

## CHAPTER XII

**V**id' is the root from which, by adding 'ya,' the term 'Vidya' is derived. 'Ya' means 'what' and 'Vid' means 'Light.' So, "that which gives Light" is Vidya. This is the basic meaning of the word. Therefore, it is evident that *Brahma* Vidya alone deserves to be known as Vidya. Knowledge was considered Light and Ignorance as Darkness by the ancients. Just as light and darkness cannot coexist at the same time in the same place, Vidya and Avidya cannot be together. So, all who journey along the path of progress have to purify their consciousness and illumine their selves through *Brahma* Vidya.

In the section on Vibhuthi Yoga, the Gita informs us: "*Adhyaatma Vidya Vidyaanaam*," "I am," the Lord declares, "*Adhyaatma* Vidya (the *Brahma* Vidya) among all Vidyas!" All other Vidyas or knowledge systems are as rivers; *Adhyaatma* Vidya is as the ocean. As all rivers find

their fulfilment when they merge in the ocean, even so all Vidyas join the ocean of Adhyaatma Vidya as their ultimate goal. This is not all. When the 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 Vidyas concerned with the objective external world renounce their individual names and forms when they arrive at the confluence with the vast Ocean of *Brahma Vidya*.

“*Vidya thapobhyaam Poothaatma*”—“By means of Vidya and Thapas, man is transformed into a purified soul.” Vidya can be considered as having two aspects: *Baahya* (external) Vidya and *Brahma Vidya*. *Baahya* Vidya provides the wherewithal for human livelihood. Man can study many subjects, earn valuable degrees, acquire higher and higher jobs, and manage to spend his life with no worry and fear. This type of Vidya helps man, whatever the job he is raised to, whether a peon or a Prime Minister. *Brahma Vidya*, on the other hand, endows all human beings with the strength which enables them to discharge successfully the duty they owe to themselves. It lays down the path which leads both to joy in worldly relations and bliss in the life beyond. Therefore, *Brahma Vidya* is far superior to all the Vidyas available on earth to man. *Brahma Vidya* has the divine potency to liberate everyone from bondage. *Baahya* Vidya has no such potency. *Brahma Vidya* makes you aware of the Omniself, the Absolute, the Parabrahman; Thapas enables you to merge with That. Vidya is the process of

acquiring knowledge; Thapas is the known. The first is indirect, it is the means. The second is the goal, the end.

Guru means literally the “big” person, the “great” person. That is to say, the guru must have mastered these two, Vidya and Thapas. When one desires to wash off from the clothes he wears the dirt it has accumulated, he needs both soap and clean water. So too, when one is anxious to remove the dirt that has stuck to the mind, both Vidya and Thapas are essential. 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 man can be rendered holy or purified without Vidya and Thapas.

Thapas 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, and emaciating one’s body, holding the nose to regulate breath. NO. Physical actions, oral assertions and mental resolves—all three have to be in unison. The thought, the speech and the act all have to be pure. This is the real Thapas. And they have to be co-ordinated not by the compulsion of duty. The effort must be undertaken for satisfying one’s inner yearnings, for the contentment of the self. This struggle is the essence of Thapas.

The Gita depicts the ideal guru and the ideal *sishtya*—the pupil is the *Adhikaramurthi* and the Preceptor is the

*Avataramurthi*. Arjuna has earned the right to learn; Krishna has come as Man to teach man. The pupil is *Narothama* (the best of men); the Preceptor is *Purushothama* (the best among Physical Embodiments). The pupil wields the bow; the guru wields the secret of all skills, Yoga. He is *Yogeswara* (Lord of Yoga). Arjuna is *Dhanurdhar* (wielder of bows). When these two meet, Vidya is transformed into *Brahma Vidya*.

The pupil, Arjuna, after imbibing the teachings of Krishna, said, “*Karishye Vachanam thava*,” “I shall do as you command.” He threw away now, not his bow named Gaandeeva, but his great big ego itself, the *Ahamkara* that was deluding him. The Guru was the *Sutradhaari*—the Director of the play. The Sishya, Arjuna, was the *Pathradhaari* (the character in the play). The sishya should not be proud that he has been entrusted with a duty; for as long as you are conceited, you cannot get a guru. When the guru accepts you, your pride will disappear.

One should not feel great or be proud when he gives his all and boasts of his sense of renunciation. The real renunciation is to give oneself away. Then, the guru will grant him freedom to follow his own will, as Krishna did. “Beloved Arjuna! *Yathechchasi, thathaa kuru*.” “As you will, so you act. Think well. And do as you like,” Krishna told him. He meant that He had given him all the advice he needed and He had also accepted the ego Arjuna had discarded. And so, Arjuna can now be granted freedom to

act as he wills, for his will has become His. The individual who has reached that level has to be given freedom. The guru should not mercilessly order his sishya about simply because the sishya has dedicated himself and his all to him. The greedy guru and the indolent disciple—both fall into perdition. The guru should not turn into *Vitthaapahaari*, a person who steals wealth; he should be a *Hridayapahari*, a person who steals hearts! The guru has to be an alarm timepiece. He must wake up those who are enveloped in the sleep of ignorance and reward them with teachings on Atmajnana, the knowledge of their Atmic Reality.

A traveller 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 cast his eyes all around. He saw two men squatting under a tree at a little distance from where he stood. He walked towards 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 preceptor who has not mastered the Sastras, which are the repositories of the experience gained by seekers in the past, is represented in this story by the man. And the lame person represents the person who has not put the knowledge into practice and gained personal experience. In

fact, knowledge of the Sastras and experience gained by its practical application—these two make a full man. Only such a Guru can save the sishya by his instruction and example. This is the conclusion expounded in the *Mundakopanishad*.

Even more difficult than getting a good sishya is the task of securing a good guru. Only when a real guru accepts them can the sishyas become exemplary persons. Pure-hearted students, unselfish students, non-egoistic students—when such aspirants approach them, the gurus exult in ecstatic delight. Parikshith, the Emperor, renounced everything and decided to realise God, and, right at that moment, Maharshi Suka appeared, to guide him straight to his goal. Similarly, when the good sishyas get the good gurus, they succeed not only in attaining Bliss but also in conferring peace, prosperity and joy upon the entire world.