

Our System of Education

Contributed by Fethullah Gulen
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Our minds naturally turn to the quality of schools and teachers when a new school year starts. But we should not be able to help thinking about it constantly since schooling is so vital a part of the making of human beings. A school may be considered as a laboratory in which an elixir is offered which can prevent or heal the ills of life and teachers are the masters by whose skills and wisdom the elixir is prepared and administered.

The school is a place of learning where everything related to this life and the next can be learnt. It can shed light on vital ideas and events and enable its students to understand their natural and human environment. It can also quickly open the way to unveiling the meaning of things and events which leads man to wholeness of thought and contemplation. In essence the school is a kind of place of worship whose "holy men" are teachers.

Good schools worthy of the name are pavilions of angels which develop feelings of virtue in their pupils and lead them to achieve nobility of mind and spirit. As to the others however soundly built they may appear they are in fact ruins – they instil false ideas into their pupils turning out monsters. Such schools are nests of snakes and we should be consumed with shame that they are called places of learning.

The real teacher is one who sows the pure seed and preserves it. It is his duty to be occupied with what is good and wholesome and to lead and guide the child in his or her life and in the face of all events. As it is in the school that life flowing outside in so many different directions acquires a stable character and identity so too it is in the school that a child is cast in his or her true mould and attains to the mysteries of personality. Just as a wide full river gains force as it flows in a narrow channel so too the flowing of life in undirected ways is channelled into unity by means of the school. In like manner a fruit is a manifestation of unity growing out of the fruit-tree's diversity.

School is thought to be relevant only in a particular phase of life. However it is much more than that. It is essentially the "theatre" in which all the scattered things of the universe are displayed together. It provides its pupils with the possibilities of continuous reading and speaks even when it is silent. Because of that although it seems to occupy one phase of life actually the school dominates all times and events. Every pupil re-enacts during the rest of life what he or she has learnt at school and derives continuous influence therefrom. What is learned or acquired at school may either be imagination and aspirations or specific skills and realities. But what is of importance here is that everything acquired must in some mysterious way be the key to closed doors and a guidance to the ways to virtue.

Information rightly acquired at school and fully internalized by the self is a means by which the individual rises beyond the clouds of this gross world of matter and reaches to the borders of eternity. Information not fully internalized by the self is no more than a burden loaded upon the pupil's back. It is a burden of responsibility on its owner and a devil which confuses the mind. That kind of information which has been memorized but not fully digested does not provide light to the mind and elevation to the spirit but remains simply a nuisance to the self.

The best sort of knowledge to be acquired in the school must be such that it enables pupils to connect happenings in the outer world to their inner experience. The teacher must be a guide who can give insight into what is experienced. No doubt the best guide (and one that continually repeats its lessons) is life itself. Nevertheless those who do not know how to take a lesson directly from life need some intermediaries. These intermediaries are the teachers – it is they who provide the link between life and the self and interpret the manifestations of life's happenings.

The mass media can communicate information to human beings but they can never teach real life. Teachers are irreplaceable in this respect. It is the teachers alone who find a way to the heart of the pupil and leave indelible imprints upon his or her mind. Teachers who reflect deeply and impart the truths will be able to provide good examples for their pupils and teach them the aims of the sciences. They will test the information they are going to pass on to their pupils through the refinement of their own minds not by such Western methods as are today thought to provide facile answers to everything.

The students of the Prophet Jesus upon him be peace learnt from him how to risk their lives for the sake of their cause and were able to endure being thrown into the mouths of lions: they knew that their master had persisted with his teachings even in the face of death threats. Those who put their hopes on and gave their hearts to the Prophet Muhammad the greatest exemplar of humanity upon him be peace and blessings realized that suffering for the sake of truth resulted in peace and salvation. His students observed their master wish peace and felicity for his enemies even when he had been severely injured by them.

A good lesson is what is taught at the school by the real teacher. This lesson not only provides the pupil with something but it also elevates him or her into the presence of the unknown. The pupil thus acquires a penetrating vision into the reality of things and sees each event as a sign of the unseen worlds.

At such a school one is tired of neither learning nor teaching because the pupils through the increasing zeal of their teacher sometimes rise to the stars. Sometimes their consciousness overflows the boundaries of ordinary life brimming with wonder at what they have thought or felt or experienced.

The real teacher seizes the landmarks of events and happenings and tries to identify the truth in everything expounding it by using every possibility.

Rousseau's teacher was conscience; Kant's was conscience together with reason... In the school of the Mawlana and Yunus the teacher was the Prophet Muhammad upon him be peace and blessings. The Qur'an is the recitation its words are Divine lessons – they are not ordinary words but mysterious ones surpassing all others and they manifest the highest unity in multiplicity.

The good school is the holy place where the light of the Qur'an will be focused and the teacher is the magic

master of this mysterious laboratory. The only true master is one who will save us from centuries-old pains and by the strength of his wisdom remove the darkness covering our horizon.