

The Sacred Role of Women



A Compilation of Ladies Day Discourses

of

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

About the Resource Material

The Resource Material is drawn mostly from the Ladies' Day discourses of Sathya Sai Baba from 1995 to 2003 when the last Ladies Day Discourse was given. It also includes a Mahila Day discourse in April 1997 which was a detailed discourse by Sai Baba on the role of women in society. Discourses of this compendium parts enable ease of reference by topic.

Reference for all discourses of Sai Baba in this document is the international website for the Sai Organisation: <http://www.sathyasai.org>

This presentation of material has been sourced from *Celebrating Ladies' Day*, a programme of Sathya Sai International Organisation, Australia.

An effort has been made to achieve consistency of spelling of Sanskrit words through reference to the dictionary on the website.

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A Compilation - Ladies Day Discourses of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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ROLE OF WOMEN IN SSIO

10TH WORLD CONFERENCE

Love is the Source, The Path, The Goal

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Sathya Sai International Organisation

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INTRODUCTION

The 19th day of each month is known as *Mahila* (woman's) *Day* in the Hindu culture and this sacred celebration of women takes place every month on this day. 'Ladies Day', as it is known by students of Sai Baba of all cultures, is held on 19th November each year and most years, from 1995-2003, Sai Baba gave a discourse on this day.

What does Sai Baba say about women and Ladies Day?

He says that women and men are equal in all respects but that women have a special sacred duty to restore *Dharma* (righteousness) in the home. He tells us that our understanding of our primary duty as Divine Women needs to be remembered and acted upon, especially in the modern world with all its distractions and temptations. The key reason for Ladies Day is for women to celebrate, to learn, to remember and to practice our *Dharma* (here meaning our righteous duty). Its celebration puts emphasis on the critical importance of women excelling in our role as mothers.

Sai Baba says, "There is nothing more sacred than motherhood. We need children who fulfill the aspirations of their mothers. We also need women who embody motherhood. In order to foster such lofty ideals we have chosen the 19th of November to celebrate as 'Ladies Day'."

Sai Baba places great emphasis on the proper upbringing of children and the need for women to look after their own homes with love. He says that the importance of women in fostering *Dharma* through the home is critical for the future of one's country and the world and this role should take precedence over any other activity. While women are responsible to take a lead and give priority to 'love at home', this does not mean that men do not also have a role in establishing *Dharma* at home. He says, "Husband and wife are both equally responsible for establishing harmony at home. But times have changed. Womanly ideals are not being practiced and there are no ideal men and women today. That is why the world is in such a sorry state."

It may surprise some to learn that Sai Baba's discourses on Ladies Day are directed as much towards men as they are to women. This is because in order for women to achieve their *Dharma* in their lives on earth, partnership and cooperation of both sexes working together as One is required. Women can only successfully achieve their *Dharma*, if men also understand what this means - and what it doesn't mean.

Sai Baba says that women are the guardians of *Dharma*, the embodiments of righteousness, and it is our role to instill purity of thought, word and deed both within ourselves and with our children and families and also, society. He says, "As today is a sacred day dedicated to women, they should change themselves and help to change the men and the children. They should develop the qualities of sympathy, compassion, love and sacrifice. Study the lives of our great women who were models of patience, fortitude, compassion and sacrifice. I desire that you should take up the reins of leadership and bring peace and prosperity to the nation by leading ideal lives."

Sai Baba places enormous emphasis on the need to educate children so they grow up to become outstanding citizens. He is not interested in our children becoming great or famous persons, except in so far as the goodness of our children shines like a light which inspires others to light their candles of goodness as well.

Sai Baba asks men to see women as Divine Goddesses with a sacred role to inspire *Dharma* within the household and society. In the Sathya Sai Organisation women do a lot of service with a

great deal of cooking and cleaning for various functions. While this role is highly valued, women often comment that they have no time for themselves; there is no time to develop their own spirituality - no time even for Sai Ladies Wing meetings which offer a spiritual and educational service. But Swami says, "Nowhere in any sacred text is it stated that women should only cook and not do work like men."

He says, "They (women) are not encouraged to show their ability. Even in the family, they have to face obstacles and confrontations. If women are given due recognition and encouragement, they will shine with brilliance in all fields and will serve the house, country, and the entire world gloriously, contributing to the welfare of the entire humanity."

It is therefore important that women give special time to their own education and spiritual development, which is why Sai Baba has given Ladies Wing three strands: spiritual, education and service.

Sai Baba says it is a privilege to be born a woman and that when we take our innate feminine capacities into the community, we have much to share and give. Women are embodiments of selfless love and sacrifice is natural to us. These hidden powers have the capacity to transform not only our homes, but our work environments and the wider community.

Sometimes as women, for whatever reason, we don't recognise our own worth and value. Low self esteem may lead us to say, "I can't do that" or even, "I am just a woman". But Swami never limits what women are or what we can do. He says that while caring for and not neglecting the home, women may and do participate in society and excel at leadership roles. He supports education of women. He cites many examples of exemplary women, and speaks of such women with great pride. He urges us also, to be proud of being women and all we can do. But He also cautions that if we just give priority to work and making money, at the expense of the home and children, we are not happy.

It is our duty as women, to honour the words of Sai Baba and His faith in us, to work on our self confidence and to develop self respect and, to work to our capacity, finding the necessary balance in our lives. Then, "Women can rule the whole World." Our Sai has really said it - yes He has! But this is in our own way. He says, "Women can control the whole world by themselves by virtue of their inherent qualities of love and spirit of sacrifice (*prema bhava* and *thyaga bhava*)."

We are so blessed to share the mutual experience of love and respect for the Avatar, Sathya Sai Baba. Let us fill our hearts with his name and sing His glory on our Ladies Day, men and women and children joining together in Unity, to acknowledge and celebrate the Ideal of Womanhood now and always.

Love and Light to Every One.

Christan Mackenzie,
National Ladies Programme Coordinator 2011/2012
Australia & PNG

1. The Privilege of Womanhood

1.1 Privilege of Being Born a Woman

In this infinite universe, among the myriads of living beings, humanity is eminent. Among human beings, it is a privilege to be born as a woman. There are many examples to demonstrate the preeminence of women. Was not Rama born as a Divine incarnation in Kausalya's womb? Did not Lava and Kusha (the twins) become great because they were born to Sita? Was it not Jejbai's loving care which made Shivaji great? Was it not Putlibai's piety which made Gandhi a *Mahatma*?

All the greater sages, and saints, heroes and warriors were born to women "who made them great". Woman is the Goddess of Nature. Gayatri, which enshrines the essence of the *Vedas*, is a goddess, venerated as *Veda Matha* (the mother of the *Vedas*). It is obvious that feminine birth is estimable, adorable and sublime. The *Veda* also adores the feminine principle in various ways. *Vedic* rituals and practices accord a high place to women.

The woman is adored under different names as *Sathyavathi*, *Anyavathi*, *Angavathi* and *Nidhanavathi*. *Sathyavathi* proclaims the truth that the Divine pervades the cosmos, God is not separate from *Prakrithi* (Nature). Nature is a form of the Divine. The *Veda* testifies to the omnipresence of the Divine like the presence of butter in every drop of milk.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

1.2. The Archetypal Divine Woman

The archetypal woman is described as *adhishakthi* (the primal source of all energy) having a whole array of powers. She is hailed as the mother of the *Amrithasyaputhrah* (children of immortality).

The three gunas are Vedas in the word "*Sthree*". The word *Sthree* is made up of three, consonants, "*Sa*", "*Tha*" and "*Ra*".

"*Sa*" signifies the *Sathwic* nature of women. It represents also the triple aspects of experiencing divinity *Salokyam* (vision of the Divine), *Samepyam* (proximity) and *Sayujyam* (mergence).

"*Tha*" signifies the *Thamasic* quality. But this *Thamasic* quality is not indolence and slothfulness. It includes qualities like humility, kindness and modesty. This means that women begin with qualities like meekness and modesty so that they may serve the family and society in the right spirit. There is a saying in Andhra Pradesh: "Judge a house by its mistress."

"*Ra*" represents the *Rajoguna*. This does not mean pugnacity and querulousness. This quality signifies the preparedness of women, where necessary, even to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their honour and the honour of their family. *Bharat's* history is full of examples of women who fought valiantly and gave up their lives to protect their husbands and their honour.

"*Sthree*" thus represents the combination of the three *gunas*. Woman, who should be highly honoured for these qualities, is being treated as a *Abala* (weaker vessel) and assigned an inferior status.

It will not be out of place to mention here that women who have wielded power in *Bharat* or other countries have proved themselves to be exceptionally able and successful. There have been many kings in Britain - but no one ruled the country so well as Queen Victoria, Her rule was marked by righteousness, prosperity and efficiency. There was no discontent during her reign. In more recent times, Indira Gandhi ran the Government with courage and consummate skill. She was prepared for any sacrifice in the interests of the country. Among Prime Ministers, she headed the Government for over twelve years. Many others had only brief tenures!

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

1.3 Women are Embodiments of the Divine Spirit

Women are the embodiments of the Divine Spirit! At least from now on you must strive to sanctify the home and turn the family towards the Divine path.

Women must realise the enormous power of the mind for good or evil and see that this power is used only for doing

good. The mind can make a person a demon or Divine. The mind is under the control of the intellect. The intellect is governed by the *Atma*. Self-realisation will bring about control over everything.

The dire conditions prevailing in the world are known to everyone. The root cause of all this is the failure of people to realise their inherent divinity. Excessive desires, fueled by selfishness, are the cause of all troubles. The primary requisite is confidence in one's self. Without that confidence, nothing can be accomplished.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1996

2. Significance of Ladies Day, 19 November

2.1 Encourages Women to Play their Role in Society

In order to teach the subtleties of the scriptural texts, and encourage women to play their role in society, the 19th is fixed as *Mahila Day*. Dharma can be made to occupy its position in society and restored to its pristine glory only by women.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

2.2 Ladies Day is About Transformation to Leadership

As today is a sacred day dedicated to women, they should change themselves and help to change the men and the children. They should develop the qualities of sympathy, compassion, love and sacrifice. Study the lives of our great women, who were models of patience, fortitude, compassion and sacrifice. I desire that you should take up the reins of leadership and bring peace and prosperity to the nation by leading ideal lives.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

2.3 Ladies Day Reminds Us All of the Importance of Mother

Today, the 19th November is celebrated as Ladies Day only to remind you of the importance of mother. You should conduct yourself according to the wishes of your mother. Do not disobey her. Chaitanya the great devotee of Lord Krishna, married Lakshmi on the insistence of his mother, though he was not in favor of marriage. But as fate would have it, Lakshmi passed away soon after the marriage.

His mother Sachidevi felt very sad for having made him marry against his wishes. Chaitanya told her, "This is what happens when one goes against the dictates of one's conscience." So, if you feel what you are doing is correct, then try to convince your mother, but never hurt her feelings.

There is nothing greater than mother's love. Mother's words are always sweet. At times she may use harsh words, but they are meant only to correct you, not to hurt you. There may be a wicked son, but there can never be a wicked mother in this world. Today is declared as mother's day only to make you understand the value of mother's love and her concern for you. Among mother, father, teacher and God, mother is given the topmost priority. The modern youth do not care for the mother. They think they are highly educated and that the mother does not know anything. It is a great mistake to think so.

Never look down upon the mother. Even the mother should not compel her children to accede to her wishes. Through love and sincerity she should put the children on the proper path. She should aspire that her children be good, they need not be great.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1999

2.4 Ladies Day Celebrates Mother as Teacher

Mothers in ancient days used to teach the children about right conduct, morality and devotion. The first preceptor for a child is the mother. For this reason, Bharat culture gave the first place to the mother among the four persons to be revered as divine: mother, father, guru and guest. The mother gets the first place because she bears the child in the womb for nine months and nourishes him with her own blood.

Even in mentioning the names of deities, the first place is given to the goddess, as in Sita-Rama, Parvathi-Parameshwara and Lakshmi-Narayana and the reason for the feminine name getting priority is she is *Prakrithi Swarupini*--the embodiment of *Prakrithi* (nature). The implication in this usage, is that you should realise God through the propitiation of *Prakrithi*.

In this world, all things are transient. Only righteousness and good name endure. How is one to acquire a good name? By revering the mother. Never go against the wishes of the mother. The son who causes pain to the mother can never be happy. Hence, earn the blessing of the mother.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

2.5 Ladies Day Celebrates and Fosters Lofty Ideals of Motherhood

Since time immemorial, it is the mothers who brought up the children. The lap of the mother is the child's first school. That is why even the Vedas say, "May mother be your god, may father be your god, may teacher be your god." Thus, first honour is always given to the mother. Let us take for example the names of deities, Sita-Rama, Radha-Krishna and Parvati-Paramesha; the feminine aspect of God comes first.

It is the mother who shapes the child's life. Even when she punishes the child for any of its mistakes, she does it with love, to lead it on to the right path. Today we need such mothers.

In this sacred land of Bharat patience is our treasure. Among all the vows, adherence to truth is the greatest penance. Sweetest of all feelings in our land is the love of the mother."

There is nothing more sacred than motherhood. We need children who fulfill the aspirations of their mothers. We also need women who embody motherhood. In order to foster such lofty ideals we have chosen the 19th of November to celebrate as 'Ladies Day'.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2001

2.6 Ladies Day is About Selfless Love

Obey the commands of your parents and become ideal parents in future. Teach the same to your children as well. In order to teach these ideals, I have proclaimed November 19 as Ladies Day, which is very auspicious. The importance of this day lies in propagating and realising the sanctity of motherhood, which is founded on the principle of selfless love. Children should be fostered on the principles of piety and virtue. This day will be celebrated by posterity for aeons.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2001

2.7 Ladies Day Reminds Us of Sacrifice

Savitri fought with the God of Death (Yama) and succeeded in getting her husband back to life. Can you find any instance in the scriptures or history where a husband was prepared to do sacrifice for his wife? If the wife is dead, he is ready to have a second marriage. Such unfair things are happening in the world in respect of women. That is why it was decided to celebrate not only 19 November but the 19th of every month as *Mahila Day*.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

2.8 Ladies Day is the Message of Peace and Harmony at Home

Without peace and harmony at home, there can be no peace in the nation. This message should be propagated throughout the country on every November 19th, by observing it as Ladies Day. You should teach people how to run their homes well and how to bring up children on right lines. You must deal calmly and tactfully with the men, if they

are not cooperating. Though Ravana was evil minded, his noble wife, Mandodhari, tried to correct him as much as possible. She advised him strongly not to keep Sita in Lanka, but to restore her to Rama.

From today learn to see the good in others and examine your own defects. Thereby you will benefit both ways. Those who go about finding faults in others are like dogs which go after cast off shoes.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

2.9 Ladies Day is For Dharma to Establish in Society

In order to teach the subtleties of the scriptural texts, and encourage women to play their role in society, 19th is fixed as *Mahila Day*. Dharma can be made to occupy its position in society and restored to its pristine glory only by women. But men also have equal right and they should participate in this mighty and sacred effort so that the country will prosper. Even if men don't actively participate, they should at least let the women do the work without interference.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

2.10 Ladies Day is Celebrated to Make You Understand the Value of Mother's Love

When Abhimanyu was in the womb of his mother Subhadra, Arjuna used to tell her many stories. One day, Arjuna was explaining to her the intricacies and nuances involved in entering Padmavyuha (a military formation in the shape of a lotus). Before he could explain to her how to come out of the Padmavyuha, Lord Krishna, the supreme director of the cosmic drama, entered the scene. God comes whenever the need arises and plays His role appropriately.

Krishna asked Arjuna, "What a mistake you are committing! It is not Subhadra, but it is the child in her womb who has been listening to you all the while. Where is the necessity for you to teach the child about Padmavyuha?" He took Arjuna away with him.

Later on, in the Kurukshetra war, Abhimanyu lost his life in Padmavyuha, since he did not know how to come out of it. Why did Krishna do this? It is because Abhimanyu had to attain *Veera Swarga* (heaven of the heroes). In fact, when the Kauravas challenged Abhimanyu to enter Padmavyuha, he came to his mother Subhadra and sought her permission and blessings. Subhadra tried her best to dissuade him from going to the battlefield. She said, "My dear son, it is not an ordinary task to enter Padmavyuha and come out of it. Moreover, your wife is in the family way, and your uncle Krishna and father Arjuna are not here. So, give up the idea of going to the battlefield."

But Abhimanyu did not pay heed to her advice. He said "Mother, I am a *kshatriya* (warrior) by birth. There is no greater insult for a *kshatriya* than to shy away from the challenge posed by the enemies. In fact, you should encourage me and enthuse me to fight and annihilate the enemies. It is not proper on your part to discourage me from going to the war." Abhimanyu knew what he was doing was correct, but he did not understand his mother's love. He lost his life because he went to the battlefield against the wishes of his mother.

There is nothing greater than mother's love. Mother's words are always sweet. At times she may use harsh words, but they are meant only to correct you, not to hurt you. There may be a wicked son, but there can never be a wicked mother in this world. Ladies Day is celebrated only to make you understand the value of mother's love and her concern for you. Among the mother, the father, the teacher and God, the mother is given the topmost priority.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1999

2.11 Ladies Day is Celebrated to Delve into Sacred Qualities of Women and Disseminate Them

This day of 19th November is celebrated as Ladies' Day in order to delve into the sacred qualities of women and disseminate them. Women are the repositories of truth and culture. Though the earth is one, the plants vary depending upon the seeds sown. The womb of the mother symbolizes the mother earth. As is the seed of thought sown in it, so is

the fruit that it yields. You cannot expect mangoes by sowing a neem seed. So, the mother should foster good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Only then can she beget virtuous children. Today we find many children having bad qualities and wicked conduct. The reason for this can be attributed to the bad thoughts of their mothers.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2000

2.12 Ladies Day is about Spending Your Time in a Sacred Manner, Developing Self Confidence and Self Respect

This day (19 November) is being observed as Ladies Day. What does it mean? You think that this day is meant to do some sacred acts, listen to Swami's discourse, etc. It is not merely that. You should spend time in a sacred manner. What you learn today should be an ideal for your lifetime. Develop self-confidence. Under any circumstances uphold your self-respect. What is the use of living a life bereft of these two? You may not have money or strength and you may be put to disrepute, but always maintain your self-respect.

Divine Discourse November 19 2002

2.13 Ladies Day is About Speaking With Love, Uttering Sacred Words and Helping Others

This day (November 19) is very sacred. *Griham Ammayi*, the mother of this body, used to speak to all with love. She could never withstand the suffering of others. She would come upstairs and plead with Me, saying, "Swami, they are in a sorrowful state. Please call them and talk to them." Her heart was filled with compassion. That is why her fame has spread so much. In order to attain a good name, you have to utter sacred words and help others.

Whenever mother Easwaramma would come to Me with such a plea, I used to pretend to be angry and chide her, saying, "Why are you coming here with recommendations? I don't want to listen to them." But she would persist. She would continue to plead, "Swami, please take pity on them. They are in dire need of Your help. Please talk to them once." I used to be happy thinking, "How compassionate and kind-hearted she is!" *Hri + Daya = Hridaya*. That which is filled with compassion is *hridaya* (heart). But today, man does not possess such a compassionate heart. He utters harsh words and thereby is put to disrepute. One should talk softly and sweetly. Never hurt others' feelings with harsh talk.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2002

2.14 Ladies Day - Realises Oneness of All Forms

Today, being Ladies Day, many ladies have gathered here to share their happiness with one and all. We distinguish and differentiate between ladies and gents on the basis of *upadhi* (vesture) or physical form. However, the principle of *Brahman* present in ladies and gents is one and the same. *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman). Everyone aspires to attain divinity. Many sages, seers and yogis did intense penance to have the vision of God. Where is God? *Daivam manusha rupena* (God incarnates in the form of a human being). God assumes human form to protect humanity. This has been the mission of all avatars.

God transcends names, forms and attributes. He is infinite and not limited to a particular form. Once Sage Narada and a few other sages prayed to Lord Narayana to incarnate in human form and redeem mankind. Lord Narayana said, "Narada, *Brahma Shakthi* (Divine power) is positive. It is not possible for *Brahma Shakthi* to incarnate on earth unless it is coupled with negative power. It is only when the positive and negative combine that Divinity manifests in human form."

In response to the prayers of sages and seers, God comes down in human form. He strives for the welfare of humanity and bestows joy on one and all. The Avatar is a manifestation of *Brahmaswarupa* and *manavatwa* (humanness). The same principle of Brahman is latent in all. One has to develop inward vision in order to experience Him. *Easwarasarva bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings). In this cosmic drama, God alone is the director and also the actor. He is donning all the roles such as mother, father, husband, wife, daughter, son, etc.

2.15 Ladies Day, A Noble Thought

Many women have been eagerly awaiting November 19 to celebrate Ladies Day. It is really your good fortune to have such a noble thought. Give up all negative thoughts and develop sacred feelings. Lead an exemplary life. The *Upanishads* have accorded a great value to human life. You should live up to it. The *Upanishads* are the storehouse of knowledge. The *Vedas* contain mantras like *Purusha Suktam*, *Sri Suktam*. One may have mastered the *Vedas*, but if one does not study the *Upanishads*, all his learning will prove futile. That is why people start the study of the *Upanishads* after they complete the study of *Vedas*. The *Upanishads* take you closer to God. I wish that you follow the teachings of the *Upanishads* and manifest your latent divine power. I bless you all and bring My discourse to a close.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2002

3. Sacred Role of Women in Society

3.1. Women Have Hidden Power Within Them

Women devotees in the Sai Movement are participating in large numbers enthusiastically in service activities such as helping the women of weaker sections to learn some useful trades like tailoring etc. so that they can earn some money for the family and also spend their time usefully. If such activities are taken up all over the country, the country will prosper. This sacred work is typical of the culture of our ancient country. Women are the heirs of our ancient culture. Culture means refinement. Women are the torch-bearers of refinement and they are toiling for the emancipation of the nation.

Geetha Reddy spoke about the exploits of great women in the battlefield like Rani of Jhansi, who fought a terrific battle and gave up her life rather than surrendering to the foe when she was overpowered. She lived up to the teachings of the *Vedas* that only through sacrifice can one attain liberation. Even in this Kali Age, there may be some exceptional cases where women may not be following *sathya* and *dharma*. But mostly they live up to these ideals.

However, they are not encouraged to show their ability. Even in the family, they have to face obstacles and confrontations. If women are given due recognition and encouragement, they will shine with brilliance in all fields and will serve the house, country, and the entire world gloriously, contributing to the welfare of the entire humanity.

No doubt, there may be a few who may not be having good qualities characteristic of a woman. But in any class of society, this is inescapable. Take, for example, the orange fruit. In order to enjoy the juice you have to peel out the bitter portions of the outer skin and seeds. Even so, the fruit of human life has much bitter portions as outer skin. You have to remove this and weed out the seeds of bad qualities, so that you can taste the sweet juice inside.

If man follows the example of the woman to imbibe sacred and sacrificial qualities, the world will definitely improve. They say "*Udhyogam purusha lakshanam* (a man is known by his job)", as though only males can do jobs. It is a misnomer. Women are also doing all types of jobs equal to men. In fact, women work more sincerely and with dedication.

Recently, Swami questioned a director of the Indian Telephone Industries when he came to see Swami about the percentage of women employed in the industry. He said 99% of the employees were women and added that women did ten times better work than men. They don't stop or step out until the allotted work is completed. They have the work culture better than men.

Nowhere in any sacred text is it stated that women should only cook and not do work like men.

As a matter of fact, even man has to learn cooking and house-keeping to help his wife in times of need. Awareness is life. Awareness means total knowledge and not partial knowledge. This enthusiasm is full in women. Even men should make effort to learn everything.

Women have hidden power immanent in them. You have to encourage them to exhibit their talents. An army commander, who makes all sepoys in the army shiver before him, shivers before his wife when she confronts him after he reaches home. Similarly, the principal of an institution, before whom the students may shiver with fear, may himself feel shiver going down his spine when confronted by his wife for an explanation why he came late.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

3.2 Women Should Come Up in Society

Today's society is polluted because there is no encouragement for women to cultivate such high ideals. In modern times the ways of life are so perverted that only evil thoughts, evil feelings and evil behaviour rule the roost. In this situation Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations are encouraging women through opportunities in the wings like *Mahila Vibhag*, to develop good ideals of character and propagate them to the world at large. Only if the women come up in society, the whole world will turn sacred. The Organisations of women have achieved many great things, but men do not recognise their good work. Women are capable of ruling the nations and even the whole world if they make up their minds. Men should not consider women as mere slaves. Today our country is on the downslide because we take our women very lightly.

There is nothing in this world that women cannot achieve. Recognising the nature of such women we must encourage them and give them equal opportunities in society. No such encouragement is being given today. Men do not tolerate women joining together for a good cause in an Organisation. Because of their own selfish interest, men are unable to recognise the good that women can do to the society.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2001

3.3 Family First, Work for Income Second

Young boys and girls should study not to eke out a livelihood but with the sole purpose of demonstrating and propagating the ideals the country has stood for since ancient times. Modern boys and girls study for the sake of short-term benefits and not with an objective of experiencing and enjoying the tradition and culture of Bharat.

If women go out for jobs,
who will take care of the homes?
When husband and wife go out to offices,
who will do the household work?
If women go out to teach others' children,
who will look after their own children?
Just like men, if women also go to work,
who will cook food in the kitchen?
Earning money may solve some financial problems,
but how will it resolve domestic problems?
It seems that unalloyed happiness
is not the lot of womanhood.
(Telugu Poem)

Today, women, because they are educated, compete with men to take up jobs. There is nothing wrong in going for a job. However, they must take care of their home needs before taking up a job. When wife and husband go to offices, who will look after their children at home? If the mother is not at home to guide them properly, the children go astray. If both parents go out for jobs, they may be able to satisfy their desire for money, but there is every possibility of their children getting spoiled because there will be nobody at home to discipline them. Whatever moral values you have

learnt, you have to teach your children. Whatever you have studied will have value only when you care for your children's progress. Education is meant to bring out the innate potential of an individual.

Women should recognise their responsibilities and conduct themselves accordingly. There are many ideals set by women in this regard. Rajeswari Patel said that many women in the past developed virtues in them and led ideal lives. Savitri was exemplary in her conduct. Women of those days would not only discharge their household duties diligently but would also bring up their children in the most ideal manner. They would teach their children not merely by precept but by practice. However, we do not find many such ideal mothers today. They are interested in earning money rather than moulding their children into ideal citizens. They would help the nation to a great extent if only they could bring up their children in an ideal way. What is the point in women taking up jobs and earning money when their children are going astray with none to restrain them? So, first of all, women should look after their home and children properly. They should devote sufficient time to perform their household duties. The educated women of today employ a cook and a servant-maid to perform the household chores. They spend much of their earnings in paying salaries to them.

Ladies Day 19 November 2002

4. On Men and Women

4.1 Women are Stronger than Men

You may be under the mistaken notion that women are weak in body and mind. But, in fact, they are stronger than men.

In the epic *Mahabharata*, there is a story of a queen, Pramila, who wanted to marry Arjuna. But Arjuna was reluctant to marry her. Pramila sent her commander-in-chief Malayavathi to capture Arjuna. Malayavathi waged a fierce battle against Arjuna, ultimately captured him, and brought him to the presence of Pramila. She requested him to marry her, but Arjuna refused to marry even if it were to cost his life. Pramila was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, and so was Arjuna. Both of them prayed fervently.

Krishna, being the director of the cosmic drama, had his own master plan. He appeared there, called Pramila and Arjuna to his side, brought their hands together, chanted the mantras, and solemnised their marriage.

God can do anything and everything. He can transform earth into sky and sky into earth. But man lacks devotion and faith in God. He has faith in worldly matters, not in spirituality. There is nothing superior to *bhakti* (devotion). In the word *bhakti*, the letter *bha* stands for lustre and luminosity, and *kthi* denotes that which attracts. From *bhakti*, you get *shakti* (power) for the body, mind, and spirit. Through this *bhakti* and *shakti*, you get immersed in *rakthi* (attachment) toward God and develop *virakthi* (detachment) from the world. Then God confers on you *bhukthi* (food) and also *mukthi* (liberation). Thus, man has to travel from *bhakti* to *mukthi*.

As I told you yesterday, human life is a journey from 'I' to 'We'. In order to go to Tirupati, Varanasi, Gaya, and Prayag, you may have to take great pains and travel long distances. But the journey from 'I' to 'We' is very short in the sense that you have to detach yourself from the body and develop attachment towards the Self. For this, mother's grace is very essential.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1999

4.2 Men Should Honour Women

From ancient times the feminine aspect of the Divine has been worshipped in various ways. The Veda declares that where women are honoured and esteemed, there divinity is present with all its potency. Unfortunately today men consider it demeaning to honour women. This is utterly wrong and is a sign of ignorance.

Sthree (Woman) is *Grihalakshmi* (the Goddess of Prosperity for the home). She is hailed as *Dharmapathni* (the virtuous spouse). She is called *Illalu* (the mistress of the house) and *Ardhangi* (the better half). People gloat over petty titles

conferred on them. But women have been conferred the highest titles which are valid for all time. A home without a woman is a jungle.

Men should realise the high status of women and honour and respect them accordingly. They should not make women weep and shed tears. A home where the woman sheds tears will be ruined. Men should give an honourable place for women and lead a respectable life.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

4.3. Women are Not to Be Treated Lightly

Have full faith in God as your Indweller. Develop pure sublime love. That alone will be lasting. All other qualities come and go. Learn to live in love. Women are the fountain-source of love. *Bhakthi* is considered a feminine quality while *Jnana* (wisdom) is considered masculine. Let me not be misunderstood if I say that for the presence of all the male devotees present here, women alone are responsible. It is they who by their sacred feelings brought their menfolk here. Their work is sacred in every respect. They seek not only to sanctify their lives but the lives of all others in the family.

Women are not to be treated lightly. The *Geetha* says that women are endowed with seven kinds of powers while men have only three. It is sinful to look down upon women.

Consider, for instance, this fact. There are any number of women who have tried to bring back their dead husbands or to venerate their memory. How many men have done likewise for their wives? Many hasten to acquire a second wife.

In this respect, Bharat has been an example to the world.

Wherever women are honoured, there is prosperity and happiness. Women should never be slighted or treated with disrespect. A home in which the housewife sheds tears will be bereft of all prosperity. This is the ancient conception of the role of women in the home.

You might say that the karma of the previous birth has to be consumed in this birth and that no amount of grace can save man from that. Evidently, some one has taught you to believe so. But I assure you, you need not suffer from karma like that. When a severe pain torments you, the doctor gives you a morphine injection and you do not feel the pain, though it is there in the body. Grace is like the morphine, the pain is not felt though you go through it.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1996

4.4. Mothers and Fathers

It is the mothers who make their children take to the right path, not so much the fathers. Today we find the father's teaching the children to utter lies. For instance, when the telephone rings in the house, the father who is in the house tells his son to inform the caller that the father is not at home.

The practice of fathers allowing the sons to go astray has a long ancestry. It started in the *Dhva para Yuga* with Dhritharashtra, father of Dhuryodhana. Whatever evil deeds his son did, Dhritharashtra used to say he was a good man. Fathers who allow their sons to go astray are not real fathers at all. Prahlada observed: "Only he is father who advises the son to seek God. Only he is a true guru who instructs the pupil about God." The mother is the first preceptor for the child.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

4.5 The Devotion of a Wife

Consider, for instance, this fact. There are any number of women who have tried to bring back their dead husbands or to venerate their memory. How many men have done likewise for their wives? Many hasten to acquire a second wife.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1996

4.6 Selfless vs Selfish

The woman is the embodiment of sacrifice. Though the male counterpart may also do sacrifice, it will be with selfish

tinge while woman's sacrifice is absolutely selfless. Therefore, we should be proud of our women.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

4.7 Men and Women are Spiritual Equals

Generally, the term *Purusha* is taken to mean only males, basing on physical form. It is not true. *Purusha* represents the *Atma* or *Chaitanya* in all, which is in the body from top to toe. *Purusharthas* (prime goals of life) are four, namely, *dharma, artha, kama, and moksha* (right conduct, wealth, desire, and liberation). This does not apply only to males. It is common to both males and females.

Actually, women follow the fundamental Dharma truly, while men act selfishly. One who realizes divinity is *Purusha*. *Swadharma* means *Atmadharma*, not the *dharma* pertaining to the body. This is explained in the Bhagavad Gita. This was the ideal followed by the ancients.

Artha does not merely mean wealth of money. It means wealth of wisdom. Both men and women have the right to experience non-duality, which is real wisdom.

Kama is the desire not for worldly objects but for God.

Moksha (liberation) is the fourth objective of life. Desire for *moksha* is common to all, whether men or women. *Moksha* is *moha kshaya* or shedding of bodily attachment. Without following the senses or mind, if you follow conscience, you can progress toward *moksha*.

Krishna said in the *Geetha*, “*Ananyaschinthayantho mam ye janah paryupasathe* (whoever worships me: to the exclusion of all others),” “*thesham: nithyabhiyukthanam yogakshemam va- hamyaham* (I look after the welfare of such unwavering devotees).”

This is an assurance to one and all with no distinctions of any kind. Everyone should cultivate a similar sense of universality.

The Divine is omnipresent. Differences based on caste, creed, sex, or nationality have to be given up. God has no distinctions. You should also practice this principle of equality.

God is everywhere. You cannot restrict Him to your narrow limits as though He is confined only to the form contained in your small picture frame. It is a folly to think so. He has thousands of forms and names. When you are doing *Sahasranama archana* (worshipping the thousand names of the Lord) you mention each of the thousand names and offer a flower. All are offered to only that one picture and not to thousands of pictures. All may refer to one God only. You may say Allah, Jesus, Rama or Krishna and so on. But all refer to only one God. If you say the form you worship is the only God, you are limiting the Infinite to a narrow finite entity.

Give up all religious differences. There is only one religion, that of love, There is only one caste, that of humanity. There is only one language, that of the heart. I spoke earlier of the four parts of *Gayatri* and five elements. All are divine. They have no caste or creed or any such difference.

If you realize the unity, you get purity and divinity. You are forgetting this and breed feelings of enmity and community. God has no such distinction of community, nationality or sex. In ancient times, they did not have such differences. Do not give room for any such feelings. God is one and everyone in this world has equal right to enjoy His Grace.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

4.8 The Need For Men and Women to have Pure Hearts

From time immemorial, women of India, by their adherence to ideals have bestowed joy on this land and so occupy an exalted position, which is higher than that of men. Women embody the aspect of Mother Nature and the ancient sages found solutions to problems in life by recognising this truth. What is the cause for misery, conflict and suffering in the world today? It is the absence of purity in the hearts of men and women.

The behaviour of men and women is responsible for the rise or fall of a nation.

The country would not lack in anything, if there were men and women with pure hearts.

But today hearts are completely polluted.

Here is a piece of pure white paper.

But what is written on one side makes it appear dirty.

So too is the case with a man's heart; dirty feelings pollute it.

Newspaper of today becomes a waste paper tomorrow.

The paper by itself does not have any smell.

The same paper when used to pack jasmine flowers smells of them;

It will smell of 'Pakodas' or even of dry fish if it is used to pack them.

When the heart is purified, it shines with compassion.

Bad feelings and bad thoughts pollute the heart of man.

Ever since ancient times, women have maintained their hearts pure.

Savitri was one such great woman of India. She brought her husband back to life by winning over the Lord of Death. There are many such cases of women who have revived their husbands from death; but history does not speak of a single man reviving his wife from death! Women of such exalted character have set great ideals of womanhood in Bharat.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2001

5. Mother as Divine/Woman as Goddess

5.1 Embodiments of Sweetness & Sacrifice

There are several organizations which are being run by women with great dedication and zeal for the benefit of the people. Valmeeki extolled the sweetness of womanhood. What is the cause of this sweetness? The spirit of sacrifice is the cause, according to Valmeeki.

A mother is ready to sacrifice everything even her life, for the sake of her child. Such a spirit is to be found only among women. If a child is grievously ill, the father may say that the child may as well die. But the mother will try to save the child at any cost. It is for this reason, that woman is described as *Thyagamuurthi*, the embodiment of sacrifice. Men do not have the same spirit of sacrifice as women. Men may present a heroic pose, but do not have the determination and perseverance to carry on the struggle to the end. Valmeeki described woman as the *Bhakthi svaruupini* (embodiment of devotion). Man was described as *Jnanasvaruupa*. The *Jnani* has limited access to the Divine mansion. But the woman devotee has access to innermost apartments. The preeminent status accorded to women will be evident from all the ancient scriptures.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1995

5.2. Goodness is the Natural Quality of a Woman

A married lady has many great titles like *Dharma Pathni* (Righteous wife), *Griha-Lakshmi* (Goddess of the house), *Illalu* (lady of the house) and *Ardhangi* (equal partner of the husband). These titles have more value than socially recognised titles like *Padhma Bhuushan* and *Padhma Vibhuushan* given by the Government. A lady must look after the home first and then work outside, if necessary. A house without a mother is like an empty *choultry*. A lady should be an ideal mother to her children, look after her husband and then do outside work. She can study, get degrees, enter politics

or do any other work but she should not neglect the home, which is the very foundation of her life. Husband and wife are both equally responsible for establishing harmony at home. But times have changed. Womanly ideals are not being practised and there are no ideal men and women today. That is why the world is in such a sorry state.

Parents must aspire to make their children good persons (those who see God in man) and not great persons (those who see man in God). Though Shri Rama and Ravana were very learned persons, Shri Rama set an example of a good person by his deeds, while on account of his excessive ego and desire, Ravana became an evil person though he was great in his own way. Goodness is the natural quality of a woman.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1997

5.3. Home is the Birthplace of all Dharmas

Fear of sin has gone,

Evil deeds are rampant.

Devotion to God is wavering.

To fight these tendencies,

Chanting the name of the Lord is the only remedy.

Oh man!

If women go out for jobs, who will take care of the homes?

If husband and wife go to offices, who will look after the children?

Earning money may solve some problems, but how will it resolve domestic problems?

Truly speaking, working women do not enjoy much happiness.

It is not my view that women should not get educated. They should have education. You may also take up jobs. But you should live up to the obligations and glory of womanhood.

The first title given to a woman is *Grihalakshmi* (the goddess of Home). A woman is expected to confer all prosperity, honour and good name on the home and the family. She is characterized as *Grihalakshmi* and not *Office-Lakshmi*.

Another title for a woman is *Ardhangi* (the better half). This means she is the better half of the husband and not a partner in his job.

The third title is *Illalu* (the Mistress of the Home). She is the mistress in the house and not in the office.

Dharmapathni is the fourth title conferred on a married woman. This implies that the home is the dwelling for all righteousness. The home is the birth place of all the *Dharmas* (rules of right conduct) hallowed by usage from ancient times.

Hence, righteousness should be fostered in the home. A home is no trivial place. The home is the abode of *Dharma*, which protects and safeguards the country. The home is the beacon which illumines the world and sustains it. Women should realize that, irrespective of their education or position, their foremost obligation is to protect the home.

What we have to safeguard and protect today are Truth and Righteousness and not the nation. When Truth and Righteousness are protected, they will protect the nation. Hence righteousness should be fostered in the home. A home is no trivial place.

The home is a veritable university teaching many subjects.

The home is a centre of comfort and pleasure conferring joy.

The home is a place that can make even the creator, Brahma, sing and others dance.

The home with the husband is a school for the wife.

The home is the abode of Dharma, which protects and safeguards the country.

The home is a beacon which illumines the world and sustains it.

Women should realise that, irrespective of their education or position, their foremost obligation is to protect the home.

For lakhs of students and children who go to school, the mother is the first teacher.

From the moment of birth, for every one, the mother is the preceptor.

If such a teacher leaves her home to teach other children, who will teach her children?

For *Bharat's* women, the first duty is to reform the home and run it along ideal lines. The home and the family is the basic social institution everywhere in the world. When the home is improved, the whole world will be better. The home is a heaven itself.

In this phenomenal world, whatever pleasures and satisfactions one may derive elsewhere, if there is no joy at home, it becomes a veritable hell. The home is heaven itself. It is the duty of women to maintain it as such.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1996

5.4 Women Cannot Be Considered Weak

People generally speak of women as the weaker sex. At last, now *Bharatiyas* recognize that women cannot be considered as weak. The woman in charge of the home plays the main role in bringing good name and fame to the home. Not only in respect of individual homes but also in the good name of the country and the world the woman plays the main role. From ancient times, woman has been accorded a high place in the society.

The scriptures have ascribed seven virtues to women as a class: *sathya* (truth), *prema* (love), *dharma* (righteousness), *shanthi* (peace), *sahana* (tolerance), *ananda* (bliss), *svanubhuti* (spirituality).

The woman at home has been held in high esteem as '*Grihalakshmi*', the goddess of prosperity of the home. When her husband faces difficulties, the wife readily shares the burden and is prepared to do anything, undergo any suffering or even sacrifice her life for the welfare of her husband and the family. It is the woman of the home who is behind the good reputation of the home. The woman is the embodiment of sacrifice. Though the male counterpart may also do sacrifice, it will be with selfish tinge while woman's sacrifice is absolutely selfless. Therefore, we should be proud of our women.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1998

5.5 Women Can Control the Whole World

If *Bharatiya* culture and morality have survived despite long periods of foreign rule, it is to no small measure due to the courage and fortitude of the nation's women. As the earlier speaker, Dr. Geetha Reddy, has pointed out, women shine as soldiers with the weapons of *sathya* and *dharma*. They will not normally tell lies. There may be occasions when a few of them may do so unknowingly. But, by and large, they as a class up-hold truth and righteous conduct. They follow the Vedic injunction, *Sathyam vada, dharmam chara* (speak the truth and practice righteousness)

Because of the evil influence of modern education, people consider women as toys and tend to treat them as puppets. The women have very auspicious and noble qualities. But men consider them as cooks to be confined to the kitchen and the four walls of the house. What they forget is that women not only manage the affairs of the family but also look after the health and well-being of all the members of the household.

Questions are raised like who will look after the home if women go to offices and who will teach her children if the mother goes to school to teach other children, and so on. Some say that though the woman goes to work to solve the financial problem, bigger problems may have to be confronted by her going to work. 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.

Women can control the whole world by themselves by virtue of their inherent qualities of love and spirit of sacrifice (prema bhava and thyaga bhava). Anger is alien to women, and it is more rampant in men. Though there may be instances when a woman may give vent to anger, such occasions are few and far between while in men the reverse is the case.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

5.6 Only Women Can Restore the Glory of the Land

Men are in quest of peace. But how is it to be secured? Faith in God is essential. That faith has to be generated in the family. Then alone the children will develop sublime thoughts. They are the future citizens of the nation. Hence they have to be brought up well. Unfortunately today mothers in affluent families neglect their children. They leave the children in the care of nannies and the children have more love for the nannies than for their mothers.

In ancient times, children who were fed on their mothers milk developed into good persons. Today the children are fed not on mother's milk but on tin milk. With the result the children develop a "tin" mentality.

Only women can restore the glory of the land. If the mothers take care of the homes on right lines, they will be protecting the nation. Mothers should foster in the children love for truth and righteousness and tell them stories about the lives of great men and women. In olden times, the elders used to tell the young children all about the nation's great heroes and saints. Where are such elders today?

Modern youth even mock at such old people. It is the seed sown by those elders which has kept our ancient culture alive to this day. Only the women of the nation can revive and restore to its glory the ancient culture of our land.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1996

5.7 Woman, the Ideal for Her Children

A lady must look after the home first and then work outside, if necessary. A house without a mother is like an empty choultry. A lady should be an ideal to her children, look after her husband and then do outside work. She can study, get degrees, enter politics or do any other work but she should not neglect the home, which is the very foundation of her life. Husband and wife are both equally responsible for establishing harmony in the home. But times have changed. Womanly ideals are not being practiced and there are no ideal men and women today. That is why the world is in such a sorry state.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

5.8 Never Look Down on the Mother

Modern youth do not care for the mother. They think they are highly educated and that the mother does not know anything. It is a great mistake to think so. Never look down upon the mother. Even the mother should not compel her children to accede to her wishes. Through love and sincerity she should put the children on the proper path. She should aspire that her children be good, they need not be great.

Rama was good, whereas Ravana was great. Rama put into practice whatever he had studied and thus earned a good name. But Ravana was immersed in ignorance, because he did not practice all that he had studied. As a result, he did not earn a good name. Man needs to have fear of sin and love for God to earn a good name. Since man lacks fear of sin and love for God, humanness is on the decline. This is the cause of restlessness in the world today.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1999

5.9 All Are Children of the Universal Mother

Never forget the love of your mother, and under all circumstances make her happy. I am pleased with you only when you make your mother happy. As Uma Bharati pointed out, make efforts to understand the oneness of all. If you think that you are separate from others, then there will be scope for hatred. Realise that you and I are one. Bodies may be different, but you are bound by the same love principle.

Just as your mother loves you, you should love everybody. All are the children of *Viswa Matha* (universal mother). All are brothers and sisters. You should not have any differences whatsoever. The sun is one and the same for all the worlds. Just as the sun is reflected in a water tank, in a river, in an ocean, likewise the same Divinity is reflected in the hearts of one and all.

Ekam sath viprah bahudha vadanti (truth is one, but scholars refer to it by different names). It is not correct to say that you like only Rama or Krishna or Siva or Sai Baba. There is only one God, and He is omnipresent. Do not hate other religions. A Hindu should become a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian, and a Muslim a better Muslim. The one without love can be called neither Muslim nor Hindu nor Christian nor Sikh. In fact, he is verily a demon on this earth. Only those without love give scope to differences based on religion. You will find the unity of all religions only when you fill your heart with love.

The culture of Bharat (India) has given utmost importance to the mother. One refers to one's country as motherland, not fatherland. Lord Rama declared: "*Janani janma bhoomishcha swargadapi gareeyasi* (mother and the motherland are greater than even heaven)." Country is the mother and the culture is the father. Never forget your country and its culture.

Since ancient times, the culture of Bharat has been propagating the message of peace and love with the prayer, *Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy)! You have to uphold this sacred culture.

You may worship God in any name and form you like, but understand the truth that God is One and One only.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1999

5.10 Problems with Contemporary Education

Generally the women are selfless. Their hearts are full of compassion and love. They take a lot of pains to bring up children on the right path, a task that is almost impossible for men. 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 behaviour. In olden days mothers initiated their children into studies by chanting sacred words like OM NAMA SIVAYA or OM NAMO NARAYANAYA. 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.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2001

5.11 Emulate Ideal Parents of Yore

Nowadays students are not being taught good qualities. Instead, when they come home, mother immediately puts on the television and the father too joins the son to watch the television. Earlier, the moment children returned home, parents took them to the Puja room and revised whatever was taught to them by teachers in the class. Nowadays parents want their children to pursue higher studies so that they may get rich fathers-in-law. In those days parents never wanted a rich father-in-law but wanted a virtuous wife for their son. This is the reason why those days were prosperous and peaceful. What is the reason for chaos in the world today? As there are no ideal parents today at home, there are no ideal children

also. The first school is the home itself. If the home is good, when such children enter society, they will learn good qualities there also. Today's students must recognise that whatever knowledge, wisdom or good qualities they have learnt, were taught by the society. So they have to ask themselves as to what they are doing for the society after receiving so many benefits from it. Students receive a lot of benefits from the society but they don't contribute anything good in return. Thus, men are becoming ungrateful. We must be grateful to those who help us. What is the use of all education if we cannot show gratitude and respect to our benefactors? All the education thus becomes useless. First and foremost we must learn to respect the society because we are born, brought up and remain a part of the society till we die. Those days mothers used to teach their children that they could lead an ideal life only when they respected society.

Divine Discourse, 19 November 2001

5.12 Teach the Children Sacred Things

Teach the children sacred things and not nonsense verses. In the old day, the first words a child was taught at school were "*Om Namashivaya*" (the five-letter Divine manthra) or "*Om Namo Narayanaya*." Today, as the sacred ritual of initiating, a child is taught a nursery rhyme like "Baa Baa Black Sheep," or "Ding Dong Bell, Pussy is in the Well." Is this the kind of stuff that should be taught to our children? What should be implanted in the hearts of our children are sacred names like Rama and Krishna.

Divine Discourse 19 November 1996

5.13 The Teachings of the Mother and The Importance of Speaking Truth

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*, *dharmam*, *shanthi*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* (truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence) in them. There are many who give speeches at length about the importance of these values in our daily life, but how many are translating them into action? Very few. They do not utter truth nor do they perform righteous deeds. Our ancients never deviated from the path of truth and righteousness under any circumstances. *Sathyannasti paro dharmam* (there is no dharmam greater than adherence to truth). The Vedas teach, *Sathyam vada, dharmam chara* (speak truth, practice righteousness). Your thoughts, words, and deeds should be in harmony with each other. It is said, "The proper study of mankind is man." Today, nobody knows what man has in his mind because his thoughts, words, and deeds are in total variance. He is wasting his life with such unethical behaviour. The tongue is given to speak truth.

O tongue, the knower of taste!

You are very sacred.

Speak the truth in the most pleasing manner.

Chant the divine names of Govinda, Madhava and Damodara incessantly.

This is your foremost duty.

(Sanskrit Verse)

The tongue, which is meant to utter sacred words, is being used to criticise others. One cannot describe in words the fate of such a person. Our ancients had so much love for their motherland that they wanted to be born again and again in this sacred land of Bharat. But today people have neither *deshabhimana* (love for the country) nor *dharmabhimana* (love for righteousness). Instead, they are developing *dehabhimana* (love for the body). Body is like a water bubble. How long can you protect it? It will burst sooner or later. Hence, develop *atmabhimana* (love for the *Atma*), which alone can protect the entire world. Develop faith that the same *Atma* exists in you and all others. When you have such strong faith, the whole nation would prosper. One with *atmabhimana* is a true human being. If one does not have *atmabhimana*, one's life is wasted.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2002

5.14 Women Sacrifice for the Sake of Truth

In spite of his education and intelligence,

a foolish man will not know his true Self and

an evil-minded person will not give up his wicked qualities.

Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to true wisdom.

What is the use of acquiring worldly education

if it cannot lead you to immortality?

Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal.

(Telugu Poem)

Modern education can help you only to eke out a livelihood. It is meant for a living and not for life. In fact, it is responsible for the present decline of morality in society. In olden days, people gave topmost priority to truth and righteousness. They considered divine love as their very life. The women of Bharat sacrificed their lives for the sake of truth.

This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women, like
Savitri, who brought her dead husband back to life;
Chandramati, who extinguished wild fire with the power of truth;
Sita, who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed, and
Damayanti, who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity.
This land of piety and nobility attained plenty and prosperity and
became the teacher of all the nations of the world
because of such women of chastity.
(Telugu Poem)

From time immemorial, the sacred land of Bharat has occupied the exalted position of a teacher to the rest of the world. It has been extolled *askarma bhumi*, *thyaga bhumi*, and *yoga bhumi* (the land of action, sacrifice, and spirituality). You have to discharge your duty. You cannot progress in life if you do not follow the path of karma.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2002

5.15 Upholder of Good Reputation of the Home

The woman at home has been held in high esteem as '*Grihalakshmi*', the goddess of prosperity of the home. When her husband faces difficulties, the wife readily shares the burden and is prepared to do anything, undergo any suffering or even sacrifice her life for the welfare of her husband and the family. It is the woman of the home who is behind the good reputation of the home.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

5.16 Torchbearers of Refinement

Women devotees in Sai Movement are participating in large numbers enthusiastically in service activities such as helping the women of weaker sections to learn some useful trades like tailoring etc. so that they can earn some money for the family and also spend their time usefully. If such activities are taken up all over the country, the country will prosper. This sacred work is typical of the culture of our ancient country. Women are the heirs of our ancient culture. Culture means refinement. Women are the torch-bearers of refinement and they are toiling for the emancipation of the nation.

Divine Discourse 19 April 1998

5.17 Sai's Primary Advice To Women

Primarily, women should keep their tongue under check. Since men are involved with multifarious activities, it may be difficult for them to control their tongue. Hence, it is the duty of women to look after the home diligently and conduct themselves in a pleasing manner. Treat guests in a cordial manner and, to the extent possible, extend your help to those who are in need of it. Today people do only lip service, they do not translate their words into action. You should

empathise with those who are in difficulties and try to give them solace. You should comfort and console them with soothing words. Those who talk harsh words are verily demons. If you hurt others' feelings, you will be hurt twice as much. You cannot escape from the consequences of your actions. You have to bear this truth in mind. Your life will be sanctified when you conduct yourselves in such a manner as not to hurt others.

People aspire to attain liberation. What is liberation? Help ever, hurt never. That is true liberation. To get rid of moha (attachment) is true *moksha* (liberation). Do not try to find faults with others. If you point an accusing finger at someone, remember that three fingers are pointing at you. *Sathyam kantasya bhushanam* (Truth is the true ornament to the neck), *Hasthasya bhushanam dhanam* (charity is the true ornament to the hand). Your hands are useless if they do not perform acts of charity. You have to sanctify each limb of your body in sacred activities. Your eyes should look at only sacred things.

Do you know what an enormous power is latent in your eyes? There are *crores* of light rays in them. In olden days, people used to invoke the grace of sun god to have a better vision. When you perform *Suryanamaskar* (worship of sun god) and invoke his grace, the light rays in your eyes will become more effulgent. On the other hand, if you look for mistakes in others, the sun god will withdraw his rays from your eyes making you blind. Hence, make proper use of the limbs given by God.

These teachings are simple to practise in your daily life. Just because they are simple, do not take them lightly. Though they appear to be simple, they lead you to liberation. It is your good fortune (*adrishtam*) that you are blessed with eyes to see. What is *adrishtam*? *Adrishtam* is that which cannot be seen. You may not be able to see the results of your meritorious deeds. But they confer on you all the happiness and comforts in due course of time. That is *adrishtam*. There are many things that follow you that cannot be seen by the naked eye.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2002

6. Stories Of Noble Mothers

6.1 Ghandi's Mother Putlibai

Aryamba was born in Kerala. She was a paragon of virtues. She spent all her time in the contemplation of God and in undertaking noble deeds. As a result, Sankaracharya was born to her. Sankaracharya could become Jagadguru (world teacher) because of his mother's virtuous thoughts.

Noble souls like Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa could attain exalted positions in their lives only due to the sacred feelings of their mothers.

Putlibai, the mother of Mahatma Gandhi, spent her life in the contemplation of God. She used to observe a vow wherein she would not partake of food unless she heard the singing of the cuckoo.

One day it so happened that the song of the cuckoo was not heard. Gandhi, who was a small boy then, could not bear to see his mother fasting for a long time. He went behind the house and mimicked the singing of the cuckoo. Putlibai felt very sad as she knew that her son was uttering a lie.

She cried, "O God! What sin have I committed that I gave birth to a son who speaks untruth?"

Realising that he had caused immense grief to his mother by uttering a lie, Gandhi took a vow that he would never indulge in falsehood thenceforth. So, it is imperative that the mother gives training in moral values to her children right from their childhood. She should not overlook the mistakes of her children. She should punish her children whenever they stray away from the right path and reward them for their good deeds. It is because of the feelings of the mother that the children become good or bad.

Gandhi's mother was a strict disciplinarian and pure-hearted. As the saying goes, "*Yatha Raja, Thatha Praja*" (as the king, so the subjects), she had a maid named Rambha, who used to look after the children with love and care. One day, Gandhi came running to her and said that he was haunted by fear.

Rambha told him, "My dear one, where is the need to fear when all-protecting Ramachandra is with us always. Recite the Name of Rama whenever you are fear-stricken." From then onwards, Gandhi chanted the Name of Rama till his last

breath. Can we find such noble-hearted women today? It is because of such women that the children take to the path of righteousness.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2000

6.2 Mother of Rangoon

After the war for the liberation of Rangoon, a mother and her son somehow managed to reach Chennai, having lost their near and dear ones. They had no shelter over their head nor any food to eat. The mother would go begging for alms from house to house, give most of it to her son and partake of whatever little was left. When she would not get enough, she would give the entire food to her son and herself would go without food. She was put to many difficulties, but she bore everything for the sake of the well being of her son. Consequently, she became weaker day by day.

One day the son, unable to see her suffering, told her, “Mother, it is not proper on your part to feed me and starve yourself. From today, you take rest and I will fetch food for both of us.”

But the mother said she could not bear the sight of her son begging for alms. However, on a certain day, the mother was too weak even to walk. So, the son went to beg food.

He stood in front of the house of an officer and cried, “O sir, I am hungry, I am hungry.”

An officer, who was relaxing in an easy chair in the verandah, brought food on a leaf and told him to sit and partake of it. But the boy said that he would take it home.

The officer said, “I don’t think you are really hungry, otherwise why should you take it home.”

When the officer was uttering these harsh words, the boy felt giddy and fell down. He was trying to say something, but could not say it loudly as he was very weak. The officer went close to the boy and tried to hear what he was saying.

“Sir, I would like to give it to my mother first, only then I will eat. First, to my mother, to my mother....” and he breathed his last.

Can we find such noble sons today? We cannot find such mothers and sons today. It is not merely the effect of Kali age, but also the result of modern education system. Today’s education is meant only for earning a living. The educated do not think of the welfare of society and the country at large.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2000

6.3 Mother of Ishwarchandra Vidgasagar

You all know the story of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. He was living with his mother in a village near Kolkata. They were very poor. She used to feed her son with whatever she could earn everyday and did not care much about herself. Her son’s wellbeing was uppermost in her mind. She wanted him to lead a peaceful and sacred life. Being a hard working student, Vidyasagar used to study under street lights. He completed his post graduation and took up a job. Initially, his salary was very little, just enough for his mother and himself. Gradually, he attained a good position.

Once a fair was held in the village. Vidyasagar’s mother went to the fair wearing an old sari as she had no other good sari to wear. Seeing this, Vidyasagar felt very sad. That very evening, he bought a good sari for her. Once during the course of their conversation, Vidyasagar asked his mother if she had any desires.

She said, “Son, the people of our village are facing hardship due to lack of drinking water. I feel pained to see them trekking long distances to fetch water. I will be happy if you can get a well dug in our village.”

Vidyasagar immediately got a well dug and fulfilled his mother’s desire. Her joy knew no bounds. She said, “Son, water sustains life. You have quenched the thirst of the villagers. I am extremely happy that I have given birth to a noble son like you.”

On some other day, Vidyasagar asked his mother if she had any more desires. She said, “Son, the children of our village are going to the neighbouring village to attend school. I am pained to see children walking such a long distance everyday. So, please construct a small school in our village”.

Accordingly, Vidyasagar established a school in the village, giving immense joy to his mother. She said, “Son, you have

set an ideal not merely to our village but to the entire nation. Your life is sanctified.”

After a few days, one evening, when Vidyasagar returned home from office, he found his mother in a pensive mood. On being asked for the reason, she said, “Son you have provided water to the village and also established a school for children. But, it is the lack of medical facilities in our village that is troubling my mind. Please build a small hospital here.”

As per her wish, he constructed a small hospital which had one doctor and one nurse. His mother was overjoyed at this. The reason for My telling you all this is to emphasise that the feelings of mothers are noble. Each one has to resolve to fulfill the sacred desires of his mother. One should never act in such a way as to cause pain to one’s mother.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2000

6.4 Easwamma, Sai Baba’s Mother

Like the mother of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami’s mother had also some sacred desires. One day, while I was having My food upstairs, *Griham Ammayi* (mother of Swami’s physical body) came to Me.

I asked, “*Amma*, what is the reason for your coming here?”

She said, “You finish your food first, then I will tell You.”

After I finished My food, she said, “Swami, ours is a very small village. put to a lot of suffering due to the absence of medical facilities. They have to run to Bukkapatnam even for a small problem.”

Then I assured her that I would build a hospital in the village. As promised, I got a small hospital built immediately.

On some other day, she again came upstairs and said, “Swami please don’t think otherwise, I have one more desire”.

I asked her not to have too many desires.

She said, “Swami, You are fulfilling the desires of thousands of people who are coming to You. Why can’t You fulfill my one desire?”

Then I said, “Tell Me your desire”.

She said, “Swami, the wells of our village have dried up. Please get a well dug in our village.”

As per her wish, I got a well dug in our *Mandir* itself. All the people of the village used to take water from this well. She said she was extremely happy but added that she had one more desire.

She said, “Swami, the children of our village are going to Bukkapatnam for their studies. Poor children, they don’t have the strength even to walk such a long distance. Please construct a school here”.

I fulfilled her that desire also. She felt very happy and said that she had no more desires left. Just as a small seed becomes a huge tree, the small school I established then has become a big university now. At that time, I constructed a small hospital. But now here is a big Super Speciality Hospital. The small well that I got dug here in the village has assumed gigantic proportions of a water project for the entire district. If the feelings of the mother are sacred, so too will be the feelings of the children.

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6.5 Jijabai, Kausalya and Sita

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. The same can be said of our ancient sages and seers. They could sanctify their lives because of the noble influence of their parents. Today, people neglect their parents as they fail to recognise the impact and influence they bear on their lives. They forget the fact that they could attain exalted position in life only because of their parents.

Divine Discourse 23 December 2003

6.6. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu And His Noble Mother Sachi Devi

If the thoughts are sacred, they will certainly fructify. One need not think that one does not have enough money or resources. If you resolve to do something good, you are bound to succeed. The power of noble thoughts will give you the necessary strength.

Once Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went to a temple along with his mother Sachi Devi. He prayed, “O Lord, You are the master of the world. You are the master of the body, life and soul. You can grant any wish that I ask for. But I don’t have any worldly desires. I do have one desire. You are the embodiment of love. Love is our life. So, please grant me the strength to love You. I don’t want anything else.”

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu developed such noble thoughts because of the noble feelings of his mother Sachi Devi. She always taught him that all the needs of a person were automatically taken care of once he became the recipient of God’s grace.

Chaitanya used to go round the streets singing the glory of Krishna. Good and bad, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness co-exist. Where there is light, there is bound to be its shadow. Likewise, good people are bound to face difficulties. But those difficulties will enhance the goodness in them.

Pleasure and pain, good and bad co-exist, None can separate them. You cannot find pleasure or pain, good or bad to the exclusion of the other. Pleasure results when difficulties fructify.

Once when Chaitanya was singing the glory of Krishna in the streets, some evil-minded people snatched away the cymbals from his hands. But he was least perturbed. He continued to sing the glory of Krishna with firm faith and devotion. Seeing Chaitanya, the children would get inspired and they too would join him in singing the divine name. Chaitanya used to make children sit around him and impart sacred teachings to them. Chaitanya became a noble soul because of the noble feelings of his mother. So, the mother should have pure thoughts and good conduct. Only then will she be blessed with ideal children.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2000

6.7 Women of Character - Chandramathi, Sita and Damayanti

Chandramathi was a woman of sterling character. She always followed her husband, Harishchandra.

When they were passing through difficulties, she infused courage in him saying, "Oh king, you are highly intelligent and educated. You should never give scope to weakness and waver from your chosen path. We are swimming in the ocean of truth. We should not give up our resolve till we reach the shores. "

In this manner, women of those days would encourage their husbands to follow the path of truth. Women of Bharat always upheld our sacred culture.

Sita would not shed tears even in extremely trying circumstances. Though she was surrounded by demons, she was never afraid of them. She spent her time in the contemplation of her husband, Lord Rama, and thus she set an ideal. The same can be said of Damayanti also. She was one of virtues. With her strong determination, she helped her husband to regain his kingdom. In this manner, women of those days earned a name for themselves with their sterling character and ideal motherhood. Women of today should make them role models.

The happiness that one derives from virtues is far superior to the happiness that we get from the possession of wealth. Unfortunately, the educated youth are striving for wealth, physical strength, and friendship. But all these have little value without the wealth of character. For men or women, character is the foundation. If one lacks character, one becomes feeble in all other respects. People of those days strove for noble character. They were prepared to give up their very lives for a righteous cause. Women strived to uphold the honour of their husbands. The strength of an individual lies in character, not in the wealth one earns. One should be prepared to face any hardship to lead a virtuous life. The country is in dire straits due to the absence of men and women of character. Materialistic wealth is not what we need today. We need to earn the wealth of virtues. Wealth cannot confer true happiness on you.

Women should develop the wealth of virtues and also safeguard the honour of their husbands. Both men and women should have good character. Without good character, all your learning will prove futile.

Divine Discourse 19 November 2002 Appendix 2. Passing the Candle of Service Ceremony