

47. Education in the Sai era

EDUCATION must enable a person to discriminate between light and darkness. It must foster and promote the precious wealth of moral strength and spiritual victory and purify the inner impulses of man. Mere mastery of books does not entitle a man to be called 'educated.' Without mastery over the inner instruments of emotions, no man can be deemed to be educated. The latent has to be cleansed so that the patent can flourish. Experience is essential for the confirmation and consolidation of what is learnt from books. We do not see any sign of this in the present educational system. There is no attempt to awaken the Divine in Man, no awareness of the possibility of rising to the psychic plane.

The ideal that is held before the student in our educational institutions is different. They are engaged in a mechanical process of turning out young men and women who detest work that soils the hand or disturbs the fold of their dresses. They instil the passion for profit in their hearts, and ignore the urge to sympathise and serve. Education must produce wisdom and moral character. It can be acquired only by hard living and spending days of toil, with no respite for even sleep. But present-day education makes those who undergo it, mere bonded-slaves to their senses. They do not know how to avoid this bondage, so they revel in envy, greed and egoism. What the country expects and demands from the educated person is, however, that he should set an example of honest labour, lighting the lamp of knowledge in every home.

***Atharva Vedha* embodies many secrets**

When you really analyse it, you will discover confusion, uncertainty and indecision in every section of the educational system. The remedy for this unhappy situation lies in the revival of ancient ideals and practices with slight adaptations to suit the changed times and circumstances. For these ideals and practices enshrine values that are eternal and essential.

For example, though the Russians and Americans boast that they have advanced far ahead in the fields of science and technology, one has to admit that this country had made vast progress in them even in the *Vedhic* age. The Atharva vedha embodies many technological secrets and scientific laws which were directly utilised by Westerners. Western scholars are investigating the possibilities of the exploratory laws mentioned in this *Vedhic* text. Mention is made of aerial vehicles, of gravitation and of various other scientific principles and appliances. They have inspired many inventors and technicians in other lands through the ages.

Indians have developed a fascination for foreign lands. They admire the achievements of other people but ignore those of their own. The faculty of initiation is subdued by this faculty of imitation. As the proverb says, "they prefer the stale, insipid dish available at the neighbour's home to the well-cooked, tasty dish available at their own." As a result they are unable to identify and promote the knowledge and skill that they have mastered in their own country.

Give up the mad pursuit after Diplomas

The Wright Brothers are declared to be the pioneers, the very first to fly a heavier-than-air plane in the sky. Their powered flight took place on December 17, 1903. But a German had actually forestalled them by his flight on September 13, 1896. We must note that even earlier than this German, on August 14, 1895, an Indian belonging to Bombay, Shivaraam Baapuji Kadalekar, had succeeded in a similar feat. His name failed to draw public admiration and his feat was not acclaimed because of the envy, selfishness and the quarrelsome nature of our people.

Unity of minds, mutual love and cooperation are the qualities we have to develop today. Education is not for securing university degrees. Give up this mad pursuit after diplomas which cater to the ego and increase the distance between you and others. Develop the desire to serve others and equip yourselves through education with the skill needed to serve others better. Education must enthuse youth to understand the precious heritage of Indian culture and spirituality, and to evoke the higher powers they possess. Though there are perennial sources and springs of strength within them, they behave like weaklings and ignoramuses. Patience, tolerance, tranquility and calmness have to be implanted in the heart.

Education is not mere book-knowledge

Education has to cultivate humility and discipline, but today it is yielding a harvest of pride and envy. *Vidhya* means-vidh (light) and *ya* (that which gives). *So vidhya* (education) has to shed light and illumine the darkness in the mind and intellect. It does not indicate mere book-knowledge. It has to clarify the kinship of man with man and his intimate relationship with nature. It must harmonise one's earlier experiences with one's present one, and guide one to profitable and beneficial experiences in the future. It must validate the knowledge gained from books by these experiences and, by that process, make man more and more human, until he becomes Divine.

Riches beyond reasonable limit will result only in disaster. So, too, mere scholarship beyond limit will only bring about pride and competitive struggle. Of course information of a certain quality is desirable in a certain quantity, but without a parallel and simultaneous cultivation of morals and self-awareness, scholarship will only be a burden and a danger. The cultivation of a social consciousness is also very important. One must not learn to live like a drop of oil on a pond spreading all over the surface and refusing to merge with the water. One must join others in common tasks and contribute one's strength and skill to the common pool. A single thin string cannot bend even an ant, but hundreds of them twisted into a rope can hold back an elephant. This is the effect of united effort. It is a desirable trait to work for a common cause with others in *cooperation*; but today people unfortunately only believe in *operation*.

Study the best means of bringing peace

What can gatherings, meeting and sessions of learned bodies achieve? The conclusions arrived at after extensive discussions are not put into practice at all. Large sums of money as well as countless reams of paper are wasted. The recommendations and resolutions must be tested on the touchstone of practice. The money can be better spent on raising the standard of life of the village folk. You have formed a study circle. Study the best means of bringing peace and apply those means in a few villages to prove their validity. They can then be taught to people in other lands also. Members of the circle can help students who are handicapped or defective and who have not been able to keep abreast of the rest, by giving them extra attention and special guidance.

The clouds gathered thick in the sky have, in their midst, streaks of lightning. So, too, there has to be wisdom illumining the clouds of knowledge. The learned man's life itself must shine as his message to mankind. Every particle of strength, every moment of life, every expression of virtue and every manifestation -of intelligence, must be directed to the fulfilment of this high purpose.

When the name of the drug is repeated, can the disease be cured? Can poverty be overcome by reciting the word, 'Dollar' or 'Rupee'? Can the reading of the menu-card remove the pang of

hunger? A pass in the examination does not make a person more useful or more wise. Lecturers and professors of the teaching faculty are like an 'overhead tank' and the students are the 'taps.' When the tank is filled with potable water, the taps too, will yield water with which people can slake their thirst.

The duty of teachers is to correct and counsel the students, charging them with enthusiasm and courage and removing their sloth and vacillation. This is the underlying object of all the curricula and classes---to eliminate narrowness of outlook and to promote wide, inclusive modes of thought, word and deed. Faith in the One-ness of all must be rooted and strong.

The *Upanishath* declares, "All this is enveloped by God," and the Geetha declares, "All this is the Lord," and "The Lord is in all beings." Consider every student who is eager to learn as your own child. Consider every subject you teach as a means for instilling faith in God. When you teach physics, also lead the students into the magnificent mystery of philosophy. While teaching botany, guide them into the sublime secrets of the tree, and of the Creator who has blessed them with it. Life is a tree. The mutual relationship we cultivate and cherish is symbolised by the branches, twigs and leaves; the thoughts arising in the mind are the flowers; *aanandha* (bliss) is the fruit, and *dharma* (virtue) is the sweet juice it contains. The tree is held firm by the very roots which feed it---roots that symbolise faith and self-confidence.

At present, discipline has almost disappeared from the educational field. Professing one thing and doing another has become a Universal vice. The nation can prosper and be happy only when education develops in an atmosphere of Truth, Love and Reverence.

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