

36. Students, parents and the Nation

DEAR students, teachers and lovers of education! Bharatias were wedded to Truth and Righteousness. Justice was their sheet-anchor. Students should safeguard today not the nation but Truth and Righteousness. Only students who are broad-minded and have a wide outlook can uphold Truth and Righteousness.

The world is based on Truth and Right Conduct. These two sustain the world. If they are protected, the world will be happy and prosperous. Victory will come in the wake of Truth and Righteousness. No other form of strength, including armed might, will ensure victory. Hence, students should consider themselves the guardians of Truth and Righteousness and equip themselves for this role.

Education is the formal expression of Truth, which is the basis of social harmony. The divine qualities of man can be seen in education as in a mirror. Today's educational system makes the student hard-hearted. He lacks the feelings of kindness and sympathy. Tolerance and compassion are totally absent. Those who should seek to serve the poor and the needy are wrapped up in their own selfish pursuits. Selfishness and self-centredness should be rooted out. Service to society should be regarded as the primary purpose of education.

Decline of moral values

Bharatiya culture is a sublime one. It is incomparably great. But the advance of modern technology has shaken the traditional institutions like a powerful cyclone. It is true that materially, scientifically and economically, great progress has been made. But morally, spiritually and socially man has fallen a great deal. Moral values have been shattered. In trying to make life more comfortable with the help of machines, men have become slaves of the machine. It is, therefore, incumbent on students to see that science and technology are used on right lines for the good of mankind. Unfortunately, even those who profess to be leaders of society and who claim to be interested in promoting the well-being of the people, are not acting along right lines to set a good example to the students.

Education when it gets linked with egoism, loses its wider perspective. It becomes supremely purposeful only when it is related to spirituality. Hence students should rid themselves of egoism and strive to promote the welfare of society, through the knowledge acquired by them, with faith and self-confidence.

Education is not mere verbal knowledge. It should enable one to manifest his inherent divinity. It should promote the practice of Truth and Right Conduct. Unfortunately educational institutions today have become merely workshops manufacturing degree-holders. The acquisition of degrees cannot constitute education. Education must promote ethical behaviour. It must: foster self-control. This is the essential function of education.

Parents should possess exemplary character

If students are to *conduct* themselves properly, the parents have to set the right example. Unfortunately, even though many of the parents might be educated, wealthy and interested in *Bharatiya* culture, their practical conduct is not exemplary. This is the reason why most students go astray. All parents want their children to get a good education, good jobs and earn high incomes. But few of them want that they should grow into ideal citizens. In some instances, where the students have developed some spiritual interests, the parents try to discourage them.

There are parents who behave like Hiranyakasipu and take their children to task for their interest in spiritual practices at such an early age. Nor is that all. Some of them even try to cover up the bad behaviour of their children by pretending that they are well behaved. They make no effort to correct the children and turn them towards the right path. Because of this attitude of the parents, the students are taking to bad ways and are spoilt like Dhritarashtra's children (the Kauravas). The students are not to blame. It is the parents who are responsible for the students' misbehaviour, which is reflected in indiscipline in educational institutions.

Students must be made to feel proud about their country, their people and their culture. They should realise that wealth and strength, are of no value without character. Of what avail was all his wealth to Dhritarashtra? Because of the wickedness of his sons, he lost everything in the end.

Education today develops knowledge and skills but not character. Right education should promote good qualities. There is no need to seek a new system of education or effect reforms in society. It is enough if we have young men and women of good character and integrity. They will make the country great and prosperous.

Students! You have to realise the importance of mental transformation. All kinds of political and economic reforms are taking place. But little is being done to promote the sacred *Bharatiya* culture. What we need is spiritual transformation. It is the absence of spirituality that accounts for all the chaos, conflict and disorder in the world.

The two-maxims of Hindu tradition

The Hindu tradition laid stress on two maxims: Speak the Truth; Follow Righteousness. These two vital principles have been obliterated today. Mammon reigns supreme. Wealth is worshipped as God. Malpractices are the offerings made to this deity. Humanness has been sacrificed. There must be a return to human values. Education must aim at promoting these values. Planting the seed of love and fostering the tree of tolerance, students should seek to offer the fruit of peace to society. This should be their primary duty.

Students! You do not become educated merely by getting degrees. You will be truly educated only when you render services to the people. Engage yourselves in service to the people. True education is that which equips one for service and not merely for earning wealth. Fill your hearts with compassion. A compassionate heart is the seat of the Divine.

Role of Sai Institutions in shaping students

It is asked: who is to blame for the present state of education--the students or the teachers? It must be remembered that today's teachers were themselves students once. Today's students will be tomorrow's teachers. Hence students should train themselves properly for their future roles. It was with this object in view that the Sathya Sai educational institutions were started. Today's students are the future nation-builders. Only when the students learn to conduct themselves with integrity and fairness will they be able to restore the nation's ancient values and cultural heritage. The ancients achieved name and fame by their adherence to values. Students in those days were exemplars of tolerance and compassion. They were wedded to Truth and Righteousness. Consequently they lived long lives. Unfortunately such attitudes are not to be seen among students now. They have no trace of selflessness in them. They have installed conceit and ostentation at the altar of education. These traits are alien to true education and should be totally eradicated. Humility and obedience, which are the insignia of the educated man, should be promoted. Students today are failing to show reverence even to their parents, much less to elders.

To flaunt one's degrees is not a sign of true education, but only an aberration. The truly educated person should cultivate the virtues of truth and righteous conduct and lead an ideal life in the service of society. Only such persons can contribute to the greatness and glory of Bharat.

Cultivate respect for Bharat's ancient culture

Bharat stood as a beacon-light to the world in ancient times because of its spiritual ideals. This sacred land is the land of *Thyaga* (sacrifice), of *Yoga*, and of *Karma* (Righteous action). Today's education tends to make it a *bhogabhumi* (land of indulgence). With the result that all kinds of *roga* (maladies) are present in educational institutions.

You must cultivate respect for Bharat's ancient culture, follow its ideals and experience the joy to be derived therefrom. Society today suffers from lack of peace. Evil forces are rampant owing to the unchecked growth of selfishness and self-interest. These tendencies have to be rooted out. This can be done only by taking to the spiritual path. It is the duty of parents to sow the seeds of spirituality in the children from their early years. They should not think that parental responsibilities end with sending the children to school or college. They have a duty to see that the children grow into worthy citizens of the country. Great men like Sankaracharya, Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi became ideal men because of the example set by their parents in their daily lives. When the parents lead upright lives, the children will follow them. Hence, parents as well as teachers should serve as ideal examples to the students.

From all the enquiries I have made, I have found it is the parents who are spoiling the children. Their affection for the children is totally misconceived. They should realise that those good qualities which are instilled in the children when they are young, alone will stand them in good stead all their lives.

Dear embodiments of Love! Together with your studies, cultivate humility and reverence, and learn to conduct yourselves in an exemplary manner. Without morality, society will be ruined. Hence, by leading moral lives, foster the well-being of the nation. This is the sacrifice you have to perform. Do not lead a life of selfishness. Money comes and goes. Morality comes and grows. The path of righteousness may be strewn with obstacles. Do not bother about them. Act according to your conscience in all circumstances.

Dharmaja's adherence to Dharma

In the *Mahabharata*, there was an occasion during the time the Pandavas were living in exile, when Draupadi addressed Dharmaja as follows-"Dharmaja! There is no greater votary of *Dharma* than you. You adhered to *Dharma* as your life-breath even in the smallest action. In spite of this, you have had to go through inconceivable ordeals. How has your *Dharma* protected you?" Smilingly Dharmaja replied: "Draupadi! Despite all the trials and tribulations I have gone through, I have not given up adherence to *Dharma*. That is my greatness. We should not succumb to difficulties and give up *Dharma*. *Dharma* should be upheld even during difficulties. That is the mark of greatness."

Students! This life is not for experiencing happiness or sorrow. Both have their good and bad results. They are transient and impermanent. You should rise above them to uphold righteousness in service to society and serve as an example to the nation.

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It is essential to inquire into the credentials one has, before one formulates one's prayer. That inquiry will reveal whether one's thoughts and resolutions, hopes and desires arise from Faith or not. How to test and discover the truth? People take a piece of gold and draw with it a line on a piece of stone; then they examine that streak and assess the quality. The test which will reveal the quality of your Faith is whether you are practising sincerely the injunctions laid down by God.

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