

Balavikas Youth Competition - 2019

High School

Significance of the Jnana Mudra

The importance of the thumb and the capacity to oppose it to the forefinger, is the beginning of man's march to knowledge, secular and spiritual. There is no distinction between secular and spiritual so far as knowledge is concerned; all knowledge is sacred. On the Saraswati Puja day, you find all instruments of knowledge placed before Saraswati. In my childhood, every year, I used to join the worship of Saraswati in my home. I saw carpenters' tools, doctors' medical instruments, and all types of holy books being kept before Saraswati, also called Vani, 'speech'. She represents the unity of all knowledge. She is a wonderful, austere goddess, so inspiring to the human mind. So long as we worshipped Saraswati in the true, our land was devoted to knowledge. But when we left Saraswati, and ran after Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, both Lakshmi and Saraswati, both wealth and knowledge, vanished from India. Today we have to bring both of them back to our country, first Saraswati, then Lakshmi. Lakshmi is the product of Saraswati.

The more knowledge you have, the more wealth you can create; except through efficient work inspired by knowledge, there is no other way to gain wealth. You cannot create wealth by magic and mystery. That lesson we have to learn today. Saraswati is primary, and Lakshmi is a by-product of Saraswati. This knowledge must come so that poverty will be eliminated in India. Pure science is Saraswati, and applied science is Lakshmi. Knowledge applied to agriculture improves the wealth of the nation; so also industry. Everywhere these two austere goddesses reign, but we in India have to re-learn how to truly worship them. Merely making arati, waving of light, before their picture is not the way to worship them. Go to the university, study various books, think for yourself - this is how you become students of Saraswati. And, hard work, teamwork, trying to improve efficiency - that is how we have to worship Lakshmi. Arati we can do once a year, but everyday we have to worship Lakshmi only through this kind of hard work. Then alone Lakshmi kataksha or grace will come to us.

Therefore, in this modern age, the ideal is jnana, and everyone is to be on the road to knowledge. Nature has given human being the capacity to oppose the thumb to the forefinger, and thus manipulate the world around him or her, and acquire knowledge and power. This is the beginning of human evolution. In the description of Sri Krsna, this wonderful expression is there; jnana mudraya krsnaya. In all the iconography of India, of great saints, sages, incarnations, and of the Divine Mother, you will find this particular pose of jnana mudra. It is especially seen in depicting Siva as Dakshinamurti. By this jnana mudra, he is able to remove the doubts of students around him. This is the tradition coming down to use from very ancient times and we should apply the essence of this tradition to deal with our own present-day problems. The whole land must become dedicated to knowledge and knowledge-seeking.

- Swami Ranganathananda
Significance of the Jnana Mudra, The Charm and Power of The Gita