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Character training

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18. Character training

*Verily, he, who does not have
All the virtues in full, is no Guru at all!
How can one be held high unless he is humble?
Education fosters good traits, good thoughts,
Strong faith in Truth, in God, and devotion
To discipline and to duty.
The real guru is one
who teaches these
And the real pupils are those who learn them.*

Every country, wherever it may be and whatever its stage of progress, must have three requisites' material resources, protective power and a proper educational system (producers, security personnel and teachers). The peace and prosperity of the world depend on the work of these three classes of people. They form the legs of a tripod. Even if one leg is weak, the other two cannot sustain. When production is plentiful, it has to be guarded against loot and plunder. When soldiers and security men become powerful, they turn into a menace to the country while production declines. When production and protection are adequate, if the educational system takes a wrong track, the country is weakened. The development of material resources and the defence of the country ultimately depend on the kind of education that is imparted.

But a tripod is not only 'three legs'! How can one sit on three legs? There should be a plank, resting on them--the plank of LOVE, that is to say, Love of the Country. "Country" does not mean a specific area on the map, the soil. It means the human community inhabiting the territory. And 'Love' means the sense of inter-relationship and involvement of the individual with that community.

This degree of love is absent now in many highly educated, highly placed persons. As a result, the process of education too is suffering from misuse, and crores of rupees, set aside for it, go to waste. And since education affects the other two sections too, even the money spent on the producers and protectors does not yield full fruit.

Education has to open the doors of the mind

Education is being confused with the acquisition of verbal scholarship. This is wrong. Education has to open the doors of the mind. Many describe science today as a powerful acquisition, but, science holds before mankind a great opportunity, that is all. It cannot be as great a power as it is imagined to be. If it is devoid of character, it brings disaster. It can then cause evil and wickedness. Intelligence can be found to be very high among clever thieves. So, too, scientific knowledge can be misused for destructive purposes.

To enter Heaven, man must transform himself into an innocent infant. This is the Truth. To enter the heaven of science, man has to mould himself into a humble, unselfish seeker. This is as true as the former statement. Mankind is caught in the mire of egotism, self-seeking and envy and, as a consequence, it is wandering in the realm of demonkind.

Education is not merely the gathering of scientific knowledge; it should endow man with heroism in action. It should instruct man to decide on what has to be done and how. It must make man recognise the kinship that exists between himself and others. On the other hand, scholarship or punditry pores over many tomes and texts and devises many wonders, witticisms and feats. This is just a fanciful rut into which the intellect falls. True beauty lies in true education. *Vidhya* is the hidden treasure. It guards us even while we are in foreign countries, like an intimate kinsman, standing by us, behind, beside, before.

Youth must be full of yearning to know

The system of education prevalent in India is antagonistic to the progress of the people. It appears to be a system which teaches students to live without dirtying their hands with the soil. The process ignores the human traits of man. It is not right to do so. Education must aim at enlarging the heart and awakening the latent intelligence and skills of man, and inspiring him to calmly welcome physical labour and exhausting work.

How can education shine in man if he does not attain these fruits? Gandhi once said, "Knowledge without character is a powerful evil." Today, there is knowledge but character is seldom seen with it. Practice promotes *Vidhya*. Experience is the Guru. But he is not visible at all. Teaching ends with the school, but learning ends only when life ends. *Vidhya* does not mean mere attendance at school or college, mere study of some books, or mere mastery of a few subjects.

Living, not for the sake of food but for the sake of an ideal, that is the goal of education. The human personality must blossom into enthusiasm for work, into eagerness to raise society to the highest level. Without character, man becomes the plaything of every passing whim, a kite whose string has broken, or a counterfeit coin, without benefitting any one.

In order to manifest genuine human excellence and instruct others to do the same, spiritual *saadhana* alone can equip one with necessary qualifications and authority. Education is now solely materialistic. The Governor quoted in his speech the axiom, "*Saa Vidhyaa Yaa Vimukthaye*." (That is, *Vidhya* which liberates). *Vidhya* is that process which makes us aware of the bondage we are in, the suffering we live through and the darkness within. The *Upanishadh* exhorts us: *Utthistatha, Jaagratha, Praapya Varaan Nibodhatha* (Arise, Awake, Approach the wise and learn).

Teachers decide the future of a country

Education has become mechanical today. The spirit of inquiry is absent. That alone can enable one to discover Truth. For this, youth must be full of yearning to know, and to shine through that knowledge. Success begets success. Success will encourage and ensure success at a higher level. Students must learn more about persons who have achieved success despite obstacles of every kind. Their examples have to be of the heroic mould. Even failure is commendable, if it befalls one while pursuing a high ideal. "Better far to fail in bagging a tiger than succeed in killing a lame jackal," says a Thelugu proverb. Aim high and strive for grand victories.

When one's interest is rooted in some field of knowledge, attention on it becomes firm and memory will enshrine it in the mind. Students now remember the trivial details of the lives of film stars, since they are victims of a barren fascination. Steady interest is essential in order to master worthy knowledge.

Education is now oriented more for earning a living than leading a worthy life. As soon as they secure degrees, they succumb to the lure of money and run off to Iran or Iraq. Education must be oriented towards the attainment of character for leading clean simple lives. Rivers are dammed. and the waters are stored in reservoirs. Of what earthly use are these if the waters are kept therein? Through canals, they have to be taken to the fields to feed the crops in order to appease the hunger of millions. So too, we store the knowledge available in libraries in our heads as reservoirs, But, is that enough? Can this be the end of education? It has to be utilised through canals of service in order to fertilise and feed the minds of one's fellowmen and make them more intelligent, more skilled and more loving. The nation will thus become more prosperous and happy.

Character is the best qualification for a job

Vidhya or education is a penance, a *thapas*; but it is being reduced into a dull routine, *thamas*. Teachers decide the prosperity or poverty of a country. Theirs is the most responsible profession. Tilak declared that when India achieves *Swaaraj*, he would prefer to be a teacher in a High School rather than be the Prime Minister of free India. Teachers have the task of sculpturing the leaders of peoples. Teachers should not descend into politics; their status is far too high. They have to do service to the sacred, the innocent, the tender minds of the children of the land. Politics breeds selfishness; their task is to live unselfishly and promote the spirit of unselfish service on the young.

Even if man does not elevate himself to divinity, he must at least be at the level of man! But, he does not live in a human way now. He has become an inhuman inhabitant of the earth. Science has brought him to the very brink of total disaster. The duty of science is to promote love, sympathy, brotherhood and charity. In Bangalore, many have known Sir C.V. Raaman. He is known all over India, too. He was a great scientist. When he was the Director of the Indian Institute of Science he had to interview candidates for jobs. One young man did not give the correct answers to some of his questions and so, Raaman, told him not to have hopes of securing the job. He advised him to try his luck somewhere else and asked him to leave. The candidate left the room slowly with a broken heart. He descended the steps and stood alone in the foyer.

After sometime, when Raaman came down, he noticed that he was still hanging around! He rebuked him and told him once again that he should give up all hopes of being taken for the job. The young man replied, with folded hands: 'Sir! I am only waiting for the office to open. I have been paid five rupees extra by them as fare and daily allowance through wrong calculation. I shall return that amount and leave.' On hearing this, Raaman's heart melted; he patted the candidate on his back; accepted him and gave him a job. Character is the best qualification.

Emphasis is laid on spiritual education

In order to promote truth, righteousness, and universal love, the Sathya Sai Trust is establishing primary schools, high schools, junior colleges and colleges where emphasis is laid on spiritual education so that good character becomes the core of the personality. *The sankalpa* of Sathya Sai is to offer, for serving humanity, heroes of action and heroes of self-sacrifice. A few minutes ago, the members of the Executive Committee of the Kingdom of Sathya Sai, were introduced to you. The students of Sathya Sai are free from any trace of blemish. No one can point their finger at them and discover any fault. They possess the highest virtue; they have enough riches, but they have renounced desire and attainment; they have come in to serve society. They earn first

classes and ranks in University Examinations. Their attitudes and feelings are not in the least agitated by worldly things or events.

Many old students work in our College without remuneration. Some may imagine that the alumni grouped under the name "Kingdom of Sathya Sai" are idlers or revellers. These students, when the truth is known, will put such people to shame. Our students have no egotism; they do not cater to the self; they offer all they have and even their lives for the sacred task of social service. With Devotion and Duty, only such persons can ensure for Bhaarith the happiness she craves for.

We want students of this exemplary nature. That means, the teachers, who train them have to be examples themselves of these noble ideals. As Vice-Chancellor Vishwanathia said, *Yathaa raaja thathaa prajaa* (As is the ruler, so are the ruled). Teachers of past ages were embodiments of renunciation; they had no illusions; they saw clear and deep. The instructors of today do not often deserve the appellation of teachers or preceptors or *gurus*. Money should not be the target or the yardstick; morality should be the scale.

We fight for rights, while functioning entirely on wrong lines. Our right is the fulfilment of the duty laid on us. Discharge your responsibility without demur or deviation, to the best of your ability. That is your Right. No one should hinder you while doing that duty. But teachers do not work as sincerely and as fully as their salary demands. They are demeaning themselves by this negligence of duty. Plunge into work whole-heartedly. Is it 'work' to lounge under a fan in an airconditioned office, without damaging the crease of one's coat? The only justification for accepting remuneration is hard work with bone and muscle, sweat and blood, hard work to bring peace and happiness to the country and the world.

Sathya Sai Auditorium, 29-8-1981