

30. Education and culture

*Wealth is worshipped as God,
Selfishness has become the basis of life,
Pomp and show have become the fashion of the day,
Ego is ruling supreme in everyone,
Ambition makes men ignore righteousness.
There is no humility and no regard for truth,
Education is sought for earning money,
Hypocrisy has become the order of the day.
How can the sons of Bhaarath Maathaaji
Hope to progress in the right path?
Spiritual education is the urgent need
Of the hour to reform our children
And turn them in the right direction.*

STUDENTS, teachers and educators! What do you mean by education? What type of education should you have? What kind of education will set an ideal? What is the outcome of education? One must enquire deeply, investigate and get the right answer to these questions. People feel that education helps in materialistic pursuits and rest content with this. This is a not a right attitude. Education should promote culture. It is not by education alone but by culture that one gets refined.

Culture promotes refinement. It is termed as *Samskaara* which consists of *Sadhguna* (good character), *Sadhaachaara* (good practices) and *Sadbhaavana* (good feelings). For a person to be deemed educated, his behaviour should be good, his actions useful to society and his feelings should be compassionate and kind. "*Sarvabhootha Hithe Rathah*" (One should have concern for the welfare of all beings).

What is education without culture?

It is not enough if a student is endowed with scientific and worldly knowledge. He should have essentially moral and spiritual knowledge also.

The aim of education should be to bring about an all-round development of the personalities of the students. Education should make all virtues emerge and shine forth in students. Indian culture essentially aims at developing human beings with such a personality.

What is education without culture? It is like a kite cut off from its main thread. It is not possible to predict where this kite would land--whether on thorny bushes or on dwelling places. It is difficult to predict how such education is going to affect and harm society. It may also be compared to a house without light; bats and poisonous reptiles enter into such houses. Education without culture makes man forget his true human nature and take to evil ways. Such education is like a counterfeit coin. Even beggars refuse to accept a counterfeit coin. Even parents would

hesitate to love a son without culture. Refinement and culture are the very life-breath of human life.

Knowledge with humility makes one blossom

It would be wrong to call it education if it merely teaches the meanings of words. The basic aim of education is to make men of character and virtue. Many people think that knowledge is power. It is not so. In fact, character is power. Education should confer humility. Education without humility, action without discrimination, scholarship without wisdom, words without truth, friendship without gratitude, music without melody, politics without morality and integrity can never shine in society. One's personality blossoms only when one has humility along with knowledge.

Education should be useful to society. It should make citizens follow the path of morality and righteousness and make their lives happy.

Human life is very sacred and valuable. Today people are not aware of the uniqueness of human life. They have forgotten human values. That is the reason why one comes across various agitations and strikes in society today. What is the reason for the country getting poverty-stricken, for suffering from fear and anxiety, for not recognizing the sacredness of spirituality, for losing morality and integrity? The reason is that man is not living as a human amidst his fellow beings. He is living like an animal or like a demon. Today, the cloud of ego and pomp is covering the sun of *Aathma* and hiding its natural splendour.

Selfishness is rampant. The true meaning of word *Svaartha* is that one has to know *Sva* (*Aathma*). Understanding the *Sva* (*Aathma*) is *Svaartham* (*Sva+Artha*). The syllable *Sva* in *Svaartham* does not refer to the body; but the soul. The *Aathma* (spirit) is pure, unselfish and eternal. That was the reason why the ancient *rishis* described *the Aathma* in such glorious terms, but today man is misunderstanding the meaning of the word *Sva*, identifying it with the body instead of the soul.

Man today is treating the body as the source of all happiness. Such happiness is not true and permanent; it is momentary. Educated persons are not striving to earn spiritual, permanent and real happiness.

We need a fusion of knowledge and action

We are acquiring knowledge, but do not put it to proper use. Knowledge without action is useless. Action without knowledge is foolishness. There is a divorce between knowledge and action today. We need a fusion of knowledge and action. Students should cultivate patriotism and a spirit of service. It is conspicuously absent today.

In India today there are 200 Universities and 9000 colleges. About a crore of students have been enrolled in these colleges. Universities are becoming factories which manufacture graduates. These students are let loose on the world after graduation. No one is bothered about the future of these graduates and how they will benefit the nation?

What is the use of having education which does not benefit society? No one seems to bother to examine all these matters, whether Government, society, educational authorities, Vice-Chancellors or other administrators, etc. This is a sad state, which ails the system of education today. It is making man a slave of the senses. How can such people serve the society? Wherever you look at the students you find sacrifice conspicuous by its absence.

Universities are busy developing different types of subjects to be taught, but are not aware of the Real Subject which they should reach. What is that subject which is the very basis of all other subjects? *Aathma-Vidhya* (Spiritual knowledge), is the basis of all education. It is like the ocean while all other types of education are like rivers which must merge in the ocean. Today, education without a spiritual base is causing harm. The essence of Spiritual Education is faith and dedication. They are like the two bunds of a river. Only when the river of life flows *between* these bunds would the river be safe. If there are no bunds, the waters would flow over villages and towns and cause vast destruction. It is the absence of spirituality which is responsible for all the problems, violence, agitation and strike. Education should foster the two bunds of dedication and faith in students.

From self-reliance to self-realisation

Education should inculcate in students the spirit of self-reliance and self-confidence. The first thing in life is self-reliance, second is self-confidence, third is self-sacrifice, fourth is self-realisation. With self-realisation life finds its final fulfilment.

Sage Vaalmeeeki has compared Raama and Raavana in his epic, the Raamaayana. Raama is described as a great *Jnaani* and Raavana as a fool. Raavana had mastered 64 types of worldly knowledge whereas Raama had mastered only 26. Why was such a highly educated person as Raavana called a fool by Vaalmeeeki? It is because Raavana lacked three important qualities which Raama had. They are working for the welfare of entire humanity, possessing the supreme knowledge and having great virtues. Raavana was only a slave of the senses.

Knowledge bereft of noble qualities and virtues becomes only bookish knowledge which is of no use to society. What is it that made Raama God? It is imbibing of the six qualities, namely character, compassion, non-violence, control of the mind, control of the senses and fame. Students should imbibe these six qualities which make man God. Students should never indulge in violence. Hurting or harming any person essentially means hurting and harming oneself. It is in this context Vyaasa stated that the essence of the eighteen *Puraanas* is "Help ever, Hurt never."

Spread Bhaaratheeya culture

In today's system of education the teachers are not teaching this basic virtue. The Raamaayana, Bhaagavatha and Mahaabhaaratha are like three important life-breaths for Indian culture. Today's students do not know these three texts without which a person cannot be called Bhaaratheeya. Instead, students indulge in reading cheap novels, which contain bad ideas.

Students going out from Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning should take an oath that they would plunge into society and spread Bhaaratheeya culture from house to house to all people. Indian culture is the very backbone of our life. If you cannot spread this culture yore studies have no meaning. I desire only one thing from you. You should enjoy peace yourself and spread peace all around. That is the gratitude which you have to show to the Institution which has given you free education and which has showered so much of love on you. Strive to bring about unity; there is no greater strength than unity.

Whatever you have learnt should be made relevant and useful to society. The gap between learning and practice should be bridged. Knowledge from books and laboratories should be made relevant and useful to society. Work for the honour and glory of the society and the nation.

Carry on your secular life with spiritual outlook

What are you planning to do after you obtain the Degree from the University? It is no use going in search of a job from office to office with your Degree certificate or registering your name in the employment exchange. If the Government starts colleges without being able to give jobs to the graduates, it leads to all sorts of problems arising out of unemployment. The colleges must be operated, keeping in view the demand for graduates.

Our University spends Rs. 60,000 per head on Arts students, Rs. 90,000 per head on Science students, but we do not charge any fees. What benefit do we get out of this? The only benefit is to make your lives exemplary to the world at large. We want you to carry on your secular life with spiritual outlook and attitude. With the education obtained in the Institute, if you have determination, there is nothing which you cannot achieve. During your student days do not enter into politics. After completing your education, you may enter into politics and practise the values which you have learnt as a student and serve the society and the nation.

We got Independence, but unfortunately after Independence unity is lost. Independence without unity does not benefit the nation.

Today in the Convocation you have taken an oath administered by the Vice-Chancellor. Oath raking is like giving a promise. You must take the oath whole-heartedly. It would be a great sin if you conduct yourselves in daily life contrary to the oath.

Students! Whether you are aware of it or not, Mother Bharath is pining for you. You are not even recognizing the fact that you are born in the sacred land of Bharath. Mother Bharath has hidden an enormous treasure for you--the treasure of knowledge and spirituality.

You may return to your places and conduct yourselves in keeping with human dignity and the type of training that you have obtained here. Do not get a bad name either for yourselves or for your parents. You should be free from ego, jealousy; arrogance and be full of humility, nobility and sacredness. Service to society and the nation must dominate your thought, word and action.

Benedictory address to the Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning on 22-11-1994.

The children must have reverence towards their religion, their culture, their educational attainments and their country. They must learn well their mother-tongue, so that they can appreciate the great poetical works and epics written by the Seers of their land. This will give them valuable guidance in the stormy days ahead.

BABA