

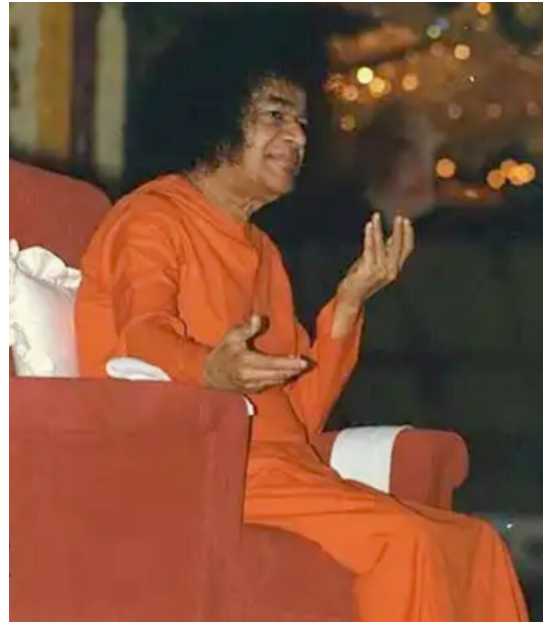
The Spider in the Same Web

In 1969 on the occasion of Janamashtami day, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in His discourse said that the receptacle may be different, but the divine content is the same. The taste of the Divine can be experienced in the atom or the cosmos, the friend as well as the foe, the virus and the universe.

Festival days like this are marked out in the calendar in order to awaken the mind of man, which is apt to doze off in sloth or complaisance after some spurt of *sadhana* [spiritual effort]. They are like alarm bells that go off at intervals during the year warning men of the journey ahead and the goal beyond the horizon. "*Thasmaath jaagratha jaagratha!*"—therefore, be warned, be warned!" say the sages. Awake, arise, and stop not until the goal is attained.

Man should not yield to thirst for the world's gifts; he should yearn for the gift of grace. That yearning will impel Krishna to appear Himself in order to quench the agony. *Bharatiya* [Indian] culture has emphasized the inner meaning of the scriptures and the deeper significances of rites and ceremonies. It revels in symbolism, but it has always encouraged seekers to rend the veil and learn the principle enshrined in the symbol. It has advised the reciters of the sacred *Vedas* to recite the hymns with a full awareness of the meaning of the paeans and prayers.

We are today celebrating the advent of Krishna. The *Avatar* (Incarnation) in the Krishna form has vast mysteries enshrined in it. Brindavan (the forest of Brinda) is the tangled jungle of life. The cows tended by Lord Krishna in Brindavan are none other than the humans that are helpless without His care and guidance. Gokula (the herds of cows) is the name given in the *Bhagavatam* (story of the Glory of the Lord) to the region where Krishna tended the cows. 'Go' means also the individual who is enclosed in the body. So Gokula is the region inhabited by man. You know that in *Telugu* [an Indian language], *Gita* means a streak! And in the *Upanishads* God is described as a "streak of lightning, flashing through a thick blue cloud"; Krishna is 'blue,' of the blue clouds. The



Vedas say, *neela thoyadha*; the *Bhagavatam* says, *neela megha*. Both mean that He is as deep as the sky or the sea and so His color is that of the sea and the sky!

Trace the Lord in your heart and hold fast

The streak mentioned in the *Vedas* is the *Gita*, the true '*Gita* of Krishna.' The *Gopis*, the simple sincere cowherd maids of Gokula, sought Krishna within or behind every bush and bower, for He was fascinating them, but ever keeping Himself away! This is only another way of describing the search for the God that we know to be within us, who eludes our efforts to sink into that sweetness. Krishna is hiding in the recesses of your heart; you have to trace Him there and hold fast. He runs away, but leaves footprints marked by the spilt milk on which He has trodden in His hurry to be beyond our reach. Yes, the lesson is: recognize His footprints in everything of beauty, every act of goodness, every tear of gratitude, every sigh of compassion, and discover Him in the bower of your own heart, filled with the fragrance of love and light of virtue.

When you have to be shown the moon, they say, "Look at the top of that branch of that tree!" As if, the moon is right on the top of that branch! There is a long long way to go to reach the moon, but you can see it from afar as a round disc emitting cool, comfortable light. So, too, the *Bhagavatam* and other epics and poems show the Lord and help you to see Him enough to arouse the keenness to approach nearer to Him, that is all! Each book leads you from one stage to another, revealing more and more of the beneficence of God, until you are filled with insatiable yearning for Him. That yearning is its own reward; it will transform the Will of God into the form you long to see. A rolling stone, it is said, gathers no moss; the stone that stays put is encrusted with moss. The mind that rolls from book to book, that delineates the charm of Divinity, cannot get encrusted with the moss of material desire.

The Lord has no favorites or foes

God is not drawn into desire; He has no wants; He is full, free, and ever content. He has no aversions or attractions. He has no bonds of kith or kin. One poet has sung, "O Krishna! O Gopala! I do not count on your being kind to me or being moved by my appeals for mercy. Don't I know that you killed with your own hands your maternal uncle? You killed the very nurse who came endearingly to you in order to feed you at her breast! With no iota of compassion toward the father of your dearest devotee, you tortured him and killed him while the son, Prahlada, was looking on! You approached Bali as if for alms, and when he gladly placed all he had at your feet, you trampled on his head and pressed him down into the nether regions! How can a heart that has no tenderness melt at my misery?" Yes! The Lord is above all attachments; he has no favorites or foes. You decide the distance between Him and yourselves. *Moksha* [liberation] is the stage when *moha* (attachment) attains *kshaya* (extinction). How, then, can the grantor of *moksha* be Himself affected by attachment?

God has no will or want. He does not confer or withhold. He is the eternal witness. To put it in the language that you can understand, He is like the postman, who is not concerned with the contents of the letters that he hands over to the addresses. One letter might communicate victory, another defeat; you receive what you have worked for. Do good and

have good in return; be bad and accept the bad that comes back to you. That is the law, and there is really no help or hindrance.

The Rajasic and Satwic Mahatmas

Ravana is a *mahatma* (great person); Thataki, described as an ogress, is also a *mahatma*! That is to say, they had superhuman prowess and mysterious powers. All are Divine; God is the inner motivator of everyone. They are *mahatmas* not only in the sense that all are *mahatmas*: They are *rajasic mahatmas*, enslaved by their emotions and passions, quick to hate and slow to forget the slights inflicted on them. Rama and Lakshmana are *satwic mahatmas*, embodiments of the prowess and powers that righteousness and virtue can endow.

A red-hot iron hammer can be hammered into shape by a cold iron hammer. So, too, a person red hot with emotion and passion can be hammered by the hammer that knows no heat of anger or hate. That is the reason Rama was able to defeat Ravana and destroy him. Why? The very word *satwa* means strength, power, vigor, and vitality. For, virtue is power, goodness is power. A person is angry because he is weak; he is a bully because he is a coward; he utters lies because he is sure he deserves to be punished and he is too weak to welcome it gladly!

The human baby, born as innocence in *Dharmakshetra* (in the realm of *dharma* [righteousness]), in the fullness of *satwaguna*, gathers as the years roll by the moss of *rajas* and *tamas* and lands itself in the conflict-ridden area of *Kurukshetra*. That is the story of *Mahabharata* in each life. *Kurukshetra* is a battlefield between *mamakah* (our people) and Pandava (the fair people). That is what the very first *shloka* [verse] of the *Gita* announces! What does this really mean? On one side stand the *rajasic* (passionate) and *tamasic* (impure) impulses fed by the sense of mine and our; on the other side stand the *satwic*, fair, spotless attributes of love, forbearance, truth, and righteousness that are divine and fostered by God. The combat between the two forces—the down-dragging and the uplifting—knows no armistice. The daily bath ensures cleanliness, the daily battle keeps the evil foes at arm's length beyond capacity to harm.

World is same for the insect and the human being

It is said that during the *Kurukshetra* battle that lasted for 18 days, Vyasa had his mind torn with contrition, for the contestants were both of his lineage. So he could not cast his eyes on the fratricidal carnage! One day, he was so overcome by remorse that he hastened beyond the blood-soaked plain, where another day's holocaust was about to begin. Hurrying along, he saw a spider scurrying forward on the ground! "Why so fast?" inquired the sage. The spider ran off the road, climbed up an ant-hill by its side and from that eminence, it replied, "Know you not that the war chariot of Arjuna is about to pass this way! If I am caught under its wheels, I am down." Vyasa laughed at this reply; he said, "No eye gets wet when you die! The world suffers no loss when you are killed! You leave no vacuum when you disappear!" The spider was touched to the quick by this insult. It was shaking with rage. It ejaculated, "How is that? You are a bloated sage! You feel that if you die it will be a great loss, whereas I will not be missed at all. I, too, have wife and children whom I love. I, too, have a home and a store of food. I, too, cling to life with as much tenacity as you

folk. I have hunger, thirst, grief, pain, joy, delight, and the agony of separation from kith and kin. The world is as much in me and for me as in and for human beings and others."

Vyasa hung his head and moved on in silence, muttering the line, "*Samaanyam ethath pasubhir naraani*—for man and beast these things are common." But he told himself, "Enquiry into the Ultimate, yearning for beauty, truth, and goodness, awareness of the underlying unity, these attributes of wisdom are the unique treasures of mankind," and went his way.

Krishna is in the bower and the battlefield

Through this wisdom, man can see the indwelling God in the spider and in every being that exists within the bounds of space. The receptacle may be different, but the divine content is the same. The taste of seawater will be saline whether you test a truckload, a bowlful, a potful, or a sip, or a drop on the tongue! The taste of the Divine can be experienced in the atom or the cosmos, the friend as well as the foe, the virus and the universe. This is the realization, the liberation, the illumination, and the revelation! "*Sarvam Vishnumayan jagat* (the world is God-filled)." This sphere of change is surcharged with the Omnipresent Divine. Sage Thyagaraja sang, "O Sita Rama! Out of your infinite compassion, you shine in the ant and in the Trinity!" Krishna is in the bower and the battlefield, blowing the conch or playing on the bewitching flute, wielding whip and wheel, the unseen force behind every thought, word, and deed of man everywhere at all times.

Source: *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, Vol. 9

Sai—My Everything

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It is beyond my ability to write about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, since words fail miserably to portray His glory. Sai, the name itself fills our heart with immense joy, confidence, and happiness. Surrendering my ego and knowledge at His Lotus Feet, let me pen down the story of my journey to Sai.

It was in the year 1998 that I came to know about Shirdi Sai Baba when we were staying in Sambalpur, a town in the western part of Odisha. On every Thursday, my mother used to make *prasadam* [food offering] at home and she would ask me to offer it in a Sai Baba temple that was two kilometers away from my house. With great difficulty, managing the *prasadam* box on one side of the cycle's handle and pushing the cycle pedal I used to go on a road full of pits and stones. It continued for years. Something in the temple made me happy and comfortable.

A few years later we shifted our house near that temple, and on every other day I used to go and spend my time there, while my classmates would be playing outside in the fields and on the playground. I read Shri Sai Satcharitra in the year 2007 during my under graduation, when I was staying at a hostel in Visakhapatnam. Whenever I read it, I was filled with sadness and grief. I used to consider myself unlucky in comparison with those people who moved and lived with Sai Baba of Shirdi at Dwarakamayai.

Meanwhile my parents shifted to Visakhapatnam. One day my sister told me about a *satsang* [company of seekers of truth] near our house where Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba used to show His presence by performing many *leelas* [Divine plays]. I went there to see the *leelas* of Bhagavan. I was told that we could keep *prasadam* or anything for blessings there. I was preparing for my chartered accountancy examinations at that time. I went with my admission card and placed it at the altar for blessings. *Vibhuti* [sacred ash] appeared on my card and the devotees told me that Swami had blessed it.

I felt good about it and came back. I thought that since Swami had blessed it, I would pass the examination in flying colors. But the reverse happened. So this center to me was just another place for *bhajans* [devotional singing] and service activities. My mother was a regular participant in *bhajans* and service activities there. Every morning she used to wake me up singing some *bhajan* that irritated me a lot. But I would keep quiet and never said anything to her. I had a big gang of friends in the year 2009. We used to go to every movie in the city and roam around. Since my parents were very particular about timings, I used to do all this during my college time, i.e. from 8.00 am to 2.00 pm.

It was in the very same year I secured top marks in the university accountancy examination. I still wonder today at this. My so-called best friends doubted that I had manipulated something in the examination and obtained high marks. I started keeping distance from them, because differences of opinion made them doubt me even more.

It was during that period after finishing my under-graduation final examinations, I used to participate in *satsang* and *Narayan Seva* [feeding service] conducted in a Sai center there. I felt very happy and thought of continuing these *Seva* activities. One day I felt deeply disgusted with the scandals propagated by my friends. So I went to attend the *satsang* conducted in the Sai Center and prayed to Swami that He should help me. I also prayed to Bhagavan to keep me away from my friends. I further prayed that Swami should become my only friend. The very next day, I got calls from my friends one after another telling me that they did not want to continue their friendship with me.

I wonder even to this day what had made my friends discontinue their friendship with me overnight. From that day till today, Swami has been helping me in many ways, day-in and day-out. I slowly started developing a bond with Swami. Since I had no friends, Bhagavan became everything for me. His name was always in my heart, mind, and on my lips. He would also respond and reciprocate in numerous ways. Whenever I thought of Him, a big picture of His would appear on a hoarding, or on an auto-rickshaw.

At times I would feel His touch on my shoulder while riding the bike. At times I would see Him on a branch of a tree, and He would suddenly disappear. For some time, I thought that I was imagining or hallucinating. Either way I was happy.

On introspection, I learnt many things about Swami. Swami says, "Test is My taste". Initially, He encourages us to get closer to Him and tests us. We learn many things during this period and thus become wiser. We can pass Bhagavan's test if we cultivate the spirit of surrender. The feeling of *anyatha sharanam nasthi* [other than You there is no refuge] is a source of immense strength and peace. Renouncing the feeling of the doer-ship and resigning oneself to His Will cements our bond with Him.

What I have learned being with Swami is to never question Him. When we do not know what is going to happen in the next moment, how can we question the One who knows the past, the present, and the future of everyone and everything? We can ask but not question. Acceptance of His *sankalpa* [Divine will] and abiding by it is a source of infinite strength. He is not interested in our failure or success. He is not interested in what failure or success does to us. He is interested in our progress. His love for us is unique. I always pray to Him that till the last breath of my life His name alone should be on my tongue, His thoughts alone should be in my mind, His image alone should be in my eyes, and His words alone should be in my ears. If coming to Swami is one achievement, then continuously being with Him and in Him is the real achievement. His grace alone can help us achieve this. Let us all live in Sai. Let us all live for Sai.



~By K. J. Srinivas

Source: *Sai Nandana* 2015 (90th Birthday Offering)

Those who seek to acquire steadiness of faith must first acquire the strength to bear grief and pain, insult and injury. The succession of joy and grief must help confirm the faith and make it immovable. That alone can evidence true devotion.

~Sri Sathya Sai~

Gurus—not Teachers

In the following discourse, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba lays down the basic guidelines for gurus to follow.

Education confers humility; endows one with an authority to command that will entitle one to affluence. With the help of this affluence, charity and compassion can be made fruitful, and by this means, happiness in this world and peace in the next can be won. Education is thus a great constructive force for mankind. But reformers and reconstructionists have tinkered so much with the process of education that it has now been reduced to a caricature of itself. The effectiveness of the educational system and the boons it could confer on man have been ignored and neglected. The name is now given to the art of collecting information of the objective world. The far more important task of transforming the nature of man into the divine is given up as beyond its ken.

The difference between the ancient ideals of education and the modern practices is appalling. Today, the educational process is denied to the aspirant if he fails to pay his fees. The teacher, too, feels that he has no duty to teach if in a certain month he is not paid his salary. Students pay for being taught; teachers are paid for the teaching. Money decides what is taught and how it is learnt. "Pay and receive; be paid and give." That is the bond between the teacher and the taught. "Love, reverence, affection"—these have no place in the transaction. How then can education be fruitful? Gokak [the previous speaker] said just now that when teachers love the children, they will be rewarded by the love of the children who sit around them. Now they are loved for the sake of the money they bring, and so the relationship is artificial and without roots in the heart.

Heirs to the richest cultural heritage

The teacher and the pupil will both be immersed in joy only when love that does not seek reward binds them together. When material gain is the goal, the joy based is on matter and does not thrill the mind. It cannot be pure, steady, and sincere.

As teachers of the *Bala Vikas* classes throughout the country, you do not look forward to monetary or material benefits, and so you have ample opportunity to make the child's heart and intellect blossom through the rays of love. Let Me tell you that most teachers today have specialized in western type of training, so they have lost their moorings in our own culture, and so are unaware of the deeper springs of the spirit.

They have been rendered materialistic, worldly, and egoistic. They are caught up in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and in the earning of money. They do not know that real education consists in helping the child to manifest the Divinity latent in him. Remember that the children who come to you are all heirs to the richest cultural heritage that the world can give. They are the 'Children of Immortality' extolled as such in the ancient texts by sages and scholars of this land. Do not turn them into experts in mathematics unable to add up a simple domestic bill; scholars in the geography of America, but unable to direct a pilgrim who desires to know in which direction *Kasi* [the holy city] lies; prodigies in algebra

who are helpless when asked to define the area of their own rooms; past masters in drill and gymnastics, but all at sea when requested to sit in the *Padmasana* [lotus pose] posture; proficient in Botany, but ignorant of the uses of the common *Tulasi* [holy Basil] plant found in the courtyard of every Indian home! They can draw realistic pictures of dogs and foxes, but their handwriting remains an illegible scribble. How can we expect that Indian culture will be preserved and fostered by these products of our educational system? The teachers who have brought them to this pass and the educational administrators who devised the system are both equally to blame.

Be aware of the high purpose of education

Correction of these faults must start with the teachers; they must become aware of the high purpose of education, and the goal to which it must guide the children of the land. I know that great enthusiasm prevails today among both the pupils and teachers of our *Bala Vikas* classes, for the spiritual ideals cherished in this land since ages. Nevertheless, I must say that there is a great and urgent need for you teachers to receive training in the methods of child education. For example, when teaching the recitation of *bhajans*, poems, or hymns you have to pay attention to the correct enunciation of each sound, the correct pronunciation of each letter; otherwise, the meaning is liable to be warped out of recognition.

The three R's are most neglected today

In olden times, teachers took particular care to explain to the pupils the origins and roots of each new word, even of words like *Sah* and *Twam*. They taught not only the meaning of the word but delved into its roots and opened up before the pupil a vast vista of related words and a huge expanse of meaningful vocabulary. Since words in Indian languages get transformed when written or pronounced in conjunction with other words, there is a duty cast on you to teach how they are to be separately recognized and identified. Boys may write *Ramunithoka pivarudu itlaniye* (meaning, "Rama's tail, Pivara spoke thus,"—that is absurd) instead of *Ramunitho kapivarudu itlaniye*, meaning, "With Rama, the Lord of monkeys spoke thus," (—that is quite correct).

The word, *santha pakodilu*, which I once used to indicate the error involved when people desert the true path and pursue degrading objective pleasures, which I compared to the *pakodilu* (savories) sold in *santha* (village markets during fairs and festivals), for they attract by their color, have ruinous components, and destroy health. Kasturi, who did not know much *Telugu*, divided the word into *santhapa* and *kodilu*, making the meaning absurd, for *kodilu* means fowls, and *santhapa*, like *pivarudu*, has no meaning at all, being a mere jumble of sounds! Unless training is given in reading aloud with concurrent attention to the meaning of the words and phrases, such mistakes are bound to recur. The three R's are the skills most neglected today.

Writing has also to be taught well, for the knowledge of the correct form of each letter has to be mastered by all. Or else, even here, a tiny slip might change a sublime idea into ridiculous jargon. *Rishikoti*, when written wrongly in *Telugu*, as a consequence of the omission of a single upward curve was once mis-shaped into 'bush coat' and the whole sentence was rendered ridiculous thereby! Scrupulous care and steady attention alone can make the pupils avoid such errors.

Study of books that is worthwhile for children

One point I have to emphasize here is that you should be careful while handling some books being published for school use by so-called scholars at the present time. They cast doubts on the truth of great epics like the Ramayana and assert that Dasaratha and Ravana did not exist in authentic history. They characterize them as representatives or symbols of opposing Cultures, the Aryan and the non-Aryan, and sow the seeds of factionalism and hatred. By such writings, children begin to doubt the very foundations of goodness, truth, and beauty. They are confused while deciding on right conduct and behavior, right ideals and ways of living.

You must examine every story or account that you place before the children from the point of view of individual faith and social harmony. Does this lead the child to a better, more harmonious, a more God-oriented life? That is the question you should ask yourself. Prahlada has beautifully summed up this principle in the verse he utters in the Bhagavatam while advising his playmates on the disciplines that should be welcomed. "The study of books that describe the glory of God is the study that is worthwhile. The preceptor who tells us about the glory of God is the preceptor to be sought after and revered. The father who directs you to approach God is the father who deserves the reverence and obedience of the children, not the others."

Hills and mountains are overlaid with rock and boulder, the sculptor gathers them and shapes each of them into something useful and beautiful depending upon the nature and characteristics of the stone. Out of one boulder, the artisan might carve a huge mortar and pestle to be kept in the corner of the kitchen of a populous home. Out of another the sculptor might produce a rough-hewn gargoyle being incorporated into a building as an eerie object to ward off the evil eye! A third stone might get transformed into a charming little danseuse to embellish the shelf of a museum. Another stone, catching the eye and attention of a skilled sculptor, might be elevated into the idol of a divine manifestation, fit to be installed in a temple where it receives the adoration of millions for generations.

Parents have important roles in children's education

Though they were the progeny of one peak, each has a different destiny depending upon the care and consecration bestowed on it by the sculptor. Teachers are the sculptors who shape the rocks into things of beauty and significance, of utility and inspiration. They study the pupils, their nature and equipment, and decide on their roles in society, their paths, and the stages in their progress.

But it must be pointed out that the sculptor or teacher is not the only factor to be reckoned with in the process of education. The mother and father of the child, too, have important roles in the process. The positive and the negative must both meet in order to produce the electric current. Even God needs the yearning and the endeavor of the devotee to fulfil His Will to save him from perdition. You may have flowers and a length of string and a needle too, but without the garland maker, how can the flowers be strung on the string? You may have a lamp, oil, and wick, but you can get light only when someone strikes a flame and lights the lamp. So, too, the teacher and the pupil have to be brought to each other and

encouraged to learn and teach, to share lovingly their knowledge and experience, by the parents, so that education might proceed, and the child inherit the heritage left by its forefathers.

The teacher must win the reverence of the pupil by showering on him his love; the pupil must win the love of the teacher by showering on him reverence and affection. It is a mutual transaction, a sharing of the emotions of the heart. How can a proper congenial atmosphere for study and teaching be built on a foundation of doubt and hatred? Nowadays, the atmosphere is polluted by the teachers' fear and suspicion, and the hostility and audacity of the students. There is no love to lubricate the relations between the teacher and the taught.

The *guru* is equal to God Himself

We have heard the *guru* being praised as equal to God Himself. Gokak quoted the *shloka* (verse) where the *guru* is referred to reverentially as Brahma, the first of the Trinity entrusted with creation; as Vishnu, the second of the Trinity entrusted with the preservation and protection of creation; and as *Maheshwara*, the last of the Trinity, charged with destruction and dissolution. This description is symbolically correct, as we can see when we analyze the work that the teacher or *guru* is expected to carry out. The *guru* sows the seeds of virtue, of wisdom, and of faith in the heart of the pupil. He is, therefore, *Brahma*, of the nature of the creator. He is like the farmer who plants saplings in the well-prepared soil of his field. But the farmer does not sit with folded hands thereafter. He takes incessant care to see that the saplings grow vigorously and well, and he is vigilant to water the growing crops and feed them with fertilizers at the appropriate stages of growth. This is the role of Vishnu so far as education and the educator are concerned. The *guru* cannot sit back and silently watch the fate of the pupil after the first few lessons. He has to guide the pupil at every step, foster and encourage good habits, sound reasoning and valid emotions, and act as Vishnu, the second of the Trinity.

Teachers must inspire high qualities in their pupils

The *guru* has also the duty cast on him to watch every step of the pupil and warn him off when he takes false step, or develops a bad habit, or entertains a deleterious doubt. Like the farmer who has to be vigilant against the growth of weeds or the upsurge of pests, the *guru*, too, must be ever alert to destroy the pests of vice and the weeds of sloth and unsteadiness. The word 'teacher' cannot denote these high roles; it can mean only those who transmit information and train in skills. I direct that *Bala Vikas* teachers should hereafter be known by the vastly more appropriate name of *guru*, so that you may be conscious always of the spiritual role that you have taken on and its responsibilities and value. You are the lamps from which their tender hearts must receive light and love. By your adherence to truth, righteousness, peace, and love, you have to inspire these qualities in the children that come to you and the homes from where they come.

There are many who shiver at the prospect, when they contemplate the future of this great country. You should never entertain such doubts and fears, for you are the builders of that future, and you know that it will be glorious. The *Bala Vikas* children whom you are guiding and inspiring will be the leaders of tomorrow in this land. The virtues you implant in them,

the counsel you are providing them, and the examples you place before them will remain carved in their memories and transform their outlook and behavior in the days to come. Ask anyone assembled here whether they can bring back to memory the book that he read this morning; 95 percent of this vast gathering will fail in this test. But ask them to repeat from memory one *stotra* (hymn or moral verse) that their grandfather or grandmother taught them when they were little children sitting on their knees, and I am sure most of you will be able to recite the *shloka* or *stotra*. The things learnt during those early years stick in the memory and act subtly and silently on the growing mind to modify and purify the conduct of later years.

Spiritual education must start early in life

Some shortsighted critics declare that spiritual matters should not be communicated to children for they are too young and inexperienced to benefit by the instruction. But if a thing deserves to be done, the sooner we set about it the better. The slogan, "Start early, drive slowly, and reach safely" applies not merely to journeys by road or rail; it applies also to the journey from untruth to truth, from darkness toward light, and from death to immortality. The unrest, anxiety, fear, and hatred that torment the world now is largely due to the neglect that kept off from the growing child the disciplines that can regulate the passions and emotions of man.

We postpone this essential task of education at our peril; for when children are equipped with the discipline to secure balance, equanimity, harmony, and peace, they can no more be drawn into wild adventures and barren activities. You have to learn spiritual disciplines along with the information-giving subjects of the curriculum. You have to earn the high diploma that the *Upanishads* offer you, namely, *amrutasya puthrah* (child of immortality), along with the Master's and Bachelor's degrees etc. that help you eke out a livelihood up to a certain stage of life.

Everyone must learn the secret of happiness

But remember you cannot take up the threads of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) all of a sudden after retiring from active service! You cannot learn spiritual *sadhana* when you are physically debilitated and overwhelmed by the approach of death. How can a man think of God, his Savior, when he himself is overcome by sorrow at the need to depart from this world and when all his kith and kin are weeping and wailing loud and long?

No. Everyone must learn the secret of happiness that consists in refusing to shed tears for anything less than God. You have won this human body, this human life, as the reward for many lives spent in acquiring merit. You have won this chance, this unique good fortune of being able to get *darshan* (sight or audience) of Sai. Plunging deep into the waters of this tumultuous ocean of *samsara* (worldly life), you have heroically emerged from its depths with this rare pearl in your hands—the grace of Sai. Do not allow it [grace] to slip from your clasp and fall into the depths again. Hold on firmly to it. Pray that you may have it forever and be filled with the joy that it confers. That is the way by which you can render this life fruitful.

Instruct the children of the *Bala Vikas* to revere their parents. This is the first thing to do. It is a simple act of gratitude for those who endowed them with the material instrument for life. But mere possession of the human body, however wonderful it may be, is not enough for one's peace and joy. One must know how to unravel its mysteries and how to regulate one's own impulses and hungers. This process is accomplished by the *guru*, and so the pupils must be instructed and encouraged to revere the *guru* in gratitude for the service he renders. Education must aim at providing the child not livelihood but a life worth living. For this, the acquisition of skills in doing or reasoning is not enough. Faith in oneself and in the divinity of oneself are absolutely essential. That is the precious treasure of wisdom stored in our ancient scriptures and in the experience of the saints and sages of all countries and faiths.

There is only one religion, the religion of love

There is one more point that I wish to emphasize. Some teachers have asked Me whether the *Bala Vikas* classes can serve children of all faiths or whether they can admit only children of the *Hindu* faith. The question has arisen because the questioners do not know the very fundamentals of the *Hindu* faith. There is only one religion, remember, and that is the Religion of Love; there is only one caste, and that is the Caste of Humanity. You must be careful not to encourage or entertain the slightest trace of 'difference' on the basis of religion, caste, creed, or color in the *Bala Vikas* classes.

Do not tarnish the spotlessly clean minds of the children by infecting them with a sense of distinction between one child and another. Impart instructions and inspiration equally to all. Select stories from the scriptures of all faiths to interest the children in the values of good life. Speak to them of the moral heroes of all lands, the saints of all faiths. For they are all of the same stamp. No scripture enjoins violence or lays down untruth as a way of life. All religions extol truth, righteousness, peace and brotherhood, and love. All saints are embodiments of service, compassion, and renunciation.

Do not compare the various manifestations of the Divine and pronounce judgement, declaring that Rama is greater than Krishna or Shiva superior to Vishnu. This line of thought is poisonous and harmful to the devout aspirant. You do not know your own self; how dare you pronounce judgement on personalities and powers you have never experienced or understood. Rama is as unknown to you as Christ, and so it is best to keep silent and revere both with equal ardor. For all are manifestations of the same divine effulgence.

I bless you that you succeed in the great task you have imposed on yourself, and that you will be able to light the way for the children of this land into the glorious region of everlasting joy.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.12*

A Bouquet for Beloved Sai

I start this Prayer to Sri Ganesha, who
keeps us from all harm and sin:
Dear Ganesha, Sri Ganesha, bless this
journey we begin.
Sweet Ganesha, Sai Ganesha, lead us
to Lord Sai our King.
.... To Sathya Sai our Divine King.

Om to Earth and Heaven above, *Om* to
the dawning Sun within.
Sai has come to Light our Heart,
Illumine Love and Peace therein.
Om to Earth and Heaven above, to
Sathya Sai, our Lord, we sing.
His Light and Goodness fills our Heart,
Illumines Love and Peace therein.
O God Beautiful, O God Beautiful,
Thank you for each perfect day.
Thank You for Your gracious gifts,
You care for us in every way.
Dearest Lord, we feel Your Presence in
our heart where You reside.
May all our words, and all our deeds,
and all our thoughts on You abide.

At Your Lotus Feet we pray that never
we from *dharma* stray.
Help us, Lord, to see Your Form in
every creature that is born.
You're our Beacon, You're our Shelter,
You're our Hope, we bow to You.
Show us how to serve all mankind,
Love all, seeing only You.

Lord, we want no wealth or fame,
Just give us strength to sing Your Name.
When we search our heart, our mind,
Beloved Sai, You're all we find.
You're our Mother, You're our Father,
You're our Brother, Sister too.
You're our Friend, and You're our *guru*,
You're our God, we worship You.

Brothers, Sisters, near and far,
Come listen to the *Avatar*.
When we share the love we feel,
His Golden Age He'll soon reveal.
Start the Day, Spend the Day,
End the Day with Love, Sweet Love.
That's the Way to come to Baba,
merge with Him who's purely Love.
Start the Day, Fill the Day, End the
Day with Love, Sweet Love.
That's the Way to reach Lord Sai, merge
with Him who's purely Love.

Praise God, remember God,
Rejoice in God, be One with God.
Let every breath be filled with God,
within us is the Loving God.
... Sri Sathya Sai our Living God.
Lord, we want You. Lord, we need You.
Lord, we give our lives to You.
Lord, our Hearts are filled with *prema*.
Lord, our Eyes see only You.

Asatoma Tamasoma, from the
Darkness lead us Home.
Always shine Your light upon us,
Give us Peace, Lord Hari *Om*.
We open wide our Temple door,
Let voice and heart to Heaven soar:
Glory to the Blessed One,
Whose Love is deep within our core.
.... We have His Love forevermore.

Joyfully we sing God's Name,
Proclaim God's Truth, extol His Fame.
Our Hearts receive the *Aarti* Flame,
and taste the sweetness of His Name.
We're happy that on Earth He came.
We're ever grateful that He came.
.... Dear Lord Sai, we're glad You Came.
OM - Shanti - Shanti - Shanti.

~A. N. Drucker

Source: Sanathana Sarathi, Sept. 1981

Q & A with Bhagavan

Who has Divine Vision?

(A visitor, a prince from another state of India, came to Bhagavan, offered some acres of land for a yoga center and asked Bhagavan to visit his state and use His will to avert the danger of political violence.)

Sai, to the Visitor: Swami's love is the same for all, even for those who engage in bad actions. These suffer, not because of Swami's anger, but because only through suffering do their minds turn inward in self-inquiry. And only through self-inquiry will they be free of the illusion that separates them from God. The only gift acceptable to Swami is the heart. Acres of land are of no interest to Him. Presently, there is great disorder amongst both politicians and students. This will continue for a time, but at a certain point Swami will step in and bring about some order.

Hislop: How about order in America and Europe?

Sai: Countries are like carriages. The engine is God. The first carriage is India. The other carriages will follow. According to the astrology of ancient times, the change in world conditions to be brought about by Swami's influence will come in about 15 years (this conversation was in December 1968). This was predicted 5,600 years ago in the *Upanishads*. The coming of Baba, the Sai Avatar, which includes the three incarnations, is all forecast quite clearly. People born in this present generation may consider themselves quite fortunate.

Hislop: Is today's world without saints who have direct and deep God experience?

Sai: There are people, even today, who have the genuine experience of divine vision and self-realization. But they do not travel here and there in the world, building up a following of disciples. They stay very quietly away from public view and do *sadhana*. If you were to find such a one and ask for guidance, he would not be interested in you. If the life of a '*guru*' who is out in the world is closely examined, it will be found that he has desires and problems. His knowledge is from books and other persons and he has no full and real experience of the divine of whom he speaks. Such persons are caught in the bog of *samsara*, just as you are. How can they pull you to firm ground? Nowadays, God is the only genuine *guru*. Call on Him and He will guide you. He is in your heart, ever ready to help, protect, and guide you.

Hislop: Swami says that these are people who have divine vision. How can one achieve that vision?

Sai: Divine vision erases from the mind the seeing of that which is impermanent. Name, form, and characteristics will in time disappear. So why wait? Erase them from the vision now. Erase them from the mind now and see only that which is real. Why bother about the illusion, that which disappears? Far better to give one's time and attention to reality. Divine vision is seeing through the ephemeral illusion and abiding in and with the reality. God is the eternal reality. He is the changeless basis of every phenomenon. King Janaka became firmly established in the divine vision. Name, form, personality, attributes had been so thoroughly seen through that they never again came into his vision during the balance of his lifetime. Divine vision is the result of practice and of God's grace. At times, divine vision may appear to arise spontaneously, but it is because of work done by the person in a previous life.

Hislop: What is the difference between a person of divine vision and a person who is fully God-realized?

Sai: There is a difference. The God-realized person, the *jivanmukta*, no longer has any identification whatsoever with the body. He is one in whom only the divine vision is active. He pays no attention to the body, and it wastes away and dries up. He does not bother with food and water. They do not even come to mind. As a result, 21 days is the time that life can remain in the body under these circumstances. He has lost all body identification and neither eats nor drinks except as force-fed. The 21 days may vary a little due to the condition of the person. King Janaka retired to the forest and became a *jivanmukta*. Life remained in his body for 19 days. The person of divine vision is known as a *raja yogi*. He retains some body identification, and thus continues to live with the body. King Janaka reigned for many years as a *raja yogi*. *Jivanmukti* is permanent God-realization. It is merging with God. There can be a temporary God-realization for a few hours or a day or so in deep meditation, or at various levels of *samadhi*, but that is not permanent. It is not merging.

Hislop: Sorry, Swami, divine vision is still not clearly understood.

Sai: There is a piece of clear glass. From one side one can look through and see the object on the other side. If the clear glass is plated with a silver film on one side, it becomes a mirror in which one may see himself, and objects on the other side of the mirror are not seen. Likewise, through consciousness one may see the outside sensory world. Or, with his intelligence, he may look to and become aware of that which may be found within himself. If one lives and keeps himself within the reality found within, with Godly thoughts, desires, and interests, if one keeps his life centered on the Godly side of consciousness, the consciousness becomes a mirror coated on its outer surface with the dust of the sensory world. On the pure inward surface of this mirror, on the pure mind and the pure heart, one may see the reality of himself reflected and this constitutes self-realization. That is *raja yoga*. King Janaka became one who lived his life in this way.

Source: *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Thought of the Month

Moksha

People speak about *moksha* [liberation]. What is it from which they have to be liberated? Is it from family, wealth or position? No. Liberation from these is an easy affair. Liberation is from the sense of identification with the body. The body is only an instrument and not your true self. The body is a gift from God. It does not belong to you, but you have to protect it as an instrument given to you everything belongs to God. You have to treat it as a trust and not as your private property. It is, therefore, your duty to make right use of the body and senses given to you.

~Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 28, P. 287

In the spiritual field, man is enjoined at the very outset to know himself. He should not be a slave of the senses. Nor should he follow others like sheep. "Be a ship and not sheep" a ship serves to carry others and cross the Ocean...the one who pursues the spiritual path not only benefits himself but promotes the well-being of others. He is like the incense-stick which consumes itself in the process of spreading its fragrance while burning... Consider the body as a vessel, wisdom as a rope and use the vessel to draw the nectar of divinity from the well of spirituality. Not otherwise can immortality be attained.

~Sathya Sai Speaks, P. 66-67

There is a conflict between sensual desires and spiritual yearning in human beings. These senses are so powerful that they are able to delude by their attractions even profound scholars.... The one who seeks *preyas* (sensual pleasures) is concerned with the body, while the one concerned with the *atma* [soul] seeks *shreyas* (spiritual well-being).

Today ninety nine percent of the population are involved in sensual desires and not in spiritual bliss. Education today is mainly concerned with sensory pursuits. All occupations are related to the achievement of sensual desires. All enjoyments are related to the senses. Even the acquisition of wealth is for enjoying trivial sensual pleasures. The involvement with *preyas*, thus is connected with pleasures of the body, the mind and the senses. There is doubtless need for some concern about physical comforts. "Even the body is essential for the realization of *dharma* [righteousness]," says the scripture. The demands of the body have to be satisfied. Society has to be served. Family responsibilities have to be discharged. The body is the basis for all these. But this should not be the ultimate goal of life. The former relates to the external phenomenal world and is concerned with worldly desires. Together with this, there should be the yearning for a higher *shreyas* (spiritual life). It is only when one yearns for *shreyas* that even *preyas* leads to fulfilment.

~Sathya Sai Speaks, 59-60