

29. Reform should start primary stage

EDUCATIONAL institutions have the responsibility to give to society well educated persons who are competent and who are men of integrity and who can be relied upon to serve society with devotion and competence. The crisis in the educational field is well-known. Many attempts have been made to bring about changes in the educational system but it is forgotten that what gives education its true value and significance is its moral and spiritual content. In a world in which many technical and scientific changes are taking place, a balance has to be maintained between modernity and spiritual traditions and heritage of the country. The link between education and employment which has remained from the days of Macaulay has to be broken. Education should be for life and not merely for earning a living.

Without emphasis on character, educational institutions have become the abodes of indiscipline and disorder. Who is responsible for this condition? Teachers who are unable to understand the workings of the minds of the students are worried about how to deal with the situation. The students have no sense of discipline or respect for teachers. Both students and teachers are confronted with managements who are not primarily concerned with the real purpose of education. The result is we have students who indulge in agitations and teachers who are discontented. The managements for their part complain against the Government, but it is not the teachers alone or the students or the management or the government who are to be held responsible for this state of affairs.

The parents' duty in shaping students' character

The parents of the students have forgotten their own responsibility for developing in the young the right attitudes and behaviour. In the past, the family was the first institution in which the students imbibed the culture and traditions of the nation through stories about the great sages, saints and heroes of the past. By too much indulgence the parents are also allowing the students to have their own way and ignore what is good, noble and virtuous.

The teachers do not impart to the students the essential values of life to enable them to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false.

Most of the problems in our country are created not by the uneducated or the illiterate but mainly by the educated persons. The reason is the educated persons have not had the right type of education.

The change should begin at primary level

There is too much interference by the Government in the educational system which accounts partly for the prevailing evils. Attempts to tinker with the system by altering the number of years at school and the number of years at college do not effect any fundamental changes. Whether it is 10 + 2 + 3 or 10 + 3 + 2 makes no difference to the end product of the system. The change in fact should begin from primary level when the children are in their most impressionable years. It is at that stage that discipline and moral values should be inculcated. Students who have been moulded on right lines in the early years by being filled with examples from our cultural heritage would develop into ideal citizens.

At the higher levels of education the major problem is caused by politics and the holding of elections in college associations. Elections to student bodies should go. They invoke not only considerable waste of money but result in divisions and conflicts between students.

Changes are needed also with regard to examinations. Frequent postponement of examinations has become the bane of the educational system. The educational authorities should see that all examinations in colleges are completed by the first week of April so that the results are announced in the first week of June and all colleges are re-opened for the new academic year by the last week of June. Only then will students be able to plan their further studies.

Teachers for their part should regard their vocation as a sacred duty. They have the responsibility to mould the future generations of young students both by what they teach and by their example. These teachers should inspire the students by example, by the way they live outside the classroom. If there are such teachers there will be no cause for students to go assay. One of the principal aims of education must be to make students self-reliant. They should not become degree holders going around begging for jobs.

I hope that you will devote yourselves to your duties with greater vigour and enthusiasm and bring about a transformation in the students. It should make them useful and worthy citizens of this great country.

Discourse at Brindavan Auditorium, on 15-12-1985.

The secret of the liberation lies, not in the mystic formula that is whispered in the ear and rotated on the rosary; it lies in the stepping out into action, the walking forward in practice the pious pilgrim route, and the triumphant reaching of the goal.

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