

**Draft speech of Smt. D. Purandeswari Hon'ble MoS (HRD) on
the occasion of CBSE teachers award function
On 04-09-2006**

I am extremely happy to come here this morning on this very important occasion and preside over the function of CBSE Award to Principals and Science Teachers for 2005. At the outset I convey my warm felicitations and greetings to the teachers and principals who have been selected for this prestigious award. I sincerely hope that this tradition of recognizing meritorious service of the teachers will promote the culture of excellence and dedication among the teaching community.

Teachers' Day, as you are aware is celebrated on 5th September every year being the birth day of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan one of the most illustrious sons of India who devoted his life to the cause of education throughout. Centuries back, the famous Greek Philosopher Plato, in his Magnum Opus, 'Republic' observed:

“Unless kings are philosophers and unless princes and potentates are imbued with element of philosophy, there is no respite from ills for our city-states nor yet, I believe, for the entire mankind” Unquote”.

Dr. Radhakrishnan epitomized Plato's above mentioned concept of philosopher king. Let us pay our respectful homage to this leading philosopher-statesman who, by sheer dint of his merits and excellence rose from an ordinary teacher to the highest office of the President of India. His work on Indian Philosophy put India on the philosophical map of the world.

There is no doubt that his life and teachings will continue to inspire generations of our countrymen for centuries to come.

Education is not the amount of information that is put into a child's brain undigested, unrelated and unassimilated. The very essence of education is the concentration of mind and not mere collection or collation of facts. As Swami Vivekananda said : "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man". The concept of education is that it should help the formation of character and expansion of intellect whereby a child can step into adolescence with a positive view of life. It is this man making character which is the basic object of all education.

In order to ensure that a meaningful education is imparted to our children, it is essential that right type of teachers and instructors are put in place. Teachers' education programme generally train our teachers to adjust to a system in which education is seen as a mere transmission of information and knowledge is treated as information 'given' by the teacher and taken by the taught without question. In this system there is very little leeway for inquiry, initiative and innovation. This is because mostly the teachers training schemes do not give much scope for the teachers undergoing such training to have a critical examination of curriculum, syllabi or the course contents. Most of such programmes provide little or no opportunity for inquiry or investigation: In the process the teachers end up with a purely pedantic outlook and restrictive mindset which prevent them from serving as effective facilitators of social transformation. This mindset must change. Teachers must be encouraged to develop a spirit of inquiry and research and must be perennial learners and must update their knowledge continuously. It is some times complained that teaching profession always

does not attract the best talent because of inadequate prospect of career advancement. This I think is not fully correct. Over the years we have taken fundamental steps to improve appreciably the teachers' lot in terms of monetary and other fringe benefits; and the process is still on.

A potential teacher must inculcate a sense of dedication and spirit of service. He must take up the challenging task with the enthusiasm of a zealot, only then he will be able to create a niche for him as the prime mover of social change. A successful teacher is he who can motivate his students to discover their latent talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and imbibe the desirable social and human values. A teacher who does not measure up to the standard will leave no indelible impression on the society in general and the student community in particular.

We in India have had a rich record and long history of teaching and learning. "Guru – Shishya Parampara" is exclusively unique to Indian ethos. Be it learning of music or archery or techniques of warfare or for that matter any worldly or spiritual knowledge, we have traditionally regarded learning as a collective wisdom handed down from one generation to another. May be, time has come to revisit this time-honoured practice of teacher student relationship.

Times have of course changed. In the present era of internet, learning has become easy but in a way mechanical. Even then the element of human touch must be ever present if we really want the younger generation to come up. We should not forget that technology is merely an enabler or at best a facilitator of rapid transmission of learning. The key to learning will

as always be the quality of trainers or “Gurus”. In this regard our teachers owe a tremendous responsibility to the society, which I am sure, they will discharge honestly and faithfully.

The 21st Century is acknowledged by all as the “Knowledge Century” which means that Knowledge or brain power should be reflected in a country’s competitiveness, advancement and human capabilities. Human capabilities are a function of the well-being of a people and the investment we make in human capital formation. The ability of a nation to make best use of its knowledge or brain power will ultimately determine its place in the comity of nations in the present century. In this context, lifelong learning is a high priority for all. Based on the four pillars of learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together, it provides the enhanced opportunities that are essential for full citizenship in the knowledge society. It is fundamental to the development of a nation. It builds the base for economic and social development, develops the capacity of individuals to contribute to and benefit from that development, sustains and enriches both individual and overall culture of a nation and builds mutual respect and understanding that ultimately transcends all cultural differences and barriers.

I have no doubt whatsoever that our teaching community would keep up its best tradition and rise to the occasion to act as effective facilitator of change for our younger generation so that it can be smoothly and swiftly switched on to the emerging Knowledge societies. This alone would help our country to rich soaring heights of perfection and become a power house of intellectual endeavour and knowledge engine of the world.

I am happy to learn that over the years, the CBSE has grown as a pioneering educational institution, not merely because of an increase in the number of affiliated institutions it has, throughout the length and breadth of the country and with 117 schools affiliated in about 22 countries, but also because it has taken up the task of providing quality education through several academic initiatives, such as no school bags in classes I and II, alternatives to homework for classes 3-5, scrapping of pass – fail system for primary classes, focus on health promotion in schools and on Life Skills Education. It has also decided to give 15 minutes of additional time to the students in the examination so that they have reasonable time to understand the questions and answer the same. These are indeed commendable efforts in the right direction. I am sure the sensitivity exhibited by CBSE will help in restructuring the environment of the classroom and help students to emerge as thinking and creative learners.

Before I end I once again congratulate all the recipients of the CBSE Awards for Teachers and wish them many more years of useful contribution to the cause of education. I also convey my best wishes to CBSE and hope that the Board will continue to strive for excellence in all spheres of school education in keeping with its impeccable tradition in this regard.

Thanking you,

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