

11. Drastic overhaul

BUILDERS of Future India, Patrons and Well-wishers of Educational Institutions! In this holy land of ours education is straying today into wrong directions, and encouraging wrong notions and patterns of behaviour. You are all aware of this trend, and its consequences. The sooner we set things right, the better for all concerned. For, whether the students master the curricula or not, whether they understand, appreciate and assimilate the culture of India or not, the years roll by inexorably; time rushes past with no possibility of return; the span of life allotted to each is undergoing subtraction, every minute. Therefore, delay in this matter of reform is unpardonable.

The years spent by these persons as students in schools and colleges are the most crucial years of their lives. The heart of youth is pure, clean, full of enthusiasm and optimism. They are eager to achieve happiness to enter upon an adventure and earnest to serve others. It does not involve much effort to direct them along beneficent channels. Of course with equal ease, they can be directed along maleficent channels too.

The educational system must decide to direct them to the achievement of the Divinity latent in each one. Striving towards such a goal is an essential step, for ensuring social, national and world peace and prosperity.

Student life must be filled with cooperative activity

Humanity is like a train full of passengers, moving in one direction. Some alight at the little halt, some get off the station after that. Some alight a little further off. But, young persons travel longest. So, intensive care must be accorded to the problem of their education. Their lives must be made happier, more full of activity and contentment, more useful to the human community and this can happen only when the Divinity in them is allowed to blossom. The nation is looking forward to these young men and women to realise its dreams of unity, integrity and prosperity; these bright young people have to confer confidence and courage, joy and enthusiasm. But, judging from the nature of the students today and from the patterns into which they are being moulded, one feels that the hope of the nation might not be realised. The coming years might witness the decline of the fine ideals of Indian culture, cherished through the millenia.

Beautiful, fruitful ideals must be planted in the tender hearts of the youth. They are lovely creepers which can yield clusters of fragrant flowers, spreading the fragrance of truth and virtue. They have to be fostered with love and care, by parents, teachers and all those interested in the progress of the nation. It is a sacred responsibility which cannot be by-passed.

The years of student-life must be saturated with cooperative activity, social service, eager search for truth and readiness to sacrifice one's interests for the good of those who are less fortunate. Moral and spiritual values have to be honoured as much as, if not more than, economic and material values. Life must be a harmonious blend of these values with emphasis on moral strength.

Education must fill students with self-confidence

Students, Embodiments of the Divine *Aathma* (soul)! There is a great and urgent need that you should delve into the problem---who exactly you are, and realise that you are Divine, so that you can raise yourselves to that level, instead of remaining merely human or degrading yourselves into the lower level of animality. What exactly are the degrees which you earn now, after such elaborate and exhausting studies.? The degrees are only begging bowls, which you can hold

while presenting yourselves in front of office after office, seeking jobs. Education does not fill you with self-confidence, self-reliance and self-knowledge. How can even parents, teachers and the elders give you these, when they are themselves suffering from their absence? Since they do not have these qualities, the country is in the throes of poverty, faction and sloth.

Imbibe knowledge in schools and colleges with your minds, fully engaged in the task, with your hearts welcoming the acquisition and with your souls fully concentrated. Do not try to achieve distinction, through expenditure of money. How can money bring you knowledge? Yet the temples of the Goddess of Learning (namely the schools and colleges) have become this day temples where the Goddess of Riches is worshipped. Saraswathi, the Goddess of Learning is described in the *Puraanas* (ancient legends) as the rival of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Riches. They are both as unfriendly as the proverbial mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. How can they be together in the same home? So, Saraswathi has been practically driven out of her temple and Lakshmi has installed herself therein. Money is demanded and being paid, for admitting a child to the school, for testifying that he has attended the required number of classes, for accepting his application to sit for the examination, for declaring him to have passed it, and to certify that he has secured the desired number of marks. The entire field of education has been thus degraded and disorganised, with incalculable harm to the country's prospects in the coming years.

Students have their minds polluted by hatred

The emotions that spring from the minds of youth have to be canalised and sublimated, now, while they are yet elementary and in the nascent stage; this is their primary duty. When you neglect it, youth runs amok and ruins its own destiny. At the present time, youth is exploding and running into extreme actions of arson and acts of disorder. The blame lies at the door of those who incite them and inflame them, letting them loose on society. Many lament the injury to life and property that these acts result in. But the more dangerous results are not so clearly recognised. The students, for example, are injuring themselves their careers and their usefulness to the community even more lastingly. They waste a great deal of hard-earned money; they waste something that cannot be recovered later, namely, Time; they have their minds polluted by hatred.

Politicians are to be blamed and avoided, for they inject hatred and prejudice in the minds of youth, in order to use them as instruments for their own aggrandizement. Students must keep themselves away from them. Their first duty is to spend the time for study; after completing the present task of acquiring knowledge they can take part in political activities, and distinguish themselves as leaders and pleaders. Now, they have to acquire skills, insight, balance and the spirit of service. They have to revere their parents, teachers and the elders. They have to understand the ideals of their country's culture and learn to mould their daily lives in accordance with them.

Students must learn discipline and reverence

Of course, the system requires drastic overhaul. For, the sons and daughters of this land have to know the standards set by our scriptures and sacred texts, the story of the origin and development of our ancient culture,-and' the life-giving 'principles of law and justice that took root on this soil.

Another point. Young persons have to join school, or college, not merely for getting instruction in the classes, or studying some books with the help of teachers, for if that were so they could as well sit in their own homes, and the instruction can be imparted to them while they reside there.

They have to join the institutions so that they may learn to live and move with persons of their age but from different social and economic backgrounds with different intellectual equipments and emotional peculiarities, so that they may learn discipline and reverence, tolerance and co-operation. Some years at school and college will train them to react properly to society and to the outer world.

What happens at the present time is the result of the undue importance attached by parents and society to a pass in the examination. Students cram their hardest just a few days prior to the date of the examination; then they start to vomit the whole lot on to the answer papers, and return home, with a vacant head; for the knowledge gained has not affected their behaviour or opinions or attitude in the least. Education is not to be taken as a process of filling an empty sack and pouring out its contents, making the sack empty again. It is not the head that has to be filled through education. It is the heart that has to be cleansed, expanded and illumined. Education is for 'life', not, for a 'living'.

The sign of the educated man is humility that he has not been able to know the vast unknown that still remains to be explored. The educated man must realise that he has more obligations than privileges, more duties than fights. He has to serve the society amidst which he is placed and the heritage that has been handed down to him by his forefathers. He should be delighted to serve, and not desire to dominate. For service is divine; service makes life worthwhile; service is the best way to use one's skills, intelligence, strength and resources.

Nature is the best teacher

I must tell you of the paramount importance of Love. Love is God; Live in Love; God is the embodiment of perfect Love; so, He can be known and realised, and won, only through Love. You can see the Moon only with the help of Moonlight. You can see God only through the rays of Love, the one Quality of Love, expresses itself as attachment to things, affection towards kith and kin, desire for objects, love in human relations, reverence towards the great, and devotion to God. Cultivate Love and all its aspects will be fed and fostered.

Through education, you have to interpret (in the light of the principles of Indian Culture) the knowledge of Nature and its components, and the knowledge of man and his various victories and failures. Of course, Nature is the best teacher; so be vigilant to imbibe useful and lasting lessons from Her.

This college is the result of the generosity of many donors, specially, the Raajamaatha of Nawanagar. You must rejoice that a lady of such magnanimity is associated with your college. Be grateful to her; show your gratitude, by bringing into your daily lives, the ideals of spiritual progress, moral elevation and intellectual attainment which she holds before you. Develop the faith and the steadfast persistence needed to rise to her expectations.

I bless this Institution, so that from its portals may emerge brilliant young persons ready and able to serve the Motherland and to add lustre to Her Glory. I love students and educational institutions very much. I bless that each one of you may reach high attainment in education and earn good marks (not bad remarks), give your parents who have toiled long for your up-keep, the happiness they are hoping for and reward the Raajamaatha and other elders who are watching over your studies and upbringing, with such great affection, presenting them the fame you earn by goodness and scholarship.

Rajkot (Gujarat), 1-4-1973

*We can be successful leader, only if we are disciplined follower,
who do not issue command, to other, but rather set an. example of
service in our actions.*

Sri Sathya Sai