

Chapter 9. Spiritual Wisdom and Yoga

Q. You have been saying that spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is essential. What exactly is the function of spiritual wisdom?

A. Spiritual wisdom makes you realise your own Reality (the *Atma-swarupa*).

Q. And *yoga*? If a person has no *yoga*, what happens?

A. That person is like a lame person.

Q. And if a person has no spiritual wisdom?

A. That person is like a blind person.

Q. They say that *yoga* destroys all blemishes, removes all faults. How does that happen?

A. Can rice become eatable unless it is boiled over a fire? By *yoga* and other disciplines, the subconscious mind (*chittha*) becomes soft. It is called severe austerity (*tapas*), heat; it becomes hot (*taptha*). Moreover, *yoga* and spiritual wisdom are like oil and flame. The oil is *yoga* and spiritual wisdom is the illumining flame of the lamp.

Q. Swami! Pardon me for asking this. So many people are teaching *Vedanta*, now. Have they all realised this truth, experienced this Reality?

A. How can this be said? You can judge them yourselves. See if they have purity of heart, purity of thought, purity of mind, knowledge of the inherent and immanent Highest *Atma (Paramatma)* —only such have the right to teach *Vedanta*, for only they can experience *Vedanta*.

Q. The teaching by those who have no such qualities, will it benefit to a certain extent at least?

A. Fine descriptions of the various delicacies and tasty dishes won't satisfy a hungry person. The *Vedanta* that stops with words is like that. *Vedanta* has to be experienced in order to satisfy. Again, listening without eagerness to learn is also ineffective. Unless the teacher has detachment from sense objects, the teaching is but parrot talk. Those who come to listen, without desire to learn and benefit, are engaged only in showy demonstrations.

Q. Baba! You say that purity of heart, purity of mind, and knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) are essential. Then what use is spiritual practice done through the body, composed of the five elements? Isn't it enough if one acquires the wisdom (*jnana*) of one's essential nature?

A. Wonderful fellow! Simply because the rudder is essential, can you take it that the boat is unnecessary? How can you cross the river with only the rudder?

Believe that the Lord has conferred upon you the body as a boat to cross the sea of life (*samsara*) and subconscious mind stuff (*chittha*) as the main thing in it. That is the first step in *Vedanta*. Knowledge of the real form of divinity is the rudder. But that alone is not sufficient; physical habits and disciplines have also to be attended to. To attain the ethereal eternal stage, a disciplined body is important.

Q. Another doubt afflicts me, Swami. Talking of physical disciplines, may I know whether knowledge of *Brahman (Brahma-vidya)* makes any distinction between male and female?

A. Well, my boy! This boat has no such distinction. Knowledge of *Brahman* and cleansing of the subconscious mind do not depend on sex at all. All who are ill have the right to the drug that cures, right? So too, all who have the illness of birth and death have the right to knowledge of *Brahman*, the specific that will cure it. Perhaps not

all can afford to have access to that wonder drug, but you can't argue that some have no right to it.

Q. Why, Swami, some *Vedanta* scholars say that women have no authority to learn or practise knowledge of *Brahman*! The boats are not of the same nature, it seems.

A. My child! As I have said, both have equal right to the specific. But both have to follow a regimen for the drug to act upon the system. Contemplation of the essential basis of oneself is the drug; along with it, the regimen of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) and renunciation (*vairagya*) has to be rigorously followed.

Women may not be able to observe this disciplinary regimen as rigorously as men, since they are weaker. Perhaps, the reason for those people denying women the right to this drug is this weakness. But all, whether men or women, who can observe the restrictions and regulations have an equal right to benefit by the drug of knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*). That is my verdict.