

Divine Love's Ripple Effect : Sahebji's Parenting Wisdom

~ Saheli Sheth (Peoria, USA)

When my sister was four, she discovered a small box hidden in the corner of the room. Intrigued, she found a cassette tape labeled "Favorite Music" with my dad's name on it. The songs on the tape were classics from my father's youth, a treasure from a time before YouTube. Curiously, my sister unraveled the film inside the tape until it was all out, innocently wrapping it around herself like a new outfit.

When my dad entered the room, his eyes darted between his daughter, the music box, and the cassette tape that could no longer play music. He looked back at my sister, who was now gleefully dancing with the film all over herself. My dad felt a rush of anger and grief, as his most beloved music was forever gone.

To our surprise, he then grabbed a camera and, laughing along with my sister, began taking pictures of her. To this day when he tells this story, he often says, "She looked so innocent and so happy that I just couldn't be mad at her!"

We might have heard about the importance of seeing God in everyone; in that moment, I witnessed this principle in action. Instead of seeing an annoying 4-year-old, my dad chose to see a carefree child, a reflection of God's effortlessly blissful nature. By pausing to remind ourselves, "God works through everyone," a state of anger can transform into a state of love.

Years later, as a bold teenager, I recall asking my mom directly, "Why didn't you and Pappa ever use physical discipline on us?" She tenderly replied, "You are our angels! We could never do that to you." I believe that every child is an angel deserving of love and care, and that every parent and guardian is doing their best at any given moment. I hope all parents and guardians approach this reflection with grace and compassion for themselves as caregivers, recognizing that there are various approaches to parenting and that love and care can be expressed in different ways.

My parents' approach to parenting was guided by the wisdom imparted by Sadguru Sant Param Pujya

Shantidada: "Aapde maatra emne prem, prem, prem aapvaano. Baaki badhu Bhagwan sambhaali leshe." [All we must do is give our kids love, love, love. God will handle the rest.] In moments of frustration, my parents would pause and reflect on Shantidada's teachings. By pausing for a moment during a conflict, we can replay Shantidada's guidance in our minds and more seamlessly incorporate it into our relationships.

Now as a young adult, I look back at my nurturing upbringing and recognize how Shantidada molded my parents to be more loving in their interactions with my sister and me. As a result, I can easily share this warmth with the youth I work with as a mental health clinician. Such is the ripple effect of love – we can give what we have received.

How do we increase our capacity to love? Sant Bhagwant Sahebji suggests a simple practice: Reflect on our kids' and loved ones' positive virtues each night before bed. This practice can not only improve our sleep quality but also primes our minds to actively focus on the positive in our children.

Sant Bhagwant Sahebji beautifully stated, "The home is the greatest of all schools in the world, and parents are the best teachers." We may gently ask ourselves: What lessons are being taught in the school of "Home"?

Our actions and behaviors serve as our children's curriculum. Do they witness us speaking to others with respect? Do they hear our humble apologies when we make mistakes? Do they see us refrain from gossiping about others? Do they observe us doing our puja and thanking God for another day of life? Are we modeling the values we want them to embrace?

Our actions at home are the legacy we leave behind. Today, I offer a prayer to Lord Swaminarayan: May we all be inspired by Sahebji's example to build harmony in the home by first embodying it ourselves. And may every parent and guardian reading this leave behind a legacy of divine love. ◆