

Chapter 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.