

49. Planning The Curriculum

Minister Chenna Reddy “opened” the Puttaparthi school building an hour ago, but the meeting in connection with that happy event is being held here now because the village has no place to accommodate even a tenth of this vast gathering of persons from all over India. The minister had seen Me, and I had been to his house eight years ago, but his yearning to come to this village and to this Prasanthi Nilayam has materialised only today. Even today, the opening of the school building is just an excuse that he has utilised to come to Me. He has hastened straight from the East Godavari District to fulfil this programme and satisfy the yearning of years.

In villages, no two people have the same viewpoint, no two agree; this causes and promotes ill feeling, misunderstanding, pride, envy, and hatred between individuals, but I am telling this not only to the people of this village but the people who have come here from a thousand villages, remember. When it is a question that interests the entire village, do not thrust forward your little prejudices, your particular hatreds, but think only of the common good, the common welfare. Then, all your personal likes and dislikes should be forgotten. I am also known as Puttaparthi Baba; therefore, you in this village have every right to come to Me, all of you, whenever you desire to do any good to the village.

This day, when the village elementary school is moving into the new spacious, well-ventilated, terraced building of its own, is indeed a great day in the annals of this village. This day starts a new era, when education will grow and will result in virtue, humility, and peace.

India has dharma on its side

I know that your hearts are filled with other thoughts — thoughts of pushing back the Chinese from the land they have invaded and occupied, of sympathy to the families of the soldiers who have been killed and wounded. Minister Chenna Reddy also referred to them feelingly. They fought for their country to keep the enemy away. It is your first duty to pray for the dead and to pray for the happy and victorious return from the battlefield of the gallant fighters. It is your duty also to search for your own faults and failings and to correct them soon. You have also to discover and develop all your talents and become strong, self-reliant, full-grown Indians, in order to save your country and its culture. Above all, you must get firmly entrenched in faith; faith in the ultimate victory of truth and love, of justice and fortitude. You have not tried it, so you are unaware of the potentialities of faith.

During the *Mahabharatha* War also, people had the faith that “Where Krishna is, there victory is certain,” for Krishna will always be on the side of truth and truth cannot bring defeat. India has virtue (*dharma*) on its side; that is to say, Krishna on its side, so the paeans of victory will sound soon — if they have not already sounded! The Chinese can do India no harm, for we are not wanting in the strength of virtues, truth, justice, love, and forbearance. These are the real arms, the real ammunition, the armaments.

When Aswathama slyly entered the Pandava camp and, blinded by hate, slaughtered the sleeping children of Droupadi, she scorned to wreak vengeance on the maddened culprit, for he was the son of the guru of the Pandavas and as worthy of reverence as the guru himself. That is the nobility that stirred the hearts of mothers in this country. That is no weakness; it toughens the fibre; it demoralises the enemy, who is rendered a coward by the fear that haunts him and the hesitation and doubt about victory that dog his steps.

Learning is of no use if not put into practice

So be brave and confident. My birthday festival will not be marred by any dispiriting news; it will be made happier for you by quite positive cheerful news, I am sure.

I must now speak about the school that has this function today. Minister Chenna Reddy is also Minister for Planning, and he also spoke about the plan for education. No amount of planning or even carrying out the plan will help if the things learnt in schools are not put into practice. For example, there are lessons on health and hygiene in the textbooks of even the primary classes. They are all learnt by rote and repeated, but examine how far they are practised. Look at the village roads, the village well, the village home, the village children and tell Me whether fifty or sixty years of teaching the rules of health and hygiene has had any effect! If even these matters involving life and well-being are neglected, I need not tell you that other subjects that are laboriously taught in schools produce even less effect.

What profit is it for the children to know the length of the Mississippi River or the height of Vesuvius? Why load them with information they may never require? On the other hand, give them the tonic to strengthen that spirit —the tonic of the repetition of the name of the Lord, the tonic of meditating on the glory of God in the silence of the heart. Formerly, children were learning repetition of Rama's name (*Ramanama*) and of the garland of letters (the *aksharamaala*) together; they used to read and write "*Suddha Brahma Parathpara Rama.*" Now, they sing, "Ding dong bell; puss is in the well." This type of silly meaningless jargon is spreading everywhere like a poisonous infection destroying the seeds of peace and joy.

The doctor does not give any medicine that comes to his hand. He diagnoses the illness, studies the patient, their background, ancestry, habits, food, likes, and dislikes. Then he prescribes the appropriate remedy. For the illness of greed, hurry, hatred, and discontent that affects this country now, along with the rest of the world, the planners of education must discover the correct remedy. Then they will find that the first few steps in spiritual discipline must be taught even in childhood. People have the springs of joy and peace in their hearts even as children. Cultivate them, give them the fullest freedom to gush forth and fertilise all fields of activity — that is the real purpose of education.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 1962-11-23