

3**Character Is The Goal Of Education**

Students, Boys and Girls!

THE present Vice Chancellor, the former Vice Chancellor, the Secretary of the Central Trust and two students have made excellent speeches in beautiful vocabulary. In this vast world, wherever you see, you find most wonderful and joyful events that awaken your inner being and fill your heart with immense bliss. Our students also have developed great skill, intelligence and expertise in the fields of sports, games and music and demonstrated their talents giving joy to one and all. Whatever be the activity they undertake, they do it to please Swami and not for temporary happiness.

Education Must Develop Inner Vision

Right from the time of birth, all activities of man

are centred round the process of learning and acquiring wisdom. It is absolutely necessary to teach the spirit of idealism to our students so that they fill their hearts with love and give happiness to one and all. Today, there are a number of educational institutions all over the world, but, nobody seems to have understood what education really means. Students fill their heads with mere bookish knowledge, write examinations, secure pass marks and claim that they are educated.

In spite of his education and intelligence, a foolish man will not know his true Self and a mean-minded person will not give up his evil qualities.

(Telugu poem)

Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom. What is the use of acquiring education which cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal.

(Telugu poem)

Vidya means *Jnana* (wisdom). *Jnana* does not mean worldly intelligence. True education is that which develops inner vision and makes you experience everlasting bliss. In what way are the students benefited by the present educational system? They are merely acquiring degrees and earning the appreciation of the authorities, but they do not understand the real significance of education. Modern students are unable to realise the true spirit behind their participating in sports

and cultural events. In all events of sports and games, you have a winner and also a loser. People are interested only in the outcome of the events and not in enjoying the spirit of sports. The aim of sports and games is not to produce a decisive result but to inculcate the spirit of sportsmanship in the participants. *Life is a game, play it. Life is a dream, realise it. Life is love, enjoy it.* It is only he who understands the import of these statements and realises them in his daily life is a true student.

Modern system of education, instead of developing the power of discrimination in students, is making them narrow-minded. It neither bestows true wisdom nor does it help them to become broad-minded. The present-day education has become meaningless. The textbooks that are prescribed for students do not contain the essence of true education. I wonder why the government promotes such meaningless textbooks! May be, even the government is unaware of the realities. It appears as though someone at some low level is taking these decisions without consulting the higher authorities. It is bringing a bad name to the government, but nobody seems to be concerned about it. Such an unhealthy trend is on the rise. Nobody is making efforts to understand the sacredness associated with the ancient system of education. Students are interested only in bookish knowledge, not in the essence of education. Only their textual knowledge is tested, but not practical knowledge. Students think that degrees are meant to earn a livelihood. *Education is for life, not for a living.*

But neither the students nor the parents realise this truth. Parents are happy if their children score high marks in their examinations. They are not bothered about the heap of bad remarks their children get. If only they care to look into the remarks, they will truly understand the type of education that their children are receiving. Due to the advancement in modern education, the study of *Vedas* and *Sastras* has declined. In this situation, how can the present education confer true wisdom on you?

Parents And Teacher Should Be More Responsible Students!

You should acquire such education which will be beneficial to the society and the world at large. What is the present state of society? In what way can we make it ideal? How should one work for the advancement of the society? Nobody seems to think on these lines. Even the present system of education does not lay emphasis on service to society. If someone talks about reforms in the system of education, the students just brush it aside. They think that textual knowledge is the be-all and end-all of education. The elders should take up the responsibility to give proper education to students. Students should uphold the honour of the society. We should follow the teachings of our ancient sages and seers who have given us the true meaning of education. It is a sign of foolishness to become egoistic by merely acquiring a few degrees. You should understand the needs of society and utilise your education for its progress. People say they

are serving the society, but without really understanding what the requirements of the society are. Such service is not *samaja seva* (social service), but *samadhi seva*, meaning a lifeless, mechanical activity. Society will progress only when the system of education is set right. As the craze for Western education has increased, the study of *vedic* texts is being neglected. Parents should teach their children what is good and what is bad right from their childhood. They should not be satisfied merely by securing admission in a college and acquiring a degree by their children. They should ensure that their children utilise their education to serve the nation. The government may not be able to do much in this regard; it is the responsibility of the parents to guide their children on proper lines. They should encourage the children to work for the progress of the nation. But nowadays, parents do not have such broad-mindedness. Even teachers are not interested in the welfare of the nation. They feel that their responsibility ends with imparting bookish knowledge to students. They do not even enquire whether the information contained in the textbooks is beneficial to society or not. They do not take up the matter with the government. Even if they do take it up, the government is not responsive. They are changing educational institutions into factories which produce degree holders. Students alone are not to be blamed for this state of affairs. Parents, teachers and the government are equally responsible for this dismal state of affairs. It is not enough if students secure high ranks

in the class and earn a good name. They should work for the progress of the society and the nation and thus bring a good name to parents. Parents should monitor the progress of their children from time to time, inculcate virtues in them and mould them into responsible citizens. They should not rest satisfied if their children get good marks. They should also observe what type of books they read at home. Some students read meaningless novels. But the parents do not bother to correct them. On the other hand, they say, “What is wrong in reading novels? It is enough if they are happy.” In this manner, they spoil their own children. They do not care to observe how their children behave in their absence. There is no point in merely educating the children without correcting their behaviour. Parents should emulate the ideals of our forefathers who brought up their children in the most ideal way.

Students Be Provided A Blend Of Secular And Spiritual Education

Embodiments of Love!

The modern system of education needs reforms. Parents today take pride that their children are studying in English medium schools and are able to recite English poems. They fail to understand what type of impact and influence this modern education has on their children. The tiny tots in kindergarten are taught nursery rhymes like “Ba ... Ba ... Black Sheep”. Because of such education, the children are ultimately becoming black

sheep themselves. I am really pained and disgusted watching the present-day system of education which is totally spoiling the lives of students. That is why I have established educational institutions spending crores of rupees to mould the character of students. I am providing even textbooks free of cost to the students. In the present-day world, the situation is so bad that even for admission to a primary school one has to register well in advance paying thousands of rupees as donation. Parents are happy if their wards get admission in what they consider good schools, but they do not bother about the benefit that would accrue on account of such an educational system. The children do not appreciate the privations the parents have to undergo for educating them. Parents take loans and even forgo proper food and sleep to educate their children. Ultimately, the children do not benefit out of this system of education. They are unable to understand what is good and what is bad for them. Today when the quality of education has become so ‘cheap’ how can such education make one a ‘chief’? Neither the parents nor the teachers nor the students are able to understand how the society and the nation are benefited by the present system of education. Therefore, all of them should join hands and work unitedly to bring about a complete transformation in the society. At present students’ agitation is on the increase. However, it is not their fault. They are in themselves very good-natured. Fault lies with the teachers, elders and the government. It is a decided factor that the present system of education

is not designed to mould the character of the students. There are many good students, but parents, teachers and textbooks do not guide them properly. It is high time that the parents opened their eyes and seen the real state of affairs. They should see to it that their children come up in their life by acquiring proper education. They should encourage their children to pursue such type of education which will lead them to immortality. Of course, secular education is also necessary. But, secular education should be harmonised with spiritual education to mould the character of the students and make them better citizens of the country.

The End Of Education Should Be Character

Students!

Do not feel proud that you are pursuing higher education. Along with higher education, you should cultivate noble qualities. Education bereft of virtues is useless. The end of education is character. Today many students read useless, even immoral fictions. The authorities should ensure that such books are not sold in the market. Students should read only such books which can improve their character. They should participate in sports and games in the true spirit. This advice would equally apply to the girl students as well. They question, “When boys ride motor bikes, why can’t we do the same?” In this way they argue and waste their time. Nobody says that girls should not ride motor bikes. But

one should act according to the time and circumstances. The number of fatal accidents of young people involved in two wheelers is on the increase. Parents make many sacrifices to bring up their children. But, if the precious lives of students are lost in motor cycle accidents, I can understand their agony.

Today, girls want to compete with boys in every field. They also aspire for name and fame. Their argument is, “In what way are we inferior to boys? Why can’t we acquire the same type of education as boys?” However, each one should acquire such type of education that is appropriate and suitable to them. It is essential for women to look after their families well and shape the character of their children in an ideal manner. Along with inculcating virtues in children, they should also be given proper education. The present-day education is leading students in the wrong direction. Parents are to be partly blamed for this. They want their children to acquire high qualifications and get married to another highly qualified person. Some parents while trying to fix up marriage alliance ask, “My daughter has completed her postgraduation. She is good. looking. What about your son? Has he completed his postgraduation? Is he handsome?” In fact, beauty is related to character, not to the physical appearance. Beauty of character is what one should aspire for. Is it always possible to get a postgraduate bridegroom for a postgraduate bride? The present-day education is leading to unhealthy

competition and conflicts. I do not say that girls should not pursue higher education. If I am against women's education, why should I establish women's colleges? I have established various educational institutions with the sole purpose of inculcating virtues in students. I am providing education free of cost. There are no examination fees even. My only aim is that students should acquire proper education, become ideal citizens and give happiness to their parents.

Students!

Do not misunderstand My words. I am telling you all this for your own welfare and progress. You should acquire such education which will bring a good name to you and uphold the reputation of your family. Do not become egoistic and take to wrong ways in the name of freedom. I quite often caution the boys not to look here and there while walking on the road. Some boys, while speeding on their motor bikes, keep looking at girls who are passing by. Their attention is diverted and they end up in accidents. If your character is good, you will always be protected. You should always keep your senses under control. You should always have a check on your vision, listening and speech. Buddha undertook various spiritual practices with a view to have mastery over his senses.

*Why are the eyes given to you?
Is it to look here and there? No.*

*The eyes are meant to see the beautiful form of
the Lord.*

Why are the ears given to you?

Is it to listen to vain gossip? No.

*The ears are meant to hear the glories of the
Lord.*

(Telugu poem)

The ears are given for hearing good words and putting them into practice and thereby lead a virtuous life. Having realised that God has given the sense organs for the purpose of leading a virtuous life, Buddha discarded all ritualised spiritual practices and put his senses to sacred use. He assured himself that what he had to achieve in life was virtues, and not sensual pleasures. He realised that conscience was his true *Guru* and made efforts to control his sense organs like eyes and tongue. If these two sense organs are controlled, all the other organs would automatically come under control. Having thus set a goal for himself in life, Buddha entered the wide world, after renouncing his wife and only child. I am not, however, advising you to leave your wife and children and go to the forest like Buddha. You look after them well and fulfil your responsibilities towards them. Teach your children noble qualities and bring them up in life. Lead a life of virtue. This is what Buddha taught. If you cultivate *samyak drishti* (right vision) like the Buddha, the whole world will be under your control.

Strive For A Virtuous Life

Do not pay heed to the wrong advice of others. Foster noble qualities. If you can control your senses, that itself amounts to realising the essence of the epic, *Bhagavata*. The study of the epic *Bhagavata* is meant to transform you into a man of virtue. Hence, control your senses and become a master of the world. This is what you have to strive for, today. Explain to your parents also about your priorities in life. Tell them, "Mother! You expect me to go for a job which offers a fat salary. But, high salaries are not as important as a virtuous life. If we give preference to money instead of a noble life, our life itself will be ruined." When you keep your senses under control, you will become a person of noble qualities. You will also gain the strength of character. Hanuman, the illustrious servant of Lord Rama is an example of such noble qualities. He was extolled as '*santhudu*', '*gunavantudu*' and '*balavantudu*' (calm and serene, one of virtues, one of mighty strength). He became a great *Guru* because of his noble qualities. We should emulate his noble qualities.

Dear Students!

You are like pure gold. You are people of noble qualities. You are precious. But, some of you are misguided by bad elements. Even if others try to mislead you, do not deviate from your chosen path. Stand firm. Only then will you acquire name and fame. This is My advice to the students. In today's education you are taught skills which will enable you to rise up in your

career, but, nobody teaches moral education. Morality is the most important aspect of education. *Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows*. Therefore, cultivate morality. That will earn you respect from society.

God is your sole refuge wherever you may be, be it in a forest or in the sky or in a city or in a village or on the top of a mountain or in the middle of a deep sea.

(Telugu poem)

Cultivate noble qualities. I shall give you everything. Nay, I shall give Myself to those who cultivate noble qualities and also to those who teach them. In fact, I am living only for their sake. I do not seek anything in return from them. Lead a life of character and nobility. Bring good name to your parents, your institution and to Swami.

Dear Students!

You are all men of noble qualities, but you are influenced by the contemporary society to a certain extent. Therefore, do not succumb to distracting influences. First and foremost, make proper use of your senses. Any elders you come across, revere them as your father and mother. Earn good name for yourself by your thoughts, words and deeds.

Join good company, speak good words, cultivate *samyak drishti* and pursue good education that will build your character – this is what I expect from you, students.

In fact, this is what your parents also wish for. No father or mother will expect their children to be spoiled. But, they are unable to advise the children properly and put them in order, out of some sort of inhibition. Of course, I have no such qualms. Therefore, I am advising you, with all the emphasis at My command, to see good, be good and do good. Cultivate noble qualities. *Thyaga* (sacrifice) is the noblest of all qualities, not *bhoga* (indulgence). In fact, *bhoga* will lead you to *roga* (disease). The *Veda* has proclaimed *Na karmana na prajaya dhanena thyagenaike amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Hence, *Bangaru!* (My dear golden students) cultivate such noble qualities as *thyaga*. I am prepared to sacrifice everything for you. But, you must also be in a position to receive My grace. I am yours and you are Mine. That should be the relationship between us. Try to understand Swami's love. All this is meant to advise you to tread the right path. Do not go against the wishes of your parents. If, by any chance, you have to differ from their views, explain to them lovingly your viewpoint. They will also feel happy that you have respected their feelings. The *Veda* has declared, *Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava, Acharya devo bhava, Atithi devo bhava* (revere your mother, father, preceptor and guest as God). Speak sweetly and softly to your parents. Convince them, if necessary. I am prepared to sacrifice anything for the sake of such students. Several students join our educational institutions. Some of them

may not be in a position to pay fees. Therefore, we have decided that all education in Sathya Sai institutions should be totally free and no fees be collected from the students. You should be free from all anxieties and enjoy peace. By conforming to good behaviour only can peace be obtained. Several students today wish to enjoy good things in life, but are following wrong methods. They wish to partake of sugar, but consume bitter pills. They say one thing and do another. That is why it is said

*Manasyekam vachasyekam karmanyekam
mahatmanam*

*Manasyanyat vachasyanyath karmanyanyath
duratmanam*

(those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony are noble ones; those who lack harmony of these are wicked)

I like such students whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect accord. I am prepared to sacrifice anything for them, nay, I will give away Myself to such people.

Dear Students!

Knowingly or unknowingly you might have committed mistakes in the past. But, at least in future, cultivate good qualities and try to keep your parents as well as Swami always happy.

(Swami called students from Primary School,

Higher Secondary School and also from the three campuses and gave away glittering silver trophies in appreciation of their performance in the Sports and Cultural Meet.)

[Sankranti Message, 15-1-2004, Prasanthi Nilayam]