

STUDENTS—HOW TO PLAN YOUR CAREER ?

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THIS article aims at giving you a few guidelines which will enable you to plan your career. Since planning one's career is in a sense planning one's future, it is desirable to give it the attention it deserves. In particular, I would commend your meeting an *informed* person and discussing with him your future. This individual discussion is extremely important because planning one's career is essentially an individual proposition.

The following guidelines will give you some idea about the possibilities that you can fruitfully explore. They are intended more to provide you the directions for thinking than to give you a specific programme of action.

The purpose of any career is to fulfil three of our needs, viz., status, salary and satisfaction. The priority and importance of each of these will vary from person to person. But all of us are interested in the status that the occupation gives, the income that the occupation brings and the satisfaction that the occupation provides. At this stage, three points deserve emphasis. The first is that we should think in terms of a worthwhile occupation in the next 5-10 years to come instead of a cushy job. The cushy jobs are few and far between and for all that we know they may prove to be a will of the wisp.

Secondly, the emphasis should be on income and not on salary. In other words, if we get obsessed with getting a monthly salary from one organisation or another, instead of making an income through one vital activity or another, we will be avoidably handicapping ourselves.

Thirdly, satisfaction can be derived in one of two ways: One is to do what we like. The other is to do whatever we do in a manner likeable to us and others. In other words, satisfaction need not be derived from what we do; it can as well be from how we do it.

If because of circumstantial reasons you have to take a salaried job, it is good to prepare yourself for such jobs which are enlarging both in quantity and in opportunity. Getting into crowded areas is again handicapping ourselves avoidably. Two job areas which would be growing in the years to come are the sales job areas

and the cost reduction job areas. Competition is already in and it will be more in the years to come and not less. Competition means two things: (i) Dynamic selling; and (2) Creative cost reduction. In the past few years, because of the protected economy, we have developed soft muscles as far as selling is concerned. Many companies are recognising this and many more will be recognising this.

Since sales is a beginning of the economic cycle in an organisation, any man who is good in sales will be a much needed man. Whatever courses you take, therefore, should be such that they will equip you to take a career in sales. The assumption, of course, is that you are temperamentally inclined that way. If, however, you are not temperamentally inclined to go in for sales, another emerging areas is the area of cost reduction. For reasons of competition locally and for reasons of entering the export market, it has become necessary now that we continually reduce our unit cost. This situation will be more tomorrow and certainly not less. If, therefore, you can take courses which will equip you for a career in cost reduction area, you would be preparing yourself for not merely a ready job but a job that will enable you to grow faster and further.

If circumstances permit, it would be desirable to prepare yourself for starting your own little business. The assumption here is that you are inclined that way and also that your parents would permit you to go ahead. Going on your own, among other things, will call for a capacity to work long hours and also to wait for results. In a way economic staying power is important. But much more important is the psychological staying power. There are so many things that are still imported. There are so many things that are not available in the country. There are so many things that are not done at all in the world of products and services. Provided you are willing to make a start in a small way either by yourself or in partnership with a colleague of yours who has got a complementary temperament, it would be good to think along these lines and choose courses suitably. I do not pretend this is simple but I do maintain that one way to make business more acceptable to the

public is for well-educated men to get into business in an organised fashion.

If you would rather like to be in a profession, you can certainly do so. There is plenty of room at the top. The congestion is only at the bottom. If you are prepared to work both creatively and long enough hours and put in the necessary effort and make the necessary adjustments, professions do offer great scope. If, on the other hand, you want to get rich or become somebody overnight, probably professions may not be the thing for you. Profession by the very definition means personal discipline and personal integrity and the willingness to deserve and then desire. You will have to consult yourself before you think in terms of a profession. Even without making the sacrifices, you can be making a living. But if all that you want is a living you need not plan your career at all!

It is possible that your father has a business. If that is so, it would be good to take it over and improve it quantitatively *and* qualitatively. Business can be modernised, business can be humanised, business can be made a very well respected occupation in the community. If you do not take it up and make business high ethical and socially acceptable, it is likely that customer who is the voter may vote business as a system out of this country. Since you are interested very much in your future, perhaps you will have to get into the game *in a very responsible way*. If this is your situation, my thought to you would be that you do not go in for engineering, accountancy or careers of that kind but go in for what is described as humanities. Study literature, study anthropology, study social sciences, study history, study philosophy. These studies would probably enable you to equip better for business leadership than accountancy, engineering and technology. When you do get into business, treat the customer with respect not only because he is a customer but also because he is a voter. Today the voter is anti-business. It seems your responsibility to make him pro-business. This is a great responsibility; but this is also a great opportunity.

Some of us, it is quite possible, need not work for a living. For such people another career has got tremendous possibilities. That career

is social work. There are so many things in this country which need able, trained and committed men. This work is there in the city *and more so in the village*. These things are not done today and certainly not well enough because it is done either for a salary or for a consideration. Social work to be done in an outstanding fashion is best done by people who have got the missionary spirit, who probably are supported by missions! In social work I also included politics. Some of us who are well off will have to prepare ourselves through social work to get into politics. If right from now, we begin a career in politics and dedicate ourselves suitably, may be the country in the coming years will have more statesmen than politicians. This again would mean that those who seek a career in social work or politics should go in for what is described as liberal education.

Whatever career you choose, three things are important. The first is that you pursue your educational line without any coaxing from anybody. Work, systematic work, long hours of work, work consistent with a balanced life has never hurt anyone and, therefore, long studious days would be the first indication. The second indication would be preparation for the careers we have in mind. This means appropriate study, observation and field research. This consistent and systematic preparation would give us a headstart when we take up our career. Thirdly, we should use all the opportunities for self-improvement. There are many opportunities for developing one's personality and personal skill. All these opportunities are better availed of even while we are preparing for a career. For example, word power is a great power in a democracy. The skill in the spoken and the written word would give you an edge over others and these skills are acquired while you are at school or college. Similarly, adoptness at many languages would be a great help. The opportunities that you get in developing mastery over many languages is highest while you are studying and these opportunities are best availed of. Once you are about to retire you can take sides but if you want to take sides *with you* in the name of your career, the best is to vote for as many languages as you can have mastery of.