

## CHAPTER - XVI

**T**he student seeking Vidya must possess kindness, compassion and love towards all living beings. Kindness to all beings should be his very nature. If it is absent, he becomes a boor. Vidya means, more than everything else, the quality of compassion towards living beings. If a person bears ill-will against any being, his education has no meaning. The advice given in the Gita, “*Adweshta Sarva Bhoothanam,*” “with no ill-will towards all or any being,” conveys the same message. In the same manner, the Gita warns off and on that any insult or injury or even neglect directed against any living being is an act that insults, injures or neglects the Divine. “*Sarva Jeeva thiraskaaram Kesavam prathigachchathi.*” Love and compassion must not be limited to mankind only. They must enfold every living being.

The Gita says, “*Sunee chaiva svapakecha, pandithah sama darsinah.*” That is to say, the learned man who has acquired humility through Vidya must deal with equal compassion and consideration the cow, the Brahmin, the elephant, the dog and the eater of dog-flesh. 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 Vidya. The narrow vision that is limited to the community has to be given up. Bharathiya culture emphasises the highest truth, the broadest vision. Imparting this ideal is the purpose of Vidya, as laid down in Bharath. No other country has placed before its people such a lofty all-inclusive, beneficial ideal.

This day, the country is facing ruin because this ideal has been neglected, Vidya 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 learnt from books has to be confirmed and corrected by practising it in social living. Then only can the knowledge of the kinship between man and man be gained. Thereby learning is transformed into Vidya. Vidya cannot be acquired by merely mastering reading, writing and arithmetic.

Each student must, after intelligent inquiry, decide for his guidance 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.

Students have to pay great attention to another important quality—cleanliness, both outer and inner. When

either of these is absent, that person becomes useless for any task. The clothes he wears, the books he reads and the environment around him 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, the 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. They may develop causing infections to others. And one's condition will be rendered miserable. 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 he resides must be free from stink. The student must be able to draw on himself the love of all. The room where the student resides and the adjacent area must be kept clean. 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.

However rich a person may be, he cannot be happy without health, he cannot derive full joy from the riches he owns. A meal makes him exhausted; without a meal, he

feels weak. Thus he plods on without ever being happy. So, external cleanliness promotes health and happiness.

Next, we shall 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 course of action is being followed, by some who are ours; so, we shall follow that course ourselves.” 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 men, moving about as educated persons, yet stupidly following others as sheep do and polluting the minds with ideas borrowed from the lips of others are things 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 be able always 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, jealousy and the evil deeds they lead us into. A student must cultivate wide, inclusive feelings. Then only is he entitled to acquire the higher learning. Then only can he earn respect in society. He must keep far away from narrow, selfish thoughts, feelings and plans.