

ESSENTIALS FOR THE MAKING OF A GOOD TEACHER*

At the outset, let me congratulate the awardees of honorary doctorates,

persons securing the Ph.D. degrees, Gold Medalists and Rank holders and all those who have secured their degree from Gulbarga University, for bringing honour to themselves, their parents, their teachers and the society. I wish them success and to excel in whichever field they may choose to go. I firmly believe – nothing can be achieved in life without the blessings of elders. God doth sent His bounty unto us. But He needs a medium. The medium is our parents and teachers. Dear students! You have to be thankful to them.

I am happy to be in your midst today at this Convocation which is taking place during the Silver Jubilee Year of the University. It is a matter of great joy to learn that His Excellency, the President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalamji, inaugurated the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the University on the 23rd September this year. As can be noted, this University is making rapid progress and rendering yeomen services in this part of the State which is considerably backward as compared to the other parts of Karnataka. With 35 Post-graduate departments, 160 affiliated colleges and P.G. Centres at Bidar, Raichur, Bellary and Sandur, the University is poised to make a deep and abiding impact, in terms of equipping the human resource with the wherewithals, necessary for transforming the five districts, located within the University jurisdiction, into areas of aspiration and development.

Though the vast areas within the University jurisdiction have been declared as backward, now I am happy to learn that these very areas were brimming with life and were areas of great civilization in the years gone by. Ancient educational institutions in the form of *Agraharas*, *Brahamapuris*, *Ghatikasthanas* and *Mathas* existed in the region, following traditional methods in teaching. *Mathas* were residential schools wherein the teacher and the taught lived together. *Agraharas* and *Brahamapuris* were the settlement of scholars. *Ghotika* was meant for conferring degrees or certifying scholarships. The *Maha Agrahara Nagavai*, the ancient University of Nagai at Chittapur Taluk was established during Rashtrakuta and Chalukya periods (993 A.D.). However, what has made me to travel all the way to Gulbarga is the fact that Vijaneshwara, the author of Mitakshara was born in this region and also wrote the legal treatise at Martur, a place only a few kilometers from the city of Gulbarga. There must have been great scholarship and wisdom, prevalent during those times to witness a person in the form of Vijaneshwara, being born and groomed here, whose work has come to be accepted as the authority on Hindu Law by nearly the whole of India. It will be a matter of joy to declare open the Centre for Studies in Vijaneshwara's Mitakshara and Human Rights, this afternoon in the University Campus. This, coupled with the contribution made by Basaweshwara during the 11th and 12th centuries, marks this region as unique in the legal development and social transformation that have taken place in the country. Let us not forget that our glorious history of past, also helps us to illuminate our future. The lives and works of these great persons give us strength and fill us with hope to march ahead to make this region and our country more developed and prosperous in the years to come.

I am aware that at this moment I am standing in a place of learning. I am surrounded by eminent teachers, brilliant students and good persons - all great human beings. This is an appropriate occasion when I would like to share with you a few thoughts on education.

Quite often I say that the preceding century has bestowed on us many a valuable gifts. Man has landed on Moon and Mars. Barriers in advancement of science and technology have been broken. The progress and prosperity now know no bounds. But alas!, it is all materialistic. In the land of gods, sages, saints and scholars, the spirituality has been a casualty. The valuable gifts, handed-down by the preceding millennium to us are not without their price tags. We have entered the new millennium, and in particular this century, accompanied by three 'Cs', as is writ large. There is crisis of character, crisis of credibility and crisis of competence, *i.e.*, value-based competence. The solution to various problems which the present day society encounters every day, lies in the hands of teachers. Committed teachers, the real teachers, the *gurus*, as they have been known to us from our ancient India, if realize and assume the responsibility as they have done in the past, can transform and shape the coming generation into creative citizens.

The parents, in particular the mother, is the first teacher of the child. The education begins even before the child is born. The classical example of Abhimanyu bears testimony to this truth. He learnt the secrets of fighting war and breaking the '*Chakravyuha*' whilst he was still in the womb of his mother. The conduct and behaviour of the mother, bearing a child, lays the foundation of the character and shapes the destiny of the child – as he shall be.

Once admitted in school, the role of teachers comes into play. In an educational institution, the student not only learns the lessons given, he unconsciously imbibes into his personality the quality of his teachers which determine his emotions, expectations and what he is going to be in his life ahead. Whether the child as a youth would contribute to generate peace and creativity in the society, or fight a war of destruction, depends on what seeds are sown in his mind as a pupil. He can learn to forgive and forget, cooperate and create; he can also learn to assert and desert, fight and destroy.

When we discuss education, the first question which we have to ask to ourselves is why we are born on this earth? Are we here only to acquire wealth, power and status? In my humble opinion "no". That is not the sole purpose of being born as a human being. The real purpose of being born in a human life is to lead a virtuous life and the real purpose of education is two pronged: to enable human beings in sustaining their body and growing their souls. The immediate purpose of education is to enable the student in earning a career. The ultimate purpose of education is to attain an exalted state of virtuous conduct, by growing a discerning mind which can distinguish good from bad and lead us to salvation. To help people in raising them to a higher level of existence, education acts as a catalyst.

An ideal education not only empowers the student with the tools, essential for his survival in the competitive world of today but also aims at achieving the development of character without which a man though may be useful to himself, would not be useful to the society.

The Supreme Court in the case of *Unnikrishnan*, (1993) 1 SCC 645, 665 has forcefully stated about the role of educational institutions in nation building which is worth quoting:—

"Para 13: Victories are gained, peace is preserved, progress is achieved, civilization is built up and history is made not on the battlefield where ghastly murders are committed in the name of patriotism, not in the Council Chambers where insipid speeches are spun out in the name of debate, not even in factories where are manufactured novel instruments to strangle life, but in educational institutions which are the seed-beds of culture, where children in whose hands quiver the destinies of the future, are trained. From their ranks will come out

when they grow up, statesmen and soldiers, patriots and philosophers, who will determine the progress of the land.”

Education is knowledge, imbibed with values and wisdom. Else the knowledge may prove to be dangerous and sow in the mind the seeds of destruction to the serious detriment of humanity. We need that education, which is knowledge with ethics, so as to condition the students’ behaviour and character by which they not only successfully pass the journey through life but also spread the fragrance of their presence in the society, conscious of their responsibility and discharging the trust that the society places in them.

Here comes into play the role of teachers. Teaching is not just being possessed of a few fragments of knowledge, associated with the capacity to speak out. A teacher is not just one who is possessed of means for spreading literacy; a teacher is one who has a vision and capacity to impart learning and putting into use the means for the purpose of achieving creative ends. If the people of India feel frustrated and disillusioned by what is happening around us as told to us by the newspapers every morning, the solution lies in the hands of teachers. A very onerous obligation is cast on the shoulders of teachers which they shall have to realize and be ready to accept if our country has to be a better India tomorrow.

A teacher is not just a graduate or a post-graduate or even one armed with a doctoral degree, aspiring for a job to make his both ends meet. Teaching is a service-oriented profession which requires a will to sacrifice. Our traditional thinking was of a teacher who enjoyed the blessings of Goddess ‘*Saraswati*’ but also incurred the wrath of Goddess ‘*Lakshmi*’. The two Goddesses were jealous of each other and refused to live together. With the lapse of time they have learnt the art of living together. Goddess ‘*Lakshmi*’ has accepted Goddess ‘*Saraswati*’ as her elder sister and also the leader. If only Goddess ‘*Saraswati*’ is allowed to lead, ‘*Lakshmi*’ shall follow. Now, it is not, and should not be, the other way round. Today the richest persons of the world are those who are learned – the technocrats, the professionals and so on.

The universities ought to select for appointment only such teachers who love teaching and have the potential for shaping as a committed teacher. An intensive orientation course for enhancing teaching qualities should follow and be kept renewed, periodically, to sharpen their teaching skills. Tools made available by modern technology can be of immense help not only for identifying the innate qualities, required for this great profession but also for assisting the teachers in sharpening their communication skills and effective delivery of thoughts.

Those already in the profession of teaching need to constantly upgrade their knowledge and abilities. In this direction, the U.G.C. sponsored programmes of Orientation and Refresher Courses for teachers can be appreciated. But then, these courses should not end up in a monotony. They should be well-designed and implemented in such a way as to involve the participants fully in the programme.

The universities should so guide their teachers as to concentrate on imparting knowledge and character in the students upto pre-college level. By the time they reach high school or higher secondary level of education, they must be matured enough to take decision under the guidance of their teachers to take up such professional or other course of study as is suited to their aptitude and inclination. A close interaction between the teachers and the parents, at this crucial point of time, would enable the young boy or girl to move on the right track, so that his or her talent is best utilized in the interest of the society and the youth is also saved from frustration.

Incidentally, I must emphasise that the universities have also to pay their teachers well. The UGC scales of pay are reasonably good and the management should not lag behind in ensuring

availability of such pay-scales to their teachers. After all, it is the performance of the teachers that brings laurels to the university.

Ladies and Gentlemen! I have no desire of attempting at educating the educators, more so, when I am standing on the floor of a great educational institution. I have only shared a few thoughts, relating to teaching and teachers as they came to my mind. I close this topic by sharing an anecdote with you which only a week before, Mrs. Maharukh Singh, the Principal of Mothers International School, Delhi narrated to me.

There was a school situated in a *jhuggi-jhonpdi* cluster. One day a teacher asked all the students to answer a few questions, written on a piece of paper and distributed to each one of the students. One of the questions was – ‘What is your future?’ Almost every student answered by saying – “no future”. The record of the answer-sheets, along with the names and particulars of the students, was preserved in the archives of the institution. 15-20 years later some one looked into the records. Feeling a little upset, he sat down on inquiring what had happened to those students. To his surprise, he found that each one of the students had achieved success in his career. Someone was a doctor, someone an engineer, someone a political leader. Inquisitive, he got in touch with them and asked to each one of them the secret of his success. The answer was common. Every student said that there was a teacher who succeeded in changing his attitude and converting him from failure into a success. The teacher was contacted for revealing the secret of his technique. He said – “faced with the students who saw no future for themselves, I changed my manner of teaching. I did not teach but I reached them. I did not speak, I inspired them. I simply loved them so that their hidden concepts and capabilities come out and bloom, allowing their personalities to shape by themselves.”

In my humble opinion he was a teacher, the real teacher.

A good teacher must be reciprocated by good pupils. The youth of today is well informed and highly knowledgeable. What is required is to channelise these qualities into constructive and realistic programmes of action that will be beneficial to the country.

Sources of knowledge have immensely expanded in modern times, thanks to information technology and electronic media. Knowledge thus gained must be used for constructive achievements. Centres for vocational guidance in Universities, manned by experts, can help the students in matching their vision with the abilities possessed. This will indeed make a big difference.

A good pupil is one who has a mission, a vision and a passion for learning. Either he should be blessed enough with, or else he should develop, speed plus comprehension in reading, writing and thinking. The teacher should train the students into learning the art of continuously improving their study skills. And, in turn, every student must reciprocate by desiring to do so.

For the students, I may say, mediocrity is no anathema to excellence. It is better to set such goals as are simpler and achievable and strive to achieve those goals. That enhances the capacity for setting higher targets and achieving them, qualitatively. The secret of success and contentment lies in finding out one’s own powers and one’s own limitations – what one can do and what one cannot do. Do not want too many things and do not try to be someone else. Be your own genuine self. Be a fighting optimist. Think most, feel the noblest and act the best. Learn the art of working *for* others and working *with* others by designing, sharing and achieving common goals. This will bring to you, the sense of fulfillment and contentment. You will rise superior in trials of life and despair would never take over you.

Whether a teacher or a taught, there are unlimited opportunities for innovation and improving practices. The accomplishments multiply in geometrical progression when the teacher and the taught, succeed in developing the bondage of mutual confidence by communication and understanding. I read an article written by one Shri B.S. Sudhindra who suggested that a good student is one who follows a simple formula – “SQ3R” i.e. Survey, Question, Read, Recall and Review.

An eminent educationist has said –

“Any analysis of socio-economic, cultural and religious content of any country or continent would remain incomplete unless the nature, content and process of its educational endeavours are also analysed simultaneously. Any transformation in human approach and attitude can never be achieved unless a supportive pattern of education is evolved. The entire world is talking of fighting against the terrorism of various kinds – social, racial, economic, colonial, military, etc. The only right weapons and approaches would be information, knowledge and wisdom. All other weapons have outlived their utility. These are the days of mind power. Right education is the key to peace and prosperity.”

To a question as to what is the measuring rod of the happiness of any human society, the “*Tattiriyopanishad*” has declared that “the number of youth who are well-educated and thereby have secured profound knowledge, who are of sterling character, and who are healthy and physically fit, constitute the measuring rod of happiness. In the absence of any one of these, a person is likely to become a liability to his parents and the society instead of being an asset. Thus, education has three dimensions, intellectual, moral and physical. I am confident that each student of this University, armed with the education he has secured here at, shall make effort to be a youth of the above description.



* Speech delivered at the Silver Jubilee Convocation of Gulbarga University, Gulbarga on 30th December, 2004, at Gulbarga University Campus.