

TEACHERS ARE THE EPITOMES OF SELELESS SERVICE

On 5TH September 2015 I was invited to talk about Teachers Day among the principals, headmasters and teachers of various educational institutions. It was held in the Durbar Hall of Raj Bhavan, Shillong.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, former president of India, was a philosopher, educationalist, author and statesman. India celebrates his birthday, the 5th of September, as ‘Teachers Day’ every year.

He was the champion of ‘Sanatana Dharma’. He was a professor of Eastern Religions at Oxford University and the finest Indian to be a fellow of the British Academy. He was also named the ‘Knight of the Golden Army of Angels’, the Vatican’s highest honor for a head of state.

He was born in a village near Thiruthani in Tamilnadu. After his primary education he joined Madras Christian College and graduated with a Master’s degree in Philosophy. Then he served the Madras Presidency College, and the Mysore University. During that time he had written many articles for journals and he also completed his first book, “The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore.” He believed in Tagore’s philosophy to be the “genuine manifestation of the Indian spirit”. Then an important academic event happened. At the invitation of Oxford University, he gave a lecture on “The ideals of life” in Harris Manchester college. In 1939 Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya invited him to succeed as the Vice –Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University.

When India became independent in 1947, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan represented India at UNESCO and was later appointed as the ambassador of India to Soviet Union. As a fitting reward for his life of honesty, dedication and knowledge, he was then elected to the constituent Assembly of India.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was elected as the first vice-president of India in 1952 and elected as the president of India in 1962.

Dr. S Radhakrisnan, began his life as a teacher and made an immense contribution towards our nation through his creative intellect and genius of thought. Some of his students and friends requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday on the 5th of September; to

which he replied, “Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my proud privilege if this day is observed as Teachers’ Day instead. Since 1962, his birthday is celebrated in India as Teachers’ Day on the 5th of September.

Even in dire circumstances, our teachers have rendered invaluable service towards individual, social and national growth. Let us therefore accord due respect to our teachers, as has been India’s own tradition. Today more than ever, a great responsibility rests with Teachers in regard to building the character and acumen of the children and youth of India.

A good teacher teaches, best through his or her personal example. It is said that the most powerful lessons are never spoken aloud. Ethical and moral values, awareness of our heritage of thought and significance of culture, our spirit of pluralism and oneness, the inculcation of scientific temper, patriotism and sense of mission are the virtues needed to nurture young minds by our teachers, in order to take the country forward.

Children need to be taught the norms of decent behavior so that they develop fine qualities. There are certain moral values that have to be inculcated in children during the formative years so that they would be able to make choices that are beneficial to them. This is the collective responsibility of parents, teachers and schools. We should imbibe the thought in them that “Do to others what you expect of others to do to you”

More over Morals and ethics are not simply taught, they are acquired by observing the behavior of our elders. Mahatma Gandhi was born in Porbandar. It so happened that a group of people came to perform a drama in Porbandar. It was about the ancient king Harishchandra who was very Truthful. Gandhiji saw how much Harshchandra had to suffer to be truthful. This had a lasting effect on him. He decided that he would also always tell the truth. Soon truth became his way of life. He made up his mind that even if the truth led him into trouble, he would never give it up. Gandhiji’s autobiography was named as, “The story of my experiments with truth.”

When a teacher enters a classroom, students should feel exhilarated like a flower blossoms after it receives the rays of the Sun. A close relationship should be fostered between the teacher and the students for inspiration, growth and guidance.

Indiscipline in the educational institutions is a consequence of many negative things. Discipline cannot always be enforced, but has to grow from within. Greater personal contact between teacher and their students will promote a positive learning environment.

The teachers are required to teach a certain curriculum within a prescribed time frame. This is very important because the students want to get through the examinations with good percentage of marks. At the same time, a teacher can make students explore the larger ideals and the value of humanism to his pupils, so that they can become good students as well as good citizens.

At some point of time, in their life they will be able to explore all the big questions in life; such as, who am I? Why I am here? What is the purpose of everything? Can we live not only for ourselves but also for the wellbeing of others?

Our country achieved political freedom through tremendous sacrifice and struggle of our great leaders. It is our duty to reinforce national unity, economic growth and social emancipation. India today is striving towards economic progress with social justice. In this endeavor, the teacher has an important role to perform. By facilitating the application of knowledge, promoting skills and vocations beyond classrooms and curriculum.

Teachers are epitomes of selfless service and in my belief, they are the engines of national growth.
