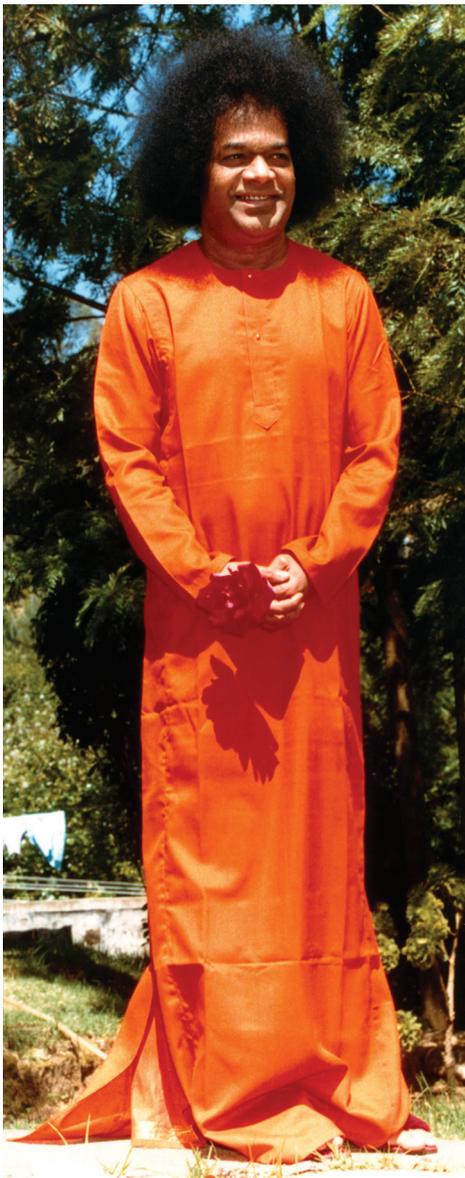


DIVINE TEACHINGS OF Sri Sathya Sai Baba

VOLUME 5



Ceiling on Desires

Do not waste food; do not waste money; do not waste time; do not waste energy; do not exploit Nature.

Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is pure. Give any surplus food to those in need.

Don't waste money. God is wealth. Since God is wealth, misuse of money is evil. Practice charity by gifting away money, food, clothes, houses, etc.

One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time.

Don't waste energy. Energy is wasted in seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, and doing what isn't necessary. Be moderate in all these five activities.

Know that whatever God has created is for your own welfare. You should enjoy Nature according to your need. You should not rob Nature of its resources to satisfy your greed.



Divine Teachings
of
Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Volume 5: Ceiling on Desires





©2021 Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation.

Published by Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation.

All Rights Reserved.

If an official Sri Sathya Sai Organization wishes to translate this book into its local language, please write to us at: info@sathyasai.org

We would love to hear your comments about this book. Please send them to: info@sathyasai.org





Dedicated with love and reverence
to
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba





Contents

Preface	5
Ceiling on Desires.....	7
Glossary	69



Divine Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

- Volume 1: Silence
- Volume 2: Contentment
- Volume 3: Forgiveness
- Volume 4: Forbearance
- Volume 5: Ceiling on Desires

Topics for forthcoming issues

- Compassion
- Eight Flowers of Worship
- Ten Types of Purity
- Twenty Virtues Essential for Wisdom
- Who Is Dear to the Lord



Ceiling on Desires

Preface

During His sojourn on Earth, Sri Sathya Sai Baba delivered more than 2,000 discourses, most of which were subsequently compiled in *Sri Sathya Sai Speaks* and *Summer Showers*. In addition, He wrote 16 books in the *Vahini* series. You can find these at this website: <http://sssbt.info/>.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba was born in a small village in India on November 23, 1926. He left His body on April 24, 2011, having become one of the most revered spiritual teachers in the world. He exhibited love, wisdom, and knowledge beyond our comprehension. His devotees regard Him as an incarnation of God in human form (an *Avatar*).

Sri Sathya Sai Baba did not come to establish a new religion. Instead He exhorted people to practice their own religion and to respect the differences among faiths. His mission is best described in His own words:

I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added luster. . . . I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect or creed or cause; nor have I come to collect followers for any doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into My fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this universal unitary faith. . . . this path of love, . . . this duty of love, this obligation to love.

All religions teach one basic discipline: the removal from the mind of the blemish of egoism, of running after little joy. Every religion teaches man to fill his being with the glory of God and evict the pettiness of conceit. It trains him in the methods of detachment and discrimination so that he may aim high and attain liberation. Believe that all hearts are motivated by the One and Only God; that all faiths glorify the One and Only God; that all names in all languages and all forms man can conceive, denote the One and Only God; His adoration is best done by means of love. Cultivate that attitude of Oneness, between men of all creeds, all countries, and all continents. That is the message of love I bring. That is the message I wish you to take to heart.

His discourses and writings focused on what He had come to give us: a path toward realizing our own Selves, toward realizing and experiencing the oneness of all creation. His discourses and writings are filled with simple

explanations of how we should live and how we should treat our fellow humans in order to further ourselves along the path to enlightenment.

We are pleased to offer our readers *Divine Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba*, Volume 5. It includes the topic, “Ceiling on Desires.” The quotations are selected from *Sri Sathya Sai Speaks* and *Summer Showers*. Each quotation is numbered, and references are provided.

In one of His Divine discourses Sri Sathya Sai Baba said: “Practice what I teach. That is enough. That is all I ask.” Let us imbibe His words, apply them in daily practice, and find fulfillment in life.



Ceiling on Desires

The following are highlights of the full quotations that begin on page 15.

*Do Not Waste Food
Do Not Waste Money
Do Not Waste Time
Do Not Waste Energy
Do Not Exploit Nature*

Do Not Waste Food

*The nature of the food and water that we take in decides our character. Only by controlling the quality of our food and water can we attain Divinity. That is why food is said to be God. Hence to waste food is to waste God. Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is satwic (pure).
Give any surplus food to those in need.*

Eat only what you need to eat. Don't be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach.

Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food. Food is the main source of man's life, body, mind, and character.

Don't waste food. Food is God. Your body is made of food, and you are the result of the food eaten by your parents. Eat as much as it is necessary to eat. But do not throw away food by taking too much on your plate. By wasting food you will be wasting the energy Divine.

In the preparation of food, you should be careful in avoiding wastage. We are only doing a disservice by consuming more food than what is necessary for the body.

With regard to food you must ask: "Am I just eating what I need or more? Am I wasting food?" So also with regard to money: "Am I using this money for my own selfish needs or for boosting my name and fame, or to satisfy my ego and vanity?" Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater sadhana (spiritual practice).

One's food influences one's thoughts. Smoking and intoxicating drinks have to be given up. They are ruinous for the health. Eating meat should also be given up because eating animal food promotes animal tendencies. The fourth evil

that has to be gotten rid of is gambling. Those who take to the spiritual path should avoid as much as possible these four bad practices. It is sinful to slaughter poor animals for one's food. Sai members should follow the motto "Help ever; hurt never." There is no meaning in professing to respect human values without observing the rule that you should cause no harm to others in any form whatsoever.

People are born without any desires and qualities. At the time of birth, they have no attributes whatsoever. As they grow up, they acquire some qualities, due to the influence of the food habits they develop and the company with which they associate. As they develop attachment and possessive instinct, they have to face so many losses, difficulties, troubles, and challenges.

Do not waste food. Food is responsible for sustaining the body. Eat moderately. Don't waste food. Food is God. Many people face problems for lack of food. If you waste food, you betray those people who are denied food. So, do not waste food.

It is significant to note that those who live on vegetarian food are less prone to diseases, whereas non-vegetarians are subject to more diseases. Why?

Because animal food is incompatible with the needs of the human body. Doctors speak about proteins being present in non-vegetarian food, but the fact is that there are better quality proteins in food articles like vegetables, pulses, milk, curd, etc. Non-vegetarian food not only affects man's body but also has a deleterious effect on his mind.

Food, head, God—these three are interrelated. By consuming animal food, animal tendencies are aroused. As is your food, so are your thoughts. Men today are behaving in a manner worse than that of wild animals in the forest. They have become cruel, pitiless, and hard-hearted. There is no sympathy or understanding even between man and man. The main reason for this condition lies in the kind of food that is consumed.

Our ancestors used to take food twice a day, and our ancient sages used to eat only once a day. They declared that the man who eats only once is a yogi (God-loving person), the one who eats twice a day is a bhogi (enjoyer), and he who eats thrice a day is a rogi (sick man). Today, people go on consuming food at all times, not to speak of drinks and snacks in between. How then can they escape from indigestion and other diseases?

Do Not Waste Money

Don't waste money. God is wealth. Since God is wealth, misuse of money is evil. Practice charity by gifting away money, food, clothes, houses, etc.,

instead of misusing it in extravagance. Misuse of money is not only evil but a sin as well.

Misuse of money is a great evil. Money is Dhaivaswaroopam (embodiment of Divinity). When you talk of wealth you should be careful to avoid avaricious accumulation and extravagant expenditure.

Indians consider money or wealth as the Goddess Lakshmi. Do not misuse money. By doing so you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas, and bad habits. Use your money wisely for good deeds. Do not waste money, as misuse of money is evil. It will lead you along the wrong path.

God is immanent in every human being, nay, all living beings. There is no place where God is not present. Wherever you look, God is present there. In fact, you need not come over here to see God. He is very much present in the place where you reside. Without realizing this truth, people are spending a lot of money and going on pilgrimages. That is not what you are expected to do. Develop the quality of love in you and share it with all. Then all people can become one.

Many people come here from far-off places, spending a lot of money. After spending so much money and traveling long distances, what is it that they should get? They should develop Divinity within.

Misuse of money is evil. Don't waste money merely because you have an excess of it. Health is wealth. If you waste money on eating immoderately, you will be spoiling your health. Make use of money only to the extent needed. If you misuse money, you may acquire bad habits, follow a wicked path, grow in ego, become ostentatious, and develop bad qualities. So, make proper use of your money; spend it in a sacred way.

A compassionate heart is the temple of God. First give happiness to God within you. Many people visit places of pilgrimage in search of God. Do not waste your time and money. He is within you. It is God who is searching for a true devotee.

In money, there is no evil. In scholarship, there is no evil. In knowledge and intelligence, there is no evil. But evil arises from the activities that man carries on with their help. Pure water has no color. Poured into a black bottle, it appears black. Poured into a red bottle, it appears red. The water does not become red or black; the color is due to what we have done to it.

When money, scholarship, cleverness, and intelligence are possessed by persons in whom rajas (passion, emotion, extrovert qualities) predominates,

they promote hatred, ambition, and lust. When possessed by persons in whom tamas (sloth, dullness, conceit) predominates, they promote miserliness, greed and envy. When possessed by persons in whom satwa (equanimity, balance, purity) predominates, they promote love, compassion, urge to serve, the unity of all mankind, and world peace. The sublimation of character into the stage of satwa is the duty that everyone owes himself. This is the path; this is the real goal. You must try ceaselessly to tread the path and reach the goal.

A man should own only as much wealth as is essential. It is like the size of his shoes. If the shoes are too loose, he cannot walk; if they are too tight, he cannot wear them. Too much money is a torture; rich people will agree with this judgment.

It is foolish to accumulate money and sit on the pile, which turns into garbage. Spread garbage over the cornfield, it will fertilize the crop and multiply the harvest. After all, how much and how long can a man enjoy? A dog can only lap up water, even from a huge lake. Like blood, money too should circulate to ensure health.

During festivals and family occasions, a lot of money is spent in organizing 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.

Do Not Waste Time

The most important, the most needed factor is time. One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time.

Our scriptures say that God is referred to as time and as non-time. God is not limited by time. He is beyond time; He is time; He restricts time. Time is the embodiment of God. Everything depends on time.

The main reason for man's birth and death is time. Time is the main factor in our growth. If we waste time, our lives will be wasted. Therefore time is an essential part of our life.

Do not degrade time by spending it participating in unnecessary conversations, or by getting involved in others' personal matters. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way.

Don't waste time. Time waste is life waste. Spend the time by using sanctifying words. Do not waste time. Wasting time is wasting God.

Time is the yardstick of life. Seconds become hours, hours become years, years make yugas (ages) and so on. You should not waste this most valuable "time." Time lost in wasteful pursuits can't be gotten back by any means. All our activities should be planned for utilizing the available time to maximum advantage. So, we should not waste food, money, time, and energy.

Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking seva (service) activities in a pure and unselfish spirit.

Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, in indulging in unnecessary talk and doing meaningless actions. In all these actions we are sacrificing the body to time. Instead we should try to make time our servant. It means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds. Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions "How am I utilizing time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?"

Don't waste time. Time waste is life waste. When you talk unnecessarily, you not only waste time but also lose your energy. Talk to the extent necessary. Never waste time. Time is very important. Time is the very form of God.

Time is God. The Upanishads say that nothing is more precious than time. If you waste time, it is as good as wasting the opportunity given by God. Don't waste energy. We lose and waste energy by misuse of the senses. Just as the batteries in a radio are drained when the radio is switched on, we lose energy by talking too much. We waste our life by wasting energy.

There is no need to think about what is past or about what is in store in the future. Of what avail is it to think of the past, which is irrevocable, or to worry about the future, which is uncertain? It is a sheer waste of time. Past is past, future is future. You can do nothing about either. What is most important is the present. This is not ordinary present. It is omnipresent. The result of the past and the result of the future are both present in the present. You are reaping in the present what you had sown in the past. And what you are sowing in the present you will reap in the future. Thus, both the past and the future are contained in the present only. So, make the best use of the present. Give up all sorts of worry and lead ideal lives leading to immortality and fulfillment of the purpose of human life.

Do Not Waste Energy

Our physical, mental, and spiritual energies should never be wasted. You might ask me, "How are we wasting our energies?" If you see bad things, your energy is wasted. Hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts,

and doing evil deeds wastes your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.

The path of Divinity is not seeing, listening, speaking, thinking, or doing anything bad. If we are not following this path, we are wasting our energy. On account of this waste of energy, we are losing our memory power, intelligence, power of discrimination, and power of justice.

Our mind is like the radio. Whether you talk with others or only think within yourself, you are consuming energy. Your mind is working all the time. Since it is always turned on, you are consuming a lot of energy. Instead of wasting that power, energy, or force in mental meandering, isn't it better to spend your time in thinking good thoughts?

If you are prompted by the feelings that your body belongs to the Lord, you will not sin with your body. Instead, all your efforts and endeavors would proceed toward Divinity. If you are saturated with the conviction that your energy belongs to God, you will not misuse it.

Don't waste energy. People waste their energy by indulging in bad thoughts, bad looks, bad hearing, and bad action. The right royal road is: 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. By translating the above instructions into practice, you will be sanctifying your time.

Unnecessary talk should be avoided as this results in a waste of energy and a reduction of memory power.

Don't waste energy. Energy is wasted in seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, and doing what isn't necessary. Be moderate in all these five activities. Spend the energy to the extent necessary. When you develop energy, you develop Divinity. If you waste energy, "allergy" begins. Do not waste energy. See, listen, and talk what is good. Talk less, talk sweetly. We keep thinking until we go to bed, with no rest in thinking. We build castles in the air. So, reduce useless thinking. Think, but think usefully. Think of the Divine. Think of Divinity. Don't have thoughts of others.

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?

You see, hear, speak, smell, and perform all actions only due to the Divine energy of God. Do not waste your Divine energy by misusing your senses. If you put this Divine energy to sacred use, you can attain the sacredness of Divinity. But if you waste this energy, you will be a victim of many diseases.

You are wasting knowledge and energy in seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, etc., in a wrong manner and in excessive measure. You have tuned the radio to a particular station. Whether the volume is kept high or low, whether you listen or not, so many units of electrical energy will be wasted. Likewise your body is a radio. You are constantly engaged in thinking as well as talking in a loud or low tone, talking to others or to yourself, talking while awake and even while asleep. Due to such continuous talking day and night, how much energy is being wasted, thereby causing allergy in your lives. Every action involves the use of energy. If the energy in the body is properly utilized, then balance will be maintained and the body will be in good shape.

Do Not Exploit Nature

Society is a limb of prakrithi (Nature) and prakrithi is a limb of Paramatma (Supreme Lord). Thus there is close relationship between man and God.

Nature is more progressive than man, and to protect Nature, man has to exploit it within limits. When man tampers with Nature recklessly, it reacts adversely and trouble arises. In order to protect Nature, man has to practice ceiling on desires. He should not trigger the negative aspect of Nature. In this respect, scientists have no concern for the harmful effects that may accrue to society by their inventions. They don't care for the welfare of mankind and go on making use of intelligence to produce their weapons of destruction.

God maintains perfect balance in His creation. In God's creation, the earth and the oceans are endowed with balance. But man is indiscriminately exploiting the earth for extracting oil. Every day tons of fish are caught from the oceans. This indiscriminate exploitation of nature results in imbalance in the earth, which is playing havoc with human lives.

Man has to blame himself for the earthquakes. Due to excessive greed for wealth, he is disturbing the balance of the earth. Hence the earthquake. That is the law of Nature. You have to express your love for man by helping the needy.

Love is your nature.

Just as balance is very much essential for Nature, so also love is very much needed for man. Know that whatever God has created is for your own welfare. You should enjoy Nature according to your need. You should not rob Nature of its resources to satisfy your greed. Instead of being satisfied with what Nature

is giving him, he aspires for more and more, and in the process, creates imbalance in Nature.

Today scientists are interested in new inventions. The advancement in science and technology has also led to imbalance in Nature. As a result, there are earthquakes and no timely rains. Science should be utilized only to the extent needed. Science has its limitations, and crossing those limits leads to danger.

These days we see Nature revolting by way of disasters because man ignores all limits in exploiting its resources. Torrential rain, drought, earthquakes, floods—such are the repercussions of man's greed. On account of scientific progress, scientists have grown selfish without regard for the world's welfare. They provoke Nature to retaliation.



Ceiling on Desires (1)

Keep Desires under Control

What is the meaning of “Ceiling on Desires”? Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dreamworld. He is forgetting the *Paratattwa* (Supreme Consciousness). That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. We are spending too much money. Instead of inordinate spending for our own pleasure, we should be spending for the relief of the poor and needy. This is the real meaning of “Ceiling on Desires.”

Do not make the mistake of thinking that giving money is all that is needed, however. Do not give to others while allowing your own desires to continue to multiply. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life’s bare necessities.

Food Decides Our Character

How can you reduce desires? **First, food.** Eat only what you need to eat. Don’t be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food. Food is the main source of man’s life, body, mind, and character.

The gross part of the food, which is the major portion of the food consumed by the body, is thrown out as waste matter. A minute amount of the food, which is the subtle part, is assimilated by the body and flows as blood. And a minuscule amount, which is the subtlest part of the food, makes up the mind. Therefore the mind is the reflection of the food consumed. The reason for the present beastly and demonic tendencies in our minds is because of the food we consume.

Instead of kindness, compassion, love, and patience, only bad qualities such as hatred and attachment are being perpetrated. Therefore the quality of the food that we eat should be very pure, very clean, very sanctified, and *satwic* (pure). Man receives real nourishment from such food.

A large part of the water we drink is expelled as urine. A minute part of the water consumed becomes *prana* (life force). Therefore the nature of the

food and water that we take in decides our character. Only by controlling the quality of our food and water can we attain Divinity. That is why food is said to be God. Hence to waste food is to waste God. Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is *satwic*. Give any surplus food to those in need.

Second, money. Indians consider money or wealth as the Goddess Lakshmi. Do not misuse money. By doing so you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas, and bad habits. Use your money wisely for good deeds. Do not waste money, as misuse of money is evil. It will lead you along the wrong path.

Third, time. The most important, the most needed factor is time. One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time. Even our scriptures say that God is referred to as time and as non-time. God is not limited by time. He is beyond time; He is time; He restricts time. Time is the embodiment of God. Everything depends on time.

The main reason for man's birth and death is time. Time is the main factor in our growth. If we waste time, our lives will be wasted. Therefore time is an essential part of our life. Do not degrade time by spending it participating in unnecessary conversations or by getting involved in others' personal matters. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way.

Fourth, energy. Our physical, mental, and spiritual energies should never be wasted. You might ask me, "How are we wasting our energies?" If you see bad things, your energy is wasted. Hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts, and doing evil deeds wastes your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.

See no evil—see what is good.

Hear no evil—hear what is good.

Speak no evil—speak what is good.

Think no evil—think what is good.

Do no evil—do what is good.

This is the way to God.

The path of Divinity is not seeing, listening, speaking, thinking, or doing anything bad. If we are not following this path, we are wasting our energy. On account of this waste of energy, we are losing our memory power, intelligence, power of discrimination, and power of justice.

Our Mind Is Like the Radio

Today's man is not capable of discriminating between good and bad. Then how can he enter the path of right action? You might be wondering how this is possible; how are we wasting time. For example, when you turn on the radio to listen to a certain program, whether you raise or lower the volume of the sound, as long as the radio is on, the current is being used.

Our mind is like the radio. Whether you talk with others or only think within yourself, you are consuming energy. Your mind is working all the time. Since it is always turned on, you are consuming a lot of energy. Instead of wasting that power, energy, or force in mental meandering, isn't it better to spend your time in thinking good thoughts? The "Ceiling on Desires" program has been proposed so that man does not waste anything in the areas of food, money, time, or energy.

Main Goal of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization

Today, however, some service-oriented people and workers in the Sri Sathya Sai World Organization have not fully realized this. Instead they are giving money, thinking that it is service. They are cleverly getting out of serving, while their desires are growing out of bounds. We should gradually try to change these attitudes.

The main goal of the Sai Organization is to enable members, workers, and officers to lead ideal, perfect, and happy lives. Therefore we must live up to the high ideals of the organization and transform ourselves into ideal beings, thus helping others to follow our example.¹

1. Sathya Sai Newsletter (USA), Volume 13, Number 3 (Spring 1989). Divine Discourse on Service and the Sai Organization, November 21, 1988.



Ceiling on Desires (2)

Your Energy Belongs to God

If you are prompted by the feelings that your body belongs to the Lord, you will not sin with your body. Instead, all your efforts and endeavors would proceed toward Divinity. If you are saturated with the conviction that your energy belongs to God, you will not misuse it. It is in the light of this that we have prescribed the principle of “Ceiling on Desires” in the Sri Sathya Sai *Seva Samithis* (Service Centers).

The Four Instructions

The first ceiling on desires is “Don’t waste food. Food is God.” Your body is made of food, and you are the result of the food eaten by your parents. “*Anna Brahma*” (food is God). Eat as much as it is necessary to eat. But do not throw away food by taking too much on your plate. By wasting food you will be wasting the energy Divine.

The second instruction is “Don’t waste money. God is wealth.” Since God is wealth, misuse of money is evil. Practice charity by gifting away money, food, clothes, houses, etc., instead of misusing it in extravagance. Misuse of money is not only evil but a sin as well.

The third instruction is “Don’t waste time. Time waste is life waste.” God is exalted as “*Kalaya namah, Kalakalaya namah, Kalathithaya namah, Kala swaroopaya namah.*” Spend time by using sanctifying words. Do not waste time. Wasting time is wasting God.

The fourth instruction is “Don’t waste energy.” People waste their energy by indulging in bad thoughts, bad looks, bad hearing, and bad action.

The right royal road is:

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.

By translating the above instructions into practice you will be sanctifying your time. This is the “*sadhana*” and the service that you have to

practice. A time will come when the mind will be extinguished and the merger with the Divine achieved.²

2. Summer Showers in Brindavan 1993, Chapter 6: The Conquest of the Mind.



Ceiling on Desires (3)

Your Real Nature

Do not hurt anyone. Hurt never, love ever. Constantly remember love, which is the eternal truth. You are not one person, you are three: (1) the one you think you are, (2) the one others think you are, and (3) the one you really are. That is your real nature. You say, “this is my body, this is my mind, this is my intellect, this is my *chitta* (awareness),” etc. But who is this “my”? Unfortunately, no one today puts this question to himself.

When you say, my body, you are separate from your body. You say, this is my house. But who are you? You have to find answer to this question. How long will this house, which you say is yours, last? It is sure to dilapidate sooner than later. All these worldly objects are subject to change and destruction. There is only one entity that is changeless, that is *Brahma tatwa* (knowledge of Brahman). That is love. If only you get hold of it, everything else will come under your control.

Wherever you look today, there are only desires, desires, and more desires. Put a ceiling on these desires! Only then will your mind become steady. You say I want this, I want that, etc. Thus, you develop many wants. They are like passing clouds. Why should you multiply your wants, these passing clouds? Ultimately, nothing accompanies you at the time of your leaving this mortal body.

Nothing Accompanies You

Great kings and emperors ruled over this world. They conquered several countries and accumulated boundless wealth. Even Alexander the Great, who conquered several parts of the world, could not take with him even a miniscule part of the wealth he accumulated. He had to leave this world with empty hands. To demonstrate this truth, he instructed his ministers to take his dead body in a procession through the streets of his capital, keeping both his hands in a raised position pointing toward the sky.

The ministers were curious to know the reason for this strange request. He said, I have conquered several countries and accumulated so much wealth. There is a vast army under my control. Yet, none is accompanying me at the time of my leaving this body. I am going with empty hands. This has to be demonstrated to all people.

Embodiments of Love! People should, of course, have some comforts for this physical body and fulfill some desires that are necessary for their daily life. But, unfortunately, these desires are reaching a point of insatiability. You may live for a few years or full hundred years in this physical world. One day or the other the body has to be cast off. Hence, one should not cultivate unlimited desires. Some people have intense desire to have the vision of God. Where is God? But, you are all embodiments of Divinity. God is not separate. Men are more valuable than all the wealth in the world. God also is in human form.

Cultivate Human Values

We see three kinds of beings in the world: tame animals, wild beasts, and humans. One has to analyze for oneself whether one belongs to the category of animals or beasts or human beings. If you think you are a human being, then cultivate human values, lead a human life, and develop human thoughts. First and foremost, truth is a human value. Truth does not undergo any change in all the three periods of time—past, present, and future. Truth is always truth. Develop faith in that truth. All others undergo change.

You say I am peaceful today. What about tomorrow? No peace. All pieces, pieces! Hence, this state of peace also undergoes change. Love is God; live in love. In fact, your entire life is nourished and nurtured by love. When truth and love go together, non-violence is the result. Where there is love, people will not quarrel among themselves. You don't get angry at someone. When you develop love, you consider all people as your brothers.

Supposing you meet someone and say, "Hello brother," even your enemy will respond by saying, "Hello brother." As is the feeling, so is the result. Hence, you have to develop noble feelings. Good and bad arise only from your thoughts. If something bad happens, it is not something that others have done to you. Nor has God a role to play in this. You are bad to yourself! Your thoughts have done you harm! Suppose you are happy, even that is not caused by God. That too is on account of your own thoughts. Hence, one has to purify one's thoughts, first and foremost.

Develop Pure Thoughts

When you develop pure thoughts, your life will be happy and peaceful. Where there is purity there Divinity is. Unfortunately, today Divinity is being divided and differentiated in the name of religion. Where unity, purity, and Divinity go together, life is happy. God is not responsible for either good or bad thoughts. Only you are responsible for both. If you have bad thoughts, that is your own making. All are your own making. The same is the case with good thoughts. See! How beautiful are these lights in this hall! Who made them? The human being only. Hence, there can be no Divinity without humanness. Humanness must be sanctified. Human beings must cultivate human values. Only then can one attain Divinity.

The senses create a lot of unsteadiness in us. They lead us to bad ways in many ways. However, when our mind is pure they lead us on the noble path. Hence, keep your mind fresh and pure always. It should not be allowed to waver, which can lead us to ups and downs. It is said, “The entire world is permeated by the mind.” Do not think that God is separate from you. You are confused because you think you are separate from God. Not only are you confused, but your “fuse” is also blown, meaning you are engulfed in darkness. Your faith in God must always be steady and unwavering.³

3. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 41, Chapter 19: Contemplate on God, the Real Hero, for Victory. Divine Discourse on December 25, 2008.



Ceiling on Desires (4)

Have Human Qualities

First of all, you should understand what humanness means. In accordance with your form, you should have human qualities. Of what use is your life if you behave like a monkey? Understand that you belong to mankind. Do not have a monkey mind. One whose heart is full of compassion alone is a true human being. Today man talks of the need for compassion but has filled his heart with demonic qualities like anger, greed, jealousy, etc.

Man should put a ceiling on his desires. As man’s conduct is perverted, today we find natural calamities taking place. You are aware of the devastation caused by the earthquake in Gujarat. Thousands of people lost their lives. The reason for this is that man is entertaining excessive desires. God maintains perfect balance in His creation. In God’s creation, the earth and the oceans are

endowed with balance. But man is indiscriminately exploiting the earth for extracting oil. Every day tons of fish are caught from the oceans.

Strive to Maintain Balance

This indiscriminate exploitation of nature results in imbalance in the earth, which is playing havoc with human lives. Only when man is free from *kampam* (unsteadiness) within, will he not be troubled by *bhukampam* (earthquake). Not only the people of *Bharat* (India) but also the people of the entire world should strive to maintain balance. The five elements are nothing but manifestations of the Divine. Man's life will be secure only when he realizes this truth and acts accordingly.

A few days ago, I sent lorry loads of rice, grams, etc., to the earthquake victims of Gujarat. Some people asked, "Swami, why should you take the trouble of spending so much money on sending the relief material to Gujarat? You could have as well averted the earthquake." I replied, "My dear, man has to blame himself for the earthquakes. Due to excessive greed for wealth, he is disturbing the balance of the earth. Hence the earthquake. That is the law of Nature." You have to express your love for man by helping the needy. Love is your nature.

Just as balance is very much essential for Nature, so also love is very much needed for man. Know that whatever God has created is for your own welfare. You should enjoy Nature according to your need. You should not rob Nature of its resources to satisfy your greed. Here is an example. Once a greedy person owned a duck, which used to lay a golden egg every day. One day, he ripped open the stomach of the duck thinking that he would get many golden eggs at a time. Today man also is indulging in such foolish and greedy acts. Instead of being satisfied with what Nature is giving him, he aspires for more and more, and in the process, creates imbalance in Nature.

Do Not Cross Limits

Today scientists are interested in new inventions. The advancement in science and technology has also led to imbalance in Nature. As a result, there are earthquakes and no timely rains. Science should be utilized only to the extent needed. Science has its limitations, and crossing those limits leads to danger.

You have a long way to go. Adhere to truth and righteousness. Our ancient sages said, “Speak truth, speak pleasantly, and do not speak unpalatable truth.” Make proper use of natural resources, and do not put them to misuse. Help everybody and make them happy. Share all the good things you have learnt with others. This is your foremost duty.⁴

4. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 34, Chapter 3: The Vision of the *Atma*. Divine Discourse on February 21, 2001.



Ceiling on Desires (5)

Make the Mind Steady

If God is present everywhere, people ask why we are not able to see Him. The ocean water reflects the sun above. When the water is disturbed, the reflection of the sun is also disturbed. Similarly, God is in every man. But he is not able to see Him because of his disturbed mind. A disturbed and vacillating mind can never reflect God. A disturbed mind causes confusion and depression. As Arjuna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, “This mind is very unsteady, turbulent and is agitated strongly;” the mind is highly fickle and vacillating. All the *sadhana* (spiritual practice) that man performs aims at making his mind steady. There is no use doing *japa* (chanting the Lord’s name), *dhyana* (meditation), and *yoga* if the mind is not steady.

Once you have the five senses under control, you can experience God. He is not far away from you. He is in you, below you, above you, and all around you. God, in fact, is the indweller of man. Yet man is not able to see Him. What is the reason? Man’s limitless and wayward desires prevent him from seeing God. Desires are the root cause of man’s disturbance. Sense control and ceiling on desires will help him to see God all around and experience bliss. So, we have to keep our desires under check. We should not be worried by the evil talk that others indulge in. We should not be affected by calumny and criticism.

Man Is the Cause of His Own Restlessness

Buddha wanted to control the five senses. He decided, first and foremost, to acquire *samyak drishti* (right vision). Man today is not able to control his vision because of the fickleness of his mind. Cinema, video, TV, etc., have polluted the mind of man. He does not see good and hear good. Man is the cause of his own restlessness. Besides *samyak drishti*, Buddha

emphasized the need for *samyak sravanam* (right hearing), *samyak vak* (right speech), *samyak bhavam* (right feeling), and *samyak chintanam* (right thinking).

Due to lack of these, humanness is fast giving way to devilishness and beastliness. Animal qualities are fast increasing in man. Animals have a season and a reason, but man has none. Man today has become worse than animals. Human qualities like compassion, kindness, love, and forbearance are absent in him. He should be free from evil thoughts, which are the root cause of his worries. This requires *abhyasa* (constant and sustained practice). Man can control the mind and attain peace by *abhyasa*. It is only in a peaceful mind that noble thoughts arise.

Master the Mind and Be a Mastermind

The mind should be under the control of man. Master the mind and be a mastermind. Unfortunately, instead of controlling the mind, man has become the slave of his senses. That is the main cause of his unsteadiness. Moreover, he has body attachment (*dehabhimana*). This is the reason he gets easily disturbed if people find fault with him. Why should he worry about the body when the body is like a water bubble? You should get rid of body attachment.

Man today has unlimited and unnecessary desires. Take, for example, a person who wants to become the president of a village *panchayat*. If he is elected, he desires to become a minister, then the chief minister of the state, and later the prime minister of the country. What are these positions after all? What does a man get from these posts of high status if he has only evil desires? The outcome of evil desires is evil. So, man should not give room to evil desires and thoughts. Their reaction, reflection, and resound is also evil.

Evil Desires Cause Evil Thoughts

Evil desires cause evil and sinful thoughts in man. First of all, Buddha developed pure, steady, sacred, and selfless vision. He made a great sacrifice by renouncing all worldly comforts, his family, and even his tender son. He then gradually reduced body attachment and finally cut it off completely. That is how he attained the state of desirelessness.

It is a mistake on our part to identify ourselves with the body. When we say, “This is my body, my mind, my *buddhi* (intellect), my *chitta* (awareness), my *antahkarana* (inner instrument),” it means that we are separate from the

mind, body, *buddhi*, etc. It is a *bhrama* (delusion) to think that we are the body. As we go on cultivating *bhrama*, we distance ourselves from Brahma (God). The more we leave this *bhrama*, the closer we go to Brahma. Buddha approached many *gurus* and listened to their teachings. He studied sacred texts. He realized that this was only a wasteful exercise. . . .

Control the Five Senses

First and foremost, we should develop the spirit of surrender. Perform all deeds with a spirit of devotion to God and as an offering to Him. Then every action will become Divine. This is the teaching of Buddha. In this world, the five senses of man play a most important role. Buddha gave utmost importance to sense control.

To control the mind, we should control the five senses. Only then will we be able to realize God. Everything can be acquired by love alone. Love is God, live in love. We can understand spirituality only by cultivating love. That is why I often say, "Start the day with love, fill the day with love, spend the day with love, end the day with love, this is the way to God."

Everything is possible by the power of love. Love is everything in this world. The world cannot exist without love. Do not entertain bad desires. They will bring about your ruin. Those having bad desires cannot have a peaceful death. We must keep the mind peaceful and sacred. We can acquire peace of mind only by love for God.⁵

5. Summer Showers in Brindavan 2002, Chapter 11: Sense Control Is the Highest *Sadhana*.



Ceiling on Desires (6)

Learn a Lesson from Nature

Members appear to be confused about the true meaning of this program of "Ceiling on Desires" decided on at the Tenth All India Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organizations. There are four components in the term "Ceiling on Desires." They are, respectively, curb on excessive talk, curb on excessive desires and expenditure, control of consumption of food, and check on waste of energy. Man needs some essential commodities for his sustenance, and he should not aspire for more.

We can learn a lesson in this respect from Nature. Only if air is available in sufficient quantity will it be comfortable and good. If it is excessive and there is a gale you will feel uncomfortable. When you are thirsty, you can consume only a limited quantity of water. You can't consume the entire water of the Ganga! We take only as much as is needed for the sustenance of the body. . . .

Our Desires Should Be Limited

There is a limit for everything to function in a normal way. When your eyes happen to see a flash of lightning or a flashlight while taking photographs, they automatically close because they can't withstand such high illumination. Eardrums also cannot tolerate hearing beyond a certain volume, and we close our ears or keep cotton inside the ears. From these we see that our life is a limited company!

Similarly our desires also should be limited. Women are usually desirous of adding to their wardrobe any number of *saris* when they go to a shop or an exhibition. You should have a reasonable number of *saris*, but not a huge collection for pomp or show. Misuse of money is a great evil. Even men will have to do their own bit in controlling the expenditure on unwanted and unnecessary things. Money is *Dhaiswaroopam* (embodiment of Divinity). When you talk of wealth you should be careful to avoid avaricious accumulation and extravagant expenditure. Even in the preparation of food, you should be careful in avoiding wastage. We are only doing a disservice by consuming more food than what is necessary for the body.

Third, you should be careful about "time," which is the yardstick of life. Seconds become hours, hours become years, years make *yugas* (ages), and so on. You should not waste this most valuable "time." Time lost in wasteful pursuits can't be gotten back by any means. All our activities should be planned for utilizing the available time to maximum advantage. So, we should not waste food, money, time, and energy.

God Wants the Flower of Your Heart

Even in purchase of garlands, you need not waste money. What God wants is the flower of your heart that is filled with humility and devotion. Eight types of flowers can be offered to God, viz, (1) *ahimsa* (non-violence), (2) *indhriya nigraha* (control of senses), (3) *sarvabhootha dhaya* (compassion

toward all beings), (4) *sathyam* (truth), (5) *dhyanam* (meditation), (6) *santhi* (peace), (7) *vinaya* (humility), (8) *bhakthi* (devotion).

I feel very much concerned about the excessive money that is spent by the trust and *samithi* (center) on the expensive huge garlands offered to Me on every occasion and also the use of flowers for decorating the path. No doubt you are doing this as an expression of your *ananda* (Divine bliss). But I won't call this *bhakthi* (devotion), though you may not admit this. We should realize our defects and rectify them. You may show your affection by just handing over one flower and spend the money wasted on garlands for helping the poor people in distress.

People may think that Baba will not like it if flower paths are not provided and huge garlands are not offered. You must understand that God appreciates only your motive and not the external things. By indulging in such exhibitionism, you will only spoil the name of the organization. As a member of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization you should have no sense of ego or pride. As I have often said, you should have your "hands in society and heads in the forest." This should be your guiding principle. What little you do you must do with a good and pure heart.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna has referred to "*pathram, phalam, pushpam, thoyam*" (that is, leaf, fruit, flower, or water) that can be offered to God. I am pleased with any of these provided it is offered with sincere devotion. What is "*pathram*"? It is not the "leaf" that you see around you. The inner meaning is that your body itself is the leaf.

Flower is not the one in the plants, but it is the flower of your heart, "*hridhaya pushpam.*" "*Phalam*" is not the ordinary fruit but "*manophalam*" (the fruit of your mind). "*Thoyam*" means water, but what is referred to here is not the water from the river or tap. It refers to the tears of joy welling up within you from a sincere and prayerful heart.

Transform Yourselves into Better Individuals

Moreover you should not only practice yourself but teach others also about this ceiling on desires. Though Narayana is in everyone, the one in the poor people is referred to as "*Daridra Narayana.*" When this Narayana begs for food, you refuse to give him food while you offer food to another person who is already well fed. You place before God's pictures a lot of food of rich variety as "*naivedhyam*" (offering). You do this because you know very well

that this is coming back to you. So, here too it is “*swartham*” (self-interest) and not “*thyagam*” (sacrifice). The *amrithathwa* (immortality) or *moksha* (liberation) will come out of *thyagam*.

We have *Seva Dal* (voluntary service corps), *bhajan mandalis* (devotional singing groups), and other wings. It is a good sign that more and more youngsters are coming forward to join the *Seva Dal* and take part in service activities. The participation of youth is necessary for the welfare of the world. We should rejoice when they turn over a new leaf in their life.

There is a common saying that you should not rejoice and distribute sweets, etc., when a child is born, but you should do so only when the son grows up and earns a good name as a “*sathputhra*” (good son). You can't please Me just by joining as a member of the organization. I shall wait for the day when you turn over a new leaf and transform yourselves into better individuals. You should become “*guna-sheelas*” (persons of sterling character and good qualities).

It is the code of conduct that is responsible for the organization moving forward growing from strength to strength. The office-bearers should exercise maximum care to see that the code of conduct is adhered to and guide others also in the right path. When a cook in a house works with integrity, the master on his own will entrust him with the keys to the house. Similarly, God also will appreciate only men with integrity. The desire to please God should be the fundamental motive.⁶

6. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 16, Chapter 3: Ceiling on Desires—I. Divine Discourse on January 19, 1983.



Ceiling on Desires (7)

Time Wasted Is Life Wasted

There is the program connected with “Ceiling on Desires.” You must realize that this program has not been launched to raise funds. The object of the program is to prevent waste of money, time, food, or other resources and to use all these for the welfare of the people. The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations. It may be used in the best way you choose for the benefit of others. Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking *seva* (service) activities in a pure and unselfish spirit.

Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, in indulging in unnecessary talk and doing meaningless actions. In all these actions we are sacrificing the body to time. Instead we should try to make time our servant. It means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds. Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions: "How am I utilizing time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?"

Likewise, with regard to food you must ask: "Am I just eating what I need or more? Am I wasting food?" So also with regard to money: "Am I using this money for my own selfish needs or for boosting my name and fame, or to satisfy my ego and vanity?" Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater *sadhana* (spiritual practice).

Three Types of Strength

These are the aims of the "Ceiling on Desires" program. It was never the purpose of this program to collect money for the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations. The object was to encourage you to share your money with others, to give you an opportunity to utilize your surplus resources for some good and noble purpose that will sanctify your life.

Three types of strength are given to a person: physical strength, mental strength, and the power of money. It has been said that all these should be offered as *yajna* (sacrifice). This sacrifice is not offered to God. God, who has given you the body and the mind, does not need them for Himself. God is also the source of all wealth. What does He want with your wealth? Use it for sacred purposes. The *seva* (service) program is intended only to provide you with opportunities to make your lives sacred and worthwhile. It is to develop the spirit of sacrifice.

Devotion of Hanuman

Was it beyond the power of Rama to discover Sita in Lanka Himself? What need was there for Him to send Hanuman? Rama wanted Hanuman to go on the search, so that He could show to the world the devotion and steadfastness and faith of Hanuman. It is a case of grace on the part of Rama. In the same manner, if Sai so much as wants to do so many things Himself, He could do anything. This endeavor is not for the sake of Sai. It is done through these Seva Organizations so that members of the organization get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand the basic truth that these

avenues of service have been provided so that you will obtain a good name for yourselves and not for the sake of Sai.

If people have any wrong notions about the service program, endeavor to remove their doubts and explain the real purposes. For instance, some people say for the sake of the 60th Birthday Celebrations they have embarked on this project of "Ceiling on Desires." This is a wrong notion. Tell these people it is not so. Sathya Sai does not need anything, and He does not ask anything from you. Our idea is that we should undertake some development program so that the villages can be benefited.

The idea is to save money that is now being wasted in one way or the other, so that it may be made available for doing something good. Above all, the basic purpose of all service activities is to effect a transformation from the state of man to the state of Divinity. Fill your hearts with that which is godly. Then there will be meaning to your volunteer service.⁷

7. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 17, Chapter 16: Ceiling on Desires—II. Divine Discourse on July 14, 1984.



Ceiling on Desires (8)

Promote the Brotherhood of Man

Bharatiya (Indian) culture has emphasized the valid ways in which one has to spend energy and money for service of the distressed, the diseased, the hungry, the illiterate, the ill housed, the ill clothed. *Bharatiya* culture condemns the spending of energy and money for pomp, for vengeance, for competitive faction, for material triumphs. Wealth is to be held in trust and used for promoting the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. *Bharatiya* culture also lays down that nothing should be done to damage anyone's faith in God or in his own self. Faith is a tender plant, and it needs all the nurture that you can give.⁸

8. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 17, Chapter 16: Ceiling on Desires—II. Divine Discourse on July 14, 1984.



Ceiling on Desires (9)

The Fire of Wisdom

Here is a piece of burning charcoal. If you take proper care of it, it will keep burning. But if you neglect it, it will soon get covered up with ashes. In the heart of every human being, there is *jnana-agni* (fire of wisdom). That fire signifies a pure heart. Today we are not able to see that fire because the heart is enveloped by the ash of worldly desires. When the ash is blown away, the fire will be visible. Men tend to forget the noble and ideal sentiments in their hearts because they are covered by worldly material and sensual desires. . . .

From ancient times the sacred land of *Bharat* (India) has been standing forth as a leader among nations by its spiritual wealth, ensuring their peace and security. It proclaimed the great message: "Let all the people of all the worlds be happy." Students should be taught to use properly all the talents and qualities given by God to them. Without good qualities life is worthless. By their bad qualities students today misuse their knowledge. They should cultivate humility, which can confer many benefits.

They should learn the lessons that Nature provides by way of selfless service. Every element in nature—the earth, water, the sun—demonstrate the selfless service it is rendering to man. Man, who is a child of Nature, has become a stranger to compassion and other natural qualities. By falling prey to all kinds of desires, man has strayed away from the right path. He has not only to acquire knowledge, but wisdom. He has to combine good qualities with good practices. Book knowledge has to be translated into good deeds. . . .

The Way to Experience Joy

Whatever trouble you may face, you must learn to feel happy in any circumstance. If you are stung by a scorpion, you must console yourself that you were not bitten by a snake, and when you are bitten by a snake, you must console yourself that it has not proved fatal. Even if you are not able to own a vehicle, be happy that you have your legs intact to enable you to walk. Even if you are not a millionaire, be happy that you have enough resources to feed yourself and your family. This is the way to experience joy even while in adverse circumstances.

Ceiling on desires is a must for leading a peaceful and meaningful life. You must curb the desire to seek more and more wealth and turn your effort to realize the Reality within. In pursuing this effort, you must avoid waste of

food, money, time, energy, and knowledge as all these are forms of God. Unnecessary talk should be avoided as this results in a waste of energy and a reduction of memory power.

Teach Good Disciplines

Besides observing the ceiling on desire, students should also practice the discipline of seeing no evil, hearing no evil, thinking no evil, and doing no evil. Only when children are taught these good disciplines in the formative stage, they will grow as good persons. By leading a life without discipline, students will practically be like cars without brakes, which will spell danger to the occupants. Sense control is an essential requisite for students who are in the vulnerable stage of succumbing to the temptations of sensual pleasures.⁹

9. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 27, Chapter 20: Spiritual Orientation to Education. Divine Discourse on July 21, 1994.



Ceiling on Desires (10)

Heavy Luggage of Desires

In the modern world, every person tries hard to attain peace. Peace cannot be attained by spiritual percepts nor can it be obtained from a market as a commodity. It cannot be acquired even by knowledge of the texts or a high position in life. Peace can be attained only by God's grace. Though man is eager to attain peace, he confronts many obstacles in the path. Those who travel by train may be well acquainted with the slogan "less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure." Now, man is burdening himself with limitless desires.

Because of this extra heavy luggage of desires, he finds it extremely difficult to carry on the journey of life. By such proliferation of desires, he loses his balance, moves far away from his goal, and even tends to go mad. It is for this reason that I have been stressing the need for a ceiling on desires. By limiting your desires, you can attain peace to a certain extent. You have to exercise a check on your desires and make efforts to get the grace of the Divine. . . .

When desires become excessive, Atmic consciousness cannot be realized. You cultivate desire for tea, coffee, playing cards, visiting clubs, watching television, etc. You have to curb such desires. Try to reduce taking

coffee, tea, and other useless and wasteful pursuits like playing cards, etc. You will find within two days that you have become more intelligent and happy. Because of such unnecessary desires, you become mad and slaves of habits, thereby forgetting your human nature.

Mathi (good sense), *gathi* (goal), *stithi* (position), and *sampathi* (wealth) are the valuable possessions of *maya* (illusory energy), but they are all lost because of excessive desires harbored. The animal quality is predominant, and human values are absent. How can one attain peace with these drawbacks? When sage Vyasa requested Narada to advise him as to how to get over his restlessness, Narada told him, “You have composed so many epics, but you have not progressed in the path of realization. Compile *Bhagavatham*, describing the glory of God and the greatness of devotion.”¹⁰

10. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 31, Chapter 19: Faith, Love, and Grace. Divine Discourse on April 25, 1998.



Ceiling on Desires (11)

Control Your Thoughts Properly

Supposing you get angry. From where did this anger come? This has come from you only. Similarly, jealousy is a quality that manifested from your mind. Thus, each one of these bad qualities is the result of your own thoughts. Hence, if only you are able to control your thoughts properly you will be able to achieve anything in life. The mind, intellect, and *chitta* (awareness) are the reflections of *Atma* (Divine Self). The mind has no stability. It is the repository of thoughts and desires. It is said, “The mind is the root cause of either bondage or liberation.” Hence, one has to keep the mind under proper control by putting some ceiling on desires. . . .

God is immanent in every human being, nay, all living beings. There is no place where God is not present. Wherever you look, God is present there. In fact, you need not come over here to see God. He is very much present in the place where you reside. Without realizing this truth, people are spending a lot of money and going on pilgrimages. That is not what you are expected to do. Develop the quality of love in you and share it with all. Then all people can become one.

All are one, be alike to everyone. No living being can ever live without love. Living is possible only with love. Hence, develop a loving nature. When

you go home, close your eyes and contemplate upon God. You are sure to find Him in your own heart. When you open your eyes to the outside world, you see all and sundry. What do you think is the purpose for which you are endowed with eyes? It is only to see God.¹¹

11. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 42, Chapter 1: Know Thyself! You Will Know Everything. Divine Discourse on January 1, 2009.



Ceiling on Desires (12)

Man Is a Limb of Society

Man is not making efforts to understand the relationship between *prakrithi* (phenomenal world) and *Jivatma* (man) and *Paramatma* (Supreme Spirit). These are very intimately interrelated to one another. They are not disparate. The relationship between *Paramatma* and *prakrithi*—God and Nature—is the same as that between mother and child. The relationship between man and society is the same as that between the honeybee and the flower. Just as the child is fed by mother's milk, as the honeybee is fed by the honey in a flower, man must enjoy the gifts of Nature. From time immemorial man has been plagued by negative ideas.

There is a legendary tale in which one greedy man killed the goose that laid golden eggs thinking that he can extract all the eggs from it in one lump. Such acts of folly are committed freely by scientists today by exploiting Nature's gifts beyond all limits, creating disastrous imbalance resulting in natural calamities such as earthquakes, spelling danger to humanity. We cannot blame science for this. Those who apply the scientific discoveries without discrimination are to be blamed for this. They fail to consider with deep deliberation the effects of excessive depletion of natural resources.

Man has to consider himself as a limb of the society and help in the welfare of society, just as the organs of one's body are used for one's well-being. Again society is a limb of *prakrithi* (Nature) and *prakrithi* is a limb of *Paramatma* (Supreme Lord). Thus there is close relationship between man and God. Nature is more progressive than man, and to protect Nature, man has to exploit it within limits. When man tampers with Nature recklessly, it reacts adversely and trouble arises. In order to protect Nature, man has to practice ceiling on desires. He should not trigger the negative aspect of Nature.

In this respect, scientists have no concern for the harmful effects that may accrue to society by their inventions. They don't care for the welfare of mankind and go on making use of intelligence to produce their weapons of destruction.

Excessive Comforts Cause Misery

Care should be exercised in providing comforts as excessive comforts may spoil man's mind and cause misery instead of happiness. Nothing good can be achieved without certain restraints. Because of the advancement of technology and provision of excessive comforts, life has become mechanical and spirituality has declined. Science fragments everything to pieces while spirituality builds up unity in diversity. Today man is not making efforts to cultivate the feeling of oneness among humanity.

To quote an example you have the ozone layer in the atmosphere, which protects the people on earth from the evil effects of solar radiation. Because of the advance of technology, several factories have sprung up causing emission of harmful gases in the atmosphere as a result of which the ozone layer has become thinner, and if this goes on unchecked it may have disastrous consequences. The scientists are trying to stop the breakup of the ozone layer, but they are unable to find a remedy.

The actual cause for this situation is that more carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, which normally is absorbed by the plants and trees which can assimilate the gas and supply oxygen by the natural process of photosynthesis. But, because there is deforestation to an alarming extent, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has considerably increased. Therefore, the remedy for this situation is intensive afforestation, growing more trees everywhere and protecting the existing trees without destroying them for other purposes. Thus the relationship of man, Nature, and God is very intimate, which scientists may not be able to realize.¹²

12. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 26, Chapter 3: The Predicament of Man Today. Divine Discourse on January 21, 1993.



Ceiling on Desires (13)

Human Values Are Inherent in Every Person

The Sai Organizations have been enjoined to carry out a program of “Ceiling on Desires.” Everyone should try to control desires as much as possible. The promotion of human values is another item in the program. These human values are inherent in every person. All that is needed is for everyone to manifest them in his daily life. Truth, righteousness, and peace are all in you. You are the embodiment of truth, peace, love, and God. Recognize this fact. Members of Sai Organizations should cultivate certain desirable practices.

Avoid Four Bad Practices

For instance, they should regulate their diet, because one's food influences one's thoughts. Smoking and intoxicating drinks have to be given up. They are ruinous for the health. Eating meat should also be given up because eating animal food promotes animal tendencies. The fourth evil that has to be gotten rid of is gambling. Those who take to the spiritual path should avoid as much as possible these four bad practices. It is sinful to slaughter poor animals for one's food. Sai members should follow the motto “Help ever; hurt never.” There is no meaning in professing to respect human values without observing the rule that you should cause no harm to others in any form whatsoever.

God loves those who serve others because He is in all of them. Whomever you may serve, consider it as service to God. Divinize all your actions. Treat every action you perform as God's work. Sai Organizations have not been set up for propaganda purpose. We do not need any publicity. Who invited all of you here? You came out of your love. It is an outpouring of your love for Swami. What is the nature of your relationship? Love to love; heart to heart. It is your love for Me and My love for you, which has brought about this enormous gathering here today.¹³

13. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 28, Chapter 34: Spiritual Significance of Loving Service. Divine Discourse on November 21, 1995.



Ceiling on Desires (14)

Develop Good Character

Human life is highly valuable, sacred, and full of radiance of virtues. We waste such a noble human life for the sake of sensual pleasures and worldly possessions. The main responsibility of a human being is to develop good character and realize human values.

People are born without any desires and qualities. At the time of birth, they have no attributes whatsoever. As they grow up, they acquire some qualities, due to the influence of the food habits they develop and the company with which they associate. As they develop attachment and possessive instinct, they have to face so many losses, difficulties, troubles, and challenges.

One should uphold human values in the face of all challenges, defeats, and losses. Human life is full of problems and challenges. They all help indirectly to develop human qualities. If one is to lead a human life, one has to develop human qualities.

In the first instance, people develop desires. Desires are common to all, whether one is young or old, man or woman, a common man or a saint. However, it is very important to have good desires, e.g., desire to reach an exalted position, desire to lead a noble life, desire to be a good student, desire to tread the Divine path.

Unlimited Desires Are Like Chains

It is quite natural to have desires because one has to live in the world. But there should be a limit to desires. Because desires have crossed all limits due to the effect of *Kali Yuga* (Iron Age), people have lost their peace and are experiencing restlessness. Desires may be there, but there should be some limit to them. Unlimited desires are like chains, which bind and imprison. One loses freedom as one becomes bound by desires.

Animals also have desires, but they are not limitless like those of humans. Animals have a reason and a season, but people have no reason and no season. That is why people today face so many troubles and problems.

People have no dearth of food, raiment, and shelter. Then what is the reason for their restlessness? It is only excessive desires that make them restless. Therefore, put a ceiling on desires. Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure. Life is a long journey. In this long journey of life, do not have excess luggage. This, in Vedantic parlance, is called renunciation (*vairagya*). . . .

In which direction should you move? You have worldly attachment and desire for God. But you cannot have both at the same time. The heart is a single-seated sofa, not a double-seated one. It is not a musical chair either. It should not change continuously. Immortality is not attained through action, progeny, or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice. Therefore, if you want to attain immortality, you must renounce worldliness.

Here, in this container, is water. If you want to pour milk into it, you first have to throw the water out. Only then can you pour milk in it. If you pour milk when there is water, neither water nor milk will stay there.

Similarly, there are so many worldly desires in your heart. First, make it empty by removing worldly desires; then fill it up with Divine desires. If the heart is really empty, you can fill it with anything. If it is filled with other things, then how can you fill it with Divine knowledge?

Without Purity, Unity Is Not Possible

First, cleanse your heart. That is purity of heart (*chitta shuddhi*). Without purity, unity is not possible. Where there is no unity, Divinity will never enter. On the other hand, enmity may enter there. First of all, develop purity. . . .

Many people come here from far-off places, spending a lot of money. After spending so much money and traveling long distances, what is it that they should get? They should develop Divinity within.

This morning also Swami said this. In the cup, there is water. If you put a teaspoon of sugar in it, the sugar will settle down at the bottom. Above there is water. The taste lies at the bottom, not on the top. If you drink the top water, it is tasteless. What is that tasteless water? The tasteless water is worldly desires. But Divinity is at the bottom.

In order to mix sugar with the water on the top, what should you do? Stir it well with a spoon. In this way, the sugar at the bottom will spread all over in the water. Then, wherever you drink, it is bound to be sweet. Your heart is the cup. Divinity is sugar. Worldly desires are water. When you put in the spoon of intellect and stir the water, which is spiritual discipline (*sadhana*), Divinity will spread all over.

So, what are you supposed to do? Divinity within you is quite natural. You are not expanding it all over. You are limiting it; you are making it narrow with the feelings of “I” and “mine.” This is only contraction of love. But there

should be expansion of love. In order to expand love, have the feeling that everyone belongs to you because there is God in everyone.¹⁴

14. Treasure Spiritual Knowledge in Your Heart. Divine Discourse on April 4, 1993.



Ceiling on Desires (15)

Tread Along the Right Path

Embodiments of Love! In the modern world, the life of a person is very peculiar. Knowing full well what is good, what is bad, what is noble, what is mean, a person is not able to tread along the right path. One knows what is good, but one does not follow that. One knows what is bad, but one is not able to get away from that. What is the reason for this? It is only weakness that is responsible for it. One indulges in evil acts but wants the merit of good acts. One is not prepared to face the consequences of one's evil deeds.

Some evils have gone into the heart and have made one go along the wrong path. These are mainly two: one is desire (*kama*) and the other is anger (*krodha*). Desire drives one toward animality; it converts human quality into animal quality. Howsoever highly educated one may be—a great scientist, a person of authority and high position—one is unable to control desires. We can lead a truly human life only when we are able to control our desires. Excessive desires cause delusion in humanity.

In the *Ramayana*, we find the example of Ravana. He was highly educated, very rich, and powerful. Despite all this, he brought about his ruin. Why? He could not control his desires. He lost his discrimination due to his evil desires and could not recognize what was good and what was bad.

Not only should we have control of desires, we should have control over our senses also. Just because we are gifted with eyes, we shouldn't make use of them in any way we like. We have ears. That does not mean that we should hear anything and everything. Similarly, we shouldn't use our tongue in any way we like. Never speak anything that may hurt anybody. Never injure the feelings of others with harsh words.

Bad Company Is Responsible for Evil Qualities

We are endowed with a powerful mind. It moves about as per its will. There is a limit to wind velocity, but the speed of the mind has no limit. It

broods over all unnecessary things. We have hands. We should do no wrong with our hands.

*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.*

We should see that all that enters our senses is good. We should give no scope to anything evil. Bad company is responsible for our evil qualities. So, run away from bad company. Otherwise, your life will go along the wrong path due to the effect of bad company.

When dust on earth associates with air, it goes up in the sky. It has no wings to go up. The same dust in association with water will go down. To go down it has no legs either. But one way it goes up, the other way it goes down. What is the reason? The reason is friendship. When it has friendship with the wind, it goes up. When it has friendship with water, it goes down. Air has the nature to fly high, while water goes down. Even if you pour water on the mountain top, it will go down. Because of association, a person acquires good or bad qualities. So, get away from bad company. . . .

Never Have Excessive Desires

One may have desires, but one should never have excessive desires. You are thirsty. It is enough if you get a tumbler full of water. In the forest, if you are thirsty and desire a tumbler of water, be satisfied if you get it. Do not desire a cool drink in a forest. How can you get it in a forest? That is excessive desire.

The entire universe is the embodiment of Lord Vishnu. It is the very form of God and a wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpa vriksha*). It will fulfill all your desires. So, there is scope for fructification of every thought of man. However, a bad thought will give you bad result, and a good thought will give you good result. Here is a small example.

Walking in the scorching heat of the sun in a forest, a man came across a huge tree and stopped under it to take rest. This was a wish-fulfilling tree, but the traveler was not aware of this fact. As soon as he thought how nice it would be to get some drinking water, he saw a pot full of cold water before him.

Getting relief from his fatigue by drinking water, he felt hungry and thought how happy he would be if he could get delicious food also to satiate his hunger! His happiness and surprise became manifold when a sumptuous meal appeared before him.

After eating the delicious food to his fill, he felt sleepy and thought how wonderful it would be if there was a soft bed on which he could sleep happily. At that very moment, a soft bed appeared before him as desired by him. As the wayfarer lay down on the bed, he thought how nice it would have been if his wife was there to press his feet! The very next moment, he found his wife before him.

Extremely surprised to see his wife there, he thought, “My wife lives in the village. It would take her two days to reach here. How could she reach here instantly as I thought of her? Perhaps she is not my wife; rather some goblin has appeared in her form who will now eat me up.”

The wish-fulfilling tree would give whatever one desired. Hence, a goblin at once appeared there and swallowed him up. God is also like a wish-fulfilling tree for those who take refuge in Him. Whatever they ask from God, He grants their request and gives the desired thing. Wise people pray to God only for His grace, which can give them everything. Those who start asking God for this thing and that thing are foolish. They ultimately ask for something that brings about their disaster. That is why it is said, as is the mind (*mathi*), so is the destiny (*gathi*).

The moral of the story is: as is the thought, so is the result. When the traveler desired water, it came. Should he not be satisfied with that? Still he wanted a bed. Should he not be satisfied after he got the bed? Excessive desires only put him in danger. So, we should have control over our desires.

Anger and Desire Hurt You

When you have a desire in your heart, you are not able to do anything good because the desire becomes an obstacle. It is only your desire that makes you think of doing something bad. We say we have enemies. Who are the enemies? Those who harm you or hurt you are your enemies. Those enemies are within you. Both anger and desire harm and hurt you and cause pain to you.

Your mental restlessness is due to your anger and desire. Anger can be controlled when you put a ceiling on your desires. In human life, there are desires. They should be there; there is no mistake in it. But they should be limited. If they are excessive, you can never fulfill them.

As is the vessel, so is the water collected. There is plenty of water in the Ganga. In the ocean, there is a lot of water. But you can collect the water depending on the size of the vessel. You cannot collect the whole lot. If you want more, have a bigger container. So, develop Divine power.

To satisfy all sorts of worldly desires without developing Divine power is contrary to human nature. Anger and desire are the qualities of animals. Therefore, keep a distance from animal qualities. That is spirituality. What do you mean by spirituality? Not merely devotional songs (*bhajans*), penance, or worship. No! You should get rid of the animal qualities within you. Anger and desire are your real enemies. Put them under control. If you allow them liberty, you cannot escape from danger and restlessness. . . .

If you want to reach Divinity, escaping punishment, proceed in a limited way. There should be a limit in talking, seeing, walking, thinking. Everything should be within limits. But today we cross all limits. Our desires are limitless. Reduction of desires in *Vedanta* is called renunciation (*vairagya*). Renunciation means reduction in desires.

Do Not Develop Too Much Attachment

Life is a long journey. Reduce the burden of your desires. Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure. Carrying too heavy luggage on the long journey of life is troublesome. The luggage is desires. Gradually, reduce your desires. When you reduce worldly desires, spiritual desires will increase. People today aspire for spirituality but go on increasing worldly desires. People develop too much attachment. It is not attachment that is important.

Detachment is the royal path in spirituality. How? You have a family, children, a house. Do your duty. Duty is God. Work is worship. But do not have too much attachment. Educate your children, give them food, take care of them. But do not be too attached to them. . . .

When you release cotton or a piece of paper in the air, it will go up. What is the reason behind this? Because they are light in weight, they go up. So, if a person also is light, they will go up in spirituality. But today, people have burdened themselves with the heavy weight of desires. So, they ruin themselves. How do you expect them to attain liberation? A person says many things but does not do even one thing. We should be light. We should reduce the weight. Then we can rise to noble heights.

If you have too much attachment, you are sure to ruin yourself. The one with worldly attachment is no devotee. In order to cut down attachment, people used to go to the forest in earlier times. But there is no need to go to the forest.

Just do your duty. In the house, you have your spouse and children. Take care of them. Reduce your worldly desires. If help is solicited, then help. But don't develop attachment.

You are aging. Still, you have no spirit of sacrifice. People today have no sacrifice (*thyaga*). Sacrifice is *yoga*. Worldly pleasure (*bhoga*) is disease (*roga*). Observe limits in worldly pleasure. So, it is good to reduce your desires.¹⁵

15. Direct Your Mind Toward God. Divine Discourse on April 6, 1993.



Ceiling on Desires (16)

Divinity Is Present within You

Here is fire. It is covered by ash. Why has the ash covered the fire? It has covered the fire because we have neglected it. Where did the ash come from? It came from fire only. Ash that came out of the fire covered the fire. If you blow it off, the ash will go, and you will see the fire.

Similarly, the fire of Divinity is present within you, but you have neglected it. Therefore, the ash of illusion has covered it. So, you are not able to visualize the Divinity within you. Blow off the ash of illusion through renunciation; then you will see the fire of Divinity. Fire has not come afresh from somewhere. It was already there within you. Similarly, there is Divinity in the form of the Atmic Principle in everyone.

People today protect and decorate only the chariot of their body, which is drawn by the horses of the senses. It is however necessary to control the horses. Keep the horses of the senses under control. Who controls these horses? It is the mind that should control the senses. Since the mind controls the senses (*indriyas*), the mind is also called Indra. Based on this, it has been said: *yoga* is control of mental modifications (*yoga chitta vritti nirodha*).

People control other things. The government exercises control over property, food, and, in fact, everything. But no heed is paid toward controlling the mind. For that reason, we face troubles. If the mind is under control, there is no need to control other things; they get controlled on their own.

Observe Ceiling on Desires

For that reason, the Sai Organization has devised the program "Ceiling on Desires." Ceiling on what? Is it a ceiling on property or food? No, no! It means ceiling on the activities of daily life.

First and foremost, exercise control over food. Do not waste food. Food is responsible for sustaining the body. Eat moderately. Don't waste food. Food is God. Many people face problems for lack of food. If you waste food, you betray those people who are denied food. So, do not waste food.

Second, don't waste money. Misuse of money is evil. Don't waste money merely because you have an excess of it. Health is wealth. If you waste money on eating immoderately, you will be spoiling your health. Make use of money only to the extent needed. If you misuse money, you may acquire bad habits, follow a wicked path, grow in ego, become ostentatious, and develop bad qualities. So, make proper use of your money; spend it in a sacred way.

Third, don't waste time. Time waste is life waste. When you talk unnecessarily, you not only waste time but also lose your energy. Talk to the extent necessary. Never waste time. Time is very important. Time is the very form of God.

*Salutations to time,
To the one who is beyond time,
To the one who has conquered time,
To the one who transcends time,
To the one who is the embodiment of time, and
To the one who ordains time.*

*Kalaya namah,
Kala kalaya namah,
Kaladarpa damanaya namah,
Kalateetaya namah,
Kalaswarupaya namah,
Kalaniyamitaya namah.*

Everything is time.

Fourth, don't waste energy. Energy is wasted in seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, and doing what isn't necessary. Be moderate in all these five activities. Spend energy to the extent necessary. When you develop energy, you develop Divinity. If you waste energy, "allergy" begins. Do not waste energy. See, listen, and talk what is good. Talk less, talk sweetly.

We keep thinking until we go to bed, with no rest in thinking. We build castles in the air. So, reduce useless thinking. Think, but think usefully. Think of the Divine. Think of Divinity. Don't have thoughts of others.

Worldly Relationships Are Temporary

“Who is to whom? What are these worldly relationships?” These are temporary, like passing clouds that come and go. Before marriage, who is husband and who is wife? Before birth, who is mother and who is son? No one knows. The son, the wife, the husband, the mother—all come in between like passing clouds. In this world, no cloud is permanent; all come and pass on. Why should you worry about them? Do your duty to the extent necessary. But nobody has any relationship with anybody.¹⁶

16. Realize God through Experience. Divine Discourse on April 8, 1993.



Ceiling on Desires (17)

Develop Divine Consciousness

In order to develop affinity with God, get rid of affinity with the world. Remove body consciousness and develop Divine consciousness. If you want to develop Divine consciousness, reduce the burden of desires and worries and become detached.

Detachment does not mean leaving wife and wealth and running away to the forest; it is sacrificing negative feelings, desires, and delusions. Desire comes out of illusion (*bhrama*), not Brahma (God). Remove the illusion and reduce the desires to make the journey of life a pleasure.

God is everywhere. He is all sweetness. As the *Upanishads* say, God is like a doll of sugar, every part of which will taste sweet. No matter what for and how you pray to God, you will get sweetness, because God is filled with sweetness of love.

God Does Not Put Burdens on People

Who is responsible for your burdens? Once a cowherd maiden (*gopika*) went to a well to fetch water. After filling water in three pots, she put one on her head and another in one hand. She was trying to put the third pot over the pot on her head. But she was finding it difficult and was in need of help from someone.

Since Krishna was standing nearby, she asked Him for help. But He refused. Meanwhile, another *gopika* who was passing by came forward and helped her in putting the pot on top of her head.

Krishna followed the *gopika* on the way to her home. As soon as she reached home, Krishna came forward to help her put down the pot from her head. She then asked Krishna why He refused to put the pot on her head earlier, and why He came forward to help her put the pot down. Krishna then explained that it is not His nature to put burdens on people; He is interested only in removing their burdens. People think that God gives them all burdens. That is not correct.

Reduce Your Relationship with the World

There was a student who, after completing his education, got married. Before marriage, he had two legs. Now after marriage, he became four legged, like an animal. Sometime later, he begot a son and he became six legged, like a cockroach, and thereafter he got a daughter and became eight legged, like a spider. In this way, people keep on increasing their burden. People are responsible for all their bondages, not God. Give all your burdens to God, then you will be relieved of your burden. Gradually reduce your burden. Strengthen your relationship with God and reduce your relationship with the world to reduce your burden.

Bliss comes naturally to you when sorrow is removed. Removal of attachment is liberation (*moha kshaya* is *moksha*). Liberation (*moksha*) is not anything separate or different. It is reduction of attachment and development of detachment. It is possible only through the strength of devotion, which gives steadfastness, leading to detachment. Food, strength, and liberation (*bhukthi*, *sakthi*, and *mukthi*) all come from supreme devotion (*para bhakthi*).

God Is Searching for a True Devotee

Embodiments of Divine Love! Divine love and compassion are naturally present in your heart. Try to protect them at all times. A compassionate heart is the temple of God. First give happiness to God within you. Many people visit places of pilgrimage in search of God. Do not waste your time and money. He is within you. It is God who is searching for a true devotee.

Ceiling on desires is of four types: First, don't waste food; food is God. Second, don't waste money. Misuse of money is evil. Third, don't waste time. Time is God. The *Upanishads* say that nothing is more precious than time. If you waste time, it is as good as wasting the opportunity given by God. Finally, don't waste energy. We lose and waste energy by misuse of the senses. Just as the batteries in a radio are drained when the radio is switched on, we lose energy by talking too much. We waste our life by wasting energy.

*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.*

Do Not Worry about the Past

Today, people are worried about what they are incapable of. They do not think about what they are supposed to do. Students keep dreaming about the future, without attending to their studies. Past is past. Don't worry about the past. Whatever was done will not come back. Future is in the womb of time; it is unseen and uncertain. So do not worry about the future. The present is very important. It is not ordinary present, it is omnipresent.

The past is a tree, the future is also a tree, but the present is the seed. The past is in the present, and the future is also in the present. What you ate earlier, you will have its belch now. Experience the present properly. Don't worry; always be happy. While eating food, don't worry where the vegetables came from and what will happen to the consumed food tomorrow. So, don't think of past or future; be happy in the present.

There was a mother whose son became ill and died of fever. After five years, her second son also became ill. The mother started worrying that the same might happen to him. Think of happiness, rather than unpleasant things. Past is past. Know the correct way to utilize the present.

Love All and Serve All

People today worship lifeless objects while harming living beings. Spiritual practice (*sadhana*) and devotion must be accompanied by the awareness that God exists in everyone. So, give respect and joy to all. That is sacred life, true devotion, and spiritual practice.

What is the way to love God? The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. But it should not be worldly, material love; it should be Divine love, which is changeless and eternal. Worldly love collapses, perishes, and exhausts itself, whereas Divine love is changeless and limitless and constantly renews itself. God is always with you, in you, and around you. There is no need to search for Him. In fact, God is in search of a true devotee. We must recognize that the world is based on compassion. Perfect faith, *dharma* (righteousness), and devotion to God residing in your heart will protect you.¹⁷



Ceiling on Desires (18)

In Money There Is No Evil

Man ignores God who is the very basis of his life and refuses to recognize things as mere things. His mind has become a bundle of desires. In Vedantic parlance, this striving and yearning, this desire which prompts men, is called *kama*. When the spirit of inquiry gets sharper and deeper, it leads man beyond realms of the senses and even the feeble faculty of reason, beyond the stars and space, and helps him to dive into the boundless ocean of bliss. Instead, if *kama* gets bogged down in the distracting objective world, it plunges man into misery.

When *kama* (desire) is directed toward spiritual progress, it rewards man, filling his heart with Divine delight. For the Divine is free from mental modes or physical forms. It has no likes or dislikes. It is not bound by time or space. It is ever pure, ever conscious. It is free from the blemish of duality. Only persons endowed with *satwa guna* (unruffled serenity) can have a vision of the Divine, and achieve the heroic victory.

In money, there is no evil. In scholarship, there is no evil. In knowledge and intelligence, there is no evil. But evil arises from the activities that man carries on with their help. Pure water has no color. Poured into a black bottle, it appears black. Poured into a red bottle, it appears red. The water does not become red or black; the color is due to what we have done to it.

When money, scholarship, cleverness and intelligence are possessed by persons in whom *rajas* (passion, emotion, extrovert qualities) predominates, they promote hatred, ambition, and lust. When possessed by persons in whom *tamas* (sloth, dullness, conceit) predominates, they promote miserliness, greed, and envy. When possessed by persons in whom *satwa* (equanimity, balance, purity) predominates, they promote love, compassion, urge to serve, the unity of all mankind, and world peace.

The sublimation of character into the stage of *satwa* is the duty that everyone owes himself. This is the path; this is the real goal. You must try ceaselessly to tread the path and reach the goal.

Take Refuge in the Company of the Good and Godly

God is the sole sustainer of human life—the basis, the structure, the consummation. Money cannot help man to cultivate godliness and merge in God, the source. Scholarship too is equally powerless. The *Upanishads* proclaim that release from death can be achieved neither through entanglement in works, nor through one's progeny, nor through the accumulation of riches. It can be gained only through *thyaga* (acts of renunciation, detachment, unconcern, giving up). It is a pity that this warning is not heeded and man is engaged in mere grabbing and grasping. As a result he suffers from more and more bonds that get tighter and tighter.

The best means to escape from this fate is to take refuge in the company of the good and godly, and journey along their beneficial path. This is the valid vesture (*dharma*) that can protect man. One must take delight in wearing it and becoming worthy of it. *Dharma* also indicates the unchanging genuine nature of every entity—its essential characteristic. . . .

My Total Selflessness

No one, in fact, has the right or reason to point a finger at any blot in Me. My total selflessness, My compassionate heart full of eagerness to serve and save, My resolve to establish peace and prosperity, My determination to shower *ananda* (bliss) on the world—these are being manifested more and more from day to day, and I am at all times in immeasurable *ananda*. I am not affected by anxiety even for a moment. Consider, is there anyone in this world who can announce this?

It is sheer ignorance that induces people to comment otherwise. When they experience My love and witness the unfolding of My mission, the comments will cease, and the reality that Sai is, will be clear to them. That knowledge can bear fruit by transforming your humanness into Divinity, into Sai. "*Brahma Vid Brahmaiva Bhavathi*" (The knower of Brahmam becomes Brahmam itself).

This project of transformation involves consideration of the problems that afflict the individual, the society, the nation, and mankind. The rules and regulations laid down by government cannot cure certain deep-rooted defects. So, the Sai Organization was commissioned to promote among the members a ceiling on desires.

Use Money for Social Service

People now yield, on account of weakness of will, to the temptations that clamor for their money. The richer they are, the more wasteful are the ways in which they spend their money. Even a struggling middle class family attempts to adopt the spending habits of the reckless rich and suffers ruin. A worker drawing ten rupees as daily wages spends two rupees on drink, three on the cinema and two more on some spree or the other, forcing his family to starve.

The message of placing a ceiling on desires and utilizing the money thus saved into a fund was to use the money for social service among the villages, for the poor and the illiterate. But, the underlying principle was generally neglected. What was offered to the fund was not savings derived by desisting from desires. The old, deleterious habits were not given up. Smoking, drinking, etc., continue undiminished. The object of the program was to put a brake on harmful desires and not the collection of money.

Of course, money is an essential requisite and those who have assumed responsibility for service projects do need it. Six thousand villages have been adopted by the units of the organization, and facilities for education and medicine are provided therein, besides roads and wells. When I decide on a project, the wherewithal for accomplishing has to be spontaneously available without any fund-raising campaign. . . .

Circulation of Money Ensures Good Health

A man should own only as much wealth as is essential. It is like the size of his shoes. If the shoes are too loose, he cannot walk; if they are too tight, he cannot wear them. Too much money is a torture; rich people will agree with this judgment. It is foolish to accumulate money and sit on the pile, which turns into garbage. Spread garbage over the cornfield, it will fertilize the crop and multiply the harvest. After all, how much and how long can a man enjoy? A dog can only lap up water, even from a huge lake. Like blood, money too should circulate to ensure health.

Members of the organization should understand and follow these ideals set before them. In fact, no other organization has such selfless workers engaged in loving service. If you watch with an open eye, you find them cheerfully and enthusiastically laboring in the kitchens and serving the meals, cleaning and sweeping, though most of them are unaccustomed to manual work, and accommodating themselves in open grounds. Their faith has given them this fortitude. The volunteers and *Seva Dal* (voluntary service corps)

members, men and women, have toiled in the true spirit of dedication and surrender. . . .

Give Up Selfish Activity

I desire one thing from you. Develop brotherhood with all. Adopt right conduct always. Give up selfish activity. Welcome all chances to serve the illiterate and the poor.

As part of the 60th Birthday Celebrations, I am prescribing a test that you have to accept. When you undergo it and emerge victorious, you can be pronounced as real humans. The farmer ploughs the field, sows the seed, and watches the crop grow, until the grain is harvested. The next process is winnowing. The light chaff will then be carried away by the wind, and the hard grain will stay. I shall start winnowing from now; the test will remove the chaff.¹⁸

18. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 18, Chapter 25: I Will Be Closer to Devotees. Divine Discourse on November 23, 1985.



Ceiling on Desires (19)

Controlling the Senses

When a man is born, he is endowed with limited capacities. But owing to the misuse of the senses and the limitless growth of desires, these capacities are wasted away. As a consequence, he becomes prematurely old and dies. Hence, these limited capacities should be properly used by controlling the senses, thereby prolonging one's life, and dedicating one's knowledge and talents to the service of society.

It is only when students develop character and integrity that they will be able to transform the moral climate of the world around them. It is because education has failed to transform human behavior that there is no mental or spiritual development among them. For this purpose, a system of *dharma* (moral order) has to be established that will promote both worldly and other-worldly well-being. Only then will humanity be divinized. . . .

Primary Purpose of Education

It is not earning a livelihood that is important. What matters are the ideals for which you live. The primary purpose of education is to enable one to manifest the Divinity within him. When students pursue education in this

spirit, they will promote the welfare of the nation, of society, and their own good.

Therefore, education should not be pursued as a means for achieving a desired end. This is a degrading attitude. All worldly desires can confer only limited pleasure. How, then, is one to achieve lasting bliss? It cannot be obtained through the body. Only through inner experience can lasting bliss be secured. Then alone is there fulfillment in life.

Today there is no harmony between thought, word, and deed. Thinking in one way, speaking in a different way, and acting in a different way, men are getting themselves bound by their own contradictions. In the process, they are deceiving themselves.

Education should be pursued, not merely for acquiring degrees, but for cultivating human values. All riches are ephemeral. Do not become slaves of wealth. Become subjects of good qualities. Wealth without character is worthless. A life becomes an ideal one when character constitutes one's wealth. The blossoming of one's character leads to radiance in life.

Keep Desires within Limits

When a child is born, he is innocent of all desires. As he grows older, desires multiply. These desires have to be kept within limits. Life is a long journey, and the less luggage you carry, the greater the comfort. Reducing desires is the true mark of civilization. The government has imposed ceilings on land, on houses, and on many other things. But there is no ceiling on desires. Education should lead to restraint on desires.

It should be realized that every organ in the body has a limit to what it can do. It is dangerous to use it beyond that limit. This applies to almost everything in life. Whenever the limit is exceeded, there is an adverse consequence. Excessive light will burn the retina. A deafening noise may damage the eardrum.

Students! You are not unaware of the situation in the world today. Wherever you turn, there is disorder and violence. Man has been given two boons: happiness and peace. Every person in the world, from a king to a beggar, desires only these two. But what is the happiness that he should seek? Is it physical, mental, or material pleasure?

Men are not sure about what kind of happiness they want and wherefrom they can get it. If it is sensory pleasure that they want, they will find that this is only momentary and that they are weakened at the end. This is no pleasure at

all. What about peace? People consider freedom from worry as peace. Thyagaraja declared that there can be no pleasure without peace. How is peace to be secured? Only when desires are reduced will peace be secured. As desires grow, peace is lost.

Develop Contentment

Man is a prey to insatiable desires. As soon as he realizes one desire, he develops a desire for something more attractive. He wants to become a legislator. Soon after he becomes one, he wants to become a minister and thereafter the chief minister. He is not content with that. He desires to go to Delhi. There is no end to these desires. Man should develop contentment. The discontented man loses in many ways.

A student may desire to score high marks, but he should not wish that others should not fare equally well. This selfish attitude is unbecoming. All should fare equally well in the examinations. All should achieve excellence. Students should have this broad-minded attitude.

The stage of the student is like that of a tender sapling. When it is tended properly, it will grow into a good tree. From this young age you should see that the mind does not go astray. Do not give room for envy, hatred, and arrogance. Rejoice in the success of others. Success will come to you of its own accord. Yield your place to persons weaker than yourself in queuing for the bus. Shed the desire to get ahead of others.

Do not always think narrowly about your own position. It is only when you develop a broad outlook that you will be able to emerge in the years to come as leaders of the nations. You are the leaders of tomorrow. It is only if you develop right attitudes now that you will be able to play your roles properly in the future. Purify your hearts. Control your senses. This is the right path.

Spirituality does not mean mere meditation or worship. It means getting rid of the pollution in the mind. Students should be known for their serenity and orderliness. Instead, we find that there is excitement and agitation wherever a few students gather. This should not be allowed to happen.¹⁹

19. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 25, Chapter 13. Love the Motherland: Serve the World. Divine Discourse on May 21, 1992.



Ceiling on Desires (20)

The Means to Self-Realization

In the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, a fourfold program of “Ceiling on Desires” has been laid down. This enjoins everyone not to waste food, money, time, and energy. Avoiding waste of these four forms of gifts from God is spiritual *sadhana*. It is the means to Self-realization.

Spirituality consists in forgetting worldly concerns and immersing oneself in God. This means sanctifying every action in life, whether it be talking or walking or anything else. Reading and writing are also forms of meditation, because they call for concentration. Everything in life can become a form of meditation.

Avoid doing anything in a hurry. It is not difficult to attain the state of the over-mind if one has the determination to realize it. *Crores* (millions) of rupees are being spent on exploring space. But very little effort is made to explore the heart within one's self.

When everyone tries to act according to the dictates of his conscience, he will realize the sublime consciousness within him. There are two basic elements in man, the head and the heart. When these two are put to right use, the hands will act in the right way.²⁰

20. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 26, Chapter 22: From the Mind to the Over-Mind. Divine Discourse on May 24, 1993.



Ceiling on Desires (21)

Check Your Desires

Buddha stated that the richest man in the world was not the one like his father, who was an emperor, but one who is contented with what he has. You have to check your desires and put a ceiling on them. One who has multiple desires is poor. Only by controlling desire you can reach the goal.²¹

21. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 31, Chapter 20: Install Divinity in the Heart. Divine Discourse on April 26, 1998.



Ceiling on Desires (22)

Light the Lamp of Love Within

Everyone should develop love more and more. But, today, there is hatred and anger everywhere. Wherever you see, there is desire, enmity, and fear. How do you expect to be at peace? How do you expect to be blissful? Light the lamp of love within. Then fear and illusion can be removed and you can have the vision of the Self. Otherwise you are bound to suffer.

You have to exercise a ceiling on your desires. There are rules for ceilings with regard to land and property. But you have no ceiling on your desires. Ceiling on desires means exercising control over them. You can be happy once the desires are controlled.

Your life is a long journey. You should have less luggage (desires) in this long journey of life. Therefore, it is said: less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure. So, ceiling on desires is what you have to adopt today. You have to cut short your desires day by day. You are under the mistaken notion that happiness lies in the fulfillment of desires. But, in fact, happiness begins to dawn when desires are totally eradicated. When you reduce your desires, you advance toward the state of renunciation.

You have many desires. What do you get out of them? You are bound to face the consequences when you claim something as yours. When you claim a piece of land as yours, then you will have to reap the harvest. This instinct of ego and attachment will put you to suffering. You will be blissful the moment you give up ego and attachment. . . .

You have to make every effort to understand the immanent Divinity. The Divinity within is covered by ego and anger. Therefore, it is said, “Real knowledge dawns when attachment is destroyed.” Where does this attachment come from? Excessive desires lead to attachment.

Sacred Love Is within You

Embodiments of Love! All are embodiments of God. “*Sahasra seersha Purusha sahasraksha sahasrapad* (God has thousands of heads, eyes, and feet).” You will experience it once you inquire deep within.

You may attain peace by undertaking *japa* (repetition of the name), *dhyana* (meditation), and *yoga*. But this peace is not permanent; it is temporary. To attain permanent peace, develop love within. Love can turn earth into sky and sky into earth. This sacred love is within you. But, you direct it in the wrong direction and thereby it gets perverted. You are

responsible for the loss and suffering. You are responsible for the wicked actions and agitations outside.²²

22. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 32-1, Chapter 6: Put a Ceiling on Your Desires. Divine Discourse on March 14, 1999.



Ceiling on Desires (23)

Do Not Become a Victim of Desires

The culture of *Bharat* (India) says: *Sathyam bruyath, priyam bruyath, na bruyath sathyam apriyam* (speak the truth, speak sweetly and softly, and never utter truth in an unpalatable way). *Sathyam bruyath* is the moral value. *Priyam bruyath* is the social value. *Na bruyath sathyam apriyam* is the spiritual value. So, the moral, social, and spiritual values are all contained in the above statement.

The *Ramayana* teaches these values in the simplest way. But man has forgotten the message of the *Ramayana* and is leading the life of a Ravana. Ravana did not understand this principle of Divinity. There was no transformation in him, though he had acquired all forms of knowledge and had done several penance. He ruined himself on account of excessive desires.

Before his death, he gave a message to the people: “O people, with all my skills and expertise in different forms of knowledge I became a victim of desires. I lost my sons, ruined my clan, and burnt my kingdom to ashes, since I could not control my desires. Do not become a victim of desires like me. Follow the path of truth and righteousness and be like Rama. Experience Divinity.” . . .

Human Life Is a Long Journey

Today man has degenerated to the level of an animal due to excessive desires. Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure. But, the desires (luggage) in man are multiplying day by day. Human life is a long journey. One should lead a Divine life (*divya jeevanam*), not a mean life (*deena jeevanam*).

Always be happy. Difficulties do come in life. That is the law of Nature. Never get disheartened by them. Difficulties are like passing clouds. Difficulties come and go, but morality comes and grows. Unfortunately, there is a decline in moral values in the society today. . . .

Annihilate the evil qualities of *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), and *lobha* (greed). Ravana ruined not only himself, but also his dynasty because of *kama*. Therefore, to the extent possible control your desires. Today the government has imposed ceilings on land and property through legislation, but what is essential is a ceiling on desires. Not only did Hiranyakasipu refrain from chanting the name of Lord Hari, he also insisted that his son Prahlada follow suit. He developed hatred toward his own son for singing the praise of Lord Hari against his wishes. This evil quality of anger led to his doom.

Duryodhana was greed personified. He was not prepared to part with even a small piece of land. He subjected the Pandavas to enormous hardships. What happened to him ultimately? He became a victim of his own greed.

Desire, anger, and greed are the greatest impediments in the path of spirituality. Render help to others, if possible. Never hate anybody under any circumstances. The essence of eighteen *Puranas* is contained in these two maxims: Help ever, hurt never.²³

23. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 32-1, Chapter 8: Relevance of *Ramayana* to Modern Life. Divine Discourse on March 25, 1999.



Ceiling on Desires (24)

Emulate Noble Qualities of Children

Children in general are Divine in nature. As they grow up they develop bad qualities like excessive desires, attachments, anger, jealousy, etc. Along with advancing age, sorrows and difficulties will also increase. Therefore, one should strive for attaining control over one's desires. That is ceiling on desires. If you can develop this control, you will come under the influence of Divine power. Otherwise, you will be deluded by the power of desires and get into that vortex from which you can never come out. A childlike simplicity, purity, and innocence is the road to Divinity.

Embodiments of Love! I wish you should become children at least for one minute a day. You should emulate those noble qualities that are characteristic of children. Supposing you are troubled with desires, chase them away as unbecoming of your noble personality. Only then can you hold your head high.²⁴

24. Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 37, Chapter 14: Divine Love Alone Can Save Us from Sorrows. Divine Discourse on August 28, 2004.



Ceiling on Desires (25)

Time Waste Is Life Waste

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 organizing 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 on 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.²⁵

25. Lead an Ideal Life and Set an Example for Others. Divine Discourse on July 21, 2008.



Ceiling on Desires (26)

Do Not Waste Your Divine Energy

You should give some thought to the financial condition of your parents and your own future. Do not spend money as you please, just because parents have sent it to you. That is why I always emphasize the practice of ceiling on desires. Don't waste time. Time waste is life waste. Don't waste food. Food is God. Don't waste money. Misuse of money is evil. Don't waste energy. Energy is God.

You see, hear, speak, smell, and perform all actions only due to the Divine energy of God. Do not waste your Divine energy by misusing your

senses. If you put this Divine energy to sacred use, you can attain the sacredness of Divinity. But if you waste this energy, you will be a victim of many diseases.

My Purity

You can see for yourself, sacredness is the root cause of this body's energy. Do you know how old this body is? It is seventy years and six months old. But how energetic I am! Even now I can run very fast and stand first in the running race. Even a sixteen-year-old young boy cannot do as much work as I do.

I do a lot of work. Every day I receive bundles of letters by hand and by post. After the *bhajan* (devotional singing) is over, I go back and read all those letters. I know the contents of each letter, yet for the satisfaction of devotees, I read them. Till the time I come out again at 3.45 P.M., I read these letters. How is My eyesight? I can see things clearly even from a long distance. This is not Divine power; this is My natural power. It is My purity that is responsible for this.

I have no defects like short-sightedness and long-sightedness. I can read even very small letters. You can estimate the power of My ears when I tell you that I can hear even the sound of the footsteps of an ant. All My senses are perfect. I feel very sorry when I see small children wearing spectacles. Small children of six, ten, and sixteen years of age are wearing spectacles today. What is the reason? The defect lies in their blood.

You can live long if you make proper use of your senses. Therefore, develop sacredness. I can do much more work than a young boy can do because I am endowed with such great power due to the sacred use of my senses. That is not Divine power or something that I have acquired. It is My natural power.

You will be surprised to know what I eat. I eat *ragi sankati* in the morning. But you eat various items like *korma*, *burma*, etc. I wonder how you people eat and digest those things. No doubt, youngsters should eat well and maintain their body. But you should not eat in excess.

Do Not Eat Everything

Today people don't observe any time for food nor do they give any proper interval between one meal and the other. They keep eating something or the other all the time. They have their lunch in the afternoon and dinner at night; in between, they keep stuffing their belly with snacks and drinks.

You should inquire what is to be eaten and what is not to be eaten. Do not eat everything, everywhere. Observe proper discipline with regard to your eating habits. One day, I will speak to you about proper food habits. As is the food, so is the head. Food, head, and God are interrelated.

Don't waste your time. Study well. Some boys read bad novels keeping them inside their textbooks. To others, they appear to be reading textbooks, but they conceal their novels in between textbooks. When someone comes near them, they at once hide them.

Never read such bad books. As is the *pustaka* (book), so is the *mastaka* (head). Today, there are many bad books in the market. People indulge in such evil practice of writing bad books only for the sake of money. They write them because there are people to buy them. They will not write them if you don't buy them. Therefore, never read bad books, never join bad company, never wear inappropriate dress.²⁶

26. Do Not Waste Natural Resources. Divine Discourse on July 18, 1996.



Ceiling on Desires (27)

Maintain Balance

You have been told, off and on, about the program of "Ceiling on Desires," which has four important components. The first one is "Don't waste food." Why? Because food is God. Food is indispensable for human life, since the body cannot survive without food. The second one is "Don't waste money." The misuse of money is an evil. Today's youth especially are wasting money in a number of ways. This will lead to bad habits, loss of peace of mind, and the ruining of your life itself.

Our country is today facing grave economic problems, so indiscriminate spending of money for selfish purposes should strictly be eschewed in the interest of the society at large. The spirit of cooperation has to be promoted. National unity and integrity should be safeguarded.

A balance has to be maintained between individual interests and national interests. Everything in life depends on maintaining the proper balance, whether it be walking, sitting, cycling, or driving a car. Today this balance has been lost because of excessive knowledge and its misuse. If knowledge is to be put to right use, it should be transformed into skill. However, instead of skill, young people in particular are killing knowledge. You are wasting knowledge and energy in seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, etc., in a wrong manner and in

excessive measure. Therefore the third item in the “Ceiling on Desires” says “Don’t waste energy.”

Do Not Think about the Past

A small illustration in this connection. You have tuned the radio to a particular station. Whether the volume is kept high or low, whether you listen or not, so many units of electrical energy will be wasted. Likewise your body is a radio. You are constantly engaged in thinking as well as talking in a loud or low tone, talking to others or to yourself, talking while awake and even while asleep. Due to such continuous talking day and night, how much energy is being wasted, thereby causing allergy in your lives. Every action involves the use of energy. If the energy in the body is properly utilized, then balance will be maintained and the body will be in good shape.

The fourth dictum of the “Ceiling on Desires” is “Don’t waste time.” Students, only when the body is strong, healthy, and happy can you enjoy the proper state of balance in life. Man’s life is wasted in brooding over the past and worrying about the future. What is the root cause of man’s sorrow and sickness? Not being content with what he has, and hankering after what he does not have, man forfeits peace of mind.

There is no need to think about what is past or about what is in store in the future. Of what avail is it to think of the past, which is irrevocable, or to worry about the future, which is uncertain? It is a sheer waste of time. Past is past, future is future. You can do nothing about either. What is most important is the present. This is not ordinary present. It is omnipresent. The result of the past and the result of the future are both present in the present. You are reaping in the present what you had sown in the past. And what you are sowing in the present you will reap in the future. Thus, both the past and the future are contained in the present only. So, make the best use of the present. Give up all sorts of worry and lead ideal lives leading to immortality and fulfillment of the purpose of human life. . . .

Nothing Is Permanent

In this world, there is nothing permanent whether persons, objects, or other things. The very name *jagat* (universe) means “coming and going.” Knowing this truth, why should you worry at all? So give no scope whatsoever for any kind of worry. Only then can man be entitled to become Divine.

It is only man that is endowed with the capacity to discover his Divinity. In this context, food habits play an important role. Out of 8,400,000 living beings on earth, 8,399,999 species of creatures like insects, birds, animals, and

beasts, etc., live on what is provided by God in nature, and hence they do not generally suffer from any diseases.

Man is the sole exception in this regard. By becoming a slave to his palate, he relishes only cooked and spicy foods of various kinds, without realizing to what extent such foods are curtailing his own longevity.

Besides this, it is significant to note that those who live on vegetarian food are less prone to diseases whereas non-vegetarians are subject to more diseases. Why? Because animal food is incompatible with the needs of the human body. Doctors speak about proteins being present in non-vegetarian food, but the fact is that there are better quality proteins in food articles like vegetables, pulses, milk, curd, etc. Non-vegetarian food not only affects man's body but also has a deleterious effect on his mind.

Be Careful about the Food You Eat

Food, Head, God—these three are interrelated. By consuming animal food, animal tendencies are aroused. As is your food, so are your thoughts. Men today are behaving in a manner worse than that of wild animals in the forest. They have become cruel, pitiless, and hard-hearted. There is no sympathy or understanding even between man and man. The main reason for this condition lies in the kind of food that is consumed.

Students, be careful about the food you eat. See that it is conducive to your health and happiness. Our ancestors used to take food twice a day and our ancient sages used to eat only once a day. They declared that the man who eats only once is a *yogi* (God-loving person), the one who eats twice a day is a *bhogi* (enjoyer), and he who eats thrice a day is a *rogi* (sick man). Today, people go on consuming food at all times, not to speak of drinks and snacks in between. How then can they escape from indigestion and other diseases? . . .

Observe moderation in your intake of food as well as in other living habits, to keep your body in good shape and to perform your duties properly. However, do not develop undue attachment to the body. The two feelings of “I” and “mine” are solely responsible for all the problems and evils prevailing in society. You should try to minimize, if not eliminate altogether, the feelings of “doership” and “enjoyership.” Only then will you be able to lead ideal lives.

We suffer from ill health due to psychological reasons also. If you examine your pulse, blood pressure, temperature, etc., with a feeling or fear that you are unwell, you will obtain abnormal readings. If you have the apprehension that you will not sleep well, it will happen accordingly. So,

always try to have a positive outlook and self-confidence that your health is all right.

Waywardness of the Mind

Our ancients wished to live long for the sake of a godly life and therefore tried to preserve the health of their bodies as well as minds accordingly. Today, one is called an old man at the age of 60 or 70. But in olden days, people were considered young even at the age of 80, 90, or 100. Students, you might have read in the *Mahabharata* that at the time of the Kurukshetra War, Krishna and Arjuna were 86 years and 84 years old, respectively. But they were in youthful condition and participated in the war with vigor, vitality, and valor.

Who was the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army? It was the 116-year-old Bhishma. If it were to be today, a 116-year-old man would be confined to his cot, with his body shaking all over and needing others' help even for getting up from bed. But Bhishma fought fiercely for nine days. How do you account for this? It was because of his mental strength, nourishing food, and above all Self-confidence (confidence in the real Self, *Atma*).

Today such spiritual strength is totally lacking among the people. Self-confidence is constantly going up and down. Their minds are unsteady and subject to jumps and bumps from moment to moment. If their wishes are fulfilled, they will install ten pictures of God instead of one in their shrine room. In case their desires are not complied with, they will remove even the one picture that they used to worship previously. This is an indication of the waywardness of their mind. This is not the right attitude.

You may worship a picture as God, but not God as a picture. If your mind wavers from moment to moment, how can there be steadiness or stability in life? Everyone must endeavor to develop the courage to face the vicissitudes of life, joys or sorrows, gains or losses, with equanimity.

Today, many profess themselves to be believers in God. But because these so-called believers do not conduct themselves properly, many are becoming atheists. Talking about *bhakthi* (devotion), they resort to *bhukthi* (hedonism). This is no genuine devotion. A devotee should be ready to gladly accept anything as God's gift. Can you get sugar by merely requesting the sugar cane, instead of crushing it to extract the juice from it? Even if it is the best kind of diamond, will it shine in all its effulgence unless it is subjected to cutting and polishing?²⁷

27. Summer Showers in Brindavan 1990, Chapter 3: The Moving Temple.



Ceiling on Desires (28)

Desires Are Responsible for Our Joys and Sorrows

Jada Bharata's wisdom spread all over India. His main teachings for eradication of worldly attachments were (1) control of the senses and (2) ceiling on desires. We should not let desires grow without limit. Desires alone are responsible for our joy and sorrow. One who desires is not a devotee. The one who works with an expectation in mind is not a devotee. You must work for others, for God.

You may chant the *Vedas* morning to night, know all the scripture, undertake various *sadhanas* (spiritual practices) or perform *yagnas* (*sacrifices*)—God will not be achieved by any of these activities. This was the truth taught by Jada Bharata. These acts are only for mental satisfaction. How far is their reach, how permanent is their effect? This body composed of desires can never achieve God—Bharata recognized this truth.

An example. A camphor box has the smell of camphor even after all the camphor is removed. The body is a container smelling of sensual pleasures. Even after desires are curbed, *vasanas* (remnants of desire) exist. As long as the slightest tinge of desire exists, *vasanas* will prevail. As long as *vasanas* exist, one cannot reach God. So, patiently maintain self-effort with determination till the final trace of desire is erased. This is *Atma bodha*—teaching of the *Atma*.

Do Not Pray to God with Desires

Man has not taken birth to cultivate and satisfy desires. A life based on desires is narrow. Human life is meant to be as sacred and infinite as our innate Divinity. Do not pray to God with desires. “Lord, if I pass this exam, I’ll break two coconuts for You.” Is God short of coconuts? Will He satisfy your desires in fond anticipation of your coconuts? People go to Tirupathi and pray, “O Venkateswara! Fulfill my desire, and I will give you every hair on my head.” What good is your hair to the Lord? You entertain rotten desires and hold your rotten hair as ransom! No, no. This is not true prayer. It is only begging, with selfishness as the motive.

A servant works hard all day. But in the evening, he comes to the master and demands wages. One who demands compensation is an outsider, a paid servant. The wife and children also work hard at home. But does the wife demand wages at the end of the day? No. She is an owner, not a servant. The wife and children work

out of a sense of duty. Those who realize that their primary duty is to dedicate their lives to God qualify as “owners.”

Therefore, do not pray to God with desires. You should be able to assert, “I pray to You for You! I do not want anything else.” This truth was propagated by Jada Bharata. With such sublime teachings, Bharata succeeded in destroying the false pride and excessive desire in many kings of his time.²⁸

28. Summer Showers in Brindavan 1995, Chapter 6: *Priyavrata* and Jada Bharata.



Ceiling on Desires (29)

Creation Is Vast and Endless

Everyone strives to acquire happiness and to remove misery, but is unsuccessful. Creation is vast and endless. Man is just a tiny part of the cosmos and therefore should lead his life in keeping with the welfare of all. Instead, man believes that creation is meant for his own enjoyment, and exploits it. Just as a child draws milk from its mother and a bee draws nectar from a flower, man can also draw necessary resources from Nature.

These days we see Nature revolting by way of disasters because man ignores all limits in exploiting its resources. Torrential rain, drought, earthquakes, floods—such are the repercussions of man’s greed. On account of scientific progress, scientists have grown selfish without regard for the world’s welfare. They provoke Nature to retaliation. . . .

Limit Desires and Attachment

For happiness and sorrow, your behavior alone is responsible, not anyone else. People are unable to believe this fact. With pure conduct, you can acquire all the happiness and comfort you desire. Your desires also must be within limits if you want peace of mind. Men are going mad because they do not limit unreasonable desires. . . .

Bhagavatham is replete with ideals: (1) Keep your word. (2) Never lie. (3) Limit desires and attachment. Yes, you may have attachment to your wife and children. But keep it within limits. Not only must you limit your attachment but limit its duration also. Your householder life is only till fifty years of age. By sixty years, you must enter *vanaprastha* (recluse). You should snap ties with your wife and children and be free of all responsibilities. The age of seventy years is the time for complete renunciation (*sanyasa*).

Instead of cultivating such sacrifice, men today refuse to renounce attachments till death. Only hell can result to such people. Help your family and others to the extent possible. Discharge your duties toward everyone. And remember that every person is independent, governed by his individual *karma*. Everyone is responsible for himself. Don't cultivate attachment, which is the root cause of sorrow. . . .

Attain the Limitless Divinity

You may definitely have attachment and desires. But limit them. With limited desires, attain the limitless Divinity—this is the easy path. If you fail to put a ceiling on desires, you distance yourself from God.

Students, plan your life along idealistic lines from a young age and demonstrate it to society. You definitely have the freedom and the right to desire the necessities of life. But don't cultivate too many desires. Cut your ego and limit attachment, thereby letting Divine feelings flourish. This is what *Vedanta* and the *Bhagavatham* advise. . . .

Students! As much as possible, decrease your desires. Desires are the prime cause of sorrow. The less our desires, the more our bliss. While performing worldly duties, do virtuous actions and think of spiritual matters. Our country is full of miserable situations. Students should arm themselves with skills and capacity and rectify these situations.²⁹

29. Summer Showers in Brindavan 1995, Chapter 7: Vishwamitra.



Ceiling on Desires (30)

Lessons Nature Teaches

It is impossible to describe completely the glory of God. All the praise one can sing would be far from adequate. In fact, it is pointless to try and describe something that is indescribable. Instead, one must, to start with, try to understand the lessons that Nature teaches. What a tremendous load the earth carries! Some people say: “Swami, I do not wish to be a burden to Mother Earth. Please grant me death.” Will the burden of the earth decrease just because you die? Your death will not make any difference to it. The burden carried by the earth will diminish only when you lessen your own burden.

What is the true burden you bear? Desires are your burden! If you put a ceiling on desires, you become lighter and come closer to God. That is why Swami

often says: less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure. You must therefore sincerely try to decrease the burden of desires. If you do so, you will also cease to be a burden to God. Increase in your burden means more work for God! However, God being subtle, He does not directly carry your burden. Instead, He makes each person carry his own weight in such a manner that the person believes that it is actually God who is carrying! This is the subtlety of God. Though present in the five elements, He makes it appear as if the elements carry on all by themselves. . . .

Virtues Are Most Essential

Man has no doubt mastered many ways of accumulating wealth and amassing fortune. Yet, happiness eludes him. Why? Because his conduct is not proper. For good conduct, virtues are most essential. A virtuous person can accomplish anything. A son lacking in virtues and a life without a meaningful goal are of no value. Without virtues, life ceases to have any meaning.

Good conduct should be the real basis for life. However, modern man is totally lacking in character and virtues. No wonder both peace and happiness elude him. Because of man's misconduct and immoral behavior, there is pollution everywhere—in air, water, land, and food. All the five elements have been severely contaminated, consequent to man's unbecoming behavior. If man behaves properly, is pollution of the elements conceivable?

It is all due to the extensive prevalence of immoral feelings and improper behavior. The sharp decline of virtues like love, compassion, and forbearance is directly responsible for the widespread pollution that one sees today. In fact, one might even say that the five elements are afraid of man! The five elements as God created them are all pure and sacred.

Have Good Thoughts

There is nothing wrong with them whatsoever. It is man's misconduct that has caused them all to become polluted. Impurity within gets reflected as pollution without. Here is an example.

The water of the river Ganges is pure. However, if you fill a colored bottle with the water of the Ganges, it would appear colored. If the bottle is red, the water would seem red, while if the bottle is blue, the water too would appear blue. Where does the color come from? From the water or the bottle?

Ganges water is intrinsically pure; the color is therefore due to the bottle holding the water. The human being is like a bottle. If evil thoughts dominate, the body indulges in bad actions; if good thoughts prevail, the body performs good

actions. The body is not responsible for the actions; the thoughts that propel the body are. Bad feelings, bad thoughts, and bad company provide the stimulus for bad actions. You must understand this basic fact.

You should have good thoughts and aim at purity in character. Recognizing the five elements as God's gifts, their sanctity must be preserved. They must be made use of in a proper and befitting manner. Why do you sing *bhajans* (devotional songs)? Inquire deeply into the meaning of this practice. *Bhajan* singing provides an opportunity to chant the Lord's name in a sweet and pleasant manner. The vibrations associated with the Divine name then suffuse into the atmosphere and cleanse it; the pollution present is wiped out. Thus, the basic purpose of *bhajans* is to convert bad into good.

Chant the Name of God

Students!

As is the flame, so is the smoke.

As is the smoke, so is the cloud.

As is the cloud, so is the rain.

As is the rain, so is the crop.

As is the crop, so is the food.

Therefore, if the food has to be pure, then smoke must be the starting point, i.e., the flame. When trash is burnt, the polluted smoke percolates all the way to food. And when such food is consumed, diseases result. Contaminated food is thus responsible for most of the bad thoughts and actions one sees today. Seawater is salty, but when it evaporates, the vapor is free from salt.

Subsequently, the vapor becomes a cloud, which too contains pure and sweet water. The rain that comes down brings this pure water to the earth. This is God's love manifesting as rain, bearing water as pure as that of the Ganges. In a similar manner, *buddhi* (intellect), the blazing sun, must distill away all bad feelings. What results would be the vapor of good qualities. When sufficient vapor accumulates, there results the rain of love. The cloud from which the rain comes is truth. Thus, truth is the source of the love drops. The rain of love ultimately gives you the crop of Divine grace. Therefore, all your thoughts and actions must be pure and sacred.

If you constantly chant the name of God, the polluted atmosphere would automatically get purified. The Divine vibrations originating from the chant of the Divine name mix with the atmosphere and spread everywhere, indeed throughout the world. A radio program is broadcast from Delhi, but in a fraction of a second

you can hear it here. How? Because of the propagation of vibrations. Therefore, good sounds and holy vibrations generated by *bhajan* singing will propagate, purify the atmosphere, and help in the production of good food. In addition, when you breathe purified air, it also helps to keep out bad thoughts.³⁰

30. Summer Showers in Brindavan 2000, Chapter 2: The Sanctity of the Five Elements.



Glossary

For a comprehensive translation of Sanskrit words into English, please go to the following website: <http://sssbpt.info/vahiniglossary/entries.htm>





Ceiling on Desires

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, one of the most revered spiritual leaders in the world and regarded as an incarnation of God in human form by His devotees, delivered more than 2,000 discourses, most of which are compiled in *Sri Sathya Sai Speaks* and *Summer Showers*. He also wrote articles for His devotees in the spiritual monthly *Sanathana Sarathi*, which were later published in 16 books under the *Vahini* series. This compilation of Divine Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Volume 5, contains quotations on the topic “Ceiling on Desires” selected from the discourses of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sri Sathya Sai says: “In the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, a fourfold program of ‘Ceiling on Desires’ has been laid down. This enjoins everyone not to waste food, money, time, and energy. Avoiding waste of these four forms of gifts from God is spiritual *sadhana*. It is the means to Self-realization.”

