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EDUCATION

MAHATMA DEVESH BHIKSHU



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THE ESSENCE OF THE GITA

- ◇ The soul is immortal. It does not take birth. Nor does it die. Nobody can kill you. Then why feel worried? or fear anybody?
- ◇ Whatever happened in the past was for the good. Whatever is happening now is also for the good. Whatever will happen in the future will be for the good too. Hence do no repent over the past. Do not worry for the future just think of the present progress.
- ◇ What have you lost for which you weep? What is there that you brought with you but have now lost? What is there that you produced but has now perished ? You did not bring anything to this world. Whatever you have, you had it only here. Whatever you have given, you have given it only here. Whatever you have taken, it is from Him, the Almighty. Whatever you rendered, it was rendered into Him. Empty-handed you came and empty-handed you will go. Whatever is yours today was somebody else's yesterday and will be somebody else's tomorrow. You take delight in the illusion that it belongs to you. Alas, this illusory happiness is at the root of all your suffering.
- ◇ Change is the law of the universe. What you deem as death is, in reality, life. A moment can turn you into a millionaire: another can reduce you to a pauper. Free you-remind from such thoughts as 'this is mine this yours', 'this is ,this petty' and the shackles that hold you captive will "collapse. Then everything will belong to you, and you to everyone.
- ◇ Neither you belong to the body nobody to you. The body is constituted by the five elements: earth, water, air, fire and vacuum. After death, it disintegrate and return to these elements. The soul, however, is eternal and unchangeable. What are 'you the soul or the body?
- ◇ Surrender yourself to the will of Cod. He is the best anchor. He who knows about this anchor gets liberated from fear, anxiety and sorrow for ever. Dedicate all your actions to Cod. It will enable you to experience the happiness of a truly liberated one. —Lord Krishna

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PREFACE

The aim and purpose of education and learning are to mould an individual into human-being, so that with the knowledge acquired, he or she is able to fulfil the role befitting the status bestowed by God amongst the creatures of the world.

This book gives some glimpses of the Vedic era, when everyone enjoyed peace and tranquillity because of the Varna-Ashrama system prevalent in the society, wherein more emphasis was laid on the spiritual side of life, which was really responsible in making a balanced Man.

With blessings,

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1

Origin and Aim

Vedas are the fountainhead of all true knowledge and learning. They are the original source, which were given to us by God Almighty at the time of the Creation, not only for the benefit of the mankind, but in the interest of the entire Universe, So that this world can be made beautiful by human-beings through the knowledge so obtained and practised. This is quite logical, because we call Him our creator and father. Then how could it be that He would just create human-beings and leave them quite ignorant? Even an ordinary man tries his best to educate his children by all means at his disposal. And God, Who is Almighty, acted accordingly by putting at the disposal of the human race all true knowledge, embedded in the Vedas. That is why Mahrishi Patanjali in his famous book Yoga-Shastra says–

सग्नं पूर्वोत्तमपि गुरु कालेनानवच्छेदात् ।

He, *i.e.*, God, is the only our first and prime teacher, Who remains unaffected by time also, as it is He, Who has created time as well. If God would have left the mankind ignorant and at the mercy of the Nature, then He could not be called just and a good father.

So, it is through the Vedas that all knowledge, whether of material science or of spiritual science, has come to us. But some people may doubt the veracity of this statement and to them. I would request to go through a book, known as ‘Rig-vedadibhasya Bhumika’ written by Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati’. In this book, you will find chapters on Mathematics and aeroplanes, amongst others. This book was written by Mahrishi in his life-time, about 1875, since

he himself left the world in 1883. And as is well known to all now, the first pioneers of aeroplane were the Wright Brothers, who tried their first experiment in 1902-1903 or thereabout Mahrishi, has quoted verses from the Vedas on Algebra, Geometry and many other scientific subjects in this book, though he never had any knowledge of English. Of course, he was well-versed in Sanskrit, besides Gujarati, his mother-tongue, and Hindi. This should set all doubts at rest.

As already stated, the aim of education is to get all knowledge, so that the purpose of life is fulfilled and a healthy society is established, where all can live happily in peace, doing their respective duties honestly and truthfully. In other words, the purpose of true education is the all-round development of a person, not only physically and mentally, but also he is able to realise his own self. In order to achieve this aim, the Vedic seers propounded the theory of 'Varanashrama Pranali' which was in vogue for long-long years. According to this concept, the human society consists of four Varnas and four Ashramas. The four Varnas are— Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra while the four Ashramas are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sanyastha.

This world is afflicted primarily by three things, *viz.*, ignorance, injustice and want. In the four Varnas, the duties of a Brahman was to make himself so capable as to be able to eradicate ignorance, *i.e.*, he was required to educate people, by imparting all sorts of knowledge, thereby making the public literate, not only the alphabets, but true knowledge, according to their individual liking and tastes. The duty of a Kshatriya was to see that there was justice all-round and people on the whole do not feel aggrieved on any score. For imparting justice, a Kshatriya was required to undergo the necessary education and training to make himself fully capable of discharging his duties effectively. The duty of a Vaishya was to see that there was adequate production, in the country on all fronts, *viz.*, agriculture and

industry, so that the necessities of the people are met easily, without any difficulty. In this way, these three Varnas were fully equipped to make the society self-sufficient, free from ignorance, injustice and want. As a matter of fact, these Varnas were decided by the Guru's Acharyas or Rishi's when a disciple left the Guru's Ashrama or Gurukul on completion of his studies or training. They were thus enabled to face the challenges of this mundane world as also were given the spiritual education, so that they never felt disturbed by some temporary failings in life and were always ready to accept things as they came along.

The fourth Varna, Shudra, is one which was incapable of doing any of the above-mentioned tasks and remained ignorant and therefore was required to assist any of the three Varnas, according to his liking, either physically or otherwise. The Vedic seers also decided the order of three Varnas—upper most being Brahmana, the second in order Kshatriya, the third Vaishya and the last Shudra.

This would appear to be quite logical, though in modern times, we find that wealth is considered all-in-all and the other Varnas, superior they may be because of their quality of work, yet are at a discount these days. To my mind it is a cycle, as we can see that in ancient times, knowledge and learning was given the highest regard and respect in society and even kings and emperors bowed their heads at the feet of Rishis.

There after a time came when kings and monarchs had their sway and bravery and valour was considered to be the uppermost in society and learned people looked to them for patronage. Now, for some time, the trend is towards wealth and a rich man, though may be ignoble in character, is given a high place in society. But this trend is not going to stay long, because we see the signs that the labour force, *viz.*, Shudra Varna, is asserting their right more forcefully and the time is probably not far off when they may gain the topmost position in society. So, manual labour is going

to be recognised soon, because some work has got to be done physically after all, in spite of all the machinery and science being at our command. Hence, we should not forget the dignity of labour and try to do as much work as possible with our own hands. This is going to keep you fit as well.

These Varnas were based on the qualities and capabilities of a person, and not on birth, as we witness today. Actually the 'Varnashrama' system could not remain unaffected by time and being very old practice, its true concept has been lost sight of and, therefore, appears redundant and useless to say the least. In ancient times in a family of four brothers each one of them was found in different Varnas, according to their individual traits and liking, education and learning. For example, Vishrawa Muni had four sons, named Kuber Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. All the four were in different Varnas- Kuber was the treasurer of Devas, Ravana though very learned, was described as Rakshasa, Kumbhakarna was a great scientist of his time, but because he followed the orders of his elder brother and fought Rama, he was also counted as a Rakshasa the fourth Vibhishana was a real Brahman and had sagely aptitude and we find him siding Rama against his own elder brother. There are many examples like this and we find that the daughters of kings and monarchs were married to Rishis and Munis and *vice versa*.

In so far as Ashramas were concerned, in Brahmacharya Ashrama all children of all the Varnas were expected to get proper education. The system of education was within the reach of rich and poor alike, because the education was imparted in the Ashramas of Vanaprasthis, known as Rishis or Munis and most of the Vanaprasthis were none else but those who were in Grihastha Ashrama previously, doing their respective duties in the roles of the three Varnas—be they doctors, engineers, judges, architects, agriculturists, warriors, soldiers and soon. While Varanas were decided on the basis of profession or vocation followed by a

person, the basis of deciding Ashramas was generally the age factor. An individual was considered Brahmachari up to the time he remained a student and this was normally up to the age of twenty-five, though there were also cases where this period was more and for them the age factor was not of much importance. The Grihastha Ashrama was generally between the ages of 25 and 50 or there about. When a Grihasthi's children were married and well on their feet, then it was time for him or her to enter the Vanaprastha Ashrama and do service to the people for about 20 or 25 years, preparing himself/herself at the same time to take the last leap to Sanyastha Ashrama, in which the person was required to detach himself entirely from this world, but at the same time preaching to the people to follow an honest and industrious life in Grihastha Ashrama, treating all and sundry, as if they were his own family members.

This is how our society was composed in Vedic times, all sections doing their tasks sincerely, thus making their lives successful in all respects. There could have been no quarrel between the old and the new generations, because the older ones gave up their all and spent their remaining lives in teaching the children in their Ashramas and ultimately when they felt that they were too old even for that, became Sanyasis, imparting the knowledge to others which they had in their life's experience. In such a fabric of society of Varnashramas, all able-bodied persons found work according to their ability and capacity, thus nobody remaining idle even for a moment. The emphasis was not more on amassing wealth, but leading a happy and healthy life, everyone getting his due reward according to his desert. This system laid greater emphasis on character, because the aim being to make them real human-beings, unselfish in nature, in their behaviour and conduct towards all. Even kings and emperors used to abandon their kingdoms and did likewise, *i.e.*, they would become Vanaprasthis and

Sanyasis, since they knew it that generally the people would follow them, as has been truly said-

यथा राजा, तथा प्रजा ।

As is the king, so are the people That is why, Manu Maharaj has stated in his famous book Manusmriti:-

एतद्देशे प्रसूतस्यएकाशादयं जन्मनः ।

स्वं स्वं चरित्रं रिक्षेरन् परथिव्यां सर्व मानवाः ।।मनु० २/२० ।।

All persons of the world should sit at the feet of the Brahmans of this country and take lessons on character.

I have tried to describe briefly the state of affairs in those days when the people and the rulers alike followed the teachings of the Vedas. This can well be illustrated by an example of Raja Ashwapati, who told the Rishis that there was not a single individual in his entire kingdom with bad traits:-

न मे स्तेनो जनपदे न कदयो न मद्यपः ।

नानाहिताग्निर्नाविद्वान् न श्वैरी श्वैरिणी कुतः ।।

In my whole kingdom, there is no thief, there is no miser person either, there is none fond of intoxicants; there is none who does not perform Yajya (Agnihotra-havan); there is none illiterate either. Besides, there is no adulterer, then how can there be any adultress. This kind of character of the whole nation was found in those days. Actually this was Rama Rajya and for such a reign, Mahatma Gandhi used to say often that after Independence, we would strive to have Rama Rajya Remember, Man is also an animal. But God has bestowed some special faculties to him the power of intellect; the power of speech and the power of doing work with both of his hands, consisting of ten fingers. Thus, man has to acquire the knowledge and ultimately he becomes what he learns and practises Otherwise, he is no more than a beast. A child brought up in an Indian family becomes conversant with the language spoken by the family, viz., Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati, etc, and from the very childhood begins to learn and understand the customs and traditions of his clan. So is the case of a child born and brought up in

an English family, German family or Chinese family. We call these Sanskaras and these have a great influence in the making of a Man Hence, our Rishis fully understood this important factor and as per the Vedic concept gave us the Varnashrama Pranali, which was responsible in creating the vast majority of people, persons of sterling character. And that is why our country is famous for its great personages and a vast horde of Rishis and Munis. As a matter of fact, the entire population of our country was considered to be of noble character and therefore it was generally said that here lived thirty-three crores of 'devatas', i.e., all the people were of divine qualities, splendid in their behavior and character.

This, in brief, was the aim of education, knowledge and learning which the Vedas propagated, as propounded through the system of Varnashrama Pranali.

What is the time to begin giving education to a child or at what age, a child should be admitted in a school? Generally, the age of five years is considered most suitable and this is what has been prescribed in our country. But for some time past, parents who are more conscious about the studies of their children, send them to Nursery and Kindergarten Schools at the age of three or four, so that they come up to some basic standard by the time they are sent to regular schools for studies. In olden times, parents taught their children at home the alphabets *etc* and used to send them to school at the age of six, seven or eight. We, therefore, find different ideas as to when a child should commence his studies.

In this connection, I read in a magazine some thirty years ago, an article, describing a meeting which was held in some important town in Rajasthan on the subject of Education. Important dignitaries and educationists and learned people were invited, amongst many Principals of Schools, Colleges and Universities. This was to be presided over by the Governor of the State, but for some unavoidable reason, he could not come and the responsibility fell to a Mahatma, who was very learned and was present on the occasion. In this meeting someone raised the question as to when a child should be sent to school, *i.e.*, what is the most appropriate age to commence studies? Many educationists expressed their views on the subject and while there was consensus of opinion mostly at the age of five, some differed and thought that the age could be reduced to three

or four. At long last, when the time was coming to a close, the Mahatma gave his Presidential speech in the end and said—Most of you people present here think that the studies of a child should be commenced at the age of five some of course consider that it could well be reduced to three or four. But, in my opinion, the education of a child begins from the time the child comes in the womb of his mother, or even earlier. On hearing this, people were amazed, but the Mahatma went on to explain that according to the Vedic rites or Sanskaras, the first Sanskara is that of Jarbhadhana Sanskara, which means that the young couple when intend to have a child, perform some Yajna and take some vows as to how they would lead their lives, so that the child in the womb imbibes good qualities from the very beginning.

The Mahatma further explained that like a crop, which a farmer sows, he takes care of two things, considered most important'. One is the land that it should be fertile and good in every respect and the other is the seed that it should be of a very fine quality. Here in this case, the mother serves the purpose of land, the father is the farmer who provides the seed. So, both need to be of superior quality to have a noble and virtuous progeny. Hence the parents must lead a pious life, always nurturing noble thoughts, if they want their offsprings to be good. Because it is the father, who first holds in his womb the Atman who eventually takes birth in his house. Subsequently, the father transfers the jivatma to the mother, in the shape of semen and the mother nourishes the child in her womb for about two hundred and eighty days. Therefore, this period is indeed most significant and how the mother has to conduct herself during this time has been fully explained by our Rishis in Sanskara Vidhi.

The Rishis divided this period of pregnancy into nine months and nine days, the remaining one day has been left aside. During these nine months, what the mother has to eat has been described in detail, month by month. After the period of nine months is over, one day each for each month

has been taken into account and the food to be taken is like the months in order the last one day left entirely free for the mother but taking care all the same that here again it ought to be Sattvik. Besides food, other precautions are necessary and a mother should always nurture noble thoughts so that the child in the womb gets similar traits, being one with her during the time of pregnancy. So, we see that both the parents have to lead a pious life in order to have a good child, bodily as well as mentally. Not only that, the parents fully understood the impact of their devotion and there are many instances, where parents undertook long periods of austerity and penance before the Garbhadhan Sanskara.

For example, the four sons of Raja Dashratha were born after Shranghi Rishi performed Putreshti Yajna in his palace. Now, what was this Putreshti Yajna, has to be considered. Shranghi Rishi was a great expert in Ayurveda and had wonderful knowledge about the various weaknesses which are generally found in men and women. So, he cured the king of his disabilities in this regard, as also he treated the three queens of their infertility for about two years, before performing the Garbhadhana Yajna. The Rishi remained in Ayodhya all the while and guided them and in short this whole affair was narrated as Putreshti Yajna by Mahrishhi Valmiki in his Ramayana. Mother Kaushalya followed the instructions given by Shranghi Rishi firmly and for this purpose, she herself would tend to the cow, feed her and milk her, not allowing any servants of the palace to do all these chores, so that she may get actual Sattvik food. Not only that, she used to water the fruit trees herself and looked after them and only ate the fruits of such trees, as also the milk of the cow, whom she used to look after. Thus, we find that how parents used to lead an austere and hard life in order to have good children.

Similarly, I have read the true story of Mother Madalasa. She was the daughter of a Rishi and it so happened that the king, who was yet unmarried, once went to the Rishi's

Ashram to pay his respects, as was the custom in those days. There he saw young maiden Madalasa and had a yearning to get her in marriage. The king, therefore, placed his request before the Rishi, but the Rishi replied that this request was to be placed before his daughter, Madalasa, who was free to choose her husband, because she was quite competent, as according to the prevalent custom of Swayam Vara in those days, it was only proper to do so. Thereupon, the king placed his request before Madalasa and begged her to be his queen. Madalasa replied that she was agreeable to the king's request, but on one condition that she wanted to be free with regard to her children as to what they are to be. In other words, she fully knew that it was more in the hands of a mother to make her children whatever she wanted them to be. The king readily agreed to Madalasa's condition and they were duly married. In course of time, Madalasa became pregnant and she being the daughter of a Rishi, wanted her child to be a Rishi. Therefore, she would all the time think accordingly and sing in the same vein, thus the result was that the child had no liking for royal pleasures. Because his mother, Madalasa always sang Vedic hymns, whilst, feeding her milk—

शुद्धोऽसि बुद्धोऽसि निरञ्जनोऽसि ।

You are pure, you are learned, you are immortal.

The child when grew up to the age of four or five, he was sent to a Rishi's Ashrama to get proper education and when he finished his education, he had no inclination to return to his father's kingdom. Second son was born and the result was the same, because again Madalasa had given him such education from the very childhood and during the period of pregnancy so that he also had no liking to become the heir to the throne. Thereafter, they got the third son, and this time also Madalasa did likewise. In this way, all the three sons became Rishis, known as Dalabhya, Tilak and Pravanha. Now, the king was upset and he sought the advice of his Purohit, who was also a Rishi and a very

learned man. The Purohit told the king that in this matter, he should seek the help of his queen, who alone can help him and nobody else. The king realised the soundness of this advice and begged of Madalasa that their fourth child should be of Rajsik Vritti, so that he is able to hold the reins of the kingdom. Madalasa smiled and agreed to give him a son, as desired by the king. In course of time, she again became pregnant and this time, she changed her tune and thoughts, as she was bound by the word she had given to her husband. Ultimately, we see that the fourth son followed in the footsteps of his father, because Madalasa brought him up in such a manner that he had the liking to be a king, brave and just, who kept his subjects happy and cheerful through his administration and management skill of the realm being magnanimous and pious in nature at the same time.

Concluding his speech, the Mahatma gave the example of Yogiraja Krishna, telling the people present that soon after the marriage with Rukmani, Krishna along with his wife went to the caves of Himalayas and there both of them undertook to lead a pious life for a period of twelve years before performing the Garbhadan Sanskara, so that they may get a noble and virtuous son. Incidentally, it may be stated here that Yogiraj Krishna had only one wife, Rukmani and the legendary tales of his sixteen thousand wives denote an altogether different meaning which being allegorical has not been properly understood by the people at large. So, they got their son, Pradyumna, who was just like his father, Yogiraj Krishna. In this way, the meeting came to a close and all went their way, praising the Mahatma for his erudition and knowledge, as also the efficacy of his advice which his lecture contained. So, we see that the statement found in our Shastras that the first teacher of a child is Mother; the second teacher is his Father and the third is his Acharya, is quite true because whatever a child learns at the tender age becomes firm in his mind, rather it becomes his habit. Therefore, the role of

a mother is most important and an educated mother and an educated father, such parents who are really learned and fully understand their obligations and responsibility are a boon to the society and the nation. It is only such parents who give good citizens to the country and thus make the nation rich and prosperous.

In so far as the period of education is concerned, *i.e.*, up to what age a person should study and then enter the Grihasthasrama having completed his Brahmacharya Ashrama period, there are three categories known as Vasu, Rudra and Aditya, *viz.*, ordinary or inferior; middle and superior, these three classifications have been laid down and the age prescribed for each is that a Vasu Brahmachari is one who remaining in his Acharya's Ashrama studies up to the age of twenty-five; a Rudra Brahmachari is one who in his Acharya's Ashrama studies up to the age of thirty-six; and an Aditya Brahmachari is one who in his Ashrama studies up to the age of forty-eight. The well-known King Ravana remained in his Guru's Ashrama up to the age of forty-eight and studied all the Vedas and Shastras and thus became an Aditya Brahmachari. He married at the age of fifty and thus entered the Grihstha-Ashrama when he was fully satisfied about his ability and learning Ravana was indeed a most learned man of his time.

Really speaking, a person may go on learning throughout this life and yet he cannot master all the education and learning, because the field of knowledge is vast and unending and therefore our Rishis have called it 'Gyan Ka Agadh Vana', *viz.*, the unending forest of knowledge. It is absolutely true because how can a person be able to master all the branches of education-Arts, sciences, history, geography, economics and so on.

A Sanskrit poet has expressed his feelings on this subject that if he is able to live a few hundred years and goes on learning and studying throughout his life, yet he will only be able to cover a small portion of it, since the expanse of

knowledge is so vast that it is difficult to describe it even. But our Rishis were indeed marvellous and they have divided all this vast knowledge into fourteen categories or branches, yet with all our learning, the secret of Atman and Parratman, which we generally call spiritual knowledge in common parlance, remains elusive and most of the people find themselves in the dark on this most important issue.

So, concluding the chapter, I may say that life itself is a continuous process of learning and, therefore, it beloves us that we should never be idle in this regard. I may quote Shri C Rajagopalachari who wrote in his autobiography, the opening lines—”I graduated from the University of Madras in the year 1910. That was the year in which my education began.” But this again is not a new idea, because our Acharyas used to tell their disciples at the time of convocation:-

“स्वाध्याय प्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ।

After completion of your studies here, you are now going home and would enter the Grihstha-Ashrama, but never be indolent in study and giving discourses in your life.

3

Procedure and System

The procedure of education in Vedic times was quite simple and inexpensive unlike these days and all children—whether male or female—were required to undergo a course of learning and training. In other words, education was compulsory, which is quite explicit from the statements found in Manusmriti and such other books. Even up to the time of Raja Bhoja, about three thousand years back education was compulsory, which we learn from his proclamations. It was not difficult either, because all the Vanaprasthis, both men and women, used to teach boys and girls, according to their ability and capacity in their Ashramas. Therefore, only a few students or pupils were there in each Ashrama and they were treated like their own children by the Rishis/Munis, who themselves led a very simple life and were thus the living examples of austerity, character and conduct. That is why, they were known as Acharyas, who virtually made their disciples persons of good character, besides the education and training imparted to them without any selfish motive.

Here it is essential to clarify that all the Vanaprasthis could not be expert in all the branches of education and therefore, the students or pupils shifted from one Ashrama to another as the circumstances and situation demanded. As today, we see that a child goes to a Primary School, then to High or Higher Secondary and later on to a College or University and still those who pursue technical or vocational education and training shift to such institutions as medical, engineering, *etc.* Similarly, in those days also, the children studied in different Ashramas according to their need and

ability to pursue the studies, as also the provision of such an education and training in an Ashrama. I may once again emphasise here that all the education and training was given based on Vedic texture, because the concept that all the true-knowledge is embedded in the Vedas was the living and obvious example in those days. Most of the Acharyas, who imparted middle highwer class education and training, were well-versed in Ayurveda and therefore they used to test the flair and inclination of the new disciple, so that he or she could be given education most suited to his or her aptitude. In doing so, the Acharya would examine first of all whether the child was really a deserving one to be given the education or not Secondly, having decided this issue, he would also examine him closely as to whether he was fit to be a Brahmana, Kshatriya or Vaishya, because the purpose of education was to make him fit in any one of the three Varnas And in case, it was found on the expiry of a few years, that he was not able to fit in any, then he was considered a Shudra.

Now, it would be better to describe what Mahrishi Dayananda Saraswati has to say in this connection, as whatever he has written or uttered is entirely based on the Vedas According to him, the aim of education is to increase know ledge and learning, civilization, nobility of character and control over the organs and passions. This is the sum-total of education that a person having known what is good, should endeavour to bring goodness in his life and having known what is bad, should give it up altogether. The knowledge of alphabets ought to be given at home to a child at the age of three or four are that of Hindi language, besides their own regional language at the same time. From the time of pregnancy up to the age of five, mothers ought to teach the children from six to eight years, fathers should educate and from nine years onwards, children should be sent to the Ashramas of Acharyas or Gurukuls, where learned and well-educated persons will give them proper

education and training. This is the order, *i.e.*, of Mother, Father and Acharya. Such a family is indeed blessed and a child born in the family is really fortunate, whose parents are noble and educated, because mothers are the greatest well-wishers of their children and do immense good in their making, as nobody else. At this tender age, whatever is learn by the child becomes his habit in course of time. Hence, such a mother is actually a blessing to mankind, who instructs her child to be a person of character from the time the child came in her womb to the time of his youthfulness, when he has obtained all the education he wanted.

The places of education, which we may call educational institutions, should be in lonely places, away from the villages and towns. There should be no population for about five to six miles of the institution. The institution of boys and girls should be separate and located far away from each other. All the children in an institution or Gurukul have similar clothes, food and living places. There should be no discrimination whatsoever on any count, whether a child comes from a royal family or belongs to a farmer or a poor labourer. All should have equal treatment in every respect. Parents should not meet their children and vice versa and there should be no communication or correspondence of any sort between them, so that the students are able to devote their full attention to their studies, without a care of the worldly affairs. Their only concern ought to be to study. When the students go for a walk or anywhere out from their Gurukul or institution, a teacher should always accompany them, so that they do not make any undesirable scene because of he naughty actions, as some children are likely to give vent to their feelings, once they are not being supervised.

The institutions of the girls and boys should be separate and located a few miles farther away from each other In the girls' institutions, only lady-teachers should teach and all staff should be female, right from a peon or lowly servant to the Head of

the institution. Similarly, in the boys' institutions, these should be entirely manned by males. No male should be allowed to have any access in a girls' school or Gurukul. Similarly, no female member be allowed to go to a boys' institution. The idea is to make their lives pure and simple, so that they may not even have a chance to see and think otherwise, but of their studies always during their stay there in the Gurukuls.

The Acharyas should not only be learned, but persons of noble and high character, so that their disciples may take a leaf from their teachers' life and try to emulate them. They should really be the well-wishers of their students, without any discrimination for any consideration whatever, and entirely devoted to serve mankind and the cause of education, devoid of self-interest. The word 'Acharya' itself means the one who is able to make other persons of good conduct and character by his worthy influence. It is because of the Acharyas' instructions and noble example that the disciples give up all their bad habits and traits and become good and noble likewise. Thus, we see that the role of Acharyas was not only to give education, but to make their disciples persons of character and it will have to be admitted that this was indeed a glorious task which they were entrusted to do, considering the condition which we witness today, as students give little respect or regard to their own teachers, what to say of others in all walks of life.

There should be a rule or even law of the Government that no child can be kept illiterate and has to be sent to school after attaining the age of five or six. In case some parents do not send their children or wards to school, they should be given punishment. In other words, education should be compulsory because without education, knowledge or learning, a man is nothing but a beast. Besides punishment to the parents, such uneducated persons be not allowed to have the right of vote and they should be prohibited from having any alliance in marriage, because such people become a burden on society and the

nation. Such people are known as Shudras, who only do physical labour and a country where this type of people abound, cannot be considered good and prosperous. It is backward and obviously science and technology have little place in such a society. Our rulers should give some thought to this problem and make the population not only literate but really educated, if they want the country to be progressive. It is ironical that we want to import technology from abroad but keep our populace illiterate and poor only for the sake and comfort of a few, who in the words of Mahatma Gandhi are English in black skin.

More emphasis should be given to the study of Sanskrit and Hindi as also the mother tongue English may also be studied being prevalent and, therefore, in the later stage of a student's life, only Sanskrit and English be given more importance, so that he becomes fully conversant with these languages and their literature. It is essential so that children do not find difficulty in the long run in deciding their future, yet at the same time become conversant with their own sacred books which are mostly written in Sanskrit. Hence, the knowledge of Sanskrit should be considered inevitable, if we want our children to get acquainted with our heritage and culture. Care should also be exercised in selecting books, in that only those books written by the Rishis should be studied because they were impartial and gave immense knowledge of the subject dealt with, while books written by various modern writers are not so good as to give the correct and true knowledge as most of the writers have written their books with certain bias and prejudice, besides the fact that they are hollow within, *i.e.*, after reading many books, one gets so little, while the case is quite reverse about the books written by the Rishis. The books of Rishis are entirely based on the Vedas, but if anything is found to the contrary, then such books should be discarded as well.

Whatever is studied, it should be understood well as to what is their meaning and the underlying ideas and thought & should

be clear, otherwise reading without understanding is useless and is only a burden on the mind. That which is clear with its meanings and thoughts gives pleasure to the soul. No body can get a good result, without understanding the meanings and ideas, hidden in the garb of the language. But not to study at all is no good hence the Vedas and other relevant scriptures when studied with their meanings clear not only give immense pleasure, but also open the gate to nobility and greatness. In the beginning, it is all right to mug-up and remember the verses by heart, but in course of time, one should try to understand the underlying ideas. The more we muse over these, the more we will be able to enjoy because such a vast treasure of knowledge is hidden in the verses of the Vedas that it is difficult to describe. On the other hand, people who simply recite the verses, without understanding their meanings, cannot get this pleasure, because they remain in the dark. This is the difference between a learned and uneducated person. But the learned person should also put these noble thoughts into practice in his daily life, *viz.*, in his behavior and conduct, so that his life becomes purposeful and in turn able to impart this knowledge to others, so that they also benefit and make their lives successful. Generally, people fall in a rut and ignore the vital part of putting the instructions contained in the Vedas in life and thereby miss the golden opportunity which God has bestowed on them.

In this way, we see that the system and method of education was not only Vedic, but most scientific and rational in its procedure, that could easily fulfill role of making the mankind happy and successful in life. When we go into the meaning of 'Veda', it will be seen that this word connotes four meanings—(i) it means knowledge (ii) existence (iii) beneficial and (iv) provokes thought. And if we bring all these in a simple sentence, it comes to that Vedas give knowledge of our existence and that of the world and God are beneficial in all respects and make a Man thoughtful. As a matter of fact, there is nothing left outside its ambit when we fully analyse and study the

Vedas. The purpose of education is to develop a person's faculties of body, mind, heart and soul. This cannot be better achieved by anything else, but the Vedas, and this was certain to be so, because it is God-given knowledge and perfect in all aspects, except the fact that it is so vast and unsurpassable that it is well-nigh impossible to master it all in life-time.

The scientific aspect of Vedic education can be seen from the fact that according to Varnashrama system, a child attains knowledge and learning up to at least the age of twenty-five years thereafter enters Grihastha-ashrama, where he is required to earn wealth and lead a pious life with his wife and is able to give good citizens to the nation by way of his children when he becomes some what old and his children become young, then he is required to become Vanaprasthi, severing all connections from his household and leading an austere life, teaching the children in his Ashrama before he ultimately becomes Sanyasi, in case he considers that he has entirely become detached from all the ties of this mundane world and is in a position to treat ail alike, just as if they are his own family members. Obviously, in this way the structure of the human society was so nicely balanced and the finer points of both the spheres, *viz.*, of the material as also that of the spiritual were methodically achieved, with the advancing of the age, most suitable and apt at the appropriate time of the life's journey.

Mahatma Gandhi was very much in favour of such a system of education. In this connection, he wrote in *Young India* in 1927 that in ancient times, our Brahmacharis were known to be following the path of God and kings and emperors and all great men gave them regard and respect. It was the duty of the governments or rulers of those days to take over the responsibility of all their expenses and in turn these Brahmacharis gave to the nation not only good citizens but many a time, hundredfold strong force, in physical, mental and will-power capacity that raised our country to the pinnacle of glory.

Many people have the fallacious idea that modern age is the most civilised and that our ancestors were savages or even apes and that it is all because of the Europeans and their talent that we live in such a progressive scientific age, with most of the facilities available to the common man, which even the royal family members could not dream of in the past. This is because of the two main factors—one, that we have been fed on false history which the Britishers during their “period of reign over this country manipulated in such a way which gives us a picture suiting to this idea. Secondly, the theory of evolution of Charles Darwin that Human-being came into existence, not only after the other species of birds and beasts come into being, but that it is by process of evolution from one specie to another and hence in this ladder, Man’s forefather is an ape-or monkey. Both these factors are grossly false and mistaken, because if we analyse them deeply, we come to the conclusion that these are entirely baseless and not a grain of truth or rational is there to hold them as proof or testimony to the growth of civilisation, which we witness in modern times of course, it must be admitted here that during the last five thousand years after the War of Mahabharata, science and technology had a great setback and more so, when our country was raided by Muslims and we had to suffer bondage for many centuries during which period, they destroyed all our palatial mansions and works of art, as also made fire of an our books on science and technology. In the early nineteenth century when their power was waning, Britishers appeared on the scene and

they destroyed the remnants of our history and culture in order to establish their supremacy. Therefore, after this dark period what we see today is mostly the contribution of the Europeans and if there is any discovery in this field by any Indian, that has not been given due prominence.

The theory of evolution holds no water and majority of the scientists as also the luminaries of the world today have ‘rejected it as entirely baseless and a fig of imagination of Charles Darwin. This has also been proved unfounded by the passage of time, because not a single person has been the outcome of such an evolution during the last few thousand years and no ape has been seen to have changed into a human-being during these centuries. All species have their own progeny and created as such at the beginning of the creation of the Universe. Man of course came last of all, when all the flora and fauna came into existence and was thus able to survive since he depends on vegetables and fruits as also milk *etc* for his food. According to the Shastras, first of all vegetable world, grass, trees, *etc.*, grew up and subsequently the birds and animals and this order appears to be reasonable as well. Hence, the theory of evolution and the ideas of stone-age, iron-age, copper-age, science-age and now that of nuclear-age may be true in so far as revival of civilisation is concerned, more so in the European region, as in that part of the world, they might have been leading a savage life.

But civilisation in this part of the world goes back to crores of years, as is evident from our books Manu Maharaja, who has written Manusmriti, was the first king and prior to him there was no such institution because people lived happily and peacefully, all doing their duties, without any rancour or trouble. With the passage of time, some bad elements also found place in society and it was then that people thought of having an authority who could maintain equity and justice, so that all good people could’ live undisturbed. This was millions of years ago, as we can very well see

from whatever historical threads are available to us. It was in Manu's lineage that Ramachand Taji Maharaja was born at the end of Treta Yug, approximately nine lakh years back and in his time, we find that science and technology was much more advanced than what is witnessed now. Because it is well known to all that Ravana, the demon king, was the contemporary of Rama and in his do main, it is also known even to a rustic villager that science was so much advanced that as a parable it is generally said that in Lanka, which was the seat of his kingdom, Air or Wind-god was working as a sweeper Fire-god was working as his cook and Water-god was working as the bearer of water. What does it mean? It is quite clear that these natural element had been harnessed by Man and as we see today in our own houses, air-god serves us in the shape of fans, 'fire-god in the shape of electricity, gas-ovens *etc* and water-god in the share of taps So, all these and even may be more, in Ravana's Lanka these facilities were available.

In those days, Vedic teachings were given the most important place in lite and people generally followed what their Rishis and Munis told them. According to the Vedas, there are two main branches of education—one is known as Para Vidya, *viz.*, Spiritual Science, and the other is known as Apar Vidya, *viz.*, the Material Science. Both of these were considered essential to make a Man's life really successful and therefore the tradition was to give both these educations in the Ashramas, known as the Houses of Learning. The idea was to make such an orderly life, so that Man could derive the benefit of both during his life-time and this was well traditionalised in the Varna-Ashrama custom, prevalent in those days. Now, this tradition is almost extinct, but its rertinants are still found, as there are some Ashramas, though they do not serve the same purpose now but these house old and retired persons and endeavour to teach them to lead a pure life at the fag-end of their life However, the system or tradition of Varna can stilt be

perceived in the various professions or vocations followed by the people, though they call themselves of the caste in which they are born, irrespective of their business or trade in which they are engaged. It is the curse of being a very-very old custom as has been i truly said-Old order change the yielding place to new ones lest the old may corrupt the world. But the question is how far the new custom, if any in vogue, has been able to make the society more happy and successful. As a matter of fact, there is no new system now but the old one has no doubt been corrupted, not being adhered to any more anywhere.

Our Rishis, Munis, sages and saints having fully realised the act that in order to make a Man's life really purposeful and successful, both the material and the spiritual sciences are essential and play a great part in making him a Man. Any one if followed to the extreme is likely to make him lop-sided.

Not only that, they knew full well that Man does not live by bread alone and has a natural urge to look far beyond the regions of this material and manifest world. That is why it was generally stated that the spiritual science begins at the point where the material science ends. Moreover, in the first half of life, say up to the age of fifty or thereabout, it is essential to have knowledge of all this material and physical world as much as possible and enjoy the bliss of married life as also give good and noble people to the society in the shape of sons and daughters thereafter only think of the other world, making way to the young generation, which was not only conducive to the harmony of the family-life but also helpful in making his own life's goal of Mukti or Moksha accessible to those who yearned and worked for it accordingly Indeed, they knew that material progress must be controlled by spiritual science, otherwise it is likely to betray the mankind and the consequence of such a course is disastrous, as has been amply proved by the history of human-race.

Even much before Rama and Ravana, there was a demon king, known as Hiranyakashipu, who reigned supreme over this world and with the aid of physical sciences, he had not only abundant wealth, but science had developed to such an extent that he began to entertain the idea that there was is such thing as God and that it was only for name-sake. In his proclamations, he had declared that the idea of God exists only in the imagination of Man. In reality, there being no such object, the sovereign of a state was only to be taken as the Supreme Soul, *viz.*, the Paramatman. I being your king, I am all-in-all and people should only worship me. Once his purohit warned him also, but Hiranyakashipu became more adamant in his attitude. Later on how his own son, Prahlad, who was convinced of the existence of the supreme power God, came out openly against his father's unreasonable proclamations and thus people were: divided, some favouring the king, while most of the people on the side of his son Prahlad. Therefore, a tug-of-war ensued between the father and the son and ultimately Prahlad won and was crowned by the people as their king. In Hiranyakashipu's reign, science had made great strides and the scientists had succeeded in journeying to many other planets. This gave them pride, because it is a natural phenomenon that because of immense power which it bestows, Man loses his sanity and becomes arrogant, this being the characteristic of the world of matter that whosoever becomes attached to it, becomes proud and ultimately loses his self-control thus such an attitude brings his fall in the end. That is why our sages and Rishis have warned us time and again that material or physical science must always be controlled by spiritual science, if Man wants to live happily in this world.

We find the same catastrophe taking place in the case of Ravana, in whose time science had advanced in both the realms, *viz.*, physical and spiritual, but again Ravana became obsessed with power and arrogance, while his contemporary Rama, who was ultimately able to vanquish

Ravana in the battlefield, was well-versed in both the sciences and therefore was able to come out victorious in the end. Ravana's brother Kumbhakarna was an eminent scientist of his time and was always busy doing research and development work in his laboratory situated in the ranges of Himalayas. He had many disciples whom he would 'guide and help in this work and during the summer period of about six months, Kumbhakarna worked in his laboratory, away from his palace in Lanka. He used to return to Lanka after the summer season was over for six months and in Lanka, his main task was to supervise the various institutions of learning and sciences located there. As Kumbhakarna used to stay away from Lanka for six months in the caves of Himalayas, where his laboratory was located, in allegorical language it came known that he used to sleep for six months.

In those days, science was very much developed and Ravana himself had visited many planets. They had planes which could take them from one planet to the other and return to this world in the end, very fast in speed 'and so much sophisticated that we do not have such machines now. Mahrislii Narada and Maharaja Hanuman jidhad such sandals (wooden) or of a material in which they machines were fitted and they could take off any time they so desired and flew to any place or planet. Besides, the physical science gadgets, they were also well-versed in the Yogic sciences and taking advantage of both, they could soar high in the skies or deep into the seas. Hanuman ji was also a great specialist in the realm of the Sun's rays and I have read that he wrote a book on this subject which was destroyed by Yavans, amongst many such valuable books, as already described earlier. Now, people do not understand this and say that Hanuman ji had kept the Sun in his mouth. Just think, how can this be possible? Therefore, the fact is that Hanuman ji knew all about the sciences of the Sun's rays and their effects and he put them into use as well.

Another great scientist's name of those days, known today, is that of Maharaja Shivji, who reigned in the mountainous regions of Kailash and Tibet. Ravana revered Shivji as his Guru and it was Shivji who gave Ravana some invincible weapons and armaments. But as I already said earlier, most of these people knew their own limitations as also that of the physical sciences and therefore more often based on spiritual sciences, which we call Yoga these days and seldom we find that such a case occurred, as that of Hiranyakashipu or Ravana. As a matter of fact, many of our ancient Rishis and Munis were well acquainted with both the wings of Science—Material and Spiritual—and we see that during the period of exile, Ramachandraji Maharaja fully utilised this time of fourteen years in getting the required knowledge and training in sophisticated arms in the Ashramas of Rishi Bharadwaj, Atri Rishi, besides the early training which he received from Vishwamitra Rishi, before Rama got married to Sita. It was because of this early training that Rama and Lakshmana were able to kill the Rakshasas, who used to disturb the Rishis in their abodes in the forests.

When I say that Science was more advanced in the ancient ages, it means in two ways—one was that of progress in material and physical sciences and the other in the spiritual science of Yoga as well. It is now accepted by one and all that spiritual science was indeed much more advanced and progressive in those days, but people have doubts about the material science. Here only one glaring example should be sufficient in this regard. You all know that in modern times of atomic or nuclear age, we have such powerful bombs which can annihilate and destroy this world in no time, but the scientists of today have not been able to devise any weapon or machine or armament which can nullify the devastating effects of these destructive bombs. But in ancient times, we read of such destructive weapons and armaments, yet at the same

time we read that in those days they had matching weapons as well which could nullify the destructive effects of atom bombs, Hydrogen or nuclear bombs. Then they call these Agneya-Astras which we now call nuclear bombs, but they had Varuneya Astras as well which effectively finished the fires caused by Agneya-Astras. In other words, in modern science of warfare, we have bombs, which can cause fire and destruction all round, but there is no weapon or device so far discovered by our scientists today which can save us from such a devastation, once these destructive bombs are released. In olden days, our scientists always thought of both the sides and thus it can be safely concluded that science in those days was much ahead of our times.

When we analyse the system of education in Vedic times, we find that all the children studying were categorised in three different Varnas, viz., Brahaman, Kshatriya and Vaishya, and they were given learning and training accordingly, after they had the basic elementary knowledge, common to all. It was their Acharyas who decided their Varnas, having seen the children's aptitude and liking. But the selection of Varna was not permanent, because it generally depended on a person's behaviour and conduct in his life and in many cases, it was changed, since the Varna, which is now called caste-system, was totally based on the actions and deeds, and not on birth as it is prevalent these days. So, it can be safely inferred that every child was required to specialise in a particular Varna, the duties of which he or she was required to discharge in his her daily life. According to Manusmriti, the duties of the four Varnas (including Shudra) are as under:-

अध्यापनमध्ययनं यजनं याजनं तथा ।

दानं प्रतिग्रहश्चैव ब्राह्मणानाम कल्पयत् ॥ 1-88

The six duties of a Brahmana are—study, teaching, performance of a yajna, officiating at the performance of yajna, to give charity and to receive charity. But to receive charity is an humbler duty.

प्रजानां रक्षणं दानमिज्याध्ययनमेव च ।

विवेकप्रसक्तिश्च क्षत्रियस्य समासत् ॥ 1-99

The duties and qualities of a Kshatriya are: —
(1) Judicious government of the subjects, i.e., impartial

regard of the virtuous and condemnation of the wicked, and all-round protection of all. (2) Spend money and other resources for the propagation of education and piety and in the service of deserving persons. (3) To perform Agnihotra etc or to get them performed. (4) To study Vedas and other scriptures and to arrange for their teaching. (5) To abstain from sensual indulgence and through self-control keep the body - and the spirit strong. (6) To be brave at all times, especially in the times of war. (7) Ever to exhibit valiance and never to demean self. (8) Perseverance. (9) Dexterous. (10) Firm and fearless.

पशूनां रक्षणं दानमिज्याध्ययनमेव च ।

वणिक्पथं कुसीदं च वैश्यस्व करमिव च ॥ 1-90 ॥

The duties of a Vaishya are-(1) To maintain and multiply the breed of domestic animals, such as cow etc. (2) To give money etc for the progress of education and piety. (3) Performance of Agnihotra and other Yajnas. (4) Study of the Vedas and other scriptures. (5) All business and trade. (6) Money lending at reasonable rate of interest. (7) Agriculture.

एकमेव तु शूद्रस्य प्रभुः कर्म समादिशत् ।

एतोमेव वर्णानां सुश्रामनसुयया ॥ 1-91 ॥

For a Shudra, it is proper to abandon such evil ways as recrimination, jealousy, vanity and to serve the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas with due respect and to earn his living thereby.

From the above brier' description, it is clear that each person is allotted the task according to his ability, capacity and merit Hence such constitution of a society is conducive to the progress of humanity. In this context, it should be: always borne in mind that in case the children of a Brahman remain ignorant and stupid, they are bound to be Shudras similarly that of a Kshatriya or of a Vaishya In case a Shudra's children become meritorious, they are bound to go up the ladder, suiting their merit and qualities. In such a system, the lower classes will have an incentive

to go up by acquiring the required knowledge and learning. The task of service is given to a Shudra only for the reason that he, being uneducated, cannot do any work requiring some knowledge bodily service he can easily do. Now, it is for the rulers to organise the functioning of the Varnas properly, so that there may be peace and tranquillity in the state. As a matter of fact, there was no place for any kind of un-touchability or hatred towards any section of the society this became prevalent more because of the ignorance and the so-called caste system based on birth was generally accepted, which is a curse on the mankind. The Government is not handling this issue properly and the policy undertaken by them in this regard is making the situation worse, because the remedy has proved futile.

Obviously, according to the Varna system all the people in the society were required to be specialist of some sort, so that they could fit in this fabric. Not only this, the education of girls was given special attention, considering the fact that they were required to undertake the duties of housewives and, therefore, all the knowledge which a housewife ought to know, was given to them. Also, the factor that a girl has limited years of time at her disposal as compared to a boy, because girls generally mature at an early age, was taken into account and their syllabus was planned suitably, taking all these factors into consideration. It was essential for girls to study Ayurveda, because it is the branch of knowledge which gives them the necessary understanding about food, consisting of various things, such as grains, dais, vegetables, fruits, milk, curd and so on and their effects on health under certain conditions of the body. Actually Ayurveda was only the knowledge of the proper adjustment of the right types of foodstuffs in the meals, taken by the people so that they remain not only healthy bodily, but also mentally alert and intellectually sharp. Now, our housewives do not have this basic knowledge and, therefore, people suffer from various diseases, which

could be avoided, if this elementary knowledge could be imparted to them earlier in their study-time in childhood.

Our sages and seers of Vedic age fully knew the fact that a Man's life cannot be meaningful and really successful, without that of Dharma. The definition of Dharma in their view was—

‘यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयस सिद्धिः स धर्मः’

Whereby one is able to attain fullest development and progress here in this life and is also able to pave the way for salvation, is called Dharma. Unlike the present age, it was not only a bundle of certain rituals, which people now perform according to their own sect or group, but a way of life, which really made life purposeful in all respects. In a word, Dharma made a Man actual human-being or you may even call that Dharma is nothing but true knowledge of God, Self and the Nature around you. That is why it has been stated in our scriptures—

‘धर्मेण हीना पशुभिः समाना’

। चमतेवद कमभवपक चिर्वितउं पे दवजीपदह इनज इमैजण

‘विद्या विहीनः पशुः’

A person without education or learning is like an animal. So, there was vast field of education in both these wings—material or spiritual. There were many Rishis who excelled in both.

In this connection, the name of Maharishi Bharadwaj can be cited, who possessed both the types of knowledge and many kings of his time sent their children to study in his Ashrama. I have read that Ravana and Kumbhakarna also went to his Ashrama to get the necessary instructions and training in physical science, more so on such Yantras (machines) which could take human-beings to other planets, as also in his Ashrama there were such Yantras, which we call television these days; in Sanskrit it was known as ‘Chitravali’ then. In the Chitravali, even the photo and pictures of many Rishis Munis or of our great ancestors could be seen. Not only that, I read that the Rishis possessed so much knowledge that after a person has left

the place, even his photo could be taken as he had left some of his remnants there in the atmosphere, which were helpful in resurrecting his photograph. These Rishis always advised that people should know and practice science, but must not indulge in it, because ultimately it leads to corruption. People should try to acquire the knowledge of God or Brahma instead.

It is true and our history warns us that with the development of material and physical science, amenities increase and as a result Man becomes licentious and sensual and thus becomes wayward, forgetting the true aim of life. We must understand that the inner spirit of Man develops with the knowledge of the Supreme and the development of the inner spirit is thousand times more necessary than the material and scientific progress. Our Rishis have been possessing both the Supreme knowledge and the scientific knowledge generation after generation. The knowledge of the material science is not far from him who possesses the knowledge of all his three bodies, viz, the: casual body, the subtle body and the gross body.

A material scientist can travel in his machine for a limited space only, but a Yogi in his subtle body can travel in all the planets, unaffected by fire, water and air, and hence it is easy for him to travel to the Moon or to the Sun.

Now, I may cite a few illustrious examples. Raja Ramachandraji Maharaja was an eminent geologist of his time and the story of Ahilya-udhara is nothing but a parable, in that Rama when going through the lands of Nishada, saw that most of the land under his reign 'was lying fallow and barren. He, therefore, advised Nishada how to get this infertile land converted to a good fertile one and when Nishada acted as per Rama's instructions, all the land which was discarded as useless piece, was giving prosperous crops in the years to follow. About Rama, I have read that he could tell after examining the sand-crust of the earth whether there was any hidden matter, viz., gold, copper,

silver, oil-petrol, coal, etc., in her womb and at what depth it could be found. Ramachandraji was an expert in this art and that is why in his reign there was plenty of food-grains, milk, fruits and vegetables and people enjoyed their life, remaining truthful all the while, respecting the laws of the land, there being all facilities available to them. There was no dearth of any kind and everyone did his duty sincerely and honestly.

We also know how scientific progress was made in the kingdom of Ravana and as a matter of routine in their daily life, they were using scientific gadgets for their comforts and luxury. That is why, they became proud of their material achievements and later on we find that the result was that he attacked all the smaller kingdoms around his State and by and by grabbed most of the States on this globe. In his Lanka, he had various types of aeroplanes, which could fly at a terrific speed and manned rockets were also sent to various other planets. The difference in the progress of both the ages—viz., of ancient Vedic times and that of modern age—is that most of the people did not use them in their daily life. Because they had not discovered any such devices which may render Man useless as also their machineries were not run on oil or petrol which cause air-pollution all round, but on such materials not causing any such hazards. They preferred to remain without such gadgets or machinery rather than pollute the air and atmosphere, which may ultimately be the main cause of destruction and diseases, as can be witnessed today.

In Dwapara Yuga, we see that science was equally well developed, because in the Mahabharata War, most deadly destructive weapons and armaments were used, but their effect was circumscribed by Maharaja Yogiraj Shri Krishnaji, who knew it well beforehand and all round the field of Kurukshetra, he through his scientific knowledge was able to erect such a wall of rays, which prevented any noxious gases from leaking outside. Before the War actually

started, Arjuna went to Mangala planet and spent about three years there, learning more about the war weapons and armaments, because science on that planet is much more advanced than on earth. But the Mahabharata War proved to be the grave of all our civilisation and science and most of our knowledge and learning was destroyed then. The remaining contained in our books was also turned to ashes by the hordes of foreigners who invaded and ruled this country during the last few centuries. This history is well-known to you all.

For the fusion of the two, *viz*, physical and spiritual sciences, our Rishis told us about Yajna or Agnihotra, which removes or nullifies the evil effects of gases *etc* caused in the atmosphere and climate. Yajna was a must for every household because through this, a man can benefit in two ways—one as I have been saying the purification of the climate and purification of Man within. If we study the science of Yajna we will discern that it is a Vedic purification project or way of life, so devised in the most simple manner, which can purify the entire cosmic atmosphere, thereby changing it to healthful in all respects. Though there are many types of Yajnas, but the two were very helpful, besides the daily Agnihotra, which every person must perform, without fail, considering it as his first and foremost duty. These two are Putreshti Yajna and Vrishti Yajna. Besides, the remedy of air pollution, by Yajna, we can also modify the weather condition and remove the possibility of strong winds, floods, *etc*. It is indeed a great science about which people today are mostly ignorant. The science of Yajna can be helpful in the formation of rain clouds, thereby giving us plenty of agricultural produce.

Through Agnihotra, many fell diseases can also be cured, because the oblations dropped in the fire are made of medicinal herbs *etc*. and they are effective in removing ailments and thereby cause happiness to all. As a matter

of fact, it is through Yajna (Agnihotra) that the whole environment can be purified, because the grit of cow is very efficacious, besides the ideas and thoughts which are embedded in the Mantras, sung simultaneously when Agnihotra is performed.

As can be seen from what we have discussed so far, in the Vedic society, there was complete freedom for individual, yet at the same time the texture was totally based on the tradition of Varna-Ashrama, which gave every opportunity to one and all to develop his or her faculties to the maximum extent possible. Unlike other living creatures, Man is required to be made, *i.e.*, he becomes what is taught to him, what he learns from his family and other surroundings and these we call Sanskaras. Therefore, in his case it is most essential that what sort of education is given to him is well planned in advance, taking into consideration the various factors, *viz.*, his aptitude and liking, besides the wherewithal and the availability of the resources. Our Rishis and Munis had given deep thought to all these and many more, which perhaps might not have occurred to our mind, and the system then in vogue, being based on the teachings of the Vedas, was faultless and perfect, because it has the blessings of God Almighty, whilst the other systems which we see today are Man-made and, therefore, defective, not coming up to the required standard, so that Man ought to become after getting the necessary education and training. Hence, full development of Man is not possible in our present educational system, being hampered by many difficulties and obstacles, the chief being that of Money.

The Acharyas or Rishis in the Ashramas were pundits of Ayurveda, and, therefore, they knew very well to assess the mental inclination of a student or Brahmachari, who came

there for studies. Not only that, they being well-versed in the Vedas, taught the disciples subjects which suited them for the development of their mental and intellectual faculties. In this context, there are many verses in the Vedas, which narrate the qualities of Mind and having studied these and such like Sutras and Mantras, the pupils got the necessary inspiration and encouragement to utilise this God-given boon to the utmost. About mind' it has been stated that it is All-powerful and has the likeness of God, because it also makes its own creation and for that matter, it has been called the creator, who creates its own world. Mind has also been called All-in-All, because its powers are unlimited and boundless. Because of Mind's divine powers, it has been also mentioned as a god, it is a depth-less storehouse of ideas and thoughts and therefore called 'Sea' and since the ideas are given expression through speech, the speech has been mentioned as a canal. It is the Glory of the Soul, *i.e.*, it is through the mind that the soul is able to get his all things done. Mind also controls the breathing system to a large extent, because our nervous-system and the flow of blood in the arteries depends entirely on its thinking. All our organs depend for their respective powers on the thinking of the Mind and thus it can be safely said that it is the mind which sees and again it is the mind which hears and it is the mind which feels.

In Atharva Veda, in a verse, all the aspects of psychology have been mentioned, *viz.*, it is Mind which causes sensation, motivation, and is the cause of consciousness and thinking, attention and feeling, emotion and perception. Actions of remembering and forgetting are also the preserves of Mind, as also the intelligence and learning are its main faculties. Among its many qualities we can also count imagination, emotion and feeling it is also responsible for dreams in which state we make our own worlds. Desire, intention and will are also caused by Mind. As a matter of fact, Mind is like the Prime Minister of the Soul and as we experience in

our daily life, it has unending qualities, which if harnessed to good purpose, should be able to raise Man to unknown heights. Another most important aspect of Mind is what we call 'Will-power' through which Man has been able to perform almost impossible deeds and feats. In Vedas, Mind has been called to possess thousands of rays, like the Sun it has within its compass not only this globe, but the entire space, the Moon, the Sun and many other countless planets and stars, including the present, past and future. It is the means of attraction, as like attracts like, similarly mind attracts mind and Mesmerism and Hypnotism are the two methods which are in vogue these days -these are nothing but the children of the mind. By constant penance and practice, we can develop the magnetic powers of our mind.

Through pure and pious mind, a man can become healthy, wealthy and wise our physical health depends more on our mental outlook, as the purity of mind drives away all the bodily dross and diseases. Remember that Mind has the life-giving power and substance, it gives life to the lifeless and power to the weak. It is responsible for awakening our unconscious tissues and encourages us to carry on our task in hand till we are able to complete the same successfully, in the midst of all the difficulties which we encounter at every stage. Describing the powers of the mind, it has been stated in the Vedas that through willpower, even death can be driven away and a person who is virtually in the jaws of death, can be saved. As a wild and powerful elephant is tied by thick and strong ropes, similarly death can also be controlled by Mind. Here I am reminded of the historical fact of how Bhishma Pitamaha drove away his death till the time he wanted it. He had been lying wounded in the battle-field for months together and bleeding all through, but expired only when the Sun turned northwards as was his desire. This is a glaring example which has come to us in the historical pages of the War of Mahabharata and is well known. There are many such cases, which we can

discern if we go through the pages of our history carefully. In 'Raghuvansha' the famous book written by Mahakavi Kalidas there is a shloka about the lives of monarchs, which indicates that people in those days welcomed death, but only when they thought it desirable:-

शेषवेऽभ्यस्त विद्यानां यौवने त्रिवैणाम् ।
वार्द्ध के मुनिवर्त्तीनां योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम् ॥

During the period of childhood, they used to study when young they enjoyed all the worldly pleasures on reaching the old age, they renounced their kingdom and would leave for the forests as Vanaprasthis (Munis) and in the end left this body through Yoga. Now, please note the last part of the Shloka, which says that they used to leave this earthly body through Yoga not that death came to them and they expired without their being a party to it.

Undoubtedly, if the mind is pure, then the course of life becomes very clear and charting along the Vedic lines, a man can steer through to the Moksha, but if the mind is impure, then he is likely to remain in bondage, because it is the mind which is responsible for our salvation. That is why, it has been said:-

मनएव मनुयाणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः ।

Only the mind is responsible for the peoples' bondage or salvation. What is the remedy to make the mind pure? To avoid sin, bad deeds in thought and words as well. If we are able to control our thought and always think good and have noble ideas, then we have crossed a great barrier, because the rest becomes quite easy. It is only through the purity of mind alone that victory can be achieved on sins. In a Vedic verse, it has been told that a man's sense or intelligence is just like his heart. It is through our thoughts and ideas that our hearts become noble and pure. In Vedas there are many verses extolling the role of will-power, as this is such an irrepressible instrument, which enables a person to perform unique tasks, because it exhorts him to advance

further with indomitable courage steadfastly towards his goal. It enables him to make firm determination, which knows no bounds or hindrances. It is such a power that even the world can be conquered not only this globe but even the regions beyond it. All the directions come bending before such a man of determination and will-power. He knows not defeat and is always victorious, because he is not even daunted by death, as he is the controller of death as well.

Will-power can also be used for the over-all good of the people, because a person with firm determination proceeds undaunted by the opposition he has to face and gladly accepts the challenge, without feeling any difficulty or trouble. In the end, he is successful in his mission and it is his mind which works as a vehicle, which brings all what he wants. It is only through mind that well-nigh impossible deeds are rendered possible because it is such a source of energy and strength that the person becomes invincible, though he may be surrounded by enemies on all fours, yet they prove useless and find themselves unable to vanquish him. By his will-power such a man makes them incapable. Indeed, the strength of mind is incalculable it is a blessing and a boon, which if given due recognition, has the capacity to change this earth into veritable heaven. It is a rich source of power and plenty and is the able guide towards the aim and objective you have in mind, Remember, if you have a strong will-power, an other factors automatically be come helpful to you. It protects Man from all the coming troubles as it works like a shield and even the gods salute him it shows the way as it has been truly said-'Where there is a will, there is a way'. It has no beginning or end and even the water, air, fire, the Sun or the Moon cannot have access to it Will-power is the greatest of all, because it is through this that a man is able to accomplish all what he wants.

Will-power is related to all the good qualities and virtues and therefore in a verse in Vedas these have been described

as husband and wife. The daughter of thought is want or desire and she has been wedded to courage. Because it is through determination or thought that want or desire is born and it works along with courage in life. Man is always influenced by thoughts and it is evident that our life is what we think Good and noble ideas and thoughts are the means of progressive life, while bad thoughts render life useless and a curse to the society. In Vedic verses, there are prayers that we may ever nourish good thoughts and never any bad or sinful idea occur to us We must not forget the fact that thoughts are infection, and easily travel from one person to the other. Hence, noble thoughts should always be given place in our mind, if we want life worth living. It is the company of good and noble people, not only of our age, but also those, who are no more on this earth, that we enjoy 'from their books which make our lives harmonious, affectionate and attractive. Even the divine feeling of 'love' is the off spring of the mind.

In Vedas, we have also been told about the traits which harm the will-power of a man Important amongst them are— (1) ideas of sin, (2) jealousy and (3) lust or passion. We have therefore been advised to do away with these and control them as much as possible, because these are the source of lethargy and laziness, as also take us on the road of ruination.

If we analyse the subject deeply, we will come to the conclusion that it is up to us whether we use our mind to make us or mar us. We are the Masters of our destiny and, therefore, it belovd us to control our mind so that it serves us in a better way, rather than we become slaves to our desires and passions Vedas have told us quite explicitly that Man ought to understand his position and all the knowledge and learning which he gets should enable him choose his path, so that he is able to lead an honourable life. In my opinion, a person may be considered developed when he ceases to think of 'self' only in the narrow terms

and also takes into consideration the society in which he lives. Thus, all his actions, whether in thoughts, words or deeds, should emanate from this feeling of reducing the pangs and suffering of others. And in the long run, this is going to help his own cause as well.

This is what our Vedic educational system taught us and the gist of the whole span of knowledge and learning has been traditionalised in Varna-Ashram system. As I have tried to explain earlier, this system gave all opportunities to each and every individual, whether low or high, rich or poor, male or female, without any discrimination whatsoever to develop his or her faculties to the maximum possible extent. We have examples of Krishna and Sudama, who had their education in the same Ashrama, as also we learn from Ramayana that Rama, Lakshmana, Bharat and Shatrughan were given education at the Ashrama of Muni Vashashitha where many other children of other people were receiving their education at the same time. It was then up to them individually how much they progressed, though of course the necessary guidance of the preceptors or Acharya was always there available to them. The entire emphasis in those days was to make all good and noble citizens of the world, so that each one in the society could discharge his allotted to devotedly and efficiently. With the passage of time, the system became corrupt, mainly due to the reason that Man on the whole became more selfish in nature and gave the least regard to the teachings of the Vedas and, as can be seen, this has proved a doom to the mankind and his future.

The system worked so well for ages and it can still do so, but it all depends on the nature of Man himself, who needs to do some self-introspection, if he really cares for the welfare of the world as a whole. But I have my doubts on this score as all the warnings given from time to time by many a learned person, have proved futile so far. Unless Man sheds his selfishness and ego, the future of the world

is bound to be bleak, because they have all the destroying agency and machinery at their disposal, not only in the shape of weapons, armaments and deadly nuclear bombs, but also their own enemy within their own selves, like greed, lust, ego, *etc.* In such circumstances, who is going to heed the advice of the Vedic sages and seers, Rishis and Munis, as in the opinion of these mighty rulers, these are old and time-worn out ideas, having no relevance in the modern days of nuclear age. They forget the fact that these contain the eternal truth and if not given proper heed well in time, humanity is heading towards utter chaos and destruction. May the Almighty bless them with intelligence and understanding.

7

Role of the Rulers

During the Vedic Age, when all education and learning was imparted by Vanaprasthis Sanyasis, who were known as Munis, and Rishis, because of their knowledge of the Vedas, Brahman Granths, etc., and selflessness, leading the lives of Yogis and -doing their duties as ordained by their Ashrama rules, there was no financial problem, since all living was quite simple and for their daily necessities of life, contributions and donations came forth from not only the parents, but also from others in plenty. The rulers also helped these Ashramas, if and when-such a necessity arose. The kings and monarchs considered it their duty that these institutions of knowledge and learning should continue to carry on the noble task which was most essential and was really in the interest of the nation as a whole. In those days, parents could not keep their children or wards at home after he or she attained the age of going to an Ashrama for education and learning. In this way, we see that all were afforded the required opportunity, without any distinction, to get the necessary knowledge of fitting in a Varna of Brahman, Kshatriya or Vaishya, so that he or she could thereafter serve the society according to his ability and capacity. Such children, who could not get any knowledge of any of these Varnas and remained ignorant of their role in society, were only known as Shudras, immaterial of the fact whether he or she belonged to a higher Varna. In this way, we see that real brothers or sisters may be selected for different Varnas, because it all depended on their performance in not only qualities, acquiring the necessary knowledge, but on their actions, habits and traits.

These Varnas were decided by their Acharyas at the time they left the Ashramas on completion of their education and training. But these Varnas could also be changed even later on, since the classification of Varnas depended entirely on one's conduct and character, knowledge and behaviour in life. We find that the kings and monarchs or the rulers in those times were very anxious to see that each and every individual in his kingdom got all the opportunities of developing his or her faculties as much as possible, so that they fully understood their own responsibilities towards their country and thus lived a happy and peaceful life, doing their respective duties in whatever Varna or Ashrama they were. As a matter of fact, it was their own choosing according to their liking and that before everyone tried to do his/her best and they considered it their responsibility to discharge their duties most efficiently.

Even in Dwapar Yuga's fag-end, Mahrisbi Vayas has written how good and noble people carried on their family-life as under:-

सर्वे आश्रमवर्णाः निज-निज यज्ञ हिते रताः ।

भवति गुंजायमानो हि वेदध्वनि गर्हे-गर्हे । ।

All the people, according to their Ashramas-Varnas, were duly engaged in their tasks, duties, viz, they performed the duties not only for their own interest but for the interest of all as a Yajna is performed. And in all the households, the sonorous sound of Veda-Mantras could be heard. It clearly means that a Brahman was constantly busy in eradicating ignorance (Brahmcharis, Vanaprasthis and Sanyasis also come in the category of Brahmins) a Kshatriya was keen to see that there was no injustice done to any similarly a Vaishya was busy in agriculture, farming, tending animals, in trade, business or industry, so that there was enough produce of the foodstuffs and other materials considered as the necessities of life. The remaining, if any, were to assist these three Varnas in their work through their physical labour because such people known as Shudras had not

been able to acquire the necessary knowledge or learning of any of these three Varnas.

The rulers of that age took keen interest in the activities of the various Ashramas, mostly spread in the vast forests, away from the outskirts of villages or towns these were generally away from the populace, in the peaceful atmosphere of the Vanas (forests) Many times the rulers sought the advice and help from the learned people, known as Rishis/Munis of the Ashramas in times of difficulty and of course the Rishis were their ultimate guide in so far as the knotty problems of the State were concerned. These Rishis and Acharyas were given due respect in the society by one and all and kings and monarchs would sit at their feet, as and when such an occasion arose. The sons and daughters of the rulers also went to these Ashramas for education and learning and therefore it was natural for them to look after these institutions and help in their proper functioning. Besides, the rulers of those days considered themselves responsible for the welfare of their subjects and treated them as their own children and the entire region as their own house. Mahakavi Kalidas has written in his book 'Raghuvansha' as to how much care the rulers used to take of their subjects, as under:-

प्रजानां विनयाधानाद्रक्षणाद् भ्रष्टादपि ।
स पिता पितरस्तासां केवलं जन्महेतवः । ।

As a father prevents his children from doing any bad action and teaches them to do good always; protects them by all means and looks after them till they grow up; similarly the rulers of kshwaku Vansha never allowed their subjects to do anything harmful but encouraged them to follow the virtuous and noble path. They also managed the affairs of the State in such a manner that every one got proper education and training, food, clothing and shelter and subsequently work to do according to his ability and capacity. In this way, there was not even a single person dissatisfied and thus a ruler was in reality the true father of his subjects.

In 'Raghuvansha' itself, Mahakavi Kalidas has described that in the Ashrama of the sage Vartantu, once when some Brahmcharis on completion of their studies, were leaving for their homes, as was the practice in those days, a Snatak, named Kautsa, asked the Guru as to what 'dakshina' (remuneration) he should give to him for the education which he had received from him. The Rishi told the Brahmachari that he was quite pleased with his behaviour and conduct whilst in the Ashram and, therefore, there was no need for any other 'dakshina' besides. But Kautsa insisted on giving the Rishi whatever he wished and when the Brahmachari could not be put off in any way, the Rishi got somewhat irritated by the persistent request and told him that he had given Kautsa education in the fourteen branches of knowledge and, therefore, wanted fourteen crores of gold sovereigns as his 'dakshina'. This was indeed a very large amount and hearing this, Kautsa could think of no other way but to seek this money from Raja Raghu, who was the ruler of Ayodhya at that time Here it may be pertinent to mention that Raghu was the great-grand-father of Ramachandraji Maharaj.

Kautsa accordingly took leave from his Guru Vartantu to procure the requisite 'dakshina' for him and set forth for the town of Ayodhya. On reaching the palace, when he saw the king Raghu sitting on a mat with earthen pot of water at his side, he realised that the king had a few days earlier performed 'Vishwajit Yajna' in which he had given all his treasure and everything else in alms to the needy and the Brahmanas, thus there was left nothing which he could give him. The king gave him a hearty welcome and asked Kautsa as to how it was possible for him to come to the town. The king also asked the Brahmachari about the welfare of the Rishi and all else in the Ashrama and was told by the Brahmachari that all was well, except the episode which had prompted him to come to Ayodhya. But since it was evident that he was a bit late in coming because

the king had donated all his wealth already and there was nothing much left, he would not like to worry the king on that score, but seek the required amount of fourteen crores of gold sovereigns somewhere else.

Raghu at once told the Brahmachari Kautsa that he need not go anywhere else, but wait in the Guest House for two-three days, during which time arrangement for the money in question would be made. Kautsa was relieved to hear this Raja Raghu sent his warriors to Kuber and when Kuber came to know that Raja Raghu wanted fourteen crores of gold sovereigns to give them to Kautsa, he immediately despatched his people with many carriages laden with gold' sovereigns. Raja Raghu told the Brahmachari to take them all, but Kautsa replied that he wanted only fourteen crores of gold coins and no more. Here, Raghu said that all that wealth was sent by Kuber for him, but the Brahmachari would not accept any more. Thereupon Raja Raghu sent the carriages full of fourteen crores of gold coins with Kautsa, as was his wish.

Another instance which we read in Ramayana is that once Maharishi Vishwamitra came to Raja Dashratha in Ayodhya and told him that demons, Maricha, Subahu and Tadaka were disturbing the peace and harmony of his Ashrama and were not allowing him to carry on his work, Yajna *etc.* These Rakshasas were the kith and kin of Ravana and were a source of trouble to the people in Vishwamitra's Ashrama. The sage therefore asked the king to allow Rama and Lakshmana to accompany him to his Ashrama for a few days, so that these two brothers could kill the Rakshasas. Raja Dasharatha was reluctant to accede to this request of Rishi Vishwamitra in the first instance, but yielded ultimately when counselled by Muni Vashishtha, Purohit and Guru of Rama and brothers, as also by Queen Kaushalya, mother of Rama. So, the two brothers Rama and Lakshmana set forth to the Ashrama of Vishwa-mitra along with him. As a matter of fact, the

purpose of Rishi Vishwamitra was twofold in asking the services of Rama and Lakshmana for the performance of his Yajna undisturbed by the Rakshasas—One that he wanted to give the necessary training to the two brothers in various arms, weapons and armaments of sophisticated nature because his aim was to prepare them for the war with Ravana which was to come later on Secondly, to get these kith and kin of Ravana killed, so that they may not be able to create disturbances in the Ashramas of the Rishis in future. But to give the requisite training to the two brothers was more at his heart, as the Rishis and Munis of the area had so decided and Rishi Vishwamitra had given a word to undertake this task.

So, we see that the rulers of the Vedic age knew the importance of these Ashramas and gave all assistance to them in whatever form it was necessary, as the situation demanded. Later on, we also learn from the Ramayana that the two brothers when sent to exile for fourteen years in the forests (vana), they roamed from Ashrama to Ashrama of the various Rishis, including that of Bharadwaj and Attri Muni. There actually the two brothers had their training for a long period of about thirteen years, preparing all the while to vanquish the might of Ravana, who because of his vanity had attacked and usurped almost the entire globe, except the small territories of the northern part of Aryavarta (Bharat) and some portion in the South Actually only the four small territories were ruled by Raja Dashratha in Ayodhya, Raja Shivji in the mountainous region of the Himalayas, Raja Janak in Nepal and Raja Bali in the South Otherwise the flag of Ravana was flying everywhere else and as he had become very proud and' haughty of his might, he was also harassing the Rishis and Munis in their Ashramas, which prompted them to do something to destroy him. Therefore,

they made plan and put it into practice by preparing Rama and Lakshmana for a great war with Ravana and were successful in their mission.

It is obvious from the above that the rulers had a great stake in the proper maintenance and organisation of the Ashramas, as these were the actual fountain and source of all the education and learning in the land. But unfortunately with the lapse of time, the system has become extinct, more so as the Vedic teachings were ignored and forgotten because of the advent of foreigners and new sects and the so-called religions on the earth, trying to destroy even the remnants of our past glorious heritage of civilisation and culture, known as the Vedic Sanskriti. Whosoever came here, tried to impose their own culture through their own language formerly the Muslim invaders did away with all the institutions of Sanskrit, and Urdu and Persian began to be taught in the educational institutions in all the Government-controlled bodies, because they wanted their work to be done in their own language. During my childhood, I heard this parody-

पढ़ें फारसी बेचें तेल । यह देखो कुदरत के खेल ।।

Those who learn Persian language, sell oil; how things change with the change of time. Because at that time we were ruled by the Britishers and therefore English language was being taught everywhere.

Now, though we are free since 1947, yet the country is tom by strife and the issue of language, as laid down in our Constitution, has not been implemented with any sincerity so far. Thus, we find ourselves in doldrums because the rulers do not think of their own culture, as they always try to please the minorities. And it is not possible to please everybody. It is a democratic set-up and the interests of the vast majority of the people should not be ignored, because of a few disgruntled elements, who always prove hindrance in anything which is in the interest and welfare of the country and the nation as a whole.

8

Method of Teaching

Vedic civilisation and culture has been that of jungles and forests or Vanas and therefore the problem which is now being faced by the mankind of ecological balance, was never there, because our ancient Rishis knew their importance and place in life. Unlike today, even the big towns were properly planned and people generally were not so keen to rush to the big cities because they had adequate sources of employment in their villages or habitats in the midst of nature, where life was more happy and peaceful. Mostly the people were leading a simple and contented life and they did not hanker much after wealth or money, since there was plenty for all to meet their necessities. The Varna-Ashrama system prevalent in the society in those days was able to meet the aspirations of one and all, without any discrimination whatsoever on any basis, as everyone got according to his merit and had complete freedom to choose his way of life. Hence, there were only two kinds of people, known as Arya or Devas, and a few only who somehow for one reason or the other adopted bad means, were known as Dasyus or Asuras, Rakshasas, *etc.* In other words, there were two types of people— Good and Bad and the latter category was very small in number, because of the teachings of the Vedas in the various Ashramas spread all over the forests.

As a matter of fact, three-fourths of the population lived in the forests in the Ashramas and only one-fourth, who were young couples, were leading life as householders in the family, because not more than four generations live

at a time, out of which the oldest generation, *viz.*, grandparents became Sanyasis parents became Vanaprasthis and children had to be sent to the Ashramas for study. Hence, only the young generation lived a family-life and these householders also know and were fully aware of the powers and greatness of Brahmacharya. So, they also led an austere and blissful life, not indulging too much in sensual pleasures only for the sake of getting a child. The problem of over-population or of feeding too many mouths was not there at all as people understood the value of self-control. Since the education in those days was two-fold broadly, *i.e.*, of material science and spiritual science, and equal emphasis was given on both the wings; therefore, it became quite clear to them that life's goal could never be achieved if they indulged excessively in the worldly mundane matters and lost their energy and strength thereby. Now, the things have changed vastly and majority of the people are of the view that 'eat, drink and be merry' is the only aim of life, because they do not believe in the eternity of the soul, or even if some doubt lurks in their minds, they do not like to bother about it. Thus, we find that the present day education only teaches us about worldly things and even in that sphere it is not so successful while the Vedic education was efficacious in both the spheres. And the difference between a Man and the other creatures can only be visible when the spiritual side is also taken care of.

It has been rightly said:-

आहार निद्रा भय मैथुनं च, सामान्यमेतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।
धर्मो हितोऽधिको विशेषो, धर्मेण हीना पशुभिः समाना ॥

Food, sleep and sexual intercourse are alike for all the creatures of the world, including Man but only Dharma is the specialty of Man and if he is devoid of Dharma, then a Man is just like a beast or animal. As a matter of fact, 'the lust and greed of mankind can only be controlled and kept in check by spiritual science or we may call it the true knowledge of Nature, Soul and God.

According to the Vedic scriptures, the rules for those who teach and read are— Let them read and teach by living a right sort of life get true knowledge by living a truthful life they should read and teach Vedas and other scriptures by living a life of austerity and virtue, by checking the external senses from evil ways and by checking the tendencies of mind from all evils. Let them read and teach by kindling the sacrificial fire and by the acquisition of the knowledge of electricity *etc.*, regularly performing Agnihotra by serving the learned people and by keeping human dealings properly and last of all by protecting and developing the vital fluid of life. The idea behind all the activities was that each and every individual, whether a man or a woman, ought to get the maximum and the best result out of life, so that the ultimate aim of humanity is attainable, and the Varna-Ashrama tradition, followed rigidly, was such a path that could ensure it. This was all possible only through the teachings in the Ashramas, where people from all walks of life, expert and specialised in different branches of the various lines of education, imparted knowledge and learning, based on their life-long experience.

These learned Vanaprasthis/Sanyasis, known as Munis and Rishis, had no self-interest at all, devoid of all lust and passions they fully devoted their whole time, being dedicated to the cause of education and future make-up of the nation. The system of education being given in Ashrama is considered ideal for two reasons chiefly They are:-

(a) Because only Vanaprasthis or Sanyasis undertook the task of teaching, they had no family aberration or commitments to meet and hence not much need and thus no greed either of was not only a tradition, but a missionary way of life which also afforded them the opportunity to advance further in their own life's journey.

(b) Not only these people had vast experience, but also devoid of any sort of lust or passion, since they already had their family-life during their younger days and now again

through austere and Brahmacharya, they passed their time, not only giving knowledge to other but also increasing their own. Thus, they were able to make the children, *i.e.*, their disciples and pupils, men and women of splendid character unlike these days, who are taught mainly by young teachers, whose minds and thoughts generally wander elsewhere because of their sensual desires. Thus, how can the students in our schools and colleges be persons of solid character when their teachers themselves are not of that metal?

That is why they were called Acharyas the etymological sense of the word 'Acharya' means the one who himself being a person of character in all respects can also make his disciples and pupils not only learned but that of character as well. For them, these worldly and mundane matters had little meaning, as their ideas and thoughts were always busy with the divine ways of God and they served the cause of humanity by giving education and knowledge, which was divinity herself. Manu Maharaja has said in his famous book 'Manusmriti' as under:-

सर्वोमेव दानानां ब्रह्मदानं विशिष्यते ।

In all the alms in the world, the alms of the teaching of Vedas is the best, as giving the divine knowledge is considered the best type of charity. Therefore, all sorts of sacrifices of body, mind and money should be made for the propagation of education. That country is indeed fortunate in which Brahmacharya and Vedic learning are properly propagated.

Manu Maharaja states further in Manusmirti-Male and— female students 'avoid wine, flesh, scents, garlands, metallic medicines, company of opposite sex, violence to creatures rubbing the parts of the body and unnecessarily touching the sexual organs, the use of colloquium in the eyes, shoes, umbrella, and be free from lust, anger, greed, attachment, fear, sorrow, jealousy, malice, dance vocal and instrumental music, gambling, prattling and recrimination, lying gazing at opposite sex, dependence and injury to others. They should always sleep singly and should not

allow their vital fluid to flow out. If a man wastes his semen through lust, he brings to naught his vow of Brahmacharya.

'The Acharyas enjoined their male and female pupils to always speak the truth; do righteous deeds; study without laziness; acquire all knowledge after keeping your Brahmacharya intact, *i.e.*, preserving the vital fluid; never lose sight of health and mental equilibrium under any circumstances, never slacken the proper development of your excellent talent through indolence; never abandon study and teaching in life; never betray slackness in the service of the godly and learned persons, mother, father and the like; serve likewise the preceptor and guests on all occasions; perform righteous and noble actions and deeds always, never having recourse to such actions which are contrary to truthfulness; copy such actions of ours which are good in nature and tally with the rules of conduct; but never copy our improper actions and associate only with such persons who are learned and virtuous.

I may now relate some episodes of student-life of Rama, while he was studying in the Ashrama of Vashishtha Muniji. He studied there along with his brothers for about thirty years. His study period was divided into three parts by Maharishi Vashishtha— for the first ten years, they were taught about words and phrases, speech and discourses about proposition, resolutions, determinations, promises and vows good manners, proper behavior, civility, propriety, *etc.* Thereafter they were given education on particular subjects, such as commerce, mathematics, history, geography, economics and various other sciences and other subjects of art and culture. Last of all, they were given practical training, so that whatever was taught to them theoretically, actually became their own part and parcel of life. They studied during these years all about the arms and ammunition, weapons and armaments of various types and nature, so that they became perfect in the science of warfare. In Treta Yuga, there were research laboratories

and science-rooms, very spacious with the necessary facilities and instruments in the Ashrama of Mahrishi Vashishthaji Mahrishi and his wife Arundhati both used to teach and they had special knowledge about the various planets and worlds in the space, though of course, they also did research work concerning the earth.

Guru Vashishtha was so expert about the geological science; that he could tell what metal or oil *etc* was lying hidden in the womb of the earth, by tasting the particles on the front portion of his tongue. Once it so happened that study on geology was going on, when Mahrishi Bharadwaja came there He asked as usual as to what was going on and Vashishthaji replied that they were all doing some research work and study on the crust of the earth and wanted to see whether the same could be put into action Mahrishi Bharadwaja told them that you all come to my Ashrama, where in my Science”laboratory, there is a machine which would give you all knowledge about what is lying hidden up to the depth of many miles, not only in ‘the womb of the earth, but even if it is in the sea under water. They all went to his Ashrama and saw for themselves what Mahrishi Bharadwaj had told them. Rama along with his brothers remained in the Ashrama of Mabrishi Bharadwaj for about six months, studying all about it and also many other scientific matters. Through their scientific instruments, they could also know about other planets and stars and what sort of creatures were living there. For example, on Mangalalok on the Moon how many Suns are there in the Milky way. In this way, they found at last that it was not possible for them to measure the entire expanse of the space which has no beginning or end, as also the innumerable planets and stars so gigantic in size and shape, all bound in a harmonious thread by God Almighty.

Similarly, Ravana along with his brothers, studied in the Ashrama of his Guru, known as Mahrishi Brahma Ravana’s student-life was quite long, as he completed his studies at

the age of 48. He got married at the age of fifty. During the early years of his life, Ravana was very inquisitive and it was his desire to attain as much knowledge as possible, more so about the science of warfare. Though born in a Brahman family, he had the traits of a Kshatriya and we see that he became a king of great eminence during his life-time His. Acharya had predicted about his egoistic nature, when he was taken to the Ashrama by his father, Vishrawa Muni.

Later on we read in Upanishadas also about the Ashramas of various Rishis and Sages, and indeed these Ashramas were the places of knowledge and learning, virtually the temples of education, where besides the material and physical sciences, spiritual science had an important place. Because, education as such was not considered complete without the knowledge of Atma and God. As the situation worsened, education based on Vedas was given go-bye and Sanskrit as a language was taught in Gurukulas Even now there are some Gurukulas in the country, they perforce also teach English as a subject in order that the students may not face difficulty in life subsequently. But most of our educational institutions are in the shape of schools and colleges, where they are given general knowledge of English language and some other subjects, with out any practical training in any trade or vocation and the result of such an education is that the number of educated unemployed is increasing day by day. As against this, according to Varna-Ashrama tradition, all students having given some basic knowledge of language and the essential subjects were categorized into three classes, *viz.*, of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, and their education and training thereafter proceeded, suiting the vocation, profession or trade, according to his aptitude and talent.

Also, one great factor in those days was that the wise Rishis and Munis understood that too much dependence on machinery was likely to render a large number of people

jobless. Therefore, they preferred to undertake doing tasks with manual skill, rather than with machinery, which has caused so much havoc and widens the ditch between the rich and the poor. Our country has man-power in plenty and seeing this, Gandhiji also counseled our rulers after Independence that only cottage industries were most suitable, so that every hand could get something to do. But those who hold the reins of power do not care about the condition of the common man and think of the computer age. There is no harm in knowing all about the nuclear armaments and we should have some of them. But in our day-to-day life, it would have been far better to rely on small scale cottage industries, because agriculture cannot give occupation to all, land being limited. We should have copied Japan, who has made wonderful strides, though in the Second World War, that country suffered the most, because I learn that cottage industries on small scale are very common there. So, concluding I may say that Man should know about Material as well as Spiritual Science, if he wants to survive in future.

9

Role of Ashramas

There are, broadly speaking, only three afflictions in the world which human-beings should remove and a society which successfully gear up to meet these challenges, can be called a good society. These can be known as Ignorance, Injustice and Want. We have already seen that Varna-Ashrama tradition was fully capable of doing so, *viz.*, the Brahmans' duty was to impart knowledge? And remove all sorts of ignorance the Kshatriyas' duty was to see that there was no injustice anywhere and that of the Vaishyas' duty was to remove want, *i.e.*, in other words, to work hard in such a way that there was plenty of production on all fronts and people did not have to suffer for the lack of any of the commodities, which we may call the necessities of life. Hence, when all the three Varnas were sincere in their duties, there was plenty of everything and the people enjoyed their lives, without any rancour or dispute whatsoever. A society or nation in which there were only a few Shudras, was considered exemplary and vice versa, *i.e.*, in a society where there are more of Shudras, the number of illiterates and physical labour force large, such a country or nation cannot be called progressive. It is indeed backward and our country is considered and counted amongst such nations.

In ancient times, our country was the pioneer in the field of civilisation and because of the prevalence of Varna-Ashrama system, every one was employed doing his or her job satisfactorily. Such a State was known as 'Rama-Rajya' and Gandhiji used to refer to such a rule in our country

in the fond hope that we will be able to usher in such an era, soon after Independence, because in our view, all our troubles were the cause of slavery and once we become free, these troubles will be over. But this has not happened and to my mind it may be because we have not taken into consideration the roots of our culture and try to impose the Western system, which has not proved conducive as the results have clearly shown so far. These days, education is also controlled by the Government to a very large extent and whatever policy is laid down by them, is generally followed in our educational institutions. This was not so before, but the Ashramas had their independent role and education, knowledge and learning in both the wings—material and spiritual—was given simultaneously, because at that time there was no such dispute of various sects, since these are the off-shoots of recent age, none going beyond a few thousand years, maximum two to three thousand at the most.

So, in the Vedic Age, the Ashramas had the uppermost say in the affairs of the State and their Acharyas, known as Rishis, were revered for their knowledge and learning. Kings and monarchs would quite often visit these Ashramas and sought the advice of the Rishis on various matters and problems and that their blessings. Whenever any coronation was due and ceremonised, it was always done in the presence of most of the Rishis of the Ashramas and one chosen for the occasion used to perform the ceremony. In the case of Rama's chandraji Maharaja, Guru Vashishtba duly performed the coronation ceremony. In the case of Ravana when Ravana's father, Vishrawa Muni and Ravana's grand-father, 'Pulastya Rishi, requested one of the Rishis present on the occasion, be refused to do so, because according to his reading, Ravana's traits were likely to be haughty in future, which may bring doom to the nation. Pulastya Rishi then requested some other Rishi and he agreed and thus Ravana was at last crowned as the king of Lanka.

When Raja Dashratha decided to crown Rama, then the Rishis held a meeting and it was discussed there that in case Rama was crowned, then their plan of preparing Rama to face Ravana and vanquish him, would not be fulfilled. Hence, it was at their behest that Queen Kaikeyi agreed to ask for the two boons from Raja Dashratha, asking him to send Rama into exile to forests for fourteen years and crown Bharata instead as the king of Ayodhya. This was accordingly executed as we all know and the plan of the Rishis to give more training to the two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, was carried out during the long years in exile and in the end we see how the mighty Ravana was killed, along with his followers. On return from exile, Rama did not agree to become the king and it was again at the instance of the Rishis and Munis of the various Ashramas that he was persuaded to be crowned. Having realised the importance of the Ashramas in the making of Man, Ramachandraji Maharaja even sent her Queen Sita to the Ashrama of Mahrishi Valmiki. When Sita became pregnant she herself had expressed her desire to go and see the Ashramas of the Rishis once again, as and he had enjoyed her stay there during the period of exile.

It was in the Valmiki Rishi's Ashrama that Sita gave birth to Love and another child Kusha was adopted by Sita, as the child was left by someone in the Rishi's Ashrama and both the children were duly brought up by Sita there. They were, in course of time, given all sorts of education and training by the Rishi and ultimately both of these Love and Kusha became so well-versed in the various fields of education whether it was physical, material or spiritual, date later one see that these two brothers challenged the might of their own father, about whom they were unaware, since this fact was never told to them. It was true and accepted by all in those days that the children born and brought up in the Ashramas, having received all sorts of education and training there, were better, noble any more virtuous

in their behavior, conduct and character in life than those who for some reason or the other did not have the benefit of such an education. Yet there were also some cases where we learn that there arose some differences between a Rishi and his student-disciple and the Rishi did not allow him to prosecute his studies further in his Ashrama.

One glaring instance is that of Yajnavalkya, who was getting his education and training in his Guru's Ashrama and with the passage of years, Yajnavalkya had known quite much and begun to understand the values in their proper perspective in life. One day, it so happened that in the Ashrama, some disciples began to eulogise their Guru in unlimited terms, as if he was all-in-all and the entire credit for their knowledge and learning went to their Guru. This went on for quite some time, which when carried to the extreme, was not to the liking and taste of Yajnavalkya. He, therefore, opined submissively that all the factors in an Ashrama were responsible for good education, in which the atmosphere and the conduct and hard work and devotion of the disciple was as much helpful as the sincere and unselfish attitude of the Guru. Such a bland statement from Yajnavalkya annoyed his Guru and in an infuriated state, he ordered Yajnavalkya to leave his Ashrama immediately, as he could not tolerate all this from his disciple. Yajnavalkya had no recourse, but to bid good-bye to his revered Guru and his Ashrama and seek refuge somewhere else in order to pursue his studies further, which he was resolved to continue, in spite of the difficulties he had to face. Therefore, we learn that he did not go to any Ashrama, but whatever studies he did, it was on his own of course, he must have been seeking the aid of the Rishis whenever he encountered any difficulty. Ultimately, I have read that the Yajnavalkya became such a learned Rishi of his time 'that most of the Aishis and Munis accepted him as 'Brahmgyani' and in any assembly, Yajnavalkya was given a respectable position.

Subsequently, matters changed for the worse and the system of Vama-Ashrama received a severe jolt and setback as political stability in the country was also. In doldrums and the country was subdivided into many smaller States, each being ruled by someone who came to power either by heredity or by force. The remnants of the Ashrama tradition could, however, still be seen and some learned pundits held on to the system somehow, on a smaller scale, though actually they were not Vanaprasthis, but Grahisthis in all respects, yet fully dedicated themselves to the cause of education and learning. It was indeed a great sacrifice on their part, because they hardly got any financial help or support from any quarter and yet they carried on somehow. Ultimately, the system became extinct all together and in their place schools and colleges were opened, but the education given in those institutions is quite alien to our land and culture, because the medium of instruction was chosen to be English, a foreign language which crippled the natural talent of most of the students. Along with these are some Sanskrit Pathashalas and some Gurukulas also functioning at the same time, but these are very few in number and can hardly cater for such a large population of the size of a country like India. Besides, the system of education in these Pathashalas and Gurukulas is more or less on the pattern of the schools and colleges, except that more emphasis is given on the language of Sanskrit. Also in some Gurukulas special consideration is given to the teaching of the Vedas, no doubt English is also taught there as a subject, so that the students going out of these institutions do not remain cut off from the general stream of the educational trend in the country.

Briefly, we have tried to analyse the historical facts of the Varna-Ashrama system and its advantages, as compared to the modern educational system based on Western culture. Most of the learned people agree that this system has not proved beneficial to the country as a whole, not because it is

alien, but also because it has proved very costly and a large majority of our children remain untouched by it most of the people cannot afford the expenses as also the Government cannot go on financing, finding it almost an unmanageable task. Therefore, under such circumstances, reversion to the age-old system, if resorted to and planned, can prove more advantageous, as also it would give employment to a large section of the people. Besides, the Varna-Ashrama tradition has an in-built characteristic of being profession/vocation-oriented and the problem of employment gets solved automatically thereby. It does not, however, mean that there should be no education of any foreign language whatsoever. Of course, some of our students can always be chosen to be educated and trained in the various foreign languages, so that they can effectively fill up the diplomatic appointments in our embassies abroad. But this could be in addition to their general education, which all have to be given, without any exception.

As at present, education-giving to all the children in our country has assumed a gigantic proportion and as a result with all the endeavors of our Government, they cannot make the resources available to even half of the populace. Not only education, vast majority of our people do not even get two square meals a day and many die because of starvation. This is the plight of our country at present and Man is no more than a beast, who is also at the mercy of the Nature. It is all because we have not been able to do away with our slavish mentality and a few people at the helm of affairs exploit the large masses of the people in the name of a great democracy in the world. Very little work has been done to ameliorate the condition of the people at large, mainly because the machinery is so overwhelmingly corrupt and the policies adopted have proved ineffective, because the root cause of it all being alien to our civilisation and culture has been forgotten. And so long as we do not wake up to this reality, the goal is likely to remain as far as ever.

FEEDBACK (‘Education’)

In order to get full benefit out of this book, read the nine articles giving a gap of say two days in between each, so that you may be able to assimilate them properly, nursing over the theme all while. This is more a historical description in the garb of literature, which gives you inspiration, as you will know about your ancestral heritage and thereby enthuse you to assist yourself more, because most of our powers remain hidden and we are not able to exploit them fully to our advantage.

Now that you know all about it and have tried to absorb the underlying ideas, you are in a position to answer the following:

1. In order to remember the salient points, you must have made note of these in your pocket book or diary. If so, please let us know, which appealed to you most?
2. List points/questions which came to your mind when reading this book?
3. Did you succeed in getting answers to your questions?
4. Did you discuss these questions to seek clarification or solution with any one?
 - (a) Parents
 - (b) Teachers
 - (c) Friends
 - (d) Student Adviser in University.
5. Which further information you wanted to get, but could not get here/anywhere?
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