

2. Charming saplings

THE magnificent mansion that was created by the sages of the past, for the peaceful and prosperous existence of their succeeding generations, the mansion called *Sanaathana Dharma* has crumbled through the wanton neglect of the sons and daughters of *Bhaarithmaatha*. Now, peace and joy are to be found only among these little children, the elders have lost the art, the discipline, of regaining them and retaining them.

These children are fresh charming saplings, who can be made, by care and love, to blossom into ideal citizens of this land, able to understand and practise the great disciplines laid down by the sages for their liberation, through self-realisation. The mother and the father must bear a major share of the responsibility for the proper upbringing of children. The earliest years of life are the most crucial. The skills, the attitudes, the emotions, the impulses that make or mar the future are built into the Foundation of Life in those years. The parents can help or hinder the making of that foundation, strong and straight. But, the parents have no equipment now for this basic role. They have no faith in their own ancient culture; they themselves have no mental peace, no *saadhana*, no spiritual discipline, which the children can imbibe from them.

Children must grow up in homes, where their parents honour their parents, in their turn, and are happy only when they serve their elders. Then only will children revere their parents! This must be taught to them by example, rather than by precept! Schooling is a waste, if children do not learn lasting virtues, do not develop strength of character, as a result of the process. They must learn reverence for parents, teachers, and elders. Now, they learn a number of copy book maxims; but, they do not put a single one into practice in daily life. For, practice is present nowhere.

Plant the seeds of love in tender hearts

Even as children, they must learn the glory of God who is their inner Reality; they must understand that they are not the body, but, they are the one *dehi* (indweller), who is the *dehi in* all. Through *bhajan* (singing devotional songs) and through *shravana* (listening to tales of God's Glory), these elevating truths can be handed over to them by teachers and parents who are themselves aware of these and practising them in daily life. Learn your own news, before getting excited about the news of others. Learn the A B C and D of your own alphabet and then, you will be better able to guide others, in their learning and life.

Do not ridicule the children when they go to a temple or a sage and show interest in *bhajan* or worship or *dhyaana*. Many elders believe that there is time enough for such pastimes, after one has lived for sixty years! People who spread this nefarious doctrine are ruining the lives of their dear ones, for, they do not condemn the wrong and encourage the right. There are others who by their behaviour and habits at home, in full view of the children inculcate the habit. of uttering lies, gambling, drinking, etc.

Plant in those tender hearts the seeds of love, sympathy, truth, justice, charity, compassion, repentance and self- control. That is the prime duty of all who deal with children. When the father asks the child to tell some one at the door that he is not at home, or when he asks its brother to reply to a phone call, that he has gone out, the vice of dishonesty is implanted in the child. Do not burden the tender brains with all kinds of lumber, information that can never be put to use, facts that warp and twist truth, etc. Teach them only as much as they can use beneficially and as much as can be of direct help to them in their lives. Train character more than brains.

The parents first and foremost, the teachers next, the comrades, playmates and companions next, and the various levels of society later, these shape the character of the children, and the destiny of the country. You must revere the teacher, so that the child may revere him; the teacher too must become worthy of reverence and aware of his high role. This school, bearing this Name, has an unequalled responsibility in this regard.

Shri Sathya Sai Convent School,

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