

Date: 16 March 2005 Occasion: Discourse Place: Prasanthi Nilayam

## Humility and Character are the Hallmark of Education by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The creation emerges from truth and merges into truth,  
Is there a place in the cosmos where truth is not?  
Visualise this pure and unsullied truth.  
(Telugu poem)

### Embodiments of Love! Students!

You have joined this institution to pursue your education. Firstly, make efforts to understand the true meaning of education. Humility and character are the hallmark of education. But, today, students do not develop humility. They are interested only in acquiring degrees. However, our educational institution is an exception in this regard. Few students come here with the sole objective of acquiring degrees. Most of them come here with the single aim of pleasing Swami by striving to follow Swami's ideals and attain exalted position in life. They give happiness to their parents by their good conduct.

### Students!

Education does not mean mere acquisition of degrees.  
Oh man!  
Examine and enquire for yourself what great happiness  
you have achieved by spending all the time from  
dawn to dusk in acquiring knowledge and earning  
wealth, unmindful of God.  
(Telugu poem)

One may acquire a high academic qualification such as  
M.A. and B.A. and attain exalted position,  
One may amass wealth, perform acts of charity, and attain name and fame,  
One may have physical strength and enjoy a long and healthy life,  
One may be a great scholar studying and preaching the Vedas,  
But none can equal a true devotee of the Lord.  
(Telugu poem)

Having entered the portals of this educational institution, you should try to understand the value and true meaning of education. Only when you understand these aspects can you be called truly educated. There is a lot of knowledge in **pustakas** (books), but what is the use if the **mastaka** (head) is filled with "mud"? Once you fill your **mastaka** with knowledge, you need not refer to **pustakas** any more.

Elders should evince interest in the education of their children. They should enquire as to what the children are learning in the educational institution and constantly monitor their progress. Modern students react to the queries of elders in a discourteous manner. They indulge in mere verbosity and confuse the elders.

Students should earn a good name in society and uphold the reputation and prestige of the institution in which they study. An educational institution is like a gigantic tree. Different subjects are like its branches and sub-branches. Virtues are like the fragrant flowers that you find on the tree. Faith is like the roots. When you water the roots of faith, you get the fruit of **Ananda** (Bliss).

At present, all educational institutions have begun to feel that character is very important for a student. The end of education is character. Character does not mean good conduct alone. One should consider the fellow human beings as one's own brothers and sisters. One should develop **bhava shuddhi** (purity in feelings), which will ultimately lead to **jnana siddhi** (attainment of wisdom).

Our students are highly virtuous. I repeatedly say that they are My property. When I have such a property with Me, why should I worry about anything? I asked the boys who appeared for the GATE examination, "My dear ones! How did you write the exam?" They said, "Swami, with Your grace and blessings we have done well. You say that students are Your property. Having been blessed with the opportunity of being Your students, our only aim is to live up to Your ideals and bring a good name to the Institute." I was very pleased and deeply touched by their answer. It is heartening to note that there are such ideal students in our Institute. It is because of such noble students that the country has progressed and prospered. If there are no men and women of virtues, how can the world shine with all its brilliance?

Our students do not indulge in empty rhetoric; they are men of action. Their sincerity makes Me happy. I have come to impart such ideal education to the students and inculcate virtues in them.

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 that cannot  
lead you to immortality?  
Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal.  
(Telugu poem)

Once you acquire the knowledge of the Self, you would have acquired everything else. These words of wisdom are imprinted in the hearts of our students.

### **Embodiments of Love! Students!**

You have proved your worth among lakhs of students and secured high ranks in the GATE examination (loud applause). The examiners were highly impressed with the intelligence and behaviour of our students. They wanted to know whether our students came from East or West, North or South. Our students replied, "Sir, we are neither from East nor from West, neither from South nor from North, we are the students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning."

They are not satisfied with what they have achieved. They are striving hard to bring more and more laurels to our Institute. Wherever you go, you find our students leading exemplary lives propagating the ideals of our educational institutions.

Once someone asked our students what type of food they like to take, vegetarian or non-vegetarian. They replied in one voice, "Non-vegetarian food gives rise to evil thoughts and feelings; hence we would never touch non-vegetarian food." They are 100% vegetarians. Even the students who used to eat non-vegetarian food earlier become vegetarians once they join our Institute. Once someone tried to persuade one of our students to take non-vegetarian food, saying it contained a lot of good nutrients. But he did not budge from his stand. He said, "I don't want such vitamins and proteins. Even vegetarian food has all the vitamins and proteins that I need. I want to tread the path of truth, and non-vegetarian food is not at all conducive for spiritual progress. Along with secular education, I want to acquire spiritual education and propagate it to the world." Many such students are firm in their resolve to spread the Sai ideals. It is because of such noble students that our institution has attained worldwide fame.

Students should develop good habits right from their childhood to enjoy good health and happiness. In this context, there is a poem that reads as follows:

Get up early in the morning at the crowing of the cock,  
Have a bath after your morning ablutions,  
Wear a proper dress.  
Eat properly and moderately.  
Go to school and study diligently.  
Earn a good name.  
Don't move out when it is raining,  
And never go near the murky pools.  
Take part in games,  
Run and play.  
If you abide by all these rules,  
You will have both health and wealth.  
(Telugu poem)

Students should exercise restraint over their food habits. Even birds, beasts, and animals observe certain regulations in this regard. Born as human beings and having acquired education, is it not expected of you to follow proper discipline with regard to food? Students who eat non-vegetarian food right from their childhood give up that habit when they join our institution. Even their parents are surprised at their transformation. When one of our students went home during vacation, his mother tried to serve him non-vegetarian food. He refused to touch it and requested his mother not to prepare non-vegetarian items in future. He explained to his parents the ill effects of consuming non-vegetarian food.

Non-vegetarian food is the cause of several diseases like cancer. You might have read in journals and newspapers that most of the people in Singapore eat fish. Consequently, they are infected by several harmful micro-organisms. Similar instances were reported from various parts of Bharat. It is because of unhealthy food that people suffer from diseases. Many are under the mistaken notion that non-vegetarian food gives them strength, but in reality it makes them weak. Once you spoil your health by partaking of non-vegetarian food, you will never be able to regain your health even if you spend the rest of your life in forests eating fruits and tubers.

These were the answers given by our students when they were asked questions about their food habits. The explanation given by our students made such an impact on the audience that many of them became total vegetarians. As the food, so is the mind. As the mind, so is the man. Hence, one must necessarily partake of sacred and **sathwic** (pure, serene) food to lead a happy and healthy life. Of late, there is a growing awareness among the **Bharatiyas** (Indians) about the influence of food on one's mind. Consequently, people are changing their food habits for the better. Our body is made up of flesh. Why should you feed it again with flesh? Such unsacred food gives rise to unsacred thoughts.

### Students!

It is not enough to observe regulations with regard to food alone; you should cultivate good habits also. You should participate in sports and games regularly. Take part in games that will help in the blossoming of your physical and mental faculties. Healthy food and good habits will take you to exalted position in life.

### Dear Bangaru Students!

Truly, you are like gold. It is not possible to describe your sacred feelings. You speak from the depths of your hearts. The language you speak is not ordinary. It is **Atma Bhasha** (language of the spirit). You are leading your lives with sacred feelings. However, keep away from bad company. It is said, "Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are." "As your company, so you become." Hence, always keep good company. Be in the company of those who speak good words. Never utter harsh and unsacred words. If you use unkind words, people will treat you like an enemy. If you speak softly and sweetly, people will enjoy your company and talk to you for any length of time. When you are in the company of others, make sure that your body is clean and your mouth does not emit bad smell. You should take proper care of your health in every possible way. When your body is clean and healthy and when your thoughts, words, and deeds are pure, you will be loved by one and all.

### Students!

Wherever you may go, ensure that you are presentable and acceptable in every way. Only then will you earn the respect of others. Always keep your mouth clean. Bad breath leads to various diseases. Not merely that, it will cause inconvenience to others. If your mouth emits foul smell, people try to avoid you. Hence, the moment you get up from bed in the morning,

you should brush your teeth and clean your tongue thoroughly. When you keep your mouth fresh and clean, you will enjoy good health. Though I don't sleep in the night, I brush My teeth before going to bed. I brush My teeth at regular intervals so as to keep My mouth fresh and clean. That is why I don't have any health problem. I don't have any pain whatsoever.

You should take care that no food particle sticks between your teeth. Some people use a hard brush to clean their teeth. As a result, their gums start bleeding. But I use a very soft brush. Even now My teeth are so strong that I can crack a betel nut. My students are struck with awe and wonder when they witness My physical power.

### Students!

It would be a shame for you to spoil your health and submit yourself to the hands of a doctor. Hence, each one has to take care of one's own health. One should never be dependent on others. This is what I teach My students quite often. Get up early in the morning, do some jogging and exercise so as to keep your body fit. During examination time, students try to keep themselves awake in the night for late hours to study. They keep dozing with books in front of them. Such studies will take you nowhere. Do not force yourself to study when you feel sleepy. Keep the books aside and go to bed peacefully. You should study only when your mind is fresh and attentive.

Oh man!  
Do not feel proud of your education and scholarship.  
If you do not offer your salutations to God and  
Do not contemplate on Him with devotion,  
Of what use is all your education?  
(Telugu poem)

### Students!

First and foremost, take care of your health. Your education will prove as mere waste if you do not maintain proper health. Do not rest content with secular education. You should also acquire *educare*. Education is related to gathering outside information, whereas *educare* relates to inward transformation. *Educare* is that which makes the human values blossom from within. Whether you have acquired *educare* or mere education will become evident in your speech. A word of caution in this regard: do not talk loosely. Especially when you speak to elders, carefully frame your sentences and speak with all humility and respect. True education is not limited to textual knowledge. You should manifest the human values of truth, righteousness, love, peace, and non-violence. Truth should not be confined to mere words. It should be translated into deeds.

### Students!

Having come here and acquired education of the highest standard, lead a life of virtues. Share your knowledge with others.

Let us all move together, let us all grow together,  
Let us all stay united and share our knowledge  
Let us live together with friendship and harmony.  
(Telugu poem)

This is what you have to learn today. Always have a smiling countenance and be a good friend to others. A good friend is one who always has good thoughts, speaks good words, and performs good deeds. When you lead your life in such a manner, you will be an ideal person and a source of inspiration to others.

Bhagawan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin*".