

23. Don't neglect the study of Sanskrit and Vedic culture

In past ages, Indians performed their daily rites, sat in purified places, surrounded by sacredness, and immersed themselves in the study and practice of the teachings of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. They recorded their experiences in order to guide others to bring those experiences back again into their own consciousness. But their children and grandchildren placed the books on the altar and duly worshiped them. Neglect reduced them to dust or lumber; the palm leaves disintegrated, and rats ate into them.

Eager students from the West have sought out this lumber, realising that it enshrines incomparable sources of illumination and priceless pearls of wisdom. They lift it reverentially above their heads and acclaim it as the precious gift of the continent of Bharath (*Bharatha-khanda*) to themselves and their children. They carry it across the seas with joy in their eyes and thankfulness in their hearts.

Shall I reveal what the children of India have been doing? They don't open the pages, peruse the contents or even concern themselves with them. Only one in a million reads them, but even he is ridiculed as a fool and a crank. People laugh at the books as a conglomeration of lies and legends and argue about the historicity of the books and their authors. They dismiss Sanskrit as "very hard to learn" and pass on the treasure to scholars from other lands. What a sad spectacle this is! It would have been some compensation if they attended carefully to the study of their mother tongue, but even this they fail to do. It is neglect; neglect everywhere.

No. I don't condemn worldly happiness. I feel glad when people are happy. But, please don't believe that this happiness is permanent. I want you to study all the arts and sciences for acquiring worldly happiness, but I want you to remember that this happiness is not everlasting.

Permanent happiness can be secured through only one knowledge (*vidya*), the *Upanishad* knowledge. That is the science of God-realisation, the teaching of the sages (*rishis*). Only that can save one and grant one peace. There is nothing higher than that; this is an indisputable fact. Whatever your joy and sorrow, whatever the subject you have specialised in for a living, rivet your eyes on knowledge of *Brahman*. If only intelligence is sharpened, without the growth and practice of virtues, and if mere information is stored in the brain, the world cannot progress and its welfare will be in jeopardy.

But people now seem to be losing faith in virtues, for the educational system does not assign any place to spiritual teaching or training. True education does not mar or pervert the beautiful virtues of boys and girls, it does not content itself with filling the brain with cumbersome junk. Only education that gives full scope for the blossoming of all the virtues that distinguish people is beneficial.