

## The Spirit of Youth

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A community maintains its liveliness through the spirit of its young, and flourishes through it. When a community loses this spirit, it fades and withers away, like a flower whose veins have been cut, and it is finally crushed under foot.

A young man, of school age or in adolescence, is usually filled with activism, with national or patriotic feelings, talks about healing the wounds of the nation and developing the country, and is furious with idleness and insensitivity to the problems of the community. Nevertheless, many of the young who overflow with such lofty thoughts, usually settle down and lose this activism after they get a post or find a good job in later years. Addicted, in the course of time, to carnal desires and material pleasures, they come to renounce their ideals, any criticism of which they could not once endure, and fall into the captivity of low desires and interests. Once they have got into such a perilous state, they can no longer recover unless a heavenly hand comes to their aid, and are fettered by what they were once furious about. They become so indifferent to their previous ideals that they feel offended by the criticism of either their own conscience or somebody else, for their abuses even in their jobs or responsibilities.

From then on, they use all their abilities to maintain their posts and win the favour of their superiors, things which humiliate a man, and become more and more degraded. If they show a capacity to be promoted, they will no longer think of anything other than getting promotion even if at the cost of losing all their honour and dignity, and doing things contrary to the dictates of their conscience and faith. They will bow down before every person from whom they anticipate benefit, and display so weak a character that they may speak excessively ill of one whom they praised to the skies a day before.

The show and flattery reciprocated between them and their like are so demeaning to their already worn-out character that we can no longer expect of them any good or virtue. More pathetically, they develop the mental or spiritual ‘disease’ that although they have already lost their sensitivity and the ability to think and decide properly, and are completely devoid of insight and wisdom, yet they regard themselves still as ones who think better than others, who make the best judgements and do the most useful things.

And indeed it is very difficult to remind them of, or warn them against, their faults. Since the selfish souls such as those usually develop hatred and rancour against those who show them their faults, and tend to regard themselves as always right, they never like to take advice from anybody else.

Almost everyone naturally has a weakness for some things and it comes out under the appropriate circumstances. However, it is always possible to save people from drowning in the swamp of their weaknesses. If we are able to implant in the young firm belief, pure and sound thoughts, a strong feeling of altruism and an inextinguishable feeling of love of nation and country; if we enable them to come together around a sacred cause to which they should be made to dedicate themselves; if we bring them to prefer such values as honour and dignity over passing pleasures; and if we inculcate in them the duty of loyalty to the country and working for its good, and convince them that it is an unforgivable ingratitude to the blessing of time to be occupied with anything other than serving the nation and country in accordance with that sacred cause – if we are able to do all this, then the young will maintain their essential identity against mental and spiritual corruption. Otherwise, we will witness each day a star disappear from the sky of our hopes because of spiritual diseases such as love of position, attachment to life, fame-seeking and addiction to material pleasures, and we will be bowed down by disappointment and loss of hope.