

Character - End Of True Education

*No trace of peace anywhere;
 Truth has become equally scarce;
 Fearsome weapons are stocked up galore;
 Others abound who cover with dread;
 Self love, the cause for this wicked furore;
 Such is the truth of Sai's word.*

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

EDUCATION is increasing day by day, but there is no commensurate transformation in human behaviour as a result. What is the kind of education do we need? Today, academic excellence in education has increased, but its salutary effect in human behaviour is decreasing.

A Harmonious Blend Of Secular And Spiritual Education Is The Need Of The Hour

Dear Students!

Today, the education being pursued by you is only secular (i.e., value neutral). Mere secular education is not

enough. It must be supplemented by spiritual education. You must develop the principle of love. You must follow the path of truth. True education is that which is suffused with truth and love. Without truth, love is ineffective and devoid of value. Secular education is for making a living, whereas spiritual education is for reaching the goal of life. Therefore, it is the duty of students as well as educators to harmonise the secular education with spiritual education. Today, the world has recognised the importance of harmonious relationship between secular and spiritual education.

The whole world has started imparting spiritual education along with conventional curricula. People have realised the truth that spirituality is not a modern discovery, but ancient wisdom. However, the importance of this principle has been confined to only propounding and teaching of spirituality. Actually, there is a decline in the practice of spirituality in daily life. Therefore, practical education is most important today. Education without practice would lead to unrest. Modern studies in institutions is referred to as education. But, spiritual education that has its effect on one's heart, is 'educare'. 'Educare' means bringing out the latent divinity in a human being and establishing it as an ideal to the whole world. Modern education ends with mere bookish knowledge. It is confined to what is contained in the books. Educare, however, is not related to the books. It is related to teaching about the source of all knowledge, that is latent in the heart of a human being.

Therefore, underlying such type of education is the prime necessity, today. People are pursuing higher education in the secular field. That is not enough. They have also to pursue spiritual education which teaches human values like truth, righteous conduct, love, etc., which bring about a transformation of the heart.

A harmonious blend of secular and spiritual education is ideally suited to the present-day world. One is an inner awakening and the other is an external teaching. Secular teachings are related to the physical world. They are the negative aspect; whereas teachings related to the inner awakening are positive. Take for example, love. Who can define the form of love? The best way to define love is to love others and be loved by others and thereby experience the bliss of love. Such teachings related to the inner awakening are the urgent need of the hour. Educare is that which establishes love and kinship between human beings. Today, nobody knows what is there in the mind of another individual; not to speak of the individual whose thought, word and deed are not in harmony. He thinks something, speaks something else and does something that is totally different. This is not the characteristic of true education. What you think, you speak; what you utter, you perform in action. Since there is no unity between thought, word and deed, man today is not rising to the level of a *mahatma* (noble soul). He is becoming a *duratma* (wicked person). It is said:

Manasyeka Vachasyekam Karmanyekam

Mahatmanam

Manasyanyat Vachasyanyath Karmanyanyath

Duratmanam

(those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in complete harmony are noble ones; those with whom they are at variance are wicked ones).

Villages Foster Love And Kinship

It is the so-called 'educated elite' who are the greater criminals than the unlettered masses. It is they who are causing great damage to the country. The uneducated villagers are leading respectable lives and are setting examples to others. For instance, those who are educated and considered to be great intellectuals are leading luxurious lives in cities. On the other hand, those considered to be rustics and unlettered simpletons are living in the villages. They are leading a very simple, happy and contented life. Today, you will find that several schools, colleges and universities are established in cities. You will also find constant unrest and agitations in the campuses of these educational institutions. On the other hand, there are hardly any such agitations in the villages, where such institutions of higher education are non-existent. What could be the reason for this situation? More of this so-called modern education!

You go to villages and observe. The moment you enter a village, the simple villagers enquire, "Oh brother!

Where do you come from? What is your country, etc.?” They talk to you with respect and reverence and enquire after your welfare. But, in the towns and cities, even a father and son do not enquire the welfare of each other. They go about their daily routine in a most mechanical way, with no concern for each other. The reason for this situation is modern education. It is said, *The end of education is character*. Since people have lost their character nowadays, respect and reverence have also declined. Even parents contribute to this situation. Parents in villages send their children to cities for education. They expect their children to pursue higher education and earn degrees. Their intentions are, no doubt, good. But, the children take to bad ways, while in cities. While they were in villages, they used to respect elders and were obedient to their parents. Once they entered cities in pursuit of higher education, they lost all the good qualities of respect, reverence, character and humility acquired at home. Students have now forgotten the value of a life of sanctity. They do not hesitate to smoke in front of even their parents. Bad habits are on the increase. But, the situation is somewhat different in the villages. The children in the villages behave with restraint in the presence of elders and parents. The healthy parental control is still surviving in the villages. No such control, however, exists in towns and cities. Youths smoke and offer cigarettes to their friends, they go to cinemas and indulge in ever so many bad habits. There is none to restrain them and wean them away from bad habits. What is the reason for this behaviour? Modern education. They have no respect

for elders, parents and society. When someone points out their mistakes, they begin to argue saying, “Why should I fear? It is my will, I smoke my cigarette.”

Education Sans Good Behaviour Is Useless

A small example. Once, an Indian and a foreigner were travelling together in a railway compartment. The Indian was a chain-smoker. Not only that, he was puffing the smoke on the face of the foreigner. The foreigner tolerated it for sometime and when he could not bear it anymore, he told the Indian, “My dear son! I am not feeling well. I cannot bear cigarette smoking. If you want to smoke, please go to the toilet.” The Indian who was brought up with modern education replied, “If you cannot tolerate my smoking a cigarette, you may go to the toilet. I have bought the cigarette and I will smoke freely. I am at liberty to smoke and puff the smoke as I please.” Thus, he began quarrelling with the foreigner. The foreigner was helpless. After some time, he went to the toilet and returned. In the meanwhile, the Indian student threw out the shoes of the foreigner from the compartment. The foreigner saw this but thought that it was not wise to argue with this arrogant boy. He, therefore, went up to the upper berth and stretched himself. Now it was the turn of the Indian boy. He went to the toilet. Before he returned, the foreigner threw away the coat of the Indian boy, to teach him a lesson. The boy returned from the toilet and enquired where his coat was. The foreigner re-

plied that it had gone in search of his shoes, which were thrown out of the compartment by the boy. Then the boy realised his mistake. As you are aware, for everything, there will be reaction, resound and reflection in this *Kali* age. When you speak softly and sweetly to others, you will receive the same in return. If you are rude to others, others will also be rude towards you. Every individual, irrespective of his age and country, must, therefore, speak softly and sweetly. Whether one is educated or illiterate, one must speak softly and sweetly. He must have humility.

What is education?

“Hear ye the word true of Sai.

*Culture, conduct, truth, faith, devotion
and discipline*

These are education true,

All else is trash.”

(Telugu poem)

Man does not consider himself duty-bound today. Performance of one’s own duty is discipline. What is the use of education without discipline? Education without knowledge is useless and knowledge without education is foolishness. Therefore, no purpose is served by pursuing such foolish and useless education. One must cultivate good behaviour also with high education. But, what we find today is high academics and degenerated behaviour. Therefore, you must acquire high education, but lead a simple

life. That is true education. Once, Mahatma Gandhi was shedding tears while holding a book. He had read that book and found it to be trash. Meanwhile, a Britisher came there and asked Gandhiji why he was shedding tears. Gandhi replied that the book he was holding did not promote character building, which he believed was the heart of education. There is a vast difference between modern education and ancient wisdom. The time in which you are pursuing your education may be modern, but your behaviour should always be in accordance with ancient wisdom. Only then will your education command respect.

You must respect your parents. If an elderly gentleman visits your house, welcome him with reverence and respect. Speak to him sweetly and softly. When that gentleman enquires the whereabouts of your father, do not brush him aside saying, “Go and find out.” That is not the reply you have to give. Politely tell him, “Sir! My father is in the drawing room, I shall call him.” When you thus speak sweetly and softly, the visitor will have a good opinion about you. He would think that you are the worthy son of a worthy father. You must protect the honour and prestige of your father. How? With your good behaviour and sweet and soft words. Otherwise, the visitors would form opinion, “The father is a good and respectable person, but this son of that father is a bad fellow. He is rude and arrogant. He is not a worthy son.” Therefore, what we have to learn today is to cultivate humility, in spite of our modern education and living in a modern age.

Who is a student? A student is one who is acquiring education and who conducts himself with humility, obedience and discipline. He, who has no obedience and discipline is not a student, but a stupid. There must be calm and serene atmosphere in campuses where a number of students pursue their education. Today, elders hesitate to go to places where there are students; the reason is, the elders are afraid that these students might create trouble. This was not the situation in earlier days. The students of those days used to conduct themselves with humility. They had a sense of discrimination, acquired through education. In modern education, honesty and integrity, duty, discipline and devotion are woefully lacking. What is the use of such education? In olden days, a student used to be initiated into learning with a sacred prayer to God “Om Namah Sivaya! Om Namo Narayanaya!” The elders in the neighbourhood were invited for the ceremony and their blessings for the child obtained. In contrast, today, a child is initiated into learning with a nursery rhyme “Ba Ba blacksheep”, with the result, he would ultimately become a black sheep in society.

Keep A Watch On Your Words

Dear students! You are pursuing your education in a sacred atmosphere. You must continue to develop this atmosphere later in your life. Modern science is, of course, great. But, your senses are at a low level. Along with science, the senses must also be raised to a higher level. Today, we are leading a high level life, keeping our senses at

low level. This should not be what is meant by ‘educare’. Educare is bringing out the latent divinity in a human being. Whatever words you speak, you must watch whether they are the result of your education or educare. Today, nobody is keeping this watch. I often refer to the spelling of the word, WATCH. The spelling consists of five letters, namely, W A T C H. These letters stand for:

- W - Watch your Words
- A - Watch your Actions
- T - Watch your Thoughts
- C - Watch your Character
- H - Watch your Heart

The real watch is when you keep a watch on your words, actions, thoughts, character, and heart; not the one you tie to your wrist. The wrist-watch may go for repair, but the word ‘watch’ will never get spoiled. It will always bring purity of thought, word and deed. How great these words are! Education in the olden days contributed to making man a noble and ideal human being.

Then, about cleanliness and purity. These two are most important aspects of education. Students must take good care in respect of personal hygiene, involving regular bath, neat and clean dress, etc. “Cleanliness is godliness”. Therefore, be clean and pure. Lead a happy and contented life. Always help others. *Help Ever, Hurt Never*. Surely, you can pursue modern education. But, along with it, you

must also learn ancient wisdom. There must be a harmonious blend of these two. Pursuit of scientific knowledge is, of course, necessary. But, today, we are understanding science in a perverted way. Science starts at a particular point and ends at a different point. It is not a full circle; whereas, spirituality is a full circle, ending at the point of origin. That is why it is said,

Poornamadah poornamidam
Poornat poornamudachyate
Poornasya poornamadaya
Poornameva avashishyate

(That is full, this is full. When the full is taken out of the full, what remains is again the full.)

Rise To The Level Beyond The Senses

Science starts with an enquiry. “What is this? What is this? On the other hand, spirituality begins its quest with the enquiry “What is that? What is that?” The enquiry “What is this?” indicates nearness, nearness to the senses. This is science. In contrast to this, the enquiry “What is that?” indicates distance, i.e., distance from senses. That is spirituality.

A small example. You all have come here from far-off places like Zambia, East Africa, etc., to have the *darshan* of Sai Baba. Since you are living at such distant places, you develop great love for Sai Baba and yearn to have His *darshan*. The same eagerness will not be there to see a

person in a neighbouring village. It is natural to develop interest in an object that is far away. What is that “that”? “That” means, that which is beyond the senses, namely, spirituality. “Below senses” is dirty. We should not aspire for that. We must rise to the level of beyond senses. Only then can we lead a sacred life. Today, students are below the senses. They are becoming slaves to the senses. This is not proper education. You must become a “Master of Senses”, not merely a “Master of Science”. You must make the senses your servants. You should not become a servant of the senses.

You all know about Queen Kaikeyi in *Ramayana*. She was an adept in *asthras* and *Sasthras* (all kinds of weapons). She was the daughter of the king of Kekaya kingdom. She was the youngest and dearest queen of King Dasaratha. She brought along with her, a servant called Manthara to serve her in the palace. But, in course of time, she allowed Manthara to become her mentor and she became her servant. Ultimately, she yielded herself to Manthara’s advice and made her life most miserable. She lost her husband, King Dasaratha, who died unable to bear the pangs of separation from his beloved son, Sri Rama. She had also to face the anger of her own son, Bharatha, who did not like the idea of Rama being sent to the forest and his becoming king in Rama’s place. Everyone in the kingdom hated her for sending Rama and Sita to the forest. That is why, it is said that a servant should be kept as a servant and a master should remain a master. You are the master and your senses are the servants.

Follow The Principle Of Simple Living And High Thinking

“Master the mind and be a mastermind.” That is the quality of a student. Only then can you acquire true higher education and share it with others too. I can teach you at great length about education, but time is a constraint. What I teach the students centres round the principle of “simple living and high thinking”. I Myself follow this principle. It is not education in terms of degrees that is important; culture is important. If we develop culture, we can acquire any amount of purity and sacredness in our life. The aim of all this training being given to you, is to make you self-reliant. You must attend to all your personal chores yourself. For example, you must clean your dinner plates, wash your clothes, etc., by yourself. This is the duty of a real student. If you cultivate such good habits, what more is required? This is simple living and high thinking. You must lead a noble life, based on this principle.

I am also advising Jumsai that this principle of self-help must be implemented in all the schools run by the Institute of human values. Students of the institute must become self-reliant. The place of their study, the place of their stay, the book racks, etc., must always be kept clean by the students themselves. No separate servants must be engaged for this purpose. I often tell the students a joke – “The vegetable purchased is worth two annas; but the charges paid to the porter for carrying the vegetables are four annas.” Will you ever pay a higher amount towards

porter charges, than the cost of the vegetable itself? You should not waste your money in such ways. *Misuse of money is evil.* The money you spend in your student life is contributed by your parents. They earned it by their sweat and blood. Each rupee of such amount must be treated as a drop of their blood. Curtail your expenditure and pursue higher education.

Today, several students wish to go to foreign countries for higher education. How much money is required for this purpose! What do you do, after reaching the foreign country, spending such a huge amount? You are not concentrating on your studies. On the other hand, you spend your time in ever so many activities, wasting your valuable money. If you are short of money as a result of this wasteful expenditure, you resort to cleaning of cups and plates in a restaurant, to supplement your income. Instead of cleaning cups and plates in a foreign country, why don't you do it in your own country and in your own home? By doing so, you will be helpful to your parents. Your parents will feel happy. Dear students! Make your parents happy. Make your teachers happy. You serve them. Only then, will you be able to receive good education from the teachers.

Embodiments of Love!

Realise the truth that real education is that which teaches humility. It is only when you cultivate this quality of humility, can you become ideal students and serve your

country well. You keep yourself away from places of violence, for, if you go there, you will also receive injuries to your body. If you can, try to control such violent incidents, otherwise, keep yourself away from them. Try to establish a peaceful atmosphere everywhere.

Dear Students!

You are full of noble qualities. You are strong in body and mind. Along with that, try also to develop good character. There is no use developing friends' circle, wealth and strength, without developing character. You become ideal students and propagate the principles of Sathya Sai Education in the world and earn respect from the world.

*Discourse on 20-11-2002,
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