

Cultivate Good Habits to Command Respect in Society

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Some people keep awake the whole night of Sivarathri playing cards.

Can this be called vigil (*jagarana*)?

If one abstains from food on account of quarrel with one's wife, can it be called fasting?

The fisherman goes on watching intently to trap the fish in the net.

Can this be termed meditation?

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Several people play cards throughout the night in order to keep awake on the holy night of Sivarathri. Once, I asked an officer, "How did you spend your time last night?"

He immediately got up and answered, "Swami! I spent the time very happily."

I further asked what sort of happiness he derived. He replied, "Yesterday was Sivarathri. I played cards throughout the night and enjoyed it very much. I did not have even a wink of sleep."

I questioned him again, "How can you derive the fruit of holy Sivarathri by spending your time playing cards throughout the night?"

The officer gave a wonderful reply, "Since I was busy playing cards throughout the night and was therefore free from all worries; I thought I was happily spending time last night."

You might have observed the fishermen laying their nets in the pond and waiting with single-pointed attention hoping for some fish to fall in the net. Can you call their intense gaze as concentration? Can it lead to liberation? The understanding of concentration and meditation by people today can be compared to the fisherman's single-pointed effort to catch fish.

Another example: A person was heavily drunk and had lost his body consciousness. Can you call it total identification with divinity (*thanmayatthwa*)?

One more example; a person quarreled with his wife and abstained from food. Can you say he was on a ritual fast? Some people resort to such acts of *thanmayatthwa* and concentration and live in a fool's paradise. One can imagine to what extent a person has degenerated himself taking to bad ways and distortions!

Did you ever analyse the nature of the human body? It consists of sweat, urine, excreta, bad odour, flesh, and blood. It is prone to decay and death, ultimately. Every second, only bad matter and bad odour are generated in the body. What is there to be proud of such a decaying body?

One has to realise the true nature of such an evanescent human body and make the best use of it. Do you know why God gave us the human body? Is it for indulging in evil acts and wasting the precious life? No, no. The body is given to us to strive to attain Divinity; not for misusing it. Realise for yourself to what sacred purposes it is to be used. From the time one gets up from the bed till one goes to bed at night, the time is spent in worldly pursuits. One does not have time to think of God even before going to bed.

The human body is a sacred instrument given by God, and it has to be sanctified by contemplating on God at least one or two times a day. What kind of activities are to be undertaken so that one may derive happiness and joy? The most appropriate answer to this question would be that the senses should be engaged in constant contemplation of God. The eyes must always see good things. The ears must be engaged in hearing good

things. The tongue must speak always sweet and noble words. It should chant the divine name. Thus, every limb of the body must be put to proper use and sanctified.

Dear students!

Normally, I do not like to speak about My physical self. However, I am revealing certain aspects of My daily routine with the hope that they will serve as guidelines for you. I wake up four times during night. Usually I get up from bed at midnight, brush My teeth—and also clean the tongue and mouth thoroughly. Again, I repeat the process at 1:30a.m., 3a.m., and 4:30 a.m.

The boys who sleep in My room to attend to My needs during the night may find it inconvenient, sometimes, because their sleep is disturbed. However, I strictly adhere to this routine so that My tongue, mouth, and teeth are always clean. I feel happy only when My tongue and mouth are clean. A clean tongue helps in maintaining purity of body and mind.

You might have observed Me talking to a number of people, every day. I will spend even 20 minutes instead of 10 minutes talking to those who keep a clean tongue and whose mouth does not emit bad odour. On the other hand, I do not talk to those with bad odour even for two minutes.

During our sleep, bacteria get generated. and they stick to our tongue and teeth on all sides of the mouth. They have to be removed by proper brushing of the teeth and thorough cleaning of the tongue and mouth. Only then can we be healthy and happy.

Apart from physical cleaning, our tongue must be engaged in speaking sacred and pure words. Following this principle, I am putting My tongue to proper use by engaging Myself in sacred activities.

Only after I clean My body properly do I come out of My chamber. By the time I come out, a boy looking after the kitchen brings the *ragi* gruel. I partake of the gruel and feel very happy and energetic. Except for this *ragi* gruel, I don't take any other item during early morning. I don't have breakfast.

After taking the gruel, I once again clean my mouth. Then, I drink some fresh water and come down.

Several people may be wondering what I have for breakfast. Nothing; I have no taste for snacks at all! A glass of cool water is all that I like to have.

Thereafter, I spend time happily with devotees, giving *darshan* and talking to some; I also give interviews to selected people. I am always pure in body and mind. My words are pure, My thoughts are pure and My acts are pure and sacred.

One important aspect to be borne in mind by people who are called for interview. While I enter the interview room with such a pure and sacred body, I notice that some people sitting there in the group are in the habit of smoking. Please be cautioned that I do not allow people to smoke. I strongly disapprove of the habit of smoking. Immediately, I pick up such people and ask them to go out.

The wife of a smoker may plead with Me, “Swami! He is my husband; if you send him out, what is there for me to represent to you?”

I firmly reply, “Whether it is husband or son, whoever he may be, one should not enter My room with bad odour and the smell of cigarette. Tell him to go out, clean his mouth, and come back. Then I shall speak to him.”

Such people will go out immediately, clean themselves, and come back in ten minutes. Then I speak to them endearingly.

Several people try to cover the bad odour emanating from their body by using some perfume. There is a small story in the *Puranas*, which is relevant in this context. Goddess Parvathi did great penance hoping to marry Lord Easwara. She tried all sorts of methods to entice Easwara, i.e. by putting on good dress, applying perfume, etc. But Easwara did not yield to her wishes. Then, she sought the help of Cupid (Manmatha) to wean Easwara to her side. Even then, Easwara did not budge an inch. On the contrary, he took Cupid to task for trying to help Parvathi.

Immediately, Parvathi realised her fault and regained her poise. She meditated on the divine form of Lord Easwara, which is eternal, unsullied,

enlightened, liberated, and the embodiment of purity (*nitya, suddha, buddha, muktha, nirmala swarupinam*). She came back to her normal, natural and pure self. Easwara then turned His vision toward her and accepted her. They were married on an auspicious occasion with the consent of her parents.

A human being should always be natural and pure. A human should not be artificial, wearing gaudy dress and applying perfumes and colours. This may be necessary to a certain extent. But, of what use is it to apply perfumes when the body is full of bad odour?

My body always emits natural effulgence and divine fragrance, because I never entertain bad thoughts. "A sound mind in a sound body" is the principle I follow. In order to teach such good habits to others, I always maintain My body and mind in a pure and unsullied condition.

Sometimes, I wake up the boy sleeping in my room at midnight and again at 1a.m. This may cause some inconvenience to the boys. They may feel a little inconvenience during that particular moment, but they soon forget the same and attend to Swami's needs.

Thus, the body must always be kept in a clean and fit condition, since it is a sacred instrument provided by God. Since I give utmost importance to cleanliness of the body, others would also like to emulate Me. By following My good habits and moving along with Me, people command respect in society.

Markandeya was a great devotee of Lord Easwara, but he had a short span of 16 years of life. Like any other boy his age, he used to spend a lot of time in play. He was very happy in the company of other boys, unaware of his impending death. When his parents realised that he would shortly be completing 16 years, they felt very sad that he was nearing his end. They were immersed in sorrow and started shedding tears. Markandeya asked his parents, "Why are you crying?"

Realising the futility of concealing the information from their son any longer, they replied, "Son! Our relationship with your mortal body ends today. Lord Easwara granted you a short span of life of 16 years, which will come to an end today."

Markandeya felt very much disappointed, since he spent all his time till then in play, in the company of other boys. Realising that he had still a few more minutes time, he took a bath and went to the temple of Easwara. There, he started chanting the divine name of Easwara with a pure tongue.

Meanwhile, it was time for sunrise. Easwara and Parvathi were discussing the impending death of Markandeya. Parvathi asked Easwara, "Swami! Markandeya's life is fast coming to an end. Why delay in saving his life? His parents are immersed in great sorrow."

Easwara suggested that Parvathi should enter the scene and play her role in prolonging the life of Markandeya. Parvathi then lifted the child and made him to sit on her lap. Markandeya had the good fortune of sitting on the lap of the Divine Mother, which entitled him to win the grace of Lord Easwara. Easwara came there and blessed Markandeya that he shall be immortal (a *chiranjivi*). Thus, he earned the grace of both the divine Mother and Father.

In the meantime, Markandeya's parents arrived to see what had happened to their son. Their joy knew no bounds when they found their son hale and healthy. They expressed their happiness thus: "Son! It is only due to your devotion and complete surrender to Lord Easwara that you are able to overcome death and earn the divine grace for becoming a *chiranjivi*. You protected yourself; we could not do anything in this regard."

God does not need anything from the devotee except devotion and complete surrender. He expects from a devotee a sacred body, sacred words, sacred vision, and selfless activity. When a devotee offers these things, God gives Himself up to that devotee.

One's body, mind and actions should always be pure, so that God is attracted toward that person. It is not by the different forms of worship or other rituals that God's grace can be obtained. Even the mother expects the child to cultivate a pure heart. Frequently, I recite the following poem to remind man of the futility of struggling for merely filling one's belly:

Oh! Human!

You struggle hard for the sake of filling your belly,

You acquire many forms of knowledge in various fields.

Examine and ask for yourself what great happiness you have achieved by spending all the time from dawn to dusk in acquiring worldly knowledge and earning wealth, while forgetting God.

(Telugu poem)

I always sanctify My time by engaging Myself in activities beneficial to the society. Right from My childhood, I cultivated spartan habits and followed strict regimen. This I had already explained in a poem on an earlier occasion thus:

Get up early at the crowing of the cock,
Have a bath after your morning ablutions,
Wear a proper dress,
Eat properly and moderately,
Go to school and study diligently,
Earn a good name,
Don't move out when it is raining,
And never go near the ditches.
Take part in games,
Run and play.
If you abide by all these rules,
You will have both health and wealth.

(Telugu poem)

In those days, people were not used to snacks. The cooked rice was soaked in buttermilk on the previous night and taken as breakfast next morning with a little salt.

Several boys keep their study tables very unorganised, with the books strewn all over. They make it clumsy and dirty. But I used to keep my books always neat and tidy. Whatever I am relating today is based on My personal experience.

In those days, very few boys were in a position to purchase new books when they were promoted to a higher class. Every four or five years, the textbooks were changed. I always used to keep My books neat. Hence, boys studying in the lower standard and promoted to the higher standard at the end of the academic year used to take My books.

During a particular year, a poor boy approached Me and asked for My books. I advised him to have a bath in the Chitravathi river and then come. He did accordingly. Then, I showed My books to him.

In those days there was high syllabus even for lower classes, like history, geography, civics, etc. On seeing My books, he commented, "Raju! you do not seem to have touched your books even once. They appear brand new." The cost of My books totaled to twelve rupees, but the poor boy was not in a position to pay even that much.

I told him "My dear! I was selected for the scout camp by our teacher. I have to purchase khaki dress and shoes. Besides, there are some other items of expenditure. I don't have money to incur that expenditure. Nor I would like to ask My parents. What I need at the moment is five rupees. Therefore, pay Me five rupees and take away the books."

The boy felt very happy. He immediately paid the amount. In those days, currency notes were very rare, so he brought the entire amount in small coins packed in a piece of cloth. It was tied in an old cloth, which gave way, unable to bear the weight of the coins. The coins were strewn all over the room, making a big sound.

On hearing the sound, the lady of the house came there and asked, "Where did you get all this money? Did you steal from my trunk?" So saying, she slapped Me. The poor boy standing there explained to her, "Mother! I gave those coins to Raju toward the cost of his books, which I purchased from him."

She did not believe his words and took away the entire money. The next day, all My classmates were going to Cuddapah to participate in the scout camp. I was studying in Kamalapuram when this incident happened. I told My teacher that I would start the next morning and join the group there.

Early in the morning, I set out on My journey by walk. I walked a long distance, and before I could join My colleagues, they had left for their breakfast. As for Myself, I did not have even a paisa in My pocket. What will I eat for breakfast? I thought I would manage somehow without eating anything. I purposely avoided My classmates then, lest they may question Me whether I had breakfast.

They were searching for Me. There was a masonry tank nearby in which water was stored for cleaning the cows and buffaloes. I was feeling very tired, hungry, and thirsty, having walked all

the way, but I could not help. I washed My face with that dirty water and drank some. Then, I noticed that someone had left behind a packet of beedies (country cigarette) and a one anna coin on the tank there. The beedies were, of course, of no use to Me, so I threw them away.

I took the one anna coin and converted it into four small coins (botlu or kanis). Four kanis in those days were equivalent to one anna. As I was returning, I noticed a person sitting on the roadside playing cards spread over a cloth and inviting passersby to bet on a particular card. He would offer double the amount if we were able to win.

No doubt, this was a sort of gambling, which I would advise everyone to refrain from. But I was completely helpless at that time. I therefore put one coin on different cards. Every time, I won the bet and got double the amount I invested. Thus, I played the game till I could make sixteen annas (one rupee). Then I thought that was the end of the game and returned with the money already earned.

Since I was feeling hungry, I purchased three dosas with one bottu. In those days dosas were available at the rate of one for a dammidi (1/3rd of a bottu). Thus, I managed with two bottus a day eating dosas. I joined the scout duty along with My friends.

During the night, I kept the bundle of coins under My head and slept on the sandy floor. Since I was very much tired, I was lost in sound sleep. Meanwhile, someone noticed the bundle under My head and took them away when I turned to the other side. When I woke up the next day, I noticed that the cloth bundles containing money were stolen away by somebody. I had no money to buy even one *dosa*.

My classmates were very much dejected at My plight. They were in fact crying. They pleaded with me to eat at least one *dosa*, which they would buy for Me, but I flatly refused. I told them that I was not hungry, since I did not like to avail Myself of others' help. Especially, I did not wish to touch others' money. So, I left that place.

Another incident happened during My childhood. Once My hand was swollen, and it was giving Me a lot of pain. I did not reveal it to anybody. I tied a bandage Myself with a wet cloth. The next

day, Seshama Raju's (Swami's elder brother) son died. He gave a telegram to Venkama Raju (Swami's father). Venkama Raju immediately rushed to see Seshama Raju. The *Griham Abbayi* (Venkama Raju) started from Puttaparthi and reached Bukkapatnam, and from there to Kamalapuram. By the time he reached Seshama Raju's house, all in the family was immersed in sorrow over the death of his son.

I too had to pretend to be sorrowful, since I was beyond sorrow and joy. The *Griham Abbayi* asked Me why I had a bandage on My forearm. I tried to explain away very casually as if nothing had happened. I told him there was a slight pain in the joint and therefore I put the arm in bandage.

A lady belonging to the Vysya community in the neighbouring house, who used to make her living by preparing *dosas* and selling them, tried to reason with *Griham Abbayi*, saying, "What! Venkama Raju! I know you are sufficiently well-off so as to get Raju educated at your place. Why should you put him to so much trouble by keeping him under the care of his elder brother at such a distant place? You do not know how much the boy is suffering here. He has to fetch drinking water from a distant place carrying two big pitchers with the help of a Kavadi on his shoulders, daily."

Thus, she narrated several incidents where I had to undergo physical strain and suffering. *Griham Abbayi* was deeply moved on hearing My plight and immediately called me and said, "My dear son! Start immediately and come along with me. Let us go back to Puttaparthi."

All the family members loved Me. He therefore, lamented, "I never beat you till date. You are undergoing so much suffering here."

I tried to console him by saying, "No, No. What these people say is not true. No one here is putting Me to any trouble at all! If I come away with you now, there will be none to help in the domestic chores here. It is not proper for you to take Me away from this place right now. You may go and I will follow you later at an appropriate time."

Thus, I never revealed the fact that the pain in My arm was due to the injuries inflicted on Me in Seshama Raju's house. I never had the habit of

complaining against elders. I always tried to protect the dignity and honour of the family.

In those days, I was struggling very much due to paucity of funds for My education. Often times, I had to manage with empty pockets.

In the same village, there used to be a businessman by name Kotte Subbanna. He used to run a provision shop in which some *ayurvedic* medicines were also sold. Once, a new *ayurvedic* medicine by name “Bala Bhaskara” was put up for sale in his shop. It was a new and very efficacious medicine. It could fetch him a good profit if popularised. Therefore, He, therefore, asked Me to shoulder the responsibility of making propaganda for this new medicine. I agreed to his request but asked for some more information about the medicine.

Then I composed a song about the efficacy of the medicine and gathered a few children My age to go round the nearby villages with placards in their hands, singing the song. I led the team of boys. The song ran as follows:

There it is! There it is! Oh, children! come, come!
There is the medicine Bala Bhaskara;
Be it an upset stomach or a swollen leg;
Be it a joint pain or flatulence;
Be it any ailment, known or unknown;
Take this Bala Bhaskara for an instant cure!
If you wish to know where it is available,
There is the shop of Kotte Subbanna;
It is in that shop that you can pick it up.
Come here boys! come here!
It is an excellent tonic,
Prepared by the famous physician Gopalacharya
himself,
Come here boys! come here!

(Telugu song)

By the time we completed our propaganda tour of the nearby villages, all the stock of medicines in Subbanna’s shop was exhausted. He felt very happy. He called Me and expressed his happiness, saying, “My dear Raju! Due to your efforts, all the stock of medicines in my shop was sold out in no time. I am grateful to you.”

When *Griham Abbayi* asked Me to follow him to Puttaparthi, I told him that I could not go with him since Seshama Raju’s family was in a sorrowful state due to the loss of their son. “It is not proper for Me to leave them at this juncture. You

please go to Puttaparthi. Later, I will join you, I said.”

Griham Abbayi shed tears of joy for My sense of responsibility and noble feelings. He said, “Dear son! I had never come across small children explaining such noble thoughts to elders. How noble and great are your qualities! You are teaching me such great things. How sweet and wise your words are! Your nobility alone will protect you.” Saying thus, he left for Puttaparthi.

However, ever since he reached Puttaparthi, he used to send messages daily asking Me to go over there. He was remembering all those complaints made to him by our Vysya neighbour about My difficult life in Kamalapuram and was feeling very sorry for My plight.

Meanwhile, a few more days passed. I had to sit for My examinations as well. So, I thought it would not be wise to get back to Puttaparthi at this juncture without attending the examinations. Moreover, I had My friends to be taken care of in the examinations.

We three were friends —Ramesh, Suresh and Myself. We sat on the same bench in our classroom. Ramesh and Suresh used to sit on either side of Me. They were dull in education. I told them, “I will write the answer for the questions on your answer books. You just sit silently in the examination hall.”

All the three of us went into the examination hall. Our roll numbers were quite afar from one another, so we had to sit at different places in the examination hall. There was no chance at all for us to communicate with each other. My friends were very unhappy and dejected.

I conceived a plan to help them. First, I finished writing My answer sheets within no time. Then I took additional sheets and wrote the answers for both Ramesh and Suresh, in their own handwriting. Then, I kept all the three answer sheets on the table of the examiner.

The result of our examination was announced on the third day. In those days, the examination results were announced soon after the examination; not like the present day when it takes months together to announce the results. All three of us passed in first class. Whatever answers were there

in My answer sheets, the same were found in the answer sheets of the other two boys as well, but none could accuse us of copying, since our roll numbers were very different and our seats distant from each other. Mine was number 6, whereas another boy's was 108. The third boy's roll number was still far.

Our teacher, Mahboob Khan, realised that I helped the other boys to perform well in the examinations, but he didn't reveal it to anyone. While we were coming out of the classroom, the teachers followed us and congratulated us for securing first class in the examination. They shed tears of joy. Thus, I made everyone including my teachers and classmates happy and returned to Puttaparthi.

My friends Ramesh and Suresh expressed their wish to accompany Me to Puttaparthi. In fact, they insisted on following Me. I advised them that they could join Me if they so wished, but they had to leave Me in Puttaparthi and get back to their places. I used to advise, guide, and correct My fellow students during My stay in school. Never did I waste My time in school. I always endeavoured to sanctify it. I used to talk sweetly and softly with everyone.

By the time I reached Puttaparthi, people could notice that a strange ailment had taken over Me. I used to talk to Myself. People thought that I was mad. Several people offered several suggestions to get Me cured of this strange disease. At the end, all people unanimously decided that I should be taken to a witch doctor (*bhootha vaidya*) to cure Me of an alleged possession by a demon. That sorcerer got My hair shaven off and inflicted two deep cuts on My scalp in the form of an X. Then he poured lime juice on the bleeding cuts. It gave Me great pain and an unbearable burning sensation. But I did not give vent to My feelings and silently suffered all this torture. In fact, I was laughing at his foolish treatment.

Then, he decided to put Me to more suffering. He brought *kalikam* (a sort of poisonous substance) and put it in My eyes. Thus, he put Me to several kinds of torture. Venkamma (Swami's elder sister), who accompanied Me to this sorcerer's place, could not bear to see Me undergoing this suffering. She therefore ran to *Griham Abbayi* and pleaded with him, "Father! Don't put Sathya

to this inhuman treatment. This man is inflicting great pain and injury on the boy. Enough torture; take him away immediately to Puttaparthi."

I was brought back to Puttaparthi. From then on, I underwent occasional bouts of a "strange ailment". On Thursdays, I used to answer questions and enquiries of people in the name of Baba.

Ever since that sorcerer shaved off My hair and put two deep cuts on My scalp, till today I did not have a haircut. Some people think that I trim My hair. No, never. My hair grows naturally. I have had this type of hairstyle for the last 70 years. The ensuing birthday is My 79th birthday.

Till today, I did not suffer from any disease. My teeth and eyesight are intact. Till a few years ago, those accompanying Me were, in fact, running to catch up with Me. I can still walk fast, but the doctors put a condition that I should not, the reason being that I was operated some time ago when I had a fall on the floor. They put a steel rod joining My hipbone and put sutures over it. That is why I was advised against walking fast.

Nevertheless, I have been able to attend to My daily routine. I do not give up any item of My daily activities. I am giving interviews to visitors. I am moving along the *darshan* lines, giving *darshan* to devotees. There is absolutely no hindrance to My daily activities.

I have already spoken so long. There is a lot more to say, if I wish. I have been maintaining My body all these years in perfect shape. It is possible that I might have caused some trouble to some people in the process, but they do not mind. They do service to Me, even though I dissuade them.

Today is *Durgashtami* day. Tomorrow and the day after are the *Mahanavami* and *Vijayadasami* festivals. I have a lot of work to do. I have to talk to the priests conducting the ritual. Besides, there are other important matters to be attended to.

After finishing My work, I will again talk to you. Didn't I tell you that students are My property? I care so much for them. If they are happy, I am happy. I have a piece of advice to you. Never give up repetition of the name (*namasmarama*). Do constant *namasmarana* wherever you are.

(Bhagawan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, "*Hari Bhajana Bina ...*")