

2. Education for transformation

PRESENT day education develops the intellect and skills but does little to develop good qualities. Of what avail is all the knowledge in the world, if one has no good character? It is like water going down the drain.

There is no use if knowledge grows while desires multiply. It makes one a hero in words and a zero in action.

Man's achievements in the fields of science and technology have helped to improve the material conditions of living. What we need today, however, is a transformation of the spirit. Education should serve not only to develop one's intelligence and skills, but also help to broaden one's outlook and make him useful to society and the world at large. This is possible only when cultivation of the spirit is promoted along with education in the physical sciences. Moral and spiritual education will train a man to lead a disciplined life.

Education without self-control is no education at all. True education should make a person compassionate and humane. It should not make him self-centered and narrow minded. Spontaneous sympathy and regard for all beings should flow from the heart of one who is properly educated. He should be keen to serve society rather than be preoccupied with his own acquisitive aspirations. This should be the real purpose of education in its true sense.

Fear of sin and faith in God should be promoted

Education should instill in the student "fear and faith." 'Fear' does not mean timidity. It is fear of sin and faith in God which have to be promoted. One should feel that he will forfeit the respect and regard of the community if he commits a sinful or immoral act. The student should learn to avoid unrighteous conduct. Students should be taught to love their mothers and their Motherland with deep devotion. *Desabhakti* (devotion to one's country) is one form of devotion to God. One who has no love for his mother, his Motherland, his mother tongue and his religion will be leading a meaningless life.

The educational system is beset with many problems. It has failed to promote in the young such qualities as love, forbearance and fortitude. Instead, it serves to encourage the animal nature in students. There is no place in it for cultivating human values like Truth and Righteousness. It does not imbue the student with a sense of humility, which is the hall-mark of right education.

Human values are absent in educated persons

Parents are keen about educating their children, but they are not concerned about the kind of education that should be given. Education should help to make students the embodiments of human values such as Truth, Love, Right Conduct, Peace and Non-violence. Academic knowledge alone is of no great value. It may help one to earn a livelihood. But education should go beyond preparation for earning a living. It should prepare one for the challenges of life morally and spiritually. It is because human values are absent in 'educated' persons that we find them steeped in anxiety and worry.

Who is responsible for the deplorable state of education today, for the lack of discipline among students and the absence of moral values among educated persons? It is not correct to blame the students. Teachers do not understand the needs and impulses of students and the students, for their part, have no great regard for the teachers. The management of the educational institutions and the educational administrators do not understand the problems of the teachers or the real

needs of the students. Politicians utilise the situation for interfering with the education system. Conditions arise in which the police have to intervene and sometimes close the educational institutions. For such a situation, the parents, the teachers, the administration and the government are all to blame. Each is responsible in some way for the malaise in the system. All concerned have failed to recognise their respective obligations.

The educational system that we inherited from Macaulay's days was designed to train students for filling certain types of jobs primarily to provide an army of clerks for the foreign administration. The link between education and jobs has to be broken. Education should be for life and not for a living. It should prepare youth for all the responsibilities of citizenship.

Parents and teachers should set the fight example

Parents have the primary responsibility to mould the character of children. Too much freedom should not be given out of excessive affection. Children should be taught to exercise self-restraint and observe discipline in their daily life. If parents are negligent in bringing up the children in their most tender years, it will not be easy to correct them later on. There is a Telugu saying that if the daughter-in-law is dark in complexion, all the children will be dark. In the sphere of education, the system of education can be compared to the daughter-in-law. If it is defective the end products will also be bad. The entire country will suffer from the consequences of defective education. If students are disciplined and well behaved, the country will be safe and sound.

What is the Government's responsibility? We find that every time there is a change in the education ministry, the educational policy is changed, with the result there is instability and uncertainty. The main defects in the educational system remain uncorrected. As a consequence, the students suffer.

There is no point in blaming the students. They are like the stones out of which the sculptor chisels the figures he wants. It is the sculptor who produces a thing of beauty out of a piece of rough rock. Parents and teachers are the sculptors who have to mould the shape and figure of the students for whom they are responsible. If parents and teachers set the right example, the students will automatically blossom into models of excellence and bring glory to the nation.

Students should totally eschew politics

There is a basic rule that should be observed by students and teachers. They should totally eschew politics. The students can enter politics, if they choose, after completing their studies and starting life on their own. I am not against politics or politicians. Politics is an essential element in the growth of a country. But what I urge is that one should not venture into it in an immature and adolescent stage. When a student indulges in politics, he cannot be good in his studies or in his politics. He will only be wasting his precious life.

There is no room for teachers to indulge in politics. Their sole duty is to take good care of the students entrusted to their care and shape them into useful, patriotic and worthy citizens, reflecting the culture and traditions of the land. Teachers who take to politics do so for their own selfish ends to improve their position and influence. They are, in fact, betraying their trust as teachers.

What about elections to student bodies? We find that these elections are conducted on the lines of Assembly elections, involving considerable expenditure on campaigning through posters etc. Sometimes these electoral battles have resulted in damage to property and life. A great deal of

energy and money is frittered away on this wasteful exercise. It is no doubt necessary to develop qualities of leadership among students. But this should be done in the proper way. Students after all remain in colleges for a brief period. The Vice-Chancellors and Principals of Colleges should sit together and devise methods to instill in the students a sense of discipline and to promote good behaviour and keenness to pursue their studies. There should be no elections, but only selection. The Principal should select a student, who is not only proficient in studies but is also exemplary in his behaviour and in rendering selfless service to others, and make him the leader of the students. Elections are conducted for so-called students' unions! What is the meaning of "Union"? It is "coming together of all persons." But what we actually see in students' unions are only dissensions, disunity and mutual rivalry.

Characteristic of true education is humility

The students are innocent. It is the parents and teachers who should lead them in the correct path. Unfortunately, teachers are not doing their part. They have their own "Unions" and indulge in undesirable activities, which are followed by the students, in their turn!

The characteristic of true *Vidya* (education) is *Vinayam* (humility). Humility helps to make one a *paatratha* (one deserving respect). Deservedness leads to *Dhanam* (wealth) and *Dhanam* leads to *Dharma* (righteousness).

Dharma is the means to *Mukti* (liberation). We are now giving importance only to intellectual cleverness. This is wrong. Importance has to be given only to character. Education is of no value at all without character. What is the use of having ten acres of waste land? If you have a small plot of fertile land that is more valuable.

Undesirable state of academic standards

The prevailing system of assessment of the academic performance of students is deplorable. If one gets 25 per cent or 30 per cent of marks in a subject, a student is supposed to have obtained pass marks and he is promoted. This only means that everyone has the license to commit errors to the extent of 70% to 75%. If one commits mistakes to the extent of 75% as a student, how much more mistakes will he commit when taking up a job? He may commit even cent percent mistakes and get away with it. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs. "Look up and aim high" should be the motto. Low aim is actually a crime! If a student aims at 90%, he may manage to get 60%. If, on the other hand, he aims only at 30%, he may get only 15%.

There is another undesirable practice now due to the interference of extraneous persons. The Education Minister gives some grace marks, the Chief Minister gives his own quota of grace marks and the Education Secretary gives some grace marks! With these quotas of grace marks in prospect, which student will have interest in his studies?

India is hailed as a *Karma Bhoomi*, *Thyaga Bhoomi*, and *Yoga Bhoomi* (the land of righteous action, sacrifice and spiritual greatness). But, today we find that because of the defective educational system obtaining here, it has turned into a *Bhoga Bhoomi and Roga Bhoomi* (a country revelling in material pleasures and replete with diseases), ruining the health and character of the people as a nation. This is not a desirable state of affairs. Even if there are ten students of sterling qualities and impeccable character it is enough. What is required is quality and not quantity. If the education system could contribute to the turning out of students of good character, committed to human values, the country will become stronger and greater as a nation and be a model to the world.

The teacher is a king-maker

Teachers should not feel that they belong to a despised profession. Teaching is a very noble and respectable profession. The teacher is actually a king-maker. Even Kings and Emperors have to be in their early years students under a teacher. Bala Gangadhar Tilak, the great patriot and freedom fighter, who was in the teaching profession, was asked as to what position he would like to occupy when the country became independent. He replied that he was not interested in becoming a Minister or holding any office in the administration. He would prefer to go back to his profession of teaching so that he could mould several students into ministers or rulers rather than be a ruler himself. Such is the nobility and dignity of the teaching profession.

Science is tending to get out of control. There is a Sanskrit saying that there is no nobility without self-control. People are gloating over the phenomenal successes of science and technology. The scientist, in exploring the secrets of Nature, has acquired mastery over air, water, earth, fire, etc. But all these achievements are not greater than what Hiranyakasipu was stated to have achieved in his time. What should be recognised is that in controlling the forces of Nature, the balance should not be upset. In dealing with Nature, there are three requirements. The first is knowledge of the laws of nature. The second is the skill to utilise the powers of Nature for human needs. The third is to maintain the balance among natural forces. It is the disturbance of this balance that has led to such consequences as soil erosion, pollution of the atmosphere, etc.

Need for balance

Today's education is knocking off the 's' from 'skill', with the result that the knowledge is 'killed', with disastrous results for mankind. Students should be given knowledge, skill and balance. In the present system of education, this combination is absent. Each is pursuing his own selfish interest, without regard to the interests of others.

This is the plight of man today. Science has enabled him to acquire immense control over the external world. But he has no control over himself. Winston Churchill once observed: "Man has conquered all, but not himself." And this was what Prahlada told his father, Hiranyakasipu: "Oh Father! you have conquered all the world, but you have not conquered yourself."

If the present educational system is to improve, the only way is to eliminate selfishness and train students for the service of society. How are students to be trained for this purpose? It is only through the inculcation of love, with no trace of self-interest. Love is of two *kinds--Sahaja Prema* (Natural love) *and Daiva Prema* (Divine love). Natural love is one which expects something in return. Divine love expresses itself in loving service without expectation of any return. Divine love always gives to others and receives nothing. Natural love always expects something from others. True education must teach this divine love of heart to heart, mind to mind, and *Atma to Atma*.

Freedom from Government

In order to effect real improvements in the system of education, it is necessary to free educational institutions from Government control and make them independent like the judiciary. They should be run by autonomous agencies free from Government and political influences. Education should be under the control of a national body of educational experts, who have the interests of students as their sole concern.

Now we find that for a seat in a Medical College one has to pay Rs. 2 lakhs or more. Parents who are anxious to give a medical education for their children somehow raise the money. When a student has gone through the medical course in this way and sets up practice, his first concern is to earn money by whatever dubious means to recover the amount spent on his education. He has to resort to corrupt practices. Once this process starts, his character is undermined. We should not give room for practices which demoralise the students from the outset of their educational career.

Another problem relating to our education is the difference in the system from State to State. These differences make it difficult for parents who are liable to transfer to get their wards admitted in the respective classes in a different state. There should be some uniformity in the system of education throughout the country. Vice-Chancellors and Principals of Colleges should get together and devise a common system of higher education for the whole country. They should ensure that all examinations are completed by April 20 and the results are announced by the second week of June so that all colleges can reopen before the end of June. This will enable students to seek admission to any institution of their choice anywhere in the country. It is essential to have a common schedule of examinations for all States.

Free Education in Sai Institute

There should be no link between money and education. In the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Education (of which Bhagavan Baba is the Chancellor), we will be providing from the new academic year (June 1986) free education to students at all levels including Post-graduate courses. The aim is to train the students in the proper way and make them accept the Institute's discipline. When you collect money from outsiders you become tools in their hands. When you provide free education, you can control the students. You can impart moral values and mould the character of the students.

At present there are what are called moral instruction classes in some schools. These figure only in the time-table. Often these periods are used for teaching other subjects. From the most impressionable years the children should be taught to cultivate love for all. Love leads to unity. Unity promotes purity. Purity leads to Divinity. Today there is no love and we find enmity instead of unity. A human being without love is worse than a wild animal in the jungle. Animals, birds and trees provide some service to others, but the man who is selfish not only does no service but causes harm to others. The educated are even worse sinners in this respect than the unlettered. It is educated young men who are found engaged in crimes like hijacking, bank robberies and other grave offenses against society. Is this the kind of transformation that should be expected from education?

Teaching love through Love

Education should imbue students with certain ideals. They should realise that there is only one caste, the Caste of Humanity. There is only one religion, the Religion of Love. There is only one language, the Language of the Heart. If these basic ideals are followed, there will be no room for petty differences and mutual recrimination.

You can teach love to students only through love. Because of my love which is my *Swabhava* (nature), the students in the Sathya Sai Institute are disciplined and orderly and there is no unrest in our campus. I have no ill-will towards anyone. There may be persons who may criticise me or even bear malice or hatred towards me. But I have no enemies at all. Everyone is dear to me. As

I have love as my permanent quality, I have no worry and am always happy and at peace. Love in speech is *Sathya*. Love in action is *Dharma*. Love in thought is *Shanti*. Love in understanding is *Ahimsa* (Non-violence). This love is flowing in us as an unseen river. It is only by developing love that we can sanctify the educational system and train the students in the practice of human values as the essential condition for leading worthy lives. I appeal to all of you, to strive in this direction and make education really purposeful for turning out students who will be good citizens of whom the country can be proud.

Discourse at the Music. Academy Auditorium, Madras, on 20-1-1986.

When truth, justice, compassion and peace flee from man, the world degenerates into a snake-pit. God then comes down as an Avatar to rescue mankind from its doom. He comes to reveal to man his Reality, to restore to him his birthright of Atmic bliss. He does not come to found a new creed or religion, to breed a new faction or install a new God.

BABA