

## 21. Teaching values by example

A SOCIETY without values will cease to be human. The more human values are cherished, the better will be the growth of society, the nation and the world. We cannot rest content with an educational system which is confined to academic achievement. It has to promote simultaneously human virtues. The main problem of our education is how to adapt the spiritual and cultural traditions we have inherited from the past to the needs of daily life today.

The relationship between the individual and society has to be rightly understood. Why should the individual serve others? What claims has society on the individual? When we examine these issues we realise that the individual can find fulfillment only in society. Born in society, growing up in society, living in society, man ends his life in society. In the word *Samajam* (Society), *Sam* represents unity, *aa* means going towards. *Samajam* (society) means going forward in unity.

Society may be viewed as a many-petalled flower. Every individual is like a petal. All the petals together make for the beauty of the flower. Without the petals there will be no flower. Likewise, every individual is a petal making up the flower of society. Each one should manifest the glory of the divine.

Society may also be compared to a four-wheeled chariot. The four wheels are: *Aikamathyam* (Unity), *Swaadhenam* (Control), *Jnanam* (Knowledge) and *Sakhti* (Power). These four help the society to go forward.

### Truth does not change with time

How are human qualities to be promoted in society? Society is made up of individuals. No man can be an island to himself. Living amidst fellow human beings, man has to sow the seeds of love, rear the plants of harmony and offer the fruits of peace to society. Thereby his humanness is manifested. In the *Ashtaanga Yoga* (the Eightfold Yoga), this figures as the first among the different disciplines: *Yama* (outer sense control), *Niyama* (inner sense control), *Asana* (seating posture), *Pranayama* (breath control), *Pratyahara* (sense withdrawal or detachment), *Dhaarana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (inner communion).

*Yama* calls for the observance of the following practices: *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Sathyam* (truth), *Astheyam* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharyam* (celibacy) and *Aparigraha* (non-acquisitiveness). These are the five human values-to be cultivated in the language of *Vedanta*.

*Ahimsa* does not mean, as is commonly understood, not causing harm to others. It really means that one should not cause harm to anyone in thought, word or deed. This is the most important human quality. Only when this has been developed, will one be qualified to practise and experience Truth.

Truth does not mean merely telling the facts as one sees or knows them. Truth is that which does not change with time. It must be spoken with complete purity of mind, speech and body.

*Astheyam* means refraining from stealing what belongs to others. Even the thought of taking another's property should not arise in the mind. Nor should one tell others to commit theft. This is the third human value. The fourth is *Brahmacharya*. Observance of *Brahmacharya* means that whatever one thinks, says or does should be filled with thoughts of *Brahman*, Supreme Divinity. To be ever immersed in the consciousness of *Brahman* is *Brahmacharya*. All thoughts, words and deeds should be dedicated to the Divine. When the thoughts, which are prelude to action, are centered on God, they are unlikely to go astray.

*Aham* (the Ego) arises from the *Atma*. Thoughts are produced by the ego and give rise to speech. Hence all actions are based on the *Atma*. When all these are sanctified by dedication to God, the consciousness of oneness with *Brahman*---*Aham Brahmaasmi* (I am *Brahman*) ensues. That *Brahman* is *Prajna* (constant integrated awareness).

### **The acquisitive tendency has become a mania**

The fifth practice is *Aparigraha*. This is usually interpreted as not accepting other's property as gift or gratuitously. This is not the correct meaning. It really means performing actions without expecting any reward, without any acquisitive motives and in a completely selfless spirit. Today because all actions are done out of self-interest and desire for acquiring wealth, they lack true human quality. Even worship, religious ceremonies, pilgrimages and the like are done with some kind of expectations and not in a spirit of disinterested devotion.

People today are totally immersed in self-interest. Multiplying desires without limit, they are becoming demonic beings. They are not content with having what they need for essential purposes. They wish to accumulate enormously for the future. They are filled with worries and discontent. Thereby they forfeit their happiness here and in the hereafter. Birds and beasts are content with what 'they can get. Man alone is afflicted with insatiable desires. Birds and animals have no desire to hoard or to exploit others. But man is a prey to these vices. He forgets his natural human qualities and behaves worse than animals. When these tendencies are given up, the inherent divinity in man will manifest itself.

Human virtues cannot be acquired from others. They cannot be nourished from mere study of books. Nor can they be got ready made from teachers. They have to be cultivated by each person and the resulting joy has to be experienced by him.

The world sorely needs today human values. Attempts are being made to promote these values in the educational field. But they cannot be promoted through materialistic, worldly or scientific means. Without developing devotion to God no human quality can grow. The first requisite is faith in God. Doubts are raised whether God exists or not. Those who affirm that God exists and those who deny are equally incompetent to say anything about God if they know nothing about the nature of God.

To assert the existence of that which does not exist is ignorance. To deny the existence of that which exists is folly. God is omnipresent. There is no need to search for Him anywhere. Everything that we see is a manifestation of God. Wherever we are there is God. There can be no greater folly than to deny the existence of God when the whole cosmos bears witness to His handiwork. Everything in creation must be viewed as a manifestation of God. Only with this basic faith can one develop one's human personality.

### **A righteous life leads to peace**

Human values cannot be promoted merely by repeating the words *Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa*. The *Vedas* declare- "*Sathyam vada Dharmam chara*" (Speak the truth; adhere to right conduct). In practising *Dharma* there should be no *marina* (secret desires). Actions performed with such secret motives result in bondage. Truth and right conduct should be adhered to with pure intentions. Both of them are rooted in the eternal. A righteous life leads to peace. Love is to be experienced in the depths of peace. Love should find expression in non-violence. Where love prevails, there is no room for doing harm or violence to others. All these basic values have to be demonstrated in action and not limited to preaching.

### **Educationist's vision is turned outwards**

Many educationists and Vice-chancellors are present here today. Their vision is turned outwards toward the external physical world. I am concerned with the Inner Vision. It is not possible to reconcile the physical and the internal spiritual vision. The heart cannot be transformed by lessons in a classroom. The world cannot be changed by mere preaching. Only through action and practical example can the impulse for change be intensified. When one leads a disciplined and regulated life, the lesson will be learnt without any teaching. The people will follow of their own accord. This applies to human values. Only when they are practised by teachers and elders, will students practise them.

Those who seek to impart the values of *Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa* to others, must first try to practise them themselves whole-heartedly. To imagine that values can be instilled by teaching is a mistake. Such learning will have no permanent effect. Educationists must take note of this fact. If transformation is to be effected in students, the process must start from a very early age.

To propagate human values, it is advisable to keep as far away as possible from the powers that be. It is not possible to promote sacred values through the help of governmental authorities. Some well-intentioned leaders may formulate commendable schemes. But there is a frequent change of men in the seats of power. What, then, happens to human values? It is essential to be self-reliant and stand on our own legs. Only when you are untrammelled and independent can you propagate these sacred values freely and effectively. Educationists should try to set up an independent body for the formulation and implementation of educational policy, free from control or interference by the government. Only then will the promotion of human values succeed.

### **Unity is lacking in colleges and universities**

If there is unity among educationists, any undertaking can be successful. Today unity is lacking in colleges and universities. Students and teachers are at loggerheads. How, then, is national integration to be promoted? When there is no unity or harmony at home, how can there be national unity?

Those in power operate under their own compulsions. They can take over properties and enterprises, but they cannot promote values. They may occupy temples and take over temple properties, but they can exercise no control over God. Governments may exercise control over men, but they have no hold over men's qualities.

Educational institutions must promote the spiritual outlook among students. When students acquire spiritual values, human values will grow in them of their own accord. Human values are not things to be implanted from outside. They are within each individual. They have to be manifested from within.

Human values are in everyone. What we need are persons who will provide the stimulus and the encouragement to bring them out. If the feeling that the divinity that is present in everyone is one and the same, is promoted among all, human values will sprout naturally in every person. To have this sense of spiritual oneness is the prelude to experiencing the highest bliss.

### **Moulding of character must start with children**

Educational institutions should teach students to adhere to truth and to discharge their duties as a sacred obligation. Students should not allow success or failure to raffle their minds unduly. Courage and self-confidence must be instilled in the students.

*Bend the twig and bend the tree*, says the proverb. The moulding of character must start with children at the earliest age. Begin developing human values from the primary school. Some are concerned about our living in a "secular state". Secularism really means equal respects for all faiths and beliefs. There should be no hatred towards any faith. Other creeds or beliefs should not be condemned or derided. Some time ago there was an absurd idea that Sathya Sai educational institutions were religious institutions. Sai educational institutions are based on equal respect for all religions. They are wedded to unity and harmony.

Whatever studies you may pursue, do not give up your faith in God. To give up God is to give up life itself. Life is God. Truth is God. All that you do as an offering to God will be an expression of human values.

The educationists and Vice-chancellors who have assembled here have come to some decisions as a result of their high-minded deliberations. They are firmly convinced that human values have to be promoted. Whatever their limitations, they should strive to the extent possible to implement their decisions. The Divine is installed in their hearts. It is enough if they follow the promptings of the Divine. They are bound to achieve their objectives. If faith in God is strengthened, all values will develop in due course. Sublimate your lives by remembering, worshiping and adoring God.

*Valedictory discourse to the National Symposium on Value Orientation on. 26-9-1987.*

*The Lord has endowed man with a body and that is why every limb and every sense is worthy of reverent attention. Each must be used for his glory. The ear must exult when it gets a chance to hear the wonderful talks on God. The tongue must exult when it can praise him. Otherwise the tongue of the man is ineffective as the tongues of the frogs which croak day and night sitting on the marshy bank.*

*BABA*