

Student life is the most precious life. The way in which you utilise this period will decide the nature of the coming years that lie ahead of you. Your happiness, your success, your honour and your good name all depend upon the way in which you live now. In this present period, my dear student, you are preparing your future. Remember this.

I wish you to be great. The world has put its faith in you. Your elders keep their hope upon you. Now is the time for you to wisely mould your life, your character, your physical health, your entire nature in any way in which you make up your mind to do so. And you must do this now.

Swami Chidananda
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MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

SWAMI CHIDANANDA



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Sri Swami Chidananda



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MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

O Children of Immortality!

In brief I wish to give you the essence of your culture, the ancient message which your ancestors have given to you, especially to the young and especially to the students. I want to tell you very clearly that the need of the students and young people was well known to our great sages of wisdom. And so they gave a due place to the young people in human society. They gave a special set of principles in the concept of their life, and they formulated a special set of principles for the young people to follow.

Before I try to lay before you their concept of student life, their principles for young people to follow, I give you four sentences, which I want every young man and woman, all students, to memorise and keep as guidelines for your life. They are four brief sentences and they contain a very important message. These four brief sentences which I want you to listen carefully and keep in your memory are as follows:

“When wealth is lost nothing is lost.

When health is lost something is lost.

When character is lost everything is lost.

A person without character is not a man but an animal”.

THE WEALTH OF CHARACTER

What distinguishes the human individual from the animal is our behaviour. There is a difference between the Charitra (character) of a Pashu (animal) and the Charitra of a Manava (human being). If the Manava does not keep up to this higher standard of Charitra, then even though he may be a human individual in Roopa (form) and Nama (name), he is only an animal because his life, conduct and behaviour is more suitable to the animal than to a man. Through your behaviour you must prove that you are a human individual. If you have no control over your senses, if you have no principles for your living, if you are subject to anger and passion and gluttony (Kama, Krodha and Vishaya Vilasa), if you have no moderation, then there you have the animal. Therefore, you have to prove your human status not merely by reading a few text books and passing a few examinations and getting a degree, but by the manner of your life, conduct and behaviour. The highest wealth in human life, the highest wealth of youth, is the wealth of character. The most precious thing is character. That is your real treasure. If you develop a noble character, then you are really a wealthy person, which means your life is rich with this Aishwarya (wealth) of Satcharitra (noble conduct).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHARACTER TO HUMAN LIFE

What is the relationship of character to human life? The relationship of character to human life is the same as that of the foundation to the entire structure of the building which will be raised over that foundation. The most important part in the structure of the building is the foundation. If the foundation is well laid, if the foundation is strong, then the building will stand. You can raise it high, and it will last, it will be strong. If the foundation is weak or not properly laid, then any moment the building can collapse, the building cannot be lasting.

Even so is the life of the individual. If in young age, in his youth, in the period of student life the individual tries hard to develop noble qualities, to become strong in body, to acquire will power, strength of mind and he is able to overcome all negative qualities like selfishness, egoism, pride, dishonesty, greed, weakness, overeating and slavery to senses; if by using his will power, the young man is able to become master over his senses, overcome anger, and develop truthfulness and honesty and he becomes a person of integrity and thus becomes a master of his senses, such a student lays a strong foundation for his future life.

Upon the foundation of a well developed character and conduct, one can build up the

edifice or structure of a successful life. Whatever someone undertakes, he will succeed in it. Whatever profession he adopts, he will make headway in it. He will shine; he will earn the respect of all people. He will have a magnetic personality. He will have influence over his time. He will be a leader, for the power of character gives magnetism to the personality, and the power of character depends upon self control. Without self control you cannot be an ideal individual.

The secret of a successful career, the secret of a magnetic personality is self control and character which is the outcome of self control. The key to character is self control, and character is the basis of success in life. With character you can overcome every obstacle in life. You can succeed in all undertakings. You will shine brilliantly in every field of life.

THE ESSENCE OF BHARATIYA CULTURE

The essence of Bharatiya culture is character and the essence of character is in self-control, Samyama. All great personalities are people endowed with self-control, all people who have become immortal—Bhishma, Harischandra, Lakshmana, Markandeya, Savitri, Sita, Shivaji, Rana Pratap—all had strength of character. Therefore develop the great ideals of self-control,

character, virtue, will-power and mastery over one's senses.

THE ESSENCE OF EDUCATION

Who is really an educated man? He who can see two paths—worthy—unworthy, proper—improper, right—wrong, Dharmic—Adharmic (righteous-unrighteous), and he who has the strength to say, “I will choose that which is proper, that which is according to the principle of Dharma, I will reject that which is petty, that which is unworthy, even though it is attractive, even though it may be pleasant. I know that I am a Bharatiya. Therefore I have to fulfil a certain Adarsha (ideal), and I am also a divine being. I am not this body. I am not the five senses. I am not this little restless mind. I am not this limited intellect. Beyond body, mind, senses and intellect I am an immortal soul. My wisdom which I have inherited as a Bharatiya, my culture which is Adhyatma Sanskriti (spiritual culture), tells me very clearly:

*Ajo nitya saswatoyam purano,
na hanyate hanyamane sarire*

Unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient, it is not killed when the body is killed.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE SPIRIT

In this body, there is an immortal imperishable Self which is not affected even when the body is destroyed by death. It is unborn. It is permanent, It is eternal. It is beyond time, Anadi, Ananta, beginningless and endless. Fire cannot burn it. Water cannot wet it, wind cannot dry it, weapons cannot injure it. That is my true Self. I am the imperishable, unborn, eternal, indestructible Atma Swaroop. Indeed there is the imperishable within the perishable, the divine within the human, the spiritual within the material, and I am the divine, I am the eternal. Divinity is my true nature, and my physical nature, my Pranic nature, my mental and my intellectual nature are only temporary attributes. They have been superimposed on my real nature. My true nature, my Nija Swaroop, is that I am Ajar (without old age), Amar (immortal), Avinashi Atma (indestructible soul), Nitya Shuddha Atma (ever pure soul), Divya (divine) Atma.

My Sanskriti has given me this knowledge. Therefore having received this as my heritage, I shall always be established in this inner consciousness. To be divine is my birthright. To be divine and to shine with divine qualities is natural to me. To exude fragrance is natural to sandal wood. To be sweet is natural to honey and sugar. Just as it is natural for ice to be cool and fire to be hot, the sun to be bright, even

so it is natural to me to be divine, to be noble, to be good, to be loving, to be pure, to be truthful, to be wise, because that is my Nija Swaroop. In this way, I should have this awareness, that “I am divine”.

The individual, when he is young, when he is laying the foundation of his life, must fill the first stage of his life with divine qualities, with noble virtues, with Divyata (divinity). Then his whole life is safe; his success is guaranteed.

THE GOLDEN PERIOD OF LIFE

I will tell you, my beloved young friends, the individual's life between sixteen and thirty is the most precious period. That period of fourteen years is a golden period. It is the most precious period. If this period is properly managed, if you are established in virtue, self-control, purity, truthfulness, then your entire life will be full of light, full of joy, full of success. Therefore, be most careful to mould yourself in this period. In whatever shape, in whatever pattern you put your life in these fourteen years, that pattern will remain throughout your life. It will become your permanent asset, Shashwata Dharma and Aishwarya (wealth). Therefore with eagerness, with enthusiasm, wisdom, try to mould yourself into an ideal pattern. Then you have already attained victory. Whatever seal or stamp is there in this period, it will remain forever.

But if you are careless, if you don't give attention to this period, if you allow it to go here and there, if you have no self-control, then you ruin yourself. If you don't attain the most important virtue of self-control at this period, then your life is lost. No one is to blame. Therefore pay special attention and try to acquire healthy, strong habits. Your whole life should contain healthy habits. And from your life you must keep out anything unhealthy, either physically, mentally or morally.

AVOID BAD COMPANY

In this connection, I would like to say two things. One thing that every young man, every student, every young girl should avoid bad company. Fly away from bad company. Bad company is more dangerous than fire or poison. Poison may destroy one's body; if you take poison one body will be dead. But if you get into bad company and develop bad habits that will become your inner Samskara (impressions) and Vasana (desire), and bad Samskara will go from birth to birth. Even if this body is reduced to ashes, the Vasanas and Samskaras will continue in your next birth also. Fire will burn only when you come into contact with it. It cannot harm you from far off, but the proximity of bad company will drag you down and bring about your downfall. Therefore avoid bad company. Be alone.

It is better to have no company, rather than risk bad company. If you must have company, have company of such people who elevate you, who ennoble you, in whose company you feel pure, you feel good, you are inspired towards higher idealism. This is one very important thing.

NEVER IMITATE THE WEST

As the second important thing for all students and young people, I will make this request. NEVER IMITATE THE WEST in its superficial fashion and way of life. There is nothing more shameful than imitation of Western or alien cultures. It shows moral bankruptcy and that you have nothing of your own. Therefore you are trying to fill it with something which is not your own. It is most shameful for the youth of Bharatavarsha. One should never imitate.

If you want to emulate the West, emulate the good qualities of western society, cleanliness, punctuality, honesty. They are people with a sense of duty. They are industrious. They try to excel, to show their skill, they try to do their best and they are never idle. They are always conscious of their duty. In our country we don't imitate these higher qualities of western men and women, we only imitate that which is superficial. So imitation of fashion and passion, imitation of dress, hair-dress and life style –this is shameful, this is ignoble, this is not worthy.

**LEARN YOUR CULTURE:
BE PROUD TO BE A BHARATIYA**

Any person who is a Bharatiya should know that his culture is a rich culture. It is full of idealism. There are many great things to learn and copy for which western people come here. Therefore better learn your culture. Better find out the rich, noble qualities of your culture and be proud that you are a Bharatiya. Cultivate for yourself a Bharatiya life style, and that Bharatiya life style is what I have just now described to you.

By the strength and power of character you can keep your senses subdued, you can control the little desires and passions of the mind—Asha, Trishna, cravings of the mind and be a master in your own home, not a slave in your house. Therefore avoid bad or impure company and do not imitate the western superficial life style. This is not necessary for us.

You must shine as an ideal Bharatiya and you must live in such a way. If western people come here they must see you and realize what you are. We have got enough light to banish the darkness that is prevailing in the material world. We have enough light to give them, to bring light upon their life's path. Guide them towards a higher goal. As a Bharatiya it is your privilege and duty to evolve this higher idealism. When you grow older you must be able to show the rest of the

world the higher culture and higher ethical values for which your country stands. This is the real essence of your country's culture. Therefore do not imitate and avoid bad company.

THE FOUR STAGES

What has your ancient culture to tell about youth and student life? Your ancient culture has divided man's life into four stages and given them the name 'Ashrama'.

Four Ashramas—what is this Ashrama Dharma? In each stage there are certain ideals and principles laid down, and that is the Dharma of that particular Ashrama. The fourth—the last Ashrama is Sannyasa Ashrama. At the end of life, the individual should take Sannyasa. The third Ashrama is Vanaprastha Ashrama. After having fulfilled the duties of the second Ashrama, one must retire and turn the attention to higher things.

The second Ashrama is Grihastha Ashrama, the stage of the householder. It means marriage, having a wife, children, doing Udyoga, professional duties, social duties, domestic duties to his own Parivar—his mother and father and relatives. The second Ashrama is Grihastha Ashrama. What is the first? It is the Ashrama in which you are living. It is called Brahmacharya Ashrama.

What is Brahmacharya? Brahmacharya has got two meanings. The real meaning is that Charya or that conduct of life which ultimately leads you to Brahma Jnana (knowledge of Brahman) or Brahma-Sakshatkar. That is Brahmacharya. The pattern of living or the way of living and acting will bestow upon you Brahma Jnana, Brahma-Sakshatkar. Secondly Brahmacharya means a life of self-control, control of all the senses, all impure desires, control of anger and passion. It means self control. This is Brahmacharya. It means not merely remaining unmarried. That is not the proper definition. It means the first stage of life that is youth.

In those days they regarded human life as being hundred years in span. But who lives for hundred years now-a-days? The life span has become shortened. In these first 25 years one must lead the student's life. By the time the engineering students, medical students, law students finish their degree, they are 23, 24 and therefore Brahmacharya Ashrama means till age 24. You can regard Grihastha Ashrama from 24 to 45 and Vanaprastha from 45 to 60. After 60 one must take Sannyasa. Now we are not concerned with the second, third and fourth Ashramas, but with Brahmacharya Ashrama, the most important stage, because upon this depend the three other Ashramas. If the Brahmacharya Ashrama is properly lived he will become an ideal Grihasthi,

he will become an ideal Vanaprasthi, and he will become an ideal Sannyasi. If in the Brahmacharya Ashrama you don't live properly, if you have no character, no conduct—then what happens? You cannot become an ideal householder. Your children will be unhealthy. If you have no self-control and your actions are not based upon virtue, your life will be full of wrong deeds, and in Vanaprastha Ashrama you will become a miserable person, and your whole life will become a failure.

Success or failure in life depend upon how you have lived the first quarter of your life, and in this connection they have laid down three great duties. What are the duties for the youth and the Vidyarthi (student) in the Brahmacharya Ashrama? One important duty is self-evident. The student's first concern is to attain knowledge—acquire knowledge. But in your ancient culture knowledge was not merely confined to history, science, mathematics, civics. It also meant knowledge of a profession and knowledge of life; how to live an ideal life. Why have you come here? To know your real nature!

It meant Naitika Vidya (moral science), Naitika Shikshana or Dharmic Vidya. It also meant Adhyatma Vidya (Self knowledge). You have to learn Bhautika Vidya (material knowledge) in order to have Udyoga (business) and be independent, earning income and be able

to support your wife and children when you enter the second Ashram, the Grihastha Ashrama. But if you want to live a noble life and get a good name in society, you must know what Dharma is, what Niti (ethics) is. So study Manu Dharmashastra, Yajnavalkya Smriti, the science of right conduct. You must also learn Naitika Shiksha (moral education).

Each student must know the Srimad Bhagavad Gita by heart, and you must learn a little Sanskrit. The Gita contains the essence of Adhyatma Vidya (spiritual knowledge). Your whole Sanskriti is based upon knowledge, the knowledge of the Vedas. Your Dharma is called Vedic Dharma, and the real name of your religion is Sanatana Dharma or Vaidic Dharma, which means Dharma based upon Vedas and the wisdom of Vedas contained in the Upanishad. The essence of the Upanishads is given in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita—containing only 700 Slokas. If you learn by heart one Sloka every day, in two years the whole Gita will be at your command. If you are more eager, if you learn by heart one Sloka in the morning and one Sloka in the evening, then in one year you will know the entire eighteen chapters or 700 Slokas by heart. In the Gita is the essence of the Upanishads—the essence of your Adhyatma Vidya—spiritual wisdom. So to attain wisdom, to attain knowledge—secular knowledge, ethical knowledge and spiritual knowledge is one

of the primary duties of students in the Brahmacharya Ashrama.

Secondly, if you want to make use of your own Vidya, your secular ethical and your spiritual wisdom—you have to translate it into action. You must live it, and you can effectively practise whatever you have learnt only if your health is good, if you have got a strong, healthy body. Therefore the second important duty of the student is a *Dharmarthakama mokshanam arogya mulamuttamam*. The basis, the root of Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha is a strong and healthy body. Therefore you must daily do exercises, Asana, Pranayama, Surya-Namaskar and develop a very strong body. You must cultivate healthy habits. Go to bed early, wake up very early in the morning. Take a cold bath. Do some Surya-Namaskar. Have some Asana practice, do vigorous physical exercise and eat moderately. First you must have a Vajrakaya (strong body) like Maruti. Hanuman should be your ideal. Bhishma should be your ideal. Swami Vivekananda should be your ideal and Bhima or Lakshmana should be your ideal. In this way you should be strong in your body. Then only you will have strength of mind. Because body and mind are interconnected. If the body is weak, the mind cannot be strong. You cannot develop will power. Therefore developing a strong body and establishing sound physical health—Arogya (health) is the second important duty. The body is

the instrument of Seva (service) and successful endeavour. Any Purushartha (endeavour), any Parishrama (hard work) is possible only if your body is strong.

Thirdly, the last most important thing is development of a noble character. Once this age passes, you cannot change your character, because in young age, you are like bricks which have not yet been put inside the kiln. The clay is still soft; you can alter the shape. You can put upon it any Chhap (imprint). You can mould it. You can change it. But once you have put a brick inside the kiln and it becomes hard, then you cannot change it. If you try to alter the shape, it will break. So whatever you want to do, do it in this stage. When a plant is tender, it can be turned in any direction. When it becomes a big tree you cannot bend it. It will break. So in this age, you can mould your character, you can make your behaviour, you can make your Swabhava (nature) in any way you want. But if you wake up too late and then try to change it, you find that you cannot. Your nature has become hard, crystalised. Therefore, now is the time when you can give any shape.

Remember the greatest disease of human society is selfishness. Arrogance and anger is not a sign of strength. Try to learn this. As a sign of self-control always be humble, simple and unselfish. Let your character shine with

selflessness. Let it be endowed with simplicity, humility and forgiveness. Study 'Sure Ways of Success in Life' by Swami Sivananda and 'Self-Indulgence vs. Self-Restraint' by Gandhiji. Let self-help, moderate living and character be your motto. Be an ideal student.

May God bless you!

Swami Bhikshuananda
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