

39. Serve the child

MEN are proficient in various skills. They manufacture and operate diverse machines and master many fields of knowledge. However they have not acquired the peace that is their due. They are carried along by the torrential flood of worldly life. Though endowed with human capabilities exercisable through a human body, men do not choose the straight path of Truth. They wander about in false and fleeting pleasures and fritter their years, forgetting their innate, Divine Reality. This is far from the fulfilment they should aspire for. Mere skill, mere designing and manipulation of machines, hollow pomp, boast and assertions about being a *jnaani* (liberated person)---these do not reveal the secret of human nature. Has man solved this mystery which includes all mysteries? Has he found the answer which is the key to all problems? Has he earned the knowledge which can make him know all that he has to know?

The solution, the answer, the knowledge is one, and only one. Why pluck the leaves, break the branches and hew the trunk in order to destroy the tree? Cut the root and it is done! The *Vedhic* seers and the sages who followed, concentrated on the discovery of this key knowledge, the *Aathma vidhya* (the science of spirituality). Seekers from overseas also became aware of this *vidhya* and the modes of *saadhana* (spiritual discipline) it lays down, and have acclaimed it enthusiastically the world over.

Our forefathers revered the sacred texts

But though this *vidhya* permeated its native home and illumined it for ages, Indians were huddled within the dark circle of the lamp's shadow. This has been their miserable fate. Our great-grandfathers and even fathers, perused the pages of books depicting the sacred culture of our land, assimilated their message, practised the *saadhanas* and taught and remembered their teachings with gratitude. And, as a result, they enjoyed unruffled peace. They studied the great classics---the Mahaabhaaratha, the Raamaayana, the Bhagavathgeetha---and their hearts had the moral maxims propounded therein, imprinted indelibly on them. They were guided throughout their lives by these sacred texts which they placed in their shrines, offering them reverential adoration. Their hearts were purified and sanctified by these acts of worship and work, and they were prompted to render service to society as a consequence.

By some stroke of evil fortune, times changed. The 'modern age' dawned and our people bowed slavishly before it. These holy books were neglected and even cast aside as containing 'primitive' ideals. Western scholars and seekers, on the other hand, retrieved them, studied them scrupulously, analysed their propoundings on subjects as diverse as medicine, armaments, mathematics and astronomy, and spoke of them to the very people who had pioneered in those fields! We welcome them with glee, as a man prefers stale food in another's house to fresh dishes in his own!

Cultivate virtue in the hearts of pupils

In blind admiration of Western ways of life, students in India belittle virtue and extol dry scholarship. They forget they are human beings engaged in the pilgrimage to God. Instead they engross themselves in attempts to squeeze joy out of the material world. Therefore the first task of teachers is the cultivation of virtue in the hearts of the pupils. This is much more vital than the promotion of learning. The education system today does not recognise or encourage moral or spiritual values. Therefore the student community has degenerated into a socially dangerous

element. The students-do not pay the least attention to promotion of the welfare of society, nor do they have any understanding of their social obligations. Unless the desire to do service is earnest and the skill to do service is cultivated, students will remain a burden on the community, behaving as parasites and exploiters.

A generous heart helps spread peace and joy. Little knowledge narrows the mind and limits one's concern for others. It bloats the ego and feeds selfishness. It makes man forget the delight derivable from virtue. Such students are unable to develop the prosperity of the nation or the progress of society. The thick veil of egoism blinds their sight and renders them callous to their own dignity and destiny. Students should try their best to realise their heritage. A mind free from either extreme attachment or detachment, a speech uncontaminated by falsehood and a body unpolluted by sin---these are what every student must strive to possess. Teachers must be vigilant to help and encourage them, and to avoid any trace of dishonesty in their actions and statements.

***Gurus* must practise what they preach**

Selfishness, envy and egoistic pride are the three tendencies and attitudes that should not take root in tender hearts. Therefore prompt the children in your care to engage themselves in acts of service to others. What a shame it is for man to behave selfishly, while his life itself depends on the unselfish behaviour of the rest of creation. Whatever information, instruction or inspiration man has gained, or whatever wealth, riches or material possessions he has earned, he should share them with others in an unselfish manner. This is his primary duty. Teachers must be on the watch for chances to instil this ideal in the hearts of their pupils.

India has no shortage of rich persons, nor a shortage of great philosophers, academicians and scholars. In spite of this the land has no peace and the people are afflicted by anxiety and fear. What is the reason? The chief reason is the greed for self-aggrandisement and the absence of virtues like service and renunciation. The rich, the great, the learned and even the monastic heads of religious sects are caught in the coils of selfishness, and are unable to manifest the Divine virtues latent in them. The hearts of the young pupils have to be filled by you with noble yearning, so that they may be shaped into strong and sturdy instruments for raising the India of the future to the glory which is her right.

Gurus (teachers/preceptors) have to be examples which can inspire the pupils. They must practise what they preach. As the teacher, so the pupil. When the tap is turned, water flows down from the overhead tank. The quality of the tap water is the same as that of the water in the tank. When the heart of the *Guru* is full of goodness, selflessness, and love, the pupils will express these virtues in every act of theirs.

Teachers should not form rival groups

There are, it is said, more than 5000 Bala Vikas *Gurus* in the land. If each one corrects and improves a hundred children, the nation would indeed be transformed. You must examine what exactly has been attained during the four years that have elapsed since the Bala Vikas came into being. This analytical study has to be made constantly. When the *Guru* cultivates a *saathwic* (pure) nature, students too will grow into embodiments of that nature. The *Guru* should be alert so that the weeds of hatred, envy and similar vices do not take root in her own heart. These weeds are rampant in the political field and they creep into other fields too. Teachers should not form rival groups---some proud of their achievements, some envious of the praise others earn---

which engage themselves in recrimination. See others as your own brothers and sisters, for all are One when viewed as *Aathman*.

Somehow, somewhere, at intervals, you may be confronted by wrong traits. But remember that you have entered the circle of Sathya Sai Bala Vikaas gurus. It may not be serious if these traits enslave teachers in others circles, but your mission is much more fundamental and the hope that you arouse, much more heartening. These traits will hamper and pollute your efforts.

Be conscious of the sacred significance of the name, *Guru*, by which you are known. '*Gu*' means 'darkness,' '*ru*' means 'removal.' So the *Guru* has to illumine the intelligence of the child and remove the ignorance that is obstructing its full development. Diving deeper, we find that *Guru* also has another meaning. '*Gu*' means, 'not limited by attributes' and '*ru*' means, 'not affected by appearances.' That is to say, the *Guru* must be free from prejudice and must treat all pupils with equal love.

Remove the primeval ignorance

Pour out all your love on the children around you and instruct them gladly and sincerely. This attitude alone can justify association with the Sathya Sai Bala Vikas. Of course Sai is not unaware that the Bala Vikas *Gurus* are now heartily engaged in their sacred task and are contributing their best to the progress of the movement. But just as a battery has to be charged occasionally, I am now pointing out certain defects and dangers that might tarnish. It is imperative that you should discover the right path and pursue it steadily with faith. Take, for example, the petromax lamp. It requires some quantity of kerosene and also a pumping now and then. A pin has to be used sometimes to clear obstructions. The kerosene is faith, the pin, love that urges you to do your duty, and pumping, the will that sustains you in your task. Besides these, the lamp needs a wick. The name of the Lord which is your constant inspiration, is the wick. Endeavour, in the light of the *Aathmic* Unity of all, to remove the primeval ignorance from yourselves and from your pupils.

A bad teacher can ruin thousands of lives

Discuss and discover during this conference how far you have succeeded in this holy mission, and as a result of that discovery, lay down before yourselves the ways and means by which greater success can be achieved. Communicate your experience to others, and also your ideas on improving the curriculum, the method of teaching and the means of assessing the progress made. I would advise you to pay special attention to the activities and methods by which you can contribute, through the Bala Vikas, to the blossoming of talents latent in the children, the expansion of prosperity of the nation and the security and welfare of society. A bad pupil causes harm only to himself, but a bad teacher can ruin thousands of lives. Be steady and stable in your efforts? A guide-post which changes direction with every gust of wind only adds confusion for the confounded traveller. You have also to cultivate *prema* and expand your desire to do *seva*.

More than all, fill your mind with God and transmit God to the children. Look forward to no remuneration or reward, except the joy on the faces of the children. Nowadays teachers are more attached to their salaries than to their duties. They are centred more on their own lives than on their sacred task. Give up the mad rush in pursuit of degrees. Pursue, rather, chances to serve others and to promote the prosperity of the nation. Indian culture has declined so far and so much because teachers, who are its guardians and promoters, are content merely to feed themselves and their families and to cultivate their own fame and fortune. The *Vedhas* tell us: *Na karmanaa*,

(not by acts), *na prajayaa* (not by progeny), *na dhanena* (nor by riches), *thyaagena ekena* (only by renunciation) *amrithathwam anasuh* (can Immortal bliss be achieved). So renounce, renounce! Serve and give your knowledge, your delight and your love gladly to the children. Serve thus the society and the people.

The Sathya Sai Bala Vikas *Gurus* are doing this service whole-heartedly. I believe they will continue their efforts even more sincerely and gladly. The resolutions you will arrive at in this Conference should not be inscribed on paper only, but must be followed and practised in actual day-to-day teaching in the classes. I am sure each one of you is determined to do your best in the service of the children, the society and the precious heritage of Indian Culture.

Fourth All India Conference of Bala Vikas Gurus, Prashaanthi Nilayam, 20-11-1979

Devotion and faith ensure the gift of knowledge of the Spirit---the great prize for the great adventure of birth, life and death. When the mind weds pravriti (worldly activity), the progeny is bondage; when it weds nivriti (spiritual renunciation), the progeny is freedom.

Sri Sathya Sai