

Education is not preparation for life, it is life in itself...

I have spent one full night tossing around in my bed, deeply admiring the winter chill, cloudy dark sky and the beautiful white moon which was playing hide and seek with the clouds. The street that is often a site of commotion—vehicles coming to and fro, the vegetable sellers and the local shopkeepers selling their stuff—was suddenly so quiet and desolated, as if everybody has abandoned their regular pavement. And then my attention was drawn to the streetlight that gave out yellow light and made the surroundings really pleasant in this foggy night. No wonders that Delhi rocks in this season. All through this time, I was thinking about what education really means to me. Before this, strangely I never thought about this subject so carefully. I guess I was too occupied with the regular errands of my mechanical life so much so that I didn't spare few minutes and hours of my life to introspect on this rather important constituent of my life—after all, 12 hours of everyday are spent on education.

Is it just these 12 hours of attending school and college and doing studies back home enough to be called education or these 9 letters have a much deeper meaning and impact on one's life? Finally I've entered the introspection phase and have my thinking caps on. Various incidents from past have sown these seeds of introspection, though I failed to recognize them. But at the present moment, all these incidents were flashing in my mind one after the other and these threads spun with each other to weave the thoughts on importance of education. Just another day, I had gone to the bank with my father to submit the KYC form. There I saw that a young woman became an object of public amusement and embarrassment because she had casted a thumb impression on her form and wasn't literate enough to fill up the form. The clerk who had filled up her form looked at her as if he had written his entire estate in her name. I still remember that inferior look he had in his eyes for her. And the best part, he demanded ₹ 100 from her as his fee *(unofficial fee!) for filling in the form. And that woman simply gave the amount. I just wished she was literate!! And my heart was in all gratitude for my parents to have never compromised with my education.

And then returning back home, I unknowingly noticed that a majority of cobblers, drivers, maids, vegetable sellers, vendors, vagabonds, site workers, masons, electricians, beggars (yeah! even begging has become an occupation) are illiterate. They work so hard and yet earn meagre wages and live such a burdened and tough life. If they had been educated, they could have lived better lives. And yet another incident forced me to dwell upon the real essence of education. On a sunny afternoon, sitting on the bus stand, I saw a blind leper man crossing the other side of the road and he suddenly fell on the road. A car hit the man. But look at the ruthlessness of the driver and other cars and passers-by. They simply went away as if that man was invisible equivalent to a dust particle. Thank god, the man was rescued by the traffic policeman. But my soul was torn into pieces that at least these bigwigs going in the cars were educated and this is how they behave. Have we become so selfish that we have no desire to help others and turn a new chapter in someone else's life? And we beat drums about corporate social responsibility in the boardroom meetings. Aren't all those passers-by the biggest hypocrites and monsters disguised as civilized humans? Education has taught us morals and values but we have forgotten them.

In this mad race of competition, the meaning of education has become limited to acquiring theoretical knowledge according to one's intelligence and learning capacity, acquiring big degrees and certificates,

getting jobs, earning money and getting promotions. But the tree of education has far more branches than just these few branches. Education is the redirection of soul from abysmal darkness to light. It is a process of learning, sharpening our skills, bettering our lives and being able to discern or know the difference between good and bad. Learning can be from textbooks, Internet, mass media, experiences, people, nature and of course teacher! On a philosophical note, the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly teaches us that good things come to those who wait.

Education is vital for one's growth and development. It makes us rational and reason out things, hence we are not fallen to superstitions and baseless things. It develops self-identity and helps us walk hand in hand. It doesn't make us feel ashamed. The more educated a person is, the more knowledge one obtains on different subjects. She/he can easily be identified in one glance, has knowledge of one's rights and duties and cannot be cheated on so easily. Education instils in the decision-making skill in us and instils in the modus operandi of living life in the right way and with the right morals. An educated person commands respect from everyone. It is the most important plank in one's ladder of success. Success is determined by one's education, hard work, determination, passion for one's goal, smartness, EQ and IQ. And hence a person leads a contented and happy life.

Moreover education is the manifestation of humanity already in man. It does not limit to earning money, getting jobs and getting promotions. If someone talks about money, then even a sex-worker earns more money than an educated person. But one should establish one's stature in society. Even if he is dead, people should remember him. Suppose if the person has many degrees and he does not have moral, ethical and social values, then that education is of no use. Our education should help to eradicate illiteracy, poverty, unemployment from our economy. It should help to drive away untouchability, promote one's culture and raise awareness. Success isn't the matter of being the best and winning the race, it is something that how will you handle the worst situation in your life. Success isn't a matter of what you have in your pocket but what you have in your heart.

Had there been no education, the world would have torn apart; we should have lived like animals in the bush that have no respect, class, no sense of right and wrong. Without education, a man is more like clay which can be moulded to any type of shape and size. Hence, we require education to raise high in our life just as a balloon needs air to float in any direction.

India's literacy rate is still pathetic; not even 70%. So all my readers gear up and sow this magical seed of education in someone else's life and leave an indelible imprint upon that person's life. Help in whatever way you can but definitely help. Keep smiling and helping.....😊

