

1. Education and Immortality

That indeed is true spiritual education which secures universal peace, dispels narrow-mindedness, and fosters unity, harmony, and co-operation.

Students, Embodiments of Love!

It is the foremost duty of every student to transform every activity of his life into one of strength and beauty. But unfortunately, the education system of today fails to nourish the qualities of wholesomeness, unity and love, which are the hallmarks of true education. Students should realise that their life span is fast melting away like ice, whether they care to improve or not.

Students of today are blind to the goal of life. Some students do not even feel the pain of not knowing the purpose of life. Only one in a million or one in a crore (ten million) strives to realise the essence of life. This striving is the steppingstone for the realisation of the purpose of life. Many students and men feel that the acquisition of food, clothing, shelter, wealth, conveniences, and comforts constitute the very purpose of life. Life remains a tragedy as long as man labours under this kind of delusion. The day he realises the purpose of life, he undergoes a total transformation, from *vedana* (agony) to *nirvedana* (freedom from pain). When one becomes conscious of light, acquires wisdom and realises the meaning of existence, one is transported from agony to ecstasy. Light here does not signify the light of the Sun, the Moon or the lamp but that of the

heart. Wisdom does not refer to scientific wisdom, but enlightenment brought about by the transformation of the heart. What about existence? Awareness of one's own true reality is the proper meaning of existence. The awareness of one's reality lies in the realisation that one is not the body, the mind or the senses. True realisation lies in understanding the fact that man is based on a transcendental principle that goes beyond the boundaries of matter.

The need for gratitude

Man should earnestly investigate the presence of Divinity in human life. Awareness of one's own duty is tantamount to the awareness of Divinity in human life. Students of today are blind to these principles of duty, which are Divine. They do not show gratitude even to doctors who have brought relief to a sick patient or an animal in their homes. They argue that they need not be grateful to the doctor because it is the duty of the latter to bring relief to a suffering patient. But let us remember that the patient too has a duty. Flagrant violation of duty leads us nowhere. It is our duty to show gratitude to the mother who nourished us in the womb and fostered our well being after our birth. But modern students have no sense of gratitude. On the other hand, they question why they should be grateful to the mother, who, in their opinion, is duty-bound to take care of them. Let every student realise that it is his duty to take care of his mother even as she took care of him earlier.

Even the great Greek Emperor, Alexander, harboured the mistaken notion that one need not be grate-

ful to all those people who had performed good deeds out of a sense of duty. But that same Alexander had the good sense to realise that, whereas all human love is marked by selfishness, it is Divine Love alone that is totally free from selfishness. Nothing in the world made by man can equal the glory, grandeur and the majesty of God. Can any high-powered bulb equal the matchless brilliance of the Sun? Can any pump in the world supply as much water as is delivered by a heavy downpour? Can any fan in the world give as much coolness as given by the Wind-God? The gifts of God are abundant, bountiful and beyond comparison.

We pay tax for all the facilities provided to us. We pay water-tax to the Municipality, which provides us with water. We pay tax to the Electricity Department for providing power. But what taxes are we paying to the great Lord who provides us with end-less power, light and wind? When we pay tax to the different departments for services provided, is it not our duty to pay the tax of gratitude to God? We do not show any gratitude to God who has gifted us the five elements, which never get depleted. In fact, it should be our foremost duty to show our gratitude to God, who gives us so much in endless abundance. It is the absence of such gratitude that is the cause of agitation and confusion in the world today. We have to face the consequences of our misdeeds because every action has a reaction, resound and reflection. The awareness of this fact on the part of one and all will bring abundant peace and harmony.

Man is endowed with endless strength. His body is indeed a massive generator. His face is like a televi-

sion-set. But man has lost his value in the world today. It is man who lends value to a diamond. It is man who unearths a raw stone and turns it into a priceless diamond after processing and polishing it. Though man has been able to transform a cheap raw stone into an invaluable diamond, he himself has no value in spite of contributing much to the value-addition of the diamond.

Vidhya and Vidhyarthi

Modern education does not confer any value on man. Even the rich meaning of a word like *vidya* has lost its pristine glory. The syllables *vid* and *ya* are laden with significant meaning. *vid* means light and *ya* means that. Hence, *vidya* means 'that which lends light.' The present educational system keeps us in darkness instead of shedding illumination. True education is that which is in consonance with the *vedic* statement, *Tamasoma jyotirgamaya* (Lead me from darkness to light). But today's education-systems, instead of dispelling the darkness of ignorance, have made the students blind and deaf. Students have eyes, but they do not see. They have ears, but they do not hear. They have minds, but they are as deficient as the mentally-deranged. One has lost faith in one's own eyes, ears and mind. Man has begun to deceive himself. Today he sees with the eyes of others, hears with the ears of others and thinks with the minds of others. How can such a man be called human, when he has lost faith in his own eyes and ears and in himself? What can such a man achieve in life?

*Of what avail is all high learning?
 Who can erase the scroll on the forehead
 written by God?
 When bad thoughts are harboured in the
 head
 The mind becomes blunt and useless.*

Vidhyarthi (student) is the one who contributes substantially to the welfare and the well being of society. He is: *vidya* + *arthi*, a true seeker of learning. Unfortunately, today he seeks sensual pleasures instead of seeking true learning. Why should such students enter educational institutions, which are temples of learning?

Education today is mistaken for bookish learning. It is spirituality that lends excellence to education. Education devoid of spirituality is an utter waste. Great men of learning like Bipin Chandra Pal and Rabindranath Tagore were born in Bengal. In the same State was born Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who had no schooling at all to his credit. Though an illiterate, he is more remembered in Bengal than scholars like Bipin Chandra Pal and Rabindranath Tagore. It is the spiritual might of Ramakrishna Paramahansa that earned for him an eternal place in the hearts of the people. Every bit of learning should be based on the foundation of ethical, *dharmic* (righteous), and spiritual principles. Education that is not founded on these will flounder to the ground and become useless.

*They may be men of eminence,
 With MA and BA degrees to their credit.*

*They may be men par excellence,
 Endowed with wealth and merit.
 They may be perfect men,
 Endowed with perfect health and strength.
 They may be men of penance,
 Reciting the vedas with religious zeal.
 But they can never match the excellence and
 splendour of the devotees of God.*

It is by dint of devotion that even ordinary persons are elevated to extraordinary status.

Divine Love and human love

This Summer Course is about Indian culture and spirituality. What is Indian culture? Indian culture is the harmonious synthesis of the ethical, the *dharmic* and the spiritual qualities. The eminent scholar Elliot, after sound investigation, defined culture as a “way of life”. This definition is neither appropriate nor adequate, as it does not properly define the scope of life. It does not mention whether life refers to animal, human or subhuman. Culture lies in seeing unity in diversity, with a deep-seated faith in the unity of Life. We must nourish faith in the feeling of the caste of humanity and the culture of love. Here the culture of love does not refer to the bodily love that marks the relationship between the wife and the husband, between children and parents, and between friends. The son, though he loved his mother with all his heart, flings her body onto the burning pyre and consigns her to the flames without any mercy after death. How can such love be called true Love? All such relationships can at best be termed attachment and not Love.

Attachments come in the middle and pass off in the middle. But Love existed even before birth and will last after death. Attachments are like passing clouds that sail away quickly. There is no love between the husband and the wife before they are wedded. There is no love between the mother and the child before the birth of the child. Only Divine Love exists before birth and lasts after death. True Love is uncontaminated, unsoiled, unadulterated, unpolluted, eternal, perennial, pure and unsullied. It is only Divine Love that is not tainted by selfishness and self-interest. All other kinds of love are stained by selfishness. It is this faith in the glory of Love and Divinity that distinguishes Indian culture.

Culture is universal in its scope and significance. We should not claim and contend that Indian culture is superior to all the other cultures of the world. We should have firm faith in the injunction: "All are one. Be alike to everyone."

Together we shall live.

Together we shall move.

Together we shall grow in splendour.

*Together we shall live in amity and harmony,
without conflict and skirmish.*

We should foster the noble sentiments expressed in *vedic* statements of this kind. Unfortunately, the educational institutions of today do not nourish these noble sentiments in students. They are purely academically oriented and disregard the finer values of life. These institutions impart only the

knowledge of the subjects and lose track of the object of life. The learning imparted covers the physical and the superficial. It is like a camera, which photographs only the physical and the apparent without fathoming the inner recesses. True learning is like an X-ray camera, which lays bare the innermost details with perfect fidelity. Our mind should be like an X-ray with Love as the film, so that it can capture the entire personality of a being with total fidelity. An X-ray machine without film is of no use, as nothing can be captured without a film. Similarly, a mind devoid of Love is of no use. Love does not change with time. It is abiding and eternal. But the love of people today is transient and ephemeral, and may expire at any time. Such a love is not at all worthy of being called Love. True Love endures trial and turbulence, loss, and pain, and it transcends every trying circumstance. We should not forget God under any circumstance, however difficult it might be. Our Love for God should survive every onslaught. We should resist all the ravages of time and the vicissitudes of life. Our Love should not change and float with every passing wind.

The lives of eminent *bhaktas* (devotees) demonstrate to us how firm and strong our devotion should be. The life of Prahlada is a testament of real devotion to God. Though severely tortured by his father, Hiranya Kashyapa, Prahlada stood firm as a rock, steadfast in his devotion to Vishnu. The teachers of Prahlada came to Hiranya Kashyapa and pleaded their inability to divert the mind of Prahlada thus:

O Great Lord of the Demons,

*Though pierced by sharp swords,
Your son does not shed a single tear.
Instead he prays: "O Hari, the destroyer of
demons."*

Though of tender age, Prahlada planted God firmly in his heart and withstood every storm and stress. Physical afflictions had no effect on him and did not reduce his devotion. The mind steeped in the Love of God is beyond any shock and strain like the chloroformed patient who is oblivious of the incisions made by the surgical instruments. Only Love of this kind can be victorious ultimately. Pain is a part of life and must be accepted at any cost. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. But today, the devotion of the people wavers with every trying circumstance. When our wishes are fulfilled, we install many photographs for worship; and when our wishes are not fulfilled, we throw out all the photographs. We must cultivate the temperament that makes us view pleasure and pain alike. Both pain and pleasure are gifts of God, for there is no pleasure without pain and there is no pain without pleasure. Culture lies in seeing this unity of pain and pleasure.

What are culture and spirituality? Culture marked by unity is spirituality. Culture and spirituality enable us to realise our true nature. Hence, secular learning should be coupled with spirituality. It is only such a harmonious blend of the secular and the spiritual that would lend beauty and radiance to life. We should not learn merely to fill our bellies but also to fill our hearts with Bliss. The food eaten fills only

the belly and does not fill the mind, but spiritual food fills the mind and gives eternal Bliss.

Education and morality

Inculcation of morality is very important in life. Students lead chaste and disciplined lives as long as they live in the hostel, but lead an altogether different life once they leave the hostel. Your lives should be marked by discipline and morality, whether you live in the hostel or outside it. Your lives should be lived in consonance with the command of the conscience. It should remain the same, whether observed or unobserved, noticed or unnoticed.

The glory of a race rests on morality.

Decline in morality brings degradation of the race as well.

That race is indeed a noble race which seeks sustenance from morality.

Listen to this noble truth, O brave sons of Bharath, O brave students of Bharath!

Divert the mind

Though it is hard to restrain the mind, it can be diverted. When the mind steeped in the secular world is diverted toward Divinity, it gains in moral strength. The mind steeped in the worldly matters makes you a prisoner of the world, whereas a mind steeped in God secures liberation for you. Your heart is the lock and your mind is the key. When you turn the key to the left, it locks. But if you turn the key to the right, it unlocks. It is the turning of the key that makes the difference. Hence the mind is the cause for your liberation as well

as bondage. What then is liberation (*moksha*)? It is not an air-conditioned mansion, but a state devoid of delusion (*moha*). Majesty and morality lie in diverting the mind from the world to God. It is this that really contributes to your progress and prosperity.

Students, in this Summer Course you have to go beyond the borders of the subjects that you study in your classrooms. You have to obtain, in this Summer Course, that wisdom which secures for you moral splendour and bliss.

Though one is endowed with wealth and righteous conduct, one is plagued by the absence of progeny. Though one is endowed with great learning, one is plagued by unemployment. Education today is reduced to begging. If you beg for favours from God, He will certainly respond. It is better to beg from God than to beg from people.

Your Vice-chancellor has appealed to Me to speak about the glories of the *Ramayana*. This I shall do every evening, bringing out the excellence of the Epic. Every syllable of the *Ramayana* is of utmost significance to students. As the human body is made of blood cells, the *Ramayana* too is constituted of sacred and sublime cells. Human life finds fulfilment by dwelling on the sanctity of the *Ramayana*.

Education and Immortality

Students should not confine their studies merely to the subject prescribed in the syllabus. Their interest should embrace the realms of spirituality as well. I do

not underrate the importance of secular education, but I do wish to emphasise the need for cultivating secular as well as spiritual education. Let Me illustrate this with an example.

A game of football is played by two teams, each team consisting of ten players playing on each side of the field. While playing, each team strives to score a goal by shooting the ball between the two goal posts. Life is a game in which one has to aim at leading one's life between the two goal posts of secular and spiritual education. While playing football, one kicks the ball as long as it is filled with air. Once the football is deflated, no one will kick it. The air in the football signifies the presence of ego. A man swayed by ego would have to receive blows until he becomes devoid of ego. Only a deflated ball is taken by the hands, whereas an inflated ball is kicked mercilessly. Similarly, a person who has destroyed his ego is well respected, whereas the person who allows himself to be swayed by ego becomes the target of all sorts of attacks. Only a person who is free from ego can transform himself into an ideal man. Secular things come and go, whereas spiritual gains stay forever. Hence, spirituality should constitute the basis of all our activities.

As the human body collapses without the spinal column, so also human life sinks without morality and spirituality. The spinal column is made of thirty-three rings, and it supports the entire human body. Similarly, moral and spiritual principles constitute the very rings of the backbone of human life.

I will expose the rings of moral principles that constitute the *Ramayana*. My earnest wish is that students evince keen interest in the moral and spiritual principles of the *Ramayana* and fully benefit from it. The elders too should mould their lives in consonance with morality and spirituality. Neither wealth nor scholarship can bring you happiness. Only the Love of God confers endless Bliss on you. It not only bestows happiness but gives extreme strength as well.

*Any amount of learning without Love for
God is utter futility.*

*The foolish one, in spite of all learning, re-
mains a fool forever.*

*The wicked one, despite all learning, never
sheds his wickedness.*

*Learning promotes only logic but not pure
Wisdom.*

*Of what use is learning if it does not bring
you freedom from death?*

You must seek such learning as confers immortality. What is Immortality? The removal of immorality is immortality. Human life, which is mortal, is bound to perish one day or the other. Hence we must strive for morality, which is imperishable. This moral splendour is the need of the country today. It is My earnest wish that our students should cultivate moral splendour and strive for the welfare and upliftment of the country at a time when selfishness and self-interest are so rampant.

