

14. MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE

Today, Swami is going to speak about the childhood of this body. Childhood is childhood, but the significance of the childhood of this particular body cannot be easily understood by students. That is why Swami is going to speak on the subject this morning.

Kondama Raju [Swami's grandfather] had four sons. The eldest was named Pedda Venkama Raju. The second son was named Chinna Venkama Raju. The third son was named Venkata Subba Raju while the fourth bore the name Venkata Rama Raju. Since Venkavadhoota was his preceptor, Kondama Raju liked the name 'Venka' very much; that is why all his sons had Venka admixed in their names.

In due course all these sons got married but being poor, all the four families had to share the same small hut. The hut did not have a tiled roof but only one of thatched grass. As time passed, children were born in all the four families. Chinna Venkama Raju had twelve children; Pedda Venkama Raju had eight children; Subba Raju had nine while Venkata Rama Raju had eleven. There were enough children to fill a small primary school! [Loud laughter.] In those days, people knew how to live united, adjust to each

other, get along with each other, and help each other. For the sons, Kondama Raju was father but for their wives, he was not a blood relative. Thus, on account of the daughters-in-law, differences of opinion slowly began to crop up. Noticing this, Kondama Raju realised that it was no longer possible to continue the joint family, that it would have to be split, and that each son would have to shoulder his responsibility separately. The family had just two acres of land – it was that poor. Kondama Raju divided this land equally amongst the four sons so that they got only half an acre each. He also divided the ancestral house into four portions, ten feet by eight feet each, and gave one portion to every son for living with his family. This may seem small but by the standards prevailing then in the villages, this was ample space.

After this division, Kondama Raju had no place of his own in the original house. So he moved to a small plot eight feet by eight feet and built there a small hut for himself. The four sons told him, “Father, why do you have to live alone? You are old. Please be with each one of us by turn for a while, and spend your remaining days in this manner.” He replied, “I do not wish to live with my sons and daughters-in-law. I wish to live independently, supporting myself by opening a small shop.” It was a small provision shop that supplied common needs like pulses, puffed rice, some edibles, coconuts, etc. The shop was very small, not bigger than this table [at this point, Swami indicated the table in front of Him]. For the village, however, this was a big enough shop. When Kondama Raju declared that he would run a small shop and take care of himself, Pedda Venkama Raju said, “But who would cook for you, look after you, attend to your needs, etc.? We feel it would be good if you were to have someone by

your side.” Kondama Raju thought over the matter for sometime. Whom should he take with him? At that time, this body was about seven years of age. Kondama said, “Venka (this is the way he addressed his eldest son), don’t think otherwise; I would like to have Sathyam live with me. He alone is my property.” Everyone said, “But Sathyam is so young! How can He cook for you? We will hire a cook.” Kondama replied most emphatically, “I do not want anybody except Sathyam. If Sathyam is by my side, no one else is required.”

At that time, Sathyam had just one pair of shorts and one shirt. He had to manage with those for one whole year. The shorts and shirt would be worn while going to school; at home, Swami would wear a small *dhothi*. Life was very simple then. After advancing to the fourth standard, it became necessary to go to the school in Bukkapatnam since the school in Puttaparthi did not offer studies beyond the third. One had to go to Bukkapatnam by walk. There were other boys in the village who studied there, and Swami used to go along with them.

Early in the morning, Swami would make a millet preparation – two balls of it, one for the grandfather and one for Himself; also, some groundnut chutney to go along with it. After this, Swami would run to school. Once a week, He would prepare some *dal* [a soup-like preparation made out of pulses], laced with spinach. There were no vessels made of metal; only earthen pots. After hurried cooking, Swami would run all the way to school. At noon, there would be a break; as soon as the bell rang, Swami would run back home. The distance to be covered was three miles

[about four and a half kilometres]. All the boys used to do this, and Swami did the same. On reaching home, Swami would serve food to His grandfather. He would wash the clothes, keep food for the night, and then have His meal. After this, a long run back to the school; this was how life went on for some years.

Kondama Raju was quite upset by all this. He thought, “There is no one to help Raju.” One Sunday he asked, “Sathyam, am I giving You a lot of trouble?” Swami replied, “Grandfather, if I do not work hard now, when else then? Start early, drive slowly, and reach safely! This is work that I have to do with pleasure! So long as I am strong in body and mind, I am ready to do any amount of work.” The grandfather was immensely pleased with this reply. This is the loving manner in which we spent time together. Sometimes in the evenings, Swami would prepare *rasam*. The wonderful aroma of the preparation would spread all over, attracting the attention of people who lived in the neighbourhood. They were mostly tribals, called Valmikulu or Boyavallu. These people would wonder, “Where from is this nice aroma coming? What is the item being cooked? Raju is too young to make such items and Kondama Raju is too old to do the cooking. Who else could it be?”

One day, one of the tribals who had discovered the secret came to the hut, wrapped up in a blanket. He was shivering and suffering from fever. He said, “I am getting the smell of something good being prepared here. Please give me some of it.” Kondama Raju was a most compassionate person. He called Swami to his side and whispered into His ears; he did not want everyone to know

and that is why Swami was summoned to his side. Kondama Raju said, “Poor fellow, he is eager to have the *rasam* that you have prepared. Give him some.” Swami gave that person some *rasam*. Next day, his fever was gone. The news quickly spread and from then on, everyone in the neighbourhood started coming for *rasam*, bringing aluminium tumblers; and for their sake, Swami had to make extra! He would make *rasam* in a big pot. Meanwhile, the tumblers would have been lined up, and Swami would pour *rasam* into them one by one. Thanks to the *rasam*, sickness disappeared from the village and everyone was happy. In due course, this news reached the other street where Pedda Venkama Raju and Chinna Venkama Raju resided; soon, people from there also started coming for the *rasam*! What you have to note here is that even at the age of seven, Swami not only had to manage the house but also serve others outside. Drawing water, cleaning, cooking, procuring the provisions – everything had to be done by Swami.

Meanwhile, Swami was made a teacher! Students living on the street – students does not mean just young boys; some of them were in their twenties (!) – they all came to Swami and said, “Raju, please teach us alphabets and how to read.” Swami readily agreed. Kondama Raju was not happy about this and said, “Raju works so hard during the day; He has little rest, and now you are adding to His burden.” Swami intervened and told Kondama Raju, “My mission is to make everyone happy. Teaching these people is no problem at all. I will do this teaching without problem or inconvenience to you.”

There was a person named Narayana Rao, who lived near the Sathyamma Temple. There were only two persons in the village, namely, Karnam Gopal Rao and Narayana Rao, who had proper houses. This Narayana Rao, made available a small thatched hut in his compound and that became our 'school'. Classes were in the evening, after all the household work was over. Swami used to serve food to Kondama Raju, eat, wash the vessels and put them away, and then leave for teaching.

Swami must make a special mention about the type of students He taught. These students were really adults; some even had moustaches! Swami would come wearing shorts; yet, all these grown-up people would stand up as a mark of respect. In the beginning, they used to address Swami as 'Raju' but soon they began to say 'Sir!'. There was no chair for the teacher; so, a big, nice stone was brought, covered with cloth, and this became the chair. The students had no slates to write on. Swami therefore asked them to bring sand from the Chitravathi River and spread it in the 'classroom' before the places where the students sat. The sand thus became the slate! Swami used to write the alphabets, starting in the traditional manner with '*Om Namō Narayanayah*'. This is how the instruction was commenced. Within a week, the students had learnt the basics of the alphabets. The students now needed books and slates. In those days, the slate cost one *anna* [the decimal system of currency did not exist then; the rupee was divided into sixteen *annas*, and each *anna* into twelve *pies*; three *pies* made one *pice*], and for one *pie*, one could get three slate-pencils. Swami asked the students to procure these but they did not have any money, not even one *anna* – that is how poor they were.

Students! You have to note how much Swami cared about the welfare of those whom He taught. There was a small shopkeeper named Venkataramana Shetty who lived in Puttaparthi in those days. Swami told him, “Listen, I want you to give slates to each of the eleven persons studying with Me.” The shopkeeper said, “But they will not pay me any money!” Swami replied, “I shall see to it that they do; My students will not default.” Having total faith in Swami, the shopkeeper supplied slates and slate-pencils to all the eleven students. Swami then told His students, “Be careful with the slates and the slate-pencils. Use the slate-pencils till they become really small. You have obtained all these by paying money and so you have to be careful with what you have acquired.” This is how Swami taught even in those days that money never ought to be wasted. The students learnt everything with great enthusiasm.

These people had no regular employment. They used to grow a small amount of spinach in their backyards and then try to sell it. Swami taught them how to augment their income. He asked them to go where there were tamarind trees, collect the tamarind fruits that fell down, remove the seeds, and then sell the processed tamarind. Swami said to them, “This belongs to no one; it is God’s property. No one can object to your collecting and selling tamarind this way.” These people followed Swami’s instructions with implicit faith and total obedience. With money earned this way, every week they used to pay back the shopkeeper one *bottu* [a quarter-*anna*]. In a little over a month’s time the slate and the pencil were paid for completely, by each and every student. The students were now happy and declared, “At last, the slate and

the pencil really belong to us.” Swami cautioned, “Yes, it is now yours, but never waste anything!” This is how Swami constantly reminded His students about the importance of never wasting anything.

In due course, the spinach business began to thrive. Where there is sacrifice, there is quality; and where there is quality, there Goddess Lakshmi [the Goddess of Wealth] appears. Swami now advised these people to grow papaya fruits along with spinach. This way, in due course, they could now earn about half to one rupee per month, which they kept aside.

Two years passed. Swami had completed studies up to the sixth standard, which was the highest available in Bukkapatnam. In those days, one prepared for ESLC [Elementary School Leaving Certificate] examination; for this one had to study up to the eighth standard which meant going elsewhere. But then some one would have to look after Kondama Raju. At this juncture, Seshama Raju [Swami’s elder brother] came to Puttaparthi and told Kondama Raju, “By keeping Him here, you are denying Him education; this would spoil Him. Therefore, send Him with me.” Kondama Raju was a very wise and philosophical man. He replied, “Well what have I studied? Nothing. You are supposed to have studied; what good has it done to you? What is the harm that has come to me by my being uneducated? It is all the same, whether one receives this education or not. I do not care for this type of education. You do not possess even one thousandth of the good qualities that Sathyam has! In what way has your education benefited you?” Seeing the angry response of Kondama Raju,

Seshama Raju remained silent; in those days, youngsters kept quiet when elders became angry; they did not argue back.

Later, Seshama Raju called Swami aside and said, “Look Sathya, education is very important. What can you do without education? Even to count, for example, for counting the number of clothes given to a washerman, one has to study and learn. Education is therefore indispensable.” Swami then went to His grandfather and said, “Grandfather, I am going.” He asked most anxiously, “What happens to me?” Swami then arranged for one of the sons of Venkata Subba Raju to take His place. In this manner, Swami prepared to leave for Kamalapuram, along with His elder brother Seshama Raju. When word got round about the impending departure, the eleven students being trained by Swami began to cry, “Our teacher is going away; we are losing our teacher. What happens to us now? What will be our fate?” That was their affection for Swami.

On the following morning, these eleven students planned to walk all the way to the Bukkapatnam Bus Stand along with Swami and His elder brother to see them off. From Bukkapatnam, we were to go to Dharmavaram, and from there to Kamalapuram. These students wanted to give a parting gift and so they collected some money; each contributed half-an-*anna*. It came to almost six *annas*. They offered the money to Swami but Swami refused saying, “I do not want all this. You keep it for yourself.” In those days things were so cheap that one could buy a short-pant for half-an-*anna* and a shirt for just one *anna*. Swami took just what was needed for one shirt and one short-pant, plus two *pice* for

stitching charges. But the tailor was so nice and so full of love for Swami, he said, “Raju, for You there are no charges!” What you must notice here is that everyone had love for Swami. What was the reason? Soft and sweet words, always spoken by Swami. This is what endeared everyone to Swami. These students got the dress stitched and sent it over.

Meanwhile, Seshama Raju got married. Following his marriage, he had to go to Anantapur for some further studies and training. His wife was left behind in Kamalapuram, and Swami had to do all the household work. In those days, a train used to pass by early in the morning. Hearing the whistle of the engine, all the town-people would take their pots and head for a pond five miles away, to fetch drinking water. Swami would go at four in the morning to bring water. It was the time of the Second World War. It so happened that one day, a special military train passed by at eleven o’clock at night. Hearing the whistle of the engine, all the people went as usual to the pond, without realising what time it was. Swami also went with all the others. It was very chilly then but one had to carry on nevertheless. After daybreak, there was more work to do; water had to be drawn from the well for people in the house to bathe. After this, there was a lot of household work to be done, followed by the cleaning of the entire house. It was only after finishing all this work that Swami could go to school.

In the school there was a Muslim teacher by name Mehboob Khan, who liked Swami very much. One day, with much kindness and consideration he said, “Raju, You work so hard all the time. I live

just opposite Your house and, through my window, can see what You are doing. You are fetching so much water and also doing so much household work.” Swami replied, “Sir, the body has to do work. In fact, the body has been given for doing work. If there is no work, laziness would set in and the body would become sick. Work is not all that difficult.” In due course, Mehboob Khan’s love for Swami increased. He used to teach English; the lessons were simple and Swami would quickly absorb them.

It was only the sixth standard, but there were many big boys in the class. Some of them were as old as eighteen or twenty! If all the boys in the class stood up, Swami would not be seen because He was so much shorter. Even if He stood on the bench while others stood on the ground, He could not be seen easily – that is how short He was. Even now, Swami is rather short; just imagine how short He must have been then! [Laughter.]

Mehboob Khan eagerly looked forward to taking classes for us. One day, the Telugu class was in progress. It was being handled by one Kondappa. The bell rang, signalling the end of that class; it was Mehboob Khan’s turn next. However, Kondappa continued with the class and asked, “Did everyone take notes in my class? Those who have not done so, stand up on the bench.” Swami said, “Sir, I did not take notes.” Swami had no money to buy notebooks! Swami ought to have stopped there but continued: “Even without taking notes, I know all the answers. You can ask questions and test Me if you want.” Kondappa became angry and said, “You have the audacity to talk back? Stand up on the bench! [In those days, this was one form of punishment given to students.] The students in the class protested by shouting ‘No!

No!’ in unison. This made the teacher even more angry. He said, “You will remain standing like this for the next three periods!”

It was time for Kondappa to leave the class. He got up but the chair stuck to him and also rose! [Laughter.] He thought that some nail had got stuck in his *dhothi* and that was the reason why the chair came up when he got up. Or might be there was some gum dropped on the chair. He called the sweeper to check for gum on the chair. The sweeper said that there was no gum. Meanwhile, Mehboob Khan rushed into the class; it was Swami’s class, and he was very keen to be there as quickly as possible. He saw Swami standing up on the bench. Tears rolled down his eyes; wiping them, he asked Kondappa, “Why did you make Raju stand up on the bench? This is wrong. This is my class and you have no business to make Him stand.” Turning to Me, Khan said, “Sit down!” Swami then said, “Sir, both of you are My teachers. He asked Me to remain standing on the bench for three class periods. How can I disobey him? I cannot sit down unless he permits Me to do so.” This is the way one should conduct oneself with teachers. Mehboob Khan then told Kondappa, “Raju is a very good boy; ask Him to sit down.” Kondappa knew this but said, “He answered back and I did not like that.” Mehboob Khan replied, “You are not aware. There is the mighty power of truth in this boy. His name itself is Sathyam! He always abides by truth, and that is why He commands so much power.” Reluctantly, Kondappa said, “Sit down!” The moment Swami came down, Kondappa got unstuck!

News about this incident spread rapidly, and Kondappa getting stuck to the chair became the talk of the school. Some teachers

called Swami and said, “Sathya, did You really make Kondappa get stuck to the chair?” Swami replied, “Sir, I did not do any such thing; as is the action, so is the consequence.” As a result of this incident, Raju became well known.

Swami then moved on to the seventh standard. Holidays came, and Seshama Raju took Swami to Hampi [an ancient town of historical importance in the neighbourhood]. On reaching the place, Seshama Raju told Swami, “You keep a watch over the luggage while my wife and I go and have *darshan* [of Siva in the form of Virupaksha].” Swami said, “Please do; I shall mind the luggage.” It is Swami’s nature to always help. Seshama Raju then said, “After we come back, You can go and have *darshan*.”

Swami sat down there with the luggage while the brother and his wife entered the temple to have the *darshan* of Virupaksha. Inside, they did not see the Virupaksha idol but Swami! Then Seshama Raju said, “Look, Raju is here! Who is taking care of the luggage?” He came out running and saw Swami there! He ran back inside and saw Swami there also. Seshama Raju and his wife then began to converse with each other. They said, “There is some strange power within Sathya. His effulgence itself is so unusual. We are not treating Him as He ought to be.” Meanwhile, the Municipal Chairman came there, in order to have the *darshan* of Virupaksha. He too saw only Raju instead of the idol. He was surprised and asked the temple priest, “Who is this boy? Where did He come from?” All of them came outside and there they saw Swami near the luggage. They then exclaimed, “This was the boy we saw there inside the temple where the idol is installed! Clearly, this is no ordinary boy; there is some extraordinary power within

Him.” The Chairman asked Seshama Raju as to who I was; he replied, “My brother.” The Chairman then invited all of us to his house for tea the following day.

We went to his house. Swami was offered coffee but Swami said ‘no thanks’. The host then offered milk, coconut water, etc., but Swami refused them all – Swami does not partake of such beverages and drinks. From the day this body came into existence, it has never touched tea, coffee and such drinks. Other things offered were also refused. They then realised that Raju was different and said, “There is some extraordinary power in this boy.” They were very keen to present something to Swami, like a dress. But they were not sure if Seshama Raju would get angry if such a gift was given; or the boy might refuse, thinking that his brother Seshama Raju would become angry. Finally, the Chairman brought a collar pin made of gold, and, holding Swami’s hand, slipped the pin into Swami’s palm. While giving the pin the Chairman said, “Please accept this. I am the Chairman and a respected person in this locality. You must pay heed to my word. I am giving this out of love, as if you are my son. You must not refuse this offering.” Seshama Raju’s wife spoke in the same tone: “He is an elder and You must not refuse what he is giving out of love.” Swami reluctantly accepted the collar pin but was not happy. He does not like to receive material objects as gifts from others.

The Hampi visit over, we all came back to Uravakonda by bus. Next day, Swami had to go to school. Swami left the house and went about ten feet when the collar pin fell down. Many searched for it but the pin could not be found. Swami then said:

*Understand that I am Sai!
Have no more worldly bonds with Me.
I have bonds with none.
It is beyond the power of anyone to restrain Me!*

The collar pin symbolised worldly attachment, and when it was lost, it was also symbolic of the end of the ‘Raju phase’ and attachments implied by it. Declaring that He had no worldly relationship with anyone, Swami ran to the house of one Anjaneyulu. He was the Prohibition Commissioner in those days. In front of his house there was a small rock. Swami went and sat on that stone.

Meanwhile, Seshama Raju, his wife, the children – all came running to where Swami was. They said, “Come back home.” Swami replied, “I have no home.” Seshama Raju then said in a stern voice, “Stop this philosophy and come back; I don’t wish to hear all this idle talk.” Swami replied, “This is not idle philosophy but the Truth! I am not going anywhere.” Seshama Raju tried to drag Swami away but he could not move Swami even an inch! In the meantime, Anjaneyulu appeared on the scene and told Seshama Raju, “Why are you trying to force Him?” Seshama Raju replied, “I am not forcing Him; just that He has come away without having food.” Anjaneyulu then said, “That is no problem; He can have food in my house today.”

Swami was taken inside by Anjaneyulu and served many items of food on a plate. It was always Swami’s practice to mix all the items before eating. This used to be the practice in the Shirdi *Avatar* also; there, Lakshmi Bai would serve many items and

Baba would mix them all before eating. In this *Avatar* too, Swami is following a similar practice.

Swami now started having food in Anjaneyulu's house, and spend time sitting on the rock. Anjaneyulu's children would say, "Raju, why are You doing like this? Your study is getting disturbed. Time is getting wasted. Don't give up study," and so on. But Swami did not pay any attention to such talk.

People also used to ask, "Who are You? What is Your name?" Swami replied, "My name is Sai." In those days, no one knew the name Sai Baba. They mistook Sai Baba to mean 'Sahebu', which meant a Muslim. At that time, the Commissioner's son ran inside, brought a camera and clicked a photo. In the picture, Shirdi Sai could be seen in front of Swami. Thereafter, Prohibition Commissioner Anjaneyulu gave Swami the name Sai Baba, and in due course the name remained.

Earlier while in school, Swami used to lead the school prayer. The Headmaster Kameswara Rao was an ardent devotee. He used to say of Swami, "Sathyam is not a *pillavaadu* (an ordinary boy) as you imagine; He is a *Pidugu* (thunderbolt!)." Kameswara Rao it was who had asked Swami to lead the school prayer. Swami asked, "What prayer should I recite?" He replied, "You compose Your own prayer." On the spot, Swami composed a prayer that reflected the sentiments of many religions like Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, etc.

[At this point, Swami sang melodiously, the prayer song He had composed sixty years ago as young Sathya.]

Some said that the names of other religions like Islam etc., should not be mentioned. Such objectors merely reflected their own narrow-mindedness but all the school children liked the song. One evening, Seshama Raju asked Swami, “Where from are You producing such songs? Are they Your own compositions or have You copied from somewhere else?” Seshama was himself a Telugu poet and poets are known to be crazy at times! That is why he asked such a question!!

Later, Seshama asked Swami to write a small play and also act in it. So, Swami wrote the play *Cheppinattu Chesthara*? You all know about this play. Swami acted in the drama and also won a big prize for His acting.

The Headmaster wanted to raise some funds for the school building. So he announced that there would be a dance performance by the well-known dancer Rishyendramani. The prize was to be distributed by the Head of the *Panchayat* [Council of Village Elders], one Rama Subbamma. This Rishyendramani was reputed as a dancer of great skill and talent. She could balance a jug of water on her head and dance without allowing the jug to fall or the water to spill. However, this dancer was not going to appear in our school. Swami was expected to play the role! So, to uphold the announcement of the Headmaster, Swami had to appear on the stage dressed like dancer Rishyendramani and perform her type of dance! For the dance, Swami placed a bottle of water on the head, a plate on top of the bottle, and two lamps on the plate! This is not all! While dancing, a sewing needle had to be picked up with the eyelids, and this had to be done without

allowing the objects on the head to fall down! Rishyendramani could do all this, and Swami was expected to emulate her feat!! Everyone was stunned by the performance. No one knew that it was Sathya who had danced and not Rishyendramani. Seshama Raju also witnessed the show; he too could not believe his eyes; so spectacular was the show.

It was time for the prize distribution. Rama Subbamma came on the stage and showered praise on Rishyendramani for her scintillating performance. She then announced, “By way of showing my appreciation, I am now going to present a medal to Rishyendramani.” All eyes were now on the stage, eagerly looking for the arrival of Rishyendramani. Instead, wearing shorts, Swami came there running! Rama Subbamma said, “Boy, this medal is not for you but for Rishyendramani.” The Headmaster then came there and told Rama Subbamma, “That was not Rishyendramani who danced; it was this boy, dressed like her!” Rama Subbamma was stunned; she dropped the medal, lifted Swami, and hugged Him! That was how the Kamalapuram experience was.

In course of time, Swami entered the eighth standard. There was one Raghavan, who was the drill master. He was well-built and had a good personality. At that time, a cattle fair was due to take place in the neighbouring town of Cuddapah. The drill master wanted all the scouts in the school to go and do service in the fair. The question arose as to who should be the leader of the scouts. Boys from all classes, from the sixth to the twelfth, volunteered. But Raghavan was firm; he said that Raju alone was fit to be the leader. Swami told the drill master, “Sir, how can I be the leader?

I am not big enough for the job.” Raghavan replied, “I know that You can be the leader. You can do it!” Swami then softly said, “Sir, a leader must have uniform, whistle, stick, shoes, etc. I cannot afford these. Therefore, I cannot assume the responsibility of leadership.” One must always be realistic and state truthfully what one can do and what one cannot. Meanwhile, all the students unanimously declared that they wanted Raju as their leader for the scout camp in Cuddapah. Raghavan explained why this was not possible – the leader had to have the proper dress, whistle, shoes, stick etc, and Raju could not get these.

Two boys used to share the desk used by Swami in school – Ramesh and Suresh. One was the son of the local Shirastadar while the other was the son of the Tashildar. Swami used to sit in the middle and these two boys used to sit on either side. All of us were of the same height. Ramesh was the only child of his parents. He went to his father and said, “Father, I want two scout dresses; I like them very much.” He got them. He then neatly packed one set and then wrote a letter: “Raju, You must accept this dress. If You don’t, I will give up my life!” Ramesh kept the dress packet and the letter in Swami’s place in the desk. Swami read that letter, tore it, and prepared a reply: “Friendship cannot and must not be based on giving and taking. If such transactions exist, then it can no longer be called friendship. Thus, your giving Me a gift is not good. You love Me very much, and I too love you a lot. If I were to accept your gift, then our mutual love would get spoiled. For this reason, I cannot accept what you are giving. If you do not want our friendship to be ruined, then you will take back what you have given.” Ramesh insisted, “Does not matter if

our friendship gets ruined; but You must accept what I am giving. I have not even told my father what I am doing. This is my dress, and I want to share it with You!” However, gently but firmly, Swami made Ramesh take back his gift.

In due course, the news that Swami was an excellent composer of poems and songs reached one Kote Subbanna. This person made his living by selling medicines. He had a big shop full of medicines. One day he sent word that Raju should go to his house. Swami sent a reply: “Why should I? I have no work there; I do not go about aimlessly from house to house like a rat or a cat!” Students should know this. You all have the tendency to go from room to room; this is not a good habit. Only cats and rats move about like this; you are neither cats nor rats. You must remain where you are.

Kote Subbanna realised that Swami would not come to his place; so, he came to Swami. Once you are after Truth and remain firm in your determination, then even people of great stature would have to come to you. Subbanna placed a small bag containing some eatables in Swami’s hand and said, “Listen, I have a new wonder drug called *Bala Bhaskara*,” and then went on describing its wonderful properties. He added, “I want a small help from You.” Swami replied, “Help I always give. That is My ideal. What is it that you want?” He said that he wanted a poem extolling the efficacy of the new medicine, and added, “If You can have the poem ready by the evening, it would be very nice!”

Swami wrote the song. Kote Subbanna came to the school to collect the poem because he was not supposed to come to the

house. He was waiting near the school gate. There Swami gave him the composition. Subbanna then said, "I have the poem alright but what about the tune for the song, and who will sing it? I don't understand." Swami said, "There are people who would be ready to do all this, if you pay them money. You can also prepare placards, and have little boys carry them while singing the song." Subbanna then said, "I shall do all this but You must indicate how the song must be sung." By evening he managed to round up a few boys and Swami taught them the song. The song was a hit, the advertising was a tremendous success, and Kote Subbanna did brisk business!

[At this point Swami sang, in His own beautiful way, the song He had composed over sixty years ago that advertised the qualities of the wonder drug *Bala Bhaskara*.]

The story of the Cattle fair that Swami mentioned earlier, did not quite end there. The scouts in the school were preparing to leave for duty. They very much wanted Swami to go along with them. If He did not go, the boys would feel very unhappy and sad. But Swami had His own constraints; He could not go without the proper dress etc. So, Swami decided to act as if He had acute stomach ache. If one has fever, it can be detected with a thermometer or even by touching the body; but stomach ache cannot be verified so easily! Meanwhile, the boys who were going in a procession came to our house. They saw Swami groaning and moaning and said, "Raju, if You are not going, we too will not." Drill master Raghavan added, "Why did such a thing happen to You? It is our supreme misfortune." Swami replied, "Sir all of you please

go ahead. I shall join later if the pain subsides.” A minimum of five rupees was needed for expenses during the ten days of the camp; but Swami did not have even five paise! After everyone left, Swami sat up on the bed and thought of a plan.

At that time, Swami had just completed studies in the sixth standard. The textbooks used in the sixth standard were available with Swami. In those days, the same books were used in the class year after year. Thus, the books with Swami could be passed on to someone just entering the sixth standard. Swami decided to give these used books to a Harijan boy in the town. He went to the boy's house, called the boy out and told him, “Take a look at all these books that I used last year. They cover all the subjects like civics, history, and so on.” The boy examined the books. All that he needed were there; besides, they were in very good condition. These days, students do not take good care of their books. They scribble on them and even draw all kinds of pictures and cartoons. If books are spoiled, then so would be the heart. Books must always be maintained in a good condition – this is what Napoleon also advocated. The Harijan boy, after examining the books that Swami had brought, said, “Raju, these books are worth twenty rupees but I would be able to give You only fifteen.” Swami said, “I do not want fifteen rupees; five would do.”

In those days, currency notes were not yet in vogue; so Swami received the cash in small change. Two rupees were needed as bus fair and three rupees for food. Swami separated the coins amounting to three rupees, placed the change in a piece of old cloth and tied it into a bundle. When Swami came home,

the bundle gave way and the coins scattered all over the place making a lot of sound. The lady of the house [Seshama Raju's mother-in-law] came out and angrily said, "Where did you get all this money from? You must surely have stolen it!" Swami explained, "I did not steal this money; I got it in return for my old textbooks." The lady retorted, "I do not believe a word of what You say." Swami then brought the boy who had purchased the books, to bear witness. Falling at the feet of the lady that boy said, "Mother, Raju is incapable of stealing. It was I who gave Raju the money, all these coins that are spread over here." The lady shouted, "You two are made for each other! You are just dancing to His tune. Both of you get out from here!" So saying, the lady collected all the scattered coins.

Swami had promised the scouts that He would join them at night. At five o'clock in the evening, Swami had food and started walking towards Cuddapah. Swami reached the destination in the early hours of the morning, at about 2.30 a.m. Swami was feeling very thirsty but there was no drinking water around. However, there was a tub nearby with water meant for bathing cattle. Swami was forced to drink some of that water. It was very quiet and there was no one around. When Swami looked around, He noticed that there was a bundle of beedis and a one-*anna* coin on a stone near the tub. Swami intensely dislikes beedis. So He crushed them and buried the bits in the sand. Having done that, He took the one *anna* coin and started walking. Soon it was daybreak.

All that Swami had was one *anna*. Is it possible to survive for nine days on just one *anna*? While so wondering, Swami noticed

that in the fair, a game of petty gambling was in progress. Swami decided to play! Every time He did, He won; soon, the one *anna* He had started with had become twelve *anna*. At that point Swami stopped, feeling that this amount was sufficient to see Him through for the entire stay. Since He was on a winning streak, many urged Swami not to quit but continue playing. Swami told them that there ought to be a ceiling on desires and walked away.

Swami has played many games but this was the only time He had indulged in gambling. One should never gamble, but at that point of time Swami did so because He had no money. However, on reflection, Swami felt that He ought not to have gambled; so He went back to return all His winnings to the man who ran the gambling game. But that man refused to take back the money won from him. He then told others, “Strange boy. I don’t know where he comes from. But this much is certain: He is a very good boy!”

After the cattle fair was over and the scout service had concluded, Swami returned to Kamalapuram. He carried with Him some fruits and flowers to be presented to His sister-in-law [Seshama Raju’s wife]. Swami’s long absence had infuriated the people at home, especially as all the work normally done by Swami had to be done by them. Thus, when Swami returned, He got a very cold reception. The fruits and flowers that He lovingly offered were flung away; and, Swami was severely punished. As a result, the hand was badly swollen. What could be done? Swami had to bear it all with patience and forbearance.

There was an old lady in the adjoining house. She used to watch

all this and cry silently, because she could not bear to see Sathya hurt. On the following day, Seshama Raju's son died and a telegram was sent to Puttaparthi. In those days, the telegram was received in Bukkapatnam and then hand-carried to Puttaparthi. It so happened that Pedda Venkama Raju had gone to Bukkapatnam for the weekly fair. There someone handed him the telegram sent by Seshama Raju. Immediately, Pedda Venkama Raju boarded a bus for Kamalapuram. When he came home, he saw that Swami's hand was badly swollen. He asked what had happened and what caused the swelling. Swami said it was due to a boil. He did not say anything then. But meanwhile, the old lady in the neighbouring house told Venkama Raju all that had been happening – about the heavy work-load, the ill-treatment, etc.

In the evening, Pedda Venkama Raju took Swami out. It was dark and so Swami carried a lamp. We went beyond the limits of the village. There, Pedda Venkama Raju stopped. The lamp was placed on the ground. Pedda Venkama Raju took Swami's hands into his, cried, and then said, "Son, did I send You here because I could not feed You? I will do anything, I will even become a petty peddler of salt to support You. Why do You have to suffer so much here? Though Your father, I have never raised my hand against You and struck You! You are being put to too much suffering here. Come back with me at once." Swami gently said, "They need a lot of help here right now. It would not be proper to leave and go away abruptly. You please go now. I shall come back later when the time is appropriate." Swami never said anything against His brother or the other members of his family. Father went back most reluctantly but after he returned, he kept

on writing postcards, “Come back immediately.” And then, in order to get Swami back real quick, the message was sent, “Your mother is in a serious condition.” Swami knew that this was not true. He stayed in his brother’s place till the examinations were over.

Swami is telling all this in order to impress upon students, how young people ought to behave and conduct themselves in relation to elders and teachers. You know a lot about the world. You are aware that even great sages have faced many problems. The best way to get over problems is to develop sacred feelings. Always, help ever, and hurt never. This is the maxim followed by Swami, and that is how He grew up. These days, young boys have so many clothes – ten pairs of trousers, ten shirts, ten bush shirts...! Swami did not enjoy such luxury; He had to be content with just one shirt and one shorts per year. One must learn to manage with minimum possessions and be simple. As Swami often says, less luggage means more comfort. You must decrease your acquisitions and possessions. You must also decrease your desires. Do you think you will lose anything by doing so? No; on the contrary, by strictly adhering to Truth, you can achieve anything you want. Therefore, you must always follow the path of Truth. Thus, the two maxims,

Sathyam vada, dharmam chara,

Always speak the truth, and always adhere to righteousness, form the fountainhead of *Bharatiya* culture. Hence, follow the path of truth and foster love for God. Once you have intense love for

God, you can achieve anything in this world. There is nothing greater than love in this world. You young people should never forget love. With love, you can accomplish anything. You can even acquire big and valuable objects.

[At this point, Swami materialised a big diamond. The creation of the diamond was greeted with loud applause. Holding up the diamond, Swami asked the audience, “Can you see it?” He then showed the diamond to Prof. Anil Kumar (who was translating) and asked, “How is it?” Amazed, Prof. Anil Kumar replied, “Swami, it is brilliant!”]

Such things will be in your hands. Once you have truth, everything comes to you. King Harishchandra was able to accomplish everything; how? On account of adherence to truth. He lost his wife. His son died. He also lost his kingdom. He then ended up as a caretaker in a cremation ground. However, in spite of all his difficulties, he never compromised on truth. His wife then told him, “I too shall strictly adhere to truth. Together we shall sail through all other problems. Otherwise, together we shall sink. But we shall never give up truth.”

[Swami interrupted His discourse and, pointing to the diamond He had created earlier, asked Prof. Anil Kumar, “Is it glowing?” He replied, “Swami, it is shining brilliantly!”]

If you adhere to truth, you can do anything. Once in Kodaikanal – many must have seen it. [Swami asked someone in the audience what He had materialised in Kodaikanal. He then continued.] Swami had materialised the Syamanthakamani in Kodaikanal.

This extraordinary jewel belonged to Sathyabhama. Swami showed the jewel to all present there; later, it was sent back to where it came from!

Whatever you want is in these Hands. Do not underestimate Swami just because He is moving about and talking to you all like an ordinary person. **Everything is in this Hand!** You may not know about it, but just wait; in the days to come, the whole world would be in this Hand like this diamond [so saying, Swami pointed to the diamond in His Hand, and there was a big applause].

From today, all of you students must become wedded to truth. Always be just and you would then be automatically respected. Adore and revere your parents and also your teachers. Are you aware to what extent Swami gave respect to His teachers? I don't think you know. The other day, Swami spoke about *kshama*. There is a lot of difference between mere patience and *kshama*; people often mistake one for the other. *Kshama* is the golden virtue that enables you to face with equanimity all difficulties, troubles, obstacles, losses, suffering, calumny, etc. The world is not aware but it is because of *kshama* that Swami generously forgives and forgets all the misdeeds done against Him [applause]. Without *kshama*, it would not be possible to put up with even for a moment, what is going on around! Yet, Swami is so forgiving that He tolerates every mistake including very big ones – which is possible only when there is *kshama*. It is Swami's *Kshama* that will bring the whole world to Him. Adhere firmly to *sathya* and *dharma*, and you would have no reason to worry about anything. Only then would you be able to achieve anything you want. Students must therefore be humble always; humility and *kshama*

go together.

[Swami paused and then gently indicated that perhaps He had been speaking for ‘too long’. In unison, all the students roared, ‘No Swami!’. Laughing, Swami joked, ‘Already you have started telling lies!’ Bhagavan then continued.]

Swami wishes to mention one more thing. One day as Swami was returning from Bukkapatnam, He passed by an elderly lady who was removing lice from the hair of a child. This lady had the habit of chewing betel leaves and spitting frequently. It so happened that when Swami was going past her, she spat and the red spittle splattered all over Swami’s dress. It all happened quite accidentally of course – nothing deliberate. The lady saw what had happened and became quite upset. She lamented, “Raju, look what I have done!” She then tried to remove the stain left by the betel juice. Swami told her not to worry, went home and immediately washed the shirt clean. Had the shirt have been given to a washerman, he would have charged about half an anna or so. But no; Swami would never spend money like that; money was not only scarce but also very valuable. Swami would wash and then iron the dress using an improvised iron – a vessel with burning charcoal in it.

That is how frugal Swami was. He never added to the financial burden of His parents. Swami never borrowed, never caused any dissatisfaction to parents, always upheld the family honour – that is how Swami spent His student days. You too should be like that, and bring credit to your parents. They struggle hard to bring you up and you owe them a deep debt of gratitude. Just because you can receive money from home, it does not mean you should

spend it any way you like. It is not good to waste money; misuse of money is evil.

Good conduct and behaviour would not only get a good name for you, but also bring credit to the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Swami will, without fail, help you to any extent, if you endeavour to earn a good name. Swami will ensure all success. It is not enough if you merely listen; you should actively put into practice, the teachings of Swami. If you do so, it will do you a lot of good in the future. Purity will not only bring you peace but a good reputation as well.

[Swami then asked the students to sing *bhajans*. They sang two *bhajans*: *Govinda Murahari Madhava ...* and *Bhajore Bhai Sai Ram....* Swami greatly enjoyed both the songs. Swami then asked, “Who wants this diamond? Tell Me, and I shall give. Who wants it?” Bhagavan then threw the diamond into the audience and it vanished! The miracle was greeted with loud applause.]

29 May 2000