

7. Bhagavan's call to students

THIS is the age of science and technology. On the one side astonishing progress has been made in the fields of plastics, electronics and computers. Scientists have also made wonderful discoveries in the spheres of atomic energy and space exploration. Moreover man is sending out into space artificial satellites. Enormous energy and expenses are being devoted for investigating the mysteries of the atom. But there is no comparable concern for developing human behaviour. In the competition for over-reaching each other, men are immersed in selfishness and are pursuing wrong courses. Politics and economics are bedevilled by crises. Men are riven by caste and religious conflicts. The appetite for power and position has become insatiable. These are causing the disintegration of the sacred land of Bharat. Indiscipline is rampant in the student world.

What is the reason for the divergence between scientific progress on the one side and the social and moral decline of man on the other? What the world needs today is a large number of pure-hearted boys and girls, who are utterly selfless and are prepared to offer their lives to the service of the nation. Unfortunately, men today are lost in the pursuit of fleeting sensuous pleasures and material possessions. Has this any meaning?

Take the example of Emperor Sivaji. He lacked nothing by way of wealth. What, then, is the secret of his approaching Samarth Ramadas as a suppliant? Similarly, King Janaka had all the wealth he needed. Why did he resort to the Sage Yajnavalkya? The reason is that from ancient times it was the practice of the kings to seek the advice and guidance of sages who were the repositories of spiritual wisdom. Thereby they secured peace of mind and security for their kingdoms. They realised that man can get enduring peace and happiness only by spiritual realisation and not by any other means.

Students should develop social consciousness

Students should strive to awaken in the people a recognition of their inherent divinity the loss of which accounts for the degradation of humanity today. Students should develop social consciousness. It is not enough to acquire academic knowledge and technical skills, which are all that present-day education is concerned with. If there is no love of God, fear of sin, and practice of social ethics, how can there be peace in the world? Scientists and political leaders are teaching all kinds of things to the youth. But of what use are these teachings? Slogans on the walls, lectures on the platform and pontifications in the press are not what the students need. They need the example of leaders who stand up for integrity and morality.

All things in the world are perishable. Mortality is the inescapable destiny of every man. But the ideals for which men live and for which they are prepared to give up their lives last for ever. Hence every student should have great ideals and try to live upto them. That is the secret of immortality. By their exemplary lives, they should transform the world. This was the role of Bharat in ancient times.

Strive to become human to reach the Divine

Students should realise their great responsibility to the nation. They must eschew selfishness altogether. Men today are immersed in selfishness, which is the cause of many other evils in society. Every thought, every action is prompted by self-interest. Desires multiply and peace of mind is lost. Man should be rescued from this deplorable state. Mankind's problems today cannot

be solved by science and technology alone. Only a transformation in the character of man can serve to solve the present crisis. Men should strive to become human and progress towards the Divine.

Education which does not serve to develop character and foster virtues is of no use. Science and technology are undoubtedly necessary. But they should be utilised properly. Scientists are trying to discover everything about the external world. But they make no attempt to understand the truth about themselves. They have not learnt to control their senses. This was the lesson which Prahlada taught to his father, who was a master of the elements and wielded immense power. Prahlada told Hiranyakasipu: "You have conquered all the worlds, but have no control over your senses."

Self-control implies control over desires

In the educational process today, it is essential to inculcate among students the need to control the senses. It is the absence of self-control that is at the root of all the violence and conflict in society today.

Self-control implies control over desires. I have often impressed on students the importance of setting limits on desires. "*Naasreyo niyamam vinaa*" is an ancient saying. (Nothing ennobling can be realised without observing restraint). There is a need to acquire wealth for living. But excessive wealth is harmful. What men have to aim at is not *sampada* (wealth) but right *samskara* (conduct). Life is governed by restraints at every stage. The eye cannot tolerate the glare of blazing lights. The body cannot bear a rise in temperature. Anything in excess is a cause of trouble.

Students should seek to follow great ideals and serve as examples to the world. They should make use of their knowledge for the service of the motherland instead of going abroad to earn high incomes. Indian culture has esteemed the mother and the motherland as greater than heaven itself. Loving service to parents, reverence towards elders and respectful behaviour towards everyone are the marks of Indian culture. Students of the Sai Institute should exemplify these traits in their conduct wherever they may be.

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