

29. The teacher and tomorrow

THE human body is the most wonderful machine in the world. It has a bewildering multiplicity of limbs, organs, veins, nerves and cells which co-operate to maintain it under varied conditions. If anyone of these rebels or refuses to rescue another, the body is bound to suffer. So too, a society, community, or nation can be safe, secure and happy only when the individuals comprising it are mutually helpful and bound together in skillful and sincere service. Every generation has to receive education and training in such intelligent cooperation and service. Or else, the world has to face confusion and chaos.

The educational process has not received proper attention from thoughtful persons. The institutions which ought to have been temples of Saraswathi (the Goddess of transformation through learning) have become in all lands temples of Lakshmi (the Goddess of wealth). The ideal held before the tender, innocent, unselfish children is a lucrative job rather than a life of peace, contentment and love. Narrow loyalties, contest and competition are polluting the minds of children. Parents, teachers and all interested in the progress of mankind have to take note of this situation.

Pay attention to pupils spiritual progress

Teaching and learning have both become mechanical routines. They have lost the freshness and joy which vitality alone can give. The value of the teaching process lies in raising the level of consciousness of the learner, in heightening the sense of wonder and awe and in emphasising the unity of one with all. The destiny of a country is decided by the ideals implanted by the teachers in the minds of the boys and girls entrusted to their care. Education must pay attention not merely to the material and intellectual progress of the pupils but, even more, to their moral and spiritual progress. Education should help man to live a meaningful life. It should not direct all efforts to provide a livelihood.

Education can claim success only when it results in the student gaining awareness of the Divinity inherent in him and others. No academic degree can confer as much self-confidence and self-satisfaction and lead man as quickly and gladly to self-sacrifice and self-realisation as that awareness. It has to be transmitted by teachers who have it through a sense of duty and in a spirit of love. It has to be accepted by students who have cultivated faith in the teacher and reverence for his role. The pot that pours and the pot that receives have to be steady and straight, eager to give and gain. If the teacher has the responsibility to inspire and illumine, the student has the responsibility to respond to the Love and Light, discarding all contrary thoughts. Thoughts that arise from the region of the pleasant (*Preyas*) cannot co-exist with those which arise from the tough challenges of higher life (*Sreyas*). The student must be equipped to prefer the latter to the former.

No one should be ridiculed or slandered

The higher life, which makes man human and a fit candidate for unfoldment of the Divinity that is his Reality, depends on the cultivations of the Five Cardinal virtues--Truth, Right Conduct, Love Peace and Non-Violence. These virtues elevate the individual as well as the society of which he is a part. The teacher has to watch every word and gesture of his, every action and reaction of his, in order to avoid any infringement of these virtues. For, the teacher is, for the pupils, the ideal, the example, to whom the parents have entrusted them. Women teachers can discharge this responsibility better than men. Children can be moulded more easily through

sweetness and softness which maternal affection implies, rather than by fatherly advice and admonition.

The atmosphere of Love should not be disturbed by any uncharitable remark against any one's faith. Nor should any one be ridiculed or slandered.

Children's minds should not be polluted by fear, hatred or disgust. The doors of their hearts must be open to all. Later on as the impact of society and the state grows, pupils can be led to an understanding of the political and religious forces that will affect their lives.

Students have to be encouraged to "Follow the Master (the inner voice of Conscience), Face the Devil (the down-dragging anti-social urges), Fight to the End (until one is able to overcome the inner foes of lust, anger, greed, undue attachment, pride and hatred) and Finish the Game (of life on earth)." This duty is referred to in the Gita as *Swadharma* (one's genuine obligation to oneself); the duties that one gets involved in, while dealing with others is defined as *Paradharm*. Of these two, *swadharma* is more vital and valuable.

Discourse on 28-12-1986, at Prashaanthi Nilayam.

The teacher should serve as a signpost for the community. The student determines the future of the nation. Together, they help to promote the greatness and welfare of the nation. Both students and teachers should realise that their welfare is bound up with the well-being of the society as a whole.

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