

Dear Devotees, Prabhupada said there are two things that are great blessings for anyone. To have the guidance of a spiritual master and to be born in a family of devotees . For our purpose let us examine the second blessing. Great spiritual stalwarts such as Pariksit Maharaj, Yuddhisthira Maharaj, Mirabai and Uddhava and our own Srila Prabhupada had the great fortune to be born in a family of devotees and thereby receive good training from their early childhood.

Srila Prabhupada writes in Srimad Bhagavatam 2.3.15

“By the grace of Lord Shri Krishna, we had the chance of being born in a Vaishnava family, and in our childhood we imitated the worship of Lord Krishna by imitating our father.... Our spiritual master, who also took his birth in a Vaishnava family, got all inspirations from his great Vaishnava father, Thakura Bhaktivinoda. That is the way of all lucky Vaishnava families. The celebrated Mirabay was a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna as the great lifter of Govardhana Hill.”

So we can hardly overemphasize the need of good training for our children from the very beginning of their lives. This was Srila Prabhupada’s desire for our children. Prabhupada wanted our children to go to a gurukula. What if there is no gurukula for our children? The parents become the guru and the kula (ashram) is the home. So we can please Srila Prabhupada by giving our children the topmost education at home. Let us consider some benefits of home education.

1. Home schooling makes better devotees because

(a) The children avoid the negative influences in schools. There is less pressure on them to adopt the values of their peers.

(b) Most teachers in schools provide bad role models for the children because they do not understand the value of devotional service. They do not follow the four regulative principles of no meat eating, illicit sex, gambling and intoxication which can have a detrimental effect on their character. Children learn by example and it is difficult to find good examples in schools.

(c) The parents can serve as good examples and role models for their children.

Prabhupada writes in a purport of the Srimad Bhagavatam 1.9.26

"For learning Vedic knowledge, one must approach a person who is cent percent engaged in devotional service. He must not do things which are forbidden in the sastras. A person cannot be a teacher if he drinks or smokes. In the modern system of education the teacher's academic qualification is taken into consideration without evaluation of his moral life. Therefore, the result of education is misuse of high intelligence in so many ways."

2. Home schooling inculcates good character and values in the children through good devotee association and reading of Srila Prabhupada's books. Srimad Bhagavatam is a wonderful book to teach from because it gives the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita through stories, and children love stories. These stories are not fictitious, rather they are the lives of great saintly personalities and the pastimes of Krsna and His incarnations. By reading these, one directly associates with these great personalities and their teachings. By such association one begins to develop the character of these very same personalities. As the child grows older, they also begin to appreciate the instructions such as Teaching of Queen Kunti, Prahlad Maharaj, Druva Maharaj, and Kapila Deva. In fact, many of the devotees described in the

Bhagavatam, such as Prahlad and Druva, are children themselves, so the children have perfect examples and heroes to follow.

It is described that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu heard the stories of Druva Maharaj and Prahlada Maharaj hundreds of times while growing up, and still he was not satiated by hearing their stories. The instructions by these saints are so valuable that any moral or social book in society cannot compare with them. Thus, the children develop good character and saintly qualities by reading the Srimad Bhagavatam.

Next week we will discuss some more aspects of home education for our children. If you have any questions please write.

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