

# **TEACHERS' DAY, 2006**

**SEPTEMBER 5, 2006**

## **REMARKS & COMMENTS BY SHRI S.K. SINGH**

### **GOVERNOR ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

September 5<sup>th</sup> is the Birth anniversary of one of the modern India's most notable Teachers and philosophers, the Late Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who was Independent India's second President. We have been observing it ever since his passing away as our country's Teachers' Day. We take pride in the thoughts and teachings of this Guru of the Gurus, someone who possessed the qualities of a Rishi and a Raja and thus was considered a Rajarshi.

Almost immediately after Independence Nehru assigned him as India's first Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Marshal Stalin, a somewhat fear-some ruler and Communist ideologue was an overwhelming person. Radhakrishnan's personality was such as to have earned the personal respect of even Marshal Stalin. It was not possible for Stalin to ever be informal or relaxed with anyone. Ambassador Radhakrishnan, however, won his faith, trust and respect and could often discuss with him openly, and at length, Hindu philosophy, specially the Sankhya Yoga which believes in a universe without a deity. He told Stalin that Lord Buddha founder of Buddhism, before his death, advised his followers not to make a deity out of him. There was no God in his philosophic system except good moral conduct, or the middle path. He told Stalin that communism's denial of God does not worry Hindu thinkers and philosophers, howsoever, traditional. This Indian Ambassador boldly told Stalin, face-to-face, to be humane and non-violent. (Several decades later Rajiv Gandhi too persuaded another Communist Supremo of the Soviet Union Gorbachov, in this writer's presence, the same lesson of Gandhian non-violence). Dr. Radhakrishnan added that Stalin had done more for education, health, and free housing for the poorest amongst his people than either Lenin or Peter the Great had done. That is why the children of Soviet Union refer to you, he said, as Papa Stalin, the gentle kindly Father figure. All this was discussed during his farewell call on Stalin. Getting up to take leave of this taciturn and tough Dictator, Ambassador Radhakrishnan

permitted himself to pat Stalin on his cheeks. Stalin was stunned, but recognized the Guru in Radhakrishnan and neither protested nor squirmed.

The duties of a Teacher and the responsibilities of his Pupils towards the Guru are analyzed in some detail in the Taittiriya Upanishad. I have just been reminding myself of what all of you teachers must know about your own duties and responsibilities. I too began life as a teacher. What does teaching involve? How and what is the pupil required to learn? Can there be a process of learning without the discipline reflected by the teaching community for setting their own example for themselves? Unless the teacher himself sets standards or values for himself how can he teach any idealism to his pupils? Is educating feasible without the teacher's learning the responsibilities towards society? Unless I project knowledge, how can it be conveyed by me to my Pupils? And I have to do so in a manner that these values and this idealism becomes ingrained in you, as part of your personality and being? Unless I can do that have I molded you? Have I improved your identity and personality? If I the teacher fail to convey the knowledge everlasting to you how do I make you capable of absorbing fresh lustre through your contact with me, your teacher. Unless I provide you the wherewithal to have lustrous values how do I structure the future of my society, my nation, and the institutions I cherish.

“Looking through the sun  
Peeping through the moon  
Meaning of life is contained  
in fulfilling obligation...”

What are our duties to society in modern times? Can we break with impunity the rules of the road? Can we stand or sit on the side of the road and start piddling or defecating? Are we permitted to throw waste paper or plastic after eating in a public place? Is it fair to throw cigarette butts on our streets? Is it not horrendous to allow you to spit in public your pan reddened spittle? Can we permit ourselves as young pupils in a State like Arunachal to demand that Arunachal remain exclusively reserved for only APST in a manner that Arunachalee tribals exclude all other tribals not listed in the schedule of tribes of this one State, and indeed all the other tribals or non-tribals who have lived here over decades? Is such exclusivity permissible or even civilized?

As an old teacher I demand we sit as Indians together, discussing and agreeing to concepts of unity and universal brotherhood.

“I am the eye with which the universe  
 beholds itself and knows itself divine;  
 All harmony of instrument or verse,  
 All prophecy, all medicine is mine”

I regret whatever happened in Ujjain, and the violence used for exterminating or assassinating an innocent unarmed teacher like Prof. Sabbarwal. But I am not prepared to apportion blame between teachers and pupils as two separate communities. I blame only the philosophy of hatred of a particular religiously oriented political group which is now trying to hide its head behind all kinds of excuses for their Corporators and for their student leaders. But again why have communal ideas been permitted to affect or afflict the political ideology of different parties and groups? Why have all these people become so allergic to democratic functioning, even to the extent of hating an innocent expression like “secularism”?

India is a country which received Judaic, and Christian philosophies within Christ's life time or thereabouts. We also accepted the influx of Islam during the Prophet's own times through welcoming Islamic preachers from the Gulf region who introduced us to both their products for trade, as well as their faith. These people did not come into India as marauders & looters, but as Trades people. Our tolerance for the influx of various religious systems and beliefs like the Zoroastrian, Islamic, Christian & Judaic ones are obvious. But one can proudly acknowledge that we have, on this soil, given birth to several other faiths, religions philosophic systems e.g. Aryan Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and several smaller groups like Quadianis, Ismailies, Khojas etc.

With our kind of history, we need to understand that, if we learn to hate other members in and of our own society, merely because they have a different philosophic & cultural belief system, we shall never prosper. Are not love and brotherhood far more compatible with the concepts of peace and harmony in society. All these lessons

must be seen as fundamental to all our faiths in India; Hindus, Muslims, believers in the Donyi Polo faith etc.

Ever since I came here in 2004, I have identified myself with the value system and the particular individuality of the Arunachalee people. I have traveled around the State, visited our Schools, taught myself at some of them, discussed problems & issues with our teachers, tried to solve some of their problems and issues. It amazes me that while the Education department rule books state that political groupings of students e.g. AAPSU and ANSU etc. need be available and open only to mature students belonging to Intermediate and Degree classes. Not to their younger brothers. Indeed the State does not permit younger students to take on membership of these groups while they are in lower classes, or make any money contributions or participate in bandhs and strikes or get registered as members of AAPSU or AANSU or indeed, stand for election into any of their bodies. You will be interested in learning from your Governor something, which all of you should have some knowledge and thoughts about. And that is that if the above rules are not being followed in even one of our Pradesh's sixteen districts, it is through the connivances of our Teachers. Can we ensure that from our teachers in this beloved State of ours students do not learn to break or bend these rules?

I hope you recognize that the responsibility for bending the correct implementation of these rules lies with the community of Teachers. In the long term, if the dragon of adult party politics gobble up the lives of some of our Teachers whom we are honouring with awards today, the fault for this ultimate price being paid by some of them will lie squarely with themselves. There are, and will be many pressures on all of you. My advice is not to yield easily; and never to bend the rules. I hope there was some idealism which motivated each of you to become teachers. Never forget that by being kind or gentle and tolerant about your favourite pupils you indirectly encourage them, at a later date to learn to use muscle power & money power rather than accept the norms set for them and for all of us in this society.

I hope there are amongst my audience here some members of the faculties of the Rajiv Gandhi University, and the NERIST our two University level Institutions. My advice to them would be to get their doors specially open for the Teachers from all our Schools and Junior Colleges. The University level faculty members must encourage these Teachers to get to know them, and they must be allowed to use the Libraries of our two highest level educational Institutions in our State. I hope they will

take the trouble of studying and understanding of what will be taught to their younger brothers and sisters, presently in High School classes or at the Ten-Plus level. Your younger brothers and sisters will succeed you in studying in our two University level Institutions. They must not enter these higher classes totally unprepared. There must be a constant interaction, or exchange of knowledge between the University and the School level faculties.

When I am amongst Teachers I forget my position as an Administrator or Governor. The only Avatar I am conscious of is that with which I commenced my working life, i.e. as a Teacher. With you I am surrounded by my own people, my own community, my own group of comrades. Those of you who have been honoured with these awards here, I congratulate and offer my respects. May God be with you. May you never forget that your mission is to improve society, as a whole, and that can be done only through your ability to say openly and bluntly what you will refuse to compromise on. Please never accommodate irrational or illegal requests of breaking rules whatever the origin or source of such requests may be. You must be clear that you insist on improving your Scholars by teaching them the lessons contained in the Sermon on The Mount. Please never accept standards lower than those that were laid down and maintained by Yajnyavalka or Jesus or Lord Buddha or Lord Mahavira or Guru Nanak Devji. Your rigidity, mixed with a certain gentleness shown by these almighty Teachers and thinkers must remain your ideal.

“Indeed when it is said in our Arunachal Pradesh: My poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found amongst them; my jails are empty, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want; the rational world is my friend, because I am the friend of its happiness.”

Once you can say this about your motherland then alone can the people boast of their laws and the governance that guides them.

Thank you for asking me and thank you for allowing me to spend sometime with you all.

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