

3. Noble mothers breed noble sons

EMBODIMENTS of love! This entire cosmos is under the control of God. God is subject to Truth. Truth is governed by the noblest persons. These noble beings are embodiments of the Divine.

Students! Today you must all become messengers of peace and security to the world. To prepare yourselves for this role you have to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. Only the individual who cherishes sacrifice and renounces pleasures can be qualified for a life of sacrifice. It is only when the distinction between this renunciation (of pleasures) and acceptance (of a life of sacrifice) is rightly understood can one experience the joy of sacrifice.

Even if the soil is fertile, if the seed is of poor quality, it cannot grow into a good tree. On the other hand, if the seed is good but the soil is unfertile, a strong tree cannot grow. If children are to become culturally refined young persons, the parents should have the refinement of culture. When the parents observe exemplary conduct based on culture, the children will also imbibe these practices. As Dr. Sushila Nayyar observed (in her speech earlier), students have to cultivate simple living and high thinking. Students must learn to lead simple lives. At the same time their ideals must be of the highest order.

There are many examples of people who have led simple lives with high ideals.

Puthlibai and Gaandhi

Gaandhiji's mother, Puthlibai, was a lady who believed in the two principles of truth and right conduct. She adhered to the practice of taking her morning breakfast only after hearing the first call of the cuckoo. One morning, the cuckoo's call was missing for a long time and Puthlibai did not take her breakfast. Seeing this, the young Gaandhi went to the backyard, cooed like cuckoo and came and told his mother that she could now take her breakfast. Puthlibai, who could easily guess the trick her son was playing, felt very sad about his behaviour. She thought: "What sin have I committed that such a son should be born to me? There is no use blaming you for what is the result of my own sin. How sinful am I that I gave birth to an untruthful son." Unable to bear her grief, she slapped the boy on the cheek and went inside.

That very moment Gaandhi took a vow "I must never again utter an untruth in my life. What life is it that causes grief to a mother? In a country in which everyone is enjoined to revere the mother and father as God, I have caused grief to my mother by an act of deception." From that day he resolved only to speak the truth and never indulge in falsehood.

Mothers of those days were women of great piety and noble character. They practised virtue and set an example to the children. Only from wombs of such noble women were born sons of high character.

The mother of Aadhi Shankara, Aryaamba, was a high-souled woman. Hence, Sankara could achieve greatness and world fame. Vivekaanandha was another illustrious figure. Adhering to the instructions of his mother, he led an exemplary life and achieved name and fame. Their lives shine in the pages of history as examples for mankind.

As is the seed, so is the tree. Similarly some are born with noble character and some are born differently. These differences are the result of their careers in previous lives.

Chaithanya's yearning for the love of the Lord

Once Chaithanya went to Puuri and prayed to Lord Jagannaath- "Oh Lord of the universe! Lord of Life! Master of my body! Lord of Creation! I am not concerned with surrender and salvation. I am incapable of doing *Yoga* or *Dhyaana*. Nor am I interested in mundane pleasures. I only desire one thing. Give me the all-consuming love for you. With that love I can accomplish everything. Without your love, of what use are all the pleasures of the world, all the talents and powers one can command? Of what avail is scholarship or intellectual brilliance? I must earn the love of the Lord. Confer that love on me, Oh Lord!"

By revering their parents and following their noble examples, many great men achieved glory and fame in the past. If today we do not have high-minded youth, it is the parents that are responsible. In this context, let me relate the story of Eeshvar Chandhra Vidhyaasaagar, the great scholar of Calcutta, who was inspired by his mother to educate himself for a career of dedicated service to the people. His mother, told Eeshvar Chandhra: "True education must lead you to God. Academic education must help you to serve society and promote the welfare of mankind. You must be an example to other men and lead an ideal life." Despite their poverty, the son followed the mother's advice and by his own diligence got a degree. In due course, he got a job, pursued higher studies and attained a position of eminence. Having accumulated some money he approached his mother and asked her whether she wanted anything. She said: "I have no desires. I only want you to earn a name as a man of good character, dedicated to the service of the nation."

The three wishes of Vidhyaasaagar's mother

The son pressed her again after some time to indicate what she wanted by way of jewels or clothes. She told him: "I am now past the age for wearing jewels or flaunting gaudy dresses. However, I desire three ornaments about which I shall tell you later on."

After a period, having saved some more money, Eeshvar Chandhra asked his mother' "What are your three desires?" "The first one," she said, "is a primary school for the children of our small and backward village. The second one is a small village hospital for the local population. My third desire is that you should not sell your knowledge, nor feel proud about it. Cultivate humility and consider yourself the servant of all. Service is the pathway to leadership. These are the three ornaments I seek."

Carrying out his mother's wishes, he established a primary school in the village, a hospital for the villagers and dedicated his entire life to the service of his fellowmen. He became famous as Eeshvar Chandhra Vidhyaasaagar, known for his knowledge and spirit of service. He became well known as a speaker who attracted large audiences of men and women. His talks were ennobling and inspiring, summoning the people to a life of sacrifice and service'

A young officer learns a lesson

Once, a senior officer was keen to listen to Vidhyaasaagar's speech and set out for the place of the meeting by train with a suitcase. On alighting at the station, he called for a porter to carry his suitcase. As no one appeared, an old man who had got down from the same train offered to carry the suitcase. From the simplicity of the old man's dress, the officer took him for a poor villager and allowed him to carry the suitcase upto the place where he was to stay. After depositing the suitcase, when the old man was about to leave, the officer offered him a rupee for his labour. The old man declined the money and said that what he had done was in a spirit of service and not to

earn money. After thanking him the old man (who was none other than Eeshvar Chandhra) told the young officer before leaving: "Your practice does no credit to your education. After so much education you are not able to attend to your own needs. You have made yourself unfit. Humility is the ornament for education. Education without humility is no education at all. Self-conceit is also not an index of good education. Arrogance and attachment are bad qualities, which you must get rid of."

Later in the day large crowds were assembling at the place of meeting. All were eagerly waiting to welcome Vidhyaasaagar. As Eeshvar Chandhra got up on the stage, he was profusely garlanded. The young officer was in the audience. He saw the speaker on the stage and wondered whether he could be Vidhyaasaagar: "Is he the same man who carried my suitcase in the morning?" He felt ashamed of himself. "What a shame that I should have treated with disrespect such a venerable person out of my pride and arrogance!" The officer felt that he had learnt a good lesson that humility is the true hall-mark of real education.

Eeshvar Chandhra Vidhyaasaagar was in the habit of examining his faults, if any, and trying to correct them. But students today entertain bad thoughts or do wrong things and justify their behaviour by the specious argument that "to err is human." They should realise that because they are human they should observe right conduct. They should not take to bad ways. Bad conduct is utterly unbecoming of one who calls himself human. The natural qualities of a human being are good thoughts and good conduct. Students should strive to live in this manner.

Parents are responsible for children going astray

The world has witnessed any number of great personalities who have led ideal lives. Today mothers who "brought up such noble beings are becoming rare. Parents often tend to encourage the improper behaviour of their children rather than correct them. Parents today are primarily responsible for their children going astray.

Here is another story of a mother and son who came as refugees from Burma. The son starved himself to feed his mother from the food he was getting by begging. One day when a house owner offered to give him food as he was starving, the boy said he would not eat the food there, but must carry it home. He fell down in front of the house and the owner heard the feeble words coming from the boy's lips: "First mother, then myself." With those words, he breathed his last.

Such examples of filial and maternal affection are becoming rare these days because of the trends in modern education. Maternal love has vanished. Filial duty is absent. What a testimony to the tragic results of modern education! There is no reverence for elders, no recognition of obligations to parents. Selfishness has become the bedrock of life. The nation is a prey to all kinds of ills because of this all-pervading selfishness.

Education should make students service-oriented

There was a time in the past when men were prepared to sacrifice their all for the sake of the people and the welfare of the nation. Today this spirit is absent. Selfishness is rampant. The educational system is responsible for this situation. Education should make students service-minded, not job-seekers. Parents have also a duty in this regard. They must reform their children by setting the example themselves.

You must be prepared to make any sacrifice for the sake of the nation. Welcome sacrifice, banish pleasure-seeking. Discover the joy to be derived from sacrifice.

When Bhaaratheeyas got their independence, Nehru was the prime Minister and Vallabhai Patel was the Home Minister. Dr. Sushila Nayyar was then the Health Minister. It was at that time she came to see me in Delhi. Later in 1962, she came to Puttaparthi together with Vinoba Bhave. Since then she has been associated with 'Svaami. Vallabhai used to tell Sushila Nayyar: "Sushilaben! You lead a simple life. As a minister you should appear more impressive." Patel used to tease her in this manner.

Vallabhai's daughter used to live with him. She was an exemplary daughter. She used to spin the yarn from which the clothes were made for her father and she used to make a sari for herself out of the old dhothis of her father. The national leaders of those days were ideal leaders. They fought for the freedom of the country. In those days, it used to be said that the white rulers were oppressing the black natives. Alas! Today the black natives are oppressing the black natives. In those days there were men who were prepared to sacrifice their all for the nation. Today we have men who are prepared to sacrifice the nation for their self-interest. What kind of leadership is this? Whither have the ideals fled? What we need is devotion to God, which will fill us with the spirit of sacrifice. Only then can real humanness prevail. Sacrifice is the key to immortality. Today people seek nectar in intoxicating drinks. Is this a mark of culture? No. Sense-control comes first. Life is a challenge. Meet it.

Students should become crusaders for peace

Students should become crusaders for peace in a country riddled with conflict and disorder. Sanctify your education by a life of dedicated service. I told the girl students yesterday that Duty and Discipline should be like two body-guards for Devotion.

All of you should set an example to the nation in leading a life marked by Devotion, Duty and Discipline. I bless you all that you should become worthy servants of the nation.

Dedicated services of Sushila Nayyar

I have seen Sushila Nayyar on several occasions. Recently she came to Brindhaavan and stayed there for two days. After the passing of Gaandhiji, she has been working in Gaandhigraam with dedication. She has faced many trials and tribulations. Whenever she comes to Svaami she experiences peace and joy. She is working hard to promote the activities in Gaandhigraam. Svaami's grace has been available to her in plenty in this mission. She need not worry on this account. She is far advanced in age (96). Despite the infirmities of age, she is actively engaged in social service. What ails our young people that they are not attracted to social service? The only service they are rendering is to feed themselves. But the body is given for the pursuit of *Dharma* (Righteousness). if it is not used for this purpose, why have it at all? Don't bother to fatten your body. Rather, you should wear it away in the service of others. It is .through such service that you should redeem your lives.

Develop devotion to God through meditation and contemplation. Take a pledge to render service to your fellowmen.

Discourse in the Puurnachandhra Auditorium on 15-2-1.995.