



Harmonious Homes

Human Values Parenting

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Knowing Your Child Well



Sri Sathya Sai Educare, SSSGC-USA

Knowing Your Child Well

“The uniqueness of every being is one of the marvels of creation. No two persons are entirely alike. There are differences even among twins. People differ in respect of talents. But it should be realized that all talents are derived from the Divine.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi, April 1996, pg 88

In July 2001, during a conversation with some devotees regarding the significance of parenting, Sri Sathya Sai Baba emphasized:

“Everyone is born with unique gifts and temperaments for a reason. Your duty as parents is to see how these gifts and traits are used to make your child do good at home, in school and in the village.”

“Your relationship with your children should be simple, natural, friendly and loving.”

“You must know your children well. Only then, you can mold them to have good thoughts and practice good actions.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Conversation with Devotees, July 2001



It is evident from Swami's words of wisdom above that every child is born with a set of natural talents and temperament that are unique to them. These are not chosen by the child nor created by parents. It is an inherent part of each child's very being that defines his or her fundamental disposition and characteristics including the way they think, feel, and act naturally. There is nothing right, wrong, better or worse with these talents and temperament. It is the way in which children were created to experience the world and learn from it in their own individual ways.

Natural talents are inborn gifts a person possesses that allow them to demonstrate specific skills and activities without any practice or minimal training in a natural way. Some examples of natural talent include music, art, math, critical thinking, writing, verbal communication, creativity and so forth.

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Temperament is a set of innate qualities every person is born with and it stays with them throughout their life. It is not influenced by life experiences and remains unchanged from birth. Examples of temperament include determination, assertiveness, focus, calm, emotionally intense, impulsive, adaptable, easygoing, sensitive, anxious, sociable and so forth.



As explained by Swami, the natural talents of an individual are aligned with their innate temperament. For example, a person with musical talent tends to be imaginative, determined, disciplined, patient and committed. However a child with mathematical talent may be very inquisitive, curious, objective, creative and exhibit considerable common sense.

“The highly talented persons in different walks of life have not acquired their skills from somewhere outside. All these are but manifestations of their own innate potentialities. It is sheer ignorance to think that any person can be developed by some other person. Everything is in you alone. All that you do by way of your effort is to manifest or give an outer expression to what is already inherent in you. So, even in the spiritual field, all the sadhana (spiritual practice) that you need to do is to remove the obstruction, namely, the ignorance that is preventing the manifestation of the divinity already present in you.”

Krishna too taught this very truth to Arjuna as follows: “Arjuna, you did not know the art and science of archery when you were born. You are under the impression that Drona instructed you and therefore you acquired the skills of warfare from somewhere outside. It is not correct to think that Drona taught you and that you learnt these skills afresh. All that Drona did was to facilitate the manifestation of what was already in you. Remember that any teacher or even any great man endowed with extraordinary powers cannot bring out what is not already inside you. Luck or ill luck, bliss or misery—all these are in you only. Suppose you are digging a well. On reaching the depth of, say, 100 feet from the ground-level, you strike a good spring with a copious supply of water. Now, have you created the water or brought it from somewhere? No, no. Water was there all the while. It came to view because the earth that was hiding it was removed. So too, there is divinity ever present in you. But you have forgotten it. Why did you forget? Because of your wrong identification with your body.”

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Summer Showers 1990, #13 Page 69

In order to help a child realize his or her full potential, these talents and temperaments must be identified and nurtured in the right ways. It is the duty of every parent to intimately understand their child's gifts, talents and temperament, and accept it with an open mind and loving heart. They must provide the best guidance to their children to develop their talents and put them to use in good ways to serve themselves and their communities.

Active listening and patience are two important virtues that help parents continuously learn about their children and respond to their needs effectively. Our next module will focus on the best ways for parents to develop patience and listening skills in order to better understand and nurture their children.

Swami's Loving Engagement with His Students

An Example for Parents

We all know that Swami's life is His Message. Everything He does is not only an example for us all, but also completely for our benefit. Swami's relationships with His students are most unique. The ways in which Swami engaged with, motivated, and inspired His students contains many lessons for parents on how they should engage with their own children. Here are a few lessons that Swami taught through example.



Spending quality time

Even though He was engaged in monumental projects, Swami would carve time out in His day for the students. Swami knew how to reach children at any age, took care of their basic needs without being asked, and spent time with them no matter how busy He was. Everything He did was selfless, in the best interests of each child and powered by love.

Swami would spend hours each day with students or working and planning for their welfare. Whenever Swami would speak to an individual child, He would look directly into their eyes with rapt attention, so much so that the child would feel no one existed but Swami and him. During darshan or when Swami visited the hostel, or attended student sports events, it was like a family getting together. The constant was Swami, our Lord, giving His precious time to engage with and teach His children.

Making what is latent, patent

Through the fostering of self-reliance in all operational areas of the college hostels (cooking, building upkeep etc), involvement in seva in the ashram for festivals, and encouragement of talents in vocal/instrumental music, drama, other fine arts, photography and sports activities, Swami provided opportunities for all His students to explore different activities to discover their interests and develop them. Swami never imposed His will on others, but instead encouraged what was latent to become patent.

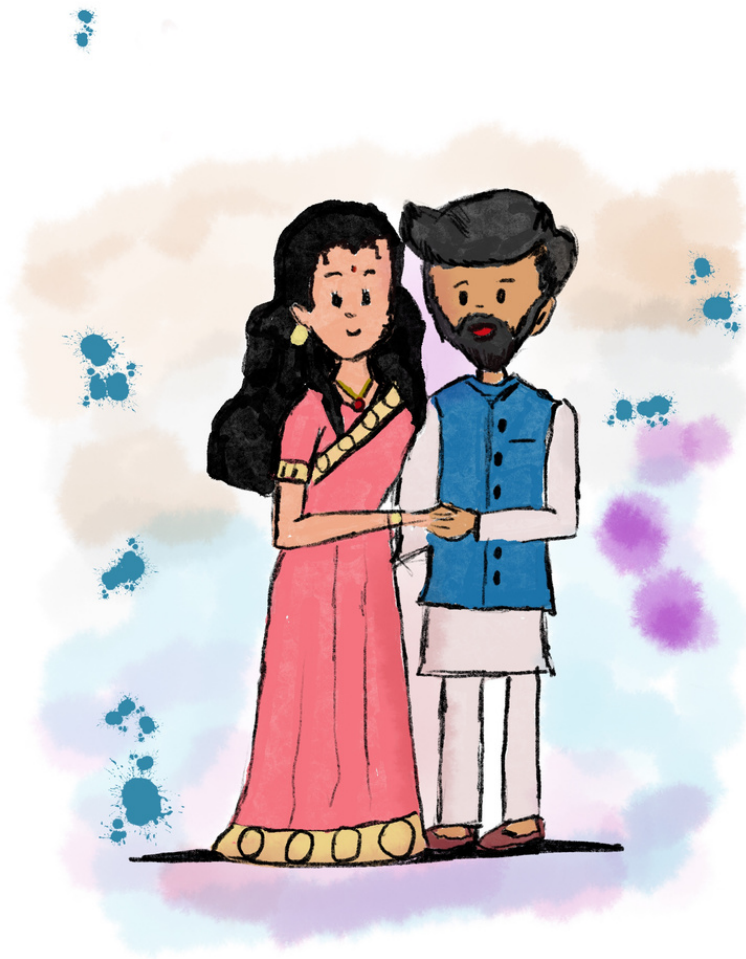
Giving responsibility and understanding the student

Through all His teachings, His own example, and His engagement with students, Swami trained generations of students to take responsibility for managing projects large and small, complex and simple. Students were given increasing responsibility as they grew, starting with tasks in the hostel and progressing to larger assignments in the Sathya Sai colleges, ashrams, and hospitals. Those fortunate students who completed their studies and were given roles in His institutions were given just one command - to go and join the institution in the assigned role. There was no need for these students to be told how to conduct themselves since Swami had already given all necessary guidance and instruction throughout their education with Him. The only expectation was to conduct oneself as Swami would expect. Those who did not have an opportunity to stay in His institutions were also guided by Swami based on His understanding of each student and his/her interests and temperament and the needs of their families.



Discussion Questions

1. What is one inherent talent that distinguishes you, the parent? How has it manifested and influenced your life? How has it influenced your children and household?
2. Have you discovered your child's unique talent? If so, how and when did you discover it? How would you nurture it?
3. What temperament does your child exhibit naturally? How do they complement the unique talents in your child? How do you react and nurture this temperament?
4. How do you modify your approach to your child based on his or her temperament? If you have more than one child, does your approach to each of them differ? If so, how?



References of pictures and Illustrations

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