

## *Arsha Vidya: The Vision of the Rishis*

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*Rishi* means the one who knows - the word is derived from the Sanskrit root *r* which is in the sense of knowing. The knowledge, or *Vidya*, of the *Rishis* is called *Arsha Vidya*.

### **The Flow of Knowledge**

Mystics do not create mystics - because they are mystics. A mystic cannot make another one equally an eloquent mystic. If he can, then there is a means of communication and therefore there is nothing mystic about it. Then there is a teacher. Mystics have no tradition whereas when teaching is involved, there is communication. Then there can be a tradition - a teacher, a student and his or her student; *Guru Sisya - Prasisya Parampara*. Then the flow is possible. Knowledge always flows to the hearts, to the minds.

Wisdom cannot be considered as old or something new. It is not old because it does not become obsolete. It is not new because nothing new is added to it and, therefore, it is fresh, coming as it does from a teacher to a student like even the Ganges. Ganges is an ancient river; we do not know when she started flowing on the earth. We have the story of *Bhagiratha* doing penance and bringing to earth the river which once flowed in the heavens. It is an ancient river, no doubt, but when you bathe in the river, the water is fresh and it leaves you fresh. For the people who have a *sraddha*, faith, a bath in the river not only imparts freshness at the physical level, but even their mind also becomes fresh. The old sins are washed away. They look upon the Ganges not as just a river; there is a different outlook. She is the very flow of knowledge whose touch changes the person into a pure one. In this world there is nothing more sacred, more purifying than knowledge.

Therefore this knowledge, *Arsha Vidya*, is like a river that flows from the teacher to the student and to his or her student and thus it goes down. And knowledge being what it is, it is always true to the object. There cannot be a second version about knowledge. That is the reason why we do not really accept any empirical knowledge as really knowledge

inasmuch as it is only good for empirical transactions. This is a flower and it is a rose. You have the knowledge that it is a flower and it is a rose. But there are areas in this flower itself that we do not know at all. And so any objective knowledge you have is incomplete. In no discipline of knowledge have we come to the last word. In any empirical knowledge, it is well known that the more one knows, the more one comes to know what one does not know. A highly informed person is the most ignorant person, because he knows what all he does not know. Only a totally ignorant person does not know what he does not know and so thinks of himself as a wise person. Any empirical knowledge is non-final; it is non-conclusive.

Take for example the knowledge of a forest. To know the details of the forest, what all makes the forest - the trees and the bushes, the herbs and the shrubs, the climbers and the creepers - is a big job because there are varieties of trees and even after knowing their names, to know everything about the trees such as plant physiology, plant anatomy, etc. is even a bigger job. The research will be on and on and on. One good thing about this knowledge is that there is always room for new Ph.D's; all one has to do is to either contradict or amend the old opinion and present a new one. The knowledge of the details or parts is always subject to contradiction or amendment. Thus to know the details about the forest is not easy. But if someone does not know a forest and if we want him to see what the whole forest is, it is easy. All we have to do is to drive him through the forest, perhaps take him up in a helicopter and have him look down from it and he can clearly see what a forest is like. And once one knows what a forest is, it is known; there is no scope of contradiction. Thus if knowledge is possible, it is the knowledge of the whole. In the knowledge of the whole, there cannot be any addition or amendment.

Wisdom of the whole is *the* wisdom because wisdom means knowledge and knowledge is possible only of the whole. The whole has no parts. When there are parts, every part has areas of ignorance. If you have the appreciation of the whole, it is possible to make another person see the whole. If one knows the whole, one can make the other person see the whole and the other can make another one see it. And thus we find a *whole* series of *gurus* and *sisyas*: there is a flow.

## **I am the Whole**

Now, the whole is something that cannot be away from me. There is a pot with a certain volume. If the pot-space were to think, "I am merely a ten-litre pot-space." So, it seeks the company of smaller pot-space. So it, then, seeks the company of smaller pot-spaces because the big pot-space reminds it of how small it is. There is an innate jealousy because nobody likes to be small. Let us say that this ten-litre pot-space does undergo a process of change and becomes a 20 litre pot-space. Now it can keep company of a new set of pots. It gets a new class-status! But there is always a 30 litre pot-space! And if the 20 litre pot-space becomes the 30 litre pot-space, there is a 50 litre pot-space. There are tanks having thousands of gallons of capacity and so the process of becoming has no end.

One ten-litre pot-space, which also had a desire to become a 20 litre pot-space, stopped and watched the rest of the pots going crazy in the process of 'becoming' and therefore asked: "Do I really want to become something else or do I want to be free from the very attempt of becoming?" Once the question arises, the answer also becomes clear. By becoming a bigger pot-space, nobody becomes the limitless space. The problem is not that I am a ten-litre pot-space. The problem is, I am small. The small 'I' will ever be, however big I become. If I have to become big, I should become so big that there is nothing bigger than me. And that kind of bigness can never be achieved by a process of becoming, if indeed such a bigness is there, I cannot become that. I can only be it or not. I must know it. This is then a new kind of knowledge.

This small pot-space listens to another pot space which also had a similar problem earlier and had solved it by listening to another pot-space! The small pot-space is told: "You want to be free from being small. You want to be limitless. But limitless can never be separate from you. If you are different from the limitless, the limitless becomes limited. You delimit the limitless if the limitless is separate from you." The pot-space thought: "If I am separate from the limitless space then I am not limitless, which means the limitless is other than I. That means limitless is one and I am another. But the limitless ceases to be

limitless if it does not include me. If there is such a thing as the limitless, the whole, it should include me; it cannot be separate from me."

The pot-space realized, which means, it understood: "I am limitless space in which all the pots have their being; all the planets, the solar systems, even the galaxies have their being. I am the one limitless space and I feel limited only when I look at myself through the pot-wall, the pot-form or the enclosure. But 'I am' is not limited. The space *is* in which the very pot exists. Therefore I am the one space -without batting an eye-lid, without any motion or movement on my part-I see that I am the whole."

This teaching 'I am the whole' is the knowledge, or the vision, of the *Rishis*. It is *Arsha Vidya*. This is not the only knowledge given to us by the *Rishis*; they have given us a lot. But this is the one thing that stands out, this one thing that beckons everyone, the one thing that cannot but fascinate everyone even a dull person. This knowledge, the *Arsha Vidya*, is the most fascinating, the most hopeful, the most yearned for. Once one has gained this *Vidya*, one can make the other also see it.

### **The Guru-Sisya Parampara**

There is a method of teaching, a method of communication, by which the vision of the whole can be imparted to the other. We have a tradition that begins from Lord *Shiva* and comes down to us through the *Rishis*. The tradition has always been the same, it has not undergone any change; it cannot undergo a change because it deals with the whole. This certainly does not apply to the knowledge of the parts. For example, the knowledge of physics in the *Vedas* is definitely wanting. I am sure there are notions of that time which may be considered as silly in comparison to the modern knowledge. But that is so because physics deals with details. Physics was not the subject of the *Rishis*. You can always defer about the details in the creation and that is so even now. What is considered as right at one time may not be considered so at another. And so the knowledge of the whole alone is the knowledge that can be handed down intact without the need for any amendment. Thus we have a *parampara* or a tradition.

There is always a teacher-student *parampara* in every field of knowledge. You learnt physics from your professor and now you have become a professor. But by this time, a number of things that your professor taught you have been falsified. Hence the same knowledge is not handed down in the case of physics, or any other field of empirical knowledge. The word *guru* can be used for anyone who imparts us knowledge: be it the knowledge of music, dancing, language or any other subject. *Guru* means the one who removes ignorance and so the one who removes any kind of ignorance can be called *guru*. But nobody removes ignorance completely in any subject; everyone removes ignorance only to a certain extent. In fact, in all disciplines of empirical knowledge, we find that the more we learn, the more we come to discover what we do not know. So none of the teachers of empirical knowledge can be called *gurus* in the real sense because none of them removes ignorance totally. Hence if any one can remove ignorance totally, it is only the one who teaches the whole, because the ignorance of the whole is the one single ignorance - there are no parts in the whole. Therefore only one person can be called *guru* in the real sense and that is the one who removes the ignorance of the whole and only one means of knowledge can be called the valid means of knowledge and that is the means that becomes instrumental in giving rise to the knowledge of the whole. It does not stand contradiction; it cannot be falsified. Once known, it is known for good.

Our *Rishis* were blessed with this knowledge. It is said they were given this knowledge by the Lord because knowledge is never created: it always *is*. Any creation presupposes knowledge and the knowledge must rest in a conscious being. Also, the knowledge should be as good as the creation; it is not possible to create a pot with the knowledge of a cloth. One should necessarily know what a pot is in order to create one. So the knowledge must exist before any creation. In the beginning there was the word, where 'word' means knowledge - knowledge of the entire creation. Hence if there is a creator, the creator must have all the knowledge and the creator must be a conscious being because knowledge must rest in a conscious being. Hence knowledge is before the creation and knowledge remains after the creation too. So knowledge is and ignorance also is; they seem to coexist. Knowledge always is but is not available to us because of ignorance. Every time we remove ignorance, we bring to light what is. Everyone is born

ignorant and what one does is removes ignorance all the time. So any form of knowledge always is and so also the knowledge of the whole.

To remove the ignorance of the whole is the job of the *guru*. The first *guru* is the Lord, the creator. It all starts with the Lord. We know the *Parampara* only up to the *Rishis* and then we simply connect it to Lord *Sadasiva*, or Lord *Daksinamurti*. The knowledge is first revealed to the *Rishis* and from them it flows to us. Therefore this *Vidya* is called *Arsha Vidya*, the *Vidya*, the vision of the *Rishis*. The *Vedas* are the words of the *Rishis* and so the vision of the *Rishis* is the vision of the *Vedas*.

### **The Last Word**

*Arsha Vidya*, the vision of the *Rishis*, is a beautiful vision. It cannot be bettered by anybody because the *Rishis* have the last word about you. Others can say you are part of the total, you are little, you are mortal, etc. But the *Rishis* say that you are the whole and nobody can say more than that. Who is going to improve upon it? Who can say more than that? They have the last word about you and they say that you are the last word in the creation! And so this vision, *Arsha Vidya*, can never be bettered. It is also not available for any kind of an opinion and so it cannot be falsified. The whole is not subject to time etc., and hence it does not come under any kind of contention. And that is why it can be handed down by a teacher to a student in its entirety. This is the only knowledge which qualifies to be called knowledge because it cannot be falsified, it cannot be improved upon, it cannot be amended. And the one who imparts this knowledge can be called *guru* in the real sense because he or she removes total ignorance about it. Everyone must acquire this knowledge because there is no choice in becoming the whole.