

6. The teacher and his task

The Gurus, versed in yoga in ages past,

Shed all fascination for the physical,

All dependence on desire.

The Gurus, all through the centuries,

Lead such lives and lead others too!

EDUCATION has the responsibility of rendering every field of life fruitful and beneficial. It has a duty to the nation to make people skilful and upright. Unfortunately the educational institutions of today are following a contrary path. Man alone, among living beings, has the capacity to recognise the Divinity in himself and in all else, the sacredness of his mission and the capacity to realise his manhood, which implies detachment, renunciation, virtuous conduct and disciplined behaviour. But these qualities are not developed to any significant extent by our education today.

We now believe that the acquisition of knowledge is for the acquisition of wealth. But this is not right. True education is really related to the very consummation of life. It has to do with the goal of life more than the means of living. It is only through education and more education that we can instil into the mind of man the sacred ideals of human life.

Education is intended for the fulfilment of life

The cow yields milk only for feeding its calf. The calf after having its full, jumps about in joy and feels strong and happy. But we take hold of the milk intended for the calf and sustain ourselves with the strength it gives. So, also, education which is intended for the fulfilment of life is misused by us for the 'fill-fillment' of comfortable living. What we should do is to consider 'fill-fillment' as secondary and fulfilment as the primary purpose of education.

What we are today teaching and learning in schools cannot be considered *Bhaaratheeya* education. Though our present system of education, is extolled as national education, it is in fact anti-national. It sometimes leads to the impoverishment of families because they have to sell even their property to meet the expenses of the children. And what is the net gain? By education a young man gains a degree which is only another name for the bowl used for begging for jobs! Indian education should ideally emphasize self-reliance and independent living. It should confer on the student the courage to stand up against injustice, indiscipline, immorality and falsehood. It should grant steady faith in the *Aathman* (divinity) as the reality of man. These principles which should underlie Indian education are, to speak the truth, being gravely neglected by us.

Our ancient education gave scope for the exercise of the Divine qualities in man. India became celebrated for her culture because in the *gurukulas* (hermitages) of ancient times, great teachers taught these ideals to their pupils, having already realised them in their own lives. Today much of the reform in our educational system is going to bring down the quality of the teachers.

Teachers must make efforts to live uprightly

The profession of a teacher is the most responsible one in every country. If the teacher strays from the path of truth, the entire society will suffer. So you must make every effort to live your life uprightly. You have in your charge, looking up to you for guidance, children so innocent that they have no knowledge yet of the world and its ways. It is only when the teacher himself is

wedded to discipline and observes good habits that his pupils will be able to shape themselves into ideal individuals and citizens.

When the teacher falls a victim to bad habits, undesirable manners, bad company and evil behaviour, the children too will naturally be drawn into evil ways. Thus the teacher has to bear the responsibility of promoting the welfare of the world or bringing the world down to disaster. Of course even today there are some teachers who follow the ancient ideals. Indian culture is, even today, flesh and green only because there are in the country some teachers filled with holy feelings and sacred ideals.

In truth, teachers who got the chance to attend this camp are fortunate. From the vast expanse of Andhra Pradesh where we have thousands of teachers working in schools, you alone---about six hundred of you---have been selected to attend this camp. And you have been assigned the duty of moulding the children of your schools into ideal pupils.

Rishikuls have disappeared today

Every village school is to be transformed into a *gurukula* and every teacher into a *rishi* (sage) who will lead the children along the material, moral, ethical and spiritual paths, until they become ideal citizens of India. You too belong to the line of the ancient *rishis*, because you have been chosen for this task. What has happened today is the disappearance of the *rishi* from the *rishikul* (abode of sage), so that it has become the miserable '*shkul*' or school!

Each religion teaches man the righteous path;

He has only to know it, and march along.

If the vision is straight, what can division do?

Listen to this truth, O child of India!

You should not give room for any doubt and discussion on religious matters. You must recognize the truth that can reconcile and bring together all religions without distinction. Teach the children this truth and instil love and harmony-in the tender minds of boys and girls. They are now lovely creepers who depend on you and your care for their proper growth and blossoming.

The holy undertaking has been started by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education. They have planted the sapling. Your teachers are entrusted with the duty of tending it and making it grow into a fine tree which will offer its flowers and fruits to the world. You must help the flower of peace to blossom and the fruit of spiritual equanimity to be shared by all mankind. In fact you are not merely teachers at your own schools, but are teachers of the human race.

Therefore you have to cultivate in your own heart the spirit of sacrifice, the virtues of charity and the awareness of Divinity. Then only do you become entitled to cultivate these in the hearts of the children. But unfortunately these principles of Indian education are absent in schools today. You must try your best to reshape the system and make it really Indian. Of course in the initial stages you will find this task very difficult and exhausting, but be assured that as you proceed you will find your task more and more easy.

Students must lead lives of service & sacrifice

In the coming days we will take up each subject and the possibilities and implications of teaching it. Out of these discussions will emerge resolutions and programmes which we can all consider

later. During these ten days, each day will be devoted to the consideration of one aspect of spiritual and cultural education: How to develop the attitude of love among the children? How to make them recognise the kinship that unites all mankind? How to implant in their minds feelings against caste distinctions, regional differences and religious prejudices? How to bring out the Splendour of Divinity that is the core of humanity?---These topics have to be given special attention.

Among the students of today there is little trace of moral and spiritual consciousness and the desire to judge what is right and what is wrong, India is an ancient nursery of *yoga* and home of renunciation. The students of this land should not waste their lives in seeking material comfort. They must lead lives of service and sacrifice. We must resolve to guide the students in this direction. It is indeed a matter of pride that for the first time such an attempt on such a large scale is being made in Andhra Pradesh, through an institution established under the auspices of the Government. Remember that mere attendance at this camp cannot bring much profit. Your teachers have to play a really diligent role in making this experiment a success.

To-day humanness in man is absent

In schools we have teachers who teach history or geography or mathematics. The geography teacher opens out a map and points to some country and explains how people live there. The mathematics teacher writes on the black board: $13+3+3-9$. The history teacher relates the story of a kingdom. But the drill teacher has to stand before the lined-up pupils and himself demonstrate what they should do while he counts one, two, three, four, etc. Every teacher, like the drill teacher, has to do what he says. He must demonstrate in his own life, the truth and validity of what he advises the pupils to do.

For example, he punishes them for smoking, beedies and cigarettes. But when he is himself addicted to smoking, what authority has he to advise others against it? By this type of hypocrisy the teacher loses all respect in the eyes of his pupils. If, however, you observe the rules you impose and then try to put them in practise, your advise is certain to be followed. When can you reach this stage? It is possible only when you become at least embodiments of humanness and when you recognise what the essential human qualities are.

The thought that arises in the mind, the word that is formed on the tongue and the act performed by the hand---when these three form stages of the same process, they indicate humanness. Nowadays man *appears* to be man, but his humanness is absent, partly because he thinks one way, speaks another way and acts a third way. Speak what you think, do what you speak; that is the sign of true manhood. So you first act according to your own advice. Bring about consonance between your thought, word and deed, and then guide the children. Otherwise you, as teachers, cannot cut much ice with them.

Pupils in schools must have a strong foundation

Through the centuries India has nursed many religions, creeds and sects. But the essence of all *Shaasthras* (spiritual sciences) is that in every being there exists the Divine. The teaching of this essence is very necessary today. As the Minister for Education said just now, the foundation of an edifice has to be very strong. Even a small house requires a foundation. For a tree to grow, the roots have to be strong indeed. Without roots the tree will collapse with the first gust of wind. A house without a foundation will also fall down in a heap. Similarly, pupils in schools must have,

for their satisfactory progress in life, a strong foundation. And what is a strong foundation? Moral, ethical and spiritual knowledge and experience are the best foundation.

But there is no use simply talking about foundation. When are we to build on it? We are all the time discussing only the plan. This present movement for *Abhyudhayas* (Progressive Primary Schools) is only the foundation. High schools would be the walls, and colleges the roof. All the three have to be planned at the same time. They are going to complement one another. Today we are laying the foundation, but that is not the end. The building has to be erected. The sapling is planted but it still has to be watered, manured and carefully tended.

To be born as a man is the highest fortune of *jeeva* (individual being). So you must make the best use of this rare chance. You must practise in daily life what the *Aathman* (inner conscience) urges you to do. When this is done, the villagers will also be charged with spiritual adventure through their children, and the entire Andhra Pradesh will vibrate with a new enthusiasm. I desire that you should make all efforts in this direction. I wish you would take a vow in this regard for, believe Me, there is no sacrifice higher than this, no *yoga* nobler than this, no offering holier to God than this.

Give, and you gain. Grasp, and you lose

The children you claim to be yours are *kaamaputhras* (born out of lust), but the children who come to you for education are *premaputhras* (drawn to you by your love). In truth, more than your physical children, these children have a right to your love. So decide to make sacrifices for their sake. *Thyaaga* is the real *yoga*. Give, and you gain. *Bhoga* (enjoyment) results in *roga* (disease). Grasp, and you lose. Recognise the truth of these beliefs. Of course there are many among you who intellectually do recognise their validity. But so far you have had no opportunity to translate these beliefs into action.

In the Geetha, Krishna tells Arjuna, "Be an Instrument, O *Savyasachi* (skilled bow man)!" The present plan has become instrumental in bringing you all here and allowing you to share *aanandha* (divine bliss). This *Abhyudhaya* (development) scheme has brought us together and built a bridge between humanity and Divinity. Without this bridge of love, the journey from there to here and from here to there would be impossible.

Life is granted to spend in *karma* as duty

Embodiments of Love! I wish very much that you should fill your hearts with love and lead the children under your care along the path of Indian ideals. For this you have to form study groups in order to collect and codify your suggestions. You must analyse and examine the principles underlying the *Abhyudhaya* scheme and store enough of ideas during these ten days to help you to plan things for the next ten months. Time is most important. This body is given to us in order to use it efficiently every minute of its existence. Work has been visualized in all its details so that every moment of the assigned time can be made worthwhile by carrying out the selfless work of implementing the given scheme. Human life has been granted to us in order to spend it in *karma* (action), as duty. In fact time is to be considered Divine, and adored as such. God is described as *Kaalakaala* (He who is the Lord of Time), *Kaalaatheetha* (He who is beyond time) and *Kaala thathva bodhaka* (He who teaches the principle of time).

So do not waste precious time in wandering about; outside the camp, imagining that you have come here to somehow spend ten days at Brindhaavan. Participate for your share in the seminars

and in the study groups. Place before others your doubts and try to get them resolved. Spend your time in the company of others, not in gossip but in fruitful discussion. Even after you go to your village, take the children out for social service once or twice a week and help them to discard laziness. Laziness produces rust which in time turns man to dust.

If man wishes to be happy and healthy, the first exercise he must do is to remove from his mind every bad thought, feeling and habit. What is the next step? He must welcome good thoughts, good feelings and good habits. These exercises can be started even from childhood. Removing the bad and substituting it with the good has to be done by you as a teacher for your students. You must be vigilant to prevent the children from being spoiled by the evils of injustice, violence, immorality and falsehood. This is the '*thapas*' (penance) imposed on you as your duty. These ten days you must collect enough courage and inspiration to undertake this *thapas*. You need not go in for any other spiritual exercise. Dedicate all your skill, strength and scholarship to this great *yajna* (sacrificial rite). Dedicated *karma* is the *yajna*. Let this *yajna* of selfless discharge of work become the practice all over this land.

Bliss can be got only by dedicated work

The bliss does not come out of books, nor can it be bought for any sum. It can be got only by dedicated work. When you complete this training and go back, through you, three to four thousand teachers can get inspiration every year. This 'scheme helps you as an individual and also society at large.

After training, many continue to remain unemployed. But *udhyoga* (job) is not so important. What is important is *yoga* (divine communion). Without *yoga* how can *udhyoga* yield happiness? Everyone, from the watchman at the gate to the Prime Minister in the capital, is interested in *udhyoga*. But real *udhyoga* has its base in *yoga*, which harmonizes our psyche, enables us to stick to truth and keeps us on the path of *dharma* (righteousness).

"Books are packed with learned stuff.

Brains are stuffed with only dust."

You must get and impart education that would mould you into holy, full and free Divine beings.

The fool has mastered all knowledge.

He struts about as a scholar of repute.

Yet he knows not even who he is,

And he dare not shed a single vice!

His reputation comes from disputation,

But his scholarship leaks from many a hole.

He studies and studies until he dies,

But he still knows not how not to die

Whatever one learns or does not learn, one must, after being born as man, learn about the *Aathman* (divinity), for that alone can confer bliss and immortality.

Resolve today to sacrifice everything you have for the sake of the pure-hearted children who rely on you for guidance. So long as you are caught in the coils of monetary considerations and so

long as you think that such benefit alone can make you happy, you will continue to be as you are. But you can gain *aanandha* the very day you decide on dedicated service. Whether you get or do not get the comforts you desire, you should pay attention to the task for which you have come and cultivate the means for realizing the *Aathman*.

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