

Humility And Character Are The Hallmarks Of True Education

He alone is truly educated who is engaged in the service of all beings, who is the master of all forms of knowledge and who is the paragon of all virtues.

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

EDUCATION which is not used for the welfare of society is no education at all. You can be called truly educated only when your education benefits people at large and you become recipient of their love. It is not enough if you merely acquire bookish knowledge. You should attain supreme wisdom and cultivate virtues. True education is that which bestows on man the wealth of morality, spirituality and character. The purpose of education is not merely to sustain the body;

it should broaden man's mind and make him an ideal and virtuous person.

Character–Need Of The Hour

If one enquires deeply, one will find a lot of confusion in the modern system of education. Under these circumstances, students have to understand the purpose of education, put their knowledge into practice and experience bliss therefrom. Man today has made great progress in the field of science but that should not make him egoistic. Science is related to worldly education. What man needs is good character. Worldly education cannot foster virtues in man. One who sets an ideal to society by his virtues and conduct alone is truly educated. Modern students are trying to master various forms of knowledge but they are unable to understand the nature of their body and the mind. The same was said by Winston Churchill once: "Man has conquered all, but he has not conquered himself." Modern man knows everything except himself. To know one's own self is positive and to know about the world is negative. It is not the quality of a true student to acquire degrees merely to seek a job. A true student is one who shares his knowledge with his fellow beings and leads an exemplary life.

*“One may master all forms of knowledge,
One may vanquish one's adversaries in de
bate,*

*One may fight with valour and courage in
the battlefield,
One may be an emperor reigning over vast
kingdoms,
One may offer cows and gold as an act of
charity,
One may count the countless stars in the sky,
One may tell the names of different living
creatures on the earth,
But it is impossible to control the body,
mind and senses.
Turn the vision inward and achieve the
supreme state of equanimity of the mind.”*

(Telugu Poem)

Man has traveled lakhs of miles into space and reached the moon but he is yet to travel even half an inch inward. An educated person should investigate into his true nature. Ravana was in no way inferior to Rama in terms of knowledge but sage Valmiki, the composer of *Ramayana*, described Ravana as a fool and extolled Rama as one of wisdom. The reason was that Rama put His knowledge into practice and led an exemplary life. On the other hand, Ravana did not practise the knowledge he acquired, became a slave to his senses and thus ruined himself, his kingdom, and his entire clan. Education is meant not to satisfy the senses but to make one transcend the senses and set an ideal to society. This is most essential for modern stu-

dents. Our country can attain its pristine glory only when we have such ideal students. But alas! Students today do not think on these sacred lines.

All the ancient and eternal teachings are being misinterpreted. Sacred qualities are fast disappearing among people. Righteousness and compassion are no longer practised. The sacred teachings of the Vedas are forgotten and wickedness is on the rise.

(Telugu Poem)

This is the appalling state of affairs today. All the remedial measures that are being undertaken are only making matters worse. True education is that which destroys narrow-mindedness, develops equality and ultimately leads to world peace. Students should acquire such education and serve the country. People say that they are serving the country, but most of them are craving for their own selfish gains. Man today is immersed in selfishness and is wasting his life in futile pursuits. He wants to possess everything in this world. His craving for more and more things is to satisfy his unlimited desires and not to fulfil his real needs. In this manner, man is getting immersed in sensual pleasures. He has become a slave of his senses. He can be called truly educated only when he controls his senses. Modern students behave and act as they please. What are the qualities that are expected of a student? *“Students should pursue such education which confers on them*

the sacred qualities like good character, adherence to truth, devotion, discipline and duty. (Telugu Poem)
This is what we have to learn today.

Practical Knowledge Leads To The Understanding Of The Atma

Embodiments of Love!

You are all very virtuous and intelligent. You are endowed with a sacred heart. Fill your heart with love and compassion. That which is filled with *Daya* (compassion) is *Hridaya* (heart). However, today love and compassion find no place in human heart. Consequently, wicked qualities are finding their way into it. Whatever you experience outside is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of what is in your heart. Today negative qualities are prevalent in the world. What is the reason? The reason is that man's heart today is full of negative feelings. All that is witnessed in the world is the reflection of man's heart. Man should purify his heart to receive divine grace.

A deep enquiry into the principles of science and spirituality will reveal that atom is the basis of everything in this world. This flower, this cloth are nothing but different combinations of atoms. Even the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, are all constituted by atoms. In fact, all objects are constituted by atoms. But there is something more subtle and fundamental than even atom. Everything has originated

from fundamental principle. Instead of trying to know the fundamental principle, man is getting carried away by trivialities.

*Subtler than the atom, vaster than the cosmos,
Divinity is present all over as the eternal witness.*

(Telugu Poem)

Try to experience the principle of the Atma which transcends everything. In order to experience the Atma, you should pursue spiritual education along with secular education. Worldly education imparts only bookish knowledge. What we require is not superficial knowledge but practical knowledge. Can you know the taste of sweets like Laddu, Jilebi, etc., by merely reading their names in books? Only when you put them on your tongue will you experience their sweetness. Likewise, you can experience bliss only by practising what you have learnt. That is practical knowledge. Modern system of education is based only on bookish knowledge. There are many so-called educated people in our country. What is the help they are rendering to the country? Are they involving themselves in any activity that would benefit society and make people happy? No. They are leading such miserable lives that neither they are happy nor do they make others happy. Of what use is their education?

In spite of his education and intelligence, a foolish man will not know his true Self and a

mean-minded person will not give up his wicked qualities. Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom. What is the use of acquiring worldly education if it cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal.

(Telugu Poem)

You should pursue such education which will benefit you and also society at large. There are numerous unfortunate people who are suffering. Enquire, whether you are making any effort to alleviate the suffering of at least one of them. Your education is meaningless if it does not confer happiness to you and your fellow beings.

Today students are acquiring various degrees like M.Sc., M.B.A., Ph.D., etc., But are they using their education for the welfare of society? They merely fill their heads with bookish knowledge, go to the examination hall and empty their heads. No one is making any effort to know the purpose of education and its inner significance. No doubt, the students are intelligent and noble-hearted. But they are taking to wrong ways for lack of proper guidance. It is the duty of the parents as well as the teachers to show them the correct path. Some parents may not be educated so as to guide the students on the right path. What about the teachers in school? They concentrate on imparting

bookish knowledge and do not make any effort to foster purity among the students. We should therefore understand the essence of education, put it into practice and experience bliss.

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar showed how education should be utilised for the service of others. Born in a village near Kolkata in a poor family, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar acquired knowledge by dint of his hard work. True to his name, he was an ocean of knowledge. In his school days, he studied under street lights at night as there was no electricity in his home. His mother used to shed tears seeing her son's ordeals. He would console her, saying, "Mother, if I work today, I will be happy later". *Na Sukhat Labhyate Sukham* (one cannot derive happiness out of happiness). It is only out of difficulties that one can derive happiness. He worked hard and completed his education. As he was reputed for his oratorical skill, people would gather in large numbers to listen to his speeches. All that he spoke had a great impact on the people because he had a pure and compassionate heart.

Once he was invited to make a speech in a college. An I.C.S. officer was also traveling. Both of them got down at the same station. The officer started looking for a coolie to carry his suitcase. Seeing this, Vidyasagar volunteered to carry it. The officer handed over his suitcase to him. Vidyasagar was happy that he got an opportunity to serve. He asked him, "Sir, where

should we go?" The officer replied, "Take me to where Vidyasagar is going to address a meeting today. I came all the way to listen to him." Vidyasagar smiled and took him to the meeting place. The officer offered him some money but Vidyasagar politely refused, "Sir, I carried your suitcase only to help you, not for money." The meeting was about to commence. Everybody was eagerly awaiting Vidyasagar's arrival. As soon as Vidyasagar arrived, he was garlanded and was given a grand welcome. The I.C.S. officer instantly recognised Vidyasagar as the one who had carried his suitcase. He repented and thought to himself, "Though he is highly educated, how simple and humble he is!"

One who has ego will not be respected even by his own wife and children. Vidyasagar had no trace of ego in him. He held the audience spellbound with his speech. Time and again they clapped and expressed their appreciation. He did not exhibit his scholarship. He spoke from the depths of his heart and made a lasting impression on the people. His speech was based on his experiences in life and not on bookish knowledge.

Students Should Revive The Ancient Glory Of Bharat

Even today there are many such noble personalities. Bharat is a very sacred land but, unfortunately, the *Bharatiyas* themselves are not able to understand and appreciate the greatness of Bharat.

Due to the absence of fear of sin and love for God, humanness has declined in human beings. This is detrimental to universal peace.

(Telugu Poem)

Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat. Of all the rituals, adherence to truth is the greatest penance. The nectarean feeling in this country is the feeling of love toward one's mother. Character is valued far higher than the very life itself. People have forgotten the basic principles of this great culture and are imitating Western culture today. Alas! What has happened to this country?

(Telugu Poem)

What an ideal and sacred country our Bharat is! But today it is facing hardships as the *Bharatiyas* themselves have not understood their culture and are unable to adhere to its principles.

Students! Boys and Girls!

Remember the glorious history of Bharat and its rich cultural heritage. People from other lands visited this sacred land in the past and admired its greatness.

Fill your hearts with compassion. Spare no effort to alleviate the suffering of your fellow beings. You may not be in a position to help everybody but

alleviate the suffering of at least a few and experience bliss. If you have ten rupees in your pocket, give at least one rupee to the needy. The culture of Bharat teaches: *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Help everyone to the extent possible. Charity is the true ornament for the hand, truth is the true necklace. These are the true ornaments that one should aspire to possess. When you become the possessors of these precious jewels, there is no need for any other jewels.

Develop compassion and spirit of sacrifice and earn a good name. Do away with all evil qualities like anger, pride, hatred and jealousy. Any act of charity or service that you undertake will prove futile if you do not give up bad qualities. Develop love, share it with others, and make them happy. Only then will your education become meaningful. This is the service that you are expected to render to your motherland. You don't need to undertake gigantic service projects or construct big schools. Serve society as per your capacity. Whatever activity you undertake, let it be suffused with love. There is no wealth greater than love.

*Benedictory address, 20th Convocation of SSSIHL
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