

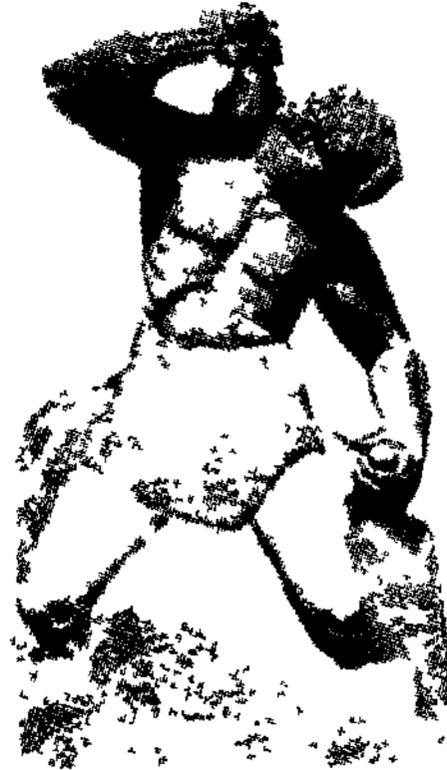
INTEGRATED PERSONALITY: Student Power— Its Use and Abuse

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The election of the office-bearers of a students' union is being conducted in full swing in a big college. Soon a clash ensues between the supporters of the rival candidates. Unable to control it, the authorities of the college promptly call in the police. The police arrive on the scene and quickly go into action 'hammering' the students mercilessly, severely injuring quite a few of them, not excluding perhaps a couple of the professors too, who are helplessly watching the dogfight. Enraged at this atrocity of the police who had no business to interfere in their 'family quarrel', the students now decide to 'teach them a good lesson' and begin attacking the police party as also the college authorities with whatever missiles they can lay their hands on. The college office is ransacked, the laboratories are destroyed and the library is set on fire. The College Union too does not escape from vandalism.

Meanwhile, seeing that the situation has gone out of their control, the 'small' police force beats a hasty retreat in order to return with greater reinforcements, being promptly chased by the enraged students whose number has in the meantime, been swelled by the 'reinforcements' from a part of the goondas from the nearby cinema house. Unaware of all this turmoil, a bus of the public transport system tries to plough through this crowd of 'war heroes'. Woe be unto it! The wrath of the crowd now turns 'justly' against the bus and other transport vehicles and the police meanwhile manage to escape. Buses and cars are stoned and a couple of them are burnt also. Among the innocent passers-by and the passengers, who frantically try to escape from the scene, a few are seriously injured including an old woman and a helpless child. Some shops are looted and the nearby post-office is burnt. (It just does not matter if Shyam's applications posted for jobs have been burnt in that



**Let us carve out
our own image.**

bonfire and if an old father died owing to lack of timely help since his only son could not get the telegram of his father's critical illness, as the telegraph office had been reduced to 'sacred ashes'!)

The authorities of law and order now quickly act and a much bigger police force including a company of the CRP is brought into action. Firing 'in self-defence' becomes inevitable, leaving half a dozen young men dead,

perhaps totally ruining the future of a few families which depends upon them.

Thus 'order' is restored and 'peace' returns.

There have already been echoes of this disturbance in the State Legislature where, as usual, the opposition charges the Government with high-handedness and unprovoked attack and the Treasury Benches charge the opposition with having deliberately fomented the trouble just to tarnish the good name of Government. The State exchequer and the public lost just one crore of rupees thereby obliging the finance minister to impose new taxes to make up the deficit!

Thus the story goes on.

And this certainly is 'student power' which has made itself keenly felt by the Government and the people!

Not that this is the only side of the story. To be fair, there is certainly the other side, the brighter side, students helping in the construction of a road or a school building in a village, spreading literacy by running night schools for the employed adults, giving knowledge about better sanitation to ignorant people, helping the police in controlling traffic or in maintaining law and order in times of emergency by working as volunteers—these are but a few of the several activities carried on by the students either individually or in groups. And this certainly is also 'student power' and that too in the true sense.

If the 'student power' is manifesting itself today in the way it does, and not in the way it should, the fault is not wholly its. You cannot keep your finger in

the fire and then expect it not to be burnt! Having forced a negative and soulless education down the throats of these students, having been infected with the contagion of politics in all its departments of life, having forgotten how a true teacher or a parent or a political leader or a member of the society is to conduct himself, having placed inordinate emphasis upon money and other material values, if the society still dreams of 'controlling' the 'student power', it is hugging a fond illusion!

So, if we are to survive we have to return to the spirit of our great scriptures and our great forefathers who discovered great universal ideals. To build a strong virile new nation on the bedrock of civilization and culture, not forgetting at the same time, to borrow the best from others if and when necessary, is the task we have to undertake urgently. Studying the maladies that ail our student population and finding out suitable remedies so that we can train them properly and bring out the best in them are part and parcel of this task.

STUDENTS AND PARENTS

The Indian national heritage has given a very high place to the sacred and sweet relationship that should exist between the parents and the children. In the ancient days, the children used to be taught to look upon their parents as God. And this spirit had been kept up for centuries.

But things are changing fast. The parents are complaining that their children do not respect them or obey them... The children are lamenting the lack of understanding on the part of their parents.

It has therefore become extremely necessary to coolly and carefully analyze this problem and find a solution at the earliest.

From this analysis some plain facts emerge:

(a) The parents demand respect and obedience from their children, without commanding it. They do not command it since they often do not practise what they say. The young people have a very keen power of observation and note this lacuna immediately. So they not only lose respect for their parents but also come to the conclusion that hypocrisy is a matter of course in this world!

(b) Bringing up children is both a science and an art. Strange as it may seem, many parents do not know how to bring up their children and make them useful members of the family and the society. The children just grow up by themselves!

(c) The fast changing social conditions, evils of industrialization, the impact of materialistic culture and political ideologies and the gradually increasing economic difficulties in many countries are no less responsible for this deterioration of the once sweet relationship between the parents and the children.

What are the remedies then?

Since the last-mentioned cause is beyond the capacity of the parents, they can only concentrate on the first two.

First, the parents have to assiduously cultivate certain basic moral, ethical and spiritual values which alone can give strength and stability to their character. They should translate these virtues in their own life. They must practise what they preach to their children.

Secondly, they must maintain a close and intimate contact with their children, acting as their friend, philosopher and guide. They should try sincerely to understand their thoughts and feelings. They should always act with prudence and never try to impose solutions. As regards the grownup children, they should be treated like friends. They should appeal to their mind through reason and touch their hearts with love. That will do the trick!

How should the children respond? They should also try to understand the feelings of their parents who have brought them up and who are after all their best well-wishers. They should know that the parent-child relationship is God-made and natural. A deliberate violation of the spirit of this relationship by either side will spell disaster. The chances are more that the violation comes from the side of children. The children should realize that nature will pay them back in their own coin when they in turn become parents! The law of retribution does exist in nature and is inexorable.

IMITATION OF AFFLUENT SOCIETIES

Though affluence has brought many material comforts, it has also wrought untold miseries for the affluent society. Material enjoyment has an optimum limit beyond which it proves boring and even harmful. It is a well-known fact of economics that when the production in a factory exceeds the optimum level, it results in a loss!

The same principle holds good in the field of material enjoyment too.

Once the basic needs of the body are met and even enjoyment obtained, man does not know what to do with himself, unless he has a high ideal before him so that he can channelize all his energies towards its

realization. This naturally results in psychosis and neurosis as in the affluent societies.

Two of the factors which have, between themselves, almost exclusively been responsible for this spurt in crimes are alcoholism and the movies. The story goes that once Satan asked a man to steal his neighbour's money, kill his own child and drive away his wife. The man promptly refused. Then Satan offered him an alcoholic drink. Accepting this apparently innocuous offer the poor man drank it, and then, committed all the three crimes without being prompted or prodded further!

The movies are no less responsible for crimes. Recently, two high school boys kidnapped a primary school boy and murdered him. Reason? Just for the fun of it! Inspiration? From the movies of course! The movies and the television are very powerful media of mass communication. The effect of a film or a scene on the T.V. can linger in the mind for a pretty long time. If sex and crime are exhibited, even glorified, through these media, day in and day out, woe be unto the society that is exposed to it!

Another significant fall out of this cinema T.V. culture is promiscuity, which is eating into the vitals of the youth, leading to forced abortions often resulting in physical death as also venereal diseases. Since excesses of youth will be like drafts on old age payable with compound interest, and dissipation leads to disease and degeneration, our students, teachers and parents should join hands in fighting this menace.

The drug habit is no exception. It starts innocently but ends in disaster. In a period, says an authentic source, when 43,000 Americans died in the Vietnam War, 1,40,000 died at home from drugs! Many of the top doctors of America are of the definite opinion that these drugs cause permanent damage to the brain cells and cause prolonged psychosis as well as hysteria. The saner section of the American people including students are waging a war against this menace. The students should beware of these evils and fight them tooth and nail.

STUDENTS AND RELIGION

Man being 'cast in the mould of God' cannot easily deny Him. Even great scientists like Newton and Einstein have believed in the existence of God as an intelligent power regulating and guiding the destinies of the universe.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'Religion is realization'. It is a 'manifestation of the divinity already in man'. And whatever helps in unfolding this divinity inherent in man is religion. It is not just a dogma or a creed or a set of observances. It is leading the life in such a way that we help manifest our higher nature, truth, goodness and beauty, in every thought, word and deed. As the Biblical saying goes, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'. He needs something more, some high ideal to live for. And this ideal is provided by religion, any religion, when understood properly.

It is true that much blood has been shed in the name of religion. World history is replete with crusades and Jehads. But this is not the fault of religion as such, but due to a misunderstanding of the spirit of religion. No religion ever says that man should shed the blood of another or be cruel to another. And whenever man had heeded this advice, there has been a golden era in history.

THE IDEAL OF EDUCATION

Man is not just the body or even a combination of the body and the mind. He is essentially the spirit. The aim of education should be to help manifest this spirit in every thought, word and action. So it should aim at a full and harmonious development of the body and the intellect, and tune it to the spirit within. In other words, it should help build up an integrated personality, a perfect character.

Imparting of moral and spiritual teachings through stories and biographies in the lower classes, a regular study of the major religions of the world in the higher classes as also group prayers and meditation—this is the suggested pattern. □

POINTS TO PONDER: Naturally we run into extremes. When we are healthy and young, we think that all the wealth of the world will be ours, and when later we get kicked about by society like footballs and get older, we sit in a corner and croak and throw cold water on the enthusiasm of others. Few men know that with pleasure there is pain, and with pain, pleasure; and as pain is disgusting, so is pleasure, as it is the twin brother of pain. It is derogatory to the glory of man that he should be going after pain, and equally derogatory, that he should be going after pleasure. Both should be turned aside by men whose reason is balanced. Why will not men seek freedom from being played upon? —Swami Vivekananda