



The Duty of Parents and Teachers Toward Children

*Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba spoke on Easwaramma Day in May 1992
and said that parents should not hesitate to correct the child if he is wrong,
and they should be exemplary in their behavior.*

*In this form life is transient,
Wealth and youth are not permanent;
Equally impermanent are wife and children;
Only Truth and reputation are lasting.
Concerned only with one's good and teaching the truth,
The preceptor may chastise or beat one,
Like the mother who administers unpalatable medicine
For the good of her child.
Do not forget this truth.*

*What greater gift is there than the gift of food?
What greater deity is there than one's parents?
What greater morality is there than promoting the public good?*

*What righteousness can excel more than compassion?
Is there any gain superior to the company of the good?
Is there any disability worse than enmity?
Is there any death on earth worse than infamy?
Is there anything more valuable than lasting fame?
Can anything be more sustaining than remembrance of the Lord?
Is there a heaven higher than inner joy?*

If children are to be persons of good character, adhering to good practices, the parents should be of good character and exemplary conduct. The great teacher, Adi Shankaracharya, was the child of parents who were highly virtuous and noble in their conduct. For the great name attained by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the credit goes to their parents. Many great men achieved name and fame by following in the footsteps of their parents.

A lesson Gandhi learnt as a boy

If Gandhi, who was an ordinary person, was able to achieve greatness and world renown, it was because of the lessons in good behavior that he learnt from his

mother. The mother used to observe a vow: she would take her food only after the cuckoo sang in the morning. Once when Gandhi was a boy, the mother was waiting for a long time to hear the call of the cuckoo. Observing this, Gandhi went out of the house, imitated the call of the cuckoo and came in and told his mother that the cuckoo had sung and that she could take her food. The mother, who saw through her son's trickery, slapped him on the cheek and said, "You wicked fellow; what sin must I have committed to bear a son like you?" She felt sad that such a child should have been born to her. Her grief touched Gandhi's heart. From that moment Gandhi took a firm resolve never to utter a lie again.



In his childhood, Gandhi used to be full of fear. There was a maid in his home called Rambha. Gandhi disclosed to her how he was always afraid. Rambha told him, "Child, always recite the name of Rama. By chanting Rama's name, your fear will go away."

From that time Gandhi was always chanting the name of Rama. The habit of reciting Rama's name, which began in his boyhood, continued right up to the moment of his passing. Nor was that all. By adhering to the chanting of Rama's name, Gandhiji was able to achieve his aim of winning the country's freedom by non-violent means. For such a life of purity and virtue, the parents were primarily responsible.

Parents lack refined qualities

Unfortunately, today because the parents themselves have no purity of character, lack refined qualities, and do not lead regulated lives, evil practices and wickedness are growing all over the world. When the parents get up from their beds abusing each other, their children get up assailing each other. Because of the malefic effects of the *Kali* [Iron] age, parents tend to be quarrelsome. Fathers are behaving like Hiranyakashyap.

Because of such parents, Bharat is witnessing the spread of unrighteousness and evil practices. In days of yore, the people of Bharat earned name and fame by leading virtuous and sacred lives and were an example to the world. The children of today take after their parents. The tree is based on the seed and the seed determines the nature of the tree.

For the evil ways and bad behavior of children today, the parents alone are to be blamed. Few parents choose to tell their children to speak the truth, to act righteously and earn a good name. Because of such bad parents, the nation is forfeiting its good name. It is better that such children are not born at all. They are a disgrace to their parents and to their country. Their education and their jobs may help to bring to them power, position, and wealth but do not serve to promote in them such virtues as compassion, kindness, and sacrifice. All their acquisitions have no permanence.

Whatever strength one may possesses, without the strength of the divine, he is a weakling. What happened to a valiant person like Karna? He had physical prowess, intellectual abilities, and great scholarship, but lacking Divine support, he met with a pitiable end.

Teachers' failure

For all the ills with which the nation is afflicted today, the parents and teachers are responsible. The teachers do not punish the students (for their lapses). Because the students are not punished for their mistakes, they behave as they please. The teachers are responsible for the sins of the students. They do not teach the students the right path. They transmit only book knowledge, but do not teach the right knowledge, wise living, and higher values. If there are no morals and no human values, a man becomes a demon.

Only he is a real man who harmonizes in his life the body, the mind, and the *atma*. A life based on the body and the senses is an animal existence. One who is totally dominated by the thoughts and fancies of the mind is a demon. One who ignores the

calls of the body and the mind and follows the call of the Spirit is divine. The animal, the demonic, and the divine possibilities are immanent in the human condition. Hence, one who values only the body and follows the inclinations of the senses is comparable to an animal. In a sense, the animal may be considered superior to such a man because it has "a season and a reason" for its behavior. But one having the human form, who craves for sensuous pleasures alone, is worse than an animal.

Character is more important than wealth

Even for these three kinds of behavior, the parents and teachers are responsible. They are responsible for the good or bad conduct of the students. It is the parents who lead children to the highest levels or cause their fall to the lowest depths.

Parents are concerned solely about the material welfare of their children and have no concern for their moral and spiritual well-being. When a child is born, the parents desire that he should be educated, sent abroad, encouraged to make as much money as possible there by whatever means. This is all that they teach their children. People today earn money in so many different ways, from begging to dacoity. It is not wealth that is important. Character is primary. Parents do not teach the children to cultivate good qualities. They do not control children who go astray. They condone the lapses of the children and often encourage them in their bad habits.

They are encouraged in their wrong ways even as Duryodhana [from *Mahabharata*] was encouraged by his father, Dhritarashtra. It is because of such parents that the children today take to wrong courses. Dhritarashtra was not only physically blind but lacked also the eyes of wisdom. He was totally blind. Parents today are tending to be equally blind. They don't correct the mistakes of their children or chastise them. They are afraid that the children might run away and commit suicide. Parents have the right to warn and correct their children.

Why should they be afraid to do so? What does it matter what happens to such wicked children? Instead of being a running sore for the parents, it is better they are no more. Death is preferable to infamy. Nor is there greater wealth than fame. Better to have a renowned son who is short-lived than an infamous son with long life.

Ensure world peace

The foremost thing that man has to acquire today is God's love. This love will secure world peace, peace in society, and peace in the home. Through the individual's love and morality, there will be peace and security in the home. By individuals winning the love of God, society secures peace and order. When the people have got the love of God, the world as a whole enjoys peace and happiness.

Happiness and peace are not to be found in wealth, position, or power. All these generate only fear and anxiety and not peace and happiness. Today even highly educated persons do not recognize this truth; they pose as devotees but follow the examples of their parents.

Hiranyakashyap tried all methods to divert his son, Prahlada, from devotion to God. The child was subjected to every conceivable kind of torture and ordeal: trampling by elephants, biting by cobras, and immersion in the sea. But Prahlada's devotion to the Lord saved him. Disregarding his perverse father, Prahlada held fast to the Lord.

Noble and divine feelings are absent today

There is nothing great about being a father. No father can rejoice merely when a son is born. Only when the people praise the virtues of the son will the father rejoice over his birth. A righteous son redeems himself and his family. Verily, they alone are fit to be called parents who bring up such virtuous children.

Prahlada declared, "He alone is a father who tells his son: Child, realize God. He is a true *Guru* who leads the disciple to God." Such teachers and parents have become rare these days. All that had brought fame and glory to the country in the past has become a waste because of the decline of moral values and behavior. The educational system is utterly vitiated. There is no attempt to promote human qualities. Noble and divine feelings are absent. It is utterly unbecoming of those who call themselves human beings to behave like animals with no devotion to God....

Responsibility of parents toward children

Every effort has to be made to experience Divine love and purity. One who has secured love can accomplish anything. Nothing is beyond his reach. Hence, one should be worthy of God's grace. Without Divine grace, man is no more than an animal. Man should strive to control his senses, develop good qualities, and lead an ideal life. Parents are primarily responsible for bringing up children who will lead such ideal lives. Therefore, they have to reform themselves.

Today parents all over the country are worried about the conduct of their children and are not at all happy. They lament about the behavior of their children, but do not realize that they are themselves to be blamed. If the parents had brought up the children on right lines, would they go astray? Pampering the children in various ways, they are allowed to go about like street dogs. How can such boys be reformed? It is impossible. When wealth grows, arrogance increases and morality declines.

Men should realize that without God's love, human existence is utterly valueless. A bird like Jatayu earned God's grace. A simple old woman like Shabari won God's love. But men today, despite their scholarship and scientific knowledge, are making no attempts to secure God's love. What is the use of this education or science? True science should serve to promote the progress of the nation. But today, in the name of science, the world is being destroyed. Education should not breed a class of parasites who exploit others. It should help to promote good qualities.

Victory can be won only with God's grace

Students should remember that this country was known in the past as a land where people led truthful and righteous lives. Krishna told Arjuna that he should consider

God and *dharma* (righteousness) as most important. Because the Pandavas [from *Mahabharata*] adhered to righteousness and had firm faith in God, they could ultimately enjoy all prosperity and happiness. Because of their love for God, they could bear with fortitude all troubles and difficulties. What was the fate of the Kauravas who ignored God? Not one of Dhritarashtra's 100 sons survived. Despite all the resources they had and the valiant commanders who were on their side, God was not on their side.

True victory can be won only by God's grace. Strive for securing the love of God. Today, love is being misused for satisfying the senses, with deplorable results. (Swami related the dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his wife, Maitreyee, over attachment to the things of the world and pointed out how Maitreyee was as ready to give up worldly possessions as the sage himself). Today such couples are rare. There must be such couples who will give birth to virtuous children. Only virtuous children can bring a good name to the country.

Of what use is a son who does not use his hands to perform good deeds, who does not use his tongue to utter the Lord's name, and who does not cherish in his mind truth and compassion? This is the triple purity that makes human life sublime.

Students should dedicate their lives to the service of others. Cultivate love. Remember the great mothers in the past who gave to the world *Avatars* from time to time. What is the inner significance of observing today as Mother's Day? It means that women should become such great mothers. The fathers should be exemplary in their conduct. When the fathers are not setting the right example, the children should be such as to have the courage to correct the parents. But unfortunately, there are neither exemplary parents nor exemplary children.

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The Wonderful Mother That I Have

Mrs. Geeta Mohan Ram comes from a family that has been associated with Swami for the last four generations. Her great grandfather, Mr. Seshagiri Rao, came to Swami in 1943 and was the temple priest of Prasanthi Nilayam for many years. Her father, Dr. Padmanabh is a familiar figure in Swami's ashram in Bangalore. Having come to Swami at a tender age, her life is full of exciting and illuminating experiences. Below are excerpts of a talk she delivered at a Sai Retreat on May 13, 2006, in Atlanta, USA.

My *pranams* (salutations) at the Lotus Feet of our ever-present Swami and Sairam to all of you on this wonderful day—a holy day of Buddha Poornima, with Mother's Day coming up tomorrow.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do my *namasmarana* [taking the Lord's name] and place my respects at Sai—my Mother, who has been a part of my life since the day I have come into this world. To speak of Swami is a huge responsibility. [For] many subjects you can prepare, read books, and have references, but when we speak of Swami people look at us very differently. They wonder and say, “They have had the association of this Divine being—how has their life changed?”

So when you speak of Swami, your life changes. When you enter a Sai Center and sit for *bhajans* [holy songs], study circles, your life changes—it should change, otherwise we would be very poor representatives of this wonderful Mother that we have!

My multi-faceted beloved Swami

For me Swami has been many things. I have seen many facets of Swami and I still discover more as the years go by. He has been my Mother—a very loving Mother—corrected me like all Mothers do with their daughters. He has been a strict Father pointing out my poor marks in several exams. He has been a strict teacher and has not forgiven me if I have made the same mistake twice—even after having been corrected.

But He has also been a very good friend! These are all things that a Mother has to be with her children—you have to be a loving mother when your child is very young; you have to be a strict parent to inculcate discipline and devotion; you have to be a teacher by example—I am sure many parents will agree with me. And you have to be a friend with your child, too. Swami has been those many things to me.

When the Lord becomes your guest...

My earliest memories—and very sweet ones—of Swami are of when I was a child and He used to come and stay with us in Bangalore in my parents' house. When Swami is with you; you know that everybody is very focused. When we have a guest in our house, the housewife is focused on the room, the bedroom, and the food—as she wants to make the stay a pleasant one for the guest.

But imagine having Swami staying with you! You will have this wondrous feeling of when is He going to walk into the kitchen, and I remember my mother would constantly be cleaning the kitchen never knowing when Swami would walk into the kitchen!

I remember my father, who never lifted the newspaper to put it away, would be constantly putting away the newspaper so that Swami wouldn't find it on the sofa in our living room! I remember my brother cleaning his room exceptionally when Swami was around because he never knew when He would come in. And I

remember hiding my story books behind Sathya Sai Speaks so Swami wouldn't know what I was reading!

This is my experience that whenever Swami would come, suddenly the look of all the bookshelves would change. I think as a child I read Enid Blyton; as a teenager I probably read Barbara Cartland and Mills and Boons—whatever the current craze was in school—but they would all go behind, and in front of them there would be a second row of Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, in the hope that Swami would think that I was reading them!

You can't trick the Lord!

The thread that ran through my life is that whatever I did, Swami knew everything. He is Omnipresent and you could never really trick Him—even though for a while He pretended and played along.

I remember once when He came into our room. He would actually eat in my room because we had separate food for Swami, and then the other devotees who came with Him were fed. He would walk into the room a little bit ahead of time while my parents and aunts were setting up the table. And then He would stand in front of the bookshelf and look at all the books.

So your heart is pounding, and you hope that He would just look at the books in the front. Then He would look at the books and say, "Oh! *Prema Vahini!*" Then He would look and say, "Oh, is this the new one that has come out at the Sathya Sai bookstore now?" And He would very sweetly remove two books and say, "Oh! Barbara Cartland! Is that what you read?" and put the Sathya Sai Speaks back right where it was!

The ecstasy and agony of experiencing 'that omnipresence'!

So the thread of Omnipresence ran through my life. Sometimes as a child I would wish that 'that Omnipresence' was not reminding me all the time that He was with me because I wanted to be like any other child and read what I wanted to read and do what I wanted to do!

But as I grew older, I remember what a wonderful sense of security it gave me—because wherever I went, I knew that Swami was with me! It was very easy for me to say, "No" when my other friends said "Yes" to things—because I knew that when I went back on the weekend, Swami would be asking me where I went last Wednesday or Thursday!

I remember once when I was in college, and I met an old friend from my school while I was walking to the bus-stop. We hadn't seen each other for a while and were very happy—it was just an unexpected meeting. We both were standing in front of a

sugar cane stall. So, we were talking and decided to buy a glass of sugar cane juice. We drank it while we chatted there for quite a while and then we went home.

The following weekend we were in Brindavan. In the early days with no *sevadals* there, we were the *sevadals*, we were also the *bhajan* singers, the cleaners—we were everything. All of us had jobs to do, and when I went to Brindavan my job was to clean the altar inside where Swami did *bhajans* on some evenings.

There were pictures of Shirdi Baba and Swami in different poses—and I used to clean that altar. Swami was walking around the building and He came up to me and looked at what I was doing, and then He said, “What time did you go home last week from college?”

I couldn’t quite remember. I said, “Swami, after college I went home in the evening.” But He said, “What time did you go home last week on Wednesday?” I still couldn’t remember! He said, “You went home late because you missed the bus!”

Then I remembered and I said, “Yes Swami, I missed the bus.” He said, “Why did you miss the bus?” I said, “I met a friend of mine and we were talking.”

He said, “Three mistakes. Missing the bus because you were talking to the friend on the street; second mistake—not telling your mother that you would be late or why you came late; third mistake of drinking on the street out of a dirty glass that the fellow gave! Three mistakes in one day!”

So this is the Omnipresent Swami, and sometimes I would say to myself, “Swami, please! Why don’t you go and get on somebody else’s case instead of me all the time!”

But He was the loving Mother—He reminded me that there were certain ways that one behaves and if you don’t follow the norms of the society at that time, you are bound to have problems with it.

“Life is a game—play it!”

In those childhood sweet days there were times when He would be in the house and we children would be banished to our rooms because the [elders] didn’t want us to make any noise! They would say, “Swami is talking in the living room, so stay in the room, read a book, or do something. But don’t appear here and make noise!”

I remember my cousin and me—we were almost the same age—were constantly banished to the room to do something with ourselves. Those were not the days of TVs, Xboxes, or Play-stations. We would go to the room and play Snakes and Ladders or Ludo. On one occasion, Swami knocked on the door, walked in, and saw us playing snakes and ladders.

He came in and said, “Oh! You both are playing over here while I have to go and talk to those devotees, that’s not fair! You guys are having fun here! Can I please play with you?” We said, “No!” because we had already experienced playing with Swami and we didn’t want Him to play with us! We said, “No!” He said, “Why not?” We said, “Because every time You roll the dice, You always get the number You want! So, we don’t want You to play with us!” He said, “No! No! I will play like you people!”

So, He sat down and rolled the dice and we rolled the dice, and the game was progressing quite nicely—sometimes He went up the ladder and came down the snake, too! We thought this was pretty good. But by the time one of us had gotten all the way to 98 or 99 where the snake is waiting to bring you down, Swami rolls His dice and within three moves He reaches 100 and says, “Useless people, you don’t know how to play!” He used to say, “What is this? A game isn’t it? You shouldn’t cry when you lose a game!”

You know Swami doesn’t do anything without a reason! And I never forgot the lesson He taught us with that snakes and ladder game. He said, “Life is like a game! As long you have Swami as the dice of God in your hands, it will move you along—sometimes you go up the ladder, sometimes you come down the snake—it’s okay! But as long as you have the dice with you, you can keep playing and you can keep moving forward. That’s the important thing you have to remember. What is the use of playing this game, reaching 100, and starting again from number 1 day after day!”

He was a friend and He played, He joked, and He looked at the books that we were reading—He was a wonderful Mother in many different ways!

Swami—the ‘micro-manager’

When He got me engaged to my husband—the wedding was still a month away—and my parents and aunts had to go to Puttaparthi for the global *akhanda bhajan* [24-hour devotional singing]. As Swami was going to conduct the wedding in Puttaparthi, He had asked us to bring all the details of the wedding. He wanted to see the saris, the invitations, the guest-list, the menu. He wanted to see and check everything!

Swami is a micro-manager! There is no other word for it. He will check everything 25 times. He even wanted the paper sketch of the *rangoli* (colored powder art on the floor) that was going from Swami’s building to the wedding hall!

So, armed with all these things, we arrived at a very crowded Puttaparthi where the *bhajans* were going on. As the *sevadal* knew of the upcoming wedding, we were allowed to take everything that we had to show Swami.

Just before going for *darshan* [seeing a holy person], I had worn a very simple synthetic *sari* because everybody in Puttaparthi would ask questions like ‘who is the boy?’ etc. I didn’t know anything about the boy as Swami had fixed the wedding. So, I had no answers to their questions. I didn’t want to be the center of attention. As we left our room, my aunt (an elderly person) said: “You know, you are the bride; you are getting married in a couple of weeks. You shouldn’t be wearing such a simple sari. You should wear a silk sari, something festive!” I said, “Well, the wedding is a month away. I am not going to start looking like a bride for the next 35 days. I am certainly not going to wear it because all those ladies at *darshan* keep looking at me!”

Sure enough, after Swami had gone inside the *bhajan* hall and attended the global *bhajan*, He came out and called us in for an interview. We went in loaded with everything, and as soon as we entered, He first looked at the draft of the invitation and approved it. He looked at the guest list, added a few names and deleted a few. He looked at the menu and said, “Oh! This is not good, that is not good!” And chose different things.

After all this discussion, He said, “Why didn’t you bring the bride? Why isn’t the girl here?” And I am sitting right there in front of Him! We all look at each other and I am thinking, “Okay. Why isn’t He recognizing the bride who is sitting right in front of Him! He has known me since I was born, He should know me!”

We all think He should know us, are we really undeserving! Why should He know us? That’s the question to ask ourselves. He knows us; but why should He? Do we do anything at all that deserves His attention? I leave that question to think about!

He said, “Where is she?” My aunt said, “She is sitting right here!” He looked at me and said, “This one?” You know, He can really bring your ego down! She said, “Yes Swami! Why are you asking that?”

“Be conscious of all that you do!”

Then He looked at me and said, “Didn’t your aunty tell you to wear a different sari this morning? Two mistakes!” He is always pointing out mistakes! And He loves to number them to clarify them in your head.

“Two mistakes! One: you didn’t listen to an elder when she told you something. Big mistake! Second: bigger mistake! Because all the people here know that you are getting married; Swami is getting you married; Swami has fixed the wedding; Swami has found the boy and the family! And you are sitting there looking like you are not interested in getting married! Everybody is thinking that maybe the girl doesn’t want to get married and Swami is forcing her.

“Maybe she doesn’t want to get married and her parents are forcing her because he is a Sai devotee. Maybe the girl wants to marry somebody else! By your one gesture

and the way you behave, you can create many ripples. So always be conscious of what you do. If you are getting married, behave according to the time and place. Be happy if you are happy! If you don't want, tell me now and it's off! But if you're happy and you want to get married then behave accordingly, appropriate to the time and place! Don't draw attention to yourself by being out of place. Merge with it!"

What a lesson He taught me as a mother! Whatever we do, it doesn't just reflect on us, it reflects on our parents, it reflects on our families, and it also reflects on Swami. He said, "Be conscious in your life whatever you do! How you stand, how you sit, what you say", because it first reflects on Him!

That's why I said that the minute we say we are Sai devotees our every action and speech is judged by everybody. If you are just a regular person, nobody will bother with what you do. But if you start attending a Sai center, they will say, "Oh! you know what? Every Sunday they go and sit for two hours and sing some Sai *bhajan*, but they are worse than us!" That will be the remark if your behavior is not up to date. That was the Mother Sai teaching me how one has to dress for a particular place or occasion.

Once I said, "Swami! I have been speaking the same thing in every retreat for one and a half years! Why don't you make me speak something else?" He said, "No! They need to hear it. You have to talk about it. When they are ready to change, I will give you a different story."

And then, very sadly He made this gesture: "Look at Me! Fifty years I am saying the same thing! Does anybody hear? If they hear, do they listen? And if they listen, do they practice? You are complaining of one year of speaking the same thing!"

What a statement! We must bend our heads in shame.

"I am always with you, behind you, beside you..."

I was speaking at a retreat in Texas, and I had to speak in the afternoon. I went in the morning to hear Brother Jagadeeshan speak, and I love his talks; he is such a wonderful narrator. Even though they had offered me a seat, from childhood I had learnt to sit on the floor in front of Swami, so I sat on the floor.

After the talk I had gone back to my room, but I did not change, and I went in the same *sari* for my afternoon talk. Swami's picture was on the wall and I was standing at the podium that was way forward as the stage was very big. I went and stood and started talking—that was it! This was in September and I went to India in June. In July Swami called me for an interview. He asked me, "Where have you been speaking?" I said, "Swami, I spoke in Texas." He said, "Yes, I know you spoke in Texas and Jagadeeshan spoke too, is it not?"

Then suddenly out of the blue He asked me, “Don’t you pack your clothes properly when you go on your trips?” That was completely unexpected – it had nothing to do with my talks! I said, “No Swami! I pack my clothes well.” I started racking my brains if I wore something that was not appropriate? I always wear a sari. My mind was churning, “Why did He ask me?” because Swami does not ask very specific questions without a reason. Such an unexpected question! He asked me again. I said, “I don’t know, Swami, have I done something wrong?” That’s the best way, ask Him a question back.

He said, “You know, in Texas you wore that blue cotton sari. All day you sat on the floor, and then when it was your turn you went and stood there [to talk], your cotton sari was all crumpled and was a little high in the back. I am the one who has to see your ankles because I am behind you! When you go and speak somewhere, and especially if you have to sit for a long time, you should wear a proper silk sari, they don’t get so crumpled.” Can you imagine? What a lovely motherly advice!



But remember, in every Discourse He says, ‘Don’t worry! All of you go back to your homes safely!’ He says, “I am with you, behind you, beside you and all the time, all the way, wherever you go!” We forget that He is behind us, that He can see your ankle, we forget that He is beside us and can hear us; we forget that He is in front of us and He sees the path we are taking—we forget all these things. A simple example of a *sari* tells you that He is there with you all the time.

“Sai, my mother, who notices everything!”

I was in the summer course once and out of the blue they asked me to summarize the day’s activities. They had chosen me and a boy to read the summary of what had happened in that day’s lecture. It was a wonderful opportunity to be in front of Swami. The draft had been checked and rechecked by 25 adults to make sure that the right things were written before it came to me. Swami was sitting on a chair and

we were behind the screen. The boy came and read his part. And as I came to Swami to take my *padanamaskar*, He said something to me that I didn't quite catch.

Swami very sweetly dropped His handkerchief deliberately on the floor! So, I bent to pick it up and as I got closer to Him to give Him the handkerchief, He said, "You must pull down your sari from the back with your heels!" Can you imagine that? Obviously, my sari was a little folded in the back and before I turned around to face the audience and come to the stage, He was making sure that I was neatly dressed. He said it all with a smile, *Kaalu kinda pettukoni cheera eedchuko* (in Telugu), meaning, 'put down your foot and drag the sari down'.

Everybody thought He was giving me some beautiful blessing with a sweet smile. But He was pulling me up on my bad sari-wearing techniques!

Sai my Mother who notices everything! Sai my Mother who has taught me everything! Sai my Mother who has shown me most love!

All I can say is that we are all born at a wonderful time where we have a wonderful Mother in the form of Sai pouring His love on all of us, and it is for us to absorb it and to understand it. If we don't, then we miss out on a good chance. I am sure each one of you feels His Love in your own way....

He has been a part of my life in wonderful miraculous ways, but the little things are far more meaningful because I see His love in these much more than in the big things.

You see His love for humanity as He has built the wonderful Super Specialty Hospital where thousands of people with no money are treated totally free of cost. We have the University, we have the Music College, and the water project.

He reminds us many times that, "Lying is not just telling a falsehood! Keeping something from your mother is also a lie. She may not know, but I know!"

Problems are blessings

He constantly teaches us that if you have decided to take this path of spirituality, then there is no shade of grey! It is either black or white. And if you want Him, it has to be white.

You can't find loopholes in your behavior and say, "Well this might work for today!" There are no loopholes. He is going to pull you up if you make a mistake either physically or in some other way by bringing some big problem along to remind you and correct you. He says, "Problems are there to remind you that you are forgetting Me!"

Swami always loves to quote that famous prayer of Mother Kunti [from Mahabharata]. After the whole war is over, Lord Krishna says, “Now that everything is over and your sons are kings, what do you want? Ask and I shall give.” She replies, “Always give me troubles, because when I have troubles You come to me!”

Swami says, “When you have troubles, you come to Me, troubles remind you of Me.” He reminds us that He is there; and He also reminds us that He is a good friend. I don’t want to make Him so serious that you have to wonder: “Oh my God! I can’t step out of this building without worrying.” He can be fun, too!

His awesome sense of humor!

I remember once Laalgudi Jayaraman, a famous violinist, was coming to Puttaparthi to play the violin in front of Swami in Prashanti Nilayam. My father used to always go from Bangalore to Puttaparthi on the weekends. Being a doctor, he made sure that he came back on Sunday night so that Monday morning he could attend to his patients.

Swami in those days would say, “Stay one more day!” And my father would say, “No Swami! I have given appointments and my patients will come so I have to go.” “Stay one more day, Padmanabh!” “No Swami, I have to go!” This was a constant conversation between Swami and my father in my childhood.

One particular weekend when we were in Puttaparthi, Swami said to my mother in the *darshan* line, “Today in the evening Laalgudi Jayaraman is going to come, why don’t you all stay for the concert and go tomorrow morning?” My mother replied, “Swami, you know my husband, he is not going to let us stay! He will say he has to go to see his patients.” Swami said, ‘No, He will stay!’ She said, ‘No Swami, he won’t stay.’”

Sure enough, after the morning *darshan* my father said, “We are packing up, let’s leave!” And in those days, we used to leave during the daylight hours because the roads were bad. In fact, Swami used to say, “Before it gets dark you have to cross those 22 miles from Puttaparthi.” So, my father said, “Pack up!” We said, “Please, can we stay?” He said, “No! Pack up!”

My father got ready to put away things in the car—for those of you who have been to Puttaparthi, you know the Ganesha statue is where we used to park our cars in those days. My mother and I brought out all the bedding and we were rolling it out on the sands under the eucalyptus tree.

While rolling the thing, my mother and I were wishing that for once daddy would agree and stay! Because we were very fond of the very famous Carnatic Music violinist, we wanted to hear him play live!

This was around 12-12:30 PM, when Swami had retired to His room! Suddenly, we heard somebody calling us making the sound, “Shh! Shh!” We look around and when *we looked up He was there standing in His balcony with His bedroom door open and gesturing to us to not make a noise!* Because all the devotees would come running if they knew that Swami was standing in the balcony!

He gestured, “Don’t pack!” We said, “But Swami we have to go now!” He said, “No! Don’t pack!” And He showed us with gestures that the car tire had a puncture. Flat tire! We can’t go! The 22 miles ride from Puttaparthi to Penukonda was on the worst road. If anybody had a flat tire, Swami had a rule that it had to be fixed before one could leave. Without an extra tire if you had another flat tire on the way, then you would be totally stuck. There was nothing between Puttaparthi and Penukonda and you were stuck with the angry villagers who didn’t like devotees coming to Puttaparthi.

So, we understood. We happily put away our bedding inside. My father came and asked, “Why are you people sitting?” We said, “Yes, we are getting ready.” He took another bunch of things to the car and came back and said, “You knew that the tire is flat, and we can’t leave.” We said, “Yes”. He said, “We can’t go now so I am going to take a lorry and go to Penukonda and get the tire fixed, you people be ready. If I can get it fixed, we will go today, otherwise we will go tomorrow.”

My father went to Penukonda and, sure enough, He could not come back in time for us to leave. So, while my poor father was getting the tire fixed, we were happily listening to Lalgudi Jayaraman’s music!

After the music was over, Swami got up from His chair and asked, “Where is Padmanabhan? Has he gone to Penukonda?” We said, “Yes, Swami! He has gone to Penukonda.” He said, “He will come back at ten o’clock, you go to bed! Wasn’t the music good?” Then He smacked my cheek and said: “See! You wanted to listen to the music, so I sent your father to Penukonda!”

He would play along with us! We couldn’t help but love Him so much, even when He scolded us. We enjoyed the scolding though we knew that we couldn’t make the same mistake twice—like I said earlier.

Our Swami – He is there for all of us.

Sairam.!

source: Heart2Heart, Radiosai

Dearest Sai, We Seek Thy Solace

In a personal interview with Bhagavan Baba in 1979, the author told Him that she wrote poems occasionally to pour out her love for Hi. Swami blessed her and said, "Write more poems on me". Later she was blessed to write 75 poems on our Lord for His 75th Birthday called 'Seventy-Five Blossoms'.

Oh Listen, Dearest Lord Sai,
As a babe seeks its mother with tears dripping down,
As a blind man stumbles and falls in the darkness around,
As the blithe bird in the sky above totters down, cruelly shot,
As the sun, covered fully, removes its brilliance in a trice,
So, do we, one and all, stand shattered, mute and helpless,
Beloved Sai, none to seek, we pray to Thee for Thy mercy.

Oh Hearken, Dearest Lord Sai,
Thou art everywhere in Thy full grandeur, shining splendidly with Thy halo,
Here and there, up and down, all pervading, Thy glory exists,
Lord of creation, nameless and formless, Thou art fullness itself,
Thy love, so divine, brim with compassion, in full embrace of us all,
Shocked and silenced by this demonic virus, we all bow down,
Beloved Sai, none to seek, we pray to Thee for Thy mercy.

Oh Awaken, Dearest Lord Sai,
Shall I tell Thee the havoc wrought by this vicious virus, so elusive,
With a name so strange to utter, only a tiny speck in a deadly shape,
With a stealth hard to detect, with such a will to strike all in its path,
Merciless and mute, it sprung on us all, it jumped, nay it galloped
Until we trembled and tottered, breathless we hid in our space,
Beloved Sai, none to seek, we pray to Thee for Thy mercy.

Oh Listen, Dearest Lord Sai,
Shall I recount tales of woe, sights so strange, suffering so intense,
With this virus, so invincible in its track, began its journey far away,
Slowly but surely, its tentacles grabbed all on its way, far and wide,
In its sojourn every nook and corner, trampling rich and poor alike,
We stood, bereft of all that we knew, lost the freedom we enjoyed,
Beloved Sai, none to seek, we pray to Thee for Thy mercy.

Oh Hearken, Dearest Lord Sai,
Shall I tell Thee what I see day long, what I hear, washing and masking,
Intent not to succumb to the threat around us, we hide in our homes,
Hospitals aflutter with the sick and the dying, medical warriors fighting,
Fighting with all their skills yet young and old, elderly too turn a prey,
Dead with none to mourn, nor to bury, adds to the count, a scary number,
Beloved Sai, none to seek, we pray to Thee for Thy mercy.

Oh Awaken, Dearest Lord Sai,
Bewildered, I ask Thee oft from our hiding spots of these harrowed times,
Did we err so strong to upset life's balance? Is *karmic* law astir to action?
Looking through the window, nature unperturbed in its calmness I see,
Birds hopping merrily, worms wriggling beneath the grassy spot, so wet,
Divine grace, plenty to behold, ready to shatter *karmic* law, Sai is here,
Beloved Sai, none to seek, we pray to Thee for Thy mercy.

~Kanaga Ranganathan, March 30, 2020

Q & A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Mind and Meditation

Hislop: The Buddha's way of slowing down the mind is given much attention to in Burma. Swami must have a better way.

Sai: The Buddha's way of watching the breath as it enters and leaves the nostril is just for a few minutes before the meditation begins. There is no 'better' way to quieten the mind. There is only one way. Sitting in meditation, the question often comes up, 'How long to sit?' There is no answer. There is no particular time. Meditation is really an all-day-long process. The sun shines, and the sunlight falls here and there. What is the difference between the sun and the sunlight?

Hislop: There is no difference, Swami.

Sai: In the same way, all is God. Thoughts, desires, all are God. All thoughts should be regarded as God.

Hislop: But Swami, there is still the puzzle of how to slow down the activity of the mind.

Sai: Really, there is no mind; it is a question of what is desired. With God as the only desire, all will be well.

Hislop: But in meditation there is a fast rush of thoughts and ideas through the mind. Does this not need to be slowed down so there may be quiet in meditation?

Sai: Yes. The mind must slow down. At a certain stage it will come to a stop. If desire in meditation is turned toward union with God, the mind will naturally slow down. No method should be used; no force used. Desire should not be too fast, too strong.

Even desire for God can be too hurried, too feverish. Start early, drive slowly, reach safely. It is possible to be too lazy. Fast then slow is also bad. The process should be steady.

Hislop: These thoughts that stream through the mind, are they material?

Sai: Yes. They are matter. All matter is impermanent.

Hislop: Where do thoughts come from?

Sai: They come from food and environment. If you have *satwic* [pure] food and have only desire for good, only good thoughts will come.

Hislop: Where do thoughts go?

Sai: They go no place because thoughts do not flow through the mind. The mind goes out and grasps and gets engaged in thoughts. If desire is for God, the mind does not go out. But the best way is to not have the problem of getting rid of thoughts. The best way is to see all thoughts as God. Then only God thoughts will come.

Hislop: Swami says that it is the *atma* [soul] that is unlimited power, yet in one's daily life, the mind gives the experience of being a sort of relentless power.

Sai: The mind is passive, yet it seems to be active. It is active only because the *atma* reflects into it. It sometimes seems to be stronger than *atma*. Iron in its nature is not hot; it is cool and passive. The iron is heated in fire. Is it the iron that burns thus creating the heat? No, it is the heat that is put into the iron by the burning coals. The heat is added to the iron. Yet, when hot the iron seems even more hot than the burning coals.

Hislop: The mind has the tendency to plan ahead. No doubt this is a wrong activity?

Sai: In ordinary life, one makes plans and carries them out. This has to continue, with purity, and without harm to others. At length, a spontaneous divine thought will arise without planning. Such divine impulses will continue.

A Visitor: How can I tell what is right thought?

Sai: Here, in the *ashram*, you can ask Swami. In America, pray for the answer, then make enquiry in an impersonal way, and in half an hour you will have the answer. If you know what is right, don't ask. Do it. That is confidence, God power. Put aside all relationships. Is the work right, regardless of who is involved?

Hislop: Swami says to keep a distance from the mind. What does that mean?

Sai: That means, do not be led by the mind.

Hislop: What are the acceptable mental functions?

Sai: First, find out what is right and what is wrong. If right, do that which satisfies you. If unsure, do nothing until sure.

Source: *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Thought of the MONTH

Distinguish Between the Permanent and the Transient

The root cause of all difficulties experienced by man is forgetting his spiritual reality and identifying himself with his body. The body is only the vesture of the indwelling Spirit. By immersing himself in body-consciousness, man develops egoism and possessiveness, which result in promoting many bad qualities. He forgets his inherent divinity and fails to use the senses and organs he is endowed with for the purposes of the Divine. Two different characteristics are to be found among men. One characteristic, which is rather common, is for one to delude himself that he is a good man, with many virtues, intelligence, and talents. The other quality, which is rare, is recognition of the good quality in others, their merits, abilities, and good deeds, and appreciation of their ideals. Jesus belonged to the second category. He saw the good qualities in others, rejoiced over their virtues, and shared his joy with others.

... Jesus spent forty days in penance in a forest. During the penance, He prayed to God for three things: One, He should be blessed with the quality of loving everyone equally; Two, He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that He might be subjected to by anyone; Three, He should be enabled to use his God-given body wholly in the service of God. After forty days, Jesus emerged from His penance with the faith that His prayers had been granted.

Without faith in God, all scholarship, wealth, name, and fame are of no avail. He cannot experience bliss. Christ also taught that the body should be used for recognizing the indwelling Spirit and not to protect itself. It is the mark of ignorance to pamper the body and ignore the Spirit within.

If a tiny sugar crystal is mixed in a heap of sand, even the most intelligent person will not be able to separate the sugar from the sand and recover it. But without any extraordinary intelligence, an ant is able to make its way to the particle of sugar in the sand heap and relish its sweetness. The ant is aware of the sweetness of sugar and is able to get at the sugar even in a heap of sand.

Likewise, man should seek to distinguish between the permanent and the transient and realize what is everlasting. Man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the evanescent but, unfortunately, instead of using this capacity he is caught up in the delusions of the phenomenal world and is wasting his life.

"You must adhere to truth and not succumb to falsehood or unrighteousness. You must face with courage the vicissitudes of life. You must love even your enemies. Universal love transcends all other virtues. Love is the supreme virtue," declared Jesus.

Jesus taught that God is Love. Instead of recognizing this basic truth, men are allowing hatred, envy, and other evil qualities to pollute their love. Man is gifted with the quality of love not to express it for selfish purposes, but to direct it toward God. Jesus declared that there is nothing great about returning good for good. They should do good even to those who harm them...

Love is the means of developing devotion and achieving liberation apart from other things. Only the love of God is real love. It is the royal road for man to realize the divinity in him and in everyone.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. 21

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