Globethics Repository



Gurus---not teachers

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Baba, Sathya Sai
Publisher	International Sai Organisation
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-14 08:31:45
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/196228

22. Gurus---not teachers

EDUCATION confers humility; endows one with an authority to command that will entitle one to affluence. With the help of this affluence, charity and compassion can be made fruitful, and by this means, happiness in this world and peace in the next can be won. Education is thus a great constructive force for mankind. But, reformers and reconstructionists have tinkered--so much with the process of education that it has now been reduced to a caricature of itself. The effectiveness of the educational system, and the boons it could confer on man have been ignored and neglected; the name is now given to the art 'of collecting information of the objective world. The far more important task of transforming the nature of man into the divine is given up, as beyond its ken.

The difference between the ancient ideals of education and .the modern practices is appalling. Today, the educational process is denied to the aspirant, if he fails to pay his fees; the teacher too feels that he has no duty to teach, if in a certain month he is not paid his salary. Students pay for being taught; teachers are paid for the teaching they do. Money decides what is taught and how it is learnt. "Pay and receive; be paid and give." That is the bond between the teacher and the taught. "Love, reverence, affection"---these have no place in the transaction. How then can education be fruitful? Gokak said just now that when teachers love the children, they will be rewarded by the love of the children who sit around them. Now they are loved for the sake of the money they bring, and so, the relationship is artificial and without roots in the heart.

Heirs to the richest cultural heritage

The teacher and the pupil will both be immersed in joy only when Love that does not calculate the reward binds them together. When material gain is the goal, the joy based is on matter and does not thrill the mind. It cannot be pure, steady and sincere.

As teachers of the Baala Vikaas classes throughout the country, you do not look forward to monetary or material benefits, and so, you have ample opportunity to make the child's heart and intellect blossom, through the rays of Love. Let Me tell you that most teachers today have specialised in western types of training, and so, they have lost their moorings in our own culture, and so are unaware of the deeper springs of the spirit.

They have been rendered materialistic, worldly, and egoistic. They are caught up in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and in the earning of money. They do not know that real education consists in helping the child to manifest the Divinity latent in him. Remember that the children who come to you are all heirs to the richest cultural heritage that the world can give. They are the 'Children of Immortality' extolled as such in the ancient texts by sages and scholars of this land. Do not turn them into experts in mathematics, unable to add up a simple domestic bill; scholars in the geography of America, but, unable to direct a pilgrim who desires to know in which direction Kaashi lies; prodigies in algebra who are helpless when asked to define the area of their own rooms; past masters in drill and gymnastics, but, all at sea, when requested to sit in the *Padhmaasana* posture; proficient in Botany, but, ignorant of the uses of the common *Thulsi* plant, found in the courtyard of every Indian home! They can draw realistic pictures of dogs and foxes, but, their hand-writing remains an illegible scribble. How can we expect that Indian culture will be preserved and fostered by these products of our educational system? The teachers who have brought them to this pass, and the educational administrators who divised the system are both equally to blame.

Be aware of the high purpose of education

Correction of these faults must start with the teachers; they must become aware of the high purpose of education, and the goal to which it must guide the children of the land.

I know that great enthusiasm prevails today among both the pupils and teachers of our Baala Vikaas classes, for the spiritual ideals cherished in this land since ages. Nevertheless, I must say that there is a great and urgent need for you teachers to receive training in the methods of child education. For example, when teaching the recitation of *bhajans* or poems or hymns, you have to pay attention to the correct enunciation of each sound, the correct pronunciation of each letter; for, otherwise, the meaning is liable to be warped out of recognition.

The three R's are most neglected to-day

In olden times, teachers took particular care to explain to the pupils the origins and roots of each new word, even of words like *Sah* and *Thwam.* They taught, not only the meaning of the word, but, delved into its roots, and opened up before the pupil a vast vista of related words and a huge expanse of meaningful vocabulary. Since words in Indian languages get transformed when written or pronounced in conjunction with other words, there is a duty cast on you to teach how they are to be separately recognised and identified. Boys may write *Raamunithoka pivarudu itlaniye* (meaning, "Raama's tail, Pivara spoke thus," (which is absurd), instead of *Ramunitho kapivaarudu itlaniye,* meaning, "With Raama, the Lord of monkeys spoke thus," (which is quite correct).

The word, *santha pakodeelu,* which I once used to indicate the error involved when people desert the true path and pursue degrading objective pleasures, which I compared to the *pakodeelu* (savouries) sold in *santha* (village markets during fairs and festivals), for they attract by their colour, have ruinous components and destroy health. Kasturi who did not know much Thelugu, divided the word into *santhapa* and *kodilu,* making the meaning absurd, for *kodilu* means fowls, and *shanthapa,* like *pivarudu,* has no meaning at all, being a mere jumble of sounds! Unless training is given in reading aloud, with concurrent attention to the meaning of the words and phrases, such mistakes are bound to recur, The three R's are the skills most neglected today.

Writing has also to be taught well, for the knowledge of the correct form of each letter has to be mastered by all. Or else, even here, a tiny slip might change a sublime idea into ridiculous jargon. *Rishikoti,* when written wrongly in Thelugu, as a consequence of the omission of a single upward curve was once mis-shaped into 'bushcoat' and the whole sentence was rendered ridiculous thereby! Scrupulous care and steady attention alone can make the pupils avoid such errors.

Study of books that is worthwhile for children

One point I have to emphasise here is, that you should be careful, while handling some books being published for school use by so-called scholars, at the present time. They cast doubts on the truth of great epics like the Raamaayana, and assert that Dhasharatha and Raavana did not exist in authentic history. They characterise them as representatives or symbols of opposing Cultures, the Aryan and. the non-Aryan, and sow the seeds of factionalism and hatred. By such writings, children begin to doubt the very foundations of goodness, truth and beauty; they are confused while deciding on fight conduct and behaviour, right ideals and ways of living.

You must examine every story or account that you place before the children from the point of view of individual faith and social harmony. Does this lead the child to a better, more harmonius, a more God-oriented life? That is the question you should ask yourself. Prahlaadha has beautifully summed up this principle, in the verse he utters, in the Bhaagavatha, while advising his playmates on the disciplines that should be welcomed. "The study of books that describe the Glory of God is the study that is worth-while. The preceptor who tells us about the Glory of God is the preceptor to be sought after and revered. The father who directs you to approach God is the father who deserves the reverence and obedience of the children, not the others."

Hills and mountains are overlaid with rock and boulder, the sculptor gathers them, and shapes each of them into something useful and beautiful, depending upon the nature and characteristics of the stone. Out of one boulder, the artisan might carve a huge mortar and pestle to be kept in the corner of the kitchen of a populous home. Out of another the sculptor might produce a rough hewn gargoyle being incorporated into a building as an eerie object to ward off the evil eye! A third stone might get transformed into a charming little danseuse to embellish the shelf of a museum. Another stone, catching the eye and attention of a skilled sculptor might be elevated into the idol of a Divine Manifestation, fit to be installed in a temple where it receives the adoration of millions for generations.

Parents have important roles in children's education

Though they were the progeny of one peak, each has a different destiny, depending upon the care and consecration bestowed on it by the sculptor. Teachers are the sculptors who shape the rocks into things of beauty and significance, of utility and inspiration. They study the pupils, their nature and equipment, and decide on their roles in society, their paths and the stages in their progress.

But, it must be pointed out that the sculptor or teacher is not the only factor, to be reckoned with, in the process of education. The mother and father of the child too have important roles in the process. The positive and the negative must both meet in order to produce the electric current; even God needs the yearning and the endeavour of the devotee to fulfil His Will to save him from perdition. You may have flowers, and a length of string and a needle too; but, without the garland-maker, how can the flowers be strung on the string? You may have a lamp, oil and wick; but you can get light only when someone strikes a flame and lights the lamp. So too, the teacher and the pupil have to be brought to each other and encouraged to learn and teach, to share lovingly their knowledge and experience, by the parents, so that education might proceed and the child inherit the heritage left by its forefathers.

The teacher must win the reverence of the pupil by showering on him his Love; the pupil must win the Love of the teacher by showering on him reverence and affection. It is a mutual transaction, a sharing of the emotions of the heart. How can a proper congenial atmosphere for study and teaching be built on a foundation of doubt and hatred? Nowadays, the atmosphere is polluted by the teachers' fear and suspicion, and the hostility and audacity of the students. There is no Love to lubricate the relations between the teacher and the taught.

The *Guru* is equal to God Himself

We have heard the *Guru* being praised as equal to God Himself. Gokak quoted the *shlokha* (verse) where the *Guru* is referred to reverentially as Brahma, the first of the Trinity entrusted with Creation; as Vishnu, the second of the Trinity entrusted with the preservation and protection

of Creation; and as *Maheshwara,* the last of the Trinity, charged with destruction and dissolution. This description is symbolically correct, as we can see when we analyse the work which the Teacher or *Guru* is expected to carry out. The *Guru* sows the seeds of virtue, of wisdom, and of faith in the heart of the pupil. He is, therefore, *Brahma,* of the nature of the Creator. He is like the farmer who plants saplings in the well-prepared soil of his field. But the farmer does not sit with folded hands there-after. He takes incessant care to see that the saplings grow vigorously and well, and he is vigilant to water the growing crops and feed them with fertilisers at the appropriate stages of growth. This is the role of Vishnu so far as education and the educator are concerned. The *Guru* cannot sit back and silently watch the fate of the pupil, after the first few lessons. He has to guide the pupil at every step, foster and encourage good habits, sound reasoning and valid emotions, and act as Vishnu, the second- of the Trinity.

Teachers must inspire high qualities in their pupils

The *Guru* has also the duty cast on him, to watch every step of the pupil, and warn him off, when he takes false step, or develops a bad habit, or entertains a deleterious doubt. Like the farmer who has to be vigilant against the growth of weeds or the upsurge of pests, the *Guru* too must be ever alert to destroy the pests of vice and the weeds of sloth and unsteadiness. The word 'teacher' cannot denote these high roles; it can mean only those, who transmit information, and train in skills. I direct that Baala Vikaas teachers should hereafter be known by the vastly more appropriate name of *Guru,* so that you may be conscious always of the spiritual role which you have taken on, and its responsibilities and value. You are the lamps from which their tender hearts must receive Light and Love. By your adherence to truth, righteousness, peace and love, you have to inspire these qualities in the children that come to you and the homes from where they come.

There are many who shiver at the prospect, when they contemplate the future of this great country. You should never entertain such doubts and fears, for you are the builders of that future and you know that it will be glorious. The Baala Vikaas children whom you are guiding and inspiring, will be the leaders of tomorrow in this land. The virtues you implant in them, the counsel you are providing them and the examples you place before them will remain carved in their memories and transform their outlook and behaviour in the days to come. Ask any one assembled here whether they can bring back to memory the book that he read this morning; ninety five per cent of this vast gathering will fail in this test. But ask them to repeat from memory some one *sthothra* (hymn or moral verse) that their grandfather or grandmother taught them when they were little children sitting on their knees, and I am sure most of you will be able to recite the *shlokha* or *sthothra.* The things learnt during those early years stick in the memory and act subtly and silently on the growing mind to modify and purify the conduct of later years.

Spiritual education must start early in life

Some short-sighted critics declare that spiritual matters should not be communicated to children, for they are too young and inexperienced to benefit by the instruction. But, if a thing deserves to be done, the sooner we set about it the better. The slogan, "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely" applies not merely to journeys by road or rail; it applies also to the journey from Untruth to Truth, from Darkness towards Light and from Death to Immortality. The unrest, anxiety, fear and hatred that torment the world now is largely due to the neglect which kept off from the growing child the disciplines that can regulate the passions and emotions of man.

We postpone this essential task of education at our peril; for, when children are equipped with the discipline to secure balance, equanimity, harmony and peace, they can no more be drawn into wild adventures and barren activities. You have to learn spiritual disciplines along with the information-giving subjects of the curriculum. You have to earn the high Diploma which the *Upanishaths* offer you, namely, *Amruthasya Puthrah* (Child of Immortality), along with the degrees M.A., B.Sc., etc., which help you eke out a livelihood, up to a certain stage of life.

Everyone must learn the secret of happiness

But, remember you cannot take up the threads of *Saadhana* (spiritual discipline) all of a sudden after retiring from active service! You cannot learn spiritual *Saadhana,* when you are physically debilitated and overwhelmed by the approach of death. How can a man think of God, his Saviour, when he himself is overcome by sorrow at the need to depart from this world and when all his kith and kin are weeping and wailing loud and long?

No. Every one must learn the secret of happiness which consists in refusing to shed tears for anything less than God. You have won this human body, this human life, as the reward for many lives spent in acquiring merit. You have won this chance, this unique good fortune of being able to get *Dharshan* (sight or audience) of Sai. Plunging deep into the waters of this tumultuous ocean of *Samsaara* (worldly life), you have heroically emerged from its depths, with this rare Pearl in your hands---the Grace of Sai. Do not allow it to slip from-your clasp and fall into the depths again. Hold on firmly to it. Pray that you may have It for ever and be filled with the joy that It confers. That is the way by which you can render this life fruitful.

Instruct the children of the Baala Vikaas to revere their parents. This is the first thing to do. It is a simple act of gratitude, for those who endowed them with the material instrument for life. But, mere possession of the human body, however wonderful it may be, is not enough, for one's peace and joy. One must know how to unravel its mysteries and how to regulate one's own impulses and hungers. This process is accomplished by the Guru, and so the pupils must be instructed and encouraged to revere the *Guru,* in gratitude for the service he renders. Education must aim at providing the child, not livelihood, but, a life worth living. For this, the acquisition of skills in doing or reasoning is not enough. Faith in one-self and in the Divinity of one-self are absolutely essential. That is the precious treasure of wisdom, stored in our ancient scriptures and in the experience of the Saints and Sages of all countries and faiths.

There is only one religion, the Religion of Love

There is one more point, which I wish to emphasise. Some teachers have asked Me whether the Baala Vikaas classes, can serve children of all faiths or whether they can admit only children of the Hindhu faith. The question has arisen because the questioners do not know the very fundamentals of the Hindhu Faith. There is only one religion, remember, and that is the Religion of Love; there is only one caste, and that is the Caste of Humanity. You must be careful not to encourage or entertain the slightest trace of 'difference' on the basis of religion, caste, creed or colour, in the Baala Vikaas classes.

Do not tarnish the spotlessly clean minds of the children by infecting them with a sense of distinction between one child and another. Impart instructions and inspiration equally to all. Select stories from **the** scriptures of all faiths to interest the children in the values of good life. Speak to them of the moral heroes of all lands, the Saints of all faiths. For, they are all of the same stamp. No scripture enjoins violence or lays down untruth as a way of life. All religions

extol Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Brotherhood, and Love. All saints are embodiments of service, compassion and renunciation.

Do not compare the various manifestations of the Divine and pronounce judgement, declaring that Raama is greater than Krishna or Shiva superior to Vishnu. This line of thought is poisonous and harmful to the devout aspirant. You do not know your own self; but, yet, how dare you pronounce judgement on personalities and powers you have never experienced or understood. Raama is as unknown to you as Christ, and so, it is best to keep silent, and revere both with equal ardour. For, all are manifestations of the same Divine Effulgence.

I bless you that you succeed in the great task you have imposed on yourself, and that you will be able to light the way for the children of this land into the glorious region of Everlasting Joy.

Raajahmundhry, 3-1-74

> *Those who seek to acquire steadiness of faith must first acquire the strength to bear grief and pain, insult and injury. The succession of joy and grief must help confirm the faith and make it immovable. That alone can evidence true devotion.*
>
> ***Sri Sathya Sai***