

The Child

In India people approach whatever they do in a spirit of devotion. For the musician, the farmer, the teacher, their work is an offering to God. Thus what more obvious way for Gijubhai to express his gratitude to express his attitude to children than in terms of the divine - let the child be your God.

The following prose poem was originally written by Gijubhai who was known as the "mother with a moustache." Kashinath Trivedi, a former education minister translated it into Hindi. I bumped into him unexpectedly in Wardha, Central India. Since it was out of print and this was his last copy, he read it aloud to me. I listened and was greatly moved. Of course, there were no photocopiers for miles so he promised to copy it by hand and send it to me. I have translated into English.

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1. The Child

The child is the soul of the parents,
The child is the ornament of the home.
The child is the glory of the garden.
The child is the light of the family.
The child is the smiling bud in our life.

2. The gift of a Child

Who makes you forget your sorrow?
Who removes your tiredness?
Who saves you from your barrenness?
Who fills your house with giggles?
Who makes your laughter last forever?
It is the Child.
To find god worship the Child.

3. Peace

Of all gods' creation the child is unique and innocent
Let us realise the pace of a child's progress.
Those who enable a child to be free set the whole of
humanity to peace.

4. Tell me

Where shall I play?

Where shall I jump?
To whom shall I talk?
When I talk my mummy feels interrupted,
When I play my daddy is irritated,
When I jump I am told to sit down,
When I sing I am told to be quiet,
Tell me, where shall I go, what shall I do?

5. Let the Child Act

The child likes to do things.
Let him wash his own hanky,
Let her fill her own cup,
Let him arrange the flowers,
Let her clean the plate,
Let him pod the peas,
Let her serve the food,
Let the child act,
And act at her own pace,
And act at his own wish.

6. The Child Knows

Whether there is nectar or poison in our eyes,
Whether our speech is sweet or bitter,
Whether our touch is soft or harsh,
Whether our mind is respectful or disdainful,
The Child senses it immediately,
The Child knows it all.

7. The Enemy

'Go to bed otherwise an old man will take you away.'
'Eat otherwise thieves will catch you.'
'The tiger is coming.'
'The ghost is coming.'
'The police are coming.'
'Be quiet, or else, I'll lock you in the room.'
'Read your book, or I'll hit you hard.'
Those who frighten the child like this are the enemies of the child.

8. Will we understand?

The laughter of the child is life's laughter.

The cry of the child is life's tears.
A child's smile makes the flowers bloom.
A child's cry makes the flowers droop.
Instead of letting the sweet shehnai of a
child's laughter into our homes
Why do we let the War's trumpet
of a child's crying be blown?

9. Heaven on Earth

If we give a child his due respect
We can establish heaven on this earth.
Heaven lies in the happiness of a child.
Heaven lies in the health of a child.
Heaven lies in the well being of a child.
Heaven lies in the innocent and carefree nature of the child.
Heaven lies in the humming and singing of a child.

10. The Great Soul

The child's body is small but it contains a great soul.
The child's body is growing,
The child's energies are growing,
But the child's soul is complete.
We should respect this great soul.
And we should not corrupt the child with our ways.

11. Realisation

A child is a complete person.
A child has intellect, emotions, mind and understanding.
A child has strengths and weakness.
A child has likes and dislikes.
Let us recognise the wishes of the child.
Let us understand the emotions of the child.
A child is small and innocent.
Because of our ego we must not reject the child.
Because of our pride we must not insult the child.

12. Self Reliant

The child will eat, don't feed her.
The child will bathe, don't force her.
The child will walk, don't push her.

The child will sing, don't make him sing.
The child will play, don't interfere.
The child wants to be self-reliant.

13. Will you not do even this much?

Instead of going to your club, take the child to a park.
Instead of gossiping, show the child some animals.
Instead of being immersed in your newspaper, listen to the child.
When the child goes to bed, delight her with stories.
Take interest in the child.

14. At the Mercy of Servants

That is a beautiful home where parents live in love.
That is a beautiful home where rose-like children play around.
That is a beautiful home where parents care for the children as they care for their own soul.
That is a beautiful home where children receive respect from adults.
And where children do not live at the mercy of servants.
Yes, yes that is a beautiful home.

15. For the Self

Respect the child so that we can keep our self-respect.
Avoid shouting at a child so that we can rid ourselves of the bad habit of shouting.
Refrain from beating a child so that we can be free from violence and misconduct.
When we have reformed ourselves the child will naturally grow in goodness.

16. Threats and Bribes

Let parents and teachers realise that by threats
And bribes you cannot teach children good conduct,
They will only be ruined.
By threats you make the child rough,
By bribes you make the child covetous,
Threats and bribes make a child shameless and pitiable.

17. Home is the true School

If parents think that they can do what they like

And still train children in good conduct,
They are making a great mistake.
Parents and the home are the greatest and most
powerful schools.
A child ruined at home cannot be saved even by God.

18. Gifts of Nature

How can the child who is removed from nature know
the secrets of nature?
The shining moonlight, the flowing river,
The soil in the field, the cottage on the farm,
The stones of the hills, fresh air and the colours of the sky
Are the gifts of God and
Nature to the child.
Let the children taste the joys of nature
until they are totally satisfied.

19. Dynamic

The child is progressing every minute
The child has questioning eyes.
The child's heart is expressive.
The grammar of a child is made of questions and exclamations
It has no full stops, not even a comma.
A child is dynamism reincarnate.

20. New Age

The age of worshipping the snake has gone.
The age of worshipping ghosts has passed.
The age of worshipping of stones, a statue is no more.
Now is the age of worshipping the child.

21. Quarrels

Quarrels between parents
Poison the home,
They cause great difficulty for children.
For the sake of children, adults must learn to live in harmony.
Happiness at home is the great source of education.

22. My Debt

Children have honoured me with their love.

Children have given me new life.
While teaching children I have learnt much.
While reading to children, I have read much.
As a teacher I have learnt that children
Are the true teachers,
This is not poetry, this is experience.

23. Living Book

Those who find knowledge by reading books
Become teachers.
Those who find knowledge through children
Become wise.
For the wise every child is a unique and living book.

24. The Child God

You can bluff the world
But you cannot bluff a child.
You can fool everybody
But you cannot fool a child.
You can hide things from ordinary people
But you can hide nothing from a child.
She knows all, she is everywhere,
She is all pervading
Be a devotee of the child God.
Be single minded in your devotion.
This is the key to true success.

25. Talking is useless

Is reading, thinking, writing about a child enough?
No, we have to erect new temples
and re-establish the goddess of knowledge
and wisdom in them.
The new age of the child has begun.
Just talking is not enough,
We must do something, we must act.

26. Hard Work

Working with children is difficult
Understanding the nature of a child, cultivating deep
feelings and reverence for a child is demanding.

Trusting and loving a child is hard work.
You have to sweat for it from head to toe.

27. Remember

Dust from a lane is more precious to a child
than the dust of sandalwood.

A sweet breeze is sweeter for a child than even its mother's kiss.
Soft sunrays are softer for a child than a cuddle.

28. How can I rest?

As long as child is battered at home
and abused at school.

How can I rest?

As long as children have no playgrounds,
No gardens to work, no places to learn.

No homes to grow in freedom,

How can I rest?

As long as children are not able to receive
love and reverence

How can I rest?

29. All children are equal

There are all kinds of children:

Invalid and blind, bright and backward,

Beautiful and ugly, dark and fair.

Also there are children clever, hefty,
naughty, mischievous and cunning.

In the eyes of a true teacher all children are equal.

They are all God's children.

30. Playgrounds

Will we let our millions of children

Wander about in dirty and dangerous streets?

No, we should provide them with good homes

Where they can be creatively engaged,

And we should provide them with good playgrounds

At every street corner so that they can develop body and soul.

Playground are the best easiest and the cheapest

Means for the true development of a child.

31. Do or Die

At every moment I want to have a glimpse of
The great soul within the little body of the child.
This is my inspiration.
I want to live to re-establish children's rights.
And I want to die doing it.

32. Religious Education

By talking about religion or by performing rituals
Or putting on the traditional costumes
We will not be able to make children religious.
Religion is not in books or sermons
Religion is not in dead dogmas
Religion is in life itself.
If teachers and parents live a religious life
Children will automatically get a religious education.

33. Look at Yourself

You are not God, why do you act like God to children?
You are not all knowing, why do you laugh
at children's ignorance?
You are not almighty, why are you annoyed by children's helplessness?
You are not complete, why are you irritated at children's shortcomings?
Look at yourself first and then look at the child.

End