

11. Learning and liberation

MEN crave for a prosperous future, for positions of authority and power and happy, care-free lives; they never desire to possess pure, clear, loving intellects and a humble disposition. Therefore the youth today, in India as well as in other lands, are afflicted with deep discontent which manifests itself in revolt against rules, regulations, curricula and social norms, and an agitational approach to every little problem that affects them. What is the basic cause of this phenomenon?

The reason lies in the fact that they have started to neglect the ancient culture of India and its ideals. They are imitating undesirable and fanatic norms of behaviour and are addicted to a code of disbelief, having no roots anywhere.

The most fundamental teaching of the ancient culture of India is Love. For generations, the youth of this land have been exhorted, encouraged and taught, by precept and example, to love the poor, the helpless, the handicapped, the illiterate and the disabled, for the same spark of Divinity that is in us is also equally evident and active in them. Education must endow man with this compassion and this spirit of service---intelligent, timely and full. That is to say, education must not only *inform*, it must also transform.

True education is that which liberates man

Unless knowledge is transformed into wisdom, and wisdom is expressed in character, education is a wasteful process. If education confers this gift of transformation, then surely life will become peaceful, happy, and full of mutual help and co-operation. But the aim of education today has degenerated into the acquisition of certain skills and intellectual tricks. It provides the educated with food, clothing and shelter and considers that its task is over with that achievement.

The sages who laid down the goals of education have declared, "*Saa vidhyaa yaa vimukthaye.*" (That is true education which helps to liberate man)---liberate him from greed, hatred, unrest, narrow loyalties and ego impulses. Education today, adds to the unrest already in the heart of man; it does not liberate him from the prison house of desire into which he has strayed. Man builds rest-houses where he can cool his tired brain and revive his exhausted nerves, but he has yet to build *shaanthy mandhirs* (temples of peace) where he can unconcernedly learn to witness the happenings of the world, aware of the level of the world, aware of the level of their relative importance. That will give him equanimity. Faith in an All-knowing, All-operating God will render him free to watch with interest the ups and downs of history.

Education has to clarify the goal of life

Just as the body needs rest, the mind too needs quiet. Faith in God is the best guarantee of mental quiet. Man must follow the path of virtue, practise spiritual disciplines and take an enthusiastic part in social service. These three have to be accepted, adored and assimilated into daily life. Education has to clarify the goal of life to the rising generation and indicate the ways and means of accomplishing it.

Women are taking to modern education in larger and larger numbers nowadays. They are serving in offices, schools and factories. They are also rising to positions of authority in other fields. But most of them are prompted by urges of personal aggrandizement rather than ideals of service. When women run after jobs, who is to run the family? If both father and mother move into

offices to earn money, what becomes of the children? Pouring over books, how can the kitchen work? More money may be earned, but it leads only to more anxiety, more unrest and more loss.

The women who take up jobs are finding that they have no happiness worth the name. The educated woman must utilise her knowledge and skill to bring up her children into healthy, virtuous and disciplined youths who may be of use to their country, their culture and their community. Earning money is not the end-all of education. It is the greed to earn money by any means, as fast as possible, that has led to the evils that we see in society today. Money breeds pride, pride fosters hatred.

Cultivate the habit of self-examination

No one has the golden quality of contentment. The discontented man is as bad as lost. There is no limit to man's desires. Every person wielding power over others yearns to rise higher and higher and exercise more and more influence, but no one attempts a rigorous examination of himself to find out whether he has merit enough to be conferred with the position he craves for. Those who contentedly carry out the duties commensurate to the positions they hold, are very few. Every one, fit or unfit, throws stones, on the off-chance of getting a fruit from the laden tree. Students must cultivate humility and the habit of self-examination.

Another reason for the prevalent overwhelming dissatisfaction of the youth, is the chronic hypocrisy of elders. The very people who proclaim the efficacy of *sathya* (truth) from platforms, the very preachers who dilate on *dharma* (righteousness) and *shaanthy* (peace), live without any regard to *sathya*, *dharma* or *shaanthy*. The determination that one must act according to one's profession has disappeared. We can establish peace and prosperity, morality and uprightness in the land, only when those who preach and those who teach high ideals, act up to their own exhortations.

Sheer ignorance is the root cause for the disrespect that is being shown to Indian culture and the fascination exercised by the culture of the West. Do these people at least grasp the values of Western culture fully? No. Only the fringe and the foppery are adopted. How can a person who is unable to understand his own culture and heritage understand the meaning and significance of an alien culture?

The true sign of education is humility; for there is much more to be investigated and learnt. There are always many more who are far more learned. They carry their scholarship more lightly. Discipline is important in order to progress in learning, and even more so in dealing with others. An undisciplined person is a danger to society; any moment he may run amuck. Man must recognise what limits, regulations and do's and don'ts are laid down by the sages of the past in order to ensure social security and individual advancement.

Be conversant with some spiritual discipline

The code of conduct laid down for the students of this college helps you to develop qualities that will stand you in good stead later in life. The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue---the four senses of sight, hearing, smell and taste---are all located in the head. Of course, the eye and the tongue have been provided with doors, so that the doors can keep out what is not desirable and welcome what is. Desire only the sight of beneficial things, only to speak out what will be conducive to peace and harmony. Do not indulge in talkativeness. If you get a reputation for talkativeness, you will suffer from weak memory, social odium, and nervous debility.

You have the great responsibility of motherhood and the duty of educating your children into strong and good citizens of this country. Along with the University degree, you must also acquire some general knowledge which is essential for householders and others. Otherwise, though the husband and the wife may both be degree-holders, they would be helpless and desperate even if the baby caught a slight cold.

You must also be conversant with some spiritual discipline like *naamasmarana* (remembering God's name), *dhyaana* (meditation) and *yoga* (divine communion), so that you may not be carried away by every changing breeze.

Practise the constant presence of God

It is best that you imprint on your hearts the dual nature of the world that is a mixture of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, victory and defeat. Practise the constant presence of God and learn to offer all your activities at the feet of the Lord as an act of worship. Then they will be free from fault. Krishna advised Arjuna to enter 'the fight,' and at the same time told him not to have hatred towards the 'enemies.' These may appear to be two irreconcilable attitudes, for war is *raaga* (passion, attachment) and renunciation of hatred is *vairaagya* (absence of *raaga*).

Arjuna asked Krishna how he was to reconcile these two attitudes. Krishna said, "*Maamanusmara, yudhyacha*" (Keep Me ever in thy mind, and fight). "Do not cultivate the egoistic feeling that it is you who is fighting. I am-using you as My. Instrument," He said. Even the food you take should be to propitiate Him, who is resident in your bodies as the *Vaishwaanara*, eager to digest the food we place in it. It is the Lord who receives the food, digests it and supplies strength thereby to the various limbs of the body.

This college was established ten years ago. Hence it is now a sprightly girl of ten summers. A baby girl of two or three will not dare venture outside the home alone. A girl of twenty can well look after, herself wherever she is. But a girl of ten can neither be kept at home, nor does she know how to look after herself outside. Therefore we have all to guard her and guide her with great care and diligence. We must see that the ideals and aims of this college are maintained and fostered. On your discipline, devotion and duty are based the success and reputation of this college. Now, and later, you must lead lives of exemplary virtue and bring honour to parents and your *alma mater*.

Do not hanker too much after irresponsible liberty. Women suffer most when they are moved by this desire. You must be the torch-bearers of the educational ideals of this college. When one teacher neglects her duty or lowers her standard of conduct, hundreds of students are affected thereby. The moral strength and virtues of the teachers will be reflected in the students under their care. You have to treat them as your own children, children who need and deserve your love. Be like mothers to these children and let this college ring with Love given and Love received.

Women's College, Ananthapur, 30-8-1978

*The Aathma (divinity) is the Sun in the firmament of the Heart.
Now, the light of the Sun is obstructed by the thick clouds of
vishaya-vaasana (desire or sense objects and objective pleasure);
let the strong wind of paschaath-thaapa (repentance and*

*resolution) scatter the clouds, so that the aathma may shine forth
brilliantly.*

Sri Sathya Sai