

CHAPTER - XV

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 Sutra of 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. That is not 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 Yajna or Sacrifice. As trees do not eat their fruits but offer them to be eaten by others in an attitude of detachment, as rivers, without drinking the waters they carry, quench the thirst and cool the heat from which others suffer, as cows offer their milk, produced primarily for their calves, in a spirit of generosity born of *Tyaga* (renunciation), to be shared by others, so too should those who have acquired Vidya 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 egoism in his thoughts, at any time. However, the misfortune is that scholars as a class are today afflicted with unbounded egoism. 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 *sajjans* 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. To promote the best interest of mankind, one has to cultivate the holy urge of *paropakaaram* (service to others) and the attitude of sharing.

The parrot talk, “Service to Man is Service to God” (*Manava seva is Madhava seva*) does not extend to all men. Those who reel off this axiom do not inquire who are the men 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. Man 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.

Nara is Narayana. Man is God. Every single act of Man has to be elevated as an act of service to God. But

students today do not know what exactly is Narayana and what exactly is Nara. How can a person claim to be educated when he cannot identify the Nara-Narayana Principle? They are the entities denoted by the Upanishads as ‘*Thwam*’ and ‘*Thath*,’ “you” and “That.” He who has not become aware of these two cannot claim to have known himself. The 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 not only serve 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. For 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.

While dealing with uncultured folk, one has to exercise caution. So too, with ungrateful fellows who forget the good done to them. 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. He must manifest his natural virtue of detachment and practise his characteristic attitude of helpfulness.

Protecting one’s Motherland is a noble duty. It is the primary duty of each student. The student cannot claim to

have learned much unless he is able to discover and discharge what his duty is and what his immediate role should be, when circumstances call for such decisions. The educated man 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. Whether a person is a master of all sciences or famous as a great intellectual, he is certain to be counted out of scholars and pundits if he has no humility and discipline in his dealings with others. Such persons 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. Artlessness and simplicity alone earn honour. 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 for serving others.

Some persons 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

in him will lead an unassuming life. But he who has not derived genuine education and the strength it can confer lives in pomp and pride. He struggles much to hide his defects from being known to others. And in the end, the struggles do not succeed. He meets with double ruin—he does not experience Ananda nor does he impart Ananda to others. He becomes the target of ridicule.

Therefore, do not allow the desire for ostentation to enter the mind. Do not allow egotism to approach you. Be humble and be loyal to high ideals. Then only can you serve the cause of world peace and prosperity. “*Sreyaasthe Viswasreyah.*” It is only when the individual succeeds in being good that the world too can become good. One who is eager to be a real student must place before himself the ideal of world peace and prosperity. He has to be unpretentious. He must vow to be of service to others. This is the essence of true education or Vidya.