

Knowledge is Power

There is a difference between 'strength' and 'power' we say 'the power of the press' and not 'the strength of the press'. A tiger has strength and this is only physical. Contrarily, a man with ideas or knowledge has power which is superior to and dominates mere physical force. It is rightly said 'a pen is mightier than a sword.' Today man with his gradually mounting knowledge and wisdom has been able through science, to unravel the mysteries of nature and harness them for his own benefits. Brain, not brawn (muscles) rule the world. Man with his superior intelligence is capable of domesticating the wildest and most fierce animal. He with his knowledge of science, can soar in the sky without wings, and reach the most distant place in few hours. The point is that power resides in ideas and not in muscles of the body. A competent doctor with one or just two injections can save the life of the mightiest wrestler, because of his knowledge of medical science.

Essay No. 02

Knowledge Unites Us

"The past not only contains, in its depths, the unrealized future, but in part the realized future itself"—Tagore. The spark that led to the discovery of fire also ignited man's thirst for knowledge—a quest that also marked the beginning of man's passion for tinkering with nature and all things heretofore covered by a "veil of ignorance". This passion for moving into the realm of the uncertain and unknown was the force that gave us the ability to comprehend ourselves and our surroundings with insight, developing new axioms and newer truths. This insight helped humanity to progress from the simple tool-making stage to a complex, super-computer stage where technological superiority aided by science plays a dominant role. However, all stages left their indelible imprints in the vast reservoir of human knowledge and each stage was symbolically linked to the other, in the sense that each left valuable resources for the next. The initial stages in the progress of human knowledge were marked by the presence of a knowledge system that was uniting and all-encompassing in nature. However along with the progress of civilization many changes came in the material conditions of social existence, knowledge systems also underwent a shift whereby "more and more was sought about less and less", consequently leading to the erosion of the uniting focus of knowledge. The loss of the uniting and all-encompassing focus of knowledge conducted the caesarian separation in the spontaneous and instinctive relations between man and the natural environment.

The material transformation of our knowledge systems ushered the realization that knowledge is power and the "sublime shades of the forests" were merely to provide

utility to man. This transformation emphasized the 'purposefulness' of knowledge and initiated the 'discriminatory' character of modern knowledge, thereby introducing the separate worlds of man and nature.

Ironically, we seem to have arrived at a stage today where probably man's quest for knowledge has come a full circle. The insight/knowledge that was garnered after the 'first spark' has paradoxically brought us to a state where the determinate nature of knowledge systems vindicates the 'uncertain and relative' nature of the manifested reality. In contemporary times we confront a reality that is uncertain, relative and consequently paled by an ontological and epistemological crisis, not only regarding knowledge systems but also about 'our' very being. This ontological and epistemological crisis confronts contemporary society in a manner that may be unprecedented in human history. Especially the purveyors of knowledge and knowledge systems are the ones who are caught up in this philosophical and sociological crisis that has sterilized the growth of new truths and new ideas that are instrumental in producing alternative 'visions of existence'.

An increasingly technological society with little faith in the fellow strugglers, bereft of compassion, empathy and 'depth of sentiment', where even the sacred and the high divine ground is institutionalized in a manner that implies merely a mechanical performance of rituals without the feeling of a conscious divine bliss, we await the first dawn of a new millennium.

The deep knowledge gives freedom to its receiver. This "freedom of power in our language, freedom of expression in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds and freedom of mind in our social environment", is said to be the chief inspiration of human civilization. But if we consider the contemporary conditions prevailing in the land, which saw the unique integrated contribution of several races in the enhancement of its cultural life, we can discern the 'rigid rule of the dead', that still binds our social and cultural moorings.

The social and cultural life of India is still bonded by the fetters that were placed upon it because of the so-called, 'civilizational necessity.' Ever after five decades of free transmission of knowledge we have not been able to create 'free' society from such civilizational necessities, rather we have strengthened these fetters with the initiation of a 'pedagogical laboratory' that accentuates the "irrational habits bred by an inert racial mind".

Seemingly, as we near the third millennium we feel more and more defeated about our social and cultural destiny. Knowledge and its transmission is a "universal activity, requiring universal cooperation", which shall fail if we deliberately define a destiny that constricts the expansive participation of the human spirit.

Like the past that partly reflects the future, the millennium that is embodied in the womb of the new dawn can also be palpably discerned through the mists of time. Despite the eternal and pervading hope that man ever sustains in his heart, we can make a prognosis of the baggage that the new millennium shall unfold. The suicidal passion unleashed by the technological tiger shall widen the hiatus between the mind and the body. The human spirit shall suffer further onslaughts and faith in ideals shall become clichés, unless the retreated few returns to reassert the common destiny of man and renew the search for the unity of human consciousness and common human destiny.