



Amritha Vani

They speak of two types of *karma* [action]: *dehika* and *daivika* (physical and spiritual). But this division is absurd and even dangerous. All acts and activities are spiritual, the body is but an instrument for spiritual progress and attainment. Modern education emphasizes the physical and neglects the spirit, which is crucial. It teaches that joy derived through the senses alone are worthwhile. It does not give even a glimpse of the deeper and more lasting joy derivable through the spirit that is your real self, and it is, in essence, *ananda*, *shanti*, *jnana*—*sathyam*, *shivam*, *sundaram* (bliss, peace, spiritual knowledge—truth, goodness, and beauty).

You must have noticed that I never address you as '*Bhaktulaara*' for how can you be only that? You are *Bhagavan*, you become that by just shedding the *avidya* (ignorance) that makes you imagine that you are limited. That is why I address you either as *Shanti-swarupulaara* or *Ananda-swarupulaara* or *Divyatma-swarupulaara* (embodiments of peace or bliss or divine soul). That is your real nature, but you are not even told who you are. Your misery is traceable to this failure to know yourself.

Educators today do not teach the ways and means of crossing the sea of misery, of facing success and defeat, of remaining calm and collected. The brain is stuffed with information, the hands are trained in skills, but the senses are not tamed, the intelligence is not curbed, the mind is allowed to run amok. That is the cause of the tragic crisis in the world today.

Do karma full of joy and enthusiasm

You have been born in this *karmakshetra* (land of spiritual activity) and your duty is to engage yourself in continuous uninterrupted *karma*. Do not be bogged in gloom and sloth; do *karma* full of joy and enthusiasm, as if each act is an offering at the feet of the Lord. *Bharat desh* (India) is the *Guru-peetham* (seat of the spiritual teacher) of humanity. That is the role it has played and must play. But as a consequence of undue attachment to the senses and the world, fostered by blind admiration and snobbish imitation, the role has been forgotten, to the great loss of ourselves and of the rest of humanity. The restrictions, regulations, and rules of guidance for individual, family, community, nation, and humanity are either not remembered or brushed aside as obsolete. The joy, peace, and contentment that one gets by observing them are themselves witnesses of their worth.

The *Pundits* and scholars who have assembled here for the *Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha* being inaugurated now have therefore a great responsibility for

they must hold fast to the *prasanthi* (total peace) that the study and practice of the *Vedas* and *Shastras* [scriptures] has conferred upon them. They must also share that *prasanthi* with all humanity. They must be bold, free, and happy always, for they know that this is all an unreal dream. They know the goal of life and they are marching steadily toward it with every passing minute.

Grief is the greatest friend of man

All that is *padartha* (matter) must be transformed into *paraartha* (spirituality); that is My plan. The *jnana* that the *Vedas* and *Shastras* have given to these people must be distributed. At present these scholars have no self-confidence because they are losing faith in what they themselves have hitherto considered invaluable. They send their children to technical courses and secular studies, for they are heavily pinched for the means of livelihood. What is the good in having an umbrella that allows the Sun to burn you and the rain to soak you, they have started asking! But the *Vedic* treasure house has vast riches, which are urgently needed today. It is to conserve, develop, and utilize it more fully that this *Sabha* [assembly] is inaugurated now.



The *Vedas* are the basis of *dharma*, which is like the Mother in its loving care for man. *Bharatabhumi* (India) is *Yoga Bhumi*, *Karma Bhumi*, *Tyaga Bhumi*, not *Bhoga Bhumi* (land of spiritual union, spiritual activity, renunciation, and not a land of enjoyment). The Kauravas failed because they stuck to empire and greed for power and fixed their minds on *bhoga* (enjoyment). The Pandavas secured Divine guidance and won because they stuck to spiritual joy, ascetic self-control, simplicity, and sincerity. To follow the same path is the sign of wisdom. That is the Path of *dharma* (virtue) from which mankind has strayed away. Grief is the greatest friend of man, for it opens the eyes and shocks you into the search for the secret of *shanti* and *santosh* (peace and happiness contentment).

There is no need for tears or despair

A monkey put its hand into a pot of nuts and tightened its fist full of the food, but it could not take its hand out of the narrow neck because the fist was too big for it.

Unless the nuts were dropped back into the pot and the fingers released, the hand could not be got out! That is the situation of man today. His greed is giving him great pain, but he has not discovered the fact; so, he clings to his possessions and tries to pull his hand out; that gives him great pain. There is no use blaming the nuts or the pot. The fault is in the monkey itself. *Prakriti* (nature) is the pot, and the sensory objects are the nuts.

A bird sits on a tiny twig in perfect confidence! Where does it get the confidence from? Not from the twig, but from the wings that can take it aloft at the slightest sign of danger. The twig is *prakrithi* (objective world), sit on it lightly, gaily, confidently; but rely more on the wings, namely the Grace of the Lord who can lift you aloft, away from *prakriti* at the slightest premonition of danger. The twig is not very reliable, but the wings are always there to save you.

The revival of that *dharma* is a task that the rulers have not planned for; it is a program that the people are not keen upon. Then who must take it up? It was said that I have taken up this Form in answer to the prayers of *Sadhus* (noble souls) and others. There are some mothers who feed the baby only when it starts crying; the more considerate and loving type of mother knows when the baby is hungry; she need not be called to its side by a loud wail. This Mother is that type of Mother. I have come because I felt I had to come. I resolved upon this. There is no need now for tears or despair either among the repositories of the *Vedic* wisdom or among the good, who suffer from the cruel winds of *adharma* (vice). This campaign will succeed; it will not fail. The welfare of the world will be ensured through the fostering of the Godly everywhere, and more particularly of these reservoirs of the ancient wisdom of this land.

Love is God. God is Love. Where there is Love, there God is certainly evident. Love more and more people, love them more and more intensely; transform the love into service, transform the service into worship; that is the highest sadhana [spiritual effort].

~Sathya Sai Baba

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 3

Shankara's Advaita

The *Arishadvargas* (the six enemies of Man) get a foothold in his mind because it is filled with the darkness of *ajnana* [ignorance]. They are nocturnal birds like bats and owls that cannot tolerate light. Darkness will not flee if you throw stones at it; nor will it disappear if you lay about it with a sword or shoot it with a gun. It will be destroyed only when a lamp is lit. [Sage] Shankara taught this simple truth to many who were ignorant of this simple fact. The people of this country were lost in the pursuit of many goals because their vision was blurred by darkness. Shankara

taught them that the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Shastras* had but One in view, the One-without-a-second, *Advaita*.

Shankara, when quite a young boy, was one day offering *puja* [prayers] to Devi, the household deity, because his father was away and he had asked him to perform worship in his absence. He placed milk before the image and prayed pathetically that She should sip the milk, as he imagined She was wont to do when his father did the *puja*. He wept so sincerely that Mother melted at his wailing and drank the entire quantity! Shankara had seen his father distribute the milk that was offered to the Mother, a tiny spoonful to every member of the family. But since the cup was emptied in one quaff by Her, nothing remained. The boy feared that he would be blamed for drinking what was the share of the others. So, he wailed again. Devi felt great pity at the plight of Shankara, who had taken the image to be alive, and who had compelled Her already to manifest Herself from it. But she did not pour milk out of Her palm, as I do; she pressed Her maternal breasts and filled the cup. Shankara's *avedana*, his anguished yearning, had succeeded in making Devi respond!

Beginners only need image worship

Similarly, the other day Sri Ramamurthy, who is sitting among you here, shouted, "Swami" in sincere faith and agony. His wife was writhing in pain because her clothes had caught fire. She was too panic-stricken to call out My Name. But this cry was heard by Me. I hurried to the spot, which is, as you say, 400 miles away; I crumpled the fire out before it was too late.

Shankara worshipped images in childhood, and he knew the value of *Saguna-swarupa* (God as endowed with qualities). He advised *Saguna aradhana* (worship of the Form) to the large majority of people even later in his life. Little children must be taught with the help of slates and boards on which illustrations are drawn. Temples, images, and pictures are the slates and boards for the children in spiritual progress. But if you play with a toy elephant, you cannot derive the experience of contacting the real one. The Formless can be conceived only when you have transcended the Form.



Shankara's *advaita* is the ultimate truth

When Shankara thought of renouncing the world (in order to get the authority to educate it), he felt that his mother's consent had to be taken for the step. So while bathing in the Poorna River near his house, he cried out one day that a crocodile had caught his leg. It was true, for the crocodile was, as in the Gajendra *moksha* story, only *samsara* (worldly life) called by that name, sensual desire, to put it in other words. When the mother came rushing to the bank of the river, he told her that the crocodile would let him off only if he took *sanyasa*, became a monk! This was also true, for renunciation, detachment, giving up worldly ties, is the means of saving oneself from bondage. The bewildered mother agreed, and the boy left home to seek his guru, and through him the secret of liberation.

Shankara lived only for 32 years, but during that time he purified and consolidated the various schools of worship and brought them under the over-all care of one philosophical principle, *advaita* (non-dualism).

The *Mahavakyas* (the great statements on Supreme Reality) of the *Vedas* once again began ringing in the hearts of all, with their true meaning. *Aham Brahmasmi; Thath-thwam-asi; Prajnanam Brahma* (I am Brahman; Thou art That; consciousness is Brahman)—all were explained in simple, convincing logic, in sweet captivating poetry. Shankara's *advaita* is the ultimate truth, and so it is only confirmed, not shaken by the discoveries of science or the flights of intellect. It speaks of the unity of matter and energy; of time and space, of the Universe being but Brahman seen through the veil of *maya* [illusion], which, too, is but an activity of the primordial.

Shankara knew that *advaita* requires intense *sadhana* (spiritual effort) that will remove all trace of ego, all idea of duality, from the mind of man. So as a preparatory discipline to the dawn of the awareness of one's real unity with the substance of the Universe, he taught the rules of *yoga* and *bhakti* [devotion] and *karma*. These, according to him, will brighten the intellect, cleanse the emotions and purify the heart. *Advaita* is the awareness of the Divine in everything, everywhere, in full measure.

Shankara suggested *sathsang* (good company) as the very first step in *sadhana*. The company of the wise and the good will develop into detachment and love of silence and solitude. That will promote the disappearance of *moha* (delusion), which according to Arjuna [son of Pandava], was the fruit of listening to the *Gita*. When that happens, one is established steadily in the Tat-twam, the reality of this and that, the identity of this with that. Well, the recognition of that identity is the attainment of *mukti* (liberation).

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 3

Your Mercy

Before I had the luck
or as I see it now
Your Mercy
came down on me
like the star-light
penetrating through
the encircling gloom
I little knew
what form to meditate.

The gods of my fathers
were all there
all lying transfixed
in a death-like trance
inert, unresponsive
like fragments of a phantom.

All came alive
on a sudden
each rising afresh
shaking off the dust of ages
restored to his pristine glory
when in the star-light
of Your Mercy
flashed forth as forms
through which you, my Swami,
had manifested yourself.

Such an impregnable rock
is thrown up out of the quick-sands.
My lost gods are recovered for me.

Behind my closed eyes
blossoms out a world
rich with the fragrance
of lotus-feet
the twang of the arrow
the enchanting flute-melody
the effulgence of the swan-borne
goddess, her fingers playing at Vina,
the drum, the trident,
the snake-roll, the crescent
of Shiva the androgynous.

~Dr. P. P. Sharma, Kanpur

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Nov. 1981

Baba and the Bees

The other day here in Prasanthi Nilayam I was listening to a story about Baba being told by Mr. Kasturi to a group of us Westerners. The story related to a cat who called on Baba in distress and how He came to its help. It moved me very much as I am an animal lover, and especially fond of cats; our family has seven of them. So I decided to share this animal story of my own, or rather insect story.

About seven years ago, while living in the beautiful mountains of Idyllwild, California, this miracle happened. Idyllwild is a place that has many bees, especially wasps called yellow backs, a dangerous stinging variety. Most people living in these mountains are dreadfully afraid of them, but I was not. In fact, I used to put out every day a plate of left-over fruit for them to enjoy—a habit my husband did not appreciate! Often, he would complain that the plate was too near the house, then I would go out and move it, fruit and bees further away, telling him a little egoistically: "I am not afraid of them, I have contacted their spirit, and they will never sting me. Anyway, Sai Baba is protecting me!"

Weee! When one makes a bold statement like that, better watch out, for the ears of Baba are everywhere, and He might decide to test the statement.

Which is just what He did!

I had known about Baba for two years but had not yet had the blessed chance to see His physical form. I did, however, firmly believe in His Divinity and Omnipresence! Some days later I was invited to a children's party, to which I went alone. When the festivities were over and I was about to leave, loud terrified screaming was heard from outside the back of the house. Everyone rushed to the wide windows to see what was wrong, and there we saw two small children running to the house pursued and surrounded by a thick cloud of furious bees—yellow backs! There must have been at least 200 of them.

The children had found and broken open one of their hives and the bees were taking their revenge! All the party guests, including myself, seemed to be rooted to the floor.

Only the mother rushed out into the holocaust to save her little ones. No one else dared! Then a big man ventured out, coming back almost immediately with several stings. The back door was closed tightly to keep the bees from swarming inside. From the safety of the windows, all watched the mother strike out at the bees helplessly, only making them angrier... Then I heard it, that still small voice inside, which I had come to identify as Baba. It said, "Go out and help that poor mother and children, I will be with you," I stared at the scene before me in horror, my faith in having made friends with the spirit of bees having fled. The small Voice insisted, so I found myself opening the door and stepping out into the middle of the flying,

buzzing storm. A moment of terror rushed through me from my toes right up and out of the top of my head. I closed my eyes and prayed: "Baba if ever I needed you, it's now, please come here!"

In that very same instant, He was there! I felt His cool, peaceful presence surround me, and the whole area! Finding the hysterical mother almost hidden by the swarming wasps, I grabbed her wildly flaying arms and shouted so as to be heard above the ominous droning.



"Be calm now, God is with us, He has come to help us." I had never met this woman before, nor she me, for all I know.

She stared into my eyes and became calm. Together we caught hold of the children and began to strip off their clothes, to which dead, half-dead and live bees were clinging.

We both spoke gently to the children, and I also talked to the wasps, begging them to be calm and not to sting any more. Their stings had caused numerous ugly swellings on the faces, arms, and legs of the children, some of them bleeding badly and were giving a lot of pain also.

We plucked bees out of their hair, eyes, nose, mouth, somehow getting them clear-

ed enough to enter the house and into the bathroom. As we bathed them, they cried with pain, and indeed their small bodies were a mess!

I prayed again silently to Baba to help the poor little things, and then a great miracle occurred, for before our astonished eyes all the swellings, the ugly lumps, began to fade away and with them all the pain went, too!

The mother and I looked at each other in amazement, neither of us having suffered even one sting ourselves.

When it was all over; and the children, smiling now, were wrapped in towels, I said to the mother, "I believe that your children have had a divine healing, but if you have any doubt at all you'd better take them to a hospital for treatment."

As most of you readers will know, bee stings can be deadly! She answered me, with tears of joy pouring down her face! "I know I have just seen a miracle; I need no hospital!"

We smiled at each other, simply 'knowing'! Then she said quietly, "I have never met you, but I have heard about you, and that you follow a holy man who lives in India; was it He you prayed to for help?" "Yes, It was," I told her.

"Will you write his name for me and somewhere I can buy books about him; and where I can write to him. I would like to thank him for saving my children." I gave her this information and left through the front door, as the back one was still being guarded by the unsatisfied yellow backs.

I am sure Baba the God of Bees, too, had called another devotee, and in his own inimitable way!

—Maria St. John, California

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1981

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Baba Answers

Question: Swami! Excuse me. A person observing you moving amongst people and choosing some of them for special attention is puzzled why some are left out.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. It is quite natural that you are puzzled. One looking from the outside cannot know who is worthy and who is not.

Question: People say that they are often punished by Swami. Is that a fact?

Sri Sathya Sai: Of course. In punishing a person for misdemeanor, Swami wants to correct the defaulter. But, though harsh in appearance, at other times He is all Love inside. Sometimes He corrects a person in private, at other times He does so in public. For, if He corrects in public, all who hear will learn and see for themselves what pleases Swami and what does not. Swami is very strict in His principles and rules. An *Avatar* does not compromise. To the *sadhaka*, strictness is ultimately the best kindness.

Question: Yes, Swami. Persons near you have to be perfect.

Sri Sathya Sai: People judge Swami by the conduct and behavior, the earnestness and sincerity, the generosity and humility of those 'near' Him. So, those who are outwardly 'distant' are not apparently dealt with so severely. But even they are watched and warned. Depending on the situation, I can be soft as a rose petal or hard as diamond.

Question: Swami is the motivator of the individual; I have heard you say it. I know it is true. How then do persons commit faults?

Sri Sathya Sai: Swami is the 'I' in you and in everyone else. The 'I' that prompts you to will, to think, and act is the reflection of the 'I' that I am. The Sun is reflected in water, wherever it lies, whatever its quality. The Sun warms the water it shines upon. When the reflection is in muddy water, we say the person is *tamasic*—dull, slothful, stupid, fond of darkness, reveling in ignorance. When the Sun is reflected in water that is quivering in ripples, the person is *rajasic*, passionate adventurous, emotional. When the Sun is reflected in clear calm limpid water, the person is *satwic*, calm, unruffled, full of peace and inner joy.

Question: Many Gurus teach, "All is done by the Lord, and not by you." But the world over, there is the concept that man is responsible for his actions.

Sri Sathya Sai: As long as you believe you are only human, this concept will persist. But that cannot change the truth—"You are God."

Question: We do not will to be human, and not God!

Sri Sathya Sai: No, you do not. It is just a matter of being confused. It is a delusion. At present, there is in you a mixture of five states of consciousness: the unconscious, the subconscious, the conscious, the super conscious, and the Divine Consciousness, where God alone *IS*. When you raise yourselves from one state to another, the idea of your being *merely human* will vanish of itself. The *Gita* [Song of the Lord] teaches man first to engage himself in 'work'; then he is asked to 'give up the desire to earn the fruits of work'; later he is told that *dharma* [righteousness] is his only concern; afterward, *dharma* is interpreted as *dharma* for liberation; finally, he is told that even the desire for liberation is to be given up. 'Be attached to Me alone', is the final lesson. You do not *will* to be human; you are *mised* to believe so.

Question: Pardon a question that borders on the personal. Swami seems, to us, to have different moods; what does this mean?

Sri Sathya Sai: I am not hurt by any type of questions; in fact, I want you to be free of all doubt. Remember, Swami is always happy. He is always Bliss. No worries, no concerns can affect the Bliss.

Question: Yes. Swami is often heard saying, 'Yes. Yes. Yes'.

Sri Sathya Sai: Your tendency is to say 'Yes' to that which is pleasing to you, and 'No' if the prospect is otherwise. Swami says, 'Yes. Yes. Yes.' to everything that comes. For, everything is My gift; everything is good for the person, at the time, for the purpose I have in view.

Question: Considering the task that Swami has undertaken, it is strange that You are always in Bliss.

Sri Sathya Sai: The boat glides over the flood; but does not allow the flood to enter it. On Swami's shoulders alone rests an ever-increasing burden. The problems and sorrows of millions of people; the institutions and individuals who turn to Him for guidance; the interviews, the prayers, the petitions. On the mental level, unknown to you, I am with all who yearn for God, no matter where they actually are, over the entire world.

I am by the side of seekers, saints, *yogis*, *rishis*, everywhere, watching them, counselling them, fostering every sign of progress toward God and Self-realization. But the Bliss in Me is constant, unchanging. Even outwardly, My Bliss can be noted as constant, even while I may appear angry, impatient, aloof, or distant. The anger is put on just to set right some situation; the aloofness is assumed for the particular time and place. My Love is as constant as My Bliss.

Question: Those saints, *rishis*, and sages, do they pray for counsel? Is not praying the same as begging? If we are God, we beg only from ourselves.

Sri Sathya Sai: It is not begging when you ask God for something. When you receive what He gives, you have to rise up to His level, at least for that moment. When you beg from one equal to you, you put yourselves down and he is raised up. When you beg from one lower than you, you degrade yourself still lower. But when you beg from God, you rise; you are elevated in spirit and you sense fulfillment.

Question: But I had thought that since God knows all, He would remedy the situation if it is appropriate that it should be done.

Sri Sathya Sai: Of course, He would, provided you have surrendered fully, without any reservation. But until then...

Question: Yes. Swami had written in a letter to me, "Do not worry about your health. Your God is always with you, in you, and around you."

Sri Sathya Sai: That is right. What I said is enough for those who have surrendered! You must weaken your sense of identification with the body. You may have a headache today, a stomachache tomorrow. Don't worry. You are not the body; no;

you are the *atma* [soul], the divine dweller in this body. Once I have told you not to worry, there is no more need to ask Me about it. Don't identify.

Question: Swami said that while praying to God, the petitioner raised himself to the level of God. In order to make such a prayer, in what state of mind should one first put himself?

Sri Sathya Sai: It is not necessary that one should put oneself into any particular state of meditation.

Question: Usually, the advice is that one should go to a quiet place and be in a quiet mood when he wishes to pray.

Sri Sathya Sai: Wherever and whenever you put yourselves in touch with God, that is the state of meditation. You may feel that 1 P. M. in California is not a good time to call Me, for I may be asleep in India and that I should not be disturbed! I know you have felt like that once or twice. But I am omnipresent; I have no such limitations. I never sleep. At the middle of the night, I turn off the light and rest in bed because if the light is on, devotees will gather. I have no need of sleep. But you need at least four hours of sleep.

Question: If I am walking in the street with people around, and my mind engaged with things I must do, is that a good time?

Sri Sathya Sai: At the beginning, one might need some special circumstances for clearing the mind of junk and concentrate on God; but when you become aware of God in everything and everywhere, no matter where you are, it is the same; prayer can emerge from the heart and reach God.

Question: Swami! You have said that in meditation one should strive to cut off the Form aspect. But we worship your Form and like it. We pray to that Form.

Sri Sathya Sai: That is the right thing to do; but, later, when visualization is abandoned, you come closer. Now, you are looking at Me directly.

Question: Swami! When they heard of Krishna's death, many *Gopis* [milk maidens] fell lifeless from the shock. So their relationship was only with the Form of Krishna, it seems.

Sri Sathya Sai: No. The *Gopis* had both relationships. Because of their years of close companionship, they were strongly attached with the physical Presence. But they also knew Krishna in their hearts as their Innermost Reality. They always felt He was with them, even when His worldly activity took Him far away, physically.

Question: Then why the terrible shock? If Krishna was so firmly imprinted on their hearts?

Sri Sathya Sai: Their only reason for placing any value on the body was that Krishna was also in physical existence! When Krishna left, they had no more interest in the world!

Question: One last question, Swami! On behalf of America. Will Swami come soon?

Sri Sathya Sai: My coming will delay until a base is built in America. However, I can go to America or any other continent informally any time. The devotee need only call Me; I will appear at once.

—From the Notebook of John Hislop
Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1974

Thought of the MONTH

Mastering two fields of Knowledge

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?" 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 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 realizes 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.

~Vidya Vahini, Culture of Dharma

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 color. 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* (*atma-jnana*)—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.

~Vidya Vahini, Knowledge of Self

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