

33. Towards a value based education

STUDENTS! Embodiments of Love! Teachers and Patrons of Education!

Education lends beauty to man. Education is man's most precious wealth. It confers happiness and renown on man. It is the teacher of teachers. When a man travels abroad, education stands by him like a kinsman. Education is adored by rulers, not wealth. One without education is an animal.

Degrees alone do not signify education. Education that is confined to the physical sciences is a travesty of true education. Together with knowledge of the natural sciences, one has to acquire humility, discipline and a good character. Everyone should recognize this sacred character of education.

The student of today is concerned with acquiring wealth, strength and position, but not good qualities. Education is meant to enable one to acquire what are good qualities. Every student should take note of this. Education is not intended merely to stuff the brain with information. It has to transform the heart and make it pure. This sacred truth has been forgotten.

Educational institutions should be sacred

Formidable problems have cropped up in educational institutions today. Educational institutions, which should serve to promote wholesome and progressive tendencies among the citizens, are going in the wrong way. The discipline that should prevail in them has deteriorated. The sacred feelings that should inspire educational establishments have disappeared. Reverence and respect are not to be seen. Money has been elevated to the primary place. This means that in institutions in which Saraswathi, the Goddess of Knowledge, should reign supreme, Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, has been installed. Knowledge that should be acquired by the heart is being garnered by money.

This is a great threat to society. It is only when a student is filled with sacred thoughts that he will be able to serve society properly and make himself a better human being. The country will prosper only when those occupying the seats of power understand these problems properly.

President Sri Venkataraman, in his Convocation address, explained in clear terms the implications of the five values of *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Santhi*, *Prema* and *Ahimsa*. These five terms are like the five life-breaths for a man. Not only that. They are also the *Panchabhutas* (five basic elements). Without these values, humanness will be destroyed. All other accomplishments are worthless without these values. For the mansion of *Sanathana Dharma*, these values are the walls supporting the edifice.

Nine gem-like qualities to be cultivated

The student today has to cultivate in this *Kali* age nine gem-like qualities--the spirit of sacrifice, humility, the spirit of selfless service to society, friendliness, discipline, adherence to truth, non-violence and faith in God. The boys and girls who have these qualities alone will be the nation's treasure of virtue and ensure its future.

Dear Students! Without these sacred qualities, all education is valueless. Does literacy or degree constitute education? Without wisdom and virtue can one be termed an educated person? True education is that which fosters the sense of oneness, draws out one's divine qualities and promotes the blossoming of human personality. The eternal verities are being given the go-by.

Man is getting alienated from Nature. Good practices are giving place to bad habits. Education is reaching its nadir.

Man should be prepared to make any amount of effort in the pursuit of knowledge. Education today is concerned with worldly comforts, but it should seek to promote, in addition to worldly knowledge, concern for spiritual development. Education has two important characteristics. One is exposition of facts relating to any subject. The other is the unfolding of the individual's personality. The first is concerned with matter. The second is with energy. Education is a combination of the two. It is a combination of worldly and spiritual knowledge. Education cannot be confined to stuffing the head. It has to melt the heart, refine it and turn it Godwards. It is not enough to make a man of the student. He has to be transformed into an ideal human being. He must be made compassionate. Every effort should be made to utilise education for the purpose of divinising man.

The four hallmarks of a true student

Man should stand out as a seeker of truth. The student should practise the truths he has learnt and use them for the good of the society. Citizens may be interested in students' problems, but students should not get involved in the citizens' politics. Students should aspire to promote the nation's well-being, its security and happiness. Selflessness, absence of egoism, unostentatiousness and true love should be the hallmarks of a true student. A student's life should radiate light all around. *Vidya* means light. It is to make this illumination available to the world that students should pursue education. Students should desire to enjoy the bliss derived from *Vidya* (education) and not the pleasures of *Vishaya* (worldly objects). Students should aim at being masters of their senses and not their servants.

A man may be a great *Vedantin* (philosopher). He may explore many things. He may expound new theories. But he should really, try to find out what he has accomplished as a human being. Without the cultivation of human values, all explorations and speculations are of no use.

Today the educational system, not only in India but in all countries, has taken the wrong turn. No single person is responsible for this situation. Parents have failed to bring up their children properly. The nation's leaders do not set them a good example. Even teachers have failed in their responsibilities. When we have exemplary parents, exemplary leaders and ideal teachers, students will be ideal students. Students, who are selfless, pure-hearted and innocent by nature, are being dragged into politics, their minds are getting fill with bitterness and hatred and their hearts are getting polluted. Students in no circumstance should get into politics. After completing your studies, if you take up a job or start a business, you may take to politics. In entering politics you must do so to serve the nation and promote its welfare and integrity.

Quality and not quantity should be increased

Students today lack the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong. The authorities feel that education is progressing in the country. There are more educational institutions and more students seem to be receiving education. But no one seems to bother whether they are really getting educated at all. Mere increase in the number of educational institutions is not enough. We must look at the quality of education. Standards have to be raised. There are many reasons for deterioration in educational standards.

Only when education is treated as an autonomous and independent undertaking can the problem of standards be properly dealt with. Educational policies are changed with every change in the Education Ministry at the Centre or in the States. Frequent changes in educational policy are responsible for the fall in educational standards. Changes in the Ministry or the personnel at the top should not affect the core of education. It is essential to separate education and place it under the control of experienced and dedicated educationists. Without this basic change, whatever may be done to increase educational institutions is a waste of money.

What is the progress that has been achieved in education? Crores are being spent on education. What is the return for all this expenditure? There is a general decline in character and students have no respect for teachers; gratitude is at a discount. This is the "progress" that is witnessed today.

How can the nation progress? Everything depends on the young students of today. Education is not confined to school or college. It is a process that goes on all through one's life. Students! Develop pure thoughts and see that you do not cause any difficulties to your fellow-students. Strive to please your parents. Gratitude is the foremost quality in a student. Show your gratitude to your parents to whom you owe everything in your life.

Students should serve the Motherland first

Students! Human life is very precious and in it the days of youth are even more precious. Every student must cultivate humility and reverence. He must understand the state of the country. You must love the Motherland. Today there is a craze among students, whether they are engineers or doctors, to apply for jobs abroad as soon as they get their degrees. Serve your Motherland first. Earn honour and respect here. Take a pledge to serve your Motherland. Some people imagine that they can pursue their higher studies abroad. But what happens is that after going there, they forget even their parents. What is the use of such ungrateful persons going abroad? The students alone are not to blame for this. The Government is also responsible. The Government should realise that our students are being spoilt by being sent abroad and should restrict the number of passports issued to them. Are there not facilities for higher studies within India? Is there not enough science and technology here? The students claim that they are acquiring special knowledge. But all that they learn is pride and ostentation. Sri Rama declared: "The mother and the Motherland are greater than Heaven itself." You must love your mother, whether she is beautiful or otherwise.

Realise the greatness of Bharat

Students! Realise the greatness of Bharat. There is no need to disparage other countries. Only be prepared to sacrifice everything for your Motherland. Students today have no patriotic feelings. They only love themselves (their bodies). *Deha* (the body) and *Desa* (the country) are intimately related to each other. Recognize the unity of the two.

Realise at the outset the greatness of *Bharatiya* culture. It is an ideal to the world. It confers *Atma-anandam* (*spiritual bliss*). Without recognizing this, all your education is worth nothing. You are acquiring book knowledge, but are not putting into practice what you have learnt.

It is most essential to practise unity in thought, word and deed--which is the mark of all great people. Recognising the all-embracing character of *Bharatiya* culture--which covers every

aspect of life from the spiritual to the physical--you have to live up to its message. Develop the spirit of love in your hearts.

Students! Wherever you may go, remember your Institute and behave in a manner befitting its alumni. That is the gratitude you can show to the Institute. We do not ask from you anything. Our only desire is that you should become ideal students. Only then Will your studies here be justified and you will be making your lives worthwhile. Eschew selfishness. Only the spirit of sacrifice can confer immortality. Help ever, hurt never.

Stern discipline is needed at every stage

There is something wrong with our system of examinations and promotions. An examinee is "passed" if he gets 30 percent marks in a subject. This is improper. If a man is entrusted with a hundred tasks and if he fails in 70 of them, is he to be recognised as having performed well? A few mistakes may be excused, but if one commits 70 mistakes does he deserve to be passed? This is wrong. Even with regard to the 30 percent pass marks there appear to be various manipulations. All kinds of "grace marks" are given. Why, then, should the student study at all? It is because of such practices that educational institutions have lost all credibility. What can you make of students who "pass" in this manner? What kind of national leaders will they be? Hence it is essential to reform the examination system and raise educational standards and performance.

There should be no room for compromises and relaxations in the educational fields. Education is called *Sikshana*. This term means that there should be stern discipline at every stage. Students should be properly corrected and encouraged to study well. A teacher is one who teaches what is good and wholesome for the students. A real student is one who respects the teacher. In days of yore, the most pure and sacred relations existed between preceptors and pupils. Today, the talk is all about freedom. But freedom should be within limits. The end of wisdom is freedom. The end of culture is perfection. The end of education is character. The end of knowledge is Love. Freedom today has degenerated into disrespect and irreverence with the result that students are getting conceited.

Dear students! I wish that you should go out into the world as ideal students and serve the nation well. Securing degrees is not enough. You have to make your knowledge available to others. This is the purpose of education. Remember God, love the nation and experience bliss. This should be your aim.

The President of India, Sri Venkataraman, addressed you today and spoke about the sages and saints of India. You must pay heed to the words of elders and try to live up to them to the extent you can. Eschew all differences of caste, creed and nationality and cultivate oneness of spirit. All are one be alike to everyone. Realise the divinity within you and recognize that it is in one and all.

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