

## 37. Precious Treasure

Children have unselfish love. They are innocent onlookers; they observe the action of the elders and they learn their lessons from home much earlier than from school. So, parents have to be very careful in their behaviour with the children and between themselves.

There was a judge who used to come to Shirdi. He asked his wife and child to stay with Baba and left for home for a few days. He said to the boy when he left, “This is God Himself” After some time they fell in with a (person from) Kathak, who was reciting musically some *Puranic* story. Within a few minutes, they heard him revile Sai Baba as a mad man and a cheat. The child could not stand it. He tugged at his mother’s sari and forced her to return to Baba.

Next morning, they approached Baba for his blessings, and He asked them why they had returned. The incident of the Kathak was duly reported. The boy heard everyone addressing Baba as the Lord. Remembering the harsh words of the Kathak, the boy wept, but Baba pacified Him humorously, “I am only a man. What the Kathak said is true. I am mad, and I am cheating people of what they consider very valuable but what I feel is useless.” Then, even as they were talking, one Mr. Patel came there and related how Baba had saved his child from a serious accident. Baba told him, “Yes, I held him when he fell, with My four hands. “Patel shed tears of thankfulness; but the boy cried out “Ah I told you, You are God; You have four hands, like Vishnu.” Baba laughed; He took the boy inside and gave him a vision of Himself, as having four hands.

That boy stayed on in Shirdi for 26 years after this and left it only after Baba “left”. He then became a renunciant and became a great sage.

### **Children should grow with love of the mother**

Children should have the love of their parents. The child should grow with the mother for the first five years of life. Many children do not know what mother’s love is like. The mother should not hand over her responsibility during those years to someone else and be called simply “mummy”, as if she was some doll with which the child liked to play. Nowadays, the children of rich and “educated” parents are severely handicapped. They are deprived of the care and love of parents. They are handed over to the care of servants and nurses, and they grow up in their company and learn their vocabulary and habits and styles of thought. This is very undesirable.

When a boy is five years old, the father has to take up the task of bringing him up. Then, he must be entrusted to a guru, who must teach him a standard of value with which to deal with the family, the village, the country, and mankind.

Teachers must be aware of their good fortune as well as their duties. Some teachers shirk their duties and play false to the expectations society has in them. They come into the class, write on the blackboard, say, “Silence”, and go off to sleep in the chair! So the children dislike school. Teachers in the old days used to go round the village with two stalwart students and peep into house after house for shirkers, and when they discovered any, the malingeringer was forcibly carried weeping and struggling to school, there to be beaten severely for the crime.

Children are like fresh cloth; they can be given any colour you like. Just dip them in that colour, that is enough. Adults are like old clothes that will not imbibe colour so easily and well. Hearts that are green and soft

will learn habits and disciplines quicker. For learning good habits and manners, age is no bar; training will make even children learn them.

### **Become as straightforward as a child**

Adults develop a sense of shame and of pride, which is mostly artificial, false, and skin deep. So they invent excuses to justify their actions and also manufacture justifications for their errors. Children have no such inhibitions. They believe everybody, and everybody can believe them. Their hearts are like gramophone records; they get impressed by whatever tune you sing to them. They play back the correct tune, without any distortion, provided the needle is sharp. The needle is love, and it must be one-pointed and direct. Only then can the music be drawn out. In the case of elders, the needles would have been blunted, but children have the gift of one-pointed attention. They are fearless; it is the elders who plant their fears in them. The children are truthful, but the elders teach them the art of lying. They set children to watch and report, so they become interested in the faults and errors of others.

When elders speak, it is difficult to discover whether it is truth or untruth. But children are plain spoken. They have not discovered that success in the wordly sense is dependent on cleverness in the short run, though in the long run, it is honesty and plain speaking that bring maximum profit. That is why it is said that, to win the grace of God, you must become either as simple and straightforward as a child or as wise and discriminating as a deeply learned scholar.

The gramophone records that do not have any grooves, because they have not been used, can be played over and over again, with the needle of one-pointed attention not being blunted at all, for the grooves blunt the point, not the plate. Prahlada is a fine example of this. He had no egoism; he was in perfect, unaffected calm. So, whatever happened to his physical cloak, he never felt it. The needle simply rolled round and round; there was no music; there was just silence.

### **The richest inheritance you can give children**

Poison and nectar cannot merge; Being (*Sath*) can merge only with Being; nature is full of Supreme Reality (*Prakriti is Brahmamayam*); Supreme Reality is full of nature (Brahman is *prakritimayam*)! Cloth is yarn-illusion and yarn is cloth-illusion. One is meaningless without the other.

The childhood stage is the pure Being stage, and if you can manage to live on with that innocence, as Sage Suka did, you can achieve merger quite naturally. The sun's rays wait outside your closed door, silently and patiently. Open it to the width of a chink, and it gladly rushes in through that chink. Open it wider, and it bathes you in light and warmth. Children's minds are always open; they have no closed doors, which bring in the darkness. That is why their smile is like sunlight in a grief-stricken home. Druva and Markandeya achieved the vision of the Lord and liberation for themselves not by means of a trick or stratagem but by transmuting their minds by spiritual practices into the divine instrument for salvation.

Of course, what do you seek in life? Joy, mutual harmony, unison, and love — between the officer and clerk, the master and servant, the husband and wife, the father and son. In fact, these four are essential between any two who are bound by rights and duties. Sow the seeds of these harmonious qualities even while your children are young —that is the richest inheritance you can give them, the most useful insurance against the attack of despair, despondency, and discontent.

## He who does not work but eats is a cheat

There is a story of a dog that came to Rama, bleeding from blows. Lakshmana was sent to inquire why it was in such pain. He discovered that a *brahmin* had beaten it with a stick. When asked, the *brahmin* could give as sufficient cause only that the dog come across his path. Rama asked the dog, “How do you want me punish this *brahmin*?” The dog promptly gave the reply, “Make him the manager of a temple.” “What?” said Rama. “That would be a reward, not a punishment.” The dog said, “No, I was a manager, and since it is next to impossible not to mishandle or misuse or appropriate some fraction of Gods’s money, when he is the manager, he too will get this canine birth and perhaps get beaten too.”

Remember, not only that dog and that *brahmin*, but every one of you is living off the property of God, for does not all this belong to Him? And what do you do in return for all the benefits you derive from the property of the Lord? You cannot eat it and sit quiet. You must at least give some physical labour in return. He who does not work but eats is indeed a cheat. Not that the Lord wants anything from you, but it will give self-respect and it will purify your heart. So, teach children not to receive something for nothing. Let them earn the things they seek by hard work.

Again, when boys play cricket or football or tennis, if they become eager to defeat the opponent, they start committing faults or fouls. Then, even if they score a goal, it will be declared not a goal; it may well be offside or out. But if they stick to the game and play it well, unaffected by the atmosphere of rivalry and lust for victory at all costs, they are bound to win. In a race, it is better to let the horse go along gathering its own speed; do not compare and compete, for that will cause a fall or a slip. This lesson has also to be taught to children: competition has to be healthy, subordinated to the proper rules of the game and free from hatred and malice.

Above all, realise that children are precious treasures. Yours is the great task of rearing them up to become devoted servants of God and sincere seekers on the spiritual path.

Whitefield, 1962-05-19

**T**he chief purpose of religion is to make people aware of their relationship with God. Every person has full rights to worship God and win His grace. But, whatever the road, whichever the path, the goal is the same. *Vedic* religion will not permit you to quarrel with any other religion, or hate it, or decry it. It insists on tolerance and respect.

**Sathya Sai Baba**