

Rule - 8

Vidya and Avidya (Knowledge and Illusion)

One shall promote vidya = true knowledge and dispel avidya = illusion.

केतु कृष्णकन्नकेतवे पेशो मर्या अपेशसे ।

समुषभ्दिरजाययाः ॥

Imparling knowledge to the ignorant, light to the benighted.

Rise ye, mortals, like unto the dawn.

—Yajurveda XXIX 27.

Nature and Nurture — Educationists make distinction between the nature and nurture of a man. In nature they include traits which are ingrained in the individual. They are part of his being at the time of his birth. They may then be only latent, and when favourable circumstances arise, may assert themselves and take tangible form. Ere that they may not even have been noticed. Every individual has in him such apparently inexorable traits, which differ widely in different persons. They constitute his personality and are thought to be impossible, at least most difficult, of effacement.

Nurture: Its Effect — Nurture is a result of environments. This a man imbibes from outside. The way in which a man is brought up, and the associates with whom he mixes in his childhood and later, have a profound influence on his moral and mental make. Sometimes the essential traits of his temperament are changed by introducing a change in the conditions,

in the midst of which he lives. Always dogged by misfortune, he has a tendency to become irascible. Never thwarted in the way of his progress, he may become elated and supercilious, and if noble by nature, sweet and accommodating.

Nature is Past Nurture — Man is thus considered to be a combination of nature and nurture. The Arya philosophers, latest of whom came Dayananda, make no difference in the nature of individuals. Not that men are not born unequal and Varied in their mental and moral equipment. The varieties, they show at the time of birth, are traced by them to nurture in previous lives. Souls in their natural endowment show only certain capacities. They can know, they can act, they can feel. The scope and potency of these capacities depend upon the mode and extent of their giving them an opportunity of free or restrained play. Free will is the nature of man. He may be active or idle, either usefully or mischievously so. This, in the main, determines his future character. His activities in one life, deliberate first and then a fraction of them unconscious, are the cause not only of his birth in the next life in this animal's body or that, but also of his efficiency or inefficiency as a free agent, with prepossessions and proclivities, good or bad or indifferent, in that new sphere. Thus a great portion of what materialists, or fatalists among spiritualists, regard as the nature of man is, to the Arya Samajist, his nurture extending over a number of lives. Nature should be unchangeable. It is an absolutely inexorable factor in human, or for that matter, animal constitution. Reform which addresses itself to the rectification of the nurture of this life alone, has a very superficial job before it. The Vedas make the province of reform wider, they carry the scope of its effects deeper into the foundations of human character. Their conception of nurture would appear to be much too wide. It is nurture, a joint result of the exertions of the individual soul and the reaction they evoke from its

surroundings, that makes temperamental differences between man and man, man and woman, woman and woman.

Education Begins in the Womb — The idea of education which the Vedic science of training has before it is commensurately vast. Education according to the Aryan conception, begins from the day the child is conceived in its mother's womb. The copulation of parents, of which the conception is the consequence, is a part of a sacrament, called the *Garbhadhanam*. It is not at all sexual pleasure but the discharge of a parental duty, one of the most sacred human functions, that is the aim of the sexual act. The parents proceed to it with an aim. They have, after long company, in purity of love, resolved not only that they will have an off-spring, but also what sort of man or woman the intended infant is to be. The mentality of the father and the mother at, and before, the time of coitus has a deep and lasting impression on the mentality of the coming child. What in common parlance is called the nature, but what we think is the previous nurture of the soul that will be attracted to make the ovum of the prospective mother its abode, will depend upon the parents' resolve — not only on their capacity, but the practical steps they take, to translate that resolve into action. Aryan eugenics lays great stress on the regular performance of this sanskara, in the course of which the seed of the sapling is to be laid.

Education at Home—After an interval of four months follows *punsavanam* or the *virilising* ceremony, and two months later the *Simntonnayanam* or the intellect-promoting ritual. These sacraments are to emphasis.- the spinal phase, to be taken particular care of, at each of these particular stages, in the development of the embryo. The ceremony, which comes next is that of birth, or *jatakarma*. The mother passes through the ordeal of the delivery and the child sees its first light of day. Its body made safe from all infections, the formula Vedos, "thou

art the Veda”, is whispered in it ear, and the symbol Om, the proper name of God, is painted with honey on his tongue. Thus is the name of God made sweet to him from its birth. The psychological effect of this process is too deep for words. It may be mentally brooded over and enjoyed. On the eleventh day after birth falls the naming ceremony. When a month and a half old, the child is taken into the open and brought in contact with outside air, with bright sunshine in the day, and cool moonlight in the night, this being, so to say, its first initiation into communion with nature. Between the ages of 1 and 3 are performed the first barbering and piercing of the ears, both processes of medical virtue.

At School — At the age of eight takes place the investiture with sacred thread, followed by *Vedarambha* or commencement of Vedic studies. This, in other words, is the admission of the boy or girl into a *Gurukula*, family of the guru, as the Aryan schools of old were called. From old the educational institutions among Aryans have been residential. Specialists in the line of bringing up children, Brahmanas whose aim in life is to disseminate true knowledge and enlightenment, imbued through and through with righteousness, should alone be in charge of these institutions. They accept pupils as members, as it were, of their own families. Their relation to them is literally parental. The Veda places the *brahmachari* in the womb of the *Acharya*, meaning that the latter should be as solicitous of the welfare of the disciple, as the pregnant mother is of the embryo. Could tutorial care go any further? The camps’ of the United States of America, the agricultural schools of Sweden and the residential academies of other countries are only a partial modern realisation of this Vedic idea of Gurukulas. The sites are similar, so also is the paraphernalia. The difference is in the nature of the personnel of their staffs. The ancient Brahmanas are extinct—natural teachers and preachers of highest morality and exemplary self-sacrifice, who should

work not for pay, but should share with their pupils the food and clothing which the community supplies them. When will the young hopefuls, reading today in schools, on whom the future of the country and humanity depends, learn their first lesson of human fraternity, if not during the scholastic years? The development of the child, not only physical, but mental and spiritual also, is the concern of the teachers. A regular programme of work, consisting of exercise, meals, study, prayers and other social and religious functions is to be observed. The diet is to be regulated by rules of health and of promotion of physique. The curriculum consists, in the beginning, of the three Rs, and later of all sciences, positive and theoretical, as also of philosophy and religion. The motto is to teach every pupil something of everything and everything of something. This course is to be compulsory for all children, male and female. The attitude of the Vedas towards physical science and mental and moral philosophy, has among all religious books of the world been unique. Claiming to be the repository of seeds of all sciences, the Vedas have never come in conflict with, or even looked askance at, discoveries of new truths. It is for this reason that the history of the Vedic religion is absolutely free from religious persecution and fanatic bloodshed. While the progress of science in lands, where the Vedas have been the accepted scripture of the people, has always been phenomenal, not a single scientist there has had the opportunity of winning glory as a martyr. To the Vedas, sciences and philosophies are appended as Upa-Vedas, Angas, and Upangas, i.e., subsidiary studies of the Vedas themselves. Arthaveda—economics, Dhanurveda—military science, Gandharvaveda—music, and Ayurveda—medicine are, for instance, Upavedas; and Phonetics, Grammar, Prosody, Astronomy, Rituals, and Exegetics are the Angas; and the six systems of Philosophy, the Upangas of the Vedas. This very harmony between religion and science alone, which is an unparalleled miracle of the Vedic religion,

entitles it to be regarded as the religion of scientific truth, which the term Vaidika Dharma literally signifies.

Marriage — To the age at least of twenty-four in the case of a boy and of fifteen in the case of a girl this tutelage with the preceptor should continue. Then alone is the *snataka*, i.e., graduate, whom the shastras call twice-born, because of his or her second birth from the Acharya's womb, allowed to marry. The bride and the bridegroom have free choice in selecting their mate. The Acharyas, who have been keeping a watch over the lives of their respective wards, and are most intimately acquainted with their inner temperaments, compare between them, notes they have taken of their gradual unfolding, and recommend to their respective disciples, what spouse will suit them. The function of other elders is also advisory. The ultimate decision rests with the pair themselves. In the course of the ritual performed at the time of marriage, some very solemn vows are taken by the prospective wife and husband. The latter undertakes to support her, forswearing concealment of any enjoyment of his from her. While the wife is to remain at the house and look after their joint concerns at home, all outside functions fall to the lot of the husband. They form, as it were, the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the family system. The idea not of equality or inequality, but of the capability to supplement each other by dint of their different endowments peculiar to their respective sexes, is the keynote of the matrimonial relation. According to the Vedic ideal, marriage is not a contract but a spiritual necessity, solemnised by the performance of a sacrament.

The bond it forges is indissoluble. Divorce is forbidden. Souls once mated are mated for life. The disintegration of the household, the trifling point of view as regards marriage, the wresting of children from either parent, and depriving them, as a result, of the privilege of looking upon

the latter as their joint guardian angels appointed in its bounty from heaven, an Elysian foundation of angelic notions of life and its obligations—these and many others are the horrible concomitants of the liberty to marry and unmarry as often as one likes. Utmost caution should, of course, be exercised at the time of the first selection, which once made should always be the final selection. In case of disharmony, separation may be arranged, providing also that the separated pair will not marry, and the economic responsibility to support the wife will even then be the husband's. This will make both wiser and the way of reconciliation smoother. Matrimony is too close a relation to make its maintenance depend on erotic price. Even if conjugal relations are not by the lapse of time restored, the self-restraint which the couple exercise as a result of their self-imposed isolation from each other, will be a beneficent schooling in sagacity and carefulness in choosing their mates in future lives.

The Householder — The wisdom which a householder gains by coming in contact with different strata of life and by making the best of all sorts of physical and mental experiences which the life of the world, now hard matter-of-fact, now airy as the heaven, affords, is an invaluable asset in the progress of knowledge of both the individual soul and the community of souls of which he is a member. While wife and children are the father's paradise', friends and guests the social animal's Eden, the earthly ills of both mind and body to which animal existence in whatever form, is heir, are his occasional Hades. Twenty-five years are the maximum period allowed for alternately enjoying and suffering, or suffering and enjoying, this phase of earthly human existence. In the course of these, all agencies of enlightenment, such as libraries, press, playform, picture-galleries etc. are abundantly provided. The Aryan view of life is one of a deeply cultural mode of the achievement of human destiny. Both men and things

are utilized to the utmost as the instruments of acquiring Vidya, realisation.

The Recluse — At the age, at the latest of fifty, the twice-born should retire again into privacy. At this stage he becomes a student, a student more of self than of things and persons besides self. Thus, detached from the phenomenal world, he rivets his mind on permanent concerns of spiritual humanity. The problems which face mankind for all time, apart from the ephemeral happenings of day to day, engage his attention.

The Sanyasi — If a Brahmana, i.e., a teacher, he may, after this period of preparation, come out again into the public as the common guide and friend of all communities. His narrow prejudices gone, his bias towards himself and those whom he in former days regarded as his own, all these different forms of selfishness of widening range are, at the end of this conscious but automatic process, vanished. He is a Sanyasi, cosmopolitan philosopher. All communities claim him as their own. He has no possessions. His home is in the open, or else in the vehicles which carry him from one place to another. He is a roaming promulgator of God's wisdom. Indifferent to his own comforts and conveniences, his one concern is to make mankind, and with it the whole animal kingdom, comfortable and happy. Of all agencies of humanitarian effort to secure the welfare of the world, the high goal aimed at the Principle VI. The Sanyasi is decidedly the most powerful. The world today lacks this agency and is, therefore, at war with its own highest good, peace. For if every man were to realise his own ultimate identity with other men, with whom would he fight but himself? Humanity today is, alas! at war with itself.

The Ideal of the Arya Samaj — Thus does the Arya Samaj seek to further right knowledge and dispel ignorance, to promote realisation and remedy illusion. Knowledge, according to the definition of the Arya

Shastras is right knowledge, knowledge born of the Vedas, knowledge which will make us discriminate between right and wrong, between what tends to our good and what leads to our virtual ruin. The furtherance of literacy is only a part, a minor part, of the educational programme laid out by Dayananda. Not simply schools but whole lives of human beings have to be made the instruments of realisation, Vidya. Vidya, as conceived by the Rishis, is not simply knowledge in the modern sense; it is identification of one's self with the Real, the True, the Right.