

15. Precept and example

INDIA is declared a "secular state" and so the students in the schools are denied any chance to receive training in spiritual matters; not even a knowledge of the fundamentals of *Sanaathana Dharma* (eternal universal religion). This is a tragedy. The children have a right to the property of their ancestors; but the children of the land have no access to the basis of their ancient culture. India is India because of *Sanaathana Dharma*. It has enabled her to survive many a terrible storm; it has kept the country culturally united, in spite of varieties of language and food habits and dress. The Raamaayana and Mahaabhaaratha and the Bhaagavatha are revered from the Himaalayas to the Cape. The ideals of *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi* and *Prema* which they uphold and exemplify have welded the people and kept them on a path which was beneficial to the individual as well as society.

Sanaathana Dharma is the only religion that declares that there is no religion that can be labelled 'one and only.' It says that all religions are but facets of the 'one and only.' It says that all Names are names of God, that all Forms are but His Forms. No religion can claim to represent fully the Universal, Eternal, Truth. This is the teaching of *Sanaathana Dharma*. Therefore, if any one finds fault with another's faith, he is casting a slur on his own faith. If any one defames another religion, he only reveals his ignorance of the nature of religion and the glory of God.

Education must open the inner eye of the students

Education must include the education of the mind of man, of his impulses to hate, to hoard, to fight, to defame. It is not merely the acquisition of certain skills by which the materials found in nature can be reshaped into utility products; it is not merely the acquisition of information about the laws of nature. It is the process by which man makes the best of his own inner equipment, his *Anthahkarana* (inner consciousness), to know himself. It should open his inner eye, more than his outer; the outer must reveal the glory of God, the inner must reveal the God within. Food must contribute to the development of the head; the head must discover the existence of God everywhere.

The rulers of this land have a great responsibility in this matter. They must bring up the children of this land, not simply as good mechanics and artisans, skilled hewers of wood and efficient drawers of water, but as persons equipped with *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi* and *Prema*; and so able to brave the waves of fortune, to preserve their equanimity under all conditions. Students must learn to be good and steady *Sevaks* and *Saadhakas* (servants and aspirants of spiritual discipline). They have to be taught the *Yoga* of mind control, not breath control which under incompetent leadership might endanger health. I want that they should be given training in these matters, by whatever name the training may be called.

Children should grow in the awareness of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. If no provision is made for this atmosphere and this teaching, we are denying them their due. Faith in man involves faith in God; faith in God creates faith in man. Without faith, man is a creature bereft of roots; he dries and withers quickly. Faith in the God within him who makes him say, I, I, I, when referring to what he was made to say and act and do by the prompting from within---faith is the sustenance on which Love and Courage, Contentment and Joy grow. Children can be easily made aware of this inner I, which has the body as its apparel; they will grow in mutual love and cooperation with all men of all lands, when they Know that colour and caste are but apparel which do not affect the real Reality.

Teachers must be like the rishis of old

Of course, to instill in the minds of the young the value of prayer and of humility and loving service to others, the homes where they grow have to be the first schools. The parents have to be imbued with faith in the basic truths of this Universal Religion. They must be seen worshipping at the family altar, meditating in silence, forgiving the lapses of others, sympathising with pain and grief; they should not be seen by the children as worried, helpless, discontented and distressed, as if they had no God to lean upon, no inner reserves of strength and courage to fall back upon.

The teachers should be simple, sincere, straight-forward *saadhakas*, radiating joy and love. Emphasis on the standard of living, income and expenditure, calculations of costs and prices in terms of rupees and paise will not make a good teacher. He must be like the *rishis* (sages) of old; balanced, contented, quiet, calm scholars who have practised self-control and who carry about with them an atmosphere of cool equanimity.

The friends that the child collects at school and around the home have a beneficial or deleterious effect on its growth. Comics, horror stories, terrorism, gunmen pictures and cinema posters that degrade man into flesh and skin--these drag the prospective hero into a zero. The child learns to worship money and things which money can buy; he admires cruelty and cunning, rather than sympathy and love. So the home, the school and the society---all three have to arouse themselves and take up this challenge to the future of this great land.

There are no bad children at all

Boarding schools and hostels where the teachers and wardens are genuinely interested in thus uplifting the coming generation may succeed more than many homes and most schools. But even they should not try to shape the children into a predetermined mould. *Sanaathana Dharma* has no set pattern. It admits of infinite variety, based on past achievement and present accomplishment.

It has been suggested that the bad children--there are no bad children at all, there are only ill-brought up children---should be isolated and given special attention, so that they may be cured of evil tendencies. But I do not like isolating them and directing the attention of every one to them. as specially marked out boys. It is not good for them, nor is it good for the others. You may pay some special attention unnoticed by the rest of the boys, because they happen to come from families that have no roots in spiritual practice: but that is all that is advisable. Of course, a good teacher knows how to manage such things, if he or she has the faith and the intelligence.

There should not be, in My opinion, separate "Moral Instruction" lessons in the curriculum; every subject has to be learnt with moral instruction as the thread running through from lesson to lesson. By example and precept, in the class-room and on the playground, the excellence of intelligent cooperation, of sacrifice for the team, of sympathy for the less gifted, of help to the maimed, the weak, the ill and the poor, of love and self-reliance, of silence and prayer has to be emphasised.

Prefer the moral way of teaching all the subjects

The indirect method of instilling these morals is better than direct teaching through text-books and tests. Tell stories from the *Upanishads* and the Bible, from the Bhaagavatha and the Raamaayana, the Mahaabhaaratha and the lives of Saints from all nations and all ages, to illustrate a point while doing any lesson, in any subject. It is possible to teach even science and

mathematics in a moral or immoral way. Prefer the moral way.

One advantage which will accrue when you take this moral uplift programme in right earnest is that, through the subtle influence of the children, you are cleansing the atmosphere of the homes also. When the boy sits in silence and meditates on the Maker of all this wonder and glory, the parents too will react in the same way and the atmosphere of the home will be filled with humility and love.

If an institute is started where the training in *Yoga and* meditation, and in the proper leadership of children in schools is taken up, it will do much good. Senior boys and teachers can live there in communication with God for some weeks and return to their schools and workspots charged with faith in man and God. That will be the dawn of a revolution in the outlook and the activities of the India of today.

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