



Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia
National Education Conference 2011

Give Up & Gain - How To Create A New Social Reality

Abstract

Caught between the fear to give up and the desire to gain, increasing number of people largely from developed nations, are getting disconnected from their communities and are unable to meet fundamental human needs of belonging, security, authenticity and autonomy.

However, as sporadic as it may be, the inherent helping nature of humans is constantly demonstrated whenever a nation is subjected to natural disasters as witnessed in several recent instances within Australia and world wide. The feelings of solidarity and gratitude displayed at times like this as a result of philanthropic giving or volunteering personal time and resources, whilst remarkable, can be short lived and generally people revert back to their selfish drives to find meaning and happiness.

Defining 'Giving up' within the parameters of 'Spirit of Sacrifice' as described by Sai Baba and citing the various projects undertaken by Him in Medicare, Educare and Sociocare as role models, this paper addresses how 'Giving up' our evil qualities like jealousy, hatred, malice and wrath as well as material objects, can fundamentally reorient an individual on a spiritual trajectory of personal transformation.

The resulting 'Gains' are a personal capacity at individual level to sacrifice time, money, resources, expertise, knowledge etc. and establish intimate, ongoing and lasting connections with the community. The selfless contributions made by individuals in this spirit of 'Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God' helps usher in a new social reality as prophesied by Sai Baba where national unity and social harmony are both founded upon Spirituality.

Aim:

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how 'Spirit of Sacrifice' as described by Sai Baba when practiced can help an individual not only give up evil qualities as well as material objects but also gain a personal capacity for transformation and usher in a new social reality where national unity and social harmony are founded upon spirituality.

Objectives:

Workshop Participants through brainstorming and discussion will

- Describe fully and assess thoroughly the effects of a lifestyle solely based on 'having' and the ultimate results of such life style
- Identify the different elements of Authentic Happiness and Well Being Theories
- Examine the qualifications for Sacrifice as defined by Sathya Sai Baba using the various projects undertaken by Him in Medicare, Educare and Sociocare as role models,
- Assess and decide how those qualifications lead to 'Other Centredness' and 'Generativity' thus creating a new social reality steeped in PREMA (Love)

This workshop titled "Give Up & Gain – How to create a new social reality" began by identifying that earnings, possessions, appearances and celebrity/fame are some of the things that people in developed nations place extreme importance on for living. This identification is termed as "Affluenza Virus" by Oliver James in his book with the same title. Swami calls this 'Bhoga'

Continuing with the brainstorming, it was determined that exclusive focus on those four things result in

- Selfishness
- Self-centredness
- Greed
- Hoarding
- Upward Social comparisons
- 'HAVING' as opposed to 'BEING'.

As a result, a lifestyle solely based on 'HAVING' causes us to

- Feel empty & lonely
- Become consumption driven = losing intimacy
- Feel inadequate as we constantly compare
- Try and fill an internal lack thru external means = No Contentment
- Replace our 'NEEDS' by 'WANTS'

The increasing drive to consume combined with diminishing contribution to community and personal isolation in the current culture are linked to continuous low key dissatisfaction and unhappiness, personal depression, mental illness, suicide, and short life span. The ultimate result of 'Affluenza Virus' is that it impedes an individual from meeting the four fundamental human needs of Belonging, Security, Authenticity and Autonomy.

Next the concept of happiness and personal fulfilment based on latest research was explored. According to Martin Seligman 'Authentic Happiness' is analysed into 3 different elements of

- Positive emotions = what we feel = Pleasant Life
- Engagement = Flow = Being one with the activity whether music or shopping etc., = Engaged life
- Meaning = Belonging to and serving something bigger than yourself

However he concluded that we choose these for their own sake – a one dimensional theory. All three are solitary pursuits when done in excess can lead to "Affluenza Virus"

10 years later Seligman evolved his Authentic Happiness theory to “Well-Being Theory” and termed it “Flourish” – which measures

- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishments

P E R M A

Increase in P E R M A increases Flourishing

Citing Sathya Sai Baba’s quotation **“Happiness lies in liking what you do, not in doing what you like”** the workshop explored what happens to us when we like what we have to do. The conclusions drawn from that discussion were that

- There is no resentment when we like what we have to do
- We finish what we undertake despite obstacles
- We have no ill feelings towards work

Next the discussion on Spirit of Sacrifice identified Sacrifice as giving up

- Time
- Money
- Resources
- Expertise
- Knowledge

However, people who contribute to charities regularly also give up all the above. People who go out of their way and help physically during times of natural disasters sacrifice their time, expertise, resources etc., So, what is the difference between Charity and Sacrifice?

Charity is

- Driven by the urge to meet needs of others who are in distress
- Giving of money, time or energy for a good cause;
- Short lived
- Feel good but no real transformation possible
- Stems from ‘sympathy’ not ‘empathy’
- Can create feelings of superiority
- No equality in charity
- Breeds dependency

Whereas, Sathya Sai Baba says:

“Sacrifice is giving up of one's bad traits and weaknesses. If sacrifice means just the giving up of hearth and home, many people will do it very easily!”

He also says in *Sathya Sai Vahini, Ch 21: "The Inner Inquiry"*.

There is no greater happiness than sacrifice; it is the highest virtue. One who has the true spirit of sacrifice gives away even his most dearest possessions, gladly and without hesitation. But the most profound sacrifice is surrendering the fruit of all actions to the Lord. A thyagi (one who sacrifices) does not shrink even to give up his body, regarding it as worthless. Sacrifice means something more than giving up wealth, gold, and material objects: evil qualities like hatred, jealousy, wrath and malice, which have become ingrained in us over many lifetimes, must be discarded as well.

Continuing on, the workshop explored some of the qualifications required for Sacrifice. According to Sathya Sai Baba the qualifications are:

Pure Heart	=	Positive Emotions
Charity	=	Engagement
Love	=	Relationships
Attitudes	=	Meaning
Selfless	=	Accomplishments

The service projects undertaken by Sathya Sai Baba like the Hospitals, Water Projects, and Educational Institutions are prime examples of those qualifications. The result of work undertaken using these qualifications is that projects are not short lived, they are 'other centred' and leave a positive legacy to the next generation called 'Generativity'.

Grama Seva in particular demonstrates the difference between charity and sacrifice. Resources can be allocated by donating money to the villages, instead Sathya Sai Baba makes the students and staff participate in the entire process of preparation through to distribution of food, clothes etc., which actually teaches them the spirit of sacrifice.

Grama Seva project demonstrates how we can gain

<u>Pure Hearts</u> that are	Positive
Create <u>Loving</u>	Relationships
Through <u>Charitable</u>	Engagements
With <u>Attitudes</u> that are	Meaningful
Achieve <u>Selfless</u>	Accomplishments.

A New Social Reality based on P R E M A (LOVE) is created.

By Giving Up we are reoriented on a spiritual trajectory of personal development. Our Self Transformation helps create a new social reality steeped in Prema where the Spirit of Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God are constantly demonstrated.

We go from

Vyakthi	–	Samasthi	–	Parameshthi
I	-	We	-	HE
Selfishness	-	Self sacrifice	-	Self Realisation

The resulting Contentment is the cure for not just Affluenza Virus but also for the social disturbances that we see today.

Sathya Sai Baba says:

Contentment is a pure (sathwic) quality; it will not transform you into an idler; No. Instead, it will bring you closer to God and grant you peace.

You will also find yourself less selfish and being able to overcome many pitfalls of the path. You will be able to discern the impermanent in life and reject their temptations.

Discrimination, renunciation, and the spirit of inquiry, all develop through contentment.

The contented person will become very pure (sathwic) and will attain a rich inner life in communion with the Atma. They will be able to undertake any work without rest and complaint and will acquire one-pointedness of mind.

Contentment gives all spiritual aspirants the enthusiasm and vigour necessary for treading the path, that leads to Sakshatkara (realisation of God).

- Sathya Sai Vahini, Ch 21: "The Inner Inquiry"

It was concluded that the vital link in a revival of new civilization is a personal capacity at individual level to sacrifice time, money, resources, share wisdom, expertise, knowledge etc. These are the aspects of sacrifice we are all capable of and thus usher in a new civilisation.

Finally a few questions were raised to ponder upon and act on from this workshop.

Social Proof – is when humans take action or make a decision based on seeing other humans doing it first. It is sort of like an implied recommendation – if other people do it, it must be good.

So questions to ask of ourselves as Sai Devotees:

- Are we seeing first and creating social proof? Or
- Are we following other's created social proof?
- How much of what we see burdens us enough to act on?
- How are our attitudes shaping when we see the goings on of the world? Do we
 - Feel passionate and act or
 - Get overwhelmed thinking we are only one person and give up action?
- Are we Crowd Creators or Crowd Followers?
- **What are the barriers between our declared values and our actual behaviour to Give up and Gain a new social reality based on Love?**