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Truth and righteousness are the foundation for true education

by
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Dear Students!

I do not wish to speak much about present-day education. In fact, there is a purpose and goal for education: that is truth. Whatever is learnt other than truth, cannot be construed as true education. That is only secular education.

There are many "educated" people in the world today. But, what are engaged in? I do not find educated people engaged in service to society today. Nevertheless, the educational institutions in the world are turning out more and more such "educated" people. The education that these people acquire is only secular education and not spiritual education. In fact, spiritual education is the only true education, which will establish the existence of God.

Secular education enables one to secure employment and eke out a living thereby. It is for the physical sustenance of the person concerned and their family. As the saying goes, "The end of education is character." Devoid of character, all other possessions are useless. Unfortunately, today, character building has been relegated to the background. It is the last priority.

Of what use it is to pursue such education that does not confer character on a person? Modern education may help one to gain control over men and matter, but it utterly fails in uplifting one's own self. There must be unity between one's inner feelings and outward actions. The harmony between thought, word, and deed is of utmost importance. Education should enable one to cultivate good qualities, character, and devotion. When there is unity between thought, word, and deed, one can acquire purity and realise Divinity.

Modern education is fully self-centred. Wherever you look, selfishness is rampant. Contrary to it, true education teaches selflessness. People pursuing such type of education, give up their selfish interests and work for the larger interest of society. It is said, **Paropakaraya punyaya, papaya parapeedanam** (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). Wherever you look, people today analyse whether a particular activity they wish to undertake will be beneficial to them or not. Everywhere you will find only selfish interest coming to the fore.

People tend to forget that the real self is one's own Self (**Atma**), which is the same Self (**Atma**) present in every individual. And, that Self is **Chaitanya Shakti** (the power of universal consciousness). This **Chaitanya Shakti** is present in every human being, nay every living being. That is why it is said, **Easwara sarva bhutanam** (God is the indweller of all beings). Hence, one has to give up one's self-interest and strive to realise the **Atma Tattwa** (**Atmic Principle**) that is present in every living being.

Modern education is steeped in utter selfishness. It is only when one transcends one's self-interest that one can acquire true education and purity of heart. One has to rise above self-interest and help others with a spirit of sacrifice. Only then can one become a true human being and be called as such; not by mere education. Birds, beasts, and animals cannot realise this sacred **Atma Tattwa** and manifest selflessness. Only a human being can do so by **sadhana** (spiritual exercises). A human being can acquire value only by developing good character. Hence, one has to strive to acquire and protect one's character by pursuing true education.

Education is not for earning a fat pay-packet. After all, what can money do? In what way it can help us? It may perhaps help us acquire name and fame and build palatial buildings with modern comforts. But, devoid of character, of what use all

these comforts? Unfortunately, today the world respects only such people. In my view, a person without character is unfit to be called a human being. He is only an animal. Even an animal is better than such a human being, for, it has a season and a reason. But a human being has no season and reason at all! Wherever you see, you will find only selfishness today. Only such people pass off as gentlemen in society in present times.

Coming to the point once again, character is the most important aspect of a human being. Truth and righteousness are the foundation for character. As the saying goes, **Sathyannasti paro dharma** (There is no **dharma** greater than adherence to truth). The mansion of righteousness rests on the foundation of truth. If the very foundation of truth collapses, there can be no righteousness. Hence, truth and righteousness are the two most important limbs of a human being. When truth and righteousness go together, love manifests.

Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the value of all your education is zero;
Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the sanctity of all your acts of charity is zero;
Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the utility of the positions of power occupied is zero;
Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the result of all your good deeds is zero;
These four qualities are the four foundation walls
that support the mansion of **Sanathana Dharma**.
What more can I explain,
Oh men of noble qualities!
(Telugu poem)

There can be no peace without truth, righteousness, and love. You often come across people complaining, "I have everything in life, but I have no peace of mind." A person without peace of mind is confronted with troubles from all sides. If only one has peace of mind, one can be happy in the world. One will have no troubles at all! Such a person is a great soul.

Let us now analyse the true meaning of the word **manava** (human being). It means one without attachment to the world. Only such a person can be called a real human being. To marry someone, beget children, and develop a family --these are all considered to be attachments. Man loses peace on account of developing attachments. A paradoxical situation has developed today where man has everything --good food, comfortable life, etc.-- but he has no peace of mind. Why? Because, he has developed an attachment to the objects of enjoyment. Peace is something which cannot be purchased in a market. It depends upon one's attitude to life and living.

Hence one has to develop **ekatma bhava** (feeling of oneness). If this **ekatma bhava** is developed, one can move about freely in the world with no attachment to any particular individual or object. When one loses one's freedom, one will become bound by the objective world. One will develop desires, lust, etc. Where there is lust, love cannot exist.

The rose flower, which is a symbol of love, teaches many good things. It is a thing of beauty that speaks silently in the language of fragrance. It is surrounded by thorns. In this example, the rose flower is comparable to love and the thorns to lust. Man must be able to pluck the flower of love without being pricked by the thorns of lust. It is only when man develops pure love untainted by desire and lust that he can be called a true human being.

Adi Sankara, the greatest exponent of the **advaita** (nondual) philosophy, once went on a tour to North India on a mission of winning over scholars by argumentation. During the course of his tour, he came across a great scholar by name Mandana Mishra. He had a wife, Ubhaya Bharati, who was equally well-versed in scriptures. Besides, she was a realised soul. She was selected to be the arbitrator and judge to decide the winner in the argumentative sessions between Sankaracharya and Mandana Mishra.

She was a truthful lady and was aptly suited to be a judge. The judges of modern times are not comparable to Ubhaya Bharati in the qualities of truth and objectivity. She always believed in the aphorism "Truth is God" and therefore was eminently suited for the assignment.

The arguments between Sankaracharya and Mandana Mishra commenced in the presence of Ubhaya Bharati. She was following the arguments and counter arguments with rapt attention. Finally, Sankaracharya defeated Mandana Mishra in the arguments and was declared as winner by Ubhaya Bharati.

As per the conditions governing the sessions, Mandana Mishra had to take to **sanyas** (become a renunciant), and he did accordingly. As a dutiful wife, Ubhaya Bharati followed suit, and she also took to **sanyas**.

A question may arise here as to what is **sanyas**, in the real sense. It is giving up of all desires. As long as one entertains desires, one will only be a **samsari** (householder). One will develop worldly relationships. One will desire to have a son in the first instance. Thereafter, the whole retinue of daughter-in-law, grandsons, granddaughters, etc., will follow.

Ubhaya Bharati did not wish to entangle herself in the web of such worldly relationships. Hence, she took to **sanyas** (renunciation).

One day, she was going along with her disciples to the river Ganga for taking a holy dip in the river. On the way, she observed a **sanyasi** (renunciant) relaxing on the wayside, keeping a dried bottle gourd under his head. He was using it to store drinking water, so he was preserving it safely. Ubhaya Bharati saw this **sanyasi's** attachment to the bottle gourd and commented to her disciples, "Look! This man calls himself a **sanyasi**, but he is attached to a bottle gourd, which he is keeping safely under his head as a pillow."

The sanyasi heard this comment, but did not utter anything then. While Ubhaya Bharati and her disciples were returning from the river, he threw away the bottle gourd in front of them in order to demonstrate that he was not attached to the article. Observing his action, Ubhaya Bharati aptly remarked, "I thought there was only one defect in him --**abhimana** (attachment). Now I realise that he has another defect also: **ahamkara** (ego). How can one with --**abhimana** and **ahamkara** become a **jnani** (realised soul) and **sanyasi**?" Her comment was an eye-opener for the **sanyasi**. Immediately, he fell at the feet of Ubhaya Bharati and prayed to her to teach him true knowledge.

People today put up a show as though they had renounced everything. In fact, it is they who crave for worldly possessions.

Dear students!

You are all engaged in pursuing education. Hence, you must have only one desire now. That is **brahmacharya** (celibacy). When you come here to join the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning as students, you pray, "Swami! We don't want anything. We have no desires like marriage, setting up a family, building houses, etc. Please lead us on the path of liberation." But, the moment you leave the portals of the Institute, umpteen number of desires swarm you like honey bees.

Man's behaviour is influenced by **sthanabala** (power of the place), **bhujabala** (power of the physical body) and **dhanabala** (power of wealth). For instance, in the **Ramayana**, when Rama and Lakshmana were going in search of Sita, Lakshmana suddenly felt tired and told Rama that he was exhausted and was fed up with the search for Sita and would like to go back to Ayodhya as quickly as possible to have a more comfortable living.

Rama smiled at him and said, "Let us proceed further, I shall explain everything later."

How did Lakshmana, who previously had declared that Rama was everything to him and that he would not live without Rama, even for a moment, suddenly develop this attitude? How did this concern for bodily comfort arise in him suddenly?

After they walked some distance and sat under a tree. That moment Lakshmana felt the pangs of repentance for his impertinent behaviour. He realised his mistake, caught hold of Rama's feet and asked, "Rama! Forgive me for what I had said. I cannot understand how these devilish qualities and bad thoughts entered me. What could be the reason?"

Rama thought over the matter for some time and explained, "Lakshmana! The region through which we passed just now was the haunt of Surpanakha. She used to rest under that tree. Hence, the place is surcharged with all her devilish qualities. The vibrations of those evil qualities aroused bad thoughts in you. The moment you came out of the place, you are your normal self again. Your inherent good nature asserted itself."

Thus, one's association with a particular place also has its effect on one's behaviour. That is what is called **sthanabala** (power of the place).

People often wish and pray for a son. But what type of son do they should pray for? One who will emulate the noble qualities of the parents. Unfortunately, today you do not find noble qualities anywhere. Youngsters often move in bad company and cultivate bad qualities. This is not correct. They should always make friendship with good people and emulate their qualities. The great epic **Ramayana** is replete with several examples of how association with good people

results in developing noble qualities. Adi Sankara in his famous **Bhaja Govindam** song very graphically described how **satsanga** (good company) would ultimately lead one to liberation:

Satsangatwe nissangatwam,
Nissangatwe nirmohatwam,
Nirmohatwe nischalatattwam,
Nischalatattwe jivanmukti.
(Sanskrit sloka)

Today, people move about in bad company and ultimately spoil themselves. This is the effect of the **Kali Yuga**, which is often referred to as the **Kalaha Yuga** (the Age of Conflict). Man, by nature, is divine; but he turns bad on account of **dussanga** (bad company). That is why sages and seers in ancient times constantly strove to cultivate noble qualities by **satsanga**.

Today, trash literature is found everywhere. Wherever you look, you will find people, especially youngsters, reading bad books that pollute their minds. You might have observed youngsters visiting the library invariably on Sundays and holidays. They search for bad books and read them with absorbing interest. Those bad books are very exciting to the young minds. Thus, youngsters spoil themselves on account of bad company. No force on earth can change such boys. Not even God. Unless one makes introspection into one's behaviour and strives for transformation, one continues to move about in bad company.

One's character and conduct are of paramount importance. If they are taken care of, one is sure of treading the right path. There is no use acquiring high academic degrees with a view to earn high salary and position. How long will they last? On the other hand, it is possible that they may land one in trouble sometimes.

In keeping with the saying, **Yad bhavam tad bhavati** (as the feeling, so is the result), one has to cultivate noble thoughts and feelings. One has to read good books that will bring about a transformation of heart and uplift the soul.

You often find youngsters going to the library and engaged in deep study. What sort of books they study? They read bad books camouflaged in a good cover. Once you remove the cover and look into the book, everything is trash, with bad photos. You will have to be very tough with such students. No one can be taken for granted. They speak sweet words outwardly as though they are very innocent. But, they stealthily engage themselves in bad activities. Unlike the students in the **Gurukula** system of the ancient times, present day students indulge in bad behaviour. In spite of great efforts on the part of teachers to bring about a transformation in them, they continue to exhibit their bad qualities. It is not surprising to see students assaulting teachers in the educational institutions today. There are students who find fault with those who actually provide for their living. There are also students who do not hesitate to pull down the very hand that feeds them. Such are the qualities of the present day students. They do not appreciate the role played by the teachers in their uplift.

What are the qualities expected of a student?

Students should pursue such education that
confers on them the sacred qualities like
good character,
adherence to truth,
devotion, discipline, and duty.
(Telugu poem)

Only students who cultivate such qualities are eligible to be called students in the real sense. Those who act against those principles are not students, but stupid. You should not make friendship with such people. Neither you should call them stupid and earn their wrath. Be neutral in your relationship with them. You should keep up your own good qualities, which the world will appreciate. Love all. In fact, love is the most important aspect of education. One who teaches the method by which man can cultivate selfless love is the real Guru. There are, of course, several such teachers.

I have established the Sathya Sai Educational Institutions only with a view to inculcate love and teach good qualities to students. It is not an exaggeration to say that there is not a single bad book in our library. Our students are very good students. They do not at all move in bad company.

Even when they go home for vacation, they do not like to stay there for long. Sometimes, their mothers may say, "My

dear! You stayed for one full year in Brindavan or Puttaparthi. You never had an opportunity to eat tasty and spicy food. I shall now prepare such food that you will relish."

Our boys will then reply, "Mother! You should also not eat such **rajasic** (passionate) food. It is not good for health."

As the food, so is the head (thoughts). Thus, when the food and head go together, people forget God. Hence, do not change your food habits. Continue to stick to a **sathwic** (pure) diet. Take plenty of green leafy vegetables. It is only when you maintain spartan habits with regard to food and head that will you become a good-natured individual.

You are aware that people outside have high expectations of the students studying in Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions. Students, as long as they remain in our hostels, exhibit good behaviour and devotion. Once they go out of the portals of the institution, they turn bad. This should not happen. Wherever you are, whether in the hostel here or when you go out, you must continue to exhibit good behaviour. Of course, I have no doubt at all about the behaviour of our students. They are good boys. I sincerely wish and hope that our students continue to be good and become good citizens worthy of emulation by others.

I conclude My Discourse with blessings to all.