

## **PEARLS OF EDUCATIONAL WISDOM:**

*From the book of P. Ribes, s.j. "Foundry Workers or Gardeners"  
Published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.*

### **Education Has a Social Function**

By Fr. Joseph Matheikal, sj

#### **Main Themes**

*Education is meant both, for personal promotion and for social promotion*

*Educators should be agents of social change*

*Our educational philosophy and anthropology should be based on Gospel values  
not on market and consumerist values.*

**Target audience:** *Parents, Teachers and Professors at all levels, especially in Institutions  
of Higher Learning, Seminaries and Religious Houses of Formation*

#### **INTRODUCTORY NOTE:**

- ✓ *Long ago, Fr. Joseph Matheikal, s.j. former Principal of St. Xavier's School, Delhi, wrote an article in the review IGNIS, No. 74, entitled "NEW PEDAGOGICAL VALUES FOR OLD". In that article, he forcefully brought out to light the underlining values animating our Educational Institutions. Values we imbibed, unawares, from the philosophy of education prevalent in the current world value market, values that are **materialistic, consumerist, competitive, individualistic, and clearly anti- evangelical.***
- ✓ *I prefixed to that article a short introductory story to challenge you to a "serious reflection, criticism and evaluation" of the educational philosophy and values, we impart to our students. **The notes below may trigger fruitful discussions***

### **LUCKY PARENTS. (A Story)**

Johnny's parents thought themselves lucky to secure admission for their son, in one of the most trendy and prestigious catholic educational institutions in town. They thanked God for their good stars.

John's Dad encouraged his son to keep a journal where he would write down some of the enlightened thoughts – valuable "pears of educational wisdom" – imparted by word and example to the students by their learned professors.

After Johnny completed his education I was privileged to glean from his journal some of his jottings. They gave me, and I hope they will give you too, an insight into the philosophy of education obtaining in some – nay in most – of our prestigious educational institutions.

For clarity sake, I have grouped those gleanings into four chapters. Please read them critically and see whether you agree with them. They represent the unexpressed educational thinking of our top, prime educational institutions.

# **PEARLS OF EDUCATIONAL WISDOM**

## **Johnny's Educational Gleanings.**

### **CHAPTER ONE. ABOUT STUDIES AND LEARNING**

1. Schooling and College are meant to prepare myself to fit as smoothly as possible into the existing society and to make me a law-abiding citizen.
2. What I study, and the career I choose, is my own personal choice and concern.
3. I have to study very hard, if need be, even take extra classes to secure the highest possible marks, to enter into some of the most prestigious learning institutions, to secure a high degree, get a good job, and attain a high standard of living.
4. I have to make an effort to learn, what my masters teach me, what my texts books tell me without contradicting my elders or questioning them.
5. In school, the School Captains, and in College, The Students' Councils and Unions are there to assist the authorities to maintain discipline.

### **CHAPTER TWO ABOUT SUCCESS IN LIFE:**

1. In order to succeed in life, I have to decide what suits me best and helps me to promote my advancement in life.
2. Success is just a matter of making it to the top, now in my class, later on in positions of power and influence.
3. Success is a matter of working harder and harder.
4. The more influential I become, the greater my worth and personality will be.
5. Real success in life is measured by degrees, power, popularity, money and prestige.

### **CHAPTER THREE. ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY, PROGRESS AND HUMAN NATURE**

1. There is a nobility of birth.
2. Man is basically selfish.
3. Man should be free to do what he wants and promote himself.
4. Manual and menial work is to be avoided by the educated and the managerial elite.
5. Either we like it or not: 'the survival of the fittest' is the law of life.
6. Most of the poor are poor, because they are lazy.
7. The rich are rich, because they are industrious or blessed by God.
8. Becoming civilized is becoming more and more like the city elite, and adopting the style of the "Industrialized" nations in dress, behavior, food habits, language, housing, cultural expressions and gadgetry.

## **CHAPTER FOUR. ABOUT SOCIAL ORGANIZATION:**

1. The right of private property and private enterprise is sacred.
2. The largest share of benefits should go to those who invest in the process, not to the labor. In a free enterprise system, any individual has a chance of becoming a millionaire and succeed. All that's wanted is daring and hard work.
3. Law and order in society has to be maintained at any cost according to the legal system obtaining in our society.
4. Politics are dirty. Don't you ever get into politics.

**IT GOES WITHOUT SAYNG THAT** When Johnny's Parents read these FOUR CHAPTERS, of "Pearls of Educational Wisdom" they were delighted and exclaimed: "Is not Johnny a clever and perceptive lad? What a highly educated gentleman he has become. We are proud of him and grateful to those who educated him"

## **A CRITIQUE ON JOHNNY'S PEARLS OF EDUCATIOAL WISDOM.**

**In order to coment on "Johnny's Pearls of Educational Wisdom" we should keep in mind the folowing facts:**

1. **Every type and method of education is value-laden.** There is no a possibility of imparting "neutral" education
2. **While we educate, we communicate values,** openly or in a hidden way, consciously or unconsciously,.
3. **We transmit values not only through the content of our teachings, but even more through the very methods we adopt.**
4. **By innuendos, reinforcements, approvals or disapprovals, rewards and punishments, we pass on to our students the values that govern our life.**

### **Procedure:**

- a) To make things easier for you to hold a discussion on Johnny's educational gleanings, we offer here below, in one column the **VALUES we consciously or unconsciously impart**, (*the values Johnny caught from his educators*) and opposite, in another column, the **VALUES we ought to impart** to our students.
- b) The materials offered below could be used for debating and discussion groups. On the left of the page you will find the propositions, on the right side, the views of the opposition. Feel free to use these materials as you like best.

## **CHAPTER ONE:** **ABOUT STUDIES AND LEARNING**

1. Schooling and College are meant to prepare myself to fit as smoothly as possible into the existing society and to make me a law-abiding citizen.

2. What I study and the career I choose is my personal business.

3. I have to study very hard, if need be, even take extra classes, to secure the highest possible marks, enter into one of the most prestigious learning institutes and secure a good degree, get a good job and attain a high standard of living.

4. I have to make an effort to learn what my masters teach me, what my textbooks tell me and not to contradict my elders or question them.

5. In School, Captains and in College, Students' Councils and Unions are there to assist authorities, to maintain discipline.

1. Schooling and college is to equip me with the tools necessary to change the existing society and to make it more human; to make it a better set-up for all the Society members to grow and use their God given potentialities.

2. What I do and what I study will affect the Community. I am responsible to the Community. I am part of it and I benefit from it. I should have the Community needs in my mind in all my decisions.

3. I have to study to grow as a human being – not necessarily to get high marks – to enrich myself as a person, to be able to help others with my knowledge and skills and to build the community. I have to aim at a “ high standard of life”, rather than at a “ high standard of living”;

4. I have to learn by internalization. I have constantly to question my professors and teachers till all my doubts are removed. Vigorous class discussions on what is written on the texts are a must. I must take things in, just because I told.

5. School Captains, and Leaders, College Students' Councils and Unions, properly guided are, one of the richest spheres, in which, students can be trained in creative thinking and responsible freedom and democracy.

## **CHAPTER TWO:** **ABOUT SUCCESS IN LIFE:**

1. In order to succeed in life, I have to decide what suits me most and helps me to promote my personal advancement

1. In order to succeed in life, I have to take my decisions always keeping in mind the needs and wants of others. I cannot take decisions in a societal vacuum; I cannot advance in life to the detriment of other members of my society. My decisions and promotion has to promote the Kingdom of God as well.

2. Success is only a matter of

making it to the top, now in my class, later on in positions of power and influence

3. Success is a matter of working harder and harder

4. The more influential I become, the greater my personality will be.

5. Real success in life is measured by degrees, power, popularity, money and prestige.

2. Success is a matter of being happy and well adjusted. Success is a matter of being oneself and what I have to be. Success is not in feeling oneself superior to others, but in feeling useful, helpful, wanted and human.

3. Success is not “work-holism”. Success comes with love, with meaning in life, with job satisfaction and friendly human relationships.

4. The more loving, the more human and sympathetic, and the more generous I become, the greater my personality and my warmth will be.

5. Degrees are “pedigrees”; titles are ‘masks’; power corrupts, popularity puffs up, money and prestige spoil us. Real success is measured by how much I contribute to the welfare of my society and to the happiness of all those around.

### **CHAPTER THREE:**

#### **ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY, PROGRESS AND HUMAN NATURE:**

1. There is a nobility of birth

2. Man is basically selfish

3. Man should be free to do what he wants and promote himself.

4. Manual and menial work is to be avoided by the educated and the managerial elite.

5. Either we like it or not: “the survival of the fittest” is the law of life.

1. No man is nobler than any other by birth. All are equally noble and children of God. Nobility is “a make belief”, a creation of human pride and arrogance.

2. Man fundamentally longs to be “unselfish” for his deepest aspiration is to be loved and to love. Society makes man “selfish” by not caring for him.

3. All should be left free and be given opportunities to grow as human beings. No one should be given “false freedom” (license) to oppress others. True “self-promotion” is human promotion, not monetary promotion.

4. Working is creation and the most humanizing of all activities. Work, manual and mental, has equal dignity. Christ did both. Manual work, besides, has the added advantage of putting us in immediate contact with nature, which has a very wholesome psychosomatic effect on man.

5. As children of God, all men have the right to survive and to live in a human and decent fashion. It is the unjust structural set up of society that makes life impossible to the weak, the backward and the poor. In fact society should promote them to better life, not

- necessarily to a wrongly called “better standard of living” Not just to have more, but to be more.
6. Most of the poor are poor because they are lazy.
7. The rich are rich because they are industrious, or lucky, or blessed by God.
8. Becoming civilized is becoming more and more like the city people, and adopting the style of the “industrialized” nations in dress, behavior, housing, food habits, language, culture and gadgetry.
6. The ordinary poor laborers normally work harder than their bosses and those of the upper crust. They earn less because the dominant classes impose on the poorer and less literate the structure of wages and benefits which suits best to their own class.
7. The differences between rich and poor, “haves” and “have-nots” are man made. God created all human beings and the earth’s goods for all. God did not made poor and rich people. What man made, man can unmake. Man should undo the basis of these unjust differences by re-ordering the political, economical and societal structures. To induce change is in our power, but not unfortunately, in our “wills”.
8. Becoming more civilized means achieving greater refinement and depth in one’s skills and abilities; cultivating greater sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings so that our society grows in peace, love and mutual belonging. Civilization has nothing much to do with technology and scientific advancement. Brutality often, enough goes hand in hand, with science.

## **CHAPTER FOUR;** **ABOUT SOCIAL ORGANIZATION:**

1. The right of private property and private enterprise is sacred.
2. The largest share of benefits should go to those who invest in the process, not to the labor
1. God gave the wealth of the world to all his children. The right to private property ceases to be whenever even one of God’s Children is forced through no fault of his to live a life that is sub human. The right to private enterprise does not justify robberies, misappropriations, exploitation and oppression of our brothers and sisters. The right to a decent life, which all men have, supersedes any right to private enterprise.
2. The largest shares of benefits should go primarily to those who worked for them, namely the labor. Capital without labor is inert. Human beings take priority to material goods.

3. In a free enterprise system, any individual has a chance of becoming a millionaire and succeed.  
All that's wanted is daring and hard work

---

4. Law and order in society have to be maintained at any cost according to the legal system obtaining in the land

---

5. Politics are dirty. Don't ever dare to enter into them..

3. Some occasional stories of "success" of poor individuals who made it to the top are more hindrances than helps to more important thrusts in the advancement of society. The idea of making the life of the whole community more human and just is lost sight of. The idea of instant personal success, bluffs people to selfishness and frustration. For one man who 'succeeds' thousands become failures;

---

4. We have to go beyond "law and order" to find out the justice and fairness of the laws and the political structures that rule a determined society. Law and order cannot be maintained at the cost of injustice and exploitation. We cannot uphold peace at the cost of justice and charity. We have to work for a "just legal order". Laws are to protect the rights of all citizens – chiefly, the weakest ones – not the interests of the dominant classes in power.

---

5. Politics are not dirty. Many politicians are dirty. Politics, properly engaged, is a most noble profession. Through them, one can do the greatest possible good to the largest number of people. Political action with the right motives and love for the people is serving God himself

## Conclusions

**The attitudinal and structural changes to be introduced and fostered in our educational institutions should aim at one single target.**

1. **To build a society of brothers and sisters where love, cooperation, sharing and concern will be the basis of a life fully lived in joy and unity.**
2. **Members have to respect each other and sacrifice their personal selfish interests at the service of the interests of the community at large.**
3. **We want to build a society, where all persons are given the dignity conferred to them by God, where, they can live honorable lives in freedom and responsibility as members of one human family, the family of God's children.**

