

FROM THE EDITOR

REFORMING EDUCATION

Cultivation of Calibans

You taught me language; and my profit on't is, I know how to curse."

Thus spake Caliban in Shakespeare's *Tempest* and he spoke almost the last word on the use of education in the sense it prevails today, though he said so four centuries ago.

The educated people as a class do not inspire much respect among the masses. Education had not made them honest or noble. It had perhaps made them clever and they are anxious to pass on that cleverness to their children; their concern was to secure a lobster's ease of life in their old age. If they worship a Baba or a Swami after retirement, it rarely signifies a higher quest; it only betrays their eagerness to clutch the tail of the same elusive security on a different front.

In other words, they are a selfish lot.

Not in these words though, this was the verdict on the elite of the country your editor received from a small gathering of 'illiterate' villagers. They conceded that there were some honest, truthful and good people among the officers, lawyers or teachers. But their goodness was independent of their education.

"Some of our children, to provide for whose education we are labouring like donkeys, will not be different. They will only remind us, when we try to forget it, that we were really donkeys," said one.

The circle is vicious. If the educated people do not inspire trust in the masses, the teachers do not inspire respect in the students and the students themselves cut an extremely sorry figure before the common man.

With this scene of overwhelming cynicism for a backdrop, some people at the helm of affairs in this country are trying to reform education. Can their efforts meet with some success?

Two Aspects of Education

Education, broadly speaking, has two roles to play. First, it makes one 'literate', it qualifies one to earn as well as to contribute to the community in some way. In rare cases, it helps one to explore, discover or invent things of lasting consequence. The second role of education is in cultivating love for higher values in man, discovering to him his self which is greater than his physical frame, mental and intellectual caliber or social status.

Today any sensible man knows that all the academic qualifications and achievements are zero unless education plays its second role.

The question is, can any alteration or modification in our educational system make education effective in this sense? No, it cannot. But this need not alarm us. The truth is, the urge to grow towards light is inherent in man. Given a suitable environment, encouragement and opportunity, the evolutionary splendour hidden in him will spontaneously reveal itself.

The question that follows is, how far the system itself, however idealistic and psychologically sound, can create the necessary climate for this kind of progress? The campus is but a small fragment of

the society and its impact on the student, as the time passes, becomes less and less prominent as the interaction between the student and the society becomes more rapid.

There is only one institution which can educate the child in this sense. That is the family. It is well known that the ideas and values a child imbibes during the first few years of his life are infinitely more important in this regard than all the theories he can learn later. **The plain truth is, no education in the true sense can be effective unless the family is re-educated, unless the parents change their attitude to children, unless they realise that in the ultimate analysis nothing can ensure their children true happiness, protection and strength but their allegiance to truth, nothing is true insurance for them but their trust in a higher consciousness inherent in themselves.**

Parents and guardians must resolve to educate themselves as the first step towards the education of their children.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

EDUCATING THE RURAL WORLD

A friend who had taken up educating adults in a village during his holiday met me the other day. To my question as to how his mission had fared, he began narrating Tolstoy's story of "Three Hermits"—a missionary reaching a small island inhabited by three strange, old men and passing on to them the right method of prayer and then sailing away—but the three men catching up with him, running on the waters, to inform him that they had forgotten the method and then going back to their island!

"I realised that the people I tried to educate were a hundred times wiser than I, only not conscious of their knowledge like the three hermits who were not conscious of their power. Although they did not know the method of writing or reading, we have no right to call them uneducated," he said.

This is one aspect of the situation—a tribute to the illiterate villager. There are other aspects. The old, pre-Independence concept of adult education must change. Except in tribal areas, there are numerous social service organisations today, private or governmental, to stand by the illiterates so that they are not cheated. In the changed situation, what is most important is not to literate the illiterate, but to see that the education and culture already inherent in him, be he literate or illiterate, are not destroyed. Misuse of politics has claimed or clouded much of these already, now the rest is at the mercy of powerful media making inroads into the rural world, mainly the TV. Embracing thousands of villages by the audio-visual wave may be an achievement, but it involves a great responsibility. The programmes—every ad, every posture counts—must not set in a process of uneducation, must not promote dubious values, must not try to sell ideas that have corrupted urban life-style.