

CEILING ON DESIRES

Study Guide on Ceiling on Desires

Do Not Waste Food

Do Not Waste Money

Do Not Waste Time

Do Not Waste Energy

Do Not Exploit Nature

Reproduced below are thirteen divine discourses delivered by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in which He explains the "Ceiling on Desires Programme."

Desires Are a Prison

What is the meaning of "Ceiling on Desires"? Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness. That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. We are spending too much money. Instead of inordinate spending for our own pleasure, we should be spending for the relief of the poor and needy. This is the real meaning of "Ceiling on Desires."

Do not make the mistake of thinking that giving money is all that is needed, however. Do not give to others while allowing your own desires to continue to multiply. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life's bare necessities.

How Can You Reduce Desires?

First, food. Eat only what you need to eat. Don't be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food. Food is the main source of man's life, body, mind, and character.

The gross part of the food, which is the major portion of the food consumed by the body, is thrown out as waste matter. A minute amount of the food, which is the subtle part, is assimilated by the body and flows as blood. And a minuscule amount, which is the subtlest part of the food, makes up the mind. Therefore the mind is the reflection of the food consumed. The reason for the present beastly and demonic tendencies in our minds is because of the food we consume.

Instead of kindness, compassion, love, and patience, only bad qualities such as hatred and attachment are being perpetrated. Therefore the quality of the food that we eat should be very pure, very clean, very sanctified, and *satwic*. Man receives real nourishment from such food.

A large part of the water we drink is expelled as urine. A minute part of the water consumed becomes the life force. Therefore the nature of the food and water that we take in decides our character. Only by controlling the quality of our food and water can we attain Divinity. That is why food is said to be God. Hence to waste food is to waste God. Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is *satwic*. Give any surplus food to those in need.

Second, money. Indians consider money or wealth as the Goddess Lakshmi. Do not misuse money. By doing so you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas, and bad habits. Use your money

wisely for good deeds. Do not waste money, as misuse of money is evil. It will lead you along the wrong path.

Third, time. The most important, the most needed factor is time. One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time. Even our scriptures say that God is referred to as time and as non-time. God is not limited by time. He is beyond time; He is time; He restricts time. Time is the embodiment of God. Everything depends on time.

The main reason for man's birth and death is time. Time is the main factor in our growth. If we waste time, our lives will be wasted. Therefore time is an essential part of our life. Do not degrade time by spending it participating in unnecessary conversations, or by getting involved in others' personal matters. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way.

Fourth, energy. Our physical, mental, and spiritual energies should never be wasted. You might ask me, "How are we wasting our energies?" If you see bad things, your energy is wasted. Hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts, and doing evil deeds wastes your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.

See no evil—see what is good.

Hear no evil—hear what is good.

Speak no evil—speak what is good.

Think no evil—think what is good.

Do no evil—do what is good.

This is the way to God.

The path of Divinity is not seeing, listening, speaking, thinking, or doing anything bad. If we are not following this path, we are wasting our energy. On account of this waste of energy, we are losing our memory power, intelligence, power of discrimination, and power of justice.

Today's man is not capable of discriminating between good and bad. Then how can he enter the path of right action? You might be wondering how this is possible; how are we wasting time? For example, when you turn on the radio to listen to a certain programme, whether you raise or lower the volume of the sound, as long as the radio is on, the current is being used.

Our mind is like the radio. Whether you talk with others or only think within yourself, you are consuming energy. Your mind is working all the time. Since it is always turned on, you are consuming a lot of energy. Instead of wasting that power, energy, or force in mental meandering, isn't it better to spend your time in thinking good thoughts?

The Ceiling on Desires Programme has been proposed so that man does not waste anything in the areas of food, money, time, or energy.

Main Goal of the Sathya Sai Organisation

Today, however, some service-oriented people and workers in the Sri Sathya Sai World Organisation have not fully realised this. Instead they are giving money, thinking that it is service. They are cleverly getting out of serving, while their desires are growing out of bounds. We should gradually

try to change these attitudes. The main goal of the Sai Organisation is to enable members, workers, and officers to lead ideal, perfect, and happy lives. Therefore we must live up to the high ideals of the organisation and transform ourselves into ideal beings, thus helping others to follow our example.

Sathya Sai Newsletter (USA), Volume 13, Number 3 (Spring 1989). Divine Discourse on Service and the Sai Organisation, November 21, 1988.

Easiest Way of Achieving Control of the Mind

You should be established in the awareness that the Lord is ever present. You must also be prompted by the feeling that you are performing deeds for the pleasure of the Lord. This is the easiest way of achieving control of the mind.

If you are prompted by feelings that your body belongs to the Lord, you will not sin with your body. On the other hand, all your efforts and endeavours will proceed towards Divinity. If you are saturated with the conviction that your energy belongs to God, you will not misuse it. It is in light of this that we have prescribed the principle of ceiling on desires in the Sri Sathya Sai Centres.

Fourfold Programme

The first ceiling on desires is “Don’t waste food. Food is God.” Your body is made of food, and you are the result of the food eaten by your parents. Food is God. Eat as much as it is necessary to eat. But do not throw away food by taking too much on your plate. By wasting food you will be wasting the energy divine.

The second instruction is “Don’t waste money. God is wealth.” Since God is wealth, misuse of money is evil. Practice charity by gifting away money, food, clothes, houses, etc., instead of misusing money in extravagance. Misuse of money is not only evil but a sin as well. The third instruction is “Don’t waste time. Time waste is life waste.”

God is exalted as time. He is beyond time, transcends time and is the embodiment of time. Spend the time by using sanctifying words. Do not waste time. Wasting time is wasting God.

The fourth instruction is “Don’t waste energy.” People waste their energy by indulging in bad thoughts, seeing bad things, hearing bad things, and taking bad actions.

The right royal road is the following:

See no evil—see what is good.

Hear no evil—hear what is good.

Speak no evil—speak what is good.

Think no evil—think what is good.

Do no evil—do what is good.

By translating the above instructions into practice, you will be sanctifying your time. This is the spiritual practice and the service that you have to undertake. A time will come when the mind will be extinguished and merger with the divine will be achieved.

Summer Showers in Brindavan 1993;
Chapter 6: The Conquest of the Mind.

Light the Lamp of Love Within

Man is making every attempt today to be happy, blissful. Where do you get bliss? Is it in the material things, in the world, in individuals, in books? No, not at all. Bliss is within one's own Self. You have forgotten your true Self, the source of bliss. You are struggling hard for artificial happiness outside. You are not aware of the reality that lies in the heart. In fact, all the bliss is there. The principle of love originates from the heart, not from the world.

Everyone should develop love more and more. But today there is hatred and anger everywhere. Wherever you look, there is desire, enmity, and fear. How do you expect to be at peace? How do you expect to be blissful? Light the lamp of love within. Then fear and illusion can be removed, and you can have the vision of the Self. Otherwise you are bound to suffer.

You have to exercise a ceiling on your desires. There are rules for a ceiling with regard to land and property. But you have no ceiling on your desires. Ceiling on desires means exercising control over them. You can be happy once the desires are controlled.

Less Luggage, More Comfort, Makes Travel a Pleasure

Your life is a long journey. You should have less luggage (desires) in this long journey of life. Therefore it is said, "Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure." So, ceiling on desires is what you have to adopt today. You have to cut short your desires day by day. You are under the mistaken notion that happiness lies in the fulfillment of desires. But, in fact, happiness begins to dawn when desires are totally eradicated.

When you reduce your desires, you advance towards the state of renunciation. You have many desires. What do you get out of them? You are bound to face the consequences when you claim something as yours. When you claim a piece of land as yours, then you will have to reap the harvest. This instinct of ego and attachment will put you to suffering. You will be blissful the moment you give up ego and attachment.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 32, Part 1,
Chapter 6: Put a Ceiling on Your Desires.

Nothing Accompanies You When You Leave the World

Wherever you look today, there are only desires, desires, and more desires. Put a ceiling on these desires! Only then will your mind become steady. You say, "I want this, I want that," etc. Thus you develop many wants. They are like passing clouds. Why should you multiply your wants, these passing clouds? Ultimately, nothing accompanies you at the time of your leaving this mortal body.

Great kings and emperors ruled over this world. They conquered many countries and accumulated boundless wealth. Even Alexander the Great, who conquered several parts of the world, could not take with him even a miniscule part of the wealth he accumulated. He had to leave this world with empty hands.

To demonstrate this truth, he instructed his ministers to take his dead body in a procession through the streets of his capital, keeping both his hands in a raised position pointing towards the sky. The ministers were curious to know the reason for this strange request. He said, "I have conquered many countries and accumulated so much wealth. There is a vast army under my control. Yet none is accompanying me at the time of my leaving this body. I am going with empty hands. This has to be demonstrated to all people."

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 41,
Chapter 19: Contemplate on God, the Real Hero, for Victory.

Excessive Desire Causes Imbalance in Nature

Man should put a ceiling on his desires. As man's conduct is perverted, today we find natural calamities taking place. You are aware of the devastation caused by the earthquake in Gujarat. Thousands of people lost their lives. The reason for this is that man is entertaining excessive desires. God maintains perfect balance in His creation. In God's creation, the Earth and the oceans are endowed with balance. But man is indiscriminately exploiting the Earth for extracting oil.

Every day tonnes of fish are caught from the oceans. This indiscriminate exploitation of Nature results in imbalance in Earth, which is playing havoc with human lives. Only when man is free from unsteadiness within, will he not be troubled by earthquake.

Do Not Rob Nature of Its Resources to Satisfy Your Greed

Not only the people of India but also the people of the entire world should strive to maintain balance. The five elements are nothing but manifestations of the divine. Man's life will be secure only when he realises this truth and acts accordingly. A few days ago, I sent lorry loads of rice, grams, etc., to the earthquake victims of Gujarat.

Some people asked, "Swami, why should you take the trouble to spend so much money for sending relief material to Gujarat? You could have instead averted the earthquake." I replied, "My dear, man has to blame himself for the earthquakes. Due to excessive greed for wealth, he is disturbing the balance of the Earth. Hence the earthquake. That is the law of Nature."

You have to express your love for man by helping the needy. Love is your nature. Just as balance is very much essential for Nature, so also love is very much needed for man. Know that whatever God has created is for your own welfare. You should enjoy Nature according to your need. You should not rob Nature of its resources to satisfy your greed.

Science Should Be Utilised Only to the Extent Needed

Here is an example. Once a greedy person owned a duck, which used to lay a golden egg every day. One day, he ripped open the stomach of the duck thinking that he would get many golden eggs at a time. Today man also is indulging in such foolish and greedy acts. Instead of being satisfied with what Nature is giving him, he aspires for more and more, and in the process, he is creating imbalance in Nature.

Today scientists are interested in new inventions. The advancement in science and technology has also led to imbalance in Nature. As a result, there are earthquakes and no timely rains. Science should be utilised only to the extent needed. Science has its limitations, and crossing those limits leads to danger.

You have a long way to go. Adhere to truth and righteousness. Our ancient sages said, "Speak truth, speak pleasantly, and do not speak unpleasant truth." Make proper use of natural resources, and do not put them to misuse. Help everybody, and make them happy. Share all the good things you have learnt with others. This is your foremost duty.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 34,
Chapter 3: Vision of the *Atma*.

Desires Are the Root Cause of Man's Disturbance

All the spiritual practices that man performs aims at making his mind steady. There is no use in constantly repeating God's name, meditating, and practising spiritual austerities if the mind is not steady. Once you have the five senses under control, you can experience God. He is not far away from you. He is in you, below you, above you, and all around you. God, in fact, is the indweller of man. Yet man is not able to see Him. What is the reason? Man's limitless and wayward desires prevent him from seeing God.

Desires are the root cause of man's disturbance. Sense control and ceiling on desires will help him to see God all around and experience bliss. So, we have to keep our desires in check. We should not be worried by the evil talk that others indulge in. We should not be affected by calumny and criticism.

Control the Five Senses

Buddha wanted to control the five senses. He decided, first and foremost, to acquire right vision. Man today is not able to control his vision because of the fickleness of his mind. Cinema, video, TV, etc., have polluted the mind of man. He does not see good and hear good. Man is the cause of his own restlessness.

Besides right vision, Buddha emphasised the need for right hearing, right speech, right feeling, and right thinking. Due to lack of these, humanness is fast giving way to devilishness and beastliness. Animal qualities are fast increasing in man. Animals have a season and a reason, but man has none. Man today has become worse than animals. Human qualities like compassion, kindness, love, and forbearance are absent in him. He should be free from evil thoughts, which are the root cause of his worries. This requires constant and sustained practice.

Master the Mind, and Be a Mastermind

Man can control the mind and attain peace by constant and sustained practice. It is only in a peaceful mind that noble thoughts arise. The mind should be under the control of man. *Master the mind, and be a mastermind.* Unfortunately, instead of controlling the mind, man has become the slave of his senses. That is the main cause of his unsteadiness. Moreover, he has body attachment. This is the reason he gets easily disturbed if people find fault with him. Why should he worry about the body when the body is like a water bubble? You should get rid of body attachment.

Summer Showers in Brindavan 2002;
Chapter 11: Sense Control Is the Highest *Sadhana*.

Learn a Lesson from Nature

There are four components in the term "Ceiling on Desires." They are curb on excessive talk, curb on excessive desires and expenditure, control of consumption of food, and check on waste of energy. Man needs some essential commodities for his sustenance, and he should not aspire for more.

We can learn a lesson in this respect from Nature. Only if air is available in sufficient quantity will it be comfortable and good. If it is excessive and there is a gale, you will feel uncomfortable. When you are thirsty, you can consume only a limited quantity of water. You can't consume the entire water of the River Ganga! We take only as much as is needed for the sustenance of the body.

Doctors know that the body temperature is normally 98.6 degrees. If this goes up to 99 degrees, they say fever has set in due to some disorder in the body. We inhale and exhale at a normal rate. If there is a slight increase or decrease in the rate, it indicates disorder in the body. Changes in the pulse rate or blood pressure also indicate disorder. So you find that if you exceed the limits even to a little extent it is dangerous or harmful to the body.

There is a limit for everything to function in a normal way. When your eyes happen to see a flash of lightning or a flash of light while taking photographs, they automatically close because they can't withstand such high illumination. Eardrums also cannot tolerate hearing beyond a certain volume, and we cover our ears or keep cotton inside the ears. From these we see that our life is a *limited company!*

Our Desires Should Be Limited

Similarly our desires also should be limited. Women are usually desirous of adding to their wardrobe any number of *saris* (long traditional dress worn by Indian women) when they go to a shop or an exhibition. You should have a reasonable number of *saris*, but not a huge collection for pomp or show. Misuse of money is a great evil. **Even men will have to do their own bit in controlling the expenditure on unwanted and unnecessary things.**

Money is the embodiment of Divinity. When you talk of wealth, you should be careful to avoid avaricious accumulation and extravagant expenditure. Even in the preparation of food, you should be careful in avoiding wastage. We are only doing a disservice by consuming more food than what is necessary for the body.

Thirdly, you should be careful about "time," which is the yardstick of life. Seconds become hours, hours become years, years make ages, and so on. You should not waste this most valuable "time." Time lost in wasteful pursuits can't be got back by any means. All our activities should be planned for **utilising the available time to maximum advantage.** So, we should not waste food, money, time, and energy.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 16,
Chapter 3: Ceiling on Desires-I.

Aims of the "Ceiling on Desires Programme"

There is a programme connected with "Ceiling on Desires." You must realise that this programme has not been launched to raise funds. **The object of the programme is to prevent waste of money, time, food, or other resources and to use all these for the welfare of the people.** The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sathya Sai Organisations. It may be used in the best way you choose for the **benefit of others.** Do not waste time. **Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God.** Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking service activities in a pure and unselfish spirit.

Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, in indulging in unnecessary talk and doing meaningless actions. In all these actions we are sacrificing the body to time. Instead we should try to make time our servant. **It means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds.** Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions: "How am I utilising time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?"

Likewise, with regard to food you must ask, **"Am I just eating what I need, or more?"** Am I wasting food?" So also with regard to money: "Am I using this money for my own selfish needs or for boosting my name and fame or to satisfy my ego and vanity?" Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater spiritual practice.

These are the aims of the "Ceiling on Desires Programme." It was never the purpose of this programme to collect money for the Sathya Sai Organisations. The object was to encourage you to share your money with others, to give you an opportunity to utilise your surplus resources for some good and noble purpose that will sanctify your life.

Make Your Lives Sacred and Worthwhile

Three types of strength are given to a person: **physical strength, mental strength, and the power of money**. It has been said that all these should be offered as *yajna*(sacrifice). This sacrifice is not offered to God. God, who has given you your body and your mind, does not need them for Himself. God is also the source of all wealth. What does He want with your wealth?

Use it for sacred purposes. The service programme is intended only to provide you with opportunities to make your lives sacred and worthwhile. It is to develop the spirit of sacrifice.

This Endeavour Is Not for the Sake of Sai

Was it beyond the power of Rama to discover Sita in Lanka Himself? What need was there for Him to send Hanuman? Rama wanted Hanuman to go on the search so that He could show to the world the devotion and steadfastness and faith of Hanuman. It is a case of grace on the part of Rama.

In the same manner, if Sai wants to do so many things Himself, He can do anything. This endeavour is not for the sake of Sai. It is done through these service organisations so that members of the organisation get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand the basic truth that **these avenues of service have been provided so that you will get a good name for yourself and not for the sake of Sai.**

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 17,
Chapter 16: Ceiling on Desires-II.

Always Be Happy

Whatever trouble you may face, you must learn to feel happy in any circumstance. If you are stung by a scorpion, you must console yourself that you were not bitten by a snake, and when you are bitten by a snake, you must console yourself that it has not proved fatal. Even if you are not able to own a vehicle, be happy that your legs are intact to enable you to walk. Even if you are not a millionaire, be happy that you have enough resources to feed yourself and your family. This is the way to experience joy even in adverse circumstances.

Turn Your Effort to Realise the Reality Within

Ceiling on desires is a must for leading a peaceful and meaningful life. You must curb the desire to seek more and more wealth and turn your effort to realise the Reality within. In pursuing this effort, you must avoid waste of food, money, time, energy, and knowledge as all these are forms of God. Unnecessary talk should be avoided as this results in waste of energy and reduction of memory power.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 27,
Chapter 20: Spiritual Orientation to Education.

Peace Can Be Attained Only by God's Grace

In the modern world, every person tries hard to attain peace. Peace cannot be attained by spiritual precepts, nor can it be obtained from a market as a commodity. It cannot be acquired even by knowledge of the texts, or a high position in life. Peace can be attained only by God's grace.

Though man is eager to attain peace, he confronts many obstacles in the path. Those who travel by train may be well acquainted with the slogan "Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure." Now, man is burdening himself with limitless desires. Because of this extra heavy luggage of desires,

he finds it extremely difficult to carry on the journey of life. By such proliferation of desires, he loses his balance, moves far away from his goal, and even tends to go mad.

It is for this reason that I have been stressing the need for ceiling on desires. By limiting your desires, you can attain peace to a certain extent. You have to exercise a check on your desires and make efforts to get the grace of the divine.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 31,
Chapter 19: Faith, Love, and Grace.

Bad Qualities Are the Result of Your Own Thoughts

Suppose you get angry. From where did this anger come? This has come from you only. Similarly, jealousy is a quality that manifested from your mind. Thus each one of these bad qualities is the result of your own thoughts. Hence if only you are able to control your thoughts properly, you will be able to achieve anything in life.

The mind, intellect, and awareness are the reflections of the *Atma*. The mind has no stability. It is the repository of thoughts and desires. It is said, "The mind alone is the cause of bondage or liberation." Hence one has to keep the mind under proper control by putting some ceiling on desires.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 42,
Chapter 1: Know Thyself! You Will Know Everything.

Do Not Trigger the Negative Aspect of Nature

Man has to consider himself as a limb of society and help in the welfare of society, just as the organs of one's body are used for one's well-being. Again society is a limb of Nature, and Nature is a limb of the Supreme Lord. Thus there is a close relationship between man and God.

Nature is more progressive than man, and to protect Nature, man has to exploit it within limits. When man tampers with Nature recklessly, it reacts adversely and trouble arises. In order to protect Nature, man has to practise ceiling on desires. He should not trigger the negative aspect of Nature.

In this respect, scientists have no concern for the harmful effects that may accrue to society by their inventions. They do not care for the welfare of mankind and go on making use of intelligence to produce their weapons of destruction. Care should be exercised in providing comforts, as excessive comforts may spoil man's mind and cause misery instead of happiness. Nothing good can be achieved without restraints.

Because of the advancement of technology and provision of excessive comforts, life has become mechanical and spirituality has declined. Science fragments everything to pieces, whereas spirituality builds up unity in diversity. Today man is not making efforts to cultivate the feeling of oneness among humanity.

Intimate Relationship of Man, God, and Nature

For example, the ozone layer in the atmosphere protects the people on Earth from the evil effects of solar radiation. Because of the advance of technology, several factories have sprung up, causing emission of harmful gases in the atmosphere. As a result, the ozone layer has become thinner, and if this goes on unchecked, it may have disastrous consequences. Scientists are trying to stop the breakup of the ozone layer, but they are unable to find a remedy.

The actual cause for this situation is that more carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. Normally carbon dioxide is absorbed by plants and trees, which can assimilate the gas and supply oxygen by the natural process of photosynthesis. But, because there is deforestation to an alarming extent, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has considerably increased. Therefore the remedy for this situation is intensive afforestation, growing more trees everywhere and protecting the existing trees without destroying them for other purposes. **Thus the relationship of man, Nature, and God is very intimate, which scientists may not be able to realise.**

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 26,
Chapter 3: The Predicament of Man Today.

Cultivate Four Desirable Practices

The Sai Organisations have been enjoined to carry out a programme of ceiling on desires. Everyone should try to control desires as much as possible. The promotion of human values is another item in the programme. These human values are inherent in every person. All that is needed is for everyone to manifest them in his daily life. Truth, righteousness, and peace are all in you.

You are the embodiment of truth, peace, love, and God. Recognise this fact. Members of Sai Organisations should cultivate certain desirable practices. For instance, they should regulate their diet, because one's food influences one's thoughts. Smoking and intoxicating drinks have to be given up. They are ruinous for the health. Meat eating should also be given up because eating animal food promotes animal tendencies. The fourth evil that has to be eliminated is gambling.

Those who take to the spiritual path should avoid as much as possible these four bad practices. It is sinful to slaughter poor animals for one's food. Sai members should follow the motto "Help ever; hurt never."

There is no meaning in professing to respect human values without observing the rule that you should cause no harm to others in any form whatsoever. God loves those who serve others because He is in all of them. Whomever you may serve, consider it as service to God. Divinise all your actions. Treat every action you perform as God's work.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 28,
Chapter 34: Spiritual Significance of Loving Service.