

24. Be Queens!

Principal Parvathamma has been yearning a long time for this day, when I could come to your college and speak to you. This college, as she said just now, has been in existence for eighty-five years, and it has educated and sent into various fields of life thousands of women. Bharath (India) is the land where *Bha* or *Brahma-vidya* (knowledge of Brahman) has attracted the *rathi* (attachment) of its people, where the people have a natural attraction toward spiritual practices, where the call of the Infinite is listened to with keenness. This keenness has now declined. It is a great misfortune, and you must see that this keenness is not lost. You should decide that it must be revived, at least in your own hearts.

An intellect that is moved only by truth and a consciousness that will not tolerate the impurity of meanness or vice—these two are the prerequisites for the fulfilment of that ideal. This is the wealth (*aasthi*) that will make a person a believer in God (*asthika*)! The intellect must investigate, as far as it can, the fundamental problem: why this birth, whither this life, whence this adventure, what is the effect of human actions on this life and on future lives, etc. Consciousness must dive deep into the Divinity that underlies it.

Have faith in your own essential Divinity

Education that does not confer modesty and wisdom is a sheer waste of precious time. Whatever else you learn or do not learn, equip yourself with the strength that is necessary to be virtuous, to resist temptation and the lures of the objective world. Discrimination is not the cleverness that is given inordinate value today but the capacity to see things in their proper proportion, to evaluate the temporary and the lasting, the particular and the universal, the shallow and the deep. You must also have the attitude of reverence toward the past, toward the elders who are the repositories of the saintly spiritual wisdom and the experience that you have to acquire.

Have also faith—faith in your own essential Divinity, faith in the higher values attainable by earnest practice and the exercise of detachment. Life becomes sweeter with a little dose of denial, too; if you get all your desires, it begins to cloy. Deny yourselves many of the things your mind runs after, and you will find that you become tough enough to bear both good fortune and bad.

Now, people are apt to go by the appearance rather than the reality of things. Once, an ardent devotee of Ganesha used up all his riches to make golden images of that God as well as of the mouse that is His vehicle, besides an umbrella, a seat, and other appurtenances, all of gold. Later he fell on evil days, so he had to sell all these loved things. The merchant who offered to purchase them started weighing each item and declaring the price it would fetch. When he said that the Ganesha would fetch as much as the mouse, for both were of equal weight, the man got enraged and complained that he was being let down. Ganesha must fetch more than the mouse! That was because he forgot the reality and attached value to the appearance, form, and name and not to the substance.

Education is not for mere living

If value is given to the office that a man holds, which is but temporary, as soon as he retires and starts sitting on a bench in the Laal Bagh (a park), people will stop recognising and saluting him! The schooling that gives only outer polish is just a waste of opportunity.

Education is not for mere living; it is for life, a fuller life, a more meaningful, a more worthwhile life. There is no harm if it is also for gainful employment, but the educated must be aware that existence is not all, that gainful employment is not all.

Again, education is not for developing the faculty of argument, criticism, or winning a polemic victory over your opponents or exhibiting your mastery over language or logic. That study is best that teaches you to conquer this cycle of birth and death, that gives you mental equipoise that will not be affected by the prospect of death, that will not be disturbed by the blessings or blows of fate. That study begins where this study of yours ends.

When this material world is studied and analysed, you realise that it is just a conglomeration of good and bad, and you aspire for something beyond this duality. The light will dawn on you only after you have acquired truth, righteousness, peace, and love (*sathya, dharma, santhi*, and *prema*). The root cause is that the basic thing is not known or experienced. How then can lasting peace be achieved?

Joy and grief are not brought about by others

When the doctor said to apply this ointment at the place where the scorpion stung his son, the fond father asked the son, "Where did the scorpion sting?" The boy replied, "in that corner," and the father applied the ointment to that spot on the floor! How can the pain disappear? Take the lamp to the place where the darkness is. Joy and grief are not brought about by others, they are emanations from within you. So, cure yourself, do not try to put the blame on others and start plans to cure them.

You carry piles of books up and down, from your rooms to college and back. You know more about questions than about the answers. You can learn more by observation and meditation than by pouring over the pages of books. The really valuable things you can learn from the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and religious scriptures.

A pandit engaged a boat to take him across the flooded Godavari river. When the journey over the river started, he began a lively conversation with the boatman. He asked the boatman whether he had any schooling, and when the reply came that he had none, he said sadly, "Alas! A quarter of your life has gone to waste. It is as if you have drowned those years in the Godavari."

The pandit asked the boatman whether he could tell him the time from his watch. The boatman confessed he did not have a watch nor cared to have one. The pandit deplored and said, "Half your life has gone into the Godavari." His next question was about newspapers —did the boatman read any, what was his favourite paper? The boatman replied that he did not read any, nor did he care to know the news. He had enough to worry about already. The pandit declared forthright that three-quarters of the boatman's life had been liquidated.

Just then, the sky darkened with storm clouds, and there was an imminent threat of rain. The boatman turned to the pandit; it was his turn to put a question. He asked, "Can you swim?" When the frightened passenger confessed he could not, the boatman said, "In that case, your entire life is now going to merge in the Godavari."

This is the case of the educated in India today They do not have the education that will help them in distress or dire need to win back their mental poise.

Be prepared for both joy and grief

You are being carried along the flood of material pleasures and lures. How long can you drift like that? When

you live in the world of desire, you must be prepared for both joy and grief. If you invite Minister *Bhoga* (material enjoyment), you must be prepared for the visit along with him of his Private Secretary *Roga* (illness)! Invite, on the other hand, the Minister *Thyaga* (sacrifice) or his colleague *Yoga* (meditation), and you will be happy to receive their Private Secretary *bhoga* (enjoyment), who plays a minor role in the presence of his master.

Develop a pure and strong character

Real education is not the command over a number of languages. I remember an incident that happened some time ago. The wife of an educated gentleman used to get letters from a certain LakshmiNarayana, and the husband suspected him to be a boy friend of her college days. When a telegram came one day asking the wife to meet LakshmiNarayana at the railway station, he hid the message and waited for developments, full of anger at the stranger as well as at his own wife. Tragedy was averted when Lakshmi, the college friend, rushed in, disappointed that the wife did not meet her at the station according to the telegram. It seems she had come to that very town because her husband, Narayana, had been transferred to that place! Mere literacy is the source of such silly suspicions!

What is the worth of education if virtuous conduct is not found in those who claim to have been educated? Develop a pure and strong character. Remember, most of you will get married, and you will have the great responsibility of rearing up families. That is a very valuable opportunity. Learn to adjust your likes and dislikes to those of others, learn the gentle art of sacrifice and service —keep in mind, when you react angrily against your mother-in-law, that a day will come when you too will have daughters-in-law! Try to appreciate their points of view; they may have greater forethought, greater experience, a greater sense of responsibility; they may know more about people and things than you, who are fresh entrants in their household.

The family of the husband whom you marry is a good training ground; it is a field of spiritual practice. When you are found fault with, do not fly into a rage. Instead, examine your own conduct and discover the faults in yourselves. Self-examination is the first step to self-improvement and peace. Do not exaggerate the faults of others, but give them a wide margin and see them as small. Exaggerate yours; see them big and strive to remove them fast. Take all fault finders as your friends and well-wishers, for they give you warning signals in time.

Cultivate a sweet temper and sweet speech

I find that now-a-days, the art of cynical argumentativeness has spread everywhere. This is a dangerous sign. On account of this, reverence has disappeared, and respect for the teacher has also gone. Of course, there are teachers who undermine their own dignity by such acts as begging cigarettes from their own students!

A murderer was once sentenced in court, but, while arguing his defense, he pleaded, “I am the *Atma* (Pure Self), as the *Gita* declares. How can I kill or the deceased be killed?” The judge answered, “Do not worry. You will not die when you are hanged, nor can I get you executed. It is all *Atma*, undying, unkilling, everywhere, in all.” *Dharma* (Law) is applied by such people only when it suits them; otherwise, they do not care for its commands.

Cultivate a sweet temper and sweet speech, which is its natural consequence. Speak without anger or spite, without any artificiality or formality, straight from the heart. Then, you will be spreading joy and love among all. When your parents plead that they cannot afford to clothe you as you wish or give the various frills of finery that you crave, do not get wild and quarrel with them. Be bold enough to resist the temptation of yielding to the pressure of the crowd. Remember: nourishing good qualities (*guna-poshana*) is as important as nourishing the body

(*deha-poshana*).

Be silent partners, inspirers, and teachers

You go about filling every bus in attractive dresses and carrying heaps of books, but let Me tell you that the greatest beauty aid for women is virtue. Attach importance to discipline (*nishta*) and not to breakfast (*nashta*). You can miss breakfast but not discipline. Live a regulated disciplined life from now on; make it a habit, an armour that will protect you from harm.

Pray to God and recite His name or meditate on His glory for some fixed period of time every day; you will find it amply rewarding. Don't say, "Let me have a taste of the reward, and then I shall start the spiritual practice." Practise, and the experience will follow, must follow.

This college is known as the Maharani's Women's College. I want each of you to be a *maharani* (queen) of your household. Queens watch the world from the inner apartments of the palace, through interstices in the wall or enclosures; they can see, but they are safe from other eyes. That is the highest women's duty, as laid down in the scriptures (*sastras*). You should not be seen or talked about; you must be away from public gaze; you must be silent invisible partners, inspirers, and teachers.

If you desire that others honour you, you should honour them too. If others must serve you, serve them first. Love begets love; trust engenders trust. Self-aggrandizement and selfishness bring disaster in their train. As a matter of fact, no joy can equal the joy of serving others. Be like this timepiece; show the correct time to all who desire to know, regardless the person who comes for the information. It has no likes and dislikes.

A prayerful life will be a source of strength

People call you weak. Do not believe it. Having all these strong points in your favour —intelligence, discipline, spiritual capacity, consciousness of other's excellences, awareness of your faults, eagerness to improve yourself— how can you be called "weak"?

I was asked by your Principal to plant a champaka tree in the garden of this college, and I did it gladly. But the thing that will give me greater pleasure is to plant the sapling of prayer in your hearts. A prayerful life will not yield to the fury of passion; it will be a source of strength and cooperation.

Decline in the discipline of constant thought of the Lord (*namasmarana*) has been the cause of the decline of this country. A single household now has ten factions and parties. Those who cannot reform their own homes have started reforming the country and advising cooperation and harmonious living to others.

Knowledge of the *Atma* as the very basis of all beings is now forgotten, and that is the cause of lack of peace —all the unrest, the confusion, and the moral crisis of today. It is to awaken the sleeping and communicate this message to them that I have come. I bless that all of you may have lives full of joy and peace; I bless that this college may have many many more years of useful life, useful in helping the women of this land to realise themselves and help others to do so.

The journey of every person is toward the cemetery. Every day brings you nearer to the moment of death. So do not delay the duty you must carry out for your own lasting good.

Recognise that you are Siva (God) before you become a *sava* (corpse); that will save you from further deaths.

Sathya Sai Baba