

Facilitators please note: Only the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires is to be given in this introductory unit of work with some understanding of applications of the philosophy.

Pre-reading List for the Facilitator:

- 3.1. *Dynamic Dharma for Integrated Living. Chapter 4: Dharma of the Human Body (p.43-76). Pal Dhall.***

Additional Resources (not in Resource Book):

- *Ceiling on Desires. Phyllis Krystal.*

Aims:

Facilitator explores the following with the participants:

- Philosophy of Ceiling on Desires program and the role of self-awareness
- Sathya Sai Baba's teachings on interconnectedness of Man, Creation and God
- Living in harmony with nature; needs versus wants analysis – consider this topic at the individual level with a focus on wasteful patterns of behaviour regarding time, money, energy, food, water and other resources

Objectives:

The participants will be able to:

- Describe Philosophy of Ceiling on Desires program
- Self-awareness as a spiritual discipline
- Develop a program to create awareness of COD through spiritual education around food, water, energy, time and money

Activity 1: Brief Discussion on the Question in the light of Quotation

What are the philosophical underpinnings of the Ceiling on Desires program?

“What is the meaning of Ceiling on Desires? Man is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness. That is why it is important to keep desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants.”

The Facilitator takes the responses on the quotation asking for focus on the key ideas:

- “living in a dream world”
- “forgetting the Supreme Consciousness”
- “Desires are a Prison”
- “Man can be freed only by limiting his wants”

The Facilitator ensures the following points are discussed and understood:

- Sathya Sai Baba has emphasised that the body has been given to us for a grand purpose of realising the Lord within but that we *forget the Supreme Consciousness*.
- Our senses are outwardly directed and continuously attract us to the external world. With this attraction goes our mental energy which manifests as desire for more and more exciting and richer external life. The more complex and luxurious the external objects, the more we crave for them. Secondly when desires are fulfilled we develop the intoxication of pride. We wrongly identify happiness as residing in the object of our desires.
- Once the desire for one possession is fulfilled we soon develop desire for something else. So, no matter how much we indulge in the external sensual stimulation we cannot quench our desire for more. We live in a *dream world* thinking that we will get permanent happiness from satisfying our desires. But in reality when desires are fulfilled they set up a subconscious pattern in our mind of seeking satisfaction through fulfilling further desires. In this sense we are imprisoned by the desires.
- Our preoccupation with the external leads to forgetfulness of the opportunity we have in this life to make progress towards our salvation.
- For this reason desire, *kama*, is one the 6 inner enemies. The stronger the desire the more of our energy is directed to satisfying it. Unfulfilled desires give rise to frustration, agitation, even anger. When the desires are fuelled because of comparison with others' possessions then we feel wanting and incomplete.
- A focus on inner life requires that we control dependence for fulfilment on the external flow of energy into attractive and alluring objects. Sense control and control over an external flow of energy through the redirection to nobler purposes of *iccha sakti* or desires is the essential first step in spirituality. “*The first step in spiritual training is to curb the iccha sakti which prompts the senses to pursue the objects. If iccha, desire, is for God it is good, if for objective pleasure, it harms the individual*”. (VA Vol. I, p. 102).
- The way to overcome desires is not by indulging or expressing them. This merely reinforces the already established pattern. Nor is it through repressing them. This is akin to putting more fuel to dampen a fire. In the Ceiling on Desires program, the desires are acknowledged by understanding the nature of lower mind. But the temptation is suppressed through redirecting the *iccha sakti* with a strong will power. The mental energy of desire is channelled into more purposeful activity e.g., Sathya Sai Baba asks that the money saved by ceiling on desires is put to good use.

- Ceiling on desires program is thus, not just self-denial, but a program that cultivates careful choices and provides motivation to further the highest purpose of life. It utilises our inner and outer resources to achieve the noblest and the highest possible.

Activity 2: Brief Discussion on the Question in light of the Quotation

How does the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires relate desires and happiness?

“You are under the mistaken notion that happiness lies in the fulfilment 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.”

The Facilitator invites first a focus for responses on what are authentic happiness and bliss. Once this has been discussed the Facilitator invites a discussion on the relationship of “liberation” to renunciation. The Facilitator ensures the following are discussed:

- Happiness is from personal engagement with one’s signature strengths.
- Research shows a lack of relationship between happiness with worldly achievements and possessions beyond meeting with the essential needs of decent living.
- To a large measure in ordinary life happiness comes from positive emotions associated with satisfying relationships in which service and love are important elements.
- Renunciation is a sacrifice of the less important for something more valuable (freedom). It is obtaining freedom from dependence on external impermanent objects and relationships and placing reliance on ourselves and on our relationship with Divinity to meet with our highest goal.
- Facilitator introduces concepts of *Moksha*, Liberation, *Nirvana* and the desire for God as the legitimate desire. Facilitator ends with the following quotation that contrasts the two paths – *Pravritti* and *Nivritti*:
- *People are under the mistaken notion that they get happiness when their desires are fulfilled. In fact, happiness results not when their desires are fulfilled, but when they are controlled. One can enjoy the state of bliss by controlling one’s desires. One who craves for fulfilment is already restless. Desires correspond to the Pravritti in which there is no happiness whatsoever. Deluded as you are by your wrong thinking, you imagine that there is happiness in the world. But in fact you are distancing yourself from Nivritti (the inner path towards God”.* (SS, Aug. 2001, p.228).

Activity 3: Brief Discussion on the Question in light of the Quotation

How does the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires applies to Money?

Facilitator first invites comments on the following quotation:

“Indians consider money or wealth as Goddess Lakshmi. Since God is wealth, misuse of money is evil. 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..... Practise charity by giving away money, food clothes, houses etc instead of misusing it on extravagance. Misuse of money issin as well.”

The Facilitator ensures the following points are discussed:

- *Artha (Wealth) is one of the four goals of life but this is tied up with the idea of Dharma i.e., it has to be earned by right means of livelihood. Excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of individuals and in the hands of a few nations is causing massive problems all over the world. Exploitation and poverty cause imbalance and are responsible for deprivation, hunger and malnutrition on a massive scale and they can even cause wars. Furthermore when morality is lacking in the means for acquiring wealth it can cause extreme misery as the current global financial crisis has shown. “Men are consumed by a limitless passion for wealth and power. No doubt money is necessary for meeting with one’s daily needs. But even here there should be limits” (SS Dec 1994, p. 311)*
- *Wealth is of many types – of happiness, good health, of good relationships, of education and personal attainments etc. Focus on money to the exclusion of other types of wealth causes an imbalance in life and does not lead to expected happiness. It leads to stress, ill health and ultimately to disillusionment. “Wealth can provide a multiple-storey mansion but not sound sleep. Wealth can provide bodily comforts but physical comforts do not produce bliss... But when there is no peace of mind, what use are these comforts?” (SS July 1995, p. 171)*
- *Improper use of money is the purchase of rich foods harmful to health, pursuits of addictions that enslave the mind, ostentatious displays that puff up the ego and give false pride.*
- *It is a poor notion of Education when it is undertaken solely for achieving wealth by obtaining better jobs. According to Sathya Sai Baba’s philosophy real education, *Vidya*, is for attaining enlightenment rather than for accumulating wealth.*
- *Money can give a false sense of security. But in reality it comes and goes. The rich become puffed with pride at their wealth and behave arrogantly; this takes them away from the principle of Oneness; their locus of control is outside of themselves and their focus away from the inner richness which is the real wealth. “Together with the growth of one’s wealth one’s spirit of sacrifice should grow commensurately.....These days wealth increases but not magnanimity. (SS Dec 1994, p.311).*
- *Proper use of surplus money is to give in charity. A measure of genuine wealth is the size of our compassionate heart and the extent to which we can serve to relieve the misery of others. “Wealth is to be held on trust, and used for promoting the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God”. (SSS Vol.VII p. 41).*

Activity 4: Brief Discussion on the Question in light of the Quotation

How does the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires apply to Food?

The Facilitator invites comments on the following quotation:

“Do not waste food, food is God. Your body is made up of food and you are a result of the food eaten by your parents. Eat as much as is necessary to eat. But do not throw away food by taking too much in your plate. By wasting food you will be wasting the energy Divine”.

The Facilitator ensures the following points are discussed:

- The concept of *Anna Brahma* – Food is God, Divine Energy.
- Ordinarily when we think of food we think of nourishing the body. We tend to think of a balanced diet in terms of nourishments for the physical body. This is not wrong but this is incomplete information.
- Food is energy and the most vital energy is our mental and spiritual energy. The food we eat turns into thoughts, aspirations, love, prayers, concentration, intellect, and motivation as well as flesh, fat and blood. It is the vital energy in food that gives us a sense of wellbeing and wholeness. The fresher and purer the food the more vital energy is in it and the more it is able to purify our thoughts and nourish our spirit. In the mainstream thinking focus is placed on food with the physical health in mind.
- Thus purity of food is vitally important. However, purity of food means it is purchased with money which has been acquired by rightful means, it is prepared with prayers, in clean vessels, is consumed after offering it to God so it becomes *prasadam*. Further the food is consumed with mindfulness and appreciation of the sacrifice that has gone into it (the labour of the farmer, transport and marketing workers and others involved in the process of getting it to our table, the sacrifice of insects and worms that enrich the soil and fertilise the crops, Divine Grace in the rain, sunshine and soil that nourish the crops). Purity is further promoted when the food is eaten in loving company.
- Fresh organic vegetarian food, not too rich in fats and sugars and in the right quantity promotes *satvic* and positive thoughts, gives more vitality, helps concentration during prayers and prolongs life. Meat, excessive spices and salt, intoxicants and excessive fats are *rajasic or tamasic*. They promote agitation and distraction of the mind or sloth and laziness.
- Excessive food, even *satvic*, becomes *tamasic* and gives rise to obesity associated with many diseases and shortened life expectation.
- Meat eating is to be avoided for very many reasons. Meat production is wasteful of natural resources in a world of diminishing resources, involves a lot of cruelty to the animals that are killed. The raising of farm animals pollutes the environment, the land,

the waterways and the atmosphere. When consumed the fear hormones that flood the flesh of the dying animal cause agitation and fear in the consumer, and the vibration in the meat promotes animal tendencies. Baba has said *“Non-vegetarian food not only affects the body but also the mind. Food, Head, God – these three are inter-related. By consuming animal food, animal tendencies are aroused”*.

- Food or *Ahara* is of many types – in fact all that we take through all the sense organs “feed” the mind. This includes all the sense impressions we take into the mind through the eyes, ears, tongue, skin and nose, the television programs we watch, the books we read, the conversations we have and the thoughts we have privately. Ultimately these collectively determine the state of our mind.

Activity 5: Brief Discussion on the Question in light of the Quotation

How does the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires apply to Time?

“Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation depends upon Time. Even our scriptures say that God is referred to as Time and as No Time. God is not limited by Time. He is beyond Time. He is Time. He restricts Time..... If we waste time our lives will be wasted.”

The Facilitator ensures the following points are discussed:

- Discuss the concept *“God is referred to as Time and as No Time. God is not limited by Time. He is beyond Time. He is Time”*. God is beyond time but manifests through the illusion of time. Sathya Sai Baba has also said *“God is called Kaalaswarupa, the very embodiment of time”*.
- Time emerges from memory of the past, the perception of events in the present and a mental construct of the future. We connect events in a linear fashion to make sense of our experience of the world which in fact is full of impermanence and change. Sathya Sai Baba has said, *“Past is past. Forget the past. Do not worry over the future, since it is uncertain. The present is not ordinary present, it is Omnipresent.”*
- Time is a gift (a present) given to us to realise Divinity. The most precious thing we have is our time; it is our life. Time lost is lost forever and a moment gone can never come back. Our life span is limited to a few years and these should be used in the most appropriate manner. The optimal use of time is to engage in whatever will enhance us spiritually. Wasting the gift of time is a waste of opportunity to advance towards Immortality. Sathya Sai Baba has said: *“Try to escape into purer air of the spirit as often as you can, taking the name of the Lord on your tongue. Of the 24 hours of the day, have 6 hours for your individual needs, 6 hours for the service of others, 6 hours for sleep and 6 hours for dwelling in the presence of the Lord. Those 6 hours will endow you the strength of steel.” (BTBOS, p.231)*

- Time waste is life waste. Time is wasted not just in idleness and daydreaming but also when it is not utilised wisely but spent in unproductive activity e.g., watching TV, gossiping, window shopping, worrying and ruminating over the past or the future etc.
- Time should be spent in activities that are positive and productive: work, family, recreation through exercise, spiritual activities such as meditation, cultivating arts, reading uplifting literature and in satsangh.
- Time should be managed properly for the worldly objectives we all need to achieve: clear goals, strong motivation, concentration and steady application with a sense of surrender of the outcome of our effort.
- *“The future is the consequence of the present. The present is the consequence of the past. The tree of the past gives the seed of the present, which grows into the tree of the future. Between the tree of the past and the tree of the future, the present is the seed, which is of utmost significance”*. This is the theory of karma that links present activities to a good or a bad future. We have to use the present to sow the good seeds for the future.
- The law of karma places the future life in our own hands. Sathya Sai Baba has said *“There is a law of cause and effect; every karma has a consequence, whether you like it or not. A good karma produces good result and a bad one produces a bad result. Birth is the result of the karma done before death; if you are asked “What happens to man after death? You can point to yourself and declare “This is what happens.” They are born again.” Even poor karma from the past can be overcome through present good actions. It should be noted in respect of Vedantic concept of action, even our thoughts are “actions” and therefore the karmic consequences of bad thoughts are as bad as those of bad actions.*
Sathya Sai Baba gives in this powerful quote the immensely precious value of time: *“Death is pictured by some as terror-striking God who rides on a monster-buffalo, and pounces on you with a noose. No, the noose is of your own making.....It is the Time that creeps steadily towards you and sheers the cord of life. So utilize the capacity for karma with which you are endowed to liberate yourself from the clutches of Time.”* (VA., Part 2, p.83).

Activity 6: Brief Discussion on the Question in light of the Quotations

How does the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires apply to 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 thoughts and doing evil deeds waste your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.”

“Where is the Cosmic Energy? The Cosmic Energy is all pervasive. It is in you, above you, below you and around you. You yourself are the Cosmic Energy; but you are not able to realise it.”(Summer Showers, 1993, p.11)

The Facilitator ensures the understanding of Divine Energy as the source and the individual energy as the derivative of this and focuses on the following points for discussion:

- **The Divine All pervasive Energy:** Everything is a manifestation of all pervasive Divine Energy. Sathya Sai Baba has clarified that *the energy with which the most elementary particles are bound with each other is Divine. The individual separation of these individual particles is absolutely precise and cannot be altered by anyone.....This Divine Energy is God.* Even empty space is filled with Energy. Sound, thought, emptiness, attraction and doubt are said to be the five characteristics of empty space in Vedanta. This view is not dissimilar to that of the physicists who claim that vacuum is a quantum field filled with immense energy and that solid matter like stars and planets seem material but are in reality energy in space. According to consciousness research empty space is filled with Consciousness. We are an inseparable part of this immense and unimaginably vast and powerful Divine Energy/ Consciousness: *Sath Chith Ananda*
- **Individual energy:** There is infinite power within man, power that is beyond comprehension and which is Divine Cosmic Energy. Sathya Sai Baba has said that *“Divinity expresses Itself as energy. The sun derives its effulgence from this same source. It is the same Cosmic Source that accounts for the power of the human mind. This primordial power is termed “Om”. “Bhu” is another power. Yet another power is that of vibration termed Praana sakthi or Life Force which activates every part of the body. This is termed “Bhuvah”. Lakshmi symbolises this power which enables humans to see, hear, and do. Lakshmi is the power to see good, hear good, speak sweet words, entertain good thoughts and do good deeds. The Lakshmi Principle accounts for all the good auspicious happenings in the world.*

Ceiling on desires for the Energy is to live a life taking into account how best to utilise this immense resource within.

- **At a practical level:** There are many forms of inner energies: Physical energy of activity that includes sense perception and action (through the ten organs of perception and action), mental energy of thinking, intelligence, concentration, reasoning, intuition, motivation and decision making and spiritual energy of understanding the purpose of human life and applying discipline to realising the Goal of life.
- Our energy varies according to how we handle our life. Excessive talking, negative feelings of anger, hate, regret, guilt, anxiety, fear are wasteful of energy. Indeed the six inner enemies of desires, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy and envy are enemies precisely because they waste our energy and take a focus away from spirituality, away from *Sath Chith Ananda*, our Divine Source.

- Positive energy is generated by the practise of the five Human Values, by spiritual practices such as reading spiritual literature, *bhajans*, meditation, selfless service, surrender and devotional activities. All these activities take us towards *Sath Chith Ananda*, our Divine Source.
- Sathya Sai Baba has said: *If the energy of the body is properly utilised then balance is maintained and the body will be in good shape.* This means that when energy is misused and wasted then we live short and miserable life. There is indeed scientific evidence for the shortening of life with unresolved negative emotions like grief, hostility, anger, worry and anxiety. Energy is also misused when we seek satisfaction by excessively fuelling our desires: *“Desires are dreadfully dangerous. Today’s enemy may become tomorrow’s friends. But desires are perpetual enemies. They haunt the man ceaselessly.”* (SS, May, 1995, p. 122). Excessive talking, seeing bad things, hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts and doing evil deeds waste our energy.
- **External energy:** Sathya Sai Baba has also said, *“Every atom and cell is a bundle of energy, expressing the Divine will. Matter and energy are not really separate.”* This is also the conclusion in quantum physics. Divine Will as originating this universe endows the whole of creation with Divine meaning. Violence to matter, animate or inanimate, is violence to the Divine. Waste of external energy whether electrical, chemical, or from gas in our homes, or fuel in our cars is sinful not only because of the misuse of finite resources or the adverse impact on the global climate but also because of their inherent Divine nature.
- Therefore we have to conserve external energy. Responsible use of these resources and ceiling on desires advances us spiritually.

Activity 7: Brief Discussion on the Question in light of the Quotation

How does the philosophy of Ceiling on Desires apply to Water?

“Because of decline in the morality among men water is getting scarce in the world.”

The Facilitator ensures the following points are discussed:

- Water is a resource of immense intrinsic value; without water life is not possible. It is used in religious rites for sacred purposes, for cleaning, for cooking and drinking, for growing food and vegetables, for raising animals and in industry for manufacturing goods. Water is also used for recreation and sports and for creating aesthetic and peaceful ambience in parks and gardens.
- In many parts of the world there is no appreciation that on a global level fresh water is in short supply and is a diminishing resource.
- There are billions of people without access to fresh water in the home and they pay high price for water relative to their income.

- Health and hygiene are directly related to availability of clean and fresh water.
- We have been living off aquifers which have taken millions of years to become established. As they are becoming depleted and will take long time to replenish many countries are likely to experience water shortage. We will need to adapt to less water and depend upon rain as the major source.
- In light of the looming shortage there could be wars over water and rivers.
- Poor agricultural practices cause pollution of ground water, rivers and oceans.
- In our homes we misuse water if we leave our taps open unnecessarily or do not attend to dripping taps, have excessively long showers and do not economise on the water by using dual flush systems for toilets.
- Wastage of water is violence to this sacred element.

Activity 8: Breakaway groups for discussion on individual and group action plans for the practise of Ceiling on Desires program.

The Facilitator divides the participants into groups for discussion (10 minutes) on individual and group action plans. The groups present their deliberations to the rest of the class.

At the end of the session the Facilitator invites insights and action plans and reviews them.