

12. Equal half, not better half

A school is assuredly a sacred place, where a holy task is being put into action---the shaping and moulding of the fortunes of many generations of the country. The children here learn the skills and the special aptitudes which can take each of them to the goal of happiness, which can take the families and societies to which they belong, to peace and prosperity. They are here corrected and trained; they are introduced to the grand culture that the ancient seers and sages of the land have discovered and laid down.

This is therefore a sacred place and I am glad I came here and met these children. I am glad that their parents, especially their mothers, have also been invited and are present. For they should know the school which their children attend and the teachers who train them, so that they may contribute their gratitude to those who share their responsibility.

More than all, the character of the children must be made strong and pure. Give them all the confidence and courage they need to become good, honest, self-reliant

children. It is not enough if they learn something by which they can make a living; the manner of living is more important than the standard of living. The children must also have reverence towards their religion, their culture, their educational attainments and their country. They must learn well their mother tongue, so that they can appreciate the great poetical works and epics written by the seers of their land. This will give them valuable guidance in the stormy days ahead. They must also develop a deep reverence for their' motherland, for Bhaarath is the most ancient as well as the wisest teacher of humanity and every, child born here has a great responsibility to know, respect and practise the teaching, which is so universal and so meaningful.

Do not give room in your hearts to envy

The human heart when young is very soft; it responds to grief and pain in fellow-men. It is the example of elders, the lessons they receive from parents, the company they get into, and the training they get in school and society that harden these hearts into stone. Keep those hearts soft; learn to share with others their grief and their joy; do not get jealous when others are happier or when others win prizes or credits in examinations. Emulate their industry, pray for a higher share of intelligence or a sharper memory, but do not give room in your hearts to envy and malice. Envy is a deadly poison; it will contaminate character, ruin health and rob you of peace. Be *An-asuyas* (un-affected by envy), and you can subdue the Gods of Creation, Protection and Destruction. Like a pest that destroys growing crops, envy enters slyly and spreads quickly. So even in small matters, be vigilant to ensure your not falling a prey to envy.

Parents must not find fault with others in the hearing of children, or show their hatred or envy of others before these tender minds. The Goddess at Shri Shailam is called Bhramaraamba-- the Bee that hovers ever at the Feet of Shiva, drawn by the fragrance of His Glory---for He is called Mallika-Arjuna, the White Jasmine. The hearts of children are pure, they are drawn easily and naturally to the Feet of the Lord for they have no *vishaya-vaasana* (attachment to sense objects) preventing them from inhaling aright the Fragrance of the Divine Glory. The bliss that radiates from the faces of these children is evidence of their innate simplicity and sweetness.

Learn to respect and honour your parents

The parents of these children have to be congratulated, for they have realised the value of school education for their children and put them here, in spite of various difficulties, economic, social, etc. I know how many of them are depriving themselves of a full meal every day so that their children may get the benefit of education. Children must be grateful to them for all this and for the love they bear for them. They daily pray for your health; they pray that no harm may befall you; they pray that you earn a good name in school. I know all this, for they pray to Me. You must learn and behave in such a way that they are made happy, in return. Until marriage, you are under their care and after that, you must bring honour and good name to the family of the husband. That is your duty and it is only when you fulfill the duty that you are blessed by God.

The parents gave you this body and fostered the intelligence and love that are embedded in it; so, gratitude is their due. If you do not honour the parents who are the creators in human form, how can you learn to honour the Creator in Divine Form? Moreover, the parents reveal to you the glory of God and the means of worshipping Him; they are the first representatives of authority which you meet with, authority modified by love and care. Learn to bend before that authority and you will learn how to submit to the Lord. As the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined

Schooling is not merely for *aahaara* and *aah-laada* (food and delight), for earning a living and learning to enjoy leisure. It is to activate the Divine qualities of *viveka*, *vairaagya* and *vichakshana* (wisdom in action, non-attachment and discriminatory power), to ensure in the individual the stabilising virtues of *shaanthy*, *sathyam* and *dharma* through the blossoming of *prema*.

Faith can give strength and peace

The flag which was hoisted now is the Flag of Victory, which marks the winning of Freedom by India. When we hoist it in the quadrangle of a school, it must mark the victory of the school in shaping its students into citizens worthy of India's ancient culture, worthy of India's precious heritage of spiritual wealth. The root is education and the fruit is virtue. Otherwise all the schooling is a waste of time and money. This is a temple of Goddess Saraswathi, who grants the wisdom to grasp the ultimate Truth and to acquire the knowledge which dispels ignorance for ever. This is the alms that Shankaraachaarya begged from Annapoorna, the Goddess at Kaashi; not the alms of a handful of rice for relieving physical hunger.

It is virtue that made Dhroupadhi immortal; India had many such great women whose virtue and wisdom are extolled through the centuries. Seetha, Saavithri, Gaargi, Anasuya, Dhamayanthi; women who are installed in the hearts of millions of people who worship them; they draw inspiration from them when confronted with calamity or crisis. They were full of unsullied love towards all who suffered; they were ready to serve the poor and the distressed; they were so steady in their faith in God that they put up with the direst misery in joyful submission to His Will. Faith can give you that strength and that peace.

You must love and revere your teachers. That is the first step in the discipline which leads to a virtuous character. They have your progress as the spur in their work; they have a lot of patience to put up with your errors; they take your hand in theirs and lead you gently on into the wonderland of knowledge about the world and its Creator. If you disregard them, how can you imbibe the lessons they are eager to teach you? Without *sikshana* (learning), there can be no *rakshana* (protection); education alone ensures safety. If educated, you can be safe from the

temptations of the world which induce you to speak falsehoods, to appropriate another's property, to hate others, to take advantage of another's weakness or ignorance.

The ideals of Indian marriage

So, derive the best out of these elders who have been entrusted with your education. They are specially trained for the purpose and selected for their efficiency. If you respond to their efforts, their enthusiasm will remain green. In ancient times, the voice of the teacher was supreme. Even emperors did not interfere with the freedom of the teachers to train and punish their sons. The son was handed over to the teacher and they supported him in all his efforts to instruct and improve him. They never sided with the son against the teacher. But now the children are the masters; they dictate terms; if they get poor marks, the parents declare war against the unfortunate teacher who cannot inflict even the slightest punishment on the pupil. That is why the standard of teaching and learning has fallen so low today.

The ideal for women is the status of *Sathi*, the faithful wife, the loving mother. The *dharma* is very laudable. The Indian ideal of marriage is that the right half is the husband and the left half of the same body is the wife; *pathi* and *sathi* (husband and wife) are complementary, parts of the same unit. When Shankaraacharya challenged the famous ritualist scholar Mandanamishra for an intellectual duel, the judge who was to hear the arguments and counter-arguments and decide who has won, was Udayabhaarathi, the wife of Mandanamishra, himself a contestant. The other contestants agreed to this! Imagine the faith that they had, not only in her intellectual eminence, but more than that, in her utter impartiality and integrity.

The true sign of a Hindu housewife

And, do you think she neglected her domestic duties during the long hours when Shankaraacharya and Man-danamishra were carrying on their intellectual warfare? No, she was attending to her household chores. That is the true sign of a Hindu housewife. She was an eminent scholar; yet she was cooking in the kitchen for her husband and the guests and managing the household like an ideal *Grihalakshmi*. It is said that she put a flower-garland round the necks of both the contestants and attended to her work, away from both. She said that she could discover who scored the victory quite easily, for the garland on the defeated candidate would fade while that on the successful person will remain fragrant and fresh as ever.

When at last her husband lost the encounter, according to her own judgement, she came forward and claimed her right as the equal half not the better half, but the 'left' halo to continue the contest. "You cannot claim the laurels of victory until you defeat me too, for I am half of my husband, and I remain undefeated."

What a great inspiration is this Bhaarathi for all of you! Our *Puraanas* and *Shaastras*, the *Upanishads*, the *Vedhas*, the lives of the saints and seers of this land, contain hundreds of such incidents which serve as beacons to light your path. Learn about them and derive benefit from them.

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If you deny God, it is as if you deny yourself. There is no God, you declare; but, you assert that I exist. Well, who is that "I" that exists, that exists throughout the varying stages of growth, physical and mental, in joy and in grief?.

That "I" is God; believe it. For that "I" sees with the eye, tastes with the tongue, walks with the feet, argues with the intelligence; but, all the while, it is conscious that it is separate from all these.

When you affirm there is no God, you first assert and then declare the absence of the entity. You assert the non-existence of something that is. That "I" must be conceived as a wave of the ocean of God, not as the first person singular.

Sathya Sai Baaba