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The Sunday Talk Given at Prashanti Nilayam

by Prof. Anil Kumar

“Kerala Teachers’ Meeting at Prashanti Nilayam”

(Part 1)

January 24, 2009, Morning

OM...OM...OM...

Sai Ram to everybody

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of our most Beloved Bhagavan,

WELCOME TO THE TEACHERS

Our most popular, dynamic state president, Mr Mukundan, senior professor, Professor Vidyanathan, and members of the teaching fraternity, I welcome you all to this meeting this morning.

My friends, first of all let me tell you that you are not here for the simple reason that you wanted to be here. No! You were brought here by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. You have not come on your own. Please believe me. That is the fact of facts: you were brought here, and there is a Divine mission and a purpose behind it. (*Applause*)

Being teachers, we can participate and associate with the Divine mission more than a person of any other profession. A teacher is a nation-builder. My friends, I am so happy to be in the company of the teaching fraternity because this is my forty-fifth year of service as a teacher. For your information, I can also let you know in all humility, with no sense of self-aggrandisement, nor any praise, that all the members of my family--my parents, grand-parents, and great grand-parents--all happen to be teachers, and therefore my body carries the genes of so many teachers!. For a change my mother wanted a son to be a doctor. No doubt about his intellect, he is famous in his own field; but he ended his career as professor of pathology. Destiny! (*Laughter*)

A TEACHER IS THE RICHEST MAN

My mother wanted at least one son-in-law to be an engineer, yet my sister is married to an engineer who finished his career as the Director of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. So even if you want to be otherwise, you can't! We are destined to be teachers, and I am proud to be a teacher, my friends.

Given the chance, I want to be born as a teacher time and time again because the teacher's property is not counted in the form of coins or currency notes, nor by way of entry in a passbook. Where is our passbook? The hearts of our students are our passbooks! Where are the entries? Their goodwill, our work, our love, and their respect towards us are the passbook entries in the hearts of our students!

Who is the richest man? A teacher is the richest man, whether you believe me or not, because he doesn't simply calculate in the normal sense of the term of prosperity or plenty. Not only that, a teacher is extremely happy, for if there is a profession of contentment, gratification, and commitment, it is that of the noblest profession, of teaching.

Our realm is well fixed; we don't dream of buying the whole of Trivandrum, nor do we dream of owning the whole of Alleppey. Our scale of fees is that we know what we are going to be and our satisfaction lies in watching the smiles on the faces of the students.

If you tell a doctor, "Doctor, I am happy with you," the doctor will tell you, "I will be happier with your bill payment!" And if you say, "Thank you engineer, you have done a good job," he will say "How about my percentage?" But a teacher will be extremely happy if any student comes and says, "Sir, I have learned a lot from you."

When a parent comes and tells us, "My son always speaks about you, my daughter always speaks about you," well, that gives us the greatest joy. We don't have to take our food or meals for the next week because a word of appreciation is enough for teacher. What more can we want? In fact the greatest personalities of all humanity happened to be teachers.

DIVINE TEACHERS

Lord Krishna Himself is a Divine teacher. He belongs to us, to our cadre. We own Him and naturally He has a claim on every one of us. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is a teacher. Jesus Christ is a teacher. Shirdi Bhagavan, Lord Dattatreya, and Sathya Sai Bhagavan are all teachers and we belong to them. We draw inspiration from them.

Therefore my friends, I am sure that each and every one of you feels very proud of this teaching profession and that we have no regrets of having become teachers. Not in our wildest dreams! The person who has any kind of complaint, the person who feels dissatisfied, it is better that he quits the job, giving room for another person so that he may do his best.

THE KING'S INSPECTION

I can give one example that happened in the time of King Charles I in Great Britain. The king happened to visit a school and he was conducting an inspection, going around the school. The headmaster was teaching some interesting lesson from poetry, English literature. Naturally teachers forget their surroundings, forget the time, forget their family problems, forget their personal problems; they go beyond and get absorbed, lost in the teaching. That headmaster was teaching and he didn't know what was happening. He didn't notice the king passing by.

At the end of that session, many teachers came and said, "Sir, you didn't notice the presence of the king! You are sure to lose your job. As a mark of respect, you should have taken off your hat." That is what used to be done. "You didn't observe the minimum of etiquette or good manners," they told him.

You know what the teacher said? "Only one king visited the school; I have forty kings in my class. How can I leave them? I have forty kings here." That is the feeling of a teacher. He is an architect.

THE TEACHER WAITS FOR THE GENUINE STUDENT

As we speak of the profession of teaching, I recall there was a time when a gentleman was speaking on the poetry of William Wordsworth. William Wordsworth is known for his excellent compositions on Nature. In particular I well recall what I read on daffodils while I was in the pre-university class in the year 1957. Daffodils!

On that morning this teacher was teaching that particular lesson and he was talking about clouds. One student got up and started questioning him. The teacher finally said, "I can only explain depending upon the stretch of my imagination and creativity. I don't want to say anything more than what is written. My dear boy, if you want to learn more on this theme of Nature, I suggest you meet another person—you will find him, a priest in a temple."

At the end of that session, this boy in all good faith ran to a temple where he noticed a priest. The priest hugged this boy and said, "I have been waiting for you, my dear son. I have been waiting for you." That priest was no less than Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, *pariprajika shiromani*, the teacher of teachers. That boy was known later in his public life as Swami Vivekananda; in those early days, he was known as Naren. At that time Paramahansa said, "I have been waiting for you all these years." So a teacher waits for a good student.

A teacher waits for a genuine student, yearning for a student of sincerity and steadfastness. That is the real teacher! One teacher told his friends, "I am not tired of teaching. Other disciples can go to the master." The real teacher is never tired of teaching. They told him, "We find your health deteriorating. We don't think that you will be able to continue to teach for much longer. You are tired, and you are not able to swallow even a drop of water; you are not able to drink a glass of water and you are not able to eat, but you want to teach!"

The teacher replied, "I am not tired of teaching. I have not been able to drink or eat, yet I continue to teach. The reason is, when all of you are drinking, when all of you are eating, it doesn't matter if I don't drink and eat." This went on right up to the last stages of his life; until his last breath he went on teaching. And that teacher of teachers happens to have been Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa again. Jesus too by His life demonstrated the essence of all His philosophies. His life itself is the message.

FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF EDUCATION

We are extremely fortunate today that we have a teacher of teachers amongst us in the name of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He is a teacher of teachers. It is most interesting to watch and listen how He explains and how He teaches us, to see what this profession stands for.

As a student and also as a teacher I remember the Radhakrishna Commission on education, later the Kothari Commission, and I don't know how many other commissions were there. When I left my college in Guntur, it was the days of Kothari Commission.

Any number of commissions may be appointed by the state governments and Central governments. The essence of all commissions, all education, has been communicated repeatedly by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in a simple, straight, and unambiguous style, His own unique, Divine style.

What does He say? That education is for six fundamental values, that education is aimed at six important points or aspects:

Sadgunambunu Sadbuddhi Sathya Nirathi

Virtues, a good mind, adherence to Truth

Bhakti Kramasikshana Kartavyapalanambu,

Devotion, discipline, duty – these are the six principles.

Sadgunambunu Sadbuddhi Sathya Nirathi

Bhakti Kramasikshana Kartavyapalanambu

Nerpunadhe Vidya Ardhaani Vidyardhi Nervavaleyu,

Ardhaani Vidyardhi Nervavaleyu.

It is only education that inculcates these six qualities,

which a student has to cultivate.

One can only claim to be an educated man if he possesses these six qualities.

Sadgunambulu, Sadbuddhi, Sathyanirathi, Bhakthi, Kramasikshana, Kartavyapalana-- these are Sanskrit words. They don't need any translation; you can understand straightaway. So what is the principle of education, the aim of education? What does Baba say?

Viswashanthi Chekurpuvidhamunerpi Viswashanthi Chekurpuvidhamunerpi

Samkuchitabhavamulanella Samayajesi

Viswashanthi Chekurpuvidhamunerpi,

Education should make every student fit to work for the peace of the world.

The university should establish universal peace. Every student has a role in this. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu. Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavanthu.* We have to work for world peace. We have to work for universal peace.

Viswashanthi Chekurpuvidhamunerpi

Samkuchitabhavamunella Samayajesi

There should no longer be any narrow-mindedness; there should not be anything like fragmentation or division, or any narrow, parochial, linguistic, chauvinistic divisions, whatever they may be. We should not be divided in any way on the grounds of any religion or geography.

Samkuchitabhavamulella Samayajesi.

All narrow feelings should be given up

Ikamatyamu Sahajeevanaadhikamu

Samathanerputakadhe Samatha Vidhya

Unity, cooperation, integration, equality, equanimity

These are the fundamental values of education as stated by Bhagavan.

Teachers are guilty of repetition. They go on repeating things for two reasons, because of the profession, and also because of their advancing age. But it is in order to make sure you have heard that I repeat once again:

Viswashanthi Chekurpuvidhamunerpi

Samkuchitabhavamunella Samayajesi

Ikamatyamu Sahajeevanaadhikamu

Nerputakaadhe Samatha Vidhya.

Therefore, in the first composition, it is made very clear what students should acquire through their learning. Here the aims of education are expressed in an excellent way by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. That is His philosophy of education.

THE TEMPLE OF LEARNING OR THE TEMPLE OF LAKSHMI?

Bhagavan further stated that all centres of learning, all educational institutions, should be centres for the dissemination of knowledge or *Saraswathi Nilaya*. This is where knowledge is spread, where knowledge is shared, and where expertise is passed on from generation to generation.

Saraswati Nilaya means, that is to say, temples of learning. It is a matter of shame that today the temple of learning has become the temple of *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth. In the name of donation or capitation fees, they collect huge amounts. It is no exaggeration if I tell you one has to shell out thirty *lakh* rupees to get admitted to a medical college!

I tell students, if you put that money into the bank, the interest on it is enough to carry you for the rest of your life, rather than having to study! You don't have to study. You don't have to dissect. You don't have to undergo all the stress and strain—just deposit thirty *lakhs*! You have enough money to enjoy. Fifty or sixty *lakhs* will get a postgraduate admission in medical colleges!

Today the price of admission into a primary school is forty-five thousand rupees. Lower kindergarten—forty-five thousand rupees! I don't know from where they get the money. Everyone must have gunny bags of money or some printing machines at home! I don't know!

Had this been the situation in my youth, I would have been educated at home. You may not believe it when I say that my salary was one hundred and eighty-four rupees per month. One hundred and eighty-four rupees! But I can tell you I would have saved ten to twenty rupees at the end of the month.

Today one may receive twenty or thirty thousand rupees, but from the twentieth of every month the pocket is empty. (*Laughter*) He can't do anything. My friends, I am telling you the fact of facts. A teacher will never go by the rising prices; a teacher wants a rise in standards. He will never count by the clink of coins; he always counts God's blessings.

ONCE A TEACHER, ALWAYS A TEACHER

Other professions may have some kind of retirement. One can say, "I am a retired collector," another man can say, "I am a retired engineer." The profession that has no retirement age is the teaching profession. We have no retirement. If anyone says, "I was your student," correct him and say, "You are wrong; you are my student."

I can say, "I was your patient," because I am not a patient now. We can say, "You were an engineer because you gave me my building plans; but now ten years have passed, and you are no longer an engineer." But a teacher is a teacher forever and ever.

Teachers know no retirement. I know this from the great example of Abdul Kalam (former President of India) referring to his teachers. We also hear the same from Swami Vivekananda. When everybody praised him to skies, "You are a thunderbolt of Hindu *Vedanta*, you are a paragon of Hindu *Vedanta*," Vivekananda replied, "I enchanted so many by my speech, and I impressed so many with my eloquence. Brothers and sisters let me tell you—just one look of my *guru* is enough to produce ten thousand Vivekanandas!"

That is what he said. That shows the role of a *guru*. It lasts from the womb to the tomb. It is eternal. It is not a contract; it is not a matter of business. No! It is a kind of relationship, heart to heart, love to love, one of continuity to eternity.

I am also very proud to say that a teacher is beyond age. Those people who are very, very healthy are teachers. Make a graph, yes, take the percentage of people who are healthy, who are handsome, who are young, evergreen heroes—who are they? No doubt about it, they are teachers. Teachers! Take a look at the percentage! Why is it so? Because of contentment and because of the great spirit of joy, privilege, and excitement when we find our students come up in their lives.

I well remember a passenger standing behind me in the Tokyo airport. He said, "*Namaskaram*, sir." Tokyo? *Namaskaram*? (*Laughter*) What's this? I was surprised. He told me, "Sir, I was your student." Oh good. Tokyo, fine. Then I said, "What are you now?" "Sir, I am a professor at All India Institute of Medical Sciences. I studied there; I was also your student."

When I was not able to recognise him, he said, "Sir, in those days I was very thin." He was as wide as a door now! He was very thin in those days, though we have to change his measurements today. But a teacher continues to be the same.

LOVE OF PROFESSION

Teaching is not a profession. Teaching is not a job. Teaching is neither for emoluments nor salary. Teaching is a mission of life. It is a mission of life because it is something to which one is committed for the whole of one's life.

If anyone starts speaking, we can certainly make out that he is a teacher because of the clarity of his explanation. If anyone goes on differing with you, goes on saying, "No!" to every statement, he must be a lawyer! (*Laughter*) And if one goes on speaking on a platform, bringing up all kinds of differences between people—the latest politician! (*Laughter*)

So a teacher can easily be identified by his skill in communication, capacity of articulation, vocabulary, scholarship, and knowledge. These are the qualities of a teacher.

That is the reason why it is said, "Knowledge is power." Knowledge is power. It has been said that three qualities are necessary for a teacher. What are they? The first is love of the profession. I love my profession. Yes, I am proud of my profession. I will not allow anybody to speak ill of me or consider me next to anybody.

I don't mention his name, but a classmate of mine later became a Director General of Police, DGP. He was my roommate also. I met him after his retirement. He asked, "What happened to you after all these years?" I said, "I am not a criminal who has to meet you." (*Laughter*) "Let you retire, let you come down to earth as a civilian, and we shall meet."

Then he said that I had not changed much, to which I replied that I hadn't changed because I was a teacher. I cannot change my temperament. We continue to be like this because we are so proud of ourselves and our profession.

Love and pride of our profession, this is the first requirement. The second quality of our profession is love for students. We love our students. We can never complain about them. We shouldn't criticise or comment.

A-B-C-D OF TEACHING

My father, a retired Deputy Director of Higher Education for the government of Andhra Pradesh, was very fond of teaching. Even while inspecting schools, suddenly he would start teaching, telling teachers what to do, while other people were waiting for him to come out. He would never come out until he had finished speaking to them.

He said that there are four types of teachers. The first category of teachers belong to cadre A, the A type of teachers. Who are they? Avoid! If any student asks, "Sir, what is this?" They reply, "It is not necessary for you." (*Laughter*) Avoid.

The second cadre, the B class of teachers: bypass. “Sir, did you read that? Did you know that? Did you hear that? Do you know this?” The teacher does not answer your questions, but he tells you everything else. Bypass.

Then comes the next cadre, the C class of teachers--confused! If you ask him a question, we will see that he forgets the very question itself. He forgets the very question itself! The student will begin to wonder, “Did I ask any question at all?” Confused.

And then comes the last cadre, the D class teachers: divide. “Last year’s batch was much better than this year’s.” (*Laughter*) “Ten years ago, no student ever asked such a silly question.” That was yesterday. Why does he speak of yesterday today? Divide.

My father used to say that this is the ABCD of teaching: Avoid, Bypass, Confuse, and Divide. None of us belong to any of these categories.

PRESENTATION OF TEACHERS

We have got absolute and total love for our students. We want them to be equipped. We want them to be resourceful. We want them to be highly knowledgeable and respectable.

And now the third quality of our profession: the joy of teaching. The joy of teaching! We find great joy while we are teaching. It may be the same lesson that I have been teaching for the last twenty or thirty years; it doesn’t matter. The students are fresh, the students are new.

I may be eating the same *idli*, yet I am not bored of it. I may be eating the same *avial* (a favorite vegetable dish of Kerala) yet I am not tired of it. I am not tired of *sambar*. Why should I be tired of the same lesson? No teacher is tired of teaching the same lesson because the students are new.

Experience will tell you that your presentation is different year after year. Your presentation is different from batch to batch because the presentation depends upon the quality of students, their mood, the ambience, whether it is first morning period or afternoon first period. The first period after lunch in the afternoon is the best time for *samadhi!* (*Laughter*)

Here in Sathya Sai Institutions they have to get up at 4.30 in the morning—poor fellows—naturally you can imagine what happens to them in the class! I tell them, the saints and seers took decades and decades to attain *samadhi*, which you attain in no time at all! (*Laughter*)

So our presentation depends upon the ambience, the time, and some of the preceding classes. If the mathematics class is followed by English class, well, you can imagine. That is the reason why all language classes are scheduled first. First period is the

language period because with all creativity, imagination, narration, and description, the teacher takes you to the clouds, heaven, and paradise!

But if you begin with mathematics, *Hari om! (Laughter)* They don't feel like staying. Not that I am underestimating or underrating mathematics. The first class should be fresh, beautiful, creative, and imaginative. This is the joy of teaching. I feel very happy in teaching. So these are the three qualities that every teacher should have.

ALL STUDENTS BELONG TO THE TEACHER

It is further stated that a teacher is a cloud. Not to cover the sunlight, not to cover the moonlight, but rather the teacher is a cloud that brings a shower. The shower is rain, the students are the land. Just as in hot summer the dry, parched land receives unexpected showers from above and Mother Earth dances like peacock, we enjoy the shower of rain. We feel like getting ourselves drenched in rain. A teacher should be a kind of shower.

To our students who struggle with problems, it is not enough if I am a teacher who runs away from the class thinking that anybody can do it. A tape recorder would do a much better job than that. We are not tape recorders. We have to watch our students, share their feelings, and understand them. This is what we are already doing.

My friends, never think that I am preaching to you. No! I am sharing with you. We are just reminding ourselves of our own qualities. We are just reminding ourselves of our own qualities that make us unique and special. That's all. There's nothing new in what I am saying.

I don't like to see any student put on a long face in the classroom. He may be an MSc student or a PhD student, a student in any class. The moment I see him, if he is serious, I will enquire "Oh! I see something's wrong with you?" At the end of the class I'll call him, "What's wrong? Was there a fight with your roommates? Did the warden ask you to pack off?" Or, "Did you get low marks?"

Until I see him smile I will not leave him. He may be from any class; he may be an MBA or a commerce student, or first class, not necessarily bio-science or my discipline. No, no, no! All students are our students. Please understand this: all our students, whether A, B, or C section. The sections are made for convenience, but we belong to all. We cannot say, "These are my students." No, no, no! *All* belong to you. The sense of belonging to the institution, the sense of belonging to the student community, is the asset of a teacher.

UNTIRING TEACHERS

One day it so happened that I was a bit serious. Somehow it never happens! One student from Bombay came to me and said, "Sir, if Anil Kumar is serious what will happen to the rest of the world?" (*Laughter*) Naturally we have problems. No one can be totally happy. Life is a combination of both tears and smiles. Life is a combination of

pleasure and pain. Once we recognise this basic truth—that both will happen—we know this is what makes a complete day.

A twenty-four hour day comprises twelve hours of broad daylight and twelve hours of night. The night and the day constitute a twenty-four hour day, am I not right? I cannot say, “I always want daylight, only bright day.” You will be bored with that. If the sun is available for twenty-four hours, we will ask why. We will say, “God, take rest and allow me to sleep.”

You can't say, “Give me only night because I like the night.” If that night continues all the time you will be bored, “Let me do some work. I cannot grope in darkness.” So there is duty in the night because when you sleep you will have sufficient leisure and rest. In the daytime you can work. Both contribute to your progress.

Similarly, pleasure and pain are the lessons of life. The tear and the smile have their own lessons to teach, and we are here to learn. We should not be lost. We should not oscillate or swing like a pendulum between the two extremes. Certainly not! Life is a combination of both. Night will be followed by day. The day will be followed by night. That is what Baba says, “Pleasure is an interval between two pains.” It is quite natural.

Therefore, in a classroom there shouldn't be anything like the bookkeepers' ‘brought forward’. The last entry will be first entry on the next page. There shouldn't be any ‘brought forward’ of our family conditions to the classroom. No! We don't do that!

Once the classroom job is over, we have to be very fresh. People of other professions, in other vocations may get tired; but when the student comes to the class, the teacher is more handsome and brighter than before. He is more energetic than before. Am I right or not? A teacher is energised more and more because we receive energy from our students.

Our students' smiles are a blessing to us all; that is the real boost. That is the multivitamin available to us. Further, I can tell you that in other jobs and other types of professions, they end up with an area of specialisation. You go to somebody, a clerk or a superintendent, and he signs the paper. Thank you! You don't have to see him, that's all.

But students see us all the time. They watch us; they watch our style of talking, our hairstyle, how we walk and smile, our pronunciation and diction, our English, our accent, and our actions. They notice every little thing.

THE TEACHER AS A ROLE MODEL

I am very fortunate to have had excellent teachers. As a student I had one teacher by the name of Dr. M.D. Thomas, whom I think of every day. It is he who inspired me and continues to inspire me, and the thousands of other students he transformed into teachers.

The day I joined the Christian college as a professor, the first thing he said was this, "Mr. Anil Kumar, learn to dress and address." Dress well and address well, that is the first teaching of Dr. Thomas, which I am practicing still to this day, and which I will practice also in the future: dress and address.

The second thing he said was this: "Never go to the class unprepared. If you haven't prepared adequately, go on casual leave or disperse the students." (*Laughter*) Don't cut a sorry figure in front of the students. Once the students make out that you are empty, that you are in the class unprepared, you won't get the adequate or expected attention in the next class. We lose our name and our fame. Therefore, never go to class unprepared. What a wonderful instruction this is!

And number three, he said, "Be punctual."

I also remember Dr. Thomas lectured on William Shakespeare's, *As You Like It*. He used to carry the Warwick edition of Shakespeare in his hands, a small book of this size. He would remove all these inter-leaved white papers with written notes that he kept between the bound pages. As he walked in the corridor, was it the English language that was walking or Dr. Thomas walking? It was English that was walking in the corridors! Of this there was no doubt.

And he used to walk with a beautiful swing, I tell you. He used to swing like that, *wah, wah!* The moment I heard the bell, I felt like killing the peon. (*Laughter*) Beautiful strides. Therefore I used to make notes about the kind of suit he wore, the colour of his tie, and the matching shoes he used to wear, and I would pray, "Oh God, make me like Dr. Thomas some day." Later, I was his colleague for two decades, and he continued to bless me. I was so happy about it.

Children will emulate what we do. I recall how my neighbour's daughter once fixed a rose flower in an odd manner. I asked her, "What is wrong with you?" "Kasturi madam puts it like that," she replied. (*Laughter*) Therefore, my friends, don't model yourself on anybody. We are most popular! After the teacher, next is the film star, and then the superstars in the theatres.

At the dining table, children go on speaking about their teacher. And the parents are so happy listening to them talk about us, "What does he do? What does he say? Is that so? Does he encourage you? Good!" Therefore it is like a kind of mission. Our job does not simply end at 4:30PM or 5:00PM, No! No! No AM or PM; it's a twenty-four hour job! (*Laughter*)

Therefore it's absolutely necessary to maintain an exemplary character. No student expects me to smoke, no student expects me to go to a movie, no student expects me to loiter, and no student expects me to be a vagabond, because the students learn from me. If a student is spoiled, it is because of the teacher.

THE CHILDREN OF TODAY

We should have a feeling that we should never complain against a student. We should never do that. Why? Children today are more intelligent than we were. A simple example: A father was telling his son, "My dear son, you are very good! I am very happy that you study so well! Washington stood first in the class, you understand that? So see that you also stand number one in the class." The son said, "Okay Daddy, I will try. But, at your age, he became the President of America!" (*Laughter*) That is what the child of today says!

We never spoke like that. We are in the midst of challenging students, testing students, students who dive deeply into the subject. To tell you the truth, what I read at graduate level is studied in the tenth class today. Therefore we teachers should understand that today's children are very, very smart, very intelligent.

So we have to change our technique. We have to change our method. This is not the age of the bullock cart. This is not the cow dung era. Our style of presentation should be quite different, befitting the modern times that we belong to.

We should have certain devices or techniques to supplement our teaching methods. A simple example: it seems a teacher was teaching as he did every day, when he found a student relaxing, about to go into *samadhi*. (*Laughter*) How should he draw their attention? If he says "Come on, wake up," the student feels disturbed, so you cannot draw his attention. He feels vexed with you, so you cannot win his love.

So what the teacher did was to say, "Oh boy! There is a fire outside! Let's go! Come on! Come on, this building may burn at any moment!" All the students run out, and see that there is no fire whatsoever. The teacher smiled. His tactic was to wake you up, to make you alert and awake. It is a device to bring a kind of alertness, wakefulness, and awareness among students.

NO CASTOR OIL FACE

A teacher is supposed to have ready wit and humour. He cannot be a Shakespeare with a long face, a castor oil face as Baba puts it. A long, serious face will make the students feel prejudiced, negative, and incorrigible. Once you get into the classroom, students must feel relaxed. They should welcome you and say, "Good morning sir, how are you?" rather than seeing a military personality coming.

The moment the students start looking at their watch, we should understand we are a failure! Doubtless we are a failure. On the other hand, if you go on teaching for some time and then you find so many students standing there outside your class, telling you, "Sir, it is our class now," (meaning time was up long ago and no one in the class has noticed), then you are a successful teacher. He is a successful teacher when the bell-time comes unnoticed. He is a real teacher. If the subject matter has been tough, then he will put his sense of humour into it.

VENI SAMHARAM

A simple example: I was the student of a great scholar by the name of Karunasri, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, who is a great poet known in Andhra Pradesh. One day he was teaching *Veni Samharam*, a Telugu drama *Veni* are the pleats of ladies, the *jada*. *Samahara* is the hair put together into a plait or braid. That is what you have. It was *Bhimasena* who took a vow over the blood stains of Duryodhana, "Oh Draupadi, don't cry any longer. I will help you comb your hair." That is *samhara*. So Karunasri was teaching *Veni Samharam*.

It so happened that one student came late to class on purpose. Why? In our student days, we had narrow pants, tube-style pants, in the 1960s--1960 to 1965 or 1970. So we had these narrow, tube pants, just like test tubes, short pants. One should be able to see the socks and their colour. And that fellow purposely came late so that we all would look at the new pair of socks he had bought! (*Laughter*) That was his intention.

Well, language classes are always full. Other classes will have a maximum of forty-five students, with empty seats, but languages will have one hundred and twenty-five students—full. Karunasri was our teacher. Had he been a science teacher like one of us, he would have sent him out of the class, saying, "I will take care of you in the exam." But no, he didn't act like that.

In Sanskrit drama, the first chapter is called *naandi*, the introduction. The last chapter is *bharatavakya*, the conclusion. That is the tradition of every Sanskrit drama. So while Karunasri was teaching the *Veni Samharam*, he noticed the boy standing there. He said, "Towards the end of *naandi*, Sisupala arrived." (*Laughter*) That fellow was never late to the class ever again! (*Laughter*)

And then one day he was speaking of Karna:

Naa Chethanu Nee Chetanu

Varamadigina Kunti Chetanu

Vasuvu Chetanu

Karnunicheya Atma Chetanu

This is from my 1957 days. I am telling you this because we teachers are a family, you see. Birds of a feather flock together. Now, he was speaking of Karna, who was cursed by many people:

Naa Chethanu,

Varamadigna Kunti Chethanu,

Karnuninchi Vaari Chetanu,

God cursed Karna,

He is cursed by his mother,

Everybody cursed him and he had to lose.

Karunasri was explaining that he had to die on the battlefield on account of these curses. Boys will be boys, after all. One fellow sitting behind, who is now in the USA, said, “*Ayo, papam!*” “What a pity,” he said. Any teacher would be irritated because when he is teaching about Karna, he expects all the Karnas in his class to hear. (*Laughter*) He does not expect any fellow to comment like that.

He was very much disturbed and said, “Ah, what a response. You could imagine Karna in front of your eye in the battlefield, Kurukshetra! You could also see Karna on the battlefield helpless, oh, what a great man you are! But Karna had to face the Kurukshetra war only once in his lifetime. You, being the *vikarna*, have to face the war twice—once in the March examination, the other in the September supplementary examination.” (*Laughter*) Thereafter, nobody dared to comment. (*Laughter*)

We must have that ready wit and humor. We can't be serious all the time. Seriousness is a sign of sickness, not of scholarship or spirituality. No, no, no. We should be happy with a smile. The more a student is negative, the more positive we should be towards him. The more the student is adamant, the more we should shower love on him. That is the best way to bring him round. That is the best way to help him.

We must recall the qualities of this noble profession to which we are committed for our lifetime. A teacher will never be forgotten throughout his life. Everyone thinks this is so because they inspire. We are not supposed to perspire, we are supposed to inspire! Perspiration is different. A teacher should lead to inspiration.

TEACHERS OF DETERMINATION AND CONVICTION

I well remember somebody asking Gopalakrishna Gokhale, “Oh Gokhale, you are a freedom fighter. What do you want to do later?” Balagangadhar Tilak and people asked him, “What do you want to do after Independence? You are bound to get a cabinet rank, Number Two in the cabinet! What do you want to be?”

He said, “I want to teach mathematics in secondary school and produce thousands of patriots. I don't want to be a central government minister.”

What did Kalam say recently on the day he relinquished his post as President of India? “I want to go back to Madras University and serve there as a professor.” When he came to Prashanti Nilayam, he asked Baba, “Would you please permit me to teach physics in

Your university?" So down to earth! This is the stuff; this is the kind of iron will. That is the determination and, conviction of every teacher.

INCULCATE THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF LIFE

Dehabranthiyu Lekha

Mohaminthayu Lekha

Thayagaseeluvai Guruvu Nedu

Thyagaseeluvai Guruvu Nedu

Gurulattimaatale Unnamaata Thelupuchunnamaata

Bhagavan said, "Dehabranthiyu Lekha," with no body attachment, with no attachment. What is it that we expect from our students? Nothing . . . nothing. Dehabranthiyu Lekha Mohaminthayu Lekha, no attachment!

Some students may recognise us; some students may acknowledge us; some students may forget us. We are not in the least bothered. The wind blows continuously; it doesn't expect 'thanks' from you. The sun shines throughout the day, not expecting any gratitude from you. The river flows incessantly, not expecting a note of appreciation. The stars glitter; they don't expect you to say, "Hi, how do you do?"

Kramamuthappaka Bhaanudu Udayaa Samayamanda Vela

How did you find the sunrise and sunset?

Gaddagamuna Kanthi Kantheyu Chaladhu

Pagalu Maatramubaagu Bangiyela

We find the stars which are shining brightly.

How is it that they hide in the day time?

Anisambutaapogandu Jeevakotulatho Sada Jevanela

The Usha fans, Uma fans, or Rally company fans may fail you. You may have any amount of fan mail or fans, yet the restless fan, the wind god, blows continuously to

sustain our life. The oxygen supply comes to our house without any recognition or expectation.

Kila Kila Navvuthu Dwanulu Dalilamu Bangi Pravahinchu Sandhavela.

You find the sound of the running brooks and rivers resonating down the line of the hills.

Why and how? It is Nature. Likewise, a teacher is beyond recognition, beyond acknowledgement, and doesn't expect any kind of gratitude, because Nature is the best teacher. We learn from Nature. We do our job. We don't expect anything from anybody.

At the same time, it is our duty to our students to inculcate the practical aspects of life. I lectured in the Andhra Christian College at Guntur for twenty-six years and some students always asked, "Sir, what are the important questions?" I would be surprised and I would tell them, "I never teach unimportant things. Why ask for important questions?" There is nothing like important or unimportant; everything is important. That is the quality of a teacher.

The students who are a bit frustrated should draw inspiration from the very height of your presence. We should be an example to everybody as we are, as we have been, and as we continue to be in the future.

TEACH THE ART OF LIVING

What I want to underline is that we should bring the practical aspects of life to the attention of our students.

Mathematics: Maruvakajapiyinchu Ganikasastramuvankā Choodapodu

Algebra: Anta Ala Arayachochunagaani Intivai Karyamu Yerugabodu

*America: Maargammu Arayachochunagaani Katikaamargammu Kanaraadu
Vrukshasastramu Erugu*

Samvvrudhhigaanu Tulasi Upayogamu Yerugadu

Manavvundu Anudinamu Drillu Anusarinchanugaani Padmasanamuveya Baadhapadunu

These are the poems composed by Bhagavan.

He thinks of mathematics, but he does not know simple maths,

He thinks of algebra, but he does not know the plinth area of his house,

He is a PhD in botany, but he doesn't know the uses of the Tulasi plant,

He is a drill teacher, but he cannot sit on the ground in padmasana for some time.

This is the condition we have today. So let us teach all practical aspects to our students so that they will not fail later.

Long ago in the college, I took some students on an excursion to Kodaikanal. We went to the Dasprakash Hotel. One student asked, "Sir, I want curd now." It was lunchtime and he wanted curd. I said, "This is not my father-in-law's house, nor is it my house. (Laughter) You ask the waiter." He could not express that he wanted some curd—he was a third year student.

Let me quote C.V. Raman. C.V. Raman was the 1930 Nobel Laureate in physics. Do you remember what he said? What he said was, "Degrees are not worth the paper on which they are printed." Another great professor was Viswanathan, a professor of English Literature at Andhra University. He wrote an article, *Psittacism on Kinds of PhD*. What he wrote was this, "PhD has become so cheap today that one can get it by counting the number of hairs in the square inch of a rabbit's skin."

So you are not to be known by your degree. A degree is only eligibility. A degree is only a qualification. A degree is only a stepping stone. In the long run, it is the performance that defines. One may be a gold medalist, but if he goes on stammering in the classroom, he cannot hammer like that for a long time. His skills, his talent, his scholarship, his competence, and his personality all count.

Therefore, my friends, Bhagavan said at one time:

Vidya Degreela Korakunu Verriveedi Sevakaruke Meeru Cherapoka.

We get degrees and we want to serve under somebody.

We want to be at the beck and call of someone else, ready with an explanation letter. Some of us are very fond of writing, "I beg to submit..." You can submit; you don't have to beg! (Laughter) "Most faithfully," but horribly faithless--some of our expressions have no meaning at all!

Vidya Degreela Korakunu Verriveedi

We acquire degrees, but it is foolishness.

Sevakaruke Meeru Cherapoka

Be not a servant in any organisation

Sweeya Desiya Sreya Sowbagyamarasi

(Sweeya, your own country, Desiya motherland, Sreya for your welfare)

Sweeya Desiya Sreya Sowbagyamarasi

In interest of the place and the prosperity of your native land, motherland

Shravikala Vidyalanu Nervavalayu

Vocational guidance, vocation,

Those, whose specialty is required today in our daily lives, have got to be learnt.

That's what Bhagavan has said. Furthermore, He has said that we have made our head an *almirah* of books!

Mastakamu Pustakamunu Maarchi

Mastaka, the head, has become pustaka, the book!

We have to absorb the essence of the book, not keep the book as additional luggage. If it's merely scholarship, then any computer disc, DVD, download, or Google search can serve better than one hundred PhDs!

We are here to add the spirit of life. We are here to add the taste of life. We are here to add hope and promise to life or the art of living. That is why we are here, not simply to cover the syllabus from start to finish.

CLARIFY AND CLEAR DOUBTS

We should also encourage students to put their doubts into questions. Earlier I told you my parents were teachers; my mother herself was the principal of a junior college. She asked me in the earlier period of my job, "Do the students in your class approach you with any doubts?" I told her, "Mummy, no one asks." (*Laughter*)

You know what she said? "There will be no doubts under two conditions: if they understand your lesson through and through, they won't have any doubts. Or when they don't understand anything, they don't have doubts. I think you fall into the second category." (*Laughter*)

There was one teacher by the name of Professor Sikes, who taught the Shakespearean play *Othello*. He was an American, and the Indian students could not follow. We had to be silent there and sleep with our eyes open. Some can do it; it is a *sadhana* and they

can do it. It is not easy. (*Laughter*) Finally Dr. Sikes asked, "Are there any doubts, please?" One student got up and said, "Please repeat the whole drama." (*Laughter*)

My friends, that is what we should ask. We should ask and encourage students to put forward their doubts because doubts will lead to clarity, and doubts will also improve our performance. In fact, we also learn and pick up new techniques by encouraging our students to put forward their doubts.

We might have missed something; we notice a dimension which a student might not. "Sir, what will happen if..." Stop! Nothing will happen, read this. I will be able to think in that particular angle subsequently.

DIVINE MESSAGE FROM ICE CREAM

I think it's 12:15 and we have about ten to fifteen minutes' more time. I really wanted to place before you the aims and objectives of teaching, the Sri Sathya Sai educational philosophy, and also the virtues and the qualities of a typical ideal teacher, and also the qualities of the students, our classroom performance, and also personality. At the same time, I once again repeat what Baba has said, and what we observe.

Baba is the best teacher I have ever met. Here is a simple example: observe Baba's method of teaching. Schoolchildren from the primary school only come for *darshan* every Thursday and Sunday. The other days of the week, they may or may not come unless specially asked to come. Sunday and Thursday they necessarily attend. All the schoolchildren sit in the front, nicely dressed. Bhagavan loves their company. He immediately goes towards them.

Swami asks, "Hmmm...How many *idlis* did you eat?"

"Swami, two *idlis*."

Swami asks another, "How many *idlis* did you eat?"

"Three, Swami."

"Good boy!"

Swami to another: "How many *idlis*?"

"Four, Swami."

"Ah! Make it six, very good!" He will come down to the level of a primary school student in good humour, make them laugh, and then tell them: "Hmmm... what did you eat last night?"

"Swami, Joy's ice cream."

“Oh, Joy’s ice cream? Oh, I see. Ice cream. What is its colour?”

“White colour, Swami.”

“Aha... When you touch it how do you feel?”

“Ice cold, Swami.”

“Aha! What is its taste?”

“Very sweet, Swami.”

“Aha! How many cups?”

“Only two, Swami.”

“Tomorrow you eat three. Ice cream is white; white is purity. You also should be pure. Ice cream is sweet; it is so cool. You should talk sweetly and softly.”

This is the lesson from ice cream. Suppose you start taking notes, “Talk sweetly...” (*Laughter*) So, just from ice cream comes the message to talk sweetly and softly. Be pure, that is the lesson of Joy’s ice cream.

DIVINE MESSAGE FROM THE MIRROR

One day Swami stood in front of the mirror. He was adjusting His hair, and I noticed. I don’t know whether He felt embarrassed or not. I was highly embarrassed. He called me: “What do you notice?”

“Swami, I haven’t noticed anything.” (*Laughter*)

“Hmm...here is the mirror, here I am, and there is the reflection. There are three: mirror, object, and reflection. Three, right? Now remove the mirror: three minus one should be two. So, we are three now. I am here, my reflection, and the mirror. When the mirror is taken out, there should be two. Are there two? No--only one!”

“So it is spiritual mathematics. Three minus one is only one, not two. Oh Swami! Mirror testing also is a message! Very good!”

Then He said, “Mirror is nature.”

Mirror is nature. I see my reflection, *Dwandwa bhava* or duality. God is the object and you are His reflection. God made man in His own image, says the *Holy Bible*. Therefore this duality, *jeeva* and *deha*, are because of the mirror, nature.

Viswam Darpana Drusyamana Nagari. This is the *Dakshinamurthy Stotra*. Therefore, this duality is because of the mirror. See how Swami explained it. “Oh God, You are the Teacher of teachers.”

In Kodaikanal, it so came about that Swami gave the chance to everybody to have individual photos with Him. Swami would stand there in the centre and all the boys lined up. “*Hmm... Next!*”

Each person had their photo taken. *Tak, tak, tak!* I was watching. He knows my temperament, how I speak overtly and don’t hide anything. This is my nature, you see. People have learnt to tolerate it. Somehow they bear with me. So I was watching.

Baba said, “Come here. Why are you staring at them?” (Others were listening to this conversation.)

I said, “Swami, I saw so many fellows. You seem to be the most handsome of all.”

Swami's response, “*Hmm...*” Suddenly He became conscious of His dress and then He said, “Anil Kumar, did you notice one thing?”

“What Swami?”

“Each time one student comes and one student goes; but I am there from the beginning.”

God is without beginning and without end. Those that come and go, *jagath—jaa, gath—* come and go, Jagadishwara; that is the style of Bhagavan. How beautifully He said it. That is the technique we have to learn.

A teacher is a student forever and ever. A patient is not a patient forever and ever. (*Laughter*) No, no! If he is a patient forever and ever, then he is gone; whereas a teacher is a student forever and ever because we learn different techniques from everybody. If we are to learn then the best role model we have is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Yes!

I can also be analytical; after seventeen years of life spent with Bhagavan I have had so many experiences. What to do?! I know I am running short of time and that you are also really hungry. (*Laughter*) But what I am to do? I am something like a teacher who is anxious to complete his syllabus with the approaching examination, and galloping like a horse!

DIVINE MESSAGE FROM CHUTNEY

One day He asked me, “What chutney did you have last night? What chutney?” (You know chutney, we relish our South Indian chutney.)

“Swami, coconut chutney.”

“Ah! You like it?”

“Excellent Swami, yes.”

“Oh, what do you do?”

“I eat it.”

“Oh good! You like it.” Now Swami says, “Oh, You bought coconut.”

“Yes.”

“You bought the tamarind and everything?”

“Yes Swami. I bought all the things.”

“Oh, so? What happened later?”

“My wife made the chutney.”

“Oh. Then what?”

“I started mixing it with rice, doing it full justice.”

BRAHMA SUTRA

So there are three stages. One, procure the provisions; two, the cooking process; and three, the eating process.

There is one sacred text by the name of *Brahma Sutra*. (Adi Shankara wrote the interpretation of four sacred texts: *Prasthan Traya*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishad* and *Brahma Sutra*.) In the *Brahma Sutra*, the first *sutra* is “*Adato Brahma Jignyata*.” *Adato* means ‘thereafter’, *Brahma* is ‘Divinity’, *jignyata*, ‘interest’. People write volumes and volumes on that one *sloka*. There are a number of interpretations.

Baba puts it in the simplest way. You go to the market and bring all provisions. *Adato Karmajignyata*, *karma* or action: if you want *avail*, what should you do? Bring all the vegetables; this is very necessary. If your wife asks, you can’t say, “No, no!” You go to the market first and procure all that is necessary. That is the field of action or *Adato Karmajignyata*.

Then what is to be done? Grinding them together will make chutney—the cooking process. *Adato Dharmajignyata*. *Dharma*, righteousness, what you call ‘right conduct’, the process of *dharma*, culturing, refinement, idealism. *Dharma* has got so many shades of meaning, as you are aware.

The job doesn't end there. I should put it on my tongue and enjoy the taste. Enjoying the taste of it is *Adato Brahmajignyata*. So *Brahmajignyata* is the field of wisdom or *jnana yoga*, or the path of enquiry. *Adato Dharmajignyata* is what we call devotion or revelation, refinement, and *karma yoga* is when we procure the provisions from outside, which is the spiritual path or exercise of our choice. So, out of *Karmajignyata* come *Dharmajignyata* and *Brahmajignyata*.

THE THREE LAYERS

It is an open challenge, my dear friends: no one has given as many examples as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, all taken from our daily life situations, expounding and explaining the highest and toughest *Vedantic* principles. No one has! (*Applause*)

If you are at all interested and persistent, and wish to find a parallel or something like that, then the nearest to Him is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Before that, the example is found with Jesus Christ. That is all, nobody else. He gives examples from them.

I conclude with this third example. He said, "Oh, you have three now--the coat, the shirt, and the *banian* (t-shirt)." Three I have. If I want to see my chest, what should I do? Remove the coat first, next remove the shirt, and last remove the *banian*. Then I can see my chest.

Likewise, I am covered by these three. Every *jiva*, every individual soul, the conscience, is covered by *triguna*. Without these three *gunas*, *jiva* and *deva* are one. Three *gunas* separate the individual from the cosmic soul, from the collective soul, from pure consciousness. So the individual is different from the universal soul only because of the three *gunas*.

What are they? The uppermost is *thamo guna*, the bestial quality or animality. What is the animality or *thamo guna*? Clutter, excessive sleep, and slumber; the best example is that of a buffalo. Let us not be buffaloes.

The second shirt is *rajo guna*: emotion, passion, desire, achievement, attainment, yearning, planning, managing, manipulating, strategy, and success. That's all *rajo guna*.

Then comes the *banian*, which is very thin. *Sathwa guna*, which is piousness, truth, sacrifice, equanimity, equality, perfection, balanced state of mind, and steadfastness. That's all *sathwa guna*. That also must be removed. Then you can see your chest—the individual soul.

The individual soul is as much as the cosmic soul. The individual is no longer an individual. It is something like a drop in the ocean. So *bindu*, the drop, is same as *sindhu*, the ocean. The separation is because of the three attributes or three *gunas*.

Thank you very much for your patience with me. Thank you very much! (*Applause*)

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