

Students are the Future Saviours of a Country Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Iron gets rusted when it keeps lying in dust,
but its rust is removed when it comes in
contact with fire.

In the same way, humans are affected by the
company with which they associate.

(Telugu poem)

Rain water gets absorbed when it falls on
sand.

When the same rain water falls on fine clay, it
becomes sweet.

In the same way, the devotion of a person
shines according to his deservedness.

(Telugu poem)

Students! Embodiments of Love!

Human life by itself is very sacred. But it becomes good or bad according to the company with which it is associated. When you keep iron in dust, it gets rusted. But when the same iron is put in fire, it gets rid of its rust, becomes soft, and starts shining.

Particles of dust rise up in the sky in the company of wind but fall down into ditches when they are associated with rainwater. The dust particles do not have wings to fly up in the sky, nor have they feet to jump down. Both their rise and their fall happen by the effect of the company. Your good or bad depends upon the type of company you join.

Good company leads to detachment;
Detachment makes one free from delusion;
Freedom from delusion leads to steadiness
of mind;
Steadiness of mind confers liberation.

*Satsangatwe Nissangatwam,
Nissangatwe Nirmohatwam,
Nirmohatwe Nischalatattwam,
Nischalatattwe Jivanmukti.*

(Sanskrit verse)

Good company makes a man noble and divine

Good company makes you sacred and divine. On the other hand, bad company gives rise to bad feelings and bad thoughts, which prompt you to perform bad deeds. Therefore, it is essential for you to join good company and develop your humanness.

Good company can elevate one to the level of Divinity, whereas bad company can degenerate one to the level of an animal. The animal level is below the human level, and Divinity is above; the human level is in between these two.

You should make efforts to rise above the human level. No effort is needed for your downward fall. To become bad is easy. But it is difficult to attain the higher level. Though it may be difficult, you should still make efforts to reach higher levels.

But, unfortunately, people today associate with bad company, because of which good feelings are turned into bad feelings and good actions into bad actions —ultimately one's life becomes miserable.

Cultivate friendship only with persons of good character

Your thoughts are the root cause of everything. Therefore, you should have only noble, sacred, pure, and meaningful thoughts. But young people today entertain bad thoughts and bad feelings and perform bad actions, thereby wasting their precious young age.

When the iron is kept in dust, it acquires rust and loses its strength. When it undergoes the test of fire, it gets rid of the rust and regains its strength.

In order to get back its strength, the iron has to get rid of dust. What is this dust? This dust is nothing but the bad feelings of people, which arise out of bad company. One acquires all sorts of bad feelings due to bad company. As is the company, so you become. Therefore, it is said, Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are. There is no harm in taking time to enquire whether the person with whom you want to make friendship is good or bad.

When you have high status and good position in society, everyone will run after you, saying, hello, hello! But when you lose your position and fall on bad days, everyone will run away from you. This is not true friendship.

What is true friendship? A true friend is one who will follow you like a shadow in times of both pleasure and pain, profit and loss.

When the tank is full of water, thousands of frogs will come into it. But when the tank becomes dry, not even a single frog will be seen there. Similarly, when you have a good position and high rank, everyone will follow you. But you will find none in your times of difficulty. Such friendship is not true friendship.

A true friend is one who remains with you in joy and sorrow and in prosperity and adversity.

Make friendship with only such persons with proper discrimination. Don't make friendship

with everybody who says hello, hello to you. This is a great mistake. You should know the background, habits, behaviour, discipline, and other qualities of the person with whom you want to make friendship. You should also try to know with whom they associate and what type of company they keep.

If you come to know that someone is in bad company, do not even look at their face. Even if they say hello to you, move away from them, saying goodbye, because such company can even endanger your life.

But today, due to the effect of modern education, students develop friendship with all types of people. It cannot be called true friendship. Such a type of friendship is temporary, like passing clouds. Entertain such friendship only to the extent necessary.

Character is very important for a student. A student without character is like a living corpse. Never make friendship with those who have no character. One who does not have individual character will not have social character also. How can a person without social character have national character?

Therefore, first and foremost, you should have individual character. You should develop steady vision and unwavering mind. You should not even look at the face of someone who has a wavering mind like the pendulum of a clock. Such students are very bad boys. You should develop no intimacy with such bad boys. Otherwise, you will also ultimately become a bad boy.

Develop friendship with only those who are good. As I have already said, if iron is kept in dust, it loses its strength. Iron is a very hard and strong metal. But when it is put in dust, it loses its strength. When it is put in fire, it becomes bright and soft. All its impurities also get removed. When it becomes pure and soft, it can be changed into any shape by beating it with a hammer. It can be made into a circle or a semicircle or any other shape. All types of

instruments can be made from it.

Good company is also like fire, which makes your heart pure by removing the dust of all impurities. Only when your heart becomes free from all impurities is it possible for you to overcome all your sorrow, grief and misery. As long as your heart is full of impurities, there can be no transformation in you.

Education should lead you to the goal of life

Everyone should undergo the process that is called refinement (*samskar*). What does *samskar* mean? *Samskar* means to get rid of impurities and cultivate good qualities.

Many edible food items are produced in their natural form. We eat rice and many types of pulses. However, we do not partake of them in their raw form, in which they are harvested.

Take paddy, for example. First, you have to separate the paddy plants from weeds. Then you have to remove the husk to get rice. After getting rice from paddy, you have to put it on fire to cook. Only then does it become fit for eating.

In the same manner, precious metals like gold and silver have to be refined. They cannot be used in the form they are obtained from mines because they are mixed with dust and other impurities. They have to be made pure by putting them in fire and by various other means. Only then can they become pure metals, which can be made into many types of ornaments. Therefore, refinement is necessary for everything.

This is a cloth. First, it is in the form of cotton, mixed with seeds. If you want to make cloth out of it, you have to separate seeds from cotton and make yarn out of cotton. For cotton to become cloth, it has to undergo many processes of refinement.

Similarly, only when one undergoes refinement can one attain purity. Whatever you

study today is limited only to bookish knowledge. Refinement is required with respect to your studies also. Howsoever highly educated you may become, your knowledge is useless without refinement.

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

A mean-minded man will not give up his
evil qualities.

Modern education leads only to argumentation,
not to total wisdom.

(Telugu Poem)

Modern education makes you fit only for argumentation. This is not the purpose of your education. Education is not meant merely to fill your belly. Agriculture is for food, culture is for wisdom. But you entertain wrong thoughts and consider that education is only for eking out a livelihood. Education is of two types: one for life and the other for a living. Besides providing the means of a living, education should also lead you to the goal of life.

Leading a purposeless life and ultimately meeting one's end is not the goal of life. You should lead an ideal life and set an ideal for others to follow. Man may die, but his ideals always live. Therefore, all of you should become ideal students. Ideals never die; they are immortal. For generations together, high ideals will be followed by others.

But people today do not know what ideal life means. They acquire some high degrees and become egoistic, considering themselves to be highly educated. As long as a person is beset with ego, ostentation, and jealousy, they will be of no use to society. Society will also not respect them. A foolish man is respected only in his house. The head of a village is respected only in the village. The king is respected in his kingdom. But a cultured man is respected everywhere in the world.

Therefore, first of all make efforts to imbibe cultural values and protect Indian culture. To whichever country you belong, protect the

culture of that country. That is the real purpose of education.

Respect and serve your parents

You should maintain your relationship with others on an even keel. There is no need for you to hate anyone. But use your discretion to choose your friends. It is better not to have any friend at all rather than developing friendship with a foolish person. Cultivate friendship only with good people.

Who is a good person? Those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony are noble ones (*Manasyekam vachasyekam, karmanyekam mahatmanam*).

You should choose a person as your friend who has unity of thought, word, and deed (*trikarana shuddhi*). Do not even go near a person who thinks something, speaks something else, and acts without any relation to their speech or thinking. Those who lack harmony of thoughts, words, and deeds are wicked (*Manasyanyath vachasyanyath, karmanyanyath duratmanam*).

A true human being is one who maintains harmony between their thoughts, words, and deeds. Try to become such a person. The proper study of mankind is man. But today people do not pay attention to this noble principle. They do not try to understand the feelings of others. Here is a small example.

Suppose there is a dog in a ditch twenty feet, away from you. If you go your way without bothering about the dog, the dog will also not take any notice of you. It will not even get up. But if you go near it with a small stone in your hand, it will immediately run away.

A dog is able to know the thoughts of a person, but today, one does not try to know the thoughts and feelings of one's fellow beings. In this way, a human has become even inferior to a dog. A human has to become not a dog but God.

The three letters that make the two words DOG and GOD are the same. The only difference lies in the way we arrange them. If you start from 'D', it becomes DOG; if you start from 'G', it becomes GOD. This is the discrimination that a spiritual aspirant should develop. You undertake many spiritual practices like chanting, penance (*japa, tapa*), etc., but they are not the real spiritual practices. The real spiritual practice is to know the truth.

Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by chanting can one cross the ocean of life.

One can achieve it only by serving the pious.

(Sanskrit Verse)

You should serve noble people. Respect and serve your mother, father, guru, and elders. Any amount of spiritual practices that you undertake cannot be considered as spiritual practice (*sadhana*) in the true sense if you disobey your elders and ignore the words of your parents. Even God will not accept this type of spiritual practice.

If you hurt living beings and worship God, God will not be pleased. First and foremost, have love for all living beings. Only then will you have loved God. God is the indweller of all beings (*Easwara sarva bhutanam*). God is immanent in all living beings.

You should respect noble people in a befitting manner, with heart full of sacred feelings. All are equal in society. However, you should follow certain principles for your own good. Without discipline, there can be no well being (*Na sreya niyamam vina*). Don't have a relationship with people who lack character and good qualities.

However, there is no harm in offering your respects to everyone. Whomsoever you salute, it reaches God (*Sarva jiva namaskaram Kesavam pratigachchhati*).

Purpose of education is to foster virtues in students

A student should not develop relationship with all sorts of people. There are students, both boys and girls. Neither should boys develop any connection with girls nor girls with boys. Boys and girls who develop such relationship and go on the wrong path are worse than dogs. Such boys and girls deceive even their parents. They waste their life, and their birth is itself a curse. Do not lead such a useless life.

What sort of life you should lead?

A person, who does not utilise their hands
in the worship of the Lord,
Who does not sing His glory till the mouth
aches, and
Who is bereft of compassion and truth
Is verily a curse on their mother's womb.
(Telugu Poem)

Is the birth of such a person meant only to give pain to their mother's womb? What is the purpose of all their studies? The purpose of education is to foster virtues. This is the essence of all education. Books are full of knowledge but what is the use if the head is full of mud? Can you call it learning? No, no. First of all, you have to get rid of impure thoughts from your mind.

If the head is empty, one can fill it with something.
But if it is already filled with trivial and mundane matters, where is the place for anything else?
How is it possible to fill the head with something sacred if it is not emptied?
(Telugu Poem)

This tumbler is full of water. How can you pour milk into it? First, you have to empty the tumbler; then you can pour milk into it. Moreover, if you pour milk into water, you will spoil both.

Cultivate sacred thought to love and respect your parents; show them gratitude and give

them happiness. There will be no worse sinner than you if you deceive your parents and take to an evil path. If you perform such a heinous act, what is the use of all your education? Even earning your livelihood by begging is better than acquiring this type of education. Therefore, acquire the education that develops virtues in you.

A son without character,
Education without purpose,
Human race without morality, and
A human without peace
Are like night without moon.

(Telugu Poem)

Your education should make you a paragon of virtues. You should become the ideal leaders of this country. In fact, you are the future saviours of the country. If the youth of the nation go astray, the entire nation is bound to come to grief. If there is a bend in the sapling, there will be a bend in the tree also. The future of a country depends on its students. Students are the very foundation of the mansion of the country.

Young age is the foundation of the mansion of life. This is the celibate stage (*brahmacharya ashram*), on which the first floor, the householder stage (*grihastha ashram*), is built. The floor of the recluse stage (*vana-prastha ashram*) is similarly built on the first floor, the householder stage. The top floor, the renunciant stage (*sanyasa ashram*), is similarly built on the recluse stage. Thus, the mansion of life is a multi-storied building. If the foundation of this mansion is not strong, the entire mansion will collapse. Therefore, you should make the foundation strong.

Young age is very important and sacred. In fact, it is the golden age. It should be free from the rust and dust of evil qualities. Students should have good qualities. All that they see, speak, hear, and do should be sacred. It is, therefore, necessary that first of all they fill their heart with love for God.

Your heart is like a big tank, and your senses

are like the taps. If you fill your heart with the water of love, the same sweet water will come out of the taps of your senses. As your heart, so will be your actions. Therefore, when you fill your heart with love, all your actions will be suffused with love.

Do not waste precious human birth

If you throw a stone in a well, it will give rise to waves. How far will the waves go? They will spread in the entire well and go up to its edges.

Similarly, when you drop a stone of a good or a bad thought in the lake of your mind, its effect will spread to your entire body. If it is a bad thought, your eyes, ears, and tongue will see, hear, and speak all that is evil. Your hands will also perform evil actions and your feet will take you to undesirable places. The effect of your thoughts will spread to your entire being right from head to toe. Therefore, the heart is very important.

But students today pay attention only to art but not heart. Heart is inside, art is outside. Art is worldly, heart is divine. Art is related to worldliness (*pavritti*) whereas heart is related to spirituality (*nivriddhi*).

The principle of *nivriddhi* is most sacred and sublime. This is described in *Vedanta* as: It is attributeless, unsullied, final abode, eternal, pure, enlightened, free, and embodiment of sacredness (*nirgunam, niranjanam, sanathana nikanam, nitya, shuddha, buddha, mukta, nirmala swarupinam*).

One should have mental purity (*chittha shuddhi*) to attain this. Good deeds give mental purity (*Chittasya shuddhaye karmah*). All the actions that we perform should contribute to purity of heart.

There was a sage by name Thiruthondar Alwar in Tamil Nadu who prayed,

“Oh Lord! I worship You with all the purity of my heart.

I have attained this precious human birth with great difficulty.

It is not so easy to attain human birth.

It can be attained only by the accumulated merits of many past lives.

Let not this golden opportunity slip away from my hand.”

The same feelings were expressed by Mira also. She prayed,

“Oh Giridhari!

I went deep into the ocean and found this pearl of human life.

Please shower Your grace on me so that this precious pearl of human life does not slip away from my hand and fall into the ocean again.

If I lose this, my entire life is doomed.”

You are blessed with rare human birth, which you attained as a result of merits of so many past lives. Make sure that you do not waste this human life by taking to a wrong path. Even if one does not attain the level of Divinity, one should at least remain at the level of a human being and should not degenerate to the level of an animal. It is very important for students to learn this.

Both good and bad are prevalent in the world. See to it that you take to a good path without bothering about what others are doing. Consider even your small defects as big, and at the same time, do not magnify the small defects of others. First of all, get rid of your own defects and cultivate virtues. Only then will humanness blossom in you.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajans*, “*Madhura Madhura Murali Ghana Shyama...*” and “*Subrahmanyam Subrahmanyam...*”)

– From Bhagavan’s Divine Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 8 July 1996.