

The Role of Students in Free India

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When a writer conceives a play or novel he creates a number of characters, but each one with a part to play, a role that is distinct from the others; a prince plays the part of a prince and a fool the part of a fool, though sometimes the prince may talk like a fool and the fool, like a prince yet their roles are different and distinct. Similarly, a clergy man may worry about the safety of his country; but his role is in the church in his parish, in his religious activities, while that of a soldier is in his nation's protection though he may talk about the state of affairs of the church in his country. Just as a politician has no role to play in a school or college, unless he is invited to give a speech on some special occasion, a student too has no major role to play outside the field of his studies. Certainly he has every right to see, assess and understand what is happening around him.

The truth is however, different. The temples of education are now the centers of the hellish activities of various hues and shades. It is true that the student community took an active part in the struggle for independence. But that was a special situation demanding a special solution. Once that goal was achieved the whole perspective changed and the aim of the nation now is to put it on the road to progress and prosperity; to eradicate the ills that afflict the society but not to create centers, of troubles and turmoil's. And in this stupendous task of ushering in the new era of hope and happiness, everyone has a role to play the it an engineer or a doctor, a politician or a bureaucrat, teacher or a student , a distinct and clear cut role to play like a cog in a machine.

A well known African writer Chinua Achebe once remarked, "I have to admit that like other people's past, ours too, had its share of triumphs and fallings". What Chinua says about Africa is true of all human beings. We must admit our past and face the consequences of our past actions good or bad; it is not possible to wipe them clear if we do not like them, and make a fresh beginning. The bad, it is not possible to wipe them clear if we do not like them, and make a fresh beginning. The past lingers on like the odours that lie deep in the blowing winds. As T.S. Eliot has once said we are free as long as we do not press the button. But when once we press it, we are no longer free. The consequence soon envelopes. If we realize that, we will never step outside the sphere of what our roles assign. A student will certainly realize that his first and foremost duty is to acquire knowledge and if there are other

things that attract his attention, he should remember that they can wait.

But the student cannot live in isolation. He cannot remain blind to what is happening in this world of complexities. He is told honesty is the best policy but sees that dishonesty is everywhere actively practices; is told that truth triumphs, but sees that it is falsehood that is in circulation. He is bewildered; he does not know which side to lean on ; bury himself right earnestly in his studies and get a B+ or A, or indulge in all sorts unconnected activities ,resort to foul means and get a 'O' when the end justify the means, the means loses significance.

But even those few that want to remain glued to their posts are not followed to remain undisturbed. They are forcibly drawn out of their cells to join the mass activities. If they refuse, they are hooted down and assaulted. The political atmosphere of the country is so corrupt now that even t he temples of god are not free from the perils of pollution. No wonder if the students participate in all sort of unscholastic activities, take to violent methods and become a problem to law and order in the end. But in the final act, it is the innocent blood that flows as in the case of the pro and anti mandal agitations, the country has recently witnessed. When the innocent boy is committing self immolation, he forgets that it is not nearly his future but all his, his whole life that he is throwing in the sacramental fire. He may think that by his very sacrifice he is contributing to create a new order that will help generation and generations of students to come, but the blind authority has no eyes to see his neither plight nor ears to hear his death cries. The V.P Singh's will always set their minds and hearts on the vote banks they need to perpetuate their power and authority.

The need of the hour, therefore, is to realize that the country is at cross roads, all that is visible is only a passing phase and that in the long run, the eternal truths and time tested values will remain there for ever to inspire and guide man to a happier and prosperous tomorrow. It is on this goal he must set his mind and heart and towards his goal that he must strive to move. Tomorrow is not for those that sit behind the steering wheel today, not for those that destroy all that is green and beautiful like the Wild West wind. It belongs to those that zealously pursue their studies unmindful of the attractions outside and undisturbed by the evil forces that are at work. He

who is not a good student today, cannot become a good doctor, engineer or administrator tomorrow.

It does not mean that they should all recede into an isolated shall life. There are a hundred and one other avenues they can pursue and explore, without sacrificing their main goal. But before that, they must have a spirit of discipline. It was because of a high sense of discipline that became the national trait, which Germany and Japan rose like cities out of fire from the colossal destruction of the Second World War. Today they are the most industrialized and advanced nations in the world. China and Russia too were once very backward. Today they are super powers.

The student must renounce communal sectarian, linguistic and parochial outlook which their fathers and elders unwaveringly cultivate. Nowhere in the world exist such shameful social evils as we have in India. Casteism, untouchability, sati, dowry system. Illiteracy and superstitions rock the society. The students should set their minds on these social ills and work towards their removal. Social service has not found a place in the present system of education, those some institutions have realized its need and relevance. Instead of wasting their long holidays in useless pursuits, the students can organize themselves into small working units and run summer camps to eradicate some of these evils. Money will be a problem but that will not be insurmountable, for charity is not in short supply in India. Where there is a will, there is a way.

We are all proud of our ancient heritage. But there is nothing that we have done in these four decades of freedom. If

there is any progress we have made, it is in the fields of population and poverty, ignorance and illiteracy. The endeavor of a people should be to add the fruits of their own labour to what they have inherited, make it greater and richer before they hand it over to the succeeding generation. We do not know if we would be able to do anything like that or hand it over, at least in tact to our successors. It would be difficult to say anything with the fissiparous tendencies and disintegrating forces that the country is riddled with today. Instead of being carried away by these currents and cross currents, the student community should assume the role of independent observers, understand what really is wrong and mend it when their turn comes. America is a great nation today not because the Pilgrim Fathers found it so, but because they toiled hard generation after generation to make it great. There are people who start from the scratch but by dint of their hard and sustaining work, emerge out as stalwarts. Such strong willed and self made should the present day student community aim to become. A great and heavy responsibility it is that rests on them but before they shape the destiny of the land, they must first shape their own character and personality. They must recall and remember what Douglas Malloch says:

“ If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail,
If you can't be the sun, be a star,
It isn't by size that you win or you fail
Be the best of whatever you are”.
If so, the country will be in safer hands.