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## **Pari Prashna -The Divine Answers**

(Bhagawan answered the questions raised by the delegates of the conference)

*When things go wrong in ventures that one undertakes, If one is undeterred and unshaken and welcomes everything with a smile giving up all worry, The heart of such a one is filled with wisdom*

*(Telugu Poem)*

**Q1 What is the relation between religion, spirituality and educare?**

*Embodiments of Love!*

IT is surprising to me to note that you have been unable to recognise the relation between religion, spirituality and educare. First and foremost understand what religion is - 'Religion is realisation'. Only when you realise the truth about yourself, will you under-

stand what religion is. Spirituality is not merely singing *bhajans*, performing worship, going to temples or on pilgrimages or undertaking any other good activity. Spirituality is recognising oneness of all beings. Here is an example. When we close our eyes we cannot see anybody. But the moment we open them we can see thousands of heads in this hall. Where have these heads come from? If you enquire into the truth, you will recognise that your eyes notice all heads. They have not come from anywhere outside.

To recognise unity in diversity is spirituality. The basic truth to be recognised is that there is only one Atma in all beings. The questions and doubts arise when you see multiplicity in unity. The entire creation has emerged from love. Therefore, there is no difference between religion, spirituality and educare.

Religion is realisation of your Self. Spirituality also is discovering who you really are. For example you say, "This is my handkerchief, this is my plate this is my hand and this is my body". Then who are you? There must be someone to say that he owns the tumbler, plate, hand and the body. When you enquire into this truth you will realise that you are separate from all these and in fact, you are the master of all these. That master is the Atma.

The next aspect is educare. How can you call yourselves educated if you do not understand what

educare is? The word 'education' is derived from the Latin root 'educare'. While education refers to collection of worldly facts, educare is to bring out from within. Education is for a living while educare is for life. Education is for 'Jeevana Upadihi' (livelihood). Educare is for 'Jeevitha Paramavadhi' (the ultimate goal of life). It is easy for us to recognise things outside us and difficult to look within. There are many things inside us, which are not manifest. When you join the three letters G, O, D, we get the word GOD. When you look at the letters individually they have no meaning of their own. Our effort lies in putting together these letters to get the meaning. This is educare. Educare means to bring out from within. The Atma is our innermost reality. That is what educare should bring out. Therefore, there is actually no difference between the three—religion, spirituality and educare.

Whatever we see in others is only a reflection of our own self. If we accuse somebody as bad, it is just that our feeling toward that person is bad. Whatever impression we have about others is a reflection of our feeling towards them. Everything is just reflection, reaction and resound. Therefore, you should not find fault with others. You do not have the right to find fault because your assessment of a person is limited to your experience with him. There are so many aspects of the personality of that person you do not know. For example, you look at Anil Kumar, you will

know only his dress, his complexion, his height and weight. But Anil Kumar is not merely what you see. There are so many qualities like love, compassion or anger, which are in him that you cannot see. Therefore, if you want to know a person completely you should investigate into all the aspects of his personality. In modern times, people go by the physical appearance and judge people based on their external actions. This is wrong. Hence, defect lies in the vision and not in the creation. When you put on red glasses everything appears red and when you put on blue glasses everything appears blue. Only those foolish people who fail to recognise this truth resort to criticism. Even in the case of an ordinary human being your assessment is wrong, then how can you assess God?

God has many invaluable things in His store. But you come and ask, “Swami, give me a locket.” You ask Him for a locket because you do not know what precious gifts He can bestow upon you. There is no dearth of anything in His store. Therefore, you should not ask God for anything in specific. When time is ripe, He will give you. God knows and acts appropriately, based on the right time, place and situation. That is why you find sometimes that He Himself comes and gives you things unasked. It is therefore very difficult to understand God. An ignoramus, who fails to understand this principle, often misinterprets it. But you should not fall prey to such calumny.

Thus educare, spirituality and religion are not different from one another. Here is a ring, a chain and the earrings - all these are different forms of the same gold. If one realises this unifying truth then where is the scope for multiplicity? Therefore, God is One though He may appear to you in different forms. The fundamental basis for everything is love. This is what you should aspire for. Do not worry about religion. There is only one religion, the religion of love. Educare means to bring out the divine love latent in man. that is why it is said, *Love is God, live in Love*. Then there would be no conflict in the world and all would live together happily. Only when there are differences, there is conflict. Push aside these differences and live with the feeling of oneness.

*There is only one language, the language of the heart; there is only one religion, the religion of love; there is only one caste, the caste of humanity.*

Religions are many but the path is only one and we need to discover this path. “O heroic sons of Bharat! No religion is bad for the one who has a good sense of understanding”. It is incorrect to see differences among religions. In our daily life, we need to realise the limitations of education. What you read for the first time may look new to you but when you read it again and again it is no more new. Here is an example. Once God wanted to grant liberation to a person and sent Yama, the God of death, to him. When

Yama approached this devotee, he questioned whether the devotee knew him. But the devotee answered that he (Yama) was a stranger to him. Then Lord Yama told him that he would return to him only when he could recognise Yama. When Yama returned after three days the same question was posed to him. Now the devotee answered that Yama was no longer a stranger to him because he had already seen him. Everything appears strange and new before acquaintance. But once we acquaint ourselves we tend to shed differences.

Basically, you have to get rid of the sense of differences and develop the sense of oneness. Then you will know that religion, educare and spirituality are one and the same.

**Q2    What relationship should Sri Sathya Sai Schools have with Government?**

Sri Sathya Sai education and Government education are two separate entities. Nevertheless, Sathya Sai Schools should have good relationship with the government. Sai belongs to everybody but government does not belong to everybody. Sri Sathya Sai Schools should obey all rules of the government, but with Sai, the only rule is Love. In Sri Sathya Sai Schools we follow all rules of discipline with love. The Government enforces its rules, therefore it is 'force', but Sai's method is from the 'source'. One can pursue

Sri Sathya Sai education along with government education. Sri Sathya Sai education imparts human values. Follow these values, and at the same time pursue government education. But do not split them into artificial divisions. Everyday we have 24 hours at our disposal. At the most we spend 6 hours – 3 hours in the morning and 3 hours in the afternoon in schools. We still have 18 hours at our disposal. Allocate 6 hours for your sleep, 6 hours for personal activities and the remaining 6 hours can be utilised for spiritual pursuits and developing human values. Sri Sathya Sai education imparts practical knowledge while the government education teaches only bookish knowledge. But do not ignore bookish knowledge also, because the former grants us spiritual happiness and the latter, worldly happiness. Government education gives us the means of livelihood whereas Sri Sathya Sai education leads us to the ultimate goal of life. The two constitute the two sides of the same coin.

**Q3     As teachers how can we understand the minds of students?**

The teacher must first have a thorough understanding of his own mind before trying to understand the minds of the students. If the teacher's mind is good, the students will reflect it in their behaviour. Since the teacher cannot see the student's mind, he has to understand it only by observing the student's behav-

ious with his parents, his friends and his fellow students. Basing on this, he will be able to lead the student on to the right path.

Sometimes, parents give too much freedom to the children and children in turn misuse this freedom to interact with their friends with laxity in behaviour. At school his freedom is curtailed. He must be taught to strike a balance between freedom and discipline. The teacher cannot interfere in the student's family affairs, for, parents give freedom to their children out of their love. Nevertheless, the teachers must keep in touch with the student's activities at home. But the sad plight of the modern age is that the parents are ninety-nine percent responsible for their children getting into bad ways, by providing them with excess of money and freedom. The parents are misguided by imagining that their children would be hurt if their freedom is curtailed. But they feel dejected if the child gets perverted and runs into bad ways. The child must be groomed well right from the beginning itself. Just as speed breakers control the speed of vehicles on the road to ensure safety, so too restrictions must be enforced upon children's freedom for their safety. The child should be given freedom in areas related to right conduct and must be punished when it errs. When the parents give freedom to their children, they should watch carefully as to how the children behave. It is then that the child will tread the right path. The first

responsibility rests with the mother for the child to tread on the right path. Generally, if the daughter in the family is spoiled, mother is responsible and if the son goes astray, father is responsible for it.

It is in order to ensure that unlimited freedom is not given to children that the institution called school has come into existence. It is here that teachers should strike a balance between freedom and restriction in student's life. The teacher must advise the student regularly that his conduct will be responsible for the name he earns for his parents and the school.

In some countries the concept of kindness and respect for elders is not stressed. The teachers of Sathya Sai Schools must advise the students in the right way. The teacher must advise the student that he is born as a human, and that he is neither a 'wild animal' to strike terror in the hearts of people nor a 'domestic animal' (docile person) to be afraid of others. He has no cause to fear nor should he cause fear in others. In this manner, the teacher must lead the students on the right path. Life is a long journey and must not be dismissed in a trivial manner. It must be spent in the most auspicious manner possible. We should aspire for a divine life and not long life. It is possible to bring about a change in students by such good advice.

You are *Acharya* and not merely a teacher. *Acharya* is one who first practises and then teaches the

same to his students. So when you want to teach good principles to students, first you practise and then set an example. For example, if you smoke in the class, students will also emulate you and start smoking. If you try to correct them by saying, smoking is bad for health, the students will in turn ask you, “Sir, then why are you smoking?” The true characteristic of good education is good teaching. Good teaching brings about transformation in students. It makes students confess their mistakes before the teacher. I know this very well. Sometimes I punish My students for their mistakes and am strict toward them. Yet, I love them and give them what they need. This transforms their hearts. They come and pray to Me, “Swami please forgive us. It is our mistake that we did not conduct ourselves according to Your words. Now we have realised it. Swami, we will never repeat such mistakes again”. Words that come out of true repentance melt Swami’s heart and Swami forgives them, “My dear son, whatever I do is for your good.” All teachers can learn to emulate this example.

**Q4     What is the most important quality a good teacher must have?**

This is a very important question. Teachers should practise what is good and teach the same to students. Teachers should lead an exemplary life. Here is an example; when I was studying in third Form in

Kamalapuram, we had a teacher by name H. Iyengar. Students were very afraid of him and would often avoid meeting him. I had great respect for my teacher. One day Iyengar got angry because he observed Me going into a lane when he was coming from the opposite direction of the road. Next day, I went to the class. I was the class monitor and had to get a bundle of sticks with which he would punish students. When he came to the class he was angry with Me for not meeting him on the road. He asked Me, "Why did You not meet and greet me?" I replied, "Sir, I did not see you. I was going to My friend's house to take My notebook from him." He shouted, "So You did not see me!" I replied, "No I did not see you." He threatened to punish Me. I told him, "Sir I am speaking the truth. If you wish to punish Me, you can do so." This answer melted his heart and he shed tears. He called Me near and said, "Raju I knew that You would never commit such a mistake. It is my mistake to get angry with You. I have a request, would you please come to my house tomorrow evening?" As instructed by H. Iyengar, I went to his house. Iyengar had great love for Me. He gave Pakodas in an aluminum plate. He said, "I made a mistake by thinking of punishing You. As an act of repentance, I want to cultivate friendship with you." Our goodness, our truthfulness and our sacred qualities will transform any person. I said, "Sir your position is much higher than Mine. Friendship is possible only

between equals.” He replied, “You may look at it that way. But, one’s age and education are not important, what is important is one’s heart. You have a good heart.” He further enquired, whether I was studying well. I told him, “Yes Sir”. He cautioned Me that exams were fast approaching and wanted Me to study well. I appeared for the examination. The examination was for two hours duration, but I finished answering the paper within half an hour. I handed over the answer script to the Invigilator and came out. He kept watching Me. He quipped, “Raju! You don’t seem to have written anything!” I replied, “Sir! You will see it for yourself tomorrow. I have written everything correctly. I do not write or speak untruth.” Next day, from the pile of answer scripts, he picked up My answer script first. He checked My answers one by one and found that there were some answers which were not known even to him. So, he wrote very, very, very, very good on my paper. In those days, the teacher retained the answer scripts. The next day, he asked his wife to prepare some snacks and invited Me to his house. He told Me, “Raju! Have a cup of coffee.” I said, “Sir! I do not drink coffee. I don’t have that habit.” “At least have a *dosa*”, he requested. I replied, “But I do not have the habit of eating at odd times”. Please eat at least for my satisfaction,” he pleaded. To satisfy him, I partook of it. Likewise, students have many opportunities to make their teachers happy.

Though the students were afraid of our teachers, I was not. The reason was that I never committed any mistakes. I used to talk very sweetly. Because of this, my English teacher, Mahboob Khan, was very eager to come to My class. If any other teacher continued to be in the class even after the bell, he would ask him to leave. In the class, all other students would tease Me by saying, “Raju, go to the front!” Mahboob Khan loved Me very much. He used to caress My hair, fondle Me and pinch My cheeks. He was 50 years old and had no children.

He would ask Me to visit his house frequently. He was very devoted to Me. At the age of 11, I left that school. Till that time, I used to lead the prayers at the school. Mahboob Khan was looking after the prayer arrangements and he asked Me to lead the prayers saying, “Your prayers melt our hearts. You compose a prayer song and sing it.” “How can I compose a prayer song?”, I asked. He said, “You can do it!” I composed a song and sang at the prayer meetings. In that song I had incorporated the idea of unity of religions even at that age.

After listening to that song, all were surprised. After sometime, I left the school, declaring, “I am Sai. No one however great can ever understand Me. Give up your attempts to retain Me with you. I belong to the whole world!”

All were bewildered. They came behind Me crying, “Raju! Raju.” Without answering anybody, I went straight to Anjaneyulu’s garden. I sat on a rock and started preaching, *Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam Dustara Bhava Sagara Taranam* (Contemplate on the feet of the Divine Master who alone can help you to cross over the ocean of life and death).” The next day, the Telugu teacher and Mahboob Khan resigned their teaching posts. They loved Me so much that they did not want to teach in the school without Me. Many other teachers followed their example. A Muslim boy was asked to go on the stage to lead the prayers. After coming on to the stage, he broke down thinking of Me. He could not sing the prayer. Others also started crying. From that day onward, prayers were stopped.

There is a bond of pure love between teachers and students. Students can win over any teacher’s heart and a teacher can win over students’ hearts. If you want to be loved, you have to love others first. First and foremost, we should aspire for truth. The basis of Indian culture is, “Speak truth, practise right conduct.” I was always very humble. Now also, I teach the same thing to students. *You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly!* But sometimes, one needs to be strict. That is what I do. I can be harder than diamond when the situation demands. Otherwise, I am softer than butter. Teachers understood this nature

of Mine. Teachers! If you want to take students into your confidence, you have to approach them with love. You have to point out their mistakes and lead them on the right path. Only then will they follow the right path and accept their mistakes. For the progress and prosperity of the nation, teachers should develop love for students and mould their character. Then the society will get many good citizens

**Q5 How to implement educare in the case of children from slum areas?**

In order to mould the character of such children through educare programme, we have to visit their houses and help the people living there by taking up social service projects like cleaning and sanitation. Then they would develop the sense of cleanliness and keep their places clean. You can also take the help of Seva Dal members in such service projects.

Even students from schools can be taken to those areas and told to involve in service activities. Thereby the students would develop a liking for service activities.

**Q6 How do you motivate children in educare programme?**

It is not possible to make small children understand the essence of educare. They are too young to understand it. It can be introduced at the college level.

But at school level, we can cultivate good thoughts and good habits among students. We can also inspire their young hearts by narrating the stories of great persons of their respective lands, and exhorting them to follow the ideals set by them. For example, the life of Harischandra is a great ideal in adherence to truth.

**Q7     How can we attract children of non-devotees to Sathya Sai schools?**

This is a very important question. Our students are our spokesmen. We have to reform the students so that they will attract the attention of their parents and bring about a good change in them. The parents may not know about Sai Baba. But when they see the good behaviour of their children because of the practising of the principles of Sai Baba, they will naturally change their minds. Students can also tell their parents that all their good behaviour is because of their joining the Sathya Sai schools. This will also attract other children to the Sathya Sai schools.

Let us take for example the good practice of the students chanting *Brahmarpanam* before partaking of food. Even the parents will be surprised at their devotion to God. If children explain to the parents the meaning of the prayer saying, “Food is given to us by God. Therefore, we must offer it to Him before partaking of it. Then the food becomes *Prasadam* and will not be tainted by impurities.” Thus even the parents

will learn to pray. This is the way to bring the parents on the right path through their children. Whatever we do, we must do it properly. If any guests visit our house, we must speak to them courteously. We must offer them seats, make them comfortable and tell them, "Please be seated. Father will meet you in a few moments." Such behaviour will make the guests happy and will naturally appeal to the good sense of the guests, whether they are devotees or not. This is how we have to train our students so that they will attract others and be examples to them.

**Q8     How do we deal with parents who do not follow Sai's teachings?**

We must bring about a change in the parents through their children studying in our schools. For example, the parents of a student may be non-vegetarians. When the student goes home for vacation, he can bring about a change in his parents by narrating to them with humility the sanctity of eating vegetarian food. The student can tell his parent, "Mother, I cannot feed myself by killing another being. This is not good for me. This body, which is made up of flesh, should not be fed with flesh. Our body must be fed with nectar and not with flesh. Eating of flesh will induce in me animal feelings. We should eat only vegetarian food which God has provided for us." Thus, we can teach parents through students. And in course of time even the parents will stop eating non-vegetarian food. Many

families have stopped eating non-vegetarian food after their children joined our institutions. Thus, it is easy to bring about transformation in parents through students.

**Q9 How to actively involve parents in educare programme?**

It is very difficult to directly involve parents in the educare programme. Hence, educare must be taught to the parents through their children. Parents do not know what educare is. What will they understand if you speak about educare to them. Since you understand what educare is, you should teach them about it through your actions.

**Q10 What is the role of technology like computers in education?**

For Me technology appears to be ‘Trick-knowledge’. I don’t have any computers. Swami has been saying this for the past five years. Now computers are also getting virus attacks like human beings. You should become a ‘composer’ and not a ‘computer’. When does a computer get spoiled? It happens when something goes wrong in the head of the composer. You may use this technology to develop science. Firstly, set right the computer that God has given you. That is your head itself. Today, one uses computer for every small calculation. It looks ridiculous. God has given us a better calculator, our brain. Make use of its services. Of course, there are certain benefits accruing

from computers. I do not deny it. You should use it depending on the need. You are all fascinated by the computer because of its novelty. But what has computer done to our society? It has developed easy-going nature in us and caused unemployment. Unemployment leads to rise in crimes. We should discard such machinery that render many people jobless. Instead of that, you should encourage domestic industries, which will provide jobs to people in the home itself.

**Q11 How to go about starting the first Sri Sathya Sai School in a country?**

It is not possible for all to start schools, as all may not have the resources to do so. But they can start imparting educare through the Bal Vikas programme. Gradually, it can be upgraded into a school. Here I have an important point to make. The good work done by women in this field is highly appreciable. Men lag far behind in this aspect. Women are somehow finding time for Bal Vikas in spite of their daily chores. In this Kali Age, it is a good blessing for both women and children. Men too should come forward to participate in such work. Only then can the nation progress. Big schools and buildings can land us in worries when we lack resources. Let it be in a small scale.

**Q.12 What is Sai Baba's vision of the future of Sri Sathya Sai Schools around the world?**

There is no need to worry about what awaits us in future. Do whatever you are supposed to, in the best way you can. This will lead you to a brighter future. Future is not sure, it is not in our hands. Present is important. Present is not ordinary present; it is omnipresent. Take care of the present, the future will take care of itself. Did you ever think in the past that you could grow to the present state of attending the conference? When you do good work that itself will bestow upon you a good future.

**Q.13 Can the children be recruited to higher classes in Sri Sathya Sai Schools directly or should they be admitted to only kindergarten classes?**

There is no hard and fast rule that children should be admitted only to the lowest class. Depending on the situation you can even admit them to a higher class. There is nothing wrong about it.

**Q.14 Should Gayatri Mantra be chanted in Western Sathya Sai Schools?**

You can do as per the dictates of your heart. If you feel its chanting bestows upon you benefits, you can do it. Gayatri is not a woman nor does this Mantra belong to any particular religion or country. It is only the name and the form of a deity. It represents the three aspects of materialisation, vibration and radiation.

These three are present in everyone irrespective of one's country and religion. In this Mantra, one prays for inspiration and stimulation of one's intelligence. I do not force anyone either to chant it or not to chant it. Mine is not 'force' but only 'source'. You can do whatever gives you joy.

I have answered your questions in brief. Purify your hearts and follow the Divine command. You can pray to God — Allah, Jesus, Krishna or Zoroastra. It does not make any difference. Develop virtues and get rid of vices. Sathya Sai is absolutely selfless; whatever I say, follow it implicitly. It will be good for you. Attain happiness and share it with others.

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