiritual bliss (ananda) that the Lord, as the embodiment of spiritual bliss, confers on you and experience it with thankfulness and without being bound by desire. This is the message of the sages and seers (rishis).

Give up the feelings "I" and "you"; only then can you understand the glory of that which is neither "I" nor "mine". This does not involve your renouncing everything. The real teaching (vidya) directs that the world be dealt with as duty demands, but in a spirit of detachment, avoiding entanglement. The acid test by which an activity can be confirmed as holy or sacred is to examine whether it promotes attachment or avoids bondage. The acid test to decide whether an activity is unholy or sinful is to examine whether it arises from or promotes greed. This is the teaching, the lesson from spiritual knowledge (vidya). Intent on fulfilling your legitimate duties, you can pray to God to keep you alive for a hundred years. You will not incur blame. So, spiritual knowledge advises you to engage in activities with full understanding of their nature and consequence.

Beasts kill only other beasts. But the blind person - one who has not acquired the vision of the Atma that one is - kills oneself. And, spiritual knowledge (vidya) warns that one who commits this crime goes into fearful realms sunk in thickest night.

The supreme wisdom attempts to describe the "characteristics" of Atma. Atma has no movement, but It is present everywhere. Even the gods cannot keep pace with it, however quick they are. It reveals Its presence long before we anticipate Its presence. The Atma is immutable and omnipresent. Spiritual learning (vidya) announces that it is an impossible task to determine It.

When one attains the supreme wisdom (the highest level of vidya), the distinction between "opposites" - Atma and not-Atma, spiritual knowledge and ignorance (vidya and a-vidya), growth and decay (vikasa and vinasa) - fade

away. Mystics and sages attained that state of higher unity, and the history of their struggles and successes is enshrined in literature through the prompting of spiritual learning (vidya). For such sages, from that transcendental level, mere ritual or textbook knowledge is as dangerous as ignorance or negative knowledge.

Such sages are aware of the mysterious origins and consequences of both. They are capable of overcoming death through lower knowledge and achieving immortality through higher or spiritual knowledge.

2. Knowledge Of Self

Spiritual knowledge provides illumination

The sublime significance of higher learning (vidya) can be grasped by one or communicated to another only when the pure mind sheds its revealing light. Inside a room kept scrupulously clean, no snake, no scorpion, no poison-bearing insect can enter. They will be at home only in dark, dirty places. For the same reason, the sacred wisdom cannot enter dark and dirty hearts. Instead, poisonous breeds like anger will find those hearts to be congenial resorts.

Washing a lump of coal with soap and water won't rid the coal of its colour. Nor will washing it in milk help.

The only way is to put it in a fire. That will turn it into a heap of white ash. Similarly, only gaining awareness of the Atma (Atmajnana) - in other words, knowledge of Brahman (Brahma-vidya) - will destroy the darkness of ignorance and the dirt of desire.

Darkness can be ended only with the help of light. Darkness cannot be overwhelmed by attacking it with more darkness. Spiritual knowledge (vidya) is the light that one needs to destroy the inner darkness. Spiritual learning provides the inner illumination. Spiritual wisdom is the authentic yoga of the Supreme Person (Purushothama Yoga) defined in the Gita; it is the knowledge of the Supreme, the higher learning (vidya). This yoga cannot be bought for money or acquired from friends or ordered from concerns or companies. It has to be assimilated and won by each one for oneself, through steady faith and ardent devotion.

The expression "God is nowhere" can remain unchanged; there is no need to confront or contradict it. The only thing necessary is to read the "w" in "where" in conjunction with the previous "no", so that the expression becomes "God is now here"! The negative suddenly becomes positive.

Similarly, merely by unifying the multidirectional vision that is now directed on the universe into one direction, the distinctions and the differences disappear and the many becomes One.

Holy people versus today's scholars

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Jayadeva, Gauranga, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Ramdas, Kabirdas, Saradadevi, Meera, Sakkubai, Mallamma - they hadn't mastered the objective commentaries and elucidations of the many sciences and scriptural texts. Yet, to this day they are adored by followers of all faiths, adherents of all creeds, and natives of all lands. The reason obviously lies in their unshaken faith in the Atma, won through purification of the mind.

Spiritual knowledge alone conferred on them the purity and the clarity. These holy people spoke what they had in their hearts, exactly as they felt or experienced it.

Consider, however, the present-day claimants of spiritual learning (vidya). Isn't it a fact that not even one in a million among them speaks exactly what is in their heart? They perform ritual worship to Sathyanarayana - Narayana or God in the form of truth (sathya) - one day a year; the rest of the year, every day, they worship Narayana in the form of untruth (asathya-narayana). The urge for objective scholarship is derived from this type of worship. Can this knowledge deserve to be called the higher learning (vidya)? No, never.

Heeding advice and correcting behaviour

Food on the plate, when not consumed by us or given to a hungry person, but kept unused, becomes foul. So too, when our faults and failings are not corrected, either by our own efforts or by heeding the advice of sympathetic souls who have succeeded in the cleansing process, imagine what the fate of our lives will be. Like the plate of boiled lentils (dhal) kept for too long, life will stink.

A father once praised his son's accomplishments and said in conclusion, "He

has only two little faults. They are: (1) He doesn't know what his faults are, and (2) He will not listen if others point them out to him." This happened in the past. But today, not one son but each and every one is in the same predicament. It has become quite natural for every father to complain thus. Is this the value of the spiritual learning (vidya) they claim to have?

Children are by nature very good; the fault lies in the system that confers education (vidya) on them. Of course, this fact is known to all, but everyone shrinks from the task of reforming it. This is the major weakness. It is easy to advise in a million ways, but not even one thing is practised. "The system has to be transformed from the primary school right up to the universities" - this is declared and announced in newspapers - but no one can be seen who transforms it or even points out specifically what changes are to be effected and how. No one highlights the defects of the system.

People don't recognise the truth that spiritual, moral, and behavioural values are the very crown of human achievement. When not in office, people write articles and essays on education or indulge in parrot-talks from platforms. When the same people achieve positions of authority, they legislate measures quite contrary to what they proclaimed earlier. Of course, speeches from platforms are good, but their practice is paralysed. Unless this illness of speech without practice is cured, education and real scholarship cannot manifest its worth.

The magnet can draw iron toward itself, but it can't attract pieces of iron covered with dust and rust. The dust and rust on the pieces of iron have to be washed away, so that the magnet can attract. Similarly, when the mind is polished clean, the effect will be, as the poet says, "A great soul (mahatma) whose sign is one thought, one word, one deed." The harmony of these three is the best proof of the worth of humanity. This unique worth is now being disclaimed by people through their own volition, through unawareness of the genuine spiritual knowledge (Atmavidya) that ought to be learned.

Sugar water versus plain water

Many scholars, pundits and experts flourished as contemporaries of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. But awareness of the Atma failed to illuminate them to any extent. As a result, the names of the scholars, pundits, and experts are not heard today. Only the name of Ramakrishna, who could not claim scholarship in any material or objective field of knowledge, has spread all over the world. Why? Sugar water and plain water look the same. Drink! Then you distinguish the one as sherbet and the other as just water. Paramahansa's words, which are full of supreme wisdom, are the sherbet; the words of scholars, which are soaked in textual scholarship, are the plain water. Pretentious pundits who have only perused the pages go after monetary gains; they don't rush toward the Divine.

Match sticks that have fallen into water cannot yield fire when struck, however vigorously you try. Besides, they spoil even the box that holds them. So, too, hearts soaked in worldly desires and designs may pour out parrot exhortations but they can have at best only listeners, not practitioners. The listeners might receive advice, but they would not accept it or act accordingly.

Real and apparent knowledge

Every event in the world has a special cause that brought it about, namely, knowledge. Of course, without things to be known, there can be no knowledge. Knowledge itself is of two kinds: inner and outer, direct and indirect (pratyaksha and paroksha), real and apparent. Outer knowledge (paroksha) is gained through the ear and other sense organs and through the words of others. Inner knowledge (a-paroksha), the true knowledge, knows no plurality; it analyses and understands the attractions and objects that haunt the mind. It purifies the mind and widens the vision of the heart.

3. Modern Education

Problems of the educational system

Today, the educational system, though very expensive and elaborate, has ignored instruction in morals. In the spiritual teacher's homes (gurukulas) of the past, instruction was provided for right living, spiritual advancement, and moral conduct and behaviour. Students were trained to lead lives marked by humility, sense control, virtue, and discipline. Now, these qualities are not recognisable among students. Students are not aware of the means or meaning of sense-control. From childhood, they revel in following every whim and fancy; they find pleasure in the free play of the senses and believe only in materialism.

As a result, the situation in the colleges fills one with alarm. The head of the department of health in Calcutta found that 80 out of 100 students in the Calcutta University are afflicted with poor health. In the Bombay region, the condition is even worse, with 90 out of 100 affected. The reason is to be found in the fact that the students are engaged in sensual living, the uncontrolled pursuit of sensory pleasure and evil habits. Can these be counted as gains from education? Or are they to be called "riches" accumulated through perverse ignorance?

Teachers have to identify their role and their responsibility. They have to bear a major share in fostering and preserving the mental and physical health of their tender, innocent wards.

To each their own world

Every living being looks at the world around, but each one looks uniquely in their own special way. The same object is looked at by ten persons with ten different feelings. The son looks at one individual with the feeling that he is the father. The wife looks on him as the husband. His father looks upon him as a son. His companion has the feeling that he is a dear friend. Since he is

the same individual, why doesn't he evoke the same reaction in all?

Those who visualise him differently are affected differently. That is the truth.

Once, a guru residing in Brahman Mutth (a hermitage), while in a happy mood, chewing betel with great relish, asked his disciple, "Dear fellow! How is the world?" The disciple answered, "Dear guru! For each one, their own world." Although all are in one world, each one lives in their own world, shaped by their own actions and reactions. This is why Sankaracharya declared "fill your vision with wisdom; then, all that you see will be God." When the vision (drishti) is filled with wisdom (jnana), creation (srishti) is filled with Brahman.

Story of Narayana and Lakshmi

In the vocabulary of education today, riches (dhana) is dharma (merit). The pursuit of riches is the "right" path. Every activity (karma) has the acquisition of riches as the goal. Possessing wealth (dhanam) confers the highest status. There is no ideal more desirable than getting rich. Here is a short story as illustration: Narayana (God) has sixteen manifest aspects; yet, He is the latent immanent reality. So, too, the material Narayana, the rupee, also has also sixteen "pennies" (annas) as parts. When men worship the rupee as the visible god, Narayana becomes unreachable to them. Few try to estimate the vastness of the loss they sustain therefrom.

One day, in the midst of conversation, Lakshmi, the divine consort and the goddess of wealth, teased Narayana, "Lord! The entire world adores Me; not even one in a hundred, why, not even one in a million, worships you." She put forward a plan to test people's sincerity. She said, "Lord! Let's discover the facts for ourselves. Come, we'll go forth into the world and find out."

Narayana agreed. He changed into a great pundit, wearing golden bracelets on his wrists as evidence of the appreciation and admiration of famous academic bodies. He had a garland of beads (from the rudraksha bush) around his neck and thick streaks of holy ash on his forehead. He manifested on earth as a redoubtable scholar. He moved from village to village and

began enchanting the people through his enrapturing discourses. His splendid personality and deep scholarship attracted the people. Thousands gathered to hear him and followed him from place to place. Brahmins invited him to their settlements and honoured him. His arrival was celebrated as a festival, with rich feasting.

While Narayana was being feted thus, Lakshmi appeared on earth as a great female ascetic. She too proceeded from village to village, enlightening the people on the Atma through her discourses. Women assembled to hear her fascinating speeches in wave after wave, in massive numbers. They prayed for her to honour their homes with a visit and partake of the feast they were most eager to offer. In reply, she informed them that she was bound by some vows that made it difficult for her to accept their request. She would not eat out of plates already in use in the homes. She said that she must be allowed to bring her own cups and plates. The women yearned so deeply to host her that they accepted the condition. Whatever her vow, they were ready to respect it. Invitations came from every woman, from everywhere.

The female yogi reached the house where she was to take food the first day and took from her bag a gold plate, a few gold cups, and a gold tumbler for drinking water. She spread them before herself, for the various items of the meal. When the meal was over, she left, leaving the precious golden articles for the host. She had a new set for each day, she said.

The news spread. The villages where Narayana was holding his delightful discourses also heard the wonderful happenings of the female ascetic's gifts. The brahmins who were staunch admirers of the far-famed scholar also rushed to invite the female yogi to their homes for lunch! She told them that they should drive the pundit out before she could enter their settlement. She would not set foot there as long as he continued to stay there! She was adamant. Their greed for gold was so strong that they forced the pundit, whom they had adored for so long and so pompously, to leave their village.

Thereafter, the female yogi entered the brahmin settlement, gave discourses, partook of feasts arranged in her honour, and presented the golden plates

and cups to each of her hosts. Thus, she managed to get the pundit driven out of every place where he sought recognition and attention. Instead, she secured the worship of people everywhere. Unable to bear the universal insult, the pundit cast off the role, and Narayana disappeared from the earth. The female ascetic came to know of this. She also gave up her role and resumed her real form. She joined Lord Narayana. While they were conversing, she told the Lord, "Now, tell me! What did you discover? Who between us is honoured and worshiped more on earth?" Narayana smiled at her question. He replied, "Yes. What you said is true." Yes. Today, education and the knowledge gained are being marketed. Money is all in all. Educated people desert their motherland like mendicants in search of money. Is this the sign of a proper education?

4. Removal Of Primal Ignorance

The highest goal of Bharath

For generations, Bharath (India) has been conferring lasting peace and happiness on peoples of all lands through the impact of the spiritual principles it has cherished. The ideal for which this land has striven has been:

Loka Samasthah Sukhino Bhavanthu
May all the worlds be happy and prosperous

This has been the highest goal of the people of Bharath. In order to foster and accomplish this holy ideal, the rulers of past ages, sages (rishis), founders of creeds, scholars, the learned, matrons and mothers, have suffered and sacrificed much. They have discarded honour and fame and struggled to uphold their conviction and to shape their lives in accordance with this universal vision.

Eliminating pride and egotism

Rare and costly articles might attract by their external beauty, but, to the eye illumined by spiritual light, they would appear trivial in value. Physical charm and force can never overpower the charm or force of the spirit. The quality of passion (rajas) breeds egotism, and it can be identified wherever selfishness and pride are displayed.

Until this mode of thought and action is suppressed, the quality of purity (sathwa) cannot become evident. And, in the absence of the pure quality, the divine, the Siva, the supreme power, cannot be propitiated, pleased, and won.

Parvathi, the daughter of the monarch of the Himalayas, was the very acme

of physical beauty. In spite of this, she had to acquire the quality of purity (sathwa) by destroying pride in personal beauty and her native egotism through intense asceticism. She had to shine in the beauty of the spirit! The legend relates that Manmatha, the God of love, who planned to project only Parvathi's youthful charm to attract Siva, was burned to ashes when her pride in her beauty was destroyed. This incident symbolises the fact that divine knowledge (vidya) cannot be gained as long as one is caught up in the coils of the ego. When one equips oneself with spiritual knowledge, pride disappears. But these days, conceit and pride are taken as adding charm to the knowledge required.

The attraction conferred on a person by scholarship in matters relating to the objective world has to be given up; only thereafter can the genuine innate divinity manifest itself. Only then can the personality of the individual, which is the self, accept the divine. The ego in us is the Manmatha, the "agitator of the mind", and it has to be turned into ashes through the impact of divine vision. The divine, the Iswara (Siva), will not yield Himself to physical charm, worldly authority, muscular or intellectual or financial power. This is the inner meaning of the Manmatha episode.

Parvathi underwent extreme austerities and subjected herself (i.e. her ego-consciousness) to sun, rain, cold, and hunger, and thus transformed herself. Finally, Iswara accepted her as half of Himself! This is the stage in spiritual advance called mergence (sayujya). It is the same as liberation and release (moksha and mukthi). In fact, spiritual learning (vidya) involves humility, tolerance, and discipline. It destroys arrogance, envy, and all related vices. Such knowledge is the real Atmic knowledge.

Develop detachment and eliminate desire

Moksha means liberation. All embodied beings long for liberation from the limitation that the embodiment connotes. Every living being is perforce an aspirant (mumukshu) for liberation, a practitioner of renunciation. Everyone has to be a renunciate (thyagi), versed in detachment. This is the final truth, the indisputable truth. When we give up our body and leave, we don't take

even a handful of earth with us. When we don't learn to give up, upon death nature teaches us this great truth about the need and value of detachment and renunciation. So, it is good to learn the lesson even before this happens. The person who learns and practises this truth is indeed blessed.

Detachment is the second valuable virtue that spiritual learning (vidya) imparts (the first being the absence of pride and egotism). Empty a pot of the water that filled it, and the sky that one could see within the pot as an image or shadow gets lost along with the water. But the genuine sky enters the pot. So too, when that which is not Atma is discarded, Atma remains and liberation is attained.

But what has to be discarded is not an objective impediment; the renunciation has to be subjective. Many people interpret renunciation (thyaga) to mean either giving away money and land as charity or performing rituals or sacrifices (yajna or yaga), or giving up hearth, home, wife, and children and proceeding to the forest. But renunciation does not mean such gestures of weak mindedness. These are not as difficult to give up as they are believed to be. If so minded, one can go through these acts easily and give up what the acts prescribe. The real renunciation is the giving up of desire.

The giving up of desire is the real goal of a person's existence, the purpose of all his efforts. It involves giving up lust, anger, greed, hatred, etc. The fundamental renunciation should be that of desire. The other feelings and emotions are its attendant reactions. We say "He who has the bow in his hand (kodanda pani)"; but this implies that he also has the arrow in his hand. The bow implies the arrow. In the same manner, desire implies the presence of lust, anger, greed, etc. These latter are veritable gateways to hell. Envy is the bolt, and pride is the key. Unlock and lift the bolt, and you can enter in.

Humanity and animal

Anger will pollute the earned wisdom. Unbridled desire will foul all actions. Greed will destroy devotion and dedication. Anger, desire, and greed will undermine the actions, spiritual wisdom, and devotion and make one a boor.

But the root cause of anger is desire, and desire is the consequence of ignorance (a-jnana). So, what has to be got rid of is this basic ignorance.

Ignorance is the characteristic of the animal (pasu). What is an animal? "That which sees is the animal (pasyathi ithi pasuh)." That is to say, the animal is that which has outward vision and accepts what the external vision conveys. The inward vision will lead a person to Pasupathi, the Lord of all living beings, the master of animals.

One who has not mastered the senses is the animal. The animal has harmful qualities born along with it, qualities that cannot be eliminated so easily. The animal cannot get free of them, for it has no capacity to understand the meaning of the advice given. For example, we may bring up a tiger cub with affectionate care and train it to be gentle and obedient. But when it is hungry, it will relish only raw meat; it won't eat puri and potato!

But people can be educated into better ways. Hence, the statement in the scriptures, "For all animate beings, birth as a human is a rare achievement." Humans are indeed the most fortunate and most holy among animals, for their inborn qualities can be sublimated. A human born with animal qualities can elevate itself through self-effort and training into a master of the animal qualities (pasupathi). The beast is born "cruel" and dies "cruel".

A life lived without mastering the senses doesn't deserve the name. A human is endowed with many capabilities, and years are wasted if the senses are not controlled and directed properly. Valid education (vidya) helps one achieve success in this process of mastery. Education promotes humility (vidya confers vinaya). Through humility, one acquires the right to engage in professions. That authority confers prosperity. A prosperous person has the capacity for charity and right living. Right living can confer happiness here and hereafter.

5. Spiritual Discipline

Education must determine and delve into the nature and characteristics of spiritual search for the Absolute or the Overself - the Highest Atma (Paramatma). It must prove its true character by manifesting as a spring of morality, laying down axioms of virtue. Spiritual education (vidya) is its own visible proof. It is the root of faith in every faith. It prepares the mind of man to appreciate and adhere to the faith and to direct man's living along that course. This has been named philosophy.

Philosophy means love of knowledge. Knowledge is a treasure of incalculable richness. Education is the relentless pursuit of knowledge, urged by love for its value and undeterred by difficulties. Spiritual education tries to probe behind the forms assumed by things and the appearances they put on and discover the reality that alone can explain them. The truth has to be known and lived by; it has to be visualised; this is the function of spiritual learning.

Spiritual learning (vidya) is the effulgence that permeates a full life. In the West, education deals more with concepts and conjectures; in the East, education deals more with truth and totality. The principle sought by spiritual education is beyond the field of the senses.

The human body

Man is a triune composite of body, mind, and spirit (Atma). As a consequence, man has three natures in his make up: (1) a low, animal nature, (2) a human nature, replete with worldly knowledge and skill, and (3) the genuine nature of man, namely, the divine, Atmic nature. Becoming aware of this third nature and establishing oneself in it - this is spiritual education (vidya).

The body is a machine with the five elements as its components: space, air, fire, water, and earth. God is playing with it, Himself unseen.

The body is a tree; love of Self is the root; desires are the branches it sends

forth; qualities, attributes, and modes of behaviour based on basic nature are the flowers issuing therefrom; joy and grief are the fruits it offers.

The human body is a world in itself. The blood flows through and animates every part of the body. God flows in and through and activates every spot in the world.

Education reveals the good and bad

Only one law guides and guards this world: the law of love. The joy or grief, good life or bad, of each nation or community is decided by and derived from its activities. The "bad" is in fact "good" in reverse. It serves to teach what has to be avoided. It would not be "bad" for all time; it is ever short lived. Neither "bad" nor "good" can be pronounced as "absolutely unrelieved" states. Spiritual learning (vidya) reveals and makes clear that "good" and "bad" are only reactions caused by the failings and feelings of the mind.

One must be able to judge the difference between one "good thing" and another that seems to us to be "better".

If one cannot do so, one will hold on to the first thing that seems good and discard the rest. But it must be understood that the "better" is not harmful to the good. Just as "unrighteousness" prods one to cultivate "righteousness", troubles induce one to manifest compassion and charity. Suffering is the inevitable seed of compassion. If there were no wrong and no suffering, one would have become either stock or stone. One who has no capacity to weigh and to respond to the call of agony and pain is like a blind person who cannot distinguish between what is good and what is bad. People without discrimination behave in this blind manner.

Desires and thoughts cause birth and death

Desire breeds wishes. Wishes cause birth and death. When one is devoid of desire, one need not go through birth and death. The next birth is the result of unfulfilled desires in this life and is determined by them. Those who have

no trace of desire for material objects can achieve the awareness of the Atmic reality.

In fact, the desire to know God, to love God, and to be loved by God does not bind. When awareness of God dawns in all its splendour, every worldly, sensual desire is reduced to ashes in the flames of that awareness.

The individual Self will turn toward the Universal Self as soon as desire comes to an end and the Self delights in supreme peace (paramasanthi). The Self must break off all contact with non-self, so that it can earn immortality.

You are a heap of thoughts. Your thoughts play a vital role in shaping your life. That is why you are advised to watch your thoughts and to welcome only good ones. Spiritual learning (vidya) stabilises good thoughts in the mind and thus rises to the status of knowledge of the supreme Reality (Atma-vidya). For example, a chair evokes an idea in your mind of a certain form and name. The word wood doesn't produce the same idea and name-form.

The value of that name-form depends on the usefulness you attribute to the wood. The relationship between you and the material world must be such as to make desires flee from you, not to make desires more intensive and extensive.

Really speaking, no one loves or desires any article or thing, appreciating it as itself. One loves it at all times only for selfish reasons, for one's own sake. No move is indulged in without a specific purpose.

But the learning derived from spiritual education will reveal that the individual is not entirely responsible for even the motive that prompts him. The activity (karma) is not fully one's own! Nevertheless, it is one's karma that elevates or degrades one's status.

Death involves certain developments that weaken and extinguish life. It does not affect the Atma; which has no death and cannot be destroyed. Therefore one should not fear death. Death is but another stage of life. However long

one suffers from illness or however severe the injury, death can happen only when time signals the right moment.

When the yearning for living ends, there can be no more birth.

The Atma activates all

One single energy (sakthi) activates all hands, sees through all eyes, and hears through all ears. In fact, all mankind is made of one divine substance. The human body, whether in America, China, Africa, or India, has the same components of flesh, blood, and bone. The instinctive urges and awareness are common to all living beings.

When investigation is done through scientific means, the truth that there are signs of awareness of life in stone and tree and metals can be demonstrated.

The Atma is a spark of the Divine. Its latent existence can be known by inquirers. God is ONE. Whatever one's nationality, whatever religion one professes, one can realise the Universal Absolute (Brahman) if one masters the science of spiritual advancement (Atma-vidya). Faith in the ONE God is the crux, the central point. Other beliefs, concepts, and conjectures revolve as the rim, on the periphery.

6. Spiritual Preceptors

Learning without culture of the spirit is barren

The inescapable destiny of every living being is the attainment of Fullness. It can't be avoided or denied. Our present condition of incompleteness is the consequence of thoughts, feelings, passions, and acts of past lives.

So too, our future condition is being built on the basis of our present deeds, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, we are the cause of our own fortunes and misfortunes. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't seek and secure assistance from others to promote our good fortune and avoid misfortune. Such assistance is essential for all, except perhaps a small minority. When we get this help, our consciousness is purified and sublimated and our spiritual progress is accelerated. In the end, we achieve perfection and fullness.

This vivifying inspiration can't be obtained through the perusal of books. It can be gained only when one mind element contacts another mind element. Spending an entire life pouring over books and thereby becomes intellectually very talented can't advance to the slightest extent the cultivation of the spirit. It would be unwarranted to claim that a person who has reached the acme of intelligence has thereby progressed and succeeded in reaching the acme of spiritual wisdom. Scholarship and culture are not related as cause and effect. However learned one is in worldly knowledge, unless one's mind is cultured, the learning is mere junk. The best and most fruitful system of education teaches culture and helps the culture permeate and purify the learning that is gathered.

As a result of the study of books, or, in other words, as a result of worldly education, one's intelligence may be sharpened and expanded. One can even deliver wonderful discourses on spiritual subjects. But, one's spiritual life cannot be taken to have advanced in proportion. The teaching imparted to us by another person might not enter the heart and transform one's nature. This is why learning without intensive culture of the spirit proves barren.

Pupils, gurus, and Avatars

Only the great one who has the Atmic truth imprinted on the heart is to be accepted as guru. And only the individual who can welcome this truth and is eager to know it is to be accepted as pupil. The seed must have the life principle latent in it, and the field must be ploughed and made fit for sowing. The spiritual harvest will be plentiful if both these conditions are fulfilled. The listener has to possess a clear receptive intellect, or else the philosophical principles that form the basis of spiritual wisdom (jnana) will not be comprehended. The guru and the pupil both have to be of this stature. Others who have no such qualification or authority can only dabble and play about purposelessly in the spiritual field.

Some gurus have far higher stature and far deeper capabilities than these learned and cultural masters: the Avatars, the human incarnations of God. By mere willing, they confer the blessing of spiritual strength. They command and, by the very force of that command, the lowest of the low rises to the status of one who has attained.

Such people are the gurus of all gurus. They are the highest manifestations of God in human form.

Visualising God

A human can visualise God only as a human. God appears in human form in answer to human prayer, since humans can experience only that vision as real. Try to visualise God in another form, and you have to contemplate some crooked ugly form and make great effort to believe that that form, which is lower than the real one, is He.

One ignorant person agreed to mould an idol of Siva and spent many days preparing it. As a result of his labour, he produced an image of a monkey! Humans are unable to picture, through imagination, any form of God beyond the human. So, we have to wait for the chance of perceiving the reality of the

Person by ourselves reaching a stage above and beyond the human level.

As at present created, humans are encased by nature, so they can see God only as a human. There is no escape.

When buffalos yearn to worship God, limited as they are by the buffalo nature, they can imagine God as a Cosmic Buffalo. So too, a human imagines the divine Principle as a cosmic perfect person (purusha) with human limbs and human qualities.

Human, buffalo, fish - these can be compared to vessels or containers. Take it that these vessels proceed to the limitless ocean of Divinity to fill themselves with it. Each can have it only in its own shape and size, right? The human vessel will earn and accept God as having a human form; the buffalo vessel, a buffalo form; the fish vessel, a fish form. All these vessel-forms contain the identical water of the ocean of divinity. When people visualise God, they see God as human. Each imposes on God its own form. If we try to imagine God to have some special peculiar form, it becomes highly distorted, as in the case of an ignorant man who labours to make an idol of Siva and ends up with a monkey form!

Spiritual education is experiencing the truth

The petty investigation done by ordinary reason, unfed by wisdom, can help to perceive only nothingness.

A person who investigates thus can only deliver lectures condemning Avatars. If you happen to be present and listening, ask the speaker, "Venerable sir! Have you understood the meaning of the words omnilocation, omnipotence, and omnipresence?" One is confined to the objective nature, which one contacts through his senses. So, one is helpless in understanding these ideas. The speaker doesn't know any more about these concepts than does the common unlettered person. Though they are ignorant of these vast horizons of thought, speakers of this type create confusion and distress through their teachings.

Spiritual education is, in reality, experience of the truth, awareness of the truth. Pleasing oratory should not be mistaken as experiencing the Truth, which comes about only in the innermost tabernacle of the Self.

7. Culture Of Dharma

The human being is like a seed. Just as the seed sprouts into a sapling and grows continuously into a tree, the human has to grow and attain fulfilment. This requires mastering two fields of knowledge. Knowledge of the world, that is to say, knowledge concerning the manifested universe. And knowledge of the other world. The first confers means the for living (jivana-upadhi); the second confers the goal of life (jivana-paramavadhi).

The means for living are the things that can satisfy one's day-to-day needs. One has to acquire them and store them, or acquire the capacity to get them when required. The knowledge of the goal of life involves inquiry into problems like: "For what end should one live?" "Who is the Creator of all that we become aware of?" "What exactly am I, this distinct individual I?" This enquiry ultimately reveals the goal. The scriptures of all religions and the many moral codes derived from them are concerned with problems that transcend the limits of this world like:

"Why are we here?" "What do we really have to do to deserve this chance of life?" "What are we to become?" Living a regulated and disciplined life What is the most beneficial way for man to live in this world? The answer: live a regulated and disciplined life. Real education must train one to observe these limits and restrictions. We take great pains and suffer privations to master worldly knowledge. We follow some regimen with strict care in order to develop the physique.

Whatever our objective, we obey an appropriate code of discipline.

What exactly are the gains of disciplined thought and conduct? The rules and regulations are elementary at first. Then, they enable one to be aware of regions beyond the reach of the senses. Later, one can journey beyond the reach of one's mind, and beyond even the outermost walls of what is reachable by all powers enclosed in the human body. Finally, one realises and experiences the truth of Truth, namely, one is the One that is immanent in all,

that is, in the entire cosmos. One is filled with bliss when fixed in this faith and in this awareness.

This process is the acquisition of real education (vidya), the culmination of the best educational process.

During the process, real education also instructs incidentally about the ideal configuration of society, the most desirable affiliations between people, the most beneficial relations between peoples, races, nations, and communities, and the best mode and manner for day-to-day life. Real education implants these in the heart, as deep as is necessary for human progress.

Of all professions, the teacher's profession has to adhere to the ideal of truth. When teachers stray from truth, society meets with disaster. Thousands of tender children, unacquainted with the ways of the world, pass through their hands. The impact of their teachings and their personality will be great and lasting. Therefore, the teacher has to be free from bad habits.

Children automatically adopt the habits and manners of elders - this is an ever-present danger. When evil influence is directed toward the thousands who receive the impact, society gets polluted. And, in time, the social evil also contaminates the teacher in some other way. "This is the lesson you taught me, O Lord!" runs the song. The teacher is laughed at and humiliated one day by his own pupils. So, the teacher must equip himself with virtues.

The king is honoured only inside his kingdom. He is adored only within its borders. But the virtuous man is honoured and adored in all countries.

A person may have outstanding physical beauty, may have the sparkle of robust youth, may boast of a high noble lineage, and may be a famed scholar. But if the person lacks the virtues that spiritual discipline can ensure, the person is to be reckoned only as a beautiful flower, with no fragrance.

Following one's dharma

When quite young, Mohandas Karamachand Gandhi witnessed along with his mother a drama on "Sravana and his devotion to his parents", and he resolved that he must also become Sravana. He witnessed a play on Harischandra, and it impressed him so deeply that he resolved to become as heroically devoted to virtue as Harischandra himself. These transformed him so much that he became a great soul (mahatma). Gandhi had a teacher who taught him wrong paths. But Gandhi did not adopt his advice. As a consequence, he was able to bring freedom to the country. In this land of India (Bharath), there are thousands and thousands of prospective great souls. The examples we have to hold before them are the men and women who have learned and practised spiritual education (Atma-vidya).

The ancient culture of India (the Sanathana Dharma) is acclaimed as of supreme value, not merely by Indians (Bharathiyas) but by people of all lands. The reason for its universal renown is that it is based on the Vedas.

"The Vedas are the source of all principles of morality or dharma (Vedhokhilo dharma moolam)". Dharma implies all the prescriptions for actions and attitudes that are needed to preserve the status one has gained as the highest among animals and living beings. The Vedas are the treasure chests that contain all the duties and obligations, rights and responsibilities that one has to accept and abide by in life.

Advice for pupils

In the ancient hermitages, after a pupil had finished the studies, the guru gave the pupil such exalted advice as no pupil in any other country received from a master. These were the commands:

Mathru Devo bhava; pithru Devo bhava; acharya Devo bhava. Sathyam vadha; dharmam chara; no itharani.

Consider mother as God; consider father as God; consider preceptor as God. Speak the truth; act righteously; do not adopt other ways.

This was the advice: "Stop all acts that are unrighteous. Engage yourselves only in such activities as would promote your progress." The Vedas and the Upanishads are referring only to these commands when they lay down that we should utter peace, peace, peace (santhi, santhi, santhi), praying for peace on earth.

The advice given to the pupils is, every bit of it, highly powerful. By his devoted service to his mother and father, Dharmavyadha won eternal fame. Through consistent adherence to truth, Rama and Harischandra made themselves immortal. By means of right conduct, mere men rose to the position of great sages (maha-purushas).

Buddha desisted from harm to living beings. He spoke of nonviolence (ahimsa) as "the highest morality (paramo dharmah). So, he was revered as a world teacher.

The real penance in life is to observe disciplines and restrictions as prescribed above. The mind is the foremost of the three inner instruments in man (thri-karanas). We must protect the mind so that attachment, passion, and excitement do not enter. These extremes are natural to the mind. The waves that rise in fury in it are the six inner foes of man: lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride, and envy. The first two bring the remaining four in their trail. To release ourselves from the first two and thus proceed on the spiritual path, we have to practise spiritual discipline. We learn these practices through spiritual learning (vidya).

8. Loving Service

Work done with no concern or desire for profit, purely out of love or from a sense of duty, is yoga. Such yoga destroys one's animal nature and transforms one into a divine being. Serving others, visualising them as kindred Atmas, will help one to progress; it will save one from sliding down from the spiritual stage attained. Selfless service (seva) is far more salutary than even vows and worship (puja). Service disintegrates the selfishness latent in you; it opens the heart wide; it makes the heart blossom.

So, work done with no desire is the supreme ideal; and when the mansion of life is built on that foundation, through the subtle influence of this basis of selfless service, virtues will gather unto him. Service must be the outer expression of inner goodness. And, as one undertakes selfless service more and more, one's consciousness expands and deepens and one's Atmic reality is more clearly known.

This ideal of selfless service (seva) and the urge to practise it form the very heart of education. Pure love, its chief manifestation - that is education. Nothing else can be. God loves those who do good to mankind as His dear children. They are ideal brothers and sisters for their countrymen. They deserve and achieve the awareness of Atma.

Whoever assigns their wealth, strength, intellect, and devotion toward the promotion of the progress of mankind is to be considered as a person to be revered. Those who observe the holy vow of service, unsullied by thoughts of self are born for a noble purpose.

Vow of loving selfless service

Prompted by the urge to advance the progress of others, a person who dedicates their wealth, skill, and intelligence, their position and status, becomes truly great. Such a one is the purposeful seer for the world. Such a one fulfils unfailingly the vow of selfless service. One who is conscious of the

basic duties and obligations and spends days in carrying them out in practice will be in supreme peace, wherever one may be. Through one's influence, the neighbourhood will also share that peace.

Spiritual learning (vidya) impels one to pour one's narrow ego into the sacrificial fire and foster in its place universal love, which is the foundational base for the super structure of spiritual victory. Love that knows no limits purifies and sanctifies the mind. Let the thoughts centre around God, let the feelings and emotions be holy, and let activities be the expression of selfless service. Let the mind, heart, and hand be thus saturated in good.

Spiritual education has to take up this task of sublimation. It must first instil the secret of service. Service rendered to another has to confer full joy in all ways. Spiritual education must emphasise that in the name of service (seva), no harm, pain, or grief should be inflicted on another.

While rendering service, the attitude of its being done for one's own satisfaction should not tarnish it. Service has to be rendered as an essential part of the process of living itself. This is the real core of spiritual education (vidya). As brick and mortar are to a house that is being built, the activity of service needs the spiritual illumination that can strengthen our resolve to purify our thought, word, and deed in order to carry out our duties. Spiritual education such as this is the key to the country's progress.

Service as dedicated worship

What exactly is the secret of ensuring peace and prosperity for mankind? Rendering service to others without expecting service from them in return. Activity (karma) that binds is a huge fast growing tree. The axe that can cut its roots is this: Do every act as an act of worship to glorify the Lord. This is the real sacrifice (yajna), the most important ritual. This sacrifice promotes and confers knowledge of Brahman (Brahma-vidya). Note that the yearning to do selfless service must flow in every nerve of the body, penetrate every bone and activate every cell.

Those who engage themselves in spiritual discipline (sadhana) must have mastered this attitude toward service.

Selfless service (seva) is the blossom of love (prema), a flower that fills the mind with rapture. Harmlessness is the fragrance of that flower. Let even your little acts be redolent with compassion and reverence; be assured that your character would thereby shine greatly. The highest happiness is contentment. Where there is no harshness, holiness will thrive and virtue will flourish. Where greed exists, vice will breed thick. One must completely destroy the urge to live an isolated life, like a lone bull. Do not entertain such a wish even in dreams.

Spiritual learning (vidya) instructs you to remember yourself first. After transforming yourself, try to reform others: that is the advice offered by spiritual knowledge. The delusive attachment to the objective world can be uprooted by means of selfless service rendered as worship to the Lord. Devotion to the motherland, love of the motherland - these are to be reckoned as far less than love and devotion toward all mankind. Genuine spiritual devotion (bhakthi) is characterised by love for all, at all times, everywhere.

Your nature is revealed by your acts, your gestures, your looks, your speech, your feeding habits, your dress, your gait. Therefore, pay attention to ensure that your speech, your movements, your thoughts, your behaviour are all right - full of love, pure (sathwic), and devoid of wildness and waywardness.

Ignorance conquered by faith, devotion, and patience

You have to develop the humility to believe that you have much good to learn from others. Your enthusiasm, your strong ambition, your resolution, your capacity to work, your store of knowledge, your wisdom - these have to be related to all others and not utilised for you alone. Your heart should take all others in. Your thoughts too should be patterned on those broad lines. Treat each trouble you encounter as a fortunate opportunity to develop your strength of mind and to toughen you with greater hardihood.

Eating food is a holy ritual (yajna). It should not be performed during moments of anxiety or emotional tension.

Food has to be considered as medicine for the illness of hunger and as the sustenance of life.

The characteristic of nature is "to manifest as manifold"; the characteristic of the Divine is "to absorb into unity". So, those who dislike or hate another or demean and denigrate another are indeed fools, for they thereby dislike, hate, demean, or denigrate only themselves! But they are unaware of this truth. Spiritual knowledge (vidya) instructs one to become established in this truth and demonstrate the underlying divinity.

In the garden of the heart, one must plant and foster the rose of divinity, the jasmine of humility, and generosity as the champak (a magnolia tree whose flowers are used to make perfume). In the medicine chest of each student must be kept in readiness tablets of discrimination, drops of self-control, and three powders: faith, devotion, and patience. By the use of these drugs, one can escape the serious illness called ignorance (a-jnana).

There are many destructive forces in the world, but, luckily, there are also, constructive forces. Students of spiritual learning should not turn into worshipers of bombs and mechanical contrivances (yantras). They must transform themselves into active persons worshiping God (Madhava) and mantras. Authority and power are powerful intoxicants. They pollute and poison people until they are destroyed. They breed misfortune. But spiritual knowledge will confer wholeness and good fortune on them.

9. Purity Of Thought, Word, Deed

The benefit we can derive from anything is proportional to the faith we place in it. From adoration of gods, pilgrimages to holy places, uttering mantras, or resorting to doctors, we derive benefits only according to the measure of our faith. When someone gives a discourse, the more faith we have in them as a scholar and an exponent, the more clearly and directly we can draw the subject into our hearts and understand the discourse deeper and deeper.

For the growth of faith and for the fostering of understanding, an essential requirement is purity of the heart, of the very base of thought (the kshetra), of the levels of consciousness (chittha). Without this purity, the sudden effort of self-inquiry or investigation into the self-existent Atma, while in the midst of diverse worldly and material entanglements, will be rendered fruitless, since it will not stem from an eager will.

The consciousness (chittha) must first be withdrawn from the objective world (prapancha) and turned inward toward the awareness of the Atma. Seeds can sprout fast only when planted in a well-ploughed land. So too, the seed of Atmic wisdom can sprout in the heart-field (hridaya-kshetra) only when it has undergone the necessary refining process.

Don't just listen, practise and experience

Do not rest content with mere listening to advice. What you have listened to must later be reflected upon, and what has thus been imprinted on the mind has later to be experienced and expressed in thought, word, and deed. Only thus can the truth be a treasure in the heart; only then can it flow through the veins and manifest in full splendour through you.

These days, listening to lectures and discourses has become just an itch, a disease, a craze. After hearing them once, people imagine they have known all. But the real purpose of the search for truth is to liberate oneself.

The yearning must be deep and persistent. The longing to know and experience the truth will then become a yoga, a process of union.

Faith is important

The union in yoga is between dharma and divinity. The more such evils as lust and anger breed in a person, the greater the diminution of the divinity. That is to say, faith in the Atma will decline fast, as the evils develop.

Faith is all important, faith in one's reality being the Atma - that is the real spiritual knowledge (vidya).

When lust, anger, etc., diminish and disappear, faith in the Atma and in the rightness of spiritual inquiry will grow and get confirmed. Non-attachment is the very foundation for attaining awareness of Brahman (Brahma-jnana), the Universal Absolute. Even for a small structure, the foundation has to be stable and strong, or else it will pretty soon fall as a heap. When a garland has to be made, we want a string, a needle, and flowers, don't we? So too, when spiritual wisdom has to be won, devotion (the string), non-attachment (the needle), and steady singlepointedness (flowers) are essential.

Take refuge in God and gain victory

Everyone in the world desires victory; no one desires defeat. All crave wealth; no one craves poverty. But, how can victory or wealth be acquired? This has to be thought about and discovered. And we need not search long for the solution. Sanjaya, according to the Mahabharatha, revealed the secret to King Dhritrashtra, "Where there are both Krishna, the Lord of yoga, and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, there victory is assured and wealth is won." Why do we need more than this as advice? There is no need to undergo the three-fold struggle - physical, mental, intellectual - to achieve victory. Nor need one get perturbed or anxious. There is no need to pine for wealth and prosperity. Take refuge in God and wield the bow of courage, that is, hold the heart pure. That is enough. Victory and wealth are yours.

But when you pursue victory and wealth, remind yourself that they are shadows, not substantial things. You cannot attain your shadow with the sun behind you even if you pursue it for millions of years, for it flees faster and is always beyond reach. Instead, turn toward the sun and proceed. Then, watch what happens. The shadow falls behind and follows you, instead of leading you. It walks on your footsteps like a slave.

Consider the shadow as the symbol of worldly illusion (maya.) As long as you follow worldly illusion, Madhava is being ignored and is out of sight. You cannot win His vision. You will be caught up in the coils of birth and death and be ever in bondage. From this atmosphere of dependence, one must endeavour to release oneself.

Or else, if all one's efforts are directed to the acquisition of sensual pleasures, it is a sure sign of rank ignorance.

People are prisoners of the senses

Those who are in bondage must first use all their skill and energy to free themselves. This is crucial for achieving everything else; all the rest are subsidiary. But, people are now immersed in subsidiary pursuits, forgetting the most basic. Every moment they must remind themselves that they are Atma and not contraptions put together as bodies.

A king had a parrot as a pet in his palace. It lived in a golden cage. It had sweet fruits to feed upon and nectarine drinks to quench its thirst. Every day, it was richly fed, lovingly petted, fondled, and spoken to by the queen herself. But did the parrot enjoy its life? Not at all. It was always sad. Why? It was not mindful of the golden cage, or of the sweet fruits and drinks; it had no pride in being nursed and nourished by the queen. It paid no attention to any of these. It was yearning for the day when it could sit on the branch of a green tree in the silent forest. Its body was having an excellent time in the palace cage, but its mind was in the thick of the forest from which it had been trapped and brought. It was born in the jungle and it lived on a tree. The parrot felt that it was far better to be free in its native habitat as an

insignificant bird than to be in a cage, coddled and admired, feasted and flattered by kings and queens.

If only one had this awareness, one would assuredly long for home, which is the Supreme Self (Paramatma), and turn away from the objective world in which one is an alien.

For political or other reasons, some people are arrested and kept in detention in order to preserve law and order. They are confined in big bungalows, given special treatment as befits their status, and provided with meals, etc., commensurate with their grades in social and political life. They are also given articles of luxury. But around the bungalow and garden, policemen are always on guard. Whatever the standard of life and the regard showered on them, they are prisoners. They are not free. So too, people confined in the world and life therein shouldn't feel elated when able to consume valuable, variegated dishes and have other rare luxuries. They should not exult over the sensual comforts that are enjoyed. They must not feel proud of friends and kinsmen. They must recognise and keep in mind the truth that they are in prison.

10. Need For Spirituality

The world situation

World problems are now assuming stranger forms and larger proportions. They are no longer individual or local. They are global, affecting all mankind. On one side, science and technology are advancing with cosmic developments. Through plastics, electronics, and computer technologies, the wonder has reached even greater heights. On the other side, mankind is afflicted with recurring political and economic crises; national, provincial, religious, racial, and caste rivalries; narrow loyalties and outbursts of disturbance in student campuses.

These have spread indiscipline and licentiousness all over the world.

This is an unbalanced and mutually contradictory situation. What really is its cause? Does it lie in the frightening decline that religion and morals have sustained in the human mind? Mankind has within its reach many means and methods through which it can earn wisdom and peace! It can secure invaluable guidance from the Vedas and sacred texts (sastras), the Brahma Sutra, the Bible, the Koran, the Zend Avesta, the Granth Saheb, and other holy texts whose number exceeds thousand. There is no dearth in this land, Bharath (India), of heads of monasteries and religious orders, exponents of spiritual doctrines and disciplines, scholars and venerable elders.

They too are propagating and publishing on a massive scale. Nevertheless, people's minds are degenerating in the ethical, spiritual, and religious fields of life, continuously and with great speed. What is the reason for this downfall?

People have now become more vicious than ever. Much more than in past ages, they utilise their intelligence and skill to indulge in cruelty. People relish and revel in inflicting pain on others so much that, as history reveals, 15,000 wars have been waged during the last 5,500 years. There are still no signs

that this horrid pastime will terminate! The impending atomic war threatens to destroy the entire human race. What exactly is the cause of all this anxiety and fear?

The remedy lies in holiness

It is clear that the beast in people is still predominant. It has not yet been overcome. Only when this is achieved can we, our country, and the world attain peace and joy.

Hatred, envy, greed, desire for pompous display and for comparison and competition with others - these evil traits have to be uprooted. These traits are vitiating not only the generality of men but even ascetics, monks, heads of religious institutions, and pundits. Among these, envy and greed have grown wild. When these masters and preceptors, who project themselves as embodiments of ideals, exhibit such low qualities, how can they set the world right? They can only intensify the pollution.

What the world needs today is neither a new order, a new education, a new system, a new society, nor a new religion. The remedy lies in a mind, in a heart filled with holiness. Holiness must take root and grow in the minds and hearts of youth everywhere, of boys and girls and of children. The good and godly must endeavour to promote this task as the one great spiritual discipline (sadhana) that they have to undertake.

Success in this task can be achieved only through knowledge of Brahman (Brahma-vidya). But today, people have deep faith only in acquisition and accumulation. They cannot give up or renounce. They have no faith in truth. They are attracted by falsehood; they find truth to be an obstacle. Therefore, they are unable to realise that death is the happy consummation of a glorious life. They die in anxiety and misery. People pronounce the words truth, nonviolence, righteousness, and love ceaselessly, parrot-like. They proclaim that there is no religion higher than truth. But the wonder is that the one thing they have no desire to possess is truth!

People yearn to know all things, but they don't yearn to know the truth. Above all, they don't evince the least desire to know the truth of their own self. They don't turn attention in that direction. Even if they do, it is only to justify fears and prejudices. Therefore, the primary task of people is to discard weakness and tendency to hurt.

The truth is not in the material world

That which is not found at the beginning or at the end, but is manifest only in the interval, the middle period, cannot be really real. It is apparent truth (mithya), not eternal truth (sathya). The cosmos did not exist before it emerged, nor can it exist after it is submerged (pralaya). What is evident in between can only be apparent truth, temporary and limited truth. It cannot be the unchanging truth.

People have to explore the value and validity of every object in the universe along these lines. The body, for example, was not there before birth, and it is not here after death. Like a pot made of clay, it exists as pot with that form and name for some time and later resumes its clay nature. The pot is but clay, with a form and a name added to it by artificial means. Whatever the objects, everything in the universe is inexorably subject to the impact of time, and it has to face death and destruction. The tree and the soil, the house and the body, the king and the kingdom - each has to suffer the same consummation.

People ignore the means of becoming aware of the immortal in them. They are enamoured of the knowledge that is concerned with the phenomenal world. Those who yield to this facile temptation are like the ones who desert the garden of heaven and rush into the jungle of poisonous vegetation. They turn away from the original (the bimba), the Atma. They are fascinated by the image (the prathi-bimba), the visible, the observable phenomena (the drisya). By this attitude, they proclaim themselves to be only ignoramuses, not knowers or seekers of truth.

Knowledge of Atma can give happiness

One should know that not even an iota of genuine happiness is derivable from the "three worlds", the three "divisions of time", and the "three levels of consciousness in daily life" (wakefulness, dream, sleep). Only the foolish seek to satisfy themselves from the limited counterfeit happiness through worldly activities. The wise know better. Those who bypass the luscious bunches of sweet grapes and run toward bushes of thorns are "camels".

They cannot be classified under other species.

Mountain peaks are charming from a distance, but when approached, they confront us with terror-striking jungles. So too, the world (samsara) appears charming when people have not delved into its meaning and value.

When discrimination is employed to explore its value, the truth is revealed that the family jungle or the world jungle cannot give genuine happiness. Only the Atma can give that blessing. Can the lake that strikes us as invitingly charming as long as the mirage is on quench our thirst? Those who delude themselves with the belief that it can and run toward the non-existent sheet of water can only get thirstier. No other benefit can accrue to them.

Therefore, one should learn the process by which one becomes aware of one's Atmic reality, spiritual learning (Atma-vidya) By learning and living it, you can quench your thirst and help to quench the thirst of all mankind.

11. Pathway To Peace

One has to achieve many objects during life. The highest and the most valuable of these is winning the mercy of God, the love of God. The love of God will give the great wisdom one needs to attain unshakeable inner peace (santhi). Everyone should endeavour to have an understanding of the true nature of Godhead.

Of course, one cannot, at the very beginning, grasp the unmanifest absolute phenomenon. At first, one has to impose a form and some attributes to bring it within reach. Then, step by step, one must try to enshrine it in oneself, as the descent of divine energy (sakthi-path). One engaged in the pursuit of success in this effort is not a mere individual seeker entitled to pursue the goal. One has to cultivate also the spirit of service and be engaged in good deeds that earn people's gratitude. Only thus can one accomplish the task of cleansing the levels of consciousness (chittha) and become a fit candidate for spiritual victory.

The duty of the renunciant

Monkhood (sanyasa) does not mean the mere acceptance of the fourth stage of life and its rights and obligations, retirement into the forest after breaking off contacts with the world, and leading the austere life of an ascetic. Instead, the renunciant (sanyasin) must move among people, become aware of their sorrows and joys, and impart the instruction and inspiration they direly need. Monks should fulfil this duty.

The renunciant can be likened to a species of fish. The fish moves around in the depth of the lake; it is not stationary at one spot. And, while moving around, the fish eats up worms and the eggs of pests, thus cleansing the water. So, too, the renunciant should always be on the move, journeying to the far corners of the land. The renunciant's duty is to cleanse society of evil by example and precept. The renunciant's teachings must transform it into a society free from vice and wickedness.

Promoting devotion and dedication

The tree can spread its branches wide. But the branches can put forth blossoms that yield fruit only when the roots are fed with water. Instead, if the water is poured on the branches, fruits, and flowers, how can the tree grow and spread? Society has the qualities of devotion and dedication as its roots of prosperity and peace. Hence, the educational system must pay attention to the promotion and strengthening of these qualities among the people.

People who occupy positions of authority are named officials (adikaris). That word can also mean the worst enemy (adhika-ari)! True officials should carefully avoid that course and use their positions to serve people under their care.

In olden times, when people of any region were sunk in fear or anxiety, or when the sources of joy and contentment ran dry, they traced the cause of the calamity to some fault or failure in the worship offered to God in the temples of that area. They sought to identify the mistakes and correct them, so they could have inner peace. They believed that the crisis could be controlled through these means. Such acts are now bundled together and labeled "superstitions", to be cast aside. But this is not superstition! Modern scientists are in such a pathetically poor state of understanding that they don't recognise these important problems. This is the preliminary stage of confusion caused by the progress of modern types of education.

The ancients grasped the supreme truth only after personally experiencing its validity. The moderns, however, dismiss their discoveries. This is the reason for the growth of barbarism in the so-called civilised countries. Many have not recognised this fact.

Three kinds of happiness

Every living being craves happiness; it doesn't long for misery. Some desire

riches, some believe that gold can make them happy, some amass articles of luxury, some collect vehicles. But everyone is set upon obtaining the things believed to give them joy. Those who know wherefrom one can get happiness are very few in number.

Happiness is of three kinds. One type is of the nature of poison in the beginning but turns into nectar later.

This is pure (sathwic) happiness, which is secured through the awareness of the Atma. That is to say, the preliminary discipline (sadhana) of equanimity, control of inner and outer senses, etc., which has to be gone through, appears hard and unpleasant and involves struggle and effort. So, the reaction may be bitter.

In the Yoga-vasishta, Sage Vasishta says,

"O! Rama! The boundless ocean can be drunk dry with great ease.
The enormous Sumeru mountain can be plucked from the face of the earth with great ease.
The flames of a huge conflagration can be swallowed with great ease.
Controlling the mind is far more difficult than these."

Therefore, when one succeeds in overwhelming the mind, one achieves the awareness of the Atma. This success can result only when one undergoes many ordeals and denials. The bliss that one earns afterward is the highest kind of happiness. As the fruition of all spiritual discipline (sadhana), one is established in the perfect equanimity of unruffled consciousness (nirvikalpa-samadhi) and the bliss (ananda) that fills one is indescribable. It is ambrosial, equal to the nectar of immortality.

Undifferentiated (nir-vikalpa) means the state of consciousness in which one

is devoid of thought. This state can be reached through appropriate discipline. It is of two natures: Non-dual in full experience and the state of non-duality when dual thought ends. The first takes one beyond the triune of knower, the known, and knowledge; and one is aware only of the cosmic intelligence of Brahman. This is the non-dual state (adwaitha-bhavana). The second stage is reached when all the attributes ascribed to God and humanity merge in the ONE that embraces the cosmos and all its contents. (This second stage is adwaitha-sthayi or adwaitha-avastha.) There is a second type of happiness: On account of the impact of external objects on the senses of perception, pleasure mistaken as nectarine is aroused. But, in time, the pleasure turns into bitter and unpleasant poison. This is passionate (rajasic) happiness. When one welcomes this passionate sensory pleasure, one's strength, awareness, intelligence, and enthusiasm to reach the four goals of human endeavour - dharma, wealth (artha), righteous desire (kama), and liberation (moksha) - become weak, because one's interest declines.

The third type of happiness arises from ignorance (thamas). It dulls the intellect from beginning to the end. It finds satisfaction in sleep, slothfulness, and faults, and it derives happiness therefrom. The dull (thamasic) person ignores the path that leads to the awareness of the Atma and pays no attention to it throughout life.

True education directs and counsels the mind and intellect toward earning pure (sathwic) happiness. Of course, it can be secured only by untiring effort. The scriptures declare, "Happiness cannot be acquired through happiness (Na sukhath labhyathe sukham)." Only by undergoing unhappiness can happiness be won. This truth has to be instilled through spiritual education (vidya). When one knows of the bliss (ananda) that pure happiness can confer, spiritual education will be found easy and palatable.

Acquire education for immortality

Having been born as humans, all efforts must be directed to acquiring this education for immortality along with earth-bound material-centred education, for it is only education for immortality that can reveal the Atma and enable

people to experience the immortal Atmic bliss (Atma-ananda).

12. Instruments Of Learning

The term vidya is derived by adding ya to the root vidh. Ya means 'what'; vidh, 'light'. So, "that which gives light" is vidya. This is the basic meaning of the word. Therefore, it is evident that only knowledge of Brahman (Brahma-vidya) deserves to be known as real knowledge. The ancients considered knowledge as light and ignorance (a-vidya) as darkness. Just as light and darkness cannot coexist at the same time in the same place, knowledge and ignorance cannot be together. So, all who journey along the path of progress have to purify their consciousness and illumine themselves through knowledge of Brahman.

The two aspects of education

In the section on manifestation of power (Vibhuthi Yoga), the Gita says that God declares, "Among all knowledge systems, I am the knowledge of the highest Atma!" All other knowledge systems are rivers; knowledge of the highest Atma is the ocean.

Just as all rivers find fulfilment merging in the ocean, all knowledge systems join the ocean of knowledge of the supreme Atma as their ultimate goal. This is not all. When rivers meet and mix with the ocean, they lose their separate names and forms and assume the name and form of the ocean itself. So too, the varied systems of knowledge concerned with the objective external world renounce their individual names and forms when they arrive at the confluence with the vast ocean of knowledge of Brahman.

Education can be considered as having two aspects: worldly education and knowledge of Brahman. Worldly education provides the wherewithal for human livelihood. One can study many subjects, earn valuable degrees, acquire higher and higher jobs, and manage to spend life without worry or fear. This type of education helps, whatever the job. On the other hand, knowledge of Brahman endows all human beings with the strength that enables them to discharge successfully the duty they owe to themselves. It

lays down the path that leads both to joy in worldly relations and bliss in the life beyond.

Therefore, knowledge of Brahman is far superior to all other systems of knowledge available on earth.

Knowledge of Brahman has the divine potency to liberate everyone from bondage. Worldly education has no such potency. Knowledge of Brahman makes you aware of the Omniself, the Absolute, the highest Brahman (Parabrahman).

Spiritual austerity and spiritual education

Vidya thapobhyam puthatma.

By means of spiritual learning and austerities (practices), one is transformed into a purified soul.

Spiritual austerity (tapas) enables you to merge with That. Spiritual education is the process of acquiring knowledge; spiritual austerity is the known. The first is indirect, it is the means; the second is the goal, the end.

Soap and water are needed to wash accumulated dirt off one's clothes. So too, both spiritual knowledge and spiritual penance are essential when one is anxious to remove the dirt that has stuck to the mind. Only when both are used can the levels of consciousness be thoroughly cleansed. No vehicle can move without two wheels, nor can a bird fly on one wing. So too, no one can be rendered holy or purified without spiritual learning and spiritual austerity.

Spiritual austerity (tapas) does not mean positioning oneself upside down, head on the ground and feet held up, like a bat. Nor is it the renunciation of possessions and properties, wife and children, or emaciating one's body, or holding the nose to regulate breath. No. Physical actions, oral assertions, and

mental resolves - all three have to be in unison. The thought, speech, and act all have to be pure. This is real spiritual austerity. Moreover, the three have to be coordinated not by the compulsion of duty but instead for the contentment of the self. The effort must be undertaken to satisfy one's inner yearnings. This struggle is the essence of spiritual penance (tapas).

The guru and the pupil

Guru means literally the "big" person, the "great" person. That is to say, the guru must have mastered both spiritual knowledge (vidya) and spiritual austerity (tapas).

The Gita depicts the ideal guru and the ideal student (sishya) - the pupil is the person of authority and the preceptor is the manifestation of the Avatar. Arjuna had earned the right to learn; Krishna had come as a man to teach man. The pupil is the best of people; the preceptor is the best among physical embodiments (purushothama).

The pupil wields the bow; the guru wields the secret of all skills, yoga. Krishna is the Lord of yoga (yogeswara); Arjuna is the archer. When these two meet, education (vidya) is transformed into knowledge of Brahman (Brahma-vidya).

The pupil, Arjuna, after imbibing the teachings of Krishna, said, "I will do as you command (Karishye vachanam thava)." He threw away not his bow, the Gandiva, but his great big ego itself, the egotism (ahamkara) that was deluding him.

The guru was the director of the play. The pupil (sishya), Arjuna, was the character in the play. The pupil should not be proud to have been entrusted with a duty. As long as you are conceited, you cannot get a guru. When the guru accepts you, your pride will disappear.

Pupils should not feel great, be proud, or boast of the sense of renunciation when giving their all. The real renunciation is to give oneself away. Then, the guru will grant freedom to follow one's own will, as Krishna did.

"Beloved Arjuna! As you will, so you act (Yathechchasi, thatha kuru). Think well. And do as you like," Krishna told him. He meant that He had given him all the advice he needed and had also accepted the ego Arjuna had discarded.

So, Arjuna could now be granted freedom to act as he willed, for his will has become His.

The individual who has reached this level has to be given freedom. The guru should not mercilessly order the pupil about simply because the pupil dedicated everything to him. The greedy guru and the indolent disciple - both fall into perdition. The guru should not turn into a person who steals wealth (vittha-apahari) but should be a person who steals hearts! The guru has to be an alarm timepiece. The guru must wake up those who are enveloped in the sleep of ignorance and reward them with teachings on the knowledge of their Atmic Reality.

The bad guru and the bad pupil

A traveler going through the countryside from village to village was confronted by a river in spate. The waters were rising and rushing. He was helpless because he did not know how to cross to the other bank. He looked all around. He saw two men squatting under a tree, a little distance from where he stood, and walked toward them.

He found that one of them was lame and the other was blind. So, he inferred that they would not know where the river was deep and where it was shallow enough to wade across. He went back, without questioning them. He knew their answers should not be acted upon.

The blind man in the story represents the preceptor who has not mastered the scriptures (sastras), which are the repositories of the experience gained by seekers in the past. The lame person represents the person who has not put the knowledge into practice and gained personal experience. In fact, knowledge of the scriptures and experience gained by its practical application

- these two make a full person. Only such a guru can save the student by instruction and example. This is the conclusion expounded in the Mundaka Upanishad.

Even more difficult than getting a good pupil (sishya) is securing a good guru. Only when a real guru accepts them can disciples become exemplary persons. Pure-hearted students, unselfish students, non-egotistic students - when such aspirants approach them, gurus exult in ecstatic delight.

Parikshith, the emperor, renounced everything and decided to realise God; right at that moment, Maharshi Suka appeared to guide him straight to his goal. Similarly, when good disciples get good gurus, they succeed not only in attaining bliss but also in conferring peace, prosperity, and joy upon the entire world.

13. Unity In Diversity

Students! The Ageless Person, beyond delusion and darkness, has to be cognised by every person through their own effort. You have taken birth as inheritors of this estate of eternal bliss. You are the dearly loved children of the Lord. You are as pure and as sacred as air. Don't condemn yourselves as sinners. You are lion cubs, not sheep. You are wavelets of immortality, not bodies compounded from matter. Material objects are there to serve you and do your bidding: you should not serve them and do their bidding.

Don't think that the Vedas lay down a bundle of frightening rules and regulations and laws. Every one of them has been laid down by the Lord, as law-giver. All elements in the cosmos, every particle everywhere, are acting every moment as ordered by Him. This is what the Vedas inform us. No worship can be higher and more beneficial than serving such a Lord. One has to offer love to Him, more love than one bears to anything else in this world and the next. He must be loved as the One and Only. He has to be remembered adoringly with such love.

Real education must result in this fruit.

The lotus leaf is born under water; it floats on water; but it does not get wet. You must be in the world likewise - in it, by it, for it, but not of it. The special feature of higher education is to prepare you for this role.

That is to say, you must live thus on earth with your heart immersed in the Divine and your hands busy in work. Love should not degenerate into an article of commerce. Love fulfils itself in love.

The Vedic religion

The Vedic religion doesn't attempt to establish, through conflict and controversy, any one doctrine or theory.

It seeks to evaluate all theories and doctrines by the touchstone of experience.

The tree is judged by its fruits. Codes of behaviour, spiritual practices, and manifestation of love all have enormous virtues, which promote the progress of humanity.

According to the point of view of great people and of the spiritual teachers of India, one advances not from falsehood to truth but from the partly true to the fully true. Each individual Atma can be called a garuda bird, which soars higher and higher and, gathering supranatural strength, at last reaches the solar orb with unlimited splendour and majesty.

The basic truth of creation is unity in multiplicity. This was understood by Indians. All other religions have accepted certain fixed doctrines and built systems on them. They are content with the establishment of such credal groups. They devised methods of worship, prayer, and adoration in accordance with the feelings and emotions they laid down as valid and valuable.

The service that every religion offers to mankind is to expand the consciousness of people beyond the material sphere and light the spark of divinity already in them. The Indian (Bharathiya) mode of worship is based on the awareness that the One manifests through many discrete forms and many discrete attributes, when confronted by many discrete situations and conditions. So, among all peoples of the world, Indians have the intellectual tolerance to proclaim to all four quarters that God exists and can be found in every religion. This is their unique good fortune.

Faith has guided Indians

One of the basic rules of living is not to be ashamed of your forefathers. As you read more and more the history of the past and visualise more and more the human condition in those ages, your pride is bound to increase.

Let faith in the supreme achievements of your forefathers flow in and energise the blood in your veins. Let the strength of that faith render your body, mind, and spirit equally strong. The fruit of genuine spiritual learning (vidya) is the recognition that every community of people and every religion has, along with a basic unity, something special of its own to offer.

In fact, no country in history has been the target of such dire calamities and has suffered under alien rule for as long as India. Despite this, Indians are ready to encounter boldly any new calamitous storm, for their lives are still more or less firmly based on the ancient ideals. This has been the stable foundation for their way of life. Faith in God is faith in Atma. They believe, without any hesitation, that this faith has guided and guarded them.

These guiding principles of Indian (Bharathiya) life were not restricted by the geographical boundaries of the country. Whether the people of this land desire it or not, the principles are spreading to other lands. They are transmuting their literatures by instilling their values into their thoughts and feelings.

The natural sciences can provide us only with food, clothing, and the like. Only spiritual science can add strength and steadfastness to the self. Students should pay special attention to this fact. What use are food, clothing, and the like, even in plenty, when one has no strength or steadfastness in oneself?

Again, when you want to promote the prosperity of the nation, you must, of necessity, gather into yourself all the spiritual resources that you can. In the past, the need was known, and efforts were made to fulfil the need; in the future too, this need must be felt and fulfilled. That is to say, all the spiritual inclinations, beliefs, and urges that are now feeble and dissipated have to be united and reinforced, one with the others.

Tolerance for all religions

The unique features of the Vedic Bharathiya (Indian) religion form its solid

base. They are as wide as the sky and as eternal as nature. As part of the religion, creeds and cults may exist as branches of a tree. One need not condemn them as wrong. But no branch should fight against another or compete with another. When that happens, the tree will be destroyed and all will end in ruin. When creeds indulge in competitive rivalry, religion is ruined and the world is destroyed.

Ekam sath; viprah bahudha vadhanthi.
Only One exists; the wise describe it in many ways.

Each of us may have different ideas on the nature and characteristics, the form and attributes of God. One person may believe that God has the qualities and form of humans. Another may believe in a God devoid of human form and signs, but yet manifesting in embodiments. Another may believe in God as altogether formless.

Every one of these can find declarations supporting their stands in the Vedas. For, all have faith in God, that is to say, in a mysterious power (sakthi) that is the source, support, and sustenance of all, a power that subsumes all.

14. Vedas, The Authentic Voice Of God

The difference in teachings about the name or form of God (Iswara) are not very important. We need not quarrel over those distinctions and differences. Instruction on God is service enough.

Indians (Bharathiyas) do not accept the view held by others that the world and the universe of which it is a part came into being some thousands of years ago and will meet with dissolution sometime in the future. Nor do they accept the statement that the universe was born out of the void (sunya). They believe that the projection (nature or prakriti) is not born of vacuity but has always been full and complete (purnam). It has no beginning or end; it has only gross and subtle forms. It is no sign of enlightenment to infer that, since there is no evidence of the full and complete, there must be a void in the beginning. There are other levels of existence to consider.

For example, you are not entirely the body; in the gross body there is a subtle body, the mind, and also another body, which is more subtle than the mind, namely, the individualised Atma or Self (jivatma). This last has neither beginning nor end; nor does it have any trace of death or decay. This is the truth that Indians (Bharathiyas) believe in. This faith is based on the declaration of the Vedas themselves.

We close our eyes when we worship God. We do not try to discover God outside us by raising our faces and looking upward. Others accept that their scriptures were written by divinely inspired persons, but Indians believe that the Vedas are the authentic voice of God, emerging from the hearts of sages.

As you feel, so you become

Students! One who condemns himself day and night as petty and weak can never accomplish anything. One who thinks that one is luckless and low thereby becomes luckless and low. Instead, when you cultivate the awareness that you are a spark of God, that you have as your reality Divinity Itself, you

can become really divine, and you can have command over all powers.

Yadbhavam, thadbhavathi.
As you feel, so you become.

It is how you feel that matters most. That is the basis for all that you are.

Have faith in the Atma, the Self. This is a must for man. In its absence, man is reduced to a monster, reveling in vice and wickedness. Your forefathers achieved prosperity, peace, and joy and succeeded in attaining their goals through that faith alone. When people lose that faith, they are certain to fall, for that faith is the very breath of life. When there is no breath, one becomes a corpse (savam). With the breath of that faith, one becomes divine (siva), the same as Siva Himself. Faith in the Self is the expression of the Siva principle in a person; that faith can endow one with all forms of power and render one full and complete (purna). For, the Atma, by its very nature, is self-sufficient and full. No other spiritual discipline is needed to realise that state.

Purity is also our nature; self-sufficiency (paripur-natha) is also the nature of the Self. Impurity and insufficiency are alien to people. Students should not ignore or forget this fact. Real education must arouse this faith and infuse the awareness of this fullness in every activity. This is the essential aim, the core of the right type of education.

Religion means experience

One other truth has to be kept in mind, more than every other. For Indians (Bharathiyas), religion means experience, nothing less. Our position is that no achievement is worthwhile unless one earns it by one's own efforts.

Everything valuable must be cultivated by oneself. Divine grace awaits individual striving and spiritual practice (sadhana). The doctrines and

directives of religion have to be assimilated by means of actual experience. It is not enough to learn to repeat them parrot-like.

The truth has to be identified; this is the very first step. The sooner we understand the truth, the sooner religious conflicts and credal dissensions will disappear. The Beyond the Beyond (Parath-para), the Omniself, is nearer than the nearest; though near, all other entities are really far away. Become aware of this fact. Only then can the knots in which the heart is entangled be loosened.

Give up life or give up body?

In the vocabulary of the West, a person gives up "life", but in the language of Indians, a person gives up the "body". Westerners profess that they have bodies and that the bodies have souls. Indians don't declare so. They proclaim that a person has a soul and that the soul is enclosed temporarily in a body. Therefore, they feel that the civilisations and cultures seeking sensual pleasures and secular glory are built on a foundation of sand, and they can shine only for a brief period of time before they collapse.

Imbibe only the good from others

Students! Imitation can never become culture. You may wear royal robes and act the role, but as a result of this imitation, can you become a king? A donkey clothed in tiger skin does not become a tiger.

Imitation is a sign of cowardice. It cannot further one's progress. In fact the tendency to imitate leads one down, step by step, into frightful shape. You must endeavour to uplift yourselves, as yourselves. You must be proud that you are Indians (Bharathiyas), children of India (Bharath), you must be proud of your ancestors. Your commendable heroism lies in your joyous assertion that you are an Indian. You should not imitate others and copy their attitudes, though you may imbibe the good in them.

We have to learn good things from others. We sow seeds in the ground. We

provide it with soil, manure, and water. The seed sprouts, becomes a sapling, and grows into a huge tree. It does not become soil when placed therein, nor manure when it feeds thereon, nor water when it partakes thereof. It only imbibes from each of them whatever it can benefit from them. It grows into what is essentially is, namely, a huge tree!

May you grow likewise. You have to learn much from others. Learn about the Supreme and the means of attaining it from even the lowest; learn from others how to practise progressive spiritual discipline (sadhana) and saturate yourselves with it. But do not be transformed into those others. This is the normal teaching for people, the code of law (smrithi) of Manu. This is the lesson that students have to understand. This is the first and foremost lesson, the crucial lesson.

15. Ego-less Service

You may master a billion fields of study, but if you have not cultivated the attitude of detachment, the mastery is of no consequence.

Sharing with others, serving others, this is the main rule (sutra) of spiritual knowledge (vidya), its genuine expression. Education is rendered noble when the spirit of service is inculcated. The service rendered must be free of the slightest trace of narrow selfishness. But that isn't enough. The thought of service should not be marred by the desire for something in return. You have to perform the service as you would perform an important sacrifice (yajna).

Just as trees don't eat their fruits but offer them to be eaten by others in an attitude of detachment; just as rivers, without drinking the waters they carry, quench the thirst and cool the heat from which others suffer; just as cows offer their milk, produced primarily for their calves, in a spirit of generosity born of renunciation (thyaga), to be shared by others; so too, those who have acquired spiritual knowledge should offer it to others prompted by the motive of service and without consideration of selfish interests. Only thus can they justify their status as noble men (sajjana).

The authentic scholar should not entertain egotism in the thoughts, at any time. Today, however, the misfortune is that scholars as a class are afflicted with unbounded egotism. As a consequence, they follow wrong ideals and take to wrong paths; they confer the benefits of education only on themselves and on their kith and kin. As a result, they forgo their position among the wise (sajjanas) and the respect it can bring. One must grant generously to others the knowledge, skill, and insight that one has acquired. If this is not done, human progress itself is endangered.

Cultivate service to all

To promote the best interest of mankind, one has to cultivate the holy urge of service to others and the attitude of sharing. The parrot talk, "Service to

people is service to God (Manava seva is madhava seva)" does not extend to all people; those who reel off this axiom don't inquire which people are to be served. They are eager only to fill their own stomachs; for this purpose they restrict their mental horizons to the uplift of their own people. Thus, they lay waste the valuable education they have received. One forgets the fact that God is in perceptible form in all beings. Service rendered to any being is service offered to God. This has to be the chief goal of the educated.

A human is God (nara is Narayana). Every single act has to be elevated as an act of service to God. But students today don't know what exactly God is and what exactly a person is. How can one claim to be educated when one can't identify the Man-God (Nara-Narayana) principle? A person and God are the entities denoted by the Upanishads as "you (thwam)" and "that (thath)." One who hasn't become aware of these two cannot claim to have known themselves. And education that does not reveal oneself to one, of what use can it be to reveal anything else?

But, to our misfortune, the educated who are the educators are engaged not in promoting our best interests and serving us but in doing great disservice as much as they need. It is highly strange. For, the educated persons must serve not only those who help them but also those who harm them. This attitude makes the service doubly holy. Serving those who do service to us is but a natural reaction. Serving those who harm us is the greater virtue.

This latter course of action involves deeper understanding of one's best interest and an alert sense of time, place, and circumstance. Education must confer and cultivate these qualities.

When dealing with uncultured folk and with ungrateful fellows who forget the good done to them, one has to exercise caution. The law is the instrument the government uses to punish those who do wrong. But the educated person and the student should not condemn them outright. You must manifest your natural virtue of detachment and practise your characteristic attitude of helpfulness.

Shun ostentation; cultivate humility

Protecting one's motherland is a noble duty. It is the primary duty of each student. Students can't claim to have learned much unless they are able to discover and discharge their duty and their immediate role, when circumstances call for such decisions. The educated person and the student undergoing education must both cultivate simplicity; they must discard ostentation. If they are addicted to ostentation, they lose their genuine nature or individuality. Students must note this point well.

People without humility and discipline in dealings with others are certain to be counted out as scholar or pundits, no matter what sciences they have mastered or how famous they are as intellectuals. Such people will not be honoured by society. They may win respect for some time, but that attitude will decline pretty soon. Such respect does not bring credit to the recipient. Only artlessness and simplicity earn honour - and they render the honour enjoyable. Insane parade of scholarship brings in only spurts of reputation and ridicule. When one gives up ostentation, one can get permanent respect from people. Real education imparts a spirit of renunciation, a dislike for ostentation, and the yearning to serve others.

Some people develop swollen heads as soon as they acquire a little knowledge. They pretend to be experts in every field and boast the whole day about their attainments. They strut about as if they know everything. "The leaf-plate on which a full lunch has been served will lie low on the floor. The leaf-plate on which nothing is placed will hop high with every gust of wind." Thus says the proverb. So too, the person who has much scholarship and many skills will lead an unassuming life. But one who has not derived genuine education and the strength it can confer lives in pomp and pride. That person struggles to hide defects from being known to others. And, in the end, the struggles don't succeed. One meets with double ruin - one doesn't experience spiritual bliss (ananda) and one doesn't impart it to others. In the end, one becomes the target of ridicule.

Therefore, don't allow the desire for ostentation to enter the mind; don't allow

egotism to approach you. Be humble and be loyal to high ideals. Only then can you serve the cause of world peace and prosperity. Only when the individual succeeds in being good can the world also become good (vyakthi sreyas becomes viswa srayas).

One who is eager to be a real student must place before himself the ideal of world peace and prosperity. One has to be unpretentious. One must vow to be of service to others. This is the essence of true education (vidya).

16. Compassion And Cleanliness

The student seeking spiritual knowledge (vidya) must possess kindness, compassion, and love toward all living beings. Kindness to all beings should be the student's very nature. If it is absent, the student becomes a boor.

More than anything else, spiritual knowledge means the quality of compassion toward living beings. If a person bears ill will against any being, his education has no meaning. The advice given in the Gita, with no ill-will toward all or any being *adweshta sarva bhuthanam*, conveys the same message. In the same manner, on and off, the Gita warns that any insult or injury or even neglect directed against any living being is an act that insults, injures, or neglects the Divine (*Sarva jiva thiraskaram Kesavam prathigachchati*). Love and compassion must not be limited to mankind. They must enfold every living being.

Vidya vinaya sampanne brahmani gavi hasthini
Shuni chaiva shvapakecha, punditah samadharshinah.

The learned person who has acquired humility through spiritual knowledge must deal with the cow, the brahmin, the elephant, the dog, and the eater of dog-flesh with equal compassion and consideration.

The Gita says

Uniform compassion shown in this manner transforms itself into uniform welfare for the recipients. Wishing well for all is the sign of one who has earned spiritual knowledge. The narrow vision that is limited to the

community has to be given up. Indian (Bharathiyas) culture emphasises the highest truth, the broadest vision. Imparting this ideal is the purpose of spiritual education, as laid down in India (Bharath). No other country has placed such a lofty, all-inclusive, beneficial ideal before its people.

Today, the country is facing ruin because this ideal has been neglected, spiritual education has been grossly circumscribed, and the educational system is polluting the social organism with narrowness and crookedness.

So, marked changes have to be made in the system. At present, we have mere book learning. But what is learned from books has to be confirmed and corrected by practising it in social living. Only then can the knowledge of the kinship between person and person be gained. Thereby, learning is transformed into spiritual knowledge (vidya).

Spiritual knowledge cannot be acquired by merely mastering reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Each student must, after intelligent inquiry, decide for themselves during every occasion which goal is best and which action is best suited to realise it. Both the goal and the action must serve the needs of society and help it to progress. People should not be involved in injustice, violence, and immorality. Nor should they deem their own gain as primary.

The importance of cleanliness

Students have to pay great attention to another important quality: cleanliness, both outer and inner. When either of these is absent, the person becomes useless for any task. The clothes one wears, the books one reads, and the surrounding environment must be clean. This is the outer cleanliness. That is to say, every material object one has to deal with for living has to be kept clean. The teeth and eyes, food and drink, all should be free from dirt. One can be healthy as a result of all this. The body has to be scrubbed and washed every day, or else layers of dust will cause itching and boils will emerge. Not only will one's condition be rendered miserable, but it may cause

infections in others. One may possess only one or two sets of clothing, but care should be taken to wash them before wearing. They should not gather dirt.

The books used for study should not be thrown about as one pleases. Scribbling on the pages must be avoided. Paper should be preserved clean and spotless. Those who see them must appreciate the care taken by the student to keep things clean. The room where the student resides and the adjacent area must be kept clean and free from stink. And, inside the room, no indecent pictures should be hung on the walls. Only pictures that inspire great thoughts and high ideals should be visible to the eye. The student must be able to draw on themselves the love of all.

However rich a person may be, the person can't be happy without health and can't derive full joy from the riches owned. A meal makes the person exhausted; without a meal, the person feels weak. Thus, the person plods on without ever being happy. So, external cleanliness promotes health and happiness.

The importance of inner cleanliness

Next, we consider inner cleanliness - that is to say, keeping the mind and the intellect free from dirt, serene and sacred. When thoughts and feelings are impure and agitated, one cannot be calm and happy. When the mind is polluted, reactions are polluted. To keep the mind clean, one has to analyse sympathetically situations involving others and their activities, and then decide on how to react to them. One should not rush to draw conclusions.

Adopting the reactions of others is not desirable. One must resolve on any action only after intelligent discrimination and inquiry. "Some of our people are doing this, so we will do it too." This attitude is mean and demeaning, it is a sign of weakness. It is the consequence of basic ignorance. Sheep behave in that manner.

Born as people, moving about as educated persons, yet stupidly following

others as sheep do and polluting the minds with ideas borrowed from the lips of others - these things are to be avoided.

The ideas and pronouncements of others may often be personal, or they may induce feelings of hatred between people. Why should we accept them as ours and mould our feelings accordingly? We should not try to shape our feelings and patterns of behaviour to conform to those of others. We should not relinquish our faith, our experience, and our innate holiness.

We may not always be able to know the reasons for our faith. It originates and is shaped by our own personal likes and dislikes, our own dominant feelings. But we must not become the target for anger, hatred, and jealousy and the evil deeds into which they lead us. A student must cultivate wide, inclusive feelings. Only then is the student entitled to acquire the higher learning. Only then can the student earn respect in society. The student must keep far away from narrow, selfish thoughts, feelings, and plans.

17. Shun Jealousy And Hatred

The root cause of all anxieties and calamities of man is envy. We can find from the Bhagavad Gita that Krishna warns Arjuna off and on, "Arjuna! You have to be envy-less. Don't get infected by envy." Envy is invariably accompanied by hatred. These two are twin villains. They are poisonous pests. They attack the very roots of one's personality.

A tree may be resplendent with flowers and fruits. But when the inimical worms set to work on the roots, imagine what happens to the splendour! Even as we look on admiringly at its beauty, the flowers fade, the fruits fall off, and the leaves turn yellow and are scattered by the wind. At last, the tree itself dries up, it dies and falls.

So too, when envy and hatred infect the heart and set to work, however intelligent and however highly educated one is, one falls. One is turned into an enemy of society. One becomes the target of ridicule because one is no longer human. One cannot be counted as a member of the community. In the end, even trusted friends desert and become one's foes. One loses the respect of one's group, and one doesn't evoke even ordinary courtesies from others. One spends the days perpetually in misery.

No enemy can be so insidious as jealousy. When one sees a person more powerful, or more knowledgeable, or with greater reputation or more wealth or more beauty, or even wearing better clothing, one is afflicted with jealousy. One finds it difficult to acknowledge and accept the situation. One's mind seeks means to demean them and lower them in the estimation of people. Such propensities and evil tendencies should never strike root in the minds of students and the educated. These should not pollute their character.

Students must learn to be happy and filled with joy when others are acclaimed as good and are respected for their virtues and the ideals they hold dear. They have to cultivate breadth of outlook and purity of motives. They must be ever vigilant that the demon of envy does not possess them. That

demon is certain to destroy all that is precious in them. It will ruin their health and damage their digestive system. It will rob them of sleep. It will sap their physical and mental stamina and reduce them to the state of chronic consumptives.

Students must resolve to emulate those who do better than themselves and earn equal appreciation. They should strive to acquire knowledge and score marks as much as others. That is the proper ambition. Instead, if they wish for the downfall of others, leaving them as the only successful ones, they are revealing their brutish nature.

It will lead them to perdition. It is a deadly virus.

Praising oneself and condemning others are also equally deadly. Attempting to hide one's meanness and wickedness and putting on the mask of goodness, justifying one's faults and exaggerating one's attainments - these are also poisonous traits. Equally poisonous is the habit of ignoring the good in others and assiduously seeking only their faults. Never speak words that demean any one.

When we are friendly with another and like him very much, whatever he does is certain to strike us as good.

When the wind changes and the same person is disliked, even the good he does strikes us as bad. Both these reactions are misconceived. They are not commendable at all. In the Sumathi Sathaka, there is a verse that teaches this lesson. "O person with good intelligence (sumathi), Know that even if friendship is strong, when wrong becomes right and right becomes wrong then friendship disappears." The student has to transform themselves into a person with good intelligence (a sumathi) and avoid turning into a person with perverted, polluted intelligence (durmathi). A huge heap of fuel can be reduced to ashes by a tiny spark of fire. A drop of poison can render a pot of milk totally undrinkable. Envy and hatred are the sparks that destroy the cluster of virtues in people.

Students must exercise constant watchfulness over their feelings and reactions. They must keep out selfishness, envy, anger, greed, and other such evil tendencies from entering their minds. These are nets that entrap the person. These vices overwhelm and subdue the holiness of people, so that the holiness cannot influence them any longer. Such people will forget themselves and behave like other wicked individuals, individuals caught in frenzy.

Such people will blabber as their tongues dictate, without regard to the effect - good or evil. Such people will engage their hands in work that the hands favour.

Envy doesn't stop with this string of mischief. It makes us revel in scandalising others. This evil is widespread among the youth. It comes naturally to them, for it is a sign of ignorance. To get rid of this habit, one must devote some time, early in the day and before retiring for sleep, in exploring the mind and examining faults that have secured foothold therein. One must pray to God to save one from this tendency. When once we have won the grace of God, we can rest assured that such absurdities will not deform our character. The discriminating student can be recognised by the good company kept, the good works performed, and the good words uttered.

This is why I emphasise on many occasions,

Eyes that seek evil, ears that relish evil,
tongue that craves evil, nose that enjoys the foul,
and hands that delight in evil - these must be totally avoided.

Whoever has any of these must be avoided. Or else, one's future is bound to be disastrous. The wrongs of the five senses (indriyas) will result in the destruction of the five vital energies (pranas) and killing of the five sheaths (kosas). Of course, the senses yield momentary pleasure and joy, but, as the

saying goes, "senility lies in wait." Sensual pleasures bring about great grief quite soon.

Gain self-confidence

Students require faith in themselves, more than most other qualities. The absence of self-confidence marks the beginning of one's decline. Today, the world is facing ruin and disaster because people have lost confidence in themselves. Only self-confidence is capable of granting peace and prosperity to each person. A self-confident person receives good everywhere and is honoured in all places. Whatever they touch becomes gold.

When a person has no faith in themself, how can they place faith in others? Even when they have such faith, it cannot be sincere and firm. It is at best artificial and superficial. Such a person will not have faith in their mother, father, spouse, and children. Such a person pretends to believe, that is all. So, the person behaves treacherously and might even injure the parents.

So, self-confidence is a must for every student. Students must study books about people who stuck to justice and led straight lives. They must cultivate faith in moral codes laid down in Dharma Sastras, instead of neglecting them. The Puranas (ancient epics) provide foundational ideals for our welfare and progress.

18. Sense Control

Teachers and students

Teachers reveal the direction and the goal. Students lay the road and journey into the future. The skill and strength, the status and stature of mankind are shaped and furthered in proportion to the quality and character of its teachers. Character is the hallmark of humanity. Teachers must dedicate their learning and wisdom to the great task of uplifting pupils to higher levels of knowledge and action. The virtues that they help to inculcate in their pupils are essential for the uplift of society also. When virtues are rooted in the heart, man shines in full glory. A life without good character is a shrine without light, a coin that is counterfeit, a kite with a broken string.

Teachers who teach with the salary paid to them in their minds and students who learn with the jobs they may procure in their minds are both pursuing wrong paths. In fact, the task of the teacher is to discharge their duty of instructing and inspiring the students so that they develop their latent talents and advance in the perfection of their skills. The task of the student is to unfold the divine that is within and equip themselves for serving society with skill and knowledge.

Thought, speech, and action

People have three instruments gifted to them: the mind, which involves them in thought; the power of speech, which enables them to communicate their thoughts; and the power of action, by which they can execute their thoughts, alone or with others, for themselves and for others. The mind designs thoughts that are either helpful or harmful. The mind can lead one into bondage, into deeper involvement in desires and disappointments. It can lead one into freedom, detachment, and desirelessness. The mind is a bundle of likes and dislikes. The mind (manas) is the seat of chewing the cud of sensual and mental experiences (manana).

Reining in the mind

The mind is engaged in two activities: thinking (alochana) and inner dialogue (manasika-sambhashana).

These activities follow different lines. Thinking is intent on solving problems that present themselves before the mind. Mental dialogue multiplies the problems and confounds the solutions, causing confusion and adoption of wrong and ruinous means to solve them. The inner conversation and controversial chatter continues from morning till night, until sleep overtakes the mind. It causes ill-health and the early setting-in of old age. The topics on which the chatter is based are mostly the faults and failings of others and their fortunes and misfortunes. This perpetual dialogue is at the bottom of all miseries. It covers the mind with thick darkness. It grows wild very quick and suppresses the genuine worth of manhood.

The talk that inhabits the mind during the waking stage persists even in dreams and robs one of much-needed rest. And the sum total of all this exercise is, to speak the truth, nil. No one can call themselves full and free unless they succeed in stopping this evil.

The Upanishads announce certain remedial spiritual practices (sadhanas) to get rid of this obstacle to inner peace. The first spiritual discipline is regulation of breath (pranayama). Regulation of breath is no gymnastics, nor a formidable exercise. The mind has to concentrate on the period of retention (kumbhaka), on the process of inhaling (puraka) and exhaling (rechaka). When attention is fixed thus, the inner talk on other irrelevant matters will end. And mental strength is acquired.

The second spiritual discipline (sadhana) is: immersal in beneficial activity (karma) - that is to say, service to people that will help diminish the ego sense, acts that are good and godly. When one's thoughts are engaged in such activities, the mind turns away from the talk it indulges in.

Again, the spiritual practices (sadhanas) of listening to spiritual advice

(sravaṇa), reflection on spiritual directions (manana), and discovering ways and means of confirming faith in the Spirit (nīdi-dhyāsana), also of recital of the names of God (japa) and withdrawing the mind from sensual pursuits (tapas), have been prescribed by the scriptures more for the silencing of this mental chatter, this inner talk. They are more a preparation for attaining the Reality than for its Realisation. For it is only when the mind is cleansed and clarified that it can achieve such a profound task. Only then can the lessons taught and the experiences undergone be pure and unsullied.

Use speech properly

The second instrument that is gifted to people for uplifting themselves is speech - the use of words. Speech is charged with tremendous power. When, through speech, we communicate to a person something that upsets their balance or shocks them into grief, the words completely drain off their physical strength and mental courage.

The person falls on the ground, unable to stand. On the other hand, when, through speech, we communicate something happy or unexpectedly cheering, the person gets the strength of an elephant.

Words don't cost anything but they are priceless. So, they have to be used with care. They must be employed not for gossip, which is barren, but for pure and productive purposes only. The ancients recommended the vow of silence in order to purify speech of its evils.

A mind turned inward toward an inner vision of God and speech turned toward outer vision of the Lord - both will promote spiritual strength and success.

19. Love And Brotherhood

Happiness and misery are due to our own actions

Of the three instruments used for thinking, speaking, and action, the third instrument is the body with its hands ready to execute the thought that is expressed in words. The deed, the work, the labour in which the hand is engaged are the source of all the happiness or misery in which a person is involved. One asserts that one is happy, or that one is anxious and afraid or that one is in trouble. And one attributes the cause of these conditions to some person other than oneself. This belief rests on a wrong basis; happiness and misery are due to one's own actions.

Whether one accepts or rejects this truth, one has to go through all the consequences of one's action. This is the law of nature. One may not believe in summer or winter, in fire or rain, but one cannot escape from heat and cold.

They affect the person anyway. Therefore, the best course is to direct our activities along proper lines.

Hands are not the only limbs or agents that are involved in human activity (karma). Whatever is done, whatever is seen, whatever is heard, one should be vigilant about its purity. Thought, word, and deed must be free from pride, greed, and hatred. The words that one utters must be free from these faults; things that one yearns to hear must be free from these superficially attractive qualities; the pleasures that one seeks must not be polluted by evil.

Students must assimilate the lessons

Students must first assimilate these mental lessons and demonstrate their effect in their speech. The lessons that are taught by words must be translated by them into action.

Today, however, education does not transform the mind. It stops the listening process, through the ear. What enters the ear might not be clear to the mind; it might reach the mind only in a hazy form. So education has to be so imparted that it is received clearly by the mind. To achieve this aim, it has to be transmitted through heads, tongues, and hands that are pure, with no blemish that warps. Only then can the learning be clear and the wisdom bright.

The role of the teacher

Students study only for a few years, but teachers, in order to justify being in the profession, have to be engaged in studies always without stopping. So teachers are to be reckoned as the only genuine students. To the question who is a real student the answer is, "The teacher". The motto, "I shall be the ideal student, for my pupils to emulate," must inspire the teacher. Such a teacher has surely recognised their duty. The teacher must come down to the level of the student; if the teacher doesn't and still continues to teach, the fate of the student is best left to the imagination.

This process is called "descent". It does not mean stepping down from the top to the ground. It means only accepting the level of the person who is to be benefited. The baby on the floor cannot jump to the arms of the mother when she calls upon it to come up. "I am a great person; I can't stoop" - if the mother feels like that, she cannot possess the child. Stooping does not make a person small. Similarly, it is not demeaning for the teacher to come down to the level of the pupils in order to teach them. It is simply a laudable sign of love.

Many teachers, at the present time, have fallen into the habit of asserting. "Well! I have got ready one lesson on one topic for today. My duty is to speak on that. I will do just that and go." Have the pupils grasped the lesson aright? Which subject has to be taught in which way, through which method? These problems do not seem to bother them. Moreover they should conduct themselves just in the same manner as they advise and expect the students to behave. When they are taught the lessons through love, their reverence for

the teacher will also be deepened. Each teacher should strive to encourage the all-round development of the student. Each teacher must expand their own heart through love and not waste years in furthering their own interest.

The teacher should not cultivate divisive traits. The saints and sages (rishis) of ancient times treated their own sons and their students with equal affection. Today, we have lost faith that our teachers are of this nature.

When the principal's son is answering question papers for an examination in one hall, the principal will not be posted as invigilator there, lest he should dictate the correct answers and help his son to get good marks! But, in the hermitages of old, there would be no suspicion that the guru would show such preference or partiality. Today, corruption has crept into thought, word, and deed at all levels. Hence these precautions. Teachers have to adopt the spiritual discipline (sadhana) of purifying their emotions in order to earn the status and authority of gurus.

The true guru must lead the pupil into a worthy and happy life. And the true pupil must respond with eagerness and adoration.

Teachers are responsible for the nature and quality of the activities and character of students. For they impress the youth by their scholarship and leadership. So, they must keep clear of selfish aggrandisement and political manoeuvring and have only spiritual enlightenment as their ideal in life. The members of the teaching staff must move among themselves as brothers. Students become aware of differences and rivalries between their teachers. Of course, differences are inevitable and may even be useful. But differences shouldn't pollute mutual relations, hinder the progress of the institution, and affect adversely the processes of teaching and learning. In these fields, teachers must consult each other and cooperate with others.

Students must practise cooperation

Among students also, we don't find this spirit of singleness of purpose and fraternal cooperation. Good nature (sadbhava) and good company

(sathsanga) have become rare; mutual love and yearning for good company have weakened. "As the ruler (raja), so the ruled (praja)," says the proverb. "As the teacher, so the pupil" seems to be equally true. Teachers, therefore, have to be interested in high thinking and a life steeped in renunciation.

The expert in chemistry or physics may not know much biology. But there is every need for them all to be friendly and work as a team. For whatever the science in which one specialises, the science of the spirit, the science that leads to the ultimate truth has also to be mastered.

The basis of humanity is God

At the Atomic Research Centre, I said that everything has energy latent in it - a piece of paper has it, a strip of cloth has it. When the latent energy is exhausted, death results; when energy fills, birth happens. Being-awareness-bliss (satchidananda) is energy. We (sat) are (chit) happy (ananda). Energy is all, and energy is derived from God. That is the very basis of all people.

Now, we are building super-structures somewhere else, not on the basis. The foundational divine principle is being ignored. We are fascinated by subjects and studies that promise to feed our stomachs and make us materially happy and powerful. But the hard truth is the Divine beneath all. People must either know the supreme truth of the one Being behind all becoming or at least know the practical truth of love and brotherhood. These two points are the limits that education must ever keep in mind - the starting point and the goal.