

## MOLOCHS AND IDOLS IN OUR TECHNOLOGICAL AGE!!

*P.Ribes s.j.*

### Trust of the Story.

- ✓ *We should not sacrifice our children's talents to monetary considerations, prestige wealth and power.*
- ✓ *The myth of the great tomorrow blinds us.*
- ✓ *Youngster should be let free to choose their future in life.*
- ✓ *Education what for? For life or for a living?*
- ✓ *Wrong goals and values in education!*

## The Parable

**Narrator:** This being a 'scientific' age, it would, indeed, be strange not to find within the sacredness of many a successful and forward looking family, a little shrine of worship. The presiding deity's name is— '**science**' as a means to success and money. If you would peep into the privacy of the Deshpande's home, you would not be surprised to hear them conversing in the following manner

**Mr. Deshpande:** For success, economic security and a bright tomorrow I want our two children to take up medicine or engineering. I wouldn't settle for anything less. Nor would I take a 'no' for an answer! Not in a matter like this

**Mrs. Deshpande:** No doubt about it. Today, it is science that counts. It is only by becoming doctors or engineers that our children will be able to enjoy a high standard of living, earn wealth and respect in society and have a future free from worries and cares.

**Narrator:** One day, Nitesh, their son, now in his SSC class came up to his father and said:

**Nitesh:** Dad, you know. I love music. All my teachers and friends say that music runs in my blood...I am mad after music! Dad, my birthday is approaching...Dad; please. for my birthday buy me a guitar!

**Mr. Deshpande:** What did you say? Have you gone crazy? Asking me for a guitar? You! Nitesh, wanting a guitar? Lord! What have we come to! No! No! Never, my son! You will never play guitar. Remember that you are in the S.S.C. class, the final year of your school life. You have to become a doctor....You have no time to waste. Music will lead you no where! Bear this in mind, my son, that in the world of today, if you want money and success you have to sacrifice music, guitars and other pet tastes in the pursuit of science!

**Narrator:** And so, Nitesh's musical talents, for money's sake, were sacrificed by the Deshpandes at the altar of 'Science'...A few days later, Tara, their daughter confronted her mother. She said to Mrs. Deshpande.

**Tara:** Mum, I love literature. I could spend all my life reading classics, poems and plays.... My language teacher says that I have a flair for writing...Mum... I have decided to take arts for my College studies with literature as the main subject. I long to be a writer and a poet! I can't think of anything more fabulous.

**Narrator:** When Mrs. Deshpande heard her Daughter's words, she nearly fainted! Regaining her composure, she screamed in holy indignation:

**Mrs. Deshpande:** Ungrateful child! What is this I hear from you, Tara? I never expected this from you! ....Dad and I have looked after you so well....Have we ever deprived you of anything? You know what we want you to take in college. Your vocation is science..... You know that you have to become a doctor...And now you tell me that you want to take literature! What foolishness!

Do you want to let us down like this? We struggled so hard to give you a bright future, a high standard of living, security, a good name, and how you say you want to become a writer and a poet?!.... Chasing moonbeams! Have you gone crazy?

All your cousins and all your best friends go for science...what will people think of us if you go for Arts? They will taunt us and ridicule us and the gossips will say, "You know, Tara could not make the grade! No! No! Forget all this crap of yours, your writing and all your poems! You will never take arts, do you understand? Never! Devote all your time to study your maths and science! Do you get that?"

**Narrator:** And so Tara's undeniable literary talents and abilities were sacrificed also by the Deshpandes for the sake of money and success at the altar of 'science'. Day after day, Nitesh and Tara kept pestering their parents with fresh requests.

**Nitesh:** Dad, you now, I like games very much.... I have a weakness for cricket...I would love to join the school cricket team....

**Tara:** Dad, I discovered that I am quite good at drawing... I would very much like to join the Evening Drawing classes at the J.J. School of Art.....

**Nitesh:** Mum, you know, I enjoy social life. I make friends easily. I have the knack of entertaining people at parties and social gatherings. Please, allow me to go out to my friends' houses whenever they throw a party?

**Tara:** Mum, I feel so sad for the poor and needy... When I see the poor street children half naked and hungry my heart breaks. I want to join the social service league in my school....Say Yes Mummy!

**Narrator:** But, Nitesh and Tara forever met with the same inflexible responses:

**Mr. Deshpande:** What, Cricket? Social life? Drawing? Social League? Downright crazy! What about your maths and science? Your medical career must come first and last! Everything else must be sacrificed to that.

**Mrs. Deshpande:** Imagine our Tara going for drawing classes! What will nature-drawing help you for? Silly! Why waste your precious time on this arty nonsense? Forget it! Instead go for full steam ahead with your moths and science

**Mr. Deshpande:** Social work, Tara? Helping the poor? Foolish! Is this what we sent you to the school for? To feed the hungry? To visit the sick? To stuff the empty heads of beggars with knowledge? If you think that this is what your education is for, you are sadly mistaken! We sent you to school to complete your secondary education and then your College and be a Doctor or an Engineer! We did not send you to school to run after beggars and destitute! Apply yourself to your studies! That's the only thing that matters!

**Narrator:** And so, Nitesh and Tara, for money's sake, went on sacrificing at the altar of 'Science' all their best talents, their very self. These were the "burnt offerings" to the idol of science:- **"Games, sports, innocent enjoyments, social life, friends, love and personal relationship, artistic abilities, beauty and spontaneity, love for the neighbor, concern for others and commitment to socio-political goals"**.

**Narrator:** Finally, after many years spent burning the midnight oil, years of toil and struggle and privation, Nitesh and Tara made the grade!....Yes, they made it!...Nitesh, became an Aeronautical Engineer. Tara, a Neurologist.

Before long they were rich beyond the dreams of avarice, they were highly successful in their professions, respected by their community and, of course, they could maintain a high standard of living...A bright future was waiting for them!

**There was, however, a small hitch. Nitesh and Tara were tense, anxious and highly-strung persons. They were heartless, friendless and selfish characters. They were mindless, loveless and joyless automatons..**

**Needless to say Mr. and Mrs. Deshpande were delighted...Their beloved Nitesh and Tara had made it...They had given them the 'brightest' possible future and a life free from worries and anxieties! It goes without saying; they were the proudest and happiest of parents!**

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

- In ancient history, and in the Middle East, there idols called Moloch's on whose altars Parents sacrificed heir children. Even today in the XXI centaury, Parents like the Desponds sacrifice their children to the Molochs of prestige, money, worldly success and to the **"Myth of the Great Tomorrow"**
- The Deshpandes slavishly conforming to the prevalent values of today's society, crushed all that was best in their children
- They thrust on their children their values – *material values, after all-*, like money, prestige, status, monetary success, mistakenly lumped together in what they called 'high standard of living

- The Deshpandes fell prey to “The Myth of the great tomorrow”.
- They brainwashed and forced their children into accepting and living up to their values. Were those values the best for their children?
- Was money and prestige the best Tara and Nitesh could secure for themselves for a satisfying life?
- Would not friendship, social concern, art, sports, music, literature, love for the poor have given them a fuller life?
- **Science, or rather science for money’s sake, is a mighty idol, the great modern Moloch on whose altar today we sacrifice our children!**
- We should seriously question the values we have in mind while educating our children; yes, all of us, **parents, teachers, even priests and religious people**, both in our homes as well as in our schools and colleges.
- We must guide and help our children and youth to take their own decisions while choosing their careers, job preferences, future professions and vocations.
- **We use too much manipulation on our children and youth in matters of choosing their vocation and careers.**
- **Consciously or unconsciously we try to fit others into our procrustean beds of thinking and force them to conform to our societal values, group interests, and monetary considerations.**
- **The result of it all is sort of a “hidden dictatorship” that makes others (*in this case our children*) do, not what they want but what we want.**
- Material success and instant satisfactions, including easy access to the sources of wealth and power, make our lives and the lives of our children inhuman.
- True joy and fulfillment in life comes from using our God given talents and not by destroying them.
- By conforming to our wishes, our children may ruin their lives! They may get what we wanted for them. But happiness and a sense of fulfillment may elude them
- None of us, whether we are parents or educators or ministers, have a right to impose our views and choices on our charges.
- We have to teach our children and our youth to challenge the hedonistic and materialistic values of our age
- Happiness and fulfillment will not come to our children by smothering the best that is in them, or by forcing them to conform to a predetermined social mould or by stifling dissent.
- In the long run, they will feel grateful to us if we let them free to be what they are cut out to be.
- High standard of living is not the same than high standard of life. In a real sense, the former is life diminishing, while the latter is life enhancing.
- When finally, Nitesh and Tara had secured for themselves, a ‘high standard of living’, the stench of rotteness had already begun to foul their ‘standard of live!
- Since our educational system is imbued with wrong values, we educators should fight tooth and nail against them, lest we educate our pupils for frustration and moral failure.
- Most of our schools and colleges serve only a tangential purpose. **They do not ‘educate’ for life, but ‘train’ for a living.**

- The final products of our schools and colleges are mostly, young men and women who instead of being fully humanized and prepared for the serious business of life have been taught to be ambitious and tough to meet the demands of a competitive society.
- **In the prefaces of our school and college calendars we preach values such as *love, co-operation, social concern, patriotism, humanitarian attitudes, honesty and integrity*, but, in the day to day running of our institutions, we practice the opposite – *competitiveness, selfishness, individualism, prestige, status, money, etc....* We suffer of schizophrenia in our educational value system**
- If we are perceptive enough we may discover a ‘hidden agenda’ in the methods we adopted in our ‘so-called’ educational apostolate”
- After all, if the old axiom: “Values are caught not taught”, still holds good, our students will catch the values we practice, not those we teach.