Articulation

Om Sri Sai Ram

I am sending you a short recorded talk on 'Articulation' for the benefit of the youngsters or prospective speakers from the state of Kerala. Let me first congratulate you and appreciate you for recognizing the fact that articulation or public speaking or effective communication is very much needed today in our organisation for its survival and to enrol the new generation into our fold. Very good. Keep on doing it. Let it spread as wide as possible. I'll tell you very briefly what it is.

First of all, we should know the occasion for which the talk has to be prepared. For example, we have to give a talk on Dassera celebration or Onam celebration or Deepawali or Birthday. We should know the occasion for which the talk is to be delivered.

Secondly, we have to make preparation, rather collecting the material needed for that purpose. In other words, we have to speak on the Deepawali, get all the material regarding Deepawali likez; what it is? Why is it celebrated? What is its speciality? What is its inner significance? We have to collect the material on the topic for the occasion.

And thirdly, we have to make notes of what all that has been read, what all that has been heard - make a note of it. . . something like the ‘bullets’ in your computer language (formatting). That means point by point, what are the points, the sequence - a note has to be prepared for this.

Therefore, the presentation is very important. The beauty lies in the presentation, for which a command over the language and thoroughness in the subject are very necessary. Unless one is thorough in a subject, he cannot articulate, he cannot speak. So, he should be thorough in the subject by making adequate preparation.

And fifth, one should use a particular language which attracts people. Language is very important. And if you have to face the audience, the body language is equally important. We should not give any odd appearance or peculiar appearance or funny appearance by our body expressions.

As you watch people, you find their facial expressions are not in any way impressive. Some people go on shaking the body, some people stretch their mouth. These are all the mannerisms which have got to be totally given up.

And the next, after preparing long notes on the subject, we should also make very short notes. Short notes, if I have to say, on one paper. The summary: one, two, three, four, five, six, like that. Keep it on the last row. So if necessary, you can look at it immediately to catch the points and speak. This is necessary because we may forget to mention some of the crucial points, or we may forget the link sometimes. Or we speak other points and we miss the link. So, for proper linking or connection with each of the points, we have to carry with us a short summary, a brief summary of our notes.

In other words, we collect all the material; next we make notes and finally a very short brief summary of the notes just on one paper or two papers, that's all. But just ready reference, so that we don't lose or miss any point.

Fifthly, the language I said, the language that we use and the body language are very important - gestures or postures have to be taken care of. For this, one can just stand in front of the mirror and rehearse. It was Winston Churchill from England who used to rehearse his talks in front of the mirror - how the body is, how the language is. So it is also very necessary. Winston Churchill did it, after all. What are we in front of him? He was a national orator.

And then the sixth is, we should also be aware of the composition of the audience. Are you talking to devotees? Are you talking to Balvikas children? Are you addressing youth? Or are you going to speak to an audience comprising professionals, experts like scientists, doctors, lawyers? Or are you going to address non- devotees altogether? So, we should know the composition of the audience also so that you will prepare accordingly.

And the next thing is that we should have a kind of feedback every time. Suppose you have spoken now and the speech is over, the meeting is over. Then you should have feedback. Ask your friends, very close people including your wife and children who will be very frank to tell you to your face. So, we should get the opinion or feedback how they felt about the talk so that we can revise, we can correct, we can modify, and we can rectify if there are any defects to improve. Feedback is very necessary. We cannot consider ourselves great and final. No! We have to ask our dear and near to comment and to come forward with their own suggestions. That's the next thing we have to do.

And then later, to begin with, let one start giving a talk. First addressing a bhajan mandali (a small group), and then next, slowly and slowly, by and by, one can go to samithi level, and then talk to samithi people how they are, how it is. And then after samithi level is over, let us try them at the district level. Then once they very well appreciate or applaud it, then we can introduce him at the state level. This is very necessary. So, we should practice as many times as possible before we go to a larger audience.

Then I would also suggest another thing. Let us listen to standard speakers. There are some speakers who are highly experienced, who are very well known, who are very popular. Not necessarily on Sai alone. There are many people in every state who are excellent speakers. In every state, top speakers are there in every state. Let us listen to them. Not only for the subject, but in order only to learn the art of speaking, how they are speaking, how they are delivering, how their accent is, what language they are using - we should go on observing them. That's also very necessary.

Let them be exposed to speakers of the state in Malayalam language whenever, whatever we speak. This is also necessary in the learning process. And we can also follow on T.V. (television), some of the discussions that we have on T.V. They will have discussions there. Maybe political or social or spiritual, whatever it maybe. There in the discussions we will certainly understand where we stand - how to speak, how not to speak, what words we should use, what words we should not use. Do's and don’ts can be learnt by following a T.V. programme, discussion programme, as a learning process. Therefore, listening to standard speakers and following T.V. debates is also a learning process where we can pick up the techniques and use them in our Sai satsangs. That's what I also recommend. So, this is a continuous learning process. It is not one that begins one day and then ends. No.

To give you an example, there was a very great international scholar and speaker by the name V. K. Gokak, who was the first Vice Chancellor of Sathya Sai University and President of Dnyanpeeth Award. He was a very learned man. He was going to speak on the day, addressing students at Bangalore Whitefield for summer course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. And the meeting was about to start in an hour. We were all there.

Swami came closely and asked us, “Has everybody gathered there? Are all seated there?” He made enquiries and suddenly laughed and looked at Ram Brahmam, the caretaker of Whitefield and said, “You know, what Gokak is doing? While taking bath, he is practicing his talk, he is rehearsing his talk.” That's what Swami said.

So, when such a man like Gokak rehearses, why not you and I? That is very necessary. So, we have to prepare individually and try that collectively in a community, and slowly develop. And we can certainly copy the techniques of some people, how they are doing, how they are presenting. That's also wonderful.

And then we should always remain humble throughout. 'Humble'. Because on any topic you cannot consider yourself final or ultimate. Every talk is fresh as any other previous talks. Supposing it comes to me: I think it is the first time I am speaking. Every time I feel like that - first time I am addressing. I never take things for granted. And therefore, this kind of feeling of freshness is very necessary.

Now what all things that have to observed: Repetition on the subject to be avoided as much as possible because some of the people may be attending our talks regularly. When they find the same stuff being repeated time and again, it is boring, boredom, monotonous. Therefore, try to avoid repetition to a great extent. And the talk should not be serious throughout. We should also see that the talk is very interesting by mixing some humour, some jokes of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Bhagawan jokes about in talks. *Humour in Sathya Sai* is a book published already. Therefore, we should learn how to engage the ideals because a serious talk and a castor oil face will be a big boredom. Nobody will be able to tolerate it. So, we should make it interesting.

And then above all, when you attend a meeting, we should know our time - how much time you are given. Is it 15 minutes or 20 minutes or 30 minutes? How much time is given to you, so that you can trim your talk to the time allotted to you. So, time you should know that. We should not go beyond the time. If you go beyond the time, well, people will not be able to appreciate you; more so the organisers in particular. And in particular, there may be speakers to follow you, and they will be very much annoyed, embarrassed. They must stick on to the time. That's very important.

And then find out the order of speakers. Are you the first speaker or third speaker or fourth speaker? If you are at the end, you should be very, very careful. Very, very careful because the audience must have been exhausted already! You should make it most interesting being a speaker, a last speaker in particular. If you are the first, that is different. Up to the third is ok. From fourth onwards, you have to take into account and be very cautious in our presentation.

Sometimes we may have to quote our predecessors, who spoke before us. Appreciate them. “These are the points highlighted. Very good.” And you can elaborate on the points they referred to in their presentation. This will make a kind of connection with the audience and fellow speakers. Like this, it is an ongoing process. By continuous process, by continuous practice, one will certainly improve.

If you have any questions, kindly let me know.

Thank you very much for your interest. I wish all youngsters that come under your care would have to prepare, to undergo training. Yes, these tips will be of immense help. That's what I feel. If they happen to be here in Prashanti Nilayam, I will be happy to address that small group whom you want to train.

Thank you very much.