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## Respect Mother— First and Foremost

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Dasara Discourse

Prasanthi Nilayam

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Aeons ago, there was darkness everywhere. There were no human beings or any other creatures. It was pitch darkness all over. Then there was torrential rain for years together and, as a result of this deluge, oceans were formed and mountains arose. Gradually the stars appeared in the sky. The sun too shone and shed its rays on the earth. The oceans and the sky became blue. The colour blue is indicative of the vastness of oceans and the sky. God is also vast; hence He is portrayed as blue in appearance. Gradually forests and hills, insects and creatures, birds and beasts grew on the earth. Millions of creatures of different species as also humans started inhabiting the earth.

Once several years ago, I visited Anantapur. I was very young then. I stayed in the bungalow of the District collector. He came to Me and asked, “Swami! There are a number of deer here. Please take two of them along with You and keep them in Your Ashram.” The Prasanthi Nilayam building was not built yet. I brought those two deer and kept them in Bangalore first. Gradually, they multiplied into hundreds. There was not enough space for their movement there. Hence, they were shifted later to Prasanthi Nilayam and kept in a separate deer park. Thus, God’s creation multiplies day by day.

It is raining outside. I find some ladies getting drenched in the rain. You allow those ladies inside. The gents too! I am sorry that so many devotees on the ladies and gents side are standing in the rain to have the *darshan* of Swami and hear His discourse. No one can fathom the mystery of God’s actions.

When I was studying in the Middle school in Kamalapuram, a small town near Kadapa, a district headquarters in the present state of Andhra Pradesh, I was very young and short. A village fair used to be held on a grand scale every year in a place called Pushpagiri, which was located between Kamalapuram and Kadapa. One day the drill teacher in our school told us, “There will be a grand cattle fair in Pushpagiri next week. Several people from all over the district and neighbouring villages will come to participate in that fair. We have to send volunteers from our school to regulate the crowds and also do some service to them.”

The drill teacher was also our scoutmaster. He insisted that all the boys of our school participate in the scout camp and help the people visiting the fair. He particularly told Me, “Raju! You must be the leader of this scout camp.”

I protested saying, “Sir! They are all older in age than Me. How can I control those boys? I cannot.” Then all the boys and teachers unanimously supported the idea of My being the leader of the camp.

The next day our drill teacher called all the boys and instructed that all of us shall wear a khaki shirt and knickers, along with a leather belt and a whistle. He also insisted that each one of

us should wear boots and carry a stick and a torchlight. How could I procure all these items? I did not have even a paisa in My pocket.

Two of My classmates, by name Ramesh and Suresh, and Myself used to sit on a three-seater bench in our classroom, the two boys on either side of Me. Ramesh was the son of a wealthy *Sirasthadar* (a revenue official). He was of the same height as I was. He went to his father and asked him, "Father! I like the khaki dress very much. Please get two pairs of khaki shirt and knicker stitched for me." He did not however reveal the fact that he proposed to give the second pair to someone else.

The next day he brought one pair in a cloth bag and put it under My desk along with a small chit. He wrote, "Raju! You are my brother. If You don't mind, please take this dress. Do not return it to me. If You do so, I will feel very bad and commit suicide."

My policy is that I do not accept anything from anyone. I strongly felt that friendship between two people will not last long on the basis of give-and-take-relationship. I therefore returned the clothes with a note, "If you and I are to continue as good friends, take these clothes back." Ramesh was literally in tears at My insistence. He took the clothes back, very reluctantly.

All the boys volunteering for the scout service were to start for Pushpagiri, the next day. It was a journey of eleven miles by walk, since no buses plied that route those days. The boys contributed five rupees each for meeting the expenses during the period, but I had no money, not even a paisa. I therefore thought of a plan. I used to keep My books always neat and tidy. In those days, very few boys were in a position to purchase new books when they were promoted to a higher class. Hence, they used to purchase secondhand textbooks at a reduced cost. A poor boy approached Me to buy My textbooks. There used to be a heavy syllabus even for lower classes in subjects like History, Geography, Civics, etc. The cost of My books totaled eighteen rupees, and My books looked like brand new ones. The boy was not in a position to pay that amount. Hence, I told him "Don't feel sorry. Just pay Me five rupees and take the books." The boy felt very happy and immediately paid the amount.

In those days, currency notes were rare, and he paid the entire amount in small coins packed in a piece of cloth. It was tied in an old cloth, which gave way unable to bear the weight of the coins. The coins were strewn all over the room, making a big sound. On hearing the sound, the lady of the house came there and asked, "Where did You get all this money? Did You steal from my trunk?" She began admonishing Me.

I explained to her, "No, mother! I sold My books to this boy. He gave Me the coins." The poor boy witnessing this incident told her, "Mother! I gave those coins to Raju towards the cost of His books, which I purchased from Him." The lady did not believe his words and punished him too. She took away all the coins and I was left with not even a paisa.

The boys participating in the scout camp were all rich and well dressed. They came to My house to take Me along with them. In the circumstances in which I was placed at that time, I was not in a position to go along with them. If I tell them I am suffering from fever, they will bring a thermometer and read My temperature. If I tell them I am suffering from some ailment, they will take Me to a doctor and get Me examined by him. Hence, I told them, "I am suffering from stomachache. I cannot come with you today."

The boys felt sorry and reluctantly left for the scout camp without Me. Thereafter, I started alone the same night in the moonlight. I walked and walked and reached Pushpagiri at daybreak. I was very much tired, having walked for eleven miles at a stretch. I was hungry and thirsty. I wanted to wash My hands and mouth and looked around for water. There was no water any-

where near. There was a masonry tank nearby in which water was stored for bathing cows and buffaloes. The water was very dirty. Feeling helpless, I washed My face with that dirty water itself and drank some to quench My thirst.

Then I noticed that someone had left behind a packet of *beedies* (country cigarettes) and a one *anna* coin on the tank there. The *beedies* were, of course, of no use to Me. Hence, I threw them away. I took the one *anna* coin and exchanged it for four smaller coins (*bottu*). As I was returning, I noticed a person sitting on the roadside playing cards spread over a cloth, inviting passersby to bet on the cards, shouting, “club, spade, diamond, etc.” He invited Me, saying, “Raju! You are a lucky boy. Come, come! Bet some amount on any card of Your choice and I will give You double that amount, if You win.” No doubt it was a sort of gambling, but I was helpless at that time. I started putting one coin each on a different card at each time. Every time I was winning the bet and getting double the amount I put. I played the game till I could make sixteen *annas*. Then I decided that that was enough and left the game and returned with the money I already earned.

Since I was feeling hungry, I purchased three *dosas* with one *bottu*. In those days, *dosas* were available at the rate of one for a *dammidi* (1/3 of a *bottu*). Thus, I managed with two *bottus* a day eating *dosas*. Though I was attending the service activities normally just like any of the other boys, in My heart of hearts I was aware of the fact that betting (gambling) was a bad practice and I should not have resorted to it. I knew of the story of Dharmaraja losing his everything including his wife, brothers, and kingdom in the Mahabharata.

At the end of the scout camp, I was left with one *bottu*. I purchased some sweets, fruits, flowers, *kumkum*, and some bangles for My sister-in-law. Seshama Raju, the elder brother of this body went for a course of teacher-training and just returned. As soon as I stepped into the house, I noticed that he was drawing lines in a notebook with the help of a wooden ruler. He was very angry that his wife had to fetch water during My absence for 3 days and therefore she was very much tired. When I offered her the sweets and fruits brought by Me from Pushpagiri, she threw them on the floor. She refused to accept even *kumkum*, which is a sign of auspiciousness.

Seshama Raju was furious after this incident. He took the ruler into his hands and beat Me on the forearm with the ruler, which broke into three pieces. My hand was swollen. I did not reveal this incident to anybody. I tied a bandage Myself with a wet cloth to the swollen hand. The next day, Seshama Raju’s son died. He sent a telegram to father to come immediately. In those days, there was no post office or telegraph office in Puttaparthi. The telegrams were sent to Bukkapatnam and from there a messenger would take it to Puttaparthi. Pedda Venkama Raju, the father of this body, used to go to Bukkapatnam regularly to purchase necessary items in the village fair. He saw that telegram there and immediately rushed to Kamalapuram. He spoke to the members of the family first and then asked why My hand was swollen and bandaged.

I tried to explain away the incident as insignificant and told him that I hit a door in the house accidentally and nothing serious had happened. The lady in the neighbouring house intervened then and informed Pedda Venkama Raju, “Sir! It is not an isolated incident. Your elder son beats the boy everyday. We are very much pained to witness His suffering.”

Seshama Raju used to be very angry with Me since his wife used to make complaints against Me daily saying I did not attend to this work, that work, etc. My daily chores in their house included making hot water for bath, preparing coffee early in the morning for Seshama Raju and his wife, doing odd jobs in the house and most important, fetching drinking water two times both in the morning and evening from a canal, which was at some distance from the house. In order

that I finish all these jobs and attend to school as per schedule, I had to get up very early in the morning, that is, at about 3 o'clock.

In spite of all this hectic schedule, I was very happy that the people in the village were of good nature and used to love Me very much. They used to make affectionate enquiries about My welfare daily. They were very fond of My singing. When I went to Pushpagiri to participate in the scout camp, all this busy schedule came to a standstill. Though the neighbours were very considerate toward Me for My hard work and good nature, people in the Seshama Raju family could not put up with My absence and disruption in the daily routine. They used to shout at Me if on any day I was a little late in bringing water from the canal. Of course, I used to ignore that shouting and carry on My work as usual, patiently.

The *Griham Abbayi* (father) informed Me that night that he had to go out for answering his nature call. There was no light. There was darkness all around. I held a small kerosene lamp in one hand and a jug of water in the other and accompanied him to an isolated place. I put those things on the ground and tried to return, but he held My hand and with great agony told Me, "Sathya! Did I ever beat You on any day in all these years? You are undergoing so much of suffering at the hands of these people here. You come away from this house. Come! Let us leave for our village early in the morning."

I tried to pacify him saying, "It is not proper for Me to leave the house now, especially when they are immersed in grief at the death of their son. Please go first. I will come later." Thereupon, *Griham Abbayi* left for Puttaparthi, very reluctantly.

On reaching home, he informed *Griham Ammayi* (mother) about the situation prevailing here. She could not contain her agony and shed tears at My plight. She told *Griham Abbayi*, "Sathya is a very good boy. I never beat Him on any day. I now understand that Seshama Raju is beating Him regularly, listening to others' words. I cannot bear this any more. We can bring up Sathya somehow, even by selling salt if need be. He need not depend on others for His upbringing. Please go and bring back Sathya to our house." *Griham Abbayi* tried to explain his inability, but she was insistent. He therefore gave a telegram, "Mother serious, come down to Puttaparthi." Then, I had no option but to return to Puttaparthi.

There used to be a merchant by name Kotte Subbanna in Kamalapuram those days, who used to sell the famous children's tonic, "Bala Bhaskara". He gave us some amount for our journey to Puttaparthi, since neither I nor *Griham Abbayi* had any money with us. We reached Anantapuram with great difficulty. There used to be a lawyer's family in Anantapur, who were all good people. The entire family was devoted to Swami. They invited us to partake lunch in their house.

We had our lunch in their house and finally returned to Puttaparthi. As soon as we entered our house, *Griham Ammayi* held My hand and asked, "There is swelling still. Does it hurt?" Thereafter, she applied several home-made medicines including a paste of rice bran on the affected part and also gave hot water fomentation. Poor lady! She tried her best to make Me cheerful. Every one around Me cried on seeing My swollen hand. I told them, "Nothing to worry; everything is healed up."

Since then I decided to stay in Puttaparthi, permanently. Seshama Raju came on a visit during holidays. *Griham Abbayi* and *Griham Ammayi* both chided him profusely saying, "You took this boy along with you to get Him educated; but you put Him to great torture. What kind of an education is this? Go away! We don't give You food even!"

Thereafter, Seshama Raju was transferred to Uravakonda. He took Me again with him in order to admit Me in the High school there. There were good teachers there, especially Sri Tam-

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miraju and another by name H.S. Ramana who used to teach us English language. He was so fond of Me that he used to take Me to his house. Not only these two, all our teachers used to be very affectionate toward Me since I was a good singer with a melodious voice. One day they put Me on the stage during a function and asked Me to sing a song. I sang the following song:

Take any vegetable of your choice, only one *anna* a measure,  
Take *brinjals*; they are very tasty,  
The well was deep and it was difficult to draw water,  
So too, the life in Uravakonda was difficult to forget.  
(Telugu song)

All the teachers praised the song and congratulated Me for singing that song. Later, they asked Me to sing the daily prayer song in the school assembly. I sang thus:

Moment to moment, thy clarion call resounds  
–hearing thy magnanimous words,  
The Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Muslims, and Christians  
come to thy throne from east and west,  
Making a garland of love  
Hail to thee who unites all humanity!  
Hail to thee who controls the destiny of Bharat!  
Hail to thee! Hail to thee!

That was our prayer song, which I used to sing daily in the school assembly. The teachers of our school used to stand on either side of Me during the assembly and shed tears of joy at My melodious singing. I used to have a very good voice.

One day, I announced to the people around Me that it was time for Me to leave the school as well as the house and embark on My mission to alleviate the suffering of humanity. I revealed My true nature earlier thus:

Know that I am Sai, verily  
Cast off your worldly relationships  
Give up your efforts to restrain Me  
The worldly attachment can no longer bind Me  
None, however great can hold Me.  
(Telugu poem)

Everyone cried aloud, unable to bear separation from Me. The headmaster of our school, Lakshmi pathi, declared a holiday for the day. Everyone, including the teachers, students, and public, felt very sad at My decision to leave them.

The next day, one Muslim boy was asked to go up the stage to sing the prayer song. He too was a good singer with a melodious voice. But the moment he went up the stage, he became highly emotional and wept uncontrollably, unable to bear separation from Me. He sat down expressing his inability to sing the prayer. The daily singing of the prayer was discontinued from then on. Instead, the headmaster of the school used to say a few words and conclude.

I gave up studies since then. At the time I discontinued studies, I was only in the third form (eighth class), but people around Me used to wonder at My scholarship thinking that I might have obtained a degree or so. I used to write poetry and kept Myself aloof from people. I used to maintain silence. Even when I was in the house, I maintained the same profile. I just used to have food and come out and sit on the Chitravathi sands. There is a hill by the side of the river where I used to go up and sit silently. Several people including children from the neighbouring villages and also from Uravakonda used to visit this “Sai Baba”. Subbamma used to cook and serve food

for them. She used to feel very happy at her service, thinking that she was serving Swami's classmates. Since then, the number of people visiting Swami has increased by leaps and bounds.

Once the *Maharaja* of Mysore, Jayachamaraja Wodayar came by his car. The motorable road was only up to Penukonda. He therefore travelled in a bullock cart from Penukonda to Karnatanagepalli and from there to Puttaparthi by walk. He pleaded with Me, "Swami! Why are You putting Yourself to trouble, residing in Puttaparthi? You please come to Mysore. I will arrange to build a big mansion for You." I told him, "A tree must grow in the same place where it was born. If it is plucked out and transplanted elsewhere, it will not grow. This tree must also grow in the same place where it was born." The *Maharaja* was a great devotee. He used to visit the Chamundeswari temple daily in the morning and evening and sing a song specially composed in praise of Goddess Chamundeswari.

The *Maharaja* of Mysore visited Puttaparthi again on another occasion. By that time, a motorable road was laid from Penukonda to Bukkapatnam. He telephoned to the Governor of Andhra Pradesh saying, "Why don't you lay a good road to reach Puttaparthi? How much money is being wasted on all and sundry schemes! Please arrange to lay a good road to Puttaparthi immediately."

The Governor instructed the Government accordingly and after a protracted correspondence, a chief engineer by name Tiruvannai Iyengar was finally sent to undertake a survey of the project. It was planned to lay a bypass road direct to the *Mandir*, without touching the Chitravathi Road. The *Maharaja* of Mysore offered to bear the entire expenditure for the project. Before starting the work, the Chief Engineer surveyed the area travelling in a bullock cart. He found that the river encircled the village on three sides and only the fourth side was available for laying a road. He stayed for three to four days here and reached *Mandir* in that route by a bullock cart. He confirmed that route and passed orders finally to lay a black top road in that route, drilling a big hole in a hill blocking the way.

At last, a direct road to reach the *Mandir* in Puttaparthi was ready, without touching the Chitravathi River. Once the road was made ready, a number of people including *Rajas* and *Maharajas* with their families started visiting Puttaparthi. Notable among them were the *Rajas* of Bobbili and Venkatagiri. They used to bring tents along with them and stay in those tents. Gradually, the number of people visiting Puttaparthi increased by leaps and bounds. The people in the villages around Puttaparthi used to argue with them saying, "Should we not have an opportunity to have Swami's *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan*? Is He meant only for the *Rajas*, *Maharajas*?" I used to pacify them saying that all are My devotees and I don't make any distinction between rich and poor.

Later, the *Rajas* of Bobbili, Trivandrum and the younger brother of Trivandrum *Raja*, who was a film director, made a lot of conveniences here like building houses for the visiting devotees. The former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, the late Dr Bezwada Gopala Reddy, built a hospital in Puttaparthi. In spite of his busy schedule as the Chief Minister, he used to make regular visits to Puttaparthi. He continued the same till his last breath. He used to attend every function held in Prasanthi Nilayam. In due course, millions of devotees from all over India and all parts of the world started coming to Prasanthi Nilayam.

In fact, I have not come down to deliver discourses on any particular form of God. Divinity is only one by whatever name and form people refer to Him. The goal is one and love is one. The names and forms may be different. Some may refer to Divinity as "Atma"; others as "Aum". Yet, both are same. The names Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, etc. may be different, but God is only one. You may contemplate on any name, but God is only one. The *Upanishads* ex-

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hort, *Matru Devo bhava, pitru Devo bhava, acharya Devo bhava, atithi Devo bhava* (revere your mother, father, preceptor, and guest as God). First and foremost, respect your mother. She is very important!

Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat.

The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling of love toward one's mother.

(Telugu poem)

Even if the mother and son go to a court in a property dispute, the mother would tell the lawyer, "he is my son," and the son would say, "she is my mother." Hence the relationship between a person and their parents is lasting. Even after the physical body ceases to exist the motherly relationship exists. A mother is a mother. Hence, there can be no greater, respectable, and sweet feeling than motherhood.

Many people write letters to Me addressing Me as "Mother Sai." They refer to Me as their revered mother. I also address all of you as "children."