

PRAHLADAS FOR THE PRESENT AGE

If I ask you, who you are, you may reply, “*We are teachers,*” or some of you may even say, “*We are students.*” But, both statements are not true! You are *Sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants); that is the real fact. I am glad your *Sadhana* is moving at a satisfactory pace. You have brought Me among you, as a result of your sincerity and enthusiasm. I am always especially interested in the service done to children and I must say, you have taught them good lessons, in a spirit of love. Some of you, I find, are a bit over-enthusiastic! You have taught the children stories that are too long, and made them cram the whole stuff. Do not tax their memory overmuch. Short stories, 20 to 25 lines long will be the best. Don’t make them learn by rote, for, what they learn under pressure, because I am coming and a programme of story telling has to be arranged, will soon be forgotten. It will not transform the mind by soaking into it. The incidents and the morals they illustrate have to be imprinted on the heart. They must learn not ‘*by heart,*’ but for and through the heart. I find you are instructing them in Bhajan, story telling and writing stories and essays. The stories they recite or write are culled from the epics and *Upanishads* (scriptures of Supreme Reality). Good. But, instruct them in meditation too, for a short while, each day. Let that habit be inculcated even at this age. Five minutes of prayers and another five minutes of *Dhyana* (meditation) will be a good exercise, whose taste itself will persuade the children to make it a habit. The tender mind has to be fed, with tenderness.

Story Of Shabari’s Entry To The Hermitage

Shabari had a very tender compassionate heart. How she came to Sage Matanga and stayed at his hermitage is a very interesting story. Her marriage was arranged by her parents, and as was the custom among the *Adivasis* (tribal folk), a goat was to be offered to the tribal Goddess, on the night previous to the ceremony, in order to win the Grace for the couple. When Shabari came to know about this slaughter, she wept, and fell at the feet of her parents, praying them to save the goat. She asked, “*How can our married life be happy, when the dying bleat of this goat is the prologue?*” But, the father pushed her aside and proceeded with the cruel rite. That night, Shabari stole out of that den of torture, and hid herself in the depths of the jungle that was not far off. When day dawned, her parents as well as the groom’s party were plunged in grief and anxiety; they combed the area, even where she was lying low amidst the thick bushes, and they went back, saying among themselves, “*She could not have gone to the hermitage, for no woman would be given asylum there.*” She heard these words and so, she concluded that the hermitage was the safest place for her. She felt that some monk will take pity on her, and not send her back. Matanga noticed her and gave her permission to be in his habitation. He told her that God in the form of Sri Rama was coming to the hermitage some day, since he has been exiled into the

forest for 14 years and He is eager to save the monks and seekers doing *Tapas* (penance) in the forest from the ravages of the demonic enemies of peace! Rama, he said, was proceeding from one region to another, with His consort, Sita and His brother, Lakshmana.

Shabari's Heart Became Rama's Heart

From that day Shabari had no other thought than of Rama, no other desire than the desire to have the *Darshan* of Rama, the chance to touch His feet and the opportunity to speak with Him. Her heart was saturated with the *Ramrasa* (the sweet juice of the Rama principle). She had no other *Japam* or *Dhyana* (repetition of God's name or meditation) or spiritual exercise. She spent her time preparing for the visit of Rama to the hermitage; just as she cleaned the paths, she cleaned her heart, too. Pebbles and thorns disappeared from both, through her efforts. She walked through the undergrowth and removed overhanging creepers and briars, for she imagined Rama would not have combed His hair and it might get caught. She broke the lumps of earth, for she feared the tender soles of Sita will be hurt when she walks over them. She gathered fruits and tubers from the jungle trees and plants and kept them by every day, for no one knew when Rama will arrive! And, she took no risks. She tasted every fruit, whether it was bitter, sour or sweet, so that Rama could eat the best. She smoothed the surface of all stones that lay by the side of the tracks in the jungle for she expected Rama, Lakshmana or Sita to sit upon any one of them when they got tired of walking. She hoped that one of them would rest awhile on one of the rocks she had polished with great care. Thus her heart became Rama *Hrudaya* (Rama's heart)! The children of the Sathya Sai Bal Vihar must know the Sathya Sai that is residing in their hearts. Teachers also must take it as a Puja (ritual worship) of Sai Rama. How to reveal the Sai Rama residing in their hearts to the children -that is the problem that must be directing your work. Sai Rama has to move about in the jungles of your heart; so, render the tracks wide, smooth, free from thorn and pebble.

Shabari's High Level Of *Sadhana*

Shabari was so immersed in Rama that the ascetics lost all awareness of her sex; they allowed her to remain in the hermitage, after Matanga related to them her high level of *Sadhana* (spiritual practice). Matanga also left his body and gave up his hermitage to Shabari, saying, you alone deserve to be here when Rama arrives. The *Sadhana* that Shabari did to earn the bliss of serving Rama, you do, when you serve Sai Rama in these children. By this service, you realise the Self. People say that they are doing *Paropakara* (good to others) and *Lokopakara* (good to the world). Really speaking, this is an empty boast. Let us take it that you invite ten people for dinner; when the ten sit at table, you too sit as the eleventh, don't you? So, you too consume

a share of the dinner. How then can you call it a dinner for others, an act of hospitality for others? When you do good to the world, you receive a share in that good, and so you cannot say that you are serving others. It is self first and help next. When you carry out the duty you have undertaken to do, God will shower Grace! You are both-teachers and students, remember; for, you teach these children and you learn from Me. You must not have the consciousness that; they are children belonging to others. Treat them as your own.

Make Children Take Up Some Positive Task

When you relate stories to the children, select such stories as have some reference to the background of the children's home life. Tell them stories which will implant in the mind genuine disgust for evil sights, evil entertainments, evil deeds and evil habits. Tell them how they must forget the wrong done to them by others and the good that they do to others. Make them take up some positive task and the negative attitudes will fall off. Good habits will drive out bad ones. A wicked man once went to a Guru (preceptor) for initiation into spiritual life. The Guru asked him to give up at least one of his bad habits; he gave up uttering falsehood. That night, when he went to the Royal Palace to commit theft, he found on the terrace another person, who said, he too was a thief. He too announced that he was a thief and both broke into the treasury and divided among themselves the diamonds found there. The other person was none other than the king; he pretended to be a thief and he knew where the keys of the treasury were! While the diamonds were shared, the honest thief felt pity for the King of the realm who was losing his entire stock; he asked his companion to leave one diamond behind, in the safe. And, it was done. Next morning, when it was discovered that the treasury was looted, the Minister was sent by the King (who had acted as thief the previous night) to assess the loss. The Minister found the diamond that had missed the eyes of the thieves. He quietly transferred it to his own pocket and reported at court that all the diamonds were gone! One step in the right direction leads to another. The King had got from the honest thief his address, the previous night, while they parted company, with their separate bags. So he sent for him and when stood in court before the King, he confessed that all but one of the diamonds were stolen by him and his unknown associate. The diamond was discovered in the pocket of the Minister and the King dismissed him for the lie. The honest thief was appointed Minister, instead, and he gave up his other evil habits too and pleased his Guru, by his fame as a virtuous administrator. One evil habit, if acquired, will lead to a whole gang of them taking possession of the mind. There is a story for this too. You can tell the children this. A King once announced that he will honour any *Brahmana* who will agree to do any one of three evil things: (1) He must aver that the *Vedas* are false, or (2) He must drink liquor, or (3) He must elope with another's wife. For a long time, no one within

the seven seas came forward to do any one of these atrocious things. At last a poor *Brahmana* on the verge of starvation came into court and offered to drink liquor, an evil which he considered the least reprehensible of the three. But, as soon as he got drunk, he began to swear and in the excitement of intoxication, he shouted in the streets that the *Vedas* are a tissue of lies; he entered the house of his neighbour and assaulted the lady of the house, like the worst criminal of the land. One thing led to another, just as in the other story, one step in the right direction led to another.

Make Yourselves Holy By Consecrated Service

I know that you are telling the children fine moral stories that will impress on them, silently and spontaneously, the value of restraint and of love in dealing with nature and life. I know that your other responsibilities do not give you the chance to serve them as much as you desire. Train as many as you can, within the limits that now exist; the Samiti (Sai Organisation) cannot ask more from you. This is no imposition from above; it is an inspiration from within. You are engaged in so many activities that do not lead to any good; you have to move in groups that you may not like; these are inevitable under present conditions. So, make yourselves holy by this consecrated service. This will bring you the saving Grace. By shaping these children in Divine Form you are helping their parents too to set their minds right; you are brightening and cleansing the homes of the pupils. When that little boy recited the story of the Gita, so feelingly, everyone was moved; when towards the end, he turned to Me and said, "*Now, we have this Sai Krishna...*" he was so overcome with *Ananda* (bliss) that he sobbed and shed tears of joy. Perhaps, he had a vision of Krishna! So intense was his faith and his sincerity. His heart was echoing every sentiment that his tongue was expressing. Children such as he are needed for our country at this juncture. You have read of Prahlada, Dhruva and other children filled with devotion to God; they lived in ages that have gone by. You have seen now that such children are here, in this age too; I am sure they will reform and transmute many Hiranyakashapus (unbelieving fathers) by their unflinching devotion and transparent dedication.

Do What God Likes, Not What You Like

Arjuna announced at the commencement of the battle of Kurukshethra, "*I will not fight against these people.*" Then, Krishna asked him, "*Won't you do what I like?*" and he had to reply, "*Yes. Of course.*" Then, the Lord told him, "*Look here: I have come as man in order to re-establish Dharma (righteousness); yours is the Kshatriya Dharma; it casts on you the duty to fight against unrighteousness. You will be doing what I like if, according to the demands of Kshatriya Dharma, you fight, as first planned.*" Do what He likes, not what you like—that is the way to win the Grace of God. He likes you to revere all beings, not to injure or insult any being; he likes you

when you do not bear in your heart the tiniest grudge against any being. The BalVihars run in schools, in the hours now given to them out of the school time table, are not as successful as those run by you in your home centres, I know; the School Vihars try to make the children successfully ride two horses at the same time—the regular curriculum and the Sathya Sai Ideals. You are doing your best, I know, and that is enough. Develop cordiality among yourselves, exchange experiences and share your ideas for improvements. This is an excellent opportunity for you to feel the bonds of the Sai family, where each teacher is a sister of the other.

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