



Harmonious Homes

———— Human Values Parenting ————

Guide 4: April 2022

A Mother's Role

Part I of 2



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Objective

To explore the importance of mothers and the critical role they play in molding their child's character, especially in the early years of a child's life.

Introduction

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given prime importance to the character attributes of women and the central roles they play in the family and society. In particular, He emphasizes the indispensable role a mother plays in the upbringing, character formation, spiritual development and physical and emotional wellbeing of her children. Because Swami focused so much time and attention on this topic, this module is divided into two parts to allow us to absorb the richness of His teachings on the most critical aspects of a mother's role.

Part 1 will discuss a mother's role as:

- An embodiment of the Divine
- Her child's first teacher and role model

Part 2 will cover a mother's role as the:

- Child's primary care-giver
- Center of the home, and
- Foundation of society and nation

Module 4, Part I

Mother - the embodiment of the Divine:

Through the care and love she lavishes on her child, the mother is nothing less than a tangible embodiment of the Divine that the child can experience directly.

The mother is the foremost deity for man as the visible embodiment of the Divine who can be directly experienced. Every son is aware of the mother's affection, care and concern. He knows how to please the mother and keep her happy. No one knows how the unmanifested Divine showers His grace or displays His displeasure, what He desires or disapproves. One can lead a sacred life by adoring the mother, instead of worshipping the unmanifested Divine.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 25, Ch #38, 1992

The mother's lap is the school for every man. It is his first temple. The mother is every man's primary wealth. To recognise this truth about one's mother is the duty of every person. There is no higher god than the mother. The father is one's treasure; the mother is his god.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 26, Ch #24, 1983



The individual child's life is greatly influenced by the qualities of the parents. The loving care of Jijabai made Shivaji a great warrior. Rama's divinity blossomed because of the noble qualities of His mother, Kausalya. The twins Lava and Kusha could become powerful and famous due to their noble and virtuous mother, Sita.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 36, Ch #20, 2003

Mother - the child's first teacher and role model:

For a child, no-one is as important as the mother. Her influence begins while the child is developing in her womb, and continues throughout life. It is vital that the expectant mother is happy and peaceful and imbibes only good through all her senses as this input directly affects the developing child.

The mother's womb is like Bhumatha (mother earth). The quality of the fruit will be the same as the quality of the seed sown in the earth. In today's world, people lack purity and sacrifice.

What is the reason? It is the lack of purity of the mother's womb. If the mother's womb is pure, the children born to her will also be pure. If there is peace in the mother's heart, the whole world will be peaceful. So, first and foremost, we need women of purity in this world.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 34, Ch #10, 2001

...it was the custom in those days that pregnant women were taken care of with great effort and they were always kept happy and were permitted to listen only to sacred stories and sacred things. They were always given only good news. It is in this context that the baby in the womb will be experiencing only happy situations and as a result will turn out to be a happy individual. But today, pregnant women see various kinds of pictures during the period of pregnancy and in this process the child also develops bad ideas even from the time of its being in the mother's womb and they take to an unsacred path once they are born. Thus the entire future of a child depends on the manner and conduct of the pregnant woman in whose womb the child is growing.

- Summer Showers 1974, Ch #11

After birth, the first bond is formed with the mother who then introduces the father to the child and fosters the development of the bond between them.



The mother is man's first Guru (preceptor). She gives the physical body to him. Besides, she gives man, the father. She alone can point the father to the child and draw his love and care towards it. The mother bears, fosters and molds the child into human-ness and, therefore, gratitude is due to her first and foremost.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 16, Ch #11, 1983

Mothers are tremendously important in determining the initial inputs to which a child is exposed and which are central to shaping the child's character and positive habits. The first 5 years of a child's life are especially critical. Children absorb and register everything that surrounds them, so the mother can sow the seeds of a spiritual life and virtuous character very early in a child's life by example and through her interactions with the child. Swami clearly states it is much more important for a mother, along with the father, to raise good children with sterling characters than great children full of worldly knowledge but shaky character. For this to occur, mothers themselves should be convinced of the value of character beyond all else, and teach their children accordingly.

The teachings of mother play a vital role in shaping the future of her children. She should make every effort to drive away bad qualities from her children and infuse human values like sathya, dharma, santhi, prema, and ahimsa (truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence) in them.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 35, Ch #19, 2002



Mother plays a very important role in shaping the character of the child. The contemporary education is largely responsible for the gradual deterioration of children's behavior. In olden days mothers initiated their children into studies by chanting sacred words like OM NAMA H SIVA YA or OM NAMO NARAYANA YA. Thus, at a very early age, these sacred words got imprinted in the hearts of children. But today's parents initiate their children into education, not by chanting holy or sacred names of God, but by rhymes like 'Ba Ba Black Sheep'.

Nowadays children are being taught all types of wrong terminology. In earlier days, children used to welcome guests in their homes with humility and reverence, whereas these qualities are missing nowadays. Today's children aspire for wealth, power and friendship but not for character. What is the use of wealth, power and friendship bereft of character? Money comes and goes but one must teach them morality and righteousness. Earlier, children were taught such sacred values. Today parents want their children to pursue higher studies and become great, whereas earlier, parents preferred their children to be good rather than becoming great. Since those parents wanted their children to be good, Bharat stood as an ideal to all nations of the world.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 34, Ch #19, 2001

Today, the mothers are responsible for the good or bad behavior of their children. It is a matter for shame for any mother to say "My son will not heed my words." If the mother had brought up the son on right lines from the beginning, he would not behave like this. The snake-gourd has to be made to grow straight by tying a stone to it from its tender stage. Likewise, the stone of discipline and devotion should be attached to a boy from his infancy. Mothers experience the disobedience of their children because of their failure to inculcate discipline in the early years.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 27, Ch #13, 1994

As she teaches the child by precept and especially by example, a mother herself must be committed to a spiritual path and the cultivation of virtues.

The Centre of every home must be the shrine room; the fragrance of flower and incense emanating from there must pervade the home and purify it. The mother must set the example in making the shrine the heart of the household. She must enforce discipline over the children in personal cleanliness, in humility and hospitality, in good manners and acts of service. She must persuade the children by example and precept to revere elders and to allot some time both in the morning and evening for prayer, and for silent meditation.

- Sri Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 9 - 13, 1969



Discussion Questions

1. What is your earliest memory of your mother? Can you name two things you learned from your mother just by observing her?
2. Looking back, how would you say the early inputs from your mother have influenced your habits?
3. What spiritual practices are you trying to model for your children?
4. How do you discuss the importance of good character directly with your children? What methods have worked for you?

References of pictures and Illustrations

- freepik.com
- "Home" drawing by Pavithra Krishnan