

1. Sports and Spirituality

*What greater misfortune can there be
Than the failure of Bharatiyas
To understand the true greatness
Of their ancient and sacred culture?
To cavil at others' faults
And to be blind to one's own;
To jeer at others' looks,
Not noticing one's own ugliness;
To make fun of others
And not see one's own follies;
To have such qualities from birth
Can there be a greater sin than this?*

STUDENTS, boys and girls, and teachers, embodiments of love! The observance of morality in daily life, the divinisation of all actions and thoughts related to life, and adherence to ideals together constitute culture. Students today do not make the requisite efforts to understand the sacredness and value of this culture. *Sanskrit, Sanskriti, Samskara* are all terms which have been derived from the roots, *Sam and Krit*. *Bharatiya Sanskriti* (culture) is a composite of purity, divinity, sublimity and beauty. This combination is reflected in sports and games.

Sports help players experience joy

Although there may be differences among nations in their food and recreational habits, the spirit of harmony and unity displayed in sports is a gratifying example to all. It is a distinctive quality of sports that differences are forgotten and persons engage themselves in games in a divine spirit of friendliness and comradery. Sports help the players not only to improve their health but also to experience joy.

Students, however, should not be content with realising these benefits. Man has another body besides the physical. It is the subtle body, otherwise known as the mind. It is equally essential to promote purity of the mind and develop large heartedness. True humanness blossoms only when the body, the mind and the spirit are developed harmoniously.

The enthusiasm and effort which you display in sports should also be manifested in the spheres of morality and spirituality. You must endeavour to experience the divinity that permeates Bharat's sacred culture.

Bharatiya culture is not a product of narrow-minded ideas and ideals. It is filled with profound, sublime and ennobling *ideas*. "*Lokaa samasthaas-sukhino bhavanthu!*" (May all the people be happy) is the benedictory motto of Bharat.

There is a prayer in the *Purusha Sukta* which students recite regularly, but they do not understand its full meaning. "*Sahaabaavavathu; sahanau bhunakthu; sahaviryam karavaavahai.*" What is the inner meaning of this *mantra*? "Let us grow together in harmony; let

us move about in friendliness; let us spread together the light that we have gained from our studies. Let us live in harmony without discord. Let us promote in harmony the use of our talents and skills." This is the profound inner meaning of this *Vedic* hymn.

No other language can stand comparison with Sanskrit in its sweetness or range of expression. The sages prayed for the happiness and well-being of every one on earth. "*Sarve bhadraani pasyanthu*" (May all see only what is auspicious). Such were the benedictions pronounced in the Sanskrit language.

Glory of Sanskrit, mother of languages

Many European languages have a large number of words which are derived from Sanskrit roots. Words like mother, father, brother, etc., in English are derived from Latin words which are themselves derived from Sanskrit words like, *Pitru, Mathru and Brathru*. Thus English is like a grand-daughter, while Latin is a daughter and Sanskrit is the mother of languages. Sanskrit enjoys this privilege of being the ancient mother of many languages.

A great French scholar, Louis Renou, spent many years in India studying the Sanskrit language. On the eve of returning to his native country, he was given a big farewell party by many teachers and students. At that gathering Louis Renou was full of tears, feeling sad at having to leave India. Controlling himself, he said he was feeling extremely sad to leave India. "Indians are treating the immortal Sanskrit language as a 'dead' language. Educational institutions and students are not making adequate efforts to study Sanskrit. Having this immortal language with them, they are not making any effort to enjoy its glories. There can be no greater misfortune than this," he lamented.

Max Mueller was another savant who explored the greatness of Sanskrit. He traced the Sanskrit origin of many English words. After completing a study of the *Rig Veda*, he inscribed an introduction to his work in Sanskrit in which he described himself as a native of Germany who had received his education at Oxford University. He coined Sanskrit equivalents for Germany and Oxford ("Sarmany" and "Gothirhapura") and Sanskritised his own name as *Mokshamula Bhat*. When great foreign scholars and savants show so much regard and esteem for Sanskrit, it is regrettable that Indians do not have the same regard for this great language.

Bharatiya culture is based on Sanskrit

Bharat's entire culture is based on Sanskrit. Culture means that which sanctifies the world, which enhances the greatness and glory of a country and which helps to raise the individual and society to a higher level of existence. Culture contributes to the refinement of life.

The process of refinement or transformation is essential for improving the utility of any object. For instance, paddy has to be milled and the husk has to be removed before the rice is fit for cooking. This is the process known as *Samskriti* or transformation. This means getting rid of the unwanted elements and securing the desirable elements. With regard to men, *Samskriti* (culture) means getting rid of bad qualities and cultivating virtues. The cultured person is one who has developed good thoughts and good conduct.

In Sanskrit, the term *Atma* refers to the Self ("I") and "mine". Where the "I" and "mine" are present strong attachment develops. This is described as *Atmabhimanam* (attachment to the self). Even in relation to trivial matters, when there is mention of "I", the person concerned places his hand on his heart. This shows that the self ("I") that is referred to is not the body but the spirit.

When a person declares, "Whatever the disaster, whatever the trouble I may be confronted with, I am not afraid," he reveals his confidence in his *Atma* (Self) which is the basis for his fortitude.

Maintain comradeship in every action

Unfortunately, nowadays it is attachment to the body that is cherished, with the result that one's outlook becomes narrow and limited. It should be recognised that the *Atma* (the indwelling Spirit) is one and the same in all beings. You have to develop this spirit of oneness and equality. Then the divinity in you will be manifested and your human nature will get sanctified and divinised. In every action, you should be comradesly and cooperative. Today such a spirit prevails in the sphere of sport, although occasionally there are deviations from it.

In the beginning, sports and athletics were intended mainly to promote health and experience joy. Today these objectives are being forgotten. Everything is being commercialised. Self-interest is getting predominant. Consequently, peace and happiness are being lost. If a person is invited to sing, he asks: "How much will you give me?" In cricket and tennis matches today lakhs of rupees are involved. When sports become a kind of business, there is no room for human values and peace becomes a casualty. It is essential, therefore, that the sense of spiritual oneness should prevail, transcending differences of nationality, language and religion. Only thus can real bliss be experienced.

Teachers role in encouraging the students

During the past five days, our boys and girls have been engaged in games and athletics with enthusiasm and vigour. The teachers should also attend these events to sustain the enthusiasm of the students. Teachers should not confine themselves only to their classrooms. In the Anantapur campus the teachers have given great encouragement to the students in their sports and games programmes. In the Brindavan campus also the teachers have actively promoted the students' preparations. Above all, in the Primary School at Prashaanthi Nilayam the teachers have worked hard to train the children in various games so that they could present a delightful programme at the Sports Festival. The teachers laboured all night to stitch the dresses and other materials for the programme. It was because of their efforts that 700 small children could put up such an impressive show. All credit goes to the 45 teachers who are rendering dedicated service without any salaries.

In the years ahead, it is the responsibility of teachers to train the students to become ideal citizens of Bharat. In the Prashaanthi Nilayam campus we have Dr. Sunder Iyer, who practised day and night himself and also trained a number of students to perform a variety of gymnastic feats. It was because of his enthusiasm and encouragement that so many students in the Prashaanthi Nilayam campus could win so many prizes in the various events. His own performance was astonishing. There are many other professors and senior students like Dr. Sunder Iyer. They should also take active interest in games and sports.

The teachers have a great responsibility not only to encourage the students participation in sports but also to promote in them the qualities of good citizenship. Students by themselves are very good. They have plenty of energy and enthusiasm. What they lack are an adequate number of teachers to enthuse them and encourage them. The students should be given proper guidance and encouragement. If these are provided, our students can develop into exemplary models for the whole world. There is no doubt about this.

Aim of Sai Education

Even in their classes many students achieve "O" grade in their subjects (This means securing 90 percent marks in the examination.) That students getting "O" grade have taken part in the sports events testifies to their all round abilities. These talents are not given to them by their professors. They have been developed by the students own intense efforts. The basic reason for all this is their devotion and love for Swami. All of them have come here for the sake of Swami and not for the sake of any specific learning. If for such students, the teachers can also serve as helpful guides, how much can be accomplished!

Education should develop right understanding

To give another example, the children of the Primary School, who conduct themselves with so much humility, discipline and goodness in the primary classes, lose some of these qualities when they go up to the Secondary School. When they go to college, almost everything is gone! What is the reason for this phenomenon? It is the teachers who account for their discipline and good behaviour in the Primary School. In the higher classes, what is done, by way of precept and example, to promote character and spirituality among the students? Unless spirituality and morality are promoted among the students, what purpose will be served by running these colleges? There are any number of colleges in the world. Here you have to impart the sacred precepts of our culture to the students. Along with this, academic subjects have to be taught. Education is for developing right understanding. Work is for earning a living. Today education is sought for getting a job. This is not proper Students should imbibe culture along with academic knowledge.

It is only when teachers understand the basic purpose of our educational institutions will they be able to make a success of them. If a student goes astray, he alone is affected. But if a teacher is bad, hundreds of students will be spoilt. Of all the professions in the world, that of the teacher is most estimable. The teacher has to teach the students what is good and ennobling for them. This is the true relationship between teachers and students. This is what should be developed in our educational institutions.

Let me tell you that *Swami* alone knows what efforts were made by the Primary School teachers to prepare the children for the sports programmes. They worked all night for several days to prepare the dresses and other materials for the display. All this was done with no masculine help. Even in the Brindavan campus, to get the appropriate outfit for the international dances to be presented by the students, one student went to Indonesia to get the right headgear for the participants. They themselves prepared all their costumes. This shows the degree of their enthusiasm. It is the duty of teachers to foster such enthusiasm and initiative shown by the students.

In appreciation of the special efforts made by the teachers and students of the Primary School and the Brindavan campus, I am presenting special cups as a token of my love.

Discourse in the Institute Auditorium, on 14-1-1990.

The Universe is an instrument to reveal the majesty of God. The inner firmament in the heart of man is also equally a revelation of His Glory. He is the Breath of one's breath. Since he has no

specific form, He cannot be indicated by words. Nor can His mystery be penetrated by the other senses. He is beyond the reach of asceticism, beyond the bounds of Vedic rituals.

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