

1. Perseverance--the key to achievement

*Verily the light that illumines all the hearts is Divine,
The love that emanates from each call is Divine
Break not the Divine command in your intellectual conceit
For pride surely goeth before a fall.
All education that is devoid of spiritual purity
Is replete with hatred and envy,
Like a dark dwelling infested with bats,
Know this to be the truth.*

DEAR students, teachers and lovers of education. For the accomplishment of any aims in life man needs an unflinching mind, tireless endeavour and unshakable determination. Young boys and girls pursuing their studies have to cultivate these qualities if they wish to ensure for themselves a bright future and an honourable and worthy career. In facing different situations in life, students have to learn to practise equanimity and amiability.

Equal-mindedness and a sense of oneness with all are the marks of a true human being. In this vast country, everyone has an important role to play. Everyone as a citizen has a social responsibility. The world indeed, is one human family. The true student should be able to experience this oneness. Sports and games enable students to develop this feeling of oneness.

Maintain physical fitness and mental purity

Sports and games and physical exercise contribute directly to physical fitness and good health. But man is not merely the gross body alone. He has the subtle element in him, namely, the mind. It is only when man achieves purity of mind and develops unselfishness that he can acquire peace of mind and experience genuine happiness. Hence both physical fitness and mental purity is essential for man.

Students should realise that the determination and perseverance they show in seeking to win laurels in sports and games are also equally necessary in other spheres of life, especially in those of morality and spirituality.

The first quality that you have to cultivate is gratitude to the Divine. People are thankful for even small acts of service done to them. Is it not necessary to be grateful to the Divine who has provided us with

so many essential benefits through Nature and the five elements? The air you breathe, the water you drink, the earth on which you walk are all gifts of God. How grateful are you to the sun, who provides light, which cannot be equalled by all the electric bulbs in the world? Can all the pumpsets in the world provide as much water as is offered in a single downpour of rain? Can all the fans in the world, provide as much breeze as you get when the wind blows? Without being grateful for these Divine gifts, man goes after the trivial and wastes his life. The great sages of yore who adored God in various ways considered devotion as a means of expressing gratitude to Providence.

Virtues alone can elevate one in life

The puranas have described the lives of the great exemplars of nine forms of *Bhakti* (devotion). They are Parikshit for *Sravanam* (listening to the glories of God), Narada for *Keerthanam* (singing the praises of God), Prahlada for *Vishnunama smaranam* (remembering the Lord's name), Prithu for *Archanam* (offering worship), Akrura for *Vandanam* (prostration), Hanuman for *Seva* (service), Arjuna for *Sakhya* (friendship), Lakshmi for *Padasevanam* (worshiping the feet of the Lord) and Bali for *Atamnivedanam* (total surrender).

Students should bear in mind that from the point of view of individual or the community, they have to cultivate good qualities along with the pursuit of their studies. Virtues alone can help one to elevate himself in life. A man without virtues and gratitude is bound to fail in life.

During the war in Lanka, Rama saw one day a powerful effulgent figure before Him. Vibhishana told Rama that it was none other than Rama's enemy, Ravana. Seeing him, Rama felt that but for his bad qualities, Ravana, who was so powerful and great, would not have come to such a pitiable end. Whatever may be one's scholarship or intelligence, without the strength of character they are likely to dehumanise man. You must fortify yourself with the strength of character, along with the acquisition of knowledge. There is nothing that cannot be achieved by a righteous person.

Self-confidence is the first requisite. You must cherish some ideals. To lead an ideal exemplary life, education is not essential. One seeks education for earning a living. But one cultivates virtues for sublimating life. It is only when education is combined with good qualities that you can experience the bliss of fullness.

The example of Edison

Students need both faith in God and *deeksha* (determination). There is the example of a great American scientist, Thomas Alva Edison. He was born in a poor family on February 11, 1847, in the state of Ohio. Although he made no progress in his studies, he became a great inventor, thanks to his supreme self-confidence and his perseverance and determination in the pursuits of his experiments. His early experiments had untoward results, which provoked his parents to punish him and ultimately to send him out of the home. For a time he earned a living by selling sweets in trains.

Once, a guard slapped him for causing explosion in the closet of a train. His hearing was affected thereby. A benefactor came into his life after he had saved a child from being run over by a train. He got a job in a telegraph company and was free to carry on his experiments. From such beginnings, Edison became the greatest inventor of our times because of his tremendous perseverance and tireless experiments. The world owes to him the electric bulb, the gramophone, the telephone and many other inventions. If without any regular schooling, Edison could achieve all this, it was because of his confidence in himself, his firm determination and tireless energy. In addition to their academic studies, these are the qualities a student should acquire. They should associate with right-minded persons, whose company will improve their mind and character.

Swami expects you to be exemplary in life

The advancements in science and technology have enabled man to roam in the sky like birds and move in the water' like fish. But he has not mastered the art of living well on earth. If man has not learnt how to lead a worthy human life, what is the value of his existence? Make your life

meaningful by doing your duty to your parents and your Motherland. The man who is not proud of the land of his birth is worse than a corpse. Learn to love your country without any hatred for other countries.

Get rid of differences based on community, creed or caste. Regard all mankind as one family. Give up feelings of hatred and aversion. As alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute, you have to stand out as exemplars to the world. Your conduct should be ideal and exemplary in every respect. That is what I expect from you, and this is what will give Me joy. Even in your sports and games, you must strictly adhere to the rules and be good sportsmen. You must raise the standard of sport and develop team spirit.

It is a good habit to get up early in the morning between 4 and 5 a.m. and complete your morning ablutions. That is described as *Rishisnanam* (the bath of the sages). Your mind gets purified when you take part in the *suprabhatham* in the morning. This may seem a little hard at first, but after some practice you will discover how good it is for you physically and spiritually. The pre-dawn vibrations in the atmosphere will help to improve your memory power. Sports and games are designed to promote physical fitness. They should not be commercialised and turned into a form of business. Our Institute students have to take part in games and athletics for the sake of the joy to be derived from them and to develop their abilities and skills. There should be no trace of self-interest in them. Develop equal regard for everyone and promote mutual respect and affection. The concept of Divine love must become your watchword and goal in life.

Discourse in the Institute Auditorium on 14-1-1989.

Teacher and student together help to promote the welfare of the nation. Both of them should realise that their welfare is bound up with the well-being of the society as a whole.

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