

**Remarks of Sri O. C. Vincent, I.A.S., District Collector, Pathanamthitta on the occasion of the inauguration of Sri Atmananda Memorial School, Malakkara, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1987:**

“It is with great pleasure that I stand before you this morning, because a major step is being taken in the improvement of the educational standards in this area of my district. As you all know, Kerala is in the forefront of the education field throughout the country. We have been proudly flaunting our statistics all these years, saying that Kerala has the highest percentage of literacy, has got more literate or educated women than any other state in the country and all that. But during the past few years we have been sort of resting on our laurels and have been allowing the other areas around our state to catch up with us and overtake us.

It is true that in terms of statistics, even now no other state is near us. We are so far ahead, but when we think of quality - quality of education and the quality of our standards of literacy and education, we have been very concerned about this. Because all these years we have been not advancing. The reason given is that the old British system of education was meant for producing a certain type of educated person to meet their needs of running the government. But now we are an independent country which has to join the race for progress and development along with the other countries and try to get ahead of them or, if we are not able to do that, at least keep pace with them.

But there are any number of schools in our state and many schools which proudly state that we are of a very high standard—“exclusive” schools—but again, when we go into this, what we find is small factories turning out graduates or matriculates or whatever. The problem is, the entire system is examination-oriented but, I’m afraid, it is not the institutions which should have been blamed for this—it is more our parents and ourselves because we want our children to all become professionals. We want all our children to become doctors and engineers but we can’t think of a society with only doctors and engineers. A progressing, developing country like ours needs good scientists, good research workers, good writers, good poets, good artists. In all fields, we want excellent people, not just graduates, doctors and engineers. We want good administrators. We want very good executives in all our multiplying, developing and growing industries and industrial and commercial concerns. What we want is people who are having in-depth knowledge in the fields in which they are used instead of having stereotyped products like products from our small industrial units.

It is high time that at least some schools pay more attention to what they teach. They should also be prepared to face the challenge and allow the children to develop in the fields which they choose or for which they are more suited. Some of our children may be good artists or good writers or good scientists. It is the duty of the schools and the teachers to find out the real field in which these children are to shine in the future and to develop those talents in particular. But then again, these teachers don’t have much freedom to do this because, as I said earlier, our parents are more concerned about making their son a doctor, an engineer, or if that is not possible, at least an I.A.S. officer.

But altogether, apart from the educational inputs, the development of the person—the character of the child—is more important, especially in these changing times, because with the modernization trends along with our basic roots in Indian culture—I mention the cultural side because this modernization is overtaking it quickly. Along with that, the fierce competition in the field of study and after that, competition for getting a good job—you come to the field of business or any field, fierce competition is there. So human values are slowly going to the background.

There is a complaint of corruption all over, not only government circles, but in public life also. The standard of corruption has risen to a pinnacle. So from the childhood itself, a proper character moulding is most important. But we don't see that in any of our schools in this state, not only in the state, but even in the country; I'm not very sure about the outside world.

But here we can be sure that with the strong spiritual background and footing that this school and the organizers have got, that danger will not be there, because along with the curriculum, I'm sure that India's tradition and heritage and our cultural spiritual values will get sufficient importance. I'm sure it will get equal importance as the curriculum itself.

I'm told that the number of students to be taken every year will be limited here. But that is understandable because if you take our government schools, the number of divisions will be A, B, C, D, running up to H or J, and the number of students in each class will be 70, 60, or like that. And in one school in our state, the number of SSLC students presented each year is more than 1,000. You can imagine what type of attention these students will get from the teachers. Because teachers will be helpless looking after such unwieldy, large classes. In these schools, the student won't get any personal attention.

But here it is good that only a few students are taken in each batch, and they've got all the modern inputs of education, all the technological developments also—including computer studies—that will make a real difference in the approach to education.

I'm very happy that a small beginning has been made in this rural area. That is more surprising because we know that even in the best of our cities, such facilities are very rare. Of course, with the international talent which is available here, and the basic organizational facilities developed here, it is comparatively easy for this organization to develop an institution. Even then, there should be that willingness to do it. That has come from this organization and I am thankful to them as District Collector. It is very rarely that we see such good schools coming up.

Usually, schools are started just like anything else. We start with first standard, second standard, like that. Then they don't get recognition for the next standard, upper or secondary school. The high school has to wait for some time or there won't be enough facilities in the school itself, or they won't have sufficient buildings: library won't be there, laboratory won't be there. Such difficulties are usually seen in all of them.

But here, from the introductory remarks of the Foundation President, I find that it has been planned in such a way that in such-and-such a year we will reach such-and-such a standard—that also is very well planned. And I am sure that with such beginning this school will be in course of time one of the institutions of which my district as well as the entire state will be proud.

I don't want to prolong my speech, but you are making a very good beginning on a very auspicious day as far as education is concerned, as it is the Vidyarambham. On this auspicious day, a very good beginning is made for a very good institution. I am sure that with the guidance of the multi-talented faculty here, the students will be very fortunate to study here, and the end result will be something our society can be proud of.

I wish this institution all success.”