

by Abraham Lincoln

*sourced from Ujwal Ravi Kadri, in The Hindu Young World, Saturday, Nov 20, 1999*

*This is an extract of a letter written by Abraham Lincoln to the Headmaster of his son's school. The values and ideals he speaks of continue to be relevant even today.*

He will have to learn I know, that all men are not just, all men are not true. But teach him also that for every selfish politician, there is a dedicated leader and for every scoundrel there is a hero...Teach him that for every enemy there is a friend. It will take time, I know, but teach him, if you can, that a dollar earned is of far more value than five found... Teach him to learn to lose...and also to enjoy winning. Steer him away from envy; if you can, teach him the secret of quiet laughter. Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to lick...Teach him if you can, the wonder of books...but also give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun and flowers on a green hill side.

"In school teach him it is far more honourable to fail than to cheat...Teach him to have faith in his own ideas, even if everyone tells him he is wrong...Teach him to be gentle with gentle people and tough with the tough. Try to give him the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone is getting on the bandwagon. Teach him to listen to all men...but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth.

"Teach him if you can, how to laugh when he is sad...Teach him there is no shame in tears. Teach him to scoff at cynics and to be beware of too much sweetness... Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to the highest bidder, but never to put a price tag on his heart and soul. Teach him to close his ears to a howling mob and to stand and fight if he thinks he is right.

"Teach him gently but do not cuddle him, because only the test of fire makes fine steel. Let him have the courage to be impatient. Let him have the patience to be brave. Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself, because then he will always have sublime faith in humankind."