

16. Why Sai colleges?

Man is essentially mind, and mind is a composite of thoughts. These thoughts shape his fortunes. We are experiencing the effects of the actions provoked by such thoughts. What exactly is the reason why the world today is different from what it ought to be? The reason is 'human activities are not of the nature they ought to follow. Why, then, these activities? Because, man's thoughts are polluted; they lead him into wrong paths. The remedy, therefore, lies in reshaping these thoughts so that they are pure, holy, tending towards detachment and service to others.

Every activity of man has an urge which impels it. When he goes to the bazaar, it is to shop for provisions. When he reaches home with them, that activity ends. That urge is over, purpose is served. The student goes to school to acquire education. Each little act of ours has to be in pursuit of a goal. We forget that the great big activity of living on the earth for years and years and years must also have a goal, a purpose, an urge that impels us.

For whom is life, for what do we live? No one asks himself these questions and no answer is sought. Many reply proudly that they live for themselves alone; but this is totally wrong. Probe them still further. Each one will assert, "I eat when I am hungry. I drink when I am thirsty; I breathe myself the air I need. I apply a bandage on my foot when I have an injury there. I swallow tablets myself when I am ill. I am living for "myself". Besides, two people sleeping on the same bed have distinct dreams; they do not have the same dream. So, it is clear one leads a unique special life of his own.

But, consider the case of one of these persons, appealing before the manager of an office for a job slightly bigger than what is offered. He says "Sir! I have my mother, my .father, and four children. I have my wife. How am I to maintain so many persons? Please, therefore, give me a higher salary!" Now, for whom does he work on the job? Why does he seek more wages? Does he not feel the responsibility for keeping others in comfort? He works for himself and his family too.

Duties are not limited to oneself and the family

This is not all. Ask the person another question. "*Guru Poornima* is being celebrated at Prashaanthi Nilayam. We are going there. Do you join us?" He replies, "What a pity? I have exhausted all the 'leave' at my disposal. I cannot think of joining you." In spite of this, if his wife has a sudden attack of illness, he admits her into a hospital and goes on leave for fifteen days foregoing his salary for the entire period. Or, let us think of another situation. This person is sitting with a plate in his hand containing his favourite savoury, '*gaare*', and is just about to relish the first bite when some one rushes in with the news, "Your son is caught under the wheels of a bus." He throws away the dish he likes so much, forgets the hunger that gnawed his stomach and runs to the street where the accident occurred. He loves his son more than himself. He runs about frantically to save his life. So, his assertion that he lives for himself is obviously not correct. He lives for himself and his family.

Most people's lives centre around only these two. Highly learned men and leaders in political fields are no exceptions to this rule. This narrow outlook is the cause of all the endless troubles that haunt the world. Our duties and responsibilities are not limited by these two entities. We have to rise to higher levels of obligation. When the village or town we live in is swept by an infectious disease, the people gather and resolve on counter-measures. This person, who announced 'I live for myself,' is also one of the leaders who have to carry out the measures. He is

now struggling not for himself nor for his family but for the townsmen. He feels that any calamity that visits the town will be a personal calamity. So, we have to concern ourselves with the society in which we are.

Our lives are spent largely in the social milieu. Our birth, our residence, our demise are all bound to social conditions. Without the human community, man cannot survive at all. This is the truth; this is the special good fortune of man.

Each must promote the happiness often others

The long-beaked stork never gets upset thinking over the sad fate of the living beings it swallows. Students of today are also unconcerned about the society that fosters them and expects their gratitude. Every individual must prepare himself to promote the happiness of ten others. Students have to resolve to look upon society as fostering their own lives. This involves renunciation of one's own fond dreams of gain. This attitude of renunciation can alone render life holy.

Students talk of friends and friendship but what do they mean by it? They mean by it an easy way to vicious paths. It does not encourage the adoption of holy, spiritual attitudes and paths. Friendship must serve as lids for the eye, as sandals for the feet. The friend must be "another me." He must experience in equal depth the joy and the grief of the other. Friends must be like milk and water. Let me elaborate this example. When milk, into which some quantity of water is poured, is placed on a burning stove, the water goes off as steam. The milk laments the separation and boils over. Then, the only way to keep it calm is to sprinkle a spoon or two of water; its friend is back and it is happy. Milk cannot tolerate separation from its friend.

Your friends today attach themselves not to you but to your purse or to some advantage they can gain through your father's kindness. When your purse is empty or when your father is no longer in power, they bid you good-bye. Friends who drag one away into evil habits and vicious deeds are prowling around in search of victims. A Telugu proverb says, "Long before Truth put on her shoes, Falsehood completes her journey round the world." Falsehood travels fast. False friends stick faster. Truth will reveal itself only slowly through the clouds of denial and doubt.

Plan to be rich in virtue and devotion

Students have to cultivate gratitude, compassion and tolerance. Sympathy with the distressed is a fundamental human quality. They must also develop a sense of gratitude. We feel thankful to some one who gives us food when we are gnawed by hunger, to the doctor who cures us of disease, the friend who pulls us out of a crisis, the officer who gives us a job when we are desperately in need of one. But, are we grateful to God who equipped us with this wonder-filled body and endowed us with qualities and skills to live through the passage of time? Alexander expressed gratitude to his mother for the body he had. But, he also said that God who enabled the mother to retain and release the body has to be thanked more.

Youth is the stage in life when the slightest turn towards wrong will spell disaster. Thoughts shape the career. You plan to earn much wealth, because you imagine that rich people are very happy. The rich have plenty to eat, but they have no appetite. The rich wield power over others but they are held down by disease. The rich can have many servants but they cannot live in peace. So, plan to be rich in virtue, in devotion and in dedication to good causes. Be rich in sovereign character. Steady adherence to truth, renunciation, genuine *prema* (love), self-less

service---these are the essential components of character. Follow the dictates of your conscience; you will never be wrong.

To-day's scholars have no steadiness of conviction

Students now believe that the study of books is all that is needed. But, the test for scholarship is Are soft and sweet words uttered? Are good works planned and executed? Are the scholars involving themselves in society and doing good for society? Are they grateful to those who promote their happiness? These are the tests; not how many books they have read or how many degrees they have collected. Consider the learned scholars of today! They are bond-slaves to greed, suspicion, envy and factionalism. They have no steadiness of conviction. So, they have no sleep, they do not relish food. Each one suspects the other. The reason for this sad condition is that they have no spiritual outlook and experience.

A person prayed to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, so long and so sincerely that she planned to follow him to his house and be there. But, on one condition and one only: "You should not look back. If you turn and try to see me coming. I will disappear at once." He agreed and started walking towards his house. He could hear the jingles on the feet of the goddess and her chuckling laughter. Yet, suspicion haunted him. Was it the real Lakshmi? He turned back to verify and Lakshmi disappeared from view.

We too are haunted by disbelief. We do our duty but are doubtful whether we would receive our needs. This is a sign of weakness. The reward is certain. Why hesitate? Be satisfied that you have done your duty well; never fail in that. But, nowadays, even those who break the law and behave in evil ways quote the law and claim its protection when their interests are affected. This is indeed a tragic situation.

Youth must learn the art of renunciation

Sai has been witnessing this trend advancing in all lands. It is to end this evil that Sai is establishing these colleges. Here, youth must learn the art of renunciation; they must acquire character, these are the two eyes which can guide him safely through life. Renunciation is the golden key that opens the door to liberation. An educated person should not revel in acquisition and accumulation of properties and possessions. Sai does everything only for your sake and for teaching you high ideals. But, since your capacity to understand the underlying purpose is limited, you might fall into wrong conclusions.

Sai has not built these colleges and these hotels at the cost of crores of rupees for projecting himself. The world has a million colleges. But, these Sai Colleges have as their aim the production of a generation of youth who live ideal lives. If only the students imbibe the right ideas and plunge into society with their thirst for service as a spiritual duty, they would be proclaiming that their humanness is worth-while. Ask yourself whether you deserve the 'human' nature implanted in you? Humility, readiness to serve, commiseration at the suffering of others--- these are the human traits of which you should be examples.

Once, a friend asked Bala Gangaadhar Tilak, who was a fearless fighter for the independence of India, "Sir! You are in the forefront of the national struggle for *Swaraaj*. You have declared that *Swaraaj* is our birth-right and that you will win it. Well! When we achieve independence, will you be the Prime Minister of Free India, or will you accept the Finance Portfolio?" Tilak replied, "My dear friend! If by some freak of fortune, India attains *Swaraaj*, I will go back to the High

School I have founded long ago at Poona and work, once again, as the teacher of mathematics. I am not content to be a leader; I wish to prepare a hundred leaders every year. I like to be a King-maker, not the King."

The teacher offers; the student receives. The teacher should possess much to impart; the student should feel the want within. When the tank is full, water will flow when the tap is opened. And, the tank must have a store of potable water.

Only a great teacher can mould a great student

Kalidaasa has described an incident in his memoirs which is appropriate to this point. Two famous pandits were engaged in a duel, dealing arguments and counter-arguments to the delight of the Emperor *Bhoja* and his courtiers. Neither one was able to outwit the other, though the competition continued for days on end. It was feared that a victor would not emerge at all. But, Kalidaasa suggested a way out; he had a plan to discover who among the two was superior. He wanted the Emperor to arrange a competition between the pupils of the pandits and declare that pandit to be the victor whose pupil was able to win in argument over the opponent's pupil. The pupils were ready to enter the fray and fight the rivals who challenged their *Gurus*.

The inference is: only a great teacher can mould a great student. Students and teachers have both fallen prey to slothfulness. They do not take to work enthusiastically. For one naya paisa of work they demand four hundred rupees. The ironed fold should not be disturbed; they should sit comfortably under a fan or in an airconditioned office; they must be paid every month thousands of rupees as salary. Is there a way of life worse than this? Such people are ruining the country. People do not work but desire handfuls of money. Is it not greed? From whom are they getting these handfuls of money. You reply, the Government pays. Who pays to the Government? The people, isn't it? Is all the education you receive to be used only for robbing the people? Students! Do not entertain such nefarious ideas and follow such ruinous paths. Earn money with toil, with hard work with the sweat of your brow; then only can you and your family live comfortably and happily.

One other point: You must all understand well the affection that Sai is showering on you. He is caring for you, his tender children; he has built for you these splendid buildings and given you all the help you need. I am not pleading for gratitude in return. No. Like the Hindi writer, Prem Chand, who could not wipe out of his mind his agony when his younger son did not touch the feet of the parents while the elder did, I too feel pain when you take the wrong turn and neglect the royal road to truth, righteousness, peace and love. I feel hurt when I see you wasting the most precious period of your lives. I am anxious about your future, for your own sake. I do not get praise if you lead good lives, nor do I get blame if you enter bad ways. I do not care for either. Have the reputation of your Colleges in mind; have the good that the world expects from you in mind. And, stabilise in yourselves the two qualities of *thyaaga* (renunciation) and *sheela* (character).

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