

31. Love and be loved

I AM glad you have met here as an association of teachers, and you have deemed it fit to honour a few teachers, who have won the love and gratitude of generations of students. This co-operation and mutual respect must become part of one's daily conduct, one's mental make-up, one's nature. This is what the *Rishis* of ancient India have consistently emphasised. 'Live together, revere each other; let not the seeds of envy and hate grow and choke the clear stream of Love,' is the prayer that they have taught the children of this land. Their teaching has been Unity Divinity Charity---in thought, word and deed, from the first breath to the last. When teachers transmit this heritage, unspoilt and undiminished, to the children, the future of the land is assured to be glorious.

Teachers should not trot out excuses, based on material considerations, to shirk or by-pass their essentially spiritual task of 'education.' They must bear trials and tribulations, with calm content, and do their work even more efficiently, so that God will reward them, and society will learn to revere them all the more. The world honours the man who suffers gladly, far more than the one who enjoys shamefacedly!

Fundamentally, the years of life are but a short span, a rest in a wayside caravanserai, a drama played on a rickety stage, a bubble upon the waters. During this fleeting hour, it has been given to few to share this golden chance of imparting instruction, inspiring devotion, instilling courage, into the growing children, so that the generation to follow will be ever grateful. Do your job well as a *puuja*, an offering at the Lotus Feet, and you will be amply rewarded with joy, peace, restfulness and rapture. These teachers whom you honour today have the same message for all of you. Do not call them poor, for they are rich spiritually, doing their duty which is well-understood, well-undertaken, and well-done joyously.

Teachers must turn the children to the path of peace

Teachers are not nowadays aware of the nobility of their profession; society has turned ungrateful. Boys and young men have the stars of the silver screen as their gods and guides; they learn deeply and dangerously from films, from horror comics, from crime books. They have no sense of values implanted in them early in life. They are carried away by the torrent of triviality. The teacher is a helpless witness of this tragedy; for, he has no strength and sustenance to impart, no ideal to implant, no enthusiasm to transmit. If only the teacher is imbued with the lessons of the *Upanishaths* and the Geetha, he can by precept and example turn the children along the path of peace and joy. Of course, the home and society must supplement his efforts and foster the impressions he is able to confer. The teacher must work in an atmosphere of Love and Truth, not Hate and Falsehood. He must move among the children, happy and content, not angry and sullen. Then only can he radiate Love.

No amount of advice and exhortation can make the teacher rise to the full stature of his profession. He has to improve himself; he cannot be improved by external pressure or persuasion. You might have taken up this profession for various reasons, but they are not relevant now. Once you have joined this grand association of teachers, you must endeavour to justify the trust placed in you, and serve the best interests of the children given unto your care, by parents who expect great things from you.

Character is the best tool for teaching profession

You only need to tread the footsteps of the great teachers of the past, who transmitted their spiritual wealth to succeeding generations. Of course, you were students some years ago, and naturally, as teachers, you try to shape your methods and manners on lines employed by your teachers. Perhaps, they do or do not approximate to the ideals I now spoke about. But, your duty is to delve into the Inner Reality and discover the spring of joy therein, so that the exacting task of moulding the children, into "children of Bhaarith" will be a re-creating job for you, highly refreshing and rewarding. Your character is the best tool for the profession you have entered upon; your learning is of course valuable, but, one can excuse a little less of it; character on the other hand, must be cent per cent, perfect. Live, not artificially, but quite in conformity with the message of the *rishis* : "*Sathyam vadha, Dharmam chara*" (utter the truth, tread the path of righteousness).

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