

Lead an Ideal Life and Set an Example for Others

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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One may become a wise man by acquiring all types of knowledge
But may not, however, realise one's own self, the dull-witted one!
Despite acquiring all knowledge,
A mean-minded person cannot give up bad qualities.

(Telugu poem)

The more a person is educated,
The more they indulge in argumentation.
Never can they acquire true wisdom
Why pursue all types of education and get doomed?
One must pursue education that leads to immortality.

(Telugu poem)

Devoid of practice, any amount of education will serve no purpose. One may acquire high academic degrees and titles, but one cannot be called an educated person. Education is different from practical knowledge. Hence one has to put into practice what one has learnt from an educational institution. Today, it is only the highly educated who come under the category of 'ajnanis' (those who lack wisdom). Children today imitate them and walk in their footsteps.

(Swami then answered some questions put by the delegates)

Q 1: How should students relate themselves to God?

A: God is not separate from you. He is in you, with you, around you, behind you and before you. One has to develop love toward God and have an inseparable bond of love with God. The relationship with God is not physical. One has to develop the feeling that God and oneself are one and the same and that God is in one.

Q 2: What are the external signs of spiritual transformation that takes place in a devotee?

A: First and foremost, one has to enquire into oneself whether one has developed unflinching faith in God or having a casual and worldly relationship with God. Having decided over the matter, one has to develop firm faith and ensure that one is living with a sense of total equanimity in both pleasure and pain. In fact, there are no special signs of the spiritual transformation that takes place in an individual. It is possible that sometimes some signs may appear outwardly and in dreams, or one may be relating oneself to the voice of God. In any case, it is the individual that has to observe for themselves whether their devotion is increasing or decreasing. Everything is dependant upon one's faith in God.

Q 3: What are the qualities that are expected of a teacher in the Sai system of education?

A: Teachers should not let students go free. Teachers should exercise proper control over students with kind and good words, keeping in view the aims and aspirations of the students. Simply because they are your students, do not let them go scot-free. Even if you were to allow them some freedom, apply brakes now and then and also punish them, if necessary. Such

punishment is intended to be a warning to the students to behave themselves properly.

Q 4: What is the role of a teacher in the Sai educational system? How should one enforce discipline?

A: Let the teacher remain as a teacher and the student as student. Both have their roles and responsibilities. Especially the teacher has got a responsibility to ensure proper atmosphere in the classroom, while keeping the students happy.

Q 5: What efforts are to be made by a teacher to become a role model in human values?

A: This is a very important question. Only when a teacher behaves properly with the students will the students emulate their qualities. What you forbid the students do not yourself undertake to do. Not only this, even with food, both the teacher and student should partake the same food. You forbid meat eating for the students and you yourself partake meat and fish. Such a practice is very bad for developing a harmonious relationship between teacher and student. What you teach students, you follow first. The teacher should not behave irresponsibly, thinking that the students have no right to question him. The teacher should conduct himself with humility and alertness while dealing with students. They should nourish and nurture the students with love. Another question relates to his dealings with students in a co-education school. The male teacher should take extra care in his relations with the girl students. They should be treated as his sisters, with love and respect. Only then will their character will be moulded. By their behaviour, teachers are expected to set examples to others.

Q 6: In what way should parents be involved in children's education?

A: Parents should not discuss their family problems in front of the children. They should sort out those problems between themselves and keep the children happy and education-oriented. Instead of being pointed out by the children, parents should set an example to their children in conduct and behaviour.

Children should not cause any inconvenience to their parents. They should develop a sense of gratitude toward their parents for bringing them up, undergoing several difficulties, and sacrificing their own comforts. Even after they are married, they should not neglect their parents, thinking, "I and my family are doing well. What do I care if my parents are suffering?" Only uneducated fools will behave like that. Educated people should not develop such attitude. You must serve your parents and keep them happy. Fulfill their needs. It is the duty of children to keep their parents happy.

These days, students make friendship with bad characters. "Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are." By joining bad company, you will also get spoiled. Today, there is a lot of agitation between parents and children. The desires and aspirations of parents and children are opposed to one another. If you look after your own tastes, what about those of your parents? You can therefore fulfill your aspirations, keeping in view the expectations of your parents. It is sheer selfishness to work for your own satisfaction, making your parents unhappy. It is unbecoming of a child.

Parents should also exercise proper control over such children. The parents should explain to their children, "Today, you are married and set up a family, but we are with you right from the beginning. Make us happy. It is your duty." Bidding good-bye to the parents and setting up a separate family is selfishness. Only because this selfishness is increasing in recent times is the relationship between parents and children strained.

Another aspect I wish to emphasise: do not interfere in matters not concerning you. Due to the impact of modern times, children tend to become separate from their parents. Tempers run high and tensions build up in such situations. Hence, you have to control your anger to a

certain extent. You have to pause and enquire into yourself, “Do I have to show my temper to my parents? Is it correct?” Do not let your elderly parents shed tears on account of your rude behaviour. On the other hand, if you make them happy, you will also be happy.

Bal vikas classes are very important for the children. *Dhyana* (meditation) should be taught to *bal vikas* children and to those undergoing training in Education in Human Values. First and foremost, parents should develop an awareness about human values. They should follow the human values in letter and spirit. How do you expect the children to follow human values, when you yourself don't? Set an example by your practice of human values.

Parents today are busy and have no time to spare for their family and children. If both parents go to their offices, what will happen to the children? Who will look after them? Some years back, I wrote a poem about the pathetic condition of the children and family in such situations:

If women go out for jobs, who will take care of the home?
When husband and wife go out to office, who will do the household work?
If women go out to teach others' children in schools, who will teach their own children?
If women also go to work just like men, who will cook food in the kitchen?
Earning money may solve some financial problems, but how will it resolve domestic problems?
Women can work and earn money but they cannot lead a happy life if they neglect their home.
(Telugu poem)

Such parents depend upon cooks and ayahs to run their homes. This will bring down the reputation of the family. Hence, you have to take up employment only after ensuring smooth running of the household. You can certainly take up a job, provided the children are taken care of in a proper manner. Even the males do not understand this situation. Some people spend their time in reading newspapers and watching TV after returning from their offices. Some others go to the club and play cards. They do not bother about their family and children.

How can they ensure proper atmosphere in the house and children's education? If the children are not studying well, it is not their mistake. The parents are to be blamed for such a situation. You remain in the house and look after the children properly. That is the real income for the family.

On the other hand, if you go out to earn a few thousands, neglecting your children, you become selfish parents. If your children are spoiled, you have to repent later. Hence, it is the foremost duty of the parents to bring up the children in a proper atmosphere.

The human values are to be followed by every individual voluntarily. No one can enforce them from above. If people in their respective occupations, like the police, doctors, nurses, etc., were to do their jobs with honesty and integrity, problems would not have arisen in society. Unfortunately, this is not the situation today. The children are suffering for the faults of their parents. Hence, we have to ensure that the children are happy and grow up in a healthy environment.

Do not allow them to sleep till 8.00 a.m. Wake them up at 5 o'clock itself. Unfortunately today even the parents do not get up at 5 o'clock. They sleep till 8 o'clock in the morning and their children up to 9 o'clock. The parents should set an example to their children. Those who have no children and no responsibilities can sleep for any length of time.

Sri Sathya Sai Organisations, while establishing schools, can raise a corpus fund for the maintenance of schools. They can also take the help of parents for running the school. Especially, the three principles of discipline, duty, and devotion must be given top-priority in Sathya Sai Schools. Children have to be taught the human values right from an early age.

Students should be taught to establish proper relationship with God.

Parents should not provide all sorts of fashionable dresses to the children. Provide them simple and neat dress that will suit their needs. It is the primary duty of the parents to exercise proper control over their children. Parents should also be given proper orientation about Sai system of education. It is possible that some parents may not be aware of it.

Some children speak lies, out of fear of their parents. Hence, parents have to visit their school once in a week to enquire about their wards' behaviour and progress in studies. Sometimes children manipulate their marks and inform them to their parents, who implicitly believe their children. They do not care to go to the school and check with the teachers. Parents have to go to the school every now and then and check with the teachers, without the knowledge of their children.

In a way, the parents in villages are better in this aspect. They at least monitor the progress and behaviour of their children in the school and take timely corrective measures. But people living in towns and cities, especially high officials, do not bother about their children. Students should not loiter here and there. Some students roam about in bazaars and waste their time. Such students are stupid! It does not behove the stature of a student to roam about in the streets aimlessly.

Parents should also prevent children from misuse of money. They have to educate children as to what is right and what is wrong. They should correct the children's behaviour. Father, mother, and children should thus lead a harmonious life in the house.

Parents should also watch what books the children are reading. Youngsters are prone to read all sorts of books. They keep some useless novels in the midst of textbooks and read them. Parents think that the boy is reading a textbook. But it is not a textbook; it is his 'taste'. Parents should immediately remove such books from the children. When you thus observe and keep a close watch on the activities of the children, they behave well and come up in life.

Educate *bal vikas* children about ceiling on desires, which forbids waste of money, food, energy, and time. Only when you enforce this rule will children come under your control. Today, even the elders do not follow this ceiling on desires. During festivals and family occasions, a lot of money is spent in organising dinners where food is wasted. Food is God; do not waste food. Give food to those who are in need of it. Unfortunately today, the poor and hungry are not fed. A lot of food is thrown in the dustbin as waste.

Regarding talk, do not talk too much, whereby precious energy is wasted. Similarly, do not waste time. "Time waste is life waste." We are wasting money. What purpose is served by wasting money? "Misuse of money is evil." Certainly you can spend money when necessary. But should you waste money for unnecessary things simply because you have enough money in your pocket?

Several people spend their entire salary for luxuries. They think that they are leading a pompous life. When you are thus spending money recklessly, even the milkman and servants in the house who observe your lifestyle put forward demands for increasing their wages. Therefore, do not set a bad example for others. With each rupee you spend, ask yourself whether it is for a good purpose or not.

These are the answers for the questions you have raised. Conduct yourself carefully and lead a purposeful life in society. Even if you commit a small mistake, society will view it seriously. Do not commit even a small mistake. Society is carefully watching the lives of members of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. Hence, lead an ideal life and set an example to others.