

7. Courage

This talk was not previously planned, but it is a case of the prayer of devotees being fulfilled. I am not giving you any new advice today; it is the same advice that I have given to students in many places. For places may be different but students are the same, and their nature, character, ideals and problems are the same in all places.

The President of this meeting said just now that you are all busy preparing for the examinations and that many of you have taken up your books only now. This has become quite usual now-a-days; nine months of the year you read all kinds of trash, and in the two or three months left you pore over the really essential books. This is not correct! It is very harmful to stuff the brain with all kinds of unwanted and paltry things. When you have some free time, read and assimilate such books as will promote an intelligent appreciation of the world and its mystery.

To live a happy, peaceful and contented life, good education is necessary, education that is based on *dharma* (righteousness).

Do not develop a dread of examinations; there, in a fixed time, you have to write answers to a certain number of questions. Well, some students start answering the very first question and go on serially with the rest. But it is always better to pause a little, read the entire question paper, select the questions that you can tackle with confidence, and write the answers for these in the beginning. This will give you a good fillip to exercise your brains better for answering the more difficult questions later.

Cultivation of virtues is very important

Never lose courage in the examination hall or outside. Courage is the fertilizer that will make the plant of scholarship grow. The field may be good, but manuring is also necessary.

You must all become heroes, adventurous and bold; prepare for that role from now on. Man has inside him a whole set of animals: the dog, the fox, the ass, the wolf. But he must suppress the tendencies of all these animals and encourage the human qualities of love and friendship to shine forth. Friendship that is cultivated from childhood onward is more lasting, so try to cultivate real friends now. Above all, begin the cultivation of virtues; that is more important and beneficial than mere book learning. That gives real bliss (*ananda*); that is the essence of all knowledge, the culmination of all learning.

Treat every one as your own people and, even if you cannot do them any good, desist from causing them any injury. Burn the lamp of love inside the niche of your heart, and the nocturnal birds of greed and envy will fly away, unable to bear the light. Love (*Prema*) makes you humble; it makes you bend and bow when you see greatness and glory. An unbending person is infected with egoism of the worst type; remember man is the only animal that can recognise and revere the great and the glorious. Use that capacity and derive the best advantage out of it.

Just as two wires, the positive and the negative, are brought together to produce illumination, similarly, the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) and the spiritual aspirant have to come together in *yoga*, to grant illumination. So, go to the holy men and holy places and keep company with pious men. A magnet attracts only iron; a student attracts toward him only those who will help his study, only such things as will give him joy and daring (*ananda* and *dhairya*).

The easiest habit is speaking the truth

Have faith that Truth will save you in the long run; stick to it, regardless of what might befall. For if you are true, the sense of guilt will not gnaw your insides and cause pain. It is cowardice that makes you hide the truth; it is hatred that sharpens the edge of falsehood. Be bold, and there is no need for a lie. Be full of love, and there is no need for subterfuge. The easiest habit is speaking the truth, honesty, for if you start telling lies, you will have to keep count of them and remember how many you have told to whom and be always alert not to contradict one lie with another! Love people, and you need no longer deceive them with a lie; you will feel that they deserve the truth and nothing less than the truth. Love saves a good deal of bother.

Do not be led away by all this present-day talk of equality, either of men and women or of all men. Each has a certain fund of intelligence and a peculiar bundle of instincts and impulses and past impressions. To the extent that you develop them or divert them or diminish their strength, to that extent there is bound to be difference in your equipment and achievement. Use all chances you get to develop your skills and your health and your character. That is your present duty. Make lasting friendships. Do not by any action of yours cause pain to another; nor suffer pain yourself by foolishness or sheer bravado.

In your school, I find there are some girls too; treat them with great respect and do not speak slightingly of them. They are your sisters and by honouring them, you bring honour to yourselves and your sisters. Respect for women is a sign of real culture.

So, I call upon you to read good books, revere your teachers, and love all. Do not dishonour your elders. Cultivate the spirit of service and learn how to serve the sick and the needy and seize every chance to help others. Or at least, desist from causing sorrow to others.

B. Z. High School, Chittoor, 1958-03-03

In your daily affairs, do not create factions or revel in hatred. See the good in others and the faults in yourselves. Revere others as having God installed in them; revere yourself also as the seat of God. Make your heart pure so He can reside therein.

Sathya Sai Baba