

Equal-Mindedness is the Hallmark of a Human Being Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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9 July 1996

Editor's note. This discourse does not appear in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series. It appeared in *Sanathana Sarathi*, July 2011.

A true devotee is one who remains equal-minded in both happiness and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, praise and blame.
(Telugu poem)

Pleasure and pain, good and bad coexist;
none can separate them.
You cannot find pleasure or pain, good or bad to the exclusion of the other.
Pleasure results when difficulties fructify.
(Telugu Poem)

Students! Embodiments of Love!

Good and bad, wealth and poverty, praise and blame go together in this world. There can be no sorrow without happiness, and happiness has no value without sorrow. One cannot derive happiness out of happiness (*Na sukhat labhate sukham*). Happiness does not come out of happiness; it comes only out of sorrow.

A wealthy man today may become a pauper tomorrow. Similarly, a pauper may become a rich man some day or other. Today you are being praised, but tomorrow you may be criticised. To consider praise and blame, happiness and sorrow, prosperity and adversity with equal-mindedness is the hallmark of a true human being.

Develop equal-mindedness

The *Gita* declares the same thing: One should remain equal-minded in happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat (*Sukhadukhe samekruthwa labhalabhau jayajayau*).

You can really enjoy your life as a human being only when you consider both sorrow and happiness, profit and loss with equanimity. If there is no sorrow, one will have no value for happiness. Therefore, one should welcome sorrow if one wants to experience real happiness.

In our day-to-day life also, we will have no value for day if there is no night, and vice versa. It is very difficult to understand this truth and act accordingly. People who do not understand this truth desire only happiness at all times. They are under the delusion that they can always remain happy. But this is not possible.

First of all, you should understand what happiness really means. Only when one is tired of walking in the sun can one understand the value of taking a rest in the shade of a tree. People who question why man should undergo sorrow and suffering lack common sense.

The student who spoke earlier said that modern education did not develop common sense. Not only common sense, it does not even foster general knowledge. In fact, both common sense and general knowledge have become zero in the present system of education.

Who will desire food when they are not hungry? Similarly, who will buy an air conditioner when it is not hot? Only those who have both common sense and general knowledge can really understand the value of the pairs of opposites like happiness and

sorrow, profit and loss, prosperity and adversity.

In all fields of life, whether worldly, physical, moral, or spiritual, one can attain name and fame only when one undergoes difficulties.

King Harishchandra underwent many difficulties and sufferings in order to uphold truth. It was his firm determination, "Come what may, I will never leave truth." He sacrificed his kingdom, sold his wife and son, and himself became a servant to uphold truth. He earned the exalted name of Sathya Harishchandra only after undergoing enormous difficulties, sorrows and sufferings. Otherwise, he would have been remembered as Harishchandra and not Sathya Harishchandra. He sacrificed everything at the altar of truth. This signifies true determination.

One should develop such firm determination. Being unmindful of all sufferings, sorrows, and difficulties, one should be prepared to sacrifice even one's life to achieve his goal. This is the sign of a man who relentlessly pursues the path of truth.

You know the story of the seven-year-old little boy, Prahlada. He constantly contemplated on the Name *Narayana*. His own father subjected him to untold suffering and even tried to kill him. But Prahlada faced all difficulties and sufferings with courage and determination and ultimately achieved victory. He could earn great name and fame because he bore all sufferings with enormous fortitude.

Did he ever get bogged down by difficulties? Did any sorrow break his determination? No, no. He achieved victory against all odds.

Hence, difficulties are the stepping stones to high esteem and reputation as well as true happiness. But people do not welcome sorrows and difficulties at all. This is a great mistake.

In order to understand the mystery of human life, you have to experience both happiness and sorrow. Otherwise, you can never enjoy true peace and happiness. You should welcome difficulties and sorrows in order to experience everlasting bliss. *Pleasure is an interval between two pains*. One who understands this truth will be neither elated by happiness nor depressed by sorrow.

But people today are prepared to ruin their precious reputation for the sake of trivial, mean, and momentary worldly pleasures and petty gains. Thereby they subject themselves to disrepute. This may be due to the influence of *Kali Age* (the age we are now in).

Unfortunately, people today are running after petty gains and not making any effort to attain everlasting happiness. Here is a small example. The owner of a 50-seater bus going from one village to another overcrowds it with 70 people for a little more money. He may earn twenty rupees extra by overcrowding the bus, but he does not realise that the tyres worth two thousand rupees will be spoiled in the process. Similarly, man today is ruining his precious reputation for the sake of petty gains.

Make sacred use of your senses

How should people in general and youth in particular conduct themselves to earn a good reputation? They should enquire how they should use their eyes, ears, and tongue and exercise control over them. It is not proper to look at everyone and everything just because you have eyes. See only what is required to be seen. It is a sin to look at everyone and everything. What do you achieve by using your eyes in an unsacred manner?

People try to derive mean pleasure by casting evil glances at women. But they do not understand how much disrepute they earn by craving such mean pleasures. Such persons cannot move in society with their head held high.

See only what is necessary for you to see. Never look at anything that is unnecessary. You are all young, and you should not think otherwise when Swami tells you these things. It is My duty to make you aware of the ways of the world and put you on the right path.

Suppose a twenty-five year old young man is traveling with his twenty-year-old younger sister. Though they are brother and sister, people may consider them as husband and wife, looking at their age. You can yourself see what a bad reputation they earn by traveling together! According to our ancient traditions and culture of Bharat (India), young brothers and sisters should not travel together. They should avoid going to a cinema, beach, or shopping centre together. They should go along with their parents. In ancient days, people strictly adhered to such principles.

Take another example of a sixty-year-old man and a sixteen-year-old girl traveling together. People may consider them to be grandfather and granddaughter, though they may not be. When a young brother and his young sister travel together, people form wrong opinions about them. On the other hand, when an old man goes with a young girl with evil intentions, people consider them as grandfather and granddaughter. We should not give scope to such situations.

If it is necessary, you may travel alone. But if you have to go with your young sister, take your mother also with you. This is the teaching of our ancient culture. Such principles and practices are meant to uphold our family name and reputation in society.

But, unfortunately, the vision of youth today is tainted with evil intentions. This is not the vision of a human being but the vision of a crow, which is not steady at all and keeps shifting here and there. It is natural for a crow because it has a long beak. But, why do you look here and there like a crow when you do not have a long beak like a crow? Keep your vision always straight. Such sacred vision is

very essential for youth. It is termed good vision (*sunetra* and *sudarshana*). When you develop such vision, you will earn a high reputation.

Exercise control over speech, vision, and laughter

You should also know how you should use your tongue in a proper way. It is necessary for students to know what they should speak before whom, when they should laugh, and when they should not. Sometimes, you start laughing when you see something funny. But improper laughter can put you to great harm.

This improper laughter was the main cause of Draupadi's difficulties. Dharmaraja got a beautiful palace built by the architect Maya. Therefore, it was called Maya Sabha. It had many wonderful architectural features. For instance, doors appeared to be where they did not exist really, and where doors actually were, they could not be seen. Similarly, the flooring was such that it would cause the illusion of a tank where there was none, and it would appear like a dry area where there was really a water tank.

Duryodhana was filled with jealousy on seeing this wonderful palace built by the Pandavas. When he entered the palace, he did not see the door where there was actually one. He rushed forward, thinking that there was no door, and banged his head against it. However, he did not bother much about it. Filled as he was with jealousy and pride, he walked haughtily looking here and there. When he proceeded further, he saw only a plain floor where there was a tank of water. Consequently, he fell into the water tank.

At that time, he heard somebody laughing at him. Anybody could have had fun on seeing such a situation. It was not Draupadi but her friends who laughed at Duryodhana. In fact, Draupadi was nowhere around at that time.

But when she heard her friends laughing, she came out to see what had happened.

Unfortunately, Duryodhana saw her when she came out and by mistake thought it was she who laughed at him. He vowed to avenge this humiliation and resolved that he would humiliate her in the open court so that people in the court would laugh at her.

Therefore, you should know where to laugh, when to laugh, and in what manner to laugh.

Laughter is of two types: *hasan* and *prahasana*. *Hasan* means to flash a gentle smile. *Prahasana* means to laugh loudly, making the sound Haha Haha Haha... This is a very bad practice.

Suppose two or three friends laugh loudly when they are going on a road. Their reason of laughter may be anything, but the women passing by may think that they are laughing at them. Therefore, do not laugh loudly at least when you are walking on a road, especially when there are women around. In any case, never laugh at women.

In towns and cities, some people keep loitering before shops, laughing at women and teasing them when they come for shopping. If they laugh at others' women, will not others laugh at their women when they go shopping?

Nobody can escape from the reaction, reflection, and resound of their actions. Everybody has to suffer the consequences of their own actions. People who indulge in such evil practices become distant even from God. What is the reason? The reason is that people who earn a bad reputation by their evil deeds have no place in divine proximity.

Therefore, have a check on your laughter. Not only on your laughter, but your speech and vision also. You should know what to speak where.

Some people sing vulgar songs on seeing women walking on the road. Has God given you a tongue to sing such vulgar songs? How

sacred is the tongue, and what an evil use you put it to by singing such vulgar songs! By acting in this manner, you ruin your reputation and subject yourself to ridicule by others.

Therefore, exercise control over your speech, vision, and laughter. If you want to have good respect in society, conduct yourself in a befitting manner. When your behaviour is good, your reputation in society will also rise high.

Obey the command of God

One should be equal-minded both in praise and blame, good and bad. Equal-mindedness is the hallmark of a human being. Only such a person has the chance to rise to the level of divine.

On the other hand, if one conducts oneself contrary to human nature, one will degenerate to the level of an animal. What does that mean? One moves in the reverse direction and degenerates from human level to animal level. One should always move forward and make progress; one should never retrace their steps.

Some officers earn reversion instead of promotion. What is the reason? The reason is their defects. You get promotion when you are free from defects.

When one has to undergo the process of promotion or reversion in a small office due to one's good or bad behaviour, how much more careful one must be if one wants to attain divine grace!

When you take to the sacred path, God will give you promotion accordingly. If you develop virtues, there is no need for you to undertake any spiritual practices to please God. God Himself will call a virtuous person, saying, "My dear, I am pleased with your virtues. Come on." You don't even need to pray to Him; He Himself will welcome you.

You should obey the command of God and develop firm faith and sacred feelings. On the other hand, if you act contrary to His expectations and commands, He will give you a reversion instead of a promotion. *Sasanam Vachanam Iti Sastram*. What is *Sastra*? *Sastra* is that which propounds the rules and regulations for the conduct of humanity. It says, don't see anything bad, don't hear anything bad and don't speak anything bad. This is not good for you.

See no evil, see what is good;
Hear no evil, hear what is good;
Talk no evil, talk what is good;
Think no evil, think what is good;
Do no evil, do what is good;
This is the way to God.

This is the code of conduct the scriptures (*sastras*) prescribe for humanity. When you follow these principles, God will welcome you. If you act contrary to this code of conduct, you will become distant from God. Not only will you become distant from God, He will not even look at your face. What is the reason? The reason is that you have violated the command of God.

Consequently, you will lose your reputation, your wealth, and your respect in society. If you don't follow His command, how can God draw you nearer to Him? Therefore, develop good qualities in you in the first instance.

Make efforts to develop equal-mindedness. The *Bhagavad Gita* also declares: Equanimity is called true *yoga* (*Samatvam yogamuchyate*) and Perfection in action is true *yoga* (*Yoga karmasu kausalam*).

Many people may criticise you. Be neither depressed by criticism nor elated by praise. When you don't have any defect in you, what does it matter if others criticise you? Face the situation with courage, thinking, "There is no defect in me. Then why should I be disturbed by criticism? This is not my fault."

In order to develop such courage and conviction, you should follow the right path. Sometimes, students laugh loudly. Yes, certain situations will make them laugh. When you see some funny incident in a drama, you naturally burst into laughter. In such situations I also laugh. However, we should control our laughter when we are in the company of others.

As the food, so is the head

During the Mahabharata war, Bhishma lay on a bed of arrows for 56 days. As Bhishma's end approached, Krishna one day took the Pandavas to him with the intention that they should learn the principles of *dharma* (righteousness) from him. Everybody knew his greatness and wisdom. Great sages sat on one side, and the relatives of Bhishma sat on the other side.

The Kauravas were already killed in the war. Their wickedness destroyed them. Even Sakuni and Karna were no more. Only five Pandavas along with Draupadi were there. Vidura also came. Draupadi always followed the Pandavas. Neither the Pandavas nor Draupadi could bear separation from each other.

The Pandavas along with Draupadi offered their salutations to Bhishma. Draupadi always had great respect for elders. In fact, she was born out of fire. Even Krishna highly praised her virtues. When somebody questioned as to who was the greatest chaste woman (*pativrata*), He did not mention the names of Sathyabhama or Rukmini. He said that Draupadi, who had to serve five husbands, was the greatest chaste woman. When they asked for the reason, He explained thus:

Draupadi dutifully obeyed the command of her husbands.
She would never say to any one of them that she had no time to serve him.
She was satisfied with whatever she got in life.

She was the supreme example of chastity,
and
None could match her in this respect.
(Telugu Poem)

At that time, Bhishma started teaching the principles of *dharma* to the Pandavas. He said, “Dharmaraja! You won the war only by the grace of Krishna. Who do you think Krishna is? You think that He is your friend and brother-in-law. You are deluded with this feeling. He is the direct manifestation of Lord Narayana. Do not be deluded by your physical relationship with Him. How fortunate you are that you are able to converse with God, play with Him, and spend your time in His company blissfully!”

These teachings of Bhishma form the *Santhi Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, which guides humanity —how one should conduct oneself in a particular situation, how one should face all situations with courage and confidence, and how one should lead one’s daily life in a righteous way.

The Pandavas were listening to the teachings of Bhishma with their heads bent in humility, but Draupadi could not restrain herself and laughed loudly. Her laughter was not meant to show disrespect to Bhishma. It was just an expression of her inner feelings.

While Bhima expressed his displeasure by his physical gestures, Dharmaraja cast a stern look at Draupadi. Similarly, Arjuna looked at her disapprovingly as if to say, “What is this? You lack common sense and general knowledge. How can you laugh loudly in the presence of so many people?”

But Bhishma understood the inner meaning of her laughter and told the Pandava brothers, “You have formed a wrong notion about Draupadi’s laughter. She is one of great chastity. None can find fault with her. She laughed not without any cause. I myself am the cause of her laughter.”

Then he lovingly called Draupadi near him and said, “Please explain the reason for your laughter to all, so that they can know the truth and their misunderstanding is removed.”

Draupadi said, “Grandfather! I always respect your words. You have dedicated your life to uphold truth (*sathya*) and righteousness (*dharma*). In such a situation, how can I dare laugh at you?”

“But you were the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army. You are the one who brought them up from their very childhood. How is it that you never imparted these teachings to the Kauravas? On the other hand, you are imparting these teachings to my husbands, who are the very embodiments of truth and righteousness.

“Where your teachings were needed, you did not give them, and where they are hardly needed, you are giving them. That is why I could not restrain my laughter.”

Bhishma said, “Yes, this is my fault. I have been eating the food provided to me by the Kauravas and living in their company. Because of the unsacred food that I ate, all the principles of *dharma* were subdued in me and only sinful feelings became prominent.

“All the bad blood in me has now drained out due the arrows shot at me by your husband Arjuna. My bad feelings and evil thoughts have also gone out with this bad blood. That is why sacred feelings and sacred thoughts are only now emerging from me. That is why I am able to teach *dharma* to the Pandavas now.

“It was the unsacred food provided by the Kauravas that made me incapable of imparting these sacred teachings all these days.”

The food one eats influences the mind to a great extent. When you eat unsacred food, you get only unsacred feelings. Bhishma was one of great wisdom. But even his mind was

influenced by the unsacred food he ate. As the food, so is the head.

Thus, Bhishma accepted his fault and told everyone that there was no fault in the laughter of Draupadi. Then all the sages, *yogis*, and all those who assembled there understood the truth that the food eaten has a great influence on one's mind.

Draupadi had every right to laugh at the teachings of Bhishma because she had led a life of truth and righteousness. In fact, she had dedicated her entire life to upholding truth and *dharma*.

Make yourself deserving of God's love

Once, during the exile of the Pandavas, Sage Durvasa came to their hermitage with thousands of his disciples and asked for food. He told them that they were going for a bath in a nearby river and would come back to have food.

The Pandavas were gripped by anxiety as to how to provide food to so many guests when they had nothing with them. Fearing the curse of Sage Durvasa, Draupadi prayed to Krishna to save them from this predicament.

Krishna promptly appeared on the scene and asked Draupadi to give Him something to eat. Draupadi replied, "Krishna, if we were living in Hastinapur, I would have certainly given You a sumptuous feast. But alas! We are living in a forest eating roots and tubers. In such a situation, what can I offer You?"

Krishna told her to look into the vessel, which she had already cleaned, to see if there was any food particle left in it. She did accordingly and found a tiny piece of leaf sticking to the vessel. Krishna ate that leftover leaf.

As soon as He did so, the hunger of Durvasa and his disciples was satiated and they went away without bothering the Pandavas. In this

way, Krishna saved the Pandavas from the curse of Durvasa.

When you satisfy God, the entire world will be satisfied with you. If God disowns you, then the world will also disown you. One who is disowned by God will not be accepted by anyone. If God accepts you, everyone will accept you.

Thus, when Krishna's hunger was satiated, Sage Durvasa and all his disciples felt satiated. After their bath in the river, they did not come back to the Pandavas for food.

Draupadi's devotion and sense of surrender to Krishna were matchless. God Himself extolled her virtues as she bore all her difficulties with fortitude.

There is no need for you to make efforts to please this person or that person. Do not waste your life in the pursuit of mean and petty desires. Make earnest efforts to please God. When you please God and become dear to Him, the entire world will become yours.

Thyagaraja also said, "Oh Rama! If I have Your Grace (*Anugraha*), all the nine planets will become subservient to me."

In order to become recipients of God's grace, treat the pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, praise and blame with equal-mindedness. Always contemplate on God's Divine Name and become deserving of His love. Once you become the recipients of God's love, you need not be afraid of anything. You will achieve everything in life.

Therefore, develop equal-mindedness and make efforts to earn divine grace.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, "*Govinda Gopala Prabhu Giridhari ...*")

—From Bhagavan's Divine Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 9 July 1996.