

Unto Bliss.

The attention of the people is engaged at present in the spread of education and it is quite in the fitness of things that it should be so. It is education and culture alone that goes to build our life, to make us real human beings. But the pity of the whole thing is that we do not care so much for increasing our knowledge and efficiency as for passing examinations and preparing students for the same. That is the reason why a large majority of those who have secured University degrees and diplomas are found lacking in real knowledge of the subjects which they have studied for their examinations. It is a matter of common experience that passing examinations by cramming notes and resorting to other similar devices does not make for real efficiency.

* * * *

But mere efficiency does not constitute the true essence of our life either.

5

Great insistence is being made these days on acquiring proficiency in the various arts. Great pains are taken with a view to becoming adept in penmanship, oratory and poesy. Labour brings its own reward and those who practise these arts with diligence and patience often succeed in becoming proficient therein and can keep people spellbound and impress them for the time being by writing articles on any subject, delivering speeches or composing verses. But mere skill in any of these arts, divorced from practical experience and real knowledge of the subject on which they speak or write or versify only serves to polish the outer surface of their life: it does not do them any real good; just as by decorating a dead body you cannot enhance its utility.

* * * *

Scholars, for instance, who have passed higher examinations in *Vedānta* and mastered the subject in all its

details will be able to analyse each and every problem connected therewith minutely. But they will be found lacking in practical knowledge of the subject and merged in the ocean of grief. *Vedānta*, to them, is a subject to be merely studied, wrangled upon or demonstrated to the public. The same is the case with those who have assumed the title of *Bhakta* and are proficient in making speeches and writing articles on *Bhakti*. In practical life their devotion will be found centred in worldly objects whereas their speeches and writings will be overflowing with devotion to the Lord. Such a life is one of mere show.

* * * *

It is in this important respect that the devotional lyrics of Tulasidas, Surdas, Dadu, Kabir, Mira and others differ from the mere poetical compositions of worldly poets who soar in the region of fancy and practise the art of poesy merely to satisfy their æsthetic taste. There may be poets who can vie with Surdas and Tulasidas so far as the art of poesy goes, or their compositions may excel those of saints like Kabir, Mira and others; but we cannot find in them the heart and spiritual insight of the latter.

* * * *

That is why in the sphere of spiritual knowledge, Devotion, Yogic practices, Dispassion, religion and science, so much stress is laid on the competence of the teacher as well as the taught. They are not cheap commodities to be had in the market. It is therefore thought advisable that all these subjects

should be studied from the mouth of a qualified teacher, rather than discussed in an article or discoursed upon. Ever since laymen began to write and discourse on these technical subjects on the strength of mere bookish knowledge culled from here and there, these subjects have come down from their high level and become commonplace. For those who followed the teachings of these laymen imparted through articles and discourses were not benefited by them to any remarkable degree and hence their faith in these matters waned.

* * * *

Only those who have realized the truth through Divine Grace and the grace of their Masters after years of stern discipline and rigorous penance are qualified to discourse on these subjects and he alone who earnestly seeks to realize that truth through penance and practice and is devoted to his Master as well as the Lord is eligible for listening to such discourses. It is due to the dearth of such teachers as well as such disciples at the present moment that people do not derive real benefit from these teachings.

* * * *

Show being the order of the day in every department of life, people are led by the mere exterior of everything, as they are not inclined to go deep into the heart of things. They only care as to how one speaks, how he writes and whether he can compose beautiful verses and so on: they have no quest for one who has acquired real and practical experience. It should, however, be borne

in mind that, as a general rule, it is impossible to acquire real knowledge of a thing without the help of one who has direct knowledge of it. He alone who has specialized in a particular branch of knowledge can impart it to others, no matter if he is quite ignorant of other things and no matter if the language in which he expresses himself is defective from the literary point of view. A painter or a goldsmith or any other artist may not be able to explain the technique of his art in correct English or Sanskrit or to write a good poem on that subject; but those who care to learn these arts will have to approach these experts, however learned they themselves may be in the literary sense of the term. The biggest prince or the most eminent poet will have to seek the help of an expert medical man for the treatment of his disease. In fact, practical experience is superior to mere verbal knowledge; of course, if it is combined with learning or art, so much the better. Tulasidas, Surdas and others combined both.

* * * *

On the other hand, if any one has got practical knowledge of a subject and is devoid of learning, he has surely grasped the thing, no matter if he is not able to benefit or attract others. Learning or art which is devoid of practical experience is useless like a dead body. That is why the Lord says in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*:—

“He who, though well-versed in the Vedas, has not realized the Ultimate Reality, has indulged in fruitless labour

like one who tends a cow which does not give milk.”*

The same may be said of learning devoid of practical experience. Efforts should be made to acquire a thing from one who has got it, no matter if he is not learned in the ordinary sense, by serving him and adoring him. He should not be ignored as an unsophisticated person.

* * * *

One's efforts should be directed towards acquiring practical experience—towards realizing the truth, and it is only after one has realized the truth that he should speak or write thereon. Then alone can the speaker or the writer impress his audience or readers and achieve the desired results. If this is not done, and if the world continues to be flooded with articles, discourses, lectures and poetic compositions not backed by practical experience, the utterances of even experienced souls will be held at a discount along with them and it will consequently be difficult to secure such utterances, to recognize them and appreciate them.

* * * *

That is why every one was not authorised to speak or wield his pen on each and every subject. But the case is quite the contrary to-day. We find great liars speaking and writing on truth, those sunk in the morass of worldly pleasures expatiating

* शब्दब्रह्मणि निष्णातो न निष्णायात्परे यदि ।
श्रमस्तस्य श्रमफलो ह्यधेनुमिव रक्षतः ॥

on Vedantic truths, cowards waxing eloquent on heroism and valour, men of loose character discoursing on chastity and continence, unchaste women lecturing on fidelity, licentious persons dilating on morality, sensually-minded persons talking of Dispassion, wicked souls sermonising on virtuous conduct and godless persons discussing Devotion. Things are getting topsy-turvy in every sphere of life. That is why everything is being held at a discount and the distinction between good and bad has almost disappeared.



"Siva"