



TEACHER OF TRUTH

"Sathya Bodhaka"



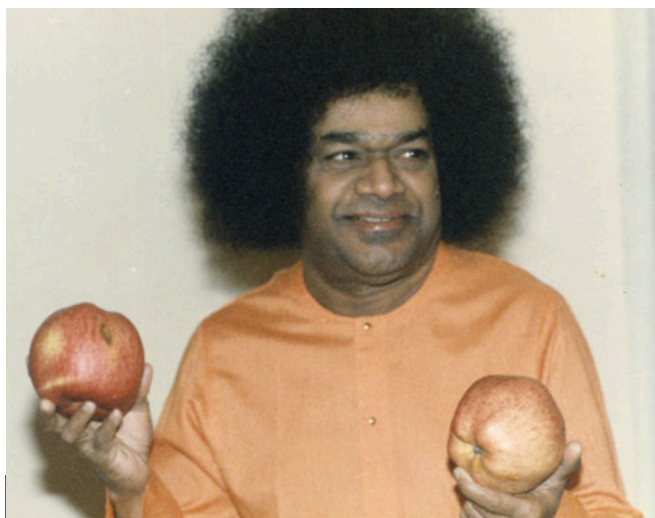
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The Power of a Story, Part 4
Sri Sathya Sai Educare



Education has become mechanical today. The spirit of inquiry is absent. That alone can enable one to discover Truth. For this, youth must be full of yearning to know, and to shine through that knowledge.

- Sathya Sai Baba, August 29, 1981

In this edition of **Teacher of Truth...** How to ask story-related questions in Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 to gauge understanding.



God says...

“When the parents take the children either to a cinema or to an exhibition, the parents will be subjected to a stream of questions about various things. The mother and father often become irritated with the large number of questions these children ask. Children, accompanying their parents, keep on asking, “What is this? Who is that? Why is this?” and so on, and so on. They keep asking these questions till the parents are fed up. In these questions, we see children attempting to look at this beautiful world and take the entire world into themselves.

To what aspect does this desire to know everything belong? Is there any connection between these children and the various things they want to understand? Is there any relevance between these children and the things they want to learn? There is no such connection or obvious relevance. There is some internal urge and an intense feeling in these children, by which they want to become aware and learn of all the manifestations around them. This is an aspect of Brahman. That is why it has been said, “Awareness is life.” In other words, this desire to be wise about everything is something which is present inside, in your heart.”

- Sathya Sai Baba, May 22, 1974

Guru does...

Asking questions is important, both for the student and the guru. When it comes to the student, we must create a divine environment and a loving relationship with the child so they are comfortable asking questions. Both these prerequisites elicit genuine questions. In *Sandeha Nivarini*, Swami says “Making the questioner give out the answers is the ancient and eternal method of teaching. If those who question gave the answers, they would clearly understand the subject. The lecturing style is now different.”

Swami insists that the questioner must have “...earnest inquiry with a desire to know.” So, encourage the child to share all that they understand through their cognition, not just what they have seen with their eyes. However, gurus must have the knack of knowing which questions are earnest and which are there just to poke the hive to see what happens. For this, the guru must be filled with knowledge, because as Swami says, only when the water tank (guru) has water, the taps (students) will have water in them.

When it comes to the gurus, it is important to make every student feel that they are a part of class—the loudest, most active child to the quietest, introverted child must have your attention (whether or not they may seem like it). Much of it is an internal process that our eyes cannot see. However, when the guru is able to lead the class with genuine knowledge that they have gleaned through Swami’s words, internalized it, and practiced it, class will be much smoother, and we will naturally elicit substantive questions from the children that we will be able to answer.

• TIP •

Teaching in
PRACTICE

Did God exist before the creation of the Universe?

If we too are God, why should we come to God?

If people don’t know about the existence of God, who do they love?

Let’s listen to the answers given by our Beloved Bhagawan. Click on the links below:

**“The Teachers and the Students”
Divine Discourse,
March 23, 1984
(Timestamp 37:50)**

**Q&A Session with
Bhagawan Sri
Sathya Sai Baba
in Kodaikanal, 1996**



After a story, gurus can ask the following types of questions and avoid others:

1. Closed-ended questions - These questions are limited as they only have one right answer. While sometimes it is helpful to ask one to check memory, most of the time, these questions don't help a child with retention.

Examples of these questions are:

- "What was Jesus' mother's name?"
- "How many disciples did He have?"

2. Open-ended questions - These questions help students give multiple answers—and all answers can be valid in their own right. They allow for inquiry and synthesis.

Some examples are:

- "How did you feel when you heard this story?"
- "How did you imagine little Dhruva was?"
- "What would you have done if you were so and so?"
- "How would you have handled the problem?"

3. Binary questions - These questions always give two choices, one of which is right. They are neither open-ended nor closed-ended, but they help an anxious child or a child who is quiet share with some more confidence.

Some examples are:

- "Was Hiranyakashipu good or great?"
- "How old do you think Prahlada was: was he a young child or a pre-teen?"

4. Referential questions - Before beginning a class or beginning a story, one can ask a referential question. This is where the guru does not know the answer, but is asking a question to gauge what the children know, and adjust how they tell the story.

Examples are:

- "What do you know about Aradhana day?"
- (Before a *Ramayana* story) "Have you used a bow and arrow before?"

Swami is very clear that no teacher ask questions to show off their knowledge or merely to test the knowledge of a student. **The purpose of questions in an SSSE class must only be to increase faith in God and promote social harmony.**



There is no greater Guru than Swami Himself. In the TIP section (previous page), watch how He listens to questions posed by youngsters. Observe these and watch it with purpose:

1. He does not judge
2. He listens patiently
3. He asks clarifying questions to make sure He understands the intention.
4. He does not engage in frivolous questions and uses humor to move on.
5. Watch Him answer - the conviction, the knowledge and clarity. We must strive to know our subject matter well.
6. He does not leave them with more questions. When He answers, the chapter is closed.
7. He always makes the students focus only on himself or herself. He says don't worry about others (this includes the world).
8. He answers them with so much love and enthusiasm!

Redirection is also a good skill to have. To do it effectively, gurus must be filled with knowledge first. The ability to redirect can help guide the class purposefully. Otherwise, children can steer the lesson wherever they wish to with their questions. As gurus, we must remain observant and attentive to keep the learning on the spiritual track.

UNITY OF FAITHS CORNER

"At the age of 15, Zoroaster/Zarathushtra took seriously to religion. And when he turned 20, he left home for the mountains where he spent ten years in a cave, devoting himself to meditation and contemplation on spiritual matters. He wrestled with ancient questions, as reflected in the following passages:

*This I ask Thee, tell me truly, Mazda Ahura,
Who upholds the earth beneath and the firmament
from falling?
Who, the waters and the planets?
Who yoked swiftness to winds and clouds?
Who is, O Mazda, creator of Good Thought?*

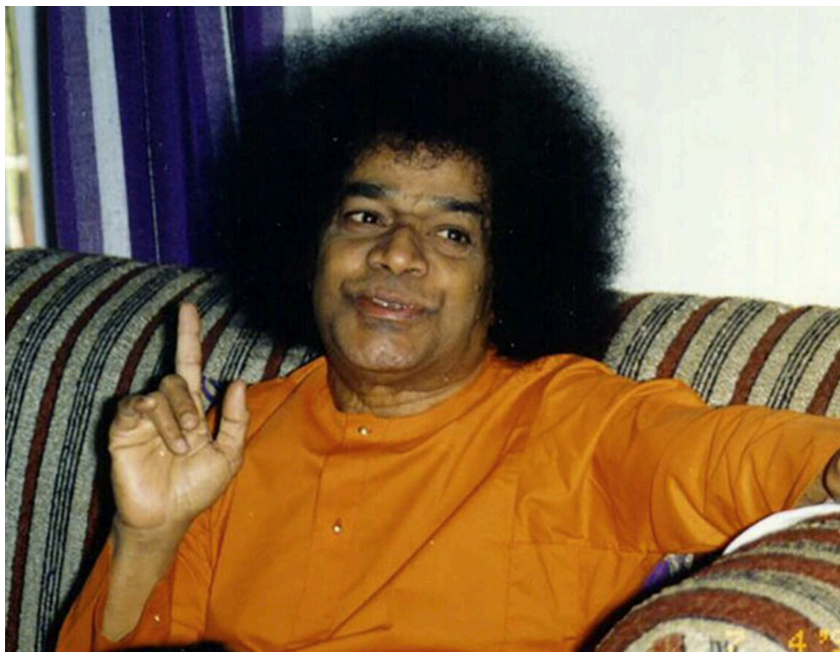
*This I ask Thee, tell me truly, Ahura,
What artist made light and darkness?*

*What artist made sleep and waking?
Who made morning, noon and night,
That call the understanding man to
his duty?*

After this year long period of isolation, Zoroaster emerged enlightened, ready to teach the masses about righteousness and the revelations made to him by Ahura. That is when Zoroastrianism may be said to have been formally born.

Source: Sri Sathya Sai Media Centre





After Joseph died, a young Jesus asked Mary three big questions:

What is the purpose of life?

From where have we come?

What is the work we should do?

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dec 25, 1989

Swami goes on to say that Jesus' questions are great Truths—an example of the types of questions upon which people should spend their time reflecting. Instead, man is spending his life thinking merely about the impermanent world.

“Who is Brahman? Who discovered this aspect of Brahman? What constitutes Brahman? Who is responsible for all this creation?”

In this manner, from moment to moment, Bhrigu was troubled with ideas and filled with the desire to learn the answers to such questions. Bhrigu made the firm determination to get at the answers. Unable to contain himself any longer, he went to his father to seek an answer. His father, Sage Varuni, was an all-knowing person. He prayed to his father to give him the knowledge that he was seeking. Varuni did not have any objection to giving answers to such questions, but in those days, the environment was such that the answers to these sort of questions were to be sought by the students themselves.

If a guru clears the doubts of the disciple as soon as they arise, then the disciple will lose all capacity to seek and search for answers. Every individual must be given some independence to seek answers to such questions and satisfy his curiosity. In this manner, Varuni wanted to give such an opportunity to Bhrigu. He gave him only a brief outline and said, “Brahman is One in whom all creation started and in whom all creation will merge. He is also the One who sustains all creation.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, June 18, 1978