

PARENTAL REVERENCE-A HINDU DHARMA

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Abstract

Hindu scriptures tell us that respecting elders is one of the most important roles one has to perform in his/her life. Before we commit to any work, we take the blessings of God and then of the elders and continue our work. A person who wants to prosper in his life must revere all elders and that protects him all the times. Listening to elders' words and advices, serving them when needed and make them feel proud of us through our good behaviour are the best things one can do.

Parents give birth to us, take lot of pain to upbringing us and provide good recognition in the society. One achieves longer life span, knowledge, glory and strength by respecting all elders who across in his life. This is what one learns from the teachings of the scriptures. If not the fruit of worship is not begotten. It's considered that parents are the replica of God and they are well-thought of as His representatives on the earth. There are certain rules and regulations to be tracked to ascertain our respect towards elders. And some stories of glory and practice from our epics and history that teach us on the theme 'How to revere our elders'

Keywords: Hindu, Scriptures, culture, respect/revere, knowledge, God.

**“Mathru Devo bhava,
Pithru Devo bhava,
Acharya Devo bhava,
Athithi Devo bhava”**

These words reveal the meaning that “May you be one for whom his mother is a God. May you be one for whom his father is a God. May you be one for whom a teacher is a God. May you be one for whom his guest is a God.” The idea is that we should respect, serve and worship our parents, guests as well as our teachers even before we worship Bhagavān (God). This is a very unique teaching of our tradition. The western religions always place God before parents. Note that in our tradition, the mother is listed first, because she is the most respectable of

all, more than even the father. Parents should be the most important people in your life. As children, we should obey our parents, grandparents, teachers and other people older to us. Listening to them and serving them when needed makes them proud with our good behaviour. The scriptures say that the father, mother, teacher, elder brother and one's provider- these five are considered as one's superiors. A person deserving prosperity must respect these superiors and be ready to sacrifice his life if needed by providing priority.

Our parents give birth to us, undergo great pains to raise us, educate us and see that we settle in our lives. The main reason behind it is their care and love that becomes the motive of our success. Not only this, they take care of our own children, (the next generation whom they love the most) by giving good values to them. Therefore, when our parents are old and cannot take care of themselves, it is our duty to pay back their love, effort and blessings by serving them and honouring them in every way possible, even at the cost of great personal sacrifice.

A great service towards one's parents is always rewarding. The negative feeling is the Bad Karma one has obtained. No prayer yields any fruit for the person who does not serve his parents and teachers. The lifespan, knowledge, glory and strength of him increases who pays respects to his elders regularly and serves them. He who serves his parents and teachers truly respects all the teachings of the scriptures. And the person who disrespects them will never get the fruit of any worship. Therefore, as long as they are alive, no one should devote himself to any other religious undertaking. Rather, he should continue to serve them with full diligence and do whatever pleases them and is beneficial to them. In fact, by serving one's parents and teachers, a person fulfils all his major religious duties. Other religious acts like worshiping are minor, compared to serving these elders. The son who pleases his parents by his good qualities acquires the fruit of all good virtues. Service to one's parents is the only essence of Dharma and it leads one to Moksha (salvation) upon death.

God wants us to serve our parents, because they are His direct representatives for us on this earth. HE has taught us that by serving our parents, we actually worship Him. To exemplify the words of Lord Viṣṇu in his teachings to Mārkaṇḍeya- "They who serve their parents, thinking of their father as the Lord of the Universe, and Mother as the holy River Ganga they indeed are My best Bhaktās."

To give some examples from our epics the story of Sravanakumara is the best one. He always believed that duty towards his parents was of the utmost importance. But he was very poor and could not afford for a bullock cart or a horse driven one during those times of his, when his parents had a desire of going on a pilgrimage. Moreover, they were blind. So, he made them sit in two baskets tied to a long thick stick and carried them on his shoulders and set on foot towards Kashi. During their journey, one night they felt thirsty and asked for some water. The boy made them wait and went in search of water. At the same time, King Dasharatha who was skilled to shoot with bow and arrow just by hearing the noise of an animal, was on hunting and waiting for such a sound. When Sravana was filling his jug with water, the immersion of the jug made a bubbling sound, leading the king to misunderstand the sound. He shot the arrow towards the sound thinking it is a deer. Thus, he killed Sravana by mistake. Yet the young boy felt it was his bad luck being killed and requested the king to take water to his parents who were awaiting his arrival with water. The moral one learns from this story is Sravanakumar was very much devoted to his parents. Though poor he found out a better way to take them on pilgrimage when they desired to go. He never bothered that he was killed but was thinking of quenching their

thirst though he was shot by an arrow. He became an ideal son by serving them with utmost care at his young age.

The temple of Vithoba in Pandharpur of Maharashtra is another example for the devotion of a son towards his parents. Pundalik lived in that small town with his parents. Once when they pleaded to take a dip in the holy Ganges at Varanasi, he scolded them to look after themselves in that issue and shooed them out of the house. Later on, he realised his mistake and went on a horse back with his wife, found them and after their dip in the holy river, brought them back with utmost reverence and served them thereafter.

From then onwards, Pundalika changed a lot. He was devoted to his parents. In Dwaraka, Lord Krishna heard about the beautiful transformation of Pundalika and He decided to visit him. His wife Rukmini asked the Lord Why did He want to visit Pundalik and Krishna replied her that Pundalik, by serving his parents, was worshipping the lord all the time. When Krishna reached Pundalika's home, the latter was absorbed in massaging his father's feet and therefore did not pay attention to the visitor. But when he noticed the divine light emitting from the body of Krishna, he turned around and said that he was busy serving his parents and cannot attend Him for a while. He threw a brick to the Lord and asked him to use it as a stool until he came. Krishna humbly stood on the brick, waiting patiently for Pundalika, with His hands on his waist, his arms akimbo.

When Pundalika's father went to sleep, he went to the door to welcome Krishna. The Lord was so pleased with Pundalika's regard for his parents now, that he asked Pundalika to request a boon from Him. Pundalika requested the Lord to stay back forever with him on the brick. Krishna complied and transformed Himself into an idol. Pundalika was declared a saint after some time. Over his samādhi in a temple on the Bhima river, a Śivalinga was erected. Even today, pilgrims first visit the Śiva temple before offering worship at the Vitthala temple in Pandharpur. This story shows how Pundalika earned the blessings of Bhagavān by doing his duty towards his parents.

Another story is of Lord Ganesha and Karttikeya – Who won the race. One day, Bhagavān Shiva and Devi Parvati told their two son Ganesha and Kartikeya that whoever goes round the world and returns back will get a mango from them. Kartikeya was happy as he was sure to win the race on his peacock and Ganesha cannot move faster on his mouse. As soon as Lord Shiva told to start Kartikeya flew on his peacock but Ganesha stood before his parents with folded hands and took a round around them stating them that they were important to him than the whole world and took three rounds around them. Just after Ganesha had completed his third round, Kartikeya landed back on his peacock. When Kartikeya felt happy for winning the race, Parvati explained him that showing deep respect to parents is the best way of serving the whole world. Thus, Kartikeya learnt a lesson from his brother that No one else in the world cares for the children as the parents. Therefore, one should always give importance and respect parents than anyone else in the whole world. This is what Ganesha had done and won the race!

Further to discuss the story of Śhankaracharya who Changed the Course of River for his Mother..... in the late 7th century Śhankaracharya lived with his widowed mother in the village of Kaladi in the Indian state of Kerala. One day, his mother fell ill and she was no longer able to walk from a hut to bath in the river that flowed at a distance. The little boy Śhankaracharya along with his friends dug a channel from the river that flowed right past his home. Now his mother just had to walk out of their home for a dip. This channel dug by Śhankaracharya still exists to

today. After sometime, Śhankaracharya wanted to become a Sadhu in pursuit of spiritual knowledge. His mother was very worried at that because he was her only support. But Śhankaracharya made arrangements with his relatives who would provide for his aged mother. He also promised to her that he would return to see her whenever she needed him. Many years later, when Śhankaracharya had become a very learned and a famous saint, he felt that his mother needed him. By his yogic powers, he flew back to his home where his mother was waiting for him before she breathed her last. By his spiritual powers, he had her get a darśhana of Viśhṇu and Śhiva. When she passed away, he prepared for her cremation. And according to tradition, a Sadhu is not allowed to cremate his parents, because he has technically ended all his relations with everyone. So, Śhankaracharya prayed and by a miracle, the wooden pyre with his mother's body lit on its own. Those who had gathered around to criticize Śhankaracharya saw the miracle and felt ashamed at their own harshness. They asked the saint for forgiveness and he obliged.

All these stories reveal a fact the God doesn't like anybody loving self. He supports and blesses those who respect elders, especially parents. All the good work must be performed by us only to get the best results. The world pleasures must be enjoyed by the body that is the boon of our parents. Generally according to Indian tradition, parents live with their children and grand-children, till their end of the life. As a result, they pass their last days happily, playing with their grand-children, and being looked after, with utmost care by their children. In fact they had raised them with great effort and pain in their own younger years. But unfortunately, the modern days however, have changed a lot where many young couples do not want to take care of their old parents. The excuse of such scenario is either lack of monetary ability, no time or the children do not want their kids to see the suffering of the old age. In some cases the shifting of the jobs for better prospects may make the children leave the parents for their comfort. Because moving them to a new place might be painful and traumatic for them to adjust. And they also feel comfortable in the used to place. Thus the aged people face different benefits and drawbacks when shifted to old-age homes.

There are many rules of etiquette that we follow for honouring and serving our parents. Some of them are not addressing our parents by their names, not shouting at them or talk back to them or even have an argument with them. Certain ways of sitting postures before them, serving them food before we eat, giving preference for them to sit, if insufficient chairs are there, greeting them in the morning and before going to bed are some of the healthy practices we commit to. Added we always give them importance by fulfilling their requests and wishes to the possible extent, do not behave badly in front of them, obey them with all cheer and accept their wisdom and knowledge as we consider them wiser and more knowledgeable than us. So giving back to parents is not sufficient whatever we do to them.

In Hinduism, parents are considered to be very important as they are believed to be the ones who bring children into the world and raise them with love and care. Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas emphasize the importance of respecting and honouring parents as a duty and a virtue. In fact, it is said that serving one's parents is one of the highest forms of service and devotion to God. The relationship between parents and children is seen as sacred and it is believed that parents should be treated with love, respect, and gratitude throughout their lives.

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