

3. Parents should not pamper children

PARENTS today tend to lavish too much affection on their children. But such affection alone is not enough. There should be control also over the children. There should be both "love" and "law". Only when both love and restraint are present will the love prove beneficial.

For all the evil habits of children, who are naturally innocent and uninformed, the parents are primarily responsible. They do not make any efforts to teach proper ways of behaviour to the children. They pamper the children by giving them money freely. They want their boys to become high officers, to earn large incomes, acquire wealth and lead a life of comfort and ease. But they do not consider for a moment how they should make the children realise the need to develop good qualities. It is up to parents to teach the children to cultivate right attitudes and moral qualities. To encourage them merely to get on in life is not proper. Parents should feel happy only when they see their sons leading blameless lives, acquiring a good name and behaving properly. To rejoice merely at the birth of a son is foolish.

Dhritharaashtra had a hundred sons, the Kauravas. He knew very well that they were a wicked lot, pursuing bad ways. He knew also that his brother's sons, the Paandavas, were wedded to Dharma (righteousness) and that the Kauravas were inflicting many indignities and injuries on the Paandavas. Although Vyaasa told Dhritharaashtra several times that, out of his misplaced affection for his sons, he should not allow the latter to persecute the Paandavas, the doting father did not heed Vyaasa's advice. Consequently, he got involved in many sinful actions.

Children should be provided with right values

Vyaasa warned Dhritharaashtra: "Dhritharaashtra! I do not say that for you to love your sons is wrong. But you must know what kind of son you should love. Not knowing this, you are behaving like a blind man. By showing your love for a bad son, you are causing harm to the community and the country." By his blind infatuation for his sons, what is it that Dhritharaashtra achieved? In the final outcome, he had no one even to perform his funeral obsequies. The righteous Paandavas had to render this service to him.

It is not wrong to love children. But you (parents) should learn how to love them. Whenever the children go astray, wittingly or unwittingly, parents should hasten to correct their faults and bring them to the right path. The obligations of parents do not end with providing food, schooling and knowledge of worldly matters. The children should also be provided with right values. They should not be made to think that the acquisition of wealth is the be-all and end-all of life. Wealth does not accompany one when he leaves the world. Wealth is necessary only for meeting one's essential needs. Too much wealth is an embarrassment like an over-size shoe. Too little of it is likely to be painful, like a tight fitting shoe. So, it is desirable to have only that amount of wealth that is adequate for one's basic needs. It is deplorable that today, in the mad pursuit of money, people are forgetting all human qualities.

The persevering seeker secures wisdom

Young people today are totally oblivious to the importance of dedicating their lives to great ideals. It is up to the parents to endeavour to make their children lead purposeful lives. Teachers, on their part, should set an example and inculcate in their wards right values. Only a lighted lamp can serve to light other lamps. If teachers lack idealism how can they inspire their students to lead ideal lives ?

People talk about the spiritual life, but rarely practise it. They often act contrary to it. The reason is the lack of virtues. Without good qualities, all other attributes are useless. It is like pouring water in a pot full of holes. When the heart is oozing with bad thoughts and evil desires, how can you fill it with pure aspirations?

Governor Banerjee spoke about success and mentioned that "success begets success." But how is success to be achieved and what is the success you should aim at? The Geetha says: "*Shraddhaavaan labhathe jnaanam*". ("The persevering seeker secures wisdom.")

This means that without perseverance and earnestness no success can be achieved. You must take interest in the path shown by elders. You must devote attention to the knowledge taught by the ancients. You must pay heed to what the elders say. If you have no *shraddha* (earnestness) you cannot achieve anything, whatever other qualifications you may have.

Despite aeons of evolution and considerable progress in scientific knowledge, man is not able to make significant progress towards the Divine because of absence of strenuous striving in the spiritual sphere. Without spiritual practice, reading religious books and listening to spiritual discourses have no value. Study of the *Upanishaths and Shaasthras* (spiritual sciences) and reciting God's names may be good acts in themselves. But, if there is no love, which is the basis of all *saadhana* (spiritual discipline), they are of no use. They are like buttermilk. But the love of God is like well-boiled milk. Everything is contained in it all proteins and vitamins. Love reinforces one's physical, mental and spiritual energies. Devotional acts without love are like diluted buttermilk in which there are no nutrients.

Students should cultivate the quality of *sahana*

Dhyaana (meditation) and *Japa* (repetition of sacred formula) without love are lifeless rituals. Love which expresses itself in service to all living things is the best expression of the love of God. There is no true devotion without such love. It is love which is unchanging and which does not mind any sacrifice in serving others. When we have students filled with such love and imbued with the spirit of service, the nation will achieve unalloyed prosperity, peace and progress. Learn, first of all, to honour your parents. Be respectful to elders and heed their advice. Carry out the behests of your teachers. Place your trust in God.

Without faith in God, all other possessions are of no avail. Take, for instance, the case of Duryodhana. He was the lord of an empire. Both Duryodhana and Arjuna went to Krishna before the Kurukshetra battle. Duryodhana wanted only Krishna's army on his side. Arjuna was content to have Krishna alone on his side. This was enough to secure for him victory in the war. All the armies Duryodhana had were of no avail. Duryodhana relied on the clever strategies of Shakuni. He had no faith in the divine intelligence of Krishna. The lesson that students should learn from this episode is that they must rely, not on their intellectual cleverness but on the guidance of their higher intelligence, which transcends ordinary reason and thinking. They should seek the support of That which sustains everything in creation.

Relationship between spirituality and science

Students should cultivate the quality of *sahana* (forbearance). Whatever you do, do it without any selfish motive. You spend a great deal of time to acquire some material object or other. How much time do you devote to thoughts of God? You shed tears profusely for getting sensuous pleasures. Do you shed a single tear for experiencing God? How, then, can you realise God?

Today, manifestation of *Bhakthi* (devotion) has become a mass-produced manufactured product. But are the devotees practising what they profess? Without practice, can the fruits of devotion be realised? Spirituality is not separate from other aspects of life. You must understand that spirituality permeates everything. Science is spirituality. Mathematics is spirituality. Spirituality can be found in everything if you look for it. What, for instance, is the connection between Mathematics and spirituality. Spiritual mathematics is different from academic mathematics. According to academic mathematics 3 minus 1 is equal to two. But in spiritual mathematics 3 minus 1 is one! How is that, it may be asked. There is a mirror. When you look at it, you see an image. There are thus three things: The seer, the mirror and the image. When you take away the mirror, the image also goes and only one thing remains. Nature is the mirror. The Divine is the seer. The *jeevi* (individual) is the image. When the mirror of Nature is removed, the *Jeevi* goes and only the Divine remains.

Birth is the cause of all sorrow

It is the relationship with Nature (the phenomenal world) that produces the appearance of duality and individual separateness. What one should seek to realise is the oneness with Divinity. The means of realisation has been indicated in the 12th Canto of the Bhagavath-geetha where the qualities of the true Bhaktha (devotee) are described. The primary quality is absence of hatred towards any living thing: "*Adhveshthasa-sarva bhoothaanaam*" (Cultivate Universal love.) Avoid causing harm to others. Do not speak ill of any one. Give up pride and egoism. Cultivate purity of thought, speech and action.

What is the origin of pride? Is it knowledge? What is this knowledge? It is really nothing more than ignorance. What is the cause of ignorance? It is the feeling of duality. Wherefrom has duality originated? From *Raaga* and *Dhwesha* (attachment and hatred). What is the origin of these two? They are the products of circumstances. How have the circumstances come about? Through *Karmas* (past deeds). What is the cause of Karmas? It is Birth. It will thus be clear that birth is the cause of all sorrow. It is only by seeking freedom from birth that one can free oneself from sorrow. The opportunity that has been provided by being born as a human being should be used for realising this supreme goal.

It is the duty of parents to set children on the right path from their early years. They should not hesitate to correct them and even punish them when the children take to wrong ways. The best way they can show their love for their children is to do everything necessary to make them follow the right path. If any boy proves intractable or incorrigible, they should not hesitate to disown him. It is better to have one good son rather than a brood of bad children.

The years of youth are most precious years

When the boys come home for holidays, the parents must keep a watch over their activities, movements and companions. Some parents tend to pamper them at home on the ground that the boys might have lacked some things in the hostel. They are encouraged to see films or the TV. They are given unwholesome food. All this is undesirable. The children are mined by these indulgences. The parents should exercise restraints on themselves in the interest of the children. Because parents are present in large numbers, I have spoken in this strain.

You must bear in mind that the years of youth are the most precious years in one's life and they should not be wasted or misspent. To let children watch the TV from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. is to make them forget all that they have learnt at school or college. In addition, they learn many evil

things. If TV is used for teaching good things, it can serve a worthy purpose. But that is not the case. The younger generation is being ruined by undesirable films and TV programmes. Their minds are being poisoned. It is not a sign of parental love to let children be mined in this manner. Even parents should avoid going to cinemas. All the crimes and violence we witness today are largely the result of the evil influence of films on young minds.

Education must be a preparation for selfless service

While science and technology may appear, to confer many benefits, they also have many harmful effects. We must have the wisdom and discrimination to make the proper use of scientific knowledge. Students must learn how to use their learning to lead worthy and noble lives. If they cannot mould themselves properly in these crucial years, they cannot hope to lead better lives in later years. Parents and teachers have a duty to see that the children are brought up on right lines through love, precept, and, if necessary, corrective measures.

Some parents say that their boys do not listen to their words. This is a sign of weakness. Why should children refuse to obey their parents? If, from the beginning, the children are taught to respect parents and elders, this kind of attitude will not develop. A disobedient child should have no place in the home. It is only when parents show firmness in dealing with their children that they will develop along right lines. It is because parents and teachers fail to enforce discipline that students behave in the most irresponsible way and indulge in disorder and violence.

Education must be regarded as a sacred process and a preparation for unselfish service to society. There are innumerable persons in the world who are suffering from various physical and other disabilities. It is the duty of educated persons to serve them and help to relieve their suffering to the maximum extent possible. This is the best form of service to the Divine. There is pollution in the air, in the water we use and impurity in so many things. You must use the knowledge you acquire to purify what is impure. It is for this purpose that the science courses in the Sathya Sai Institute are being given a spiritual orientation. Service to society must become the primary purpose of education. Students of Sai Institutions should devote their knowledge not only to earn a living, but to use their talents and energies in whatever walk of life they may be engaged, to render service to society in all ways open to them.

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When you do not know, confess that you do not know; if you pretend to know and try to cover up ignorance, it is very dangerous, especially to the spiritual aspirant.

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