



Harmonious Homes

———— Human Values Parenting ————

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Role of a Father



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Introduction: Role of a Father

The father is one of the most important figures in one's life. Most religious scriptures in the world accord father a divine status, especially for his child.

Whoever is born, the father is the cause of his birth. Therefore, the father is everyone's visible God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Rama Katha Rasa Vahini, p. 168



There is nothing in the world sweeter than the love of a mother for the child. For the well-being of the child, the mother is ready to sacrifice her all, including her life. Such nectarine sweetness is manifest only in the mother who is the true embodiment of the Divine. Likewise, the heart of the father who fosters the child, and develops his personality is also sweet. The Upanishad, therefore, enjoins everyone to treat Mother and Father as equal to God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi, August 1994, p. 214

Mother First, Father Next, Then Guru:

In defining the glory of fathers, Sri Sathya Sai Baba also reminds us that when a child is born, the first person to behold it is the mother. It is from her that the child learns the sacred principles of love, compassion, forbearance, tolerance and sacrifice. Hence, a mother always comes first to a child, only then the father.

Always mother is first and father is next. Only a mother can introduce the father to the child. Only a mother knows who the father is. Mother leads the child to the father; mother and father lead the child to Guru; mother, father and guru lead the child to God. Matha first, Pitha next, Guru third and then God. So, you always say Matha, Pitha, Guru and Daivam.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, conversation with a devotee, 2002

Father's Supreme Duty:

Although a father has three important responsibilities to fulfill in his home - as a husband, a father and head of family - his supreme duty according to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is as follows:

A father's dharma (duty) is to provide, protect and guide the family.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, conversation with a devotee, 2002

The father symbolizes Vishnu as the protector.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi, November 1995

As a **provider**, the duty of the father is to do good work and earn money the right way to provide basic needs and prosperity to his children, wife and family.

As a **protector**, it is the duty of the father to support and serve the mother to create a harmonious home that is safe, healthy, filled with devotion, peace and contentment for his children, wife and everyone at home.

As a **guide**, a father helps children to prepare for the outside world and mother helps children to grow within. A father must teach children about human values and how to practice it in the world.

He must set noble examples and encourage his children to follow. He must lead children to the right Guru and guide them to realize God within.



Prahlada told his father that a 'father who leads the son to God is the only father who deserves the reverence due to that status.' Fathers who lead their sons into the vortex of sense pleasure, the volcanoes of physical passion, the boggy marsh of pride and pomp - are unaware of their duties and responsibilities.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 8, ch. 26, 1968

A father who encourages the son to go and reach Hari is the only real father. Nowadays, there are many fathers like Hiranyakashipu. If the children want to attend divine discourses or sacred bhajans, the father discourages them and says that they should take to such a path only when they grow old and retire from active service. Some fathers even advise their children that they should do such things only as a last resort. Because such fathers have become very large in number, the children are taking to a wrong path.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Summer Course - June 1978, Brindavan

Do not set bad examples for these children to follow. If you are truthful, just, be calm under provocation and full of love in all your dealings with others, these children too will grow up in sathya (truth), dharma (righteousness), shanthi (peace) and prema (love). If you tell your son, when you are actually at home, to speak through the telephone, when someone is calling, to reply that father is not at home, you are sowing a poisonous seed, which will become a huge tree.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 13, ch. 3, 1975

Discussion Questions

1. What is your perspective on the role of a father as the provider and protector of the family ?

Father's Supreme Duty:

The role of a father is critical for the physical, emotional, and spiritual flourishing of the child. Fathers should be exemplary in their conduct and must encourage their children by example more than percepts.

If you are good, then the child becomes exemplary. Whatever habits you have, you give them to your children, one has got to control himself first. Unless the father improves, the child will not improve.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Directives and Commands of Satya Sai Avatar for Spiritual Transformation, Nov 18, 1995

A father's duty begins even before a child is born. He must serve the mother and make her happy while the child is growing in her womb. When the mother is happy, the child is happy.

The earlier years of life are the most crucial, and so mother and father have to share the responsibility of proper upbringings. The parents must lay the foundation strong and straight.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Gems of Wisdom

The child must grow with the mother for the first five years of life. When a boy is five years old, the father has to take up the task of bringing him up. Then he must be entrusted to the Guru.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 2, ch. 37, 1962





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Cultivate love, not delusion. Love your wife and children and do your duty towards them as a husband and a father. But always hold on to your true values. Do not lose your sense of proportion.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 14, ch. 12, 1978

Sri Sathya Sai Baba constantly reminds us through His discourses and various conversations with devotees that it is the duty of the father to be ever ready to correct the behavior of the child when they go astray. He must set clear boundaries of behavior for children and make them understand what happens when they disobey.

A father must always be loving and understanding to his children and must be strict and reprimand them when they do wrong. Father must always discipline his child for misbehavior with appropriate punishment and love. Only then they will learn.

It is an unfortunate fact that today ninety percent of the children are spoilt by the parents themselves. The parents do not exercise timely control over the children. If the wrong actions of the children are corrected then and there, they will grow in the proper way. The parents should show no indulgence towards children who go astray. It is misplaced affection to let erring children go uncorrected... There is no meaning in rejoicing when a child is born. The time for rejoicing will come when the child grows up, earns name and fame, and brings credit to the parents.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 20, ch. 10, 1987

If the father is not disciplined and lacks wisdom, the child will not be disciplined and will do wrong.

Swami then gave the example of Dhritarashtra, father of Kauravas to explain what may happen if a father abdicates his responsibilities to discipline his children:

Dhritarashtra was not only physically blind but was also blind to wisdom. Whatever evil deeds his sons did, he always told them they were good men and never corrected them. He was not a real father because he allowed his sons to go astray. In the end, he paid a heavy price - all his 100 sons died before him. It is very difficult for a father to face the death of his sons. You don't want to be like Dhritarashtra.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, conversation with a devotee, 2002

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First of all, parents at home are responsible. Parents desire only degrees, job, wealth, and position for their children. No parent hopes that the child becomes devoted and noble. Parents should definitely love their children but it should not be the love of Dhritarashtra. Do not support every action of your children. Mistakes must be punished and good actions appreciated. Only with such training at home, will students maintain their values when they enter society.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 20, ch. 10, 1987

The heart of the father who fosters the child and develops his personality is also sweet.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 27, ch. 18, 1994

There is nothing great about being a father. No father can rejoice merely when a son is born. Only when the people praise the virtues of the son will the father rejoice over his birth. A righteous son redeems himself and his family. Verily, they alone are fit to be called parents who bring up such virtuous children.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 25, ch. 11, 1992



Discussion Questions

1. What are some qualities that you admire most in your father? What qualities of your father do you emulate in your parenting?
2. In what way are you “guiding your child”, towards the spiritual path, as Swami quotes Prahlada saying above?

Duty of a Husband:

The duty of a husband goes beyond merely providing, protecting, and guiding the family. To be a good husband, he must always strive to keep his wife happy. Only then will his children and family be safe and content. A husband’s responsibilities begin from the time of his marriage.

Men should honor his wife as the “Mistress of the Home” and act in accordance with her wishes, for she is the Griha Lakshmi. They can only deserve the status of “man”.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dharma Vahini, ch.6, p. 29

In every family, the husband should be like Rama and the wife should be like Sita. If one assists the other, at times of difficulties as well as at times of pleasure, like Rama and Sita they will be happy indeed.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1977



But, in the modern world, it is necessary for the women to share the burden of maintaining the family with their husbands, so the women should also pursue studies as much as possible and take up suitable jobs to share the burden of the family. It would smack of selfishness if the males prevent them from going to work for which they have acquired the requisite qualifications...As a matter of fact, even man has to learn cooking and house-keeping to help his wife in times of need.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 31, ch. 13, 1998

Husband's troubles and wife's troubles become the husband's. It is like, if one part of the body is paralyzed, the other part of the body feels the paralysis. And so, your wife must feel your pain. Both your pains are removed by Swami. Both of you have Swami. Both the husband should help the wife and the wife should help the husband.

It is natural for husband and wife to have adjustment and understanding. First, you must understand each other. After that, adjustment will be easy. First understanding, Second adjustment. Ninety percent of the people try adjustment first. This is the wrong way around. First understanding.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Vision of Sai, p. 129-130

Just as a woman should consider one person and one person only as her master and husband, man too has to be faithful to one woman and one woman only, as his mate, his wife.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dharma Vahini, ch. 6, p. 29

Discussion Questions

1. In your judgment do you feel you and your spouse understand each other well? Why? Why not?
2. Share your perspective on Swami's statement – "Understanding first. Second adjustment."

The Duty of an Ideal Householder:

The duty of a husband goes beyond merely providing, protecting and guiding the family. To be a good husband, he must always strive to keep his wife happy. Only then will his children and family be safe and content. A husband's responsibilities begin from the time of his marriage.

As a householder raising a family and sustaining a society, he has also to uphold the ideals of justice and truth, and promote them by his actions.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 12, ch. 52, 1973

Discriminate before you develop attachment. If you have attachment towards wife and children, land and buildings, bank accounts and balances, and when these decline, you will come to grief. Develop attachment towards the Universal and you too will grow and live in splendor.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 9, ch. 30, 1969

Heads of family have to adhere to the schedule of rites and worship prescribed for them; they have to supervise the behavior and conduct of all members of the household; they have tender hospitality to guests and deal charity to the poor, they have also to equip their sons and daughters with the processes by which they can have mental peace and equanimity under all conditions.

A house holder has to uphold the ideals of justice and truth and promote them by his actions. He must feel the innate majesty of mankind and live - in accordance with that high status.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 12, ch. 52, 1974

Hold all your property and wealth in trust for the Lord who gave them to you. Even your family, you must treat it as a sacred trust, as persons given to you by the Lord to love, foster and guide. Thus, you must elevate your attachment into worship, and make it an instrument to spiritual progress.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Facets of the Divine Diamond (Divine Message of Sri Satya Sai Baba), Jan 1, 1990





Discussion Questions

1. What would be the potential impact on children when spouses have disagreement in front of the children?
2. As a head of your home, how do you foster Unity and Divinity among all members in your household?

This concludes our discussions on the important roles of the mother and father. The next topic will focus on creating a harmonious home that fosters an environment that leads children towards divinity.

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