

35. Education should develop human values

Education confers beauty on man;

It is his secret treasure;

It confers pleasure, fame and happiness;

It is the' teacher of teachers;

It is one's kinsman-when abroad;

It confers supreme vision;

In a royal assembly it is learning alone,

Not wealth, that counts;

A man without learning is an animal.

STUDENTS and teachers! Today neither students nor teachers are aware of the true meaning of education. Education should foster morality, righteousness and character. Man today has acquired prodigious knowledge in the fields of science and technology. But this serves only to promote a material civilisation and teaches only knowledge of the external worlds to students. What man truly needs today is not this external knowledge. He needs refinement of the heart. This can be got only by internal culture.

It is not enough today to make a man a mere human being. He has to be transformed into an ideal human being. Education makes a man compassionate. That is the fulfilment of the purpose of education. Education should not be equated with book knowledge or the acquisition of skills for leading one's life in the world. The modern student is unable to determine what is the basis of his life and what is important in it. Hence, he loses confidence in himself. Because they lack the patriotism, born out of love for the country, and the devotion to God, which instills a spirit of sacrifice, students today have lost all self-confidence.

Loss of self-confidence is the cause of all troubles

Most of the troubles tormenting the world today stem from loss of *Aathma-Vishvaasa* (self-confidence).

Devoid of the fear of sin and love for God,

Mankind today is plunged in a grave crisis.

The eternal verities proclaimed in the scriptures have assumed bizarre forms. Sacred nature is divorced from humanity. The ancient wisdom is in eclipse. Perverted knowledge is growing. In such a situation, how can ethical and spiritual values appeal to youth?

The entire educational system should be changed. The true purpose of education should be understood.

Reading and writing cannot make a man educated.

Are those acquiring degrees scholars?

Without right knowledge and proper conduct,

Can one be deemed educated?

*If learning for earning a living is esteemed as education,
Are not birds and beasts able to live without learning?*

Education is the life-breath of human beings

Education should be the life-breath of human beings. By converting education into a means of earning a livelihood, people are forgetting the meaning of life. Character determines life. It is pure and holy. Without character how can man lead a worthwhile and sacred life? For this reason, from ancient times, Bhaaratheeyas fostered a life-style based on ethics. Students are forgetting this ancient culture of Bhaarith. Pursuing worldly, ephemeral knowledge, they do not understand the nature of life.

Man should recognise the cosmic basis of education. Education today is based on mechanical skills. Students should strive to promote blossoming of the heart together with development of the intellect. Intellectual knowledge alone cannot suffice for the conduct of life on right lines.

It is true that Bhaarith is lagging behind in the economic sphere. But what harm does this do to the world? There is a greater danger from another source. This arises from the fact that people are immersed in material pursuits, ignoring moral and spiritual values. Unless this process is reversed, education cannot make headway.

Two hundred years ago, scientists in other countries started exploring the powers of nature and experimented with control of the five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth). They invented dreadful bombs and envisaged terrible wars. This is a wholly misguided effort.

Role of science in promoting human welfare

The arrogant claim that they have achieved scientific progress is utterly unwarranted because this is not true science at all. Does knowledge of how to cause mass destruction merit the name of science? Cannot their scientific investigations be devoted to causes which promote human welfare and betterment?

All the scientific discoveries of today were excelled by the achievements of Hiranyakasipu. The powers obtained from them are prone to be misused. Deluded by their scientific and technological progress, the nations are losing their wisdom. What is the purpose served by these discoveries? While they promote temporary pleasures, they virtually destroy the sources of inner strength. The education that we must aim at is one which will direct the children towards the right path and promote the well-being of the nation. Only when mankind realises this need will world peace be a reality.

Man needs today a mind free from attachment and hatred, speech that is untainted by falsehood, and a body that is totally free from violence. Of these, truthful speech is most essential. Unfortunately, man is not free from these taints. Hence, students should receive an education that produces purity of mind, speech and body.

Of what use is man's conquest of the external world if he cannot realise, his own true nature? Scientists are only helping to satisfy man's selfish desires. They are keen on securing accolades for themselves, but are not concerned about, the welfare of society or the goals of life. How glorious will be their achievements if their discoveries are useful to the people and promote the prosperity and welfare of nations?

Today every step of man is marked by unrighteousness. Every word is tainted by untruth. His thoughts are not free from evil. All his desires are rooted in selfishness. Caste and religious conflicts are rampant. Parochialism is growing. In short, humanness has reached its nadir. How then, can man be called a human being, when there is no harmony in thought, word and deed?

Bad example set by elders make students go astray

Moreover, there are no ideal leaders today. Even exemplary parents are not to be found. Nor are there ideal teachers. In olden days, the leaders, the parents and the teachers led exemplary lives. It is because such persons are absent today that students are without ideal examples to follow. There is a Telugu saying that the calf follows the cow. Because the elders set a bad example, the students also are going astray.

The students are not to blame. They are inherently good hearted and good natured. But they take to bad ways because of the elders. Therefore, the first requisite is for the national leaders and the parents to understand how the educational system should function. They should realise that education should aim at developing good qualities in the children and should not be regarded as a means to acquire wealth. Character is based on good conduct. Only a young man with good qualities can become a good leader. He must take part in social service as a preparation for leadership. Everyone should realise that his happiness is bound up with the happiness of society as a whole. Parents and teachers should develop such attitudes in the students.

Despite all his achievement in the physical world, how far has man been able to develop his human qualities? This is the question facing the world today. If people study the ancient history of Bharath, they will realise the importance which the ancients, attached to Truth.

Need for unity to protect national interests

There may be differences at the individual level, but when national interests are involved, these differences should be forgotten and all should act in unity. This was the attitude of Dharmaja in respect of his Kaurava cousins. At the individual level, Dharmaja said that the five Paandava brothers might be ranged against the hundred Kauravas. "But if the nation is in peril, we are 105 against the rest. It is our duty to protect the nation."

Unfortunately, today, each party is ranged against the other and there is discord among the people. This should go. All should bear in mind the interests of the people.

Education today is not inculcating in the students the spirit of compassion and kindness. Once Gandhiji told a foreigner that he was feeling sad because education was making students heartless and lacking in fellow-feeling. Students do not show any sweetness in speech. They have no sense of gratitude. Of what avail is such an education? The foremost quality students should have is humility. They must be free from conceit. They must be unselfish. Without these a student lacks lustre. Students today lack these qualities. They have little concern for the plight of their parents. But, there are also parents who pamper their children like Dhritharaashtra, the father of the Kauravas. If parents do not correct their children, who will correct them? How can parents cherish children who misbehave and earn a bad name?

The birthday that should be celebrated is the day when good qualities are born in one. You must become ideal students. Students must work hard. They have to be grateful to their parents for all that they have received from the latter. Children who cannot please their parents, how will they serve the nation?

The five life-breaths for a student

Every human body is sustained by the five life-breaths--*Praana, Apaana, Vyaana, Udhaana and Samaana*. What are the five life-breaths for a student? They are: Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence. All these five principles have to be rigorously observed to sublimate one's life. Each one should cultivate the qualities of compassion, patience and oneness. These qualities will promote the unity of mankind. These are based on the love-principle. Without love, there is no life. Love gives rise to truth. Love begets peace. When you have love, you practise non-violence. Love is the under-current in all these.

Education has to be reformed. But Ministers are only trifling with changes. Reports of Committees are gathering dust in shelves. Educational reforms should be related to the five basic human values, without which education has no meaning and life itself is devoid of purpose. A student today has no conception of the value of *Thyaaga* (sacrifice). He has to learn to do his duty without expectation of any reward. This is a form of *Yoga* (Spiritual discipline).

Knowledge is to wisdom as lightning is to cloud

Dear students! Giving up the craze for going abroad after the completion of your studies, take a resolve to dedicate yourselves to the service of your village, your state and your nation. Act according to your conscience. In your heart shines *Aathma-Vidhya* (the knowledge of the Spirit). Knowledge should beget wisdom like the lightning in a cloud.

Everyone of our students should stand forth as a shining example to others. The light of their example should spread all over the world and bring about spiritual unity among mankind.

All changes in the educational syllabi or other changes in the economic and political spheres are of little value. There should be change in the mental attitude of the people, as the prelude to a change in the national scene. Transform yourself first and then preach to others.

True science should foster the well-being of the people and promote unity amongst them. Unity will lead to purity and both will lead to Divinity. Today there is none of these. We have only Community (caste). It is this communal feeling that is the cause of conflict. Giving up all differences based on caste or creed, people should regard themselves as the children of one human family. There is only one religion, the religion of humanity. Students should develop this spirit of unity.

Truth and Righteousness are inter-related

Students! The future of the country, for good or ill, depends on you. The older generation cannot reform the nation. Only a disciplined and well educated younger generation can serve the nation well, as future leaders. Treat the whole world as a vast mansion. Strive for the well-being of all nations equally with Bhaarath.

The Sri Sathya Sai Institute has been established to promote sacred ideals among students. Adhere to your principles and beliefs regardless of what others may say. Have the example of the *Gopikas* in mind. Their devotion to Krishna was firm and unwavering. Consider truth as your life-breath. If you speak the truth and practise righteousness, you will attain the highest state.

Truth and Righteousness are inter-related. Together they constitute humanness. Bear in mind the glorious example of Harishchandra, who sacrificed everything for the sake of truth.

Adhere to truth in earning a living or in experiencing anything in life. Ill-gotten wealth will be lost in the same way. Engage yourselves in some kind of socially useful activity in the educational, medical or other fields. Sacrifice is more important than earning money. Students imbued with this spirit of service may go to any country. Do not use your diplomas as begging bowls for jobs. Make proper use of your education to render service to the nation and to lead noble lives. This is my benediction to all of you.

Address to the Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute held in the Vidhyagiri Stadium on 22-11-1993.